



Saint Margaret Clitherow

(1556-1586)

Feast Day-March 26

Virtue of the month:

Reverence: showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God.

Margaret Middleton Clitherow, also known as “the Pearl of York,” was born during a very tumultuous time in England, when the persecution of the Catholic Church in that country was at its height. Although a Catholic queen named Mary Tudor ruled the country at the beginning of Margaret’s life, Elizabeth I reigned during the end of Margaret’s life, and it was under her rule that Saint Margaret would be condemned to death for her faith.

Raised as a Protestant, Margaret joined the Catholic Church not too long after her marriage to prosperous butcher John Clitherow. John was a Protestant, but he had a brother who was a Catholic priest and was very supportive of his wife’s faith, even allowing their children to be raised as Catholics. All during her married life, Saint Margaret made her home a place of refuge of the Catholic priests who had to offer the Mass in secret for the Catholic faithful, facing execution if they were caught. Many of the Catholics of Saint Margaret’s native area of Yorkshire, England, knew of and supported this holy wife and mother’s determination to protect priests so that they could continue to administer the sacraments.

When civil authorities finally discovered what was happening, they arrested Margaret for giving protection to Catholic priests who were considered “traitors and seducers of the Queen’s subjects”. Warned that to save her life she needed to plead guilty or stand trial, she responded, “I know of no offence where of I should confess myself guilty. Having made no offence, I need no trial.” Pregnant with her fourth child, St. Margaret was executed on Good Friday, 1586, by having large weights laid upon her until she suffocated. Because of her faith, Yorkshire remains one of the most Catholic areas in England.