

## St. Benedict and St. Scholastica

The fascinating story of these twin saints can help you share with your youngsters the development of monastic life and the contributions of monks to liturgy, farming methods, and education, especially through the preservation of manuscripts.

**Romanus:** I am Romanus. I was a monk living in solitude in the hills of Subiaco, Italy, when I met Benedict. Answering God's call to do something better with his life, that bright young man had decided to make a long retreat. He was born around 480 in Nursia, in Italy, to a comfortable family who gave him a good education. But though he excelled at his studies, his future seemed hollow to him. He longed to do more with his own life. And so, Benedict withdrew to one of the low mountains around Subiaco. Here I began to guide him in the life of a hermit.

**Scholastica:** I am Scholastica, Benedict's twin sister. Benedict had been living in Subiaco for some time. A group of monks heard accounts of his holiness of life. Since their abbot had just died, they asked Benedict to come and be their leader. Soon, though, my brother's high ideals turned the monks against him. Instead of asking him to leave, they decided to poison him. However, Benedict was miraculously saved, and departed, glad of his escape. He returned to Subiaco where his example attracted a large number of followers. Benedict organized his followers into communities. For each community he appointed a prior.

**A Prior:** I was one of the young men who joined Benedict. He led us in the study of Scripture, teaching us to ponder the words and to return to their meaning often during the day,

whether at work or prayer. We monks earned our living by working, and were always ready to give to anyone who came to us in need. Benedict wrote a rule of life for us, a very practical way to grow closer to God. Benedict's rule of monastic life influenced religious life for centuries.

**Scholastica:** After organizing several small groups of monks in Subiaco,



Benedict founded what would become the great Abbey of Monte Cassino. The Abbey was located on a high mountain overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. It was here that our well-known visit took place.

**Benedict:** My sister, Scholastica, had also felt God's call to a life devoted to prayer. In fact she is considered to be the first Benedictine nun. Our abbey had a guest house, near the gate, where she would come once a year to visit me. We would then talk together and praise God. On one visit, which turned

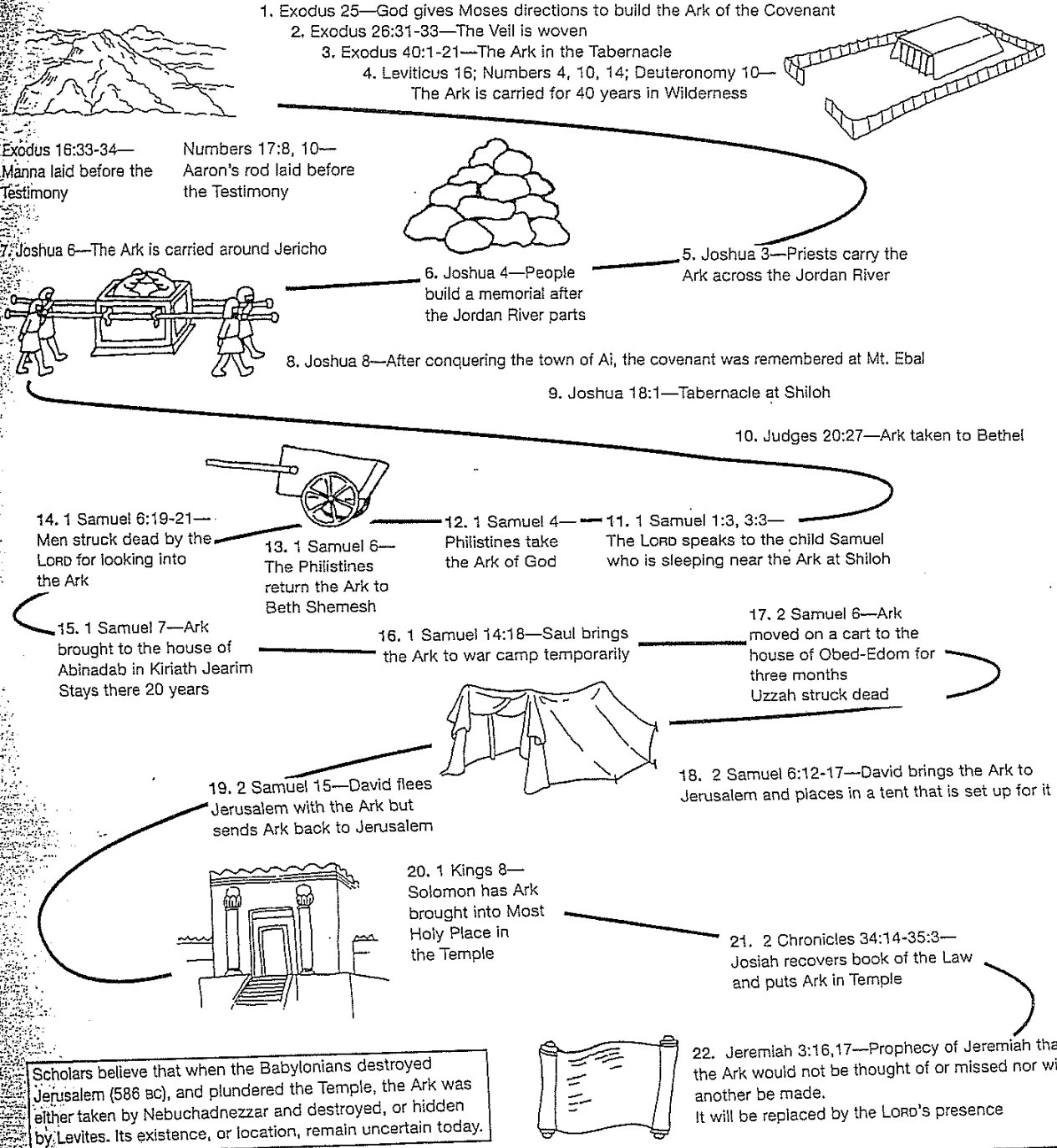
out to be our last, she asked me to stay the night, so that we could continue to talk about God and to pray together. I refused because I wished to go back to the abbey with the other monks who had accompanied me. Scholastica lowered her head and prayed.

**Scholastica:** Yes, I remember that day was a beautifully clear day. But suddenly, there was a crash of thunder, the deluge of rain poured down from the sky. There was no way that Benedict and his companions could make their way back to their abbey. My brother said to me, "God forgive you, sister. What have you done?" And I replied, "I asked a favor of you and you refused. I asked it of God and he granted it." So my brother stayed, and we talked and praised God.

**Benedict:** Scholastica returned to her convent the next day, and I went to my abbey. Three days later as I was praying, I saw the soul of my sister, in the form of a dove, rising up to heaven. I assembled the monks, and together we praised God for the life of my holy sister, Scholastica. I sent the monks to bring her body to the abbey, to be buried in the grave which I had prepared for myself. Later I, too, would be there.

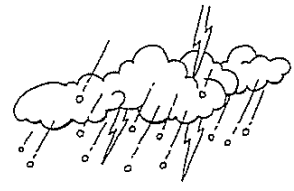
**Pope Gregory the Great:** My name is Gregory. After serving as prefect of Rome, I gave up my wealth and became a Benedictine. In fact, I wrote a biography of Benedict. Because of

# The Journey of the Ark of the Covenant from Mt. Sinai



Scholars believe that when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC), and plundered the Temple, the Ark was either taken by Nebuchadnezzar and destroyed, or hidden by Levites. Its existence, or location, remain uncertain today.

Hebrews 9:7—But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered [by sprinkling on the Ark] for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. 11—When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12—He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. (NIV)



Revelation 11:19 NIV  
Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.