

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

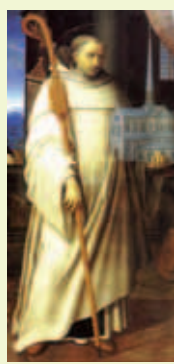
1090-1153

Saint Bernard died on August 20, 1153. In 1174, Alexander III declares him a Saint and Pius VIII in 1830, proclaims him a Doctor of the Church.

The great mystic, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, has left us some reflections on the presence and protection of the Angels over men and women: "In whatever house, in whatever place you find yourself, respect your Angel, because he is present and is very close to you. Not only is he with you but he is there for you. He tries to protect you and be useful to you. With an Angel near you, what do you have to be afraid of? Your Angel cannot let himself be conquered or deceived. He is faithful; he is prudent; he is powerful; so why are you afraid? If you were lucky

the appearance of his first writings. With his preaching, he reaches and shakes up thousands of people, even among those who do not speak the same tongue. He manages to convert many Manichaean heretics of Germany and France. Thanks to him, the Cistercian Order spreads and grows enormously. It is said that when he speaks, "mothers hide their sons and the wives their husbands," lest, attracted by his charisma, they enter into the Cistercian monasteries.

Very well known is the story of St. Bernard's vision of Angels. While Bernard



enough to see the veil fall from your eyes, you would see with how much attention, with how much solicitude the Angels are in the midst of those who pray, within those who meditate, over the bed of those who are resting, over the head of those who are ruling and governing."

Bernard was born in 1090 at Fontaines of a noble family of the Bergogne region, near Dijon. After his education in his family, he is first sent to Chatillon to pursue his studies with the Canons of St. Vorles and then enters the monastery of Citeaux. Stephen Harding, the abbot of Citeaux, discerns in this young man a soul sent by God, and in 1115 Bernard is sent to Clairvaux to found an abbey, of which he will become abbot. His spiritual experience attracts many vocations, so much so that after three years, he was able to found the first daughter-house in Tre Fontane.

The fame of Bernard's sanctity and wisdom soon spread throughout France with

was in the choir of his community, he saw the Guardian Angels of every religious in the community, who kept themselves discreetly at their sides during the recitation of the Divine Office. Other Angels were circulating in church. They were writing and then ascending to Heaven. Intrigued, the Saint looked at the mysterious book in which every Angel wrote. He noticed that some Angels, charged with bringing the monks' prayers to the foot of God's throne, were writing them down with scintillating diamonds, others with gold, others with ink or even with water depending on the fervor the monks had put into their prayer. Among the Angels were even some who ascended without writing anything because of the numerous voluntary distractions that had paralyzed the fruits of the prayers of their charges. After the Divine Office, St. Bernard told his religious about this vision to encourage them to become ever more fervent.