



WOMEN PATRONS OF EUROPE AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

Basilica of Santa Maria
Sopra Minerva

SAINT CATHERINE
OF SIENA





DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



MINISTERO
DEL TURISMO
REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

WOMEN PATRONS OF EUROPE AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

Jubilee journeys

Basilica of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva

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Section for Fundamental Questions
regarding Evangelization in the World
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4 themed routes to follow

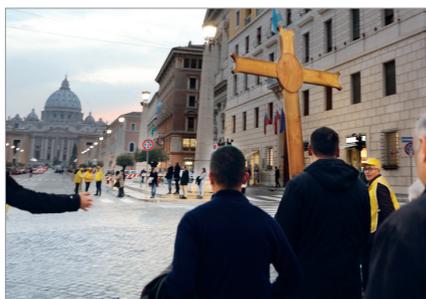
The Jubilee is a great event for all peoples during which each and every pilgrim can immerse themselves in the endless mercy of God.

It's the Year of return to the essence of fraternity, mending the relationship between ourselves and the Father.

It's the Year that calls us to conversion, an opportunity to take stock of our lives and ask the Lord to direct them towards holiness. It's the Year of solidarity, of hope, of justice, and of commitment to the service of God, living in joy and peace with our brothers and sisters.

But, above all, the Jubilee year has at its center the encounter with Christ.

For this reason, the Jubilee asks us to get moving and to overcome the confines in our lives. When we move we don't just change place physically, but we transform ourselves too. For this reason, it's important to prepare well, to plan the route and



have a clear sight of our destination. In a sense the Holy Year pilgrimage begins before the journey itself: its starting point is the decision to do set out on the path.

To fully experience the 2025 Jubilee, through walking and prayer, four routes have been prepared for pilgrims within the city of Rome, each with its own theme.

Europe in Rome

The Pilgrim Path of the Churches of the European Union, includes visits to 28 churches and basilicas, historically linked to EU member countries for cultural or artistic reasons or because they served as places of welcome for pilgrims from individual member states of the European community.

Pilgrimage of the Seven Churches

Originally the idea of Saint Philip Neri in the 16th century, the pilgrimage of the Seven Churches is one of the most ancient Roman traditions. It's a 25 km route winding through the streets of Rome.

Jubilee Churches

This is one of the churches designated as a meeting place for pilgrims. Catecheses will be held in these churches in different languages to rediscover the meaning of the Holy Year. They will also offer the sacrament of Reconciliation and host events aimed at nourishing the faith with experiences of prayer.

Women Patrons of Europe and Doctors of the Church

This is a pilgrimage that involves stopping in prayer in those Roman Churches linked to Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Saint Brigid of Sweden, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, and Saint Hildegard of Bingen.

Basilica of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva

Reasons for a pilgrimage

Catherine of Siena arrived in Rome for the final - and most decisive - time in her life, in November 1378, having been personally summoned by Pope Urban VI. She stayed in the city for about a year and a half, and died there on 29 April 1380, at the age of 33, whispering the same final words as her Beloved Crucified Spouse: «Father, into your hands I commend my spirit» (Lk 23, 46).

Rome and the papacy were experiencing a deep and dangerous internal split at the time. The lawful and valid election of Pope Urban VI in April of that year, had left a group of French cardinals dissatisfied. They retreated to Fondi, and in September of the same year, elected an anti-pope, Clement VII, disavowing the true pontiff and threatening to march on Rome to take the Papal throne by force. The people of Rome were in turmoil, exhausted by continuous civil wars, poverty, and foreign domination. The presence of two Popes also meant a split in Europe. Backing the French claim to the papacy (and the anti-pope Clement VII) were France, Joanna I Queen of Naples, and the forces of Savoy, Piedmont, the duchy of Monferrato, and Scotland. On the other side, Emperor Wenceslaus, Bavaria, Luxembourg, Mainz, England, Flanders, Louis of Hungary and Poland all sided with the legitimate Pope. Urban VI called Catherine to Rome hoping

she might gather and consolidate the forces loyal to the Pope and offer the frightened pontiff her own personal support. Chronicles of the time report the pontiff's own impression after listening to a long speech by the little Sienese woman in the presence of the entire new consistory of cardinals:

«You see, my brothers, how despicable we make ourselves in the eyes of God when we allow ourselves to become afraid. This poor little woman puts us to shame. I call her that not because of who she is, but because of the weakness of her sex, something which could have frightened her if we had been full of courage: instead it is she who gives us courage! Isn't this a confusing topic for us?» (Legenda Maior, 334).

