

MARIAN LIBRARY STUDIES

New Series 27

2005-2006



Denis Vincent Wiseman, O.P.

JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND GENTLE MARY

SALVATION AND MARY IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

Reprinted with the kind permission of
Marian Library Studies
University of Dayton
300 College Park
Dayton, Ohio 45469-1390

CHAPTER 3

MARY IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

"In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary."¹ With these words, Catherine begins her book, *Il Dialogo*, as well as all but a few of her three hundred eighty-two letters, indicating the close link that Catherine makes between gentle Mary and her crucified Son. Catherine's birth on March 25 in 1347, a year in which the customary date of the Annunciation coincided with Palm Sunday, might seem to have anticipated the close relationship Catherine would draw between Mary and the Redemption. For Catherine, Mary is not a passive or peripheral figure to the story of salvation but one who is vitally involved in its decisive moments.

As has been seen, Catherine, unlike a number of medieval authors, emphasizes the Incarnation as the beginning of the redemption. Thus, she writes:

This Word was engrafted in her flesh, this blessed and sweet field of Mary, as the seed that is cast on the earth. Through the warmth of the sun, it germinates and draws out the flower and the fruit and the shell remains on the earth. So, truly, [it was] through the warmth and the fire of divine charity which God had for the human race, casting the seed of His Word in the field of Mary. O blessed and sweet Mary, you have given us the flower of the sweet Jesus! And when did this blessed flower produce the fruit? When He was grafted on the wood of the most holy cross. Then we received perfect life.²

¹ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce."

² "Questo benedetto e dolce campo di Maria fece in lei questo verbo inestato nella carne sua, come el seme che si gitta nella terra, che per lo caldo del sole germina e trae fuore el fiore e il frutto, e 'l guscio rimane alla terra. Così veramente, per lo caldo e fuoco della divina carità che Dio ebbe all'umana generatione, gittando el seme della parola sua nel campo di Maria. O beata e dolce Maria, ci ai donato el fiore del dolce Gesù! E quando produsse el frutto questo benedetto fiore? quando fu inestato in sul legno della santissima croce: allora ricevemmo vita perfetta" (Letter 144, II, 282). This letter was sent to Monna Pavola in very early July 1375. A similar passage may be found in Catherine's letter to Don Roberto da Napoli. Cf. Letter 342, V, 138. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine shows the same connection between the Incarnation and the Redemption: "This mercy descended from heaven in the Incarnation of My Son. With what was it opened? With the key of His blood." "La quale misericordia discese di cielo nella incarnazione di questo mio Figliuolo. Con che s'aperse? Con la chiave del sangue suo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 73). We find the same relationship between the two mysteries in a prayer: "You grafted Yourself as a fruit on two trees. The first, to our human nature that You might show to us the invisible truth of the eternal Father, which truth You Yourself are. You made the second grafting with Your body upon the tree of the most holy cross, upon which tree neither the nails nor any other thing held You except the immeasurable love that You had for us."

According to Catherine, Mary's cooperation in the redemption is not confined to giving birth to the Savior. Mary is involved in the major moments of the redemption. If Christ crucified is Catherine's central focus, then it is not surprising that Catherine places Mary beside the cross. She affirms that Mary, like her Son, has been "wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation."³

Mary not only consents to Jesus' death for humanity but she "wishes that He die"⁴ because she is so eager that the salvation of humanity be accomplished. Mary seeks to prolong on earth Jesus' desire for "the honor of God and the salvation of souls" by prodding the apostles to take up her Son's ministry after Pentecost. In heaven, Mary, as the "advocate, mother of grace and mercy,"⁵ is still vitally involved in aiding souls to accept the fruits of Jesus' death. Catherine considers Mary to be particularly present to those who carry on her Son's mission for the salvation of souls. Catherine continually relates her reflections on Mary to the mystery of salvation.

Since Catherine did not write in a systematic way, we will glean her thought on Mary from her various writings and we will rely on incidents recorded in the early biographical accounts to illustrate her beliefs. Catherine's theological understandings of Mary are rooted in the Christian tradition. Yet, it will be clear that Catherine's intense evangelical zeal frequently gives a unique emphasis to the truths she received.

While Catherine's understanding of Mary has not been treated extensively, some authors have discussed aspects in various articles. Antonio D'Achille has examined the presentation of Mary in Catherine's writings.⁶ Roberto Moretti and Innocenzo Venchi, O.P., have investigated Mary in Catherine's prayers.⁷ Giacinto

And all this You did to manifest the truth of the will of the Father, that wants nothing other than our salvation. With this grafting You gave Your blood, which through the union with the divine nature has given life to us." "[A]vesti a noi t'innestasti si come frutto in due arbori: in prima a la natura umana acciò che manifestassi a noi la verità invisibile del Padre eterno, la quale verità tu esso se'; el secondo innesto facesti del corpo tuo in su l'arbore della santissima croce, in sul quale arbore non ti tennero chiavelli né alcuna altra cosa se non l'amore smisurato che avesti a noi. E tutto questo facesti per manifestare la verità della volontà del Padre, che non vuole altro che la nostra salute. Di questo innesto fu prodotto il sangue tuo, el quale per l'unione della natura divina ha dato a noi vita" (*Oratio* XVIII, 202).

³ "Ella era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 113).

⁴ "Vuole ch'egli muoia" (Letter 30, I, 113).

⁵ "La quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia" (Letter 184, III, 120). Noffke asserts that this letter was written near Holy Week, 1377.

⁶ Antonio D'Achille, "Maria negli scritti di S. Caterina da Siena," *Memorie Domenicane (Il Rosario)* (1919): 233-245.

⁷ Roberto Moretti, "La Madonna in una preghiera di S. Caterina da Siena," *La Patrona d'Italia*

D'Urso, O.P., has analyzed Catherine's treatment of Mary in Letter 144.⁸ The book, *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, published by *Il Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani*, contains four chapters on elements of Catherine's perception of Mary.⁹ Authors, elsewhere, have treated Catherine's mariology in general,¹⁰ while some have touched upon Mary's relationship to the passion and death of Christ in particular.¹¹

It is my impression that Catherine's references to Mary have not been studied as a totality. This chapter will attempt to compile all of Catherine's references to Mary as well as the references of her early biographers regarding Catherine and Mary. We will try to discern Catherine's Marian theology from this assortment of references. This chapter will consider Mary as she is seen both in Catherine's life and in her thought. The particular concern will be to show how closely Catherine's thought on Mary relates to her thought on Jesus' saving mission. This connection will be more obvious in some references than in others. Nevertheless, the fact that this relationship pervades Catherine's thought on Mary should become quite evident.

The first section of this chapter will situate Catherine's thought by reviewing Mary's place in the general culture and devotion that pervaded Catherine's environment. We will look at Catherine's Marian practices and the Marian devotions to which she makes reference, as well as the ways in which Catherine experienced Mary's care in her own life and ministry.

In the second and third sections of the chapter, we will explore Catherine's own Marian understandings. These two sections will be divided between Catherine's thought on Mary in relation to the objective redemption and Catherine's thought on Mary in relation to the subjective redemption, relying on a common distinction used by theologians.¹² We will consider how Catherine connects Mary with the ob-

38/3 (1940): 8-9; Innocenzo Venchi, O.P., "La pietà Mariana di S. Caterina," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* (1984): 95-100.

⁸ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "La dottrina di Maria. Analisi mariologica della lett. 144 (XXXIV) dell'epistolario cateriniano," *Rassegna di ascetica e mistica, S. Caterina da Siena* 24/1 (1975): 29-41.

⁹ Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, "Spunti mariani nell'epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Maria, Caterina e Altri* (Roma: Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani, 1989), 5-17; Giuliana Cavallini, "Maria nella prospettiva cateriniana," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 75-97; Alessandro Cortesi, O.P., "Maria poeta delle meraviglie di Dio in santa Caterina," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 99-121; Raimondo Spiazzi, O.P., "Da santa Caterina da Siena alla Theotokos sulla via in Nazaret," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 143-154.

¹⁰ Guglielmo Di Agresti, O.P., "Aspetti Mariano-Mariologici in S. Caterina da Siena," *Atti del Symposium Catharinianum nel V centenario della canonizzazione di Santa Caterina da Siena: Siena, 24-28 aprile 1962* (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 1962): 220-243; Luis López de Las Heras, O.P., "La Imagen de Maria en Santa Catalina de Siena," *Studium* 13 (1973): 249-279.

¹¹ Gabriella Anodal, "La Passione de Maria," *L'Arbore della carità* 22/2 (1971): 18-20; Lina Grassotto, "La Madre del Redentore," *S. Caterina da Siena* 18/2 (1967): 6-13.

¹² "If we are objectively redeemed by Christ's sacrificial death, then the concrete form of our subjective redemption, and thus of every single case of subjective appropriation of objective

jective redemption, that is, Mary's role in Jesus' Incarnation and in His death. In this section, we will also discuss Catherine's position on the Immaculate Conception, although this does not bear directly on the central proposition of this chapter. Nevertheless, this best-known teaching of Catherine on Mary does illustrate the fourteenth-century Church's struggle to understand how the redemption affected Mary herself. The final section will explicate Catherine's understanding of Mary's role in the way that redemption is applied to believers.

The occasional nature of most of our sources, particularly Catherine's letters and prayers, does not allow us to reconstruct Catherine's complete understanding of Mary. Nevertheless, by reviewing all the extant references, we hope to decipher the key elements of her Marian teachings. We hope to demonstrate that, in a very distinctive way, Mary, in Catherine's writings, continually serves both the objective and subjective aspects of the mission of Christ crucified, which is the mystery that pervades all of Catherine's thought.

Mary in Catherine's Life

Catherine's thinking is always grounded in reflection on experience. Thus she asserts: "The soul acquires every virtue and grace in the knowledge of itself."¹³ Before examining Catherine's teachings on Mary, it would be helpful to explore Catherine's own experience of Mary. We will begin by identifying briefly particular Marian practices and beliefs which are adverted to in Catherine's writings or are identified with her in the first biographical writings. We will then review the incidents in which Mary is an active presence in Catherine's life.

Marian Devotions Evident in Catherine's Life

A number of references made by Catherine and her disciples testify to Marian devotional customs and to the theological assumptions about Mary that existed in the Tuscan city of Siena during a thirty-three year period (1347-1380). They illustrate attitudes towards Mary during this important time of cultural transition as Europe began to move from the Middle Ages into the early Renaissance. In addition to the specific historical data of the Marian customs of her time and milieu, the

redemption, is bound to correspond to the essential meaning and direction of the objective gift. Subjective redemption is the free acceptance, the personal appropriation, of the objective gift." Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 72.

¹³ "Ogni virtù e grazia acquista l'anima nel cognoscimento di sè" (Letter 266, IV, 136). Noffke dates this letter between August 15 and September 15, 1378.

concepts underlying these practices provide us an indication of Catherine's fundamental attitudes towards Mary.

In many ways, Catherine imbibed the Marian attitudes of her family, her city, and of the local Church in Siena. The warmth and piety of her family life offered Catherine an environment in which her inclinations to devotion easily flourished. Raimondo recounts an example of Catherine's early Marian devotion: "And when she was about five years old, having been taught the Angelic greeting of the glorious Virgin, she repeated it frequently. And inspired by God, she began to genuflect on each stair, as she was going up and down, saluting the blessed Virgin at the same time, as she herself confessed when she discussed the matter with me in the secrecy of confession."¹⁴

Francesco Valli¹⁵ states that the practice of repeating the Hail Mary, sometimes with *laudi* (praises), and sometimes with genuflections, had become customary possibly by the end of the thirteenth century and certainly by the first half of the fourteenth century. These practices are documented in Siena, although they do not seem to have originated there.¹⁶

Caffarini indicates that this practice of genuflecting on the stairs in honor of Mary was not unique with Catherine but was a Siennese devotion, related to the dedication of the city to Our Lady. Caffarini writes: "It is thought, moreover, that it [the practice of genuflecting while saying the Hail Mary] came from the devout greetings, which were the custom to observe in a place which was especially devoted to the Mother of God."¹⁷ In 1260, the city of Siena was dedicated to Mary, and the

¹⁴ "Cumque quinquennium peregisset vel circiter, edocta salutationem Angelicam Virginis gloriosae ipsam repetebat frequentius; et coelitus inspirata, coepit ascendendo seu descendendo per gradus, ad quemlibet gradum flexo geniculo, semel beatam Virginem salutare; prout ipsamet in secreto confessionis mihi, dum offerret se materia, est confessa." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, I, xxviii, 869. Tommaso Caffarini, in his *Legenda minor*, makes similar mention of this practice: "Indeed, in her fifth year, not only before the figure of the glorious virgin Mary, but even on the steps of the staircase, she uttered the 'Ave Maria,' going up and going down, bending her knee on each step." "Anno vero quinto etatis eius, non tantum ante figuram virginis gloriose Marie sed etiam in gradibus scalarum, tam ascendendo quam descendendo, 'Ave Maria' suo flexo geniculo gradu quolibet exprimebat." Thomas Antonii de Senis [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Sanctae Catharinae Senensis legenda minor* (Recensio Vetus), I, ed. E. Franceschini, vol. X, *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici* (Milano: Bocca, 1942), 8,10.

¹⁵ Francesco Valli is one of the scholars who helped prepare the *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, the critical editions of documents related to Catherine.

¹⁶ Francesco Valli, "L'infanzia e la puerizia di S. Caterina da Siena: Esame critico delle fonti," *Studi Cateriniani* 7 (1930-31): 98.

¹⁷ "Existimatum autem est id evenisse ex devotis salutationibus, quas agere consueverat in tali loco veluti Dei genitricis devota precipua." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Legenda minor*, I, 10 (Recensio Vetus).

city added the words, *Civitas Virginis* to the official name of the city, *Sena Velus*. Thus, Catherine, at an early age, appropriated the religious practices of her city.

In his work, *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini mentions that one of Catherine's earliest mystical experiences related to Mary: "It must first be known that, when the virgin was a little girl about five years, she venerated the Virgin Mother of God and wherever she discovered her image, she said 'Ave Maria.' Once while saying that, she was lifted from the earth."¹⁸ While Catherine's spirituality necessarily underwent a development and evolution, such a phenomenon suggests that the seeds of the Marian devotion that marked her maturity were present in her youth.

Catherine's evangelizing spirit showed itself even in her childhood. Caffarini records that Catherine taught her small friends the prayers she had learned: "But also by word and by example she directed other girls to the same, teaching them affectionately the 'Hail Mary' and the 'Our Father.'"¹⁹ The fact that the children learn the "Hail Mary" as well as the "Our Father" attests to the popularity of this prayer, which, although found in the liturgy at an earlier date, does not seem to have been used as a devotion until the eleventh century.²⁰ Francesco Valli maintains that Catherine's "Hail Mary" would have ended with the words *ventris tui* ("your womb"), as even the addition of the name of Jesus to the two scriptural passages only became customary at a later time in Siena.²¹ In his preaching after Catherine's death, Caffarini uses Catherine's example to encourage the use of this prayer.²²

¹⁸ "Quantum ad primum sciendum quod, cum virgo esset parvula annum percurrans quintum, venerabatur Virginem Dei Matrem et ubicumque eius ymaginem reperisset, dicebat 'Ave Maria' et, aliquando, dicendo illam, elevabatur a terra." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, I, i, 12. Both Caffarini and Raimondo refer to Catherine as "virgo." Whether their references are to Catherine or to Mary must be determined from the context.

¹⁹ "Sed etiam ad idem verbo et exemplo puellas alias inducebat illas affectuose docendo 'Ave Maria' 'Pater Noster.'" Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Legenda minor*, I, 10.

²⁰ The "Angelic salutation" prayed by Catherine consisted of the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:28) and the greeting of Elizabeth to Mary (Luke 1:42). This combination of the two greetings is first found in some sixth-century Eastern liturgies. In the seventh century it was used in the Roman antiphony for the offertory of the feast of the Annunciation, Ember Wednesday of Advent, and the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Around 1198, it was authorized as a prayer to be taught with the Creed and the Pater Noster. The present second part of the Hail Mary, after a gradual evolution, was officially confirmed in the reform of the Breviary by Pius V in 1568.

²¹ Valli, "L'infanzia," 95.

²² In the *Processus*, Caffarini writes: "Just as our young virgin, in the beginning of her childhood, hastened to the Mother of Christ, expressly by the angelic salutations, so let us in this beginning hasten to the same Mother of God and let us likewise offer to her the angelic salutation, saying 'Ave.'" "Quemadmodum nostra novella virgo in principio sue pueritie, et signanter salutationibus angelicis, matri Christi occurrerit, ita et nos in hoc principio ipsi matri Dei occurramus eique salutationem angelicam pariter offeramus dicentes: Ave." *Processo Castellano*, 166. For another example of Caffarini's appeal to Catherine's example, see the Appendix, note 1. The Appendix will provide the

Catherine manifests an awareness of the special significance of the Marian feasts. One of her twenty-six prayers was given on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1379, which was Catherine's thirty-second birthday. In this prayer, she asserts: "But today I ask boldly because it is the day of graces."²³ This particular prayer considers especially the Marian aspects of this feast. At the time when this prayer was given, Catherine was living in the vicinity of the Dominican Basilica, S. Maria sopra Minerva, dedicated to the Annunciation. She is buried under the altar of this basilica. We will examine this prayer more closely as we study Mary's cooperation in the Incarnation.

Another feast day that Catherine alludes to is that celebrated on February 2, which, according to the practice of the time emphasized Mary's purification. In her last letter to Raimondo, Catherine writes: "Then, the day of the Purification of Mary, I wished to hear Mass. Then, all the mysteries were renewed."²⁴ Quite frequently, the liturgical feasts were occasions of particular graces for Catherine. On this feast, which took place three months before her death, Catherine experienced a vivid perception of the great needs of the Church, especially in Rome, and of her call to intercede for the Church.

The anonymous author of the only biographical source written during Catherine's lifetime, *I Miracoli*, when describing Catherine's fasting, alludes to her efforts to make a special celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady: "She did not eat nor drink, except for the feast of Our Lady in September 1374. She said that she wished to make a Passover, and she only put some fruit into her mouth in a usual way, and took a sip of water; but then she did not eat or drink any more."²⁵

reader with supplementary texts which bear on the topics discussed in this chapter. An indication that the Hail Mary was well ensconced in Catholic practice during Catherine's lifetime may be seen in her letter to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi in 1376 where she informs him that the recitation of Hail Marys along with Our Fathers are required to obtain a papal indulgence: "You know when I had the indulgence of fault and of suffering from the Holy Father, he imposed on me to say every Friday thirty-three Our Fathers and thirty-three Hail Marys and then seventy-two Hail Marys." "Sai, quando ebbi la indulgenza di colpa e di pena, del Santo Padre, m'impose ch'io dovessi dire ogni venerdì trenta e tre Pater nostri e trenta e tre Ave Marie, e poi settanta e due Ave Marie" (Letter 228, III, 306-307). Noffke indicates a date around February 25 to 28, 1376, for this letter.

²³ "Ma oggi io adimando arditamente perché egli è il dì delle grazie" (*Oratio XI*, 130).

²⁴ "Poi, il dì della Purificazione di Maria, vuoi udire la messa. Allora si rinfrescarono tutti i misteri" (Letter 373, V, 288). Noffke offers February 15, 1380, as the date of this letter.

²⁵ "Nè mangia nè beve, salvo che per in Donna di settembre, anno detto, disse che volea fare Pasqua, e quello di solo si mise alcune frutte in bocca al modo usato, e prese uno sorso d'acqua; ma poi non più nè mangia nè bee." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena*, ed. Francesco Valli, vol. IV of *Fontes S. Catharinae* (Siena: R. Università di Siena, Cattedra Cateriniana, 1936), 24.

Catherine considers this feast of Mary important enough to dispense with her daily fasting.

Although the Assumption was not officially defined by the Church in Catherine's time, it was celebrated liturgically. St. Thomas, while not elaborating on the doctrine, makes reference to it somewhat offhandedly in the *Summa Theologiae*, showing by way of reference to Pseudo-Augustine that there are truths, such as the Assumption of Mary's body into heaven, which are not found in the Scriptures.²⁶

The importance of this feast for Catherine can be seen from an incident reported by Caffarini. Being sick, she was unable to go to church on this feast. Nevertheless, she was, in some mystical way, conscious of the liturgy being celebrated in the "ecclesia maior." This church would be the Cathedral or *Duomo*, which had been dedicated to the Assumption when it was consecrated in 1179. Caffarini writes:

When, however, she was not able on certain days to go to church, she desired greatly to receive communion. One morning, while she was at the home of her companion, she saw the walls of the major church of Siena. She thanked God that He had made her worthy of this vision of which she did not judge herself worthy. When, however, she looked back at those walls, she heard there the singing of the preface of the Blessed Virgin. When, indeed, those words were said, 'And You, in the Assumption of the blessed Mary, ever virgin,' at once, rapt in spirit, she saw our most blessed Lady and she felt herself to be wholly bathed in divine fire. And Our Lady then began to speak to her the sweetest words other than those drawn up in scripture.²⁷

²⁶ "Sed sicut Augustinus rationabiliter argumentatur quod cum corpore sit assumpta in caelum, quod tamen Scriptura non tradit, ita etiam rationabiliter argumentari possumus quod fuerit sanctifica in utero." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 1, vol. 51, trans. Thomas R. Heath, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 6. For the text of Pseudo-Augustine, see "De Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis"; PL 40, 1141-1148. Also, Thomas, in his *In Salutationem Angelicam Expositio*, states that Mary did not experience bodily corruption: "The Blessed Virgin was immune from this, because she was assumed with her body into heaven. For we believe that after death she was revived and carried into heaven." "Et ab hac immunis fuit Beata Virgo, quia cum corpore assumpta est in caelum. Credimus enim quod post mortem resuscitata fuerit, et portata in caelum." S. Thomas Aquinas, *In Salutationem Angelicam Expositio*, in *Opuscula Theologica*, II (Roma: Marietti, 1954), mxxiii, 241.

²⁷ "Cum autem non potuisset aliquibus diebus venire ad ecclesiam et multum desideraret communicare, existens uno mane in domo cuiusdam socie sue vidit parietes ecclesie maioris de Senis et regratiabatur Deo quod saltem de hac visione fecisset eam dignam de qua se non esse dignam iudicabat. Cum autem sic respiceret parietes illos, audivit ibidem cantari prefationem de beata Virgine. Cum vero diceretur illud verbum 'et te in assumptione beate Marie semper virginis etc.' statim rapta in spiritu vidit beatissimam Dominam nostram et se ipsam sensit quodam divino igne totam perfundi. Et Domina tunc cepit ipsam alloqui dulcissimis verbis que redacta non fuerunt in scriptis." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 89.

Caffarini also records Catherine's reactions when her confessor asked her about Jesus' welcome of Mary into heaven upon her Assumption:

And she responded, saying that when the Virgin Mary died, Christ came to her and said to her, "Come, My chosen one! Come, My bride! And I will prepare a place for you"... And she considered with how much desire Mary cast herself into God so that about this the virgin wept while at the same time she laughed. This happened as she explained to her confessor on the feast of the Assumption of the blessed Mary and the confessor saw it in part.²⁸

Catherine is overwhelmed by Mary's total self-giving to God upon her reception into heaven. Catherine's thought quickly moves to the unitive aspect of the dogma.

Besides indicating the importance of the Marian feasts for Catherine, her writings also demonstrate particular Marian customs. One such practice which Catherine makes reference to is that of dedicating Saturday to Mary. The origin of this custom is unknown, although Alcuin (d. 804) includes two votive Masses for Our Lady on Saturday in his *Liber Sacramentorum*. The practice of fasting on Saturday came to be associated with Mary. The medieval collections of legends of Our Lady, known in German as *Marienlegenden*, did much to popularize the practice of honoring Mary on Saturdays.²⁹ Saturday, for Catherine, was "the day of Mary." Significantly, the original inspiration for *Il Dialogo* took place at Mass on Saturday. Catherine recounts this in the prologue to her book: "This day was the day of Mary."³⁰ She records this connection in her letter to Raimondo which details the origin of her book, informing him that the inspiration came to her when she went to Mass "on the day of Mary."³¹

Catherine considers Saturdays to be appropriate days for fasting. Trying to moderate the zeal of her friend, the tailor's wife in Florence, Monna Agnesa, Catherine advises: "And other times do not fast other than Saturday when you feel you are able. When this heat is passed, fast on the days of Holy Mary, if you are able,

²⁸ "Et illa sibi respondit dicens qualiter, cum Virgo Maria moreretur, Christus venit ad eam et dicebat sibi: 'Veni, electa mea! Veni, sponsa mea! Et ponam in te'.... Et considerabat cum quanto desiderio proiciebat se in Deum et de hoc ipsa virgo plorabat fortiter cum hoc simul ridebat. Hec prout confessori in die assumptionis beate Marie explicavit et confessor in parte vidit." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, iii, 47.

²⁹ See Donald Attwater, "Legends of Our Lady," in *A Dictionary of Mary* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956), 147.

³⁰ "El quale di era el di di Maria" (*Il Dialogo*, II, 5).

³¹ "Che era il di di Maria" (Letter 272, IV, 159). This letter to Raimondo was written between October 10, 1377, or shortly afterwards. For the fuller text see Appendix, note 2.

and no more."³² She counsels Ristoro Canigiani, another Florentine disciple: "And Saturday fast in reverence of Mary."³³

Catherine also directs Ristoro to an additional form of Marian devotion. Under the influence of Catherine, Ristoro had made serious attempts to change his life, even forgiving his enemies. To stabilize his spiritual growth, Catherine directs him to a more ordered prayer life by means of a Marian Office. The Marian Offices were modeled after the Divine Office. They can be found in the tenth century and seem to have undergone some formulation by St. Peter Damian and others in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³⁴ The Dominican Friars recited the Marian Office daily in addition to the Divine Office. Catherine urges Ristoro to recite this Office: "And I beg you that, if you do not say it, that you say the office of the Virgin every day in order that she may be your refuge and advocate before God for you. To put your life in order, I beg you to do this."³⁵ Catherine believes that daily devotion to Mary will order Ristoro's life and that Mary will be his refuge and advocate.

Catherine's own awareness of Mary is evidenced by the Marian invocations in her writings, especially the formula, "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary,"³⁶ found in almost all of her writings. In a series of letters, written between the close of 1375 and mid-1376, she uses a variation on this invocation. This variation may be seen in her letter to the Florentine Cardinal at Avignon, Pietro Corsini, where she begins: "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary, mother of the Son of God."³⁷

She makes use of other variations on occasion. For instance, she opens her letter to a prostitute in Perugia with the words: "Gentle Jesus, Jesus love, Mary sweet

³² "E altro tempo non digiunare altro che 'l sabato, quando ti senti da potere. Quando questo caldo è passato, e tu digiuna le Sante Marie, se tu puoi; e più no" (Letter 174, III, 85). Noffke recommends a date between August 20 and 31, 1378, for this letter.

³³ "E il sabato digiunare a riverenza di Maria" (Letter 258, IV, 100). Noffke puts this letter between August 2 and 10, 1378, shortly before the preceding reference to fasting on Saturday, found in Letter 174.

³⁴ See Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "The Marian Liturgical Tradition," in *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 185.

³⁵ "E pregovi che, se voi nol dite, che voi il diciate ogni di l'oficio della Vergine, acciò che ella sia il vostro refrigerio, e avvocata dinanzi a Dio per voi. D'ordinare la vita vostra, di questo vi prego che il facciate" (Letter 258, IV, 99-100).

³⁶ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce."

³⁷ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce, madre del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 177). For this variant, see DT LXI, 251. Noffke situates this letter near Palm Sunday, April 6, 1376.

Mother."³⁸ Her letter to the Jewish man, Consiglio, begins: "Praised be Jesus Christ crucified, Son of the glorious virgin Mary."³⁹ By invoking Mary with Jesus as she begins her writing, Catherine is entrusting each instance of her communication to the blessing of Jesus and His mother.

Catherine used beads but not as part of a Marian devotion. Raimondo makes an allusion in his *Vita* to Catherine having a string of beads. Raimondo explains that the beads are called "Pater Nosters" because they were used to count the repetitions of the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁰ The use of beads in the repetition of prayers is one of the practices that contributed to the development of the Marian rosary.

Practices of devotion related to Mary such as the use of the Hail Mary, attention to Mary's feasts, remembrance of Mary on Saturdays, fasting in Mary's honor, praying the Marian office, and invoking Mary's help are, for Catherine, part of the ordinary life of the serious Christian. Devotion to Mary is intimately imbedded in Christian living. Catherine accepts, uses, and encourages the use of the Marian practices of her time.

Catherine's Personal Experience of Mary

For our accounts of Catherine's personal experiences of Mary, we will rely especially on incidents recorded by Catherine's early biographers. Two unstated convictions underlie these accounts. The first is that Mary is actively involved in Catherine's life. Catherine prays to Mary with confidence that Mary will help her. At times, Mary's help is experienced by a vision. The second conviction is that Mary's action draws Catherine to Jesus, and, on occasion, Mary brings Jesus to Catherine.

In recording an early incident in Catherine's life, Raimondo shows us the confidence that Catherine had that Mary would assist her in discerning her unique vocation. She was about seven years old when she determined to imitate Mary's virginal consecration, considering Mary to be the initiator and the model of consecrated virginity. Catherine relied upon Mary to support her in making this decision:

She thought therefore, and she knew through God's revelation, that the most sacred Mother of God was the first of those who came to the virginal life, and who vowed her virginity to God. So she began to have recourse to her about this. And when she

³⁸ "Gesù dolce, Gesù amore, Maria dolce madre" (Letter 276, IV, 186). This letter was written at the request of one of the woman's brothers. Noffke considers this letter to have been written between late January and early May 1376.

³⁹ "Laudato sia Gesù Cristo crocifisso, figliuolo de la gloriosa vergine Maria" (Letter 15, I, 49).

⁴⁰ "Pater Noster vulgariter appellantur eo quod ad ipsorum numerum oratio Dominica replicatur." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, II, cxxxiv, 895-896.

came to her seventh year, not as a seven-year-old but almost as a seventy-year-old, maturely and for a long time, she considered making this vow, praying continually to the same Queen of virgins and of angels, who mercifully was helping her, that she might deign to obtain from the Lord for the perfect direction of her spirit, by which help she might do that which was more pleasing to the Lord, and more efficacious for the salvation of her soul, always offering her desire before her, that she anxiously sought to lead a life both angelic and virginal.⁴¹

Catherine prays "continually" to Mary to help her to do what was "more pleasing to God." Catherine constantly renews her self-giving by "always offering her desire before her." Catherine entrusts her desires to Mary, confident that Mary will aid her to please God in the celibate vocation that she adopts in imitation of Mary.

The idea that Mary is the model of virgins is deeply rooted in the Patristic tradition. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 387), in his *Catechetical Lectures*, asserts that "The virgins have their portion with Mary the Virgin."⁴² Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 394) states that the physical presence of the Lord in Mary is also true in a spiritual way of all virgins.⁴³ Ambrose (d. 397) proposes Mary as the example for all who choose virginity.⁴⁴ Jerome (d. 419) depicts Mary as the "mother of many virgins."⁴⁵

In a later incident, Catherine returns to this idea of Mary as the example of those who choose the celibate life. Andrea, a cancer-stricken *Mantellata*, whom Catherine nursed, slandered Catherine apparently out of possessiveness for her attention. Catherine reminds God of the delicacy of a celibate's reputation, alluding to the care given to Mary: "Most powerful Lord and my most loving Spouse, You know the reputation of any virgin to be delicate and the modesty of Your spouses

⁴¹ "Cogitavit igitur, et Deo revelante cognovit, quod sacratissima Dei genitrix fuit prima, quae advenit vitam virgineam, et quae Deo suam vovit virginitatem. Unde coepit ad ipsam recursum habere super hoc: et dum septennium curreret, non quasi septennis, sed quasi septuagenaria, mature ac diu deliberavit super hujus voti emissionem; orans continue ipsam Reginam Virginum simul et Angelorum, quatenus eam misericorditer adjuvando, dignaretur sibi a Domino impetrare perfectam spiritus sui directionem, qua mediante faceret id quod gratius esset Domino, ac efficacius pro animae suae salute; proferens semper coram ea desiderium suum, quo anxie affectabat vitam ducere Angelicam simul et virginalem." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, III, xxxv, 871. Caffarini also gives an account of Catherine's appeal for Mary's help in choosing the virginal life. See Appendix, note 3.

⁴² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XIII, "De Christo Creifixo et Sepulto," 34; PG 33, 768.

⁴³ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 2; PG 46, 324 B.

⁴⁴ "Haec est imago virginitatis. Talis enim fuit Maria, ut ejus unius vita omnium sit disciplina." Ambrose, *De Virginibus*, II, 15; PL 16, 210.

⁴⁵ "Et tamen haec virgo perpetua multarum est mater virginum." Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 31; PL 23, 254.

exceedingly susceptible to stain, so You wished Your glorious mother to have one considered a spouse."⁴⁶

After Giacomo, her father, had imposed heavy domestic obligations upon Catherine to break her resistance to a potential marriage, Catherine used her imagination to bolster her awareness of the presence of Jesus and Mary. Raimondo states: "She also said, at that time, she had imagined that her father represented our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and her own mother represented His most glorious mother, Mary... because of this imagination she was joyful and served everyone in such a conscientious way that everyone marveled."⁴⁷ Catherine is convinced that Jesus and Mary want her to accept with joy the humiliating work imposed on her. She finds strength in visualizing Jesus and Mary, believing that as she serves her parents she is serving her Savior and His mother. Through her imagination she pictures the reality that she knows to be true by faith; in serving her neighbor she is serving Jesus (Mt. 25:45). Catherine extends this presence to include Mary being represented by her mother.

Catherine believes that Mary is not only present but is also able to intervene in situations. Thus, she gives Mary credit for obtaining a director for her. Catherine's confessors and her superiors among the *Mantellate* were, not surprisingly, often confounded by her unusual ways. The resulting misunderstandings were a source of great suffering to Catherine and she petitioned Mary for a guide who could comprehend her unique needs. Stefano Maconi, in his testimony for the *Processus*, states: "The most blessed virgin Mary, bodily appearing to this most holy virgin Catherine, promised to give her one most faithful and devoted to her as father and confessor, who would give her much more consolation than she had from her other confessors up to that point, and, afterwards, the results proved it."⁴⁸

Catherine was asked by the Dominicans to come to Florence on the occasion of the Dominican General Chapter in 1374.⁴⁹ While in Florence, Catherine attended a

⁴⁶ "Omnipotentissime Domine ac peramantissime Sponse mi, tu nostri teneram esse virginis cujuslibet famam, et pudorem sponsarum tuarum nimis periculose quamcumque recipere maculam: propter quod etiam voluisti, tuam gloriosissimam genitricem sponsum putativum habere." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, II, IV, clviii, 901.

⁴⁷ "Aiebat enim, firmiter se tunc imaginatam fuisse, quod pater suus repraesentaret Salvatorem nostrum Dominum Jesum Christum; mater vero sua, gloriosissimam genitricem ipsius Mariam... propter quam imaginationem tam laetanter et cum tanta diligentia omnibus serviebat, quod omnes admirabantur." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, II, I, 875.

⁴⁸ "Beatissima virgo Maria corporaliter apprensus ipsi sanctissime virgini Catherine promisit ei dare unum fidelissimum devotum suum in patrem et confessorem, qui daret ei valde maiorem consolationem, quam hactenus habuerit a ceteris suis confessoribus, ut postea rei probavit eventus." "Testimony of Stephano Maconi," *Processus*, 272.

