

Venerable Margaret Clitheroe

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THE story of the first female martyr in the cause of God's truth, in any country or at any time, must always be interesting; for God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong, and our faith in His over-ruling presence and grace is brightened by reading about it.

But when the scene is laid in our own country, and in times when the names of persons and places sound very much as they do now, the effect is increased. The question occurs to all of us: If we were called to undergo the same ordeal, should we be faithful as she was?

Just three hundred years ago, there lived in York a little girl called Margaret Middleton. Her lot was cast in terrible times, for wicked people ruled England then.

For nine hundred years every man, woman, and child in England had been Catholics. They were all united to the Pope, and united to one another. Many of them were very good Catholics. They devoted their money and their time to advance God's kingdom in every way. They built and adorned most beautiful cathedrals and churches all over the country, and went in crowds to worship there. York Minster and other glorious churches, all built and decorated by pious Roman Catholics, remain to this day. But just about the time when Margaret was born, a great change came over the land. Queen Elizabeth, for her own purposes, had set up an entirely new religion. She banished, or imprisoned, all the Catholic bishops, and about two thousand priests, and had new bishops of her own, without proper orders, jurisdiction, or mission: and these she intruded into Catholic sees, and gave them ministers instead of priests to assist them in the new worship. This was the beginning of what is called "the Church of England."

Not content with doing away with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the beautiful offices and ceremonies which for centuries all Englishmen had revered and been accustomed to, Elizabeth caused a new Prayer Book of her own to be adopted in the churches, and passed a number of cruel laws, by which it was made death, fine, or imprisonment, to worship in the old way, or indeed, not to worship in the new way.

Thus the poor English Catholics were cheated out of their religion. They could not pay the fines; they dared not face the dreadful tortures which the law inflicted upon those who would not submit to the Queen's church; and they did not know what to do.

But God never leaves his faithful children without consolation. He raised up holy and zealous priests, who came over from abroad, and hid about in various houses all over the country, ministering as well as they could to the dying Catholics, and encouraging the living. It was death if they were discovered, and so generally they went about disguised as labourers or mechanics; and, as we shall shortly see, it was death for any Catholic to harbour them or give them shelter.

Such were the circumstances under which Margaret Middleton passed her childhood. Her father and mother, who were wealthy people in the city of York, had conformed to the new religion, and

Margaret was brought up a Protestant. We know very little of her girlhood; but in the year 1571 she was married to a rich butcher of the city of York, of the name of Clitheroe, so Margaret Clitheroe we will henceforth call her.

I told you that when Queen Elizabeth, for her own purposes, determined to put down the old religion and invent a new one of her own, she fixed upon ministers of her new religion who would best forward her impious designs, as bishops of her Church. Accordingly, Dr. Grindal was intruded into the see of York. His great object seemed to be to destroy, if possible, all traces of the old religion. Many beautiful churches in York were levelled to the ground, and the holiest objects were purposely chosen as suitable instruments for his spirit of sacrilege.

In order to root out, as far as he could, all remembrances of that Holy Faith which had been the support and consolation of thousands for so many centuries, he ordered the altar stones, which, as you know, are solemnly consecrated, to be placed in the pavement of the churches on the floors, so that all who passed might walk upon them. To this day some of these sacred stones may be seen, with their five crosses, in the floors of the York churches.

All idea of the Sacrifice of the Mass was thus to be extinguished; and the very words ‘priest,’ ‘altar,’ ‘vestments’ were used in terms of mockery and hatred.

We see from this the great hatred that the enemy of Jesus Christ and His Church has always shown to the central act of Christian worship, namely, the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. Once get rid of that, and you get rid of all. This mystery is the fountain of all spiritual life in the Church. Here Jesus is offered up to His Eternal Father, as Victim of propitiation for sin, as the Great Intercessor for our necessities, as the great expression of the worship due from the creature to the Creator. Here too is consecrated that which is the very life of our souls; the only means by which we can persevere in following Christ to heaven, and the only means by which we can secure a blessed resurrection for our bodies after death.

