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By
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Cover art, "Bernard of Clairvaux," as shown in Heiligenkreuz Abby, near Baden bei Wien, in Lower Austria. Georg Andreas Wasshuber (1650-1732) painted this portrait around 1700 after a statue in Clairvaux with the true effigy of Saint Bernard.

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Saint Bernard was the third son of Tescelin Sorrel, a Burgundian noble, and Aleth, daughter of Bernard, Lord of Montbard. Saint Bernard was born in 1090 at Fontaines, a castle near Dijon and a lordship belonging to his father. His parents were persons of virtuous life and his mother, not content to offer him to God as soon as he was born, as she did all her seven children, consecrated him to God's service in the Church, as Anne did Samuel. From that day, his mother considered him as not belonging to her but to God; and she took special care of his education, in hopes that he would one day be worthy to stand at the altar. Indeed, she brought up all her children with the greatest care and never trusted them to nurses. Their names were Blessed Guy, Blessed Gerard, Saint Bernard, Blessed Humbeline, Andrew, Bartholomew, and Blessed Nivard. They were all well educated and learned Latin and verse making. Then, the sons typically were applied to military exercise and feats of arms. Instead, at the age of six, Bernard was sent to Chatillon on the Seine, to pursue a complete course of studies in a college of secular canons. Even then, he loved to be alone, largely at first because of shyness. His progress in learning was far greater than could be expected from one of his age.

Soon, Bernard became alert to listen to what God spoke to his heart, by way of holy inspirations. One Christmas-eve, while waiting with his mother to set out for Matins, Bernard fell asleep and seemed to see the infant Jesus newly born in the stable at Bethlehem. From that day and for the rest of his life, he had a most tender devotion towards that great mystery of love and mercy and, in speaking of it, always seemed to surpass himself in the sweetness of his words. He began the study of theology and of the Holy Scriptures at Chatillon and was nineteen years old when he finally returned to his home after spending thirteen years at the school. In that same year his mother died. Her charities and attendance in the hospitals, her devotion and all her other virtues, had gained her the reputation of a saint. Bernard was greatly attached to Aleth and her loss was a heavy blow. He was in danger of becoming morbidly despondent until he was rallied out of his brooding and inertia by his lively sister, Humbeline.

Bernard was now his own master and made his appearance in the world with all the advantages and talents that can make the world attractive to a young man or that could make him loved by the world. Bernard's personal attractiveness and wit and his affability and sweetness of temper endeared him to everybody. However, within these very advantages lay his chief danger. For a time, there was serious risk of Bernard becoming lukewarm and indifferent. His keen sensibility and personal beauty laid him open to strong temptations against chastity. Once an impudent woman forced herself on him; but he drove her from his room by waking the house by crying, "Thieves!" Because of these and other temptations of the world, Bernard was considered forsaking the world and the pursuit of letters, which greatly attracted him.

He thought of going to Citeaux, where only a few years before Saint Robert, Saint Alberic, and Saint Stephen Harding had established the first monastery following the strict interpretation of the Benedictine rule, called after it "Cistercian." Bernard wavered for some time. One day going to see his brothers, who were with the Duke of Burgundy at the siege of the castle of Grancey. In great anxiety, Bernard went into a church by the road and prayed that God would direct him to discover and follow His holy will. Bernard arose steadily, fixed in the resolution of following the severe Cistercian life. His friends endeavored to dissuade him from it. Then, Bernard's uncle, Gaudry, Lord of Touillon, who had gained great reputation by his valor in the wars, although a man with a wife and family, came to the same resolution. Bartholomew and Andrew, Bernard's two younger brothers, also declared that they would come also. Guy, Bernard's eldest brother, was also asked to join them. Guy had obligations that seemed to fix him in the world. Guy, too, was married and had two daughters. Guy's wife, Elizabeth, eventually consented and herself became a nun at Jully. Gerard, the second brother, was not to be so easily won, being a soldier of reputation and full of his profession. Soon after though, Gerard was wounded in his side by a lance and taken prisoner. During his convalescence, God called him and Gerard, too, went to join his brothers. Hugh of Macon (who afterward founded the monastery of Pontigny and died Bishop of Auxerre), an intimate friend of Saint Bernard, wept bitterly at the thought of separation, but after two interviews was induced to become Bernard's companion. These were not the only ones who, with apparently no previous thought of the religious life, suddenly decided to leave the world for the austere life of Citeaux.

In all, Bernard induced thirty-one men to follow him—he who had been uncertain of his call only a few weeks before. It is a happening unparalleled in Christian history. Bernard's eloquent appeals were irresistible. Mothers hid their sons and wives hid their husbands, lest they came under the sway of that compelling voice and look.