Caterina (**fig.1**) was certainly an authoritative woman, as is evidenced by the wisdom and vigor of her words. She had played a decisive role with the previous Pope Gregory XI, exhorting him to return to Rome from the Avignon exile ("Come, come, come!" she had written in her letter to him numbered 206). She also exhorted him to be 'virile' in faithfulness to the Blood of the Crucified Lord. Under Urban VI she worked with all her strength to keep the Church united, and to remind the new Pope of his office as the «sweet Christ on earth». The letters she wrote to both Popes are truly extraordinary, for their passion and

vehemence. She said of herself, in this last phase of life: "You would see a dead woman go once more to Saint Peter's, and enter again and work in the barque of Holy Church. There I am, until almost the hour of vespers... without any food... even without a drop of water, with as many sweet bodily torments as I have ever endured... so much so that my life is at stake» (Letter 373).

Every day she took the same route to go and pray in the Basilica of the Apostle: leaving what is now Piazza Santa Chiara, near the Pantheon and the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, before heading along the Via Papalis (the current Via del Governo Vecchio), down to St Peter's. She dragged herself along, often exhausted, helped by the traders in the area and became known as a friend of the poor on the streets.

«Blood! Blood! Blood!» she often shouted. The Blood of the slain Only Begotten Lamb of God; the Blood shed on the Cross; the Blood that she desired to shed as a martyr of Christ. Catherine felt the weight of the entire Church on her shoulders and of the sin that infected it. She carried this burden with extraordinary strength. Some of her disciples also saw her struggling with invisible (to them) enemies who tormented her. She died with nothing of her own, but with a very large company of spiritual children who mourned her passing. Her body, in the three days in which it was exposed before burial, is said to have performed miracles and numerous graces were reported. She is buried in Rome in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where her spiritual

father and biographer, Blessed Raymond of Capua of the Order of Preachers, was an illustrious prior for years.

Near the French Seminary at Santa Chiara is the house where she lived and died, which can now be visited inside Palazzo Santa Chiara. The walls of that residence were later transferred to Santa Maria sopra Minerva.



fig.1

In St. Peter's Basilica, the mosaic with St. Peter's barque, created by Giotto, before which the Saint prayed is still visible.. Today it is in a different place from Catherine's time, now in the portico of the Basilica, in front at the central door, when exiting. Her whole life and vocation can be summed up in a clear message: the unity and peace of the Church («Peace! Peace! Peace!» she wrote to Gregory XI, Letter 196). At the age of just six she had experienced her first mystical experience: Christ in glory had appeared

to her dressed in the robes of the Supreme Pontiff, with tiara and crosier, and she understood that she had to love the Son of God in the person of the Roman Pontiff. At the end of her life, she went again to Rome to steady the «barque» of the Church and to try to prevent further schisms.

Precisely for this reason she did not spare herself from correcting the customs of the Church, so that its light could shine: “Oh dear, we can no longer be silent! We must



fig.2

shout with a hundred thousand tongues. I see that, if we keep quiet, the world is ruined, the Bride of Christ has turned pale, her color is gone, because the blood has been sucked from her, that is, the blood of Christ.” (Letter 16). Despite all this, she could not stop loving and serving that Church, because it alone could give her the body of Christ. Catherine’s is a unique and extraordinary human and spiritual story, in which all the paradoxes of the Christian life blend together: ignorance and wisdom,

