

“MY ENTIRE EFFORTS
ARE ALWAYS
IN ALL THINGS
TO RECOGNISE AND FOLLOW
AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE
THE WILL OF GOD
EVEN
IN ALL ITS COMPLETENESS.”



PRAYER

O Blessed Emperor Charles, you accepted the difficult duty and burdensome challenges of your life as the commission of God trusting alone in the Holy Trinity for all your thoughts, decisions and actions.

We beseech you to intercede with God on our behalf giving us confidence and courage so that even in the most difficult situations of our earthly lives we may not lose heart, but continue faithfully in the footsteps of Christ.

Ask for us the grace that our hearts may be moulded into the likeness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Help us to work with compassion and strength for the poor and needy, to fight with courage for peace in our homes and in the world, and in every situation to trustingly place our lives in God's hand, so that like you we may belong to Him through Christ our Lord.

Support the veneration of the Blessed Emperor Charles
and become (without fee) a member of:
Emperor Charles' Prayer League for Peace among Peoples
P. Marian Gruber, O. Cist.

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Portrait: Michael Fuchs



BLESSED
EMPEROR CHARLES
PRINCE OF PEACE
FOR A
UNITED EUROPE

Charles of Austria was born on the 17th August 1887 at Persenbeug castle in Lower Austria. His parents were the Archduke Otto of Austria and the Princess Maria Josepha of Saxony, the sister of the last King of Saxony. The Emperor Franz-Joseph I was Charles' Great Uncle.

Charles was brought up consciously as a Catholic, receiving a mainly military but also political training. From his earliest childhood his life was accompanied by a prayer group, after a nun blessed with the marks of the stigmata, had foretold *great suffering and personal attacks* for Charles in the future. From an early age, Charles developed a great love of Holy Communion and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Throughout his life he sought to resolve all important decisions through prayer.

On the 21st October 1911, he married Princess Zita of Bourbon, daughter of the Duke of Parma. In ten years of happy and exemplary marriage, they were blessed with eight children.

On the 28th June 1914, the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo resulted in Charles becoming the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The death of the Emperor Franz-Joseph in the middle of the war was followed by *Charles' enthronement on the 21st November 1916 as Emperor of Austria*. On the 30th December 1916 he was crowned Apostolic King of Hungary.

For Charles the inheritance of crowns was a personal vocation given to him from God's hand. This duty in the service of his peoples was both unrenounceable and sacred. It was to be carried out if necessary in loving submission even at the expense of his own life as a true *Follower of Christ*. In the universal and faith-serving tradition of his house, he saw the alternative to nationalism and the other fatal currents of the twentieth century whose beginning would encompass the destruction of his empire. Throughout all this, the Empress was his strongest human support.

Charles' rule expressed *Catholic Social Teaching*. His highly personal efforts to secure a *peace* were at the centre of his activities throughout a terrible war. On account of his political ideas, his beatification honoured him as the pioneer and patron of a truly united Europe.

He created a *social legal framework* which is partly in force even today. Moreover, as practically the only statesman who was himself also a soldier, he had personal experience of the horrors of the front. As Commander-in Chief he made great efforts to *humanise military tactics* where conditions permitted.

Charles saw himself opposed by a violent propaganda inspired by international forces which actively worked for the destruction of his empire and therefore had a vested interest in *discrediting him*

personally. These forces influenced also large parts of the leading internal military, social and political circles.

His constant *sensitive conscience and courageous conduct* enabled the transition to a post-war order to occur without a civil war. Nevertheless both he and his wife were deprived of their homeland, birthright and practically all of their possessions.

Loyal to his coronation oath and the express wishes of the Pope who feared Bolshevism was set to engulf central Europe, Charles tried after the war to take up again his ruling responsibilities *in Hungary*. Two attempts failed owing to the treason and dishonesty of his subordinates. King and Queen were first imprisoned and then exiled to Madeira, together with their children.

There the family lived in impoverished conditions where the already physically weak Emperor contracted a painful illness which finally killed him. Just as he had accepted dutifully the inheritance of crowns, he now accepted with equanimity also from God's hand the cross of *exile, painful illness and death*, again as a sacrifice for his peoples.

Pardoning and forgiving all, he died on the 1st April 1922 his gaze fixed on the Blessed Sacrament.

The motto of his life was as he repeated on his death-bed: