Icon of St. Batilda, queen. Other forms of her name are

Bathilidis, Bathild, Bathchilde, and Bauteur

St. Batilda

Feast: Jan. 30

An Anglo-Saxon by birth, St. Batilda was captured in 641 by Danish raiders and sold to Erchinoald, the chief officer of the palace of Clovis II, King of the Franks. She quickly gained favour, for she had charm, beauty, and a graceful and gentle nature. She also won the affection of her fellow-servants, for she would do them many kindnesses such as cleaning their shoes and mending their clothes, and her bright and attractive disposition endeared her to them all.

The officer, impressed by her fine qualities, wished to make her his wife, but Batilda, alarmed at the prospect, both by reason of her modesty and of her humble status, disguised herself in old and ragged clothes, and hid herself away among the lower servants of the palace; and he, not finding her in her usual place, and thinking she had fled, married another woman.

Her next suitor, however, was none other than the king himself, for when she had discarded her old clothes and appeared again in her place, he noticed her grace and beauty, and declared his love for her. Thus in 649, the 19-year-old slave girl Batilda became Queen of France, amidst the applause of the court and the kingdom. She bore Clovis three sons: Clotaire III, Childeric II, and Theodoric III--all of whom became kings. On the death of Clovis (c. 655-657), she was appointed regent in the name of her eldest son, who was only five, and ruled capably for eight years with Saint Eligius (f.d. December 1) as her advisor.

She made a good queen and ruled wisely. Unlike many who rise suddenly to high place and fortune, she never forgot that she had been a slave, and did all within her power to relieve those in captivity. We are told that "Queen Batilda was the holiest and most devout of women; her pious munificence knew no bounds; remembering her own bondage, she set apart vast sums for the redemption of captives." She helped promote Christianity by seconding the zeal of Saint Owen (f.d. August 24), Saint Leodegar (f.d. October 2), and many other bishops.

At that time the poorer inhabitants of France were often obliged to sell their children as slaves to meet the crushing taxes imposed upon them. Batilda reduced this taxation, forbade the purchase of Christian slaves and the sale of French subjects, and declared that any slave who set foot in France would from that moment be free. Thus, this enlightened women earned the love of her people and was a pioneer in the abolition of slavery.

She also founded many abbeys, such as Corbie, Saint-Denis, and Chelles, which became civilised settlements in wild and remote areas inhabited only by prowling wolves and other wild beasts. Under her guidance forests and waste land were reclaimed, cornland and pasture took their place, and agriculture flourished. She built hospitals and sold her jewellery to supply the needy. Finally, when Clotaire came of age, she retired to her own royal abbey of Chelles, near Paris, where she served the other nuns with humility and obeyed the abbess like the least of the sisters.

She died at Chelles before she had reached her 50th birthday. Death touched her with a gentle hand; as she died, she said she saw a ladder reaching from the altar to heaven, and up this she climbed in the company of angels.

She is the patroness of children. Holy Mother Batilda, pray to God for us!

Source: http://www.allmercifulsavior.com/icons/Icons-Batilda.htm