Without the Mass, there is no witness to the claims of God on earth; and this is why the devil hates it so much, and why we should love it, and assist at it as often as we can with the greatest devotion and thanksgiving.

It is no wonder, then, that Margaret Clitheroe found no peace in the new religion in which she had been reared. She was not a learned woman, but she knew enough to be quite certain that the religion she saw around her could not be the religion of Jesus Christ.

Besides that, there were many more Catholics in York at that time than there are now. Persecution and false teaching had not had time to do its evil work when she lived. Above all there was the tradition, still fresh, of the holy religion, the mother of saints and the mother of martyrs, to point to the old paths, and to claim her obedience.

The more she looked, and thought and prayed, the more she saw there was but one thing to be done — to be received into God’s One, Holy, Catholic Church, and that at once; for time is short, and eternity is long. Accordingly she applied to one of the priests who was hiding about in the neighbourhood, and by the grace of God was admitted by him into the One Fold of the One Shepherd.

And now began her grand life. She did not, as some converts do after their reception, go back to her old ways, friends, and acquaintances, and so risk losing the grace of her conversion; but she gave herself to forming the acquaintance of all the good Catholics she could see, and above all, of those

holy priests who were endangering their lives to keep up the Faith amid their scattered flocks in England.

Her husband seems to have been a good-humoured, kind-hearted, well-to-do man, such as we often meet with among Protestants now. He let her do pretty much as she liked. He even allowed her to talk to her children of the doctrines of the Faith, and to teach them their Catechism; and when she could find a suitable room in her house she fitted it up as a chapel, and supplied vessels and vestments for the celebration of Mass whenever a priest came by.

And many there were, whose names, we know now, are written in God's Book of Life, who frequented that house, and said Mass in the humble chapel in the Shambles. There was the Blessed Fr. James Thompson, and the Blessed Fr. William Hart, and Blessed Fr. Richard Thirkill, who all died martyrs at the gallows erected at the York Tyburn, about half a mile outside the walls of the city. Often and often would Margaret go to that sacred spot. It was dangerous to be seen going there in the daylight, for Micklegate Bar, the gate of the city which led to it, was carefully guarded by a porter who watched every one passing in and out; and there were spies, besides, all over the town, who knew that the place of martyrdom was dear to Catholics, and were on the look out for any one they saw going there.

And so Margaret generally went at night. She would set out with other Catholic women when all was quiet, sometimes barefoot, and saying her beads the while. Can we not almost follow the very steps of her blessed feet? Down the narrow street of the Shambles, and across the pavement to Ousebridge, she would pass by St. William's chapel which was then standing on the bridge, and the Tolbooth, where she was to suffer her cruel martyrdom, and along Micklegate, and under the Bar, having bribed the porter to let her pass, and along Blossom Street, by the very doors of the new Catholic Church, to the grassy mound which stood in the middle of the present road, just past the White House, opposite Hob Moor Gate.

There she passed hours in prayer, and learned the science of the Saints; there she obtained those graces which were to support her in the hour of need and make her a martyr in her turn. Then she would go back to her home, fortified for her life of danger and charity.

What Masses must she have heard in that little chapel in the Shambles! What Communions she must have made!

Priests would come for a night; and she would receive and entertain them, and with joy make use of their ministrations, and prepare the necessaries for their Mass in the morning, and send them on their way in secrecy.

Let us never forget Margaret was no foreigner — she was an Englishwoman, and spoke our language, and practised our ways and manners; and this is what she thought of the Sacraments, and the Priesthood, and the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. She risked her life that she might see a priest and assist at his Mass, and receive her Lord in the Holy Communion.

You will see Catholics now who have priests and Mass and Sacraments quite close to them; and they have no persecution, and no risk, and no danger; yet they will get out of the way of the priest, and never go near either Mass or Sacrament.

And so her quiet home life went on. There were times when a priest would come and take up his abode in her house for some little time, going out from his hiding place every now and then to hear

the confessions of the poor dying Catholics in the neighbourhood, or, disguised as a servant man, visiting the faithful who had been imprisoned by Elizabeth in York Castle.

