

# Montecassino: Monastery, Battleground, Inspiration



**Portrait of Italy**

Tolly Boatwright

10/2/24

## *Main topics & take-aways from today's talk*

- **Geography**, vital for Italy's history
- **Monastery of Montecassino**, established by Benedict of Nursia, 529 CE. Benedictines. Great floruit 11<sup>th</sup> c.; abbey rebuilt, 17<sup>th</sup> c.
- **“Battle” of Montecassino**, Jan. 1944 - May 1944, culminating 11-23 May 1944.
- **Enduring significance of humanistic learning** such as the study & preservation of manuscripts & books.
- **Some Duke connections!**

*The*  
SCRIPTORIUM *and*  
LIBRARY *at*  
MONTE CASSINO  
*1058–1105*



FRANCIS NEWTON

# Desiderius' Montecassino

- Despite setbacks to monastery (e.g., Saracens raze it in 884), strong site and individuals. Overlooks main route b/t Rome & Naples. Owned much land.
- Desiderius, Abbot 1058-1086 (later Pope Victor III).
- Rebuilt church & buildings splendidly. International artists included ones from Constantinople.
- Great *floruit* of *scriptorium*.

# The Duke connection!



Professor Newton (center) receives honorary degree from the Università di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale

Nov. 1, 2018.

Prof. Newton, with Archivist Don Mariano dell'Omo and Abbot Rev. Donato Olgiari

\*Francis L. Newton went to Montecassino in 1965, 8-month sabbatical (with family of 5).

\*Great palaeographer! Duke lured him in 1967.

\*Innumerable articles, and *The Scriptorium and Library at Monte Cassino, 1058–1105* (CUP 1999).

# The importance of book learning



Duke's Prof. Newton still working, at age 93.

**THANK YOU!**

Pax. Ora et Labora.  
*Peace. Pray and Work.*  
Respect community.  
Preserve and enhance  
learning.  
\*\*Essential to culture,  
civilization and life, to  
allow us to rebuild and  
move forward after war  
and devastation.