

## **93// HERE FOLLOWETH THE GLORIOUS LIFE AND PASSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND MARTYR ST. MARGARET**

**T**he holy St. Margaret was of the city of Antioch, daughter of Theodosius, patriarch and prince of the idols of paynims. And she was delivered to a nurse for to be kept. And when she came to perfect age she was baptized, wherefor she was in great hate of her father.

On a certain day, when she was fifteen years of age, and kept the sheep of her nurse with other maidens, the provost Olybrius passed by the way whereas she was, and considered in her so great beauty and fairness, that anon he burned in her love, and sent his servants and bade them take her and bring her to him, “for if she be free I shall take her to my wife, and if she be bond, I shall make her my concubine.”

And when she was presented tofore him he demanded her of her lineage, name and religion. And she answered that she was of noble lineage, and for her name Margaret, and Christian in religion. To whom the provost said: The two first things be convenient to thee, that is that thou art noble, and art called Margaret which is a most fair name, but the third appertaineth nothing to thee, that so fair a maid and so noble should have a God crucified.

To whom she said: “How knowest thou that Christ was crucified?”

He answered: “By the books of Christian men.”

To whom Margaret said: “O what shame is it to you, when you read the pain of Christ and the glory, and believe one thing and deny another.” And she said and affirmed him to be crucified by his will for our redemption, and now liveth ever in bliss.

And then the provost, being wroth, commanded her to be put in prison. And the next day following commanded that she should be brought to him, and then said to her: “O good maid, have pity on thy beauty, and worship our gods, that thou mayest be well.”

To whom she said: “I worship him that maketh the earth to tremble, whom the sea dreadeth and the winds and creatures obey.”

*Margaret is said of a precious gem, or ouche, that is named a margaret. Which gem is white, little and virtuous. So the blessed Margaret was white by virginity, little by humility, and virtuous by operation of miracles. The virtue of this stone is said to be against effusion of blood, against passion of the heart, and to confortation of the spirit. In like wise the blessed Margaret had virtue against shedding of her blood by constancy, for in her martyrdom she was most constant, and also against the passion of the heare, that is to say, temptation of the devil. For she overcame the devil by victory, and to the confortation of the spirit by doctrine, for by her doctrine she comforted much people, and converted to the faith of Christ. Theoteinus, a learned man, wrote her legend.*

To whom the provost said: “But if thou consent to me I shall make thy body to be all to-torn.”

To whom Margaret said: “Christ gave himself over to the death for me, and I desire gladly to die for Christ.”

Then the provost commanded her to be hanged in an instrument to torment the people, and to be cruelly first beaten with rods, and with iron combs to rend and draw her flesh to the bones, insomuch that the blood ran about out of her body, like as a stream runneth out of a fresh springing well. They that were there wept, and said: “O Margaret, verily we be sorry for thee, which see thy body so foul, and so cruelly torn and rent. O how thy most beauty hast thou lost for thy incredulity and misbelief. Now believe, and thou shalt live.”

Then said she to them: “O evil counsellors, depart ye, and go from me, this cruel torment of my flesh is salvation of my soul.” Then she said to the provost: “Thou shameless hound and insatiable lion, thou hast power over my flesh, but Christ reserveth my soul.”

The provost covered his face with his mantle, for he might not see so much effusion of blood, and then commanded that she should be taken down, and to shut her fast in prison, and there was seen a marvellous brightness in the prison, of the keepers.

And whilst she was in prison, she prayed our Lord that the fiend that had fought with her, he would visibly show him unto her. And then appeared a horrible dragon and assailed her, and would have devoured her, but she made the sign of the cross, and anon he vanished away. And in another place it is said that he swallowed her into his belly, she making the sign of the cross. And the belly brake asunder, and so she issued out all whole and sound.

This swallowing and breaking of the belly of the dragon is said that it is apocryphal.

After this the devil appeared to her in likeness of a man for to deceive her. And when she saw him, she went to prayer and after arose, and the fiend came to her, and took her by the hand and said: “It sufficeth to thee that thou hast done, but now cease as to my person.”

