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Harden Not Your Hearts

[St. Bernard of Clairvaux](#)



We read in the gospel that when the Lord was teaching his disciples and urged them to share in his passion by the mystery of eating his body, some said: This is a hard saying, and from that time they no longer followed him. When he asked the disciples whether they also wished to go away, they replied: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

I assure you, my brothers, that even to this day it is clear to some that the words which Jesus speaks are spirit and life, and for this reason they follow him. To others these words seem hard, and so they look elsewhere for some pathetic consolation. Yet wisdom cries out in the streets, in the broad and spacious way that leads to death, to call back those who take this path. Finally, he says: For forty years I have been close to this generation, and I said: They have always been faint-hearted. You also read in another psalm: God has spoken once. Once, indeed, because for ever. His is a single, uninterrupted utterance, because it is continuous and unending.

He calls upon sinners to return to their true spirit and rebukes them when their hearts have gone astray, for it is in the true heart that he dwells and there he speaks, fulfilling what he taught through the prophet: Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. You see, my brothers, how the prophet admonishes us for our advantage: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. You can read almost the same words in the gospel and in the prophet. For in the gospel the Lord says: My sheep hear my voice. And in the psalm blessed David says: You are his people (meaning, of course, the Lord's) and the sheep of his pasture. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Hear also the prophet Habakkuk in today's reading. Far from hiding the Lord's

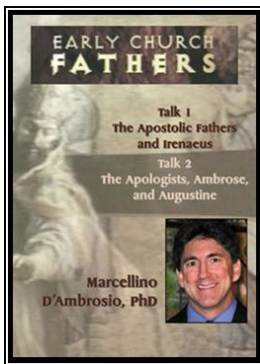
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reprimands, he dwells on them with attentive and anxious care. He says: I will stand upon my watch-tower and take up my post on the ramparts, keeping watch to see what he will say to me and what answer I will make to those who try to confute me. I beg you, my brothers, stand upon our watch-tower, for now is the time for battle. Let all our dealings be in the heart, where Christ dwells, in right judgement and wise counsel, but in such a way as to place no confidence in those dealings, nor rely upon our fragile defences.

This excerpt from a sermon by [St. Bernard of Clairvaux](#) (Sermo 5 de diversis, 1-4: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 6, 1(1970) 98-103) is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Tuesday in the 23rd week of Ordinary Time.

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