

# ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

The Complete Works

Volume One

General

Introduction

Major Spiritual  
Writings



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SISTER ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

**Elizabeth of the Trinity  
Carmelite**

# **I Have Found God**

**Complete Works  
VOLUME I**

## **General Introduction Major Spiritual Writings**

*Translated by Sister Aletheia Kane, O.C.D.*

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COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

*Centenary Edition*  
(1880–1980)  
in three volumes

I

Major Spiritual Writings

II

Letters From Carmel

III

Diary Personal Notes  
Letters of Her Youth Poems

Edition produced, presented, and annotated  
by Conrad De Meester, Carmelite

## I HAVE FOUND GOD, COMPLETE WORKS I—MAJOR SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

is a translation of Elisabeth de la Trinité,  
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*Prayer: “O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore”*

*Annotations*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- ACD Archives of the Carmel of Dijon.
- AL *Elisabeth ou l'Amour est là*, by C. De Meester (cf. Foreword).
- Ang *The Book of the Visions and Instructions of Blessed Angela di Foligno*, DDB, 1985, third ed.
- CE Composition Exercises, of Elizabeth of the Trinity, in PAT.
- Circ *Obituary Circular of Elizabeth of the Trinity* (1906).
- Exc *Excursions in the Jura*, of Elizabeth of the Trinity, in PAT.
- GV *The Greatness of Our Vocation*, Major Spiritual Writing II.
- HA *Histoire d'une Ame* (Story of a Soul), of Thérèse of Lisieux.
- HF *Heaven in Faith*, Major Spiritual Writing I.
- D *Diary*.
- L *Letters*.
- LF *The Living Flame of Love*, by St. John of the Cross, in *Life and Works...*, Paris, Oudin, 1892, third ed., Volume IV.
- LL *Let Yourself Be Loved*, Major Spiritual Writing IV.
- LR *Last Retreat*, Major Spiritual Writing III.
- P *Poems*.
- PA Procès apostolique (Apostolic Process) followed by the number of the paragraph in the Summarium of the cause of beatification of Elizabeth.
- PAT *Elisabeth de la Trinité. Paroles, annotations personnelles et premiers témoins oculaires* (cf. Foreword).
- PN *Personal Notes*.
- PO Procès de l'Ordinaire (Bishop's Process). (cf. PA).
- PS Philipon Survey, in PAT.
- RB Récit biographique (Biographical account), in PAT.
- Ru *Rusbrock l'Admirable* (Oeuvres choisies), Paris, Perrin, 1902.

S *Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité. Souvenirs*, Carmel of Dijon, first edition of 1909.

SC *Spiritual Cantic*, by St. John of the Cross (cf. LF).

SRD *Semaine religieuse de Dijon* (revue).

The number which follows the abbreviation refers, for Elizabeth's writing, to the paragraph numbers of this *Complete Works*; but, for the other books, to the *page*, except for PA and PO (cf. *supra*).

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

It is with pleasure that I acknowledge my indebtedness to all those who have helped me in any way in the preparation of this volume:

to Fr. Conrad de Meester, O.C.D.,  
for his brotherly encouragement;  
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for his careful work in reading and editing the manuscript;  
and to my sisters of Lafayette Carmel  
who made helpful suggestions and came to my aid.

Sr. Aletheia Kane, O.C.D.

## Foreword

We joyfully present to our Christian brothers and sisters the writings of Elizabeth of the Trinity, which appear here for the first time in their entirety.

Doubtless history will be surprised when it verifies that three-quarters of a century was necessary since the death of this great contemplative on November 9, 1906, for the integral publication of her works to be realized. Her desire to remain “hidden in God” has been well served by the vicissitudes of time!

And it was only pure Chance — a word which since then I gladly write with a capital letter — which led us to consider this edition, happily favored by the coincidence of the centenary of Elizabeth’s birth on July 18, 1880.

Certainly Elizabeth of the Trinity is already known, perhaps more so abroad than in France. Since 1909 the *Souvenirs*, her first biography written by her prioress, has experienced a wide diffusion and has been translated many times. One of her prayers *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore* is loved and recited almost everywhere in the world. Large extracts from her writings have been published, and Elizabeth has already taken her place among the classic authors of the Experience of God.

But this edition, of which the greater part of the texts has never been published, and which has benefited from ample information, has the good fortune to present to us Elizabeth’s whole personality. Alongside her most sublime features, her lofty praises of the divine Mystery, we hear the rich harmonies of her other keyboard, her whole humanity. The somewhat blurred halo which surrounded Elizabeth like that of a medieval saint gradually comes into focus.

This winner of the first prize in piano at the Conservatory of Dijon loves to listen to the music of silence, but in her enthusiasm she also loves to communicate its message.

Is what she says about her joy in finding God the only reason so many letters from her short life have been kept? Surely there are also other

reasons: her inexhaustible human tenderness and her warmth of heart which led each correspondent to believe that he was “the most loved.” Those first animated notes to her grandparents, to her father whom she will soon lose, to her mother, already reveal the child’s vivacity and sincerity. Later, enchanted by all that is beautiful and noble, by everything that has a certain music, the young girl will feel both dwelt in and possessed by a mysterious Presence which claims her; and this occurred even on trips, at dances, or during her piano recitals. Won long ago by Jesus, she experiences his word “more cutting than a two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12).

Her *Diary* and her *Poems* reveal a divided heart as she faced the future. Should she obey the love and demands of her family or answer the call to union and contemplation in the monastery only two hundred meters from her home? Before becoming a Carmelite, Sabeth Catez knew suffering and growth. Already at eighteen she gives herself fully to the present moment and the concrete situation, cost what it may, and through it all she radiates among her wide circle of friends the presence of God which fills her.

It is a great gift from God for Elizabeth, and somewhat unexpected, when after a long delay she can finally devote herself entirely to Jesus and his Church in the Carmel of Dijon. There she will live silently and lovingly as a happy Carmelite. Irresistibly drawn by her faith in the presence of Love within her and by the quest for continual prayer, she sings the praises of the Father, the Word and the Spirit; and she opens herself unconditionally to their life in her. She ardently longs to become for Christ “another humanity in which He can renew His whole Mystery” (PN 15), including conformity on the Cross and participation in his saving work in the world. This officer’s daughter loves her “Master” and her sisters so resolutely, so ardently, that this intensity will mature and consume her in less than six years.

## **Elizabeth’s Message Is Not To Be Limited**

If she likes to listen, she also likes to express herself! Her letters — that crowd of witnesses! — allow us to follow the flight of this loving and energetic spirit up to the last days.

The preparation of this edition has convinced us that, thanks to a much more abundant documentation than we had before, we can avoid limiting Elizabeth's message in the future. Certainly, we must emphasize her special graces of recollection and prayer, of listening to and understanding the word of God. That is her charism which won for her the love of contemplatives, priests, and theologians. But now the scope of this charism expands wide enough to encompass in its light the smallest events of our daily life, the least encounters with our neighbor, which, like so many sacraments, reveal God's presence and demonstrate how we are to give ourselves to Love at each moment. The charism of Elizabeth of the Trinity goes so far as to show us that the contemplation of the Word is prolonged in the concrete act of the gift of self. Finally, what makes her so close to us is that she had to seek God in faith, in a life more hidden and more monotonous than our own. And what makes her so different from us is not at all that she was the object of so many graces from God but that she was so terribly logical in her faith in Love present, Love inviting her.

We must place Elizabeth of the Trinity among those who have lived fully their faith "as if they had seen the Invisible" (Heb 11:27) and who have tasted the joy of his Shadow; place her, in any case, among the anawim! She accepted the rich gifts with which she was endowed by nature and all the graces that God lavished upon her with the simplicity of a child who knows it is deeply loved by its father, overflows with gratitude, and realizes what its response must be. Clear as light, she radiated these gifts with an overflowing spontaneity as easily during a dance as she would later among her sisters of Carmel and in her letters to numerous lay correspondents. If some have given the impression of a speculative Elizabeth of the Trinity, a theologian, today let her find her natural place among the simple, among the poor to whom the Good News was destined first of all and whose faith is perhaps their only wealth. In the measure that this spiritual daughter of St. Paul and St. John of the Cross drew near to God, the simplicity of her gaze of faith guided her more and more. Her "Master" was not the God of the Philosophers, but He of whom she said when she was dying, using the key words of John the Evangelist: "I am going to Light, to Love, to Life" — the answer to our most existential thirsts.

In a noisy world, Elizabeth of the Trinity invites us to create a silence within us so that we may not live on the margin of the essential, of the fully human, of the fully divine. She shows us to what a happy plenitude faith in Love, Who dwells in the inmost depths of our being, can lead us — wherever we are, whoever we are, or have been.

## **Our Edition**

The concern to make the numerous writings of Elizabeth accessible to all brought up the problem of their presentation. It was necessary to divide the whole into easily handled volumes. But should it begin in chronological order with the first writings, that is, with the letters of her childhood — (however appealing they might be)? Or with the poetry of the young girl, which has no properly poetic value but which, read from another point of view, is revealed as an authentic cry of the heart?

It seemed advisable to us not to listen first to the child Elizabeth. She has to attain to a certain maturity on the level of expression — all the more so as her formal education was very incomplete — before she can fully communicate her experience to us. Later, profit can be found in discovering the growth of the life of God in the young musician's soul. (The chronological indications that mark the texts allow for reading the documents in the order in which they were written if one should wish to do so.)

We were hoping (and the Foreword of Volume III bears witness to this) to content ourselves with two volumes, but the demands of criticism, of history, and of spiritual exegesis caused the size of our General Introduction and the annotations to grow beyond our desires. Our editor judged that it was better to divide the first volume into two separate books that would be easier to handle as works of meditation. Also a lower price would allow separate purchases at intervals.

Volume I contains, after a Biographical Sketch and the General Introduction, the four *Major Spiritual Writings* composed by Elizabeth at the end of her life.

Volume II assembles all the *Letters written from Carmel*. There is also an index of names, as well as biblical and other references for the whole of the

*Complete Works*. (This is the place where it will be the most useful.)

Volume III groups together the *Diary*, the *Personal Notes* written during the course of her life, the *Letters of her Youth* (1882–1901), and all her *Poems*.

On the margin of this edition, but closely linked to it, we will soon publish two other works. The first is entitled *Elizabeth of the Trinity: Sayings, Personal Annotations, and the First Eyewitness Testimonies*; it is in a sense a dossier on Elizabeth containing all the papers necessary for the understanding and study of this great mystic. The second, entitled *Elizabeth, or Love is There*, does not claim to be a reading guide to the *Complete Works*, but simply a spiritual commentary and a companion on the way. Having traveled Elizabeth's itinerary many times, we will draw attention to the most important stages and to some noteworthy points of view.

These editions will surely arouse new discoveries, great and small, relating to Elizabeth's life and writings. With a view to improving our work, we invite the reader to share them with the Carmelites of Dijon at their new home in Flavignerot.\*

We entrust this integral work on Elizabeth to every friend who is seeking God. It was no little labor but the happiness of the friendship which brought about this edition was doubled by our joy in meeting a prophet of the presence of God, one of the race of saints! We sense in her the Fire of the Spirit. May a spark from this Fire fly into the hearts of many of our brothers and sisters who read this book.

Conrad De Meester, O.C.D.

At the end of this foreword I would like to express my deepest thanks to:

Mother Marie-Lucie, Mother Marie-Michelle, and all my sisters of Dijon Carmel for their entire confidence and their friendly, joyous, and prayerful hospitality;

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all those who willingly answered my requests for information and whom I will cite further on (cf. p. 79);

Mgr. Albert Decourtray, Bishop of Dijon, for all the interest he showed in this edition;

his collaborators, priests, religious, and lay people whom I met and of whom I can name here only Pierre Chevignard, Peter Fletcher, and that unforgettable brother, André Jouffroy, Chaplain of Carmel.

Together let us thank the Lord for having given to his Church the always young Elizabeth Catez who became ever more “of the Trinity”!

C.D.M.

## Notes

- \* Address: Carmelites of Dijon, Flavignerot, 21160, Marsannay-la-Côte. The Monastery is 13 km. southwest of Dijon (near Corcelles-les-Monts). One can visit Sister Elizabeth’s cell, which has been transferred there, as well as a small museum where many souvenirs are preserved.

## **Biographical Sketch**

### **Up to Her Entrance in Carmel**

#### *Roots*

On Sunday morning, July 18, 1880, Elizabeth was born at the military camp of Avor in the district of Farges-en-Septaine (Cher), France, where her father, Captain Joseph Catez, of the 8th Squadron of the Equipment and Maintenance Corps, was stationed.

The birth was a difficult one. The two physicians present had already warned the captain that he would lose his first child. The mother suffered greatly for thirty-six hours. But at the end of the Eucharist that Captain Chaboisseau was celebrating for their intentions, little Elizabeth arrived in this world. The child was in good health, “very beautiful, very lively,” Mme. Catez would recall. On July 22nd, the feast of St. Mary Magdalene (which would delight the future contemplative), she was baptized.

The parents were no longer young. Joseph Catez was born May 29, 1832, in Aire-sur-la-Lys (Pas-de-Calais), the fourth of seven children of André Cattez [*sic*] and Fideline Hoel. They were poor; the father was a simple farmhand who could neither read nor write. He died at the age of forty-six when Joseph was eight. The mother died in 1876 at the age of seventy-five.

Joseph, his expression clear and candid, had to make his way in life with the energy and perseverance that will characterize his daughter. At twenty-one he enlisted in the army as a volunteer. For almost nine years he participated in the Algerian campaign, and later in the War of 1870 in which he was taken a prisoner in Sedan. Made a lieutenant in 1872 and captain in 1875, he was stationed at Lunel (Hérault) when he married on September 3, 1879, Marie Rolland, daughter of the retired Commandant Raymond Rolland of the 7th Regiment of Hussards, who at that time was living in Saint Hilaire (Aude).

Elizabeth’s place of origin on her father’s side was the Northern region of France. Her mother’s family came from the Southern region and from

Lorraine. Her grandfather Rolland was born in Pexiora (Aude) in 1811; he entered as a volunteer in the army and in 1842 married Josephine Klein of Lunéville where he was then stationed. It was there that Marie, their only daughter, was born on August 30, 1846. After retiring, M. Rolland settled again as an inspector in his native region.

Marie was a sensitive girl, gifted with an amiability that would win her many friends. Her first fiancé died during the War of 1870. It was a long and deep sorrow. Her diary, part of which remains, shows that she then devoted herself to a serious Christian life, entertained perhaps for a time the idea of a religious vocation, and also suffered periodically from an anguished conscience—rather Jansenistic, say some witnesses.

### *“A Real Devil”*

The Catez remained at the camp of Avor about nine months. Little Elizabeth heard the sound of the bugles, saw the soldiers and the horses. It was there that her father was named Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

From May 10, 1881, Captain Catez’ company was stationed at Auxonne (Côte-d’Or). In a series of letters Mme. Catez speaks of her Elizabeth, the little Burgundian of twenty-one months, “She is a real devil; she is crawling and needs a fresh pair of pants every day.” She is also “a big chatterbox”! Such are the earliest reports of the future saint. But there are some which have a more mystical quality. “She went up at the Offertory and kissed the Crucifix; she was throwing kisses to it before she got there.” “She not only prays” for her sick grandmother “but she is teaching her doll how to pray; she has just very devoutly made her kneel.” We see Elizabeth with her famous Jeanette in photos of this period as a little girl who knows what she wants!

### *Dijon*

A little while after the death of his wife on May 9, 1882, grandfather Rolland came to live with the Catez family. A new change of garrison brought them to Dijon around November 1, 1882. They moved into the Billiet villa on Rue Lamartine near the railroad station at the edge of the

countryside. Their friends, the Guémards, were their neighbors. There Marguerite was born on February 20, 1883.

As much as Guite was gentle, so much was Sabeth, the little captain, unruly! But she had a good heart and loved her parents very much. Guite recalled her sister's childhood: she was "very lively, even quick-tempered; she went into rages that were quite terrible; she was a real little devil." Her ardor and her sensitivity did not yet know how to orientate themselves. Her mother speaks of her "furious eyes." Her little friend of a few years later, Marie-Louise Hallo, also the daughter of a military man, recalls her "flashing eyes." But then it was in the context of fervor and warmth.

In the Catez family harmony reigned. Note this phrase from a letter (April 28, 1885) of Mme. Catez to her "good Joseph," perhaps already suffering from heart trouble, who was traveling in the North: "Do not forget my advice; take care of yourself; do not drink too much beer or smoke too many cigars; take care of your health and think of us." Five imperatives in two lines! The wife, who could easily expatiate in her letters also knew how to summarize. Do we perhaps detect between these lines the anxious and domineering temperament of Mme. Catez (the same temperament which can be discerned in Elizabeth's *Diary*) and the lively and sociable side of the Captain, joined to his sense of duty and loyalty?

The letter continues: "The little ones are more or less well-behaved; Elizabeth often thinks and speaks of you; she is counting the days," as witness the few words she wrote to her "little papa" (L 2 and 3). On June 2, 1885, Captain Catez retired.

### *Rue Prieur*

If up to now little Sabeth had known the tears of rage and those of repentance when she had annoyed her mother—tears which sprang only from the eyes—soon she would know her first true sorrows and the tears that well up from the heart.

On January 24, 1887, Raymond Rolland died. He was so skilled, they tell us, in "the art of being a grandfather." Eight months later Elizabeth suffered a new grief, and how much more painful! On Sunday morning, October 2, M. Catez, who had already had several heart attacks, died rather suddenly.

The three funeral orations do not have much significance. More revealing is the fact that the official organ of the diocese, the *Semaine religieuse* of Dijon did not hesitate to give the full text of Captain Chézelle's speech on this "excellent Christian" who, according to the writer, was "a very close friend of the Archpriest of the cathedral" although M. Catez had not lived in Dijon for very long. *Le Bien public* printed Captain Lafourcade's speech.

As her pension was now reduced, Mme. Catez had to leave the house on Rue Lamartine. She moved with her daughters and a young domestic servant into the second floor of a house, which no longer exists, on Rue Prieur-de-la-Côte-d'Or, on the other side of town.<sup>1</sup> From her window the little Elizabeth could see an unfamiliar building in a garden: Carmel.

The sudden disappearance of two loved ones and the uprooting from Rue Lamartine must have left the child with a keen sense of the fragility of life, and must have bound her even closer to her mother and Guite. The "trio" (this will be her expression later) were very close but not closed in on themselves. There were faithful friends, new relationships with those who lived near their house on Rue Prieur, and annual trips to visit relatives and friends. There was no lack of horizons for the little Sabeth who, in Dijon, lived near the big Park and the countryside.

Without being rich, Mme. Catez was sufficiently well off to assure the education of her children. Around the age of seven, Elizabeth received her first private lessons in French from Mlle. Grémaux. Probably in order to prepare her for a career as a piano teacher, her mother enrolled her in the Conservatory of Dijon when she was eight. The usual subjects were studied at infrequent intervals, but music held by far the first place: there was the work at the Conservatory; there were courses in common and private lessons, then at home long hours of daily practice.

The death of her father might have tempered the vivacity of the child but, despite that, life resumed its normal course. And so did the "rages." Indeed, Mlle. Grémaux recalled the "iron will" of her little pupil and her already striking recollection in church (for it was Elizabeth's nature always to go to the depths of things), but that should not cause us to disregard her faults. Guite recalled that her sister's rages were sometimes so violent "that they threatened to send her as a boarder to the Good Shepherd [a house of correction that was nearby], and they prepared her little bag."

But Sabeth was also very upright, and when she realized that one must not be a burden to others, she quickly took herself in hand. Witnesses say that her first confession, at the age of seven, visibly engaged her in the struggle against her caprices.

And then, there were so many beautiful qualities in this lovable, generous, and straight-forward heart! Letters 4 and 5 witness, not without a mischievous tone, to her good resolutions and in particular to her efforts not “to get angry.” There we also read this sentence of a little girl of nine-and-a-half: “. . . since I hope that I will soon have the happiness of making my first communion, I will be even better behaved for I will pray to God to make me better still” (L 5).

### *“I Am Not Hungry, Jesus Has Fed Me”*

Sixteen months separated her from that day. Elizabeth fervently applied herself to the catechism lessons, which, however, did not prevent her from being sentenced one day by the vicar to kneel with a little friend in the middle of the walk.

What took place in her heart on that April 19, 1891? During Mass and thanksgiving tears of joy flowed down her cheeks. As she left Saint-Michel’s she said to Marie-Louise Hallo: “I am not hungry; Jesus has fed me. . . .”

We can guess the intensity of the first encounter with the Body of Christ from a poem of her youth (P 47) written on the seventh anniversary of this communion—one of those poems written only for herself in Jesus’ presence as part of her intimate diary.<sup>2</sup> On the evening of her first communion, in her beautiful white dress, she went to visit the Mother Prioress of Carmel. Marie of Jesus explained to her the significance of her Hebrew name: Elizabeth, that is, the “House of God.” The little girl was, and remained, profoundly impressed by it. That morning she had felt so strongly that God dwelt within her!

On June 8, 1891, she was confirmed in the Church of Notre Dame.

Witnesses unanimously emphasize her very noticeable progress in making a gift of herself after her first communion. Gift to whom? To Jesus: she understood the love that he shows us in his suffering and death, in his

eucharistic presence among men. Jesus animated her in her inmost depths. Often, when she received communion, tears of joy covered her face. With all her energy she learned to forget herself for Jesus, for others. Her fits of anger were lived through and conquered within. She felt won over by Jesus. She loved to pray.

Around the age of thirteen, her confessor helped her to get through a painful phase of scruples. The catechesis of that time surrounded the approach to God with meticulous prescriptions; the danger of sin threatened on all sides and the just Judge did not overlook anything!

At fourteen, one day after having received the Body of Christ, Sabeth Catez felt irresistibly impelled to consecrate her whole life to him and to make a vow of perpetual virginity. A little later, the project of the religious life which she had nourished since she was seven took shape in this word which was spoken to her interiorly: “Carmel.”

### *Elizabeth-of-the-Big-Feet*

But let us not consider only the interior physiognomy of her whom Canon Angles, a close family friend, remembers as “always at the head of the group.” The young girl of fourteen will herself complete her image in a composition exercise that Mlle. Forey, her new teacher, gave her:

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

Without pride I think I can say that my overall appearance is not displeasing. I am a brunette and, they say, rather tall for my age. I have sparkling black eyes and my thick eyebrows give me a severe look. The rest of my person is insignificant. My “dainty” feet could win for me the nickname of Elizabeth of the Big Feet, like Queen Bertha! And there you have my physical portrait!

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

Well, at last this tedious task is finished and am I glad!<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, two big lacunae in this charming exercise without complexes. First of all, not a word about her musical talent. She had already won her first prize at piano when she was thirteen; she participated in the

concerts the Conservatory organized in town, which were reported in the papers. *Le Progrès de la Côte-d'Or*, for example, wrote on August 8, 1893:

Mlle. Catez, first prize at the piano, of M. Diétrich's class, received unanimous applause after the Capriccio Brillant of Mendelssohn. It was a pleasure to see this young child scarcely thirteen years old come to the piano; she is already a distinguished pianist with an excellent touch, a beautiful tone, and a real musical feeling. A debut like this permits us to base great hopes on this child.

In Letter 7 Elizabeth relates with dignity how the Prize of Excellence was unjustly taken away from her in 1894.

A second and greater lacuna: not a word about what is the flame of this life, the soul of her soul—her love for Jesus. If, obviously, she cannot speak of it in a homework exercise, she will do so freely in the intimate journal of her poems, as in the following few verses that are almost contemporary with the exercise just cited:

Jesus, my soul desires You,  
I want to be your bride soon.  
With You I want to suffer—  
And to find You, die. (P 4)

### *“For My Heart is Always with Him”*

A mysterious Presence already accompanied her. Few of those close to her realized that her rich vitality was orientated towards another Life: within, without, beyond. A nostalgia for Jesus, for Carmel, for Heaven, filled this young girl of fifteen and sixteen. Then, at seventeen, she discovered the earthly perspectives that this love implied; she accepted her concrete situation and all that caused suffering to her young heart, already animated by a very contemplative desire for oblation, as witnesses, for example, Poem 43.