Bernard and his followers all assembled in a house at Chatillon, preparing to consecrate themselves to God. On the day appointed for their meeting, Bernard and his brothers went to Fontaines to take farewell of their father and beg his blessing. The brothers left their youngest brother, Nivard, to be a comfort to their father in his old age. Going out they saw Nivard at play with other children. Guy said to him, "Adieu, my little Nivard! You will have all our estates and lands to yourself." The boy answered, "What! You then take Heaven and leave me only the earth. The division is too unequal." They went away; but soon after, Nivard followed them. Thus, of the whole family there only remained in the world the old father and his daughter, Blessed Humbeline.

After they had stayed six months at Chatillon to settle their affairs, Bernard and his followers all departed for Citeaux, which had been founded fifteen years earlier and was at that time governed by Saint Stephen. The company arrived at Citeaux around Easter in 1112 and begged to be admitted to join the monks. Saint Stephen, who had not had a

novice for several years, received them with open arms. Saint Bernard was then twenty-two years old. He entered this house with the desire to die to the remembrance of men, to live hidden, and be forgotten, that he might be occupied only with God. To guard against sloth, Bernard often repeated to himself the saying of the great Saint Arsenius, "What have you come here for?" Bernard also practiced what he afterwards used to say to postulants who presented themselves to his monastery at Clairvaux, "If you desire to live in this house, you must leave your body. Only spirits can enter here." He meant, of course, persons who live according to the Spirit. So rigidly did he guard his eyes that it is said that after a year's novitiate he did not know whether the top of his cell was vaulted or covered with a ceiling or whether the church had more than one window.

After Bernard's novitiate, he made his profession into the hands of Saint Stephen with all his companions except one and continued his exemplary cloistered life. Bernard was unable to reap corn as well as the rest, his superior ordered Bernard other work. Bernard begged of God that he might be enabled to use a hook properly to reap the corn and he soon equaled the best hands. While working, Bernard's soul was continually occupied in God. Afterwards, he used to say that he never had any other master in his studies of the Holy Scriptures but the oaks and beeches of the forest for that spiritual learning of which he became so great a doctor was a gift of the Holy Ghost, obtained by purity of heart, meditation, and prayer.

The peace of Bernard's soul shone through his countenance, in which the charm of heavenly grace captivated and surprised those who beheld at first only a face that was emaciated, pale, and wan. He suffered all his life from stomach troubles without ever speaking of them or using any indulgence, unless compelled by those who took notice of them. He used to say, "Our fathers built their monasteries in damp, unwholesome places so the monks might have the uncertainty of life more dearly before their eyes." Happily, those monasteries built in uncultivated deserts or swampy lands were drained of their morasses and converted into gardens and meadows by the monks' industry. Saint Bernard was a great lover of poverty in his habit, cell, and all other things, but called dirtiness a mark of laziness or of affectation. He seemed to have lost all taste for food, and often mistook one item for another when offered to him by mistake. Once, he drank oil instead of water.

The number of monks had grown too great at Citeaux, causing Saint Stephen to found the monastery of La Ferté in 1113, in Burgundy, and the monastery of Pontigny in Champagne, in 1114. Hugh, Count of Troyes, offered land on his estates to found a third monastery. The abbot, seeing the great progress Bernard had made and his extraordinary abilities, gave him a cross, appointed him abbot, and ordered him to go with twelve monks to found a new house in the diocese of Langres in Champagne. Among the monks were Bernard's brothers. The thirteen walked, singing psalms, in procession with their new abbot at their head. They settled in a place called the Valley of Wormwood, which

was surrounded by a forest that had often been a retreat for robbers. The thirteen monks grubbed up a sufficient area and, with assistance of the bishop and the people of the country, built themselves a house. The young colony suffered much yet was often relieved when in various needs, usually in a sudden and unexpected manner. Bernard made good use of these effects of providence to encourage confidence in God.

These thirteen fervent monks, animated by the example of their abbot, lived through a period of extreme and grinding hardship. The land was poor and their bread was usually made of coarse barley. Boiled beech leaves were sometimes served up instead of vegetables. At first, Bernard was quite severe in his discipline, coming down upon the smallest distractions and least transgressions of his brethren, whether in confession or in chapter. Although his monks behaved with the utmost humility and obedience, the severe discipline began to discourage them. This made the abbot aware of his fault. To pay his own penance for the harsh discipline, Bernard condemned himself to a long silence. At length, being admonished by a vision, he resumed his preaching with extraordinary results. He also decided that meals should be more regular, though the food was still of the coarsest, as William of Saint Thierry relates. In a short time, the reputation of the house and the sanctity of the abbot became so great that the number of monks in it amounted to one hundred and thirty. The name of the valley had now been changed to Clairvaux, because it was situated right in the eye of the sun.

