

3. November 2025
THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

**"Saint Ida of Toggenburg:
From a life in a palace to seclusion in the forest"**

While reviewing the saints celebrated on November 3rd in the Calendar of Saints, I was particularly moved by the story of Saint Ida of Toggenburg, a thirteenth-century hermit.

Her pious father, Count Hartmann, married her to Count Henry of Toggenburg when she was 17. She moved with her husband to Switzerland. This nobleman, owner of many castles and respected as a good warrior, had a very irascible temperament. Ida, raised in the fear of God and in virtue, endured him with patience and meekness. The couple could not have children, so Ida took in the poor as her own, becoming an “angel of comfort” to many in the villages and cottages. She also cared for all the castle’s inhabitants and guided them toward a pious life through her words and example. She was beloved by all.

It seemed that her life would pass peacefully, dedicated to the glory of God and the blessing of others. But suddenly, everything changed.

There was a man in the castle who abused the count’s trust. He had taken a liking to the countess, and after she flatly rejected him, he tried to seduce her by force in the forest. But her cries of distress were heard by a squire, who saved her from the man’s hands. Ida, who had a big heart, forgave him when she saw that he was apparently repentant, and asked the squire to keep quiet about the incident so that the culprit would not be exposed to her husband’s wrath.

However, that wicked man—whom legend calls Dominico—plotted the misfortune of Ida and the squire. He managed to arouse the count’s jealousy by claiming that his wife preferred the squire. One day, he took advantage of an opportunity to stir up the count’s excessive anger. A raven had taken Ida’s wedding ring and placed it in its nest in the forest. The same squire who had saved the countess happened to find the ring and, not knowing it belonged to his mistress, put it on his finger and showed it to everyone. This was the perfect “proof” for Dominico to use to convince the count of his wife’s

infidelity. When the count saw Ida's wedding ring on the squire's finger, he could not contain his rage. He tied the poor man to the tail of a wild horse and had him dragged down the mountain. Meanwhile, Ida was thrown out of a window 800 feet (about 250 meters) high onto a large rock.

However, the Lord saved Ida, and she survived. She then began a new life. She retreated deep into the forest, where she found a cave suitable for her. She fed on what she found in the forest and lived in complete solitude. She undoubtedly missed Holy Mass, sermons, and the sacraments in general, but God granted her His presence and comfort in other ways. Thus, for seventeen years, she lived a life imbued with God amidst nature. What a turn her life had taken! As the beloved countess, she had survived her husband's attempt to murder her. Now, with her soul filled with gratitude, she had come to feel at home in solitude with the Lord and was happier than ever.

After these seventeen years, a hunter from the castle tracked her down with his dogs and recognized her. He quickly went to tell his lord the news. At first, the count did not believe him. His conscience had tormented him for many years because of the double murder he had committed, and his soul found no rest day or night.

Finally, the count allowed himself to be convinced, followed the hunter, and indeed found his wife in the forest. He prostrated himself before her and, for the love of God, begged for her forgiveness. She did not hesitate to grant it and even asked him to forgive Dominico. However, she refused the count's request to return with him to the castle because she had promised the Lord that she would serve Him in solitude until the end of her days. Nevertheless, she asked her husband to build her a small hut next to the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the meadow. The count was saddened but submitted to her wish. Ida then left the forest to live in the hut, where she continued to serve the Lord through prayer, contemplation, fasting, night vigils, and so on. She now had the opportunity to attend Holy Mass, receive the sacraments, and enjoy the Benedictines' singing from the neighboring monastery in Fischingen.

However, her fame spread, and more and more people came to see her or ask for her intercession. When the number of people seeking her out became too great, Ida asked the nuns of Fischingen for a cloistered cell, where she could spend her last years in prayer and mortification. A confraternity was founded in her honor, and St. Ida's tomb remains in the Fischingen church to this day.

Once again, we have witnessed an extraordinary story. Which of Saint Ida's qualities should we admire most: her patience, her willingness to forgive, or her decision to continue living as a hermit even after being reconciled with her husband? Ultimately, we can only marvel at how God guides people's lives and what He can do through them. Saint Ida's testimony is imprinted on God's heart and on the heart of the Church. Even now, we can rejoice in her and ask for her intercession so that we may live out our vocations, whatever guidance the Lord may give us. In eternity, we will know her even more closely and praise God with her forever.

Meditation on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-wisdom-of-god/>