September 17

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In 1961 Dag Hammarskjöld, a statesman and witness to the Gospel, died in an airplane crash in Ndola, Congo.
The last of four children, Dag was born in 1905 in Jönköping, Sweden. After successful studies he began to serve his country, first in public administration and then in politics. On April 7, 1953 he was elected Secretary General of the United Nations, and at the end of his term in 1958 he was re-elected.
Hammarskjöld died in a mission undertaken to resolve the Congolese crisis, and in that same year he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
After his death, the surprising inner journey that had been the silent counterpart to Hammarskjöld's world travels came to light. He had been a man open to all, as his public office had required of him, but his heart had been undivided and he had constantly sought dialogue with God. God's voice alone had made his mission meaningful, day by day, offering him companionship and filling the inevitable solitude that accompanied his great public responsibilities.
Hammarskjöld's diary, which was published posthumously, reveals a deep faith and a rare mystical intensity that Hammarskjöld kept for himself, not showing others what his heart held. He was guided by the constant conviction that living means proceeding resolutely along a steep mountain trail, and that the traveller, pausing to rest at each bend in the path, can only say, "To the past: thank you/ to the future: yes!".

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) nun

Hildegard, a nun and visionary, died in 1179 in the monastery of Rupertsberg, near Bingen, Germany.
Born eighty-one years earlier in Bermersheim, Hildegard was entrusted at the age of eight to Jutta of Sponheim, an anchorite who lived near the Benedictine sisters of Disibodenberg. Around the two women the community grew, and at Jutta's death Hildegard took over its leadership.
Her extreme physical sensitivity and fragility gave her a heightened awareness of nature's physical and biological forces. She became skilled in the pharmaceutical and medical arts, and many people drew great benefits from her treatments.
Hildegard was a forceful and charismatic woman who not only read and meditated Scripture constantly, but became an itinerant preacher of the Gospel almost a century before St. Francis of Assisi, led solely by an inner voice that drove her to do it. She promoted spiritual renewal in the monasteries of her time, and was always ready to serve the sick and allay their suffering.
In all of this, Hildegard never forgot her own spiritual daughters, but continued to offer guidance to each woman in the monasteries she had founded. Her gentleness and intuition were balanced by strength and assertiveness, with which she admonished and advised the powerful of her time.
At the request of Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard wrote down the fruit of her visionary contemplation of the world, leaving for those who would follow her traces of the wisdom she had embodied and expressed in her long human and monastic journey.

PRAYER

God of mercy,
who gave your servant Hildegard
the grace to serve you with a unified heart
and love you above all else:
help us who have renewed our communion with you
in this sacrament
to give up everything that holds us back
from following Christ,
and we will grow in his likeness
from glory to glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Prov 8:12-14.22-31; 1 Cor 2:9-13; Lk 10:21-24

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER

ANGLICANS:
Hildegard, abbess of Bingen, visionary

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Robert Bellarmine (d. 1621), bishop and doctor of the church (Roman calendar)
Satirus (d. ca. 378), confessor (Ambrosian calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (7 tut/maskaram):
Dioscorus (ca. 454), patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Orthodox Church and Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Hildegard of Bingen, mystic and abbess
Johann Heinrich Bullinger (d. 1575), reformer at Zürich

MARONITES:
Sophia of Thessaloniki and her 3 children (2nd cent.), martyrs

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Sophia, Pistis, Elpis and Agape of Thessaloniki, martyrs
Founding of the relics of loasaf di Belgorod (1911; Russian Church)
Simeon Incauridze (18th cent.), monk (Georgian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Hildegard of Bingen, virgin and abbess