

## ST BERNARD ON THE OPUS DEI

*(This passage occurs at the end of his forty-seventh Sermon on the Song of Songs. He has just finished commenting on the words 'I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys'.)*

I SHOULD like to go straight on now to consider what the Bridegroom says about his most dear Bride; but the hour forbids it. For, according to our Rule, nothing is to be put before the Work of God. That was the name by which our father Benedict desired that we should call the solemn rites of praise, which are rendered daily in the oratory; and the fact that he so named it shows how greatly he desired that we should give ourselves to it with our whole hearts. I exhort you, therefore, beloved, to apply yourselves to the divine praises with your whole attention and with energy. When I say energy, I mean that you should wait upon the Lord with zest, as well as reverence; you should not be lazy and drowsy, yawning and sparing your voices, lopping your words off short in the middle and leaving whole words out; you must not sing through your noses in a soft, feeble, womanish voice, but must pronounce the utterances of the Holy Spirit with the manly voice and disposition that their dignity requires. And, when I say you should recite your Office with your whole attention, I mean that, while you chant, you should think of nothing except what you are chanting. It is not only empty, idle thoughts that I am bidding you avoid; at that time, and in that place, you must repress also all thoughts about the work that some of you are given for the common good, although at other times such thoughts must often occupy your minds. I would even advise you not to take with you, when you go to choir, the thoughts that were suggested to you by the books that you were reading in the cloister just before, or those which you may get from hearing me discourse, here in this place of listening to the Holy Spirit. They are profitable thoughts; but they will be of small profit to you, if you turn them over while you sing the psalms! For the Holy Spirit does not like you to bring forward at that time something other than your duty, which makes you neglect the duty that you should be doing.

*Translated by a Religious of C.S.M.V.*