

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA, 1347-1380

A brief history

At the age of 6, St Catherine saw Jesus appear above the church tower in Siena. She made a vow never to be married, despite family pressure. At the age of 16 she joined a group of lay Dominicans and spent 3 years in a life of deep prayer. She energetically served the poor of Siena whilst developing her own teaching. The Mass and Eucharist were central to St Catherine's extraordinary life. Catherine had many mystical experiences of God, and received the stigmata of Christ's wounds in her 20's. She exercised many charisms of the Holy Spirit, including powerful preaching, inspired writing, reading people's hearts, healing and exorcism.



She became known for her peacekeeping and reconciliation between warring families and states. At the age of 29 she powerfully persuaded the Pope to return from Avignon to Rome. She became an adviser to Pope Urban VI and his cardinals and worked for unity in the Church. She died in 1380 at the age of just 33, was canonised in 1461, and made a Doctor of the church in 1970.

Some of St Catherine's teachings

"What held Jesus on the cross was not the nails, but his love for us" - St Catherine of Siena

"We all have a cell of the heart which we can retreat to and spend precious time with God." – St Catherine.

"The living water of God's grace can alone satisfy all our thirsting" – St Catherine

"We can satisfy the thirst of Jesus for souls, by sharing the Good News with others" – St Catherine

Catherine had a consuming desire for the salvation of souls, and taught about the need to use Jesus as the bridge by which we can come to the glory of heaven and the love of the Father.

She taught about the power of the blood of Christ, poured out on the Cross, to save souls.

St Catherine teaches us about holiness

Although she had experiences that most will never share, Catherine helps us to grasp that holiness is within the reach of all of us, when we realise that we are nothing on our own, but everything with God.

"Holiness is having the humility to recognise I am really nothing; but knowing Jesus Christ and his love for me, I can do anything." - Sister Catherine Joseph Droste.

God loves us so much that he overlooks our sin because He is madly in love with us. We need to speak and act out this same love for others.

"Go to the dwelling, the cell of self-knowledge... look within yourself and you will find what I love." – St Catherine

"St Catherine is inspirational because she always gave the truth and was not afraid to do so." – John Pridmore.

"St Catherine is praying for me to receive the grace to be the person who God created me to be." – John Pridmore.

"No matter what we receive from this world, we will never be truly satisfied or fulfilled unless we have a personal, loving relationship with Jesus" – John Pridmore, quoting Pope John Paul II

"For me, the point of the saints is to show me that, even though I'm nothing, if I'm open to God and His grace working through me, I can do anything. As long as I am relying on God, He will speak and work through me." – Alice Hall.

St Catherine has taught me to speak the truth – in love – in all situations. I ask her to pray for me to be a good example, and to be zealous for God." – Alice Hall

"If you were what you should be, you would set the world ablaze" – St Catherine

Scripture for meditation:

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." (1 John 3: 16)

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life for me. Thank you for your amazing love. I put my trust in you.