

Saint Benedict. Patron Saint of Europe. Dom Polan (abate primate): “Messenger of Peace”

"Messenger of peace, bringer of unity, a father of civilisation, and above all harbinger of the religion of Christ and founder of monastic life in the West: those are the qualifying traits in celebrating St Benedict Abbot. Upon the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, while some parts of Europe seemed to be slipping into obscurity and others remained devoid of civilisation and spiritual values, with unrelenting and tireless dedication, he ushered in the dawn of a new era on this continent."



proclaimed St. Benedict, Abbot, Principle Patron of All of Europe. The apostolic letter was released on October 24, 1964 on the occasion of the consecration of the new abbey after the old abbey was destroyed in 1944, during the Second World War. It was rebuilt "thanks to the perseverance of Christian devotion." **Messenger of peace.** Today, July 11, when the Church celebrates Saint Benedict of Nursia, the Abbot Primate, head of the Benedictine Confederation, reminds us that "Saint Benedict is Patron and Messenger of Peace. It is customary to see the word 'Pax', peace, displayed at the entry to all Benedictine monasteries today. In the Benedictine experience, peace comes with another term, dear to St Benedict: hospitality." In chapter 53 of the Rule Saint Benedict writes: "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me'. Proper honor must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith and to pilgrims."



"The monasteries in Europe," explains Father Polan, "have at all times offered generous hospitality to those who were in need. Yesterday as today. This can be seen in Ukraine today, where we have four monasteries open to displaced persons and to war-torn families. Monasteries in neighbouring countries are also hosting refugees from Ukraine. Every year, the Abbots Presidents of our 19 congregations convene in a monastery for their annual meeting. This year, we had chosen the Benedictine abbey of Tyniec, near Cracow (Poland), but the Abbot called to say that it was no longer possible because they had taken in 10 Ukrainian families." **Restoring Europe.** The fatherly gaze of St Benedict stretches over Europe today, after more than 1,500 years, including with his reminders concerning labour and the importance of fair wages. "The pandemic, followed by the ongoing war - points out the Abbot Primate - have plunged Europe, and not only, into an economic crisis with inevitable repercussions on labour. By combining prayer with material work, in accordance with his famous phrase 'Ora et Labora' - the Abbot recalls, quoting from "Pacis Nuntius" - "Benedict ennobled and elevated human toil. Pius XII therefore deservedly hailed St Benedict as 'the Father of Europe' , for he inspired to the peoples of Europe that loving care for order and justice as the foundation of true social life." A visible sign of that inspiration is "the activity of so many monasteries in agriculture to provide support and help to those in need, sharing their harvest."

