

Gregory XI sent Cardinal Robert of Geneva with an army to put down the uprising, and laid Florence under an interdict. The effects of the ban on the life and prosperity of the city was so serious that its rulers sent to Siena, to ask Catherine to mediate with the Pope. Always ready to act as a peacemaker, she promptly set out for Florence, where the city's magistrates met her and followed her to Avignon to speak to the Pope as their ambassador. Catherine arrived in Avignon on June 18, 1376 and was graciously received by the Pope. As it happened, the Florentines proved untrustworthy and continued to try to rest all of Italy away from the allegiance to the Holy See. They disclaimed all connections with Catherine. Although she failed in this matter, she was successful in resolving many of the problems which afflicted Europe due to the 74 year residence at Avignon. Gregory had been ready to return to Rome but was opposed by the French Cardinals. Catherine strongly urged that he come back to Rome reminding him of a vow he had once taken and had never disclosed to any human being. Greatly impressed by what he regarded as a supernatural sign, Gregory resolved to return to Rome. On September 13, 1376 he set out from Avignon for Rome. At the request of the Pope, Catherine went again to Florence and established peace between the city governors and the papacy.

When Catherine returned to Siena she occupied herself in the composition of a book which she dictated under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This was the mystical work in four treatises called *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine*. The writings consist of her testament of faith to the spiritual world.

Although Catherine was only 33 years old her life was now nearing its close. On April 21, 1380, a paralytic stroke made her helpless from the waist downwards, and 8 days later she passed away. The Dominicans at Rome still treasure the body of Catherine in the Minerva church, but Siena has her head enshrined in St. Dominic's Church (see below). Pope Pius II canonized Catherine in 1461. One of the most important women of Europe, Catherine's gifts of heart and mind were used in the furtherance of the Christian ideal.

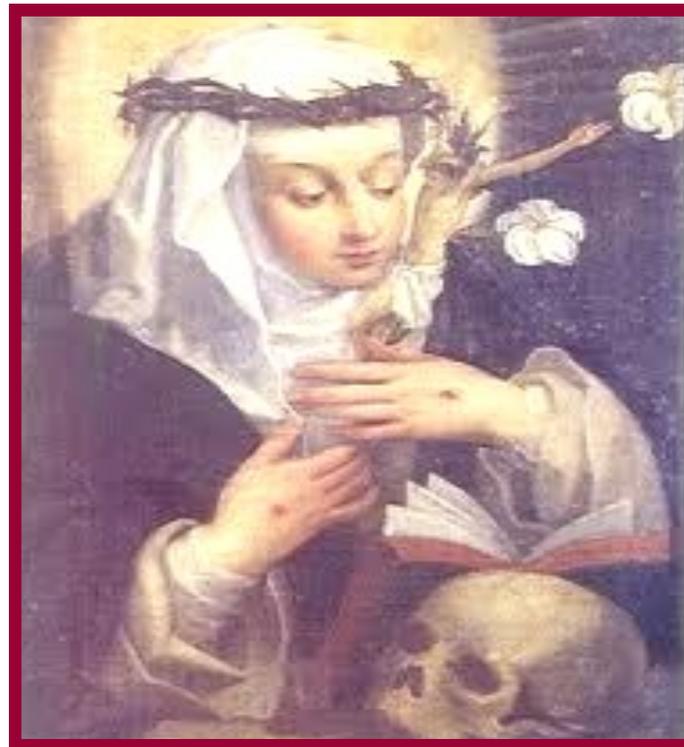
*(excerpted from: www.ewtn.com)



Saint Catherine of Siena

Doctor of the Church

Feast Day April 30th



**Saint Catherine with her lily and book.
The Skull is a symbol of penance.**

**Prayer written by St. Catherine
to the Holy Spirit**

**Holy Spirit, come into my heart;
draw it to Thee by Thy power, O my God,
and grant me charity with filial fear.
Preserve me, O ineffable Love, from every evil thought;
warm me, inflame me with Thy dear love,
and every pain will seem light to me.
My Father, my sweet Lord, help me in all my actions.
Jesus, love, Jesus, love. Amen.**

