

**Life**

St. Margaret was born in Metola Castle, Italy in 1287, her parents were nobles who hoped to have a strong and powerful son during pregnancy, but the baby girl born was dwarfed, blind, hunchbacked and lame. Her parents could not accept it and did not even give her a name. She was taken care of by a maid who took her to baptism and named her Margaret, which means pearl. Margaret's parents felt that her existence was a shame and deliberately wanted to hide her. From the age of six, she had been kept in a small secluded room next to the resident's chapel. She was only allowed to attend mass and the family chaplain taught her the Catechism. The room only had one door that leads to the chapel, and a window for delivery of necessities, her parents attempted to hide her existence from everyone except those within the castle.

After being walled up for more than ten years, her parents took her to Castello expecting a miraculous cure, and after it failed, they abandoned her on the street. Margaret never blamed her parents, and did not reveal their names to protect their reputation. The 20 year old Margaret who was handicapped from birth and abandoned by her parents did not blame God or anyone. People were moved by her faith and courage. The local beggars and poor people regarded her as one of them and let her live among them and fed her. Her devotion also moved a local nunnery which admitted her by breaking some normal regulations such as to admit only those with a normal physique. She strictly observed the rules of the convent but her fervour put the lax practice of the other nuns to shame. As a result, she was expelled from the community. The Third Order Dominican had a branch for laywomen; they broke the rule and allowed Margaret to join their community of married women or widows. She became totally devoted to God, visited the sick and prisoners, and taught children. Some patients whom she took care of were healed miraculously, and some stubborn prisoners also repented suddenly after she prayed. More and more miracles occurred, and everyone praised her virtues. Margaret died in 1320 at the age of 33. On the day of her death, the poor blocked the church requesting Margaret, the "saint" be buried in the Church. When the priest was arguing with them, a girl who could not walk touched Margaret's remains and was immediately healed, so Margaret was allowed to be buried in the church. St. Margaret of Castello was declared a saint in 2021. She is the patron saint of pro-life movements as well as the physically and mentally disabled.

**Reflection**

Each parent hopes that their children are born healthy and perfect and grow up to become useful people, but what is "perfect" and "useful"? Margaret was regarded by her parents as a useless monster who brought them shame, but our heavenly father who created everything chose her to work on many miracles. The Lord sent her to teach us the value of our lives. Everyone in the world, regardless of health, disabled physically or mentally, wonderfully promote His eternal plan. We are not qualified to label people. Let us appreciate the value of everyone. When we live with people with physical and mental disabilities, we need to learn from the poor and beggars in Castello and treat them with love and pay attention to their needs.

**Prayer**

Despite handicapped at birth and suffered from the abuse and abandonment of her parents, St. Margaret still maintained calmness, cheerfulness, and bravery and never complained or lost heart. She attended daily mass, prayed earnestly, and accepted her pain with faith. She was convinced that the Lord is beautiful and kind, did not ask why she had to suffer, and regarded it as the way to follow Christ. She once said, "Even Jesus was abandoned by his own people. God gave me a similar treatment so that I can follow Him closely. I do not deserve to be close to Him yet." Our trials surely cannot be compared to St. Margaret's, let us learn from her attitude, and through the power of prayer, offer our pains to follow Christ.

May we learn from St. Margaret to accept sufferings through the eyes of faith and follow Christ.  
We especially pray for people with physical and mental disorders.

St. Margaret of Castello, pray for us.