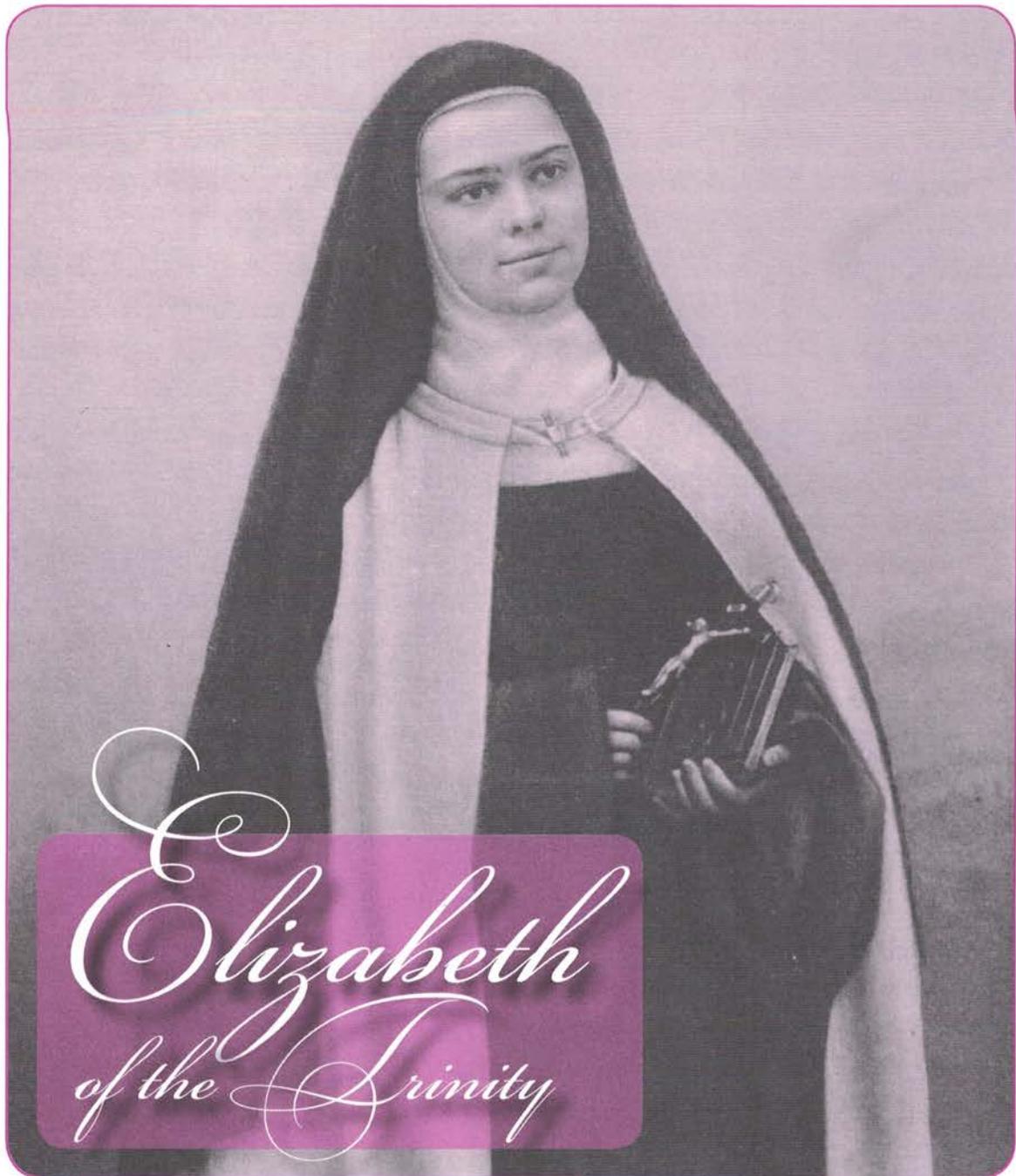


CARMEL CLARION

MAY — JULY 2009 VOLUME XXV NO. 3



*Elizabeth
of the Trinity*

CARMEL CLARION

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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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Editorial

It hardly seems possible that the 2009 OCDS Congress has come and gone. After working very hard for the last 18 months it feels strange to come to work and not be concerned with Congress related matters, such as registrations, speakers, workshops, hotel arrangements and a myriad of other things that popped up daily.

As dark as things looked at times, as difficult as various obstacles seemed to be to overcome, the dedication and commitment of the Congress Core committee, with help from the ever-present Holy Spirit, brought the plan to a successful conclusion the weekend of July 16-20, 2009. What impressed me the most as the planning moved forward was the love and devotion for God and the Order shown in the hard work and sacrifices made by this committee. We had our ups and downs as the 18 months went by. As any group of people trying to accomplish a goal, we also had our differences on the way things should be done. Yet despite these differences, members were willing to forego their own personal view for the sake of the goal – to provide the best possible event for their OCDS brothers and sisters. There were many, many other volunteers who generously gave of their time and talents in support of the Core committee, thus ensuring the success of the Congress.

From the very beginning we were determined that this Congress would be different from previous Congresses. This was to be an OCDS Congress. A Congress planned and dominated by members of the OCDS. The program grew out of the results of the OCDS Community Challenge Questionnaires submitted by you. Aside from four presentations by OCD friars, 20 secular members conducted three panels and nine workshops covering various aspects of OCDS life. The results were a success far beyond our wildest expectation.

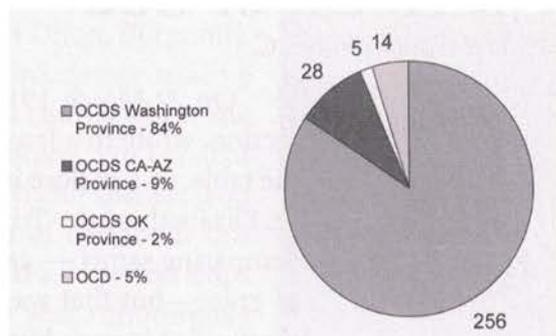
Choices we made early on in the planning, turned out, in retrospect, to be right; from the choice of the location, Baltimore, to the hotels, the Westin and Sheraton. The Westin, where most of the events took place, proved to be ideal. The food and the service by the entire staff of both hotels were excellent.

The choice of the workshop format for the Congress also turned out to be a wise one. It meant that seculars were talking to their OCDS brothers and sisters, sharing their wisdom and experience of their Carmelite life with each other. The workshop format also gave each individual participant the opportunity to share his or her own experiences with the other participants at the workshop. The feedback we received from those at the Congress was very positive regarding the workshops. Most felt that this was one of the high points of the Congress. CDs will be available in the next *Clarion*.

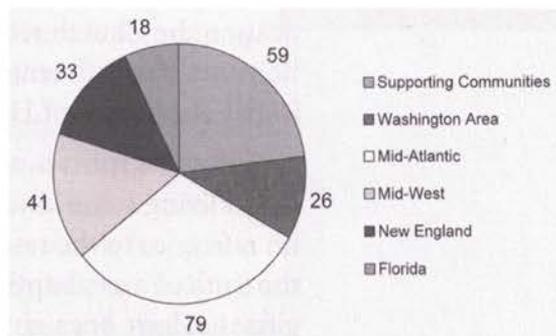
We thank you for your patience during this challenging time and regret the negative impact that Congress planning activities had on production of the *Clarion*. This issue covers a three-month period from May through July. The next issue will cover August through October, and the last will be November through December. All these issues will be slightly longer than normal to insure coverage of material on Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity during 2009.

Fr. Regis

May–July 2009



2009 Congress Attendees (303 Total)



Washington Province Attendees (256 Total)



Liane Melvin and surprise visitor Carlos "Chuckie" Ibay for Sunday Mass at the Congress.

Elizabeth:

The House of God

Michael Gaughran S.S.C.

On 22 March 1913, Dom John Chapman, a Benedictine noted for his spiritual direction, wrote to a Jesuit, 'You asked for a picture of St. Therese of Lisieux; I have one on the table, so I enclose it. She is very popular because she is so pretty! But you should read Sr. Elizabeth of the Trinity who is much more wonderful'. Now, I am not accustomed to comparing saints — each is a gift of God and each in his or her own way is a masterpiece of grace—but that was a very great compliment. Sixty-one years later, the Church pronounced this same Elizabeth as Blessed on the Feast of Christ the King.

We congratulate our dear Carmelite Sisters on their joy at seeing another of their family raised to the altar. Carmel lives for the praise of the glory of God and by this Beatification the Church recognizes another aspect of its spirit, because each of these Carmelite saints is so different in many ways; and yet the heart of their life is always so true to the initial inspiration of Holy Mother Teresa.

But this spirit is not for Carmelite Sisters alone. For the life of Carmel does not consist in living some kind of spiritual life reserved to those within the enclosure, which has no reference to the rest of mankind. Rather, it is a question of living in its fullest depths the truth of every baptized soul. So often we lack understanding of the wonderful spiritual gifts that have been given to us, so that we do not feel drawn to live them deeply. Perhaps it is Elizabeth's greatest gift to put before our eyes the wonder of life's holiness.



It is summer time. Elizabeth appears to be nine. According to Marie-Louise Hallo, this group picture was taken at the camp of Chalons-sur-Marne. The house behind the group seems to be a military barracks. Elizabeth (seated) is the first one on the right; Guite is the third. Behind the children, the second one to the right (standing) is Mme. Catez.

By holiness of life I do not mean the things we do well, the things we get right, the virtues we practice, for only God is holy. The true holiness of life lies in the fact that God is in us. The name given to Him at the beginning was Emmanuel, 'God with us': 'His name shall be called Emmanuel, which means God with us' (Lk 1:23). He is with us not only in the world, in the Church, in God's people; He is the treasured possession of every single one of us: the treasured possession of the soul. Carmelites live this truth and Elizabeth lived it, though not by writing another dry, theological book. These have their place but, thank God, Carmelites do not add to the number of unread books on our shelves. The book of the Carmelite is her soul, so often read only by God who looks into the heart of His devoted servant and reads it with joy because it is written for Him in love. But now and again, by some chance, one of them comes into the open. It is her gift to tell the world all about it. And Elizabeth had that task for us, to speak about what she lived with all the generosity of her young life. She gives us what we need: a perception of doctrine, that is, the truths of God perceived in deep faith; it is a doctrine lived to the full in faith. If you are going to live the Catholic life to the full, you have to

understand the truth of grace and live by it. This is the doctrine that we need today. There is no shallow sentiment here, but faithfulness to the truth that she lived.

Who was she, this little saint of holiness? She was the daughter of an artillery officer, born in 1880 in a military camp, who lived most of her life in Dijon, Burgundy. She did not start life as our idea of a saint. She first appears on record, demonstrating her colorful personality at the age of about two, being taken into a church where she spotted, in a crib, one of her own dolls which her mother had, unknown to her, lent for a festivity there. There was a screech in the middle of the prayerful silence, 'You wicked priest, give me back my Jeanette!' There is a photograph of her about this time, clutching the said doll, with a face you would not say launched a thousand ships — it would have sunk the whole lot of them without trace! She was a thoroughly aggressive, bad-tempered, dreadful little soul. 'A will of iron' her teacher said of her. 'She gets what she wants at all costs'. And presumably whatever it cost anyone else! The priest who prepared her for her first confession predicted, 'This one will grow up to be a saint or a devil', but she cannot go down the middle way. There is something positive here to be harnessed but which would cost her dear for years.



