

ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN


A prophet is someone who listens to God's voice in a special way and communicates what is heard to his or her own community. It is easy for us to think of prophets only as John the Baptist or as those mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures -- but that is not the case. Hildegard von Bingen was recognized as a prophetess in her day, and her words continue to reveal God to us today.

Hildegard was born into a wealthy German family in 1098. As the last of 10 children, her parents decided to dedicate little Hildegard to the service of God. They sent her to be instructed by a recluse named Jutta, who, herself, was of noble lineage. Eventually, other women were drawn to these two women until it evolved into a nunnery following the Benedictine rule. Upon Jutta's death, Hildegard was elected to serve as abbess for the community.

Hildegard was an intelligent, gifted woman, and a strong leader for her community. She was a prolific writer, composing everything from liturgical music to treatises on medicine. All of these accomplishments alone would have been enough to make Hildegard remarkable; however, she might have done all of these things and still escaped our 21st century notice. Because of her high social position and power as an abbess, she also may have lived a life of comfort and security. What sets Hildegard apart is that she undertook the role of a prophetess. Like the prophets of Israel, Hildegard listened intently to God's voice and acted upon it. Hildegard took seriously God's command to her to "speak and write." She transcribed her visions and commentary about Church reform. These writings were widely acclaimed as being authentically inspired by God. Hildegard was even authorized to preach publicly, from monasteries to the public square. Hildegard, and those around her, recognized that serving God and serving the Church was not bound to one gender; all it takes is really listening to God's voice.



“There is the music of
Heaven in all things
and we have forgotten
how to hear it until we
sing.”
-St. Hildegard von
Bingen



PRAY

St. Hildegard, Pray for our Church, that she will always fully live her identity as Bride of Christ, that she will not fail in her task of bringing the Word of God to all people, and that she will appreciate the diversity of all her members as the people of God. Pray that our Church leaders will recognize the indispensable work of women in making up the mystical body of Christ, so that all may flourish in our communities. Pray for us, that, like you, we may truly listen to God's words in us today, and that we may have the courage to act on what we hear. Amen.

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