July 23th: Memorial of Saint Bridget of Sweden, Religious, patron saint of Europe

Gospel text (*Lk* 2,36-38): There was also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. After leaving her father's home, she had been seven years with her husband, and since then she had been continually about the Temple, serving God as a widow night and day (...).

Saint Bridget, religious, Co-Patroness of Europe (1303-1373)

Fr. Joan Ant. MATEO i García
(Tremp, Lleida, Spain)

Today, we celebrate the festivity of one of the Patrons of Europe, St. Bridget or Brigitta. One hot morning, on July 23rd 1373, in Rome, while Peter, prior of Alvastra, was celebrating the Mass in her cell, Bridget passed away while muttering “into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit”, when the priest was raising the Host. She was 70 years old and she was culminating a life of faithfulness to God's designs, in similar manner as prophetess Anna, daughter of Phanuel (cf. Lk 2:36-37).

St. Bridget's life is fascinating: daughter, wife, mother of eight children, widow, princess and counselor to kings, pursued a religious life, foundress... But, most of all, she was Jesus' beloved wife, whom He confided heavenly secrets to, while introducing her to the love revealed in His Passion. John Paul II included her amongst the Patrons of Europe. God revealed Himself in her visions and she submissively accepted God's designs. She was a faithful instrument and greatly influential in the renewal of the Europe of her time.

—“Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You redeemed our souls with your precious blood and most holy death, and in your mercy you led them from exile back to eternal life” (St. Bridget).