

Scottish Saints

Saint Margaret

Saint Margaret of Scotland, also known as Margaret of Wessex, was an English princess of the House of Wessex. Margaret was sometimes called 'The Pearl of Scotland'. Born in exile in Hungary in 1045, she was raised in the Hungarian court, for she was from the line of nobility. When she was 12, she was sent to the English court of Edward the Confessor (known as 'the Confessor' because of his deep piety) and further educated.

When the Normans conquered England, Margaret, her mother, her brother, and her sister tried to return to Hungary. Their ship was blown off course and landed in Scotland. They were welcomed by King Malcolm III, who fell in love with the beautiful and gentle Margaret. They were married in 1070. Although Malcolm was a good man, he was more of a soldier than an academic or gentleman. But Margaret helped him to become an honourable and gracious leader. They had eight children; all of them grew to love those who were poor and to care for those less fortunate, as their parents had. Margaret's youngest child, David, later became Saint David I of Scotland.



Saint Margaret of Scotland

Margaret was prayerful. She gathered women together to study the scriptures and to embroider robes and altar cloths. She was always surrounded by beggars, and she gave them money and clothes. She helped ransom the English who had been captured, and she set up homes and hospitals for those in need. She and her husband would go to church during Lent and Advent. On the way home, they would wash the feet of poor people in need and give them money. At home, Margaret fed nine orphans who were brought to her daily. She brought a love of the arts and education to the people, and they loved her in return. Her children are believed to be largely responsible for two centuries of progress and peace in Scotland.

Margaret died four days after her husband's death in 1093. In 1250, she was canonized (made a saint) by Pope Innocent IV and later declared patroness of Scotland. Her remains were reinterred in a shrine at Dunfermline Abbey. Her relics were dispersed after the Scottish Reformation and subsequently lost.