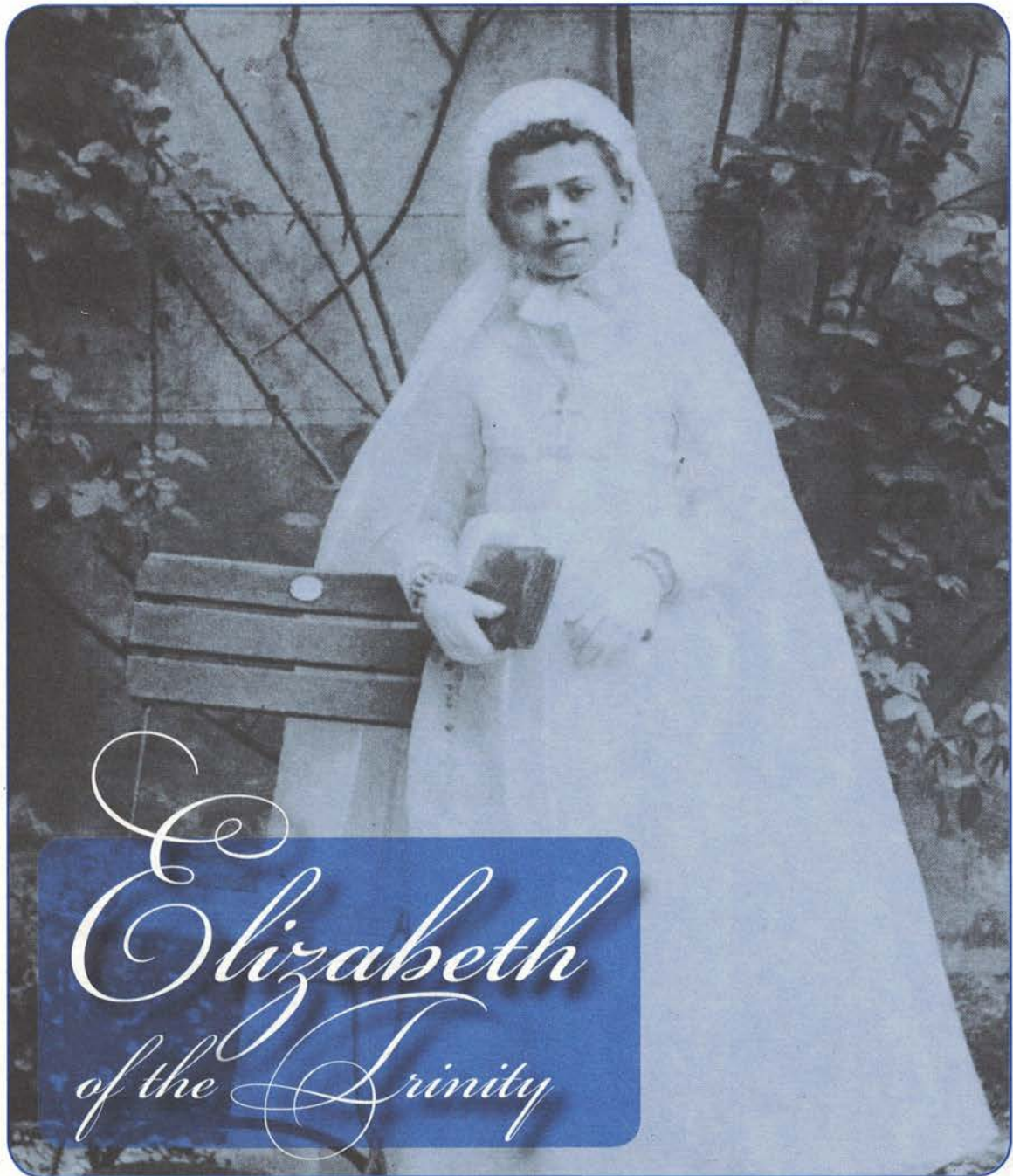


# CARMEL CLARION

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2009 VOLUME XXV NO. 1



*Elizabeth  
of the Trinity*

# CARMEL CLARION

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2009 VOLUME XXV NO. 1

*Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.*

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# Editorial

**D**uring 2009 we will be focusing on the life and writings of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. As you know, this young French Carmelite lived and died at the turn of the 20th century. We are seeking to gain a better understanding of the way she lived the mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity in her life, as well as the heavenly mission she accepted: to teach us how to let our souls be a paradise where God can take His Delight. During the first two issues this year, we begin with a two-part article called *Spiritual Journey* by Fr. Marie-Michel Philipon. Part I "Interior Life in the World" provides us with a perspective of her early life before Carmel. Jennifer Moorcroft gives us a look at Elizabeth's teen years; a time of developing strong relationships with family and friends; a time of travel; a time of participating in the gaiety of the World. Even with full knowledge of these experiences, her heart never stopped yearning to be in silence with her beloved. Her greatest contribution to us was the ability to articulate to religious and lay alike her experience of the indwelling Trinity in her own life; and to provide counsel which impacts lives. Christina Nunn provides us with an excellent overview of her correspondence in Elizabeth of the Trinity: *The Witness of her Letters from Carmel*. During the coming year, I hope you will enjoy our sharing of some of these letters.

Over the years, many of you were blessed to attend retreats given by Fr. Ted Centala on Bl. Elizabeth. He put the words of her prayer, "My God O Blessed Trinity" to the music of a familiar hymn. We hope you enjoy singing it together throughout the year.

I suggested the image of St. Elijah for the Congress prayer card because the woodcutting is a personal favorite that hangs outside my door. He is a model of our Congress theme with his fire for both prayer and action. The torch he holds high represents the flame of the spirit we are touched by when we respond to God's call to enter Carmel. True prayer leads to zeal and action for the Lord God. The dynamic movement implied in the wheels of the chariot encourages us to meet our challenges, just as he did, for we are driven by the same spirit.

We are so pleased with the amazing response throughout the country of OCDS being called to Baltimore on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Attendees of all Regions in the Washington Province are almost equally represented: Mid-Atlantic – 22%, Mid-West and Florida – 22%, Northeast – 17%, Washington Area – 21%; and 18% joining us from either the California or Oklahoma Provinces, or Canada. Our hope is that the experience of the Congress will enliven and deepen our Carmelite life, not only as individuals, but also as communities.

The program is finished and is included in the center of this issue of the *Clarion*. In addition to spiritual conferences by four Carmelite friars, 17 seculars will be participating on the panels and leading workshops. They bring a wealth of experience overcoming challenges and enjoying successes in their own communities; as well as a wonderful refectation of Christian maturity and love of the charism we share. Please continue to register for all are welcome.

Fr. Regis



*The triangle traditionally symbolizes the mystery of the Trinity. The three colors (red on the outside, yellow, and blue on the inside) of the rainbow, equal but different, from which all other colors are produced, represent the Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The rainbow manifests the radiant presence of God, experienced by Elizabeth through the Indwelling Trinity.*

Art by Peggy Wilkinson, O.C.D.S. *The Spiritual Doctrine of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, by M. M. Philipon, O.P. 5th Printing, 1985 by Teresian Charism Press

# Spiritual Journey

M. M. Philipon, O.P.

“A Carmelite: in everything she bears the mark of this predestination.”

Before we seek to sound analytically the depths of this soul, one general remark is called for: Elizabeth of the Trinity became a saint only after eleven years of struggle and constant retouching of details. Even after she had entered Carmel and had there spent several years of silently faithful religious life, it remained for her to undergo, at the hands of God, those purifications by which He brings heroic souls to the unchanging peace of transforming union, above all joy and all suffering.

## PART I - INTERIOR LIFE IN THE WORLD

### Childish Failings

As the daughter and granddaughter of soldiers, Elizabeth Catez bore in her veins the quickly roused blood of warriors. She inherited a fiery temperament. When not more than three or four years old, she once shut herself into a room of the family dwelling and stamped and raged behind the door, kicking that offending bulwark furiously all the while.

Until she was seven, these violent outbursts marked her childhood. It was impossible to control them. There was nothing to do but wait for the storm to subside of itself. Then her mother reasoned with her and taught her to overcome herself through love. “That child has a will of iron,” her teacher would say. “She is determined to have what she wants.”

She was but a child when her father died in her arms and left her with only her mother and her sister Marguerite. Marguerite was a gentle and retiring girl and Elizabeth shared every hour of her life with her until her entrance into Carmel.

Undisturbed by any other serious event, life flowed along in Dijon in happy, Christian fashion.

