

Bridget (Birgitta) of Sweden
Mystic, Religious
Patron Saint of Sweden

October 8

Bridget (or Birgitta) was born in Sweden about 1303. She came from a very prosperous family, and at the age of 13 or 14 was married to a pious nobleman, by whom she had eight children, one of whom, Catherine, is also honoured as a saint. She and her husband lived at the court of the Swedish king, Magnus II. From 1335 Bridget attempted to persuade the royal family to reform their life-style.

Bridget made various pilgrimages, and on one of these to Compostella in Spain in 1344 her husband died. After that Bridget devoted herself to her religious inclinations. About 1346 she founded the Order of the Holy Saviour (Brigittines) at Vadstena. In 1349 Bridget went to Rome to seek papal approval for her order. She never returned to Sweden, but continued her austere discipline in Rome, while continuing to make pilgrimages, including one to the Holy Land. She devoted herself to the care of the sick, the poor and pilgrims. She died in 1373.

From the age of seven, Bridget saw visions of Christ crucified, and during her solitary life she had many more visions and revelations about prominent people of her time. The accounts of her many visions were later published in eight volumes. Those covering the life of our Lord are amazing for their graphic depiction and close attention to detail. These visions were greatly valued in the Middle Ages, though some theologians questioned their orthodoxy. We have access to her work only through the editions issued by her directors, who exercised a degree of control over the material. These visions and revelations formed the basis of her actions, always with the emphasis on charity rather than spiritual favours. Bridget corresponded with popes and princes, urging them to reform in the face of the wrath of God's justice. In particular she tried to persuade Pope Clement VI to return to Rome from Avignon. Bridget also tried to influence King Magnus who, while never fully reforming, gave her the lands and buildings to found a monastery for men and women of her order. The Brigittines are still in existence, though there is no longer an order of monks.

For Liturgical Use

Bridget of Sweden was born about 1303. After some years of marriage, during which she bore eight children, Bridget was widowed in 1344. She then began a life of solitude and contemplation. She disliked intensely the misuse of power, and corresponded with popes and princes in her efforts for reform. She was the founder of a monastery in Sweden for men and women, the order known as the Brigittines. After 1349 she lived in Rome and devoted herself to charitable works and pilgrimages until her death in 1373.

Sentence

You are to me a rock and a fortress, O God; for your name's sake lead me and guide me.

Psalm 31:3

Collects

God our hope and strength,
by your grace Bridget's visions of Christ's sufferings
led her to challenge corruption in high places
and to work for the poor, the sick and the pilgrims;

grant us such a vision of your purpose
that we may be emboldened
in our service to you and to all people;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

God of the praying widow,
we praise you for Bridget, mystic and visionary,
who saw her vocation
to gather a praying community,
to rebuke rulers and authorities,
and still be at one with you.

Psalms 27:1-8 119:41-48

Readings

Amos 3:1-8	Knowledge of God's purpose	
2 Corinthians 4:7-15		God's abounding grace
Luke 22:24-27	One who serves	

Post Communion Sentence

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 5:6