

# ST. WENCESLAS

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Many interesting links connect England with the land of the Czechs. One at least has given rise to elaborate controversies on Shakespeare's knowledge of geography, for the poet assigned a sea-coast to the medieval Kingdom of Bohemia.

A permanent reminder of mutual prowess and chivalry is the motto of the Prince of Wales: "Ich Diem" adopted by the Black Prince when he slew a gallant opponent, King John of Bohemia, at the Battle of Crecy, 1346.

Princess Elizabeth, "Queen of Hearts," daughter of James I of England, played, as consort of Frederick V of Bohemia, a considerable role during the chequered political history of Central Europe in the 17th century.

In our own day Czech Legions in the world war, fighting spontaneously as England's allies, have cemented for ever ties of friendship between the two peoples.

But it is the annual tribute in England to Bohemia's great national Saint as patron of Christmas charity that most popularly binds Czech and English. The carol Good King Wenceslas is sung at Christmastide throughout Great Britain, where no doubt more details of the Saint's life and good works will be welcome.

## GOOD KING WENCESLAS

*(Composed by J. M. Neale on the basis of Czech Legends.)*

Good King Wenceslas looked out  
On the Feast of Stephen,  
When the snow lay round about,  
Deep and crisp and even,  
Brightly shone the moon that night,  
Though the frost was cruel,  
When a poor man came in sight  
Gathering winter fuel.  
"Hither, Page! and stand by me,  
If thou knowest it, telling,  
Yonder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?"  
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,  
Underneath the mountain  
Right against the forest fence  
By Saint Agnes' fountain."  
"Bring me flesh and bring me wine,  
Bring me pine logs hither,  
Thou and I shall see him dine  
When we bear them thither."  
Page and Monarch forth they went,  
Forth they went together  
Through the rude wind's wild lament  
And the bitter weather.  
"Sire, the night grows darker now  
And the wind blows stronger;  
Fails my heart, I know not how,  
I can go no longer."  
"Mark my footsteps, my good Page!

Tread thou in them boldly!  
Thou shalt find the winter wind  
Freeze thy blood less coldly."  
In his master's steps he trod,  
Where the snow lay dinted,  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the Saint had printed.  
Therefore Christian men be sure,  
Wealth or rank possessing,  
Ye who now do bless the poor  
Shall yourselves find blessing.

A THOUSAND years ago St. Wenceslas, Ruler of the Czechs, was martyred for the Christian Faith by his brother Boleslas at Stara Boleslav near Prague.

"Svaty Vaclav," a hero both energetic and pacific, remains the centre of religious cult and national life in Czechy (Bohemia), venerated by his own people and also by the faithful throughout the Catholic Church.

According to a patriotic legend an army with King Wenceslas at its head, sleeping under Mount Blanik, arises in moments of great national danger to deliver the country.

Researches made by the distinguished historian Professor Pekar, translations from the German by the Rev. Father Striz, the work "Svati Vaclav" by Mgr. Stejskal, as well as the exhaustive studies of Dr. Podlaha give abundant material for the life of the Saint.

The earliest documentary legend concerning Wenceslas dates from the first half of the tenth century, and was discovered by the Russian, Vostokoff, in 1830. It is written in Old Slav with Glagolite letters. Another legend, also dating from the tenth century, was recently found by Professor Nikolsky. The Saint's earliest biography written in Latin and beginning "Crescente Fide Christiana," is probably of Bavarian origin and was used by Bishop Gombold of Mantua when compiling another at the wish of Emperor Otto II.

Manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to be found in the libraries of Prague and in the Convent of Boeddecke in Westphalia, contain the legend edited by the Jesuit Father Balbin in the seventeenth and by Father Suysken in the eighteenth centuries, for the *Acta Sanctorum*. Father Athanasius in 1767, and Joseph Emler in 1873, and finally Dr. Pekar's Latin versions of 1906 (translated by Professor Truhler and Father Striz in 1921) give us the authentic narrative as first written by the monk Christian at the injunction of his nephew St. Adalbert, Bishop of Prague. This monk, living at the close of the tenth century, was able to investigate and control the various accounts and reports relating to Wenceslas, so that his document may be taken as historically accurate, purged of exaggeration and fancy, and as containing authentic facts. It clears the memory of Drahomira, mother of St. Wenceslas, to whose influence, as in so many parallel cases, tradition ascribed the acts committed by the evil men around her. Drahomira was a Christian, and if she did not effectively oppose the pagan element at Court, did penance for her shortcomings to the end of her life. The document also proves the existence of the Slav Rite in Bohemia a hundred and fifty years after its introduction by Saints Cyril and Methodius.

