

Catherine of Genoa

Saint Catherine of Genoa (**Caterina Fieschi Adorno**, 1447 – 15 September 1510) was an Italian Roman Catholic saint and mystic, admired for her work among the sick and the poor^[2] and remembered because of various writings describing both these actions and her mystical experiences. She was a member of the noble Fieschi family,^[3] and spent most of her life and her means serving the sick, especially during the plague which ravaged Genoa in 1497 and 1501. She died in that city in 1510.

Her fame outside her native city is connected with the publication in 1551 of the book known in English as the *Life and Doctrine of Saint Catherine of Genoa*.^[3]

She and her teaching were the subject of Baron Friedrich von Hügel's classic work *The Mystical Element of Religion* (1908).^[2]

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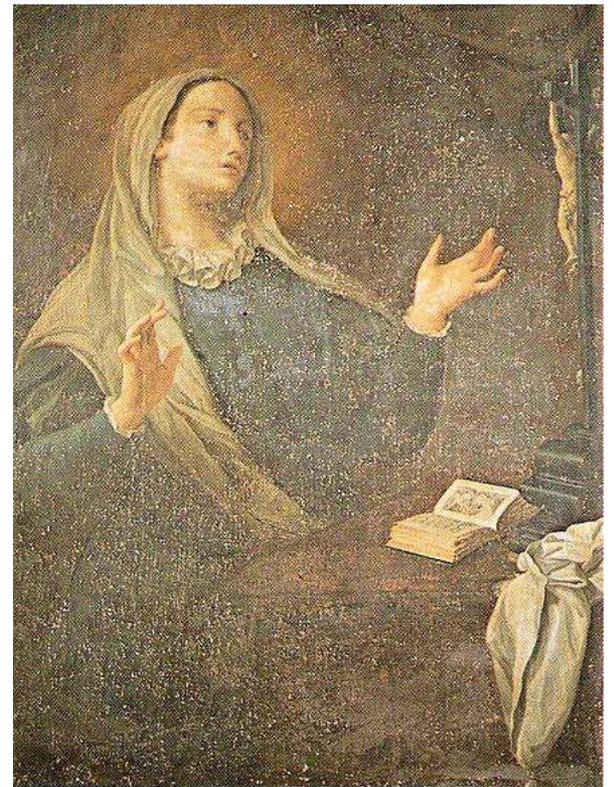
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Early life

Catherine was born in Genoa in 1447, the last of five children.^[4] Catherine's parents were Jacopo Fieschi and Francesca di Negro, both of illustrious Italian birth. The family was connected to two previous popes, and Jacopo became Viceroy of Naples.^[5]

Saint Catherine of Genoa



Saint

Born	1447 <div>Genoa, Italy</div>
Died	1510 <div>Genoa, Italy</div>
Venerated in	Catholic Church
Beatified	1675 by Pope Clement X
Canonized	1737 by Pope Clement XII
Feast	15 September ^[1]
Attributes	Widow
Patronage	Brides, Childless People, Difficult Marriages, People Ridiculed For Their Piety, Temptations, Victims Of Adultery, Victims Of Unfaithfulness,

Catherine wished to enter a convent when about 13,^[6] perhaps inspired by her sister Limbania who was an Augustinian nun.^[7] However, the nuns to whom her confessor applied on her behalf refused her on account of her youth, and after this Catherine appears to have put the idea aside without any further attempt.^[5] After her father's death in 1463, aged 16, she was married by her parents' wish to a young Genoese nobleman, Giuliano Adorno, a man who, after several experiences in the area of trade and in the military world in the Middle East, had returned to Genoa to get married.^[4] Their marriage was probably a ploy to end the feud between their two families.^[8] The marriage turned out wretchedly:^[7] it was childless and Giuliano proved to be faithless, violent-tempered and a spendthrift, and he made his wife's life a misery. Details are scant, but it seems at least clear that Catherine spent the first five years of her marriage in silent, melancholy submission to her husband; and that she then, for another five years, turned a little to the world for consolation in her troubles.^[5] Then, after ten years of marriage, desperate for an escape, she prayed for three months that God would keep her sick in bed, but her prayer went unanswered.^[8]

Conversion

She was converted by a mystical experience during confession on 22 March 1473; her conversion is described as an overpowering sense of God's love for her. After this revelation occurred, she abruptly left the church, without finishing her confession. This marked the beginning of her life of close union with God in prayer,^[2] without using forms of prayer such as the rosary.^[7] She began to receive Communion almost daily, a practice extremely rare for lay people in the Middle Ages, and she underwent remarkable mental and at times almost pathological experiences, the subject of Friedrich von Hügel's study *The Mystical Element of Religion*.^[3]

She combined this with unselfish service to the sick in a hospital at Genoa, in which her husband joined her after he, too, had been converted.^[2] He later became a Franciscan tertiary, but she joined no religious order. Her husband's spending had ruined them financially. He and Catherine decided to live in the Pammatone, a large hospital in Genoa, and to dedicate themselves to works of charity there.^[9] She eventually became manager and treasurer of the hospital.^[3]

She died in 1510, worn out with labours of body and soul. Her death had been slow with many days of pain and suffering as she experienced visions and wavered between life and death.^[8]