After her first prize in piano, it would have been necessary for her to go to the Conservatory of Paris to perfect her art. But she took two more years of harmony at the Conservatory of Dijon. Private lessons of general education were intensified, but too late, alas, to bear their fruits. We do not know their frequency, but music continued to take most of her time. At

eighteen Elizabeth also studied English, and at this time she found a real enjoyment in sewing lessons as she loved beautiful clothes.

As a daughter of an officer and wife of one, used to moving, Mme. Catez loved to travel. From the age of eight at least, Elizabeth, with her mother and sister, took long trips during the summer vacations. They often went South, where Mme. Catez had spent her youth; there were prolonged sojourns in Saint Hilaire, where the Abbé Angles had been curate for some fifteen years, and at Carlipa, where the Rolland aunts lived. Four times at least the Catez spent their vacations in Lorraine, the Jura, and the Vosges.

In her letters (for example to Alice Chervau, Marie-Louise Maurel, and Françoise de Sourdon), Elizabeth spoke of her enthusiasm for the beauty of nature, the mountains and the sea; she expressed her joy at seeing her friends, at playing tennis and croquet, of joining in musical sessions. Everywhere she was loved. A person who was with her only a few days summed up her memories sixty years later: “Very lively, endowed with great charm, she enthusiastically shared in the diversions of our age . . . Elizabeth was too attractive for one to forget her.”

But there were not only girl friends, there were also young men. The *Souvenirs* is deliberately vague on this subject: “. . . her charming appearance aroused many hopes around her. . . .”

### “*Without Making a Face*”

Here we invite the reader to read in Volume III our introduction to the *Diary* which she wrote at the age of eighteen and nineteen; it is, so to speak, part of this biographical sketch.

Let us simply recall that March 26, during the great mission preached in Dijon, Mme. Catez finally consented to her daughter’s entrance into Carmel—but not for two years. Five days later, “full of excitement,” Mme. Catez came to speak to her of a “superb match,” even though that day was Good Friday. Sabeth reaffirmed her total adherence to Jesus (D 124 and P 69 on the same day).

From her *Diary* we can infer that the young girl, without ever having made a vow of obedience like her neighbors, the Carmelites, had many occasions to practice it. But soon Mme. Catez lifted her former ban on

speaking with the Sisters (the Externs and the Prioress) of Carmel. Elizabeth asked for admission in June 1899. Nevertheless, earlier, faced with her mother's opposition and, above all, the question of conscience that her mother's ill health raised, Elizabeth had completely agreed to fulfill the concrete will of the Lord, even if it went contrary to her own plans for the monastic life. In her hope she lived in total abandonment, throwing herself "without making a face" (the expression is her confessor's) into her situation as a young layperson in the world.

So she continued to travel and meet her friends in Dijon and elsewhere. She dressed elegantly and her hairstyles were impeccable. She was noticed in the circle of military families and at the dances where one met many people; Mgr. Brunhes, future Bishop of Montpellier, boasted of having danced with her in his youth. And the more perceptive men said to themselves: "She is not for us; look at her expression."

Sabeth radiated his Love. During a dancing party one evening, a lady suddenly said to her: "Elizabeth, you see God." Her whole being was orientated towards him. When Charles Hallo, Marie-Louise's brother, complimented her on her talents, she answered teasingly: "Charles, you annoy me!"

Her passion was Jesus, to "share" his joys and his griefs, to be near him and to give him absolutely everything. As she did not yet live in his presence in Carmel, she, like Catherine of Siena interiorized her "cell":

May my life be a continual prayer, a long act of love. May nothing distract me from You, neither noise nor diversions. O my Master, I would so love to live with You in silence. But what I love above all is to do Your will, and since You want me to still remain in the world, I submit with all my heart for love of You. I offer You the cell of my heart; may it be Your little Bethany. Come rest there, I love You so. . . . I would like to console You, and I offer myself to You as a victim, O my Master, for You, with You. (PN 5)

The word "victim" used here is owed to Thérèse of Lisieux. In 1899 one of the first conquests of *The Story of a Soul* was Elizabeth: Thérèse helped her to rid herself of all that still remained of Jansenism in her image of God. But above all, it was the mystical experience of divine love that often inundated her heart which was the best antidote for her fears. Already, before her entrance into Carmel, Elizabeth had given God this title which would remain very dear to her: the God "Who is All Love."

## *Elizabeth of the Trinity*

In her heart the young girl dreamed of taking the name of *Elizabeth of Jesus* in Carmel. Not without sacrifice did she accept *Elizabeth of the Trinity* which the Prioress proposed to her in memory of a Carmelite of Beaune.

July 1, 1900, we find this name for the first time in Letter 28 which she addressed to another aspirant to Carmel, Marguerite Gollot. Shortly before, Elizabeth had met for the first time Père Vallée, Prior of the Dominicans of Dijon, a highly esteemed preacher in Carmel. The long conversation with this Father, whom she saw again several times before her entrance, intensely encouraged her to believe in the God “Who is all Love” who dwelt in her, a presence she had felt so strongly. The priest gave her wings to continue her rapid course. Not that he had revealed to her the reality of the indwelling of God in her soul for she was already living that. But she was surely enriched by what P. Vallée told her of the love that, not only Jesus, but God—Father, Word, and Holy Spirit—bore for her. How she must have drunk in these words; she who had written two years before on the day of Pentecost, 1898, in speaking of the Holy Spirit whom she “invoked each day” and from whom she awaited the fulfillment of all her desires:

Holy Spirit, Goodness, Supreme Beauty!  
O You Whom I adore, O You Whom I love!  
Consume with Your divine flames  
This body and this heart and this soul!  
This spouse of the Trinity  
Who desires only Your will! (P 54)

During the summer of 1900, this “spouse of the Trinity” said her last goodbye to the world in the course of a three-month trip. One last time the meetings and parties began again in Dijon, but also the apostolate to which she gave herself in the parishes of Saint-Michel and Saint-Pierre: the youth club for the children of the workers at the tobacco factory, catechism for the children who were preparing for their first communion, visits to their parents and to the sick, choir rehearsals.

Time passed quickly; her twenty-first birthday and her entrance into Carmel drew near. Elizabeth went through a period of aridity in her search for God. She suffered. And even more than that, she “suffered from making others suffer” (L 67): her mother and sister counted the days they had left with their Sabeth. “My poor darlings whom I am crucifying,” she groaned (L 71). Later, Canon Angles would call to mind the “two loves” which, like a horizontal and vertical beam, formed a cross in Elizabeth’s heart: “Love of God and love for her mother whom she cherished passionately.” But the daughter of the officer did not retreat before the greatest sacrifices if it was to respond to the highest Love.

Marie of Jesus knew the value of her young postulant, and she decided to take her with her to the foundation of Paray-le-Monial. Elizabeth’s trunks were already there when, at the last moment, they consented to leave her in the Carmel of Dijon out of consideration for Mme. Catez.

Those were heart-rending hours, that last evening, that last night together.

But August 2, 1901, also brought to Elizabeth the profound peace of at last being able to say yes to Jesus who wanted her in Carmel. That very morning she wrote again to Canon Angles: “We are going to receive communion at the eight o’clock Mass, and after that, when He is in my heart, mama will lead me to the enclosure door!”

When He is in my heart. . . . She ended, “I feel that I am wholly His, that I am keeping back nothing. I throw myself into His arms like a little child” (L 81).

Before leaving forever the house on Rue Prieur-de-la-Côte-d’Or, she knelt before the portrait of her father and asked him for a last blessing.

C.D.M.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> see plan 5 in Volume III.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. our introduction to the *poems*, Volume III.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CE 16 in PAT.

# **General Introduction**



## **General Introduction**

**O**n the threshold of the twentieth century, Elizabeth of the Trinity's hidden life and her witness rooted in a divine world were a silent but real message which was welcomed by many spiritually-minded men and women. A daughter of her times, Elizabeth anticipated, without being aware of it, the spirituality of the Church under several aspects.

## Prophet of God

Let us avoid two pitfalls when speaking of her contribution to Christian spirituality. First of all, it is not a question of attributing to Elizabeth of the Trinity exclusive rights in the renewal and deepening of spiritual life which she helped and continues to help effect. That would manifestly contradict the remarkable detachment she showed in giving little importance to the subjective resonances of the graces she received, but rather aligning herself with the great masters like Paul and John, John of the Cross, and Ruysbroeck. We must not isolate Elizabeth from the wider underlying currents (little known to her but well known to the Spirit), although, and wholly unaware of it, on certain points she was in advance of her times.

For example, how can we fail to compare her charismatic attraction for the New Testament with the biblical renewal that was slowly opening up, which Père Lagrange pioneered in the years 1890–1900: founding the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem, the *Revue Biblique*, and the collection “Etudes Bibliques?”

On observing that Elizabeth, like John of the Cross, builds her spirituality on the objective foundation of Scripture and Faith, how can we fail to recognize this same movement in the authors of the nineteenth century such as Newman and Gay, and again, Faber and Lacordaire?

When we hear Elizabeth call herself “Praise of Glory,” how can we fail to think of the liturgical movement Dom Guéranger and his monks of Solesmes endeavored for half a century to make prevail over a too sentimental devotion, overly concerned with states of soul?

When admiring her contemplative thirst for God, how can we forget that whole mystical invasion at the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, with renowned representatives in Elizabeth’s country such as Thérèse of Lisieux and Charles de Foucauld?

Finally, if Elizabeth contributed, without realizing it, to a spirituality of the laity, why separate this from the great evangelical awakening, that of the social movement in Western Europe, which was supported by many of the laity long before Leo XIII’s encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891?

Daniel-Rops understood this well: “Would not one of the most surprising paradoxes of our national history be this: that France, officially atheist, has been wholly penetrated with mysticism and that an immense current of fervor is circulating underground before surfacing through hundreds of springs?”<sup>1</sup>

The second pitfall to avoid would be to make Elizabeth a prophet on *all* points of view!

We recognize in her a complete and traditional formation in the customs, formulas, and conventions of the religious life at the beginning of the twentieth century—exceptional only by the quality of love that animated her. This religious life had been well tested by the social pressure of the French state but had not yet been confronted with modern challenges and new values brought about by a better knowledge of man and the world, and our technological era.

We also notice that Elizabeth’s language, personal, simple and affectionate, assumes in places a somewhat solemn style, which does not at all correspond to her personality, although it is filled with conviction, and, more than once, with a biblical inspiration unsuspected at first sight. We have here a remnant of the influence that Père Vallée’s oratorical style exercised over her for a short time, which the young religious had not yet completely assimilated. When we recall that her premature death at the age of twenty-six did not allow her time to discover *fully* her personal style and vocabulary, we can only admire her manner of mystical expression and that “language which we wonder where she learned it,” as the former rector of the University of Lyon, Pierre Dadolle, Bishop of Dijon, said in his foreword to the first edition of the *Souvenirs* (S IX).

We also see, against a background of Jansenism, from which Elizabeth was able to free herself magnificently—and to free others!—an appreciation of suffering, which, though inspired by quite positive views,<sup>2</sup> is “dated” in its expression. But can one ever speak well of this mystery?

Although traditional, several elements of her teaching, of which we will attempt to give an overall view in our work *Elizabeth or Love is There* (AL), are nevertheless very beautiful. Here all we will try to see is how this mystic enriched the spirituality of her time and still can enrich our own.

1. First of all, there is her *personal charism of sound interiority and attention to God*—a charism with many facets. Her lofty idea of God does not merely erect a hierarchy of values that culminates in God, the Prime Value, but it also impels her to leave everything, as far as that is possible, in order to devote herself (and with what ardor!) to a life of adoration freely given. The contemplative life, lived with intensity and faith, leads to the reality of God; the authenticity of Elizabeth’s love reinforces the credibility of this statement.

Even in Carmel where the search for God (which is at the same time an ecclesial prayer) was so insistently recommended by Teresa of Avila, the quality of Elizabeth’s constant recollection was impressive. Theoretically we might question what part is played here by a nature very gifted for contemplation and wonder, by a generosity which prefers God to the egotistic expressions of self, and again, by a supernatural charism destined for our enrichment: in reality all these composites are harmoniously united in this young woman. Elizabeth Catez by her fidelity to a charism displayed through all her gifts of heart and grace is a *prophet*. But she also became a *saint*, that is, faithful to the Gospel down to the very fibers of concrete existence, by the total exploitation of a gift that is placed in every human heart: love.

It seems to us that Elizabeth of the Trinity again presents a prophetic aspect by the gentleness and flexibility with which she lived this impressive recollection. There is nothing harsh, hard, or irritating about her—apart from a few short periods of transition, for she, too, must have had to struggle. In her silence there is a freedom which she had already acquired as a young lay person. Her neighbor does not feel rejected, but, on the contrary, drawn to her Mystery. We detect in her an exceptional combination of the mystical and the human, of attention to God and a deep sense of friendship; her relationship with her prioress, Germaine of Jesus, would be just one of the clearest examples of this. She learned that at the Master’s school—first of all, perhaps, in his visits to Bethany which Elizabeth so loved to contemplate. She glimpsed it in God’s heart: “Heaven is unity,” she said a little before her death (S 254). If the witnesses repeat in chorus the epithet “recollected,” they add others to it: simple, joyous, amiable, obliging. To understand thoroughly this prophet of the presence of

God, we must never separate her *writings*, in which she inculcates the nearness of God, from her daily *life*. Writings, words, and actions are all one sheaf.

As a contemplative her role will not be to speak, to act, nor to appear abroad. Her task is “to remain at the Source”: “There are two words which sum up for me all holiness, all apostolate: Union and Love” (L 191). Although Elizabeth experiences less of a need to reaffirm the apostolic usefulness of her life than her sister Thérèse of Lisieux does—a more lively disposition and more winning personality—she also knows she is “in the great body of the Church” (L 191). In making profession of the contemplative life, Elizabeth remains the same as the young girl who at the time of her *Diary* poured herself out for “souls” and prayed as fervently for the conversion of M. Chapuis as Thérèse did for Pranzini. Elizabeth carries in her heart the conviction that a daughter of Teresa of Avila “must be apostolic: all her prayers, all her sacrifices tend to this!” (L 136) When she prays in *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore* (PN 15) to be more fully incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ, into his enlarged humanity, “that I may be another humanity for Him,” she considers Christ coming into her not only as “Adorer” but also “as Restorer and as Savior” so that he can renew in her “His *whole* Mystery.”

“The Glory of God” and “the Church” the dying nun will state these two ends of her life with the same ardor: “O Love! . . . Consume all my substance for your glory; let it distill drop by drop for your Church” (S 256–57).

2. Elizabeth also surpasses the current spirituality of her day by *her enthusiastic and loving approach to the Trinity*. She is overcome with wonder before God who, however exalted and immense he may be, is not alone in his majesty but is a Community of Love: Three in a union which surpasses all understanding—creating man and inviting him to live and act in him who is Love. For her the holiness of God radiates an infinite love! To draw near him is to be freed from the evil that is in us, to be enkindled with the fire of the Spirit.

It will not be her task to reflect theologically on the mystery of the intra-Trinitarian life. Rather her vocation will consist in thanksgiving for the love of the “Three,” in wonderment of their beauty, and in the irrevocable gift of

self to the least expression of their desire. What Elizabeth emphasizes before all is the mercy of the Trinity, its “philanthropia” as St. Paul says (Tt 3:4), “his love for men.” Elizabeth loves so much to speak of God who is “all Love,” continually bending over the work of his hands. He never leaves us; he dwells in us; he wants to be loved by us; he wants to give us life—forever; he wants to transform us into himself, to deify us. It is Heaven “that the Holy Spirit creates in you,” she exclaims (L 239)!

With the eyes of her heart she follows the ascending and descending double movement of the dynamics of God’s love for us. (This is to express figuratively what cannot be separated in God.) The Father sends his Son among us; Jesus perpetuates his human work, his love, and his presence in the Church, especially through the Eucharist. They send us the enabling Spirit so that the life of Jesus may manifest itself in our life and radiate through us to others. If they dwell in us, it is not just to make us happy by our faith in their love and nearness, but above all that, patiently and in free collaboration, our existence may be transfigured into a life as “forgetful and freed of self” as Mary’s was (LR 40) for the good of others. Then the Spirit will sing ever more earnestly in our hearts “the praise” of the God of Love (Ep 1:12).

In her Trinitarian approach, Elizabeth always remains Christocentric. Since her childhood she had been deeply touched by the total gift of self that Jesus manifests on the Cross and in the Eucharist. Her prayer as a Carmelite will be, above all, listening to the “Master.” And in the evening of her life, the mystic will utter these moving words, pressing her profession crucifix to her heart: “We have loved each other so much” (S 246). Her transformation in God will come about through conformity to the Crucified and Risen One.

3. In her own way, Elizabeth was also a pioneer in the rediscovery of *Scripture as the charter of Christian life*. Today it is hard for us to understand how different the situation was at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time the Bible was much less known and read by Catholics. During the preparation of this edition, priests often told us: “What we received then in our course on Holy Scripture was quite impoverished, Elizabeth is the one who opened up St. Paul to me.”

Obviously Paul was not unknown. But the Holy Spirit developed in the heart of this inadequately educated young woman a special charism for understanding the inner meaning, for delighting in and living the magnificent designs of divine love that Paul and John unfolded before her wondering eyes. Without having read exegetical works, rather poor and rare in her day, she penetrated the texts by an inner intuition and translated them into life. She based her contemplation and her doctrine on the revealed word, made life giving by her contact with the Word of God. This is what gives her writings vigor and wholeness, depth and horizon. In all simplicity and clarity they are inscribed in the fundamental perspectives of Christianity. If we had to describe her person and her mysticism in one word, we would say right away that Elizabeth is thoroughly “Christian.” She moves “in the objectivity of the message and the universality of the mystery of Christ,” as Hans Urs von Balthasar says so well.<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean to say that she expatiates on all the aspects of Christianity. That was not at all her intention. Her whole work is a spontaneous outpouring occasioned by concrete circumstances; she lets her heart speak on what seems to her most beautiful in life: impassioned friendship for Christ, response to the love God manifests for us. She never had a synthesis in mind, although she had a profound intuition of the essential

Thus, for example, she develops the practice of charity less than Thérèse of Lisieux does (who was favored by having written an autobiography, a kind of “book” which lent itself more easily to structuring) just as Thérèse speaks less explicitly of the presence of God. But what charity in *action* in Elizabeth’s community relationships, or in her correspondence, so warm and attentive to the psychology of each one, with his joys, his vulnerable points, his sufferings, and his hidden thirst for God which she wanted to both quench and quicken! We repeat: the understanding of her message is inseparable from the knowledge of her life. Her writings, moreover, would never have had that force, that accent of authenticity, that resonance without the “lived” atmosphere from which they emanated. The supreme witness of Elizabeth of the Trinity is her way of living.

4. Elizabeth, a nun “to the hilt,” to use Lacordaire’s expression, which was quoted in her presence, paradoxically had her own word to say about

the *spirituality of the laity*—a task that she should pursue more than ever in our day!

Elizabeth's contribution here is situated at the most fundamental level of lay spirituality. While affirming her happiness in her Carmelite vocation, the mystic goes beyond external forms to enlarge on the common riches of every Christian, whether in the monastery or in the midst of the world with its multiple activities: God's desire to give himself to us, our baptism, the Eucharist, our destiny beyond death, the universal presence of God, the reality of the "Three" in us, the joy of being a beloved child of the God of Love, a joy which impels us to give ourselves to others. In this way her message assumes a universal meaning.

Besides, we should not forget that many of her writings were destined for lay people. Among her fifty-nine correspondents there are six priests or seminarians, thirteen religious,

Neither must we forget, in fact it is even important enough to emphasize it, that Elizabeth lived as a young lay person what she later extols as a Carmelite. Before her entrance into Carmel, this simple young girl, whether on trips, in a group, at home, or at the piano, already lived "within"; she felt drawn by the presence of God and she responded to it with an unlimited generosity. A considerable part of her writings date precisely from this period of her youth. This edition is privileged to publish them for the first time and to show us a young saint in the world attentive to others, who already lived her "passion for God" (L 136) in the "little cell" of her heart!

Like Thérèse of Lisieux, and partly under her influence, Elizabeth rejects a certain exotic conception of "holiness" and repeats that to live fully the Gospel, special conditions and extraordinary manifestations are not required. When she was asked on entering Carmel: "What is your ideal of holiness?," she answered, "To live by love." And "the quickest way to attain it?" "To become very little, to surrender oneself irrevocably" (PN 12). Five years later, when she composed her little treatise *Heaven in Faith* for her sister Guite, young mother of two children—she will have nine—she will say for "every soul": "Each incident, each event, each suffering as well as each joy is a sacrament which gives God to it" (HF 10).

A little later, a few weeks before she died, her mother was speaking to her of the possible departure of the community into exile and assured her

that she would not let her sick daughter leave. Elizabeth of the Trinity, the contemplative who so loved the solitude of her Carmel, answered, “Yes, Mama, if it is God’s will, I will go home with you to die. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Mystiques de France. Textes choisis et commentés*, Ed. Corrêa, 14e éd., pp. 283–284.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Our introduction to the first section of the *Letters from Carmel*.

<sup>3</sup> *Elisabeth de la Trinité et sa mission spirituelle*, Seuil, 1960, p. 79. but forty lay people (thirty-one in her letters from Carmel). She corresponds with a widow, mothers of families, a young man, her doctor, her friends. And all understood very well what Elizabeth wanted to tell them. The only boundaries separating them were the external ones.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. RB 1 in PAT.

## **Elizabeth's Thought on Her Posthumous Mission**

Eleven days before her death, Elizabeth wrote: "I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them to go out of themselves in order to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence within which will allow God to communicate Himself to them and to transform them into Himself" (L 335).

For a long time she had already been fulfilling a mission. Her "large heart overflowing with love" (L 295) predisposed her to share with others what seemed to her most dear and most important in this life. Her experience of God and the discovery of his word became an open inheritance.

Especially during her eight months in the infirmary, she felt as though impelled to express the essential, as though charged with speaking of the ultimate truth: "In the light of eternity God makes me understand many things, and I come to tell you as though it were coming from Him . . ." (L 324). The desire to communicate sometimes assumes a universal breadth: "Ah, I wish I could tell everyone what sources of strength, of peace and of happiness they would find if they would only consent to live in this intimacy" (L 302). "I wish I could make myself heard by everyone in order to tell them of the vanity, of the nothingness of what passes, unless it is done for God" (L 340).

Her message bears many names. It is a "program of life" (GV 9), an "ideal" (L 324), even her "recipe" (L 317). But also her "secret" and her "testament" (L 333), "my doctrine" (L 273) and even, indirectly, "my grace" (L 293). In her heart something is "happening similar to" Jesus' sentiments on the eve of his death (L 315) and, in the last weeks, Elizabeth says goodbye with a whole series of letter-testaments.

The idea of a spiritual motherhood after her death continues to develop, and promises to help those whom she loves multiply (L 324, 326, 330, 331, 333, 334, 335, 340, 341). "Call me," the dying nun says to her "little brother," Charles Hallo whom "she will love even more in Heaven!" "Yes, call your little sister. In this way you will increase her happiness in Heaven; she will be so glad to help you. . . ." (L 342) And to Doctor Barbier: "It is my turn now; I feel my mission beginning on your behalf" (L 340).

In her spiritual testament for Mother Germaine, Elizabeth feels commissioned by God to transmit a message and to exercise later a “priesthood” on earth. She calls herself God’s messenger who reveals to Mother Germaine “what her God in the hours of profound recollection and of unifying contact, makes her understand.” “If you knew,” she wrote, “with what certitude I understand God’s plan for your soul; it appears to me as in a great light, and I understand also that in Heaven I will fulfill in my turn a priesthood over your soul. It is Love who associates me with his work in you. . . .” (LL 1–3)

Sometimes her posthumous mission concerns a material or moral protection, but more often a deepening of life with God. We saw this in the solemn declaration of Letter 335, quoted at the beginning of this section. We notice it again, for example, in Letter 333 to Antoinette de Bobet: “I leave you my faith in the presence of God, of the God who is all Love dwelling in our souls. I confide to you: it is this intimacy with Him ‘within’ which has been the beautiful sun illuminating my life, making it already an anticipated Heaven; it is what sustains me today in my suffering.”

