

SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA

1550-1568

Saint Stanislaus Kostka, at the age of seventeen, was gravely ill, so much so that he seemed very much near the end of his life. In that time, he lived as the guest of a noble Protestant who would not even permit him to be visited by a Catholic priest. Stanislaus was not discouraged and one night, in the presence of his tutor, he received Communion in a miraculous way. A few days later he recovered and decided to enter the Jesuit order.



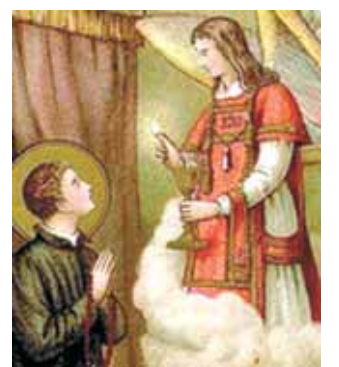
Saint Stanislaus receives Holy Communion from an Angel. Diocesan Museum of Milan



Tomb of Saint Stanislaus, St. Andrew's Church at the Quirinal, Rome



Saint Barbara



Saint Stanislaus Kostka was born in 1550 in Rostkow, a few kilometers from Warsaw. In 1564, at age fourteen, Stanislaus was sent to Vienna with his older brother to complete their studies with the Jesuits. He liked his studies and life in the college very much, and considered dedicating himself to religious life. Unfortunately the Jesuits had to close the college, and Stanislaus, his brother, and their tutor were forced to leave, accepting the hospitality of a Lutheran nobleman. Stanislaus maintained exemplary religious behavior, regardless of the pressures from his brother, tutor, and host - who all criticized him. This was all accepted with patience and submission by Stanislaus, and during the night he even prayed for them. At about age seventeen, Stanislaus became gravely ill. It is necessary to note that he belonged to the

Fraternity of Saint Barbara - whose members trust their patroness to bring them Communion upon the point of death. In this Stanislaus had total faith, and in fact one night woke up his tutor, who was keeping his vigil, exclaiming: "Here is Saint Barbara! Here she is, with two angels! She's bringing me the Blessed Sacrament!"

And so it was, the angels knelt by him and he was given Holy Communion. The young man, serene, laid back on his bed. A few days later, to everyone's surprise, Stanislaus awoke perfectly healed, declaring that he wanted to go personally to thank the Lord and manifest his desire to become a religious. The regional father of the Jesuits rejected him because of his young age and because he had no

father or legal guardian, but Stanislaus did not lose his faith and decided to immediately try Germany or even Italy. He removed his fine clothes, put on those of a farmer, and walked towards Augusta where the great Saint Peter Canisius resided, provincial of the Jesuits in Germany. Noticing his absence, his brother searched for him and began to feel remorse for his hostile conduct. Meanwhile, Saint Peter Canisius seriously evaluated the vocation of the young man and decided to send him to the Jesuit seminary in Rome. In his letter of recommendation of Stanislaus, he wrote: "Stanislaus, noble Pole, a just man, full of zeal, admitted for a certain time to the college of Dillingen, showed himself to always be exact in his duty and firm in his vocation.... we hope and expect great things from him."