

• THE STORY OF SAINT MARGARET AND THE SPREAD OF HER CULT



Margaret was born in 275 AD in Antioch of Pisidia, in present-day Turkey. She was orphaned at an early age, and her father Edesimus, a pagan priest, entrusted her to the care of a nurse, who secretly baptised and educated Margaret in accordance with the Christian faith she had embraced. When the time came for Margaret to be given in marriage, she was rejected by her father because of her declared Christian faith. One day, while the young woman was tending her sheep, she met the prefect of Rome, Olibrio, who, struck by her beauty, had her captured. Margaret's refusal of the prefect's advances and her profession of Christianity led Olibrio to subject her to all sorts of torture, culminating in her martyrdom on 20 July 290.

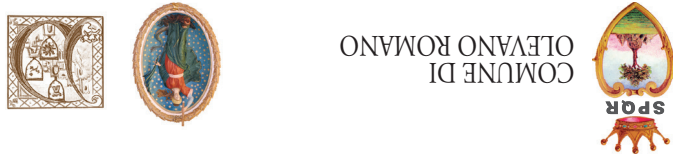
According to tradition, the cult of St. Margaret was brought to Olevano by three women from the Olibria family: Demetriade, Proba and Giulia. St. Margaret was elected patron saint of Olevano and her feast day is celebrated on 20 July.

• THE BUST OF THE SAINT

The silver reliquary bust from 1716, solemnly displayed on the feast day of St. Margaret, contains a bone from the saint's head. An older bust, from 1695, contains a bone from her arm, taken from the martyr's relics kept in Montefiascone. The more recent reliquary is linked to a legend, according to which, when the French arrived in Olevano during the invasion of the Papal States, they plundered all the treasures of the church, taking away the bust itself, which, when being taken away from the town, turned its head in the direction of Olevano. The bust was returned and still appears today with its head slightly turned.



*Santa Margherita*  
a pearl in the village



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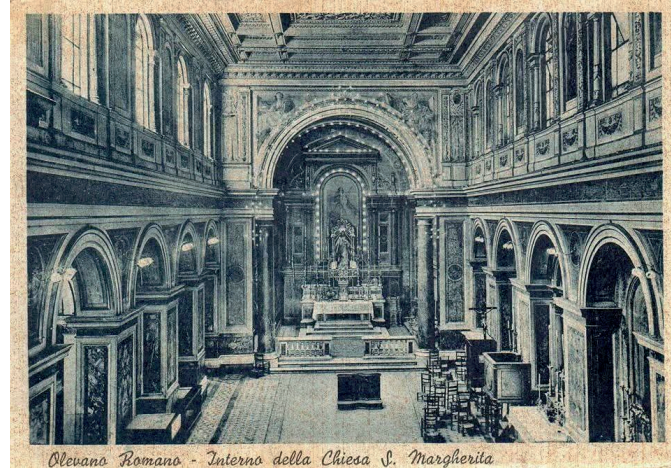
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• THE CHURCH



The parish church of St. Margaret has a simple but striking façade, which is crowned by the bell tower. It was built on top of a pre-existing early Christian church of more ancient origins, whose entrance was presumably located in what is now Via Pio Cassetta, an alley that can be identified from the outside. Nothing is known about its actual date of foundation or its initial layout: the oldest document that mentions this temple, which has always been dedicated to the saint of Antioch, is the codex of the Statuta Olibani of 1364. Between 1570 and 1573, Otto Truchsess von Waldburg, bishop of Preneste, elected it as a collegiate church. Between 1575 and 1580, the presbytery was built, converted from a previous ancient chapel where the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament officiated. During the pastoral visit of 1575, work was already underway to open a large arch to annex the part dedicated to the clergy to the nave. The work was commissioned by the community of Olevano, which made use of both the donations of



Pompeo, Marzio and Orinzia Colonna and the meagre income and assets of the church, which were sold to finance the work, with the approval of the then Bishop of Preneste, Marcantonio Colonna, which involved the enlargement and enrichment of the Collegiate Church. In 1602, the new church was completed: it consisted of the high altar dedicated to St. Margaret and two side altars, one on the east side, dedicated to St. Francis, built by Nicola Piselli, and one on the west side, first dedicated to the Presentation and then to St. Lucy, built by Don Angelo Gianfranceschi. It had a single nave with seven small chapels and as many altars made by several families from Olevano and one, dedicated to St. Peter, by the Chapter of St. Margaret. In 1723, construction began on the choir loft, which was inaugurated on 19 July 1724 along with other works in the apse of the church, carried out by the Chapter of St. Margaret. In 1879, the bell tower and façade were damaged by lightning. A complete renovation of the church was begun under the supervision of Archpriest Monsignor Leopoldo Bonuglia, who had the old Christian building demolished and rebuilt by Costantino Sneider, architect of the Sacred Apostolic Palaces. The façade was completed in 1914. The new church

had a central nave and a small side aisle, ending with the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament, which corresponds to the current layout.



