

St Elizabeth of Hungary

Elizabeth was born to King Andrew II and Queen Gertrude of Hungary. Her aunt on her mother's side was Saint Hedwig, Duchess of Silesia. As was the common practice at that time for nobility, marriages were arranged at an early age to secure alliances between powerful ruling families. When Elizabeth was only four, knights



arrived to take her to Thuringia, about five hundred miles away, where she was brought up in the court of Hermann I, Landgrave (ruler) of Thuringia. Her upbringing was alongside Hermann I's eleven-year-old son, Louis IV, to whom Elizabeth was betrothed in marriage, which took place ten years later. Elizabeth's mother was from the powerful House of Andechs and had similarly married King Andrew for political reasons. From the very beginning, Elizabeth did not fit in with the courtly life. She was sensitive to the poor, sought virtue, and preferred simplicity, which made her an object of gossip and slander among the more "refined" members of the court. In Louis, however, she found a strong support. He admired her virtues and goodness and dismissed any criticism that came to his ears, defending her before all.

The miracles of St Elizabeth

1. *the miracle of roses*, and is often depicted in art. It shows her meeting her husband unexpectedly while she is on a secret errand to deliver bread to the poor. According to legend, he asks her what she is carrying under her cloak, to counter claims that she was stealing from the castle. When she revealed her burden, the loaves of bread miraculously change into roses.
2. Another miraculous event in Elizabeth's life took place when she cared for a leper named Helias of Eisenach. She laid the afflicted upon the

very bed that she shared with her husband. Her mother-in-law was horrified and told Ludwig about this when he returned home. Just as Ludwig was removing the bed sheets he saw the figure of the crucified Christ stretched upon the bed instead of the leper.