

The Collect of the Day: O God, who beholds all things and whose judgment is always mercy; by the example of your servant Birgitta of Sweden, give to us in this life the vision of your kingdom, where Jesus Christ is all and in all, that we may pattern our earthly lives on things heavenly, where our lives are hidden with Christ in you; who with him and the Holy Spirit live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 12 said responsively by the half-verse

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- 1 Help me, Lord, for there is no godly one left; * **the faithful have vanished from among us.**
- 2 All speak falsely with their neighbours; * **with a smooth tongue they speak from a double heart.**
- 3 Oh, that the Lord would cut off all smooth tongues, * **and close the lips that utter proud boasts!**
- 4 Those who say, "With our tongue will we prevail; * **our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"**
- 5 "Because the needy are oppressed, and the poor cry out in misery, *
I will rise up," says the Lord, "and give them the help they long for."
- 6 The words of the Lord are pure words, * **like silver refined from ore and purified seven times in the fire.**
- 7 O Lord, watch over us * **and save us from this generation for ever.**
- 8 The wicked prowl on every side, * **and that which is worthless is highly prized by everyone.**

First Reading: A Reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (14:6-12)

Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? It is the same way with lifeless instruments that produce sound, such as the flute or the harp. If they do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is being played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So with yourselves; if in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is being said? For you will be speaking into the air. There are doubtless many different kinds of sounds in the world, and nothing is without sound. If then I do not know the meaning of a sound, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. So with yourselves; since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew (11:2-15)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!"

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Birgitta of Sweden, Mystic, 1373: Birgitta Birgersdotter came from a noble Swedish family and was born in 1303. Early in her life she discerned a religious vocation, but was married against her will at the age of 13 to a member of the Swedish nobility. The couple had eight children. Birgitta sought to live a holy, religious life. When her husband was absent, she openly practiced a strict asceticism, and when he was home, she did so secretly. Both she and her husband became members of the Franciscan Third Order, which admitted laypeople. From childhood, Birgitta had experienced visions. Christ, Mary, and the saints spoke with her often in Swedish and shared with her warnings intended for others, which Birgitta would write down or dictate to her confessor. Eventually these messages became increasingly political, which caused her great discomfort. Although Birgitta enjoyed a good relationship with the royal family, she sharply criticized the king, becoming a symbolic leader for the aristocratic Swedish opposition. Birgitta advised popes and rulers throughout Europe, and criticized the extravagant lifestyles of the clergy, monastic orders, and laity, challenging four popes to return to Rome from Avignon. She also tried to persuade the rulers of England and France to negotiate peace and end the war that would later be called the Hundred Years' War. Because of her struggles, she was recognized throughout Europe as an uncomfortable counselor and a visionary.

After the death of her husband in 1344, Birgitta devoted herself entirely to the religious life. The Order she founded, the Brigittines, was based on the revelations she had received earlier in her life. Her monastery would always have a women's and men's cloister next to one another, joined by a shared church, in which the monks, nuns, and laity would pray together. The abbess would be in charge of both the men's and women's cloister. To get papal approval for her order's founding, Birgitta traveled to Rome. In 1370, Urban V recognized the new order and allowed its foundation at Vadstena, Sweden. Birgitta was, in fact, not the first abbess there, but rather her daughter Catherine. Except for several pilgrimages, Birgitta remained in Rome for the rest of her life. She ministered to both rich and poor, sheltered the homeless, and worked untiringly for the return of the pope from Avignon to Rome. In 1372, she was spurred by a vision to visit the Holy Land. On the return trip from Jerusalem Birgitta fell ill and entered eternal life on July 23, 1373. In Sweden she is celebrated on October 7, which is the anniversary of her canonization.