• THE FLOOR

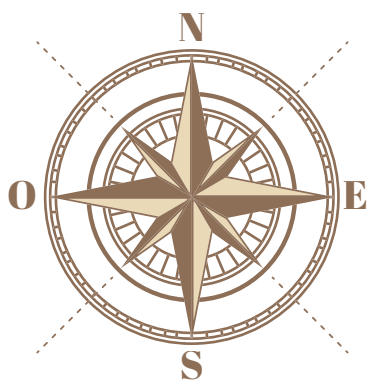
For a long time, the church also served as a cemetery, as was customary in parish churches, until 1818, when Cardinal Consalvi, Secretary of State to Pius VII, reiterated the ban on burying corpses in places of worship within the town. On that occasion, since the church was almost completely excavated for the exhumation of the bodies, new flooring was laid, of which unfortunately only a small trace remains today under the last altar of the side aisle.



• THE ORGAN

The ancient instrument is located above the choir loft of the church and dates back to the first half of the 17th century. It is an Italian-style mechanical organ with a single manual and a chromatic pedalboard of one octave. The façade pipes, arranged in a pyramid shape, are made of tin, including three twisted pipes; inside there are about 400 pipes made of lead and wood. Over the centuries, the organ has undergone several modifications and restorations, which have involved the removal of some rows of pipes and have partially altered its original appearance.





Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, trapezoidal in shape, frescoed and surmounted by a small dome



Mosaic depicting the coat of arms of Cardinal Camillo Mazzella. The latter was responsible for contacting Silvio Galimberti to decorate the chapel, who in those same years was demonstrating his artistic talent in various Roman churches



Altar of Our Lady of the Rosary



Niche where the statue of the Immaculate Conception is kept, below which there is a small glass case containing a wax statue of the young St. Agnes



Altar of St. Rita, whose canvas was created by German artist Sofie Fohn and donated by lawyer Giuseppe Sales in 1936



Recently constructed altar



17th-century wooden tabernacle



Painting of the Most Holy Annunciation



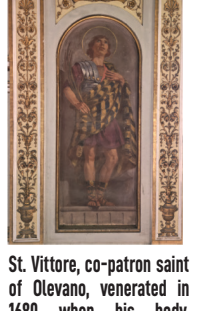
St. Lucia



St. Placido, co-patron saint of Olevano, son of Tertullo



St. Filomena



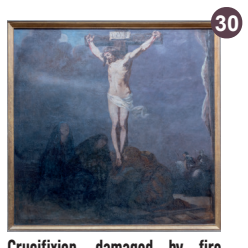
St. Vittore, co-patron saint of Olevano, venerated in 1680 when his body, extracted from the catacombs of St. Callisto in Rome, was donated to the archpriest of Olevano, Don Lattanzio Rocchi



Statue of the Pietà used in ancient processions



Last Supper, by Galimberti



Crucifixion, damaged by fire, which irreparably compromised the figures at the base of the Cross



