

## **Saint Benedict & Oblates at Saint Raphael Parish**

St. Benedict lived in the sixth century. He was born in a small town north of Rome and came to Rome for his education. Before long he abandoned his studies and lived as a hermit for several years at a place called Subiaco, where in time he acquired a reputation for holiness and miracles. Attracting many followers, Benedict established monastic communities at Subiaco, Terracina, and Monte Cassino. It was at Monte Cassino that he wrote a Rule which combined moderation with fidelity to the best traditions in Christian monasticism. During the following centuries, his monastic way of life spread throughout Europe, and Benedictine monasteries and convents became the principal centers of prayer, culture, and education.

From the very beginning Benedictine monasteries accepted boys, and convents received girls, "offered" to them by their parents for their religious activities and became known as Oblates. In the course of time, lay people asked to be associated with the work of the monks and nuns, without however leaving their homes, families, and occupations. These too were received, offered themselves to God, became Oblates of a monastery or convent, and promised to regulate their lives according to the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict. They applied the teachings of the Rule to their lives in the world, in their family circles, in their places of work, and in their civic and social activities. Today, throughout the world, there are thousands of Oblates praying and working in spiritual union with Benedictine men and women of various communities and receiving spiritual strength and inspiration from their association as Oblates. (St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.)