

16th Century

Saint Stanislaus Kostka

Saint Stanislaus Kostka was born in 1550 in Rostków, a few kilometers from Warsaw. In 1564, when he was 14 years old, Stanislaus was sent to Vienna with his older brother to complete his studies with the Jesuits. He liked very much both his studies and the disciplined life of the college and already decided to enter the religious life. Unfortunately, the Jesuits had to close the college and Stanislaus, his brother, and their tutor were forced to leave, eventually accepting the hospitality of a nobleman of the Lutheran faith. Stanislaus maintained his exemplary



devotional lifestyle, despite the pressure from his brother, their tutor, and their host, all of whom criticized him for this. Stanislaus accepted all this with patience and submission, so much so that during the night, he prayed for them. When he was about 17 years old, Stanislaus became gravely ill. We should point out that the young man belonged to the Confraternity of St. Barbara, whose members commend themselves to her as their patron to receive Holy Communion at the hour of death. Stanislaus, therefore, had complete trust that this would take place, and in fact awakened his tutor, who was keeping watch beside him, with the exclamation: “Look, there is St. Barbara! Look, she has come with two Angels! She is bringing me the Blessed Sacrament!” And so it was: the Angels bent over him and gave him Holy Communion. The boy, now serene, lay down again on his bed. Several days later, to the surprise of all, Stanislaus got up, perfectly healed, stating that he wished to go to

church to personally thank the Lord, and disclosing his wish to become a Jesuit. The regional superior of the Jesuits refused him because of his young age and the lack of a *nihil obstat* (permit) from his parents, but Stanislaus did not lose heart and decided at once to attempt to enter the Jesuits in Germany or even in Italy itself. He cast off his expensive clothing and dressed in that of a peasant, traveling on foot towards Augusta, where the great St. Peter Canisius, provincial of the Jesuits, was residing. When his brother discovered his absence, he searched for him for a long time and began to feel remorse for his hostile conduct towards him. Meanwhile, St. Peter Canisius carefully evaluated the young man’s vocation and decided to send him to the Jesuit seminary in Rome. In the letter of presentation for the young Stanislaus he wrote: “Stanislaus, a noble son of Poland, a young man who is upright and full of zeal, was tested for a short time in the boarding house at Dillingen and was shown to be always diligent in fulfilling his duty and firm in his vocation...we expect great things from him.”



(1)



(3)



(2)

- (1) St. Stanislaus receiving Holy Communion from an Angel, Diocesan Museum of Milan
- (2) Tomb of St. Stanislaus, Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, Rome
- (3) Saint Barbara