

## FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This week the Church places before us St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the great Cistercian abbot and Doctor *Mellifluis* - the “Honey-Sweet Doctor” - whose words flowed like honey because they were filled with the sweetness of Christ.

Bernard was born into nobility in Burgundy in 1090. He could have remained in the world with its comforts and honors. Instead, at about twenty-two years of age, he heard the call of the Lord and left everything. He did not go alone: he persuaded thirty companions - among them his own brothers and an uncle - to enter the new monastery of Cîteaux with him. From there the Lord sent him to found Clairvaux, the “Clear Valley.” The beginnings were harsh: poverty, cold, hunger, and hard work. Yet in that hidden place the Word of God took flesh in a community that lived conversion, humility, and fraternal love.

Bernard never sought to be a great figure. He wanted only to love God and to draw others into that same love. **In his treatise *On Loving God* he teaches the four degrees of love: we begin by loving ourselves for our own sake; then we love God for what He gives us; then we love God for His own sake; and finally we love even ourselves only for God’s sake.** This is the journey of conversion - the same itinerary the Lord proposes to us: to leave behind the idolatry of the self and to allow the kerygma to transform our lives until Christ becomes the center.

He was a man of the Word. His sermons on the Song of Songs reveal a heart that had fallen in love with the Bridegroom. He teaches us that the Scriptures are not distant history but the living voice of the Lord who speaks to us today. In every celebration we are invited, like Bernard, to let that Word resonate in our concrete life.

Bernard also teaches us to look to Mary. In one of his most famous sermons he cries out: “If the winds of temptation arise, if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, call upon Mary... If you are tossed by the waves of pride, ambition, detraction or envy, look to the star, call upon Mary.” In the storms of our own journey - family difficulties, the struggle against sin, the call to mission - Mary remains the sure guide who leads us to her Son.

At the end of his life, surrounded by his monks who begged him to stay, Bernard said: “I do not know whom to obey: the love of my sons who ask me to remain, or the love of God who calls me to Himself.” He died on August 20, 1153, having founded dozens of monasteries and having left the Church a luminous example of what it means to follow Christ without reserve.

The same Lord who called Bernard continues to call us. He invites us to leave the securities of this world, to live the Gospel in humility and simplicity, and to announce with our lives that Jesus Christ is the only Savior. May St. Bernard intercede for us so that our community may become a place where the Word is heard, conversion is lived, and the love of God is tasted like honey.

Let us look to the star. Let us call upon Mary. And let us continue walking together toward the Bridegroom who awaits us.

Peace,