Near the end of the 1118, Saint Bernard was attacked by such a serious illness that it was not certain he would survive. His great admirer, the learned and good Bishop of Châlons, William of Chainpeaux, went to the chapter of the order at Citeaux and obtained authority to govern him as his immediate superior for one year. With this commission, the bishop hastened to Clairvaux, and lodged the abbot in a little house outside the enclosure with orders that he should not observe even the rule of the monastery and that he should be entirely freed from all care of the affairs of his community. The saint lived there under the direction of a physician from whose hands he received treatment that should have killed him even quicker than his disease. Yet, he carried it out without complaint and after a year returned in better health to his monastery.

Bernard's aged father, Tescelin, and young Nivard had followed him there in 1117, and received the habit at his hands. Each of the four first daughters of Citeaux, namely La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux, and Morimond, became a motherhouse to many others. Clairvaux had many more numerous offspring. In 1117, Saint Bernard founded, among many others, the abbey of Trois Fontaines, in the diocese of Châlons; the abbey of Fontenay, in the diocese of Autun; Rievaulx and Fountains in England; and, in 1121, the abbey of Foigny, in the diocese of Laon.

In the same year, Bernard wrought his first miracle. While he sang Mass, Bernard restored the power of speech to Josbert de la Ferté, a lord and a relation, that he might

confess his sins before he died. He died three days after, having made restitution for numerous acts of injustice. When the saint had confidently promised this restoration of Josbert, his uncle Gaudry and his brother reproved him for his imprudence, but Bernard repeated the assurance in stronger terms. The saints have a supernatural instinct when for the divine honor they undertake to work a miracle. The author of Saint Bernard's life adds an account of other sick persons cured instantaneously by the Bernard making the sign of the cross upon them. These events were attested by first-hand witnesses of weight and unexceptionable veracity. We are also told that the church of Foigny was infested with flies until, by Bernard's saying, he "excommunicated" them; and they all died. The malediction of the flies of Foigny became famous as a proverb in France.

In consideration of his ill health, the general chapter dispensed Bernard from work in the fields and ordered him to undertake extra preaching instead. This led to his writing, at the request of the Abbot of Fontenay, his treatise on the Degrees of Humility and Pride, which was the first of his published works (1121). It includes a study of character that, says the Abbé Vacandard, "the most expert psychologist would not disavow." In 1122, Bernard was required to journey to Paris where, at the request of the bishop and archdeacon, he preached to the students who were candidates for holy orders. Some of the students were so moved by his discourse that they accompanied him back to Clairvaux and persevered there. Several German gentlemen, who stopped to see the monastery, were so strongly affected by all they saw and heard that they agreed to hang up their swords, return to Clairvaux with Bernard, and take the habit. Their conversion was even more wonderful because, until that day, they previously had been interested chiefly in war, tilts, and tournaments.

Humility made Bernard sincerely regard himself as unworthy and incapable of moving others. Yet, charity opened his mouth and he poured forth his thoughts with such eloquence that, aided by God's grace, it brought about these and many other similar conversions. He received into his monastery monks who came from other orders that were less austere. Yet, he declared that he was most willing to give leave to any of his own who should desire to pass to any other religious institute from the motive of seeking their greater perfection. Peter the Venerable, Archabbot of Cluny, in addressing an expostulation to Clairvaux, charged the Cistercians with hypocrisy and with vilifying the Cluniacs. Bernard replied with an apologia, in which he refutes the charge of slander and makes serious adverse criticism of Cluniac life. Charity was admirably maintained on both sides and the event resulted in Peter the Venerable and Suger, Abbot of Saint Denis, to inaugurate a reform. During a famine in 1125, Bernard had often exhausted the provisions of his monastery to feed the poor. Thus, Bernard was once again brought to the very gates of death. In this illness, he once again appeared to those about him as if he were actually dying. He fell into a trance, in which he later said he could see the Devil accusing him before the throne of God. To the charge, he made only this answer, "I

confess myself unworthy of the glory of Heaven, and I can never obtain Heaven by my own merits. But my Lord Jesus possesses it upon a double title: that of inheritance, by being the only-begotten Son of His eternal Father; and that of purchase, He having bought it with His precious blood. This second title He has conferred on me, and by it I claim the reward of Heaven." The Devil was confounded and disappeared. Then Bernard saw himself waiting on the seacoast to board a vessel, but it stood out to sea and left him. Finally, Our Lady appeared and laid her hands on him. When he awoke, his sickness had left him.

Saint Bernard's works sufficiently declare his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In one of his missions into Germany, being in the great church at Spires, it is said he spontaneously sang during a procession, "O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Maria," the words of which the Church added to the anthem Salve Regina (the word "virgo" before "Maria" is a later addition still). The custom was introduced from this incident of singing that anthem every day with great solemnity in the cathedral of Spires.

