

Nov. 19, Mechtild of Magdeburg

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Nov. 19, 2009 NCR Today

Today is the feast of [Mechtild of Magdeburg](#) [1] (1210-1279), a Beguine and a mystic who ended her days at the monastery at Helfta with St. Gertrude the Great.

*Wouldst thou know my meaning?
Lie down in the Fire
See and taste the Flowing
Godhead through thy being;
Feel the Holy Spirit
Moving and compelling
Thee within the Flowing
Fire and Light of God.*

--Mechtild

This edition of Mechtild's book, [*The Flowing Light of Godhead*](#), [2] was published by Paulist Press in 1997.

This [icon](#) [3] of Mechtild by Fr. William McNichols, was inspired by Carol L. Flinders' book, [4] http://www.amazon.com/Enduring-Grace-Living-Portraits-Mystics/dp/0060626453/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1258587101&sr=8-1-fkmr0#noop>Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics.

Many other feminist and medieval theologians and scholars have written about Mechtild. Among their books are: *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority*, by Sara S. Poor; *Visionary Women: Three Medieval Mystics*, by Rosemary Radford Ruether; and *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, by Caroline Walker Bynum.

Mechtild spent her forty years as a Beguine during a brief golden age. It wasn't long after her death that "the Council of Vienne called for an inquisitional investigation of beguines and beghards -- their male counterparts -- in Germany."

Even during her life, there was disapproval of Beguines. In 1273, Bishop Bruno of Olmutz, in East Germany, complained: "Beguines were using their liberty to escape 'the yoke of obedience to their priest' and 'the coercion of marital bonds.'"

As Mechtild became old and nearly blind, she was welcomed by the Benedictine nuns to their monastery at Helfta.

She had worried about death, but Jesus reassured her. *"It shall be thus: I will draw My breath and thy soul shall come to Me as a needle to a magnet."*

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Links:

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechthild_of_Magdeburg

[2] http://www.amazon.com/Mechthild-Magdeburg-Flowing-Classics-Spirituality/dp/0809137763/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&sr=1-1#noop

[3] http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/andre/i_mechtild.html

[4] <https://www.ncronline.org/%26lt%3Bbr>