While the monk Christian was writing on St. Wenceslas in Bohemia, another Czech monk named Vavrinets (Lorenzo) was doing the same at Monte Cassino, while a third treated the subject in rhythmic Latin beginning: "Oportet nos fratres . . ."

A legend of the thirteenth century: "Oriente jam sole . . ." acclaims St. Wenceslas as deliverer of the Czechs from the German yoke, and a Script: "Vita St. Wenceslai ut annuntietur" commemorates the virtues of the Saint and the miracles he wrought. Emperor Charles IV, the "Father of his Country," also wrote the biography of St. Wenceslas. A series of works on St. Wenceslas in several languages testify to general interest in the martyr.

### **LIFE OF ST. WENCESLAS (907-929)**

ST. WENCESLAS was born in 907, probably at Stochow, a village still extant near Prague. His father, Vratislav, a

younger son of Prince Borivoj of the House of Premmyslides, governed a portion only of the land, during the reign of his elder brother Sphytihnev, but on the death of the latter in 915, Vratislav ascended the throne. The Saint's mother, Drahomira, was the daughter of a Prince of the Lutici, a Slav tribe then inhabiting the country of Brandenburg which was afterwards Germanised. Wenceslas was baptised in the Slav Rite by Father Paul, a disciple of St. Methodius and chaplain of Princess Ludmila, grandmother of the infant. She was a woman of great learning and sanctity, and was one of the earliest Czech saints to be canonised. Saint Ludmila remains a beloved figure in the history of the nation. Together with Father Paul she superintended the education of young Wenceslas who was an apt and eager pupil. He was taught the psalms, the liturgy, and the elements of what knowledge is necessary to a future ruler, bound to defend as well as to govern his people. At Budec College he acquired Latin, the cultural language of the time, and became as proficient as any aspirant to Holy Orders. He was also fully instructed in the science of warfare and the manipulation of arms, being destined, like all the princes of his time, to direct in practice as well as in theory whatever military measures were undertaken to protect his country.

The death of his father, who was killed in battle by the Magyars, interrupted the lad's studies, for he was called to succeed. Since he was still a minor, his mother, Drahomira, acted as regent and guardian of her seven children. Drahomira is represented as jealous of Princess Ludmila's ascendancy over Wenceslas. She lent an ear to the courtiers who asserted that he was being trained rather for a monastic life than for a throne. Drahomira has been accused of conniving at, or even instigating, the wicked plans of her semi-Christianised courtiers, two of whom compassed the death of the venerable Princess Ludmila at her castle of Tetin in 921. The pagan element now prevailed so strongly at the Court of Drahomira, even after the banishment of the two murderers, that Wenceslas could receive priests and other friends only in secret and at night.

On attaining his majority the young Sovereign boldly grasped the reins of government, and issued a proclamation that he would observe divine laws, punish murder severely, but endeavour to be clement and just in all things. Drahomira, at first banished to Budec, was soon recalled to Prague by her son and we hear no more of the criminal disposition with which she had been charged, no doubt by interested calumniators intent on shifting blame from themselves. Wenceslas transferred the remains of his grandmother to St. George's Church in the capital where they received public veneration.

The young Sovereign practised Christian virtue to a degree that has identified his name with charity, beneficence and justice. He was particularly attentive to the trials of criminals, tempering punishments, and showing special mercy to the poor, as well as enforcing better treatment of prisoners. His generosity was boundless. With his own hands he gathered fuel in the royal forests and conveyed it to indigent homes. He ransomed the slaves captured in war, and had them instructed and baptised. Wenceslas was an example in assiduity at Divine Worship, and prepared with his own hands the bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice. He built numerous churches, recalled the banished clergy, and took every possible means to spread Christian civilisation and religious truth.

But good Prince Wenceslas did not neglect the duty of maintaining the integrity of his fatherland. He had an efficient army, well clad, well armed, and thoroughly disciplined. Nevertheless, he was careful not to expose rashly the lives of his men. When a marauding tribe entered his territory, Wenceslas challenged its Chief, Rastislas, to settle the matter by single combat and thus avoid wanton effusion of blood. Rastislas agreed, and sallied forth to meet his opponent, but he dropped his weapons at the sight of a luminous Cross above the head of the Saint and of an angel at each side. Wenceslas did not misuse his triumph. He ceded a large tract of land and a castle to Rastislas for the duration of his life, on condition that these should ultimately revert to the Crown of Bohemia, thus furthering the consolidation and unity of the Kingdom. Another proof of political sagacity was his treaty with the German ruler Henry, who marched on Prague with such forces as Wenceslas could not hope to defeat. He offered negotiation instead of warfare and consented to pay tribute in money and cattle as well as to recognise the suzerainty of the German Monarch.

