

Hildegard of Bingen – 10 years as Doctor of the Church

17 September 2022

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

We acknowledge elders, past and present of the lands, seas, skies and waterways where you read this reflection today. In solidarity with the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we acknowledge that these lands, seas, skies and waterways, were, are and always will be those of the First Nations peoples of the place now known as Australia. As you begin this reflection, you are invited to be still. Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, last year's Senior Australian of the Year, invites us to access the deep spring within so that we may hear the very Spirit of God, Deep calling to Deep. As we acknowledge country, you might like to [read the words](#) or [watch a short clip](#) of Miriam speaking these words wisdom. Words that invite us to Reflect. Be still. Embrace.

Context of Feast of Hildegard of Bingen, Doctor of the Church.

Hildegard of Bingen was 18 when she became a Benedictine nun. She had been receiving visions which she described as experiences that allowed her to see humans as “living sparks” of God's love, coming from God as daylight comes from the sun. She was asked to write her experiences; it took her 10 years and she called her work *Scivias* (*Know the Ways*). After Pope Eugene III read it, he encouraged her to write more; and she did: *Book of the Merits of Life* and *Book of Divine Works* followed. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI added St Hildegard to the list of (currently) 37 Doctors of the Church. St Hildegard joined 3 other magnificent female Saints (St Teresa of Avila, St Catherine of Siena, St Therese of Lisieux) who have been honoured for their wisdom and contribution to Christian understanding of theology.



Figure 1 Hildegardis Prophetissa' Postcard. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. [quest.eb.com/search/109_145844/1/109_145844/cite](https://www.britannica.com/search/109_145844/1/109_145844/cite). Accessed 31 Aug 2022.

Scripture – Reading from the Mass for the Memorial of St Hildegard of Bingen

[Song 8:6-7]

Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;
For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.
Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away.
Were one to offer all he owns to purchase love,
he would be roundly mocked.

Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Musical Reflection

Before reading the below, you might like to listen to one of these interpretation of the Song of Songs reading from the memorial: [Matt Maher](#) and [Eleanor Daley](#)

Reflection by Rachel McLean

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During this Season of Creation, ten years since she was named a Doctor of the Church, it is opportune to reflect on St Hildegard's teachings and reflections and take heed of her call for us to be co-creators. The invitation to co-creation stems from some of the first words of the first Creation in Genesis: God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (1:28). The

narrative is inviting the reader to consider their role as representative of God on earth; not to be God, but to act as God would. If we become lost as to what it means to act as God's representatives, perhaps we need look no further than God's creative acts of goodness that are recounted in the verses preceding 28. In fact, 'good' is used for each of the 7 days mark the actions of God's creation.

While learning more about Hildegard for this reflection, I came across the writing of Carmel Posa SGS who [wrote in 2012](#), that Hildegard "challenges us to know our task and live it out truthfully in accord with justice, rather than being swayed by popular trends or blind adherence to institutions. She was able to see her world as it really was, imagine it otherwise and take responsibility for speaking out in wisdom." Ten years later, I wonder if we are speaking with justice for our earth, those who inhabit it now and those who will follow us?



Figure 2 Sr Susan Daly ibvm accessed from liturgyritualprayer.com

Hildegard provides us with a lens through which we can measure our goodness as co-creators:

Holy persons draw to themselves all that is earthly. The earth is at the same time mother. She is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human. She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all. Glance at the sun. See the moon and the stars. Gaze at the beauty of earth's greenings. Now, think. What delight God gives to humankind with all these things. All nature is at the disposal of humankind. We are to work with it...Humankind, full of all creative possibilities, is God's work. Humankind alone is called to assist God. Humankind is called to co-create. With nature's help, humankind can set into creation all that is necessary and life-sustaining.

Perhaps as we enter the half-way mark of the Season of Creation, you might ponder: What does it mean for you to be of and in creation? How are you co-creating the earth?

Prayer

God who is Creator, Brother, Spirit:

help us to nurture the gifts that surround us – children, creation, connection.

Creative and Courageous God:

inspire us to find creative solutions to the concerns of our world:

injustice, poverty, racism, sexism, greed and oppression.

Ever-present and Encircling God:

open our eyes, ears, minds and hearts so that we may recognise the interconnectedness of all.

Loving God, hear these prayers as you remain with us on the journey. **Amen.**

Call to Action

- Learn more about how Pope Benedict proclaimed [St Hildegard as a Doctor of the Church](#) or to learn more about what being a Doctor of the Church means have a read of [this article](#).
- Franciscan Media provide some interesting insight into the life and times of St Hildegard, you might like to explore these you're your family: [Sisterhood of Saints: Hildegard of Bingen](#) (which tells of her life and her challenges to self, community and the church) [Saint Hildegard of Bingen](#) Feast day reflection.
- St Hildegard loved connection to creation through prayer and art. One way she did this was through mandalas. Why not explore this artform with your family. There are some great resources you can access here:
 - [Art With Georgie](#) – a hands-on experience for young children
 - [Crayola Mandalas](#) – creating a mandala for 8-14 year olds
 - Downloadable designs from [Faber Castell](#) and [PDF booklet](#)

