Spirituality
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip
News
Sts. Edith Stein, Teresa of Ávila, Therese of Lisieux and Catherine of Siena are represented in

Sts. Edith Stein, Teresa of Ávila, Therese of Lisieux and Catherine of Siena are represented in stained glass at St. Thérèse of Lisieux Church in Montauk, N.Y. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic)



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

March 9, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

VATICAN CITY — The Catholic Church needs women, especially women saints, who have shown throughout history an unwavering dedication to God and to caring for their brothers and sisters, Pope Francis said.

The women honored as doctors of the church and as co-patrons of Europe, he said, are examples of "the courage to face difficulties; the capacity for being practical; a natural desire to promote what is most beautiful and human according to God's plan; and a far-sighted, prophetic vision of the world and of history, that made them sowers of hope and builders of the future."

Pope Francis made his comments in a message March 8 to a conference at Rome's Pontifical Urbanian University on "Women Doctors of the Church and Co-Patronesses of Europe."

The academic conference, held on International Women's Day, focused on Sts. Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Siena, Thérèse of Lisieux and Hildegard of Bingen, who are doctors of the church, and on Sts. Bridget of Sweden, Edith Stein and Catherine of Siena, who are co-patrons of Europe.

The teaching and example of the seven women, he said, "can offer light and hope to our fragmented and fractious world."

Advertisement

While they lived at different times, in different countries and had "very different missions," the pope said, they each offered an example of a holy life.

"Through the grace of baptism, they were docile to the Spirit and pursued their own journey of faith, moved not by shifting ideologies but an unwavering adherence to the 'humanity of Christ' that permeated their lives," the pope wrote.

Sometimes they "felt incapable and limited, 'little women,' as Teresa of Ávila would say, faced with an undertaking that surpassed them," he said, but they drew strength from the love of God and followed their vocations on "a path accessible to all: that of holiness in daily life."

While the world today demands that "the dignity and intrinsic worth with which the Creator endowed them be restored to all women," the church also recognizes that it needs their gifts and full involvement, he said.