

Wisdom of Women

Acknowledgement of Land, Seas and Waterways

Let us acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for these lands, seas and waterways for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to these countries and waterways on which we gather and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation. We pray and give thanks for these ancient peoples who have enriched and sustained our continent over all that time.

A reflection

Among the 36 Saints named Doctors of the Church, there are just four women – four remarkable women! While small in number, these women have been recognised for their significant contribution to theology or doctrine.

Three have been remembered and celebrated in recent or up-coming Feast Days: Catherine of Siena (1347 -1380) – April 29; Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179) – September 17; Therese of Lisieux (1873 – 1897) – October 1; and Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582) – October 15.

In her book, *The time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage*, Sr Joan Chittister reminds us that the prophet's responsibility is "to sound the alarm" when our institutions lose their way and live to preserve themselves, rather than the common good. The Church's women doctors were and continue to be creative and prophetic spiritual guides whose voices from the past can 'sound the alarm' to give us purpose and focus for our contemporary journey.

Something to Ponder

Their voice:

Catherine of Siena "Start being brave about everything. Drive out darkness and spread light. Don't look at your weaknesses. Realize instead that in Christ crucified you can do everything."

Hildegard of Bingen "The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity. This Word manifests itself in every creature."

Therese of Lisieux "Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing."

Teresa of Avila "May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us."

Your voice: Who are the prophetic figures that accompany you in your spiritual journey?

What draws you to them, and what have you learned?

How do you express your creativity?

How does your creativity relate to and impact your spiritual life?

Prayers

Catherine of Siena Love Undefined



Saint Catherine of Siena. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia

Eternal God, eternal Trinity,
You have made the Blood of Christ so precious
through His sharing in Your Divine nature.
You are a mystery as deep as the sea;
the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I
search for You.
But I can never be satisfied;
what I receive will ever leave me desiring more.
When You fill my soul I have an ever-greater hunger, and I grow more famished for Your light.
I desire above all to see You, the true light, as you really are. Amen.

(Retrieved from <https://www.daily-prayers.org/angels-and-saints/prayers-by-st-catherine-of-siena/>)

Hildegard of Bingen A Reflection from Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen by Gabriele Uhlein, (p85)



Hildegardis Prophetissa' Postcard. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. Figure 4 Thérèse of Lisieux

How wonderful
is the wisdom

in the God-head's heart.
It is the heart that sees
the primordial eternity
of every creature.
When God gazes upon the countenance
of humankind,
the face that God formed,
God contemplates this work
in its totality,
its totality in this human form.
How wonderful is this breath then,
this breath that awakens humankind.

Thérèse of Lisieux From Simply Surrender – Edited by John Kirvin (p19)



Therese of Lisieux Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. quest.eb.com/search/300_1169609/1/300_1169609/cite. Accessed 12 Oct 2020.

Loving Father,
help me to understand
that the only saint you wish me to be
is the saint that I can be.
You give your love as generously
To the simplest of souls
Who welcome your grace
As to those who are the most highly privileged.
Keep me always aware of
your gift of grace
and let me so welcome it
that your love
will be made visible
in the simplest souls.

St Teresa of Avila From The St Teresa of Avila Prayer Book – Vinita Hamton Wright (p70)



God with Us

We actually have something within us that is incomparably more precious than anything we see outside. Don't think that the interior of the soul is empty. If we were careful always to remember what a Guest we have within us, I think it would be impossible for us to abandon ourselves to vanities and things of this world. We would see how worthless they are compared with those that we have inside us... But, until I closed my eyes to the vanities of this world, I did not see or understand who lived within my soul or what my soul deserved. If I had understood then, as I now do, how this great King lives within this palace of my soul, I would not have left him and not let his house get so dirty. It is wonderful that he whose greatness could fill a thousand worlds should confine himself to so small a space, just as he was pleased to inhabit his most holy Mother's womb. As our Lord, he has perfect freedom and because he loves us, he fashions himself to our measure.

Resources

Below are some readings and exercises that you might like to engage with personally.

- [Catherine of Siena](#)
- [Hildegard of Bingen](#)
- [Thérèse of Lisieux](#)
- [Teresa of Avila](#)