weakness and strength, contemplation and action, humility and glory. She lived in her family home, in Siena, up until she was 20, unknown to everyone, in the bosom of her large family. There she learned to know her Beloved Lord whom she «frequented» in intense visions and prayers. She fortified her soul with the teachings she received directly from the Master, with continuous physical struggles against the demons who persecuted her, with the misunderstandings and humiliations of family members who were initially hostile to her choices in life which were, even at an early stage, so totally for the Lord. She practiced penance and mortification of the body; she was generous towards the poor; she obtained entry into the Dominican Third Order; she started having mystical experiences, and at the age of 20 she celebrated her mystical wedding with her Beloved. After these years of intense preparation, she began her public life: «Love God and others», this was the most important commandment for her. Thus, she began to take care of the poor of Siena and travel around Tuscany and central Italy doing the same. She was a spiritual teacher, who was wise and strong, even though she had never received any formal school education and was physically slight and fragile. She carried out an intense activity as an ambassador of peace between cities at war. And she dictated powerful letters to earls, princes, kings, and queens.

It is incredible how Catherine preached and wrote as a woman of her times, every-

where and to everyone. In the meantime, she continued to live unique mystical experiences, including the exchange of her heart, (fig.2) in an almost «physical» way, with that of the risen Lord. Raymond of Capua recounts that the Lord Jesus appeared to her with a shining red human heart in his hand, opened her chest, introduced the heart inside and said: “Dearest daughter, as the other day I took your heart that you offered me, here now I give you mine, and from now on it will live in the place that yours occupied”. By 1378 she was already at the end of her strength. Her body was reduced to skin and bones. She no longer ate anything except the beloved Eucharistic hosts, the Body of her Lord. She was exhausted by the internal struggles and the continuous ecstasies, which in October 1378 frequently enraptured her. Despite this she managed to dictate a masterpiece of doctrine, spirituality and mysticism - her Dialogue of Divine Providence, the book which she wrote in conversation directly with the Eternal Father. Two questions arise about the core of her spirituality, questions that remain valid because they were asked by God himself in a vision: “Do you know, daughter, who you are and who I am? If you know these two things, you will be blessed!” Catherine’s existential and spiritual story is lived in a crescendo of passion and action that only a woman «mad with love» for her Lord could sustain. “You are what is not; I, instead, am He who is. If you have this knowledge in your soul, the enemy will not be able to deceive you,

and you will escape from all his snares; you will never consent to anything contrary to my commandments, and you will acquire without difficulty every grace, every truth and every light» (Legenda Maior, 92).

Visiting the basilica

The title of the basilica, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, already offers a first clue to the visitor. The fulness of Wisdom, who is Christ, born of Mary, does not forget or despise Minerva, representing ancient Wisdom. In the area occupied today by the basilica and the ex-convent, there once stood three temples dedicated to Minerva, Isis and Serapis. The various Christian communities who occupied this space in the early Middle Ages and then, above all the Dominicans who arrived there in 1256, understood that the location also had a symbolic value. (fig.3)



fig.3

The little elephant in the square in front of the basilica bears witness to this. In ancient literature the elephant is a symbol of wisdom due to its proverbial long memory which distinguishes it from other creatures, learning and remembering everything it sees. (fig.4)

Bernini, who created the sculpture and raised the obelisk on it, chose the inscrip-

credence should be given to the defamatory story that it was placed there, so as to be seen to turn its back on the nearby Dominican convent.

The Minerva convent was initially placed under the protection of the first Dominican house of the city, Santa Sabina on the Aventine, which recalls the meeting between the two great reformers of the Church, Francis of Assisi and Dominic - the pontiffs had the same vision for both saints: Francis and Dominic were both seen as supporting the Lateran, that is, the Church of Rome. But at the end of the 13th century the convent became autonomous. According to tradition it was friars Sisto and Ristoro, the same men who built Santa Maria Novella in Florence, who designed the built it in the Gothic style, so the two edifices can be considered sisters - although perhaps it was other Dominican friars who actually developed the plan.

Only in 1453, the year of the fall of Constantinople, was the main façade with the three Renaissance portals built.

