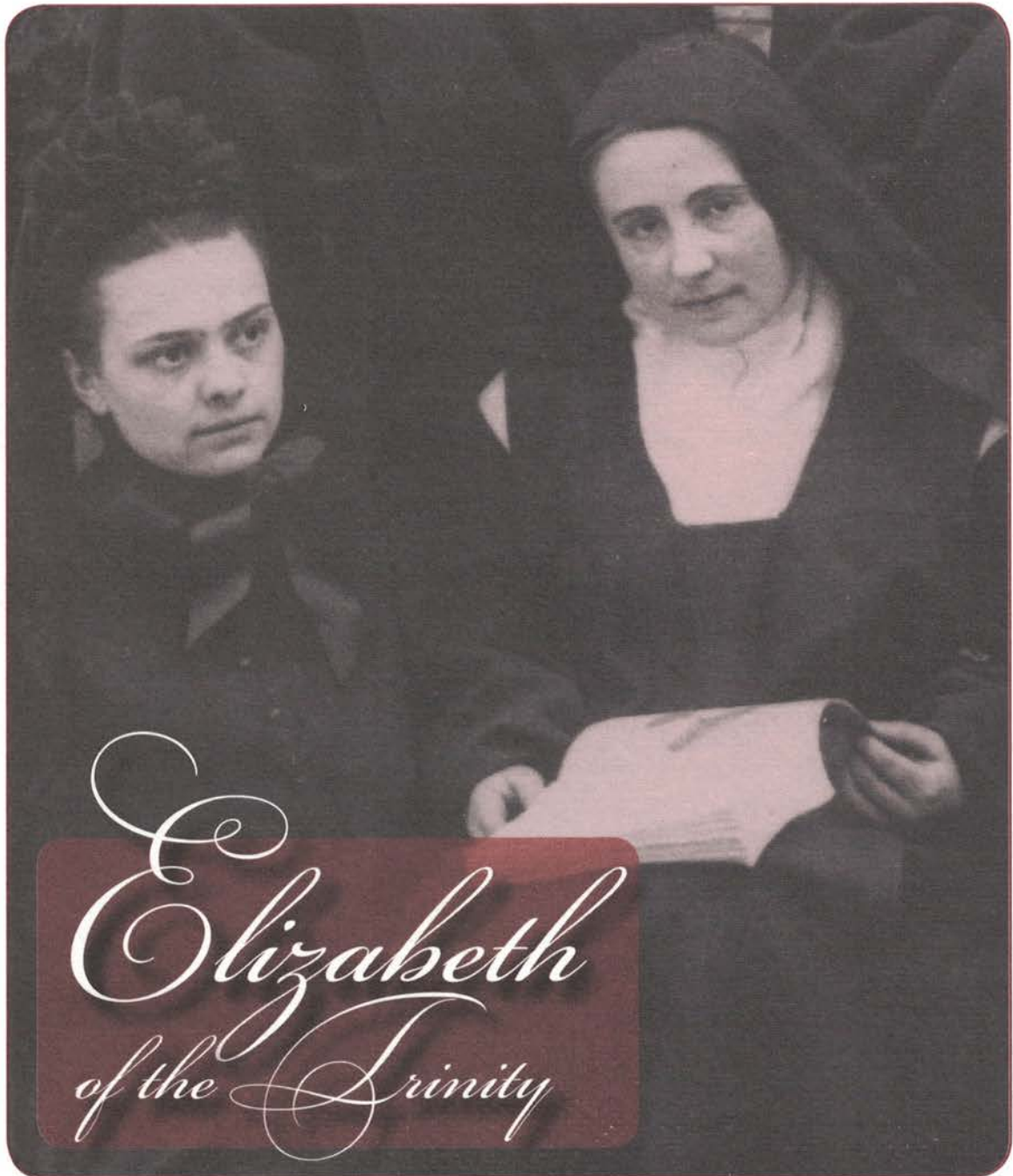


CARMEL CLARION

MARCH — APRIL 2009 VOLUME XXV NO. 2



*Elizabeth
of the Trinity*

CARMEL CLARION

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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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Editorial

One of the most remarkable revelations made by Jesus was that He came not to be served but to serve. In the ways of the world into which He came the rich and the powerful did not serve, they were served. As His ministry unfolded one of the most difficult things for His disciples to grasp was that they were called to serve others, not rule over them. As they came to realize who Jesus was and saw the power He exercised over nature, sickness and even death they assumed and expected this power to be used to dominate and conquer. However, Jesus, time and time again, disappointed them by failing to meet their incorrect assumption and expectation. It was only after Jesus' Resurrection, Ascension and Gift of the Holy Spirit that the disciples overcame their false assumptions and embraced the reality that Jesus was, indeed, a servant. He was always prayerful and zealous for doing the Will of the Father. They came to see that they were called not only for themselves but the sake of others. They were called to lay down their lives in service as their Lord and Savior did before them.

As Carmelites living in allegiance to Jesus, we too are called to service as a fruit of our prayer. To fulfill the commandment of Jesus, "to love one another as I have loved you," we must serve. We must overcome our human weakness to want to rule or dominate others. We can never say, "I will not serve." We must embrace Jesus' attitude of service that permeates the Gospels.

We are reminded from ¶ 5 in Section I, **Our Identity, Values and Commitment** of the *Constitutions*, "Elijah represents the prophetic tradition of Carmel and is an inspiration to live in the presence of God, seeking Him in solitude and silence with zeal for God's glory. The Secular Carmelites live the prophetic dimension of Christian life and Carmelite spirituality by promoting God's law of charity and truth in the world, above all by making themselves the voice for those who cannot, on their own, express this love and this truth."

See page 15 for information in the Congress Update about the donation of Ronnie Royal's hand painted icon of St. Elijah, which is to be raffled at the Congress. Using our God-given talents in service of others is a special way we can demonstrate our love and fulfill our commitment to the Order. Carlos "Chuckie" Ibay, a blind since birth concert pianist, tenor and longtime Carmelite friend, performed a two and one-half hour concert at Georgetown University for the benefit of the Congress. He amazed and delighted the audience with classical piano pieces by Schumann, Liszt, Chopin and even performed Blessed Elizabeth's favorite piece. His rich tenor voice was raised in praise to God in various hymns.

It has been great to see the sacrifice of time and work by various members of our local OCDS communities who have responded to our invitation to participate in the planning of the up-coming Congress. The Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Joseph's Communities in Washington DC, and St. Therese of the Child Jesus Community in Annandale, VA have produced many volunteers without whom our Congress could not succeed. I want you to know that this work of preparation has been a work of service for the Province and for each of you. For those who are planning to attend the Congress, we honor the challenges you have overcome to join us. Difficult as this work has been, it has also been a labor of love for the Church, Order and Province. God bless you.

Fr. Regis



Carlos "Chuckie" Ibay

Elizabeth of the Trinity

Part 1: Family Context and Early Childhood

Daniel Chowning, OCD

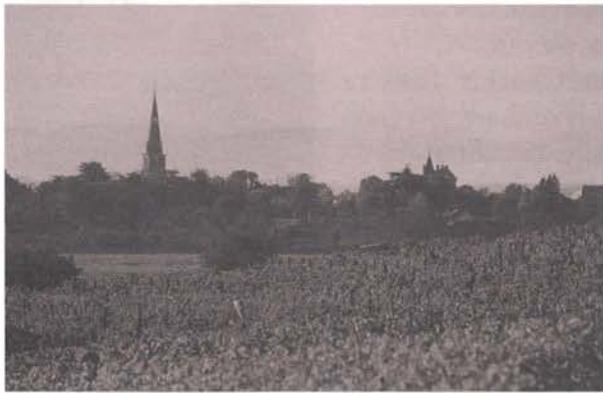
We are all born within a particular culture and family background that has shaped our character and influenced how we live our lives and the choices we make. The saints, too, were born and grew up in their own historical time, in families that shaped their personality and influenced the way they lived, and how they made their vocational choices.