## *A Visible Mediation*

Did Elizabeth consider only a purely spiritual activity after her death without a visible mediation? It is hard to believe this. She must have foreseen that the memory of her example and at least some of her writings and sayings would serve as a means for her mission.

To understand this, let us recall that, after the death of a Carmelite, it was customary to send an obituary circular to all the French Carmels and friends abroad. In it the sister's life was briefly related, while bringing out her gifts and virtues, and suggesting sometimes delicately her limitations. Each Carmelite knew this. Some were opposed to it and asked not to have a circular — out of humility, it was almost invariably explained. But most had no objection to it. For example, Thérèse of Lisieux said: “I really want a ‘circular’ because I have always thought that I must pay for the Office of the Dead that each Carmelite will say for me. I can't understand why some don't want a circular; it's so nice to get acquainted with each other and to know something about those with whom we will live eternally.”<sup>5</sup>

Elizabeth was of this opinion. Mother Germaine relates: “Three weeks before her death when I was writing in her presence, she interrupted me to say with her usual smile and profound look: ‘I'm happy to think that you will write my circular.’ And since, surprised by such an unexpected reflection on her part, I objected that I wouldn't have much to say about a religious who had only lived in Carmel for five years, she told me: ‘I will help you.’ I answered: ‘Very well. I will take you at your word. I am counting on you.’ Then she said, ‘We will do it together’” (PO 66).

This must not have been the first time that Elizabeth thought about her circular. In the first half of August 1906, when she had finished her spiritual treatise *Heaven in Faith*, the notebook intended for Guite remained in Mother Germaine's hands; Elizabeth certainly knew this. And when a little later, the Prioress asked her to compose a retreat for her this time, in which she could incorporate her personal ideas to a greater degree, Elizabeth must have easily guessed that the Prioress would use these writings for the circular, all the more so since Mother Germaine had been expecting the imminent death of her young Sister for at least three months. This clearly

results from a letter of May 17, 1906, to Canon Angles (cf. note 1 of L 271) where Mother Germaine says in regard to the visit that day of Mme. Catez to her young daughter: “It is probably the last time that they will see each other on earth.” When Elizabeth writes in a letter of July 16: “I think I will soon leave Carmel for Heaven,” Mother Germaine adds: “I think so too” (L 297).

Convinced of Elizabeth’s sanctity, which she does not fail to bring out in her circular, did Mother Germaine, great admirer of *The Story of a Soul* by Thérèse of Lisieux, already have the idea that one day she would likewise write Elizabeth’s life? Did Elizabeth ever suspect it? This is only an hypothesis. But she certainly noticed the veneration which began to surround her during her illness.<sup>6</sup>

It is very probable that the use of the word “mission” in its posthumous perspective<sup>7</sup> owes its origin in Elizabeth to an explicit comparison with the posthumous “mission” of Thérèse of Lisieux.<sup>8</sup>

The *Souvenirs* of 1935 (pp. 234–235) adds a note from Mother Germaine (who died before the appearance of this edition): “When we asked her how she intended ‘to spend her eternity,’ and if, like the ‘little Thérèse,’ she would ‘come down’ to earth for the good of souls, she replied: ‘Oh! no, indeed, as soon as I reach the threshold of Paradise, I will rush like a little rocket into the bosom of ‘my Three’; a Praise of Glory can have no other place for eternity and I will plunge ever deeper into it. . . .’ Then, after a little pause, with her eyes closed and her hands joined, she added: ‘However, if God grants my request, I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls into *interior recollection* . . . and she developed her idea in the words quoted in the above letter” (L 335).<sup>9</sup>

Marie of the Trinity, Sub-Prioress in Elizabeth’s time, also affirms: “In regard to her heavenly mission, I heard the Servant of God state several times that her mission would not be the same as that of Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, but that she would be concealed, hidden, wholly interior” (PO 185).

After all it matters little to know whether the term “mission” and the effort to condense its content were set in motion by Thérèse’s example. What is important is that this mission was prepared by and reflected in the life and witness of the Carmelite of Dijon.

Like two beacons which singularly illuminate this message, we find again in the last days, these counsels: “Let us live of love so that we may die of love and glorify the God Who is all Love” (L 335) and, “Let yourself be loved . . . ,” that insistent invitation on the threshold of Heaven (LL).

## Notes

- 5 *Derniers Entretiens* DDB-Cerf, 1971, p. 214 (27.5.1). Cf. *Thérèse of Lisieux St., Her Last Conversations*, trans. by John Clark, O.C.D., ICS Publications, p. 102.
- 6 Cf. AL. An impressive verification: almost all the numerous letters of condolence that the family received on the occasion of Elizabeth’s death used the word “Saint” (cf. PAT). Cf. also S 261: “As soon as the news of her death spread through the town, people crowded to Carmel, eager to contemplate her whom all called *the little saint*. . . .”
- 7 To be sure she had already used the word in an earthly perspective: the mission of the Carmelite (P 86, L 250, 256) or of a priest (L 250) or of a mother (L 186).
- 8 Cf. HA, p. 235. We cite the second edition of *Histoire d’une Ame* (HA).
- 9 Mother Germaine places the conversation “at the time when this letter was written” (*Souvenirs*, ed. 1935, p. 234).

## **The “Circular” and the “Souvenirs”**

## *The Circular*

A little after Elizabeth's death, November 9th, 1906, Mother Germaine began to write the obituary circular: "Fifteen days after her death," she stated, with "an extraordinary ease that led me to finish this work very rapidly" (PO 66). However, the circular will be signed only the 18th of December and sent around Christmas.<sup>10</sup> It contained fourteen pages in-quarto printed in small type.<sup>11</sup>

The Prioress consulted many sources in the course of this work:<sup>12</sup> "Thank you for your last letters, "she wrote Guite, December 1, 1906. "I needed this whole dossier these days, but I am going to put it into the hands of my little copyist so that I can return it to you very soon, I hope." However, these letters were not used. The documents cited are the *Last Retreat*, *Heaven in Faith*, the *Diary*, some verses from the *Poems* of her youth, Letter 314 to her mother and Letter 323a to a friend. Guite's "dossier" was thus completed by other documents from Carmel, from the immediate family, and from some friends of Dijon, and in particular, by conversations with Mme. Catez who furnished details on Elizabeth's youth. When the Prioress sent the *Circular* to Guite, the 24th of December, she confessed: "It seems to me that I have said nothing in these twelve [in reality fourteen] pages, there was so much to be said; it is rather a sketch than a life of a soul, and I have already gone well beyond the usual limits of our circulars. But no one will complain of it, and for my part, I have found profound joys and true graces in the course of this little work done with my holy child."

Responses full of gratitude from the Carmels were expressed as early as December 28, 1906, and were often accompanied by a request for one or more extra copies. The first printing (of which we do not know the number) was not sufficient and on the 18th of January, Mother Germaine wrote to Marie Bouveret: "I'm not surprised at the effect of her Circular. It is the same in the Carmels from whom we receive daily the most consoling letters. . . . Today I can reserve a copy for you as I have been obliged to resort to a second printing. . . ."

Three months later, April 16, 1907, Sister Agnes wrote to the Carmel of Angers: "as for a Circular, alas, there are no more left, not even one! Even

the Carmel of Saigon is asking for three! . . . But you will like the notice even more.”

## Notes

- 10 The first responses of the Carmels, preserved in ACD, are dated from the 28th of December.
- 11 It is almost impossible to find; we will republish it in PAT.
- 12 It is possible to reconstitute satisfactorily the genesis of the *Circular* and the *Souvenirs* thanks to the letters of Mother Germaine to Mme. Catez and to Guite (ACD) and to the Carmel of Anderlecht (Archives of the Carmel of Clamart), to the letters of Sisters Agnes of Jesus and Mary of the Carmel of Dijon to the Carmel of Angers (Archives of the Carmel of Angers) and to the answers from the Carmel of Anderlecht (ACD).

## *The Preparation of the “Souvenirs”*

A “notice.” . . . This is how Elizabeth’s biography, later to be called the *Souvenirs*,\* was designated at the beginning. Two years later the Introduction will attribute the birth of this book to the responses provoked by the reading of the *Circular*,<sup>13</sup> but the project dated well in advance of its diffusion.

Mother Germaine sent a copy of the *Circular* to Mme. Catez on December 24, 1906, and wrote, “If I have not spoken more of her family, it was to conform to the customs of the Order, but we can make up for this in a notice and I will whisper many things to its author on this point.”

Fifteen days later, a letter of January 7, 1907, to Guite shows that Mother Germaine was already actively occupied with the future biography: “Tell your dear Mama [that] she could do me a great service in the preparation of the necessary materials for the work I want to undertake for the honor of our little saint by jotting down some notes from time to time (in order not to tire herself), first of all about Elizabeth’s maternal and paternal family, and the place of origin on both sides. Then, as I believe I have already asked you,<sup>14</sup> a few memories of her childhood, trips, education, etc. I think it would be useful also to ask Abbé Sellenet<sup>15</sup> to send us a brief account of his memories of this soul. . . .”

Mother Germaine must have continued her search for information, for in the Archives of the Dijon Carmel are preserved several important documents which give some very early testimonies.<sup>16</sup> These are the precious substructures (nonedited) of the *Souvenirs*. The Prioress also asked for (or received spontaneously) letters written by Elizabeth to different correspondents. On the 22nd of February she announced to Guite that she “will set to work” on the 4th of March, after her annual retreat. A letter of the 9th of March to Mme. Catez shows that the gathering of materials which are called here “our documents” is being actively pursued.<sup>17</sup>

But Mother Prioress had little time to do any serious writing! Sister Agnes wrote to Angers on the 16th of April: “. . . you will like the notice even more. Our good Mother is so busy that she has hardly any opportunity to work on it!” On October 23, 1907, Germaine completed her second term

as prioress, and Sister Agnes could write to Angers that evening: “I hope this blessed notice will soon be published now that our good Mother will have more leisure to work on it.”

And in fact the writing began. The following January 6th, Sister Agnes conveyed the good news: “This blessed notice! It is under way. Be patient. I asked Mother Germaine of Jesus what date I could promise it to you and she said to tell you that at Christmas she left Elizabeth at her first Communion, and since then she has been tranquilly making her thanksgiving, as the occupations of the good mother provisor [Germaine had become the bursar] do not permit her to work on it. She hopes to take it up again soon.”

In the following months two letters reveal in what spirit the *Souvenirs* were written. First of all a concern for sobriety. On the 19th of January, 1908, Mother Germaine wrote to Abbé Jaillet: “The little work is begun: we are limiting ourselves to quite simply stating the facts so that the praise can emerge on its own without us trying to praise her ourselves.” Then, a desire to be truthful, sometimes even to the point of scruple. This can be seen in an answer from the Carmel of Anderlecht<sup>18</sup> of June 7th, 1908: “I want to tell you my dear Mother, how very happy we all are to learn that we will soon receive the notice. . . . Our dear Mother was afraid that the suppression of the familiar *tu*<sup>\*\*</sup> could not be legitimately done; although the evidence of this little infraction of our customs is somewhat unfortunate, we must, before all, be scrupulously exact.”

“Finally our ‘Souvenirs’ is finished!,” Mother Germaine wrote to Mme. Catez October 15, 1908. “Blessed be God! The whole work needs to be minutely reread from beginning to end, which I hope to do after the retreat.<sup>19</sup> . . . Our little saint is so alive and so beautiful in it! What a soul!” The introduction to the book bears the date of February 11, 1909. The manuscript then remained several weeks at the bishopric where Bishop Dadolle enthusiastically approved it.

Afterwards the manuscript was sent to the Jobard Printing Shop in Dijon. On the 10th of March 1909, Sister Agnes was able to tell Angers: “. . . the notice is now in the press [doubtless she meant to say the type was being set up]; but the Bishop wants to see the first proof again so he can write his letter of approbation. We are threatened with a new examination at the

bishopric. . . . the Bishop read the manuscript and was extremely edified; he said that she is a saint and a soul of genius.” On the 19th of March Mother Germaine announced to the Carmel of Anderlecht: “Her little notice will be published soon. . . . Yesterday, our Bishop sent word that he had read our manuscript several times. His Excellency ‘canonizes’ our dear little sister, . . . [he] wants to return the manuscript personally. . . .” The Carmel of Anderlecht answered on the 29th of March: “. . . we join with you in giving a little tug to the wings of the Bishop’s angels.”

But Bishop Dadolle’s letter of approbation will not be signed until the 24th of September. The book came off the press at the very beginning of October 1909, for from the 6th the Carmels began to send thanks for the copy they received. Elizabeth had been dead nearly three years.

## Notes

- \* Published in English under the title *The Praise of Glory: Reminiscences of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*, The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland (1962). [translator’s note]
- 13 Responses provoked in a way by the *Circular* itself: “But we must restrict ourselves and keep these confidences for the day when God will be pleased to extend the influence of His ‘Praise of Glory’” (Circ. 3).
- 14 From a letter of the same day to Mme. Catez it seems that this request was very probably made during a conversation in the parlor around the 1st of January.
- 15 Her confessor at the parish church of Saint-Michel, from the age of eleven to seventeen. Elizabeth loved “his firm and severe direction,” as she called it in her *Diary* (D 5). Abbé Sellenet’s answer to Mother Germaine’s request is found in PAT.
- 16 For example, from Marie-Louise Hallo, Germaine Gemeaux, Louise Demoulin. They are found in PAT.
- 17 Mother Germaine writes: “I am returning to you, very dear Madame, the letters entrusted to us and which, after copying, we are sending back to you complete and intact, I believe.” [It probably concerns Elizabeth’s letters to her mother.] “I am also returning your letters that were addressed to you [letters of condolence and testimony after Elizabeth’s death] keeping only four that could complete ‘our documents’ for the notice. One from the good Canon [Angles], one from the Curé of Saulieu [Abbé Sellenet], one from Abbé Chaboisseau [the priest who baptized Elizabeth at the military camp of Avor, in Farges-en-Septaine] and the fourth from Mme. de Bobet. I am keeping them very carefully with the one of yesterday (P. Vallée, very beautiful) and the religious Weekly [with the funeral oration for M. Catez, which will be cited in S 9].” For all these documents which were returned to the Archives of the Dijon Carmel in 1954 (cf. *infra*, pp. 48–49), see PAT.
- 18 This was the first Carmel founded in France in 1604, at Paris, Rue d’Enfer (successively Rue Denfert and Rue Henri-Barbusse). In 1901 they had to take refuge in Anderlecht (Belgium). In 1920 they returned to France and established themselves at Clamart near Paris. Since they were

the first foundation in France and had an illustrious history, many Carmels naturally consulted them on the subject of Carmelite customs.

\*\* It was an old custom in Carmel to suppress the use of the familiar *tu* at the time of religious profession. It was for special reasons that they were maintained in Sister Elizebeth of the Trinity's correspondance. [Note from the French edition of the *Souvenirs*, p. 73, Tr.]

19 Preached by P. Vallée, from the evening of the 16th to the morning of the 25th of October 1908.

## *The Contribution of the “Souvenirs”*

The paperback volume (of X + 368 pages, in the format 22 x 14.3 cm., and at the price of 3.50 F) bears as the complete title: *Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité, religieuse Carmélite, 1880– 1906. Souvenirs*. Following Bishop Dadolle’s letter of approbation, Elizabeth’s life is set forth in seventeen chapters. The appendix contains her *Last Retreat*, her prayer, *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore*, 23 letters or fragments of letters, 17 poems,<sup>20</sup> and a letter from Abbé D[onin] to Mme. Catez. No trace remains of the original manuscript or its first outlines.

“I wrote this book on my knees,” Mother Germaine said,<sup>21</sup> suggesting by that, not only her admiration before God’s work in Elizabeth but primarily how much trouble the work had cost her.

In consulting the sources which she used, we could also say that it was written with much love and with . . . “scissors”! The personal recollections of this major witness are enriched by those of Mme. Catez, the Sisters, friends, Canon Angles and Père Vallée, but above all by ample extracts from Elizabeth’s *Diary*, and still more by extracts from her *Letters*.

Thus the biography became, as it were, an autobiography. Moreover, Mother Germaine had explained this in her introduction: “Faithful echo of her soul, her correspondence needed only to be arranged in the order of the facts to be related to let her most often describe herself” (S 5). And the first reader, Bishop Dadolle, said of these “epistolary conferences”: “She pours out her soul with a delightful simplicity, freshness, and serenity. The thought is always substantial and exact; the lofty sentiment which wells up in it, giving it life and movement, continually clothes her expressions with a truly extraordinary strength or grace” (S IX–X).

Without being a masterpiece, the biography was successful enough. The fabric of events is harmoniously interwoven with the threads of a spiritual growth, although the outline of this evolution might be debatable. Even though the *Souvenirs* is written in the somewhat sentimental style of the period, the book leaves an overall impression of veracity.

We could have expected that from Mother Germaine. Our long contact with her correspondence and her history confirms the impression that her

community and friends have kept of her: a noble and truthful person, respectful of others, somewhat timid and reserved, but with a very generous spirit of self-sacrifice. Concerned for monastic fervor and fidelity to the spirit of Carmel, she had sufficient discernment to grant a few minor exceptions at the necessary time, and enough talent to create in her community a family spirit characterized by joy and simplicity. Rather than an organizer or a born leader, she was a true Mother for her Sisters. It is hardly necessary to say that Mother Germaine effaces herself in the *Souvenirs* behind the memory of Elizabeth and her writings; it will be first of all Elizabeth's life and the texts themselves which will insure the success of this book. As for Elizabeth's confidences to her only Prioress and Mistress of Novices, quoted here at a distance of several months or years, we cannot expect a strict fidelity as if they had been recorded on tape, but they are presented to us in the best possible condition, given Mother Germaine's spirit of truthfulness and her respect, not to say veneration before God's work in Elizabeth.

What shall we say about the textual fidelity of the texts of Elizabeth quoted in the *Souvenirs*? It does not contradict what we have just observed: that the texts are not wholly authentic. Mother Germaine was not preparing a complete or critical edition, and the example of Mother Agnes revising the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux is there to remind us that at the beginning of the twentieth century there were less scruples on this plane than today.

Nevertheless, the modifications that Mother Germaine makes in Elizabeth's writings are much less numerous and less important than in Thérèse's case. She limited herself to unimportant omissions of passages, names, little expressions of affection or familiarity, and superfluous words. There are selections from the letters, small explanatory additions, some retouches of style, the replacement of certain words by synonyms to vary the writings. These interventions are a little more important in the poems in order to correct the rhythm in the more obvious cases.

In short, these small changes have no influence on the thought and are no obstacle, so to speak, to the understanding of Elizabeth. But strictly speaking, the texts cited in the *Souvenirs* are not quite authentic. The edition of 1927 informs us that "the texts cited have been minutely collated" (p. VI). But in those days they surely had another idea of minuteness than we

have today, and the corrections are quite incomplete, especially in the *Poems*.

From the historical point of view it must be admitted that the *Souvenirs* is not exempt from errors, which proceed sometimes from the sources, sometimes from the lack of dates on most of Elizabeth's letters. Moreover, we have the impression that Mother Germaine, in all honesty, did not attach a primary importance to this aspect: she readily mixes documents of different periods; in like manner the spiritual perspectives overlap and the considerable period of Elizabeth's spiritual itinerary is blurred, whereas in this itinerary if a little of everything is everywhere, everything is not everywhere in the same way!

The fact that Mother Germaine had known Elizabeth in the monastery only as a young Carmelite, who was quite advanced in the ways of recollection and holiness, creates certain lacunae in the *Souvenirs*. Like the other panel of a diptych, we would have liked to see the mystical aspect completed by a more *human* approach to Elizabeth; there was so much tenderness in this young woman! The *Souvenirs* could have placed more emphasis on little characteristics of Elizabeth's charity, consideration, helpfulness, and joy both in her life as a layperson as well as in her community life. Other witnesses will tell us more about these, but the major witness, Mother Germaine, does not speak much about them except in general affirmations.

Besides, it was not in her nature to linger over concrete details of the past. In her correspondence after Elizabeth's death we look for them in vain. Thus a large number of incidents which portray life have disappeared. If Thérèse of Lisieux had lived with Elizabeth and would have spoken of her, she would surely have emphasized more her daily conduct in the little events of community life. But Mother Germaine had the great merit of recognizing, testing, and strengthening the gift of mystical life which the Lord granted to Elizabeth.

Being a very spiritual person, the Prioress strongly emphasized this aspect. For her Elizabeth is an angel who spent five and a half years in the Carmel of Dijon. Moreover, we must own that the adjective "angelical" is not missing from the *Souvenirs* (S 125, 222, 249, 255, 260, 262). The impression of a certain "angelization" is increased still more by the frequent

use of the word “child”<sup>22</sup>—an expression obviously quite a la mode at that time in the mouths of Mother Superiors. It is true that Elizabeth possessed “the simplicity of a child” (S 256); or as Père Vallée said: “From childhood she possessed an instinctive artlessness and penetration. Wholly candid, frank and simple, she was completely absorbed in the things of God. . . .” (S 81). But it should have been emphasized more fully that this was “a second childhood,” as Paul Ricoeur said, a Johannine “rebirth” (Jn 3). It seems to us that Mother Germaine did not know how to bring out all the richness of her saint. But we thank her for the immense devotion that animated her work “on her knees.” The *Souvenirs* remains an indispensable stage in the understanding of Elizabeth of the Trinity.

## Notes

- 20 These are: Poems 83, 86, 96, 88, 91, 89, 80, 94, 95, 100, 104, 109, 120, 115, 118, 106, 122. The (selections from) the letters in the appendix were addressed to Françoise de Sourdon, Canon Angles, Mme. Angles, Germaine de Gemeaux, Mme. Farrat and Mme. de Sourdon.
- 21 Mother Marie of St. John, who became prioress after Mother Germaine’s death, testified: “Mother Germaine had a difficult time writing it. She told me ‘I wrote the *Souvenirs* on my knees weeping’” (PO 464). The same Prioress had explained this already in the obituary circular (p. 7) of Mother Germaine (completed June 16, 1935), when speaking of the *Souvenirs* “. . . the works of God are brought to birth in suffering and humiliation; the more fruitful they are to be, the more the Lord demands a persevering and confident effort in the beginnings. Also, our dear Mother needed a special grace to complete the work undertaken, for there was no lack of difficulties and trials. She was no longer Prioress as the new elections had just placed back at the head of the community the revered Mother Marie of the Heart of Jesus. Since she had not known Elizabeth of the Trinity intimately and her views were not quite the same as those of our dear Mother, she did not at first understand the designs of the Lord. Without letting herself be upset, and remaining humble and perfectly obedient, but with the assurance that God was asking it of her, our Mother set to work. She wrote this work of devotion and tears ‘on her knees,’ continually praying to obtain light from the Holy Spirit. No one will know what anguish and affliction it cost her maternal heart. Bishop Dadolle, our Superior, supported her with his fatherly encouragement and helped her with his wise advice.” According to the recollections of the Carmelites of Dijon, the difficulty mentioned was occasioned especially by the fact that Mother Germaine, who had become bursar of the Monastery, was very busy (we heard this, moreover, in the preceding pages), and her Prioress thought that the work of the *Souvenirs* demanded too much time. There is also Mother Marie of St. John’s explanation: “of a practical nature, she [Mother Marie of the Heart of Jesus, whose brother, Bishop Herzog, would later become the first postulator of Elizabeth’s Cause. . . .] felt that it was a waste of time” (PO 464). In the same place Mother Marie of St. John affirms again: “[Mother Germaine] had each chapter sent to the bishopric and the Bishop supported her.” But this detail, a late recollection of 1948, cannot be confirmed as Mother Marie of St. John did not enter Carmel until 1915.

22 Elizabeth is called the “poor child” (S 251), “the happy child” (S 96, 178, 277), “the beloved child” (S 247), “the generous child” (S 172, 213), the “holy child” (S 182, 248, 260) and most often, “the dear child” (S 139, 177, 188, 206, 213, 217, 228, 249, 253, 255, 258).

