

Saint Nicholas of Flüe

1417-1487

The Patron of Switzerland,
Saint Nicholas of Flüe, underwent many acts of violence on the part of the devil. From the very beginning of his eremitic life, he has to repel the blows and assaults of the Evil One.

The enemy tries in every way to dissuade him from his ascetical and prayerful lifestyle. In fact, he recounts that one day the devil disguises himself as a gentleman and begins to converse with him. The devil appears “dressed like a gentleman, in richly ornamented clothes, riding a beautiful horse. After a long conversation, he advised him to give up his resolve and live like everybody else because, otherwise, he could not merit eternal life.” The Saint does not fall into the trap and continues his penitential and

him to abandon himself completely to the will of God. He understands that God is calling him to leave everything and to follow Him. He then asks for three graces: 1) to obtain the consent of his wife Dorothea and his older sons (the eldest is 20 and can become the head of the family, but the last one is hardly 13 weeks old); 2) not to be tempted later on to go back; home 3) and, finally, if God so wishes it, to live without drinking or eating. All his requests are granted. On October 16, 1467, on the feast of St. Gaul,



Cell where he lived as a hermit



eremitic life. A witness recounts that “often the devil invaded his cell with such a loud crash that it seemed the whole building was about to come down. Sometimes, appearing under terrifying guises, he would grab on to his hair and drag him out despite his resistance.”

But Saint Nicholas never allows himself to be overcome. On the contrary, he doubles his prayer and his confidence in the Lord, convinced that even if the fury of the devil bears down on him, grace will never be lacking to him.

Saint Nicholas was born in Flüeli, in the Obwald region, in Switzerland, in March 1417. He is a God-fearing peasant who was asked to be a magistrate and judge in his Canton. He abandons this office because he has not been able to obtain the abolition of a sentence he considered unjust. He is married and has children when, at the age of 50, he hears the voice of God. One day, while praying to God to give him the grace of contemplation, he sees a cloud from which a voice comes forth ordering

after saying goodbye to Dorothea whom he would always call “my dearest wife” and to his children, he sets off like a pilgrim. He arrives in the locality of Liestal, in the Canton of Basle, where a farmer convinces him to remain there. The next night, while he is about to fall asleep, “from Heaven came a light and a ray which pierced his entrails, as if a knife had struck him.” Troubled, he returns whence he came and decides to settle down in a field in Ranfit, in a valley not far from his home. For twenty years he remains in that place, living in a little cell made of wood, near which the inhabitants of the village build a chapel. In awe of his unmitigated fast (in fact he nourished himself only with the Eucharist), and seeing the increase in his reputation for sanctity, the inhabitants of the Canton turn to him for advice. His action brings about peace among the various cities. To all he entrusts his message: “In all things mercy counts more than justice.” He dies on March 21, 1487, and was canonized by Pius XII in 1947.