



ORDO PRÆDICATORUM  
CURIA GENERALITIA

Rome, 24 April 2021

*Prot. 74/18/547 Margherita di Citta di Castello*

*Even if my father and mother forsake me,  
the Lord will take me in.*

Psalm 27:10

**To all Provincials and Vice Provincials,  
To All Members of the Dominican Family**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With gratitude to God, the *Giver of all good things*, I am pleased to announce the imminent canonization (*equipollent canonization*) of our sister **MARGARET OF CITTÀ DI CASTELLO (MARGHERITA DELLA METOLA - 1287-1320)**.

The life story of the newest saint of the Dominican Family is both *heart-rending* and *heartwarming*: she was born blind, had a deformed spine, one malformed arm, one leg shorter than the other, kept hidden from prying eyes throughout her childhood, and later abandoned by her parents. She was adopted by a devout and loving family and became a Dominican tertiary (*mantellata*). Though she seemed in need of corporal works of mercy due to her physical condition, Blessed Margaret did inspiring corporal works of mercy: she nursed the sick, consoled the dying and visited prisoners. She was like that poor widow in the parable who gave generously even if she had almost nothing (Luke 21:1-4). Blessed Margaret was blind but she *saw* the goodness in people; she was born with structural leg length discrepancy, but she *walked with grace*, because she knew that she was walking humbly in God's presence. Blessed Margaret loved with a magnanimous heart even if she was unloved as a child. Truly, she was a "wounded healer", a person with disability who enabled people to become better, a rejected one who welcomed the dejected; indeed, she was a beautiful image of God's transforming love.

The veneration of Blessed Margaret as a holy woman of God was confined within Italy and the Dominican Order until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to the members of the Dominican family who promoted her example of holiness, she became known and venerated not only in Umbria and the Marches in Italy but also in the United States of America and the Philippines.

At the request of the Order, lay faithful and religious men and women from all over the world, and of cardinals and bishops, Pope Francis has approved the *equipollent* canonization of Blessed Margaret on 24 April 2021. I am grateful to the Postulation of the Order, which, from the time of fr. Innocenzo Venchi OP to fr. Gianni Festa OP, has worked with great dedication and diligence for the elevation of our beautiful and blessed sister Margaret to sainthood.

Some of you might wonder – we have already so many saints, and our liturgical calendar is almost full of feasts and memorials, why do we continue to promote causes for sainthood? We do so because, as fr. Gianni never tires reminding us, “the holiness of these brothers and sisters is a visible sign of the vitality and relevance of the Order!” The canonization of Margaret of Castello represents for all of us a renewed confirmation that *Dominican life*, in all its fullness and richness, is truly a *path to holiness*.

Thus, I ask the Prior Provincials and Superiors of the Dominican Family to circulate this letter, together with the accompanying brief biography of the new saint, to your respective communities, especially in the houses of formation. In particular, I encourage you to join us in prayer, on a date to be announced later, when, in Città di Castello, the official ceremony for the inscription of Blessed Margaret in the book of Saints will take place within the Eucharistic celebration, which will be presided over by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

May St. Margaret of Città di Castello intercede before the Lord for the whole Dominican Family.

  
fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, OP  
Master of the Order



## Biographical profile

Margaret was born around 1287 in the castle of Metola, in Massa Trabaria (on the border between Umbria and Marche), not far from Mercatello del Metauro, in the territories of the Church. Her father Parisio was the lord of the castle and was called 'cattano' (captain), a title that had already belonged to his ancestors; her mother's name was Emilia. But the child was born blind and deformed, and her noble and rich parents could not bear a disgrace that offended the family's pride. So the father locked up his daughter in a cell next to the castle church so that the "shame" would remain hidden from the eyes of the world. The little girl accepted this decision without rebellion and kept her serenity intact. She spent her early childhood in solitude, devoting herself to prayer and contemplation, in communion with God, in profound quietness and peace of mind.

After a short stay in a castle on the Metauro river, which had become necessary due to military upheavals in the region, her parents took her to Città di Castello, to the tomb of James (†1292), a lay Franciscan monk who had died recently in a state of sanctity. They hoped that he would be able to heal their daughter, but the long-awaited miracle did not happen. Having failed in this extreme attempt", the fourteenth-century biographer recounts, "they abandoned her in Castello, 'without pity, alone, without providing for her, deprived of all human help'.

For some time the helpless girl led a stray life, begging for bread, then found refuge in the small town monastery of St Margaret. But this was only a brief interlude, because her conduct of life, the very strict asceticism she observed and her admonitions aroused the envy of the nuns. Unable to compare with her unrivalled example, the nuns banished her from there as well, with many insults and offenses. After this umpteenth betrayal, Margaret was finally taken in by a deeply pious married couple, Venturino and Grigia, who reserved a small room for her in the upper part of their home, so that she could freely devote herself to prayer and contemplation. Their generosity was to be rewarded by Margaret, who placed her exceptional charisms at the service of her adoptive parents and their circle of relatives and friends. She devoted herself to the formation and Christian education of the children of her benefactors, was a gentle and authoritative guide for many people who turned to her for advice and comfort, and on more than one occasion protected her friends from grave dangers. She also cared for the poor and wretched of the city. Despite being blind and crippled, she managed to be a compassionate sister to all the unfortunate.

In Grigia and Venturino's house the girl spent the rest of her short and simple life, dividing her time between prayer, contemplative life and active charity. She always fasted, hardly ever slept, and when she did doze off she lay on the floor and never on the bed. By sharing in the sufferings of Jesus, Margaret felt bound to her heavenly Bridegroom, identified with him, and this life of union gave her ineffable security and joy. After putting on the habit of penance of the Preaching Friars, she went daily to their church, where she made her daily confession and participated with great devotion in the Eucharistic celebration. Often, she had wonderful raptures during the Mass.

When her illness worsened, she summoned the friars to receive the ecclesiastical sacraments, gave thanks to God and died in perfect serenity of spirit on 13 April 1320: Margaret was 33 years old.

see: <https://www.op.org/st-margaret-of-citta-di-castello/>