### Conversion

Her first confession wrought a change in Elizabeth’s soul which she later called her *conversion*, a shock “which caused a complete awakening with respect to the things of God.” (S6) From that day forward she resolutely entered upon the struggle against her predominant faults: anger and oversensitiveness. This hard phase of spiritual warfare was to last until she was eighteen. The priest who prepared her for her first Communion and knew her well told an intimate friend of her mother: “With her temperament, Elizabeth Catez will be either a saint or a demon.”

This first contact with Jesus, hidden in the Host, was decisive. “In the depths of her soul she heard His voice.” The “Master took possession of her heart so completely that thenceforth her one desire was to give her life to Him.” (P47). To the astonishment of those around her, a sudden and profound change took place in Elizabeth and she began to



Elizabeth – age 4 with her doll, Jeannette

make great strides toward that calm self-command which was soon to characterize her. One day, after Holy Communion, she seemed to hear the word "Carmel" spoken in her soul. She understood. She was only fourteen when, on another occasion, during her thanksgiving, she heard an interior call from the Master and she instantly made a vow of virginity in order to belong to Him alone. She was to die faithful to that vow and as pure as a lily.

Her poems, written between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, speak only the names of her beloved Jesus, her heavenly Mother, Mary, her angel guardian, the saints, and Joan of Arc, "the Maid whom none can dishonor." (P25).

Carmel had a particularly irresistible fascination for her, and her verses sing the praises of the externals of the Carmelite: the coarse serge habit, the white veil, the cheap wooden rosary, the hairshirt chastising the flesh and, lastly, the ring worn by the bride of Christ. (P38). As she lived very near her dear Carmel, she often went onto the balcony of her room, "sadly dreaming," and gazed long and fixedly at the monastery. (P40). Everything spoke to her heart: the chapel hiding the Master of her life, the ringing of the Angelus, the knell for the dead, the cells with their "tiny windows" and poor furniture, where the nuns rested after a long day of redemptive prayer. She was seventeen and longed for the realization of her dream, still so remote. She did try once to escape "this sad, seductive world" by having a priest friend speak to her mother, but Mme. Catez could not be moved. So, in prayer, Elizabeth confidently awaited God's hour.

## Social Life

After that attempt, she was claimed by a constant round of amusements and parties, in which Madame Catez quietly urged her to take part. Perhaps, without wishing to dissuade her daughter from her vocation, she secretly cherished the hope that God would not take her from her. Nor did Elizabeth need to be urged; it was enough for her that her mother wished it. She went everywhere and apparently always enjoyed herself. "She never seemed the least bit bored," is the constant refrain of those who knew her. No one could have guessed that Elizabeth was the future Carmelite whose intense interior life, wholly hidden within herself in Christ, was to bring to the Unchanging Trinity a most moving testimony of silence and recollection.

She made a beautiful figure, always simply but irreproachably dressed, and she received several offers of marriage. Typically, she bought new gloves for one of her last evening affairs, not wishing anyone to suspect her departure. She joyously took part in the social life of her circle, shunning nothing but sin.

## Good Works

Throughout the year, at Dijon, Elizabeth gave herself to good works in her parish. She helped with the choir, she taught catechism to the children and to older first communicants whom the little girls made fun of, and did whatever else she was asked. She also had charge of a club for "tough" children who worked in

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*"In the depths of her soul she heard His voice" at her first contact with Jesus, hidden in the Host.*

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*Elizabeth will soon be nineteen.*

the tobacco industry. They were so passionately fond of her that she had to conceal her address from them to keep them from overrunning her home. As Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, she later followed their lives and protected them with a Carmelite's silent prayer.

With exquisite tact, Elizabeth was at home with everyone, everywhere. She loved childhood because of its innocence and God granted her a wonderful gift of interesting youngsters. At parties for the family and friends, she sometimes had as many as forty children around her. She liked to get up tableaux, particularly of Jesus in the midst of the Doctors, and we find her dressing up her little company and teaching it how to act. She herself wrote both script and music for the plays and she was especially clever at arranging children's dances. Finally, when all the excitement of the play had died down, chairs would be set out in the garden and she would read to them while, all ears, they listened to "Patira." Sometimes they teased her to join in their games and she would smilingly give in. During the month of May, the little group she took to church used to make her stay in the back, as near the door as possible. And, "scarcely was the tabernacle closed than we would drag her off for a walk. Then she would make up wonderful stories to tell us. Elizabeth Catez always fitted into every mood."<sup>1</sup>

Let us remember this characteristic. In the cloister as in the world, Elizabeth of the Trinity tried not to seem different from others. With the rest, she appreciated the good tarts made by Francine, the best cook of Dijon, and laughed gaily at the heavy dinners typical of the south of France which filled them to the bursting point for three days after.

## Summer Holidays

As the summer holidays came round, the family always left Dijon and went on long journeys. Thus Elizabeth visited Switzerland, the Alps, the Jura, the Vosges, the Pyrenees, and a considerable portion of France.



*"I am wild over these mountains... I feel as though I could never live without them."*

Her letters show that she enjoyed herself; she was made much of in the whirling round of visits to relatives and friends and became strongly attached to a few chosen friends. More often, however, she seemed simply to mingle in the groups of girls of her own age, having, from motives both of charity and good breeding, a happy companionship with all.

"Our stay at Tarbes has been nothing but a long succession of pleasures: afternoon dances and musicales, country excursions, one after the other. The people at Tarbes are delightful. I have come to know a number of girls, each more charming than the rest. When X, who is a very good musician, and I were together, we never left the piano, and all the music shops in Tarbes could not keep us supplied with pieces to play at sight." (L13).

"We are leaving today for Lourdes and it breaks my heart to leave my dear Yvonne. She is the prettiest girl and a wonderful character. As for Madame X . . . , not a trace of her illness remains; she is younger and more stunning than ever, and always so kind. The day before yesterday was my eighteenth birthday and she gave me a

lovely set of turquoise blouse studs. Write to me soon. I must leave you to finish packing. I shall be thinking of you a great deal at Lourdes. From there we will tour the Pyrenees, going to Luchon, Cauterets, etc. I am wild over these mountains, which I am looking at while I write to you. I feel as though I could never live without them.” (L13).

She was especially charmed with Luchon. “It deserves its name of Queen of the Pyrenees. I was more excited about it than any place. The location is incomparable. We spent two days there and were able to make the trip through the Lys valley. We had gone out in a large landau, drawn by four horses, and were with cousins of R ..., and S ..., whom we had met again at Luchon. These ladies put us in the charge of someone we knew, who was also making the ascent as far as the Gouffre d’Enfer. We were 1801 meters above sea-level, hanging over that horrible abyss. Madeleine and I thought it so beautiful that we almost wanted to whirl away in those waters but our guide, enthusiastic as he was, felt differently. He proved to be much more cautious than we, who galloped along the edge of the precipice without feeling the least bit giddy. Our friends gave a sigh of relief when we got back, for they had hardly felt easy about us during our escapade.” (L16).

Thus she hurried from one set of friends to another, enjoying the most delightful life, as she tells us herself. Luneville was typical: “Lunching here, dining there, in addition to numerous tennis parties with the most charming girls.” (L13). In short, she had not a minute to herself. On the 14th of July, she was present at the review at the Champ de Mars because of her family’s close friendships in military circles. As befits an officer’s daughter, she was thrilled by the cavalry charge. “Just imagine all those helmets and cuirasses sparkling in the sun. . . . The dazzling performance ended in the evening, in the groves of the park, with fairylike illuminations rather resembling Venice.”

Yet amid these worldly amusements, in her heart she was still homesick for Carmel. As soon as the guests had left, without the slightest effort Elizabeth was back again with the Lord she had never left. At Tarbes, in order to escape for a moment from the noisy gaiety, she took refuge in the Carmelite convent and the out-sister found her kneeling by the grille in the parlor. Gladly would she have kissed every wall in that house of God! Lourdes was close by and for three days she buried herself in recollection near Our Lady of the Rock. Holidays and social gaieties easily dropped from her mind. Rapt in prayer, she remained motionless for a long time before the Grotto, beseeching Mary Immaculate to keep her pure in her own image, and offering herself as a victim for sinners. (P64).

Nothing could distract her from her Lord. Later on, from her Carmel at Dijon, she could write this postscript in a letter to her mother: “Do not forget to make your meditation on Friday, when you are on the train; it is a very good opportunity, as I remember.” (L295). She spoke from experience. Likewise the earthly riches of the great cities she visited left her indifferent. For her, Marseilles meant Notre Dame de la Garde, (L18) and Lyons, only Fourvieres. (L14). At Paris, to which she had gone with her mother and sister for the great Exhibition of 1900, only two things really interested her: Montmartre and Our Lady of Victories: “We went to the Exhibition twice. It is very fine, but I detest the noise and the crowd. Marguerite laughed at me and declared that I was like someone just returned from the Congo.” (L27).



