

# May

## PRAYER:

*Act of Hope*

## VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

*Diligence: doing your best and working hard until you're finished*

Imagine being an air traffic controller at a large international airport during the Christmas season...and simply walking away from your monitor an hour early because it's been a long day and you're tired. Or maybe you're a neurosurgeon about to remove a dangerous tumor from someone's spinal cord, and you quit almost at the end because you've got other things you'd rather do right now. Problems with this behavior? Definitely.

To practice the virtue of diligence means not only to *finish* something that we have begun but also to pay attention to what we're doing so that it's done *well*. The examples used here may be a little extreme, but the virtue of diligence remains the same, whether the task involves finishing surgery or finishing a test. Fidelity to small, everyday tasks prepares us to handle larger responsibilities well. By doing all of our work well, no matter how insignificant it may seem, we are fulfilling God's will for our lives and helping to build up His kingdom. Each time we recite the Morning Offering we give all our work as a gift to God. Let's give Him our best!

## SAINT OF THE MONTH:

*Saint Catherine of Siena*

(1347–1380, Italy)

Feast: April 29

The 24th child of cloth-dyer Jacopo Benincasa and his wife Lapa, Catherine Benincasa was born in the Italian city-state of Siena during a tumultuous time both in the secular life of the ruling Italian cities and of the Catholic Church.

Catherine vowed her life to God as a young child, and as a young woman she felt called to join the "Mantellate" who were laywomen, mostly widows, associated with the Dominican Order. These women wore the habit but resided in their own homes and cared for the sick and the poor. Her family strongly objected, since they wanted her to marry. Catherine ended the disagreement by cutting off her hair. Her family, furious, punished her by treating her as a servant, forcing her to do the cooking, cleaning, and serving, taunting her all the while. Yet Catherine served them with great love, as if she were serving the Holy Family.



St. Catherine of Siena, courtesy of the St. Catherine of Siena Institute

**DILIGENCE:** doing your best and working hard until you're finished

After years of this harsh treatment, Saint Catherine's father was moved to repentance when he saw Catherine praying one day, and a dove hovering over her head. He relented in punishing her, and allowed her to once again have her own room where she could spend all the time she desired in prayer. This she did with deep devotion, seeing Christ each day and praying with Him, until He asked her to apply all He had taught her by going out to serve her neighbor.

Saint Catherine served the needs of the poor and sick within Siena, and began to act as a peacemaker and reconciler of peoples. During this time the once-illiterate Catherine became a prolific writer of letters—to bishops, priests, religious, civil rulers, ordinary laymen, and even the pope—persistently exhorting them to be faithful to Christ and His Church.

During this period, there was a very difficult situation in which a series of popes had chosen to live in Avignon, France, rather than in Rome. Saint Catherine pleaded with Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome, writing him repeatedly with love and reverence, but also candor, reminding him of his duty and his divine calling. Saint Catherine even travelled to Avignon, walking on foot for most of the long journey, to see the Holy Father in person. Despite the respect so many had for the saint, she had difficulty being admitted to see the Holy Father, but she persisted. With the help of Catherine's influence and prayers, Pope Gregory XI overcame his fears, recalled his duty, and returned to Rome.

Saint Catherine of Siena died in 1380 at the age of 33. She was canonized in 1461, and in 1970 she was declared a Doctor of the Church. She is one of only four women saints to be given this honor.

#### **PRAYER:**

Saint Catherine of Siena, your heart was so on fire with the love of Christ and His will that you walked for many miles, and wrote many letters to the pope in spite of lack of encouragement. Pray for us, that we may persevere until death, and win the crown of glory as you did. Help us to do our best for God in every moment, and to see through to the end every duty that He entrusts to us. Amen. Saint Catherine of Siena, pray for us.

#### **PRAYER:**

Pray the *Memorare* for an increase in the virtue of diligence, and for opportunities to grow closer to Jesus over the summer:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.