

HERE FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. LOUIS, KING OF FRANCE

Caxton added this life to his edition of the Golden Legend, but it was not a part of Voragine's original.

St. Louis, sometime the noble king of France, had to his father a king right Christian, named Louis. This Louis father battled and fought against the heretics and Albigenses and of the country of Toulouse, and extirpated their heresy, and as he returned into France he passed unto our Lord. Then the child of holy childhood fatherless, abode and dwelled under the keeping of the queen Blanche his mother, sometime daughter to the king of Castile, and as she that loved him tenderly betook him for to be learned and taught under the cure and governance of a special master in conditions and in letters, and he also, as the young Solomon child, wise and disposed to have a good soul, profited right greatly in all things, more than any child of his age. Of which good life and childhood his debonair mother enjoying herself, said oftentimes to him in this manner: Right dear son, rather I would see the death coming on thee than to see thee fall into a deadly sin against thy creator.

HIS EARLY YEARS

The which word the devout child took and shut it so within his courage [heart], that, by the grace of God which defended and kept him, it is not found that ever he felt any atouchment, tache or spot of mortal crime. In the end, by the purveyance [planning] of his mother, and of the barons of the land, to the end that so noble a realm should not fail of succession royal, the holy man took a wife, of the which he received and gat on her fair children, which by sovereign cure he made to be nourished, endoctrined, and taught to the love of God and despite of the world, and to know themselves by holy admonishing and ensamples. And when he might tend secretly to them, visiting them and requiring of their profit as the ancient Tobias, gave to them admonishing of salute, teaching them over all things to dread God and to keep and abstain them assiduously from all sin.

HIS PIETY

Garlands made of roses and of other flowers he forbade and defended them to wear on the Friday, for the crown of thorns that was on such a day put on the head of our Lord.

And because that he wist well and knew that chastity in delices, pity in riches, and humility in honour often perish, he took and gave his courage to sobriety and good diet, to humility and misericorde [mercy], keeping himself right curiously from the pricking sautes [sexual desires] and watch of the world, the flesh and the devil, and chastised his body and brought it to servitude by the ensample of the apostles. He forced himself to serve his spirit by diverse castigation or chastising, he used the hair [wore a hairshift] many times next his flesh, and when he left it for cause of over feebleness of his body, at the instance of his own confessor,

he ordained the said confessor to give to the poor folk, as for recompensation of every day that he failed of it, forty shillings.

He fasted always the Friday, and namely in time of lent and advent he abstained him in those days from all manner of fish and from fruits, and continually travailed and pained his body by watchings, orisons, and other secret abstinences and disciplines.

Humility, beauty of all virtues, replenished so strong in him, that the more better he waxed, so, as David, the more he showed himself meek and humble, and more foul he reputed him before God. For he was accustomed on every Saturday to wash with his own hands, in a secret place, the feet of some poor folk, and after dried them with a fair towel, and kissed much humbly and semblably their hands, distributing or dealing to every one of them a certain sum of silver. Also to seven score poor men which daily came to his court, he administered meat [food] and drink with his own hands, and were fed abundantly on the vigils solemn. And on some certain days in the year to two hundred poor, before that he ate or drank, he with his own hands administered and cerved them both of meat and drink.

He ever had, both at his dinner and supper, three ancient poor, which ate nigh to him, to whom he charitably sent of such meats as were brought before him, and sometimes the dishes and meats that the poor of our Lord had touched with their hands, and special the sops of which he fain [gladly] ate, made their remnant or relief [remnants] to be brought before him, to the end that he should eat it; and yet again to honour and worship the name of our Lord on the poor folk, he was not ashamed to eat their relief.

Also he would not use scarlet, ne gowns of rich cloth, ne also furring of over great price and cost.

HIS CRUSADE IN THE HOLY LAND

He Leads a Host That Takes Damietta

And namely sith [after] he came from the parts of beyond sea the first time again, he coveted by great desire the growing up of the faith. Wherefore he, as very lover of the faith and covetous for to enhance it, as he yet that of late convalesced and issued out of a grievous sickness, lying at Pontoise, took the cross [i.e. as a symbol of a vow to undertake a crusade] with great devotion from the hands of the bishop of Paris, led with him three of his brethren with the greatest lords and barons in his realm. And many a knight and other people with him applied [joined with him] on his way, and with right great host arrived into Egypt, the which, setting foot on ground, occupied and took by force of men of arms that same city renowned which is called Damietta, and all the region about.

