

Saint Catherine of Siena: At least eleven saints bear the name of Catherine, but we can be sure that our window depicts Catherine of Siena, because she is a young woman wearing a Dominican habit. The youngest of twenty-five children, Catherine Benin was born in Siena, Italy to Giacomo di Benincasa, a cloth dyer, and his wife, Lapa Piagenti. Throughout her short life (1347-80), Catherine had mystical experiences. Although her parents wanted her to marry, she preferred prayer and fasting and became a member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic when she was sixteen. She visited the sick, including victims of the plague, visited prisoners, supported Pope Gregory XI's proposal for a crusade against the Turks, received the stigmata (the wounds of Christ) on her body, and successfully urged the pope to return from exile in Avignon, France to Rome. Her mystical experiences were recorded and published as *The Dialogue*. Close to four hundred of Catherine's letters survive, written to people in all walks of life, from the poor to the powerful. Catherine suffered a stroke on April 21, 1380, and died eight days later. Canonized in 1461 and made patron saint of Italy in 1939, Catherine of Siena was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970. As a Doctor of the Church, Catherine stands with thirty-two other men and women officially honored for their contributions to our understanding of Scripture and the development of Christian doctrine. Her feast day is April 29. Our window was donated in memory of Frank C. and Catherine Mildred Welsch by Marguerite Stiver.

