

# Saint Catherine of Siena

1347 - 1380

PARADISE

**S**aint Catherine of Siena, proclaimed Patroness of Italy, is one of the most famous mystics. One day Jesus said to her: "I love you so much, that whoever asks a favor of me in your name, will obtain it!" She was stigmatized, had infused science, peered into hearts, spent long periods nourishing herself only on the Eucharist and had the grace of a mystical matrimony with Jesus.

Upon death, she flew to Paradise. She saw the majesty of God, the beauty of the Celestial Court, the ocean of felicity reserved to the Blessed. Motivated by the flame of love for God, desirous of procuring Paradise for many other souls, she begged Jesus to allow her to return to earth. The prayer was granted.

The cadaver of Saint Catherine for about six hours was lying on the bed surrounded by numerous family members; suddenly she moved and regained normal life. The Saint began again to do apostolate: men, women, ecclesiastics, scholars... all of them listened to the virgin from Siena and they called her their spiritual mother.

One day a tremendous sinner resisted the grace of God; absolutely not wanting to sever the life of sin. "My child, the Saint said, if you knew which sacrifice I have done for you! I temporarily left Paradise, where I could have enjoyed without measure, and I returned to earth,

to suffer, in order to procure even you to eternal felicity." She spoke with such enthusiasm about Paradise that the sinner was convinced to return to God.

Catherine was born in Siena in 1347, to the dyer Jacopo Benincasa, and Lapa di Puccio de' Piacenti. At the age of six years old (1353) she had the first vision of Christ the Pontiff, accompanied by the apostles Peter and Paul and the evangelist John. It was a fundamental experience for her entire life; in fact she realizes that she must orientate her heart and mind toward God, always doing His will. At seven years old she proclaimed a vow of perpetual virginity; but the family obstructed the vocation and wanted to make her marry. One day her father surprised her in prayer with a dove wafting on her head. He decided at that time to let her free to choose her own path. After years of prayers and penances, she received in 1363 the habit of the Third Order of Saint Domenic. In her little room which was very bare, she conducted for many years a life of penitence.

At twenty years old she learned to read, received the ring of a mystical wedding with Jesus, dictated her first letters, she began her charitable activity for the poor, the sick, the incarcerated, often being repaid with ingratitude and calumnies. In 1370 occurs the exchange of hearts



between Catherine and Jesus. In the summer of 1374 she set out to Siena to assist the plague-stricken. In 1376, in May, she left for Avignon (France), arriving on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June; the 20<sup>th</sup> she saw Gregory XI, who decided to leave for Italy on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September, passing by Genoa, where Catherine convinced him again to continue his journey to Rome. In 1378, on assignment from the Pope, she went to Florence to negotiate peace, obtained then the 18<sup>th</sup> of July. She died the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1380.