*Dijon Carmel on  
Boulevard Carnot*

## Agendo Contra

During this period of her life, her generous watchword was “agendo contra.” A note in her diary, made when she was nineteen, reads: “Today I had the joy of offering Jesus several sacrifices over my dominant fault, *but how much they cost me!* I recognize my weakness there. When I receive an unjust reproof, I feel as though the blood is boiling in my veins; *my whole being rises in revolt. . . .* But Jesus was with me. Deep down in my heart I heard His voice and then I was ready to bear anything for love of Him.”<sup>2</sup> In order to find out whether she was really advancing in the way of perfection, she kept a little notebook in which, every evening, she marked down her victories and defeats.

Elizabeth tried to fast without her mother’s knowledge, but the watchful Madame Catez discovered the fact in a few days and scolded her very severely. Once more Elizabeth obeyed. God did not will to lead her by the way of the great mortification of the saints. It was to be the same throughout her life at Carmel. The silent Trinity expected another kind of homage from her. “Since I can impose almost no sufferings on myself, I must accept the realization that this physical suffering is only a means—albeit an excellent one—of attaining to interior mortification and complete detachment from self. O Jesus! my Life, my Love, my Bridegroom, help me! It is absolutely necessary for me to reach that stage at which I may always, and in all things, *do the contrary of my own will*”<sup>3</sup>

## The First Mystical Graces

God could not wait long to reward Elizabeth’s continual efforts to triumph over her nature by secret touches of His grace. The ascetic life leads to the mystical life and constitutes its necessary safeguard.

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*The “spiritual combat” against her faults and the triumph over her natural temperament led Elizabeth Catez to the first manifestations of those mystical graces. . . .*

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With her usual good sense, St. Teresa said: “Delicate living and prayer do not go together.”<sup>4</sup> All this is quite normal. *The Living Flame of Love* presupposes the painful *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, with its *dark nights* and active and passive purifications such as to make the most resolute tremble. We are too prone also to forget the long contemplative ecstasies of the author of the *Spiritual Exercises* in his cell at Rome, where the enraptured Ignatius murmured over and over: “O beata Trinitas!” We need not deny absolutely diversities of tendencies and spiritual paths—*alius sic, alius sic ibat*—but the Scriptural truth includes all these shades, and saints of all schools meet at a point beyond them all. At the summit, they are all transformed into Christ, identified with the beatitude of the Crucified.

The “spiritual combat” against her faults and the triumph over her natural temperament led Elizabeth Catez to the first manifestations of those mystical graces which were to transform her life, at first slowly and by successive touches as though step by step; then, from the time of her religious profession, by a calm and continuous motion; finally, in the last phase, the six months spent in the infirmary, by giant strides lifting her to the loftiest heights of transforming union.

She did not become aware of these first divine touches (received during the course of a retreat in January 1899) until several months later, when she was reading the works of St. Teresa. Her diary’s account of the matter is of the greatest importance in the history



of her spiritual life. It marks her entrance into the mystical way after a hard spiritual struggle which had lasted more than eleven years; which, in fact, was never to end.

“At present I am reading St. Teresa’s *Way of Perfection*. I find it tremendously interesting and it is doing me a great deal of good. St. Teresa speaks so well about prayer and interior mortification, that mortification which, with God’s help, I am determined to reach. Since I cannot for the present impose great sufferings upon myself, I can at least immolate my will at every moment of the day. Prayer—how I love the way St. Teresa handles this subject! When she speaks of contemplation, that degree of prayer wherein God does everything and we do nothing, wherein He unites our souls to Himself so intimately that it is no longer we who live but God living in us ... oh, I recognized there *the moments of sublime rapture to which the Master deigned to raise me* so often during that retreat, as He has done since then too. What can I render to Him for such great benefits? After those ecstasies, those high raptures, during which the soul forgets everything and sees only its God, how hard and trying ordinary prayer seems! How painfully one must toil to unite all one’s powers! How much it costs and how difficult it seems!”<sup>5</sup>



*As an adult*

God was even then raising Elizabeth to the higher states of prayer, and this was obvious when she prayed. She would be seen coming slowly up the central aisle in the parish church; she would kneel down in her place and be immediately absorbed in deep recollection. For a long time she would remain motionless, as though wholly possessed by God. Her most intimate friend was always struck by the sudden change that would come over Elizabeth the moment she entered the church to pray. “She was no longer the same person.”

For some time, she had been experiencing strange phenomena in the depths of her soul, which she could scarcely explain to herself. She felt as though she were dwelt in. “When I see my confessor,” she said to herself, “I shall speak to him about it.”

## The Meeting of Father Vallee

It was then that she met a Dominican Friar at Carmel, the meeting with whom was to give a decisive orientation to her interior life.<sup>6</sup> Mother Germaine of Jesus, Sister Elizabeth’s prioress and novice mistress and the author of the *Souvenirs*, justly remarked that “this providential meeting “recalls, by its effects of grace, that of which St. Teresa tells us in the Eighteenth Chapter of her *Life* and in the Fifth Mansion of her *Interior Castle* (First Chapter)(S66). The Saint does indeed relate how “a great theologian of the Order of St. Dominic [Master Banez, a celebrated professor at the University of Salamanca] by confirming from the doctrinal standpoint what she had experienced of the divine presence within her during prayer, brought her great consolation, in addition to the complete security which the truth gives.”

When Elizabeth timidly questioned the distinguished religious as to the meaning of the movements of grace of which she had been aware for some time and which gave her the impression of being dwelt in, Father Vallee replied, in the forceful, thought-provoking language that characterized him: “But most certainly, my child; the Father is there, the Son is there, and the Holy Ghost is there.” And, like the contemplative theologian he was, he proceeded to explain further how, by the grace of Baptism, the soul becomes that




Fr. Irene Vallee 1841 - 1927

living temple of which St. Paul speaks and how, together with the Holy Ghost, the whole Trinity is present with Its creative and sanctifying power, making Its dwelling in us, coming to abide in the most secret recesses of the soul, there to receive in an atmosphere of faith and charity the interior worship of praise and adoration that is Its due.

Elizabeth was delighted with this dogmatic explanation. Since it was grace that was urging her, she could, in perfect security, yield to her interior attraction and dwell in the innermost depths of her soul. During this interview she was overcome by an irresistible movement of recollection. The priest went on talking but he soon saw that Elizabeth Catez was no longer listening. "I was longing for him to be silent," she said later to the Prioress.

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity is completely portrayed in this avowal: eager for silence under the influence of the grace received.

On his part, Father Vallee said of this decisive hour: "I saw her borne away as on a tidal wave."

Elizabeth was one of those souls who, having once seen the divine light, never turned aside. From that day on, everything was transformed and illumined; she had found her way. Henceforth, no matter what happened, the Trinity was to be her whole life.<sup>7</sup> 

1 From the evidence of a childhood friend.

2 D January 30, 1899

3 D February 24, 1899

4 *Way of Perfection*, e.iv.

5 D February 20, 1899

6 Some account of this distinguished priest will be of interest to English and American readers: Irene Vallee was born at Urville (Calvados) on June 28, 1841. In 1860, at the age of nineteen, he entered the Dominican Order at Flavigny, where he received the religious name of Gonzalve and was the last novice to receive the habit from Lacordaire. Professed on September 5, 1861, he entered upon a long and fruitful apostolic career. Between 1881 and 1904 he preached constantly from some of the most famous pulpits in France, besides having close connections with several religious Orders. When as a result of the Combes legislation, the French Dominicans were expelled in 1904, he saved the Province by founding the priory of La Sauchoir, across the Belgian frontier in the diocese of Tournay, and there established the strict observance. In 1910, he returned to Paris, living in private and continuing his apostolic labors. After the Great War he was able to re-establish the Dominican simple novitiate at Amiens. He died at Paris on January 5, 1927, at the age of eighty-five. His own summing-up of Elizabeth of the Trinity was as follows: "Elizabeth de la Trinite avait le sens de la Redemption." ("Elizabeth of the Trinity knew the meaning of Redemption.") (Translator.)

