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MADE FOR THE TRUTH

Saint Scholastica

SAINT OF THE DAY

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St. Benedict's sister is invoked against storms and lightning because of the famous miracle narrated in the *Dialogues* of Saint Gregory the Great (540-604), where she also appears to have managed to keep her beloved brother in check. From the *Dialogues*, in fact, comes much of the information about her life. According to a tradition dating back to around the 9th century, Saint Scholastica (480-547) and Benedict of Nursia were twins whose birth coincided with the death of their mother Claudia Abundantia – wife of Eutropius Anicius, a descendant of a noble Roman family.

Scholastica consecrated herself to the Lord as a young girl, as in perfect spiritual communion with her brother, who had been sent to Rome to complete his literary studies but had been so shocked by the corruption of the world that he soon abandoned that path, and determined to choose the religious life. Many years later, when Benedict left Subiaco and headed towards Cassino, Scholastica founded a monastery few kilometers away from the place where he had already founded the Abbey of Montecassino. Her nuns followed the Benedictine Rule, of which Scholastica particularly stressed the observance of silence, especially with people outside the monastery. She would say: "Be silent, or speak of God, since what else in this world is so worthy to speak of?"

Once a year, as Saint Gregory informs us, Scholastica and Benedict met halfway in a cottage owned by the monks, exchanging experiences of their rich spiritual life. One day, between praising God and spiritual conversations, the meeting between the two went on longer than usual and, given the late hour, Scholastica asked her brother to stay with her until the morning "to look forward, with our conversations, to the joys of heaven". Benedict refused, since he did not want to break the Rule by spending the night outside the monastery; so Scholastica bowed her head, resting it on her folded hands on the table, and immersed herself in deep prayer. As soon as she raised her head, not only did the table appear covered by a river of tears but in the hitherto clear sky as such a storm broke out, with thunder and lightning, that neither Benedict nor his disciples dared step outside the cottage.

Benedict complained, and demanded an explanation of the prodigy: "May Almighty God forgive you, blessed sister. But what have you done?" And Scholastica: "See, I prayed to you and you didn't want to listen to me; I prayed to my Lord and He listened to me". Thus they sat together watching all night, cheering their souls with words about the goods of Heaven. Saint Gregory commented: "She was able to do more, the one who loved most." That was their last earthly encounter. Four days later, in fact, while Benedict prayed in his cell, he saw the glorious soul of Scholastica rise to

heaven in the form of a dove. Filled with joy, he praised God and asked the brethren to recover the body of his sister to bury it in the sepulchre that he had prepared for himself. It was February 10th. Forty days later Benedict died too". It so happened – one still reads in the *Dialogues* – "that not even the grave could separate those two souls, whose mind had been one soul in God".

Patron of: Benedictine nuns, women who have recently given birth, children suffering from convulsions; invoked against storms and lightning