But God took a hand. Her first confession brought an exceptional grace and this resulted in her entering upon a struggle with herself in which she overcame her temper altogether. At the age of nineteen she wrote, 'It seems to me that, when someone says something unjust to me, I can feel the Blood boiling in my veins; my whole being is in rebellion! But Jesus was with me. I heard His voice in the depths of my heart and then I was ready to bear anything for love of Him'. What a long way she had come in those years of struggle! Grace comes that way: there are two sides to it. There is the grace that demands something active of ourselves: to fight for virtue, fight God's good battle. Then there is the other more passive grace when God fills the soul. Elizabeth did not start as a saint, but all that mighty will in her was applied from the outset to the cause of God.

God did not leave her alone. At the age of fourteen, Elizabeth, who had already heard the call to religious life, seemed to hear one day after Holy Communion the word 'Carmel' spoken in her heart. She had already thought of the Trappistines — (she wanted something tough to fight) — and now Carmel became her one desire. At once she consecrated herself by a vow of virginity. Carmel became her whole ambition. Yet for a long time she suffered the opposition of her mother who even banned her from visiting the Carmel. For years, dominating that will of hers, Elizabeth remained obedient to that mother. She said later, 'If she had not permitted it, I would never have entered'. But she set out to live it just the same, imitating St. Catherine of Siena who said, 'I will create a little cell in my heart and adore God there'. She lived in her heart what she longed to be: 'Let me live in the world without belonging to the world. I can be a Carmelite within me and that I wish to be'.

She was a girl of high spirits; she plunged into life, which she loved. She was a most accomplished pianist, taking prizes. She loved nature, she loved the sea, she loved adventures and new experiences, going aboard an ocean liner, watching a cavalry charge. She loved her friends with very great warmth, which never left her even in Carmel. That was the kind of person she was.



Elizabeth at sixteen. In 1896 in Limoux (Aude), the Catez were guests of the Soujeole family."

The outward details of her early life are interesting, but they only go so far. Later on she was to write of our Lady, 'In her everything took place within'. And that is the secret of Elizabeth and the secret of Carmel. Her heart was for God and in the midst of every activity there was a recollection of heart, which some people noticed, 'it was as if she wasn't with us'. Why are some people saints, and others not? Many could be proclaimed saints, but they are not. There seems to be a providence that watches over it. When the Holy Father was a Cardinal and he was talking about Fr. Maximilian Kolbe he said, 'Saints are selected because they are signs for our times' offering the world a lead, pointing in the direction it needs to travel, perhaps correcting a failure. Elizabeth is just that. This is an age when there is a hunger for the things of the spirit; many directions are taken, some of them strange: too much of us and too little of God; spirituality can often have too much of sentimentality and feeling about it. Perhaps this is at least part of her message: the need for a life lived in faith and according to sound doctrine. I am convinced too that she is a saint for the young. Elizabeth lived only twenty-six years. Very many of the things she wrote were addressed to young people; but always they contained strong meat: the strong love of God, the interior life, the life of faith. She spared them nothing. A young person

living the deepest spiritual life to the full — isn't that a gift for today when the young often find it difficult to know where they are going? This is for us all.

But the grace which was, perhaps, to mark her most deeply and was the first step towards that doctrinal truth which was to shape her life, the doctrine by which she lived, began on her first Communion day when she enjoyed the treat of coming to Carmel. The Prioress, Mother Mary of Jesus, gave her a little explanation of the meaning of her name, Elizabeth. 'It meant', she said, 'House of God'. She must have been referring to the fact that Elizabeth had just received her Lord within her. The name Elizabeth fitted the occasion.

Nothing more is recorded about it at this time. But the wonder of the truth of this name came to her later at the age of about nineteen when she received a grace, which gave the sense of a Presence. About that time she wrote in her diary concerning the social life she was leading,

You know good Master, when I am at these gatherings and festivals, my consolation lies in recollecting myself and enjoying your presence, for I feel you so truly in me, my Supreme Good. In these gatherings people hardly have a thought for you, and it seems to me that you are happy when even one heart as poor and miserable as mine doesn't forget you.

She felt she must ask her confessor about this presence. About this time an eminent Dominican, Fr. Valée, happened to be visiting Carmel. There they met and Elizabeth confided in him. Understanding the nature of the soul before him he explained in reply, 'Yes, child, it is true; the Father is there, the Son is there, the Holy Spirit is there'. It was a continuation of the original grace: Elizabeth — the house of God.



September 1808 in St. Hilaire with the Lignon family. From left to right: Guite, an unidentified young girl, Mme. Catez, Mme. Lignon, Elizabeth and, in the center, little Cecile Lignon.

She came to understand for the first time the great grace that belongs to every one of us from the day we were baptized. Our Lord expressed it most completely in one verse of the scriptures, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him' (Jn 14:23). Here we have the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the quest of the soul. This was the great truth, which was the springboard of Elizabeth's whole life.

The tabernacle is the most treasured place in the world, not to say the Church. In the tabernacle dwells the Living God and we fall on our knees as we approach it. But as St. Therese once said, 'God did not come down to earth to live in a gold ciborium'. God has found a home far more worthy of Himself: the human soul made in His own image and likeness. Each one of us can say, 'I was made for this: the Living God within me. It is the greatest treasure on earth. His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us'. This is the truth that underlies our whole existence. For this Elizabeth was made. And she was made to give to the Church an understanding of this amazing truth, 'Do you not know', St. Paul once said, 'that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' (1 Cor 3:16). And again, 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?' (1 Cor 6:19).

At the end of her life, Elizabeth was to write about what she was convinced would be the grace that she would give to the Church when she was in heaven.

In heaven, I believe, my mission will be that of drawing souls into interior recollection, helping them to go out of themselves, to cling to God through a movement that is wholly simple and wholly loving; and to preserve them in that great silence of the 'within', which allows God to imprint Himself on them and to transform them into Himself.

She was beatified in the Church to give this message to the world.

Bl. Elizabeth lived by a doctrine. It was this: to live in company with Him alone. The whole of Carmel is based on this. Anyone who knows the writings of St. John of the Cross and of Holy Mother St. Teresa, knows that at the heart of their teaching lies this truth: God lives at the peak-point of the soul. Some would say, the center of the soul. Bl. Elizabeth talks about the abyss. It is all one and the same thing. The very deepest truth about myself is that 'I live now not I, but Christ lives in me'.

When she entered Carmel and knew she was to be called by her own name, she wrote, 'Did I tell you what my name in Carmel is to be? Sr. Mary Elizabeth of the Trinity? It seems to me to be a particular vocation'. Her own name spelt out the meaning of her life: house of God, house of the Trinity. Perhaps in this time as never before, it is hard for us to grasp and live truths of this kind, to grasp and live the truth of the interior life. We have to accustom ourselves to enter within, to live face to face with the unseen; that is, with the God in whom we believe. We believe Him because He Himself has told us that He is there.

How are we to manage? There is so much to do even in the consecrated life, and so many activities. It seems as if the salvation of the world depends on our efforts. Our spiritual energies become dissipated over so many things that it is hard sometimes to draw



*Icon of Apostle Paul
on Worship*

them together. There are the interminable discussions, which are the killer of the interior life; and the many activities, which are unnecessary since they are not duties of state. In our homes there is the blare of television, so ungoverned and unbridled. So that to go 'within', to penetrate into the realm of the truths of faith is something very difficult for us today. There is something else, if I dare mention it, which crops up in our very prayer life: a dependence on groups, an externalizing of prayer to the point where, though good in themselves, these factors eliminate the urge to seek God alone in the silence of the soul. We have to be very careful, in a noisy age, to look for the silence, which is necessary in order to find God. Sometimes one hears people say, 'Well, so long as you pray, it doesn't matter how'. But for the soul who wishes to taste the gifts of God there is a price to be paid — and it does matter. It matters desperately. We must long to find God where He wants to be found: in faith within ourselves.

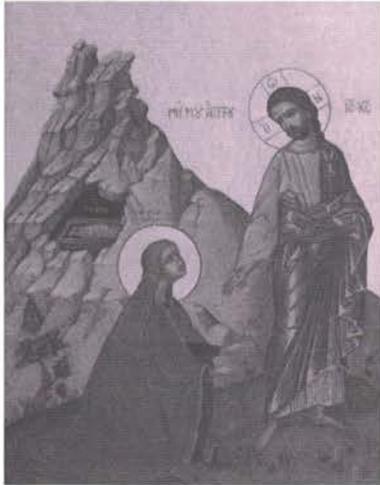
That is why for Bl. Elizabeth, as for Carmel, the person of Mary Magdalene was always such a treasure. She was one who put everything else aside just to sit at the feet of the Lord and listen; and she was content to listen and found it was a sufficient use of her time. We have often to live in a noisy world. That we cannot help. But we must struggle to keep a reserve within ourselves, which will help us to return to the things of God.

Friendship with God is the heart of the Christian life. When we consider what it means to be a Christian, we must beware of the danger of thinking it is a question of doing many things in Christ's name. That is not what He wants first of all. What He wants is the love of the heart: that personal quality of love which inspired St. Mary Magdalene to pour out the ointment lavishly so that everybody said it was a waste when so much could have been done with it. But our Lord's reply was, 'Leave her alone; she has done it for me. It is for me and there is no waste in giving it to me'. Silence of the heart is the greatest testimony of our love for Him. As Elizabeth used to say, 'I gather up all my faculties just to concentrate on Him'.

It is the gesture of true friendship to desire the Beloved's company. Elizabeth put it so simply once in a letter to a young girl.

Like me, you have to build yourself a little cell in your soul; you must think that the good God is there, and you must enter there from time to time. Ah, if you knew it a little, prayer would not be tedious for you; it seems a rest and relaxation to me; you simply come to the One you love, stay close to Him like a little child in its mother's arms, and you let your heart go. You used to like so much to sit very close to me and give me your confidences, and that is how we must go to Him. If you only knew how well He understands ...

Simplicity is the hallmark of Carmel. It has nothing to do with big ideas or very many ideas. It is not concerned with knowing all the books of theology or long complicated books on psychology. St. Teresa said, 'I don't want a whole lot of ideas'. God doesn't want a whole lot of ideas. He wants great love. And the simpler it is, the better. It is simplicity to treat Him as the Friend He is. 'I do not call you servants any more, I call you friends' (Jn 15:15). 'Come and talk to me', He says. 'Forget everything for a moment. I am always here; come and speak to Me; come and tell Me of your love and appreciation'.



Greek icon of St. Mary Magdalene and Jesus

But this relationship with God demands self-discipline. It needs a discipline. Why? Because of the way we find God. Not through feelings but with faith. Carmel has much to say about this. We are speaking here of a doctrine, a revealed truth concerning God's presence. We are not speaking of what we feel about God. Great spiritual masters like St. John of the Cross used to say that if you attach yourself to a feeling, if you enjoy that feeling so much that you want to hold on to it, however spiritual and inspired it may seem to be, it is not God. It is just your feeling about God. No, we must believe in Him and go on believing whether we feel Him or whether we don't, whether we enjoy our prayer or whether we don't. We must pray because we believe.