Notwithstanding Saint Bernard's love of retirement, obedience and the Church's needs frequently drew him from his cell. Like several other great saints who have had a supreme degree of the gift of contemplation and wished only to live alone with God in the retirement of a monastery, for years on end Bernard was required to be about his Father's business in active, public, and even political, affairs. In 1137, he wrote that his life was "over-run in all quarters with anxieties, suspicions, and cares and there is scarcely an hour left free from the crowd of discordant applicants and from the trouble and care of business. I have no power to stop their coming and cannot refuse to see them. They do not leave me even the time to pray."

The reputation of his learning and sanctity was so great that princes desired to have their differences determined by him and bishops regarded his decisions with the greatest respect, often referring to him the most important affairs of their churches. The popes looked upon his advice as the greatest support of the Holy See and all people had a profound respect and veneration for his person and his opinion. It may be said that, in his solitude, Bernard governed all the churches of the West.

The first occasion that called for his help outside was a dissension between the Archbishop and citizens of Reims. Bernard reconciled them and confirmed his words by the miraculous cure of a boy who was deaf, blind, and dumb. He opposed the election of unworthy persons to the episcopacy or other ecclesiastical dignities. This raised him many enemies who spared him neither slanders nor abuse. Their common complaint was that a monk ought to confine himself to his cloister. To this, Bernard answered that a monk was a soldier of Christ as much as other Christians, and ought to defend the truth and the honor of God's sanctuary. By his example, Henry, Archbishop of Sens, and Stephen, Bishop of Paris, renounced the court and their secular manner of living. Then

Suger, Abbot of Saint Denis, who was minister to King Louis the Fat and for some time regent of the kingdom, and who lived in great state accordingly, laid aside his worldly life, resigned all his posts, and shut himself up in Saint Denis, where he banished the court out of his abbey and reestablished regular discipline. He often reminded ecclesiastics of their strict obligation of giving whatever they enjoyed of church revenues, above a necessary maintenance, to the poor. Thus, he wrote to the Dean of Languedoc, "You may imagine that what belongs to the Church belongs to you, while you officiate there. But you are mistaken for, though it be reasonable that one who serves the altar should live by the altar, it must not be to promote either his luxury or his pride. Whatever goes beyond bare nourishment and simple plain clothing is sacrilege and theft."

Against his will, Bernard had to assist at the synods of Troyes, Arras, Chalons, and others. In the course of his assistance, he encouraged and cooperated in the founding of the Knights Templar and concurred in the deposition of the Bishop of Verdun and the Abbot of Saint Sepulchre. The severity of these disciplinary measures was imputed entirely to Bernard. This drew a rebuke from the Chancellor of the Roman Church. In reply, Bernard amply justified the part he had taken, protested his unwillingness to be present at the councils, and asked that he should not be summoned again.

After the death of Honorius II in 1130, Innocent II was chosen pope on the same day by the greater number of cardinals. Yet, at the same time, a faction attempted to invest with that supreme dignity, Cardinal Peter de Leone, who took the name of Anacletus. He had formerly been a monk of Cluny, was an ambitious worldly man, and was so powerful that he got the strongholds of Rome into his hands. Innocent II was obliged to travel to Pisa for safety. Saint Bernard was invited to a council of French bishops, held at Etampes, twenty-five miles from Paris. He strenuously maintained the justice of Innocent's cause, was recognized by the council, and soon after came into France, where he was splendidly received by King Louis the Fat. Saint Bernard waited on the king and accompanied him to Chartres, where he met Henry I, King of England. Henry was at first inclined to favor the antipope, Anacletus, but was persuaded by Saint Bernard to acknowledge Innocent. Saint Bernard followed Pope Innocent into Germany and was present at the conference Innocent had with the Emperor Lothaire. Lothaire recognized the lawful pope on the condition of receiving the right of giving the investitures of bishoprics. Innocent refused the condition. Saint Bernard's remonstrances eventually overwhelmed Lothaire and he withdrew the condition. His Holiness, Pope Innocent, held a council at Reims in 1131 and traveled from Auxerre to visit Clairvaux, where he was received in procession, as in other places, but without any splendor. The monks were clad in coarse habits and carried before them a homely wooden crucifix. The bread served at table was made of coarse flour that had never been sifted. The other food was vegetables and herbs, with one small fish for the Pope. A chronicler says the other guests had to be satisfied with admiring the fish from a distance. There was no wine. After his visit, Innocent insisted on keeping