7 After her mother had finally consented to her following her religious vocation (March 26, 1899), Elizabeth resumed the visits to Carmel which had been forbidden her for eight years. They were her support during the last two years she spent in the world. Mother Mary of Jesus was again Prioress. She it had been who, on the evening of Elizabeth's First Communion Day, had given her a picture with these few lines, explaining the meaning of her name:

"Thy blessed name, O Child, a mystery hides,  
On this great day fulfilled.  
God, Who is Love, within thy heart abides,  
His temple here below 'ELIZABETH'"

Elizabeth, then means *House of God*.

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	174	<b>Carmel: Born in the Desire for Peace</b> - <i>Patrick McMahon, O.Carm.</i> Rule of St. Albert is used to set historical perspective on formation of Carmel and provides understanding for challenges we face today.
	175	<b>A Theology of Desire:</b> <i>Keith J. Egan, T. O.Carm.</i> Biblical background of our Carmelite charism. Our Lord and Carmel teach us to desire God, Elijah called it zeal.
	176	<b>The Mystical Life of Jesus in Teresa and John:</b> <i>Vilma Seelaus, OCD</i> Full realization of our human potential is that we are all called to be mystics and discover the sacred within.
	177	<b>The Education of Desire in the Letters of Madeline de Saint-Joseph:</b> <i>Mary Frohlich, RSCJ</i> Inculturation - taking Carmel into France with echos of of Teresa and John; forshadow of Therese. Lessons on discerning vocations.
	178	<b>Peacemaking and the Mortification of Desire:</b> <i>Kevin Culligan, OCD</i> "Challenge of Peace" on 25th anniversary of US Bishops pastoral letter and discussion of the Nature of Peacemaking: God's Promise and our Response.
	179	<b>The Desire for God the Discovery of the Little Way:</b> <i>Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD</i> Understanding our desires helps us better relate to St. Therese's Little Way and finding peace.
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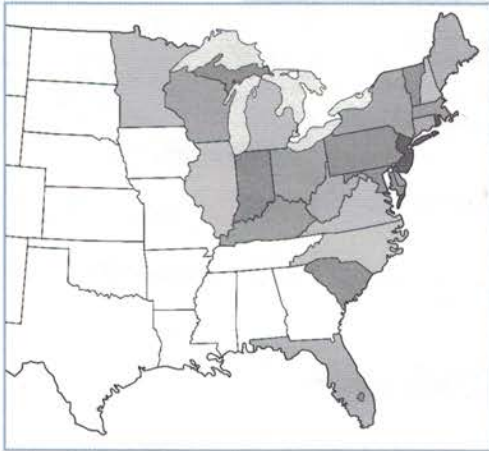
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# OCDS 2009 Congress Update



*Secular Order Discalced Carmelite  
Communities of the Washington Province*

In recent years, God has blessed the Washington Province with an abundance of vocations to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. Ten years ago (1999) there were 37 communities in the Mid-West Region; 14 in the Northeast Region; 47 in the Mid-Atlantic Region; and 12 in the State of Florida. At that time there were 110 communities.

We now have more than 4000 Secular members in 151 OCDS groups and communities. The 2009 Congress is for all of you. States identified above will be shaded on the [www.ocds2009congress.org](http://www.ocds2009congress.org) website to show our Regions and provide a detailed listing of locations where OCDS communities meet. Links to contact information on [www.ocdswashprov.org](http://www.ocdswashprov.org) will be also included. In spite of the financial challenges of our time, we currently have 30 Presidents registered to attend the Congress. This means 20% of our OCDS communities are working together to sponsor their Presidents; and other members are eagerly registering. What a blessing to all be gathering together on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel!

Our goal in the 21st Century Carmelites Campaign is to assemble pictures and a paragraph narrative of the history/apostolate from each community. This information will permit OCDS members to share their Community's formation journey and provide us all with a better understanding of the OCDS history within our Province. Please send an original or digital photograph (4 x 6 or larger) and typed paragraph indicating your Community Religious Title and the history/apostolate information you want to share. Individual names should not be listed. The picture and text will be formatted and then uploaded to the 21st Century Carmelites section of the website. Please send this information **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** to:

Sacred Heart OCDS Community  
c/o St. John the Evangelist Parish  
Attn: Michael Alley  
112 East 2nd Street  
Frederick, MD 21701

Digital photos and text can be sent to [ocds2009congress@live.com](mailto:ocds2009congress@live.com).  
Original photographs and text will be scanned and returned.

# 2009 Congress Program

The goal of the 2009 OCDS Congress is to embrace the challenges that Secular communities are currently facing and to rely upon the collective wisdom and experience of our friars and members to discuss and find practical solutions. The program is designed to address various issues expressed by the majority of communities in response to the Community Challenge Questionnaire sent to all communities in the Washington Province last May.

In addition to daily Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, and Eucharistic Adoration, there will be 4 major presentations by our friars. The presentations will lay the foundation for 3 panel discussions and 3 sets of simultaneous workshops (lead by OCDS), to provide opportunities for each participant to share both spiritual and practical experiences with members in other communities. The Congress is designed to help all attendees take home information to strengthen the Carmelite spirituality and formation of their communities.

The program will cover 4 major areas:

- 1. The Carmelite Vocation**
- 2. OCDS Formation**
- 3. OCDS Community Life**
- 4. OCDS Community Apostolate**

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

*Fr. John Sullivan, OCD*

Provincial of the Washington Province

## 1. The Carmelite Vocation

### *Presentation*

**Living out 'The Promise' in the world within the secular state of life, according to the OCDS Constitutions**

*Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, OCD*

### *Simultaneous Workshops – Living out 'The Promise'*

**Call, Vocation & Mission**

**Promise & Commitment**

**Living the Evangelical Counsels**

### *Panel Discussion – Understanding Our Carmelite Commitment, Both Initial and Ongoing*

- **Living a “life of allegiance to Jesus Christ”**
- **Daily prayer life of a Carmelite - Charism of Teresian Carmel**
- **Evangelical Self-Denial**
- **Sacraments and the Liturgy nourish our personal life of prayer**

*Continued* ➤

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## 2. OCDS Formation

### *Panel Discussion – Formation Issues*

- Overview of formation in “The School of Carmel” to include discussion of the Washington Province Formation Outline and the OCDS Constitutions
- Role of the local Council in guiding formation and discerning vocations
- Role of the monthly meeting and building community in formation
- Continuing formation after Definitive Promise

### *Simultaneous Workshops – Formation Issues*

The Critical first steps of formation – The ‘Experience’ of Prayer and Discernment of a Carmelite Vocation

Training the teachers

Continuing formation after the Definitive Promise – leadership building and fostering maturation as a Carmelite and Christian

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## 3. OCDS Community Life

### *Presentation*

**Forming Vibrant OCDS Communities**

*Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD*

### *Simultaneous Workshops – Community Issues*

Leadership responsibilities of all OCDS members

OCDS led retreats

Dividing and forming new communities

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## 4. OCDS Community Apostolate

### *Presentation*

**How Can Secular Carmelites Serve the Church in the 21st Century?**

*Fr. Thomas Otang’a, OCD*

### *Panel Discussion – Carmelite Community Apostolates*

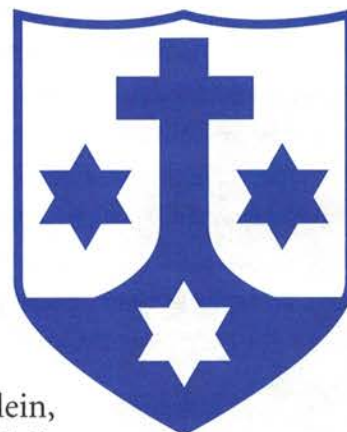
- Overview of Carmelite apostolates
- Success Story #1 of a Carmelite Community apostolate
- Success Story #2 of a Carmelite Community apostolate

*United with zeal, prayer and action, let us trust that our Lord and Lady will bless and guide each OCDS community and all Carmelites of the 21st Century.*

# OCDS Provincial Council Update

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It has been more than a year (fall of 2007) since my last report on the activities of the Provincial Council. The Council continues its work on the Statutes in cooperation with our Friars. In April of 2008, three members of the Council, Suzanne Treis, Pedro Gonzalez and I met with our Provincial at the time, Fr. Phillip Thomas and two of our Provincial Delegates, Fr. John Grennon and Fr. Regis Jordan to discuss the first draft of the Statutes. The ideas and input from that meeting were discussed and incorporated during subsequent emails and conference calls.



The Provincial Council attended the OCD Chapter Meeting in Mundelein, Illinois last June and gave an overview of our work to the Friars and Sisters present. It was good to meet and get to know our brothers and sisters in the other branches of Carmel and to share experiences of our common vocation. We were also privileged to be present at the installation of Fr. John Sullivan as our new Provincial.

