

Upon his deathbed, King Edward the Confessor tried to see to an orderly transfer of power by naming Earl Harold Godwinson to be his successor as King of England. William the Conqueror felt the title should be his and was willing to take it by force. He invaded England in September 1066 and killed Harold at the Battle of Hastings the following month. Consolidating his power by additional use of force, he was crowned king on Christmas Day, 1066, in London.<sup>i</sup>

War often causes refugees to flee for their lives. In this case, some of the nobility related to King Edward attempted to flee to Hungary. A stormy sea forced one family to abandon their original plans when they crash landed on the Scottish coast, home to another brutal warrior king. King Malcolm III of Scotland extended safe haven to Princess Agatha of Hungary and her daughter Margaret. The saintly example of Margaret's life shows there is a better way to rule than by force and aggression.

Margaret was a devout Catholic and had plans for entering the convent. Marriage was the last thought on her mind when King Malcolm sought her hand in marriage. She politely turned him down, but he was persistent and two years later, they were married. Overtime, they had eight children, 6 sons and 2 daughters. Margaret saw to her children's religious education at home and sought to improve education throughout the country.

The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the fasting that pleases the Lord. Set free the oppressed. Share your bread with the hungry. Shelter the homeless. Clothe the naked. This is very similar to the teaching of Jesus who promises to judge us by the mercy we show to others and the generosity we exhibit in sharing with those who have nothing. Margaret of Scotland took this to heart. She was a model for living out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

As Queen, Margaret exercised great influence in using the wealth of the kingdom to care for the poor and downtrodden. She fasted regularly and had a strong prayer life. This helped her to focus her efforts on what was most important and most pleasing to God. In public, she was often surrounded by beggars. She never ate without first offering food to orphans or hungry adults.<sup>ii</sup> Following the example of Jesus on Holy Thursday who washed the feet of the apostles, she would wash the feet of the poor and offer alms to assist them. She took a public stand to end improper marriages, excessive interest on loans, and correct other problems related to the selling of religious articles.

She had a powerful effect on her husband. The Book of Proverbs tells us: "When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life" (31:10-13). Margaret's generous heart for others and her frequent prayer were contagious. She not only succeeded in reforming her husband, but her adopted countrymen took note as well.<sup>iii</sup>

"Margaret died in 1093, just four days after her husband and one of her sons were killed in battle. She was canonized in 1250 by Pope Innocent IV and named patron of Scotland in 1673."<sup>iv</sup>

By virtue of our baptism, each Christian belongs to the royal family of Jesus. We may not have a prominent position in society like Queen Margaret, but we are all equal in the eyes of our Lord. As such, we bear a special responsibility to bestow our bread on the hungry and offer comfort to the afflicted. Let us all follow the example of Saint Margaret of Scotland with a devout prayer life that the Lord may guide us and direct us in reaching out to others.

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<sup>i</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\_the\_Conqueror

<sup>ii</sup> franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-margaret-of-scotland

<sup>iii</sup> catholicnewsagency.com/news/beloved-queen-st.-margaret-of-scotland-honored-nov.-16

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.