Bernard by his side. In the year following, Bernard traveled with the Pope into Italy and reconciled Genoa and some other cities to Innocent. Bernard arrived with Innocent at Rome, where, not long after, he was sent into Germany as papal legate to make peace between the Emperor Lothaire and the two nephews of Henry V, Lothaire's predecessor. He marked every stage of his journey by supporting the cause of the true pope and by the conversion of sinners. These included among others, Alois, Duchess of Lorraine, sister to the Emperor, who had for a long time dishonored her rank and religion by her scandalous behavior. Having pacified the troubles of Germany, Bernard returned into Italy, being obliged by the Pope to assist at the council of Visa in 1135, in which the schismatics were excommunicated. Afterwards Bernard went to Milan to reconcile that city to the Holy See. There, he wrought many miracles. Wherever he came, Bernard was received as a man sent from Heaven. He induced the Milanese to renounce the schism and reconciled them with the Emperor. The grateful citizens established the first Cistercian house in Italy at Chiaravalle. In November, Bernard was allowed to return to Clairvaux. There, among the postulants he took with him, was a canon of Pisa, Peter Bernard, who was to become Pope Eugenius III. But, for the present, he was put to stoke the fire in the monastery calefactory.

In the previous year, Saint Bernard had been called into Aquitaine where William, the powerful duke of that province, persecuted those who adhered to the true pope and had expelled the Bishops of Poitiers and Limoges. Gerard, Bishop of Angouleme, an abettor of the schism, encouraged William in these excesses. This William was a prince of immense wealth, gigantic stature, strength of body, and extraordinary abilities in worldly affairs. Yet, in his youth, William was impious, haughty, and impatient with the least control. He seemed unable to live without war. He also was living openly with his brother's wife. Saint Bernard was not afraid of this formidable person. For a week, the Duke listened to Bernard's arguments; and was finally won over. As soon as Bernard was gone, the Bishop of Angoulême undid his work. Bernard, who had learned never to despair of the most obstinate sinner, redoubled his prayers and endeavors, until he had the comfort to see William begin to come again to the obedience of the rightful pope. However, Bernard could not prevail upon William to restore the two bishops he had unjustly deprived of their sees.

At length, Bernard had recourse to more powerful arms. Bernard went to say Mass. The duke and other schismatics were required to stay at the door, as they were excommunicated persons. After giving the kiss of peace before communion, the abbot put the Host upon the paten and, carrying It out, his eyes sparkling and his countenance all on fire, spoke to the Duke no longer as a suppliant but with a voice of authority. He said, "Hitherto I have entreated you and prayed you, and you have despised me. Several servants of God have joined their entreaties with mine, and you have never regarded them. Now, therefore, the Son of the Virgin, the Lord and Head of the Church that you

persecute, comes in person to see if you will repent. He is your judge, at whose name every knee bends, in Heaven, Earth, and Hell. Into His hands your obstinate soul will one day fall. Will you despise Him? Will you scorn Him as you have done His servants? Will you?" The Duke, not able to hear more, fell down in fear. Saint Bernard lifted him up and bade him salute the Bishop of Poitiers, who was present. The Duke was not able to speak, but went to the bishop and kissed him and led the bishop by the hand to his cathedral-church, expressing by that action that he renounced the schism and restored the bishop to his see. After this, Bernard returned to the altar and finished the sacrifice. A particular impulse of the Holy Ghost, the great authority of the saint, and the dignity with which he was able to perform such an extraordinary action, make it an object of admiration, though not of imitation. Bernard's actions made so deep an impression upon Duke William that his conversion was complete. He founded a Cistercian monastery and undertook a penitential pilgrimage to Compostella, upon which he died.

Thus by the efforts of Saint Bernard, the schism was extinguished in many places, but it was still protected by Roger, King of Sicily and Duke of Calabria. The Pope called Bernard to Viterbo in 1137 and sent him to see Roger. Bernard, in a public conference at Salerno, convicted Anacletus's partisans of schism, and brought over many persons of distinction to the union of the Church, including Cardinal Peter of Pisa; but Roger remained inflexible. The death of the antipope, Anacletus, in 1138 opened the way for peace in the Church for, though the schismatics chose Gregory Conti, the activities of Bernard in Rome so damaged Conti's cause that he surrendered his pretensions to Innocent II. Hereupon Bernard asked the Pope Innocent for permission to return to his monastery, which he was at last permitted to do.

In 1139, Saint Bernard was elected to the archiepiscopal See of Reims. It was not the first time he had been called to the episcopacy—it was in fact the fifth—but he resolutely refused the dignity and his refusal was again respected. Bernard was present at the tenth general council, Lateran II. All this time, Bernard had continued diligently to preach to his monks, notably those discourses on the Canticle of Canticles. He now, for the first time, made the acquaintance of Saint Malachy (Maelmhaedhoc o'Morgair), who had recently retired from the See of Armagh. The ensuing friendship between the two lasted until Malachy's death in Bernard's arms nine years later.

In 1140, Bernard wrote his famous letter to the metropolitan chapter of Lyons protesting against their introduction of the feast of the Conception of our Lady, which was not known in the West until comparatively late. Bernard wrote in the belief that the canons wished to celebrate, not the infusion by God of the soul into the human embryo, but Mary's "active conception," i.e., the generative act of her parents. From other passages in his writings, it can be gathered that Saint Bernard believed in the Immaculate (passive) Conception of our Lady, a doctrine that, in those days, was not yet defined by the Church to be of faith.