Inside it is immediately clear that the structure of the basilica is Gothic - it is unique for Rome where medieval architecture has generally been replaced by the Renaissance and Baroque. However, the simple Gothic architecture is not immediately evident due to the interventions of the Dominican architect Fra Girolamo Bianchedi who worked in the mid-1800s to give the basilica its current look. The painting of the blue ceiling with stars recalls the sense of elevation that all Gothic architecture



fig.4

tion: "Whoever here sees the signs of the Wisdom of Egypt carved on the obelisk, supported by the elephant, the strongest of the beasts, should understand this as proof that a robust mind is needed to support solid wisdom.» This proves that little

is intended to inspire, the message being that only by looking upwards towards God can one become fully wise. This is a lesson that was surely as valid in ancient times as it is today. More important than the architecture, the one who invites us to look up is Catherine of Siena, who is now buried under the main central altar. Saint Catherine died in her house which was a few meters from the basilica, a place she chose so as to be close to the friars and, in particular, to her confessor and spiritual father, Blessed Raimondo da Capua who was also the General of the Dominican order, and who, at times, also resided at Santa Maria sopra Minerva. As soon as the saint died, her remains were taken to the basilica, where the Roman people came to venerate her for three days. She was first buried in the cemetery reserved for the

Dominicans, which has now disappeared, and then moved - at the behest of Blessed Raimondo - to a chapel in the transept, the current Capranica Chapel. In 1430, Saint Antoninus of Florence, a friar who continued the reform promoted by Catherine and Raymond, became prior of Minerva, and he had the sarcophagus sculpted which still covers the body of the saint today. But it was only in 1855 that the relics and the white sarcophagus which had been prepared by Saint Antoninus were placed un-

der the new high altar, where they remain today. (fig.5)

In the display two angels hold an inscription which reads «St. Catherine virgin of Siena of the Order of St. Dominic».

Accessible from the sacristy, but only with permission, is the room in which Saint Catherine died, originally sited in Piazza Santa Chiara a few meters from the basil-



fig.5

ica, but which was dismantled and rebuilt by Cardinal Barberini in this new location in 1637. The ancient walls had already been enriched by the paintings of Antoniazzo Romano and his school (1482-1483) and these were also removed and repositioned. On the altar is a Crucifixion with saints, to the left of which is a beautiful Annunciation. To the left of the entrance we see St Catherine conversing with St Augustine and, a little further on, St Jerome and St Onofrius. To the right of the entrance is St John the

Baptist and, a little further on, St Lucy and St Agatha. Above the entrance, is an image of Christ placed in the tomb. (fig.6)

On the external side of the Santa Caterina room there is a bust of Blessed Maria Cristina of Savoy, who was Queen of Naples alongside King Ferdinand in the first half of the 19th century and died giving birth to the heir to the throne when she was just 23: she was beatified for her profound faith, her charity and for her desire to promote the education of Christian women.

The Gothic Basilica underwent major changes at the time of the Renaissance. In its own way, it shows how humanism and the Renaissance had Rome as well as Florence as their center.

The basilica also contains the body of Beato Angelico, who died in the Minerva convent in 1455 – his tomb is to the left of the main altar. The Blessed painter was a Dominican friar in Florence, where he frescoed

his own convent of San Marco, which was requisitioned at the time of the Unification of Italy in the 19th century and separated from the church of the friars. It is amazing to see in that Florentine convent how Beato Angelico frescoed the rooms of the cloister, the guest quarters, the brothers' cells, and, more simply, those of the novices. His world-famous Annunciation is right there in front of you when you go up to the floor where he slept. (fig.7) Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) though, wanted him in Rome. He had known Fra Angelico while he had been in Florence to preside over the council of Ferrara-Florence, when the Eastern leaders of Constantinople had come to Rome to ask for a crusade against the Turks and offer in return the reunification of Christendom. Of all the works carried out by Beato Angelico in Rome during this first stay, only the Niccolina Chapel has survived. It tells the stories of the two deacons Stephen and Lawrence and is today in the Vatican Museums. During his last stay at the Minerva, however, Fra Angelico painted a large cycle of frescoes in the cloister of the convent, which are now lost. Critics have suggested that they may have illustrated the same biblical stories which appear in the first book with images ever to be printed in Italy, the *Meditationes* of the Spanish Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, also a Dominican friar, who is buried in the Chapel of the Annunciation, which is the work of Antoniazzo Romano, which will be discussed shortly. Scholars suggest that the banner, later applied to canvas and often painted



