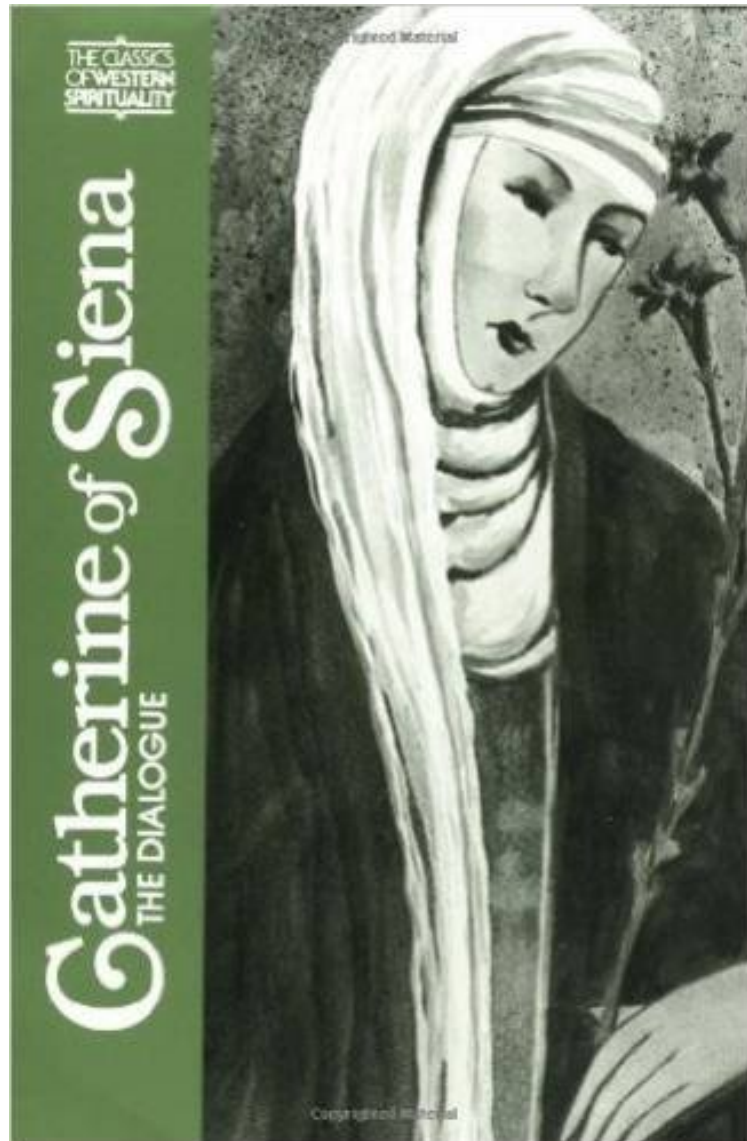


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Catherine of Siena : The Dialogue (Classics of Western Spirituality)

Catherine of Siena

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Catherine of Siena : Catherine of Siena : The Dialogue (Classics of Western Spirituality) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Catherine of Siena : The Dialogue (Classics of Western Spirituality):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Learn and Grow Spiritually from Someone Who has Been ThereBy Book GluttonSaint Catherine of Siena was a third order Dominican in fourteenth-century Tuscany. As a young adult,

she devoted herself to prayer, fasting, and mortifications. After this period of solitude, with its accompanying ecstatic visions, she went out into the world to care for the sick and the poor. Catherine also worked to bring peace and unity in the Church and among Christians. She was canonized by Pope Pius II and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI. St. Catherine gives us one of the great literary treasures of the Church, called *The Dialogue*. It was for this work and her letters, Saint Catherine was named Doctor. Saint Catherine's insights are pertinent to today's Church, especially in the Spiritual Life. For instance, she instructs us on: specific stages in the Spiritual Life. the notion of mystical marriage and what it means. how our journey in the Spiritual Life reflects Jesus on the Cross. how to overcome selfish sensuality by hatred of sin and growth in virtue. that trials, temptations, and sufferings can be transformed into positive things. how filial love and love of God eventually leads to spousal love. and, much more, even the four distinct punishments experienced by those in Hell! These are all found in *The Dialogue*, which takes the form of actual conversations between God and Saint Catherine, and comes to us in four separate exchanges. Briefly, there is a *Treatise on Divine Providence* in which is explained the connection between love and suffering, emphasizing that God wants only our love and the service we give to our neighbors. The *Treatise on Discretion* introduces the metaphor of *The Bridge* between our fallen world and heaven, which is Jesus similar to seeing Jesus as *The Way!* The *Treatise on Prayer* gives instructions for the progress from vocal to mental prayer, and describes the higher degrees of prayer. The *Treatise on Obedience* covers the necessity and rewards of obedience. As with the writing of other Doctors and spiritual writers in this series, this is a message that comprises: taking our own steps towards spiritual perfection, whereby God wants to bring us to sanctity and salvation. This is a message completely true to Sacred Scripture. This profound teaching is a gift to guide the reader to apply these extraordinary ideas and teachings to his or her own life that they might arrive at the same benefit and spiritual growth envisioned by the Saint. Highly recommended!