## *The Diffusion of the “Souvenirs”*

The *Souvenirs* circulated rapidly. Less than five months after its publication Mother Germaine wrote to Anderlecht on February 10, 1910: “Its success surpasses our expectations, and the mission of *Laudem gloriae* [“Praise of Glory,” the surname Elizabeth gave herself] is affirmed in a very comforting manner in all parts of the world. Faced with the dispersion of our 1,500 copies, we were a little hesitant on what course to take. But today we believe that we must actively busy ourselves with a second edition.”

On the 22nd of June, Sister Agnes announced to the Carmel of Angers: “The second edition ran out quickly—and from everywhere such comforting news comes to us for the glory of God.”

And around the 10th of August she noted in the Monastery’s book of chronicles: “In less than a year three thousand copies have literally disappeared. Mother Germaine of Jesus is preparing a third edition.”

On February 21, 1911, Mother Germaine wrote again to Anderlecht: “Our third edition of the “Souvenirs” appeared last December 20th,<sup>23</sup> it has vanished. 800 copies in two months. . . .”

On November 6th of the same year the Prioress informed Anderlecht: “Our fourth edition, published five weeks ago, went even more rapidly than the preceding ones; it is unbelievable.”

The following year, 1912, it had reached the fifth edition. In his letter of approbation of October 15th, Monsignor Monestès, the new bishop of Dijon affirmed: “God has made the fervent Carmelite an apostle of a permanent Pentecost of the Holy Spirit in souls.”

The printings increased and, despite the First World War, the new bishop, Monsignor Landrieux, could announce in 1919 that they had reached 25,000.

A year later it was at 33,000; in 1927, 65,000; in 1935, 80,000. The diffusion of the *Souvenirs* and its translations would have been much greater still if Père Philipon’s work, of which we will speak, had not taken over from the *Souvenirs* since 1939. The sixteenth<sup>24</sup> edition (1956) of Mother Germaine’s book, however, will exceed 100,000 copies.<sup>25</sup>

It is difficult to make a complete list of the translations of the *Souvenirs*, which appeared in at least ten languages: English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Ruthenian, Czech, Japanese, and Polish. Elizabeth's Retreats were also translated into Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese, and partially into Russian.<sup>26</sup> We must include besides the translations of the texts of Elizabeth contained in P. Philipon's books.

The different editions of the *Souvenirs* did not vary greatly in their content: some letters of approbation were added, then, in 1915, parts of the spiritual treatise *Heaven in Faith*. There were a few retouches and the choice of the poems changed a little. However, the edition of 1927 underwent a more extensive revision.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, the pages concerning Elizabeth's posthumous influence varied still more.

## Notes

<sup>23</sup> But the cover of this "Third edition" bears 1911 as the date.

<sup>24</sup> We have found sixteen editions: twelve in the *large* format, (22 x 14.3 cm.) and four in the *small* format (16.8 x 11 cm.— without the Letters and Poems; the last edition in the small format, of 1956, is complete and measures 18 x 11.3 cm.). We give between parentheses the printing they reached when this is indicated on the cover. (It is not certain, however, that the printings in the *small* format were included in this number, for Bishop Landrieux remarks in his approbation for the *ninth* edition that it is "the seventh which reached 25,000": thus he did not take into consideration the two editions in the *small* format.) Here then is the order: (1) 1909; (2) 1910; (3) 1911; (4) also 1911; (5) 1912; (6) 1915; (7) 1917; (small format); the year is suggested by the announcement in a small *Extrait des Souvenirs*, which we will speak of later, of this "popular edition"; the price given is 2.25 F; in reality it will be 3.25 F (unless it concerns another printing, all trace of which has been lost); (8) 1918 (small format, the year is indicated in pencil on the copy preserved in ACD); (9) 1919 (25,000); (10) 1920 (33,000; it is to be noted that this same number also figures on other copies that bear the year 1921 on the cover: it is then the same printing, but with two different covers); (11) ? (40,000); (12) 1927 (65,000); (13) 1930 (small format); (14) 1935 (80,000); (15) 1946 (95,000); (16) 1956 (small format). Let us also mention that the cover indicates as editor the Carmel of Dijon, but for the last two editions, les Editions de Saint-Paul, Paris. The Carmel of Dijon edited in 1917 (imprimatur) a small *Extrait des Souvenirs: Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité*, 15 x 10 cm., 38 pp., re-edited in 1925. Then, in 1938 (imprimatur): *Une Louange de gloire. Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité*, 15.1 x 9.7 cm., 38 pp. These two brochures had a large circulation but there are no figures for them. It is not possible to speak here of the numerous pamphlets and pictures diffused since Elizabeth's death.

<sup>25</sup> Although the cover bears the number 96,000 (which is unlikely since in 1946 it had already reached 95,000) the text indicates (p. 231) that the *Souvenirs* "exceeded 100,000 for France alone" (that is, for the edition in the French language).

<sup>26</sup> We took these facts concerning the translations from P. Simeone Tomás-Fernandez, *Bibliografia della Serva di Dio Elisabetta della Trinità*, Roma, Postulazione generale OCD, 1974.

27 What is most striking is the introduction of a new chapter, the XVIIIth, on Elizabeth's posthumous influence. But the "Foreword" for this new edition mentions still other modifications: "We have profited by this new edition to collate minutely the texts cited. Some fragments of the letters had been transposed to facilitate the connection of facts referring to the same subject. We believed it our duty to replace them in their chronological order. Some reminiscences of friends of our venerated Sister, new selections from her *Diary*, several unedited letters, and a supplementary chapter containing letters of appreciation concerning the spirituality and life of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, testimonies of veneration, and, finally, some accounts of facts which came to our knowledge after 1909 are the modifications of the new edition of the *Souvenirs*."

## **A “Doctrinal” and “Spiritual” Approach to the “Complete” Works**

In the course of the years the renown of Elizabeth’s holiness increased continually and spread throughout the world; the desire to see her canonized also increased. We do not intend to set forth here the history of her cause for canonization; we will limit ourselves to the history of her writings.

## *The Collection of the Writings in View of the Beatification*

On May 23, 1931, Msgr. Petit de Julleville, Bishop of Dijon, announced the opening of the informative process for the beatification of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, and ordered that all the known writings of the Carmelite be submitted to the tribunal of process: “. . . that is, everything that she wrote with her own hand, that she dictated to others, or that had been written at her direction: whether it concerns printed works or manuscripts or simple opuscles, short writings, meditations, personal notes, intimate diaries, letters, notes to others, and the like; whether these writings refer to the period that preceded her entrance into Carmel or to that which followed this entrance.”<sup>28</sup> The transcription of the documents thus collected was done at Carmel. In 1931 four Sisters set to work.

The difficult art of exact transcription was, in Elizabeth’s case, made still more arduous by her nearly illegible hand over a long period, the feebleness of her handwriting during her illness, her bad punctuation, spelling errors, and irregularity in the use of capital letters. Also, her practice of continuing her letters by often filling up the margins of the preceding pages, or in writing crosswise over the horizontal lines, and, finally, often the inferior quality of the paper.

Then, there are the spontaneous reactions of the copyists, introducing a correction, supplying a word forgotten by Elizabeth, abbreviating what she wrote out, or vice-versa, omitting an underlining, beginning a new paragraph where Elizabeth did not, or vice-versa. There are also involuntary omissions: a word, an expression, a phrase, and sometimes a whole fragment.

As Elizabeth did not date many of her letters, a certain effort was made to indicate the estimated year in the margin, sometimes committing considerable errors in this: Letter 181 will even be postdated fifteen days after Elizabeth’s death!

Thus, as the present edition shows, the inventory of the writings in such a case could not be complete.

All these defects, however, had only a relative importance in view of the end sought: to permit a judgement on the faith and virtues of the candidate

for beatification. Canon Deberre, ecclesiastical notary, in collating (doubtless rapidly to judge by the rhythm of his approbations) the copies with the originals, sought only to detect forgotten words. Confronted with the same difficulties as the copyists, his work of investigation remains incomplete.<sup>29</sup>

Profiting by the presence of the documents in their monastery, the Carmelites transcribed many of the writings for their own archives. These are the manuscript “Notebooks,”<sup>30</sup> which we will refer to occasionally. They present the same defects but have often been improved over the years by, among others, Père Philipon.

## Notes

<sup>28</sup> *La Vie Diocésaine. Revue de l'activité catholique dans le diocèse de Dijon*, no. 79, May 23, 1931, p. 244.

<sup>29</sup> Let us mention that the dossier of the writings reassembled in view of the beatification, in better order, was translated into Italian by Giovanni Dante under the title *Scritti* (Roma, Postulazione generale dei carmelitani scalzi, 1967). The Spanish edition of Fr. Alfonso Aparicio, *Obras Completas* (Burgos, El Monte Carmelo, 1969; new edition 1979) already shows a considerable progress due to the fact that the translator worked for several weeks on the autographs themselves at the Carmel of Dijon. In our edition which concerns the French originals, we will abstain from all criticism, textual or otherwise, concerning their translations.

<sup>30</sup> The Notebooks are arbitrarily numbered. Notebook 6, which contains the letters to Mme. Catez, Guite, Abbé Chevignard, and the letter to Abbé Jaillet (to which were later added some other letters or fragments addressed to the same), seems to be quite old: it was written by Sister Agnes (who, in any case, left the Carmel of Dijon in 1920 for the Carmel of Toulouse) in the ink characteristic of the first year after Elizabeth's death. There is also a letter that Bishop Dadolle addressed to Mme. Catez November 18, 1906. Could it be the transcription that the “little copyist” (very probably the young Sister Agnes, considering her numerous transactions in the preceding years) made of “this whole dossier” entrusted to them by Guite, and of which Mother Germaine's letter of December 1, 1906, that we have already cited, speaks? Notebook 7 contains the *Diary*, probably in the hand of Sister Marie of the Immaculate Conception, in the same copper-colored ink as the preceding notebook. This copy is also probably quite old. There also exists a very early copy of the letters to Mme. Farrat made by Mme. Catez on the other hand, it was only around 1967 that Sister Marie of the Blessed Sacrament, the Prioress, had the letters to Canon Angles typed.

## *Père Philipon's Book*

The arrival in Dijon of P. Marie-Michel Philipon gave a new impetus to the study and diffusion of Elizabeth's message. Even if our knowledge has evolved since then, we cannot be too grateful to him for the work which he did at that time.

Père Philipon himself explained the origin of his famous book, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*.<sup>31</sup> Having entered the Dominicans at the age of twenty-two, he soon read the *Souvenirs* which brought him "an immense light." For his doctoral thesis in theology he chose as his theme "The Indwelling of the Trinity in the Soul." When he became a young professor of philosophy at the Dominican College of Saint-Maximin he loved to treat of the mystery of the Trinity in his preaching. He reread the *Souvenirs* and decided to write on Elizabeth.

Desiring to gather more documentary evidence, he called on the Carmel of Dijon for the first time in August 1933. Mother Germaine received him somewhat reticently, but Father's earnestness succeeded in gaining the Prioress' complete confidence.

In July 1934 P. Philipon returned to Carmel. He related in 1937: "We compared all the writings with the autographs, except for a few rare letters which escaped us, but of which we were able to obtain a certified copy conforming to the original. . . . Pen in hand we questioned as many witnesses as possible."<sup>32</sup>

An attentive examination of this file on Elizabeth which he bequeathed to the Archives of the Carmel of Dijon after his death permits us to become acquainted with his method of work. As his fundamental text, P. Philipon utilized the Notebooks of Carmel. He compared them with the originals: there are corrections in his handwriting and often the mention "saw the original." We note that he realized immediately he could not and should not be disturbed by Elizabeth's poor punctuation, her irregular use of capital letters, and her spelling errors. He does not make any corrections in the Notebooks, but he emends them in his books. He pursues first of all forgotten words or phrases—without, however, finding all of them.

Three years after their transcription for the Process, many of the autographs were returned to their owners as had been provided for in Bishop Petit de Julleville's ordinance. But P. Philipon could easily recover at least those that were in Dijon.<sup>33</sup> He collated the texts of which he did not have the original with the copy from the Process: in the margins of the Notebooks of Carmel we can still see where he inserted references to the pages of the Process. For the *Last Retreat* and *Heaven in Faith* he used the texts already printed.

He then had a typewritten copy of the Notebooks of Carmel thus emended made for his personal use. He rearranged the texts in a better chronological order, although still quite inadequate and imprecise. Thus a considerable dossier was obtained.

The numerous texts that P. Philipon cites are not far from being authentic in these circumstances; however, small divergences even at the mere level of words are not absent. In the text alone of the *Last Retreat* published in *The Spiritual Doctrine*, there are at least some fifty of them.

Later P. Philipon will draw from his dossier a selection of texts, published under the title *Spiritual Writings*,<sup>34</sup> of which he said: "This work, published in 1948, cost me no effort. Without ever having reread my book on *The Spiritual Doctrine*, or having gone over the documents again, I recalled these texts, as present to my soul as if I had never left them."

## Notes

31 With a preface by R. P. Garrigou-Lagrange, Desclée De Brouwer, s.d. (published in 1939, according to "the preface for the 2nd edition"), 354 pp. We will cite from the 9th edition (1947). Père Philipon relates the origin of his book in a typewritten note which is found in his dossier in ACD; he published these pages, slightly revised, in *En présence de Dieu. Elisabeth de la Trinité* ("Presence du Carmel," 7), DDB 1966, pp. 185–187, 208–211. But the Introduction to *The Spiritual Doctrine* also gives some information on the origin of this book.

32 *Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 21. The result of his inquiry will be found in PAT.

33 A letter of December 30, 1935, from Marguerite Gollot to P. Philipon, who met him August 13, 1935, and a letter from Mme. Farrat of February 18, 1936, prove that the author was continuing his inquiry. The two letters speak of pictures or letters of Elizabeth that were to be sent to him. According to the Farrat family, the autographs of Elizabeth's letters to Mme. Farrat must have been lost after P. Philipon received them.

34 *Ecrits spirituels d' Elisabeth de la Trinité* ("La Vigne du Carmel"), Seuil 1949, 255 pp., translated into Italian, English, and Swedish.

## *Evaluation*

It is certain that *The Spiritual Doctrine* by P. Philipon answered a need and an expectation at the time of its publication. The *Souvenirs* had penetrated into a number of libraries of priests, seminarians, convents, and lay people. The prayer, *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore*, had covered the whole world.<sup>35</sup> The richness of Elizabeth the mystic was recognized.<sup>36</sup> However a doctrinal synthesis was lacking. *The Spiritual Doctrine* sought to fill this gap, and that is why this book received an enthusiastic welcome.

Marie-Michel Philipon, a young professor, recognized in Elizabeth an “essentially doctrinal spirituality.” Subscribing to the assertion of Bishop Sagot du Vauroux that “what is most remarkable in the life of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity is the exact conformity of her views, inclinations, interior life, and words, with the surest principles of mystical theology,”<sup>37</sup> he defined the meaning of his work as “a theologian’s view of a soul and a doctrine” (p. 20). Or, as he said in another place: “On each point of doctrine to be analyzed it was possible to indicate with certitude and exactness to what principles of mystical theology the movements of this privileged soul were related, and what aspects of dogma had most profoundly nourished her interior life” (p. 23).

In fact, in *The Spiritual Doctrine* we meet a “related” Elizabeth—related to a spiritual and theological doctrine that the author progressively develops by brief explanations in the traditional theological vocabulary of his time. The clear divisions must have been appreciated, although in Elizabeth’s case they are sometimes a little artificial, especially in the long chapter on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The regular recourse to John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Thomas Aquinas and other saints—less regularly to the Bible and the history of the Church—certainly opened up horizons.

The backbone of the doctrine set forth—the Trinity, baptismal grace, divine indwelling, praise, conformity to Christ—gave a dogmatic foundation and unity to the texts chosen from Elizabeth. The book left an impression of solidity. There were also some innovations on the level of information. The few pages on her youth contributed several unknown facts, and in the remainder of the book there are little confidences from

Mother Germaine and the other Sisters. Above all there were quite a few unedited texts, besides the numerous texts already familiar from the *Souvenirs*. In an appendix of nearly sixty pages, P. Philipon included the long letter of September 1906 to Françoise de Sourdon, *Heaven in Faith*, and the *Last Retreat*, which he had already abundantly cited in the course of the book. Inserted into a theological system, Elizabeth's texts certainly contributed much to the great success of P. Philipon's work.

Today we are in a position to perceive more easily the defects of this meritorious approach. While influenced by his readings of the *Souvenirs*, P. Philipon was equally influenced by his direct contacts with its author, Mother Germaine, the major witness, whose complete confidence he had gained and "to whom I owe the best of this book," as he wrote in the dedication of the copy he sent to the Carmel of Dijon. He explains this in the Introduction to *The Spiritual Doctrine*: "Nothing could have been more invaluable to us in the preparation of this work than the confidences and long hours of private conversation with Mother Germaine about one who was truly 'her child'; many times we had the inestimable consolation of receiving *full confirmation* from her on the conclusions that we drew from an attentive analysis of the documents."<sup>38</sup> All the essential points of this book were resolved in perfect agreement with her." (p. 21)

But we have spoken of the tendency to a certain "angelization" which we noticed in Mother Germaine's biography of Elizabeth. *The Spiritual Doctrine* continues to present us with the image of an Elizabeth that is somewhat one-sidedly lofty and mystical. The theological digressions on the Trinity and the work of the Holy Spirit succeed in making her even more sublime. Elizabeth's rich humanity remains in the background and her spiritual life rests on too narrow a human foundation. Her community life in Carmel (about which P. Philipon could still have gathered invaluable information from Mother Germaine) is, proportionately, brought out very little. Finally, we are surprised that the author profited so little from his inquiry of the witnesses whose replies are preserved in his dossier in ACD. But perhaps the explanation is to be found in the radical curtailing that the editor imposed on his first biographical chapter.<sup>39</sup> We notice in particular large gaps in the study of Elizabeth as a lay person—child or young girl—and yet, there would have been much to "relate." The first nineteen years,

three-fourths of her life, are exhausted in a dozen pages. Now, in our opinion, Elizabeth's Christian and mystical life must be taken seriously very early.

P. Philipon's doctrinal approach will obviously orientate his choice of Elizabeth's texts. The same views also govern the selections and suppressions in the *Spiritual Writings*. In the two books the young girl's *Diary* is scarcely mentioned;<sup>40</sup> the *Letters of her Youth* are treated somewhat better. As for her *Poems*, of which the *Spiritual Doctrine* cites only a few lines, P. Philipon did not see that the key to their reading is that of spirituality, which makes them a real "intimate journal" in which a whole spiritual itinerary is revealed.<sup>41</sup>

As regards Elizabeth's humanity, the valuable insights of Marie Dominique Poinset's book<sup>42</sup> make it, so to speak, the complement of the *Spiritual Doctrine*. But it appeared thirty years later, and the two books are characteristic of two different eras and sensibilities.

On the *historical* level also P. Philipon's study presents some lacunae: the dating of the letters, whose accuracy leaves much to be desired, and the postponement of the beginning of Elizabeth's mystical life until the age of nineteen, as we have already said. Consequently, there is an overemphasis on the importance of her first meeting with P. Vallée, hence this absolute assertion: "From this day on everything was transformed and illuminated; she had found her way. Henceforth the Trinity will be her only life through everything. . . ." (pp. 38–39)

Another "thesis" that influences this approach is the erroneous date and meaning attributed to Elizabeth's discovery of her vocation as "Praise of Glory." Basing it on the sole witness of Sister Aimee of Jesus, thirty years after the facts, when the witness was almost eighty, P. Philipon situates the discovery "during the summer of 1905" (p. 54); "during the spring or summer of 1905," he said elsewhere (p. 128). Now Elizabeth already speaks of it in a letter of January 25, 1904.<sup>43</sup> The discrepancy of a year and a half out of the five years and some months she spent in Carmel is considerable.

Yet it is interesting to read a kind of retrospective self-criticism at a distance of thirty years, in which the author notes the fascination for the doctrinal aspect that he had formerly experienced: "A real reversal of perspectives took place in my thought. When, about thirty years ago, I

began my research on Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity I was attracted especially by the simplicity and sublimity of her doctrine. My psychological inquiry of the witnesses of her life had aimed simply at assuring myself of the authenticity of her virtue so as to better understand the origins and meaning of her doctrine on the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul and on her supreme vocation as Praise of Glory. My dominant preoccupation remained the explanation of her doctrine. . . . After thirty-five years of experience with souls . . . what impresses me in Elizabeth of the Trinity, *even more than her doctrine, is the heroicity of her virtues. I am convinced that from her earliest childhood she practiced the Christian virtues in an eminent, sometimes heroic, way.*<sup>44</sup>

But at that point in the history of the study of Elizabeth, what reader would have then perceived signs indicated so obscurely? And the quality of P. Philipon's approach, which we have pointed out, assured that his work would be a great success. It underwent twelve editions in French and was translated into nine languages,<sup>45</sup> of which several were the object of various re-editions. In this way a number of Elizabeth's texts were widely diffused.

In the years 1960–1970, P. Philipon's work had less success, doubtless partly due to the “hagiographical strike” which was one of the characteristics of the spirituality of this period. In the following years, the witness of the saints stirred up a revival of interest, as the centenaries of Thérèse of Lisieux (1973) and Bernadette (1979) proved.

## Notes

35 Let us mention a commentary that was several times re-edited and translated into several languages: Dom Eugène Vandeur, OSB, *O mon Dieu, Trinité que j'adore. Prière de Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité, carmélite, commentée. Elévations* (Louvain, Abbaye de Mont-César), 1923. A more modest commentary appeared in 1942, also re-edited several times and translated: Maurice De Meulemeester, C.S.S.R., *O mon Dieu, Trinité que j'adore. Commentaire ascétique de la prière de Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité, du Carmel de Dijon*, Louvain, Imprimerie Saint-Alphonse.

36 On this subject one can consult the edition of the *Souvenirs* of 1935, in particular, chapter 18.

37 Letter of December 24, 1909, published for the first time in the third edition of the *Souvenirs* in 1911. The phrase quoted is on p. XIII.

38 Let us remark, however, that Mother Germaine died November 30, 1934. The introduction to the book was signed March 7, 1937.

- 39 He says in a typewritten note mentioned in note 31: “On reading this first chapter, the literary censor of the house Desclée De Brouwer, M. Stanislas Fumet, made this criticism: ‘Too long for a doctrinal study; too short for a biography.’ In a few minutes I cut out seventeen pages from the typewritten text and thus lightened returned it to him.”
- 40 Some sixty lines in the *Spiritual Writings*, and some one hundred in *The Spiritual Doctrine*.
- 41 Cf. our introduction to the *Poems*.
- 42 *Cette présence de Dieu en toi . . . Elizabeth Catez. Soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité o.c.d.*, Editions Saint-Paul, Paris-Fribourg, 1969, 240 pp.
- 43 See note 1 of L 191. P. Philipon was so convinced of his thesis “Praise of Glory = spring or summer of 1905” that he even changed the (exact) date on the autograph of this letter, affixed by Abbé Chevignard, by putting *December* 25 (still insufficient, it is true, to illustrate his thesis). He also changed the date on the copy in Notebook 7 of ACD in the same sense. He attributes to this so-called discovery of 1905 an excessive importance: “For a long time she was caught up in herself and was unable to free herself. God will deliver her through a personal intervention. . . .” (p. 127) “Laudem Glorïae marks another stage incomparably superior: the sole concern for His glory.” (p. 129)
- 44 *En présence de Dieu*, op. cit., p. 208.
- 45 According to the *Bibliografia*: Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, English, German, Japanese, Spanish, Croatian, and Polish.

## *Towards the “Complete Works”*

A “chance” visit to the Carmel of Dijon, November 6, 1977, gave us a renewed contact with Elizabeth of the Trinity, whose texts collected by P. Philipon we had read. Shortly afterwards, the idea of a complete edition of her writings imposed itself on us.

At that time we did not know what an unknown world was hidden behind this project; what joys, what encounters, and what work also. Since April 1978, our stays in Dijon became more frequent and prolonged. We discovered Elizabeth in a new and more complete light.