At such times Margaret would be overjoyed. She made the most of her opportunities. We hear of her going to confession twice a week, and she heard Mass with the greatest devotion every morning, kneeling by the door of the little room behind her servants and all the others, who were huddled together while the Sacrifice was going on.

When no priest was in the house she did not give up her pious exercises. She could not hear Mass, it is true; but she made up for it by praying in the room, and reciting the Office of Our Lady, which she had learned by heart, and waiting for the next priest who should visit her.

Venerable Margaret Clitheroe valued the Mass. It was this love of the Mass which led to her harbouring of priests; and it was the harbouring of priests which kept up the offering of the Holy Sacrifice uninterruptedly, in our land, up to our own days.

Her confessor, Father Mush, who wrote her life, tells us how she would assist at Mass “with her eyes fixed on the sacred altar, intent on what was being enacted there,” and when (as we shall presently see) she hired a room at a distance from her home, for greater security, where the faithful could more easily assemble for Mass, but whither she herself could less often come, owing to spies upon her steps, she thus answered one commiserating her loss: “My heart is with you — I trust you remember me toiling in the world — though I cannot come as I desire, yet it doth me good, and much comforteth me, that I know I have priests here, and that God is any way served by my means.” It was by assisting at Mass that she learned to sacrifice herself daily with the Divine Victim on the altar, and therefore she led daily a life of self sacrifice in her home duties. There she learned the dignity of the priesthood, upon whose valid consecration the Sacrifice, the centre of religion, itself depends.

This state of things did not last very long. The Catholics in the north were so numerous, and the labours of the hiding priests had done so much to keep up the faith of the people, that Queen Elizabeth became alarmed: Dr. Grindal had told her of the numbers at York alone, who still belonged to the real Church of England, and refused to join the new religion which he had done his best to enforce.

Accordingly, the Queen established a tribunal at York, presided over by a fierce Protestant, and armed it with laws of extra severity against all priests, whenever they could be hunted up, and against all who received priests into their houses, especially if they presumed to have Mass said in them, or to assist at it.

Margaret was not daunted by this cruel law. She had lately seen a great deal of her own confessor, Father Mush, and his companion Father Ingleby, and knew well of what consequence they were to the Catholics of York; and she was determined to keep up the chapel, and at the same time to provide for the safety of all. So she hired another room in a distant part of the city, where Mass could be said as well as in her own chapel in the Shambles.

Thus, she baffled the persecutors. While they were lying in wait to see who went in and out of her house, the faithful were gathered together in the other room far off, and were able to worship in peace and security.

This went on for a little time, but at last a thing happened which brought the whole to a crisis.

I told you that Mr. Clitheroe was a kind-hearted Protestant, who loved and respected his wife, and did everything she wished. I need not tell you that the great thing she wished, and for which she cared most, was, that her children, Henry and Anne, should be brought up as Catholics. Accordingly her son was sent abroad to a Catholic school. This was against the law, and came to the ears of the Council of the North. Mr. Clitheroe was sent for and asked about it. Everyone knew he was a Protestant; so after a little more inquiry the whole of Margaret's life and way of going on was known to the Council.

They took care not to ask the husband any questions; but they got hold of a foreign boy whom Margaret had taken into the house and been kind to, and from him they got all the evidence required.

The searchers came to the house in the Shambles, with Sheriff Fawcet at their head, and frightened the boy into telling them where the chapel was, and where the church plate and vestments were kept. These they seized; and having examined the various hiding places which Margaret had contrived in case of a sudden visit of this kind, they carried everything off — books, plate, vestments, and altar ornaments — and bid Margaret follow them in close custody.

The servants and the little Anne were all taken up and lodged in various prisons in the city, but Margaret was taken alone; and about seven in the evening was sent to the Castle, which was then, as now, the principal gaol in York.

There she sat in her gloomy cell. Gaols were not then as they are now. Of course prison cannot be made a very pleasant place, but modern prisoners have clean cells, and wholesome food; and this was not the case in Margaret's time, especially in the places where the Catholic prisoners were confined.

