

Women of the Church Study

Month 20 Week 1

St. Margaret of Costello

St. Margaret of Costello (1287-1320), from Italy, is the patron saint of the poor and anyone dealing with a disability or physical challenge. She also is venerated as one of the patron saints of the pro-life movement and those who are unwanted. Pope Francis declared her a saint through equipollent canonization on April 24, 2021. Her feast day is April 13.

Margaret was born blind, with severe curvature of the spine; her right leg was an inch and a half shorter than her left, and her left arm was malformed. She had dwarfism and never grew beyond 4 feet tall. Margaret's wealthy parents were ashamed of her and kept her hidden away in their house. Her family allowed only their parish priest to visit with her and he taught Margaret about God's love and the faith and provided her with the sacraments.

At one point her family did travel and took her to a shrine at Castello, hoping for a miracle. When no miracle took place, Margaret's mother and father abandoned her in the city. She was cared for by the townspeople and then taken in by adoptive parents who loved and nurtured her. She became friends with nuns in a local convent. When she was about 13 years old, Margaret asked to be admitted as a postulant. Margaret was very devout and thus disappointed in the convent. She felt the nuns were lax in keeping the rule of their order and even the routine of daily prayer and meditation. Margaret was asked to leave the convent and returned to her adoptive parents. She joined the Third Order of St. Dominic, at age 15. She was permitted her to wear the habit and take the vows of a nun but still live at home where she felt loved and secure.

Margaret minister with those in her order. Her courage, patience and her deep religious devotion won her the affection of everyone in Castello. She nursed the sick, consoled the dying and visited prisoners. She started a school for children to teach them in the faith and often took care of children while their parents were out at work. Margaret said that in the sufferings of her neighbors she saw the image of the suffering Christ. As for her own disabilities, she regarded them as a means to unite her pain with the pain Christ endured on the cross.

During her funeral Mass, a girl whose legs were crippled dragged herself to Margaret's coffin. She touched the casket, then stood up and began to walk. The miracle convinced the priest to give Margaret a tomb inside the church. Today her remains lie beneath the high altar of Castello's Church of St. Dominic.

<https://simplycatholic.com/blessed-margaret-of-castello-a-saint-for-the-disabled/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_of_Castello

<https://youtu.be/1bOryV361Go>

**There is a shrine for St. Margaret of Costello located in St. Patrick's Church, Columbus, Ohio. The Shrine is a separate chapel in the rear of the church. It consists of a life size statue (shown here), a first class relic of her heart, space for prayer, meditation, and blessed candle offerings. The Blessed Margaret Novena and Canonization Prayers are offered along with the veneration of her relic each Wednesday, following the 11:45am mass.

Women of the Church Study

Month 20 Week 2

St. Margaret of Costello

Reflection Questions

-- Margaret was faced with many difficult life circumstances. She had physical disabilities that were limiting to her function. She experienced abandonment and rejection from others, even her own family. Yet she did not allow these factors to hold her back. She was able to use her many strengths to minister to others and she developed positive and loving relationships with others.

-How many times do we let our own weaknesses or other issues, interfere with helping others?

-How often do we allow issues with others (including our families) to interfere with loving others or even forgiving others who have hurt us?

-How might we “push forward” despite life circumstances and personal weaknesses or limitations?

--Each person has strengths and weaknesses. Margaret’s “weaknesses” were more observable and limiting than others. However, she lived based on her strengths, not allowing her limitations to interfere.

-How might we look to our own strengths, rather than our difficult circumstances and relationships, to be of service to others?

-How might we look at others from this perspective, seeing their strengths and abilities, rather than their weaknesses and disabilities?

--Margaret’s family was ashamed of her and rejected her due to her disabilities. Her priest, her adoptive family and those in her community showed her respect and dignity and loved her despite her disabilities.

-In what ways do we disrespect or “reject” those who are differently abled, even in subtle ways?

-How might we change our view and offer respect, dignity, support and opportunities to those differently abled?

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Month 20 Week 3

St. Margaret of Costello

Prayers/Devotions

Novena Prayers

O God, by whose will the blessed virgin Margaret was blind from birth, that the eyes of her mind being inwardly enlightened she might think without ceasing on You alone, be the light of our eyes, that we may be able to flee the shadows of this world, and reach the home of never-ending light. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

<http://www.avemaria.org/blessed-margaret-of-castello.html>

O my God, I thank you for having given Saint Margaret of Castello to the world as an example of the degree of holiness that can be attained by anyone who truly loves you, regardless of physical abnormalities. In today's perverted culture, Margaret would have, most likely, never been born; death through abortion being preferable to life, especially life in an ugly, distorted, twisted body. But your ways are not the world's ways...and so it was your will that Margaret would be born into the world with just such a malformed body. It is your way that uses our weakness to give testimony to your power. Margaret was born blind, so as to see you more clearly; a cripple, so as to lean on you completely; dwarfed in physical posture, so as to become a giant in the spiritual order; hunched-backed, so as to more perfectly resemble the twisted, crucified body of your Son. Margaret's whole life was an enactment of the words expressed by Paul: So I shall be happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me and that is why I am content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:10).

I beseech you, O God, to grant, through the intercession of Saint Margaret of Castello, that all the handicapped...and who among us is not?...all the rejected, all the UNWANTED of this world may make their weaknesses their own special boast so that your power may stay over them now and forever.

Amen. Saint Margaret of Castello, pray for us!

<https://www.littlemargaret.org/novena/> The full Novena can be found at this website also.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person Prayer

God of all life,

Help us to appreciate the great gift that is human life formed in your image, a reflection of your holiness.

Help us to recognize you in all whom you have created: children not yet born,

families affected by poverty and war, people of different abilities, people from other lands, and

all who are victims of hatred and racism. Help us to bear witness to the dignity of all whom you have created, regardless of stage of life, or wealth, or ability, or color, or creed, for every person is fully equal in your loving eyes. Share with us your holy knowledge that we are all your children, each bestowed with inherent dignity. May your justice reign forever! Amen.

<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/life-and-dignity-human-person-prayer>

Women of the Church Study

Month 20 Week 4

St. Margaret of Costello

Practical Applications

-Think about and identify some of your own strengths. (Don't be shy!) Take the initiative to use one (or more) of your strengths to reach out and help someone else. Pray about this and be open to ways God may be able to work through you to minister to someone else. Whether this be small or big, do it!

-Think of someone you know who may be "differently abled". This person may have an observable physical or developmental disability, a mental health concern, a behavioral issue...Find a way to become a friend to this person. Interact with the person in some way. Offer to be of support or assistance in whatever way is needed. Journal about this experience, your perception and attitude before, during and after.

-Find a way to offer an opportunity to someone who might not otherwise have this due to his/her limitations. Maybe help train someone on the job. Maybe offer financial assistance to someone in need of new clothing. Maybe provide a ride for someone to visit a relative...there is probably a long list if you think about it!!