fig.6

over, which is in the chapel to the left of his tomb may be the work of Fra Angelico. It shows the Madonna and Child holding the world, in which the names of the continents known at the time, Europe, Asia and Africa, are inscribed. The Americas and Australia are missing because they had not yet been discovered. Due to his extraordinary ability to combine the Christian life of a Dominican friar, his great artistic talent and the theology expressed by his works, Fra Angelico was declared the patron saint of artists, and on February 18, the day of his death, all over the world, artists of different disciplines invoke his intercession.

Near the tomb of Beato Angelico (1455), the friars had an inscription placed which is attributed to Lorenzo Valla and which reads: "Here lies the venerable painter Fra Giovanni of the Order of Preachers. May I not be praised because I seemed like another Apelles, but because I gave all my riches, O Christ, to you. For some works survive on earth, others in heaven. The city of Florence gave birth to me, Giovanni .» The tombstone is by Isaia da Pisa.

The splendor of the Renaissance really becomes evident in the Carafa Chapel, dedicated to St Thomas Aquinas, which is in the right transept, frescoed between 1489 and 1493. (fig.5) It was commissioned by the Dominican Cardinal Oliviero Carafa, protector of the Dominicans, who, on the advice of Lorenzo the Magnificent, entrusted it to Filippino Lippi. In the vault, where the Carafa coat of arms is located, four sibyls are represented, symbolizing the

fact that the classical world was also waiting for a savior.

In the center is the Annunciation with Saint Thomas Aquinas presenting Cardinal Carafa to the Virgin Mary. At the top, is the Assumption of the Virgin Mary surrounded by a choir of angels each with a different musical instrument. The triumph of Saint Thomas



fig.7

over heresy is depicted on the right-hand wall. The saint is shown teaching from his chair, flanked by Grammar, Rhetoric, Theology and Philosophy. He has a book in his hand which says: «Sapientiam sapientum perdam », that is, «I will destroy the wisdom

of the wise», while at his feet, like an angry old man, we see Eradicated Error with a scroll that says «Sapientia vincit malitiam», that is, «Wisdom conquers malice». The entire history of the Dominicans is characterized by the search for truth to overcome error. The characters in the foreground represent various heretics, and some of the inscriptions which identify them remain visible, namely Mani, Eutyche and Sabellius, while others are now illegible. In front, however, there are contemporary frescoes that recognize the wisdom of Thomas. We can recognize, among others, Giovanni and Giulio de' Medici, the future Popes Leo X and Clement VII. In the background you can see Rome and the Lateran Basilica and Palace with the ancient equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius which, at that time, was sited near the basilica. In the lunette at the top left is the famous episode of the Crucifix addressing St Thomas saying: «You have written well about me, Thomas». The meaning of the depiction in the lunette on the right is, however, debated. The frescoes on the left wall were supposed to represent vices and virtues, but they were lost to make room for the tomb of Pope Paul IV, one of the five Popes buried in the basilica. The Chapel of the Annunciation, the third in the right nave, houses another magnificent work of the Roman Renaissance, the Annunciation by Antoniazzo Romano. It was painted between 1499 and 1500, in preparation for the Jubilee announced by Pope Alexander VI and was commissioned by the Confraternita dell'Annunziata, founded by

Cardinal Torquemada (1388-1468), who has already been mentioned. The confraternity had the aim of providing a «dowry» for marriage to poor girls, who otherwise would have run the risk of becoming prostitutes. In the painting we see the Virgin Mary with the archangel Gabriel who is telling her she is to conceive the Son of God - meanwhile Mary is busy with the task of delivering a dowry to some young women dressed in white who are presented to her by Torquemada who wears a simple Dominican habit, with the cardinal's hat at his feet. Also from the Renaissance period is Michelangelo's Risen Christ, (**fig.8**) sculpted between 1515 and 1521. Some believe that a similar Christ present in Bassano Romano is an early version of this work. Although the work has clearly been retouched by subsequent artists, and the cross is clearly not original, the expressive strength of the body and face is the work of Michelangelo Buonarroti who often expressed the vigor