Many of them died from the filth and squalor of their dungeons. A miserable bed, swarming with vermin, a broken stool, a pitcher of water, and a loaf of bread, which could hardly be seen in the darkness — that is the gloomy picture which the young wife of thirty years found around her on this spring evening. And was Margaret unhappy? Did she sit down and cry, and rock to and fro, because she found herself alone in this horrible place?

No: when the gaoler came in to see her he found her singing. She only asked after her husband and children, and when she found that nothing serious was likely to happen to them, and that no fear or compulsion had caused them to tell lies, or commit sin, she was merrier than ever. Shortly after, her friend Mrs. Tesh came in. She also, it appears, had been committed to the Castle for refusing to go to the new services, and the two friends had a happy night of it together in the cell.

"They laughed pleasantly," we are told, "over their supper, because of the various shifts they had to make so as to manage without plates or cups, for they had neither."

Only, before she retired to rest, Margaret threw herself on her knees, and thanked God that no priests had been apprehended, and that those who were dear to her had not been led into sin. So full of joy was she that she said to Mrs. Tesh, "Sister, we are so merry together that, unless we part, I fear we shall come to lose the merit of our imprisonment."

So happy was she, that a little time before she was called to the judges, she said, "Yet before I go, I will make all my brothers and sisters on the other side of the hall merry;" and looking out of the window towards them — (they were five and thirty, and might easily behold her from thence) — she made a pair of gallows on her fingers, and pleasantly laughed at them.

The parting, however, was soon to come. Next day she was ordered to appear before the Council.

The place where Margaret was tried has little altered since then. It was a beautiful building called the Gildhall. The massive pillars were each separate trees brought from a forest far off, and the windows, though they have other subjects in them now, were filled with stained glass, probably illustrating the lives of St. Christopher and St. George, the Patron Saints of the Gild. That open timber roof was the same that Margaret looked at, when first she entered the hall to be put on trial. Judge Clinch was on the bench. The hall was crowded with people to hear the trial, and Margaret was placed at the bar. The charges were read.

They accused her of harbouring priests, assisting at Mass, and sending her boy to a Popish college.

“Are you guilty or not guilty?” said the Judge.

She answered, “I know of no offence of which I could confess myself guilty.”

“But you must plead,” said the Judge. Margaret still refused. At this moment a number of men came into the hall bearing in their hands, chalices, books, and vestments of every kind and colour. These they put upon the table before the Judge, and then proceeded to put them on themselves, dancing, and marching about amid the laughter of the crowd. We can see the whole thing now in imagination. The ruffians with the albs and chasubles on, some of them inside out; and the ignorant coarse faces of the mocking bystanders, while the holy Margaret, though indignant at their shocking profanity, quietly prayed for them.

“Now,” said Judge Clinch, “these things were found in your house; are you going to plead guilty or not guilty, that a jury of your country may try you?”

But Margaret still refused to plead. She knew perfectly well that they would bring her in guilty, and that the sentence in store for her was a fearful one. It was nothing less than to be taken to Tyburn, and then hung on the gallows till she was half dead, then cut down, and laid on the scaffold, while the executioner ripped her up with a sharp knife, pulled out her heart, and burnt it on a cauldron of coals which was ready for the purpose. This was bad enough, but if she did not plead there was a worse punishment before her. It was this — she was to be taken to the Tolbooth, and tied down on the ground, and a heavy door placed upon her, on which immense weights would be put which would crush her to pieces.

This refusal of Margaret to plead has led to much comment. Many Protestants who have been much impressed by her life and death, have condemned her for thus throwing away her life: and are inclined to rebel against the word ‘Martyr’ being used of one who refused even to be tried, knowing that certain death was before her.

The true reason was, that her children, servants, and other weak people, would be brought up as witnesses against her, and she would not run the risk of the scandal to them, which their enforced testimony might occasion.

As she said herself, either they would tell the truth, and then her blood would be shed on account of their accusation — a life-long sorrow to them; or they would tell lies, and so offend God.

Therefore she would not plead, and preferred the extra torment her conduct involved, to being the occasion of one soul being saddened or stained.

This is the way the Saints looked on the sin of scandal. I need not say, that when we too often make others sin from pride or pleasure, we regard things differently from the Saints.

At last Judge Clinch sentenced her to death, and it was to be the death of those who would not plead. She was to be crushed to death.

The Judge was not a cruel man. He spent the next few days, while Margaret was taken back to her condemned cell, in Mr. Trewe's house, in doing his best to get the sentence changed, but the other Lords of the Council would not consent. No, the sentence must stand. Margaret must die.

And now, dear readers, I want to show you a wonderful coincidence.

You know that those whom Jesus loves best He makes most like Himself, and this faithful copy of His own Passion and mockery, and bitter death, He would bestow on Margaret. He also had an unjust Judge, who tried to release Him, but found he could not do so without displeasing the world. That was Pontius Pilate.

Whenever you say the "I believe," you say that our Lord "suffered under Pontius Pilate." His name is branded with infamy for ever! So with Judge Clinch. Wherever the story of Margaret is told, there the name of that bad weak man will be published. "He that is not with Me is against Me," says our Lord.

We have seen that all this was happening in the spring-time of the year, when we keep Lent. It is very difficult to fix the exact date in the Church Calendar of her martyrdom, owing to the confusion between the old and new style of computation. It certainly happened on Friday, March 25th of that year.

It was, therefore, Lady Day, but whether it was the last Friday in Lent, Good Friday, or the Friday before, when we keep the Feast of the Seven Dolours, we cannot quite determine. At any rate, whether her passion was to be brought into union with that of her Blessed Lord Himself, or with His Mother's sorrows, it was God's will that the circumstances of her pain should resemble His.

It was on the last evening of His life, that our Blessed Lord went into the Garden of Olives with His chosen Apostles, and underwent His fearful agony. He "began to fear and to be heavy," and "His soul was sorrowful unto death." And Margaret must have her agony too, and like her Master, "tread the winepress alone."

There in the little room of John Trewe's house she passed that fearful night. A kind-hearted Protestant woman, Mrs. Yoward, who could not in the least understand Margaret, stayed a short time with her, and then went to her bed. Margaret fell on her knees and prayed in agony for strength. "The flesh is weak," she said, as Jesus had said before her. But what could Mrs. Yoward say? She begged her to eat something; but Margaret knew that at such an hour bread alone could not cheer the trembling heart, and on her knees on the chill stones only, could she find comfort. Look at her for a moment: no priest, no Sacraments — none of those consolations we hope to have when we are dying — no, alone she must pray — but God was very near her. He is never so near, as when we are most alone.

Mrs. Yoward woke in the early morning, and there was Margaret still kneeling on the cold floor; but there was a look of unearthly happiness in her face — the Angel of consolation had come!

“And will you not come to bed,” said the kindly woman, “and warm your chilled limbs?” Margaret did as she was desired, and waited for the dawn of her last Good Friday. At eight o’clock the sheriff and his officers were to come.

Once more Mrs. Yoward tried to throw some comfort on the scene. “I will get some friends of mine to heap greater weights on you, so that your death may be more speedy.” “No,” answered the martyr, “God forbid that I should procure any to be guilty of my death and blood.” Even at such a moment Margaret thought of scandal.

And now the last moments had arrived. They told her of her husband’s distracted state of grief ever since her condemnation; and she sent him her hat, with a message that it came from “his loving wife, as a sign of her duty and obedience.” To her daughter, little Anne, she sent her worsted hose, and her shoes.

We do not hear much more of Mr. Clitheroe. He was dreadfully affected when he heard of his wife’s condemnation, and had been sent out of the city a few days before her martyrdom, so as not to be actually present while the deed was being accomplished. I regret, however, to say that what we do hear is not much to his credit.

Although he had his blessed wife’s example and that of a brother of his own, a priest into the bargain, we hear of his being “a man of good behaviour, and a dutiful subject, obedient to her majesty’s laws, and one who dutifully and orderly hitherto had repaired to the church to hear divine service and sermons.” And this shortly after Margaret’s death.