Even before she entered Carmel, Elizabeth's faith was tested in a dark night, which eclipsed the sensation of God in her soul. She wrote to a friend,

Pray hard for me, beloved sister; for me too it is no longer a veil which hides Him from me, but a very thick wall. It is very hard, isn't it, after feeling Him so close, but I am ready to remain in this state as long as it pleases my Beloved to leave me there, for faith tells me that He is there all the same, and what is the use of sweetness and consolations? They are not He. And it is He alone that we seek... so let us go to Him through pure faith ...

She says too, "God in me and I in Him" — let that be our motto. Ah, how good that presence of God within us is, in the intimate sanctuary of our souls. There we always find Him; even though our feelings no longer register His presence, He is there all the same.

And God asks that of people. He purifies us of attachment to too much feeling, too much consolation, too much of us, so that we can find Him in pure faith. This is why it is a mistake to try to create a spiritual atmosphere that depends too much on the emotions. It is looking for the wrong things. The purer in faith our prayer becomes, the better it is. It is a price that has to be paid, a price that demands a discipline.

The soul who wants to follow Elizabeth must desperately want to live with God. And so it must give time, give effort and give energy, regularly to come back to that inner cell and choose that presence of God within rather than the many other attractions that are calling for attention during the day. God asks a price, and He may not let us feel His presence immediately. And so Elizabeth says,

I'd like to tell every soul what a source of strength and peace and happiness they would find if they would consent to live in this intimacy. The only thing is they don't know how to wait — and God does not give Himself in the way the senses perceive... When He comes to them armed with all His gifts, He finds no-one: the soul is outside itself in external things instead of dwelling in the depths...

You may say to yourselves, 'This is fine for the Sisters of Carmel' and leave it there. But Elizabeth wrote this sort of thing for lay people. This was Elizabeth's high ideal for everyone: come back and live the great treasure that God has given you.

All this came together in another experience that Elizabeth had later. In 1905 when she was visiting Sr. Aimée in her cell, the Sister drew her attention to a passage from the



The oratory where, on Elizabeth's entrance day and First Friday of the month, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, as it was also on all Sundays and Feast days.



Sr. Aimée of Jesus at 45

beginning of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Here St. Paul spells out the meaning of our life, the destiny God ordained for us, 'We have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory' (Eph 1:12,14). Thus Elizabeth discovered the next grace of her life: to live for the praise of the glory of God. That seemed to her to sum up everything. She was to enter into that little cell within her and find there the Blessed Trinity. She was to live for the praise of His glory — and that would be all.

And what did she find in there? Reading her prayer to the Blessed Trinity which she wrote on a sudden inspiration on the night of the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, you will find she speaks of silence. And so she says, 'help me to be changeless and calm . . . May nothing disturb my peace . . . Your heaven . . . keep me all absorbed in Thee . . .'

Elizabeth wrote this contemplating the Incarnation. She thought of the day the angel had come to Mary, the coming of the Son of God. Elizabeth knew that at that moment the Father had looked down on that little creature, Mary, and the Holy Spirit had come upon her because she was so little and given to God. And so the Son of God was made her own. Elizabeth knew she too must become little and quiet in the presence of God. The longing grew that the miracle of Nazareth would be repeated in her: that in her flesh, her body, her human nature, the Son of God would come again to praise His Father's Glory. She wanted to be the home of God, the place where the Eternal Son was present. So we find her saying to the Holy Spirit,

O consuming Fire! Spirit of Love! Descend within me and reproduce in me, as it were, an incarnation of the Word, that I may be to Him another humanity wherein He renews all His mystery. And Thou, O Father, bend towards Thy poor little creature and overshadow her, beholding in her none other than Thy beloved Son, in whom Thou art well pleased.

For Elizabeth knew that in that silence within her, which was not just a silence of words but a silence filled with longing for God, that longing would be answered as Mary's longing for the will of God was. ❀

In Remembrance

The Community of the Resurrection in Indianapolis, IN lost two of its members in 2007. **Thurman (Pat) Fleck, OCDS**, Patrick of John of the Cross, who made his Vows on May 16, 2004, began eternal life on April 19, 2007. **Amanda DiCiurio, OCDS**, Mary Theresa of the Resurrection, who made her Definitive Promise on July 12, 1998, entered eternal life on December 30, 2007.

Martha Campos, OCDS, began eternal life at the age of 89 on June 16, 2008. She was a member of the Mary Immaculate and St. Mary Magdalene Community in Flemington, NJ.

Stephanie Smolucha, OCDS, who made her Vows on June 6, 1982, began eternal life on August 29, 2008. She was a member of the Our Lady of the Mt. Carmel and St. Maravillas of Jesus Community in Libertyville, IL.

Two Icons Of The Trinity: Bestowing Life Upon Humanity

M. M. Philipon, O.P.

Dance, Dancer and Dancing

Before coming to Carmel, I used to feel disappointed that there was so rarely a homily on the Trinity, even on Trinity Sunday. It seemed to me that an opportunity had been missed of exploring an extraordinarily rich aspect of our faith. Of course the Trinity is something profound, but perhaps it need not be complex. Years ago, the Catholic chaplain at the university recounted an anecdote from his experience. One afternoon, the gardener came into his office in the chaplaincy and asked, "What's all this about the Trinity?" Then, with minimal prompting, the gardener himself proceeded to explain his own understanding of the Trinity: the Father is the dance, the Son is the dancer and the Spirit is the dancing. Simple but profound.

Teresa of Avila, with her characteristic honesty, tackles head-on our intellectual difficulties with the notion of God being both Three and One, while at the same time dismissing them as unimportant in the light of the reality she knows from experience:

One day, after the feast of St. Matthew, a very clear understanding of this mystery was granted to me... To us ignorant people it appears that all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are – as represented in paintings – in one Person, as when three faces are painted as one body. And thus we are so scared away that it seems the mystery is impossible and that no one should dare think about it. For the intellect feels hindered and fears lest it might have doubts about this truth, and it thereby loses something very beneficial. What was represented to me were three distinct Persons, for we can behold and speak to each one. Afterward I reflected that only the Son took human flesh, through which this truth of the Trinity was seen... Could the Father exist without the Son or without the Holy Spirit? No, because the essence is one: and where one is, all three are, for they cannot be separated. (Sp Test 29:1-3)



"Hospitality of Abraham" also known as "The Old Testament Trinity"

By Andrei Rublev

Four years ago, on entering the novitiate, I chose the title 'of the Trinity'. I do not claim any deep personal insight into this mystery, but like Elizabeth of the Trinity, I know that my name calls me forward on a journey of exploration into an ever-deeper relationship with our triune God. By choosing that title, I expressed my desire to undertake this journey. I believe that God is Three and God is One, and I want to share in that relationship. I must be honest, though, and say that I am not yet conscious of experiencing it. I await it as gift and promise.

The three visitors

Andrei Rublev's icon of the visitors to Abraham (cf. Gn 18:1-8), painted early in the

fifteenth century, is a well-known symbolic representation of the Holy Trinity. The three figures seated around a table form a circular movement of communion and unity, while differences in their clothing, gestures and the symbolic scenery in the background allow them a subtle individuality. Both stillness and movement are portrayed, creating a sense of timelessness and vitality, echoed in the first Romance of John of the Cross:

*One love in them all
makes of them one Lover,
and the Lover is the Beloved
in whom each one lives.*

Part of Rublev's genius was to create a space in the foreground of his painting, which draws the one praying with the icon into the heart of the Trinity itself, accepting Jesus' invitation to "make your home in me, as I make mine in you" (Jn 15:4). With its accent on the Trinity as community, Rublev's icon provides a visual commentary on the third and fourth Romances, in which John reflects on God's desire to share His life with us:

*"My Son, I wish to give
you a bride who will love you.
Because of you she will deserve
to share our company.
and eat at our table,
the same bread I eat,
that she may know the good
I have in such a Son;
and rejoice with me
in your grace and fullness....
"For as the Father and the Son
and He who proceeds from them
live in one another,
so it would be with the bride;
for, taken wholly into God,
she will live the life of God."*

Bringing life and healing

For the front cover of my profession booklet, I chose a modern icon statue known as The Compassionate Trinity¹. It is contemplative like Rublev's icon, but seems also to have an 'active' feel to it. The whole earth is surrounded by God, held in the womb of the Trinity. In the center of the sculpture is a limp, puny, lifeless human being whose face is turned towards the Father and who represents all of us with our weakness, poverty and limitations – a reminder of the truth Thérèse knew so well, that we are always supported

by Divine Mercy. The Father bends over His poor little creature, holding him firmly with both hands and breathing into his face the breath of life. Meanwhile, the Son, our Good Samaritan, kneels and gently touches the feet of the puny human being. A flame in the shape of a dove descending hovers over the scene, directing its focus to the heart of the human person. In “Heaven in Faith”, the treatise by Elizabeth of the Trinity, we find words that could serve as a commentary on this icon: I no longer want “to live my own life, but to be transformed in Jesus Christ so that my life may be more divine than human”, so that the Father in bending attentively over me can recognize the “image of His Beloved Son in whom He has placed all His delight” (HF 12). This echoes her prayer to the Trinity, written almost two years earlier: “And You, O Father, bend lovingly over Your poor little creature; ‘cover her with Your shadow’, seeing in her only the ‘Beloved in whom You are well pleased.’”



The Compassionate Trinity

By Sr. Caritas Müller

The imagery of the icon is profoundly scriptural, echoing the creation and the incarnation: “His state was divine, yet He did not cling to His equality with God” (Ph 2:6); it also evokes the Good Samaritan, the washing of the feet and Pentecost. It is also distinctly medical, with both the Father and the Son portrayed as bringing life and healing to the human person. In contrast to Rublev’s icon, in which the human person is located outside the painting and invited into the life of the Trinity through prayer, here the human being is portrayed as the central focus of the powerful creative activity of the Trinity united in its common purpose of bestowing life upon humanity.

1 Die barmherzige Dreieinigkeit (The Compassionate Trinity), Keramik: Sr. Caritas Müller OP, Cazis; © ars liturgica, Buch- & Kunstverlag, D-56653 MARIA LAACH, Nr. 4573.

Question of the Month

Are we required to use the “OCDS CANDIDATE WORKSHEET” which is up on the ocdswashprov.org website under FORMS during the process of discerning a candidate’s vocation to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites?

This form is a consolidation of information, which was previously contained on the Reception of the Scapular, Temporary Promise and Definitive Promise forms. First, this information was removed from the forms because it is of a confidential nature and is **ONLY to be kept/used during formation**; then destroyed once a secular has made Definitive Promise to the Community and to the Order. For this reason, **ONLY the new forms dated January 2009** will be accepted by the Main Office and should be filed in the Community records. Second, the CANDIDATE WORKSHEET is designed for use by the council when discerning a candidate’s vocation to Carmel at each step during the formation process. Third, it should first be completed at the time an aspirant is reviewed. If invited to move into formation, it should be **ONLY filed in your community formation records** and used again after 12 and 24 months to review progress for Temporary Promise; and subsequently at the 12, 24 and 36 month points to review progress for Definitive Promise. It has been the practice of the Washington Province that this should be the **MINIMUM** interaction between candidates, Formation Directors and Councils. In the event your community has designed its own form that complies with these requirements and is working well in your community to discern vocations to Carmel, it may be used instead.

