

April 29

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Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) witness

Today the Roman Catholic and Anglican calendars commemorate Catherine of Siena, a Dominican tertiary and teacher of the faith.

Catherine Benincasa was born in Siena in 1347, the twenty-fourth of twenty-five children. From childhood she felt strongly drawn to the inner life, and at the age of fifteen she joined the Dominican Third Order, attracted by the prospect of serving the poor and sick.

Her love for Christ, fueled by a constant inner dialogue, and her life of radical faithfulness to the Gospel drew a small group of disciples who followed her everywhere, sharing in her gifts and her ministry.

Catherine dedicated her entire life to the cause of peace and unity, working for the reconciliation of warring cities and the reform of the Church, which was afflicted by corruption and schisms. Her active involvement in political and Church affairs was highly unusual for a woman of her time.

She visited the poor to bring them comfort, and the powerful to show them the way of reconciliation demanded by the Gospel. A prolific correspondent, she offered spiritual advice by letter to all who asked her for a word. She also wrote a love poem of rare beauty, the Dialogue on Divine Providence.

Catherine was named a Doctor of the Church by Paul VI in 1968, and the Church of England commemorates her with the same title. She died on this day in 1380, and although she lived to be only thirty-three years old, she left us with her life one of the most remarkable pages of Christian spirituality.

PRAYER

Lord of the Church,
as we remember Catherine of Siena
and her ardent love for you,
we thank you for the service she gave
to truth and peace in the Church:
grant that according to her example
we may live in communion with frankness and love,
guided by the gentleness of the Spirit of Christ,
blessed for ever and ever.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Prov 8:1.6-11; 3 Jn 2-8; Jn 17:12-26

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Catherine of Siena, teacher of the faith

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor of the church (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (21 barmudah/miyazya):

Hierotheus of Athens (1st cent.), disciple of the apostle Paul (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Catherine of Siena, preacher of penitence in Italy

MARONITES:

Catherine of Siena, religious

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Jason and Sosipatros (1st cent.), apostles

9 martyrs of Cyzicus (3rd cent.)

Memnon the Thaumaturge, monk (Melkite Church)