Elizabeth: A Mixture of Tenderness and Violence

Elizabeth Catez was born on Sunday, July 18, in the military camp of Avor in central France where her father, Joseph Catez, served as a captain. Her birth was a difficult one. Marie Rolland, her mother, labored for thirty-six hours in giving birth. Her parents were so anxious about her safe delivery that they asked the chaplain of the military camp to offer Mass for the child's safety. God answered their prayers and Sabeth arrived safe and healthy. She was baptized on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, July 22nd, in the camp's chapel.

Although Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity doesn't reveal directly a lot about her personality and her struggles in her writings, when reading her retreat notes and especially her letters, it is obvious that she was an exceptionally gifted woman with a rich personality. It has been said that Elizabeth's personality was a mixture of tenderness and violence. She possessed a tender and affectionate heart capable of forging strong bonds of friendship; a determined and disciplined will in reaching her goals; an aesthetic eye for beauty; exceptional musical vibrations that streamed through her fingers as they glided along

the piano keyboard; a remarkable audible memory; graceful bodily rhythm on the dance floor; refined taste for dresses, fancy hats and gloves; and a passion for traveling through parts of France where she socialized with so many different people; making friends, playing tennis, enjoying parties and admiring the beauty of the mountains, the ocean and the countryside. Later in life she wrote: "He placed in my heart a thirst for the infinite and such a great need to love that only He can satisfy it." (L169). Her great need to love is seen in the many photos that capture her active social life with her many friends.



The vineyards of the Burgundian "Cote d'Or", at Meursault.

But "Sabeth," as her family affectionately called her, also had her "shadow" side. Her tender, passionate, and determined temperament could easily erupt into fits of anger if she didn't get her own way. There are many stories of her temper tantrums as a child and a young teenager.

There is an incident when she nineteen months old that reveals her passionate and choleric temperament. Her mother had taken her to the South of France because of her

mother's illness. One day they were in Church during a mission. A Sister asked if one of the children had a doll they could use as baby Jesus for the crib. Elizabeth's mother offered Sabeth's doll. At first all the people around her distracted her. But when the priest announced the blessing from the pulpit, little Sabeth glanced into the crèche and saw her doll. In a fit of rage she cried out: "Jeannette! Give me back my Jeannette!" "Mean Curé, mean Curé!"

Witnesses testify to Sabeth's fits of anger. Her sister Guite testified: "She was lively, even quick-tempered! She went into rages that were quite terrible! She was a real little devil! Her rages in early childhood were sometimes so violent that her mother threatened to send her as a boarder to the Good Shepherd (a 'house of correction' nearby), and they said they would prepare her clothes."

Francoise de Sourdon, a close friend from Dijon, recalled that Elizabeth could be violent. One day she locked herself in the W. C. and kicked the door with her feet. Another friend, Antoinette Rollet, remembered one Sunday at the Catez home Elizabeth screamed angrily. This was frequent whenever someone opposed her will or childish whims.

Exasperated by her little daughter's fits of anger, Madame Catez often resorted to dramatic remedies to teach her to control her anger. One day, she locked Elizabeth in between two doors. Sabeth was so angry that she began to kick and stamp her feet. The noise was so loud that the owner of the apartment building, who lived below them, heard the outburst. Madame Catez often gave her a loud slap to get her to control her anger.

Elizabeth herself recalled an episode of her childhood to one of her friends, Berthe Tardy. Before her first communion, having received a reprimand, she closed herself in her room and cried out, "Help, someone has killed me."

Elizabeth herself gives us some insight into this side of her personality in a journal entry she made at the age of 18. "I had today the joy of offering to Jesus several sacrifices concerning my dominant fault, but how it cost me! I recognize my weakness. It seems to me that when I receive an unjust criticism, I feel my blood boil in my veins; my whole being revolts...But Jesus is with me, I hear his voice in the depths of my heart and thus I'm ready to bear everything for the love of him."

From where did Sabeth inherit her sensitivity, tenderness, gift for friendship, musical talent, her determination and organizational abilities? From what 'gene pool' did her choleric temperament flow? To answer these questions we need to look briefly at her family background.

Captain Joseph Catez

Elizabeth's father, Joseph Catez, was born in 1832 in the city of Aire located in the northern French department of Pas-de-Calais. The Catez were poor peasants who struggled to survive. The intellectual and cultural level of the family was very poor. In fact, Joseph's father, André Catez, was illiterate. André Catez died in

1840 when Joseph was only eight years old leaving his widow, Fidéline Hoel, alone to support her children. These were difficult years for the family as France suffered a difficult economic crisis in the middle of the 19th century.

In 1853, at the age of 21, Joseph enlisted in the French army. Joseph's first years in the military were difficult, but due to his determination and tenacity he slowly began to ascend in rank. His military career took him to different places. He served in Algeria from 1861 to 1870. In 1870, in the war against Prussia, he was held prisoner for seven months. He was liberated on August 9 of that same year. In 1872 he was elevated as a lieutenant, and finally in 1875 at the age of 43, and after 22 years of service, he received the rank of captain.



Captain Joseph Catez, 1881

His elevated rank, with the economic increase it provided, prompted him to consider forming a family. As a captain, charged with leading a squadron, Joseph was transferred to Hérault, a department that belonged to the region of Languedoc-Roussillon in central France. It was there that he met his future wife, Marie Rolland.

Having come from a poor, humble, and hardworking family who had suffered loss and struggled to make ends meet, Joseph was a survivor and undaunted by the challenges that life presented him. He knew how to win the esteem of his employers and comrades. He was loyal, determined, hard working, and forthright in his relationships, and he possessed a lively and joyful personality.

Marie Rolland

Sabeth's mother, Marie Rolland, also came from a military family. However, her family background was quite different than Joseph's. Marie was the only child of Raymond Rolland and Josephine Klein. Raymond had entered the military in 1832 when he was 21 years old. A few years later, in 1842, he married Josephine Klein whose family was well situated economically. Raymond was named a captain in 1851. Marie's parents' comfortable social class and the military community in which they socialized put Marie in contact with well-to-do families and favored the development of her warm and sociable personality.

Although Marie came from a comfortable family background with many opportunities for socializing and travel, Marie suffered much in her life. To begin with, Joseph, who was 14 years older, was not her first love. Her first love was a young man who died in the war of 1870. This death affected Marie deeply and at one point led her to question if God was calling her to the religious life. Once she married Joseph and they settled in Dijon, Marie was separated from her parents and relatives. Being an only child, she had no close relatives near her. Her husband's family lived in the North of France. Furthermore, in her youth she had been a beautiful woman, but she was bitten in the face by a viper in the country near Dijon. The bite damaged her complexion. It became faded, green and emaciated and she looked 15 years older than she was. In Elizabeth's photo album Marie is 52 years old, but she looks 65. This is one of the reasons why she always stayed in the background, far from the camera in family photos. Everyone noticed her complexion but didn't say anything. She herself was aware of the lasting effects of the snakebite and it

must have been a humiliating experience for her. Her health was fragile and as time went on she suffered from stomach problems and poor eyesight.

Marie was a woman of faith who turned to God in the midst of her sufferings and difficulties. She had a special attraction to the spirituality of St. Teresa of Jesus. She was profoundly affected by reading *The Way of Perfection*. She owned the collected works of St. Teresa, and it was from her that Elizabeth was exposed to St. Teresa's doctrine.

New Life and Death

In 1882, Captain Catez decided to settle his family in Dijon where they established themselves in the military society of the city and enjoyed the presence of many friends. Elizabeth's only sister, Marguerite, was born on February 20, 1883.

However, sadness and grief struck their lives in 1887. Marie's father, Raymond Rolland, who had come to live with them after the death of his wife, Josephine, died on January 27, 1887. Eight months later, on October 2, Joseph died suddenly of a heart attack in the arms of his seven year old daughter, Elizabeth. Within a brief period of eight months, Madame Catez had lost her father and husband; her two young daughters, Sabeth and Marguerite, grieved the loss of both their father and grandfather. Joseph Catez's death must have wounded the Sabeth's sensitive heart and left her with a deep sense of the fragility of life.

