

July 23th: Bridget, 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 in fasting and prayer. She was now eighty-four. Coming up at that time, she gave praise to God and spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

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Fr. Joan Ant. MATEO i García
(Trem, 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 Alvastrâ, 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, who: «was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer» (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. Just as Anna, Bridget served her Lord as a married woman as well as a widow. Like Anna, she was worshipping her Lord night and day.

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. Quite an example for us today. We are, also today, hoping that Europe will be at last liberated of its enslavements and its Christian blood could shine again. God relies upon us for that. If we are his faithful instruments, He will carry out great deeds through us. Let us hear God's voice in the silence and in our prayer. Let us give up so many superfluous and futile things. Let our wealth and riches be our Lord only. And let us not ever lose our illusion to love God more every day and grow in sanctity.

«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).