

Rev. Derek Fairman

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

The next saint for this month of November is St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Elizabeth was the daughter of King Andrew II and Gertrude of Hungary. She also had relatives in European royalty, and even connections to Russian royalty. She was born in Pozsony, Hungary on July 7, 1207. Her mother was murdered in 1213, and she sought peace through her prayer. She was eventually brought to the court of Thuringia in Germany, where she married the local ruler, Louis IV, or Ludwig IV, in 1221. They had three children.

The Franciscans arrived in the area in 1223, and St. Elizabeth was moved by their spirituality, which she herself quickly took to heart. Her husband encouraged her charitable efforts, which included feeding the poor with bread and caring for the sick. She converted one of her castles into a hospital for the sick. She provided for the poor from her own means. In 1226, floods and disease struck the area, she gave the people afflicted clothing and other necessities. While her husband went off to defend the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, she managed affairs at home. She had Konrad of Marburg as her confessor.

In 1228, on his way to the Sixth Crusade, her husband died of a fever, a few days before the birth of their daughter Gertrude. She was particularly grief-stricken. There followed, after her husband's death, the matter of succession, and she left the court to settle in Marburg. There she made vows before her confessor like those in religious life. Her confessor and spiritual director Konrad could be harsh, but St. Elizabeth continued to follow his advice.

St. Elizabeth has two miracles attributed to her. One is the miracle of the roses, in which she had taken food with the purpose of feeding the poor, but someone had accused her of stealing. Her husband asked what was under her cloak, and when her cloak opened, red and white roses could be seen. Another miracle involved St. Elizabeth caring for a leper, in which her husband could see the Lord Jesus in the bed.

St. Elizabeth joined the Third Order of St. Francis. She founded a hospital and spent her remaining days caring for the sick and the poor, imitating the example of St. Francis. Her spiritual director once wrote of her last days in Marburg: "On Good Friday of that year, when the altars had been stripped, she laid her hands on the altar in a chapel in her own town, where she had established the Friars Minor, and before witnesses she voluntarily renounced all worldly display and everything that our Savior in the gospel advises us to abandon. Even then she saw

that she could still be distracted by the cares and worldly glory which had surrounded her while her husband was alive. [...] [In Marburg] she built a hospice where she gathered the weak and the feeble. There she attended the most wretched and contemptible at her own table.

“Apart from those active good works, I declare before God that I have seldom seen a more contemplative woman. When she was coming from private prayer, some religious men and women often saw her face shining marvelously and light coming from her eyes like the rays of the sun.

“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 receive the body of our Lord. Afterwards, until vespers, she spoke often 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.”

St. Elizabeth died on November 17, 1231 at the age of 24. She was canonized in 1234. She is the patron of nurses, hospitals, people who are falsely accused, bakers, Hungary, countesses, exiles, and widows, among other things. Her feast day is November 17.

The next group of saints are the Vietnamese martyrs, who are the companions of St. Andrew Dung-Lac. There were many martyrs in Vietnam over the centuries, some belonging to the Dominican and Jesuit missionaries of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, others who were martyred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There had been four different ceremonies to beatify several martyrs between 1900 and 1951. But Pope St. John Paul II wished to commemorate all named and unnamed martyrs in Vietnam on a single feast day. In particular, the feast day commemorates 117 martyrs who died in Vietnam for the Catholic faith between 1820 and 1862.

The Portuguese brought the Catholic faith to Vietnam; the Jesuits established a mission in 1615 and originally ministered to Japanese Catholics who were driven from Japan. Persecutions were particularly harsh in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1862, between 100,000 to 300,000 died or were tortured for the faith. Some included Dominicans and priests from the Paris Mission Society.

St. Andrew was born in Bac Ninh City, Vietnam, in 1795. He took the name Andrew at his baptism, and he was ordained a priest on March 15, 1823. He took the name Dung-Lac to avoid capture during persecution. He was beheaded in Hanoi, Vietnam, on December 21, 1839. St. Andrew Dung-Lac and companions are celebrated on November 24.