OCDS 2009 Congress Update

We offer praise and thanksgiving for the many graces we received...

Washington Province 2009 Congress Chair

Fr. Regis Jordan, OCD, Provincial
Delegate – Mid-Atlantic

Core Committee

Michael Alley and Suzanne Treis:
Co-Chairs of Congress and Program
Committee

Teresita Abola: Benefit Concert and
Banquet Chair

Jim Jenkins and Liane Melvin: Sales and
Fundraising Co-Chairs

Qunitcoe and David Lee: Database
Managers

Virginia Picardo: Registration and
Hospitality and Welcome Suite Chair

Ruthann Piepenburg and Jack Brunson:
Liturgy Co-Chairs

Marie Pitman: Logistics Chair

Supporting OCDS Communities (# Attendees)

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (13)
Washington DC

Sacred Heart (12) Frederick MD

St. Joseph (20) Washington DC

St. Therese of the Child Jesus (14)
Annandale VA

Donations of Special Gifts and Talents

Maria Castro, Helen Dickey, Laurea Di Joseph, Cora Edwards OCDS, Mary Harrington OCDS, Penny Hickey OCDS, Bob Huber, Carlos “Chuckie” Ibay, Carmencita Ibay OCDS, Abraham and Sunita Kallarakal, Carol Koblentz, Connie Maas OCDS, Mark Marozza OCDS, Samantha Melvin, Thaiyan Nguyen, Pylander Pannell, Fr. Adam Parker, Florina Riva OCDS, Molly Roh OCDS, Veronica Royal OCDS, Cecilia Schmitt OCDS, Lucilia Solomon-Chan OCDS, and Alice Hanel Tung OCDS, our violinist.

OCDS Celebrant at the Votive Mass honoring St. Teresa of Jesus

Fr. John Moran, MM

Guests

Most Reverend Edwin F. O’Brien, S.T.D.,
Archbishop of Baltimore

Celebrant of the Eucharist on the Feast
of the Martyrs of Compiègne

Very Rev. Dr. John Sullivan, OCD,
Provincial – Washington Province

Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD, Provincial
Delegate – Northeast

Fr. John Grennon, OCD, Provincial
Delegate – Mid-West & Florida

Fr. Donald Kinney, OCD, Provincial
Delegate – California & Arizona
Province

Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, OCD, Provincial
Delegate – Oklahoma Province

Fr. David Centner, OCD

Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD

Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD

Fr. Russel Raj, OCD

Fr. Ted Centala, OCD

Fr. Thomas Otang’a, OCD

Br. Bryan Paquette, OCD

Sr. Mary Eileen McNamara, OCD

Congress Cadre Presenting on Panels and Workshops

Philip Camill, OCDS – Fredericksburg VA
Eleanor (Ellie) Cullen, OCDS – Ocala FL
Rita Dugdale, OCDS – Barrington RI
Loretta Gallagher, OCDS – Danvers MA
Antoineete (Toni) Hagey, OCDS – Kittanning PA
Debra Harper, OCDS – Ocala FL
Frances Harry, OCDS – Dayton OH
Theresa Hofer, OCDS – Ann Arbor MI
Debbie Koch, OCDS – Cincinnati Ohio
Elizabeth Korves, OCDS – Austin TX
John Leidy, OCDS – Ann Arbor MI
Annie Lex, OCDS – St. Paul MN
Sandra Malkovsky, OCDS – Raleigh NC
Deacon Nicholas Mammi, OCDS – Salem VA
Elizabeth Pantas, OCDS – Asheville NC
Corinne Roberts, OCDS – Danvers MA
Ken Vaughan, OCDS – Frederick MD
Peggy Wilkinson, OCDS – Frederick MD

Attending OCDS Communities (71)

Akron OH (1)
Albuquerque NM (2)
Almond NY (1)
Ann Arbor (St. John of the Cross)
MI (2)
Annandale (Our Lady of Mt.
Carmel) VA (2)
Annandale (St. John of the Cross)
VA (1)
Asheville NC (1)
Auburn CA (1)
Austin TX (1)
Bakersfield CA (2)
Baltimore MD (3)
Barrington RI (2)
Brighton MA (4)
Buffalo NY (2)
Charleston WV (2)
Charlotte Study Group NC (2)
Cherry Hill NJ (4)
Cincinnati OH (4)
Columbus OH (2)
Covina CA (13)
Dallas TX (1)
Danvers (St. Teresa of the Andes)
MA (3)
Dayton OH (1)
Elysburg PA (3)
Emmitsburg MD (3)
Eugene OR (1)
Flemington MA (2)
Fredericksburg VA (3)
Green Bay WI (3)
Hagerstown MD (1)
Hampton VA (5)
Harrisburg PA (4)
Havertown PA (1)
Hubertus WI (8)
Indianapolis IN (1)
Kittanning PA (4)
Lansing MI (2)
Libertyville IL (2)
Loretto PA (2)
Louisville (Holy Spirit) KY (1)
Maryland Study Group (3)
Miami FL (8)
Modesto CA (2)
Moline IN (1)
Morristown NJ (1)
Nashua (Our Lady of the Blessed
Sacrament) NH (2)
Nashua (St. Therese) NH (1)
New Orleans LA (1)
New York NY (3)
Newark DE (4)
Ocala FL (7)
Olney MD (2)
Owensboro KY (2)
Palm Bay FL (2)
Philadelphia PA (7)
Piedmont OK (1)
Port Tobacco MD (8)
Portland OR (2)
Raleigh NC (8)
Redlands CA (1)
Roxbury MA (2)
Salem NC (4)
Salt Lake City (1)
San Jose CA (1)
Seattle WA (2)
South Plainfield NJ (1)
St. Paul (Our Lady of Divine
Providence) MN (3)
St. Louis MO (1)
State College PA (2)
Staunton VA (6)
Steubenville OH (2)
Sugar Loaf PA (3)
Sun City Center FL (2)
Swartz Creek MI (3)
Towson MD (7)
Trenton NJ (5)
Vero Beach FL (1)
Virginia Beach VA (2)

OCDS Volunteers who served on the Registration and Hospitality Team, Liturgy Team, Sales Team, Speakers Assistants Team or Banquet Team (81 from outside the Washington DC area)

Ames, Mary Lou	Charlesworth, Ruth	Kassuba, Connie	Ortega, Maria
Anasoulis, Helen	Connor, Lillian	Kelly, Margaret	Parisi, Joseph
Angermeier, Patricia	Crosby, Pia	Klein, Bernadette	Payos, Nell
Armas, Amelia	D'Amico, Marie	Kleinschmidt, Margaret	Pirozzi, Tracey
Ayento, Marissa	Davidson, Mary	Klotz, Linda	Powers, Amy
Barnett, Grace	Delaney, Patricia	Koch, Debbie	Pusch, Mikellane
Barr, Paula	DeLeon, Agnes	Kovatch, Margaret	Qunitos, Imelda
Barry, Dalene	DiJulio, Don	Kranitz, Lois	Rodriguez, Olga
Barthelemy, Marie	Dominguez, Linda	Krietsch, Ann	Rowe, Mary
Bashista, Aileen	Downing, Veronica	Lambert, Rebecca	Runner, Angela
Baudhuin, Terence	Edwards, Cora	Leidy, John	Salud, Marye
Beaver, Sharon	Endres, Yvonne	Lex, Annie	Sardella, Barbara
Benedict, Don	Fecke, Sue	Lillis, Catherine	Schroeder, Karen
Berthiune, Anne Marie	Foley, Teresa	Maas, Connie	Slothower, Nancy
Bickel, Nancy	Foy, Kathleen	Maggied, Kathleen	Speer, David
Birong, Catherine	Gallagher, Ida	Malay, Sharon	Stanton, Nancy
Blum, Susan	Gallichio, Angela	Malkovsky, Sandra	Stauffacher, Kathryn
Boarts, Shirlee	Galonski, Mary Ann	Mammi, Ginni	Steger, Alicia
Bos, William	Garcia Melecia	Marozza, Teresa	Stephenson, Lori
Brannan, Patricia	Garcia, Coralia	Marr, Mary	Suguitan, Vilma
Gunda Bush	Geffken, Meg	Martin, John	Theroux, Joyce
Byrnes, Mary Alice	Giampaolo, Chloe	Pantas, Elizabeth	Tiongson, Cornelia
Byrnes, Sara	Grabowski, Sharon	McAdams, Patricia	Tiongson, Marylou
Cabot, Mary	Hain, Patricia	McAveety, Diane	Toke, Beverly
Cahill, John	Hickey, Penny	McConnell, Stephanie	Touzon, Jose
Camp, Emelina	Hicky, Vicky	McMahon, Linda	Walsh, Nancy
Campbell, Joan	Hofer, Teresa	Michaels, Rita	Willis, Sandra
Cantalopo, Kathy	Holland, John	Milstead, Suzanne	Woloszczuk, Halina
Castro, Maria Esther	Huber, Bob	Nee, Judith	Workman, Bill
Ceniza, Fanny	Hull, Elma	O'Meara, Carolyn	Zins, Debra
Chan, Christina	Ibay, Menchie	O'Meara, Don	
Charlesworth, Robert	Jensen, Timmie	Olexy, Jeanne	

These are but a few who helped us achieve our goal of a successful OCDS Congress in the Washington Province for the Glory of God and the Good of the Order.

Many thanks to all who prayed, contributed financial support, served behind the scenes and attended. May we all share our experiences and knowledge with other Carmelite brothers and sisters that this may be a new beginning of secular independence and communication to help one another "From the rising of the sun unto its setting, may a perfect offering be made to the Glory of Your Name" by *Embracing All Challenges with Zeal, Prayer and Action*.

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Letters from Elizabeth on *PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS/FRIENDSHIP*

Editor's Note: Letters published from _ (Washington, DC; ICS Publications 1995.) Introductions provided by Dr. James P. Jenkins, Sr. OCDS.

We all have relationships of many kinds, with different emotional or experiential or spiritual or physical emphasis. Elizabeth gave the gift of herself in all her correspondence. Through her words, spoken in love, she shared her truth; whether they were addressed to her friend "Raspberry", her Mama, a matronly family friend, or the seminarian she supported with her love and prayers. Elizabeth's purity of intention speaks volumes to all of us who will listen and reflect upon her message in our own lives.

L98 Friendship can take many forms, such as a gentle word of encouragement or caution or a letter of

L98 To Francoise de Sourdon [October-November 1901]¹

J. M. + J. T. Dijon Carmel, Sunday

My dear little Francoise,

Since our Mother has given me leave to write you, I'm taking advantage of this Sunday to come to you. I think they're spoiling you, my darling, but you know on what condition!...