Later in the same year, Bernard preached for the first time in a public pulpit, primarily to the students of Paris. These are the two most powerful and trenchant of his discourses preserved to us, where he says much of "things hellish and horrible." His words effected some good and a number of conversions among the students, who were at first superior to their fervent "evangelicalism."

If Saint Bernard was the most eloquent and influential man of his age, the next was the brilliant and unhappy Peter Abelard. Abelard was, moreover, of far wider learning. The two were bound to come into collision, for they represented two currents of thought that, not necessarily opposed, were not yet properly fused. Those currents were, on one hand, the weight of traditional authority and "faith, not as an opinion but as a certitude" and, on the other hand, the new rationalism and exaltation of human reason. In 1121, Abelard's orthodoxy had come under suspicion and, after a synod at Soissons, he had to burn a book he had written containing certain opinions on the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Yet, in about 1136, after a brief career as Abbot of Saint Gildas de Rhuys, Abelard returned to teach enthusiastic audiences in Paris. In 1139, William of Saint Thierry, a Cistercian of Signy, denounced some of Abelard's teachings and writings, and informed Geoffrey, Bishop of Chartres, who was legate of the Holy See, and Saint Bernard, saying they were the only persons who could crush the mischief.

Saint Bernard had three private conferences with Abelard, at which Abelard promised to abandon his dangerous doctrines, but he did not keep his promise, forcing Bernard to attack him publicly and before the authorities. Thereupon, Abelard challenged him to substantiate his charges before an assembly of bishops that would meet at Sens during the Pentecost of 1140. Bernard was unwilling to appear, telling the bishops it was their business, so Abelard triumphed. He and his friends said Bernard was afraid to encounter him face to face. The saint therefore was obliged to be present. Abelard, however, dreaded the eloquence of the abbot above all things. Abelard presented himself at the council only to hear the charges read against him drawn up by Saint Bernard out of his own book. He declined to give any answer though he had liberty given him to do it. He had very favorable judges and was in a place where he had no reason to fear anything. Instead, he appealed to the Pope and then withdrew from the synod with his party. The bishops condemned seventeen propositions extracted out of his works and wrote to Pope Innocent II, who confirmed their sentence.

Stopping at Cluny on his way to Rome, Abelard heard of this confirmation and was persuaded by the abbot, Peter the Venerable, to recall whatever he had written that had offended and to meet Saint Bernard. Abelard did so and was reconciled to him. Now, being sincerely sorry for his pride and aberrations, with the Pope's leave, he resolved to spend the remainder of his life at Cluny. Since then, Saint Bernard has been grievously criticized for his unrelenting pursuit of Abelard. Saint Bernard, however, had detected in

Abelard vanity and arrogance that masqueraded as science and rationalism that masqueraded as use of reason. Abelard's ability and learning made him all the more dangerous, which caused Saint Bernard to write to the Pope saying, "Peter Abelard is trying to make void the merit of Christian faith, when he deems himself able by human reason to comprehend God entirely ... the man is great in his own eyes."

About the beginning of 1142, the first Cistercian foundation from Clairvaux was made in Ireland. There, Saint Malachy put some young Irishmen with Saint Bernard to be trained. The abbey was called Mellifont, in county Louth. Within ten years of its foundation, six daughter-houses had been planted out.

At the same time, Bernard was busy in the affair of the disputed succession to the See of York, which was set out in the account of Saint William of York (June 8) and during the course of which Pope Innocent II died. His third successor, within eighteen months, was the Cistercian Abbot of Tre Fontane, Peter Bernard of Pisa, to whom reference has been made and who is known to history as Blessed Eugenius III. Bernard wrote a charming letter of encouragement to his former subject, saying, "To his most dearly loved father and master, Eugenius, by the grace of God Sovereign Pontiff, Bernard, styled Abbot of Clairvaux, presents his humble service." But Bernard was also rather frightened, for Eugenius was shy and retiring, not accustomed to public life. Bernard, therefore, also wrote to the College of Cardinals, a letter beginning, "May God forgive you what you have done! You have put back among the living a man who was dead and buried. You have again surrounded with cares and crowds one who had fled from cares and crowds. You have made the last first and, behold! the last state of that man is more perilous than the first." Later he wrote for Pope Eugenius's guidance the longest and most important of his treatises, "de Consideratione," impressing the various duties of his office upon Eugenius and strongly recommending to him always to reserve time for self-examination and daily contemplation and further recommending that Eugenius apply himself to this more than to business. He proves to him that consideration serves to form and employ all virtues in the heart. He reminds the Pope that, by the multiplicity of affairs, he is in danger of falling into a forgetfulness of God and a hardness of heart. Bernard stated that he thought of this made the saint tremble for Eugenius. Bernard further told him that his heart was already hardened and made insensible if he did not continually tremble for himself for, if the Pope falls, the whole Church of God is involved. Bernard's work has been most highly esteemed by popes and theologians ever since.

