

DEEP SPIRITUALITY

An extract from: Great Devotional Classics: Selections from the Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – August 20, 1153) was a French abbot and the primary builder of the reforming Cistercian order, ed. By Douglas Steere (The Upper Room, 1961).

[p.24]

We must not give to others what we have received for ourselves; nor must we keep for ourselves that which we have received to spend on others. You fall into the latter error, if you possess the gift of eloquence or wisdom, and yet—through fear or sloth or false humility—neglect to use the gift for others' benefit. And on the other hand, you dissipate and lose what is your own, if without right intention and from some wrong motive, you hasten to outpour yourself on others when your own soul is only half-filled.

If you are wise therefore you will show yourself a reservoir and not a canal. For a canal pours out as fast as it takes in; but a reservoir waits till it is full before it overflows, and so communicates its surplus. . . We have all too few such reservoirs in the Church at present, through we have canals in plenty. . . they (canals) desire to pour out when they themselves are not yet in-poured; they are readier to speak than to listen, eager to teach that which they do not know, and most anxious to exercise authority on others, although they have not learnt to rule themselves. . . . Let the reservoir of which we spoke just now take pattern from the spring; for the spring does not form a stream or spread into a lake until it is brimful. . . . Be filled thyself' then, but discreetly, mind, pour out thy fullness. . . Out of thy fullness help me if thou canst; and, if not, spare thyself.

[p.25]

*The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.*

*Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now,
And through eternity.*

-Attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux

7. The Inseparable Links

Action and Contemplation are very close companions; they live together in one house on equal terms; Martha is Mary's sister.

You do right when you offer faith to God; you do right when you offer works. But, if you separate the two, then you do wrong. . . .

So you believe in Christ? Then do the works of Christ, so that your faith may live! Let love be to your faith as soul to body, and let your conduct prove that your faith is real. You who say that you abide in Christ ought to walk as He walked.

[end of extract from pages 24-25]