

Reflection Monday Week 22 - Margaret Ward, Anne Line, Margaret Clitherow 2021

St Margaret Clitherow, née Middleton (1556 - 1586) was born in York and lived there all her life. Aged 15 she married a butcher, John Clitherow. Three years later she became a Catholic. Imprisoned for non-attendance at the Protestant church. She taught herself to read, and on her release ran a small school for her own and her neighbours' children. Her husband, who remained a Protestant, allowed her to hide priests in the house. In 1586 the secret hiding places were discovered and Margaret was put on trial. To be found guilty would have meant destitution for her children, so Margaret refused to plead: thus she could not be tried, and instead was crushed to death with a heavy stone, on 25th March 1586. Her daughter Anne was imprisoned for four years for refusing to attend a Church of England service, and finally became a nun at St Ursula's, Louvain. Her sons Henry and William became priests.

St Anne Line, née Heigham (1565? - 1601) was born in Dunmow, Essex. In her teens she became a Catholic and was disinherited by her family. In 1585 she married another disinherited convert, Roger Line. Her husband was imprisoned for his faith and then sent into exile, leaving her destitute. She taught and embroidered and also kept house for priests. To strengthen her resolve she took voluntary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. One day a large number of people were seen congregating at her house for Mass. She was arrested, tried, condemned to death, and hanged at Tyburn in London on 27th February 1601.

St Margaret Ward (- 1588) was born in Congdon, Cheshire, and became a servant of a family in London. She was arrested after helping a priest escape from prison, but even under severe torture she refused to reveal his hiding place or to renounce her faith. She was tried at the Old Bailey and executed on 30th August 1588.

Each of these three saints, like Jesus, fulfilled the words of the Prophet Isaiah quoted by Jesus in the Gospel:

*The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.*