

Readings for Thursday, September 17, 2026

Hildegard of Bingen – *Mystic and Scholar*, 1179

Psalm 104:25-34

- 25 O LORD, how manifold are your works! *
in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 26 Yonder is the great and wide sea
with its living things too many to number, *
creatures both small and great.
- 27 There move the ships,
and there is that Leviathan, *
which you have made for the sport of it.
- 28 All of them look to you *
to give them their food in due season.
- 29 You give it to them; they gather it; *
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.
- 30 You hide your face, and they are terrified; *
you take away their breath,
and they die and return to their dust.
- 31 You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; *
and so you renew the face of the earth.
- 32 May the glory of the LORD endure for ever; *
may the LORD rejoice in all his works.
- 33 He looks at the earth and it trembles; *
he touches the mountains and they smoke.
- 34 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; *
I will praise my God while I have my being.

Ecclesiasticus 43:1-12

The pride of the higher realms is the clear vault of the sky,
as glorious to behold as the sight of the heavens.
The sun, when it appears, proclaims as it rises
what a marvellous instrument it is, the work of the Most High.
At noon it parches the land,
and who can withstand its burning heat?
A man tending a furnace works in burning heat,
but three times as hot is the sun scorching the mountains;
it breathes out fiery vapours,
and its bright rays blind the eyes.
Great is the Lord who made it;
at his orders it hurries on its course.
It is the moon that marks the changing seasons,
governing the times, their everlasting sign.
From the moon comes the sign for festal days,
a light that wanes when it completes its course.
The new moon, as its name suggests, renews itself;
how marvellous it is in this change,
a beacon to the hosts on high,
shining in the vault of the heavens!
The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven,
a glittering array in the heights of the Lord.
On the orders of the Holy One they stand in their appointed places;
they never relax in their watches.
Look at the rainbow, and praise him who made it;
it is exceedingly beautiful in its brightness.
It encircles the sky with its glorious arc;
the hands of the Most High have stretched it out.

John 3:16-21

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

Collect:

God of all times and seasons: Give us grace that we, after the example of your servant Hildegard, may both know and make known the joy and jubilation of being part of your creation, and show forth your glory in the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Hildegard of Bingen

Mystic and Scholar, 1179

Hildegard of Bingen, born in 1098 in the Rhineland Valley, was a mystic, poet, composer, dramatist, doctor, and scientist. Her parents' tenth child, she was tithed to the church and raised by the anchoress Jutta in a cottage near the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg.

Drawn by their life of silence and prayer, other women joined them, finding the freedom, rare outside of women's religious communities, to develop their intellectual gifts. They organized as a convent under the authority of the abbot of Disibodenberg, with Jutta as abbess. When Jutta died, Hildegard, then 38, became abbess. Later she founded independent convents at Bingen (1150) and Eibingen (1165), with the Archbishop of Mainz as her only superior.

From childhood, Hildegard experienced dazzling spiritual visions. When she was 43, a voice commanded her to tell what she saw. Thus began an outpouring of extraordinarily original writings, illustrated by unusual and wondrous illuminations. These works abound with feminine imagery for God and God's creative activity.

In 1147, Bernard of Clairvaux recommended her first book of visions, *Scivias*, to Pope Eugenius III, leading to papal authentication at the Synod of Trier. Hildegard quickly became famous, and was eagerly sought for counsel, becoming a correspondent of kings and queens, abbots and abbesses, archbishops and popes.

She carried out four preaching missions in northern Europe, which was an unprecedented activity for a woman. She also practiced medicine, focusing on women's needs; published treatises on natural science and philosophy; and wrote a liturgical drama, *The Play of the Virtues*, in which the personified virtues sing their parts and the devil, condemned to live without music, can only speak. For Hildegard, music was essential to worship. Her liturgical compositions, unusual in structure and tonality, were described by her contemporaries as "chant of surpassing sweet melody" and "strange and unheard-of music."

Hildegard lived in a world accustomed to male governance. Yet within her convents, and to a surprising extent outside of them, she exercised a commanding spiritual authority based on confidence in her visions and considerable political astuteness. When she died in 1179 at the age of 81, she left a rich legacy which speaks eloquently across the ages.