He had married again, and “was of the best sort of the citizens, and well liked of this court” (the corporation of York), and he was chosen, as one of the best inhabitants of the city to have “a decent and comely gown made after the citizen’s fashion of a sad colour,” to receive King James, as he passed through York on his way from Scotland, on his accession. I am afraid it looks as if he had an eye for “comely gowns” and this world’s prizes.

Ah! it is not enough to be kind-hearted and mean well. When we come near the martyrs, we must either share their cross, or miss their crown.

But Margaret’s prayers were heard for her children. Her two boys both remained firm, and became priests abroad.

I think we might almost make a meditation on Margaret’s joy in heaven, as the Mass-loving Martyr assisting in spirit at the first Masses of her only sons!

Of little Anne there is more to be said. When Margaret was arrested, she was “at the first committed to ward because she would not betray her mother, and there extremely used for that she would not go to the church.” What this “extreme using” was we do not quite know. Some say that she was cruelly whipped, but of this we cannot be certain. After her mother’s martyrdom, “the heretics came up to her and said, that unless she would go to the church and hear a sermon, her mother should be put to death.” This lie had its effect. “The child, thereby thinking to save her mother’s life, went to a sermon, and thus they deceived her.”

Anne was about twelve years old at the time of her mother’s death, and it may be that when her father married again, her home was not a happy one. At any rate, we are told that “without his consent or knowledge she left York, and soon afterwards, for ‘causes ecclesiastical’ was imprisoned in Lancaster gaol.”

We gather from this that little Anne's faith grew stronger by sorrow and suffering. Her stepmother was almost certainly a Protestant, and her whole life was sadly altered from what it had been in her blessed mother's time. She had evidently also done something to excite persecution; probably by refusing to attend the Protestant services and sermons.

When she was about eighteen years old, a petition was sent to the Privy Council, that she might be released from gaol, on condition of her returning to her father, and conferring with "learned and godly preachers for such reasonable time as to their honours should seem convenient." Accordingly, she went back to York, but her mother's hose and shoes were more touching sermons than any the preachers could offer, and she refused bravely to 'conform.' Three years afterwards, she contrived, either by banishment or escape, to get across the seas, and in 1596, just ten years after her mother's death, she became a nun in St. Ursula's Convent, Louvain, and was one of the four English sisters who remained there, when the others established St. Monica's Convent. So that was the end of little Anne — and that was the way she wore her mother's hose and shoes.

Anne Tesh, Margaret's great friend, became a valiant woman indeed.

In the year 1596, ten years after the martyrdom, she was condemned for treason, and sentenced to be burnt alive, for "persuading a minister to be a Catholic." She was reprieved, and remained in York Castle as long as Queen Elizabeth lived.

When first apprehended with Margaret, she was put down in the list as one "who cometh not to the church, because her conscience will not serve her, for there is neither priest, altar, nor sacraments."

It is rather interesting to think what Anne Tesh would have thought of some people who come to us now-a-days and say they are "Catholics, but not Roman Catholics." The minister whom Anne Tesh persuaded to become a Catholic, was a brother minister of the ministers of the "Church of England" now. If he were a Catholic all the time, why did he not say so, and why did he allow himself to become one? and, above all, why was Anne condemned to be burnt alive, for persuading him to be what he always was?

There were no "Catholics" who were not "Roman Catholics" then. It is a new phrase, like a great many other new things that we see now; and there is nothing like the lives of the Martyrs to answer emphatically all these attempts to confuse the history of the Catholic Church in England. The word "martyr" means "witness." They were witnesses not only to God's Truth, but to man's truth as well.

At eight o'clock, the Sheriff Fawcet and his men arrived, and the sad procession set out from Mr. Trewe's house, across the road, for the Tolbooth on Ouse Bridge. The people were crowded on the bridge to see the Martyr pass. Do you not think that many must have looked up at the Minster towers, and the beautiful belfries of the churches, and thought, "What is all this for? She is only practising the religion of the good men who built these churches!" Whatever they thought, they were very respectful, and full of pity for the fair young woman, who was going to her death so calmly and modestly.

