

**St. Adelaide of Burgundy**  
December 16



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c. 931–999 • Modern-day Switzerland

Adelaide was the princess of the Kingdom of Burgundy. At fourteen years of age, she married Lothair, the heir to the Kingdom of Italy, as arranged by her parents. But her marriage did not last long. A rival to the throne, Berengar, had Lothair poisoned and then took over the kingdom. Berengar tried to force Adelaide to marry his son. She was beautiful and intelligent, and Berengar knew that if his son married Adelaide, the people of Italy would accept him as their new ruler.

Adelaide refused. She would never marry the son of the evil man who had killed her husband. And so Berengar had Adelaide locked up in a nearby castle on a lake.

But Adelaide was not without friends.

A priest named Fr. Martin dug an underground passage leading out of the castle. In secret, he led Adelaide to her escape into the wood. There she hid, while Fr. Martin fed her the fish he caught from the lake. Soon, a local duke took Adelaide into his castle for her protection. Adelaide, however, knew that she was still not safe. Berengar would find her. So she sent a message to King Otto of Germany for help.

Otto arrived with his army and forced Berengar from his ill-gotten kingdom, and Adelaide gave Otto her hand in marriage on Christmas Day. The people of Italy loved Adelaide, and so they happily welcomed Otto as their new ruler on account of his bride. The pope crowned Otto and Adelaide as Holy Roman emperor and empress, and together they ruled their joint kingdoms for twenty years.

When Emperor Otto passed away, Adelaide's stepson, Otto II, took the throne. The new emperor's wife did not like Adelaide, insulted her, and banished her from the court. Adelaide endured all without complaint.

When Otto II and his wife died, leaving their young son as emperor, Adelaide returned to the court and ruled as the child emperor's guardian. She provided for the poor in the kingdom, built monasteries, and sent missionaries out to those who had not heard of Jesus. At court, she lived a life of prayer and instructed her household in virtue. When the young emperor was old enough to rule, Adelaide retired to a convent and spent her life in prayer until she died a holy death.

St. Adelaide of Burgundy, help me to watch over those God puts into my care!