Bernard also relentlessly pursued Arnold of Brescia, "a man who neither eats nor drinks because, like the Devil, he thirsts only after the blood of souls. His conversation has nothing but sweetness and his doctrine nothing but poison. He has the head of a dove, but the tail of a scorpion." Arnold's heretical teaching and stirring up of the Roman populace caused the Pope to flee from his city for a time.

In the meantime, the Albigensian heresy and its social and moral implications had been making alarming progress in the south of France. Saint Bernard had already been called on to deal with a similar sect in Cologne and, in 1145, the papal legate, Cardinal Alberic, asked him to go to Languedoc. Bernard was ill and weak and was hardly able to make the journey but he obeyed, preaching at Bergerac, Perigueux, Sarlat, and Cahors on the way. Geoffrey, who was for some time Bernard's secretary, accompanied him and relates many miracles to which he was an eyewitness. He tells us that at Sarlat, in Périgord, Bernard, blessing with the sign of the cross some loaves of bread that were brought, said, "By this shall you know the truth of our doctrine and the falsehood of that which is taught by the heretics, if such as are sick among you recover their health by eating of these loaves." The Bishop of Chartres, who stood near the saint, being fearful of the result, said, "That is, if they eat with a right faith, they shall be cured." But the abbot replied, "I say not so; but assuredly they that taste shall be cured, that you may know by this that we are sent by authority derived from God and preach His truth." And a number of sick persons were cured by eating that bread. When the saint lodged at Saint Saturnin's, a house of regular canons at Toulouse, one of the canons lay at the point of death, so weak that he could not rise from his bed, A visit and prayer from the saint restored him to perfect health. "That instant," says Geoffrey, "he rose from his bed and, following after, overtook us and kissed the blessed man's feet with an eager devotion that can only be imagined by those who saw it." The bishop of the place, the legate, and the people went to the church, the man who had been sick leading the way, and gave thanks to God for His blessing. Bernard preached against the heresy throughout Languedoc. Its supporters were stubborn and violent, especially at Toulouse and Albi, but, in a very short time, Bernard had restored the country to Catholic orthodoxy and returned to Clairvaux. He left too soon however, as the restoration was more apparent than real and twenty-five years later Albigensianism had a stronger hold than ever. Then came Saint Dominic.

On Christmas Day, 1144, the Seljuk Turks had captured Edessa, centre of one of the four principalities of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, and immediate appeals for help were at once sent to Europe, for the whole position was in danger. King Louis the Young announced his intention of leading an expedition to the East, and the Pope commissioned Saint Bernard to preach the holy war. He began at Vézelay on Palm Sunday in 1146, when Queen Eleanor and many nobles were the first to take the cross. They were followed by such large numbers of people who were moved by the monk's burning words that the supply of cloth badges was exhausted and Bernard had to tear strips off his habit to make more bandages. When he had roused France, he wrote letters to the rulers and peoples of England, Italy, Sicily, Spain, Poland, Denmark, Moravia, Bohemia, and Bavaria. Then, he went in person into Germany. First he had to deal with a half-crazy monk, called Rudolf, who in his name was inciting the people to massacre the Jews, and

then made a triumphant journey through the Rhineland, confirming his appeals by an amazing succession of miracles, vouched for by his companions.

The Emperor Conrad III received Bernard with honor, took the cross from him at Spires, and set out on the crusade with an army in the May of 1147, followed by Louis of France. This second crusade was a miserable failure. Conrad's forces were cut to pieces in Asia Minor and Louis did not get beyond laying siege to Damascus. Its ill success is chiefly ascribed to the treachery of the Greek Emperor, Manuel Comnenus, but was also in no small measure due to the crusaders themselves, of whom a great part were led by no other motive than the prospect of plunder. They were lawless and committed every kind of disorder in their march. To those who were led by motives of sincere penance and religion, the afflictions were trials for the exercise of their virtue, but the ascetical exercise was dearly bought.

The unfortunate expedition raised a great storm against Saint Bernard, because he had seemed to promise success. He answered that he confided in the divine mercy for a blessing on an enterprise undertaken for the honor of the divine name but the sins of the army were the cause of its misfortunes. Further, who could judge the extent of its success or failure and "how is it that the rashness of mortals dares reprove what they cannot understand?"

In 1147, Pope Eugenius had visited Clairvaux and afterwards assisted at the general chapter of the order held at Citeaux. There, the entire Benedictine congregation of Savigny, consisting of thirty or more monasteries, passed into that of Citeaux and, out of respect for Saint Bernard, became affiliations of Clairvaux.

