

# + Transitus of Saint Benedict

Homily given at Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey  
March 21, 2025

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My Very Dear Sons,

It is our privilege and our joy to celebrate each year two major feasts in honor of Our Blessed Father Saint Benedict: this first one occurs during the Lenten season, and the second beneath the ardent rays of the July sun. Today's feast commemorates the holy death of the Patriarch of monks; the second originally celebrated the transfer of the relics of Saint Benedict from Italy to France, but has now become for the universal Church the principal celebration honoring Saint Benedict. Given the penitential character of Lent, we generally reserve more solemnity for the feast in July. It is nevertheless only fitting to say a few words about the holy death of a great saint.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,” (Psalm 115:15) says the psalmist. Why precious? Is the sad business of our mortality—our need to die someday—so precious? Are the tears and harshness of losing the ones we love something to be treasured? Of course not! But the death of a saint reveals to us something quite surprising, something most useful and precious for our own lives. When a saint dies, he or she is not preoccupied with the dismal perspective of tombs, decay, and the great unknown beyond. Quite to the contrary! When a saint dies, it is about finally entering into that spiritual state, once the soul is delivered from the infirmities of the body, where love is complete, where the human being can at last really live, and when the unfortunate lot that fell to mankind when Adam and Eve sinned is finally broken for good. This is true even before the soul receives its body back in a glorified state at the end of time. The tomb holds the body but not the soul. The saint climbs past Purgatory all the way to the Kingdom of light.

Such a view of death might seem a bit unreal to us, as this happiness to come is not altogether apparent. But to the saint it *is* apparent or almost so. Not that such a person has, while still on earth, the beatific vision of God already, living without the daily struggles we all know along the way. No, saints are pilgrims like the rest of us. But when Faith, Hope, and Charity reach a certain pitch of perfection in this mortal life, well, a very great certitude about God is reached and an incomparable confidence acquired. In fact, a true foretaste of the life of heaven is thus attained. For the saint, death is not the end of life, the last page of the book, but the beginning. The perspective of moving, at last, beyond all the evil and misunderstandings and illnesses and sadness that mark a human being little by little here below (and sometimes even children), gives wings to the soul.

Saint Francis de Sales teaches that all good souls die *in* the love of God; that all martyrs die specifically *because* of the love of God (they are put to death you see, for being faithful to God); and that some rare souls actually die *of* the love of God, which is to say that the desire to reach this eternal life which they have tasted in prayer becomes so powerful as literally to cause the soul to leave the body out of the purest love (Treatise on the Love of God, Bk. 7, n. 9-11). Such would seem to be the case, especially, of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Everything we know about Saint Benedict would tend to indicate that such was his passing too: the death of exceeding love of Christ. May he intercede for us, so that we may share some of that love, both in our earthly existence, as long as it pleases God to keep us here, and at the moment of our death. Amen.