

# Bernard Tolomei

1272-1348

*The founder* of the Benedictine Congregation of Saint Mary of Mount Oliveto, the Blessed Bernard Tolomei, received diverse gifts of miraculous capabilities. It is said that among the numerous miracles that he performed throughout his life there is also one in which he brought back to life a dead young worker by the name of Stefano.

Antonio da Barga in the *Chronicles* of Mt. Oliveto, describes different extraordinary episodes which happened to our Blessed. "One day, while his prayer was prolonged more than usual, the man of God, standing upright, on his feet, with his eyes toward Heaven in the act of prayer, saw a stairway appear which seemed to be all silver and so long that it came from the

wear white habits instead of the traditional black of the Benedictines. The Queen of the Angels will always have a privileged place in the heart of Bernard and his brothers. In the same way, the devotion of the Blessed to the Angels, and particularly to the Archangel Michael, is such that he fasted every Monday in his honor. In another chronicle of that time, we have an



heights of Heaven and it ended at his feet. At its summit was Jesus to the right, the Queen of Heaven, Mary Most Holy, His Mother, to the left, both of them in gleaming white attire. The Blessed Virgin had on her chest a star of wonderful splendor and beauty. Along the stairway there were numerous Angels and religious, all dressed in white garb. The religious were ascending and the Angels extended hands to help them along. Full of celestial joy at the spectacle, Bernard could not take his eyes away and remained a long time in contemplation. Wanting however to render his fellow brothers to also be witnesses of his joy and enable them to be participants, he called the ones closest to him, who were intently praying, and the vision did not disappear without them having merited seeing it." It is significant that at the culmination of the stairway together with Jesus there was also His Mother, the Virgin Mary, because it was precisely to her the Blessed entrusted the Congregation and in her honor he had chosen to have his monks

account that while together with his monks, Bernard was building the monastery and the church of the Abbey of Monte Oliveto, the demon sought to block that work. The tradition reports that the walls of the monastery were already at a certain height, when one morning they rose into the air by themselves and then fell to the ground. The monks set themselves to work again, but were convinced they had also to work against the devil so as to do their construction in peace. The Blessed, meanwhile, prayed fervently and flagellated himself (self-mortification), until the Lord would help him. One morning, while Bernard was praying near the construction of the church, above the walls he saw a youthful warrior appear, handsome and resplendent with a sword in hand as he circled around the church and scattered the demons. Bernard recognized him to be Saint Michael the Archangel, who from that day became the secondary Patron (after the Virgin) and the protector of the Oliveto Congregation.