Disasters Befall the Army and the King

Then after, the Christian host, esprised and beat with a much great and wonderful sickness by the just judgment of God, many Christian men died there, insomuch that of the number of two and thirty thousand fighting men, ne was there left on live but six thousand men. And God, father of

misericorde, willing himself showed wonderful and marvellous on his saint [wanting his own glory to be proven by means of his saint], gave and betook the same king, champion, or defensor of the faith, into the hands of the evil paynims, to the end that He should appear more marvellous.

And as the debonair [humble] king might have escaped by the next ship nigh thence, always he yielded himself with his good gree [will], to the end that he might deliver his people through the encheson of him [so that God might deliver Louis' people for the sake of Louis].

He was put to great ransom, which paid, he would yet abide prisoner for the payment or ransom of other his lords and barons.

St. Louis' Good Works in Syria

And then after, he put and left so as Joseph out of the chartre or prison of Egypt, not as fleeing or dreadful returned anon unto the proper or own parts, but first abode continually by the space of five years in Syria, where he converted many paynims to the faith, and he being there, the Christians out of the paynim hands ditched and fortified many towns and castles with strong walls. He found then about Sidon many dead bodies of Christian men, of which many one was dismembered and eaten with beasts and stank over much; the which he gathered and assembled with his own hands, with the aid and help of his meiny [retinue], which unnethe [hardly] might endure ne suffer the stench of them, and humbly and devoutly betook them to the burying of holy church.

The Storm During His Return Voyage

And after this, understanding the sickness of the queen his mother, by the counsel of his barons he assented to return into France. And as he was upon the sea, on the third night after, nigh the rising of Aurora, the ship where the king was in, hurted and smote twice against the rock so strongly that the mariners and other there weened that the ship should have broken and been plunged in the sea. And then the priests, clerks, and the other folk there, abashed [dismayed] with so great hurting of the said ship, found the holy king devoutly praying before the body of our Lord, wherefore they firmly believed that God Almighty, by the merits and prayers of this holy king, had saved them from the foresaid peril of death.

HIS WORKS OF CHARITY

Then the said saint, so returned into France, was received of all there with great joy, and the more ardently or burningly profiting from virtue into virtue, became to all manner perfection of life. And howbeit that miseration and pity was growing in him from his youth, nevertheless he showed then more evidently his charitable deeds on the poor folk, succouring them profitably, so as he might at their need.

He began then to build and found hospitals or houses for poor people to lie in, edified minsters [churches] of religion, and gave yearly to other poor sufferers in divers places in the realm much money, pecunies [money] or silver. He founded many convents of the Order of

Friars Preachers [i.e., the Dominicans], and to many other poor religious builded churches, cloisters, dortoirs [sleeping-halls], and other edifices convenable, gave for God largely alms to the blind, Beguines¹, daughters of God, and releved [provided assistance to] the minster of many a poor nunnery. He enriched many a church founded by him with great revenues and rente, in which he many times exercised the office of charity and of marvellous humility, humbly and devoutly serving the poor with his own hands by great misericorde [mercy].

When he came in Paris, or in other cities, he visited the hospitals and other small houses where poor people lay in, and without abomination of deformity ne of ordure or filth of some patient or sick, administered, many times kneeling, giving meat [food] to the poor with his own hands. In the abbey of Royalmont, which he founded and endowed with great revenue and rents, is showed notorily that such and semblable alms he made there many times.

And yet greater marvel, a monk of the said abbey, a leper, an abominable, and as then deprived both of nose and eyes by corruption of the said sickness, the blessed St. Louis administered, humbly putting, kneeling, with his own hands both meat and drink within the mouth of the said leper without any abomination. The abbot there present which unneth [hardly] might see that, wept and sighed piteously.

And howbeit that to all indigent he opened the bosom of misericorde, nevertheless to them that watched in divine services, and that prayed for souls, he made greater alms and offer. And by the great alms that he dealt every year to the convents in Paris, both of the friars predicators [preaching friars, Dominicans] and minors [Franciscans], said sometime to his familiars: O God, how this alms is well set or bestowed on so much and so great number of friars affluing and coming to Paris out from all lands for to learn the divine scriptures, and to the end they might show and utter them through all the world to the cure and salvation of souls.

Other alms that he did through the year, no tongue should suffice for to rehearse it.

He worshipped the holy relics with much great devotion, and assiduously grew the cultivating of God and the honour of the saints. He builded in Paris a fair chapel within the palace royal, in which he purposed and put right diligently the holy crown of thorns of our Lord, with a great part of the holy cross. Also the iron or head of the spear wherewith the side of our Lord was opened, with many other relics which he received of the emperor of Constantinople.

HIS PUBLIC POLICIES

He would speak to nobody while that he was at church hearing the divine service, without it were for great need or great utility of the commonweal, and then with short and substantious words uttered that he would say, to the end that his devotion should not be letted [hindered]. He might not hear, ne forbear the reproaches or blasphemies done to the Christian faith, but he, enamoured of the love of God, as Phineas, punished them right grievously.

¹ Beguines were women who “devoted themselves to a religious life, but did not bind themselves by strict vows, and might leave their societies for marriage” (O.E.D.).

Whereof it befell that a citizen of Paris who loathly swearing had blasphemed Jesu Christ, against the act or statute royal, which St. Louis by the counsel of the prelates and princes had ordained and made for the swearers and blasphemers, at the commandment of the said saint he was marked or tokened, at the lips of him with a hot and burning iron, in sign of punishment of his sin, and terror and dreadfulness to all others. And how for cause of that, he hearing some say and cast in on him many cursings, said: I would fain sustain on my lips such laidure or shame as long as I shall live, so that all the evil vice of swearing were left and cast out from all our realm.

He had the signacle or figure of the holy cross in so great reverence that he eschewed to tread on it, and required of many religious that, within their churchyard and tombs they ne should from thence forthon portray ne depict the form or figure of the cross and that the crosses so portrayed and figured, they should make to be planed. O how great reverence he had! He also went every year on the good Friday to the chapel within the palace royal for to worship there the holy cross, kneeling, both feet and head bare.

Of diligent discussing of causes and matters he rendered or yielded just judgment. Of very dilection or love, he doubting that the strife, actions, and pleadings of the poor should come only to the presence and knowledge of his counsellors, he went and presided among them at the least twice in a week for to hear the plaints [complaints] which lightly he made to be discussed and soon after justly urged. He stablished also, for to have away the burning covetise of the usurers, that no justicer should compel ne constrain them that were bounden to the Jews or to other public usurers by letters, ne by none other manner, to pay or yield to them their usury or growing.

ST. LOUIS DIES ON CRUSADE

In the end, after the course or running of many years, understanding that by true report knowing the desolation and perplexity and perils of the holy land, as another Maccabeus with his sons, not willing that the Christian folk and holy persons should sustain ne bear any longer evil or pain, inspired with the Holy Ghost, he passed and sailed again over the high sea unto the Holy Land accompanied with the nobles and much commonalty of his realm.

And when the ships were ready for to sail, St. Louis, beholding his three sons and specially dressing his words towards the eldest, said: Son, consider thou must, how as now I am farforth in age, and that once I have passed over the sea, also how that the Queen thy mother is of great age, proceeding nigh her last days, how now, blessed be God, we possess peaceably our realm, without any war, in delices, riches and honours, as much as pleaseth to us or appertaineth, look then that for the love of Jesu Christ and his church I ne spare mine old age, and have no pity of thy discomforted and woeful mother, but I leave both delices and honours, and expose mine own self to peril for Jesu Christ. Which things I will thou hear and know, to the end that when thou comest to the succession of the realm thou do so.

The ships then ready, sailed on the sea so long that the host arrived at the haven of Carthage in Africa, where by force of arms the Christian men took the castle, and enjoyed the land thereabout. And betwixt Tunis and Carthage they dressed their tents for to dwell there a little time.

And in this meanwhile St. Louis – after so many virtuous works, after so many pains and labours which he had suffered for the faith of Jesu Christ – God, that would benewrely [happily] consume his life for to yield to him fruit glorious for his labours and benefits, sent to him an axes [ague] continual. And then the holy ensegnments or teachings, which before he had written in French, exposed diligently to Philip his eldest son and commanded that soon they should be accomplished.

And then, he being thought of sight and hearing whole, saying his seven psalms² and calling on all the saints devoutly, took all the sacraments of the church, and at the last, he coming to the last hour, stretching his arms in manner of a cross, and proffering the last words: I commend my soul into thine hands, died and passed unto our Lord, the year twelve hundred and seventy.

MIRACLES OF ST. LOUIS

The corpse of the glorious St. Louis was transporte unto the sepulchre of his fathers and predecessors at St. Denis in France, there to be buried. In which place, also in divers others, this glorious saint resplendiseth of many miracles.

Miraculous Cures

On that day that St. Louis was buried, a woman of the diocese of Sens recovered her sight, which she had lost and saw nothing, by the merits and prayers of the said debonair [mild] and meedful [meritorious] king.

Not long after, a young child of Burgundy both dumb and deaf of kind [by nature, i.e. from birth], coming with others to the sepulchre or grave of the saint, beseeching him of help, kneeling as he saw that the others did, and after a little while that he thus kneeled were his ears opened and heard, and his tongue redressed and spake well. In the same year a woman blind was led to the said sepulchre, and by the merits of the saint recovered her sight. Also that same year two men and five women, beseeching St. Louis of help, recovered the use of going [walking], which they had lost by divers sickness and languors.

In the year that St. Louis was put or written in the catalogue of the holy confessors, many miracles worthy to be prised [esteemed], befell in divers parts of the world at the invocation of him, by his merits and by his prayers.

A Child Raised to Life

Another time at Evreux a child fell under the wheel of a water-mill. Great multitude of people came thither, and supposing to have kept him from drowning, invoked God, our Lady and his saints to help the said child, but our Lord willing his saint to be enhanced among so great multitude of people, was there heard a voice saying that the said child, named John, should be

² The Seven Penitential Psalms – in the King James Version, Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

vowed unto St. Louis. He then, taken out of the water, was by his mother borne to the grave of the saint, and after her prayer done to St. Louis, her son began to sigh and was raised on life.

Ten Men Crushed in a Quarry

It befell the same time in the diocese of Beauvais that ten men were broken within a quarry there, as they did fetch out great stones for to build withal, for on them fell a great quantity of earth insomuch that they were covered with it. A clerk then that passed there foreby, heard their sighing, and having pity on them that were nigh dead, kneeled down to the earth, and remembering the new canonisation of the blessed St. Louis, sore weeping, made for the foresaid men his prayer to him, and after his prayer was done he saw folk coming that way. He called them, and forthwith they delved with such staves as they had, so much that by the merits of the saint to whom they trusted much, they had out of the quarry the foresaid ten men, the which were found unhurt, and as whole as ever they were before, howbeit that in certain they were dead.

A Child Crushed by a Falling Wall

It happed on another time that a great wall fell on a child which was reputed as dead by all the folk, his mother vowed him to the said saint, made the stones that covered him to be had away, and found her child laughing, and whole of all his members.

A Woman with St. Anthony's Fire

A woman aggrieved with a sickness which men call the fire of St. Anthony came to Poissy, thereas St. Louis was born, and before the font wherein the said saint was baptized, she kneeled, and sore weeping made her prayer there to God and to the saint, by the merits of whom her body was clean delivered from the foresaid sickness.

A Crippled Man

Item two days after this, a worshipful man which of long time had been oppressed and beaten with sickness of feet, that he could not go ne stand without he had two crutches or staves under his arms, came unto the said font, made there his prayer, left his staves there, and home he returned as whole as ever he was. And yet sithe [afterwards] were there, and are as now done, many other miracles through the prayers and merits of St. Louis to the glory and praising of our redeemer.

The [iconography of St. Louis](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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