Thus did Wenceslas avert his country's subjugation, and the horrors of devastation and massacre in a hopeless struggle. The land of the Czechs was recognised as an entity, instead of being annexed and absorbed by its powerful neighbour. Other Slav groups in Northern Europe, whose chiefs had less perspicacity, wore themselves out in ceaseless strife against their Teuton adversaries, and were finally blotted out. Relations between Henry of Germany

and Wenceslas were cordial, and often marked by deference of the former to the latter. On one occasion at a reunion of Bavarian and other princes, presided over by the German Monarch, Wenceslas was late. King Henry exclaimed angrily that no doubt the delay was due to the long prayers of the Czech, and suggested that nobody should greet him when he appeared. At the moment of his entrance, however, Henry was the first to advance and embrace him, declaring that Wenceslas brought the grace of God amongst them.

After labouring successfully for the development of the economic resources of his people, and promoting in every way their spiritual welfare, Wenceslas bethought himself of retiring to Rome and embracing a monastic life. However, before renouncing the throne in favour of his brother Boleslas, he wished to see the completion of the Cathedral of St. Vitus. He had begun its construction in order to house worthily a relic of this Saint, presented to him by King Henry on the occasion of the Treaty mentioned above, when hostilities between Czechs and Germans were averted. Unfortunately, Wenceslas was not destined to see his wish fulfilled. The dedication of the Cathedral only took place after his martyrdom.

Prince Boleslas had not enjoyed the benefits of an upbringing under the auspices of the saintly Princess Ludmila. He had been left to the care of semi-pagan courtiers whose mode of thought and rough ways he easily acquired. They now resented the strict rules of conduct enforced by Wenceslas who was, moreover, too mild and virtuous to suit their idea of the strong ruler required by Bohemia. Boleslas had, for his share of inheritance, a tract of land beyond the River Elbe, and he built himself a fine castle at the confluence of that river with the Jisera. It is said that he commanded the chief men of the district to make him a stone residence after the Roman fashion; but they, having abundance of timber to hand, proceeded to erect a wooden palace in the usual style, whereupon he beheaded some and reduced the others to obedience.

Boleslas, the very opposite of his brother, gathered round him a crowd of malcontents to whom the acts of Wenceslas were a constant reproach, for these men scorned to repress their passions or modify their evil lives. A plot was hatched to remove Wenceslas and replace him by his more accommodating brother who was unlikely to put a restraint on morals or to hinder freebooting expeditions. Boleslas agreed to usurp his brother's place, conniving even at the projected murder. He went in person to invite Wenceslas to his castle at Stara Boleslav for the patronal feast of the church, realising that it would be impossible to seize him in the strongly-fortified royal residence at Prague. On the 27th of September, 929, Feast of SS. Cosmas and Damian, Wenceslas assisted at the celebrations in Stara Boleslav, and remained after Mass, at his brother's request, to witness the games and contests arranged in honour of the day. The conspirators had meant to assassinate him as he sat at the banquet, but when they looked on his tranquil countenance their courage failed. As he left the hall, two of his retainers approached him and warned him that something was afoot. They had a saddled horse in readiness, and urged him to make his escape; but Wenceslas refused and returned instead to the banqueting hall and resumed his seat. He lifted his glass and called on the company to toast "St. Michael, whom we pray to guide us to peace and eternal joy." Not all of those present answered "Amen," but Wenceslas withdrew undisturbed, and he recited the psalms as usual before laying down to rest. Meantime, the conspirators conferred at the house of Hnevys, and summoned Boleslas to assist. It was resolved that Wenceslas should be slain on his way to early morning Mass, and Boleslas gave orders to the priests of the Saints Cosmas and Damian Church that its doors should be barred at that hour. The church was connected with Boleslas's castle by a private passage where it was deemed the crime could be safely committed.

