



Christ Church

UNLOCKING CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL: FAMILY/SCHOOL RESOURCES

A VIRTUAL VISIT ONLINE

Stained Glass Window- St Margaret of Antioch



Introduction:

This Medieval stained glass window shows Saint Margaret of Antioch. It is located in the Latin Chapel of the Cathedral. It is on one side of a window showing St Frideswide. On the other side of our local patron saint is Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

A Christian saint is a person of faith, who has lived their life 'in the light', teaching and preaching the Gospel, caring for the poor and sick, and trying to follow Jesus' own example and teachings.

Apparently, Saint Frideswide's favourite saints were Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine. Both these women had lived several hundred years before Frideswide and both had decided not to marry, so they could be free to serve God.

In paintings and stained-glass windows, she is usually pictured escaping from, or standing above, a dragon. Here, in the Christ Church window, the fierce beast has a red wing and sharp teeth. Because nobody had never seen a real dragon, the artist was free to be very imaginative!

Background:

Margaret was born in Antioch, in what was Syria but is today's Turkey. She was the daughter of a pagan priest named Aedesius. Sadly, her mother died soon after her birth, but Margaret was nursed by a Christian woman who taught her about Jesus. Having chosen to become a Christian, Margaret was disowned by her father. Fortunately, she was adopted by her nurse and they lived in the country keeping sheep.

In 304, Olybrius, a Roman Governor asked her to marry him, but demanded that she abandon her Christian beliefs. She refused so he had her tortured and then beheaded.

Several remarkable stories became connected with her. In one story, she was supposed to have been swallowed by the devil who had taken the shape of a dragon. She escaped alive because the cross she carried irritated the dragon's insides!

Margaret is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers (Saints Acacius, Barbara, Blaise, Christopher, Cyriacus, Catherine of Alexandria, Denis, Erasmus of Formiae, Eustace, George, Giles, Margaret of Antioch, Pantaleon, and Vitus) and is one of the saints Joan of Arc claimed to have heard speaking to her.

During the Middle ages, Margaret was among the most popular saints, especially with the knights of the Crusades. More than 250 churches are dedicated to her in England, including, St. Margaret's, Westminster, which is the parish church of the Houses of Parliament in London.

In Oxford, Saint Frideswide named both her little church and her holy well at Binsey after St Margaret.



St Margaret's Church and holy well, Binsey, Oxford. Both of these places are associated with saint Frideswide who is supposed to have hidden in the woods at Binsey.

Margaret's Roman Catholic and Anglican feast day is 17 July.

Things to do at home- a few ideas

- Dragons are known as **mythical creatures**. Which other mythical creatures can you discover?
- Look up the **Welsh national flag**. How is the Welsh dragon on it similar to the stained glass window dragon, and how is it different?



- Find out more about **St Margaret's Church, Westminster**. Where is it? What does it look like? What has its role been in history?
- Who was **Joan of Arc** and why was she famous? Find some pictures of her. How old was she when she went into battle? How old was she when she died?
- There are some animals still alive today called dragons. Look up the **Komodo dragon** and other dragon-like animals on this BBC website (their Latin names are in brackets):
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20150426-ten-amazing-real-life-dragons>
 1. *Komodo dragon (Varanus komodoensis)* ...
 2. *Dragonsnake (Xenodermus javanicus)* ...
 3. *Bearded dragons (Pogona sp.)* ...
 4. *Shocking pink dragon millipede (Desmoxetes purpurosea)* ...
 5. *Giant petaltail dragonfly (Petalura ingentissima)* ...
 6. *Dragonets (Callionymidae)* ...
 7. *Black dragonfish (Idiacanthus atlanticus)* ...
 8. *Blue dragon nudibranch (Glaucus atlanticus)*
- Discover some **paintings of dragons** by artists through the centuries. Copy your favourite dragon and then design your own. Try making a 3D model of it using salt dough, clay or plasticine. You might like to cover your model with papier-mâché so you can paint it.

Here is a recipe to make papier-mâché:

You need an old newspaper, 2 cups of plain flour and 2 cups of warm water. Cover your table with another newspaper or a plastic sheet. This can get messy!

First of all, tear or cut strips or little squares from the newspaper.

Next, stir together the flour and warm water in a large mixing bowl. Add cold water a little at a time to make a smooth, batter-like paste. Stir well and avoid lumps.

Dip the paper strips in the paste, wipe off the excess on the side of the bowl and stick onto your model of a dragon. Smooth down the paper, removing air bubbles or excess paste. Add layer upon layer then leave to dry before painting it.

- Discover more about ancient **Antioch**, which was part of the Roman empire. Tradition says that the first Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian church was founded in **Antioch** (**Acts** 11:20-21). It is also said that it was at Antioch that the disciples of Jesus Christ were first called Christians (**Acts** 11:26).
- It was from Antioch that **St. Paul** started on his missionary journeys. Find out more about this unlikely missionary and where he travelled.
- Next, find out about modern **Turkey**. What is the capital city? Where is it? Which countries are its neighbours? What does it produce? Can you discover anything about their typical foods or customs?