10 of 0 people found the following review helpful. St. Catherine of Siena's *The Dialogue* Can Be a Tough Slog

By M. L. Asselin

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80) *The Dialogue* was composed as a continuous narrative (later divided up into chapters) with the regular pattern of petition, response, thanksgiving that characterizes the flow of the work (Introduction, p. 15). This is a difficult read (even in this very accessible translation), one not meant to be plowed through in the manner I read it, but to be ruminated over slowly in the manner of *lectio divina*. *The Dialogue* includes passages on the importance of prayer and the image of Christ as a bridge. At the very outset of the book, St. Catherine, following St. Paul (1 Thess 5:17), advocates for continual, humble prayer (p. 25). She gives additional attention to this idea of humility in prayer later in the book, where God says, Then she receives my visitation humbly, saying, Behold your servant: Let your will be done in me. Then she emerges from the course of prayer and my spiritual visitation with spiritual gladness and joy, in humility considering herself unworthy (pp. 133-4). St. Catherine gives special importance to mental prayer, not that one should abandon vocal prayer, since it seems not everyone is drawn to mental prayer (p. 124). Rather, one should, even in vocal prayer, endeavor to concentrate on my love, pondering at the same time her own sins and the blood of my only-begotten Son (p. 124). The target of this love is, of course, Jesus, whom St. Catherine gives various appellations, including *Bridge* (p. 59ff.), *Vine* (p. 61), *Boat* (p. 70), and *Servant* (p. 76). The *Bridge* image is one that she returns to many times. Christ is the bridge between our humanity and the Godhead. This is another way of referring to the Incarnation, but St. Catherine also uses the image to indicate a path to unity with God: the three steps of (1) desire without selfish love, (2) enlightenment of the mind, and (3) peace and quiet (pp. 65, 108). One of the ideas that really struck me was St. Catherine's exhortation to focus on your neighbors' needs and on your sins, but not on your neighbors' sins (p. 300). How often do we look to find fault in others rather than, in all humility, examine our own sinfulness! But I gave you your ears to listen to my word and pay heed to your neighbors' needs (p. 300). We perversely gravitate towards condemning others instead of reaching out to help our brothers and sisters in charity and humility. This is contrary to the Gospel, and yet so many of us who identify ourselves as Christians find judgment easier than love. This long, often meandering, book occasionally felt like a penance to read! St. Catherine's exaltation of the spiritual over the physical (soul good; body bad) seemed a little too much like Gnosticism at times. And her exhortations not to engage civil law in matters involving wrongdoing by church ministers (p. 229) doesn't resonate today in a post-scandal Church. But St. Catherine otherwise gives us much food for contemplation in *lectio divina*, including the importance of personal humility, the need to pray constantly, and the call to service.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. *Worldclass Classic*

By Jim Curry

This is a very thoughtful and careful translation of the primary teaching of one of the world's greatest mystic saints. It purports to be a dialogue with God the Father, obtained by the mystic ecstasy of St. Catherine, although probably not in the sort of very short and very dramatic fashion that a movie maker might cast it. These insights did come to her through her inner life. The wordings she received were important to her, and at the key sections, she herself felt that the wording could not be changed without doing irreparable and unnecessary harm. Still, she herself spent a lot of time editing these for clarity, in passages that were available to her to edit. Of course, we have the writings of many great mystic saints, and none of them should be neglected. St. Theresa of Avila wrote voluminously. St. John of the Cross wrote extensively. St. Theresa of Lisieux deserves top mention. None of these is somehow less or worthless. Still, it is entirely necessary to be in a right frame of mind to ascertain what the great athletic saints like Theresa of Avila or John of the Cross are really saying. They wrote from a frame of mind that is hard for ordinary people to match. Theresa of

Lisieux is more accessible much of the time, and she cannot be neglected. Still, the Dialogues of St. Catherine are wonderful because they are more accessible to ordinary people. They don't have the repulsive saccharin veneer (which turns out to be necessary and endearing when properly assimilated) of Theresa of Lisieux. They don't have the athletic difficulty of Theresa of Avila or John of the Cross. They are accessible. We can read them. We can see what they mean. We can, in fact, move our lives in practical ways toward the direction and state of mind that St. Catherine indicates. It is a very comforting book in that way. In the end, what do we want? What does everybody want? We all want to make our lives into something that matters, and not just have our lives amount to nothing at the end. Most of us have few strategies to make their own lives the beautiful work of art it can be. We have so many people who say that this or that is "larger than life." Such people are foolish. They make their lives too small. St. Catherine offers a wonderful doorway. We can all walk through and make our lives much better, much richer, much more pleasing---not just to God---more pleasing to ourselves, too. Is there someone in the world who doesn't want his/her life to be wholesomely beautiful, to be an experience of growth and freedom---to be liberating? Is there, anywhere in the world, a person who would not like his/her life to touch the celestial realm---to realize the image of God in which we are created? I think there is not one person.

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), mystic and doctor of the church, wrote *The Dialogue*, her crowning spiritual work, for "the instruction and encouragement of all those whose spiritual welfare was her concern."

Language Notes
Text: English, Italian (translation)
About the Author
Noffke has been researching, translating, and interpreting the works of Catherine of Siena since 1976. Giuliana Cavallini, O.P., was the Director of the Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani in Rome, as well as an editor of St. Catherine of Siena's dialogue and author of additional works on the saint. She purposefully wrote her biography of "St. Martin de Porres" as a story neither chronological nor critical. Rather, she gathered various episodes taken from the testimony given during the process of his beatification, from people who had known Martin in his lifetime. The completed work received the Imprimatur from Cletus F. O'Donnell, and was originally published in 1963. Giuliana Cavallini is also the author of "Things Visible and Invisible: Images in the Spirituality of St. Catherine of Siena".