

### Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

Elizabeth's life was short and tragic, but full of miraculous deeds. The daughter of a Hungarian king, Elizabeth was betrothed to German nobleman Ludwig of Thuringia at a very young age, and sent to live at the Thuringian court to learn its ways and become better acquainted with her fiancé. She was a very pious young woman, and her in-laws mercilessly ridiculed her plain dress and constant prayer vigils, though her husband-to-be was impressed with her faith. Elizabeth and Ludwig were married in 1221 when she was 14, and for a time, they were happy. They had three children, Ludwig became a ruler of Thuringia, and Elizabeth used her royal position to advance her charitable interests. An encounter with a group of Franciscan friars in 1223 deeply affected her, so deeply that she immediately declared that she wanted her life to mirror Francis' in every way. She distributed bread to the poor every day in person, personally tended the sick and victims of natural disasters, and even gave away valuables from the royal treasury. Her husband, while loving and supportive, was not always on board with his wife's saintly zeal. Once, annoyed with her long hours spent giving bread to the poor, he stopped her as she was going out and demanded she hand over all the food she had under her cloak. When she threw open the cloak, Ludwig saw no loaves of bread, but a vision of sweet-smelling and blindingly radiant flowers. He immediately repented and let her pass. Another time, Elizabeth tended a leper in the same bed she shared with Ludwig, and again annoyed, he tried to strip the contaminated sheets, but was stopped when the leper before him was transfigured into Christ crucified. In 1227, Elizabeth was devastated when her beloved husband died of a fever. Grief stricken, she declared that if Ludwig was dead, the whole world was dead to her too, and she lived out the rest of her life as a Third Order Franciscan despite pressure from the royal family, tending the poor and sick until her death at the age of 24.