I see my Framboise has hardly been converted. This certainly grieves me. In the past I overlooked these fits of temper, but now you're no longer a baby and these scenes are ridiculous. I know that you'll allow your Sabeth anything, so I'm telling you what I think! You absolutely must get to work on this! You see, my darling, you have my nature,² I know what you can do. Ah, if you knew how good it is to love God and to give Him what He asks, especially when that costs, you wouldn't hesitate for so long to listen to me. Of course in the beginning you feel only the sacrifice, but you will see, my Framboise, how after that you experience a delightful peace! If you knew how I think of you. ... You see, nothing has changed; I am always your little mother. Ah, I would like you to be so good. I'm going to tell you something: since I'm not there to receive the overflowing of your little heart at every moment: each time you feel the need to confide in me, run off to your room and there, between your Crucifix and my picture, since you love it so much, recollect yourself for a moment and imagine that I am there with the good Jesus and my Framboise. Every time you avoid a scene or an argument with Marie-Louise,³ or when you feel in too ugly a mood, you'll come there, won't you? Is that agreed?

I did as you asked that very night. I think since I'm being nice, you can really make me happy. I love you so much, my darling, you know you're my little child and I don't love anyone else as I do you. Do you want to continue our rendezvous at 8 P.M. as at Mont-Dore?⁴ A Dieu, darling, I leave you without letting you go, for I keep you in my soul. Thank Jesus for me, for I am so happy. You don't understand that, but if you knew how good it is to live only in Him I'm asking Him with all my soul to teach you that.

Your Sabeth

Tell your good mother that I pray every day for her intentions. Greetings to Marie-Louise. Kisses to my Guite.

correction. Early in her formation period in Carmel, Elizabeth reminds her young friend Raspberry, who was then age 14, that she should change her disposition from anger to love and to open her heart to the crucified Lord; especially when she is tempted. Good advice for us all.

1 Handwriting from 1901. The "kisses to Guite" implies that she had returned from her long trip in the South of France. On the other hand, it was not yet December 1, when correspondence stopped because of Advent.

2 Proud and energetic, but sensitive and thin-skinned. "You have such an ardent heart" (L 182).

3 Her sister.

4 Cf. L 65. This refers to a rendezvous of prayer. The time of grand silence began at 8 P.M., after Compline.

L160 "Yes, the future is very dark", says Elizabeth to her friend who has to deal with very uncertain, even scary times in the political structure of France. As a mother, Antoinette is struggling not only with the future

of her Church and country, but more immediately with her two children's future in these circumstances. Elizabeth returns to her own foundation in Christ, as she says, "I carry my own Treasure ... and all the rest is nothing". Her empathy with Antoinette resides at both the spiritual and pragmatic levels. Such feelings are comforting for us now as they were then.

L 160 To Madame de Bobet

[April 27, 1903]¹

J. M. + J. T.

Dijon Carmel, April 27

My very dear Antoinette,

After the silence of Lent, my very first letter is for you. Ah, if you knew how true it is that my soul is in communion with yours and that I ask Him who is my One and All to take hold of you more and more. I share all your anxiety for the two darlings God has given you.² Through what anguish your maternal heart has passed— All that, my dear Antoinette, is meant to bring you still closer to Him, it is to force us to abandon ourselves into the arms of the God who is our Father and who, in the most difficult hours, when He sometimes seems very far away, is in reality so close, so "within"³ us. I understand your anguish so well, and I send you these words that the Divine Master addressed to Saint Catherine of Siena: "Think of me; I will think of you."⁴ Go lose yourself in Him, dear Antoinette. He is guarding your two treasures, and your little sister speaks to Him about it often!...

Yes, the future is very dark, and don't you feel the need to love much in order to make reparation ...⁵ in order to console this adored Master ... Let us make a solitary place for Him in the inner most part of our soul and remain there with Him; let us never leave Him, for it is His commandment: "Remain in me, and I in you."⁶ Nothing will be able to rob us of this interior cell, no matter what trials we undergo; I carry my One Treasure "inside me," and all the rest is nothing!⁷ Oh! if you knew what happiness invades my soul when I think that it is really true that I am His, and I am persecuted like Him; thank Him, won't you, for your little sister, it is too good to be a Carmelite!... And then let us be united in loving Him. I would so like to live only by love, very high above this earth where everything leaves a void in the soul. Saint Paul says that we belong to "the City of the saints and the House of God."⁸ Oh then, why not live there now, since in the depths of our soul we possess Him who will one day make our beatitude! There is the bell for Matins; I will take you with me. A Dieu, let us always be "wholly one" in Him. Share all my tender affection with your two darlings.

Sister M. Elizabeth of the Trinity r.c.i.

1 "My very first letter" after "Lent." After her profession ("r.c.i."), this could only be in 1903, as the handwriting confirms.

2 Presumably Simone, ten years old and little Jeanne-Marie, two years old.

3 Probably an allusion to Lk 17:21, in the translation of Elizabeth's Manual: "The kingdom of God is within you." Elizabeth had already used the expression "within" in January 1900 (D 138).

4 Life, by Raymond of Capua, I, chap. 10.

5 The Waldeck-Rousseau government was successful in the elections of April 27 and May 11, 1902, followed by Emile Combes as President of the Council of State. He pursued a very hard antireligious line. He closed 135 private schools by the decree of June 27, 1902, and, on July 15, all those of congregations that had not asked for authorization: around 3,000 schools at once. On March 18, 1903, the Chamber refused the authorization requested by the 25 teaching congregations of men, thus affecting 11,763 religious. On March 24, the same refusal was given to 28 congregations of preachers, affecting 2,942 religious. Eighty-one women's congregations met the same fate. Their goods were confiscated. Many of the communities went to regroup abroad. Others, like the Dijon Carmel, continued to wait.

6 Jn 15:4.

7 Perhaps an echo of the "All and Nothing" [Todo y Nada] of John of the Cross?

8 Eph 2:19.

L214 Sometimes we have a deep spiritual relationship with someone whom we rarely see but because of circumstances that person becomes incredibly special, so we share our hearts and soul. The intimacy of such a spiritual relationship is unique because both persons want to become co-mingled, almost as one. Holy men and women write in different ways about such intimacy, as Blessed Elizabeth refers to in her letter to Abbé Chevignard. The weight of love, a phrase coined by St. Augustine and illustrated by the "power that went out of Him" (cf Luke 6:19) referring to Jesus' love of the woman in physical distress, is perceived by those whose passion is for the good of the other without regard to any return. As St. Paul says in Ephesians 3, "love never stops and love never fails". Blessed Elizabeth's letter to the young Abbé paints a word picture of that kind of spiritual love and spiritual relationship.

J. M. +J. T.

“Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper; quoniam a dextris est mihi, ne commovear.”²

Monsieur l'Abbé,

I am very grateful to you for your feastday wishes, and I am very happy the Church has placed our saints so close to each other,³ because that gives me the chance to offer you my best wishes today. Saint Augustine says that “love, forgetful of its own dignity, is eager to raise and magnify the beloved: it has only one measure, which is to be without measure.”⁴ I am asking God to fill you with that measure without measure, which is to say, according to the “riches of His glory,”⁵ that the weight of His love may draw you⁶ to the point of happy loss the Apostle spoke of when he wrote “Vivo enim jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.”⁷ That is the dream of my Carmelite soul and, I believe, also the dream of your priestly soul. Above all it is the dream of Christ, and I ask Him to accomplish it fully in our souls. Let us be for Him, in a way, another humanity in which He may renew His whole Mystery.⁸ I have asked Him to make His home in me as Adorer, as Healer, and as Savior, and I cannot tell you what peace it gives my soul to think that He makes up for my weaknesses and, if I fall at every passing moment, He is there to help me up again⁹ and carry me farther into Himself, into the depths of that divine essence where we already live by grace and where I would like to bury myself so deeply that nothing could make me leave. My soul meets yours there and, in unison with yours, I keep silent to adore Him who has loved us so divinely.

I unite myself to you in the emotions and profound joys of your soul as you await ordination¹⁰ and beg you to let me share in this grace with you: each morning I am reciting the Hour of Terce for you so the Spirit of love and light may “come upon”¹¹ you to bring about all His creative work in you. If you would like, when you recite the Divine Office we could unite in the same prayer during this Hour that I have a particular devotion to. We will breathe in love^{11a} and draw it down on our souls and on the whole Church.

You tell me to pray that you may be granted humility and the spirit of sacrifice. In the evening, while making the Way of the Cross before Matins, at every outpouring of the Precious Blood I used to ask for this grace for my own soul; from now on it will also be for yours. Don't you believe that, to achieve the annihilation, contempt of self, and love of suffering that were deep in the souls of the saints, we must gaze for a very long time at the God crucified by love, to receive an outflowing of His power¹² through continual contact with Him? Père Vallée once said to us that “martyrdom was the response of any lofty soul to the Crucified.”¹³ It seems to me that this could also be said for immolation. So let us be sacrificial souls, which are to say, true in our love: “He loved me, He gave Himself up for me!”¹⁴

A Dieu, Monsieur l'Abbé. Let us live by love, by adoration, by self-forgetfulness, in wholly joyful and confident peace, for “we are Christ's, and Christ is God's”!...¹⁵

Sister M. Elizabeth of the Trinity r.c.i.

On the 8th, we are going to give our Immaculate Mother and Queen a beautiful feast day in our souls; I will meet you under her virginal mantle.

- 1 A little before December “8th” (1904, for the seminarian has not yet been ordained). Very probably November 29, “today,” the vigil of St. Andrew (the 30th). That is the date indicated by Abbe Chevignard.
- 2 “I set the Lord always in my presence, for with him at my right hand I cannot be shaken” (Ps 15:8, in the translation from the Manual).
- 3 St. Elizabeth, the 19th, and St. Andrew, the 30th.
- 4 Elizabeth is quoting verbatim from the fourth instruction of the retreat preached at Carmel by the Dominican P. Pages from the evening of November 12 to November 20, the text of which we have (cf. notes to PN 15, 0 My God, Trinity Whom I Adore, Vol. I, pp. 184-191). P. Pages refers frequently to letter 109 of St. Augustine (PL 33). This very Augustinian letter was in reality by Severus of Milevum. In *De diligendo Deo* (1:1), St. Bernard repeats the last phrase.
- 5 Eph 3:16.
- 6 An allusion to St. Augustine: “My love is my weight” (Confessions, 13:6). On November 19, P. Pages said: “Saint Augustine in particular said: ‘I do not understand how any other weight could draw the human soul when it thus has a weight that shapes it’” (instruction 13). In her notebooks of quotations (cf. PAT), Elizabeth adds “(the weight) of divine love.”
- 7 Gal 2:20.
- 8 In her prayer (PN 15) of November 21, 1904, Elizabeth has “asked” what immediately precedes and follows this. Later we will draw attention to the reflections of that celebrated PN 15. We have also pointed out in the annotations to that text the expressions found in the preceding letters that foreshadowed this prayer.
- 9 Cf. “Living on Love”: “But if I fall with each passing hour, Picking me up, you come to my aid.” (HA 332 [St. Therese of Lisieux, Poetry, tr. Donald Kinney OCD (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1995) Poem 17]). And HA 299 [LT89]: “What does it matter if I fall at each moment!... My God, you see what I would do if you do not carry me in your arms...” In P 90, Elizabeth said: “At every passing moment!”
- 10 To the subdiaconate, January 6, 1905.
- 11 Lk 1:35. Cf. PN 15, note 26.
- 11a Probably reminiscent of Spiritual Canticle 420-22 (quoted in L 185 [K-RJ 39:3]), where the Spirit breathes in the soul and penetrates it with love.
- 12 Cf. Lk 6:19: “Power went out from him.”
- 13 The exact source of this thought is unknown. It is worth noting that in 1902, Elizabeth copied this text as an introductory quotation for a poem by Sr. Agnes (copy kept by ACD).
- 14 Gal 2:20.
- 15 1 Cor 3:23.