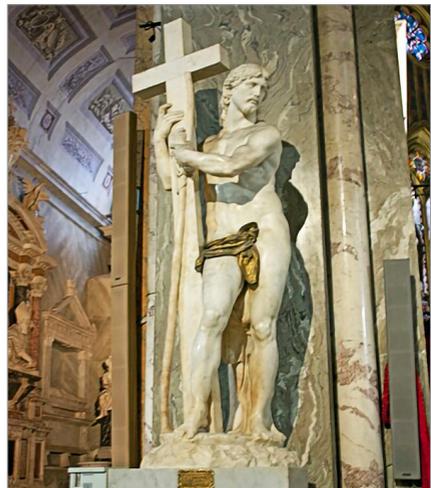


fig.8

of the Christian faith in his powerful nudes. We have already spoken of Pope Eugene IV, who was a great friend of the Dominicans. He named the Dominican, Saint Antoninus, a great humanist, to be Archbishop of Florence, and in those years a very close bond was formed between the Medici and the friars, to the point that Cosimo the Elder obtained from the Dominicans a small study in the convent of San Marco where he liked to retreat from his responsibilities and reflect. It too was frescoed by Fra/Beato Angelico. In fact, the Dominicans became the chaplains of the Medici family and this relationship persisted over the centuries. Proof of this is the fact that the two Popes coming from the Medici family wanted to be buried in this church of the Minerva. They are Leo X, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent who died in 1521 and Clement VII, who died in 1534 and was Pope during the sack of Rome

In the sanctuary area, you can see on the left wall, the funerary monument of Pope Leo by Sangallo the Younger, Bartolomeo Bandinelli and Giovanni Lippi. The statue of Leo X is flanked by two prophets in the niches to the left and right, while above can be seen the bas reliefs showing the Baptism of Jesus, the meeting between Leo X and Francis I and the Miracle of St Julian. The statue of Clement VII also has two prophets on the sides, while at the top are displayed the Peace between Clement VII and Charles V, and St Benedict meeting Totila and St John in the desert. Leo X carried on the great cultural renaissance which

had begun in the pontificate of Julius II who had called to Rome the great Masters of the Renaissance – including Bramante, Michelangelo and Raphael.

The sculptor Andrea Bregno, who died in 1503, is also buried in the basilica, and is commemorated on a plaque on the wall of the left transept, as is that great man of letters, Cardinal Pietro Bembo, who died in 1547. He has a tombstone in the basilica commemorating his place of burial. Near the tomb of Bregno has been placed the tomb of Luigia Tincani, the founder of the Union of School Missionaries, who died in 1976. This venerable woman committed herself to giving Christian testimony in the world of schools and universities, paying particular attention to women's education, drawing inspiration from Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine of Siena. Today's LUMSA University in Rome is the fruit of her labors and ideas. The Baroque age also left its mark on the Minerva complex, and the chapel in the left transept is from that period. It is dedicated to St Dominic and was commissioned by Pope Benedict XIII, also a former Dominican friar who is buried in the monument on the right wall of the chapel. In the altarpiece we see the Virgin Mary, St Mary Magdalene and St Catherine of Alexandria donating the image of St Dominic. The image tells the story of a miracle which was seen to take place in Soriano in the southern Italian region of Calabria in 1530, when the three saints offered this image of the founder to a Dominican brother. In this chapel the famous French preacher Henry Dominique