One of our members, Kathryn Blumhagen left the Council in May of 2008. Her vacancy was filled recently when Fr. Paul Fohlin appointed Loretta Gallagher to serve the remainder of Kathryn's term. Loretta lives in Newburyport, Massachusetts and brings both long tenure in Carmel and a keen editorial eye to our efforts. She was warmly welcomed to the Council during our last conference call.

On January 3rd of this year, the second draft of the Statutes was submitted to Fr. Sullivan and the Provincial Delegates for review and comment. The Council is scheduled to meet with Fr. Sullivan on July 20th, following the OCDS Congress to review and discuss our work.

Fraternally in Carmel,

Thomas J. McCabe, OCDS  
President

OCDS Provincial Council  
Washington Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

# Elizabeth Of The Big Feet: Teenage Years

Jennifer Moorcroft

Elizabeth had gone as far as she could with her piano studies at the Dijon Conservatory; if she wanted to continue, she would need to go to the Paris Conservatory. It was decided that she would stay in Dijon and take a further two years of harmony instead. In addition, perhaps concerned that their general education was not keeping up with their music studies, Mme. Catez engaged a new teacher for the two girls, Mile. Irma Forey. She was too easygoing, though, and their studies had been too neglected for them to improve.



Elizabeth, Mme. Catez  
and Guite

In an attempt to get to know her new pupils better, toward the end of November Mile. Forey gave them an essay to write—to describe their physical and moral portrait. Elizabeth tackled the assignment with a light touch that revealed almost nothing of her inner life:

To draw one's physical and moral portrait is a delicate subject to deal with, but taking my courage in both hands I set to work and begin!

Without pride I think that I can say that my overall appearance is not displeasing.

I am a brunette and, they say, rather tall for my age. I have sparkling black eyes and my thick eyebrows give me a severe look. The rest of my person is insignificant. My "dainty" feet could win for me the nickname of Elizabeth of the Big Feet, like Queen Bertha! And there you have my physical portrait!

As for my moral portrait, I would say that I have a rather good character. I am cheerful and, I must confess, somewhat scatterbrained. I have a good heart. I am by nature a coquette. "One should be a little!" they say. I am not lazy: I know "work makes us happy." Without being a model of patience, I usually know how to control myself. I do not hold grudges. So much for my moral portrait. I have my defects and, alas, few good qualities! I hope to acquire them!

Well, at last this tedious task is finished and am I glad. (Works, v. I, p. 13)

Her friends agreed that she wasn't pretty in the accepted sense. She normally wore her thick, dark brown, waist-length hair caught back to hang loose or in a long plait. According to Franoise de Sourdon, her mouth was too large and her nose turned up a bit too much. However everyone agreed that there was a luminosity about her that made her special. Above all, it was her incomparable dark eyes. "She had a look about her," said Antoinette de Bobet, "her smile! What I still see is that radiance, that look. I felt as if she could see right through me" (LLL 9). It was above all when she was in prayer, or returning from Holy Communion, that her expression was unforgettable.

Already, by the age of fourteen, she could in all honesty say that self-control, rather than lack of patience, was characteristic of her. Her temper tantrums were long a thing



As a teen



of the past, although perhaps only she knew how her blood could boil at an occasional slight or injustice, and that she would need all her self-control to bite back an impatient or angry word. Only the most observant of her friends noticed her self-denial, so graciously and unobtrusively did she practice it, eating whatever was given to her, giving way to the wishes of others. One of her friends testified that no one ever remembered her saying anything bad about anyone, or anything good that wasn't true (Souv. 24-25; LLL 51).

She was most appreciated not only for her kindness and thoughtfulness toward others but also for her tremendous drive, her sense of fun. "She did not love the world but she was in it and seemed to enjoy herself (EP 4:2-9; LLL 9), summed up Françoise.

The year at the Conservatory ended with Guite taking First Prize for the piano, and Elizabeth winning a prize for harmony. It was an exceptionally hot and humid summer, and they were glad to get away from Dijon to the Midi where, in the refreshing air of the pine woods of Mirecourt, they had some respite from the heat.

They spent a longer period at Champagnole with their old friends the Hallos. "Every day we set out as tourists," Elizabeth recorded in the diary she kept of the holidays, "either by carriage or on foot, for we have excellent legs and are not frightened by 20 kilometers" (CE 30; LLL 42). Charles, a year and a half younger than the two eldest girls, Marie-Louise and Elizabeth, must have felt somewhat overwhelmed by the female company and ended up arguing with Elizabeth on one of their trips. She was very fond of him, though, the "little brother" she and Guite didn't have themselves.

The next year was Elizabeth's last at the Conservatory. Guite won First Prize for Excellence with reviews in the local paper calling her a little prodigy. Then they were off once more on their holidays with a packed itinerary that she described in a letter to Alice Chervau:

We have arrived safely in Carlipa, less tired than mother feared. We stopped for four hours in Lyon, time to make a pilgrimage to Fourvieres, which was crowded. The basilica is splendid; Lyon has lavished all her wealth on it. Leaving Fourvieres we dined at a restaurant in the open air, then at 8 o'clock we left for Cette, where we arrived at five o'clock in the morning. We spent our morning on the beach admiring the sea that I love so much and watching the bathers. By four o'clock we were in Carlipa, where my cousins pampered and fussed over us, and we did honor to the excellent Midi cuisine. We are having some marvelous walks; only after a storm the temperature is so fresh that it is almost cold. (L 9)

"I have put my hair up," she added in a postscript, "and it has made me look very grown-up." Suddenly, she was a young woman.

From Carlipa they went to Saint-Hilaire to see Canon Angles and were given such enormous meals that their stomachs begged for mercy, then to Limoux, where she met another of her friends, Gabrielle Montpellier. "She is twenty years old and charming," wrote Elizabeth to Alice.

We are having some wonderful trips into the country. Tomorrow we are going to spend the day at Ginoles-les-Bains, and we are looking forward to it immensely....



*Elizabeth after winning first prize*

I am making lots of music here; my friend has an excellent baby grand that is my delight; it has a superb tone, and I could spend hours at it. I accompany Gabrielle's cousin who plays the violin very well; her husband is an excellent pianist and we sight-read for four hands. (L 11)

There was also a visit to Lourdes, probably the second time she had been there, and they returned to Dijon at the end of October.

What she didn't mention in her letters was her increasing homesickness for Carmel. It was only in her poems, which she called "the echo of my heart," that she was able to express her longings for the solitude of Carmel, for a cloister hard and austere (P 29). The Dijon Carmel was just around the corner from their house, and from her bedroom window Elizabeth was able to see part of the garden, a stately avenue of trees with glimpses of sisters working or praying in the garden, and drink in every detail of their monastic dress. . . . She loved all this, but at the same time it was tantalizing to have Carmel so near, and yet so far.

On three days of February 1897, three clothings took place, which Elizabeth attended and described in a poem, noting every detail:

The gentle chimes of Carmel  
Mount slowly to heaven.  
The altar is adorned with flowers  
Releasing their sweet fragrance.  
The candles shine everywhere,  
Making it a corner of heaven.  
All at once, in her bridal robe,  
The gentle bride appears.  
Her face is pure and radiant,  
Her joy is painted in her eyes.  
She is perhaps happy and proud,  
For the moment now is come  
When she gives herself completely  
To her beloved Jesus,  
Her heavenly spouse,  
The gentle judge.

Soon at the monastery door  
She goes and gently knocks  
And veiled figures with an austere air  
Come and open to her, singing.  
At the foot of a great crucifix,  
This confidant, this heavenly friend,  
His bride kneels,  
And gives her heart to her divine  
Spouse.  
Then, saying farewell to those she loves  
on earth,  
She disappears to live alone  
With these elite souls,  
A pure and humble Carmelite. (P 31)

Elizabeth would often slip into

the chapel at Carmel to pray or to go to Mass; she could talk sometimes to the extern sisters with perhaps an occasional visit to the parlor. Seeing the sisters at close quarters, she could take in every detail of the coarse brown habit, the big wooden rosary with its simple crucifix, the white mantle, the leather belt, and she longed for the time when she would be clothed in them all, when she would have a bare cell with its bed of boards herself.



