

Saint Brigid of Sweden

1303 - 1373

PURGATORY

Brigid was born in June of 1303 in the castle of Finsta near Uppsala in Sweden. Her father was “lagman”, which is judge and governor of the Upplan region, and her mother Ingeborga was a noble.

At fourteen years of age, according to the customs of that period, her father gave her in marriage to Ulf Gudmarrson, the son of the governor of the Vastergotland. Brigid would have wanted to enter a convent, but she conformed to the will of her parents.

In 1335, the King of Sweden Magnus II married Bianca of Dampierre, and Brigid who was the sovereign’s cousin was called to the court.

She had great influence on the young sovereigns, and as long as she was listened to, Sweden had many good laws and the inhumane and unjust customs of the day were abolished.

In the solitude of Alvastra, she founded a new religious community called the Order of the Most Holy Savior, composed of dual monasteries, that is men and women religious, rigorously divided and the only point of encounter was in the church for common prayer. All were placed under the guidance of one single abbess, representative of the Virgin Mary. Arrived in Rome for the Holy Year 1350, she remained forever in the eternal city. She expended herself very much for the

return of the Pope to Rome. In 1367 it seemed that her prayers had come true, Pope Urban V returned from Avignon, but his sojourn in Rome was brief, because in 1370 he departed again for France, regardless of the fact that Brigid had foretold him of his imminent death if he did that; in fact, as soon as he reached Avignon, on the 24th of September 1370, he died.

At the center of the spirituality of Saint Brigid we find the mysteries of the Passion of Christ and of the glories and the dolors (sorrows) of Mary. Brigid knew to gather and emphasize the centrality of Mary in the history of salvation, next to Christ and united to Christ, according to the saving plan of God. She died on the 23rd of July 1373. Boniface IX canonized her in 1391. John Paul II on the 1st of October 1999 proclaimed her Co-Patroness of Europe.

In her revelations it is told that one day she had a vision of Purgatory. She heard the voice of an Angel who, consoling the souls, was repeating these words: “Blessed is he that, living still upon the earth, gives aid to the souls in Purgatory with their prayers and good deeds, because the justice of God demands that without the help of the living, these would necessarily need to be purified in fire.” At the same moment, from the profundity of the abyss he heard a group of voices that said: “O Christ, most just judge, in the



name of your infinite mercy, do not look upon our errors that are without number, but rather to the infinite merits of your most precious Passion, and beyond, we beg of you, in the heart of the clergy sentiments of true charity, where for their prayers, mortifications, almsgiving and indulgences applicable to our suffrage, we are aided in our most extreme necessities.” And he heard yet other voices with added: “Thanks be given to those who bring us relief in our wretchedness; your power is infinite, O Lord, render a hundredfold to our benefactors, who conduct us sooner into the sojourn of your divine light.”