The first task, which we could never have brought to a successful conclusion without the untiring devotion of our Sisters of Dijon, was to define and explore what we have designated as ACD (Archives of the Carmel of Dijon). For a number of years the Carmelites, under the energetic impetus of Sister Marie of the Blessed Sacrament, have unceasingly and lovingly been compiling everything that pertains to their elder Sister from the beginning of the century.

In 1954 the Archives of Elizabeth were considerably enriched. In that year, Mme. Chevignard, Elizabeth’s sister and an admirable Christian,<sup>46</sup> left, at the age of 42, a widow with nine children, died in Dijon. Her children then decided to bequeath to Carmel everything that was still a memento of Elizabeth: photos and pictures, objects and books that had belonged to her, the autographs of the writings that were in Guite’s possession, copybooks, notebooks, and loose sheets on which she had copied prayers and texts before her entrance into Carmel, some music copybooks, and also nineteen school copybooks that not only give an idea of her educational formation and an overall view of the evolution of her writing as a child and as a young girl, but also contain fifty-four composition exercises, spaced over six years, some of which are very revealing of the psychology, activities, and milieu of the young girl.<sup>47</sup>

This donation to the Archives of Carmel also contained a series of letters from Mother Germaine to Guite and Mme. Catez, several of which date from Elizabeth’s last illness and the first years after her death besides a long series of letters of condolence, or of testimony, addressed to the same at the

time of Elizabeth's death or shortly after; and finally, a fragment of Mme. Catez's diary before her marriage, some letters written by her to her parents or to her husband which contain many details about Elizabeth as a small child, a series of letters which Canon Angles wrote her — always with some reference to Elizabeth — some letters from friends of Mme. Catez and Elizabeth and still other more official documents. In all of these<sup>48</sup> there can be found little nuggets of gold for Elizabeth's history.

But if we have spoken of the archives of Elizabeth of the Carmel of Dijon, let no one expect archives that are well localized, classified, and indexed. The lack of time in the life of a Carmelite dedicated to prayer, community life, daily work, and also the successive enrichment of the archives never permitted this systematic work of organization.

Thanks to the authorizations of the Carmelites and Monsignor Decourtray, Bishop of Dijon, it was possible for us to discover and explore one after the other: storerooms, cupboards, chests, boxes, packages, files, records, and envelopes — large and small. We gradually became familiar with the buildings where Elizabeth had lived; we saw the habits she wore, the objects and books she used, her photos, and the official books of the monastery (books of chronicles, accounts, elections, professions, and clothings). We examined many testimonies received with a view to writing the *Souvenirs* or to promoting the beatification of Elizabeth. Gradually a number of unknown writings found their way back to their owners. We had to study the history of Elizabeth and its context, her milieu, her city, her Carmel, her diocese, and her country at the beginning of the twentieth century. We often had to consult the Carmelites, especially Sister Elizabeth of Jesus, first niece of Elizabeth of the Trinity (of whom she often spoke in her correspondence of the last years), who later entered the Carmel of Dijon. We also had to visit and consult other archives, seek other information, interrogate witnesses of the witnesses.

But the principal work obviously concerned the numerous *writings* that Elizabeth of the Trinity left: her original writings as well as texts which she copied both as a lay person and as a Carmelite.

## Notes

- 46 It is fitting to evoke here for a moment the memory of this woman of great faith who died May 7, 1954. We will do it by quoting from an extract of a letter to her daughter Chantal, a Dominican religious nurse of the poor, written February 20, 1946 on the occasion of her sixty-third birthday: “In looking back over these sixty-three years, I see many sufferings but above all, many graces and much love on God’s part, and my heart overflows with gratitude. I do not find the time long when I am alone: I always have “Janua Coeli” [“Gate of Heaven”: the little statue of the Blessed Virgin which Elizabeth had with her in the last phase of her illness]. The Lord has taken his share of my children [a priest, four consecrated to the Lord, three married, and a child who died at ten], and I value this choice. It is my comfort, when I see that I am not performing any useful apostolate, to rely on that of my children and their activity. Tuesday is for you; while you work I sit in my armchair and pray for you. Janua Coeli is near me, and I speak to her of you. I offer my fatigue so that you may have the strength to climb those flights of stairs.”
- 47 These copybooks were found in the attic. We are publishing the composition exercises in PAT.
- 48 One will find in PAT everything that would be useful for knowing the character and history of Elizabeth.

## **The Autographs and Their Origin**

## *Inventory*

Here is the list of writings, known to this day, which Elizabeth left us. We will exclude here the texts that she *copied* of which we will speak in PAT.

There are preserved:

—her *Diary*, written in three notebooks brought together into one tome

—4 SPIRITUAL TREATISES:

I. *Heaven in Faith*, written in a notebook

II. *The Greatness of our Vocation*, in the form of a letter

III. *Last Retreat*, in a notebook

IV. *Let Yourself Be Loved*, in the form of a letter

—17 Personal Notes on loose sheets, except for PN 13 and 14, written in her “personal notebook” and PN 7 and 12, of which the originals are lost

—124 Poems (counting 1a), P 1a to 72 are written in two notebooks; the others are on loose sheets

—LISTS OF REFERENCES from the Bible or other authors, which are found in the appendix of our Volume II

—346 LETTERS (counting L 80a, 197a, 323a, and 328a rediscovered recently and also Spiritual Treatises II and IV, originally written in the form of a letter)

Besides these writings which are all published in these *Complete Works*, we must also mention:

—54 COMPOSITION EXERCISES, written in school copybooks

—a notebook containing the account of her EXCURSIONS IN THE JURA IN 1895, which is also a composition exercise

—a notebook containing some SCHOOL EXERCISES IN POETRY

These writings, though often close to the reality which the young Elizabeth lived, also contain some elements of imagination proper to compositions, therefore we have not integrated them into the *Complete Works* but have assigned them to the documentary volume PAT. There one will also find the notes Elizabeth took of three retreats preached at Carmel: summaries and her *personal* choice of another’s ideas.

We estimate that *nearly two-thirds* of Elizabeth's writings have never been published. We will speak of the autographs of the *Diary*, the *Spiritual Treatises*, the *Personal Notes*, and the *Poems* in their introductions and notes. Here we limit ourselves to the 346 *Letters*.

## *Letters Preserved and Letters Lost*

By “letter” we mean every text in prose (except for the prayers), whatever its length, addressed to another person.

How is it that so many letters have been preserved of a young woman who died at the age of twenty-six?

Let us remark first of all that letters used to play a much more important role than they do now in our era of telephones and motorized transports. Also letters that had been received were kept much longer than in our age encumbered with papers! But the question remains.

Four complementary responses must be given: (1) Elizabeth had an overflowing, communicative, and very affectionate heart: “I have a grateful soul,” she liked to say (Circ 14). So she easily took up her pen to tell of her affection and gratitude (which, in the infirmary, will lead her to write a number of short poems). (2) She was much loved by her correspondents, and her letters were for them the testimony of her friendship. (3) Her letters had such a content that they loved to reread them as messages born in the presence of God. (4) Elizabeth was considered very close to God, and soon as “a little saint”; her letters became “relics.”

However, many letters were lost. Her best friend, Marie-Louise Hallo, who, during Elizabeth’s lifetime, was absent from Dijon for three prolonged periods, confessed: “Unfortunately, I have very few of Elizabeth’s letters. I infinitely regret having torn up some of them as they were too personal.”<sup>49</sup> Likewise Mother Marie of Jesus, Prioress of Carmel at the time of Elizabeth’s entrance, said, “A prolonged stay in the South [summer 1900] marked the year before her entrance; we exchanged some letters which I regret having burned.” When she became Prioress of the new foundation of Paray-le-Monial, Elizabeth wrote her more than the two letters that have been preserved.<sup>50</sup> Sister Odile of Paray-le-Monial, whom Elizabeth had known, first as an extern Sister than as a non-choir Sister within the cloister in the Carmel of Dijon, affirmed, “I burned all her letters except for the last one.”<sup>51</sup> And Anne-Marie d’Avout, a younger friend of Elizabeth said, “Unfortunately I burned all the documents or letters coming from Elizabeth.”<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, later one was discovered, as well as a letter to

her mother, which allows us to suppose that Elizabeth wrote her occasionally from Carmel.

It is also certain that during her youth Elizabeth exchanged letters with very good friends such as Yvonne de Rostang, from Tarbes,<sup>53</sup> and Gabrielle Montpellier, from Limoux,<sup>54</sup> or with friends of her mother. Also the young Manitin Auburtin who met Elizabeth in September 1900 testified, “we wrote each other for awhile. . . . Elizabeth was too attractive a person to forget.”<sup>55</sup> At the same time her sister, Elizabeth Auburtin (Mme. de Montleau) began to correspond with her namesake.<sup>56</sup>

It is equally certain there were letters to Mme. Massiet,<sup>57</sup> Mme. Angles,<sup>58</sup> Mme. de Maizieres<sup>59</sup> and Mme. de Vathaire<sup>60</sup> that have been lost, very probably also to Marie-Louise Maurel<sup>61</sup> and perhaps even to the Rolland aunts.<sup>62</sup>

Even in Carmel how many notes to her Prioress and her Sisters have disappeared! Little notes about work written during the times of silence or for a Sister who was not available at the time; a pledge of prayers, or a greeting on the occasion of a feast or anniversary. They could have taught us much about Elizabeth’s loving and spiritual relationship with her Sisters of whom she said before her clothing, “I love them so!” (S 94) We can presume that several poems addressed to them have also disappeared.

In the month of December 1979 we had written here that it would be the least of our surprises if more letters were recovered. Two days later we received one addressed to Mme. Avout and another to her daughter Anne-Marie (L 197a and 328a), letters that were missing from all the inventories.

## Notes

<sup>49</sup> RB 7 in PAT. L 87 speaks of a letter (lost).

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Mother Germaine; cf. PAT.

<sup>51</sup> EP in PAT.

<sup>52</sup> PA 644.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth speaks of Yvonne in L 10–11 of 1896. And in 1898: “. . . my dear Yvonne whom I so love” (L 16). “If only you knew what a lovely girl she is—and with such marvelous personality. . . .” (L 14) She will address several letters to “Yvonne” as “composition exercises”: CE 22, 39, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. L 11 of 1896: “I have found my dear friend Gabrielle Montpellier; she is twenty-one and a charming girl.” And P 17: “Gabby, my dear friend, I think of you constantly.” PN 2 is written on

the back of a letter from Gabrielle (same writing as in the letter of condolence in which she signs her married name).

55 She became Mme. Sirlonge; she wrote this testimony February 9, 1958; cf. PAT.

56 Cf. L 89; the letter received is preserved.

57 Cf. L 95.

58 Cf. L 131.

59 Cf. L 257.

60 Cf. L 287.

61 September 17, 1901, Elizabeth prepared "a whole packet of mail for Labastide" where Marie-Louise will be married on the 30th.

62 Cf. L 154, with note 5.

## *The Writing of Letters in Carmel*

We will not linger over the origin of her letters from her childhood and adolescence. At first they accompanied her mother's letters (L 1–3); they were written on the occasion of a New Year (L 4–5); later they enthusiastically describe her trips; and in the last three years before her entrance into Carmel they were the expression of her friendly heart (twenty-four letters to Marie-Louise Maurel; ten to Françoise de Sourdon) or of her spiritual desires (five letters to Canon Angles; twenty-one to Marguerite Gollot). Elizabeth wrote them for the most part on her desk in her room (cf. CE 11).

In Carmel one did not write as often as one wished. Out of a spirit of solitude, correspondence was spaced, and out of a spirit of obedience, permission was always asked of the Prioress. According to the rules then in force, both incoming and outgoing correspondence was, in principle, read by the Prioress (except correspondence with ecclesiastical superiors and spiritual directors — but Elizabeth never had any in Carmel).

As for *frequency*, the Carmelite could write her parents, brothers, and sisters each month, only every three months to other relatives and friends; and if one had a visit to the parlor, allowed at the same rhythm and conditions, this visit replaced a letter. So Elizabeth wrote her mother and sister — who faithfully took advantage of the parlor visits — chiefly during their absences, trips, or vacations.

However, exceptions were always possible for an illness, a trial, a birth, or a death. Mother Germaine also allowed Elizabeth to visit her lonely mother by letter, or to cheer up one of her many friends, or again to thank a donor for a gift received for the community. During the first months of her postulancy and during her last illness, obviously the exceptions will be more numerous.

In Lent and Advent all correspondence and all parlor visits were more strictly excluded. A serious reason was needed to break this silence. Exceptions will be very rare in Elizabeth's correspondence.<sup>63</sup>

During the week the Carmelite's day was well filled with community acts and work.<sup>64</sup> On Sundays and feast days the Blessed Sacrament was exposed

in the Oratory until 5:00 P.M., Elizabeth loved to spend all her free time there. So she usually wrote her letters *during the free hour from 8:00 to 9:00 P.M.*<sup>65</sup> Seated on her little chair, she held her “desk” (L 88) on her knees, as she had no table.<sup>66</sup> This little wooden box contained an inkwell. At that hour she could seldom still profit from the natural light of evening that came through the small window overlooking the quadrangle. Ordinarily she had to use her kerosene lamp. She had to get used to it, and the new postulant confessed, “I don’t know what I’m scribbling for I can hardly see with our little lamp” (L 90). But the advantage was that the ink could be dried in the small flame so as to turn the page more quickly, which was not without danger: “Please excuse this paper,” Elizabeth wrote to Guite, “I put it closer to our lamp so that it would dry more quickly and I burned the bottom of the page” (L 117).

In winter the small cell had no heat of any kind. The cold did not help either the beauty of the writing or the rhythm. Elizabeth’s skin was very sensitive and she easily developed chilblains on her face and hands. In a photograph taken in January 1903, she can be seen with some of her fingers wrapped in bandages, which made it all the more difficult to hold a pen! But the generous Carmelite remedies it with humor: “As for the cold, I would not know it was winter if I did not see the beautiful curtains God has hung at our little window. If you could see how lovely our cloister is with its frosted panes!” (L 109) Or again there is the moving explanation of Letter 156, love of the Crucified One makes us forget “sacrifices like this,” and then in a very understanding tone, “. . . I am no more generous than you are, only you are ill, whereas I am in good health.” Only once, during the last winter of her life, a little before her health gave way definitively, do we hear her excuse herself, “Please excuse this writing [poorly formed], but we have no heat, and I cannot hold my pen” (L 263).

## Notes

<sup>63</sup> L 99, 109, 159, 186, 196, 197, 214 215, 226, 265.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. the Horarium at the end of Volume II.

<sup>65</sup> Many letters testify to this.

<sup>66</sup> There was a “board” attached to the wall (cf. L 168, n.7); but as can be seen from L 88, Elizabeth wrote on the portable “desk.”

## *The Poverty of the Paper*

Let us say a word about the paper on which the autographs were written which shows us a way poverty was formerly lived in Carmel.

Most of the time Elizabeth used “white” ruled paper, the different qualities of which, according to our tastes, range from poor to very poor. They are sheets of 26.8 x 21.6 cm. or a few millimeters less; the lines, often somewhat oblique, lead us to think that the Carmelites received this paper as a gift.

Elizabeth seldom used the whole sheet in this large size; however, the “dear little aunts” of Carlipa, one of whom was somewhat deaf, the other somewhat blind, were given more consideration. Out of the twelve letters addressed to them from Carmel, eight were large sheets. But the most “spoiled” in this matter was Mme. Angles who was always ill.

Most of the time Elizabeth tore this large sheet in two, folded it once again and thus obtained four pages of around 13.4 x 10.8 cm. which she almost always filled up completely. It is true she left a space between each line, but on the other hand she often continued along the margins of the first page and sometimes even to the fourth! Still other times the large sheets were torn into irregular fragments, sometimes three-quarters of a sheet. The strip of paper which was left served to complete a new letter.

Beginning with the autumn of 1905, Elizabeth often used a whiter paper, of better quality, ruled in small rectangles, of which some sheets still bore the name of the donor: the notary Madon of Dijon.<sup>67</sup>

At other times it was old stationery,<sup>68</sup> pieces of paper in different sizes,<sup>69</sup> where one can see the irregular edges cut with scissors.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes it was paper that was almost as thick as cardboard (L 244). Messages could also be found on the back of a picture, on a calling card with the name scratched out (L 245, 251) or not scratched out if it was used for communication within the Carmel (L 100, 328), a wedding invitation (L 260) or a death notice;<sup>71</sup> the two sheets are glued together if the name of the deceased is still there (L 243).

Like the paper of the prayer *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore* (PN 15), which was torn out of a notebook, some letters are written on a sheet taken

from an old notebook<sup>72</sup> or account book.<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth wrote before her entrance and for her personal use: Personal Note 2 on the back of a letter that she had received, Personal Note 4 on the back of an invitation to a choir recital and Personal Note 5 on the back of a bill for coal. Likewise from Carmel, she will write parts of her letters on the back of an advertisement for paper (end of L 236), or for fire and life insurance (end of L 280). The little note, Letter 282, cut in the form of a trapezoid, is written on the back of a chocolate wrapper, “Milka Suchard.”

For several letters or notes she even employed old wrapping paper that had already been used as the numerous folds prove.<sup>74</sup> These marks of poverty appear not only in her letters to her Carmelite sisters but also to her mother and to Guite, and are more and more frequent during her final illness (beginning with L 266). The letters to Guite will break all records with earthen-colored wrapping paper for Letter 292 and 298—the so deeply moving Letter 298.

If before her entrance Elizabeth often used green, blue-grey or even violet writing paper, in Carmel there will be all the nuances of grey, yellowish, and white tints, without ever attaining a true white. Her *Poems from Carmel*, on the other hand, were often written on the back of small green leaflets which the Abbé Sauv , director of the Major Seminary of Dijon, used to publicize his various “Dogmatic Elevations” and which he “bequeathed” regularly to Carmel. Something to encourage writers!

des Saints, S<sup>t</sup> Paul dans ses magnifiques  
épîtres ne prêche pas autre chose que  
le Mystère de la charité de Christ  
aussi est-ce lui que j'emprunte la  
parole pour vous adresser mes vœux  
"Que le Père de N. S. Jésus Christ vous  
accorde selon les richesses de sa gloire que  
vous soyez fortifié dans l'homme intérieur  
par son Esprit, que J. C. habite dans  
votre cœur par la foi, que vous soyez  
enraciné et fondé en la charité on s'entend  
que vous puissiez comprendre avec tous les  
saints quelle est la largeur, la longueur,  
la hauteur et la profondeur, et connaître

le don de la charité, qui est  
le don de Dieu, qui est  
le don de Dieu, qui est

1. Letter 191, January 25, 1904.

Below is a part of Letter 192, January 27, 1904.

(Length of the first line of the original is 121 mm.)

Si nous passons devant la ferme de Dulon  
nous avons travaillé avec certain un beau  
garçon de 10, seize ans, c'est Eugène

2. Composition Exercise 13, May 21, 1894.

Les grammaires jadis, comme je m'en  
suis fait le sacrifice de ma vie, comme  
je me suis offerte en holocauste à  
l'image de Jésus mon Seigneur Dieu

3. Diary 18, March 4, 1899.

Inconnu sur 23 janvier 1900.  
La retraite -  
La retraite est le temps :

4. Diary 137, January 23, 1900.

Qui un petit enfant dans les bras  
de sa mère, et de ne plus voir  
plus entendre que Lui, c'est la

5. Letter 89, August 30, 1901.

cette vocation dans la lumière  
de Dieu, comme tu le bon  
vais! Il est content de toi  
Notre

6. Letter 159, March 1903.

Pour qu'Il imprime en toi l'Image du Seigneur  
Tu fus prédestinée à cette ressemblance  
Par un mystérieux décret du Créateur.

7. Poem 93, July 25, 1905.

Par une nuit paisible, en un profond silence  
Il voguait doucement sur l'Océan immense  
Tout était en repos sous la voûte des cieux  
Et semblait écouter "la grande voix de Dieu".

8. Poem 115 for September 24, 1906.

J. M. + J. B.  
O mon Dieu Eternel que j'adore  
aidez moi à m'oublier entièrement  
pour m'établir en Vous immobile  
et paisible comme si déjà mon  
âme était dans l'éternité; que  
rien ne puisse troubler ma paix, ne  
me faire sortir de vous ô mon Immo-  
bile, mais que chaque minute m'em-  
porte plus loin dans la profondeur  
de votre Mystère. Pacifiez mon âme  
faitez en votre ciel, votre demeure aimée  
et le lieu de votre repos; que je  
ne v'y laisser jamais seul, mais que  
je sois là toute entière, toute enfilée  
en ma foi, tout adorante, toute  
servie à votre bonté créatrice.  
O mon Christ aimé, crucifié par  
amour, je voudrais être une croix  
pour votre amour, je voudrais être comme  
votre croix.

9. Personal Note 15, November 21, 1904.

## Notes

67 L 305, 309, 314.

68 For ex. L 99, 133, 135, 139, 189, 205.

69 L 118–120, 127, 134, a fragment of 178, 281, 319, 321.

70 L 213, 233, 234, 273.

71 Parts of L 302, 308, 314.

72 L 113 and a fragment of L 123.

73 L 285, 287, first half of 288.

74 L 253, 283, 327, end of 300, of 302, and of 309. There is still preserved in ACD an envelope containing similar papers that Elizabeth kept in reserve.

## The Dating of the Letters

The *Diary*, *Spiritual Treatises*, most of the *Poems*, and the *Personal Notes*<sup>75</sup> offer no difficulty on the chronological level because Elizabeth dated them, or else the date is easily found. The dating of the *Letters*, on the other hand, proved very complex from the beginning.

To establish Elizabeth of the Trinity's spiritual itinerary precisely, especially in her brief and intense life as a Carmelite, it was necessary to resolve this chronological problem with maximum care; to amass or mix up the documents could only lead to inexact conclusions.

The reader will become aware of the problem on examining the very poor chronological indications that Elizabeth furnishes at the head of her letters. (These are not to be confused with the most accurate dates possible that we ourselves have added, in brackets, at the head of the letter. In most instances we have justified this more complete dating in the first notes, in which we have omitted other unnecessary proofs.)

Here is a table of chronological indications that Elizabeth left us for her letters:

—complete date: fourteen times

—mention of the *day of the week* + the *day of the month* + the *month*, without the year (for ex. “Wednesday, November 19”): twenty-five times

—mention of the *day of the month* + the *month*, without the year (for ex. “August 4”): seventy-one times

—mention of the *month* + the *year* (for ex. “January 1901”): three times

—mention of the *day of the week* + the *month* (for ex. “Friday, June”): once

—mention of the *day of the week* + the *day of the month*, without the month or year (for ex. “Saturday 30”): twice

—mention of the *month* alone (for ex. “August”): four times

—mention of the *day of the week* alone (for ex. “Thursday”): sixty-one times

—nothing at all: 165 times

Let us point out that other hands, most often the recipients themselves, have completed or added the date on the autographs *later*, in part or

completely.

Apart from Mme. de Sourdon and Abbe Chevignard who seem to be the most precise, there are a number of inaccuracies in the others. It is the same with the chronological references that the numerous witnesses give; we must use them with prudence. One knows the limits of perception, of memory, of recall of facts—sometimes after long years. The incomplete notations and subjective interpretations, omissions, involuntary misrepresentations, personal sentiment, all this hardly permits a history of absolute exactness. The past cannot be entirely recovered, even when it is a matter of determining a fact as precise and objective as a date. Many times, even in our own work, we have recalled the wise precautions of René Laurentin in his research on Lourdes<sup>76</sup>—the object of an even more complex historical study.

Our first task was to collect all the autographs still accessible. This was indispensable not only in order to establish the authentic text of this edition, but also in order to fix their dates, as we shall see.

Besides the autographs of the *Diary*, the *Spiritual Treatises*, the *Personal Notes*,<sup>77</sup> and the *Poems*,<sup>78</sup> we were able to collect and study 293 autographs, sixteen photocopies,<sup>79</sup> thirty manuscript copies,<sup>80</sup> and seven printed copies<sup>81</sup> of the *Letters*.

