



St. Elizabeth of Hungary (O.F.S.)

[1207 – November 17, 1231

(Feast Day: November 17)

The Earthly Life of Elizabeth of Hungary

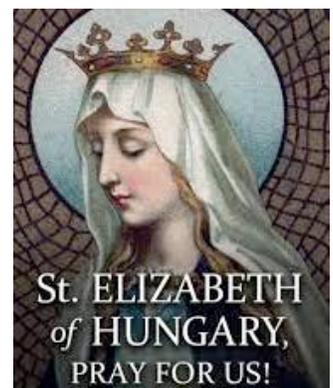
Elizabeth was born in the year 1207, the daughter of King Andrew II. At the young age of 14, she married Louis the Landgrave of Thuringia who became a king. Elizabeth was very kind and loving to her husband and their children, but she became a saint because of her care of the poor and the sick.

Elizabeth freely chose a life of penance and self-sacrifice when a life of leisure and luxury could easily have been hers. This choice made her the object of ridicule of other royalty, but endeared her in the hearts of the common people throughout her husband's kingdom. Under the spiritual direction of a wise Franciscan priest, she led a life of prayer, sacrifice and service of the poor and sick. Seeking to become one with the poor, she wore simple clothing instead of her royal robes. Daily she would take bread to hundreds of the poorest in the land who would come to her gate. She frequently visited the sick in the hospitals she had established and would wash and dress the wounds of lepers with her own hands. She saw Christ in everyone.

After six years of marriage, Elizabeth's husband King Louis (not Louis IX, the other Patron of the Secular Franciscan Order and the Third Order Regular) died unexpectedly. Political enemies of her husband exiled her and her children. As a widow, she continued to care for the poor and to build hospitals to care for the sick. She also became a Franciscan Penitent, a member of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, now known as the **Secular Franciscan Order** (O.F.S.).

The Birth to Eternal Life of Elizabeth of Hungary

In 1232 Conrad of Marburg, Elizabeth's confessor and spiritual director, wrote the following in a letter to the Pope: "Before her death I heard her confession. When I asked what should be done about her goods and possessions, she replied that anything which seemed to be hers belonged to the poor. She asked me to distribute everything except one worn out dress in which she wished to be buried. When all this had been decided, she received the Body of our Lord. Afterward, until vespers, she spoke often of the holiest things she had heard in sermons. Then, she devoutly commended to God all who were sitting near her, and as if falling into a gentle sleep, she died."



When she died on November 17, 1231 at the young age of 24, she had given all she had to those in need in the name of Christ. The Pope officially canonized her a Saint just four years after her death. Subsequent Popes have praised her virtue and declared her to be the heavenly patroness of widows and widowers, hospitals, nurses and caregivers, Catholic Charities, and the Franciscan Third Orders which today are known as the Third Order Regular (T.O.R.) and the Secular Franciscan Order (O.F.S.).