Joseph's sudden death had lasting consequences on the life of his widow and children. Marie's pension was reduced and the three survivors, "the trio" as Marie often referred to them, was forced to sell their home and move into an apartment in what at that time was considered the suburbs of Dijon. A new chapter of life began for them.

From the balcony of their new home, they could peer into the enclosed garden of the Discalced Carmelite nuns and hear the church bells call the nuns to prayer at various times of the day. ☩



Elizabeth and Guite, shortly after their father's death

To be continued . . .

In Remembrance

Sigrid Essig-Schulze, OCDS, Sigrid of Jesus and St. Therese, the Little Flower, began eternal life on March 6, 2009. She was a member of the Community of Our Lady of Mount Calvary Saint in Utica, NY; and made her Vows on October 8, 1999.

Judy Ellison, OCDS, Judith of the Holy Name of Jesus, began eternal life on April 1, 2008. She was a member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Community in Reed City MI; and made her Vows just prior to her passing.

Brian W. Morency, Sr., OCDS, Simon of the Cross, began eternal life on April 4, 2009. He was a member of the Our Lady of the Paraclete Community in Detroit, MI; and made his Vows on May 13, 2001

Spiritual Journey

M. M. Philipon, O.P.

PART II - THE CARMELITE

When Elizabeth Catez was shown into her Carmelite cell she was heard to murmur: "The Trinity is there!"

At her very first community exercise in the refectory, when she had finished her frugal meal, Elizabeth was seen to fold her hands simply beneath her cape, then, her eyes closed, to fall into a profound mood of meditation. The nun who was serving, noticing her, said to herself: "It is too good to last." She was mistaken; the Carmel of Dijon possessed a saint.



A postulant of three days... who will become a saint for she already has a remarkable disposition for it," says one of her sisters in the Dijon Carmel.

Elizabeth's Carmelite Ideal

A week after her arrival at Carmel, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity filled out a questionnaire, at recreation, which shows us her state of mind on the threshold of her religious life. The most characteristic features of her spiritual physiognomy are already clearly indicated there: her ideal of sanctity—to live by love in order to die of love; her ardent devotion to the Will of God; her love of silence; her devotion to the soul of Christ; the watchword of her whole religious life—to bury herself in the very depths of her soul in order to find God there. Nothing is forgotten, not even her dominant fault, over-sensitiveness. The only things lacking are that stripping of self which will be the work of the passive purifications of the novitiate and the supreme grace which will transform her life by showing the meaning of her final vocation: to be a praise of glory to the Trinity.

What is your ideal of sanctity?

To live by love.

What is the quickest way to reach it?

To become very little, to give oneself wholly and irrevocably.

Who is your favorite saint?

The Beloved Disciple, who rested on the heart of his Master.

What point of the Rule do you like best?

Silence.

What is the dominant trait in your character?

Sensitiveness.

What is your favorite virtue?

Purity. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

What fault of character do you most dislike?

Egoism in general.

Give a definition of prayer.

The union of her who is not, with Him Who Is.

What is your favorite book?

The Soul of Christ. In it I learn all the secrets of the Father Who is in heaven.

Have you a great longing for heaven?

I sometimes feel homesick for heaven but, except for the vision, I possess it in the depths of my soul.

In what disposition would you wish to die?

I would like to die in an act of love, and thus fall into the arms of Him Whom I love.

What form of martyrdom would you prefer?

I love all forms, but especially the martyrdom of love.

What name would you like to have in heaven?

"The Will of God."

What is your motto?

"God in me and I in Him."

In accordance with her special grace, it was in the very depths that she lived her Carmelite ideal. She went straight to the essentials: solitude, the life of continual prayer, the con-summation in love.

"A Carmelite is one who has beheld the Crucified, who has seen Him offering Himself to His Father as a victim for souls and, meditating in the light of this great vision of Christ's charity, has understood the passion of love that filled His soul and has willed to give herself as He did. On the mountain of Carmel, in silence, in solitude, in a prayer that never ceases because it continues through all else, the Carmelite lives as though already in heaven, by God alone. The selfsame God Who will one day be the cause of her beatitude and will fully satisfy her in glory, is already giving Himself to her. He never leaves her; He dwells within her soul; more than that, the two become but one. And so she hungers for silence in order to be always listening, to penetrate ever more deeply into His infinite Being. She is identified with Him Whom she loves. She finds Him everywhere; she sees Him shining through everything." (L133)



"There is the whole Carmelite life: to live in Him. Then all the sacrifices, all the immolations become divine. The soul sees Him Whom she loves through everything, and everything takes her to Him. It is a continual heart to heart union. Prayer is the essence of the life at Carmel." (L136)

Her favorite point of the Rule was silence and, from the very first, she was delighted with the familiar motto of the early Carmelites: Alone with the great Alone.

Sensible Graces of Her Postulancy

As often happens, the first stage of the religious life of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity was marked by a flood of sensible consolations. God leads souls to the heights slowly, tak-

ing them to Calvary by way of Tabor. Sister Elizabeth often went to her Prioress, declaring: "I cannot bear this weight of grace."

At that time, she would scarcely reach the choir and kneel down before being irresistibly enveloped in deep recollection. Her soul seemed to be immovably fixed in God. She passed through the cloister silent and absorbed, and nothing could distract her from her Christ. One day a nun saw her so seized upon by the divine presence while she was sweeping that the sister did not dare even speak to her. Outside of recreation hours, when Sister Elizabeth was joyous and charmingly spontaneous in manner, chatting with each of her sisters about what she knew would please her, her whole outward bearing showed a soul possessed by God. This recollection of her powers as though lost in God even caused some involuntary forgetfulness during the Divine Office of which she sincerely and humbly accused herself. She was visibly upheld by grace.

So passed the months of her postulancy. Her clothing took place on the 8th of December and Father Vallee came to preach the sermon. Completely given up to the joy of her total surrender to her Master, Sister Elizabeth that day lost consciousness of what was taking place around her, being wholly absorbed in that Christ Who had taken possession of her. In the evening, back once more in her little cell, alone with Him, her soul exulted. A song of thanksgiving rose to God from her heart. For a whole life of love she was at last alone with Him Who is Alone!

The Purifications of the Novitiate

Thus far divine grace had been showered upon her. She had yet, through weary days, to experience her nothingness, to feel that she was a poor creature and capable of any failing and thus to become more understanding of her sisters' weaknesses.

For a long year God was to leave her to herself: to her helplessness, her weariness, her hesitation over her own future, even as to her vocation. On the very eve of her profession a priest would have to come and reassure her and declare what was God's will for her bewildered soul.



*Mother Germaine
of Jesus, 1908*

Facility in prayer disappeared. No more flying; she had to feel her soul dragging itself along. Her artist's nature lay dormant; her sensitiveness was dying. Many, many times did the young novice go to her Mistress and faithfully report her helplessness, her struggles, her temptations, the martyrdom suffered by her sensitive nature in passing through the terrible nights described by St. John of the Cross. To help in the accomplishment of the divine work, Mother Germaine of Jesus guided her kindly and firmly. At the time of Sister Elizabeth's entry into Carmel, she had realized how excessively sensitive she was. In the evening during the Great Silence, the young postulant loved to walk on the terrace; the sight of the sky helped to raise her soul to God. One evening Mother Germaine happened to pass by. It was the time of the Great Silence, so she said nothing, but the next day the young postulant heard these words addressed to her: "We do not come to Carmel to dream in the starlight! Go to God by faith."

Later on, in order to test her, Mother Germaine never lost an opportunity to reprimand her for the least shortcoming, the slightest oversight. Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity would then humbly kiss the ground and go on her way.

Mother Germaine of Jesus purposely disciplined an over-affectionate disposition which might easily have become dangerous. The brave child let her do so, for, from experience, she understood better than anyone else how necessary it was for her to watch over her heart at every instant. As a young girl, she had become extremely fond of a friend whom she met almost daily at Carmel and had had long, intimate conversations with her. She loved to write to her and to read and re-read her letters, especially the passages in which her friend declared that she loved her more than anyone else. This recalling of her girlhood's past in retrospect throws special light upon her religious psychology.

"Dear little sister, yes, let us be only one; let us never be separated. On Saturdays, if you are willing, we will receive Holy Communion for each other. This will be our contract and so shall we always be one. Henceforth, when God looks at Marguerite, He will see Elizabeth too. When He gives something to one, He will be giving to the other too, for there will be but one victim, but one soul in two bodies. Perhaps I am too sentimental, dear sister, but I was so happy when you told me I was that sister whom you loved best. I love to re-read those lines. You well know that you are indeed my little sister, beloved beyond all others; need I tell you so? When you were ill I felt that nothing, not even death, could separate us. Oh! sister dear, I do not know which of us two the good God will call first; our union will not cease then, but, on the contrary, will be perfected. How good it will be to talk to the Beloved of the sister one has left behind!

"Who knows? Perhaps He will ask our blood of both of us! Then what happiness to go to martyrdom together! I cannot think about it, it is too good. . . . Meantime, let us give Him our heart's blood, drop by drop."

There is a certain sentimental emotionalism in these lines and, from the oral testimony of this same friend, we cannot but recognize that Elizabeth was excessively affectionate. Could anyone be astonished at weaknesses like these in the saints? Even St. Margaret Mary was momentarily held back by a too human affection for one of her sisters, for which the Sacred Heart reproached her. St. Thomas, who was both a great doctor and a great saint, teaches that no one on earth can completely divest himself of faults or weakness; not even the most perfect escape them.

A fine book—and a most consoling one for us—could be written on the failings of the saints and the manner in which they corrected them, with God's grace aiding their own efforts.

As soon as Elizabeth Catez perceived that her heart was not free, she heroically detached herself, but gently and with exquisite tact. "Dearest Marguerite: I can safely confide something to you, though I do not want to hurt you. You see, in the chapel with you this morning I realized that being there together was even better than our nice talks; so, if you are willing, we shall spend with Him, side by side, the time we used to spend in the garden. Am I hurting you? Dear little sister, have you not felt as I do? It seems to me that you have. Tell me, quite simply. You know that you can say anything to your Elizabeth."

After this generous act of detachment, this intimate friend told us, "I felt her move away."

Something similar, but very much deeper, took place during the phase of passive purification which Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity underwent during her novitiate. All her senses had to attain this complete detachment which alone can set the soul free.

No one around her, except her Prioress, ever suspected this stage of purgative suffering. At that time, everything which it would seem should have consoled her either left her indifferent or irritated her. Even a retreat preached by Father Vallee whose teaching, beautiful and profound as always, she truly appreciated, could not rescue her from this interior anguish. The priest himself no longer understood her and, over and over, sadly asked: "What have you done to my Elizabeth? You have changed her." The work he did not understand was God's doing and men could avail nothing.

From that hard year of trials, Sister Elizabeth gained a more robust faith and an experience of suffering that would enable her to understand and comfort other souls who were being tested by God. The essential result of this period of purgation was to render her more virile and to establish her definitely in a spiritual life based entirely on pure faith, which would henceforth go forward peacefully, under the eye of God, secure from any recurring assaults of over-sensitiveness.



The Large Cloister

Physical health returned with the establishment of spiritual balance and the conventual Chapter admitted her to profession. She was informed of this fact on Christmas Day. As on all the most important occasions of her life Sister Elizabeth took refuge in the all-powerful prayer of Christ in the Mass. This time, however, she most particularly sought His help, begging for a whole novena of Masses from the venerable priest friend who had been the first person to whom she had confided her aspirations when, as a little girl, she had climbed upon his knee. Then Sister Elizabeth disappeared in retreat beneath her lowered veil. She passed like a shadow through the community halls, her face always veiled, and her Sisters enveloped her with their prayers. But soon the retreat, begun in such joyous anticipation of her profession, became so painful as even to raise doubts as to her future and her vocation. It was necessary to send for a religious of wide experience who reassured her. Sister Elizabeth believed the priest's word as the voice of God. It is customary in Carmel to prepare for profession by keeping a sacred vigil the night before. Sister Elizabeth was in choir, wholly united with her Lord, beseeching Him to take her life for His glory, when the Master visited her. "During the night preceding the great day, while I was in choir awaiting the Bridegroom, I understood that my heaven was beginning on earth: the heaven of faith, with suffering and immolation for Him I love." (L169)

A new stage of her spiritual life was beginning. No longer would there be sufferings from a sensitive nature not yet purified, or scruples and anxieties over mere nothings. Henceforth she would tread the road to her Calvary with the peaceful and unshakable confidence of a bride who knows she is loved: she would go forward amid the most heroic sufferings with the majesty of a queen.

Intense Interior Life

Her profession once made, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity set herself to the pursuit of religious perfection, without the least sentimental emotionalism but with a new enthusiasm and a calm, heroic strength which would lead her from sacrifice to sacrifice, up to the consummation of Calvary.

The whole program of her inner life was to realize her name, Sister Elizabeth, that is, the House of God, in which the Trinity dwells.

It is true that this seeking of the presence of God in all circumstances is the very essence of the Carmelite life and is in the established tradition of the Order. St. Teresa constantly refers to it in her Interior Castle. "Intimacy with the Three Divine Persons" constitutes the central truth of her mystical doctrine.

By a special grace, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity found the most characteristic inclination of her interior life in that doctrine. Her letters, her conversations in the parlor, her poems, her retreat resolutions, all converge on this indwelling which was, if we may trust her own testimony, "the beautiful sun lighting her life." (L261) "The day I understood that, everything became clear to me." "My only practice is to enter into myself and lose myself in Those Who are there." (L179)

As the years of her religious life passed, her soul buried itself more and more in this tranquil and peace-giving Trinity, which at every moment imparted to her something of Its eternal life. At times, indeed, there were still some slight disturbances in her interior life, but more and more everything hushed to silence. "It is the greatest happiness to live in close union with God, to make one's life a heart to heart intimacy with Him, an exchange of love, to know that the Master is to be found in the depths of the soul. One is never alone then, but must have solitude in order to enjoy the presence of this adored Guest. . . . Every-thing is lighted up and it is so good to live." (L161) "You ask me what I do in Carmel. I might answer that a Carmelite has only one thing to do: to love and pray." (L168) "A Carmelite's life is a communing with God from morning till night and from night till morning. If He did not fill our cells and our cloisters, how empty they would be! But we see Him through all for we bear Him within us and our life is an anticipated Heaven." (L192)

The tranquil rhythm of this spiritual life is simple, constantly coming back to certain unchanging, essential movements: to be silent and to believe in Love, Who is there, dwelling in the depths of the soul in order to save it. Many "nights" and weaknesses remain, it is true, but what do the involuntary waverings of a soul that lives in the presence of the Immutable matter? Gradually everything grows quiet and becomes divine.

And so the life of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity flowed on. In that fervent Carmel, where so many other great souls were living by God and for His glory, it must not be imagined that she was an extraordinary figure, to be pointed out as "the Saint." It is the normal thing in monasteries to canonize religious only after they have been taken from the community! At Dijon, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity was merely the ever faithful novice who, like so many others and as a true Carmelite, was wholly "hid with Christ in God." ❧



Elizabeth's cell ...



...and view from her window which overlooked the quadrangle.

2009 Congress Schedule

This Congress is shaping up to be one of the largest Carmelite gatherings ever held in the United States. It is a “super retreat” which will be attended by several nuns, 14 friars including our three Provincial Delegates and Father Provincial; even our newly elected OCD Father General has committed to attend or send a representative. It begins with Evening Prayer and Mass on the highest Feast of the Order, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On Friday after the Keynote Address, Archbishop Edwin O’Brien of Baltimore will celebrate Mass on the Feast of the Martyrs of Compiègne, followed by exposition and procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Adoration Chapel. We will honor our Holy Mother with the Votive Mass for St. Teresa on Saturday, and conclude the Congress with Mass on Sunday, Our Lord’s Day.

The homilies will be rich with wisdom and Carmelite teachings. In addition, there will be four major presentations by our friars. Also, you will participate side-by-side with our nuns and friars during panels and workshops led by 17 seculars who share their love of Carmel, Christian maturity and community experience. Meals will be a joyous occasion for networking with our brothers and sisters from all over our country. The assembly will be called to gather for the Saturday night banquet to celebrate our mutual Carmelite spirit and to recognize our OCDS Canonically Established Communities.

