

Saint Clotilda, Queen of France

born 475, Lyons, France

died 3 June 545, Tours, France

When the King of Burgundy was killed in battle, he left four sons who fought bitterly among themselves. One of them was Clotilda's father. During this power struggle, her uncle Gundebald cut her father's throat, murdered her two brothers, and threw their mother down a well, leaving only Clotilda and her sister Sedelenda, alive. Sedelenda entered a convent, but Clotilda was brought to Gundebald's palace and prepared for a strategic marriage to Clovis, king of the Franks, when she was about seventeen.

In spite of her violent family, Clotilda was a gentle soul and devout Christian. Clovis, a pagan, agreed to have their first son baptised, but when the baby died, he accused Clotilda of angering his gods. Clotilda still convinced him to allow their second son to be baptised. Little Clodomir also became ill, and Clovis was furious, but Clotilda's prayers brought the child's recovery.

Clovis had not committed to Christianity, but as he prepared for a battle with the fierce Alemanni tribe, he prayed to Clotilda's God, vowing that if He would give him victory, he would be baptised. Tradition says that at the moment the Alemanni fled the battlefield, an angel brought Clotilda three white lilies. Clovis adopted this "fleur-de-lis" as his emblem and kept his vow to become a Christian. At the lavish ceremony, three thousand Franks followed his example and were baptized. Clovis went on to conquer southern Gaul and Burgundy. Encouraged by Clotilda, he governed humanely. After Clovis's death, his kingdom was divided among his four sons. In a tragic reprise of the war between her father and uncles, Clotilda lived to see her sons turn against one another. She could not bear to remain in Paris and retired to Tours, where she died.

Clotilda is the patron saint of adopted children.

The Genius of Clotilda:

Although her own children disappointed her, as biographer Godefroid Kurth writes, "Clotilda accomplished the mission assigned her by Providence: she was made the instrument in the conversion of a great people, who were to be for centuries the leaders of Catholic conversion."

Benediction:

The unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife."

1 Corinthians 7.14