

## **I. Spousal Dimension of the relation of Saint Catherine with Our Lord<sup>1</sup>**

In the mystical life of Saint Catherine, the explicit symbol of matrimony shows her relation with the divine.

If the supplications of Saint Catherine's are addressed even to the most strange and desperate cases, it is because she is heard as Spouse of Christ.

It would be difficult to find two men who have as attentive a conversation as Saint Catherine had with her Spouse and Savior of all.

Whether she meditated, kept vigil, or slept, she was consoled by her vision of Him. There were even times when He was present to her so that while she spoke with people, she was mental speaking with Him though with her bodily tongue she spoke with men. But this did not last long. Since her soul was so violently attracted to her Heavenly Spouse, in a short time, she would enter into ecstasy. All the admirable things in her life followed from this.

## **II. Mystical Betrothal of Saint Catherine with Our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>**

It is the same Blessed Raymond of Capua that narrates in his *Legenda Maior* of the mystical betrothal of Saint Catherine with Our Lord and the miraculous ring she received.

He recounts that the grace of the Savior enriched the soul of the Saint every day. She flew rather than walked along the way of virtue, and a holy desire developed within her soul to attain perfect faith, so that, utterly subject to her Bridegroom, she might be utterly pleasing to Him. He was the only one who could please her heart. She asked, therefore, that God increase her faith, making it so strong that it would be able to resist any attack from the enemy.

Our Lord answered her, "I will espouse you to me in faith." Catherine went on praying and praying and the Lord kept giving her the same answer.

Near Lent (when the faithful abstain from meat and fats) in the days when men celebrate the vain feast of the stomach, the virgin was to be found alone in her little room seeking through prayer and fasting the face of her eternal Bridegroom, praying endlessly for the same thing. Then the Lord said to her, "Since for love of me you have forsaken vanities and despised the pleasure of the flesh and fastened all the delights of your heart on men, now, when the rest of the household are feasting and enjoying themselves, I have determined to celebrate the wedding feast of your soul and to espouse you to me in faith as I promised."

Before He had finished speaking His most glorious Virgin Mother appeared with the most blessed St. John the Evangelist, the glorious Apostle Paul, St. Dominic (the founder of the Order) and the prophet David with his harp. While David played sweet strains on the harp the Mother of God took Catherine's hand in her own most holy hand and presenting her to her Son courteously asked Him to marry her to Himself in faith. The Son of God, graciously agreeing, held out a gold ring with four pearls set in a circle in it and a wonderful diamond in the middle.

He slipped it on Saint Catherine's finger, saying, "There! I marry you to me in faith, to me, your Creator and Savior. Keep this faith unspotted until you come to me in heaven and celebrate the marriage that has no end. From this time forward, daughter, act firmly and decisively in everything that in my Providence I shall ask you to do. Armed as you are with the strength of faith, you will overcome all your enemies."

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cf. Beato Raimondo da Capua, *Vita di Santa Caterina da Siena, Legenda Maior*, Paoline, Milano 2013, pp. 24; 29; 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 114, p. 137.

The vision disappeared, but the ring always remained on Catherine's finger. Blessed Raymond of Capua explains that though no one else could see it the ring was always before her eyes. In fact she frequently confessed to me in all humility that she could always see it on her finger and that there was never a moment when it was out of her sight. You may know of another Catherine, a martyr, who was similarly married to the Lord after she was baptized. Well, here you have a second who was solemnly married to the same Lord after achieving great victories over the flesh and the Enemy.

Following still the words of the Blessed, he gives an explanation of the symbolism of this ring, inviting us to admire the beauty it contains and to meditate on its mysterious meaning:

What is stronger than diamond? As diamond can resist, overcome, break anything, however hard, and can itself only be broken by being sprinkled with the blood of a goat, so has a faithful heart the power to overcome all adversities and is itself only softened and broken by the blood of Christ.

Then the four pearls symbolize the four different kinds of purity that Saint Catherine had:

- Purity of intention
- Purity of thought
- Purity of word
- Purity of deed

In the judgment of the Blessed, this marriage was meant to confirm the divine grace and that sign of this confirmation was the ring which she alone could see, so that when she went on to her task of rescuing souls from the swamps of this world she would never be downcast but always trust in God's grace as she bore them to the firm ground of salvation.

According to the Holy Doctors, one of the main reasons why Almighty God lets some people know that they will always be in His grace is because He plans to send them out into this perverse world to battle for the honor of His name and to save souls. This happened to the Apostles at Pentecost, when they received a visible sign of the grace they had been given, and also to St. Paul, who heard the words: "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor 12:9).

Saint Catherine, although a woman, was chosen to be an apostle to the world and to convert many souls and for this reason she received a visible sign of the grace so that she could complete with greater fervor the divine mission with which she had been entrusted.

Whereas the signs given to others had been fleeting ones, it is most notable in the case of St. Catherine that her sign was permanent and she could see it all the time.

Raymond of Capua continues by explaining the Lord willed this because of her sex and the novelty of what she did and the slack condition of times she lived, all of which seemed likely to raise obstacles to the mission entrusted her by heaven; therefore, in order to be able to persevere, she was always guided by our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

We ask Mary Most Holy, who appeared in person on the betrothal day and maternally took the holy right hand of Saint Catherine to present it to her Divine Son, that we may be made worth to have her also intercede for all the Servidoras that each one may be betrothed to Jesus Christ in the Faith.