All Carmelites—seculars, friars and nuns—share in St. Elijah’s zeal for the Lord God of Hosts, and we embrace our Mother Teresa’s determination “to begin anew, going from good to better.” We are in perpetual formation: always being called, always being taught, always focusing on prayer, and always applying the fruits of our prayer into action in our daily lives. And so this Congress has something to offer everyone:

- ✦ Those beginning formation will experience the richness and depth of Carmelite Spirituality.
- ✦ Those beginning to live the Promise of their Carmelite commitment will be helped to internalize God’s call and better understand it.
- ✦ All professed Carmelites will be nourished and energized in our mutual vocation: “allegiance to Christ” and growth in community life.

We urge you to join us for this unique opportunity to experience Teresian Spirituality, to expand horizons and to enhance fellowship with other Carmelites.

Thursday, July 16, 2009

2:00 – 6:30 P.M.	Registration Dinner on your own
6:30 -7:00 P.M.	Evening Prayer followed by a brief welcome
7:00 – 8:00 P.M.	Celebration of the Eucharist Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
8:00 – 9:30 P.M.	Reception with brief remarks
8:00 –10:00 P.M.	Registration

Friday, July 17, 2009

7:00 – 7:45 A.M.	Registration
7:00 – 8:00 A.M.	Continental Breakfast at both hotels
7:30 A.M.	Orientation to the Congress for first time attendees
8:00 – 8:45 A.M.	Morning Prayer and Mental Prayer
9:00 – 9:45 A.M.	Keynote Address by <i>Fr. John Sullivan, OCD, Provincial</i>
10:00 A.M.	Celebration of the Eucharist - <i>Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien</i> , Celebrant

11:00 A.M. Feast of the Martyrs of Compiègne
 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Procession to the Adoration Chapel

11:00 – 11:30 A.M. Break

11:30 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. Presentation: *'Living Out the Promise' in the World within our state of life, based on the OCDS Constitutions'* by Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, OCD

12:30 – 1:30 P.M. Lunch Buffet

2:00 – 3:30 P.M. 3 Simultaneous Workshops on *'Living Out the Promise'* led by OCDS members

3:30 – 3:45 P.M. Break

3:45 – 5:15 P.M. Panel Discussion: *'Understanding our Carmelite commitment, both initial and ongoing'*

5:30 P.M. Evening Prayer

6:00 P.M. Dinner on your own -or- Outing to Baltimore Inner Harbor

Saturday, July 18, 2009

7:00 – 8:00 A.M. Continental Breakfast at both hotels

8:00 – 8:45 A.M. Morning Prayer and Mental Prayer

9:00 A.M. Celebration of the Eucharist
 Votive Mass honoring St. Teresa of Jesus and recognizing Canonically Established OCDS Communities

10:00 A.M. Break

10:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Panel Discussion on *'Formation Issues'*

12:00 – 1:15 P.M. Box Lunch and Networking

1:15 – 2:45 P.M. 3 Simultaneous Workshops on *'Formation Issues'* led by OCDS members

2:45 – 3:00 P.M. Break

3:00 – 4:00 P.M. Presentation: *'Forming Vibrant OCDS Communities'* by Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD

4:00 – 4:30 P.M. Break

4:30 – 6:00 P.M. 3 Simultaneous Workshops on *'Community Issues'* led by OCDS members

6:00 P.M. Evening Prayer

7:30 – 10:00 P.M. Banquet

Sunday, July 19, 2009

7:00 – 7:45 A.M. Continental Breakfast at both hotels

8:00 – 8:45 A.M. Morning Prayer, Adoration, Benediction, and Reposing of the Blessed Sacrament

9:00 – 9:45 A.M. Presentation: *'How Can Secular Carmelites Serve the Church in the 21st Century?'* by Fr. Thomas Otang'a, OCD

10:00 – 10:45 A.M. Panel Discussion on *'Carmelite Community Apostolates'*

11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Celebration of the Eucharist
 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

INSPIRATION FOR 2009 OCDS CONGRESS



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DATE: ____/____/____

E-mail: OCDSClarion@hotmail.com
WEB: <http://www.CarmelClarion.com>

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 Scieurba 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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OCDS 2009 Congress Update



Through the generosity of Ms. Veronica Royal, OCDS, the Congress will have a beautiful and engaging icon to Raffle at the Congress during the gala banquet on Saturday evening. This original icon is a striking image of St. Elijah emerging from the cave high above the desert where he hid from Jezebel. It shows cues to his past and future – a raven, a palm tree and a hint of a flaming chariot. You can see this icon in its full glory at Ms. Royal's website www.royaliconstudio.com. The value of the icon is greater than \$350 and it reflects the years of experience she has under Russian and Slavic artists.

Tickets for the Icon Raffle can be found inside the back cover of this Clarion and should be duplicated as needed so that one or more tickets can be obtained. To enter the Raffle, provide the information on the ticket, printed name and phone number, and mail it together with a check for \$3 per ticket or \$10 for 6 tickets to RUTHANN PIEPENBURG, OCDS, 4950 N LITTLE FALLS RD, ARLINGTON, VA 22207-2832.

You can enter, as many times as you wish, and you do not need to be present at the drawing on Saturday evening in order to win. If you are the winner, you will be called and the icon sent to you. If you are attending the Congress, the icon will be displayed at the OCDS Congress sales table where raffle tickets will be sold until late Saturday afternoon, July 18th.



Hand painted by Ronnie Royal, OCDS

Letters from Elizabeth on *PRAYER*

L 123 We can reflect upon the advice Elizabeth gives to Françoise de Sourdon (“Framboise/Raspberry”) who was a younger friend to whom she talks about Jesus living in us, praying in us, and us responding to His Divine Presence. She writes as a teacher of the spiritual life to her student, and to each of us. This is the secret of happiness for Elizabeth and she wants Framboise to have the same happiness by building a cell in her own heart for the Lord to dwell there; resulting in complete dependence on Him so that emotional suffering goes away because she trusts Jesus with her deepest secrets and knows He understands. She writes:

L123 To Françoise de Sourdon

[June 19, 1902]¹

J. M. + J. T.

Carmel, Thursday night

Yes, my darling, I am praying for you and I keep you in my soul quite close to God, in that little inner sanctuary where I find Him at every hour of the day and night. I'm never alone: my Christ is always there praying in me, and I pray with Him. You grieve me, my Framboise; I can well see that you're unhappy and I assure you it's your own fault. Be at peace. I don't believe you're crazy yet, just nervous and overexcited, and when you're like that, you make others suffer too. Ah, if I could teach you the secret of happiness as God has taught it to me. You say I don't have any worries or sufferings; it's true that I'm very happy, but if you only knew that a person can be just as happy even when she is crossed. We must always keep our eyes on God. 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.

You must build a little cell within your soul as I do.² 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. Ah, if you got to know Him a little, prayer wouldn't bore you any more; to me it seems to be rest, relaxation. We come quite simply to the One we love, stay close to Him like a little child in the arms of its mother, and we let our heart go. You used to love sitting very close to me and telling me your secrets; that is just how you must go [to] Him; if only you knew how well He understands.... You wouldn't suffer any more if you understood that. It is the secret of life in Carmel: the life of a Carmelite is a communion with God from morning to evening, and from evening to morning. If He did not fill our cells and our cloisters, ah! how empty they would be! But through everything, [we] see Him, for we bear Him within us, and our life is an anticipated Heaven. I ask God to teach you all these secrets, and I am keeping you in my little cell; for your part, keep me in yours, and that way we will never be parted. I love you very much, my Framboise, and I'd like you to be completely good and completely in the peace of the children of God.

Your Elizabeth of the Trinity.

I was really delighted with the Benediction,³ thank Marie-Louise very much for me. I've been praying fervently concerning the lawsuit.⁴

1 The autographs of L122 and 123 are two halves of the same sheet of paper (L 123 adds another piece of paper). If the letters were not sent in the same envelope, they were in any case very close. “Thursday” would have been June 19, which notes 3 and 4 confirm.

