

- 1 Margaret Clitherow was a butcher's wife in York during the sad and tragic times of the 16th Century when people were persecuted - some for being Catholic, and some for being Protestant.
- 2 In Margaret's time, an Act of Parliament had made it high treason to be a Catholic or encourage others to be Catholic. Yet Margaret kept a Catholic teacher for her own children and those of a few neighbours. She had a priest's hiding-place in her house, ready to conceal a visiting Catholic priest if her house was about to be searched.
- 3 One day, the house **was** searched, and candles and vestments used for Mass were discovered. Margaret was taken to Court and charged with treason. Standing before the Judge, she refused to plead "guilty" or "not guilty" to the charge of treason. By not pleading, she wanted to spare her children and servants and neighbours from having to give evidence. At the same time, she did not want to trouble the consciences of members of a jury.
- 4 The crime of sheltering or helping a priest was punishable by hanging, but Margaret knew that she faced a worse penalty if she did not plead in court. She was to be lain on the floor and have weights placed onto a door that would lie on top of her. A sharp stone was placed under her back and, on 25th March 1586, Mrs Margaret Clitherow was crushed to death in York, after she had prayed for Queen Elizabeth I.
- 5 Margaret Clitherow was one of the 40 Martyrs of England and Wales to be canonised - made "saints" - on this day in 1970.
- 6 In that century - the 1500s - there were also Protestant martyrs. 31 years before Margaret Clitherow's death, two Protestant bishops were burned at the stake in

Oxford whilst the Catholic Mary was Queen. Bishop Hugh Latimer spoke to Bishop Nicholas Ridley as the flames were about to be lit:

*"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley,
and play the man.
We shall this day light such a candle
by God's grace, in England,
as I trust shall never be put out."*

7 *Let us pray:*

**Jesus, light of the world,
lead us to be
tolerant and understanding of others,
looking for what unites people
rather than
what might divide and separate.
Inspire us always
to discover the best in one another
and work together
to build up your kingdom
in our world today. Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org