Holy European monarch, St. Louis IX, the 13th century king of France. (This is the Louis that Missouri's largest city is named after.) St. Louis was regarded as the first among equals by the kings and rulers of Europe, not only because he commanded the largest army and ruled the wealthiest kingdom, but also because of his admirable character.

Each day, Louis welcomed 13 guests from among the poor to dine with him, and a large number of poor were fed near his palace. During Advent and Lent, all who presented themselves were provided a meal, with Louis himself often serving them. Throughout his kingdom, Louis founded hospitals, visited the sick, and kept lists of the needy, whom he assisted regularly. He chose St. Francis as his patron and imitated him in caring for lepers.

When his kingdom came into possession of the believed Crown of Thorns, Louis carried the holy relic in procession barefooted. (This event is depicted in our window.) To house this and other relics connected to Christ's Passion, Louis had the Gothic *Sainte Chapelle* built in Paris. It remains one of the most beautiful churches in the world.

Louis' domestic reforms promoted justice. Before his reign, disputing parties could opt for a "trial by battle," basically a court sanctioned and regulated duel. St. Louis replaced this with a form of examination of witnesses and encouraged the use of written records in court. His personal reputation for fairness caused the rulers of Europe to chose him to arbitrate the quarrels between them.

Abroad, Louis led two unsuccessful crusades to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims. In these campaigns more died from disease than battles, including Louis himself, at age 44. St. Louis was canonized 27 years later, making him France's only canonized king. His feast day is August 25th.

Good King St. Louis, pray for us!