

MARGARET OF SCOTLAND

THE LESSON: IN ALL THINGS, AT ALL TIMES

*“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
(Romans 12:21)*

The “Dark Ages” were not a peaceful time. Much of the old Roman empire had been conquered by Islamic forces in the seventh and eighth centuries. This upheaval was followed by two centuries of invasion by Vikings throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. The Viking raids in England resulted in a temporary period of exile for Anglo-Saxon royalty while Danish kings ruled. In many regions throughout the west it was the monasteries that preserved order, learning, and culture, offering education, medical aid, food assistance and hospitality to the surrounding communities. In spite of the turbulence of these times, Christianity continued to spread in the north, as well as in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Nubia (modern-day Sudan). It was during these “dark” times that Margaret lived.

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
(Psalm 46:1)*

Margaret was born in 1045. She was an English princess, but she was born in Hungary, where her family had been exiled. She was still a child when the family was called back to England, though her father died almost immediately after they arrived, and they had not been home for many years before another invasion made it necessary to flee into Scotland and accept the protection of King Malcolm III.

Now this Scottish king was a widower with two sons, and the young Margaret had wished to become a nun. Nevertheless, in 1069 they were married, a marriage that proved to be happy and a source of blessing to the kingdom.

*“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency
in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

Margaret was a pious wife and mother. She had great influence over her husband so that, in the words of her biographer, “by the help of God she made him most attentive to the works of justice, mercy, almsgiving, and other virtues”. She was careful to see that her children were not over-indulged, but well behaved, and prayed fervently for them to come to faith in Christ. She spent a great deal of time in prayer, in the reading of scripture as well as in ecclesiastical embroidery – making beautiful textiles for use in worship. Bishop Turgot of Durham, who penned her biography, wrote that we need not wonder “that the queen governed herself and her household wisely when we know that she acted always under the wisest of masters, the guidance of the Holy Scriptures”.

While Margaret is a model for the faithfulness with which she conducted her private life, she is also a model in how she carried out her public duties as queen. Margaret worked to bring the liturgy of the Celtic Church into closer harmony with the Roman Church. She founded monasteries, churches and hostels. She petitioned for the release of slaves, and she gave generously to the poor.

*“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart
and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”
(1 Timothy 1:5)*

Margaret only lived to the age of 47. It is said that, already weak, she died of grief on hearing of the death of her husband and one of their eight children, both of whom were killed in battle on the same day. Nevertheless, during the years of Margaret’s reign she shone as a loving wife, a devoted mother, and a conscientious leader. Three of her children

MARGARET OF SCOTLAND

went on to become rulers, including David I, who continued Margaret's work of building and supporting the Scottish monasteries, in addition to bringing about many beneficial reforms.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: DAVID FARMER, "OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS" | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, "THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1" | GERARD SAMPSON, "LAYMAN'S BOOK OF SAINTS" | TURGOT, BISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS, "THE LIFE OF ST. MARGARET, QUEEN OF SCOTLAND", ED. WILLIAM FORBES-LEITH, SJ.)

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Margaret that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen.

Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections, *and* share your reflections and your plan of action with a friend.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Margaret, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)