



Summary

1: Saint Benedict (480-547)

2: The Order of Saint Benedict

3: Blessed Bernard Tolomei

4: The Congregation of St. Mary of Monte Oliveto

5: Abbey of Our Lady of Bec-Hellouin

6: Monastic Heritage of Kilbroney



1: Saint Benedict (480-547)

Born in Norcia in Umbria about 480. He studied in Rome, and then turned his back on the world and lived in solitude in Subiaco. Disciples came to him, and he went to Monte Cassino, where he founded a monastery. He wrote his Rule, which established the spirituality and way of life of monastic communities ever since. He died in 547.

St. Benedict is known to us principally through the Second Book of the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great: *"The Life and Miracles of St. Benedict"*. This text appeared within 50 years of St. Benedict's death.



2: The Order of St. Benedict

In the sixth century, Saint Benedict was one of the many Abbots who wrote a Rule for his monks. He had established monasteries at Subiaco and Monte Cassino in Italy. In the course of two centuries the use of the Rule spread and it was due to the influence of Charlemagne that it acquired a monopoly in the West. In this way, Saint Benedict came to be considered the founder of the "Order of Saint Benedict".

Each independent house of the Order is a separate family ruled by an **Abbot** and has its own novitiate. While each monastery will have its specific character, common characteristics will be found in all Benedictine houses whether of Monks or of Nuns. Christ will be at the centre of all things. Each community will strive to attain a balance between prayer (public liturgy, lectio divina, and personal prayer), work and study.

National grouping of monasteries, reform and renewal movements developed into congregational bodies. There are now twenty-one congregations within the Benedictine Confederation. In 1893, in an attempt at centralisation Pope Leo XIII directed the setting up of the Abbots' Congress, under the Abbot Primate, which meets in Rome every four years. The **Abbot Primate** is elected to a primacy of honour and resides at the Monastery of Sant' Anselmo in Rome.

3: Blessed Bernard Tolomei

Blessed Bernard Tolomei, founder of the **Archabbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore**, Italy, was born in Siena 1272. He was educated as a nobleman of the Tolomei family and had a distinguished career as a lawyer. At around the age of forty, he felt called to a radical living out of his Christian vocation.



Fig. 3.1 - 3 Founders: Patrick Patrizi, Bernard Tolomei and Ambrose Piccolomini.
(Fresco 15th Century. Monte Oliveto Maggiore)

With some companions, he retired to a remote place to the Southeast of Siena, known as the **"Desert of Accona"**. The first monks lived a heremetical lifestyle in the caves of the hillside. Gradually they evolved into a more organised community.

When later a monastery was founded on the site, it was given the name of **Saint Mary of Monte Oliveto**. According to the tradition,

"one day, while Bernard was praying in the place where the church was later to be built, he saw a silver stairway rising eastwards, to Heaven. Jesus Christ and his Holy Mother, dressed in white, were standing at the top. A group of monks, all dressed in white, were climbing the stairs helped by angels."

(Chron. by Antonio da Barga).

Bernard and his companions received the Benedictine habit and the Rule of the Father of western monasticism. Since the time of their founder Olivetans have been clothed in white. A special characteristic of the Olivetan reform is its emphasis upon the spirit of communion uniting all its houses, called to form **unum corpus** – one body.



Fig. 3.2 - Archabbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore



When, in 1348, the plague was spreading in Siena, Bernard returned to the town to care for his fellow monks at the monastery of St Benedict. He died among his spiritual sons, a victim of the plague, according to the tradition on the 20th of August. He was subsequently venerated as a Saint. He is **officially celebrated on August 19th**.



4: The Congregation of St. Mary of Monte Oliveto

To foster the monastic movement which spontaneously developed around the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, **Clement VI** canonically erected the Benedictine congregation of St. Mary of Monte Oliveto on January 21, 1344. Although it was confined to Italy, the