*Elizabeth's dream  
would one day come  
true.*

Her confessor, Abbe Sellenet, left Dijon around this time to take up another post; he had long been convinced that Elizabeth's vocation was genuine, and before he left, he spoke with her mother, urging her not to oppose Elizabeth's call to the cloister. Unfortunately, his intervention had the opposite effect and, alarmed by the thought that she really could lose Elizabeth, Mme. Catez forbade her to make any more visits to Carmel. This was an enormous blow to Elizabeth, but one she obeyed without question. In her poems she expressed her longing to suffer with and for her Master, and there could be no greater sacrifice for her than this.

What she could do, though, was to steep herself in the writings of Saint Teresa of Avila and absorb the Carmelite spirit. Her poems of this period drew their inspiration quite heavily from St. Teresa's writings; ironically, she used her mother's own treasured copies of St. Teresa's works. Prayer was becoming habitual to her, as natural and necessary as breathing:

My heart is always with him,  
 And night and day it thinks  
 Of that divine and heavenly Friend  
 To whom it wants to prove its tenderness. (P 43)



*The Horse Show in the old "Veloforme" in Dijon Park*

She wanted to keep herself pure for him, to do what pleased him, and to suffer long for him on behalf of others. This bare recitation sums up the basis of her spiritual life, and from it springs the richness of her mystical life.

The asceticism implied in this poem was lived out unobtrusively in the social round and the enjoyment of their extended holidays. In 1898 they stayed at Tarbes, which, as Elizabeth wrote, was one long round of pleasures: with a wide circle of friends she attended dances, played and listened to music, and went on trips to the countryside. It was only in an unguarded moment during a party while she was dancing and having a good time that Mme. d'Avout caught a faraway look in her eyes and whispered to her, "Elizabeth, you are not here, you see God." Elizabeth smiled at her without speaking (AP 648; LLL 9).

From Tarbes they went on to Lourdes, that corner of heaven where Elizabeth was able to pray and receive Communion at the Grotto for three days. From her description it was far different from today. "They don't have big pilgrimages," she wrote to Valentine Defougues, "I love the calm of Lourdes" (L 15)...

After Luchon, though, it was on to dear Carlipa, which Elizabeth loved so much, and before whose peaceful serenity even the splendors of the Pyrenees faded. Her contemplative spirit was deeply at home in the quiet tranquillity of the country life she loved. They returned to Dijon via Marseille, the Grand Chartreuse, Annecy, Grenoble, and Geneva. At Marseille they went on board a transatlantic liner, when once again she gave evidence of her strong stomach and nerves; she was not affected by an ex-



*Carlipa, where "her contemplative spirit was deeply at home"*

tremely rough crossing in the small boat that took them out to the ship. At the Grande Chartreuse she was able to appreciate the depth of the silence that enveloped the famous abbey, deep in its magnificent countryside of richly wooded mountains. They stayed in a small convent close by the abbey, each having a cell to sleep in, with atrociously hard beds. At Annecy they stayed with a friend of Mme. Catez and were able to tour the picturesque lake (L 18).

Mme. Catez hoped that she might persuade Elizabeth to change her mind by having her experience some of the beauty of the world that she was so intent on leaving. In this she failed. Elizabeth, in the words of Scripture, was charmed by their beauty but knew how much the Lord of these excelled them, since the very Author of beauty has created them (Wisdom 13:3). All that she saw simply raised her mind and heart to their Creator and made her long for the sight of the One whose beauty was far beyond what she saw. But it did provide her with a rich store of memories and experiences when she was within the cloister that she loved far more than the world.

## In Remembrance

The Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus in New York City, NY lost two members who made Vows: **Emma Greiner, OCDS**, began eternal life on March 10, 2008; and **Mary Daly, OCDS**, began eternal life on September 13, 2008.

**Dorothea Josefina Theresia Becking "Thea" Johnson, OCDS**, began eternal life on June 23, 2008. She was a member of the Jesus Author of Life Community in Terre Haute, IN; and made her Definitive Promise on July 15, 2000.

**Barbara Hinchcliffe, OCDS**, began eternal life on November 5, 2008. She was a member of the Community of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, The Little Flower, in Cherry Hill, NJ; and made her Definitive Promise in 1983.

**Claude Thorpe, OCDS**, Joseph of the Heart of Mary, began eternal life on December 14, 2008. He was a member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Community in Swartz Creek (previously Flint), MI; and made his Vows on May 8, 1993.

The Community of Our Lady of Mercy in Schenectady (previously Rotterdam), NY lost two members: **Anne Giminiani, OCDS**, Sr Anne of Our Lady of Fatima, made her Vows on May 20, 2000, and began eternal life on January 17, 2009. **Gladys Kansas, OCDS**, Sr. Mary Bernadette of the Child of God, made her Vows on May 19, 1990, and began eternal life on January 24, 2009.

**Mary Margaret Sommers, OCDS**, began eternal life on January 27, 2009. She was a member of the Holy Spirit Community, in Louisville, KY; and made her Definitive Promise May 19, 1974.

**Florina Brienza, OCDS**, Teresa of Avila, began eternal life on February 14, 2009. She was a member of the St. Joseph's Community in Washington, DC; and made her Vows on May 14, 1989.

**Martie Baxley, OCDS**, Teresa of the Cross, began eternal life on March 4, 2009. She was a member of the Regina Pacis Community in Ocala, FL and made her Vows on February 16, 2003.

**Marilyn Litchfield, OCDS**, Mary Joseph of the Infant Jesus, began eternal life on March 10, 2009. She was a member of the Mary and Joseph Community in Danvers, MA; and made her Vows on November 8, 2003

# Elizabeth Of The Trinity: The Witness Of Her Letters From Carmel

Christina Nunn

Even as a novice, Elizabeth had an enormous correspondence, and it did not diminish throughout her time in Carmel. She had fifty-nine correspondents of whom forty were lay. She wrote to young teenagers and elderly people, family and friends, religious and priests; and yet Elizabeth was able to interact with each at his or her own level. Her long years of waiting to enter Carmel had sharpened her understanding of what the Christian life was all about, and she had come to interiorise her monastery in the cell of her heart. This experience helped make Elizabeth so effective in sharing her insights when she was in Carmel, able to reach out to others and touch their hearts. But most of all, she could do this because she so identified herself with Christ that she loved with his heart, with his love. She shared her understanding of God; she was not trying to prove anything. As Conrad De Meester expresses it: “she has inherited more of the prophet who proclaims, than of the theologian who explains or the exegete who analyses.”<sup>1</sup>

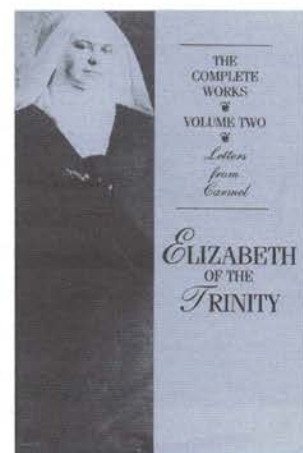
## Moments Of Contact

Elizabeth’s letters are filled with advice on prayer. Her writing is not the dry academic thesis but straightforward practical counsel. She recommends that we deepen our friendship with God by frequently introducing into our life a brief moment of contact with him, and sometimes a longer pause for prayer. She advised her mother, for example, to make three five-minute prayers daily (L 273). For Elizabeth, prayer is a ‘wonderful communion’ (L 249), ‘an exchange of love’ (L 161), ‘that intimate heart-to-heart in which the soul flows into God and God flows into it to transform it into Himself’ (L 278). She stresses to Germaine de Gemeaux, a young friend, that she does not take ‘prayer’ to mean vocal prayers but, rather, ‘that elevation of the soul toward God through all things that establishes us in a kind of continual communion with the Holy Trinity by quite simply doing everything in Their presence’ (L 252).

