



Podcast: Saint Bridget Patroness of Europe, 23rd July 2021
Mgr Daniel McHugh

Journey of Faith - Life from Holy Mass - with Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Hello, I am Monsignor Daniel McHugh.

I was especially happy and blessed to be invited to the celebration in St Peter's, Rome, for the Proclamation of St Bridget of Sweden, St Catherine of Siena, and St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross as Co-Patronesses of Europe in October 1999 by Pope St John Paul II. I was in Rome at that time on behalf of Archbishop Couve de Murville, to sign the Agreement on behalf of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, which bought the Bridgettine Sisters to Maryvale Institute in 1999.

The Pope took this initiative as we stood on the eve of the third millennium. His opening words in the Motu Proprio reads: "The hope of building a more just world, a world more worthy of the human person, stirred by the expectation of the third millennium, must be coupled with an awareness that human efforts are of no avail if not accompanied by divine grace," and he quoted Psalm 127:1 "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain". He went on "This must also be a consideration for those who in these years are seeking to give Europe a new configuration, which would help the Continent to learn from the richness of her history and to eliminate the baneful inheritances of the past, so as to respond to the challenges of a changing world with an originality rooted in her best traditions."

Pope John Paul pointed to the fact that Christianity has shaped the culture of the Continent and even today with "the gradual detachment of culture from the horizon of Faith, the role played by Faith has continued to be significant." The Holy Father said: "In the building up of Europe, Christians have a duty to make a specific contribution, one which will be all the more valid and effective to the extent that they themselves are renewed in the light of the Gospel." He pointed to the Saints as models for us on our journey and some in particular as representative of our history. On 31st December 1980 the Pope had declared Sts Cyril and Methodius, alongside St Benedict, as Co-Patrons of Europe, being pioneers of evangelization of the East, and now he was choosing three women; two from the heart of the Middle Ages and one of the 20th Century, who were outstanding for their faithful love of the Church and their witness to the Cross. And he said this: "I feel that the decision to choose this 'feminine' model of holiness is particularly significant within the context of the providential tendency in the Church and society of our time to recognize ever more clearly the dignity and specific gifts of women."

The first of the three great figures, Bridget, was born of an aristocratic family in 1303 in Fintsta, in the Swedish region of Uppland. She is known above all for being a mystic and foundress of the Order of the most Holy Savior. The first part of her life, however, was as

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a married woman with 8 children (one of whom Catherine, became a Saint too). She and her husband Ulf are models in the first place of Christian family life. It was on his death that Bridget recognized the voice of Christ entrusting her with a new mission and guiding her step by step by extraordinary mystical graces. Leaving Sweden in 1349 Bridget settled in Rome. This was a decisive step expanding her mind and heart geographically and culturally, as well as spiritually with her Pilgrimages to places of the Saints, and finally to the Holy Land Between 1371 and 1372.

It was in Rome as a student 1961 – 1968 that I encountered the Bridgettine Sisters serving Mass in their Chapel. There was no doubt in my mind when Maryvale Institute was developing and adults were visiting and studying the teaching of the Church that the Bridgettines, with their focus on the spiritual life, through the Office of the Church and Holy Mass, together with their work in Hospitality, no doubt that they fitted into the culture of Maryvale perfectly. We thank God for their service over the past 22 years: “contemplatives at the heart of the Diocese, praying for us all” as one Priest put it. As they move on to pastures new, we are conscious that “our loss will be to the gain of others.” Many people have written to the Sisters in appreciation: the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters wrote....

My dear sisters,

Thank you ever so much for the life we shared together here at Maryvale.

We greatly appreciate your constant support and prayers.

We cannot thank you enough.

May God bless and reward you abundantly.

The Reading is John 15:1-8

The Prayer is the Collect for the Feast

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