

Saint Casimir

SAINT OF THE DAY

04_03_2020



Saint Prince Casimir, patron saint of Lithuania and Poland, lived for barely over 25 years, but they were enough for him to earn the love of his people, who called him “defender of the poor” and noted his Christian virtues on a daily basis. Third of the 13 children of Casimir IV, King of Poland, and Elizabeth of Habsburg, Saint Casimir (1458-1484) was born in the royal palace of Krakow and at the age of nine was entrusted to the education of Jan Dlugosz, a Polish priest and historian, who distinguished himself by his piousness and loyalty to his country. By Dlugosz and another teacher, the Italian Filippo

Buonaccorsi (also known as Callimachus), the boy, already inspired by ardent piety, was also taught the art of governing.

When he was around 13 years old, several Hungarian nobles, unhappy with the reign of Matthias Corvinus, offered the crown of Hungary to Casimir, who was placed by his father at the head of an army. It was a time when those lands were continually threatened by the Turks, who in 1444 had prevailed over the Christians at the Battle of Varna, during which Casimir's uncle, Ladislaus III, King of Poland and Hungary, had died. The young prince, who envisioned in that crown the potential to defend Christian Europe, initially accepted the proposal of the Hungarian nobles and left with his expedition. But he soon decided to return to Poland for reasons of prudence (his troops were numerically inferior), perhaps even before learning of the invitation to desist from Pope Sixtus IV, who in the meantime had launched an appeal to his father. Since then Casimir was no longer involved in campaigns of conquest and was directed to deal with the internal politics of the kingdom.

He promptly reported to his father the needs of orphans, widows and others in need, donated his belongings to them and defended them in cases of injustice. His concern for the disadvantaged did not just occur suddenly. He spent much of his time in church, participating fervently in the liturgy and immersing himself in prayer, so much so that he sometimes forgot to eat. He often knelt at night in front of closed church doors, regardless of the inclemency of the weather.

In 1479, when the king moved to Lithuania for five years, Casimir assumed the regency of Poland, always ruling with great wisdom and showing how his faith, which he valued above all things, was truly embodied in his way of conducting politics. So, when his father asked him to marry the daughter of Emperor Frederick III because the marriage would consolidate the kingdom, the saint refused: he could not and would not, because he had consecrated his virginity to God. Between fasting and prayers, he lived in chastity until the last of his earthly days and that is why he is often depicted with a lily and is particularly invoked against carnal temptations. He died of tuberculosis on 4 March 1484. Because of his filial devotion to Our Lady, a copy of his favourite Marian hymn was placed in his coffin: *Omni die dic Mariae mea laudes anima*, "every day my soul sings the praises of Mary".

Patron of: Lithuania, Poland, young people