



On Loving God: De Diligendo Deo

By Bernard of Clairvaux

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We should love God because he first loved us and also for his many gifts to us. Christians more than others should know this. Loving God brings a reward of peace we cannot find in earthly things. There are four degrees of love for God. It is natural that it should begin with loving God for selfish reasons, but we can love God at a higher level by loving our neighbors and by loving God for his own sake, to the extent that we love him without even thinking of ourselves but because his essence is love. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was born near Dijon, France. After joining the austere Cistercian order, he was charged with establishing a new monastery, which he named Clairvaux. The monks at Clairvaux lived on a diet of bread, vegetables, and herbs, but despite the hardships of this life, the monastery flourished. Bernard, a powerful writer, preacher, and administrator, would eventually found over 160 such monasteries in countries across Europe. Among his other actions he drafted a rule for the newly formed Knights Templar.

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