

Reflection Wednesday Weeks 21 Sts Margaret Clitheroe, Anne Line & Margaret Ward 2023

St Margaret Clitheroe, née Middleton b.1556 in York and lived there all her life. Aged 15 she married a butcher, John Clitheroe, and three years later became a Catholic. Imprisoned for her 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, although he remained a Protestant himself, allowed her to hide priests in the house. In 1586 the secret hiding places were discovered and Margaret was put on trial. As the law then stood, to be found guilty would have meant destitution for her children, so she refused to plead: thus she could not be tried, and instead was crushed to death with a heavy stone, on 25th March 1586.

St Anne Line, née Heigham b.1565? in Dunmow, Essex. In her teens she became a Catholic and was disinherited by her family, and 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. 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 was born in Congdon, in Cheshire, and became a servant of a family in London. She was arrested after helping a priest to 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.

St Paul would have been very proud of our three saints today. They all welcomed the word of God into their lives and it became a power within them to hold true to the faith even to the cost of their lives. They stand proudly before us as models of the fact that the Church needs to recognise the invaluable richness that women bring to the body of the faithful and the need for them to be allowed to play a much more important and vital role in help shape the Church of the future.