

Blessed Catherine Mattei of Racconigi

1486 - 1547

PURGATORY

She was born in Racconigi, Piedmont in 1486. She was a weaver of ribbons, when she heard the call of the Lord. It seems that she frequented a community of Servites, where she learned to know the truths of the faith and to love God. In 1509 she began to frequent a small Dominican convent and she placed herself under the spiritual direction of a renowned preacher: Father Domenico Onesti of Bra. Soon suspicions and slanders started to develop around her. Given her intense life of prayer, some speak about supernatural occurrences happening to her and exaggerate or change those phenomena, while others judge her a fanatic, provoking alarm among the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1512 she was forced to appear at the Episcopal Tribunal of Turin to be questioned about the occurrences. At the Tribunal, Catherine recounted her life and the mystic episodes and the judges acquitted her of the accusations.

In 1514 she was received in the Dominican Order as a Tertiary, in Racconigi. Due to her continuous mystic experiences, she was forced to leave the town and to withdraw to Caramagna Piemonte. She had a special relationship with the souls of Purgatory. One evening while Catherine was in bed stricken by a high fever she was thinking about the souls in Purgatory, when suddenly she was enraptured in ecstasy and was led to Purgatory.

She saw the flames of Purgatory and the souls who were suffering the most

atrocious pains. All of a sudden she heard a voice that said "Catherine, in order that from now on you may take more to heart the poor souls, I will now make you feel on your head their pains for an instant." As soon as she finished hearing those words she saw coming towards her a spark of fire that struck her left cheek.

Some fellow sisters present saw this spark and immediately the face of Catherine swelled and remained like that even after she regained her senses. The Blessed confessed that all the pains she suffered up to then, although they had been numerous they were nothing compared to the pain caused by that spark.

From that day she took even more to heart the destiny of the souls of Purgatory and offered prayers and penances in supplication for them.

Another time a Carthusian Monk appeared to Catherine, who in 1409 had set himself against Gregory XII during the Council of Pisa, but who before dying had reconciled himself with the Pope and the Church and had made penance. It was revealed to the Blessed that he had been condemned by God to expiate a very harsh Purgatory, from which he was liberated thanks to the prayers, penances and sacrifices offered for him by Catherine.

One day to the Blessed appeared Jesus from Whose wounded side was flowing a large stream of blood of which half was descending to the earth on the sinners and half was descending on the souls of Purgatory. Catherine understood



that she had to offer half of her voluntary offerings of prayers and penances for the conversion of sinners and half in supplication for the souls of Purgatory.