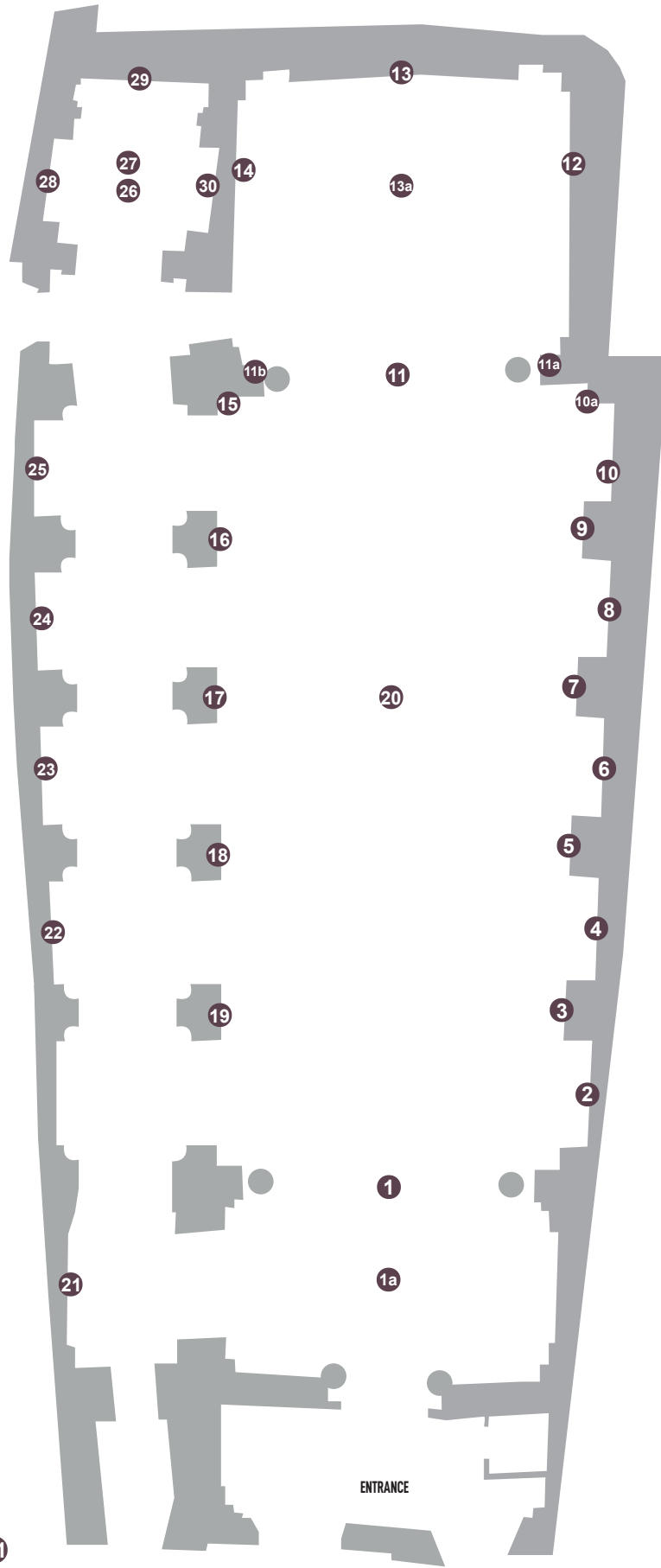
Meeting of the young Margaret with the prefect of Rome Olibrio and her capture (fresco by Silvio Galimberti)



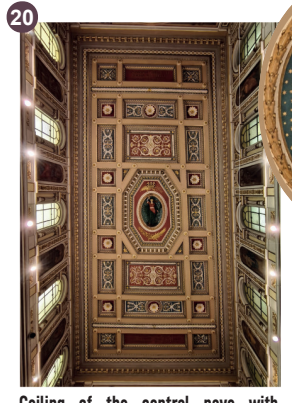
Glory of St. Margaret and her entry into paradise



Beheading of the saint in the presence of her father Edesimo and Olibrio (fresco by Silvio Galimberti)



Dome of the altar depicting the three theological virtues and a fourth figure of uncertain identification



Ceiling of the central nave with coffered panels and gilded friezes



Detail of the medallion depicting St. Margaret



North triumphal arch: St. John and St. Mark



Statue of St. Margaret, in papier-mâché



Altar of St. Anne and St. Joachim with the infant Mary



Altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, built in 1776 in memory of the grace granted to the people of Olevano, who were struck by a terrible epidemic, as attested by the municipal resolution of 8 April of the same year



Altar of Our Lady of Lourdes



Altar discovered during the restoration of the columns, on which it is possible to read a passage from the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:10), "Mulierem fortem quis inveniet?" (Who can find a strong woman?)



St. Agapitus, patron saint of the diocese of Palestrina



St. Cecilia



St. Francis of Assisi



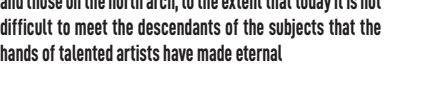
St. Agatha



Altar discovered during the restoration of the columns, on which it is possible to read a passage from the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:10), "Mulierem fortem quis inveniet?" (Who can find a strong woman?)



Organ located above the choir loft of the church and dating back to the first half of the 17th century



South triumphal arch: St. Luke and St. Matthew. The inhabitants of Olevano posed as models for these paintings and those on the north arch, to the extent that today it is not difficult to meet the descendants of the subjects that the hands of talented artists have made eternal