



PERIOD OAK ANTIQUES

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A RARE 16TH CENTURY CARVED LIMWOOD AND POLYCHROMED FIGURE OF ST BENIDICT THE MOOR.

PROBABLY ITALIAN. 28.5" HIGH X 11" WIDE. ONE ARM NOW LACKING.

STOCK NO 1310.

He was born to Christopher and Diana Manasseri, Africans who were taken to San Fratello (also known as San Fradello or San Philadelphio), a small town near Messina, Sicily, as slaves and later were converted to Christianity. The Italian "il Moro" for "the dark skinned" has been interpreted as referring to a Moorish heritage. Benedict was also called from his origin Æthiops or Niger (both simply meaning black and not referring to the modern-day countries.)

Benedict's parents were granted freedom for their son before his birth because of their "loyal service". Benedict did not attend any school and was illiterate. During his childhood and youth he worked alongside his family for meager wages and was quick to give what he had earned to those more needy and to the sick. When he was 21 years old, he was publicly insulted for his color. His patient and dignified bearing at this time was noted by the leader of a group of Franciscan hermits. Benedict was quickly invited to join that order, and shortly thereafter he gave up all his earthly possessions and joined local hermits in Monte Pellegrino. He eventually became leader of that group. In 1564, when Pope Pius IV disbanded the orders of hermits, ordering them to attach themselves to a religious community, Benedict moved to Palermo to the Franciscan Friary of Saint Mary. Benedict started at the friary as a cook, but was soon elected guardian and then



novice master - despite being a lay brother and being completely illiterate. Benedict accepted the promotion, with some understandable reluctance, and successfully helped the order adopt a stricter version of the Franciscan monastic rule. Benedict was widely respected for his deep, intuitive understanding of theology and the Holy Scripture, and was often sought after for counseling. He also had a reputation as a healer of the sick. Combined, these things continued to bring many visitors to him, even after he returned to kitchen duty in his later years. He died at the age of 65 and, it is claimed, on the very day and hour he predicted. At the entrance of his cell in the Franciscan Convent of Saint Mary of Jesus, there is a plaque with the inscription "This is the cell where Saint Benedict lived, and the dates of his birth and death - 1524 and 1589". Those dates should be considered as the correct dates of his birth and death. However some historians indicate the date of his birth as 1526.

SOLD

Dimensions:

Height: 28.5 inches (72.4 cms)

Width: 11 inches (27.9 cms)

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