

William of Saint-Thierry (c.1085-1148), first a Benedictine, then a Cistercian monk

The Contemplation of God, 1-2

"What do you want me to do for you?"

«Come! Let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways,» (Is 2,3). You, good intentions, burning desires, thought and will, affections and all the heart's strength, come!, let us climb the mountain, let us get to the place where the Lord sees and is seen. But as for you, worries, cares and anxieties, hard work and heavy bondage, wait for us here... until, hastening to that place, we return to you when we have worshipped (cf. Gn 22,5). For unfortunately we have to come back again only too quickly.

Lord, God of my strength, turn us towards you, «bring us back to you, show us your face and we shall be saved,» (Ps 80[79],20). However, my Lord, how premature, bold and presumptuous he is, how opposed to the rule borne by the word of your truth and wisdom, to claim to see God with impure heart! O sovereign goodness, supreme good, life of our hearts, light of our interior eyes: in your goodness, Lord, have mercy on us.

See! my purification, trust and right: see it now, the contemplation of your goodness, my good Lord! You say to my soul, O my God, as you well know how: «I am your salvation,» (Ps 35[34],3). Rabboni, sovereign master and teacher, the only physician able to make me see what I long to see, say to this blind beggar of yours: «What do you want me to do for you?». And how well you know, who give this grace to me..., with what strength my heart cries out to you: «I have sought you, Lord, and still will seek your face! Hide not your face from me,» (cf. Ps 27[26],8-9).