2 Cf. L 89, note 10

3 Of June 15, cf. L120, note 1.

4 Cf. L 122.

L 249 We can learn from her letter to Madame Angles, an older family friend for whom Elizabeth felt a deep affection as her friend, but also as someone she could help in dealing with life's problems. As a result, this letter is a witness to us on surrendering our inner self to God, especially in times of doubt, anxiety about life's problems and excessive concern about ourselves. As Elizabeth says to her: “the secret of peace is to forget oneself.” This letter calls for courage and abandonment to the Presence and life of God within which gives us focus to live in solitude with Jesus. She writes at length:

J. M. + J. T.

God alone suffices.²

Madame and very dear sister,

I was very touched by your feast day greetings, and thank you for the prayers you are offering for your little friend in Carmel. For her part, I assure you she remembers you very faithfully in Him who is our indissoluble bond. If you knew how attached my soul is to yours, I would even say how "ambitious" I am for it! I would like it to be wholly surrendered, wholly adhering to that God who loves it with so great a love! Yes, dear Madame, I believe that the secret of peace and happiness is to forget oneself, not be preoccupied with oneself. That doesn't mean not feeling one's physical or mental sufferings; the saints themselves passed through these crucifying states. But they did not dwell on them; they continually left these things behind them; when they felt themselves affected by them, they were not surprised, for they knew "they were but dust,"³ as the Psalmist sings; but he also adds: "With God's help, I will be unblemished, and I will guard myself from the depths of sinfulness within me."⁴ Dear Madame, since you allow me to speak to you like a be-loved sister, it seems to me that God is asking you for abandonment and unlimited trust during the painful times when you feel those terrible voids. Believe that at those times He is hollowing out in your soul greater capacities to receive Him, capacities that are, in a way, as infinite as He Himself. Try then to will to be wholly joyful under the hand that crucifies you; I would even say that you should look at each suffering, each trial, "as a proof of love" that comes to you directly from God in order to unite you to Him.

Forgetting yourself with respect to your health does not mean neglecting to take care of yourself, for that is your duty and the best of penances, but do it with great abandonment, saying "thank you" to God no matter what happens. When your soul is burdened and fatigued by the weight of your body, do not be discouraged, rather go by faith and love to Him who said: "Come to me and I will re-fresh you."⁵ As for your spirit, never let yourself be depressed by the thought of your sufferings. The great Saint Paul says: "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more."⁶ It seems to me the weakest, even the guiltiest, soul is the one that has the most reason for hope; and the act of forgetting self and throwing oneself into the arms of God glorifies Him and gives Him more joy than all the turning inward and all the self-examinations that make one live with one's own infirmities, though the soul possesses at its very center a Savior who wants at every moment to purify it.

Do you remember that beautiful passage where Jesus says to His Father "that He has given Him power over all flesh so that He might give eternal life to it"?⁷ That is what He wants to do in you: at every moment, He wants you to go out of yourself, to leave all preoccupations, in order to withdraw into the solitude He has chosen for Himself in the depths of your heart. He is always there, although you don't feel it; He is waiting for you and wants to establish a "wonderful communion"⁸ with you, as we sing in the beautiful liturgy, an intimacy between bride and Bridegroom; He, through this continual contact, can deliver you from your weaknesses, your faults, from all that troubles you. Didn't He say: "I have come not to judge but to save."⁹ Nothing should keep you from going to Him. Don't pay too much attention to whether you are fervent or discouraged; it is the law of our exile to pass from one state to the other like that. Believe that He never changes, that in His goodness He is always bending over you to carry you away and keep you safe in Him. If, despite everything, emptiness and sadness overwhelm you, unite this agony with that of the Master in the Garden of Olives, when He said to the Father: "If it is possible, let this cup pass me by."¹⁰ Dear Madame, it may perhaps seem difficult to forget yourself. Do not worry about it; if you knew how simple it is.... I am going to give you my "secret": think about this God who dwells within you, whose temple you are;¹¹ Saint Paul speaks like this and we can believe him. Little by little, the soul gets used to living in His sweet company, it understands that it is carrying within it a little Heaven where the God of love has fixed His home. Then it is as if it breathes a divine atmosphere; I would even say that only its body still lives on earth, while the soul lives beyond the clouds and veils, in Him who is the Unchanging One. Do not say that this is not for you, that you are too wretched; on the contrary, that is only one more reason for going to Him who saves. We will be purified, not by looking at this wretchedness, but by looking at Him who is all purity and holiness. Saint Paul says that "He has predestined us to be conformed to His image."¹² In the saddest times, think that the divine artist is using a chisel¹³ to make His work more beautiful, and remain at peace beneath the hand that is working on you. This great apostle I speak of, after being carried off to the third Heaven,¹⁴ felt his infirmity and complained about it to God, who answered: "My grace is enough for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."¹⁵ That is very consoling, isn't it?...

So, courage, Madame and dear sister, I am entrusting you very especially to a little Carmelite named Therese of the Child Jesus, who died at the age of twenty-two¹⁶ in the odor of sanctity. Before her death, she said she would spend her heaven doing good on earth;¹⁷ her grace is to expand souls, to launch them on the waves of love, confidence, and abandonment.¹⁸ She said she found happiness when she began to forget herself.¹⁹ Will you invoke her every day with me, so she can obtain for you the knowledge that makes saints and gives the soul so much peace and happiness!

A Dieu, dear Madame; since this is the last week before the solitude of Advent, I will be seeing Mama, Marguerite, and her little family; I won't fail to offer them your regards. My little nieces are very cute and give much happiness to their dear grandmother. Marie-Louise's babies must be as much of a joy for you. Please tell Marie-Louise I'm praying for her and haven't forgotten the nice reunion at Labastide.²⁰ Please remember me to Madame Maurel, too. As for you, dear Madame, you may trust in my deep affection and my union in Him of whom Saint John says: "He is Love."²¹

Your little Sister and friend, M. Elizabeth of the Trinity r.c.i.

- 1 "Since this is the last week before the solitude of Advent, I will be seeing...." The letter seems to have been written on Sunday, November 26 (in any case at the beginning of that week). Advent began on December 3. The year is 1905, because Guite has two children.
- 2 Teresa of Avila. Cf. Diary, note 87.
- 3 Cf. Ps 102:14.
- 4 Ps 17:23 (17:26 in the Manual).
- 5 Mt 11:28.
- 6 Rom 5:20.
- 7 Jn 17:2.
- 8 First antiphon from First Vespers of the feast of the Circumcision (January 1).
- 9 Jn 12:47.
- 10 Mt. 26:39
- 11 Cf. 1 Cor 3:16.
- 12 Rom 8:29.
- 13 Recent readings of John of the Cross had perhaps sharpened Elizabeth's conviction of the necessity of suffering. The image of the artist who puts the finishing touches on a statue with a chisel is perhaps borrowed from LF 590 [K-RJ 3:57], although this text does not refer directly to God.
- 14 Cf. 2 Cor 12:2.
- 15 2 Cor 12:9.
- 16 Therese was actually 24 years and 9 months old at the time of her death.
- 17 Cf. HA 235 [LC, p. 102].
- 18 Cf. HA 131 [SS 174]. Elizabeth had already quoted this sentence for Mme. Angles in L 224.
- 19 In 1900, cf. L 32-33.
- 20 1 Jn4:16.

Editors Note: Letters published from Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity, Volume II, Letters from Carmel (Washington, DC; ICS Publications 1995). Introductions provided by Dr. James P. Jenkins, Sr., OCDS.

Question of the Month

Where should OCDS Community records be kept?