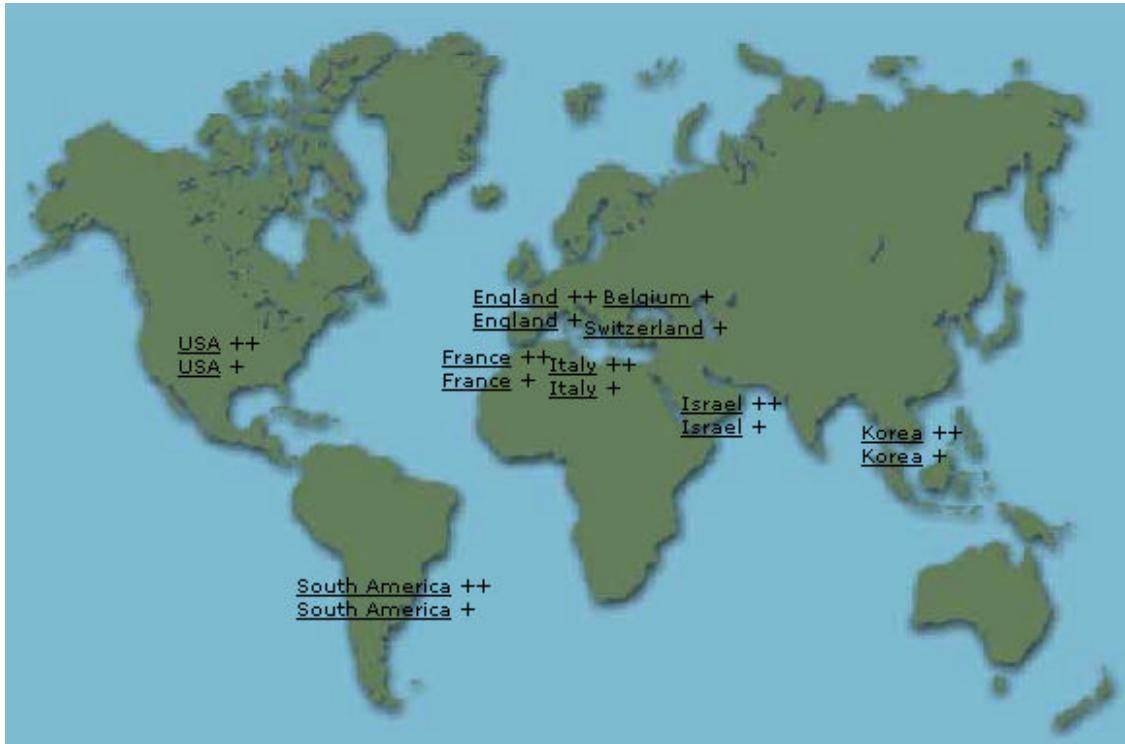
Congregation quickly developed and flourished during the 14th and 17th centuries.

Suppression began in the late 18th century, however, the Congregation did not disappear, being ready to develop again in the late 19th century (1875), in a small monastery at Settignano (Florence).



At present, the Congregation has a variety of abbeys and prioral churches in Italy, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland, Israel, Korea, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil.

 *The Benedictine Monks* *obedience* *conversion* *stability* *community* *conversion* *obedience* *conversion*



Key :

Monasteries of Monks ++

Monasteries of Nuns +

5: Abbey of Our Lady of Bec-Hellouin

Founded in 1034, at the time of William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy and King of England, the Abbey of Bec had as its first Abbot its founder, **Herluin**. Herluin began as a hermit, but very soon he was joined in his monastic solitude by a group of disciples; among them was **Lanfranc** (1042) schoolman and builder, and **St. Anselm** (1059) philosopher and spiritual master (both became Archbishop of Canterbury).



Fig. 5.1 - Abbey of our Lady of Bec-Hellouin

In 1792 the French Revolution led to the departure of the monks. At that time, the Abbey was occupied by the Army until the Second World War. In 1948 the Abbey recovered its original vocation when monastic life was restored by a community of Benedictine monks of the Olivetan congregation, led by **Dom Paul Grammont** (1911-1989), Abbot from 1948 to 1986.

This community was formed by monks drawn from the Monastery of Our Lady of Holy Hope at Mesnil-Saint-Loup (founded in 1864 by Dom Emmanuel Andre, OSB - 1826 - 1903) and its dependent House of Studies, **The Monastery of the Virgin Mary**, at Cormeilles-en-Parisis.



Fig. 5.2 - Dom Paul Grammont

6: Monastic Heritage of Kilbroney

Tradition has it that **Bronagh** and **Gall**, her brother, became Christians when Patrick returned to Ireland. Gall became a priest and later a bishop in the area of Dromore.

It is said that as a young woman Bronagh had a vision, as a result of which she established a monastic community in the glen above **Rostrevor**. What is certain is that Bronagh and her companions lived in this religious settlement in the sixth century and that from this tiny community, the message of the Christian gospel was first carried out by word and deed into the surrounding countryside. She was one of the few women saints who had a crozier. Her brother Gall died before her and she was made custodian of his Episcopal staff.

The ruins of an ancient church, a Celtic Cross, known as the Cross of Bronagh, and Bronagh's well are to be found in the Roman Catholic graveyard.

The 9th century bell of Bronagh is enshrined in the Roman Catholic Parish Church.

St. Bronagh, patron of Kilbroney, is **celebrated on the 2nd of April**.



Fig. 6.1 - St. Bronagh's Cross