Lacordaire took the Dominican habit in 1839. Set against the last pillar of the left nave is the funerary monument of the venerable Sister Maria Raggi, a Dominican. It was sculpted in his youth by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The work is famous for the marble which has been carved to depict a cloth bearing the image of the deceased. She, in turn, is portrayed at the moment at which she takes her last breath with a serenity that is nothing other than a longing for heaven. It is similar to the more monumental works showing the ecstasy of Teresa of Avila and that of Ludovica Albertoni. **(fig.9)** Right from the start of their presence in Rome, first at Santa Sabina and then at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the Dominicans had taught theology, but it was only in 1575 that the former bishop of Cuzco in Peru, Monsignor Solano, decided to establish the College of St Thomas, which would also be open to people who did not belong to the Dominican order. This College was enriched by the establishment of the Casanatense Library, created thanks to the endowments of the Dominican Cardinal Girolamo Casanate in 1701. This College, together with the entire convent, was confiscated twice - first in 1797 by the French revolutionary army and then again in 1814 by the Napoleonic army and was later used as an infantry barracks. The Dominicans were only able to return to the complex after the Congress of Vienna in 1825, but it was definitively seized in 1871 by the Kingdom of Italy. Only in 1929 did the friars once more regain possession of a few small sections

of the complex, the rest of which would go on to become the headquarters of various ministries of the new Italian Kingdom, and later the library of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Italian Senate. The Casanatense Library, also requisitioned, became a state library. With their space now reduced to a minimum, the Dominicans could no longer keep the College functioning in the so-called Dominican insula, which had gradually built up around the basilica. So, the university was transferred to the current location of the Angelicum, at the beginning of via Nazionale, in the former Dominican monastery of Saints Dominic and Sixtus.

From the right transept, you enter the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, also called the Capranica Chapel. Here, the Finnish community in Rome began to meet for the celebration of Mass at the time of the Second World War, in 1943. At the beginning only the Catholic Eucharist was celebrated, then, from 1985, ecumenical celebrations began. Since then, every year, on January 19, the feast day of Saint Henry of Uppsala, bishop and patron saint of Finland, representatives of the Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox churches pray together in the Capranica Chapel, where there is a wooden statue depicting St Henry, the work of the Finnish sculptor Sakari Pykälä (1992). Henry was born in England and went to what is now Finland to preach the Gospel, together with the king of Sweden, Eric IX, also a saint, who arrived there on a crusade. Henry reached the village of Ylistaro, in the district of Kumo, where the

remains of the house in which he preached are still venerated today. Henry was the first to announce the Christian faith to the local people. He was martyred by a murderer on whom he had imposed penance for his sins. Tradition has it that the martyrdom took place in the Kjulo swamp. His relics were later moved to the cathedral of Abo, from which Tsar Peter I took them. They were subsequently lost in Russia.

In the Rosary Chapel the altarpiece is a Madonna of the Rosary from the first half of the 18th century. On the side walls there is a cycle with Stories of St Catherine of Siena (frescoes from the last quarter of the 16th century by Giovanni De Vecchi), which allow us to visualize her life story. Starting from the left, her story is told in six stages which also represent six dimensions of her life:

1/ Childhood: The first vision of Catherine of Siena (Christ in papal robes with Saints Peter, Paul and John the Evangelist), charity with the cross given to the poor, Catherine tempted by the devil, the hermit experience.

2/ Vocation: St Dominic gives the habit to Catherine in the presence of other saints; Father Jacopo sees a dove on Catherine's head while she prays; Catherine drinks from Christ's side; Catherine drinks the milk of the Madonna.

3/ The contemplative life: Mystical wedding of Catherine.

4/ Political action: Catherine in Avignon with Gregory XI.

5/ Conformity to Christ: Catherine receives the Stigmata

6/ Death: Mystical communion and death of



fig.9

Catherine of Siena

On the vault are the Mysteries of the Rosary (1573), by Marcello Venusti. The «mysteries» of the life of Jesus, before they became a Marian prayer, were the summary developed by the Church to explain the life of Jesus to those preparing to receive Christian Initiation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church asks catechists to present the life of the Lord (CC 512 ff.) precisely according to these «mysteries». They represent the fundamental episodes of the life of Jesus and their meaning for salvation. The tradition of the Church has spaced them out through the year with their own liturgical feasts. In this way, faith is not transmitted by starting to read one of the four Gospels, but rather by starting from the main events of Jesus' life. Thus the «mysteries» of the Rosary summarize this Christ-centered teaching of the Church.