Historically the president and/or formation director have kept them. After each triennial election, all community records are to be transferred from the outgoing president and formation director to the newly elected council. ¶ 54 of the *Constitutions* specifies that it is the responsibility of the "Secretary of the Council" (who may be one of the five council members or an appointed individual) to maintain these records. This is a matter of obedience. It is highly recommended that going forward all community records be kept in a single place; though the formation director may keep formation records for candidates. In charity and for the greater good, it is also the duty of the outgoing council to share its knowledge and experience with the incoming council. A series of joint face-to-face meetings separate and apart from regularly scheduled community meetings best facilitates a smooth transition and provides visible support of the new leadership. Change is difficult for us all, but we likewise must be open to the working of the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth Of The Trinity

In Search Of The Absolute

Elda Maria Estrada, OCDS

Editor's note: This was originally recorded as a retreat and distributed as an audiotape album by ICS Publications. We hope you enjoy it printed as a 5-part series throughout the balance of 2009.

Part I – Elizabeth of Dijon: God's Masterpiece

Each of five conferences will go into greater and greater depth. The first one is a preparation for what is to come. It is called "Elizabeth of Dijon: God's Masterpiece." This will be followed by "Elizabeth's Process of Becoming," "Elizabeth: A Life Utterly Lived in Praise of Glory of Her Three," "Elizabeth: A Prophet of the Presence of God, Spirituality of Presence." And finally, "Elizabeth: Spirituality of Interiorization." Elizabeth is, in fact, God's Masterpiece.

I will take you through the milestones of her life first and then focus on her personality. Elizabeth was French. She was born in 1880 on July 18th. Her parents were Francis Joseph and Marie Rolland Catez. She was baptized on July 22nd, which is the Feast Day of a woman who sinned much but her sins were forgiven because she loved much, Mary Magdalene.

In 1887, Elizabeth's family moved to Dijon. They took up residence very close to the monastery of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns. See how God weaves the threads of our existence and takes us where he wants us to be? There is no such thing as a coincidence. The child was a prodigy. After her first confession, Elizabeth changed her conduct radically and decided to become a religious when only seven years old! Her determination mirrors her likeness to Our Holy Mother, Teresa of Jesus. Elizabeth called this experience "my conversion."

In 1891, when 11 years old, she made her first communion on April 19th. She went to visit the Prioress of the Dijon Carmel who told her the name that she would take as a religious when she entered Carmel. She called her: "of the Trinity" and told her that Elizabeth means House of God. However, I did a little research, and found out that besides being a House of God, the term Elizabeth means God is plenitude. God is fulfillment.

God is just awesome. Do you see how God is leading her? We must make connections in the very same way. He leads each and every one of us. The Saints, specifically the Saints of Carmel, are not just to be emulated and admired. We must ask ourselves how do I emulate that person? Every Saint is a living word of God and so are we, saints in the making.



Baptism has marked you with the seal of the Holy Trinity! (GV 9)

In 1894, Elizabeth made a vow of perpetual virginity and was increasingly aware of her vocation to Carmel. She said I quote, "We gave ourselves to each other totally. I love Him with His own love." We know that God's own love is the Holy Spirit. God can be known intellectually as He knows Himself. And God can be known effectively and spiritually, as He loves Himself. That can only be achieved in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

When she was 11 years old, Elizabeth received the revelation of her personal vocation. She decided to love Him and only Him in the style of Deuteronomy 6, with all her heart, with all her mind, with all her soul, and with all her strength. That's the way we love in Carmel. And if you think I'm exaggerating, just go through the lives of Teresa, John, and Therese.

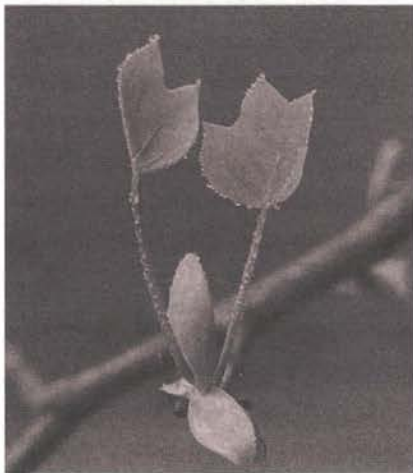
In 1899, she was present at a retreat taught by Father Cherney, a French Jesuit. During that retreat, Elizabeth received her first grace of supernatural prayer. Prayer is the locus of our encounter with God. Everything of worth in our lives occurs only in and through prayer. For a loving person, everything turns into a prayer. That's exactly what Saint John of the Cross taught us when he spoke about mediated experiences. Everything becomes a means to union with God, a means to deeper knowledge of Him, and consequently to deeper love. Elizabeth describes her prayer as "being alone with God alone." Holy Mother Teresa describes prayer as an intimate sharing between friends and being alone with Him whom we know loves us.

So she began reading and was taken by the Way of Perfection. When she went to confession during a mission preached by the Redemptorist Fathers, she was given the assurance that by divine favor, the Lord had preserved her Baptismal innocence. In other words, she had not committed a mortal sin. The same has been said of our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus and of Saint Therese, a little flower with a stem of steel. You have to have that kind of willpower to really grow and to become holy. When that experience happened, she became confirmed in her vocation to Carmel.

I want to say something about the theology of vocation. Vocation is a gift like everything else. Therese says over and over again, "everything is gift, everything is grace." But that gift needs to be nurtured like a little plant. It needs to be taken care of. It needs to be enhanced. It needs to be defended in order to become rooted. So in the theology of grace, God is giving. As St. Augustine says: "God cannot do it without me. I cannot do it without Him." So there has to be the flux and reflux of God giving and myself receiving the gift to make it become alive in me.

Elizabeth wanted to enter Carmel right away, but her Mother said no. She would not give permission until she reached the age of 21. So Elizabeth waited. She waited, hopeful that her mother would experience a change of heart. In the meantime, she didn't waste any time. She offered herself as a victim for a sinner, a very public sinner and for the sins of the whole world.

In January 1900, she was on another retreat, this time with a Jesuit, Father Hoppenot. At that time she resolved to lead the life of a Carmelite in the world. Does that sound familiar? That's us. Don't give me the excuse, I cannot be a saint because I'm a mother, I'm



... gift needs to be nurtured like a little plant.

a grandmother, I have a profession. So what? It doesn't make any difference. It's more difficult for us because we don't have the canonical hours established, because we don't have particular times of silence and recollection, and a special time for spiritual reading which nourishes our way of life. But if we are not saints, it is for one reason and one reason only. And that is that we don't want to be.

Providentially, Our Lord places certain people along our path. For Elizabeth it was the wonderful Father Vallée, a Dominican. During a visit in February 1990, he explained to her the theology of the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity. She had a keen awareness of the Trinity dwelling in her soul and that was the changing element of Elizabeth's life. That became the Raison d'être of her existence. It became her center, her axis, her north star.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, used to say, "God is closer to me than I am to my own self." While I'm saying this, my cry to the heavens is: where in the world are we? We are distracted, divided, dichotomized, dispersed all over the place except in the center where the true action is. We need a conversion. We need a profound change of direction. We need to gather everything, everything. That's what recollection means - to really gather all that is dispersed and bring it to the center where God dwells, lives, abides, loves and calls us to a constant meaningful, personal, intimate, transforming and sanctifying relationship.

On August 2, 1901, Elizabeth entered Carmel as a postulant. She received the habit on December 8th of that year and was given the name of Marie Elizabeth de la Trinity. On January 11, 1903, Elizabeth made her religious profession. It's interesting that the motto of the Carmel of Dijon was, "God in me and I in Him", which is really the Trinitarian indwelling. I have not been to Dijon yet. I am waiting for our dearest Elizabeth to be canonized. And I am going to step out in faith and make a prophetic utterance, that Elizabeth will also be another Doctor of the Church, because the depth of her spiritual doctrine is unparalleled. I hope and I pray that that is so and soon.

In 1904, on November 21st, she was inspired by the Holy Spirit to compose her famous elevation to the Blessed Trinity, a most divine prayer, which is a synthesis of her experience of the Trinity and also of her spiritual doctrine.

In 1905, she began experiencing the symptoms of her illness, the illness that ultimately would take her life. She was relieved of her duties and allowed to live a less rigid observance of the Carmelite life. At the Feast of Easter, she discovered her particular unique vocation as *Laudem Glorïae*, or Praise of Glory of the Trinity. In February 1906, while so gravely ill, she became fully convinced that her personal vocation to be a *Laudem Glorïae* of the Trinity was going to become realized in the measure and in the degree that she configured herself with the wounded, suffering, broken Christ of Calvary. Her initial vocation was and will always be Trinitarian, but the Father in the Person of the Holy Spirit sent her back to the Son so that she could experience the Pascal mystery in all of its pathos, agony, and suffering.

