Louis IX Encyclopedia Article

Louis IX

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Louis IX

1214-1270

French king and crusader, Louis was the son of King Louis VIII and his wife, Queen Blanche of Castille. Although fourth in line, the deaths of three of his brothers made Louis heir to the throne. When his father died in 1226, Louis IX became king at 12. Under the guidance of his mother, Louis set out to end the long struggle between France and the Plantagenets of England for control of French soil. At 15, he commanded French troops in a battle against Henry III, forcing the British ruler to withdraw. Louis led two crusades during his reign, the first, to the Holy Land, was an attempt to capture Jerusalem from the Muslims. After a valiant effort, his troops, wearied from battle and decimated by the plague, were forced to retreat. Louis's second crusade took him to Tunisia. After a series of victories, his troops again fell to disease. The ailing king did not survive the crusade, and passed on his kingdom to his son Philip before dying in August, 1270. Despite his defeats, Louis IX was renowned for his courage and wisdom, and was often asked by other monarchs to arbitrate disputes. He was canonized by Pope Boniface VIII in 1297, becoming the only French king to achieve sainthood.