



Painting of Saint Catherine of Siena | Siena Cathedral Choir | photo by Sailko

# Saint Catherine of Siena

## Saint of the Day for April 29

(March 25, 1347 – April 29, 1380)

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SODApr29.mp3>

### Saint Catherine of Siena's Story

The value Catherine makes central in her short life and which sounds clearly and consistently through her experience is complete surrender to Christ. What is most impressive about her is that she learns to view her surrender to her Lord as a goal to be reached through time.

She was the 23rd child of Jacopo and Lapa Benincasa and grew up as an intelligent, cheerful, and intensely religious person. Catherine disappointed her mother by cutting off her hair as a protest against being overly encouraged to improve her appearance in order to attract a husband. Her father ordered her to be left in peace, and she was given a room of her own for prayer and meditation.

She entered the Dominican Third Order at 18 and spent the next three years in seclusion, prayer, and austerity. Gradually, a group of followers gathered around her, men and women, priests and religious. An active public apostolate grew out of her contemplative life. Her letters, mostly for spiritual instruction and encouragement of her followers, began to take more and more note of public affairs. Opposition and slander resulted from her mixing fearlessly with the world and speaking with the candour and authority of one completely committed to Christ. She was cleared of all charges at the Dominican General Chapter of 1374.

Her public influence reached great heights because of her evident holiness, her membership in the Dominican Third Order, and the deep impression she made on the pope. She worked tirelessly for the crusade against the Turks and for peace between Florence and the pope.

In 1378, the Great Schism began, splitting the allegiance of Christendom between two, then three, popes and putting even saints on opposing sides. Catherine spent the last two years of her life in Rome, in prayer and pleading on behalf of the cause of Pope Urban VI and the unity of the

Church. She offered herself as a victim for the Church in its agony. She died surrounded by her spiritual children, and was canonized in 1461.

Catherine ranks high among the mystics and spiritual writers of the Church. In 1939, she and Francis of Assisi were declared co-patrons of Italy. Pope Paul VI named her and Teresa of Avila doctors of the Church in 1970. Her spiritual testament is found in *The Dialogue*.

Catherine had an intense devotion to the merits of Christ's Precious Blood, urging her disciples to become inebriated with it, and concluding her Dialogues with a prayer to the "Eternal Blood", and crying to the Divine Mercy: "O divine Folly! was it not sufficient for you to become incarnate that you must also die for us? And your mercy has done even more than this, for you have given yourself to be our food"