Jesus said: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike" (Mt 11:25). Bridget of Sweden was born in 1303 and lived to the age of 70. At the age of 7 she began to experience an extraordinary gift that lasted throughout her life.[i] The visions began with the crucified Christ and gave her great insight into the heart and mind of Jesus our Savior and also his Blessed Mother Mary.

In one of the visions, Jesus spoke to her explaining how he accepted the crucifixion for love of humanity. Despite the terrible pain, he accepted the cross with love and joy. Jesus told this to Bridget so she could learn from the Master:

> If my head was pierced and inclined on the cross for you, your head should be inclined toward humility. Since my eyes were bloody and full of tears, your eyes should keep away from pleasurable sites. Since my ears were filled with blood and heard mocking words against me, your ears should turn aside from frivolous and unfitting talk. Since my mouth was given a bitter drink to drink but was denied a sweet one, keep your own mouth from evil and let it be open for good. Since my hands were stretched out by nails, let your works which the hands symbolize, be stretched out to the poor and to my commandments. Let your feet, that is, your affections, with which you should walk toward me, be crucified as to lusts, so that, just as I suffered in all my limbs, so may all your limbs be ready to obey me. I demand more service of you than others, because I have given you a greater grace.[ii]

As Jesus has done for us, so we are called to do. To help build the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus calls for us to pick up our cross and follow him.

The private revelations that Bridget received helped her to live life for God and for others.

- Visiting the sick is a corporal work of mercy that Bridget often undertook with children in tow. (She was the mother of 8). Those who are sick often lie in bed alone isolated from the community. Bridget understood how a visit could offer comfort and lift spirits, so she always walked the extra mile to visit the sick (Book 1 Chapter 9).
- Giving alms to the poor is another work of mercy that Bridget was very intentional about. She lived a very simple and austere life after her husband of 28 years passed. She denied herself, so there was extra money to share with the less fortunate.
- We are stewards of the wealth entrusted to us, and rather than use it for ourselves, we are called to share with others. She encouraged Sweden's King Magnus to donate land and buildings for a monastery and helped to found the Order of the Most Holy Savior.[iii]

To seek church permission for her new order, she traveled to Rome in 1350 during a time of pandemic when the Black Plague was sweeping through Europe. The church was slow in her approval. 20 years and three popes later, Saint Bridget finally received official Church approval for her new order from Pope Urban V.[iv]

An important spiritual work of mercy is to admonish the sinner. Through the revelations, she knew that God was displeased with the church of her era and that it was in need of serious reform. She who lived so austerely herself, tried to help church leaders follow that same example of evangelical poverty. She worked tirelessly to better the church against a bureaucracy that was slow to reform.

Jesus tells us: "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Although one may argue that God guided her every step of the way, for her part Bridget really tried to listen to God, to love Him, and to accept great hardships so that the Kingdom of Heaven could grow. "Her life invites us to do the same."[v]

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[i] franciscanmedia.org/saint-bridget/

[ii] The Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden: Books 1, chapter 10

[iii] franciscanmedia.org/saint-bridget-of-sweden-woman-on-a-bold-mission/

[iv] wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_popes

[v] franciscanmedia.org/saint-bridget-of-sweden-woman-on-a-bold-mission/