## Notes

<sup>75</sup> For the *Poems* and the *Personal Notes* we have added an asterisk after the date when it was given by Elizabeth herself.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Lourdes, Histoire authentique des apparitions*, tome I, Lethielleux 1961, pp. 21–38.

<sup>77</sup> Except PN 7 (manuscript copy), and PN 12 (printed copy).

<sup>78</sup> Except P 88 (photocopy).

<sup>79</sup> L 11, 13, 94, 96, 106, 112, 155, 160, 165, 169, 174, 241, 256, 261, 274, 307.

<sup>80</sup> L 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 46, 78, 80, 83, 104, 147, 158, 163, 195, 218, 228, 250, 259, 276, 277, 286, 289, 293, 326, 331, 332, 336, 341, 342. Strictly speaking, we could add to this L 266, and 340 (counted among the “autographs”) which are letters dictated by Elizabeth and written by Mother Germaine. L 341 and 342 were also dictated to Mother Germaine, but the originals have disappeared.

<sup>81</sup> L 114, 152, 255, 279, 299, 323a, 339.

## *Reference Points*

Our research was based on an ensemble of reference points, some of which could be used for almost every letter.

1. It is easy to see if the letter dates before or after her *entrance into Carmel* by the use of her religious name in the signature; this is an indication which, however, does not always afford an absolute certainty.<sup>82</sup>

2. In Carmel, the initials r.c.i. (unworthy Carmelite religious) after the signature, show that Elizabeth had already made her profession, the 11th of January, 1903. Its absence does not necessarily prove that the letter was written *before* her profession, for it is not uncommon that the professed omit it.

3. The indication of the *day of the week* + the *day of the month* (for ex. “Sunday, May 19” in L 55) permits us to determine easily the year, for this juncture would occur only every six years.

4. The *contents* of the letter often furnish indications for its period or its precise date of origin. In a series of letters to the same correspondent there is sometimes a logical connection: thanking for something asked for in a previous letter, the realization of a promise made earlier. Another source can inform us concerning the time of a trip, a meeting, a retreat, or conference, or vacations spent at a certain place which the letter speaks of. Or else there is an allusion to a particular year that is beginning, a liturgical or historical event, a feast day, an event in the family, the circle of friends, or the monastery. We completed the chronological precisions of ACD with information drawn from city halls, various archives, or families of the correspondents.<sup>83</sup>

5. A dozen times the *postmark* on the envelope preserved reveals the day on which the letter was sent. Sometimes an envelope Elizabeth had received was turned inside out in order to use it a second time. Even if her letter to her family or friends in Dijon was not sent by mail but delivered, for example by one of the Extern Sisters, the postmark on the inside indicates that Elizabeth’s letter is posterior to this date.

6. Even the writing paper has a story to tell! We have said that Elizabeth often tore one of the large ruled sheets in two before writing her letter on it.

If we compare some of the autographs, we can see that we have two halves of the same sheet: the torn edges fit together perfectly and the lines (often oblique) of the ruled paper match! (See the first photo in this volume with note 1 of L 191.) As the Carmelites, in their concern for poverty, kept only a little paper at a time, there is every chance that the two letters date from the same period, perhaps the same day.

7. The *ink* also reveals the period of the letter. Here we have a little secret of convents at the beginning of this century: in those days ink was not bought ready-made. It was the Sister Provisor who “made” the community ink by pouring water into a bottle on the ink powder that had been purchased; and the Sisters went regularly to fill their little inkwell at the common bottle. The powder could vary in color (or else two different kinds of ink could be mixed), and thus the autographs are of various tints: pale copper, black, dark copper, “pure copper,” blue-grey, black again (some years after Elizabeth’s death purple will triumph). If at first sight all this seems to depend on the specialized services of the police, when one has frequented Elizabeth’s autographs for a long time, one can regroup them according to different periods solely on the basis of the ink used.<sup>84</sup> With a margin of prudence, however, for Elizabeth did not always write in her cell—she could also have drawn from the inkwell at the “turn”<sup>85</sup> where she spent several hours a day after her profession. We have examples of two different kinds of ink for the same day or the same autograph.<sup>86</sup>

8. Let us not lay emphasis on the finer *pen* Elizabeth used beginning with Letter 258. But it is important to point out that all the letters during her eight months in the infirmary will be written in *pencil*, excepting those addressed to the Prioress—which were in ink—a custom of respect from which Elizabeth did not want to excuse herself.

9. We would surely have found priceless chronological references and information in the *letters from correspondents* who answered Elizabeth or whom she answered. But in a spirit of detachment, it was the custom in the Carmel of Dijon not to keep them. Only a few, by chance, escaped destruction.<sup>87</sup>

10. And there is a tenth witness, so eloquent for one who has studied Elizabeth’s autographs for a long time: her very *handwriting*. An extraordinary evolution in her handwriting permits us, with just a single

glance, to determine within a year—more or less— the period of an autograph, especially after Elizabeth’s fifteenth year.<sup>88</sup>

## Notes

- 82 Before her entrance into Carmel she already signed almost all her letters to Marguerite Gollot, an aspirant to Carmel, with her future religious name. But after that she sometimes signs only her baptismal name.
- 83 It is a pleasant duty to thank all those who furnished us with information for this edition: MM. Pierre Gras (Municipal Library of Dijon); Bernard Savouret (Municipal Archives of Dijon); General Porret (Historical Service of the Army); PP. André Duval (Archives O.P.); Hughes Beylard (Archives S.J.); Gilbert Humbert (Archives C.S.S.R.); Joseph Baudry and Louis Marie du Christ (Archives O.C.D.); Jean Marilier (Archives Bishopric of Dijon); the Chevignard family, and in particular M. Bernard Chevignard; the Carmels of Paray-le-Monial, Clamart, Angers, Lisieux, Amiens, Saint-Sever, Mons, Kain, Avranches, Rheims; the Visitation of Dijon and of Orthez; my brother Carmelites, Pancrace Martens, Gaston de Kerpel, Emmanuel Renault, Guy Gaucher, Jean Lammens, Jesus Castellano, Valentino Macca, Simeon Tomás-Fernandez, Benoît Langlois; MM. and PP. Albert Patfoort, O.P., P. Thomas Camelot, O.P., Maurice Buil, René Lefebvre, André and Maurice Philbée, Jean Sender, Jacques Nourissat, Emile Sellenet, Bernard Card, Chan. Bruneau, Pierre de Gonneville, M. Huftier, André Darbon, O.P., Michel Florent, O.P., Paul Marsil, P.Bl., Emile De Rover, O. Praem., Michel Farin, S.J., René Bonheure, Otto Steiner, Pierre Descouvemont, Michel Veys, Gilbert Larsonneur, M.S.Th., Philippe Ledoux, O.S.B., André Vidal; Srs. Cécile, O.C.D., Genevieve, O.P., Andrée Mullot, Marie-Cécile (Ste Famille, Pezens), Marie-Roger (Providence de Portieux), Simone Tournier (N.D. du Bon-Secours de Troyes), Gabrielle (Gardes-malades de Beaune); Mme. Rocher; Mme. Elisabeth de Jacquelot; MM. P. de Saint-Péreuze, P. de La Robertie, le Marquis de Saint-Seine, Patrick Jouffroy; Mlles. Marie Dussap, Elisabeth d’Arbaumont, Marie-Thérèse Van Oosterhout; the photographers Thérèse Laureyns and A. Fasquel; all those who enriched the archives of Elizabeth; and, last but not least, les Editions du Cerf and l’Imprimerie Saint-Paul de Bar-le-Duc.
- 84 Here is the history of her ink in Carmel. Let us point out that the same tints could give colors that differ slightly according to the capacity of absorption, more or less great, of the paper used. (1) *Pale copper color*: L 84–110, with the exception of L 99 in black ink, perhaps written in the “novitiate” (cf. Plan 1, no. 19, in Volume II) where there was also an inkwell. (2) *Black ink*: L 111–148. (3) *Deep copper color*: L 149–180 (4) *Pure copper color*: L 181–192. (5) *Pure copper color but a little darker* (less visible than in 3): L 193–203. (6) *Blue-grey color*: L 204–247. (7) *Black with a base of copper*: L 248–265. Later, in the infirmary, the letters, with the exception of those to Mother Germaine, are in pencil. There is only one autograph preserved in *purple* ink: L 284. And another in *red* ink: P 121.
- 85 Cf. Plan 1, no. 21, in Volume II.
- 86 Using a finer pen and the pure copper-colored ink (color 4), Elizabeth wrote L 200, probably in the “turn” a little after L 199 of the same day. She began L 167 with the same pen and ink and continued it in her “cell” before “Matins” with the usual pen and ink (color 3!) of this period, beginning with “C’est dommage . . .” The first words of L 221 (“Que Jésus nous . . .”) are also from the same pen and ink; the rest is with her customary heavier pen and with ink color 6. L 246 is also written with two different kinds of ink. L 251 was written elsewhere than in her cell.

- 87 A letter from Elizabeth de Montléau of August 1901; a letter from Canon Angles of July 22, 1903, and one of May 19, 1906. Elizabeth must have passed them on to her mother. They are found in PAT. There is also a short letter from Sister Louise de Gonzague, Carmelite of Dijon, a telegram of December 8, 1901, from Abbé Chaboisseau, and a few pictures received. One letter and a dozen messages from different friends written *before* her entrance have been preserved.
- 88 It is a little more difficult to judge concerning the autographs written in *pencil* (a number of texts copied), sometimes in rough draft.

## *Her Writing*

The numerous autographs that flowed from her pen during her short life constitute a marvelous display of the evolution of her handwriting, marked by two rather spectacular interventions. The artist's fingers that, at the piano, rendered Elizabeth's emotions with such finesse also revealed her inmost feelings when she wrote. We have only to compare quickly examples 2, 3, 1, and 9 of the specimens of her writing reproduced in this volume to get a clear idea of the development of her writing, in which several stages can be distinguished.

1. The first is that in which the child learns penmanship. In her school copy-books she imitates reproduced models.<sup>89</sup> Despite the method, the search for a personal handwriting wins out.<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth never achieves a completely regular handwriting, but at fifteen and sixteen her writing has become round and legible, rather classic. The ink sketch of Composition Exercise 38 shows, however, that it is the fruit of application.

2. At seventeen, her handwriting evolves towards what could be called "an artist's handwriting"—large, pointed, and hooked. Did her mother urge her in this direction?<sup>91</sup> The evolution is slow but it is completed in the second half of 1898; it attains its maximum of illegibility and intricacy in the first half of 1899 when Elizabeth completes her nineteenth year. Example 3 (inset) shows us a specimen from her *Diary*. It is very hard to distinguish an *a* from an *o*, a *v* from an *n*, an *m* from *vi*; we must read the context. And what intricacy for the capital letters *I* and *J* (see the word *Jésus* in example 3)! The capitals are preceded by an "eye," a completely superfluous little circle;<sup>92</sup> after this little circle the pen descends, rises, descends and rises again to descend definitively and complete the capital. What gymnastics! But later, in August<sup>93</sup> this "eye," which for six years had preceded the capitals *I* and *J*, disappears forever (see the word "janvier" in example 4).

The second part of the *Diary*, written in January 1900 (see example 4) shows, moreover, that the "artist's writing" has become simplified throughout and has gained in legibility. The capitals *M* and *N* surmounted by a loop (see "Mardi" in example 4) lose it towards the middle of 1900.

Her whole handwriting continues to become simpler (compare with example 5).

However, Elizabeth will have difficulty ridding herself of this pointed writing; and she retains a little complex about it! In the seven months that preceded her entrance into Carmel, a year and a half after the maximum illegibility of her “artist’s writing,” she excuses herself no less than ten times:<sup>94</sup> “You will need much time to decipher this letter with my horrible handwriting,” she wrote to Canon Angles (L 38); she speaks again of a “horrible scrawl” (L 45), of an “awful letter” (L 69), of an “epistle (which) I am ashamed to send you” (L 55).

In Carmel she is still “scribbling” (L 90). Towards the middle of 1902 her writing, which has become more disjointed, seems to reflect the difficulties through which she was passing. The Sisters became aware of her writing problems; and Marie of the Trinity, her former Sub-Prioress, relates how it was remedied: “On entering Carmel, the dear postulant had a handwriting which was very fashionable at that time for artists but not very religious. So her Prioress wanted her to change it. A Sister [doubtless Sister Agnes], who has a rather classic handwriting, round and regular, gave her some lessons. . .”<sup>95</sup>

3. According to the autographs this little course took place after her profession, during Lent of 1903. Sister Elizabeth applied herself to it with an ardor that only the saints know how to put into the smallest things—here, doubtless, somewhat humiliating. The result is already visible in example 6, the first autograph that announces the new writing. The transformation is soon accomplished; and the penmanship, beautiful, round and regular, attains its apogee in the second half of 1903. Example 1, Letter 191 of January 25, 1904, although probably written with “cold hands” on this winter evening, is a good example of it.<sup>96</sup>

4. Nevertheless, this handwriting will also, slowly and unconsciously, undergo a profound modification especially in the sense of a simplification—in particular, a restriction of flourishes in the capital letters! Three factors play a role here: (a) physical fatigue—already from the summer of 1904 the hand has become less steady; the nearer Elizabeth approaches the autumn of 1906 when she will die, the more shaky and weak her hand becomes; at the end it will be sheer will power that drags it over the paper;

(b) a natural diminution of application which becomes a secondary concern; (c) a simplification of soul which goes more and more to the essential and is reflected in the simplification of this writing which had never been Elizabeth's "natural" expression. The autograph of *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore* of November 1904 (see example 9) already reflects this whole process.

These evolutions are never completely abrupt; there are steps forward and backward, but over a space of time the change is obvious.

Two examples. The capital *P* (which often appears in the name of St. Paul) is, at the beginning of the new penmanship, rich in loops<sup>97</sup> (see two specimens in example 1); towards the end of 1904 it becomes simplified most often as a printed *P* (see the word "Pacifiez" in example 9); but from the middle of 1905 it is almost converted into a capital *S* (see examples 7 and 8)—and that with great consistency.<sup>98</sup>

Another example. In the new handwriting the *a*, *o*, *g* and *q*, have in general, many loops tightly closed at the top; also the lower loop of the *g*, *j* and *y*. The nearer Elizabeth approaches death the more the majority of these letters will be open, as can be seen quite well from example 8. Doubtless it is a consequence of her weakness but also the symbol of her desire to no longer be attached to earth—to let go—and to open towards Heaven.

After a long contact with Elizabeth of the Trinity's autographs it is impossible to confuse the documents of 1902 with those of 1904 or 1906.

## Notes

<sup>89</sup> For example, in a copybook of November 1893. In October 1895 (at age fifteen) she fills up a fourth, and in October 1895, a fifth "writing copybook" of the Godchaux Method: "Ruled Writing Copybooks With Printed and Graduated Models." (This method is contained in twelve copybooks.) Elizabeth probably used others besides these two.

<sup>90</sup> Let us take an example. In the school copybook of June 1892–January 1893, the bar of the letter *d* is always straight. In the copybook of November 6, 1893–May 9, 1894, the bar remains straight (type 1), but in February 1894, it slants to the left (type 2); before long it often ends in a loop as it crosses the vertical bar (type 3), only to eliminate this loop a little later, keeping only the vertical bar and a stroke to the right (type 4). It is this type 4 (which can be seen in example 2 of the reproductions of her handwriting in the inset) which becomes general in the month of May 1894. But after the vacations, Elizabeth has completely reverted to the *d* of type 1. From May 1895, however, the *d* of type 4 gains the ascendancy, dominates again during her vacations, to disappear at the end of October (very probably under the influence of the writing exercises—see preceding note), where she reverts again to type 1. Type 4 will not appear again, but a year

later type 2 (slanted to the left) is then the most frequent. If we now examine the autograph of PN 2 (“Timetable of the Passion,” cf. Volume III), we see that the nineteen *d* minuscules all belong to type 4. At the same time, the thirteen *t*’s belong to type 1 (see example 2, inset): the horizontal bar intersects the vertical bar. This PN 2, not dated, can only belong to the first period of the *d* of type 4 (May–October 1894) where we also encounter our *t*! (In the second period of the *d* of type 4, the *t* is generally different, *no longer intersecting* the vertical bar, but simply starting from it towards the right.) The overall image of the writings of these two periods is, moreover, different. The date “1887–1890” which appears in the *Souvenirs* beginning in 1927 (p. 12) is surely in error, unless it concerns another “timetable.”

- 91 This is what tradition affirms. All her life Guite will retain this artist’s handwriting, but it is much more legible. We find it often in this period.
- 92 It appears from the second half of 1893.
- 93 We can see clearly the new Capital *J* in L 24 to Marie-Louise Maurel, of August 12, 1899, and also in the autograph of P 69 and 70 which were composed earlier; but the overall image of the writings of these poems is already so different from P 68 that we can only deduce from it that Elizabeth copied P 69–70 in her Poetry Notebook later.
- 94 Cf. L 38, 41, 45, 50, 53, 54, 55, 65, 69, 70. And even earlier in L 12 and 13; but in this period, 1896–1897, her writing was much more legible.
- 95 Letter to Père Beaubis, June 6, 1953. In it Marie of the Trinity deplores that the lessons caused Elizabeth’s handwriting to lose “all personal character.” Let us note, however, that this handwriting recaptures in great part that of the end of 1895 while perfecting it. In this very handwriting, many personal traits will manifest themselves, as we shall explain.
- 96 Note that from the first half of 1903 the *f* has lost forever its lower loop (see examples 7 to 9). Before April 1903, there was always a loop. By this fact alone, this letter *f* is a priceless chronological reference.
- 97 Most of the time, three loops: one in completing the vertical bar (which begins from the top) and two in beginning and completing the crown of the *P*. For another example of flourishes compare the word “Père” in example 1.
- 98 Other capital letters are also greatly simplified, like the *D* (compare examples 6, 8, and 9; the upper loop disappears), the *R*, and the *M*.

## Our Options for Establishing the Text

Once the texts are deciphered and the letters dated, other difficulties arise in giving a correct edition, which are due to Elizabeth's defective literary education.

Because of her studies at the Conservatory, begun at the age of eight,<sup>99</sup> there was not much time for the teaching she received at home. The little Elizabeth spent long hours at the piano each day. Her mother wished above all to assure her daughters a career as a music teacher. To judge from her school copybooks, it was only after having obtained her first prize at the piano at the age of thirteen that Elizabeth began a more intensive course of study. But it was then too late to remedy completely the handicaps due to this late education. Moreover, her instructor, Mlle. Forey, does not seem to have been one of the more demanding teachers. As a result of this, all her life Elizabeth will make many mistakes in spelling<sup>100</sup> and in grammar; and her punctuation will be rather capricious.

This posed a problem for the establishment of the text of the *Complete Works*. Should we push the demands of literary criticism to the point of scrupulously reproducing all these encumbering mistakes while considerably weighing down the critical apparatus? Should we retain the poor punctuation and thus make the reading difficult? Would the advantages be in proportion to the effort required of the reader?

We did not think so. Elizabeth's writings did not have the stormy history of those of Thérèse of Lisieux, to which Mother Agnes had added a number of corrections and personal modifications, and which, obviously, necessitated an edition as faithful as possible. Besides, we cannot say that Elizabeth was a master writer whose original punctuation would have revealed certain secrets of style.

As she did not intend these spelling errors nor this punctuation, to reproduce them would present no interest, except anecdotal for the reader, so we decided to correct the spelling and to modify slightly the punctuation, of which we will give here at least an idea.

## Notes

99 Cf. the Biographical sketch, p. 11.

100 But we also find it in the letters of her contemporaries.

## *Spelling Errors*

First of all we must not consider as errors in spelling Elizabeth's peculiarities in her handwriting. Her accents and the dots over the i's generally fly high and wide, and just as she often turns her commas to the right rather than to the left, so her grave accents often slant to the left: for example we often read instead of "chère mère": "cheré meré"!

In general, it was rather by hearing than by seeing that the words were impressed on the young musician's memory, who as a young child had never really learned the instinctive reaction of good spelling. We also have the impression that, from the intensity of her emotion and her contact with others, her attention was fixed much more on whom or about whom she was writing than on the visual image of her writing. Likewise she seems to be entirely *in* what she is reading, scarcely paying any attention to the printed image of the words under her eyes. How else can we explain the remarkable consistency with which she wrote, hundreds of times, this word "Maître" which she so loved, without the circumflex accent?<sup>101</sup> Even "Jésus" must often do without the acute accent!<sup>102</sup>

If anyone wants to undertake a thesis on "the saints and their mistakes in spelling," we can offer him the following remarks concerning Elizabeth Catez, the pianist who let herself be guided by sound:

—Frequent confusion between the infinitive (oublier), the imperative plural (oubliez) and the past participle (oubliée).

—Confusion between words of the same pronunciation: "ou" and "où"; "quelle" and "qu'elle"; "avait" and "avais"; "m'est" and "met"; "voir" and "voire"; "ai" and "aie"; "peux" and "peut"; "l'a" and "la," etc.

—Errors concerning nasal sounds: "enmène" (often); "cependant"; "fonds" for "fond"; confusion between "quand," "quant" and "qu'en";

—Errors in the use of apostrophes and hyphens: "n'est-ce-pas" (often) "ta maladie ne t-a-t-elle pas";

—A number of mistakes in the accents: "penetrée," "ici-bàs" (often), "cloitre," "abime," "apparaitre," "fraiche," "cloture," "prophête," "repeter," "predestination," "reflêter," "celeste";

—Omission of a letter in certain words with double consonants: “embarassée,” “inéparable,” “consomer,” “solenels,” “ensevelisez,” “affectionée,” “incessament”;

—But on the other hand, redoubling a single consonant: “datte” (for date), “sottisses,” “dissonnances,” and, with an admirable consistency, redoubling the s (doubtless because of a slightly more stressed pronunciation) in “anniverssaire” and “inssondable”; we also find “indispensable” and “occassion.”

Along this line, Elizabeth stumbles again over difficult words like “Ressurrection” (L 162) or “assenscions” (LR 44). But when she speaks of the *mystère insaisissable de la mort* in Letter 238 she trips so thoroughly that she commits four mistakes in just one word: “inssaissisabbe” later adding the syllable “sa” at first omitted!

“Psalmodie” was another very difficult word. Already in 1898 she had written “psaumodie” (P 53) after having corrected a little earlier the word “plalmodies” (P 49); in a notebook of copied texts we find “pslamadies.” The one who writes psalms is sometimes called “the plasmiste” (L 242); some weeks later she corrects it to “pslalmiste” (L 263).

Other difficult words: “hazard” (L 335), “phisyques” (L 249), “genoux” (L 60), “extention” (LR 8), “symphatie” (D 88, L 305), and “antiphatie” (D 88 and 97). But we can see that sometimes she corrects herself; too great a zeal makes her then change “langage” to “language” (L 238).

We pass over in silence her mistakes in Latin when Elizabeth begins to decline words in this language. Doubtless she would answer us, “Je m’imamigine” (L 298) that it doesn’t matter! In any case it is not serious, for “a Carmelite supposes a being completely divinized”!<sup>103</sup>

## Notes

<sup>101</sup> For this word she usually ignores the circumflex accent, except in L 278. Also it might be a correction by someone else, for the letters to Germaine Gemeaux have been arranged several times in pencil by someone else’s hand (cf. note 110). In any case in the same letter the word recurs twice more with out the circumflex accent.

<sup>102</sup> Towards the end of her life, Elizabeth will purposely abbreviate “J. Christ.”

<sup>103</sup> Cf. L 178. It is very probably an unknown hand that corrected it later.

## *The Punctuation*

Here also we must not confuse poor punctuation with peculiarities in her handwriting. When the period intended to dot an *i* flies too far and stops over the final period of the sentence, it produces a false colon. And if an accent overhangs the final period, we obtain a false exclamation point! Moreover, the poor quality of the paper can suggest periods and commas when in reality it is only small spots on the paper.

Apart from that, the punctuation is quite defective, and the sentences are sometimes interminable. Besides, the commas are often so small that it is difficult to distinguish them from the period, and we often have to guess. Again, if only Elizabeth would have always written a capital in starting a new sentence, but in her youth she often begins with a small letter! Later, it will sometimes be difficult to distinguish the capital letters from the small letters for *A* and *O*.

