



PRIESTHOOD

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered. One cried out to the other: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!"

At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. "See," he said, "now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"

"Here I am," I said; "send me!"

- ISAIAH 6:1-8 ^[1]

VIDEO

FISHERS OF MEN



[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible>.





CLOSING

ST. MARGARET CLITHEROW (1556-1586) ^[5]

When Margaret Clitherow was a little girl, anti-Catholic legislation had already been going on in England for some time. King Henry VIII's decision to create a new Church of England separate from the Roman Catholic Church, in order to take a second wife, had led to a new era. His daughter by a second wife was now reigning, and the country's new official church was to be promoted at the expense of the Catholic religion.

In 1559 a fine for refusing to attend Church of England services was begun. Anyone attending Catholic mass would be fined 100 marks. Any priest saying Mass and any person arranging for a Mass to be offered could be executed.

This was the world Margaret Middleton grew up in. She was not born a Catholic. She was daughter of the Sheriff of York and married a butcher named John Clitherow when she was 15. She would have two sons and a daughter. She was an excellent housekeeper with good business sense and able to help her husband in his work. She was a good neighbor and well-liked in the town. Although her husband was not Catholic, he was sympathetic to Catholics because his brother was a priest. Sometime around her 18th or 19th year Margaret quietly converted to the Catholic faith. She began to hide priests in her home and arrange for Mass to be offered in secret. She would continue to teach her children Catholic Doctrine and keep the faith alive for her fellow townsmen for the next ten years.



Margaret Clitherow

Meanwhile, the situation for Catholics became more dangerous. The fine for refusing to attend Church of England services increased to 20 pounds, almost half of a wealthy man's annual income. Jesuit priests who had been traveling about to administer the sacraments were absolutely forbidden to enter the country. Some of the very priests Margaret hid in her home were later captured and executed.

Margaret herself was arrested in 1586, having been accused of hiding and aiding priests. In order to keep her children and servants safe from having to testify, she refused a trial.

Although she was probably pregnant, she was condemned to death by "pressing." She was tied down on the ground; a sharp stone was placed on her back and then a board which covered her entire body. This board was weighted with stones until she was crushed to death. In a death that took almost thirty minutes, she was heard to cry out for Christ's mercy.

Her children were left orphans—but they never held this against her. They were inspired by their mother. She had helped her entire town to have access to priests, confessions, and the Mass—at constant risk to her own life. In time, her daughter became a nun. Her two sons became priests, ready to carry on the work Margaret had died for.

[5] See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04059b.htm> for more information.



CLOSING *continued*

THE GAUCHO PRIEST (1840-1914)

The Catholic News Agency printed this article by Kerri Lenartowick about a parish priest beatified by Pope Francis in September 2013.

Vatican City, Sep 14, 2013 / 02:57 pm (CNA/EWTN News).

On the occasion the beatification of Fr. José Gabriel Brochero of Cordoba, Argentina, known to locals as the “cowboy priest,” Pope Francis praised him for his open heart.

“Brochero was a normal man, fragile, like any of us,” said Pope Francis. But his greatness came from the fact that, “he knew the love of Jesus. He let his heart be touched by the mercy of God.”



Born in 1840 and ordained to the priesthood at age 26, Fr. Brochero was known for traversing his mountainous parish by mule to bring the gospel and sacraments to the people of Cordoba.

Padre Brochero as a young priest

Pope Francis confirmed this image of the priest in his letter to Archbishop José María Arancedo, President of the Argentinian Bishop’s Conference, on the occasion of Fr. Brochero’s beatification.

The Pope said that for the people of his parish, receiving a visit from Fr. Brochero was like “a visit from Jesus to each family.”



Padre Brochero on his mule.

When visiting his parishioners, the Pope described how the priest would bring the image of the Virgin Mary and his Mass kit and prayer book.

While explaining the faith he would “speak in a way that everyone could understand because what he said about the faith and love that he had toward Jesus would come directly from his heart.”

His apostolic courage is an important witness for missionaries today, noted the Holy Father.

“Brochero did not stay in the parish offices: he would exhaust himself riding his mule and he ended up being sick with leprosy.”

He was faithful to the end, continuing to “pray and celebrate Mass even as a blind leper.”

He was well known for his aid to the sick and dying, particularly in the cholera epidemic of 1867 that devastated the city of Cordoba.

In late 1869, he was assigned to the parish of St. Albert, which extended over a region of 4,336 square kilometers.

The impoverished population of 10,000 who made up the parish had no roads or schools. Unable to be reached by the wider world, they were, according to Fr. Brochero, “abandoned by everyone but not by God.”

Early in his time at St. Albert, Fr. Brochero led a group of people over the dangerous Sierra Mountains to the city of Cordoba for a retreat of Spiritual Exercises with the Jesuits.

Although the journey was perilous due to intense snowstorms, it bore great spiritual fruit in the life of the people.



In addition to his people’s spiritual growth, the priest sought his flock’s social progress and worked to build local schools, construct paths for transportation, and even convinced the local authorities to provide postal and telegraph couriers.

Padre Brochero near the end of his life.

An 1887 article in a local Cordoba newspaper described him as an exceptional priest whose work was not limited to preaching.

“He practices the gospel. Are you missing a carpenter? He’s a carpenter. Are you missing a laborer? He’s a laborer. He rolls up his cassock wherever he is, takes the shovel or hoe and opens a public road in 15 days aided by his parishioners,” the article said.

Fr. Brochero died in 1914.