

**St. Agnes of Prague (St. Agnes of Bohemia) -  
Highlights of Celeste Braden's Presentation  
February 8, 2020**

Celeste chose to report on St. Agnes because of 2 reasons: Celeste's mother's heritage is Czechoslovakian and she had learned about the 4 letters St. Clare wrote to St. Agnes encouraging her and her new convent in Prague. Much of Celeste's information about St. Agnes is from these 4 letters.

**History**

Her birth year is recorded as 1200, 1205, or 1211 depending on the source. She died on March 6, 1282 (at age 71).

She was beatified by Pope Pius IX in 1874. She was very loved by the people of Bohemia (now Czech Republic).

She was canonized in 1989 by Pope John Paul II.

Agnes was born into royalty, the daughter of Ottocar I, King of Bohemia. Her mother was Queen Constance of Hungary who was the aunt of St. Elizabeth of Hungary! A very strong faith heritage.

One of her brothers was King Wenceslaus I of Bohemia who reigned after King Ottocar died. (Not King Wenceslaus of the Christmas song). He and her mother were very supportive of Agnes. Her mother said she was quiet as a child and always held her hands as if praying.

**Betrothals**

Back then women were often betrothed for political reasons, especially if royalty. St. Agnes was betrothed to a man named Boleslaus when she was 3 years old! (He soon died). She was sent to be educated at a convent by Cistercian nuns.

Then she was betrothed to 2 different Henry's: Henry III of England and Henry the son of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor. However, she felt the call to serve God and not to be a queen. She talked to Pope Gregory IX who interceded for her with Frederick II since she was engaged to marry his son. He let her go without a war since he saw "she was taking Jesus as her spouse."

After her father died, her brother, King Wenceslaus, was very supportive of her. He gave her land, and from 1231 -1234 she built a hospital, a monastery and a friary on this land. St. Agnes became known for her hospital. About this time she learned of St. Clare, who became a big influence on St Agnes. St. Clare was about 10 years older. For the next 19 years they corresponded by letters which the friars would carry from Clare to Agnes. During all this time, they corresponded BUT never met face to face. St. Agnes became a Poor Clare Sister.

**St. Clare's influence**

St. Clare sent St. Agnes 5 nuns to help her get established. Around 1234-1236, St Agnes entered the St. Savior Convent in Prague and spent the next 50 years cloistered there. She was very humble and didn't want to be called an Abbess, but preferred "senior sister". She reminds us of St. Clare. She cooked, and mended the clothes of the lepers. She had the gifts of healing and prophecy. When her brother, King Wenceslaus was in battle with the Austrians, she foresaw his victory. Everybody should have such a sister!

Agnes had access to greater education because of her royalty by birth. As with St. Clare, she appealed to Pope Gregory IX for the vow of poverty. The popes, of course, wanted the nuns of the day to have a dowry and therefore be self sufficient. Agnes was obedient, but strong and persistent in this wish as she strongly felt she was called to poverty.

St. Agnes was known for prayer, obedience and mortification. Aren't we all called to these great virtues?

### **Themes of the Four letters**

Written over 19 years.

Letter # 1: very formal,, refers to Agnes as "Princess". She was never stingy but free with her great wealth. Would we be willing to give up our wealth?

Letter # 2: about prayer and contemplation.

Letter # 3: challenges of living a Franciscan life

Letter # 4: peace and joy

### **Pope John Paul II Canonization of St. Agnes**

"Agnes of Bohemia, although she lived in a period far removed from ours, still remains a shining example of Christian faith and heroic charity which invites us to reflection and imitation. She is an example of courage and spiritual help for the young people who generously consecrate themselves to religious life. For all those who follow Christ, she is a stimulus of charity practiced for everyone with total dedication, overcoming every barrier of race, nationality or mentality. She is the heavenly 'protectrous' of our difficult daily journey. To her we can therefore turn with great trust and hope."