Towards the end of her life, especially when she wrote in pencil, the signs of punctuation are lighter still; and physical weakness leads her to neglect them more and more. Then we must try to enter into her thought and complete the punctuation as needed. We have done this with extreme respect for the verity of her thought and have, by preference, left her sentences in all their length.

## *The Capital Letters*

Our third option was to conform the use of capitals. It is very difficult to say what is the secret that governs the presence or absence of the capital for appositions to Christ when Elizabeth writes in her *Diary* “Amour” fourteen times and “amour” nine times, or “vie” ten times and “Vie” six times: sometimes the two words appear next to each other, one with a capital and one with a small letter. Why is Jesus in turn the bien-aimé, the Bien-aimé, the bien-Aimé and the Bien-Aimé? And are we to attach an importance to the use of capital or small letters when she speaks to Germaine de Gemeaux of “Love, this Infinite love” and when she counsels her: “Let us wake in Love, all day let us surrender ourselves to Love, . . . and again let us sleep in Love” (L 172), only to reveal several days later to Canon Angles that her happiness is “to wake in love, to move in love, to sleep in love” (L 177)?

So throughout we have unified the most dominant tendencies in Elizabeth: capitals for the appositions of God and Christ; capitals for the qualities that define the being of God;<sup>104</sup> capitals for the synonyms of Heaven.<sup>105</sup>

In the personal pronouns that represent God there is again great confusion: Elizabeth very often writes He and Him but you and thee, when speaking of God. We have retained what is truly characteristic of her: He, The One, and Him: and in the plural, Them and Those. Canon Angles will testify: “She always called Christ—with a heavenly accent—*Him!*”<sup>106</sup> For her it was a word full of resonances and light, a word that shines!\* And she almost always writes it with a capital letter.<sup>107</sup>

As for Elizabeth’s circle of acquaintances, there is also great confusion;<sup>108</sup> we have chosen to consistently employ small letters.

## Notes

<sup>104</sup> For example, “God is Love,” but also his Mystery, his Heart, his Cross. Note that the adjective is often capitalized; as in “Infinite Love.”

<sup>105</sup> For example, Father’s House, Heavenly City, Fatherland, Divine Dwelling.

<sup>106</sup> RB 5 in PAT.

\* “shines”: “Him” in French is *Lui*; the verb “to shine” is *luire*. [Translator’s note]

<sup>107</sup> On the other hand we always found “the good God” with a small *g*.

108 Nevertheless a “general” rule can be discerned (although Elizabeth is often unfaithful to it), which is doubtless the fruit of a spontaneous interior movement: she frequently writes with a capital what concerns the person whom she is addressing, and with a small letter, what concerns a third person. A fictitious example: She could write Marguerite Gollot: “Dear Friend, I saw your Sister who met my mother. Greetings to your Mother.” But to Guite she could write: “My little Sister, I saw your friend and her sister. Their mother is well. They send greetings to our Mother.”

## *Other Conventions*

To facilitate the reading, we have printed out the abbreviations that Elizabeth often used, especially at the end of her life (pr, vs, ns, M. and Me, qqs., tante F., M.L.), as well as the numbers, leaving only abbreviations of the signature which might have significance.

The words which she underlines twice are printed in SMALL CAPITALS, and the words underlined three times in LARGE CAPITALS.<sup>109</sup>

Even though Elizabeth underlines only part of the words (see example 7),<sup>110</sup> we print them entirely in *italics*, as well as the words that she enlarged, giving them in this way a special emphasis (see “la grande voix de Dieu” in example 8).

We have completed the *inverted commas* when they were omitted at the beginning or end of a quotation, and we have respected Elizabeth’s paragraphs, which are sometimes difficult to discern when the preceding paragraph ends exactly at the end of a line. Sometimes Elizabeth suggests a new paragraph by leaving a large space between two sentences, or by putting a very obvious horizontal dash.

## **Notes**

<sup>109</sup> Sometimes she puts a second or third line, not *under* the word but *above* it, thus framing it as it were.

<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth’s habit of underlining only partially enables us to recognize that the numerous underlinings in the letters to Mme. de Bobet are not hers. Mme. de Bobet underlined very distinctly, word by word, the sentences of Elizabeth which had particularly touched her. Likewise in what concerns the parentheses in the autographs of the letters to Germaine de Gemeaux, which probably indicate some passages to be omitted when read in public. Elizabeth very rarely used parentheses.

## Elizabeth and the Influences to Which She Was Exposed

We do not intend to make a thorough study here of the influences to which Elizabeth of the Trinity was exposed; they appear in our notes of her writings and an idea of them can be formed from the indices that are at the end of Volume II.

We would like simply to point out that she read the great authors in editions different from the ones we use today. That was the way God “passed by.” In referring to the editions of today, we run the risk of projecting onto Elizabeth influences that she did not know and of not seeing those whose traces she bore.

For example, when Elizabeth discovered *The Story of a Soul* of Thérèse of Lisieux in 1899, it was the second edition<sup>111</sup> which had been thoroughly revised by Mother Agnes and is somewhat removed from the authentic edition of the manuscripts we possess today. The famous “chapter XI” incorporated the end of the present Ms. C and a great part of Ms. B. It was a magnificent ending which deeply affected the soul of the young Elizabeth. When we read “Thérèse,” we must often understand: “Thérèse + (some) Agnes.”

It is the same for St. Paul; Elizabeth read him especially in the translation by Canon Gaume,<sup>112</sup> which was augmented by numerous apologetic notes destined to make our “dear heretics” realize how wrong they were. Thus “Paul” is “Paul + Vulgate + Gaume.” (Our biblical references will always follow the Vulgate numbering because of this.)

St. John of the Cross, whose *Spiritual Canticle* and *Living Flame*<sup>113</sup> she so savored, were known to her in the well-written but rather free translation of the Carmelites of Paris. For St. Teresa of Avila, she used (most of the time) the translation of Bouix.<sup>114</sup>

The case is somewhat more complicated for the anthology of Ruysbroeck,<sup>115</sup> which so delighted Elizabeth in the months of June–September 1906 during her final illness. Ernest Hello had translated into French the Latin translation Surius made from the *Old Dutch* of Ruysbroeck. But Surius did not always base himself on the authentic texts of Ruysbroeck, and consequently Elizabeth will quote passages attributed to

the Flemish mystic which in reality are from one of his disciples, Godfried van Wevel.<sup>116</sup> Thus Ruysbroeck in Elizabeth is “Ruysbroeck, or sometimes Godfried van Wevel + Surlus + Hello.” Likewise Angela di Foligno<sup>117</sup> = “Angela di Foligno (her secretary, Brother Arnaud) + Hello.”

## Notes

- 111 Soeur Thérèse de l’Enfant-Jésus et de la sainte Face. *Histoire d’une Ame, écrite par elle-même. Lettres-Poésies*, Paris-Bar-le-Duc-Fribourg. Librairies de l’Oeuvre de Saint-Paul, 1899, XL + 488 pp. It is the second edition which remains at the head of the series until 1907, thus during all of Elizabeth’s life.
- 112 *Manuel du Chrétien. Nouveau Testament, Psaumes, Imitation*, éd. du chanoine Gaume, Paris, Gaume et Cie, 1896, LXXVI + 1041 + 214 + 214 pp.
- 113 *Vie et Oeuvres de . . . Saint Jean de la Croix*. Trad. nouvelle . . . par le soins des Carmélites de Paris. Tome IV, *Le Cantique spirituel et La vive Flamme d’amour*, Paris, H. Oudin, 1892, 3e ed., 674 pp.
- 114 *Oeuvres de Sainte Thérèse, traduites, d’après les manuscrits originaux* par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J., Paris, Julien, Lanier et Cie, 3 tomes, 1852–56. It is not certain that Elizabeth read the three volumes.
- 115 *Rusbrock l’admirable. Oeuvres choisies*. Traduit par Ernest Hello, Paris, Perrin et Cie, 1902, nlle ed., LXIV 253 pp.
- 116 In *D. Joannis Rusbrochii . . . opera omnia* (Cologne, 1552), Surlus (+ 1578) had attributed to Ruysbroeck (+ 1381) the book *Van den XII dogheden* (On the twelve virtues) composed by a disciple and confrere of Ruysbroeck, Godfried van Wevel (+ 1396), who was often inspired by his master. On this question cf. S. Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden*, tome II, De Sikkel, Anvers, 1953, pp. 329–39. In Hello’s anthology the following pages (quoted by Elizabeth! are from Godfried van Wevel: 97–103 (Humility), 112–22 (On interior detachment), except for a passage from pp. 119–21, not quoted by Elizabeth, 169–70. This having been said, our abbreviations *Ru* will refer simply to the anthology of Hello, the one in which Elizabeth read him.
- 117 *Le Livre des visions et instructions de la bienheureuse Angèle de Foligno*. Traduit par Ernest Hello, DDB et Cie, 1895, 3e ed., 286 pp.

## *Père Vallée*

We must make special mention of the Dominican Father, Irénée Vallée whom Elizabeth met several times. The first was fourteen months before her entrance. Also, she had read some of his sermons before as well as after she entered.<sup>118</sup> She saw him again several times in Carmel and made a retreat under him in 1902.

The real influence of Père Vallée, which, in our opinion, was not as great as that of Paul, John of the Cross, or the two Teresas, has nothing in common with the myth which would like to make Elizabeth the mouthpiece of the Dominican preacher. We will examine the question more thoroughly in AL; we limit ourselves here to the following remarks.

“Père Vallée is already a rather complex concept. Far less an original thinker than an eloquent preacher, he is himself a crucible in which numerous influences have mingled, and he continued to enrich himself by his readings and his contacts. For it to be really complete, someday a little study should be made on the influence of Elizabeth of the Trinity (especially after her death) on the thought of Père Vallée, who was so legitimately proud of her whom he readily called his “daughter.”

Elizabeth was not the only one to appreciate the Father Prior of the Dominicans of Dijon. He was very highly regarded and likewise listened to in the Carmel. Several Sisters had him as their spiritual director. He frequently preached there on great feasts and was asked to give the community retreats of 1897, 1900, and 1902; Elizabeth read the texts of the first two retreats that she had not attended. He also willingly gave the texts (often printed) of his sermons given elsewhere. Thus P. Vallée communicated to the Carmel of Dijon, in a theological vocabulary full of a personal oratorical style, a spiritual and dogmatic richness. There already existed a whole “Valléen background” in the Carmel of Dijon before Elizabeth entered. So she drew from this “background.” Sister Marie of the Trinity and Sister Agnes of Jesus and Mary, both directed by P. Vallée, contributed to introducing her to it. Mother Germaine, Prioress and Mistress of Novices, greatly esteemed the Father and doubtless encouraged the reading of his sermons; but her own personal spirituality and vocabulary

were more purely “teresian”—and we must understand by this word also Thérèse of Lisieux whom Mother Germaine particularly loved. What, at first sight, can seem a “Valléen” influence is often only secondary in Elizabeth. It was strongest in 1901–1902.

Later, other influences will prevail although Elizabeth still quotes P. Vallée in her letters to Abbé Chevignard, a Dominican tertiary.

## **Notes**

[118](#) Cf. L 54 (note 2), 133 (note 4), 145 (note 2).

## *Elizabeth's Originality*

Elizabeth had a very good auditory memory. From her childhood she had spent hours at her piano each day, listening to the sounds with a refined ear and assimilating the rhythm of the pieces that she played. Thus this memory was capable of very faithfully rendering the sermons of the Mission of 1899 (see her *Diary*), and the accents, and turns of phrases of P. Vallée.

But in the end, this receptivity is not so much a question of “memory.” It is her heart inflamed by love of God and all that concerns God that makes her “listen”—the word she so loved—as an ardent contemplative: first to P. Vallée, then to Mother Germaine, and later to the greatest masters of the spiritual life. But above all, she listened to her “Master” par excellence, Jesus, who sends his Spirit into this young heart that is so penetrable and avid for Life. “O Word eternal, Word of my God, I want to spend my life in listening to You. . . .” (PN 15)

“May our life flow into His. . . . There let us become silent that we may listen to Him who has so much to tell us . . . that we may hear everything that is being sung in His soul.” (L 164)

The level of expression, the level of thought existed in Elizabeth as they do in all of us who are enriched by our contacts, our reading, and our teachers. Dead at twenty-six, Elizabeth did not have the time, despite the richness of her heart, to attain a wholly personal style nor, despite her intelligence, a wholly original expression of her mystical life. But if we search not for the form in the man but the *man* in his form, we see that Elizabeth of the Trinity is situated at another level: that of holiness, of the experience of life in God—a lived experience. She is not a professor of theology, not even of mystical theology; she is a witness of grace in action!

Elizabeth Catez read relatively little. But she contemplated at length the pages of the incarnation of Christ, his death, his life-giving Eucharist, the infinite Charity that educates us to a life in God, with God, for God—and for others. She particularly delighted in walking in the garden of the New Testament; above all in St. Paul and St. John, fascinated by the wide horizons that these two guides opened up before her wondering eyes. This gives to her writings a very broad and “Christian” base and makes them

“relevant” for every believer who seeks a close relationship with God in the depths of his heart, and finds it again at the surface of each day.

## *Testimony*

Elizabeth's writings belong first of all to the order of witnessing, to be understood in the context of her unwritten acts and words. A witness does not want to prove but to share. Either you are touched by it or you reject it. Or you begin to question.

This does not exclude that there is to be found in the writings of this young mystic, not a ready-made "doctrine" but an underlying doctrinal foundation. "The structure of her spiritual universe, the content and the style of her theological thought," wrote Hans Urs von Balthasar, "are of an intensity and a flawless consistency."<sup>119</sup>

We would like to end this general introduction with the lines that this theologian sent us after receiving Volume III of the *Complete Works*, and which express our own expectation: "This profusion of new texts will help to awaken a general interest in Elizabeth. The Christian people knows well what it owes its Saints!"

Conrad De Meester

## **Notes**

<sup>119</sup> *Elisabeth de la Trinité et sa mission spirituelle*, Paris, Seuil, 1960, p. 24. This French translation, reviewed by the author, contains certain nuances in regard to the original, *Elisabeth von Dijon, und ihre geistliche Sendung*, Jakob Hegner, Köln-Olten, 1952. (Reprinted in *Schwestern im Geist. Therese von Lisieux und Elisabeth von Dijon*, Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln, 1970.) This rich study could only be based at that time on the *Souvenirs* and the texts edited by P. Philipon, the limits of which we have already described.

## **Major Spiritual Writings**

# **I Heaven In Faith**

# HEAVEN IN FAITH

## Introduction

Elizabeth of the Trinity has still three months to live when, in the first half of August 1906, she writes the first of her four spiritual treatises. The disease ruthlessly pursues its course; Elizabeth knows that death is now inevitable and imminent. She has an intense desire to see God and a faith that seems unshakable. Her mother related that, during their first meeting after the serious crisis at the end of March and the beginning of April, “Elizabeth did not hide her regret at not having gone to Heaven! . . . Never did she give me one word of hope of a cure; she felt that the Master was calling her.”<sup>1</sup> But her heart overflowed with tenderness for her own, and it is of this tenderness that *Heaven in Faith* will be born.

These pages were conceived as a “surprise” for Guite, their recipient, who will know of this initiative only two months after her sister’s death, as we shall see. Could Elizabeth have done better than to leave to Guite, for whom she “felt the heart of a little mother” (L 204), a lasting written souvenir which contains a solid and wholly spiritual nourishment? The *Letters from Carmel* reveal the level the friendship and exchanges between the two sisters had already attained.

### *A Musical Unity*

Elizabeth will organize her souvenir as a “retreat” of *ten* days, like the Carmelites make each year. Each day will have its two “prayers.”

The retreat has a *precise end*, the only one that Elizabeth still pursues: “During this retreat . . . the object of which is to make us more like our adored Master, and more than that, to become so one with Him that we can say: I live no longer I but He lives in me. . . .” (HF 28) The *way to be followed* is specified: union with God (in Christ) by a return to the center of our soul where, since our baptism, the Trinity opens a dwelling for us; this implies a prayerful and assiduous searching, full of loving attention to the

hidden God who is the great Present One, and requires the total gift of love that dies to all egoism. This whole search for God is animated by the awareness that he loves us and visits us through his Eucharist, his word, the secret touches of his grace, and his concrete desires for us scattered throughout our life; Christ is in all this; he is the way which leads us and the image which draws us; living thus, we will become, like Mary, a true “praise of glory” of God.

The unity of this treatise is less methodical and structural than psychological and musical. The great leitmotif of union with God, always differently orchestrated, runs through this whole symphony. The unity of these pages is that of the life which has inspired them: having reached the spiritual summits, Elizabeth of the Trinity, the saint and mystic, is translating the great theme of these pages by a radical and persevering gift to the hidden God who she knows is present, who is her consuming Fire, transforming her being into him, and who will soon unveil his Face forever.

To be able to appreciate the true value of this retreat, we must hear within us the echo that each word, each quotation, touched by faith, awoke in Elizabeth. But all these resonances, all these dreams, all these decisions here expressed are summed up in the first and last lines of this treatise: the overture and finale of the symphony. Everything is developed, beginning with the solemn intonation, full of evangelical tones: “‘Father, I will that where I am they also whom You have given Me may be with Me. . . .’ He wills that where He is we should be also, not only for eternity, but already in time. . . .” (HF) Everything will be concentrated in the final chords: “In the Heaven of Glory the Blessed have no rest day or night saying: Holy, holy, holy. . . . In the heaven of her soul, the praise of glory has already begun her work of eternity.” (HF 44) It is a profoundly Christian and contemplative hymn that we listen to here.

### *For “Every Soul” (HF 10)*

Contemplative does not necessarily mean cloistered. The nun Elizabeth is aware throughout these pages that she is addressing a young mother with two children, married to a banker. She considers that neither the home nor encounters<sup>2</sup> with others should prevent Guite from being united with God

who is present everywhere. Have we not all “received . . . the spirit of adoption as children in which we cry out: Abba, Father” (HF 31)? “The Trinity, this is our home. . . .” (HF 2)

By little touches, the Carmelite extends her aspirations for union with God to every Christian. When she speaks of the inner freedom required to “live in close union with God” and teaches that a soul must be “stripped and withdrawn from all things,” she adds in parenthesis and underlines “(in *spirit*)” (HF 11). Descent into the depths “is not an external separation from external things but a solitude of spirit” (HF 7). Elizabeth explains that the “Remain in Me” that Jesus addresses to all is an “order” and a “wish” valid “for you with everyone and everything” (HF 3). When we choose love that is forgetful of self, we “find everywhere the secret of growing in love even in our relations . . . with the world (and) in the midst of the cares of life” (HF 16). If one goes to “everything with the same attitude of soul that our holy Master would have” (HF 27), then everything becomes “a sacrament which gives God to it” (HF 10). And Elizabeth recalls to the young mother Mary’s example in awaiting her Child: “In what peace, in what recollection Mary lent herself to everything she did! How even the most trivial things were divinized by her!” (HF 40)

The only explicit allusion to the religious life found here serves again to make it relative and to emphasize the fundamental and common Christian value which is love.<sup>3</sup> It is in the plural that Elizabeth writes to her married sister: “. . . to correspond to our vocation and to become perfect *Praises of Glory* of the Most Holy Trinity.”<sup>4</sup> Whether in the cloister or in the world, Elizabeth recognizes only one Christian way, that of love in everything, and of attention to God present and prevenient.

### *A Mosaic in an Apse*

Elizabeth never said to herself: “I am going to write a ‘spiritual treatise.’” Her original idea was simply to give pleasure to Guite by leaving her a souvenir written in her hand and, at the same time, to do her some good. She is not concerned either with being original or quoting her sources; the references to authors<sup>5</sup> are freely made at will. In this perspective who will prevent her from strewing these pages with beautiful texts borrowed from

others if they have already expressed very well what she wants to say? For her to use Scripture and the mystics with whom she felt in unison is not an indication of a lack of inventiveness but a richness of listening, a desire to be objective; we will return to this point in the introduction to the *Last Retreat*.

Among biblical authors St. Paul—the “great St. Paul” (L 304), “St. Paul, my dear saint” (L 306), she writes in the letters of these days—obviously occupies the first place. Then comes St. John.

The first non-biblical author that she quotes is St. John of the Cross: “This beautiful book gives joy to my soul, which finds in it a wholly substantial nourishment,” she had written again two weeks before (L 299). But to choose texts of John of the Cross is for Elizabeth one more way of giving pleasure to her sister whom she had initiated with success into the reading of the mystical doctor by giving her her own book: “I am very pleased that you love St. John of the Cross; I was sure you would for I know *my child*” (L 239).

But the author who appears most often in this retreat is Ruysbroeck. For five or six weeks Elizabeth had been plunging enthusiastically into the reading of this great Flemish mystic. It is a “wonderful” book (L 288), “magnificent” (L 300), it contains “magnificent things” (L 292). Elizabeth wants to share with her sister certain pages, certain horizons, discovered in the book that their mother had given her.

In this retreat we also find quotations or reminiscences of other authors: Lacordaire, Bossuet, a text attributed to Albert the Great, Teresa of Avila, a letter recently received from P. Vallée, a note from Canon Gaume found in her *Manual for Christians*. . . .

If in this way Elizabeth assembles as it were a mosaic of beautiful texts, the apse which is to contain them is indeed her own! For, and we must emphasize it, these are but selections: between the first and tenth “day,” where much is in her own vein, along with the remarkable description of the “praise of glory” (HF 43–44), we will find personal passages that are very revealing. The borrowed passages themselves sometimes reveal very original adaptations. And, finally, there is a choice and a structuring of texts which serve as a vehicle for the convictions and desires that dwell in the depths of her being. Their inspiration is hers. We sense that Elizabeth had

first savored and prayed these texts for a long time in true *lectio divina*. Where there is often not originality of thought, there is an originality of heart and of contemplative gaze.

### *Description and History*

Elizabeth wrote her retreat in a notebook, 18.3 x 10.7 cm., with ruled paper and a hardback cover bound in black oilcloth. The notebook contains 114 pages.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth began on page two leaving the first page blank; she filled the notebook up to page 70, leaving the following 44 pages blank.

Although it cannot be proven with certitude, the analogy with the *Last Retreat* makes it probable that the invalid had proportioned her efforts and in fact spread out the writing over “ten days.” She wrote with her cherished books by her side: the long extracts prove it for her excellent memory would not have sufficed of itself to remember them. The texts chosen reflect her recent reading, perhaps of the same day. Elizabeth could have taken a few notes in advance, but nothing indicates that she made a rough copy.

*Heaven in Faith* was written in *the first half of August 1906*. It precedes the *Last Retreat* begun on the 16th. In HF 20 the “sixth day” Elizabeth quotes a passage from P. Vallée’s letter written from Belgium the 5th of August; she surely had not received it before August 7; besides she could have quoted it several days later. The Marian tenor of the “tenth day” is perhaps inspired by the feast of the Assumption, although this cannot be affirmed.<sup>7</sup>

Elizabeth certainly asked permission from her Prioress to write this retreat and use this notebook. Thus Mother Germaine knew of it and will temporarily keep the notebook when Elizabeth gives it to her. So Elizabeth did not have the opportunity to explain to her sister the “literary genre” of her text or to tell her that she had largely drawn from Ruysbroeck and John of the Cross. In fact Guite will not learn of the existence of this “surprise” until the month of January 1907. On January 7th, Mother Germaine wrote her: “Did I tell you the other day about the little retreat notebook that Elizabeth prepared for you as a final souvenir last summer? Your dear Mother will tell you about it. You must be so busy these days. . . .” The same day she wrote to Mme. Catez “. . . I am going to send you a little

retreat notebook that she prepared during the last days of her exile for her dear Marguerite. She asked me to send it to her as a last souvenir. She had in mind her sister's soul and that of her nieces but she thought that the soul of her beloved mother would also joyfully find in it this wholly profound movement of faith and love. . . . I kept this treasure so long because I needed it for my little work. . . .”<sup>8</sup>

Guite's ignorance concerning the existence of this notebook warns us therefore to interpret in a very broad sense Mother Germaine's remark that Elizabeth wrote this retreat “to answer the desire of a soul very dear to her who had begged her to initiate her into the secret of the interior life, to help *her find heaven on earth.*”<sup>9</sup>

This is the title Mother Germaine will give the little spiritual treatise which Elizabeth left without a title: “How to Find Heaven on Earth.” Considering the title too long, P. Philipon dropped the first three words in his books and entitled the retreat “Heaven on Earth.” But that is an overemphasis of the thought of an Elizabeth ravaged by disease and physical suffering.

