

Today is the Memorial of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who lived in the first half of the 12th century.

He was a theologian and the reformer of the Cistercian order. If you know who Thomas Merton was - he was a Cistercian.

Three things to give you a taste of the theology of St. Bernard.

He is credited with writing the prayer we know as the Memorare:

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.*

*Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.*

*Amen.*

He stressed three aspects of Marian theology. (1) the Holy Name of Mary, (2) how to pray to Our Lady, and (3) Our Lady's intercessory role.

Another work he wrote speaks on the four types of Christian love ranging from self-centered love, to loving God for selfish reasons, to loving God for God's sake, and finally to loving oneself solely by loving God.

In today's Gospel, we hear the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. In this parable, we hear how those who came last received the same pay as those who worked all day.

And some of the workers are jealous and upset about this.

For me, the 'punch line' is: "*Are you envious because I am generous?*"

And indeed, there are not "levels" or "ranks" of salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the eyes of God, all have sinned ... yet God also desires the salvation of all.

Whether one lives out a long life pleasing to God, or converts moments before death ... the reward is the same.

How this parable sits in our gut can be a litmus test for us as to where we may fall on the spectrum of St. Bernard's four types of love.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity - let us seek to love God, and God alone ... and in loving God more perfectly, may we realize a more perfected love of our selves and our neighbor.