

# Lenten Evening Prayer

*Liturgical Texts & Prayers from the writings of*

## Hildegard von Bingen

1098-1179



**Hildegard von Bingen** - Hildegard of Bingen was a remarkable woman, a "first" in many fields. At a time when few women wrote, Hildegard, known as "Sybil of the Rhine", produced major works of theology and visionary writings. When few women were accorded respect, she was consulted by and advised bishops, popes, and kings. She used the curative powers of natural objects for healing, and wrote treatises about natural history and medicinal uses of plants, animals, trees and stones. She is the first composer whose biography is known. She founded a vibrant convent, where her musical plays were performed. Although not yet canonized, Hildegard has been beatified, and is frequently referred to as St. Hildegard. Revival of interest in this extraordinary woman of the middle ages was initiated by musicologists and historians of science and religion. Her story is important to all students of medieval history and culture and an inspirational account of an irresistible spirit and vibrant intellect overcoming social, physical, cultural, gender barriers to achieve timeless transcendence.

# Hildegard von Bingen

Attention in recent decades to women of the medieval Church has led to a great deal of popular interest in Hildegard, particularly her music. Between 70 and 80 compositions have survived, which is one of the largest repertoires among medieval composers. Hildegard left behind over 100 letters, 72 songs, 70 poems, and 9 books.

Her music is described as monophonic; that is, consisting of exactly one melodic line. Hildegard's compositional style is characterized by soaring melodies, often well outside of the normal range of chant at the time.

In addition to her music, Hildegard also wrote three books of visions, the first of which, her *Scivias* ("Know the Way"), was completed in 1151. *Liber vitae meritorum* ("Book of Life's Merits") and *De operatione Dei* ("Of God's Activities", also known as *Liber divinorum operum*, "Book of Divine Works") followed. In these volumes, the last of which was completed when she was about 75, Hildegard first describes each vision, then interprets them through Biblical exegesis.

Aside from her books of visions, Hildegard also wrote her *Physica*, a text on the natural sciences, as well as *Causae et Curae*. Hildegard of Bingen was well known for her healing powers involving practical application of tinctures, herbs, and precious stones. In both texts Hildegard describes the natural world around her, including the cosmos, animals, plants, stones, and minerals. She combined these elements with a theological notion ultimately derived from Genesis: all things put on earth are for the use of humans. She is particularly interested in the healing properties of plants, animals, and stones, though she also questions God's effect on man's health. One example of her healing powers was curing the blind with the use of Rhine water.

In recent years, Hildegard has become of particular interest to feminist scholars. Her reference to herself as a member of the "weaker sex" and her rather constant belittling of women, though at first seemingly problematic, must be considered within the context of the patriarchal church hierarchy. Hildegard frequently referred to herself as an unlearned woman, completely incapable of Biblical exegesis. Such a statement on her part, however, worked to her advantage because it made her statements that all of her writings and music came from visions of the Divine more believable, therefore giving Hildegard the authority to speak in a time and place where few women were permitted a voice.

# Lenten Evening Prayer

*As you enter,  
please take a moment to remind yourself of your Baptism. Using  
water from the Font trace the sign of the cross  
on your forehead to remind yourself that,  
“In Baptism you are marked with the cross of Christ forever.”*

O Holy Wisdom,  
Soaring Power,  
encompass us with wings unfurled,  
and carry us, encircling all, above,  
below,  
and through the world.



*O Holy Spirit, Root of Life  
Hildegard von Bingen*

*Please begin your worship in quiet contemplation  
of all that God has made.*

Invocation:

P: "O God, grant that we may be aflame with you, Spirit of Love and walk as your children.

**C: O Sophia, Spirit of Wisdom, who speaks the language of God in our hearts, speak to us now; and infuse us with the courage to listen."**

*(Hildegard)*

Evening Hymn: ***#561 Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory***

Psalmody: ***#232 Let My Prayer Rise Up***

*the piano side is Group 1 and the north side Group 2*

***Silence for reflection***

Litany: To the Holy Spirit:

P: The Holy Spirit animates all, moves all, roots all, forgives all, cleanses all, erases all our past mistakes, and then puts medicine on our wounds.

**C: We praise this Spirit of incandescence for awakening and reawakening all creation.**

P: Doctor of the desperate, Healer of everyone broken past hope, Medicine for all wounds, Fire of love, Joy of hearts, fragrant Strength, sparkling Fountain, Protector, Penetrator,

**C: in You we contemplate how God goes looking for those who are lost and those who are at odds with God. Break our chains!**

P: You bring people together. You curl clouds, whirl winds, send rain on rocks, sing in creeks, and turn the lush earth green. You teach those who listen, breathing joy and wisdom into them.

C: We praise You for these gifts, Light-giver, Sound of joy, Wonder of being alive, Hope of every person, and our strongest Good.

*(Hildegard)*

***Silence for reflection***

Hymn:

**#399 O Holy Spirit Root of Life**

*Text inspired by Hildegard*



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.

## TO SOPHIA

You soar, sustain, and animate,  
climb, dive, and sing

Your way through this world,  
giving life to every beating  
heart.

You never end.

You keep circling, crossing over us  
on three wings--

one speeds through heaven,  
one holds the earth together with a kiss as light as dew,  
and one whooshes over, under, and through our lives.

We praise You, Sophia, Wisdom.



Hymn: ***#581 You are Mine***

Prayers of the Body

We will begin our prayers by singing # 751 three times;  
please change the singular pronouns to plural:

**#751 O Lord, Hear Our Prayers  
When We Call Answer Us**

Prayer petitions will be punctuated by silence.  
Following the Amen, please sing the alternate verse of  
#751 "The Lord is our song"

Abba Prayer

P: As Jesus taught us, we pray:

**Heavenly Mother, Heavenly Father  
Holy and blessed is your true name.  
We pray for your reign of peace to come.  
We pray that your good will be done.  
Let heaven and earth become one.  
Give us this day the bread we need.  
Give it to those who have none.  
Let forgiveness flow like a river between us  
From each one to each one to each one.  
Lead us to holy innocence  
Beyond the evil of our days:  
Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.  
For yours is the power  
And the mercy, and the glory.  
Forever your name is all one. Amen.**

Hymn: ***#567 To You Before the Close of Day***

Benediction:

P: "We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others. An interpreted world is not a hope. Part of the terror is to take back our own listening. To use our own voice. To see our own light"

"The soul is kissed by God in its innermost regions."

"Love abounds in all things. So, sing the Love of God"

**Amen**

*(Hildegard)*

Peace:

*receive the peace of Christ  
and share Christ's peace as you depart.*

