

Saint Bernard (1091-1153), Cistercian monk and Doctor of the Church  
Sermon 37, On the Song of Songs (©Cistercian publications)

## **"A hundred times more now in this present age"**

«Sow for yourselves justice, and reap the hope of life,» (Hos 10,12). These words do not postpone your triumph till the last day, when the object of your desire will be possessed, not hoped for; they refer to the time now at your disposal. But when eternal life does come, what great gladness there will be, what joy beyond imagining! And can the hope of this great happiness be without happiness? The Apostle Paul speaks of rejoicing in hope, (Rom 12,12). David, when he expressed the hope of entering the house of God, said that it gave him happiness now, not in the future, (Ps 122[121],1). Eternal life was not yet his, but his hope reached out to it; so that in his heart he experienced the Scriptural truth that the just man finds joy not only in the reward but even in the expectation of it, (Prv 10,28). The assurance of pardon for sins begets this joy in the heart where the seeds of righteousness are sown...

Anyone therefore who has the happiness of being borne aloft on the wings of grace and of breathing freely in the hope of consolation after the early period of conversion with its bitterness and tears, already in this life gathers the fruit of his tears; he has had a vision of God and heard the voice that says: "Give him a share of the fruits of his hands,» (Prv 31,31). If he has tasted and seen that the Lord is sweet, has he not seen God? (Ps 34[33],9). Lord Jesus, how pleasant and sweet must you be to him whom you have not merely blessed with forgiveness of sins but endowed too with the gift of holiness, and along with that, added to the treasury of his goods, the promise of eternal life. Happy the man with all this for a harvest... It bears out the truth in the Prophet's words: «Those who sow in tears shall reap in jubilation!» (Ps 126[125],5)... The earthly gain or honor it may confer on us is far beneath the hope conceived and the deeply rooted joy in the soul that springs from this hope does not disappoint us, because «God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us,» (Rom 5,5).