L302 There is something special when a daughter and a Mom remember some unique event that brought them to a new level of intimacy and in this letter Elizabeth recalls her entrance into Carmel five years past. She acknowledges the cost to her mother of the joyous occasion and compares it to the Blessed Mother's 'fiat' to the Angel Gabriel because both "yesses" resulted in Jesus alive in Elizabeth as well as in Mary. Candy and goodies from the family and friends are also remembered even as Elizabeth continues her downward spiral.

L302 To her mother [August 2, 1906]

J. M.+J. T. August 2¹

My darling little Mama,

You can guess with what joy I read your nice letter announcing the good news of your improved health. How I thanked God.... You see, you must listen to me and surrender your cares to me; with my Master we'll arrange everything so well! As for me, I can't give you better news; I still have the use of my little legs, but as for the rest I don't see any improvement, and if you knew how it delights me that God is letting me suffer and not you.... He could not satisfy me more. Tell Guite her cheese was very good, very thick, and that its taste was a nice change from what I usually have; would you thank her too for her good chocolate, which sometimes helps my digestion; I assure you I'm doing as much as I can, but my stomach refuses to listen. I haven't seen Doctor Morlot,² who has also upset Our Mother; I'm waiting for Doctor Barbier,³ for it's his day; if I see him first, you can be sure I will give him your message.

Darling Mama, do you remember five years ago? I remember, and He does too!... He collected the blood from your mother's heart in a chalice that will weigh a great deal in the scales of His mercy! Last night I was recalling that last evening,⁴ and as I wasn't able to sleep, I settled myself close to my window and stayed there until almost midnight, in prayer with my Master. I spent a heavenly evening; the sky was so blue, so calm, you could feel such a silence in the monastery; and I went back over these five years, so filled with graces. Oh, little Mama whom I love, don't regret the happiness you have given me; yes, thanks to your "fiat," I was able to enter into the holy dwelling and, alone with God alone, enjoy a foretaste of the Heaven that so draws my soul. Tonight I've offered again the sacrifice you made five years ago so that showers of blessings might fall on the FOUR⁵ whom I love more than anyone!...

Darling Mama, live with Him. Ah, 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! Recollect yourself from time to time, little Mama, and then you will be quite close to your Sabeth.

I saw Madame de Sourdon and Francoise, who gave me a supply of sour candy; I am very happy with Francoise. I have been waiting two days now for Madame de Vathaire, who had said she was coming; perhaps she is ill. The little ex-Carmelite⁶ sent me two pretty postcards: the church and your house; she marked your room and the place in the garden where you stay, you can imagine how happy that made me; your set-up looks charming! I'm glad Madame Guemard is close to you; tell her I often think of her and her dear little ones; her beautiful picture⁷ came with me to the infirmary; it does much good for my soul; I love to look at it night and day.

A Dieu, darling Mama, I gather you together with my beloved Guite and her little angels to send you all the love of my heart.

E. Trinity

Our Mother has seen the kind Sister who is taking care of you and who gave her much better news; that made her very happy; we talk together about you so much.... She too is always a mama for your Sabeth, whom she takes care of so well. You can be at peace, I assure you, with such a good Mother; so really take advantage of your stay with your Guite. We are having ten Masses every morning; it seems there are a great many priests for the congress;⁸ you can imagine how happy I am to have the use of my legs to get me to my little tribune; you are there with me, for my little Mama, my Guite, and I are inseparable.

1 Elizabeth underlines the date, because she has been in Carmel five years.

2 Perhaps one of the doctors sent by Georges.

3 The community's doctor. Elizabeth will address L 340 to him to thank him for his good care.

4 Cf. the letter from Guite dated August 5, 1901, to Mile. Forey (in PAT); "... I did not know where to hide myself to cry, it was a real agony; as for the last days, they were horrible, the last meal, the last evening!"

5 Mme. Catez, Guite, and her two daughters.

6 Clemence Blanc.

7 The reproduction of Our Lady of Sorrows of which S 203-4 speaks, that is, the Virgin beneath the Cross, with John and Mary Magdalene.

8 In 1906, the third "Social Week of France" took place in Dijon. The SRD of August 4 (21, pp. 497-99) writes: "There are about four hundred priests in Dijon who have come from all the dioceses of France."

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 in its conversational style as a 5-part series throughout the balance of 2009.

Part II – Elizabeth: Process of Becoming

When Elizabeth first entered Carmel and they assigned her a particular cell, her first comment was, “The Trinity is here.” A week later, she was given a questionnaire to fill out during recreation time. This particular questionnaire is really a jewel for us. It’s a true gift because it allows us to see and to understand clearly her spiritual physiognomy. It tells us what she really wanted to do. An example comes to mind. Another French man, Charles de Foucauld, the hermit who lived 30 years in Sahara said, “Once I discovered there was a God, I also realized that I could not do anything else but to give my life entirely to that God.” The only thing Elizabeth wanted to do when she entered Carmel was to bury herself within the deepest depths of her being, to find God there, and to live her life totally engulfed in him.

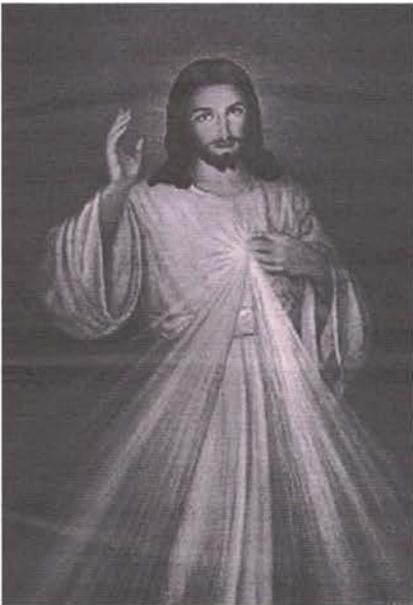
Incidentally, this is the Carmelite ideal. This is nuclear in Carmelite spirituality. As Elizabeth lived, listened and made connections, whatever she learned became flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone and life of her life. In her depths she found her vocation, which was to be a *laudem gloriae*, a praise of glory of the Trinity. The questionnaire asks, “What is your ideal of sanctity?” and she responded very appropriately, “To live by love.” This is very similar to what Teresa, our Holy Mother said, “It is love alone which gives value to everything.”

Of course, that is what makes our actions meritorious, pleasing to God. I think these questions were written with what I would call a holy malice because the second question goes, “What is the quickest way to reach it?” Elizabeth’s response is outstanding. She said, “To become very little.” She must have used Therese’s own words. By the way, she had read Therese’s autobiography, The Story of a Soul, which began to circulate in Carmel at that particular time. She must have said, *trés petite*, to give oneself wholly, entirely, and irrevocably; no Indian givers, which is our continuous fault. We say, “Yes, Lord.” And as soon as we finish saying yes, we are already changing our minds.

I was taking care of my niece once some years ago. The child must have been about two years of age. Needless to say, after 20 minutes, she left me exhausted, but really gave me a great spiritual lesson. She took a little toy and she was enraptured with that toy like that toy was her life. Seconds later, she threw it away and took another. I thought to myself, what a perfect picture of my life, of our life. We become tantalized by a reality and

then throw it away. We become distracted and dichotomized and divided, looking for everything except God.

As the Lord speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah cried, “How come my people, you have been drinking in those dirty puddles of water and you absolutely refuse to take from my living waters? How come you do that knowing it will not be able to satisfy you?” See how crazy, how insane we have become? We know that it is not going to fill the deepest needs of our hearts. Yet over and over and over again, we insist on drinking from puddles, even when we know that we are trying to dissimulate it in every way possible because we have become masters of self-deceit. Then we renounce the living waters, which are the only ones that can truly satiate the deepest thirsts of our hearts. There is a tremendous wisdom in becoming very small, and this is the most anti-cultural statement you can dream of, because today, it is exactly the opposite. We go for the exaltation of the ego because we go just for me, myself, and I; and the rest of the world can fall to pieces, I could care less, because I have my program. Very little, *trés petite* in the biblical sense is a person that becomes; and it’s a process, small. It’s a person that develops child-like attitudes. The very first child-like attitude is trust, which is the perfect anecdote to fear.



Unfortunately, all of us lost innocence a long time ago so we need a rebirth in which trust is at the center. No wonder when our Lord appeared to Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska He insisted that the signature under His image say, “Jesus, I trust in you.” When Sister Faustina told her spiritual director, Fr. Michael Sopocko, he said, “Jesus must have meant Christ, King of Hearts.” So Sister Faustina told this to the Lord in prayer and the Lord must have gotten a little exasperated because He said, “No, it has to be ‘Jesus, I trust in You.’” Trust exposes the vulnerability of God. When we trust Him, He falls head over heels because it really touches Him. It is by trust that we completely go out of ourselves and let ourselves be molded and shaped into the image of Jesus the Lord.

To be small implies not to have any duplicity. This is part of our generational problem today, multiplicity. We are all over the place except for in the center where we should be. This is to me, personally, the most characteristic virtue of our Blessed Mother: simplicity. She was simple, no deviations, and no dichotomizations. She was completely unidirectional like a living odalisque, only tending towards God. And of course the opposite of multiplicity is simplicity. To really become like all great saints, men and women of one thought, one desire, one consuming passion, and that is God and God alone, we must become simple. Elizabeth also adds two more adjectives. First she said, “to give myself wholly” - not in any kind of middle way, half way or tepid way. She says “wholly”, meaning totally. Yes, she’s the daughter of Teresa and John of the Cross, who are absolutely totalitarian. She says “wholly” then adds “irrevocably”, no turning back, once and for all, and forever. That is part of our spiritual infirmity; that we do not decide, with a very determined determination as our Holy Mother Teresa taught us, to give ourselves totally. In her own words Teresa says, that God gives Himself wholly only to those who give themselves to Him totally, without reserve. Yes, she said, “I gave myself so totally

and absolutely, I didn't keep anything for myself. My beloved is mine and I am totally His." This is the essence of the Carmelite vocation, that we become one with the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Love, in order to grow and become, needs to be nurtured, day in and day out, whether we are up and filled with joy or we are down in the depths. It doesn't make any difference. These are simply emotions that have a particular autonomy of their own to go up and down as they please. But, the Will allows us to regulate these emotions and to say "yes"; whether we like it or not, and whether we feel it or not.

