

Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice.” But what is it that Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls, says to us, his sheep? St. Augustine certainly desired to hear the voice of our Lord; more specifically, he wanted to hear these words: “I am your salvation!” He writes,



“Poor creature that I am, tell me, in Your mercy, Lord my God, tell me what You are to me? Say to my soul: ‘I am your salvation!’ Say it so that I shall hear it. The ear of my heart is turned toward You. Open it, O Lord, and say to my soul: ‘I am your salvation!’ I shall follow Your voice and adhere to You.” (St. Augustine)

In today’s second reading, John has a vision of heaven which eternally etched upon his heart the meaning of the phrase, “I am your salvation!” He sees a great crowd in white robes gathered around the throne. An Elder in his vision explains to him:

“these are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It was this that brought them before God’s throne; day and night they minister to him in his temple; he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. Never again shall they know hunger or thirst. Nor shall the sun or its heat beat down on them, for the Lamb on the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (cf. Rev 7:9-17).

This vision was given to John in a period of great trial for himself and all Christians. Yes, we all have periods of great trial and yet if we can only remain faithful to our Lord and persevere in faith what unspeakable joy and consolation awaits us!! God Himself will be our shelter/shepherd—this means perfect security, peace and well-being; Never again will we hunger or thirst, every tear will be lovingly wiped from our eyes—the desires of our heart will be fully and completely satisfied and our tears will be turned to joy; we will be led to springs of life-giving water—our life will be sustained and forever rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit: Perfect, Infinite, Love! This is the beauty and glory that awaits every soul who hears with conviction the strong voice of God, “I am your salvation!”

Yet, we know, many souls will not remain faithful to the Good Shepherd’s voice in their time of trial and temptation and never receive the glory God intended for them. How sad! According to Jesus, there is only one sin which cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the life to come: the sin against the Holy Spirit. What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? It is the refusal to turn away from sin and seek God’s mercy and forgiveness. When, by the Holy Spirit, the Lord convicts us of sin and we refuse to exulting ourselves—our ideas and revealed Truth, then we place Himself—we sin against the Holy which cannot be forgiven is the sin for for which we do not ask forgiveness. and obey! And if ever we fall, may we confident that He will forgive us if we may be among those who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” St. Claude de la Colombiere encourages us with this consoling thought: “no fall [sin], however shameful and guilty it be, should make the sinner despair of pardon. I have grievously offended thee, O my loving Lord, but it would be worse if I insulted thee by despairing of my pardon....If I had fallen a hundred times, and my sins were a hundred times worse than they are, I would still hope in thee.”

*My sheep hear my voice,
and I know them,
and they follow me.*
John 10:27

follow His voice, but persevere in pleasures—in defiance of His ourselves in opposition to God Spirit. In other words, the only sin which we have no contrition, the sin So, may God help us to hear His voice be quick to seek pardon of God only we humbly ask for mercy. Then

And so we sincerely pray with St. Augustine: “Poor creature that I am, tell me, in Your mercy, Lord my God, tell me what You are to me? Say to my soul: ‘I am your salvation!’ Say it so that I shall hear it. The ear of my heart is turned toward You. Open it, O Lord, and say to my soul: ‘I am your salvation!’ I shall follow Your voice and adhere to You.”

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



Saint Margaret of Cortona

Feast Day: February 22 and May 16

Born: 1247

Died: February 22, 1297

Patron: reformed prostitutes; single mothers, and the mentally ill

Canonized: May 16, 1728 by Pope Benedict XIII

Margaret was born of farming parents in Laviano, Tuscany. As soon as Margaret could speak, her mother taught her to pronounce the sweet names of Jesus and Mary and to love Jesus crucified. Margaret became so fond of the crucifix that she would often hold it in her infant hands and cover it with kisses. Her mother died when Margaret was seven. Her father remarried and life with her stepmother was very difficult. Margaret grew into a beautiful girl and at age 16 a young nobleman named Arsenio was smitten with her beauty and charms and told her of his love for her. He asked her to share his palace in southern Tuscany with him. Margaret, unhappy at home, yielded to the persuasions of the young nobleman and abandoned her poor cottage for a grand house and splendid attire. Though they were not married, she lived with Arsenio for nine years and bore him a son. In those years, she had doubts about her situation.

Somewhat like Saint Augustine, she prayed for purity. This period of moral ambiguity ended abruptly when one day she was waiting for Arsenio to come home and instead was met by his dog. The animal led Margaret into the forest where she found Arsenio murdered. This crime shocked Margaret into a life of penance. She and her son returned to Laviano, where she was not well received by her stepmother. They then went to Cortona, where her son eventually became a friar.

Haunted by guilt, Margaret publicly repented. Her initial zeal for atonement manifested in extreme acts: she attempted to disfigure her face with a razor and practiced severe fasting, earning the description of “holy anorexia.” Under the guidance of Franciscan confessors, including Fra Giunta, she channeled this fervor into structured devotion. After three years of probation, she joined the Third Order of St Francis at the age of 30 becoming a model of lay Franciscan spirituality.

Margaret’s spiritual journey progressed from penance to mystical union with Christ. She reported divine dialogues, including hearing Christ address her as “poverelle” (little poor one), which inspired her charitable works. At age 39 she founded a hospital for the sick and the poor. She also established the Poverelle (Little Poor Ones), a congregation of Franciscan tertiaries dedicated to nursing and social service. Despite facing slander due to her past, she became a renowned spiritual advisor, drawing penitents from across Europe.

Margaret’s synthesis of contemplative prayer and active charity created a blueprint for social justice rooted in spiritual discipline. The hospital she founded remained operational for centuries, while her emphasis on Eucharistic devotion and Christ’s passion inspired later mystics. As Cortona’s (in the Tuscany region of Italy) patron saint, she embodies the medieval ideal of civic sanctity, proving that even the most fractured lives can become vessels of grace through repentance and service.

Reflection: Seeking forgiveness is sometimes difficult work. It is made easier by meeting people who, without trivializing our sins, assure us that God rejoices over our repentance. Being forgiven lifts a weight and prompts us to acts of charity.