

To the Parents of a Novice – from the 12th century Cistercian Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux

If God is making your son his own, as well as yours, so that he may become even richer, even more noble, even more distinguished and, what is better than all this, so that from being a sinner he may become a saint, what do either you or he lose? But he must prepare himself for the kingdom which has been prepared for him from the beginning of the world...

Knowing that he is tender and delicate perhaps you are afraid for his health under the harshness of our life... Have comfort, do not worry, I shall look after him like a father and he will be to me a son until the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, shall receive him from my hands. Do not be sad about your Geoffrey or shed any tears on his account, for he is going quickly to joy and not sorrow.

I will be for him both a mother and a father, both a brother and a sister. I will make the crooked path straight for him and the rough places smooth. I will temper and arrange all things that his soul may advance and his body not suffer. He will serve the Lord with joy and gladness, 'his song will be of the Lord's, for great is the glory of the Lord'.