

LENT

SERMON SIX

Of the Pilgrim, the Dead and the Crucified

WE URGE YOU as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from the desires of the flesh.* Happy are those who conduct themselves as strangers and pilgrims in the present, good for nothing era,* keeping themselves unstained by it!* Here we have no abiding city, but we seek the one that is to come.* Let us, then, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the spirit.* Once a pilgrim has entered on a royal road he turns aside neither to right nor to left.* If he should chance to see people quarreling he pays no attention; if he comes upon a wedding, or people having fun dancing, or doing anything else, he passes by because he is a pilgrim and such things do not concern him. He longs for his native land, he makes his way toward it. Having food and clothing he does not wish to be burdened with other things. Happy indeed is the one who thus knows his own home, who complains of his exile, saying to the Lord, *I am a stranger with you, and a pilgrim, like all my forebears.**

*1 Pt 2:11

*Gal 1:4

*Jm 1:27

*Heb 13:14

*1 Pt 2:11

*Num 20:17;
Dt 2:27

*Ps 38:13

This is a big step, but perhaps there is a higher one. Even if a pilgrim does not mingle with the citizens, he sometimes takes pleasure in observing events, hearing of them from others, or himself recounting what

he sees. Even if he is not seriously held back by these things, he is nevertheless delayed and hindered by them; the less he thinks of his true home, the less does desire hurry him on. He can find so much pleasure in these things that not only does he delay and come less speedily; he stays behind altogether so that he does not even arrive late!

*Col 3:3

2. Who is more separated from worldly activities than a pilgrim? To them the Apostle says, *You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** A pilgrim can easily be held back from his quest and oppressed by his burden on the pretext of what he needs for his journey; a dead person will not even feel the lack of a tomb! He hears those who heap blame on him as if they are praising him, and those who fawn over him like those who find fault—or rather, he doesn't hear them because he is dead! His death, which keeps him thus unstained, or rather, which separates him inwardly from this world, is altogether happy. Christ has to live in a person who does not live in himself. That is what the Apostle says: *I live, yet not I, for Christ lives in me,** as if he were saying, "I have died to all else; I do not feel, I do not notice, I am not concerned; if these things are truly of Christ, they find me alive and ready. If I can do nothing else, at least I feel pleasure at what I see being done for his honor, and displeasure at what is done for any other reason." This is a very large step.

*Gal 2:20

*2 Cor 12:2

3. But perhaps we can find something still higher. Where shall we seek it? Where do you suppose, but in him of whom we were just speaking, who was caught up to the third heaven? What keeps us from speaking of a third heaven if you can find some step above those? Hear him then from his lofty height, not glorying in himself but saying, *Let me not glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.** Note that he says not only *dead* to the world, but also *crucified*, which is a

*Gal 6:14

dishonorable kind of death. I have been crucified to it, he says, just as it has been crucified to me. Everything the world loves is, to me, a cross: pleasures of the flesh, honors, riches, the empty praise of human beings. As for the things the world reckons a cross—I have been attached to them, I cling to them, I embrace them wholeheartedly. Is this not greater than the first and second steps? A pilgrim, if he is wise and not forgetful of his pilgrimage, passes by, although with suffering, and is not much involved in worldly matters.* A dead person spurns the blandishments of this world just as much as its hardships. To him who was taken up to the third heaven, the cross is everything to which the world clings, and he clings to the things which seem to the world a cross.

*2 Tm 2:4

We can also understand the Apostle's words to mean that the world has been crucified to him as a result of his reflecting upon it, and he to the world by compassion. He saw the world bound to the cross by its vices, and he himself was crucified to it by his feelings of compassion.

4. Let us all consider for ourselves what step each of us is set on, and let us be zealous to advance from day to day, because *from strength to strength the God of gods will be seen in Zion*.* Especially in this holy season, I beg, let us endeavor to live in all purity. A certain short number of days has been set; otherwise in our human frailty we might lose hope. If we were told, *Be careful at all times to maintain the purity of your way of life*, who would not lose hope? But now we are bidden to amend *the negligences of other times** in a few days so that we may taste the sweetness of perfect purity, and that from now on the vestiges of this holy Lent may be radiant in our way of life.¹

*Ps 83:8

*RB 49.3

¹ *Conversatio*.

Let us try then, my brothers, to use this holy season with all devotion, and now more than ever to repair our spiritual armor. Now is our Savior going out with the entire world as with an army to meet the enemy. Happy are they who fight bravely under such a leader!* The King's household indeed fights all year and is continually ready for war; once, however, at a certain time, he assembles his whole realm in a universal army. Happy are you who are deemed worthy to be his servants! To you the Apostle says, *You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and servants of God.** What will they do, who have undertaken to fight throughout the year, when those who are untrained and previously idle take up spiritual arms? Surely they must press on with their usual battle, more than usual, so that a great victory may result, for the glory of our King, and for our salvation.*

*See *RB Prol. 3*

**Eph 2:19*

**Ph 1:19*

Bernard of Clairvaux



SERMONS for
LENT and the
EASTER SEASON

CISTERCIAN FATHERS SERIES NUMBER FIFTY-TWO

Bernard of Clairvaux
Sermons for Lent and
the Easter Season

Translated by
Irene Edmonds

Reviewed by
John Leinenweber

Edited and Revised by
Mark A. Scott, OCSO

Introduction by
Wim Verbaal



Cistercian Publications
www.cistercianpublications.org

LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota
www.litpress.org

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

Cistercian Publications
Editorial Offices
Abbey of Gethsemani
3642 Monks Road
Trappist, Kentucky 40051
www.cistercianpublications.org

Based on the critical Latin edition of Jean Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, Sancti Bernardi opera, 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–77), 4:334–80, 5:1–121.

© 2013 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or by any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bernard, of Clairvaux, Saint, 1090 or 91–1153.

[Sermons. English. Selections]

Sermons for Lent and the Easter season / Bernard of Clairvaux ;

Translated by Irene Edmonds ; Edited by John Leinenweber and Mark Scott,
OCSO ; Foreword by Wim Verbaal.

pages cm. — (CISTERCIAN FATHERS SERIES ; NUMBER
FIFTY-TWO)

ISBN 978-0-87907-452-4 — ISBN 978-0-87907-744-0 (ebook)

1. Lenten sermons. 2. Easter—Sermons. 3. Sermons, Latin—Translations into
English. I. Leinenweber, John. II. Title.

BV4277.B47 2013

252'.02—dc23

2012049284