



I chose to read *Catherine of Siena* by Sigrid Undset in the month of August because of a religious sister, who taught me seventh grade at St. Jude Catholic School in Indianapolis, Indiana. Sister Catherine Siena was a member of the congregation Sisters of Providence. She was delightful, yet strict. My first encounter with Sister Catherine Siena was somewhat humiliating. She was teaching several seventh grade girls to do the Irish jig, which would eventually be performed in front of the school on St. Patrick's Day. One afternoon during our lunch hour jiggling lesson, I could feel her eyes staring at me. I thought it was because of my graceful dancing. However, as she came closer and closer, I realized it was not my feet that had caught her eye, but rather the mascara covering my very fair eyelashes. "Hannah," she said disappointedly, followed by an uncomfortably long pause. "What is THAT on your eyes? Please go to the ladies room and wash that off!" I quickly left the room to remove the forbidden substance from my lashes and then resumed the jiggling lesson.

Sister Catherine Siena was a stickler for proper grammar. We spent hours diagramming sentences. I can still recite the Preposition Song that she had us sing daily to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy. She was kind and loving and had special insight into her students. She told my mother, "Hannah is too good for her own good." I am still not sure what she meant, but every now and again my mom will remind me of that quote. Perhaps it is when I have said yes to too many things.

It is because of this special teacher that I have a love for St. Catherine of Siena. I was curious as to why she had chosen her name, and wanted to learn more about the saint who had inspired her. A review of this particular biography by Jessica Ptomey says it better than I could hope to, "Reading about her life and her life's work compelled me to spend time with her spiritual writing. St. Catherine is a saint who experienced profound and regular mystical encounters with our Lord. However, the majority of her life was not lived solitarily. She was a servant of the Church who lived an active and vibrant life of ministry very connected to others in the world. I believe that someone who could move so easily between mystical encounters and practical service is a saint to learn from and study."

This brings me back to dear Sister Catherine Siena. She also exuded holiness, living in the world but not of the world. Her obituary said, "Sister Catherine Siena loved to roller skate and was always among the first to pin up her habit and put on the skates. Her tall, lanky frame with veil billowing out behind her was a joy to behold. Luckily she never broke any bones while careening joyously around the gym floor."

To all of the teachers...welcome back. Thank you for your service.

*Be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire." St. Catherine of Siena*



Sister Catherine Sienna Wire