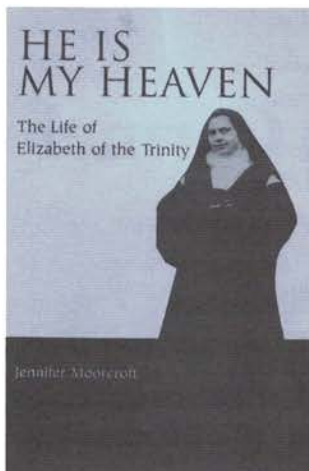
Elizabeth’s letters give a straightforward and simple way of praying. We need first to place ourselves in God’s presence – or rather, to recognise that the Holy Trinity already dwells within us (cf. L 273) and that God loves us (cf. L 85). The second movement of this prayer is to converse directly with God: to ‘bring [your] soul to Him’ (L 179), with or without words. Elizabeth describes giving God her ‘loving attention’ (cf. L 231) and looking at him with ‘a gaze full of love’ (L 138). To sum up again with the words of Conrad De Meester: ‘To pray is to receive and to give, to give and know that one is accepted, to know one is accepted and to love.’<sup>2</sup>

## Heaven Within

The indwelling of God within us is a recurrent theme in Elizabeth’s writings. This is not a new teaching: she is echoing Teresa of Avila. As a young girl, Elizabeth had copied



*Complete Works  
Volume Two Letters  
from Carmel*  
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*He Is My Heaven*  
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into her notebook a statement by the Spanish saint, 'You must seek me in yourself.'<sup>3</sup> When she read *The Way of Perfection*, she found in Teresa's teaching on prayer frequent references to the indwelling of God, such as the following: 'the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God' (WP 28.4). Elizabeth writes to her friend Marie-Louise Ambry: 'Remember that you are in Him, that He makes Himself your dwelling here below: and then, that He is in you, that you possess Him in the most intimate part of yourself, that at any hour of the day or night, in every joy or trial, you can find Him there, quite near, entirely within you. It is the secret of happiness; it is the secret of the saints' (L 175).

Writing to Canon Angles in April 1902, just eight months after entering Carmel, Elizabeth tells him: 'We find Him in our sleep just as we do in prayer, since He is in everything, everywhere, and always!' (L 111). Then, a few lines later, she uses a phrase that will become a familiar theme in her writings: 'I already live in that Heaven, since I carry it within me'. For Elizabeth, baptism is when we are clothed with God and become his children, 'and at the same time His living temple' (L 240). First holy communion, too, was for her a very important occasion. Writing to Berthe Guemard, a young friend about to make her own first communion, Elizabeth says: 'it is not for only a few moments that He comes to her, but in order to remain in her always...a union has begun between Jesus and His little communicant that is to be a foretaste of Heaven' (L 112).

## Never Alone

Prayer is not something that we have to attempt on our own. As Elizabeth says so well: 'I'm never alone: my Christ is always there praying in me, and I pray with Him' (L 123); 'my prayer is quite powerless, but I possess within me the Holy One of God, the Great Supplicant, and that is the prayer I am offering' (L 241). Because we are not alone, Elizabeth can offer encouragement to those who are going through difficult times: 'He is always with you, be always with Him, through all your actions, in your sufferings, when your body is exhausted, remain in His sight, see Him present, living in your soul' (L 138).

On several occasions, Elizabeth reminds her correspondents of Christ's commandment in John's gospel: 'Remain in me, and I in you' (Jn 15:4). This is a command but also an encouragement: it says that no matter what may be happening, we are never alone. Elizabeth's relationship with God is similar to that of Therese of Lisieux—a child with its parent: 'I go to Him like a little child to its mother,' writes the Carmelite of Dijon, 'so He may fill, invade, everything, and then take me and carry me away in His arms' (L 169).

## A Little Mother

Francoise de Sourdon was fourteen years old when Elizabeth entered Carmel, and she was greatly saddened by what felt like the loss of her close friend. We have fifteen letters written to her by Elizabeth from Carmel, and they give us a particular understanding into how Elizabeth shared her insights about God. They also show how she saw herself as a mother to Francoise – or 'Framboise' ('Raspberry'), as she affectionately called her! 'You've often said I was like a little mother to you, and I do in fact feel that my heart holds a maternal affection for you' (L 270).

Elizabeth frequently refers to the fact that, in God, she finds all those she has left behind, so that in some sense she has never really left them (cf. L 88). Her spiritual advice is immensely practical: 'You must build a little cell within your soul as I do. Remember that God is there and enter it from time to time: when you feel nervous or you're unhappy, quickly seek refuge there and tell the Master all about it' (L 123). And her counsel is also filled with her own insights: 'it seems to me that my prayer is all-powerful, for it is not I who am praying but my Christ who is within me' (L 105).

## Hard-hitting Help

There was a real depth to the relationship between Elizabeth and Françoise, and on more than one occasion the Carmelite wrote her protégée a hard-hitting letter. She saw in Françoise something of herself—the same tempestuous nature!—and cautioned her to amend her ways. Because Elizabeth had been there herself, she was able to give advice with an authentic feel to it: 'In the past I overlooked these fits of temper, but now you're no longer a baby and these scenes are ridiculous . . . You see, my darling, you have my nature' (L 98). About seven months later, she is still advising Françoise: 'I can well see that you're unhappy and I assure you it's your own fault . . . In the beginning it's necessary to make an effort when we're just boiling inside, but quite gently, with patience and God's help, we get there in the end' (L 123).

Given her great love for Françoise, Elizabeth returned again and again to what it is to live in God and to know that he lives in us: 'what happiness it is to live in intimacy with God, to make our life a heart-to-heart, an exchange of love, when we know how to find the Master in the depths of our soul' (L 161). Elizabeth set up what she called a 'rendezvous' with Françoise, just as she had with her sister Guite: after compline each day, when the great silence had begun, they would be united in prayer (L 98.105).

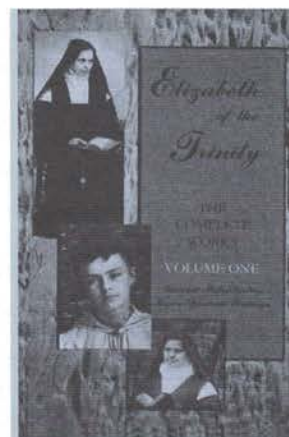
## A Vocation Shared

In April 1906, after a crisis when Elizabeth nearly died, she reassures Françoise: 'if I had gone to lose myself in (the Divine Beauty), how I would have watched over my Françoise' (L 270). Elizabeth's last letter to her, about five months later and only two before her death, is now considered one of her major works. Known as *The Greatness of our Vocation* (GV), it took Elizabeth many days to write, and her handwriting, particularly at the end, betrays her physical exhaustion. The point she stresses in this letter is that humility leads us to forget ourselves, to deny ourselves, in order that we may become Christlike; 'movements of pride,' she says, ' . . . only become faults when the will takes part in them!' (GV 5). Again, there is the blend of the practical and the mystical.

Turning to her beloved Paul, Elizabeth gives Françoise what she calls 'a programme of life' (GV 9): 'Walk in Jesus Christ, rooted in Him, built up on Him, strengthened in faith and growing in Him in thanksgiving' (GV 10; cf. Col 2:6-7). She then develops each of these phrases, encouraging Françoise to know God ever more intimately, to believe that God loves her, and to seek to enclose her will in His. As Elizabeth reaches the



*Françoise de Sourdon*



*Complete Works  
Volume One*

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end of this letter, she acknowledges that this will probably be her last one to Françoise: she now takes her leave and pronounces a blessing for her young friend: 'In the shadow of His wings may He guard you from all evil' (GV 13).

## Wherever We May Be

Although these letters were written a hundred years ago, they have a freshness and relevance for us today. The insights of Elizabeth, with her practical advice on awareness of the Trinity who dwells within us, are just as applicable now. Maybe they are needed more than ever. As her letters show, it is not necessary to be in a monastery to encounter the living God or for him to dwell in us: 'may the God who is all love be your unchanging dwelling place, your cell, and your cloister in the midst of the world' (L 261). He is to be found in the busyness of daily life, wherever we may be.

There are always moments for prayer, as Elizabeth reminds her mother: 'Friday on the train, don't forget to pray, it's the perfect time for it, as I remember' (L 287). Writing to her again, she points out, though, that we do need to have patience: 'Ali, I wish I could tell all souls what sources of strength, of peace, and of happiness they would find if they would only consent to live in this intimacy. Only they don't know how to wait: if God does not give Himself in some perceptible way, they leave His holy presence, and when He comes to them laden with all His gifts, He finds no one there, the soul is outside in external things, it is not living in its depths!' (L 302).

## A Mission – for Us

Elizabeth's entire life was a continual praise and adoration of the triune God dwelling in the holy temple of her soul. In the centenary year of her death, Elizabeth's writings encourage us to seek, as she did, the reality of the Trinity who is in the depths of our being. She urges us to know ourselves loved, and to return that love with all of ourselves. And she herself will help us in this.

