

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux – Feast Day – August 20

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was an abbot born in 1090 in Fontaine-les-Dijon, Burgundy, France and died August 20 1153 in Clairvaux Abbey, Clairvaux, Champagne, France at the age of 63 years. His feast day is celebrated on [August 20](#) every year in the Catholic Church.

St Bernard's father was called Tescelin de Fontaine and his mother was called Alèthe de Montbard. His father was the lord of Fontaine-lès-Dijon. His parents hailed from the noble families in Burgundy. Bernard had five brothers and one sister.

When he was nine years old, he went to a school at Châtillon-sur-Seine operated by the Church. He was much interested in literature, rhetoric, and devotion to the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#).

In his youthful life, Bernard did not indulge in a life of partying and adventure, he tried as much as possible to live a life of solitude and prayer.

When his mother died, when he was 18 years old, Bernard started contemplating about joining the Cîteaux Abbey, near Dijon and in 1113 AD, he and some thirty other young men, decided to join the monastery which lived according to the Rule of St Benedict.

Three years after joining the Cîteaux Abbey, Bernard and twelve other monks were sent to Vallée d'Absinthe in Langres Diocese to found a new house there. On June 25 1115, Bernard named it Clairvaux, and both the names Bernard and Clairvaux became inseparable.

During this time, the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, William of Champeaux made Bernard an abbot and a blossoming friendship grew between them.

The influence of Bernard on others to the monastic life was so immense that even his father and all his brothers entered Cîteaux Abbey and his sister Humbeline joined the Benedictine nunnery of Jully-les-Nonnains.

The Clairvaux Abbey started founding new abbeys like the Trois-Fontaines Abbey, Fontenay Abbey and Foigny Abbey near Vervins.

Despite many successes, Bernard also had emotional trials like when the Prior of the Abbey of Cluny cajoled his cousin, Robert of Châtillon, to leave the Clairvaux Abbey.

In 1098, the Cistercian Order had been founded in Cîteaux, France, by some Benedictine monks who wished for a monastic life that called for the rejection of feudal revenues, manual labor for monks, and extreme asceticism.

The monks of the Benedictine abbey of Cluny were not happy to see their splinter group, the Cistercians take the lead role among the monastic orders. They always criticized them but a wise apology by St Bernard quietened the issues.

In 1128, St Bernard took the central role in Church administration matters when, during the Council of Troyes, he was charged with drawing up the synodal statutes. He composed a rule for the Knights Templar which became an ideal of Christian nobility.

St Bernard started to have influence in civil affairs when he defended the rights of the Church against interference by the princes and kings.

Bernard helped to mediate in a schism between two rival popes, Pope Innocent II and Antipope Anacletus II and produced a verdict that Pope Innocent II was to take the leadership of the Church. The schism still continued and St Bernard came up with working solutions that managed to quell and manage that schism until it ended in 1138 when Antipope Anacletus II died of "grief and disappointment".

St Bernard also helped to stop the spread of the heretical treatise on the Trinity by Peter Abelard. He persuaded Abelard to stop his writings but Abelard declined. It was during a public debate that St Bernard managed to make Abelard completely stop the spread of that heresy.

Special Healing Prayers to pray for sick family members, friends and loved ones

St Bernard still helped stop the heresy propagated by Henry of Lausanne (his followers were known as Henricians). Henry had adopted and modified the teachings of a former Cluniac monk called Peter of Bruys (his followers were called Petrobrusians). St Bernard crashed these heresies to extinction.

In 1146-1149, St Bernard organized crusades that aimed at electrifying the people to help defeat the Seljuk Turks who had defeated the Christians at the Siege of Edessa and other areas like the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the other Crusader states would be overrun too.

St Bernard was successful in this first crusade but was not successful in the second because, as he put it, "the sins of the crusaders were the cause of their misfortune and failures in the second crusade".

St Bernard aided in founding 163 monasteries in various parts of Europe. He emphasized a lot the importance of Lectio Divina and contemplation for monks. He lamented that when Lectio Divina was neglected, monasticism suffered and noted that the people who are their own spiritual directors have fools for disciples.

St Bernard's devotion to The [Blessed Virgin Mary](#) was intense. He often wrote and preached that Mary as our intercessor.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux died on August 20 1153 at the age of 63. He was buried at Clairvaux Abbey but after the French revolutionary government dissolved it in 1792, his remains were transferred to the Troyes Cathedral.