

THE BRIGITTINES OF THE “ORDER OF THE MOST HOLY SAVIOUR”



Brigittine spirituality.

The essence of Brigittine spirituality is a focus on the Eucharist, the Passion of Our Lord in a Marian setting by means of liturgical prayers, drawing on the revelations of Saint Birgitta. Although the rule is Augustinian, in reality it breathes the spirit of Benedictine spirituality, namely contemplative with the centrality of *Opus Dei*, i.e. the Divine Office.

History of the Brigittine order.

Saint Birgitta founded the Order of the Most Holy Saviour in response to a direct command from Our Lord. In 1346. He commanded Saint Birgitta in a vision to found a new healthy vineyard, honouring His Mother. Our Lord himself dictated to her the rule of the future order. In the same way as with her other visions, Saint Birgitta has submitted the Divine instructions for the establishment of this Order and the Rules given to her by Our Lord to her spiritual advisers, drawn from the ranks of Swedish clergy. They pronounced these revelations to be inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Ref.

1. *The revelations of Saint Birgitta of Sweden vol.1* Transl. Dennis Sherby. Notes Bridget Morris, Oxford University Press 2006, p.12 & ff;
2. *God's Ambassadors*, Helen M.D. Redpath, Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, MN USA 1947, p.,52.)



Papal approval for the order was received in 1370, when Saint Birgitta was still living. The first Brigittine monastery in Vadstena was established in 1374, one year after the death of Saint Birgitta with Saint Catherine, Saint Birgitta's daughter, was its first abbess. Magister Petrus, one of the two priests who lived a religious type of life in common with Saint Birgitta and Saint Catherine in Rome, became the first Confessor General, i.e. the head of the Brigittine monks. Saint Birgitta herself never lived in the Vadstena monastery. She resided in Rome from 1350 until her death in 1373.

The Rule and Constitution envisaged double monasteries. The Brigittine order included men as well. There was strong reliance on priestly support for the Sisters from priests embracing the same type of spirituality. The Brigittine priests did not undertake external missions, but they preached on Sundays and Feastdays at the monastery's church. They also gave spiritual advice to visitors visiting the monastery. Originally, the Brigittine order included men as well. When residing in Rome, Saint Birgitta herself always had more than one priest in residence.

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In the wake of the Reformation, the male branches dwindled away, whilst women's communities weathered the storms a bit better. There were no efforts to re-establish double monasteries, consisting of Brigittine Brothers and Sisters.

The attempts to re-establish the male branches of the Brigittines all came to naught until the 1970-es, when Brother Benedict Kirby founded the Brigittine Brothers in the USA. At the beginning, the Brigittine Brothers had to move their home base several times, until finally they found their canonical home in Amity in the Archdiocese Portland.



Besides those communities of the Brigittine Sisters which remain purely contemplative, the Roman branch with an external apostolate came into being in the 20th century. This branch was born in the wake of Blessed Elisabeth Hesselblad's successful efforts to reclaim Saint Birgitta's original residence in Rome for the Brigittines.



For more information, see <http://brigittiniservitores.com>