

25 Aug

Louis IX of France



Feast Day: August 25

Canonized: 1297

During the Middle Ages, many European kings believed that they had a divine right to rule, so they did whatever they wanted. They treated people unfairly. They taxed heavily. They did not worry about justice. Louis IX of France was not like that. He believed that good kings served others.

Louis was born in 1214. He was only 12 years old when he became king. So he took his mother's advice until he was old enough to rule wisely and well.

During that time, many Christian knights went on Crusades to the Holy Land to win it back from Muslim rule. Twice Louis led a Crusade, but both times he suffered defeat. Clearly his work was back in France, helping his people.

Louis built orphanages, libraries, and hospitals for the people of France. He built Sainte-Chapelle in Paris as a home for Jesus' crown of thorns. He supported the building of the Sorbonne, a college in Paris.

But more important than any building was the work Louis did for the poor. He brought peace to his people. How did he do this? By seeking justice for all.

Louis simplified court bureaucracy, established fair laws and courtrooms, and changed the tax system. He kept a list of the needy throughout his realm and used his own money and tax money to feed them. Because justice reigned in France, peace followed.

Louis died in 1270, when he was 56. Throughout his kingdom, people mourned his death. His holiness had been a blessing to them. He is the only king of France who is a saint, declared so in 1297, and many places are named for him, such as the U.S. city of St. Louis in Missouri.