

Reflection Monday Advent Week 2 - St Ambrose – 2020

St Ambrose of Milan was born in Trier (Germany) between 337 and 340, to a Roman family. He was educated at Rome and trained with Roman advocates and administrators at Sirmium (capital of Illyria). About 372 he became prefect of Liguria and Emilia whose capital was Milan. In 374 the bishopric of Milan became vacant. Ambrose tried to pacify the conflict between Catholics and Arians over the appointment of a new bishop, but the people demanded that he become their bishop. Being a layman and unbaptized, coerced by the people and by the emperor, he was baptized, ordained, and installed as bishop within a week, on 7th December 374. He immediately gave his money to the poor and his land to the Church and set about learning theology. Knowing Greek, he was able to read both Eastern and Western theologians and philosophers. He was assiduous in carrying out his office, acting with charity to all: a true shepherd and teacher of the faithful. Unimpressed by status, when Emperor Theodosius ordered the massacre of 7,000 people in Thessalonica, Ambrose forced him to do public penance. He defended the rights of the Church and attacked the Arian heresy with learning, firmness and gentleness. He wrote a number of hymns still in use today. Ambrose was key to the conversion of St Augustine, impressing Augustine by his intelligence and scholarship. He died on Holy Saturday, 4th April 397.

The psalmist (Ps 88(89)) echoes the life of St Ambrose: *I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.* Ambrose continues to inspire us today by his dedicated life and his writings. He lived in the example of the Good Shepherd through the care and healing he showed. He led not only St Augustine to Christ but many others. He showed the love and compassion of the Good Shepherd, truly cared for his sheep and did everything to protect them from harm. Ambrose has been and is a lasting blessing to the Church.

Be inspired by his wisdom:

It is not from your own goods that you give to the beggar; it is a portion of his own that you are restoring to him. The Earth belongs to all. So, you are paying back a debt and think you are making a gift to which you are not bound.

It is a better thing to save souls for the Lord than to save treasures. He who sent forth his apostles without gold had not need of gold to form his Church. The Church possesses gold, not to hoard, but to scatter abroad and come to the aid of the unfortunate.

No one is good but God alone. What is good is therefore divine, what is divine is therefore good.

No one heals himself by wounding another.

A preacher tells his congregation, "Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. "

*"To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read **Mark 17.**" The following Sunday, the preacher asks who read it, with every hand going up. The preacher smiles and says, "Mark has only sixteen chapters. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying."*

