

Summary

Bernard z Clairvaux a jeho doba

Bernard of Clairvaux and His Time

Jakub Hromas

"You wish me to tell you why and how God should be loved. My answer is that God himself is the reason he is to be loved."

Bernard, the founding abbot of Clairvaux, is one of the greatest spiritual teachers of the Middle Ages and the most powerful promoter of reform of the Cistercian order. His life's journey began in 1090 in the castle Fontaines, where he grew up with five brothers and a sister. He was the third son of Tescelina and Aleth. It was Bernard's mother, who played an important role in his life. Aleth was a very pious woman, whose only wish was that her children have dedicated their lives to God. From an early age she led Bernard to the faith and her influence sparked a deep respect for God's mercy, justice and love in him. It was the piety of his mother, who brought Bernard to the path of faith. When he was eight years old, Bernard began to attend Latin School Châtillon-sur-Seine, which he attended another ten years. Bernard got here an excellent and thorough theological and literary education.

At Christmas in 1098 when Bernard was eight years old he had a vision, which greatly influenced his thinking. During Christmas Mass he saw the birth of Jesus and understood that God is not only an inaccessible God, who is enthroned above the others, but that he became a

man and bends, turns to the people. In a way, he is one of them. The crisis of faith in Bernard occurs when his beloved mother suddenly dies. The loss hit him so much that for a short time he is leaving the path of faith and trying to find himself. At this time Bernard is experiencing somewhat tumultuous period that sometimes he recalls in his sermons. The path to God does not stay hidden for long to him. Four years after his mother's death a major life turnaround occurs at Bernard's life. This turn will determine his future life path. When Bernard travels in 1111 to the besieged castle Grancey, he stops at the church where he prays with his hands in the air and cries. It was at this time when he decided to dedicate his life to God and become a monk.

The decision to enter the Cistercians in Citeaux was for a man in Bernard's position, unusual. He could join the order with somewhat milder rules. It was not his intention. Bernard wanted to live his life in seclusion from worldly affairs and he liked very much the strict rules. His enthusiasm for the monastic life was so strong that his decision was followed by approximately thirty like-minded people. Three years after entering the monastery, the abbot entrusts Bernard the task to establish a new monastery at Clairvaux. The decision of the abbot to entrust such an important task to a young monk is somewhat unusual. Whether leads the abbot to this decision, in the future he might not regret his decision. Bernard spent all his energy to the foundation of the monastery and its further development.

Soon, Bernard becomes a spiritual adviser not only for monks from Clairvaux, but also for those who came to the abbot of Clairvaux for advice. His sermons are getting better and better and Bernard's fame is slowly but surely growing. Thanks to him, Clairvaux is becoming one of the five major divisions of the Cistercian order. During the pontificate of Honorius II. Bernard was one of the most important men of the Church in France. Thanks to this he very often interferes in religious affairs. In 1128, Bernard participates to the Synod of Troyes, where he spoke in favor of the newly formed Knights Templar. Bernard helped Templar order not only with his impressive speech, but for them he also developed the Rule rules. In 1130 the papal schism occurs when the Pope Innocent II. and the Anti-Pope Anaklet II. Faces each other, Bernard is facing a decision which of the competing parties will he support. His decision to side with Innocent means for the abbot eight years of strenuous travel and skillful mediation support for the Innocent. Bernard had a large share in resolving the stalemate. At the same time he was trying to reconcile England and France, and a number of minor aristocrats. Bernard, however, did not celebrate a success only in the religious-political field.

It was Bernard who has contributed to the growth of the Cistercian order. When in 1145 the Bernard's pupil the Pope Eugene III is elected, Bernard becomes his unofficial mentor. Bernard, known for his preaching, the Pope entrusted him the task to preach for the Second Crusade. Bernard's eloquence re-worked again. At a meeting in Vézelay the French King Louis VII. adopted a cross. The failure of the second Crusade, which he saw in the Crusaders' sinfulness, was a hard blow for him. Despite his poor health, Bernard was managing the monastery at Clairvaux, where several hundreds of monks lived. His activities are not confined to the management of Clairvaux only, but significantly oversaw the expansion of the Cistercian order. By the time he was abbot, several dozens of new monasteries were built. Even though he had a lot of work, Bernard always found time for literary works. He wrote a number of diverse spiritual works that still speak to us today. His work of grace, free will, humility and love, laid the foundations of the spiritual life. Bernard in his work responded to the dangerous doctrine that appeared in the Middle Ages. In the teachings of men like Peter Abelard, Gilbert de la Porree, or Arnold of Brescia, Bernard saw the danger to which it is necessary to intervene.

Bernard died at Clairvaux on August 20 in 1153, aged sixty-three years. Dying in the circle of his brothers where he wanted to peacefully live his life. This wish was unfortunately not fulfilled.

