St. Wenceslas the Patron Saint of the Czech State

Wenceslas (Václav) of the Přemyslid dynasty (907–935) was canonized as the first Czech in 938, 3 years after his death. He was the only Czech saint inscribed in the official Roman Catholic calendar.

One of the most celebrated Czech saints: the patron saint, martyr and a key personality played an important role in the emancipation of the Czech state who cemented the Přemyslid dynasty within the framework of Christian Europe.

On September 28, 935, Wenceslas was murdered in the town of Stará Boleslav as the victim of a plot orchestrated by his brother Boleslav in a ruthless bid for power. Entire families of Wenceslas' supporters - even innocents – were murdered. Subsequently, in 938, it was Boleslav himself who had his brother's remains transported to Prague and pushed for his canonization.

The cult of St. Wenceslas started to spread at the end of the 10th century. His portrait together with the Přemyslid coat-of-arms and pennant symbolized the country, while the name Václav (Wenceslas) became synonymous with Bohemia and the Czech royal crown.

Wenceslas built numerous churches in Bohemia, such as the rotunda of Saint Vitus at the Prague Castle. He was deeply respected as a pious, moral, and educated personality. An intelligent man who promoted the Christian faith and took care of the poor, the sick, the widowed, and the orphaned by doing charitable deeds. His remains are buried in the Saint Wenceslas Chapel of the Saint Vitus Cathedral at the Prague Castle, seat of Czech kings and presidents.

Indeed, he became a subject of many legends, including two of the very first Old Slavonic tales. The internationally renowned English Christmas carol Good King Wenceslas, a story about a Bohemian king going on a journey and braving harsh winter weather to give alms to a poor peasant on the Feast of Stephen, is based on his life.

Since 2000, September 28 has been celebrated as the Day of Czech Statehood, the St. Wenceslas' Day.

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The National Day of the Czech Republic

In 1918, the future Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk declared the vision of independent Central European nations, cooperating in union to contribute to the peace and common welfare of the world. Czechoslovakia, the newly created democratic homeland for Czechs, Slovaks, and other nationalities, was created on October 28, 1918. This memorable day became the Czech National Day.

Founded on liberal democratic principles, Czechoslovakia prospered in the interwar period. Yet, the nation state's dreams were dashed as foreign powers appeased Hitler during the Munich Conference in 1938. Albeit resisting the occupation from abroad and within, the innocent paid the ultimate price when the Nazis annihilated many, including the entire Czech villages of Lidice and Ležáky. At the end of WWII, democracy was restored; only for the flame to dim again in 1948 with the communist coup d'état. The people's voices were heard in the 1968 Prague Spring but then the Soviet tanks rolled in on 21 August, 1968.

The bloodless 1989 Velvet Revolution reinstated the multi-party democratic government. Václav Havel, a dissident and playwright became the first freely elected President of the then Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic. In 1993, the Czechs and Slovaks went their own way in the peaceful move that split the country into two, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Since joining the NATO in 1999, the Czech Republic has partaken in number of NATO operations.

Czech Republic became a member of the EU in 2004, having held its first EU Presidency in 2009.

Currently, the country makes preparations for the second Presidency in 2022.