

THE CECILIAN

A NEWSLETTER TO HONOR ST. CECILIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR
AND A CHRONICLE OF MICHAELA SASSE'S DISCERNMENT AS A CONSECRATED VIRGIN LIVING IN THE WORLD

ISSUE NO. 9 | SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 | FEAST DAY OF ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

The prompting of the Lord to write an article about humility seemed obvious, yet overwhelming. How does one write about humility without sharing something personal and perhaps embarrassing? It may be possible, but it is not something I was able to figure out, so I will share a story where I found myself confronted by my pride and simply had to laugh, albeit after the fact.

In July, I served as a personal attendant at a friend's wedding in Hays, America. I had looked forward to this wedding for a long time! So many people that I loved would be together to celebrate the marriage of my friend to the man of her dreams!

Fr. Kade Megaffin gave the homily that day. It was clearly guided by the Holy Spirit. I spoke with Fr. Kade at the reception and shared how much I loved his homily. He received my compliments well, which led me to comment on how encouraged I was by his humility. This evolved into a discussion about the virtue of humility, and how I avoided praying the Litany of Humility as whenever I did, I found myself in an uncomfortable situation! Honestly, I have not said that prayer in several years for fear of enduring some sort of embarrassment.

As the Lord would have it, I would not have to say the Litany of Humility to have my pride dismantled. Shortly after my conversation with Fr. Kade ended, but still in the midst of pondering the virtue of humility, to my absolute horror the DJ made the following announcement to hundreds of people over the loudspeaker: "I would like to inform the owner of the white Jeep with Trego county license plates that your vehicle has been running in the parking lot for over two hours." As soon as I heard "white Jeep" I felt the heat rise to my face, and when that was followed by "Trego county license plates" I knew I was in trouble. THAT WAS MY CAR.

I wish I could say I readily acknowledged my mistake, but truthfully I sat in my seat until it would not be obvious that I was leaving to turn off my vehicle. Once the eyes of the wedding guests stopped roaming around in hopes of discovering the culprit, I grabbed my keys discreetly, then took care of an errand for the bride before walking out of the reception hall. There was no way I was going to stand up in a room with that many people as they waited to see who owned the air polluting Jeep! Sure enough, when I got to the parking lot, my headlights were on, and I heard the gentle hum of the engine. Sigh. *Mea culpa*.

If you think you possess humility, you will probably soon find out otherwise. St. Hildegard von Bingen, whose feast day we celebrate today, considered humility "queen of the virtues." Humility is the foundation upon which virtue is built; in the case of the four cardinal virtues of temperance, justice, fortitude, and prudence, humility may be thought of as the pin that holds them together. The term "cardinal" comes from the Latin word *cardo*, meaning hinge, indicating these virtues are the hinges upon which all moral life turns. Humility demolishes ego and allows other virtues to flourish.

G.K. Chesterton wrote in his book *Orthodoxy*, "The reason angels can fly is because they take themselves lightly." Pride is heavy, and it dragged Satan to the pit of hell. Once I returned to the reception hall, I told several friends about my mistake and was greeted with peals of laughter. I am still learning to laugh at myself, and my prayer is that we all learn to see the world through the eyes of God, as things truly are, and become a little lighter.



OUR LADY OF SORROWS - SEPTEMBER 15TH

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- That young people will encounter the transformative love of Jesus in the Eucharist as they participate in the Salina Diocese Eucharistic Adoration campaign, *In His Presence*
- Pray for our priests (and host something at your parish!) as we celebrate Priesthood Sunday on September 27th

ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Virgin, Doctor of the Church

St. Hildegard's feminine strength and authority, combined with her intellectual talents and mystical gifts, allowed her to be a courageous and outspoken presence to the Church leaders and political figures of her time. Hildegard was born in the year 1098 to a noble German family as the youngest of ten children. She was gifted at a young age with visions, although she initially did not understand their meaning. As a child, Hildegard was sent to be educated at a Benedictine monastery, where she was put under the care of a woman named Jutta, who taught her how to read, write, and pray the Psalms. The holiness of Jutta and Hildegard attracted other young women to them. As a result, they formed their own Benedictine convent and Hildegard received the religious habit at the age of fifteen.

After Jutta's death, Hildegard was appointed as the superior of the convent and moved it to a location independent of the nearby dominating Benedictine monastery, overcoming the opposition of the abbot and monks. Her exercise of the ministry of authority inspired the sisters in her community and utilized her many organizational, cultural, and spiritual gifts. The visions that Hildegard experienced as a child continued, and she confided them to a monk named Volmar, who encouraged her to record her mystical experiences. These were later compiled into her works *Scivias*, *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, and *Liber Divinorum Operum*. The content of Hildegard's mystical visions were primarily theological and referred to the events of salvation history, communicated to her in poetic and symbolic language.