She walked barefoot, carrying the linen garment she had made for her martyrdom on her arm, from her prison to the Tolbooth, across the road.

The old Tolbooth is taken down now, and the bridge itself has been much altered, but the Catholic children of York know well where the spot is — a little wide of the pavement, on the west side of the bridge, jutting out into the road a few feet before you come to the first arch.

It was probably a vaulted chamber of stone, of no great size. When Margaret entered it, she saw at once the preparations for her awful martyrdom. The heavy oaken door, the sharp stone about the size of a man's fist, which was to be placed underneath her back; and the great stone weights which were to be put on the door.

The minister Frost came forward and offered to pray with her.

"No, Sir," said Margaret, "I will not pray with you, and you shall not pray with me; neither will I say Amen to your prayers, nor shall you to mine."

What did Margaret mean? She was very near God now. She was either very right or very wrong. Some people would say she was very wrong. If the prayers are good surely it is good to join in them.

As I said before, Margaret was not a learned woman, but she knew her religion. She knew that over and over again God has told us by His Church, that He will not have us join with heretics in prayer, and for this reason. It is not the question as to what prayers are said. It may be God's own prayer, the "Our Father," which is said; but the Holy Scripture tells us that no one can say "Abba, Father," to God rightly, unless the Holy Spirit guide him; and heretics are opposing the Holy Spirit of Truth, and therefore, to pray under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with those who are opposing the same Spirit, is a sin.

What Margaret said, St. Augustine, in the Council of Carthage, twelve hundred years before, had said; and Pope Paul IV. had reiterated to the persecuted Catholics in Margaret's time.

We can quite understand, now, what Margaret would have thought of Catholics going to Protestant prayers.

This was her last Act of Faith. The Martyr knelt on the ground, and the women put the linen garment on her.

When all was ready, the Sheriff ordered the door to be put upon her. Her hands were tied to posts, one on each side. Under her back was put the sharp stone.

She was very like Jesus, with His arms extended on the Cross. Then four men came in bearing the heavy stone weights, and laid them on the door.

"Bring more weight," said the Sheriff, and as, with frightful violence, they hurled them on the door, the Martyr's bones gave way.

She gasped out piteously —

"Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, help me, Blessed Jesu, I suffer this for Thy sake."

The blood poured from under the door. The face of the Martyr, convulsed with agony, still pleaded for dispatch.

"Bring more stones," said the Sheriff in a husky voice.

They piled more stones upon her, and still the eyes moved. The women, shrieking, ran to the gates of the prison, and entreated the men to be quick.

She was a quarter of an hour dying — at last — "Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, have mercy upon me," and all was still.

By that door she entered into the presence of her Jesu, and though, amidst pools of blood, her mangled body lay under the heavy weights, are we not reminded of St. Paul's beautiful words: "For that which is at present momentary, and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory." — 2 Cor. iv. 17.

The body lay as it was, till three o'clock in the afternoon, at the hour when the body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross, on the first Good Friday.

They buried it in a foul dunghill, near the city walls. But six weeks afterwards the Catholics secretly recovered it. They took it a long way off and buried it in honour. But the days were dangerous, and the secret of the tomb was observed so well, that to this day we do not know where the body is.

It may be that, if we pray very hard, God may see fit to reveal this resting-place of His servant, and we may have her blessed relics again.

One very good thing they did. They cut off one of her hands; and by an unbroken tradition of two hundred years, this hand has been preserved in the Convent of St. Mary's just outside Micklegate Bar, at York, where it is shown in a beautiful reliquary.

We are the countrymen and countrywomen of Margaret — what can we do for her?

Margaret is alive — and Queen Elizabeth, and Judge Clinch, and Sheriff Fawcett — they are all alive somewhere: for our Heavenly Father is not "the God of the dead, but of the living."