⁴⁹ *I Miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena* begins: "There came to Florence in the month of May in the year 1374, through the command of the Master of the Order, when there was a chapter of the

Mass at which Raimondo assisted and she intuited that he was the director whom she had petitioned from Mary. Shortly afterwards, the Dominicans resolved to provide supervision for this young *Mantellata*, whose way of life was stirring some discussion. The Master of the Order commissioned Raimondo to guide Catherine and assigned him to the priory at San Domenico in Siena, where he remained for the next five years. Caffarini, in his *Libellus de Supplemento*, testifies to Mary's role in the choice of Raimondo. He attributes this information to the notes of Catherine's original confessor, Frate Tommaso dalla Fonte. Caffarini states that this new director was "plainly Frater Raimondo da Capua, of his Order of Preachers, whom the Mother of God appearing once to the virgin had even promised her sometime before."⁵⁰

Catherine's letters have references to this incident. She alludes to Mary's involvement in this choice when writing to Raimondo in February 1376: "To you, most beloved and dearest father and son in Christ Jesus, given by that sweet mother Mary."⁵¹ The Master of the Order may have thought he was appointing someone to monitor Catherine, but Catherine experienced Raimondo to be not only a father, but an ally, a friend, and a disciple. Occasionally she even forgets the Master's original intention, as when she writes to Raimondo: "Oh my son, given by that sweet mother Mary."⁵²

In her last letter to Raimondo, she challenges him to struggle on behalf of the Church, appealing to the bond between them, initiated by Mary: "Now I beg and constrain you, father and son given to me by that sweet mother Mary...that you may cast yourself into this ship of the holy Church."⁵³ In this letter, written three

Friars Preachers, one clothed with the habit of St. Dominic who has the name, Catherine of Giacomo from Siena." "Venne a Firenze del mese di maggio anni MCCCLXXIV, quando fu il capitolo de' frati Predicatori, per comandamento del maestro dell'ordine, una vestita delle pinzochere di santo Domenico che à nome Caterina di Iacopo da Siena." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 1. The Master of the Order at the time of the General Chapter at Florence was Elias Raimondo of Toulouse. It is uncertain whether Catherine's situation was in fact a discussion of the chapter or was a concern that was attended to on the occasion of the chapter or after the chapter.

⁵⁰ "Videlicet cuidam fratri Raymundo da Capua eiusdem ordinis Praedicatorum, quem etiam Dei Genitrix apparens semel virgini, eidem virgini promiserat per aliquod tempus ante." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, III, vi, 377.

⁵¹ "A voi, diletissimo e carissimo padre e figliuolo in Cristo Gesù, dato da quella dolce madre Maria" (Letter 226, III, 294). Noffke locates this letter around February 17, 1376.

⁵² "Doimè, figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria" (Letter 211, III, 223). Noffke offers late April 1376, as the time of this letter. Raimondo had gone before her to Avignon. Catherine did not reach Avignon until June 18, 1376, after spending most of May in Florence attempting to make peace between the city and the pope.

⁵³ "Ora prego e costringo voi, padre e figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria...voi vi gittiate in questa navicella della santa Chiesa" (Letter 373, V, 290). For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 4.

months before she died, Mary's role in their relationship has retained its significance for Catherine.

Some of the incidents in Catherine's life that involve Mary are associated with unusual mystical experiences. Great mystics, such as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, caution us that it is necessary to distinguish between the divine and the natural aspects of such occurrences, as even mystical experiences, such as visions and locutions, may be affected by natural influences or by the imagination.⁵⁴ Some of Catherine's experiences raise theological questions, such as Catherine's inspiration that Mary had original sin momentarily. We do well to remember that even the insights of the saints must be measured by the rule of faith preserved in the Church. What is clear is that Catherine's perceptions took on a sharpened clarity through her mystical experiences. Our purpose in examining Catherine's experiences will be to identify the essential truth about Mary that Catherine captured in a mystical way, without speculating on the nature of the visions or locutions.

I Miracoli recounts an experience of mystical espousal early in Catherine's life. According to the account, Catherine, as a young girl, had hidden herself in a secluded place outside of Siena:

Bowing to the earth and with a fervor of immense love she calls upon the mother of Christ, and with a girlish simplicity she asks that she may give her Son, Jesus, as her spouse. While praying, she felt herself being lifted from the earth somewhat into the air. And presently, the Virgin Mary appeared to her with her Son in her arms. He espoused the girl with a ring, and immediately disappeared and she was placed back, set on the ground, and returned to Siena and to her house.⁵⁵

Catherine believes that Mary is able to give Jesus to her as a spouse. In the apparition, Jesus is a child whom Mary literally brings to Catherine. Jesus espouses Himself to Catherine which implies that henceforth Catherine has a deeply personal and singularly loving relationship with Jesus.

Catherine had repeated encounters with Christ and with Mary during the three years in which she lived as a recluse. Raimondo relates: "Then the Lord appeared

⁵⁴ Cf. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 11, 5, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 181. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, VI:9, 9, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. II, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980), 413.

⁵⁵ "[I]nginocchiosi in terra e con uno fervore di smisurato amore chiama la madre di Cristo, e con una puerile simplicità le chiede che ella le di a per suo sposo il suo figliuolo Gesù. E così orando si senti levare da terra alquanto in aria. E di presente l'apari la Vergine Maria col suo figliuolo in braccio, il quale con uno anello isposò la fanciulla, e subito spari, e ella si ritrovò riposta in terra e tornossi in Siena e a casa sua." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 4. For Raimondo's account of Catherine's actual vow, see Appendix, note 5.

to her most frequently, and remained alone with her longer. Sometimes He brought with Him His most glorious mother and sometimes blessed Dominic, and at times both."⁵⁶

Caffarini, in his testimony for the *Processus*, likewise indicates Mary's presence in the mystical events that look place at this time: "Since in such a degree and so effectively in the manner described, the virgin was united with God and the saints that nothing in any way separated her from such union during that time.... The virgin not only was caught up with God but also many times with the Mother of God and other saints and heavenly citizens."⁵⁷

During this period Catherine had an acute awareness of the presence of Mary and of the saints. Catherine, who was inspired by the legends of Mary Magdalene's thirty-three years of penitential life, had a particular attraction to this saint. Raimondo relates that the Lord and Mary gave Mary Magdalene to Catherine as a teacher and mother.⁵⁸

Raimondo states that Mary nursed Catherine: "Now, moreover, the glorious Mother appeared to her, and satisfied her with milk from her most sacred breasts and she filled her with ineffable sweetness."⁵⁹ Raimondo describes Catherine being fed by Mary's own body very simply, although contemporary readers might be startled by the image. The essence of the account is that Mary nurtures Catherine from her own substance, implying that there exists between them the very personal relationship of a mother and a child.

However, as a mother would also do, Mary corrects Catherine. On one occasion after Catherine was momentarily distracted during a vision of St. Dominic, the Blessed Virgin reprimanded her. Caffarini remarks: "Of this distraction, she said that the most gentle Virgin Mother Mary, reprehended her so harshly that she was scarcely able to bear the shame."⁶⁰ Mary wants Catherine to be totally focused on

⁵⁶ "Apparebat igitur ei frequentissime Dominus, et diutius solito cum ea manebat, ducebatque secum aliquando suam glorioussimam genitricem, aliquando beatum Dominicum, quandoque utrumque." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, XI, cxii, 890.

⁵⁷ "[Q]uod taliter et tam efficaciter modo prefato virgo uniebatur cum Deo et superis ut nichil pro illo tempore ipsam a tali unione fuit quomodolibet separata.... Virgo non solum cum Deo sed etiam multotiens cum Matre Dei et aliis sanctis et celestibus civibus rapta." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Processus*, 132.

⁵⁸ "Dominus ipse, ac eius Genitrix gloriosa.... Magdaleneam, huic virgini dederunt pro magister et mater" Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vitas*, III, lxiv, 878.

⁵⁹ "Nunc autem Genitrix gloriosa ipsam, ut appreat, lacte suorum sacratissimorum uberum satiabat, et ineffabili replebat dulcedine." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, II, cxcix, 911.

⁶⁰ "De qua aduersione dicebat illam dulcissimam matrem Virginem, scilicet Mariam, tam aspere eam reprehendisse quod vix poterat tantam, verecundiam sustinere." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, ii, 41, 42.

