

Lives  
of  
Saints

# St Elizabeth of Portugal

1271 – 1336  
Feastday: 4th July



"God made me  
queen so that I  
may serve  
others."

**St Elizabeth  
of Portugal**

I was born in 1271. I was the daughter of Pedro III, future king of Aragon, and Costantia, grandchild of Emperor Frederick II. Everyone thought I was very beautiful and very lovable. I was educated very piously, and I led a life of sacrifice from my childhood: I said the full Divine Office daily, fasted and did other penances, and I went to Mass everyday.

At the age of 12, I was given in marriage to Denis, king of Portugal. Denis' infidelity to me was a scandal to the kingdom for many years. But I remained faithful to him and long sought peace for him with God, and was finally rewarded when he gave up his life of sin. We had two children from this marriage. The boy, Alfonso, was a rebel. Above all, he greatly resented the favours shown to the king's illegitimate sons, and I had to work hard to reconcile our son to his father. I also acted as peacemaker in the struggle between Ferdinand, king of Aragon, and his cousin James, who claimed the crown.

In his last sickness, I never left my husband's side, except for Mass, until he died a holy death. I lived for eleven more years, doing even greater charity and penance. I was able to befriend and help pilgrims, strangers, the sick, the poor – in a word, all those whose need came to my notice. I also tried to be a successful peacemaker between members of my own family and between nations. And finally from Coimbra, where I had retired as a Franciscan to the monastery of the Poor Clares after the death of my husband, I set out and was able to bring about a lasting peace between my son Alfonso, now king of Portugal, and his son-in-law, the king of Castile.

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