Saint Catherine of Siena

*Catherine di Benincasa was born in Siena on March 25, 1347, and the day was the feast day of the Annunciation. Catherine and a twin sister who did not live long after her birth were the youngest of twenty-five children. Her father, Giacomo, was a prosperous wool dyer; her mother, Lapa, the daughter of a local poet. They belonged to the lower middle-class faction of tradesmen and petty notaries, known as "the Party of the Twelve", which between one revolution and another ruled the Republic of Siena from 1355 to 1365. As a child Catherine was so merry that the family gave her the pet name of Euphrosyne, which is Greek for joy and also the name of an early Christian saint. At the age of six, she had a vision of Christ seated in glory with the Apostles Peter, Paul, and John. A year later the little girl made a secret vow to give her whole life to God. She loved prayer and solitude, and when she mingled with children it was to teach them to do what gave her so much happiness.

When Catherine was twelve, her mother, with marriage in mind, encouraged her to pay more attention to her appearance. When her mother persisted, Catherine cut off her golden-brown hair that was her chief beauty. As punishment, she was made to do menial work in the household, and her family, knowing she craved solitude, never allowed her to be alone. Catherine bore all this with sweetness and patience. Long afterwards she would write that God had shown her how to build in her soul a private cell where no tribulation could enter. Her father at last came to the realization that further pressure was useless, and permitted his daughter to do as she pleased. In the small, dimly-lighted room now set apart for her use, a cell nine feet by three, she gave herself up to prayer and fasting.

On Shrove Tuesday, 1366, while Catherine was praying in her room, a vision of Christ appeared, accompanied by His Mother and the heavenly host. Our lady placed a ring upon her finger and espoused her to Jesus. To Catherine the ring was always visible, though invisible to others. The years of solitude and preparation were ended and soon afterwards she began to mix with her fellow men and learn to serve them. Like other Dominican tertiaries, she volunteered to nurse the sick in the city hospitals, especially those afflicted with loathsome diseases.

There gathered around her a band of earnest associates. Prominent among them were her two Dominican confessors, Thomas della Fonte and Bartholomew Dominici. An aged hermit, Father Santi, abandoned his solitude to be near her, because he said, he found greater peace of mind and progress in virtue by following her than he ever found in his cell. A warm affection bound her to those she called her spiritual family, children given her by God that she might help them along the way to perfection. She read their thoughts and frequently knew their temptations when they were away from her. Public opinion of Catherine was divided. Some revered her while others completely disapproved and charges were made against her. She was summoned to Florence to appear before the general chapter of the Dominicans. Whatever the charges were they were completely disproved, and shortly afterward the new lector for the order in Sienna, Raymond de Capua, was appointed her confessor. In many ways of the spirit, Father Raymond was her disciple, and later became the saint's biographer.

Shortly after her return to Siena, a plague broke out, during which she and her circle worked incessantly to relieve the sufferers. Her pity for dying men was not confined to those who were sick. She made it a practice to visit condemned persons in prison, hoping to persuade them to make their peace with God. Her deeds of mercy along with being a worker of miracles, caused the Sieneese to turn to Catherine in all kinds of difficulties. She would prevail on individuals to amend their lives. She settled disputes and healed old feuds. When Pope Gregory XI began a crusade to wrest the Holy Sepulchre from the Turks, her correspondence in support, brought Catherine to the Pope's attention. In February, 1375, while visiting Pisa, she was receiving Communion in the little church of St. Christina, when she received the stigmata, visible to herself alone during her life, but clearly to be seen after her death.

While still in Pisa she received word that the people of Florence and Perugia had entered into a league against the Holy See and the French legates. The disturbance began in Florence, where a large army was raised under the banner of freedom from the Popes control. Through Catherine's efforts Pope