God. "The most gentle Virgin Mother" forcefully impresses upon Catherine the responsibility to be attentive to the special graces God is giving her.

A couple of Catherine's mystical experiences related to the Eucharist have Marian aspects. *Il Dialogo* recounts that, on one instance, while watching Mass being celebrated "at the altar of Mary," Catherine experienced the Trinity in the Eucharistic host.⁶¹ Catherine's indication at which altar this experience happened implies that there is a connection between the Eucharistic vision of the Trinity and the "altar of Mary." The Marian altar, representing Mary's close relationship with Christ's gift of Himself in the Eucharist, indicates Mary's relation to the involvement of the entire Trinity in the Eucharist.

On another occasion, the Eucharistic experience has a more specific relation to Mary. Mary sustains Catherine physically as she receives Jesus. Caffarini informs us that this happened while Catherine was at a Mass said by her confessor: "On a certain vigil of the Circumcision which was a Sunday... [Catherine] not being able to stand upon her feet, the blessed Virgin Mary held her hand upon her body, and held her by the hand until the Mass was finished. And then she herself received communion with such a sweetness the likes of which she was never able to express."⁶² Mary holds Catherine's weakened body with her hand, enabling her to participate at Mass and to receive communion. Catherine's reception of Jesus in communion on that occasion is so gratifying that Catherine cannot express it in words. Supported by Mary, Catherine receives Jesus.

Raimondo relates an incident in which Catherine is literally clothed with Christ by Mary. On this occasion, Catherine had been greatly disturbed by her attraction to a silk dress offered her by the devil. Catherine turned to prayer. Raimondo relates:

Her words completed, the Queen of virgins, the Mother of God, appeared to her. She seemed to her to be drawing a very beautiful garment from the side of her crucified Son, which she herself even adorned with bright and gleaming jewels. Then as she clothed her with the decorated garments, saying: "Be certain, daughter, that the garments that come from the side of my Son exceed all clothes in beauty and adornment."⁶³

⁶¹ "a l'altare di Maria" (*Il Dialogo*, CXI, 315).

⁶² "In quadam vigilia circumcisionis que fuit dominica.... Et stare non valens super pedes suos, beata Virgo Maria semper tenuit manum super corpus eius, et manu tenebat eam usque dum missa fuit complete. Et tunc ipsa comunicavit cum tanta dulcedine quod ipsam nullatenus poterat explicare." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 110-111.

⁶³ "Hoc sermone complete, apparuit ei Regina virginum Mater Dei, quae de latere Filii crucifixi pulcherrimam vestem trahere videbatur, quam ipsa etiam ornabat vernantibus et coruscantibus gemmis, et deinde virginem illa decora veste induit, dicens: Sciens scito, filia, quod vestes quae de latere Filii mei procedunt, omnes alias vestes excedunt in pulchritudine et decore." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, III, cdiii, 961. Caffarini, in the *Libellus de Supplemento*, gives the same

Catherine's experience of being clothed with garments from the side of Christ evokes Paul's words: "Every one of you who has been baptized has been clothed in Christ" (Gal. 3:27). While Paul is referring to baptism, Raimondo is recording a post-baptismal gift of grace given to Catherine. For Catherine, being clothed with Christ means that the individual has been deeply affected by the "fire and the gift of the blood."⁶⁴ Such clothing denotes a close bond with Christ which neither the devil's power or human powers can break.⁶⁵ To be clothed with Christ means to be as He was, "conformed with God," seeking what Christ sought and not the choices of the world.⁶⁶ For Catherine, this clothing implies a conformity with Christ's teaching such as characterized Paul, who was clothed with the "garment of Christ crucified, that is perseverance in His doctrine."⁶⁷

Catherine's use of the words "clothed with Christ" appear to be the same as being "clothed with the wedding garment." In fact in Letter 160, both expressions are found.⁶⁸ The wedding garment can refer to both the gift of grace and the re-

account of Mary's visit: "This said, soon the blessed Virgin appeared to her and showed her a very beautiful garment, that she had drawn from the wounded side of the crucified one. She [Mary] herself adorned this garment with golden ornaments and jewels. And she dressed her, saying: 'Be certain that no other garments exceed in beauty those which come forth from the side of my Son.'" "Hoc dicto, mox beata Virgo apparuit sibi et ostendit sibi vestem pulcherrimam que exibat de latere vulneris crucifixi, quam etiam ipsa ornabat aureis ornamentis atque gemmatis. Et tandem eam induebat dicens: 'Sciens scito quod omnes vestes alias excedunt in pulchritudine ille que emanaverunt de latere filii mei.'" Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, I, i, 13-14.

⁶⁴ "Così vi troverete affogato e vestito di fuoco e del dono del sangue del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 146, II, 291).

⁶⁵ "Vestitevi, vestitevi di Cristo dolce Gesù, che è sì forte vestimento, che non dimonia nè creatura vel può tollere, se voi non volete" (Letter 5, I, 21).

⁶⁶ "Io Catarina, schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo con desiderio di vedervi spogliato il cuore, e l'affetto vostro del mondo e di voi medesima, perocchè in altro modo non vi potreste vestire di Cristo Gesù crocifisso; Perchè il mondo non ha conformità con Dio... Egli cerca onore, stato e grandezza; e Dio benedetto le spregia, abbracciando le vergogne, scherni e villanie, fame, sete, freddo e caldo infino all'obbrobriosa morte della croce; e con essa morte rende onore al padre e noi fummo restituiti a Grazia. Egli cerca di piacere alle creature, non curandosi dispiacere al Creatore; e egli non cercò mai se non di compire l'obediencia del Padre eterno per la nostra salute. Egli abbracciò e vestissi della povertà volontaria; e 'l mondo cerca le grandi ricchezze" (Letter 111, II, 158-159).

⁶⁷ "[N]è per veruna cosa che gli advenisse allentava il vestimento di Cristo crocifisso, cioè la perseveranza nella dottrina sua" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXIII, 217). In *Il Dialogo*, the Father speaks of those who are "clothed with the sweet garment of the Lamb, My only-begotten Son, that is, of His doctrine with burning charity." "...vestiti del vestimento dolce de l'Agnello unigenito mio Figliuolo, cioè della dottrina sua, con affocata carità" (*Il Dialogo*, C, 280).

⁶⁸ "Poichè Cristo è tuo vestimento ed ètisi dato in cibo... Con amore e infiammato desiderio vi levate a strignere e vestirvi di questo dolce vestimento nuziale della divina e dolce carità" (Letter 160, III, 26-27).

sponse to grace. Similarly being "clothed with Christ" can refer to both aspects in Catherine's writings as it also does in the Pauline letters. St. Paul writes of being clothed in Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27) but also instructs the Romans: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). At times Catherine is urging human diligence with regard to grace.⁶⁹ Stripping away selfish self-love enables believers to be "clothed with Christ crucified."⁷⁰ Thus, Catherine instructs her reader: "Strip yourself of the old man and clothe yourself in the new man, that is, of Christ crucified,"⁷¹ reminiscent of Ephesians 4:22, 24.

The instance where Catherine is clothed by Mary designates a particularly intensive gift of grace, received from the side of Christ, that is, as a result of His Passion. Of special interest is the fact that Mary clothes Catherine with this garment. Given Catherine's awareness of her attraction to the silk garments offered by the devil, Catherine's appreciation of the gift she experiences from the side of Christ is more intense. Mary is the instrument through which Catherine realizes Christ's redemptive powers, symbolized by the garments from Christ's side. With Mary's help, Christ has become her adornment.