The questionnaire goes on. See how revealing it is? Please, as part of your homework, these questions are for you too. Let me repeat the first one. What is your ideal of sanctity during the time of prayer? And for you, what is the quickest way to attain that ideal? The third question is who is your favorite Saint? Elizabeth replied, "the beloved disciple who rested on the heart of his Master." Of course, this is Saint John: the theologian, the metaphysician, the beloved disciple, and the friend of Jesus who knew him intimately like no other disciple. Why? Because there was a synchronicity, there was a union; there was a constant exchange from the Heart of Jesus to John and from John to the Heart of Jesus. And this is what every Carmelite is called to do every single day of our lives, at every moment of our existence. How is that possible? By intention; repeat that intention many times every day, "Jesus, I want to do this with you, for you, in you." That's it. That's the connectedness. If I'm talking and talking but this wonderful gentleman who is taping me doesn't electrically connect the appliance, then I can talk until I lose my voice and nothing will be recorded. Exactly the same thing happens with the Lord. He says that I am the vine and you are the branches. In as much as you are connected with me, you will bear fruit, and bear it abundantly. But if you are not connected with me, you are useless, you wither, and you die, because with me you can do all things, but without me you can do nothing. Notice the terms our Lord uses are very absolute.

The next question was what point of the rule do you like best? She replied, "Silence." One day when I was sick and didn't go to work, I took paper and a pencil and began to ask the Lord to teach me about silence. I elaborated at least 15 degrees of silence. Exterior silence is necessary of course, but it's the least important. Silence is not simply the definition in the dictionary, which is the absence of noise. For a contemplative person, this means not to have our eyes rolled up to the heavens, but to have a loving knowledge of God. We want to be so close to Him that we listen to His soft voice within us, that we know Him experientially, that we become friends, and that He shares with us the most intimate secrets of who He is, of what He loves, and what He wants us to do on His behalf.

My list then moved to silence of the tongue. We say so many useless, silly, unimportant words. Then, silence of the imagination. St. Teresa our Mother used to call it "La loca de la casa," the crazy one of the house. Oh, how much time we waste thinking and imagining realities that will probably never happen. For God's sake, we should be a soul at prayer. A Carmelite should only live in one dimension and that is the



St. Teresa of Jesus

present. The past is not ours; it is gone. I have heard so many people tell me about things they did 15 years ago or 30 years ago. This pattern has to be broken. That time is gone; it does not belong to us any longer. But there we are, enslaved because we did or didn't do something many years ago. God lives in only one dimension, and that is the present.

The list goes on: silence of thoughts, silence of desires, silence of judgment, silence of passions, silence of tendencies, silence of the intellect, silence of the memory, silence of the heart. I think I forgot three but there has to be a final one, which is silence of the spirit, when we are completely harmonious and in a hesicastic state. That's from the Greek word hesicasm, which mean a state of joyful peacefulness because all of the pieces are together and we find balance and equilibrium. Silence is the medium of lovers because God can only manifest himself in and through silence. We have to develop a way, whether we are cooking or performing our professional duties or working at home to be "in our cell". To follow the words of our Holy Mother, we must live in our innermost castle where the King dwells. Because it is there, as John of the Cross tells us, in our most profound center where God dwells; where He talks to us about love and where the Song of Songs and the Scriptures become a reality. Remember, God's voice is very soft and we have to be very attentive. We have to be very vigilant to hear His words.



Elizabeth with her family on December 22, 1902, the day of canonical examination before profession.

What is the dominant trait in your character, meaning your greatest weakness, was another question from the questionnaire. Elizabeth replied, "sensitiveness." What is your favorite virtue? She replied, "Purity; blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." Purity of heart is essential for a contemplative person, for a disciple, a follower of Jesus. And of course we love to say, "purify my heart"; but we don't like the purification that will come about to bring purity to our hearts. What fault of character do you most dislike? She said, "Egoism in general." Then, a decisive question: Give a definition of prayer. And she replied, "The union of her who is not, with Him who is." What a theologian.

When asked what is your favorite book? Elizabeth said, "The Soul of Christ, in it, I learned all the secrets of the Father who is in Heaven." Another very interesting question, what name would you like to have in Heaven? She said, "The will of God." Preferably, if they asked me this question, I would say, "Love." But it is practically the same because there are three elements that constitute holiness. One, in the words of Saint Paul, is configuration with Christ. In other words, you adopt the heart and mind of Jesus Christ. You become like Jesus. Second is the union of God through love. Third is the conformity with His Will. All these are really three modalities of the very same reality. So don't get upset when another member of your community gives an entirely different point of view, because as the philosophers taught us a long time ago, all truth always converges.

The most important and last question of the questionnaire was what is your motto? I'm inviting you today to discover your own personal motto. This is very important because that motto becomes your existential thrust. Elizabeth says, "God in me and I in Him." The motto, like our spiritual or religious name, implies number one who we are and who we want to become.

Elizabeth, as a Carmelite, did not waste time in accidental realities. She became like a living arrow, a straight arrow, which never deviates from the target. She went to the essentials. She knew that this was critical for a Carmelite vocation, whether you are in a monastery or out of it as we seculars are. We must be able to keep alive and burning a big fire, a volcano like fire, a consuming fire of adoration within our hearts and for that, Elizabeth knew she needed solitude.

This is the land of those who pursue the Lord. Solitude cannot be achieved and maintained without two pillars. One is silence understood as I just explained. The other is recollection, getting away from all of those distracting elements that impede our growth and our coming closer to the Lord. Elizabeth's life was a continual prayer, incessant prayer, in season and out of season, as one who loves. Like the psalmist says, "I was asleep but my heart was vigilant."

Part of our spiritual problem today is the same problem that was happening in our country before the horrible events of September 11th. But now we have opened our eyes and ears and become more aware. We lowered our guard then and that is why all of the horrible things happened. Spiritually it is exactly the same thing. When we lower our guard, when we become comfortable, when we become condescendant, when we become distracted, when we become lazy; we are open to all kinds of negative spiritual attack. What is the anecdote for this? Our Holy Mother says it very clearly, "After having stopped praying, the only thing that I could do and the best thing that I could do was to begin praying again." Please don't waste one more second saying I don't have time to pray. Stop it. Get up again and determine with a very determined determination that you're going to continue with all you've got, knowing that due to the woundedness of original sin and the inequities brought upon us by our own personal sins, we're going to fall over and over again. Doesn't Scripture say that a just man falls seven times a day? Imagine those of us who are not so just? So, our spiritual life is a constant exercise of fouling up, and going back and trying again and again and again; every time with more distrust of self but with more trust in Him whom we know loves us.

As a Carmelite, Elizabeth was looking forever for the consummation in love. I'm going to read what she said. "A Carmelite is a person 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 the soul of Christ, and has willed to give himself or herself as He did." On the mountain of Carmel, in silence, in solitude, in a prayer that never ceases, the Carmelite lives as though already in Heaven, by God alone. What Elizabeth teaches, which she learned from our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus, is that He never leaves us. This is one of her most verdant prayers, "Lord, give me the grace that I might never leave you alone." She became like a living sanctuary lamp in the tabernacle of her body, her soul, and the deepest recesses of her spirit.

No longer two, God and Elizabeth became one. Just in case you have forgotten, this is the aim, the goal of everyone here, not by being Carmelites, but of all Christians, by our baptismal consecration. We were called by name, particularly loved, particularly chosen, particularly consecrated; that word means made sacred.



Sr. Elizabeth's own crucifix, the one she would kiss a few days before her death while saying: "We have loved each other so much!"

Incidentally, only God can consecrate. You listen and you read those prayers, "I consecrate myself to you, Lord." No, we cannot do it. What it really means is that I come to You dear Lord, and I put myself under your disposition so that You, God, in your infinite mercy might consecrate me, make me sacred, make me Your own absolute and total possession. That's what consecration means. "I have called you by name and you are Mine," says the Lord. Elizabeth hungered for silence because the closer you come to the Lord the more you need it. It is the medium of the encounter with God, so she could listen to His voice. This is the first contemplative verb: to listen. And consequently that she might allow Him to penetrate, to invade, and to possess her whole being. In other words, Elizabeth became totally identified with Him whom she loved. She said it by word and by example. This is the whole Carmelite life, to live in Him.

"We do not come to Carmel to dream in the starlight. We go to God by faith."

In order to achieve this, prayer is of the essence. As our Holy Mother taught us, that intimate sharing between friends, being many times alone with Him whom we know loves us. This is why Elizabeth's favorite point of the rule was silence. From the very beginning of her Carmelite life, she made herself a living echo to those words elicited by the first Carmelites, our desert Carmelites, "to be alone with God alone."

She began her religious life filled with enthusiasm, as many of us do in Carmel, with a lot of sensible consolations. But as you know if you have some experience with the spiritual life, this does not last for long; then praise God for the darkness, because it's a grace. It's a real grace. Look at Therese; she spent practically the whole of her life in darkness. People think that she lived in heaven on earth. She didn't. Therese lived hell on earth with a horrendous aridity, so much so that she was tempted to think and even doubt the existence of God. If you read her works well, she said, "If I would not have believed in God in pure faith, I would have committed suicide." So, things changed for Elizabeth. As it happens with us, God left her to herself; and then she tasted her littleness, her limitations, her nothingness, her insufficiency, and her helplessness.

Appreciating prayer went out the window! To pray for her was a torment, no consummation, and a total lack of gusto. She had to drag herself to pray, but she prayed incessantly in spite of the lack of emotional support. She lived as her spiritual Father John of the Cross taught us, by faith and not by sense. She said and I quote, "We do not come to Carmel to dream in the starlight. We go to God by faith." Her directress of formation, Mother Germaine of Jesus, disciplined Elizabeth in an area of her personality that she knew was a weakness. Elizabeth had an over affectionate disposition that could be dangerous in so far as she could become so easily attached to creatures. Elizabeth, being the intelligent woman that she was, realized that she had to watch over her heart at every instant. Our Holy Mother said a long time ago, "They could steal my heart even with a little sardine." She was that vulnerable. But you see; God uses these gifts to induce people that seek after Him to become extraordinary lovers. The same thing is true for us. Our problem is that we do not tap into that divine ocean of grace, of love, and mercy that is God. Why don't we tap into it? Because we don't want to, it's that simple. No, no, no, you say that you want to; but your actions do not reflect that determination, the sustained effort to do it, because this is not a one-day shot. We have to try over and over many times every day of our lives.

Elizabeth began to experience terrible purgative sufferings and other purifications. She understood, because of her experience of the Trinitarian Indwelling, that Heaven had already begun for her on earth. She said, "I live in the heaven of faith with suffering and immolation for Him whom I love." So consequently a new stage in her life began. She knew that the road through her physical infirmities was the one of Calvary and she wanted to walk it with the dignity of a bride of Christ. She went to that Calvary; not on her own strength, but with the strength of God because she knew that she was absolutely loved by Him. She went to Calvary; and He walked with her, holding her hand so she could make it.



On the second floor, the next to last window of the left wing is the cell she occupied before here illness.

The time for her profession came. Elizabeth had no illusions. She knew what awaited her. From that point on, she ran, she even flew like an eagle, to the heights. She made a deliberate choice, what she wanted to do was to bring to fruition, to realize, her name of Elizabeth, the House of God, the plentitude of God in which the Trinity dwells. And she began by taking the first step.