After the return of the crusaders, Bernard, in concert with Abbot Suger, who had opposed the former venture, energetically started to organize another. In 1150, Bernard was elected to lead the Christian army to victory. Bernard wrote to the Pope, reproaching him for his lack of enthusiasm, and preparations went on apace. However, at the beginning of the next year, Suger died and France was again on the brink of civil war. Thus, the project was never put into execution.

In 1151, Gunnar, King of Sardinia, made a visit to Clairvaux and was so edified with what he saw practiced there that he returned the year following and made his religious profession in that house. This also was done by Prince Peter, brother to King Alfonso of Portugal, and by Prince Henry, third son of King Louis VI.

Bernard urged the Emperor to proceed against Arnold of Brescia, who still held Rome against the Pope, but Conrad died suddenly in 1152 and Blessed Eugenius died in 1153.

Then, in the beginning of that same year, Saint Bernard too entered into his last illness. He had long dwelt in Heaven through desire, though, by humility, he ascribed this desire to weakness, not to charity. "The saints," said he, "were moved to pray for death out of a

desire of seeing Christ; but I am forced hence by scandals and evil. I confess myself overcome by the violence of the storm for want of courage."

He mended a little for a short time a in the spring and was called on for the last time to leave Clairvaux to succor his neighbor. The inhabitants of Metz having been attacked and defeated with great slaughter by the Duke of Lorraine, were vehemently bent on revenge. To prevent the shedding of more blood, the Archbishop of Trier went to Clairvaux and earnestly implored Bernard to journey to Metz in order to reconcile the parties that were at variance. At this call of charity, Bernard forgot his corporal infirmity and immediately made his way into Lorraine, where he prevailed on both sides to lay aside their arms and accept a treaty that he drew up.

When he was back at Clairvaux, his illness returned with more severe symptoms. His stomach was scarcely able to bear the least nourishment and could not even take in liquids. His arms and legs swelled as if he had dropsy and he was hardly able to sleep for a few minutes at a time. When he received the last sacraments and his spiritual children assembled about him in tears, he comforted and encouraged them, saying that the unprofitable servant ought not to occupy a place uselessly and that the barren tree ought to be rooted up. His love for them inclined him to remain with them until they should be gathered with him to God; but his desire to enjoy Christ made him long for death. "I am straitened between two," he cried, "and what to choose I know not. I leave it to the Lord. Let Him decide." And God took him to Himself, on August 20, 1153. Bernard was sixty-three years old, had been abbot for thirty-eight years, and had founded sixty-eight monasteries directly from Clairvaux. He was canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1174 and, in 1830, formally declared a Doctor of the Church: "Doctor Mellifluus," The Honey-Sweet Doctor, as he is now universally called.

It is said that Saint Bernard "carried the twelfth century on his shoulders and he did not carry it without suffering." During his life, he was the oracle of the Church, the light of prelates, and the reformer of discipline. Since his death, he continues to comfort and instruct by his writings. The great French lay scholar of the seventeenth century, Henry Valois, did not hesitate to say his writings are the most useful for piety among all the works of the Fathers of the Church, though he is the youngest of them in time. Sixtus of Siena, the converted Jew, said, "His discourse is everywhere sweet and ardent. It so delights and warms that it seems that from his tongue honey and milk flow in the form of his words and from his breast a fire of burning love breaks forth." To Erasmus he was "cheerful, pleasant, and vehement in moving the passions." In another place, "He is Christianly learned, holily eloquent, and devoutly cheerful and pleasing." From Pope Innocent II to Cardinal Manning, from Luther to Frederic Harrison, Catholics and Protestants of eminence have recognized the sanctity of Saint Bernard and the greatness of his writings, wherein he is equally gentle and vigorous.

His style is sublime, lively, and pleasant; his charity appears even in his reproaches and shows that he reproves to correct, never to insult. This gives such a force to his strongest invective that it gains the heart and instills both awe and love. The sinner whom he admonishes can only be angry with himself, not with the reprimand or its author. He had so meditated on the Holy Scriptures that, in almost every sentence, he borrows something from their language and diffuses the marrow of the sacred text with that which his own heart was filled. He was well read in the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine. In fact, he often takes his thoughts from their writings and makes them his own by a new turn. Though he lived after Saint Anselm, the first of the scholastics, and though his contemporaries are ranked in that class, he treats theological subjects after the manner of the ancients. On this account, and for the great excellence of his writings, he is reckoned among the Fathers. Though he is the last among them in time, he is one of the greatest to those who desire to study and to improve their hearts in sincere religion. A perfect spirit of humility, devotion, and divine charity reigns throughout his writings and strongly affects his readers, for it is the language of his own heart, always glowing with love and penitence.

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