

ZE10102709 - 2010-10-27

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-30782?l=english>

CHRISTIAN WIVES, SPOUSES HAVE MODEL IN ST. BRIDGET

Pope Reflects on Life of Co-Patroness of Europe

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 27, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI offered St. Bridget of Sweden as an example for all Christians to follow -- in particular Christian mothers and widows -- and invoked the intercession of the co-patroness of Europe to obtain Christian unity.

The Pope reflected today on the life of the 14th-century mystic during the weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square. The Pontiff said the saint's life of holiness "makes her an eminent figure in the history of Europe," and that she "attests to how Christianity had permeated profoundly the life of all the peoples of this continent."

He recalled that St. Bridget (1303-1370) was declared co-patroness of Europe in 2000 by Pope John Paul II with the hopes that she, who lived in the 14th century "when Western Christianity had not yet been wounded by division," would "intercede effectively before God to obtain the much-awaited grace of the full unity of all Christians."

"We want to pray," the Pope added, "for this same intention, which we consider so important, so that Europe will be able to be nourished from its own Christian roots, invoking the powerful intercession of St. Bridget of Sweden, faithful disciple of God, co-patroness of Europe."

Bridget was born into a noble Swedish family, and was married for 28 years to her husband, Ulf. The couple had eight children, one of who is St. Catherine of Sweden.

The Pope noted that Bridget "exercised a very positive influence on her own family that, thanks to her presence, became a true 'domestic church,'" and that her life was one that exemplified an "authentic 'marital spirituality.'"

"Together, Christian spouses can follow a path of sanctity, supported by the grace of the sacrament of

Marriage," he said. "Not infrequently, as happened in the lives of St. Bridget and Ulf, it is the wife who with her religious sensibility, with delicacy and gentleness, is able to make the husband follow a path of faith.

"I am thinking, with recognition, of so many women who, day in day out, still today illumine their families with their testimony of Christian life.

"May the Spirit of the Lord give rise to the sanctity of Christian spouses, to show the world the beauty of marriage lived according to the values of the Gospel: love, tenderness, mutual help, fecundity in generating and educating children, openness and solidarity to the world, participation in the life of the Church."

Revelations

Benedict XVI said Bridget began the second period of her life after the death of her husband, and offered the saint as a model as well for widows, noting that the saint "Renounced further marriage to deepen her union with the Lord through prayer, penance and works of charity."

After giving all her material goods to the poor, Bridget took up residence at the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, where she began to receive divine revelations. Her experiences were gathered into a series of eight books entitled "Revelationes" (Revelations).

The Pope explained that the revelations are varied in "content and style," sometimes including dialogues between the Divine Persons, the Virgin Mary and the saints, and sometimes they are simply narrations of visions that the saint had.

"Not a few of her revelations," he added, "were directed, in the form of warnings, including severe ones, to the believers of her time, including the religious and political authorities, so that they would live their Christian life coherently; but she did this with an attitude of respect and complete fidelity to the magisterium of the Church, in particular to the Successor of the Apostle Peter."

Bridget was also a founder of a religious order, known today as the Brigittines. The Pope highlighted the order as it was composed of both monks and nuns under the authority of an abbess, something which he said was common in those times.

"This is an element that should not surprise us," he explained. "In the Middle Ages there were monasteries

founded with masculine and feminine branches, but with the practice of the same monastic rule, which provided for the direction of an abbess.

"In fact, the great Christian tradition recognizes the dignity proper to women, as well as -- taking as an example Mary, Queen of the Apostles -- her own place in the Church that, without coinciding with the ordained priesthood, is also important for the spiritual growth of the Community.

"Moreover, the collaboration of consecrated men and women, always with respect toward their specific vocation, is of great importance in today's world."

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