



21. April 2026

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

“St. Brother Konrad von Parzham (1818–1894): An apostle of holiness!”

After my Easter reflections and a consideration of the last things, I am now, so to speak, turning my daily reflection toward the liturgical season of Easter. I would like to continue what I began in earlier posts—namely, to regularly take a look at the saints of the day. These need not always be those commemorated in the daily liturgy; they may also include lesser-known or regionally venerated saints who nonetheless appear in the official directories.

The saints are true witnesses to the Gospel, whether their holiness was expressed in great outward works or blossomed quietly in hidden ways. They are an immeasurable gift to the Church and, thus, to all humanity. Only God knows what graces have been poured out upon the world through their lives.

Today we turn our gaze to St. Brother Konrad von Parzham, from whom this remarkable saying originates:

“I am always well. I am always happy and content in God; I accept everything with gratitude from our dear Heavenly Father, whether it be suffering or joy. After all, He knows what is best for us, and so I am always blissful in God.”

What kind of person can utter such words? If the dimension of suffering were not mentioned, one might think St. Konrad were speaking to us from paradise. Yet the idea of paradise is not so far off when we hear him speak this way: a paradise in which even suffering is embraced in the innermost depths of a soul filled with God.

Johannes Birndorfer grew up in a Christian family in Parzham in southern Germany, and from an early age his virtuous life stood out so clearly that his contemporaries called him “Angel.” At first, as a layman in the Third Order of St. Francis, he led an apostolic life already deeply marked by a spirit of silence, frequent prayer—even while working—and a ready willingness to take on all the tasks required on his parents’ large farm.

At the age of thirty, in 1849, Johannes Birndorfer—a great devotee of Mary—entered the Capuchin Order in Altötting as a candidate. At his investiture as a tertiary, he received the religious name Konrad. He made his profession as a lay brother on October 4, 1852, and eventually became the gatekeeper of St. Anna Monastery in Altötting. He would carry out this service for forty-one years, with his duties remaining essentially unchanged throughout that time. Year after year, countless pilgrims with a wide range of intentions came to the renowned Marian pilgrimage site of Altötting, and Brother Konrad was often their first point of contact at the monastery gate. He was always there for the poor with self-sacrificing love. He also took on the responsibilities of sacristan. Despite his heavy workload, he is said to have shown patience and kindness in dealing with all who came to him.

He found peace in his deep piety, his zeal for prayer and penance, and his ascetic way of life, which was marked by humility and a sense of duty. He was also granted the privilege of receiving Holy Communion daily. He is said to have possessed a gift for discerning the heart, through which he recognized many character traits in his fellow human beings.

This beautiful quote from Br. Konrad—that he is always well—is obviously not due to a sunny disposition, but stems from his deep connection with the Lord. He himself describes his life as follows:

"My way of life consists of loving and suffering, marveling at, worshiping, and admiring God's nameless love for his creatures. In this love of God, I find no end. Nothing stands in my way. There I am most intimately united with my dear God, Mary, and the saints. Even amidst my many duties, I am all the more intimately united with Him. I speak with Him quite intimately, like a child with his father."

It was certainly not always easy for Br. Konrad to meet the many demands placed upon him. The saint lets us know how he dealt with difficulties:

"The means I use to practice humility and gentleness is none other than the Cross. This is my book. Only the gaze upon the Cross teaches me in every situation how I should behave. There I learn patience and humility, gentleness, and to bear every cross with patience."

In Brother Konrad we encounter a life rich and fruitful in the Lord, for his goodness became known to many. His example encourages us simply to walk the path to which we are called and, in doing so, to serve the Lord and His Kingdom. What is essential is to live in the most intimate relationship with God and to draw strength for our service from that communion. The source of God's love is inexhaustible, and it found a noble vessel in Brother Konrad, who received this love and passed it on.

Pope Benedict XVI, who loved the pilgrimage site of Altötting—where Brother Konrad is buried and still receives many pilgrims at his grave today—spoke very aptly about the saint:

“He truly took the last place, as the Lord recommends in the parable, as a humble porter. From his cell, he could always look toward the tabernacle, always be with it. From this vantage point, he learned the indestructible kindness with which he met the people who rang the bell at his gate almost without interruption. To all of them, without many words, he gave a message through his kindness and humanity that was worth more than mere words.”

St. Brother Konrad, pray for us, that our lives may also bear fruit for the Kingdom of God!

Reflection on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/acts-of-the-apostles-acts-751-6081a-the-speech-and-martyrdom-of-st-stephen/>

Reflection on today's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-spiritual-hunger/>