

Catherine of Siena

Saint Name: St. Catherine of Siena

Dates: March 25, 1347 – April 29, 1380

Location: Italy

Feast day: April 29

Catherine of Siena was born during the outbreak of the plague in Siena, Italy on March 25, 1347. The 25th child born to Giacomo di Benincase and Lapa Piagenti, half of her siblings did not survive childhood. As a child, Catherine devoted herself to God; however, upon her sister Bonaventura's death Catherine's parents proposed that she marry her sister's husband. Completely opposed to this idea, Catherine began to fast and make herself less attractive, eventually becoming an object of persecution in her own house. She gave herself entirely to God. Eventually her parents relented and she was allowed to follow her pious inclinations. Despite Catherine's religious nature she chose not to enter a convent; but instead, at eighteen years of age, she joined the Third Order of St. Dominic so she could continue to live at home. Catherine was known to give her family's food and clothing to people in need without their permission subjecting herself to their criticisms. She often visited hospitals and homes of the poor and sick. These actions led others to follow and help in her mission to serve others. In 1374 during the great pestilence she heroically devoted herself to caring for those infected. Two years later she went to Avignon to intercede with the Pope on behalf of the Florentines who had been banned for joining in a conspiracy against the temporal possessions of the Holy See in Italy. Pope Gregory XI sent Catherine to negotiate peace with Florence. Catherine then began to travel, spreading the message for reform of the Church and for people to confess and to love God totally. She became involved in politics and was instrumental in keeping city states loyal to the Pope and was credited with helping to start a crusade to the Holy Land. In 1377, Catherine established a monastery for women outside of Siena. She composed over 400 letters – her Dialogues. These works are so influential that later Catherine would be declared a Doctor of the Church. Catherine of Siena died April 29, 1380 at 33 years of age after a short illness and stroke.



St. Catherine was canonized in 1461 by Pope Pius II. She is one of the most influential and popular saints in the Church. She quickly made herself known by allegedly being marked by mystical phenomena such as stigmata and mystical marriage (seen only by her). The patroness against fire, illness, miscarriages, people ridiculed for their faith, sexual temptation, and nurses, her feast day is celebrated April 29.