Mary had a very significant role in the mystical espousal which came towards the close of the three years during which Catherine lived as a recluse. This took place on the last day of the Siena Carnival, Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, in 1368:

As she said that, there appeared the most glorious Virgin, His mother, the most blessed John the Evangelist, the glorious apostle Paul, and the most holy Dominic, father of her Order, and along with all these, the prophet David, having his harp in his hand. As the sweetest music was sounding, the Virgin Mother of God took the right hand of the virgin in her most sacred hand and, extending her fingers to the Son, she asked that He might deign to espouse Himself to her in faith. The Only Begotten of God most graciously assenting, He brought forth a gold ring, having around its circle four pearls and the most beautiful diamond enclosed in its center. Then, placing His most holy right hand on the ring finger of the right hand of the virgin, He said, "Behold, I espouse you to Me, your creator and savior in faith."⁷²

⁶⁹ "[O]ra di nuovo cominciate a spogliarvi di voi e vestirvi di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 96, II, 109).

⁷⁰ "Scrivo a voi...con desiderio di vedervi spogliato di voi pienamente, acciocchè perfettamente vi troviate vestito di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 98, II, 113).

⁷¹ "Spogliatevi dell'uomo vecchio, e vestitevi dell'uomo nuovo, cioè di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 160, III, 26).

⁷² "Adhuc eo loquente, apparuerunt Virgo gloriosissima mater ejus, beatissimus Joannes Evangelista, gloriosus Apostolus Paulus, sanctissimusque Dominicus Pater suae religionis, ac cum his omnibus David propheta, psalterium musicum habens in manu sua. Quo supersuavissime ac sonore pulsante Virgo Dei genitrix, virginis dexteram sacratissima tua coepit manu, digitosque illius extendens ad Filium, postulabat ut eam sibi desponsare dignaretur in fide. Quod Dei unigenitus gratissime annuens, anulum protulit aureum, habentem in circulo suo quatuor margaritas, ac adamantinam gemmam superpulcherrimam, etiam sua summitate inclusam. Quem digito annulari

In the vision, Catherine is surrounded by three favorite saints, John, Paul, and Dominic. It is Mary who extends the fingers of Catherine's hand and asks Jesus to espouse her. Mary brings Catherine to Jesus and solicits Jesus' assent to the espousal. Mary is the officiating person at the union of Catherine and her Son in a relationship of intimacy comparable to marriage.

On other occasions, Mary also gives Jesus to Catherine literally. Christmas was one of these occasions. Caffarini reports in the *Libellus de Supplemento*:

On a certain night of the Nativity of Christ, as she contemplated when the blessed Virgin gave birth to the Savior, she perceived such sweetness that she was not able to speak, so much so that she did not have strength to say the office. Afterwards, she asked the blessed Virgin if she might hold her little son. Responding "willingly," she gave Him to her, and she herself received Him in her arms and for a long time held Him with immense delight. After she had come to that good which was so great, she was not able to speak, except that she said it was full of all goods. And that night with great consolation she told one of the companions with her, that she received and receives so many and such great consolations through the Virgin, that she never wished to be separated from her, since receiving her habit, that is of that Order of which the virgin herself was.⁷³

In this account, Mary literally puts Jesus in Catherine's arms and lets her hold Him for a long time. After the experience of receiving Jesus from Mary, Catherine confesses that since her vesting with Mary's habit in the Dominican Order, she had never wanted to be separated from Mary because of all the consolations she had received through her relationship with her.

In the *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini gives an account of another Christmas vision:

On a certain night of the Nativity of the Lord, the virgin came to the church with great devotion, and set herself in the sacristy near the altar and saw that when the Blessed Virgin gave birth to Him, He was the fullness of eternal life for you [her]. And the Blessed Virgin gave her Son to her and she received Him in her arms and

dexterae virginis, dextera sua supersacra imponens; Ecce, inquit, desponso te mihi creatori et salvatori tuo in fide." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, cxv, 890-1.

⁷³ "In quadam nocte nativitatis Christi, cum contempleretur quando beata Virgo peperit Salvatorem, tantam percepit dulcedinem quod loqui non poterat, in tantum quod dicere non valebat officium. Postea rogavit beatam Virginem ut sibi comperaret aliquantulum filium suum, que 'libenter' respondens donavit sibi. Et ipsa in brachiis suis illum suscepit et per magnum spatium tenuit cum delectatione immensa. Postea venit ad aliud bonum ita magnum quod enarrare non poterat, nisi quod omnium bonorum se plenam esse dicebat. Et illa nocte communicavit et una eius socia cum ipsa cum magna consolatione, que tot et tantas consolationes receperat et recepit per virginem, quod numquam ab ipsa se separare volebat, recipiens tandem habitum suum, id est illius ordinis de quo erat ipsa virgo." Thomas Antonii de Senis, [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 80.

placed her face over the face of the boy, as sometimes a mother does to her son. And she said that the baby had in His chest the form of a cross.⁷⁴

Again, Mary gives the newly born Jesus to Catherine. These two visions of Mary giving her child to Catherine took place at Christmas, the celebration of the occasion in which Mary physically gave Jesus to humanity. As Catherine holds the child, she realizes that the infant has a cross in His chest, symbolizing Jesus' orientation to give His life on the cross even from the beginning. An incident that occurred immediately after Catherine's death illustrates the association that Catherine's disciples made between Mary and Catherine. According to Raimondo, Semia, one of the people in Rome who had been attracted to Catherine, went to sleep without realizing that Catherine died. She had a dream in which she saw Mary welcoming Catherine into heaven with extended arms. As Mary lifted Catherine, she gave her the kiss of peace, calling her "my most beloved daughter."⁷⁵ The fact that Raimondo records Semia's dream at length, in the section following Catherine's death in his biography, demonstrates that Catherine's disciples considered the dream to be an appropriate interpretation of Catherine's entrance into heaven, in which Catherine is recognized as Mary's "most beloved daughter."

In these instances from Catherine's life, it is clear that Mary deepens Catherine's relationship with Jesus. Early in her life, Catherine finds support for her unique vocation in Mary, to whom she turns in continuous prayer. Catherine believes that Mary provided her a director who was also her friend and her disciple. Catherine mystically experiences Mary nurturing her and chiding her to be more responsive to the special graces she receives. Catherine understands Mary to be clothing her with Jesus when Catherine is shaken by her attraction to fine clothing. Catherine perceives that Mary espouses her to Jesus, physically supporting her in her receiving communion, and mystically placing the child Jesus in her arms. Mary supports Catherine in following Jesus and both brings Catherine to Jesus and Jesus to Catherine. From the framework of her own Marian experiences, Catherine develops convictions about Mary that she will give to others through her writing, teaching, and preaching.

⁷⁴ "Quadam nocte dominice nativitatis virgo venit ad ecclesiam cum magna devotione, et posuit se in loco vestitarium prope altare et vidit quod quando beata Virgo peperit filium suum erat tibi tota vita eterna, et dedit sibi beata Virgo filium suum et accepit eum in brachiis suis et ponebat faciem suam super faciem pueri, sicut consuevit aliquando mater facere filio suo, et dixit quod puer habebat in pectore ad modum unius crucis." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 110-111. (Although awkward "tibi" is correct, possibly addressed to the reader.)

⁷⁵ "Domina coelorum obvis manibus suscipiens: Bene, inquit venerit dilectissima filia mea Catharina: et elevans eam, recepit eam ad osculum pacis." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, ccclxxiii, 955.