Margaret is alive, and the Church has told us she is a "Venerable Servant of God," and you know that by the blessed Communion of Saints, the servants of God are not strangers. We can do things for them, and they can do things for us. Her intercessory power is indeed required in these days.

Seventy thousand mortal sins, at the lowest calculation, well up to God's throne every year from London alone. Seventy thousand Catholics refuse to make their Easter Communion — and this in the land where Margaret died for the Faith!

It may be, that when we are dead and gone, the Holy Church will give her a higher title than she has got.

It may be that 'all generations shall call her Blessed,' and her name may be enrolled among the Saints. It may be that through the glorious aisles of York Minster, a Catholic procession once more may pass, with thuribles, and banners, and lights, and bishops in their mitres, up to the blazing shrine where Margaret is honoured.

But far better than joining in a beautiful procession, we can do something now to advance Margaret's honour.

When the evil world is putting its baits before us to seduce us from our Faith — let us remember Margaret.

When pleasure and sense would suggest "going with the swim," and living as those around us do, and not as Catholic children of the Saints — let us remember Margaret.

When the breath of the tempter is on us, and we quail in the battle, and are ashamed of our religion, and flinch from ridicule — let us remember Margaret.

The word Margaret, in Latin, signifies a Pearl, and that is why the people of the North have called her the "Pearl of York," the Pearl of great price in the treasury of Heaven.

When the King makes up His jewels, and we next see Margaret, it will be no light reward to be told that though we were poor, and obscure, and not Martyrs, we had done some little thing to increase the lustre of “The Pearl of York.”

Hymn to Ven. Margaret Clitheroe

Holy Martyr bending o’er us
With thy fair young English face,
Faithful heart and valiant spirit,
Glory of our land and race;
We, in days of peace and softness
Look to thee lest we forget
We are children of the Martyrs,
Brave and holy Margaret!

Was it for thy simple virtues,
For thy pure and blameless life,
Prudent mother, kindly mistress,
Loving friend and faithful wife —
That our Lord in mercy crowned thee
With Faith’s blessed coronet,
And that Faith, by thine allegiance,
Crowned thee martyr — Margaret?

Ah! we have not waited for it,
That dear Faith was ours at birth!
Teach us then, like thee, to prize it
As the dearest thing on earth: —
If, like thee, we may not seal it
With our blood, — Oh may we yet
To our Faith live ever loyal
Faithful martyr, Margaret!

By thy brave and secret service
To the hunted priests of God,
By the Masses heard so often
At the peril of thy blood,
Win us grace a higher value
On Christ’s Sacrifice to set
Whose divinely fruitful virtue
Made thee martyr, Margaret!

Barefoot through the silent city
Thou wouldst make thy way by night
To the tree where hung the martyrs
Who had won the bloody fight.
Kneeling on the grassy hillock
With the victors’ life-blood wet

Thou didst win a martyr's graces,
Brave and blesséd Margaret!

When the King of Martyrs called thee
In thy turn to die for Him,
For thy very joy they found thee
Singing in thy prison dim.
Teach our earth-bound hearts the lesson
We so easily forget
That we have no lasting city
Till we join thee, Margaret!

By thine own heroic silence
When they urged on thee to plead,
Lest the word that saves thee torment
Were to others sinful deed,
Let no word or act of ours
Wrong in other souls beget —
From the lightest sin of scandal
Shield us, saintly Margaret!

By thy soul's terrific anguish
Thro' that last most lonely night,
By the patient prayer which brought thee
From the darkness to the light,
By thy likeness to thy Master
In His prayer and bloody sweat,
Pray for us that in our sorrows
We may pray too, Margaret!

Lying with thine arms extended
Like thy Master Crucified,
Dying for the love of Jesus
On the day when Jesus died;
If the stones pressed heavy on thee
Other weight pressed stronger yet,
Love of Margaret for Jesus,
Jesus' love for Margaret.

As thy mangled body lieth
Crushed beneath the oaken door,
Thro' that door thy soul is passing
To the bright and distant shore.
In Christ's diadem of glory
As a jewel thou art set,
Pearl of England, pearl of Jesus,
Blessed martyr Margaret!
