



ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

PATRON SAINT OF BAKERS, THE HOMELESS, NURSING SERVICES, CATHOLIC CHARITIES AND OTHERS

1207 – 1231

“There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.”

ACTS 4:34–35

As we reflect on our call to promote the common good, consider the story of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who advocated for and gave generously to the poor despite the exclusion from her family and community it caused her.

Though born of Hungarian royalty, for political reasons, St. Elizabeth of Hungary was betrothed to Prince Ludwig of Thuringia, Germany, at a very young age. While her husband's family disapproved of Elizabeth's extreme generosity to those in need, Ludwig's perspective was one of pride and understanding. When a famine hit in 1225, he supported her when she distributed the palace supply of grain to the needy and gave up the royal family's own clothes to provide for those without. After King Ludwig died of plague, Elizabeth devoted herself to God by caring for the poor and sick. She helped to build a hospital and continued to give generously, despite the lack of acceptance from her in-laws.

Notably, Elizabeth did not only give from her excess. She continued to devote herself to caring for the sick and poor, and, after her husband's family excluded her, she used her remaining personal funds to build another hospital. Toward the end of her short life, she lived in a hut and spun her own clothes.



Elizabeth's generosity was frowned upon by those in her community, yet she persevered in choosing to care for the least in her kingdom. Indeed, her manner of giving demonstrates the essential elements of an understanding of the common good: respect for the individual, the social well-being and development of the group and the pursuit of peace. The common good calls each of us to work toward the possibility that human flourishing is accessible to all — especially those who are marginalized or forgotten. Not only this, but it recognizes that work toward the common good requires both acts of charity and of justice. Elizabeth of Hungary's various good works demonstrate both.

- ✦ Like Elizabeth, have you ever acted on a moral conviction in your role or setting despite opposition?
- ✦ What was it like to give of yourself from a place of risk?
- ✦ How might you work for justice today and ensure that human flourishing is possible for the people you serve?

O HOLY MYSTERY OF LOVE,

*The work of St. Elizabeth reminds us of our call to give of our whole selves,
Caring for the least of our brothers and sisters even when it is difficult or causes us discomfort.*

*Recommit us today to serve you earnestly
With our hands, our eyes, our thoughts, and our hearts.*

All you Holy Men and Women: pray for us.

AMEN.