Hildegard wrote extensively, even more than most scholars of her time, and her interests were varied. Her writings include the subjects of botany, cosmology, natural science, language, medicine, theology, music, poetry, and history. Her musical talent led her to compose hymns, antiphons, and songs that were joyfully performed in the monasteries. Hildegard had a great love for God's creation, the pinnacle of which is the human person. She wrote, "A human being is a vessel that God has built for himself and filled with his inspiration so that his works are perfected in it."

Hildegard was unafraid to confront the political and Church leaders of her time, and had a wide correspondence with many of them. When the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa caused a schism in the Church through his support of three anti-popes, Hildegard was inspired by her visions to write him these words spoken by God: "You will be sorry for this wicked conduct of the godless who despise me! Listen, O King, if you wish to live! Otherwise my sword will pierce you!" In the later years of her life, despite her advanced age and difficult traveling conditions, Hildegard journeyed throughout Europe to speak and share her spiritual insights. She especially addressed monastic communities and the clergy, calling them to a life of repentance and conversion and reprimanding them when necessary.

In the last year of her life, Hildegard permitted a nobleman who had been excommunicated to be buried at the convent, as she believed that he was reconciled to the Church before his death. This resulted in her own excommunication, along with the rest of her convent, and the sisters were forbidden to receive Holy Communion or to sing. Hildegard appealed to higher church authorities and the interdict was finally lifted shortly before her death in 1179. Hildegard was canonized and declared a Doctor of the Church in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI who said, "Let us always invoke the Holy Spirit, so that he may inspire in the Church holy and courageous women like St. Hildegard of Bingen, who, developing the gifts they have received from God, make their own special and valuable contribution to the spiritual development of our communities and of the Church in our time."



REFLECTION

"Humility always groans, weeps and destroys all offenses, for this is its work. So let anyone who wishes to conquer the Devil arm himself with humility, since Lucifer fervently flees it and hides in its presence like a snake in a hole; for wherever it finds him, it quickly snaps him like a fragile thread." - St. Hildegard von Bingen

Who is more humble than our Lord, who gives Himself to us in the form of bread and wine? Who has allowed Himself to be mocked and misunderstood for the past 2000 years? Who endured agony in the garden, scourging at the pillar, crowning of thorns, and crucifixion for love of you and me?

St. Hildegard von Bingen, pray for us.

UPDATES FROM THE OFFICE OF CONSECRATED VOCATIONS

- Several women have reached out to me in the past few months to inquire about a vocation to consecrated life. In a span of less than 48 hours, I had two women contact me about the vocation of consecrated virginity. Praise God! Please pray for those discerning God's will.
- There are numerous upcoming retreats and Come and See weekends for young women discerning religious life. Please see the attached flyers.
- CMSWR.org provides a thorough list of discernment events of its members around the country. This is an excellent resource, and if desired you may request a complementary copy of their vocations directory.

THE FEMININE GENIUS OF ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

"God has arranged all things in the world in consideration of everything else."

"Holy Spirit, the life that gives life: You are the cause of all movement. You are the breath of all creatures. You are the salve that purifies our souls. You are the ointment that heals our wounds. You are the fire that warms our hearts. You are the light that guides our feet. Let all the world praise you."

"A person who lacks the verdancy of justice is dry, totally without tender goodness, totally without illuminating virtue."

"Be not lax in celebrating. Be not lazy in the festive service of God. Be ablaze with enthusiasm. Let us be an alive, burning offering before the altar of God."

"Don't let yourself forget that God's grace rewards not only those who never slip, but also those who bend and fall. So sing! The song of rejoicing softens hard hearts. It makes tears of godly sorrow flow from them. Singing summons the Holy Spirit. Happy praises offered in simplicity and love lead the faithful to complete harmony, without discord. Don't stop singing."

CHARISM CORNER

The Spiritual Gift of Writing

The charism of writing does not just refer to the talent of writing, although many people who possess this spiritual gift are obviously talented writers. This charism reveals truth about God through the written word, showcasing His truth, beauty, and goodness, and profoundly impacting the reader.²

God has chosen to reach people through human authors for thousands of years. Sacred Scripture is the greatest testimony to this gift, where God used human writers, with their own styles and voices, to carry His revelation. *Dei Verbum (The Word of God)* states the following: "Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted. Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation." (*Dei Verbum*, 11)

Although St. Paul and St. Hildegard possessed this gift in spades, today it may also be found in journalists, speechwriters, and bloggers. It appears in the friend whose handwritten notes of encouragement you've kept for years. "The Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred authors is the same Spirit who impels the saints to offer their lives for the Gospel." (*Verbum Domini*, 49). If this is a charism you possess, how might God want to use your gift of writing for His Kingdom?



ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Patron saint of musicians and writers

WHO IS OUR LADY OF SORROWS?

The roots of the title of Our Lady of Sorrows can be traced back to the New Testament, but the memorial was not celebrated as a feast of the Church until 1814. Prior to that, devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows first emerged during local celebrations around the Mediterranean in the eleventh century.

In 1233, seven devout men in Florence each had a vision from the Blessed Virgin Mary, inspiring them to form a religious community that would later be known as the Servites. Around the year 1240, these same men received another vision of the Mother of God, accompanied by angels. She informed them about their mission, provided them with their habits, presented their rule of life, and personally founded their order. In that apparition, they were instructed to spread devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Mary, which became one of their central missions. Through the efforts of the Servite order in the subsequent centuries, the liturgical celebration honoring Our Lady of Sorrows gradually expanded.

In the late thirteenth century, the traditional prayer, *Stabat Mater* (Standing Mother), was composed and quickly became well known. This prayer emphasizes the deep sorrow in Mary's Heart as she stood before the Cross with tremendous strength and motherly compassion for her Son.

In 1809, against the Pope's wishes, Napoleon decided to annex the Papal States to the French empire. After Pope Pius VII excommunicated Napoleon, the emperor arrested the pope and imprisoned him from 1809–1814. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814, Pope Pius VII was released. In gratitude for the protection granted to him and to the entire Church through the Blessed Mother's intercession, the pope extended the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows to the entire Latin Church.

Traditionally, the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows commemorates the seven sorrows in the Heart of Mary as recorded in Scripture:

1. The prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:33–35)
2. The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15)
3. Loss of the Child Jesus for three days (Luke 2:41–50)
4. Mary meets Jesus on His way to Calvary (Luke 23:27–31; John 19:17)
5. Crucifixion and death of Jesus (John 19:25–30)
6. The body of Jesus being taken from the Cross (Luke 23:50–54; John 19:31–37)
7. The burial of Jesus (Isaiah 53:8–9; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42; Mark 15:40–47)

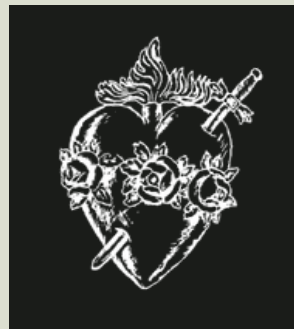
The Blessed Virgin Mary first learned about the sword that would pierce her heart while presenting the Child Jesus in the Temple with St. Joseph on the eighth day for His naming and circumcision. “Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed’” (Luke 2:34–35). Simeon's prophecy was the first piercing of her heart because it is the first scriptural record of Mary knowing that her Son would suffer. The next six traditional sorrows paint the developing picture of the fulfillment of that prophecy.

As we honor the Blessed Mother's Sorrowful Heart, it's important to understand that a “sorrowful” heart is not the same as a “sad” heart. Theologically speaking, sadness results from a form of self-pity, or an unhealthy attachment to something that was lost. Sorrow, on the other hand, is one of the Beatitudes, and therefore one of the holiest qualities we can possess. “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). To “mourn” is to have a sorrowful heart. In this context of the Beatitudes, a heart that mourns is a heart that loves. Mourning, or holy sorrow, results from a heart that witnesses sin and grieves over it. In the Blessed Mother's case, she witnessed the brutal treatment of her Son, His rejection, suffering, and death. She did not despair as she witnessed this. She did not become angry. She did not succumb to confusion and frustration. She did not withdraw into herself in self-pity. Instead, she reacted with the empathetic love that flows from the holiest of hearts. She felt holy sorrow — not so much because she felt bad for her Son, but because she grieved over the sins that inflicted that suffering, and longed to see those sins redeemed.³

I would like to acknowledge the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM Sisters) in our diocese and their connection to Our Lady of Sorrows. Their founder, Father Joaquin Masmitjá, believed in and promoted the powerful intercession of the Immaculate and Sorrowful Heart of Mary. There are many aspects of the habit of the IHM Sisters that represent the Sorrowful Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, including the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows, the navy blue of the habit that symbolizes our sorrowful Blessed Mother, and the silver badge (image at right).

Mary is the ultimate example of docility and surrender to the Father's Will. She acted with complete humility, and this emptying of self allowed her to be a vessel for Jesus Christ.

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.



¹ St. Hildegard von Bingen. The GIVEN Institute. (n.d.). https://giveninstitute.com/saint_stories/st-hildegard-von-bingen/
² Simons, J. (n.d.). The Spiritual Gift of Writing. Many Parts Ministries. <https://www.manypartsministries.com/spiritual-gift-of-writing>
³ Our Lady of Sorrows. My Catholic Life! (2024, September 17). <https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/september-15-our-lady-of-sorrows/>
Images are public domain unless cited