

Saint Anselm was born almost a thousand years ago in the north of Italy, in 1033. As a child, he showed a strong interest in learning. He was curious about the world and often thought about God, asking questions about things that others might simply accept. When he left home, he travelled to France, where he studied at the Benedictine Abbey of Bec in Normandy. There he found a new passion for learning about the faith, and soon decided to join the monastery, with a clearer sense of purpose.

At the monastery, Anselm grew in wisdom and holiness. He learned the ways of monastic life through prayer, study, and work. His love for God and learning became stronger, and he spent many hours thinking and praying. He helped others grow in faith.

Because of his wisdom, Anselm was asked to teach new monks. He was a patient and caring teacher who explained complex ideas in simple ways. He made learning accessible without losing its depth. He believed that understanding took time, and he was willing to give that time. In 1078, he became an abbot and continued to write about the faith. His years there prepared him for his future role as Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1093, he was chosen for this role. At first he did not want it, feeling too weak for such responsibility, but he accepted it when asked, trusting that he was being called to serve.

As archbishop, Anselm faced many difficulties. He wanted to strengthen the Church and guide people in faith, but the kings of England wanted control over it. This led to conflict, and he was sent into exile more than once. Even so, he remained faithful and continued to defend what he believed was right, showing courage and steadiness in the face of pressure. He returned to England and continued his work until his death in 1109. His time as archbishop showed not only intelligence, but also resilience and trust in God.

Saint Anselm is best known for his teaching that faith and reason belong together. He believed that faith comes first, and that understanding grows from it. His famous phrase, “faith seeking understanding,” expresses this clearly. This connects closely with what we heard in the first reading. We are told that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, and that we may come to know his love, a love that goes beyond what we can fully understand. Anselm’s life reflects this. He sought to understand God, yet he knew that God is always greater than our thinking. His life shows that faith is not only about believing, but about seeking, learning, and remaining open to something deeper. He encourages us to love God with both heart and mind, and to trust

that, in seeking, we are being led towards the light. Remember, faith is not a leap into the dark, but a leap into the light.

And so we end by hearing the prayer of St Anselm of Canterbury, you can follow the prayer on the back of your order of service if you want.

O my God, teach my heart
where and how to seek You,
where and how to find You.
You are my God and You are my all
and I have never seen You.
You have made me and remade me,
You have bestowed on me
all the good things I possess,
Still I do not know You.
I have not yet done
that for which I was made.
Teach me to seek You.
I cannot seek You unless You teach me
or find You unless You show Yourself to me.
Let me seek You in my desire,
let me desire You in my seeking.
Let me find You by loving You,
let me love You when I find You.
Amen.