

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA 2018



Dear Sisters:

On April 29, we will celebrate the feast of St. Catherine of Siena, a woman of weak health but was a marvel in apostolic activity, political and diplomatic action in favor of the Church, I wish that together we analyze a bit of her life and thought.

To speak about Catherine of Siena, is to speak about the Church, and this is not easy because it seems that - the Church - is in crisis, as is our society, governments, family... Being in crisis is not bad, it is possibly a symptom that a lifestyle and a value system is disintegrating or disappearing to give way to something new. It is a situation very similar to that of our times, with many points in common, and our sister has a lot to tell us.

She speaks of the Church, but not in any way, but of a Church with passion; Church that she loved, for which she lived and died: "If I die, know that I die of passion for her". To speak of the Church in a catherinian key is to speak of a Church that does not disregard temporal conflicts, because it concerns the person and its full realization. In this regard, St. John Paul II, declaring her Patroness of Europe, recalled that "the young Sienese woman entered, with a sure step and ardent words, into the heart of the ecclesial and social problems of her time". (Apostolic Letter *Spes Aedificandi*, October 1, 1999, n.6)

Paul VI, declaring her doctor of the Church, makes it clear that "she was a political woman, but in the spiritual sense of the word".

We are before the woman who received three solemn recognitions from the Church: Pope Pius II, his compatriot, canonized her in 1461; Paul VI appointed her, along with St. Teresa of Jesus, doctor of the Church in the year 1970, until then only men were granted this title; and John Paul II declared her Patroness of Europe. All these speak to us, without a doubt, of a giant in the faith, of a woman with its own specific significance.

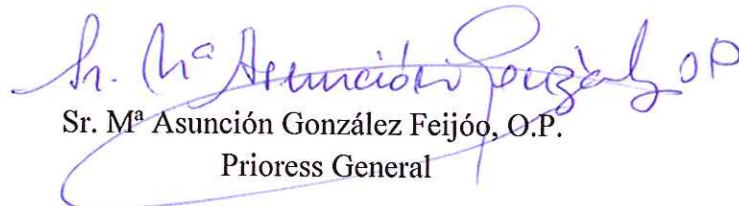
But Catherine of Siena was an illiterate woman who, through her experience of God, became a teacher of spirituality, a counselor of all kinds of people, laity, nobles, cardinals, bishops, religious, and an effective promoter of peace. All this under the sign of her identification with Jesus Christ and impulses of a burning passion for the Church, which she loves without mitigations or rebates and for which she burns with love. She defines herself by saying "my nature is fire" and because of this fire, she speaks, she preaches, she prays, she is consumed, embodying the perfection of the mixed Christian life of which Saint Thomas had

said: "It is more perfect - the mixed life : active and contemplative - because it is more perfect to burn and illuminate than just to burn or only to illuminate".

Father Timothy Radcliffe, on the occasion of the proclamation of Saint Catherine as doctor of the Church, addressed a letter to the whole Order in which he highlights the relevance of the message of our saint because "Catherine's Europe, like our world of today, was marked by violence and an uncertain future... There was a decline of vitality in the Church and a loss of a sense of purpose , as well as a crisis in religious life". (Letter to the Order, Rome, 2000) She did not resign herself but set out on the difficult task of reforming and pacifying the Church and society. Catherine knew how to rise to the occasion by playing a significant role in society and in the Church. In a world in which there is a continuous debate between war and peace, in which what triumphs is not justice but the law of the strongest, Catherine offers us her thought, which is capable of promoting authentic peace. She fought to get it, not with swords, not with wars, but with peace, humble and continuous prayer, sweat and tears shed with anguished desire. She never sacrificed truth or justice for an easy peace or of low price; Catherine strived to achieve it by following the steps of Christ, who made peace between God and men, being rejected and giving his own life. She encourages us to have the courage to assume the role of peacemakers even if this brings us persecution and rejection.

May the peace of Christ flood our hearts so we can bring it to those around us, especially those who need it most.

Peace to you and happy day of Saint Catherine of Siena,



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