

**Bishop Michael Marshall**  
**27 August 2006**

**SAINTS ALIVE!**

During the coming ‘silly season’ of summer, I thought that it might be a good idea each Sunday in the weekly bulletin to take one of the Saints (with a capital S), whose saint’s day occurs during August and write a short piece about that particular saint as well as printing the prayer for that particular saint’s day at the conclusion of the article.

In many ways it is a tragedy that we do not know more about the saints and martyr throughout the centuries, because it is in the ‘communion ‘ and fellowship of the saints that we seek to live out our discipleship in our own day and in our own culture. I like to think of the saints as being to Christ the light of the world what the spectrum is to the light of this world. They show us in differing shades and colouring something of the greater glory of God. One of the lovely things about the saints is that they are not cloned – they represent a huge variety of characteristics and personalities and all together reflecting something of the light of that infinity which is invisible to our limited sight.

Get to know the saints for what they are and not for what they are not! They are not superstars, superhuman nor even heroes. They have feet of clay and they know it, and don’t need any investigative reporter to reveal it! They are gloriously flawed human beings, who have found the gift of God’s amazing grace to be sufficient to redeem their weaknesses and to turn them into strengths. They are not ashamed of their wounds, - indeed their wounds are the marks which authenticate their love and their ‘profession’ as the wounded healers of the world.

They do not seek to impress, precisely because they are too busy trying to express something of the love of God that has made them what they are. So they do not point us to themselves or seek to draw attention to themselves: rather they point us to Jesus, ‘the Author and Perfecter of their faith and ours. We don’t so much pray to the saints so much as we ask the saints to pray to God for us, as we frequently ask our friends on earth to pray for us – only they do it from the nearer Presence.

**ST. BERNARD : 20<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST**

Bernard was born at Fontaines, near Dijon, in France in the year 1090. He entered the Benedictine Abbey at Citeaux in 1112, taking with him many of his young companions, some of whom were his own brothers. He was the leader of the reform movement within the Benedictine movement at this time and in 1115 was set to establish a new monastery at a place named Clairvaux, or valley of light.

Though times were hard, he built up the community with his remarkable qualities of leadership. Bernard preached widely and powerfully and proved himself a theology of

renown. Literally hundreds of religious houses were founded on the Citeaux or Cistercian system and Bernard's influence on his own generation and beyond was immense. He died on August 20<sup>th</sup> in 1153.

*Collect*

Merciful Redeemer,  
By the life and preaching of your servant Bernard,  
You rekindled the radiant light of your church;  
Grant us, in our generation,  
To be inflamed with the same spirit of discipline and love,  
And ever to walk before you as children of the light;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen