

September 28th: Memorial of Saint Wenceslaus, Martyr

Gospel text (Jn 12:24-26): Jesus said to his disciples: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.”

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Today we celebrate the sanctity of a faithful layman who - never better said - was faithful to his baptism, loyally fulfilling his duties as ruler. Wenceslaus I of Bohemia (907-935), grandson of Queen Ludmila (also a saint), was chosen to succeed his father Vratislaus. The "Slavonic Legend" tells us that Wenceslaus "helped all the poor, dressed the naked, fed the hungry, welcomed the pilgrims, according to the evangelical teachings." All in all, what we would expect from a minimally responsible ruler!

As accustomed as we are to the electoral promises and, at the same time, to the disappointed promises, how glad we are to hear this biographical note referred to a ruler! But the lesson addressed to politicians and public servants of today in particular, also concerns each one of us, because — in some way — we are all “rulers”.

The Gospel speaks of "service": “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be.” (Jn 12,26). Where to find Jesus? Wherever any of your brothers is. Wenceslaus "did not tolerate any injustice against widows, he loved all men, poor and rich" ("Slavonic Legend"). Jesus suffers in the person of those in need around us.

We have to be conscious that many peripheries are closer than we think: there are "poor of solemnity", but there are also "poor of faith" ... and "poor of citizenship" (whose existence matters to no one, even less to administrative structures from cities or governments). Christ can be found there!

Wenceslaus was murdered by the envy of his brother Boleslav. When there is no spirit of service tampering and jealousy thrive. Wenceslaus fell to the ground - at the gates of the Stará Boleslav's church - saying: "At your hands, Lord, I entrust my spirit" (cf. Lk 23,46). But the grain of wheat "if it dies, it produces many seeds" (Jn 12,24). Thus, a short time later, Boleslav regretted what he had done and had his brother's remains taken inside the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague.