**[F]**

Translated letter:

To the most illustrious queen of Jerusalem, Melisende, Bernard abbot of Clairvaux, to find grace with the Lord.

Given the multiple cares and affairs of the royal court, it would seem quite inappropriate for me to write if I were concerned only with the glory of your kingdom, your power and the line of your nobility. All of these are seen by the eyes of men, and those who do not have them envy those who do, and call that man blessed who has them. But what is this blessedness in possessing those things which all dry up swiftly like grass and fall swiftly like the fruits of plants. These are good, but unstable, mutable, they will pass away and perish as goods of the flesh. It is said about the flesh and its goods: all flesh is grss and all its glory is like the flower of grass.

It was necessary to write to you that these things not be greatly revered, in which grace is deceitful and beauty vain. Accept the little I say; for though I have much to say to you, I nonetheless make my words brief becuse of the many concerns you and I have. Accept this brief but useful counsel from a distant land, from which as from a small seed a great crop may later rise; accept, I say, counsel from the hand of a friend who seeks not his good but your honor. For no one can be a more faithful counsellor to you than one who loves not what you possess but you.

With the king your husband dead and the young king not yet ready to bear the business of the kingdom and to carry out the office of king, the eyes of all look to you and on you alone the whole weight of the kingdom falls. You must put your hand to strong things and show a man in a woman, doing what is to be done in the spirit of counsel and fortitude. You must dispose all things so prudently and moderately that all who see them will think you a king rather than a queen from your acts, lest perhaps the people might say, "where is the king of Jerusalem?" "But I am not," you say, "capable of this. These are great things, beyond my strength and my knowledge. These are the deeds of men, while I am a woman, weak of body, unstable of heart, not prudent of counsel, not accustomed to affairs." I know, daughter, I know these are great things, but I also know this, that the swellings of the sea are wondrous, and the Lord is wondrous on high. These are great, but our Lord is great and his power is great.

Original letter:

Illustrissimae Ierosolymorum reginae Milisendi, Bernardus Claravallensis abbas: invenire gratiam apud Dominum.

Inter multiplices curas et negotia regalis aulae satis incongruum mihi scribere videtur, si in te tantum gloriam regni tui, potentiam tuam et lineam nobilitatis respexissem. Et haec omnia videntur in oculis hominum, et qui non habent, invident habentibus ea, et beatum dicunt hominem cuius haec sunt. Sed quae est ista beatitudo in possidendis illis, quae omnia "tamquam fenum velociter arescunt et quemadmodum olera herbarum cito decidunt"! Bona sunt haec, sed mobilia, sed mutabilia, sed praeteritura et peritura, quia bona carnis. Porro de carne et honis eius dictum est: "Omnis caro fenum et omnis gloria eius tamquam flos feni." Scribentem ergo ad te non multum ista revereri oportuit, in quibus "fallax gratia et vana est pulchritudo." Accipe paucis quae dico; nam etsi multa habeam tibi dicere, verbum tamen faciam abbreviatum propter multas curas tuas et meas. Accipe breve consilium, sed utile, de terra longinqua, de quo tamquam de parvo semine multa seges surgat in posterum; accipe, inquam, consilium de manu amici, non commodum suum quaerentis, sed honorem tuum. Nullus siquidem tibi fidelior ad consilium esse potest quam qui non tua, sed qui te diligit. Mortuo rege viro tuo, et parvulo rege adhuc minus idoneo ad portanda negotia regni et ad prosequendum regis officium, oculi omnium in te respiciunt et in te solam universa regni moles inclinata recumbit. Opus est ut manum tuam mittas ad fortia et in muliere exhibeas virum, agens ea quae agenda sunt in spiritu consilii et fortitudinis. Ita prudenter et moderate oportet te cuncta disponere, ut omnes, qui te viderint, ex operibus regem te potius quam reginam existiment, "ne forte dicant in gentibus: 'Ubi est rex Ierosolymorum?'" "Sed non sum," inquies, "ad ista sufficiens. Magna enim haec sunt; supra vires meas, et supra scientiam meam. Opera haec opera sunt viri: ego autem mulier sum, corpore debilis, mobilis corde, nec provida consilio, nec assueta negotiis." Scio, filia, scio, quia magna sunt haec; sed et hoc scio quia, etsi "mirabiles elationes maris, mirabilis in altis dominus." Magna sunt haec, sed "magnus dominus noster et magna virtus eius."

*Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. LeClercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Eds. Cisterciennes, 1979), v.8, ep.354

Translation and text taken from <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/246.html>

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