On March 1st, after experiencing a severe crisis she was placed permanently in the infirmary. She knew what was coming and she was ready. She surrendered totally to the Divine Will. When I say that, I remember the words of Saint Augustine, "Oh Lord, that I



Light broke through in abundance once Elizabeth crossed the threshold of her definitive commitment by her profession.

love You so much that I can only want or not want, only what You want or not want.” It takes a lot of love to be identified with Him in such a way and to such a degree.

In the beginning of May 1906, she suffered a tremendous relapse and in order to sustain her, God gave her the very special grace of experiencing His divine presence. In July of that same year, Elizabeth spoke at length with her Mother Prioress and through the exchange of these two persons that loved the Lord so much, Elizabeth gained a deeper understanding of her vocation to become a living image of Jesus crucified.

On October 15th, the Feast of our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus, she was allowed to have a last visit with her spiritual director, Father Vallée and the members of her family. On November 1st, Elizabeth received her last communion and then entered into a very painful death agony. On November 9, 1906, she passed sweetly and swiftly to Heaven to sing the praises of the Trinity for all eternity. In 1984, on November 25th, on the Feast of Christ the King, Elizabeth of the Blessed Trinity was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

Now, let’s look more closely into her personality. Elizabeth was a live wire. She had a very strong temperament. She was impulsive and irascible. I love to hear those things. The saints were people of flesh and bones, passions, and untold limitations and imperfections, as are we. The only difference is that when they fell, they appealed to the mercy of God, got up right away and continued hoping against hope.

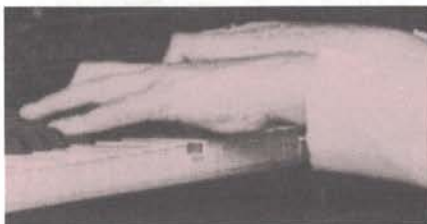
She was a very determined person. Her governess said and I quote her, “This girl has a willpower of steel. She will obtain whatever she sets out to do.” Her mother said Elizabeth was “est tres diabolique”, a little devil. She said that lovingly, but Elizabeth was a handful. Elizabeth had a very gregarious personality. She loved to be with her friends. She was vivacious and expressive. She was extroverted, but had a contemplative nature. She had an extremely passionate personality.

Elizabeth was profoundly enamored of beauty and a tremendous artist. She found beauty in all of its manifestations. She saw every created reality as nothing but an echo of the beauty and the goodness of the Father, who through the Son and in power of the Holy Spirit makes everything, be what it is.

Elizabeth possessed fine qualities. She had a very delicate sensitivity towards beauty and friendship. Sometimes you hear the expression that every gift has a downside. The flaw of character that Elizabeth had to fight most strongly, was this sensitivity, She was hypersensitive, as was Therese.

She had a delicate sensitivity for friendship and a highly developed artistic sense. She had a great passion for music and was a very accomplished pianist. She also had an extraordinary aptitude for contemplation. She had such a rich and ardent nature that it caused her problems.

However, like her Mother Saint Teresa, she was able to maintain balance and equilibrium. Elizabeth acquired a tremendous amount of self-mastery through which she obtained a great harmony, balance and equilibrium. And of course, it was not easy. Don’t think or believe that these saints were born saints. They became holy, first through great love. That is the secret of the whole thing, the great love that was translated in a profound conversion process and a profound transformation process bringing them closer and closer to Christ, until they were transformed into the image of Jesus the Lord.



The hands of Elizabeth, young pianist

Her mother said and I quote, "In Elizabeth I admire the work of grace." Elizabeth's sensitivity is the foundation of her availability to others, of her openness to friendship. Elizabeth was extraordinarily endowed for communication, for loving exchange, for friendship. That is why, like her Mother Teresa, she realized that the intimate sharing between friends was her life. A friendship developed, nurtured, rooted with her "Three," inside of her, in her most profound center.

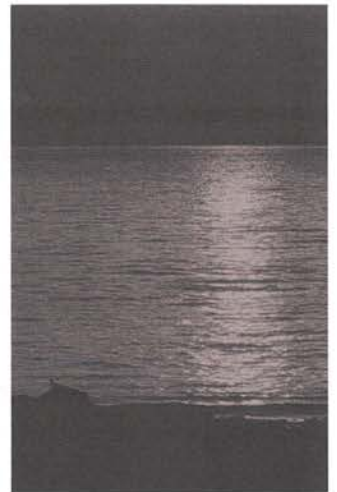
I want to share a quote of something Elizabeth said in the 1900's: "Divine Master, allow that my life will be a continuous prayer that nothing, nothing can distract me from You, neither my occupations or my joys or my sufferings. Lord, take possession of my whole being, Holy Will of God be always my will. And also," she repeats it again, "in the world, I want to totally belong to You." I think this statement of Elizabeth should be our prayer as well; that nothing, nothing can distract us from becoming more and more aware, more and more conscious of the divine presence within us. Elizabeth continued, "I am Yours. Take possession of me, of my will, and of everything I am." This appeared in her diary on January 27, 1900, the Feast of Saint John the Beloved Disciple.

Together with her artistic love for beauty, we have to be aware of Elizabeth's humanness. Her heart was enlarged by her contact with her "Three." Her experience of being loved by them was the source of everything valuable in her life.

Elizabeth said: "He teaches me to love as He loves." We need to go to the feet of Jesus and listen. Listen is the first contemplative verb. We need to listen, be quiet, and still whatever is distracting us. In the words of Saint John of the Cross, in the first stanza of the poem *Dark Night*, "I left my house." In other words, I went out of myself after everything was still and quiet. In silence we can listen to the Lord's voice, which is so gentle, so soft, so subtle, and then He can teach us to love as He loves.

Elizabeth had a very affective heart. Friendship penetrated all of her human and spiritual attitudes. She realized that friendship did not simply mean spending time with someone. She understood friendship in the most profound sense, because it is the calling of every baptized person. We are called in the words of Saint John of the Cross to union with God, union with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Saint Teresa of Jesus takes that and calls it spiritual marriage. Teresa also calls it friendship. Saint Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian of all time, said that there is no one more existential term that can better describe the profound union with creator and creature than friendship.

The impression one gets from reading her letters is that for Elizabeth, friendship is like a physiological need. We cannot deny that without this quality, we wouldn't have had the Elizabeth of the profound experience of the Trinitarian Indwelling. Once she discovered that presence, she also discovered slowly but surely, that the presence was absolute and dynamic. Our Lord wanted to relate to, be connected with, and infuse Himself within her, to be One with her. In the school of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, she learned very well and very early that the love of God increases the love of neighbor. This appears in the *Way of Perfection*, Chapter 6, numbers 7 through 9.



In Carmel, Elizabeth experienced how her capacity to love was enlarged. That brings to mind what they said about Holy Mother Teresa, who had a transverberated heart. Our Lord made her heart as vast as the sands on the seashore. In her, in Elizabeth, as in every love whether human or divine, that friendship has to be purified and perfected. In Elizabeth, all the aspects of her rich personality have their vertex, their point of convergence, their unification, their nucleus in her absolute fidelity to her Trinitarian vocation to the living, loving God who constantly and eternally lives and loves within us and calls us to an ever deeper relationship that will culminate in a most profound transforming and sanctifying union.

I repeat what I said at the beginning, the Saints are not just to be admired. They need to be imitated. They are living works that God gives us so that by looking at one or the other we can see how God is, how God loves each one of us personally, particularly, and individually.

I hope and I pray that while we consider this great woman, Elizabeth, there may be awakened, revived and strengthened in us the appreciation, the love, and the ardent desire to realize what Saint Luke says, in Chapter 17 Verse 21, “the Kingdom is within,” and that like Elizabeth, everything in us will converge in our most profound center. Amen. ☩

Retreat News from the Northeast

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.

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.

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





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