

**17. September 2019
„Memory of Paradies“
St. Hildegard von Bingen**

Wis 8:1-6

Strongly she reaches from one end of the world to the other and she governs the whole world for its good. Wisdom I loved and searched for from my youth; I resolved to have her as my bride, I fell in love with her beauty. She enhances her noble birth by sharing God's life, for the Master of All has always loved her. Indeed, she shares the secrets of God's knowledge, and she chooses what he will do. If in this life wealth is a desirable possession, what is more wealthy than Wisdom whose work is everywhere? Or if it be the intellect that is at work, who, more than she, designs whatever exists?

Today we have the joy to speak about a saint whom we as "Harpa Dei" met especially through her music. She was raised to a church teacher and was a very important nun of the Benedictines in the Middle Ages.

In 1098 Hildegard von Bingen was born as the tenth child of Hildebert von Bermersheim and his wife Mechthild in Bermersheim near Alzey. At the age of eight, Hildegard was handed over by her parents to the Klausnerin Jutta von Sponheim on the Disibodenberg for spiritual education. In the monastery, the child Hildegard was taught to sing the psalms and the chants of David. The young Hildegard benefited from this comprehensive education. At the age of about 15, Hildegard takes the holy vows and becomes a Benedictine. At the age of 38, Hildegard was elected as the spiritual mother of the women's monastery.

Hildegard had the grace of mystical insights into the ways of God. The deeper mysteries of the divine scriptures were opened for her in visions. A commission set up by the Pope examined and confirmed the seer's gift of Hildegard von Bingen.

Hildegard acquires a high degree of attention far beyond the monastic community. Many people come to her to ask her for advice and help. It is known that she had an extensive correspondence with important personalities from politics and the Church. But even ordinary people turned

to her in this written form to seek her advice. Her letters to the people and to important personalities justify the reputation of the "Rhine Sibylle" as an ambassador of God. Her songs also offer a rich visionary perspective. Hildegard dies at 81.

Much could be said about St. Hildegard: about her writings, her medicine, her unusual preaching, etc. But we want to focus more on the holy music she could hear from the angels and wrote down the notes. That is why we choose from her many words a sentence that became very important for the mission entrusted to us by the Lord.

"In music, God has left people with the memory of the lost paradise"

In the daily meditations and in our mission, the Holy Music has a very important place for us. From St. Augustine comes the wonderful word that the prayer which is sung counts like a double prayer.

Holy Music - and this means the Gregorian chorale primarily for the Latin church - has almost a shadowy existence in the church of today. The Holy Music is replaced by less significant and often banal to completely unsuitable music for liturgical actions. But with this kind of music one loses what Hildegard calls the *"Memory of Paradise"*.

And indeed: if the Gregorian chorale is sung unartificially - the same applies to Byzantine chants in the Eastern Church - then it awakens the longing for heaven. Deeply, the soul can receive these chants and it is coming home. Today, however, one has to discover again the mystery of these chants, because the soul often does not receive this spiritual nourishment. This means however, that the Church loses a not inconsiderable dimension of her identity.

A comparison may help us to better understand what has been said: if, for example, we would not proclaim the word of God in the Holy Mass and would use instead fairy tales and stories, the important food of the Holy Words would be taken away. Over time, the soul even gets used to it, but remains unfulfilled. It is only when she encounters the Word of God again that she realizes the loss she has suffered.

This also can be said with the Holy Music. The soul is reminded of paradise, of its homeland, where she comes from and where God wants to lead her.

Only now when she meets the Holy Music she realizes what she was missing and she fell in love with her beauty. And also the next sentence from the above scripture reading can be said:.. She enhances her noble birth by sharing God's life, for the Master of All has always loved her.

St. Hildegard has helped us from Harpa Dei with her chants to discover more deeply the beauty of Gregorianic chants, and also the chants she wrote, which are related to Gregorian chants, are a memory of paradise.

With the Holy Music we rediscover essential areas of the identity of our Holy Church and the music gives the soul the food for which she desires in her depth.

Holy Music glorifies God. And to glorify God is greatest wisdom!