If you ask me what is the most important reality that I must pursue to begin, and to continue my whole spiritual life, I have to give a very Carmelite answer. It is one thing and one thing only. We must live in the presence of God every second of our existence. That is it. You begin by living in the presence of God, and as you become simpler and simpler, closer and closer to Him, holier and holier, you don't live in His presence; you live His presence.

Our Holy Mother St. Teresa taught us this in the Interior Castle: to look at all times not only for the face of God, but for intimacy with the three Divine Persons. That is the essence of Teresian spirituality and of course, Teresa the Mother that she is, gives us that as our spiritual inheritance. By a very special grace of God, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity found the most characteristic inclination of her interior life in that doctrine. After profession, her whole purpose was to live His life within her.

I'm going to read something she wrote after some years of her religious life had past and when she grew more deeply into this Trinitarian realization. She said, "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 our beings; one is never alone, never. Then we must have solitude in order to enjoy the presence of this adored guest. You ask me what I do in Carmel? I might answer that a Carmelite has only one thing to do. And that is to love and consequently to pray."

As I was saying these words of Elizabeth, I was reminded what St. John of the Cross said, "Many of us don't have heavy chains of attachments to ourselves, to situations, to circumstances, to possessions, to people, to whatever it is." But he also said very clearly, "A bird, even if it's tied by a very thin silken thread, is still tied, and it cannot fly." Let's go to Jesus and ask Him, because He wants this for us, to break our chains of addictions to so many things. When I say that, some people say, "Well, I don't drink, I don't take drugs." I say, "You know very well that I'm not talking about that." But we are in bondage to so



St. John of the Cross

many realities beginning with our own puny, limited, selfish, egocentric selves. So, we go to the Lord, we ask Him to free us from bondage and we follow what St. Ignatius of Loyola taught us, “I will do as if everything will depend only on me; and I will pray as if everything will depend on God.” It is again and again the flux and reflux of the theology of grace that God does His part, but I have to do mine. As St. Augustine said: “He cannot do it without me. I cannot do it without him”.

Elizabeth taught us that the rhythm of the spiritual life is tranquil, that it is simple. We are the ones who love to complicate it. That’s a defense mechanism in everyone because if it is too complicated we come to the unhappy conclusion that it’s not for us. But it is for you and it’s simple. We are the ones who form the complications. That is not in the mind and heart of God. The rhythm of the spiritual life, the Carmelite life, is constantly coming to an unchanging essential movement, which is to be silent, very silent, to believe in LOVE, to believe in Him who loves us, and to trust Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

For Elizabeth of the Trinity to live the Trinitarian dimension was what St. Paul described in Colossians Chapter 3 Verse 3, “to live hidden with Christ in God within us.” She knew she was ill. She knew she was terminally ill. She used to say, “I know that this is only because of His exceeding love for me.” Of course, all those who suffer in body and soul and spirit, all those who suffer that way, the Father simply loves them the same special way He loved His Son. Elizabeth said, “He gave it to me because I can offer this for His glory.” To get to that point takes holiness.

She was looking for a specific name, word, or title, something. Like Therese said, “My vocation is love.” The one, who searches in faith, hope, and love, finds it. Elizabeth said, “I found in St. Paul that my vocation is to become *Laudem Gloriam*. It is bad Latin that grammatically is incorrect, but it doesn’t matter. What it really means is that I must spend my whole complete entire life in praise of the glory of the Trinity.”



A black wooden statue of “Our Lady of Grace” sat on a little altar outside the oratory during Elizabeth’s time.

As her physical life was being destroyed, her spirit was more and more strengthened and, of course, she forgot herself. Day and night, she suffered from a divine obsession, that I hope and I pray all of us will suffer from, to be the praise of the glory of the Trinity. She had only one single desire in her life, to spend her whole life in the service of souls, in the service of other people, and she dreamed of dying transformed into Jesus Crucified. Notice that in her spiritual development Jesus initially took her to the Father. He said it Himself; “No one comes to the Father if it is not through me.” He took her to the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is His power that brought about the great work of transformation into Jesus Crucified. Her spirituality is essentially Trinitarian. She followed the example of our Holy Mother Teresa who said there is no sublime stage of prayer in which the humanity of Christ is not present. And for Elizabeth, it was Christ Crucified. She cried in the height of her mystical life, “There is only one way; Calvary is the only way to the Trinity.”

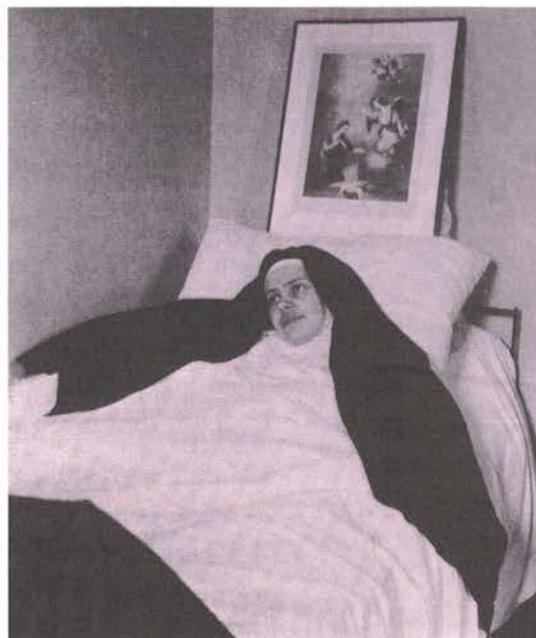
Consequently, the whole of Sister Elizabeth’s spiritual life became reduced to two essential realities. I will name them for you. Number one, transformation into Christ by love; and number two, an almost constant filial intimacy with our Lady.

We know that Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces. We learned from St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort that Mary is the fastest, the safest, the shortest, and the surest way to the Heart of Jesus. Let's go back to Fatima in 1917 with those three little shepherds. When Jacinta knew she was dying, she told her cousin Lucia, now a Discalced Carmelite, a Sister in our congregation, "Lucia, do not be afraid. Make sure you tell everyone that all the graces in life are obtained through the Immaculate Heart of Mary." Carmel is totally Marion. And in all my years of teaching, of studying, of preaching, of doing all kinds of things, I can assure you that a spirituality that does not have Mary there for some reason will not only not grow, but will vanish. Many times while listening to people, I discovered that difficulty with Marion devotion was caused by trauma in their childhood. There is something called a mother-wound in those people that needs to be addressed and needs to be healed in the Name of Jesus. I repeat, if Mary is not present, spirituality will not grow and it will vanish. Mary is essential, especially for us Carmelites.

With the realization of her baptismal grace and its special relation to the Trinity, Elizabeth was taken into the dimension of Jesus Crucified and the activity of her interior life became very simple. She was searching for the glory of the Trinity, period. That's all.

She said in the midst of tremendous sufferings, of horrifying headaches, and of cerebral congestion, with filial childlike confidence, "Our Lady who is all bright will herself take me by the hand and lead me to Heaven." When Elizabeth was dying, with her last breath, which is really the echo of life, she said, "I'm going to light, to love, to life." Therese said, "Oh my God, I love you, I just love you." And our Holy Mother Teresa said, "It's time to walk together. Let us go together, Lord. I die a daughter of the Church." On Friday, November 9th, Marie Elizabeth of the Trinity passed into another dimension of a deeper knowledge and a deeper love of the Trinity. So now before the face of God, the Immortal One, Elizabeth has become a glory of the Trinity for all eternity.

I hope you will take away some key ideas that I have shared with you; especially how important it is in life to cling to what is essential. As Christians and especially as Carmelites, we need to leave the rest behind. We cannot afford to waste any more time in our lives. The only thing I need to ask is that if in some way, through the poor miserable instrument that I am, you have heard the voice of God, please harden not your hearts. Amen. ❀



April 1906. Elizabeth is twenty-five years and nine months. As her death seemed imminent, this photograph would be a last consolation for her family; a last visit that Elizabeth would make to them. Above her head can be seen the print that Mme. De Sourdon gave her (L246), representing the Annunciation.

MY GOD O BLESSED TRINITY

(Prayer of Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity Adapted by Fr. Ted Centala, OCD
with a familiar hymn by Forest Green)



1. My God, O Bless- ed Trin- i- ty now dwell- ing in my soul,
2. My Christ, O my Be- lov- ed One, still cru- ci- fied by love,
3. E- ter- nal Word, ut- tered by God, teach me do- cil- i- ty.
4. Con- sum- ing Fire, O Spi- rit, Love, des- cend with- in me now;
5. O Fa- ther, in Your love bend down to Your little crea- ture now.
6. My Three. O my Be- a- ti- tude, my In- finite Sol- i- tude,



1. May I for- get my ver- y self, a- dore in mys- te- ry.
2. I want to cov- er You with glo- ry as Your Heart's true bride.
3. I long to spend my life in list'ning, learn- ing all truth from You.
4. Make in me, as it were, an in- carn- a- tion of the Word,
5. O'er- sha- dow her, be hold in her none else than Your own Son
6. I yield my- self, I lose my- self in Your im- mens- i- ty.



1. Make of my soul a home of rest, Your cher- ished dwelling place,
2. As A- Dor- er, Re- stor- er, and Sav- ior, Come, in- dwell my soul,
3. Be- lov- ed guid- ing Star, O hold me 'neath Your lus- trous beams,
4. That I may let Him make me new by His great Mys- te- ry,
5. In whom You set Your pleas- ure complete and make of it Your heav' n
6. I pray You, bur- y Your- self in me, I bur- ied thus in You,



1. And keep me there ab- sorbed in You, a- dor- ing in liv- ing faith.
2. Then clothe me with Your ver- y self, un- til I die of love.
3. So thru all dark- ness, help- less- ness, may I ev- er walk with You.
4. That all my life may then be- come a ra- diance of Your own.
5. A- dor- ing You and yield- ing up to Your cre- a- tive love.
6. 'Til I de- part to Your great Light, Your fath- om- less a- byss.

Reminders



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Carmel Clarion Communications became a new entity in the Washington Province December 2006 after ICS Publications made the decision to exclusively offer books. Fr. Regis Jordan assumed responsibility and the Carmelite treasure of recorded spiritual conferences was transferred to the OCDS Main Office as a valuable resource for personal spiritual growth and use in formation. Any profits after expenses and royalties go to support the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites.

- The initial 27 tapes previously offered by ICS were converted to CD. Old favorites are still available.
- Where possible, individual conferences previously only available in albums from ICS were converted to CD.
- With the addition of new conferences recorded each year, the Carmel Clarion Communications library has expanded to nearly 100 titles of live recordings of talks given by our friars and nuns. Their experience and wisdom continues to be a benefit for all seeking knowledge about our Carmelite Saints and how they can help us on our spiritual journey.
- Through an incredible donation of time and talent, the full-text of the complete works of St. John of the Cross is available for use on PCs with XP. All biblical references are cross-referenced as an aid when studying his books. The original Spanish works are included as a resource for Spanish speaking Carmelites.

We are very grateful for the many CDs purchased at the OCDS Congress and hope exposure to this Carmelite treasure will encourage the use of this valuable resource. Thank you for your support. We hope you enjoy this wealth of information, continue to build your personal or community libraries, and share the fruits of your knowledge.