

723 SAINT BRIDGET OF SWEDEN, PATRON OF EUROPE (JULY 23RD, 2021)

Readings for Today: *Galatians 2: 19 – 20; Psalm 33 (34) 1 – 10; John 15: 1 – 8.*

Saint Bridget is one of the Patron Saints of Europe.

She was born in 1303, married aged fourteen, and became the mother of eight children. In her early thirties she was called to the Swedish court as principal lady-in-waiting to the queen. There she tried, without success, to reform the conduct of the king and queen, who refused to take her visions seriously. When her husband died, she spent three years as a penitent at a Cistercian monastery, where her visions became more frequent. She then founded at Vadstena an order of monks and nuns (now called Bridgettines), in which she as abbess ruled over temporal matters, while the monks took the lead in spiritual affairs.

In 1349 Bridget left Sweden and went to Rome to obtain papal approval for her order and for the jubilee year of 1350. She never returned to Sweden, spending her time in Italy or on pilgrimages. During the remaining twenty-three years of her life she continued to have visions, many of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of the Passion of Christ. But some of her visions involved the political life of the papacy. Like her younger contemporary, Catherine of Siena, she worked to persuade the popes to return from Avignon to Rome, but with little success.

She died in 1373 and was canonized in 1391: in 1394 her body was returned to her abbey of St Mary at Vadstena, where it remains, despite the dispersal of the community in 1596. A new foundation – the monastery of *Pax Mariae (Mary's Peace)* – was made in 1963

The only Bridgettine foundation in England was Sion in Isleworth, founded by King Henry V in 1415. It lasted until dissolution in 1539, but the community had a continuous existence until 2011.

Here is one of the prayers to our crucified Lord which Saint Bridget wrote:

O Jesus, Mirror of Truth, symbol of unity, link of charity, remember the multitude of wounds with which you were covered from head to foot, torn and reddened by the spilling of your adorable blood. What is there that you could have done for us which you have not done? May the fruit of your sufferings be renewed in my soul by the faithful remembrance of your passion, and may your love in my heart increase each day, until I see you in eternity, you who are the treasury of every real good and every joy, which I beg you to grant me, O sweetest Jesus, in heaven. Amen.