At the sound of the Mass bell, Wenceslas rose and went towards the church, along the passage where Boleslas awaited him. The other conspirators were hidden in an adjoining courtyard. Wenceslas greeted Boleslas, and again thanked him for his hospitality, but in response the traitor exclaimed

"Yesterday I did my best to serve you worthily, but this must be my service today!" He drew a sword from beneath his cloak and struck at the head of Wenceslas, who parried the blow, snatched the weapon from his assailant, and threw him on the ground. He might have dispatched the miscreant and remained master of the situation, for the other conspirators rushed forward only when Boleslas's cries for help showed that he was alive although worsted in combat. But Wenceslas was no fratricide, even in self-defence, and preferred to succumb. Cesta, Tyra and Hnevys dashed to the rescue of Boleslas and stabbed Wenceslas ruthlessly, one blade-thrust piercing his side. He fell at the church door murmuring: "May God forgive you this, my Brother!"

The date of St. Wenceslas' martyrdom is September 28th, 929. When the assassins had accomplished their foul deed they escaped, and Drahomira was apprised of her eldest son's tragic fate. Stricken with grief she hastened to convey the body, covered with wounds, inside the church, whose outside walls were bespattered with blood. The red stains remained visible for centuries.

A legend says that on that ill-starred night, a son was born to Boleslas and named by the people "Strach-Hvas" (Dread Feast) in allusion to the perfidious banquet given in honour of Prince Wenceslas before he was murdered.

Boleslas took care that the funeral of his brother was carried out with due royal pomp, and Father Paul, the former tutor of Wenceslas, had the mournful task of officiating at the burial. The martyr was interred close to the church which was subsequently enlarged so as to include the grave within its precincts. Drahomira with her devoted daughter Pribyslava, fearing that they too might be victims of Boleslas's partisans, had fled before the funeral took place. Her suspicions were fully justified by the violent deaths which followed of Wenceslas's servants and of his friends, including many priests.

Some time after the martyrdom, Wenceslas appeared to his sister Pribyslava, and told her where to find, near the church door, his ear which had been slashed off by a sword-cut. She discovered it exactly in the spot indicated and had the coffin opened in order to place the severed member near the Saint's head. When the body was afterwards transferred to Prague, say the chroniclers, the ear was found adhering to its proper place as firmly as if it had never been detached.

Boleslas, tormented by remorse, sought to make reparation and to ease his conscience by transporting the mortal remains of the Saint to the capital. He gave orders that this should be done at early dawn, on March 4th, 932, under pain of death for those charged with the task if they delayed in its performance. But the river Rokytnice was in flood, and therefore impassable. The convoy fell on their knees and implored St. Wenceslas to help them. They then went to seek wood for a raft in the nearest forest, leaving the coffin on the bank. On their return they saw it on the other side and after fording the stream on horseback found it dry and uninjured as if miraculously transported without touching the water. Another obstacle confronted them at the river Vltava where the bridge was broken down. Again they had recourse to St. Wenceslas, and suddenly the coffin became so light that they easily waded with it on their shoulders to the opposite bank. A third incident confirmed their trust in the power of the Saint. Some distance from the Castle of Prague the horses drawing the bier stopped short and twelve team of oxen were requisitioned instead: The animals strained ineffectually until the arrival of the Arch-priest of the Church of Our Lady accompanied by his clergy. It was now broad daylight and a great crowd had assembled which joined in the Arch-priest's invocation for Divine assistance. At the close of the prayer, a single team of oxen (all the others having been unyoked) moved forward of their own accord and never paused in the steep ascent, till they reached the new Church of St. Vitus, Wenceslas's own foundation. Here the martyred Prince was interred amidst touching manifestations of love and grief by his devoted people.

### **THE CULT OF ST. WENCESLAS**

St. Wenceslas was a martyr for the Faith which he upheld against pagan opposition.

His zeal for the erection of churches which are amongst the most beautiful in the world; his maintenance of priests to celebrate regularly the Divine Liturgy and teach their flocks not only religious doctrine, but every useful branch of knowledge; his rectitude which forbade condemnation of accused persons without full proof of their guilt; his generosity and charity in protecting the humble against their masters; his refusal to participate in pagan feasts and rites at that time still prevalent in Bohemia; his exemplary life which caused his soldiers and subjects to see in him a monk rather than a prince, all this proves his sanctity and justifies the title of Saint given him by the Czech people. We have no exact date of his canonisation which was probably pronounced by Bishop Detmar, or by his successor Bishop Adalbert of Prague. The process of canonisation was not in those days reserved exclusively to the Papacy, as it has been since the reign of Pope Alexander III. But we have incontestable proofs that he was duly canonised, for a Sacramentary of the time of King Otto, crowned in 985, mentions September 28th, in the ecclesiastical calendar, as the Feast of St. Wenceslas, Martyr.

The concourse of pilgrims to his tomb became so immense that Prince Spytinev constructed a new church with

three naves in order to make room for them. Among the earliest cures effected at the shrine of St. Wenceslas were those of a leprous woman and of a paralytic from France, both being instantaneous and complete. The Czech people soon attributed a wider scope to the power of the Martyr than the healing of bodily ills. As fervent lover of his people, he was besought in all national crises. The Chronicler Cosmo relates that in 1002, when the Poles invaded Bohemia, Saint Wenceslas protected the land and secured the return of the rightful ruler Oldrich. The victory of Domazlice, gained in 1040 by Bratislas I over the Germans, and another victory in 1126, when Prince Sobeslas defeated the forces of King Lothar, were attributed to the intercession of St. Wenceslas. In 1260, the army of King Premysl-Ottokar II of Bohemia, encamped near the village of Kessenbrun at the confluence of the Morava and the Danube, was surrounded on three sides by the army of Beta II, King of Hungary. The Czechs called on God and St. Wenceslas, then marched boldly to the attack and routed the enemy.

On the feast of his patron and namesake, King Wenceslas II won a great battle at Sieradce on the Wartha in 1292. But on the other hand we find that it was generally held that no hostilities should be entered upon, if possible, on that day, and truces were often arranged between conflicting parties so that the Feast could be worthily celebrated.

### RELICS

Soon after his martyrdom relics of St. Wenceslas were laid on the altars of several churches. Bishop Hildibald deposited a piece of linen saturated with the Saint's blood in the St. Lawrence Chapel of Hilberstadt Cathedral in the year 992. Relics of St. Adalbert and St. Wenceslas were placed in the High Altar of Eucharia's Church at Trier in 1148. Pieces of his garments were also kept in the churches of Tegernsee, Bamberg, Salzburg, Rhinegan, and of Quedlimburg where an altar was consecrated in honour of SS. Remy and Wenceslas. In Bohemia itself there are numerous relics of the national Saint. The Czech Bishop Daniel deposited them, in presence of King Vladislav and his Queen Judith, in the churches of Bohnice, Recany, Cirkvice, and in St. James's Church of Prague.

### CHURCHES

A great number of churches were founded in honour of the Martyr, notably one at Prosek, near Prague, in 972, and another near the Castle itself of Prague, which was destroyed by Joseph II of Austria in 1782. One of the oldest extant is that of St. Wenceslas at Stara Boleslav. Prince Svatopluk of Moravia built a church at Olomouc in honour of St. Wenceslas, and Robert, Bishop of Cracow, consecrated another in that city in the year 1142. Two Kings of Bohemia, Ladislav Posthumus, and Wenceslas II, appointed priests in the fifteenth century, to say Mass regularly at the altar of St. Wenceslas in Aix-la-Chapelle. There are hundreds of churches in various cities of Central Europe dedicated to the national Saint of the Czechs, and at least four in the United States of America.

The basilica of St. Peter at Rome has a St. Wenceslas's altar erected by Bishop Berka of Olomouc who died at Rome in 1333. This altar was later dedicated to St. Erasmus; but Pope Urban VIII ordered that in the new basilica an altar should be dedicated to the Czech Saint and Martyr. This was done in 1628, when the relics were solemnly transferred. The altar which is in the right nave (where the Vatican Council of 1870 was held) bears the inscription: "Altar of St. Wenceslas, Duke of Bohemia, offered by Hynec, Bishop of Olomouc."

It was richly endowed for the celebration of Masses and the Office of the Dead.

The Czech people revere St. Wenceslas as their particular patron and he is honoured by the entire Slav race. King Bratislas II assisted on September 28th, in 1092, at a splendid church celebration of the Feast, and entertained courtiers and nobles with extraordinary magnificence during three days. On this date national assemblies were usually convoked, churches consecrated and important enterprises begun.

The Office of St. Wenceslas was introduced in the Roman Breviary in the thirteenth century; the story of St. Wenceslas as it now stands in the second Nocturn dates from the fourteenth century.

When Pope Urban VIII extended the Feasts of Kings Hermengildus and Stephen to the universal Church, Archbishop Matthew Ferdinand Zubeck of Prague obtained the same privilege for the Feast of the Bohemian Prince and Saint Benedict XIII made the Feast obligatory. The Mass and Office had previously been inserted in Missal and Breviary under *Pro aliquibus locis*.