Less than two weeks before she died, Elizabeth wrote to Sr Marie-Odile. This was a sister who had belonged to the community of Dijon with Elizabeth, before leaving for the new foundation at Parayle-Monial. Elizabeth refers to 'mission', which surely owes much to the influence of Therese. Elizabeth writes: 'I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them go out of themselves to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence within that will allow God to communicate Himself to them and transform them into Himself' (L 335).<sup>4</sup>

1 Conrad De Meester, OCD. *Your Presence is My Joy: Life and Message of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity*, Darlington Carmel, (no date). p.53

2 Ibid., p.62.

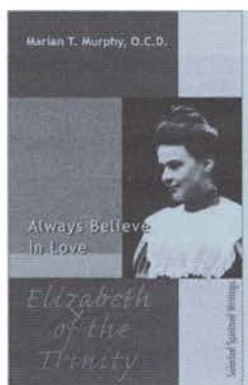
3 Luigi Borriello, O.C.D., *Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity: Apostolic Contemplative*. New York: Alba House, 1986, p.83.

4 *Elizabeth of the Trinity: Letters from Carmel, The Complete Works, Vol. 2*, ICS Publications, 1995.

Editor's Note:

GV "The Greatness of our Vocation", *The Complete Works, Vol. 1*, ICS Publications, 19XX.

*Always Believe in Love*, New City Press, 200X



*Always Believe  
In Love*  
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# INSPIRATION FOR 2009 OCDS CONGRESS



## CC Communications

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Many of you have expressed deep regret that you are unable to attend the Congress. We will be offering CDs of the Congress Program afterward, but also want to give you a way to participate in spirit before and during the Congress. Our Liturgical celebrations are listed below. Please join us in prayer before and during the assembly asking for our Saints' intercession for a fruitful Congress. Below are CDs of spiritual conferences which discuss the themes we will be celebrating each day. Listen individually, or in groups, to the guidance of our elder brothers and sisters as they confronted their own challenges with zeal, prayer and action; and provide us with inspiration to embrace our challenges as Carmelites in the 21st Century.

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## SHARING INTENTIONS FOR THE 2009 OCDS CONGRESS

THURSDAY: Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

FRIDAY: Feast of the Martyrs of Compiegne

SATURDAY: Votive Mass for Our Holy Mother Teresa & Canonically Established Communities

SUNDAY: 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

MONDAY: Feast Day of St. Elijah

QTY	CD #	DESCRIPTION
	125-AO	Elijah: A Prophet in Crisis <i>Kevin Culligan, O.C.D.</i>
	184-AL	Mary and Carmel <i>Emmanuel Sullivan O.C.D.</i>
	166	Barbe Acarie & the Beginnings of Carmel in France <i>Mary Frohlich, R.S.C.J.</i>
	117-O	Carmel in the French Revolution (Martyrs of Compiegne) <i>Salvatore Sciorba O.C.D.</i>
	116-E	Founding Communities of Prayer: Advice from Teresa of Avila <i>John Welch, O.Carm.</i>
	160	Martha & Mary Working Together: Teresa's Meditation on the Song of Songs <i>Kevin Culligan, O.C.D.</i>
	151-BJ	Eucharist and Contemplation <i>Keith Egan, T.O.Carm.</i>

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# Retreat News from the Northeast



**May 23, 2009:** District III - "St. Teresa & Prayer" a Day of Recollection by Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVelis, OCD, at the Good News Center in Utica, NY. 9 AM – 4 PM. Cost: \$40.00. Contact Person: Joyce Ponserella: cell phone 518-248-4291; email: SrMarySunshine@aol.com.

**May 29-31, 2009:** District V - a Weekend Retreat by Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD at the Espousal Retreat Center, 554 Lexington Street, Waltham, MA. Deposit: \$ 170.00. Contact: Deb Silve at [debsilve@gmail.com](mailto:debsilve@gmail.com) or telephone 617-365-3243.

**July 24-26, 2009:** District I - "Prayer" a Weekend Retreat given by Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVelis, OCD, at San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Beach, NJ. Cost: \$190.00. Please make checks payable to: **OCDS District I** and mail to: Martha Stefanchik, OCDS (Treasurer), 151 Hamilton Avenue, Princeton, NJ 08540. For questions, and registration, please call: (Home) 609-924-8231 (Cell) 609-558-5104 or email: [toglorify@aol.com](mailto:toglorify@aol.com).

**October 9-11, 2009:** District III - "Foundations for a Spiritual Life" by Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD, a weekend retreat at Christ the King Retreat House, in Syracuse, NY. Cost: \$170.00. Contact Joyce Ponserella: cell phone 518-248-4291; email: [SrMarySunshine@aol.com](mailto:SrMarySunshine@aol.com).

**October 17, 2009:** District V - a Day of Recollection at Medway, MA Contact: Deb Silve at [debsilve@gmail.com](mailto:debsilve@gmail.com) or Telephone 617-365-3243.

## Question of the Month

### *Are Secular Carmelites required to make an annual weekend retreat?*

There is nothing in the current legislation, *The Constitutions* or *National Statutes*, which remain enforce until the *Washington Province Statutes* are promulgated, that Secular Carmelites must make an annual retreat.

All Community Councils should encourage Seculars and perspective members to make an annual retreat, as this is a sign of Carmel being a priority in our lives. We all have to make financial choices and decisions where to place our focus; and work to overcome the challenges in our lives that prevent us from spending time with God.

However, we do not want to set up an expectation that a candidate exploring a call to Carmel "should" be doing something that they are not under any obligation to do. Therefore, this question has been removed from the "OCDS Candidate Worksheet" and reloaded onto the website.

SUMMER SEMINAR  
ON CARMELITE  
SPIRITUALITY

For Life and Ministry

Carmel's Search for Wisdom:  
Prayer and Contemplation

June 14-20, 2009



Presenters

Daniel Chowning, OCD  
Kevin Culligan, OCD  
Keith J. Egan, T. O. Carm.  
Mary Frohlich, RSCJ  
Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD  
Patrick McMahon, O. Carm.  
Vilma Seelaus, OCD  
John Welch, O. Carm.

Center for Spirituality  
Saint Mary's College  
Notre Dame, IN 46556--5001  
Phone: (574) 284-4636

E-Mail: Kathy Guthrie  
kguthrie@saintmarys.edu

ANNUAL  
CARMELITE SUMMER SEMINAR

The Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary's College invites you to participate in the 2009 Seminar on Carmelite Spirituality. This seminar was inaugurated in 1985.

Lectures, workshops, common prayer, and daily Eucharist are the rhythm of this one-week seminar during which prayer, study, and community offer opportunities to renew one's life, prayer, and commitments.

The Center for Spirituality welcomes to this seminar laity, religious, and clergy of all faiths. The seminar begins with the celebration of the Eucharist at 4:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 14, and concludes with lunch on Saturday, June 20, 2009.

Mark your calendar: June 15-19, 2010  
for the 25th Anniversary Seminar.

COSTS

\$40.00	Non-refundable registration fee
\$200.00	Tuition
\$150.00	Single room in Regina Hall
\$150.00	Board: Includes Sunday dinner through Saturdays lunch
<hr/>	
\$540.00	Total

There will be a surcharge of \$30.00 for fees received after May 20, 2009. Overnight reservations for the day before and Saturday night afterwards cost \$40.00 per night. These reservations can be made through the Center for Spirituality at (574) 284-4636. To stay in an air conditioned apartment building on campus rather than the dormitory building add \$75.00 to the above housing costs. The total for **Apartment Housing** is \$225.00, while the total for **Dormitory Housing** is \$150.00. There are two hotels on campus. Reservations can be made directly for the hotels: **The Inn at St. Mary's** (574) 232-4000 and **Hilton Garden Inn** (574) 232-7700.

**OCDS NEWSLETTER**

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## Reminders

The OCDS Constitutions ¶ 49d and 49e require that the “title of the community” and “place of the community meeting” must be identified. This is how the General Secretary of the Secular Order in Rome maintains records regarding OCDS communities with canonical establishment; and is required for those seeking this privilege. This information must also be kept accurate in the Washington Province Main Office records for all OCDS communities and study groups.

Our Province has grown so fast and communities are changing their meeting places, this information **must be updated** so that consistency with Rome’s records can be verified.

***THE FOLLOWING ACTION IS REQUIRED IMMEDIATELY:***

- All OCDS communities with canonical establishment must complete the information below and send a copy of its bull from Rome to the Main Office.
- All OCDS groups pending canonical establishment must complete the information below, and if the location is different on paperwork previously submitted, modify the community meeting place to agree with the city and state listed below; **then resubmit** to the Main Office for forwarding to Rome.
- All others should forward this information to be filed with your records.

Community Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Meeting Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Church

Address

City, State and Zip

Spiritual Assistant: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form and a copy of requested information to:

OCDS Main Office  
2131 Lincoln Rd NE  
Washington DC 20002-1101

Send a copy of this form to your Provincial Delegate  
if in the Mid-West, Northeast or Florida.