Spiritual teaching

For about 25 years, St. Catherine, though frequently going to confession, was unable to open her mind for direction to anyone; but towards the end of her life a Father Marabotti was appointed to be her spiritual guide.^[5] He had been a director of the hospital where her husband died in 1497.^[7] To him she explained her states, past and present, and he compiled the *Memoirs*.^[5] During this period, her life was devoted to her relationship with God, through "interior inspiration" alone.^[10]

In 1551, 41 years after her death, a book about her life and teaching was published, entitled *Libro de la vita mirabile et dottrina santa de la Beata Caterinetta de Genoa* ("Book of the marvellous life and holy teaching of the Blessed Catherine of Genoa").^[2] This is the source of her "Dialogues on the Soul and the Body" and her "Treatise on Purgatory", which are often printed separately.^[3] Her authorship of these has been denied, and it used to be thought that another mystic, the Augustinian canoness regular Battistina Vernazza, a nun who lived in a monastery in Genoa from 1510 till her death in 1587, had edited the two works. This suggestion is now discredited by recent scholarship, which attributes a large part of both works to St. Catherine, even though they received their final literary form only after her death.^{[2][3]}

Catherine's thought on purgatory, for which she is particularly known, and her way of describing it, is original in some features for the period.^[4]

Beatification and canonization

Catherine's writings were examined by the Holy Office and declared to contain doctrine that would alone be enough to prove her sanctity, and she was accordingly beatified in 1675 by Pope Clement X, and canonized in 1737 by Pope Clement XII.^[5] Her writings also became sources of inspiration for other religious leaders such as Saints Robert Bellarmine and Francis de Sales and Cardinal Henry Edward Manning.^[11] St Catherine of Genoa's liturgical feast is celebrated in local calendars on 15 September. Pope Pius XII declared her patroness of the hospitals in Italy.^[3]

See also

- Christian mysticism
- List of Catholic saints

Notes

1. *Administratio Patrimonii Sedis Apostolicae* (2001). *Martyrologium Romanum*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
2. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online: Saint Catherine of Genoa* (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/99705/Saint-Catherine-of-Genoa>[http](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/99705/Saint-Catherine-of-Genoa))
3. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press 2005 ISBN 978-0-19-280290-3), article *Catherine, St, of Genoa*
4. Pope Benedict XVI. "On Catherine of Genoa", General Audience January 12, 2011 (<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/on-st-catherine-of-genoa>)
5. Capes, Florence. "St. Catherine of Genoa." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 3. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. 27 Jul. 2013 (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03446b.htm>)
6. *Life*, chapter 2.
7. Jones, Kathleen (1999). *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
8. Flinders, Carol Lee (1993). *Enduring Grace*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
9. Foley O.F.M., Leonard. *Saint of the Day, Lives, Lessons and Feast*, (revised by Pat McCloskey O.F.M.), Franciscan Media (<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Saints/saint.aspx?id=1332>) ISBN 978-0-86716-887-7
10. Catherine of Genoa (1964). *The Life and Sayings of Saint Catherine of Genoa*. Staten Island: Alba House.
11. Kathleen Jones, *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage* (Orbis Books 1999)

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- Catherine of Genoa, *Purgation and purgatory; The spiritual dialogue*, translated by Serge Hughes, Classics of Western Spirituality, (New York: Paulist Press, 1979)
- Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on purgatory; The dialogue*, translated by Charlotte Balfour and Helen Douglas Irvine,

(London: Sheed & Ward, 1946)

- Thomas Coswell Upham, *Life of Madam Catharina Adorno*, (New York: Harper, 1858)
- Mrs G Ripley, *Life and Doctrine of Saint Catherine of Genoa*, (New York: Christian Press Association, 1896). [This is the most recent English translation of the *Life* of Catherine – but is, like the 1858 translation, made from the inferior A manuscript.]

Further reading

- Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, (London: J Dent & Sons, 1908)
- Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, (New York: Herder & Herder, 2012), pp306–329

External links

- Encyclopædia Britannica Online: article *Saint Catherine of Genoa* (http://www.britannica.com/eb/article_9021815)
-  "Catharine". *New International Encyclopedia*. 1905.
- Catherine Adorni (http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/heritage_floor/catherine_adorni.php) at the Brooklyn Museum Dinner Party Database of Notable Women. Accessed March 2008.
- Saint Catherine of Genoa: Life in the Spiritual Borderlands (<https://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://www.geocities.com/aristophanes68/Catherine.html&date=2009-10-25+12:35:54>)
- Works by or about Catherine of Genoa (<https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20of%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20o%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Genoa%2C%20C%2E%20o%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Catherine%20of%20Genoa%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Catherine%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22C%2E%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Catherine%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Catherine%20of%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Catherine%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22C%2E%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22C%2E%20of%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20of%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20o%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Genoa%2C%20C%2E%20o%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Genoa%2C%20C%2E%20of%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Catherine%20Genoa%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Catherine%20of%20Genoa%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Catherine%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20title%3A%22C%2E%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Catherine%20Genoa%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Catherine%20of%20Genoa%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Catherine%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20description%3A%22C%2E%20o%2E%20Genoa%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20of%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%20o%2E%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Catherine%20Genoa%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Genoa%2C%20Catherine%22%29%20OR%20%28%221447-1510%22%20AND%20Genoa%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29>) at Internet Archive
- Works by Catherine of Genoa (<https://librivox.org/author/10424>) at LibriVox (public domain audiobooks) 
- Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory*, Sheed & Ward, New York 1946 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140225075755/http://www.cfpeople.org/Apologetics/page51a013.html>)

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