November 16

Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1301/1302) nun

Today the Catholic Church commemorates Gertrude, a nun of the monastery of Helfta in Germany.
Gertrude went to live in the monastery at the age of five, and was brought up by women who were true spiritual masters, such as Mechthild of Hackeborn and Mechthild of Magdeburg. Under their guidance, Gertrude became familiar with all of the dimensions of the inner life - study, meditative reading of Scripture, and personal prayer.
Her strongest desire was to enter her inner heart so as to dwell there and meet God, who makes his presence known to believers through the Spirit in Christ, his merciful and loving Son.
Gertrude's refinement and inner equilibrium allowed her to share her many spiritual gifts with others, while avoiding the excesses and deviations that appear in the writings of other later mystics. What emerged from Gertrude's spiritual experiences, recorded by the saint herself with the help of a sister in the monastery, was a doctrine that is restrained and biblical in tone.
Incorrectly considered an example of "total Christ-centredness" in the spiritual life, she was in fact one of the great poets who sung of the action of the divine Trinity in believers' hearts and in the Church community.
Gertrude died on November 17 of the year 1301 or 1302. She is often depicted in prayer, holding a book and dressed as a Cistercian nun, even though the monastery of Helfta probably did not belong to any of the major religious congregations of the time.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Eph 3:14-19; Jn 15:1-8

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Margaret (d. 1093), queen of Scotland, philanthropist, reformer of the church
Edmund Rich of Abingdon (d. 1240), archbishop of Canterbury

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Margaret of Scotland
Gertrud, virgin (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (7 hatur/hedar):
George of Alexandria (?), martyr (Coptic Church)
Dedication of the church of St George of Cappadoce at Lydda (4th cent.; Coptic Orthodox Church)

LUTHERANS:
Comenius Jan Anlos Komemsky (d. 1670) bishop of the Bohemian brothers

MARONITES:
Matthew, apostle and evangelist

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Matthew, apostle and evangelist

OLD CATHOLICS:
Otmar (d. 759), abbot