

Saint Catherine of Siena

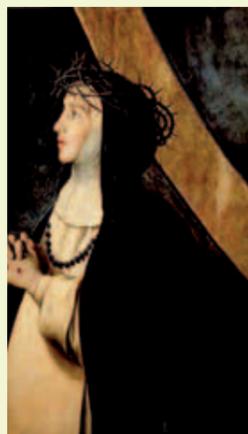
1347-1380

Saint Catherine was born in Siena in 1347. At the age of six (1353), she had her first vision of Christ, the High Priest, accompanied by the Apostles Peter and Paul and by John the Evangelist.

After this vision, she decided to consecrate herself wholly to God with a vow of virginity, even when her family initially opposed her vocation. After years of prayer and penance, in 1363 she received the Dominican habit of the Third Order. For some years she lived a life of great penance.

At the age of twenty (1367) she received the ring of mystical espousal to Jesus and numerous Angels appeared to her. Jesus Christ and Our Lady appeared to her, together with some Angels, who stood around

Catherine and Jesus takes place. In 1371, Catherine's first followers, derisively nicknamed "the Catherinites" join her. In 1373, Catherine begins to write letters to important personages of the political world. In March 1374, she is in Florence where she meets her new spiritual director, Friar Raymond of Capua (her posthumous biographer). On April 1, she receives the invisible stigmata. In May of 1376, she leaves for Avignon, arriving on June 18. On the 20th she visits Pope Gregory XI who decides to leave for Italy on



Jesus and Saint Catherine like witnesses. One of the Angels, of a superior category, held the wedding ring. At the proper moment, a Seraph gave the ring to Jesus, who, in turn, placed it on Saint Catherine's finger. The ring made of gems was visible only to the Saint; the ring radiated a marvelous light that diminished or ceased entirely as the mystical spouse of Jesus slackened in her love. In 1370, the exchange of hearts between

September 13, passing through Genoa, where Catherine once again convinces him to continue his journey to Rome. She dies on April 29, 1380, at 33 years of age. On June 18, 1939, Pope Pius XII proclaims Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Francis of Assisi primary patrons of Italy, while on October 1, 1999, Pope John Paul II proclaims her co-patroness of Europe.