A touching expression of the Czech people's love for their popular Saint is the ancient canticle "Svaty Vaclave,"

sung today with as much fervour as in the Middle Ages. The author of the first four verses was probably Bishop Bechyně who composed them at the time of the Brandenburg invasion in 1272. But the Jesuit historian, Father Balbi, ascribes them to Bishop Ernest of Pardubice in the fourteenth century. The Calixtine Hussites themselves chanted "Svaty Vaclave," and bore his image on their shields with the chalice above the banner and the first four lines of the canticle below. One of these shields is preserved in the National Museum at Prague and another in the Hermitage at Petrograd. The canticle has always had a national as well as a religious character. In the rebellion of 1848, against Hapsburg absolutism, the help of St. Wenceslas was invoked to repel and overcome Germanisation.

*Saint Wenceslas,  
Duke of Bohemia, Our Prince,  
Pray for us to God  
The Holy Spirit.  
Christe Eleison!  
Thou heir of Czech lands,  
Be mindful of thy race,  
Let us not perish, Now nor in future!  
Holy Wenceslas!  
Christe Eleison!  
We pray thy assistance,  
Have pity on us!  
Comfort the sad; banish all evil,  
Holy Wenceslas!  
Christe Eleison!  
Beauteous are the celestial courts,  
Happy he who enters there  
To life eternal, in the radiant glow  
Of the Holy Ghost.  
Christe Eleison!  
Mary, Mother most admirable,  
Thou powerful Queen,  
Pray for us Christians  
To thy Son, Our Lord.  
Christe Eleison!  
Holy celestial angels,  
Lead us towards you There where praises  
Rise unceasingly  
To the Eternal God.  
Christe Eleison!  
All ye Saints,  
pray for us!  
Let us not perish!  
St. Vitus, St. Norbert,  
St. Sigmund, St. Procopius,  
St. Adalbert, St. John Nepomuk,  
St. Ludmila, St. Wenceslas,  
Christe Eleison!*

*Glory to God the Father!  
Make we the Sign of the Cross!*

*In the name of the Father  
And of the Son  
And of the Holy Ghost!  
Christe Eleison.*

The suffragan Bishop of Prague, Thomas Pesina of Cechorod (†1680), instituted the custom of a procession from the altar of St. John Nepomuk to the chapel of St. Wenceslas, in St. Vitus's Cathedral, after Vespers and Benediction on Sundays and Feast-days. During the procession the above canticle is intoned by the Metropolitan Chapter, and taken up by the faithful who join heartily in the homage to their favourite Saint.

Homilies and sermons relating to Saint Wenceslas can be traced in documents as far back as the thirteenth century, notably in the collection of Opatovice. A volume entitled *The Lion of Bohemia*, containing prayers to St. Wenceslas, was published in 1642. A prayer book edited by the Jesuit Father Konias, in 1727, likewise includes prayers to the Czech Saint.

The memory of St. Wenceslas was also kept alive by the Drama. Jesuit Fathers were the first to arrange for the performance of a Wenceslas play at the Convent of St. Nicholas in Prague. Another, entitled "Christian Bohemia," was performed in 1583, and a five-act tragedy treating of the Royal Martyr was produced at Olomouc in 1614. Ten years later it was repeated at Hradec Kralove, and again, in 1649, at Uherske Hradiste. In 1675, there was a production at Prague in which St. Wenceslas was represented as the devout adorer of the Blessed Sacrament. Scenes from his life were also shown at Kutric Hora in 1679. Young seminarians frequently performed Wenceslas plays in various parts of Bohemia. On September 12th, 1725, there was a performance at St. Clement's College, Prague.

A play entitled "Octodecim heroum Christianorum spectacula," was published by Jules Cortius in 1662 at Prague, and seven years later William Dondinus published "Selecta heroum spectacula" at Munich. Both plays deal with the encounter between Wenceslas and Radslav (Rastislas).

Joseph Cajetan Tyl, a well-known dramatic poet, published in 1849 a play entitled "Baptism by Blood," or "Drahomira and her Sons." The most famous of Czech poets, Jaroslav Vrhlicky, wrote a poem entitled "Drahomira and the Brothers." In 1818 Joseph Linda published a historical novel: "Christianity Resplendent over Paganism," or "Wenceslas and Boleslas." In our own day a classic of the theatre repertory is a drama by Dr. Sajn and Mlle. Braunerova, entitled "Saints Ludmila and Wenceslas" and inspired by the monk Christian's legend already mentioned above. This work which is of considerable artistic value shows the life and death of the Martyr in a series of *tableaux vivants*, and it has a prominent place in the jubilee programme.

Painters, too, found inspiration in the life of St. Wenceslas. A hundred years after his death three scenes from his life were depicted (probably by a monk) for Princess Hemma, widow of Boleslas II. Pictures of St. Wenceslas are often found in devotional and liturgical books. The oldest portrait now extant, dating from the fourteenth century, is in the Church of St. Nicholas of Prague. The ancient Veleslavian Bible, preserved in the Lobkowitz Library and dating from the fourteenth century; contains a series of illustrations relating to the Saint's Life. Another is in the wall of the staircase in the main tower of Karlstein Castle, and a third in the Wenceslas Chapel of St. Vitus' Cathedral.

The life of St. Wenceslas is depicted in the forty-four chapels built in 1670 on the road from Prague to Stara Boleslav at regular intervals of 479 metres (the length of the Charles IV Bridge at Prague). The chapels contain paintings of various shrines of the Blessed Virgin in Bohemia, and beneath these are scenes from the lives of St. Wenceslas and of the noble founders of these chapels. In the church of Stara Boleslav there is a painting of the Saint by Charles Skreta, an artist of the seventeenth century. A painting by Peter Brandl (1668-1735) is to be found in the Rudolphinum picture gallery, and one by the Jesuit Father Ignatius Raab (1715-1787) in the church at Prosek.

More recent paintings are by Emmanuel Ditz in the chapel of the Count Straka Academy where the Confederation of the Czechoslovak Students has its headquarters. There is also a painting in the Collegiate Chapel of Vysehrad, by Frantisek Urban, and one in the Church of St. Wenceslas at Smychov by Frantisek Sequenza. On the standard of the National Guard of Hradec Kralove there is a fine picture of St. Wenceslas painted by Joseph Manes in 1848.

In the basilica of St. Peter at Rome (grotta Vaticana) there is a fine painting of St. Wenceslas with a sword in his right hand, and in his left a banner with a black eagle on a white ground. Emperor Charles IV is seen kneeling, and St.

Procopius, St. Adalbert and Archbishop John Ocko are also depicted. A copy has been made by the Czech painter Hynais for the Czech College in Rome, and another by Joseph Furich. A painting of St. Wenceslas by Angelo Carossello was placed on September 26th, 1630, over the altar of St. Wenceslas in St. Peter's, Rome. It shows him as a Roman Emperor with a diadem, and below there is another picture of his martyrdom. In the Church of St. Maria Trastevere, together with a picture of the Annunciation, there is one of St. Wenceslas standing beside Our Lady with banner and sword.

In the Vatican Library there is an ancient Gospel containing the following notes: "It is believed that this book belonged to St. Wenceslas, Prince of Bohemia, and was brought by him to Stara Boleslav. The Chapter of the SS. Cosmas and Damian Church presented it to Augustine, Slav Archpriest at Brno."

There are many statues of St. Wenceslas. The oldest and most remarkable is one by Peter Parler (1372), renovated in 1866 and now adorning the Cathedral in Prague. An equestrian statue in Vysehrad Park is the work of George Pendl (1678). Formerly it stood in the horse market (now St. Wenceslas Square), and it was in front of this statue that Archbishop Joseph Louis Shrenk of Prague celebrated Mass on March 7th, 1848, for the delegation about to lay the claims of Bohemia before the Emperor at Vienna. On its return it was received by the Municipality, the National Guard, and cheering crowds. A procession formed up and marched to the statue of St. Wenceslas where the Archbishop sang a Te Deum. Mass was celebrated here again on Whit-Monday, June 12th, 1848, by the patriotic priest, Father John Arnold, who exhorted the excited people to remain calm and hopeful. Since that date the old market has been called after St. Wenceslas. In 1908 a new statue replaced the old. It stands six metres high and is the work of the famous sculptor Joseph Vaclav Myslbeck who died in 1926. It bears the inscription: "Nedej zahrouti nam ni budoucim!" (Let not our race perish!) Four other patron saints of Bohemia are grouped around the mounted figure of St. Wenceslas; St. Procopius, St. Adalbert, St. Ludmila, and Blessed Agnes of Bohemia.

The name and image of St. Wenceslas are found on coins dating from the reign of Prince Jaromir in the eleventh century; coins of a later date show Wenceslas the Knight, Cross in hand, or Wenceslas the Saint with halo, or Wenceslas the Martyr. The finest engraving is that on the coinage of Wladislas I, depicting him as a child borne aloft by two angels. Several Kings of Bohemia had gold coins struck with his image: Wenceslas IV (1378-1419); Wladislas II (1471-1516); Louis I (1516-1526); and Ferdinand I (1526-1564) who was specially devoted to the Patron Saint of Bohemia.

The Czechoslovak Republic, according to a law passed on March 23rd, 1923, had gold coins minted with the image of St. Wenceslas in armour, and the inscription: "Let not our race perish," on one side, and on the other the emblems and inscription of the Republic.

The image of St. Wenceslas appears for the first time on the seals of the Sovereigns of Bohemia during the reign of Vladislas II and shows the Saint seated on his throne. These seals were preserved until the thirteenth century, but disappeared during the reign of Premysl II (1253-1278). The seals of the judicial Court of Bohemia in the time of Premysl Ottokar I bore the image of St. Wenceslas in warrior's armour with the inscription: "Judiciary Seal of the Land of St. Wenceslas, Prince of the Czechs."

Similar seals were also used by the Metropolitan Chapter of Prague from the twelfth century onwards, by the administrators of the archdiocese, and by the Utraquist Consistory. The city seals of 1520 show the Saint with lance and escutcheon of the Lion of Bohemia. His martyrdom is depicted on the seals of the Chapter of Stara Boleslav. The seals of Prague University dating from 1350 show Emperor Charles IV kneeling beside St. Wenceslas. Several cities of Bohemia use seals bearing his image.

While yet hereditary Prince of Bohemia, Emperor Charles IV had a crown wrought which was placed on the Martyr's skull to indicate that he was the real master of the country. Hence the skull with the crown is not in the tomb, but is preserved in another part of the Cathedral. Since the time of Charles IV, the crown of Bohemia is known as the crown of St. Wenceslas and the Czechs as the people of St. Wenceslas.

The cult of their Saint has been intimately associated with the national life of the Czechs who turned to him in times of stress and danger. Indeed, the Catholic Faith has been called the Faith of St. Wenceslas, and the Czech language the language of St. Wenceslas. During the fiercest German oppression, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the language was officially proscribed, and spoken only by the peasantry and by patriotic priests,

veneration for the national Czech Saint never ceased; the canticle of St. Wenceslas was sung in the vernacular; frequent pilgrimages were made to his tomb and the people cherished a belief that Svaty Vaclav would one day compass their deliverance. Laity and clergy, especially Jesuits like Balbin, fostered assiduously the cult of St. Wenceslas as a gauge of better times to come. The mother of the Jesuit Father Mathias Steyer bequeathed her fortune of 1,300 florins for the publication of Catholic books in the Czech language. This legacy of St. Wenceslas, founded in 1670, augmented by generous gifts from the Czech nobility, episcopate and clergy, distributed over 8,000 books, catechisms, bibles, lives of saints, religious and national hymn-books, within three years. By 1752 over 80,000 books had been distributed, and there is no doubt that this legacy of a Czech woman saved the written language of the people during the fierce Germanising campaign. Emperor Joseph II looked askance at the legacy of St. Wenceslas and finally confiscated "for educational purposes" the fund of 15,676 florins. The books which remained were, however, distributed to the people by the Archbishopric of Prague. The Grand Seminary of St. Wenceslas founded by the Jesuits in 1559 for 150 students fostered the Czech language; but it disappeared with the suppression of the Order, and its funds were confiscated by the State. The Czech people never lost heart through the worst period of oppression, and the symbolical image of St. Wenceslas arising with his army from Mount Blanik helped to keep alive their faith in ultimate triumph.

During the world war the first organisation of Czechoslovak legionaries to help the allies took the oath on the Feast of St. Wenceslas on September 28th, 1914, at Kiev in Russia. On January 1st, 1916 this organisation took the name of regiment of St. Wenceslas and bore it until June, 1917, after the Retreat of Zborov.

On April 3rd, 1925, the Feast of St. Wenceslas (September 28th) was made a State Holiday of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. St. Wenceslas is venerated by the entire nation. Catholics see in him a Martyr and Patron of the Church, while others revere him as a great national hero.

It is noteworthy that during the outburst of iconoclasm after the downfall of Austria, when mobs were egged on to violence by anti-Catholic demagogues, and many religious statues were destroyed, not one of St. Wenceslas was touched. Indeed, Svaty Vaclav means so much to the Czech people that all, without distinction of creed, participate in honouring him.

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