She caught him by the head and threw him to the ground, and set her right foot on his neck saying: “Lie still, thou fiend, under the feet of a woman.”

The devil then cried: “O blessed Margaret, I am overcome. If a young man had overcome me I had not recked, but alas! I am overcome of a tender virgin; wherefore I make the more sorrow, for thy father and mother have been my good friends.”

She then constrained him to tell why he came to her, and he answered, that he came to her to counsel her for to obey the desire and request of the provost. Then she constrained him to say wherefore he tempted so much and so often Christian people. To whom he answered that naturally he hated virtuous men, “and though we be oft put aback from them, yet our desire is much to exclude them from the felicity that they fell from, for we may never obtain ne recover our bliss that we have lost.”

And she then demanded what he was, and he answered: "I am Veltis, one of them whom Solomon closed in a vessel of brass. And after his death it happed that they of Babylon found this vessel; and supposed to have founden great treasure therein, and brake the vessel, and then a great multitude of us devils flew out and filled full the air alway, awaiting and espying where we may assail rightful men."

And when he had said thus, she took off her foot and said to him: "Flee hence, thou wretched fiend." And anon the earth opened, and the fiend sank in.

Then she was sure, for when she had overcome the master, she might lightly overcome the minister.

Then the next day following, when all the people was assembled, she was presented tofore the judge. And she not doing sacrifice to their false gods, was cast into the fire, and her body broiled with burning brands, in such wise that the people marvelled that so tender a maid might suffer so many torments. And after that, they put her in a great vessel full of water, fast bounden, that by changing of the torments, the sorrow and feeling of the pain should be the more.

But suddenly the earth trembled, and the air was hideous, and the blessed virgin without any hurt issued out of the water, saying to our Lord: "I beseech thee, my Lord, that this water may be to me the font of baptism to everlasting life."

And anon there was heard great thunder, and a dove descended from heaven, and set a golden crown on her head. Then five thousand men believed in our Lord, and for Christ's love they all were beheaded by the commandment of the provost Olybrius, that time in Campolymeath the city of Aurelia.

Then Olybrius, seeing the faith of the holy Margaret immoveable, and also fearing that others should be converted to the Christian faith by her, gave sentence and commanded that she should be beheaded. Then she prayed to one Malchus that should behead her, that she might have space to pray. And that got, she prayed to our Lord, saying: "Father Almighty, I yield to thee thankings that thou hast suffered me to come to this glory, beseeching thee to pardon them that pursue me. And I beseech thee, good Lord, that of thy abundant grace, thou wilt grant unto all them that write my passion, read it or hear, and to them that remember me, that they may deserve to have plain remission and forgiveness of all their sins. And also, good Lord, if any woman with child travailing in any place, call on me that thou wilt keep her from peril, and that the child may be delivered from her belly without any hurt of his members."

And when she had finished her prayer there was a voice heard from heaven saying, that her prayers were heard and granted, and that the gates of heaven were open and abode for her, and bade her come into the country of everlasting rest. Then she, thanking our Lord, arose up, and bade the hangman accomplish the commandment of the provost. To whom the hangman said: "God forbid that I should slay thee, virgin of Christ."

To whom she said: "If thou do it not thou mayest have no part with me."

Then he being afraid and trembling smote off her head, and he, falling down at her feet, gave up the ghost.

Then Theotinus took up the holy body, and bare it into Antioch, and buried it in the house of a noble woman and widow named Sincretia. And thus this blessed and holy virgin, St. Margaret, suffered death, and received the crown of martyrdom the thirteenth kalends of August [July 20], as is founden in her story; and it is read in another place that it was the third ides of July [July 13].

Of this virgin writeth an holy man and saith: The holy and blessed Margaret was full of the dread of God, sad, stable, and worshipful in religion, arrayed with compunction, laudable in honesty, and singular in patience, and nothing was found in her contrary to Christian religion, hateful to her father, and beloved of our Lord Jesu Christ. Then let us remember this holy virgin that she pray for us in our needs, etc.

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The [iconography of St. Margaret](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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