If it is best to abbreviate the title given by Mother Germaine, still we would like to keep the idea of “how we can find . . .”; the answer is, faith (cf. HF 19–20). If Elizabeth sometimes affirms she has found her “Heaven on earth” (L 122; cf. L 133) because we carry this Heaven within our soul (*ibid* and HF 32, 44), this Heaven is under the “veil of faith which covers it” (HF 19). Elizabeth then states more precisely, in speaking of “Heaven in faith” (L 143, 165, 169, 274): “How good faith is; it is Heaven in darkness” (L 162). She had understood that well when she made her profession in pure faith after hours of confusion “overwhelmed with anguish” (L 152). “During the night that preceded the great day [of her profession], while I was in choir waiting for the Bridegroom, I realized that my Heaven had begun on earth; Heaven in faith, with suffering and immolation for Him whom I love!” (L 169)

The treatise, in partial form, revised and stripped especially of the quotations from Ruysbroeck, appeared in the *Souvenirs* beginning with the edition of 1915. It will remain in this version (even after being collated with the original text in 1927) in all editions of the *Souvenirs* and P. Philipon's books, and also in the second edition (partial one of 1911<sup>10</sup>) of the short

work *Reflections and Thoughts in the Form of Retreats*,<sup>11</sup> which underwent at least seven editions. That of 1942 gives the integral text for the first time. In the text we are going to read we, of course, are the ones who introduced the page numbering.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

- 1 RB 2 in PAT. Cf. also L 266.
- 2 Guite relates: “Last winter [1905–1906] I had to go to a party, and I told her that the prospect of it was not very pleasant. She answered, ‘As for me, I am very glad that you are going to this party for at least there will be one there who will love God and keep Him company. So you must look very beautiful!’” (RB 3 in PAT).
- 3 Cf. the passage of Ruysbroeck on the “way of life or the clothing” in HF 24.
- 4 HF 41; also in the plural in HF 44.
- 5 Here is a list of *explicit references* to her sources (we omit the references to the word of the “Master” and also vague references to Scripture suggested by the quotation marks that Elizabeth inserts herself); *St. Paul*, 19 times (HF 2, 4, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27 [3x], 28 [2x], 31, 35, 41, 42 [2x]); *St. John*, 5 times (HF 2, 14, 22, 31, 38); *St. John of the Cross*, 4 times (HF 5, 6, 19, 42); *Isaiah*, twice (HF 1, 34); *David*, twice (HF 16, 23); “*the prophet*” twice (it is Hosea in HF 3 and Ezechiel in HF 26); *St. Peter*, once (HF 27); *St. John Baptist*, once (HF 38); *Bossuet*, once (HF 22); *Lacordaire* once (HF 6); a *pious author* twice (it is pseudo-Albert the Great in HF 25 and Ruysbroeck in HF 40). The expression “pious author” was current in the Carmel of Dijon at that time. Note also that Elizabeth never writes the name of Ruysbroeck (or “Rusbrock” as Ernest Hello wrote): perhaps this foreign name intimidated her pen.
- 6 Without counting the two sheets glued against the flyleaf at the front and back of the notebook, Elizabeth tore out a sheet (which would have been pp. 3–4) after the words “l’Essence divine invisible”: from HF I. Did she make an error? The bottom half will be used to write P 108. Notice also that the black ink with a copper base gives way after the words “Celui qui arrive” from HF 17, to a pale copper-colored ink. This treatise is entirely written in ink.
- 7 Note that between L 304 and L 305, there are exactly *ten days* of silence in her correspondence.
- 8 Notably the *Circular*. Thirty years later Guite will recall that “after Elizabeth’s death” Mother Germaine gave her the notebook and said, “She prepared it as a last remembrance” (cf. PS in PAT).
- 9 In the Foreword (p. 3) of the opusculc cited *infra*, note 10. Also in the *Souvenirs* of 1915, p. 305.
- 10 In a letter of May 20, 1911, the Carmel of Zarauz (exiled from Bordeaux) expressed its desire to see “the last retreat printed separately: . . . such a sublime commentary on certain passages of Holy Scripture.” Mother Germaine noted down concerning this letter (which supposes that this partially printed edition was still unknown), “One complimentary copy, Retreat, 1st ed.” She sent it in fact for the Carmel of Zarauz acknowledges receipt of the “printed matter” on June 7th: “. . . what a nice surprise.” A letter of July 8, 1911, from the Carmel of Westburn indicates the same suggestion and the same pleasure, “What a nice surprise! How grateful we are to you for having acceded to our humble but ardent desires concerning this marvellous retreat. . . . We never tire of reading and rereading these remarkable pages from the pen of one who is practically a child. . . .” September 14, the Carmel of Turin will order “three copies of the last

*Retraite of Laudem gloriae*” (which cost 0.40 F). It was a small book of 34 pages called *Dernière retraite de Laudem gloriae*. But as in the *Souvenirs* of 1909 and 1910, the “fifteenth day” is missing (cf. *infra*, p. 145, n.13 ).

- 11 The present state of our research assures us that there were at least seven editions: (1) 1911 (with only LR; cf. preceding note), (2) Between October 6, 1911 and March 31, 1915, since this edition bears the imprimatur of Jacques-Ludovicus [Monestès], Bishop of Dijon during this period (Carmel of Dijon, 17 x 11.3 cm., s.d., 64 p.). (3) Between February 2, 1916 and November 11, 1926 (s.d., 64 p.) for it bears the imprimatur of Maurice [Landrieux], then Bishop of Dijon. (4) Between these same dates for it has the same imprimatur. Only a *photo* of Elizabeth has replaced the *picture* reproduced in the preceding edition. It was on a copy that Mother Germaine listed the corrections (which would appear in the *Souvenirs* from 1927 on); (5) 1930, 64 p. (imprimatur of E. Marigny, vicar-general) (6) 1942, 76 p. (s.d., but the imprimatur of October 11, 1942, of G. Jacquin, vicar-general); (7) 1968, 84 p. (imprimatur of May 15, 1968, of R. Lefebvre, vicar-general).
- 12 We therefore began a fresh paragraph before the numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 42, and 44.

# HEAVEN IN FAITH

## Text

### First Day

#### *First Prayer*

1. “Father, I will that where I am they also whom You have given Me may be with Me, in order that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, because You have loved Me before the creation of the world.”<sup>1</sup> Such is Christ’s last wish, His supreme prayer before returning to His Father. He wills that where He is we should be also, not only for eternity, but already in time, which is eternity begun and still in progress. It is important then to know where we must live with Him in order to realize His divine dream. “The place where the Son of God is hidden is the bosom of the Father, or the divine Essence, invisible to every mortal eye, unattainable by every human intellect,”<sup>2</sup> as Isaiah said: “Truly You are a hidden God.”<sup>3</sup> And yet His will is that we should be established in Him, that we should live where He lives, in the unity of love; that we should be, so to speak, His own shadow.<sup>4</sup>

2. By baptism, says St. Paul, we have been united to Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> And again: “God seated us together in Heaven in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the ages to come the riches of His grace.”<sup>6</sup> And further on: “You are no longer guests or strangers, but you belong to the City of saints and the House of God.”<sup>7</sup> The Trinity—this is our dwelling, our “home,” the Father’s house that we must never leave. The Master said one day: “The slave does not remain with the household forever, but the son<sup>8</sup> remains there forever” (St. John).<sup>9</sup>

#### *Second prayer*

3. “Remain in Me.”<sup>10</sup> It is the Word of God who gives this order, expresses this wish. Remain in Me, not for a few moments, a few hours which must pass away, but “*remain . . .*” permanently, habitually, Remain in

Me, pray in Me, adore in Me, love in Me, suffer in Me, work and act in Me. Remain in Me so that you may be able to encounter anyone or anything; penetrate further still into these depths. This is truly the “solitude into which God wants to allure the soul that He may speak to it,” as the prophet sang.<sup>11</sup>

4. In order to understand this very mysterious saying, we must not, so to speak, stop at the surface, but enter ever deeper into the divine Being through recollection. “I pursue my course,”<sup>12</sup> exclaimed St. Paul; so must we descend daily this pathway of the Abyss<sup>13</sup> which is God; let us slide down this slope<sup>14</sup> in wholly loving confidence. “Abyss calls to abyss.”<sup>15</sup> It is there in the very depths that the divine impact<sup>16</sup> takes place, where the abyss of our nothingness encounters the Abyss of mercy,<sup>17</sup> the immensity of the all<sup>18</sup> of God. There we will find the strength to die to ourselves and, losing all vestige of self, we will be changed into love. . . . “Blessed are those who die in the Lord”!<sup>19</sup>

## Second Day

### *First prayer*

5. “The kingdom of God is within you.”<sup>20</sup> Awhile ago God invited us to “remain in Him,” to live spiritually in His glorious heritage,<sup>21</sup> and now He reveals to us that we do not have to go out of ourselves to find Him: “The kingdom of God is within”! . . . St. John of the Cross says that “it is in the substance of the soul where neither the devil nor the world can reach”<sup>22</sup> that God gives Himself to it; then “all its movements are divine, and although they are from God they also belong to the soul, because God works them in it and with it.”<sup>23</sup>

6. The same saint also says that “God is the center of the soul. So when the soul with all” its “strength will know God perfectly, love and enjoy Him fully, then it will have reached the deepest center that can be attained in Him.” Before attaining this, the soul is already “in God who is its center,” “but it is not yet in its *deepest* center, for it can still go further. Since love is what unites us to God, the more intense this love is, the more deeply the soul enters into God and the more it is centered in Him. When it “possesses even one degree of love it is already in its center”; but when this love has attained its perfection, the soul will have penetrated into its *deepest* center.

There it will be transformed to the point of becoming very like God.”<sup>24</sup> To this soul living within can be addressed the words of Père Lacordaire to St. Mary Magdalene: “No longer ask for the Master among those on earth or in Heaven, for He is your soul and your soul is He.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Second prayer*

7. “Hurry and come down, for I must stay in your house today.”<sup>26</sup> The Master unceasingly repeats this word to our soul which He once addressed to Zacchaeus. “Hurry and come down.” But what is this descent that He demands of us except an entering more deeply into our interior abyss?<sup>27</sup> This act is not “an external separation from external things,” but a “solitude of spirit,”<sup>28</sup> a detachment from all that is not God.

8. “As long as our will has fancies that are foreign to divine union, whims that are now yes, now no, we are like children; we do not advance with giant steps in love for fire has not yet burnt up all the alloy; the gold is not pure; we are still seeking ourselves; God has not consumed” all our hostility to Him. But when the boiling cauldron has consumed “every imperfect love, every imperfect sorrow, every imperfect fear,” “then love is perfect and the golden ring of our alliance is larger than Heaven and earth. This is the secret cellar in which love places his elect,” this “love leads us by ways and paths known to him alone; and he leads us with no turning back, for we will not retrace our steps.”<sup>29</sup>

## **Third Day**

### *First prayer*

9. “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home *in him*.”<sup>30</sup>

The Master once more expresses His desire to dwell in us. “If anyone loves Me”! It is love that attracts, that draws God to His creatures: not a sensible love but that love “strong as death that deep waters cannot quench.”<sup>31</sup>

10. “Because I love My Father, I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.”<sup>32</sup> Thus spoke our holy Master, and every soul who wants to live close to Him must also live this maxim. The divine good pleasure<sup>33</sup> must be its

food,<sup>34</sup> its daily bread; it must let itself be immolated by all the Father's wishes in the likeness of His adored Christ. Each incident, each event, each suffering, as well as each joy, is a sacrament which gives God to it; so it no longer makes a distinction between these things; it surmounts them, goes beyond them to rest in its Master, above all things. It "exalts" Him high on the "mountain of its heart," yes, "higher than His gifts, His consolation, higher than the sweetness that descends from Him."<sup>35</sup> "The property of love is never to seek self, to keep back nothing, but to give everything to the one it loves."<sup>36</sup> "Blessed the soul that loves" in truth; "the Lord has become its captive through love!"<sup>37</sup>

### *Second prayer*

11. "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."<sup>38</sup> St. Paul comes to bring us a light to guide us on the pathway of the abyss. "You have died!" What does that mean but that the soul that aspires to live close to God "in the invincible fortress of holy recollection"<sup>39</sup> must be "set apart, stripped, and withdrawn from all things"<sup>40</sup> (*in spirit*). This soul "finds within itself a simple ascending movement of love to God, whatever creatures may do; it is invincible to things which" pass away, "for it transcends them, seeking God alone."<sup>41</sup>

12. "Quotidie morior."<sup>42</sup> "I die daily." I decrease,<sup>43</sup> I renounce self more each day so that Christ may increase in me and be exalted; I "remain" very little "in the depths of my poverty." I see "my nothingness, my misery, my weakness; I perceive that I am incapable of progress, of perseverance; I see the multitude of my shortcomings, my defects; I appear in my indigence." "I fall down in my misery, confessing my distress, and I display it before the mercy"<sup>44</sup> of my Master. "Quotidie morior." I place the joy of my soul (as to the will, not sensible feelings) in everything that can immolate, destroy, or humble me, for I want to make room for my Master. I live no longer I, but He lives in me:<sup>45</sup> 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,"<sup>46</sup> so that the Father in bending attentively over me can recognize the image<sup>47</sup> of His beloved Son in whom He has placed all His delight.<sup>48</sup>

## **Fourth Day**

### *First prayer*

13. “Deus ignus consumens.”<sup>49</sup> Our God, wrote St. Paul, is a consuming Fire, that is “a fire of love” which destroys, which “transforms into itself everything that it touches.”<sup>50</sup> “The delights of the divine enkindling<sup>51</sup> are renewed in our depths by an unremitting activity: the enkindling of love in a mutual and eternal satisfaction. It is a renewal that takes place at every moment in the bond of love.”<sup>52</sup> Certain souls “have chosen this refuge to rest there eternally, and this is the silence in which, somehow, they have lost themselves.” “Freed from their prison, they sail on the Ocean of Divinity without any creature being an obstacle or hindrance to them.”<sup>53</sup>

14. For these souls, the mystical death of which St. Paul spoke yesterday becomes so simple and sweet! They think much less of the work of destruction and detachment that remains for them to do than of plunging into the Furnace of love burning within them which is none other than the Holy Spirit, the same Love which in the Trinity is the bond between the Father and His Word. They “enter into Him by living faith, and there, in simplicity and peace” they are “carried away by Him” beyond all things, beyond sensible pleasures, “into the sacred darkness” and are “transformed into the divine image.”<sup>54</sup> They live, in St. John’s expression, in “communion”<sup>55</sup> with the Three adorable Persons, “sharing” their life, and this is “the contemplative life”; this contemplation “leads to possession.”<sup>56</sup> “Now this simple possession is eternal life savored in the unfathomable abode. It is there, beyond reason, that the profound tranquillity of the divine immutability awaits us.”<sup>57</sup>

### *Second prayer*

15. “I have come to cast fire upon the earth and how I long to see it burn.”<sup>58</sup> It is the Master Himself who expresses His desire to see the fire of love enkindled. In fact, “all our works and all our labors are nothing in His sight. We can neither give Him anything nor satisfy His only desire, which is to exalt the dignity of our soul.” Nothing pleases Him so much as to see it “grow.” “Now nothing can exalt it so much as to become in some way the equal of God; that is why He demands from the soul the tribute of its love, as the property of love is to make the lover equal to the beloved as much as possible. The soul in possession of this love” “appears on an equal footing

with Christ because their mutual affection renders everything common to both.”<sup>59</sup> “I have called you My friends because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”<sup>60</sup>

16. But to attain to this love the soul must first be “entirely surrendered,”<sup>61</sup> its “will must be calmly lost in God’s will”<sup>62</sup> so that its “inclinations,” “its faculties” “move only in this love and for the sake of this love. I do everything with love, I suffer everything with love: this is what David meant when he sang, ‘I will keep all my strength for You.’”<sup>63</sup> Then “love fills it so completely, absorbs it and protects it” so well “that everywhere it finds the secret of growing in love,” “even in its relations with the world”;<sup>64</sup> “in the midst of life’s cares it can rightly say: ‘My only occupation is loving’! . . .”<sup>65</sup>

## **Fifth Day**

### *First prayer*

17. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to My voice and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me.”<sup>66</sup> Blessed the ears of the soul alert enough, recollected enough to hear this voice of the Word of God; blessed also the eyes<sup>67</sup> of this soul which in the light of a deep and living faith can witness the “coming” of the Master into His intimate sanctuary. But what then is this coming? “It is an unceasing generation, an enduring hymn of praise.” Christ “comes with His treasures, but such is the mystery of the divine swiftness that He is continually coming, always for the first time as if He had never come; for His coming, independent of time, consists in an eternal “now,”<sup>68</sup> and an eternal desire eternally renews the joys of the coming. The delights that He brings are infinite, since they are Himself.” “The capacity of the soul, enlarged by the coming of the Master, seems to go out of itself in order to pass through the walls into the immensity of Him who comes; and a phenomenon occurs: God, who is in our depths, receives God coming to us, and God contemplates God! God in whom beatitude consists.”<sup>69</sup>

### *Second prayer*

18. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, remains in Me and I in him.”<sup>70</sup> “The first sign of love is this: that Jesus has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink.” “The property of love is to be always giving and always receiving. Now the love” of Christ<sup>71</sup> is “generous. All that He has, all that He is, He gives; all that we have, all that we are, He takes away. He asks for more than we of ourselves are capable of giving. He has an immense hunger which wants to devour us absolutely. He enters even into the marrow of our bones, and the more lovingly we allow Him to do so, the more fully we savor Him.” “He knows that we are poor, but He pays no heed to it and does not spare us. He Himself becomes in us His own bread, first burning up, in His love, all our vices, faults, and sins. Then when He sees that we are pure, He comes like a gaping vulture that is going to devour everything. He wants to consume our life in order to change it into His own; ours, full of vices, His, full of grace and glory and all prepared for us, if only we will renounce ourselves. Even if our eyes were good enough to see this avid appetite of Christ who hungers for our salvation, all our efforts would not prevent us from disappearing into His open mouth.” Now “this sounds absurd, but those who love will understand!” When we receive Christ “with interior devotion, His blood, full of warmth and glory, flows into our veins and a fire is enkindled in our depths.” “We receive the likeness of His virtues, and He lives in us and we in Him. He gives us His soul with the fullness of grace, by which the soul perseveres in love and praise of the Father!” “Love draws its object into itself; we draw Jesus into ourselves; Jesus draws us into Himself. Then carried above ourselves into love’s interior,” seeking God, “we go to meet Him, to meet His Spirit, which is His love, and this love burns us, consumes us, and draws us into unity where beatitude awaits us.” “Jesus meant this when He said:<sup>72</sup> ‘With great desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you.’”<sup>73</sup>

## **Sixth Day**

### *First prayer*

19. “To approach God we must believe.”<sup>74</sup> Thus speaks St. Paul. He also says, “Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>75</sup> That is “faith makes so present and so certain future

goods, that by it, they take on existence in our soul and subsist there before we have fruition of them.”<sup>76</sup> St. John of the Cross says that it serves as “feet” to go “to God,”<sup>77</sup> and that it is “possession in an obscure manner.”<sup>78</sup> “It alone can give us true light” concerning Him whom we love, and our soul must “choose it as the means to reach blessed union.”<sup>79</sup> “It pours out in torrents in the depths of our being all spiritual goods. Christ, speaking to the Samaritan woman, indicated faith when He promised to all those who would believe in Him that He would give them ‘a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.’”<sup>80</sup> “Thus even in this life faith gives us God, covered, it is true, with a veil but nonetheless God Himself.”<sup>81</sup> “When that which is perfect comes,” that is, clear vision, then “that which is imperfect,” in other words, knowledge given through faith, “will receive all its perfection.”<sup>82</sup>

20. “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.”<sup>83</sup> That is our great act of faith, the way to repay our God love for love; it is “the mystery hidden”<sup>84</sup> in the Father’s heart, of which St. Paul speaks, which, at last, we penetrate and our whole soul thrills!”<sup>85</sup> When it can believe in this “exceeding love”<sup>86</sup> which envelops it, we may say of it as was said of Moses, “He was unshakable in faith as if he had seen the Invisible.”<sup>87</sup> It no longer rests in inclinations or feelings; it matters little to the soul whether it feels God or not, whether He sends it joy or suffering: it believes in His love. The more it is tried, the more its faith increases because it passes over all obstacles, as it were, to go rest in the heart of infinite Love who can perform only works of love. So also to this soul wholly awakened in its faith<sup>88</sup> the Master’s voice can say in intimate secrecy the words He once addressed to Mary Magdalene: “Go in peace, your faith has saved you.”<sup>89</sup>

### *Second prayer*

21. “If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light.”<sup>90</sup> What is this single eye of which the Master speaks but this “simplicity of intention” which “gathers into unity all the scattered forces of the soul and unites the spirit itself to God. It is simplicity which gives God honor and praise; it is simplicity which presents and offers the virtues to Him. Then, penetrating and permeating itself, permeating and penetrating all creatures,

it finds God in its depths. It is the principle and end of virtues, their splendor and their glory. I call simplicity of intention that which seeks only God and refers all things to Him.” “This is what places man in the presence of God; it is simplicity that gives him light and courage; it is simplicity that empties and frees the soul from all fear today and on the day of judgement.” “It is the interior slope” and “the fountain of the whole spiritual life.” “It crushes evil nature under foot, it gives peace, it imposes silence on the useless noises within us.” It is simplicity that “hourly increases our divine likeness. And then, without the aid of intermediaries, it is simplicity again that will transport us into the depths where God dwells and will give us the repose of the abyss. The inheritance which eternity has prepared for us will be given us by simplicity. All the life of the spirits, all their virtue, consists—with the divine likeness—in simplicity, and their final rest is spent on the heights in simplicity also.” “And according to the measure of its love, each spirit possesses a more or less profound search for God in its own depths.”<sup>91</sup> The simple soul, “rising by virtue of its interior gaze, enters into itself and contemplates in its own abyss the sanctuary where it is touched”<sup>92</sup> by the touch of the Holy Trinity. Thus it has penetrated into its depths “to the very foundation which is the gate of life eternal.”<sup>93</sup>

## **Seventh Day**

### *First prayer*

22. “God chose us in Him before creation, that we should be holy and immaculate in His presence, in love.”<sup>94</sup>

“The Holy Trinity created us in its image, according to the eternal design that it possessed in its bosom before the world was created,”<sup>95</sup> in this “beginning without beginning” of which Bossuet speaks<sup>96</sup> following St. John: “In principio erat Verbum.”<sup>97</sup> In the beginning was the Word; and we could add: in the beginning was nothing, for God in His eternal solitude already carried us in His thought.<sup>98</sup> “The Father contemplates Himself” “in the abyss of His fecundity, and by the very act of comprehending Himself He engendered another person, the Son, His eternal Word. The archetype of all creatures who had not yet issued out of the void eternally dwelt in Him, and God saw them and contemplated them in their type in Himself. This

eternal life which our archetypes possessed without us in God, is the cause of our creation.”

23. “Our created essence asks to be rejoined with its principle.”<sup>99</sup> The Word, “the Splendor of the Father, is the eternal archetype after which creatures are designed on the day of their creation.” This is “why God wills that, freed from ourselves, we should stretch out our arms towards our exemplar and possess it,” “rising” above all things “towards our model.” “This contemplation opens” the soul “to unexpected horizons.” “In a certain manner it possesses the crown towards which it aspires.”<sup>100</sup> “The immense riches that God possesses by nature, we may possess by virtue of love, by His dwelling in us and by our dwelling in Him.”<sup>101</sup> “It is by virtue of this immense love”<sup>102</sup> that we are drawn into the depths of the “intimate sanctuary” where God “imprints on us a true image of His majesty.”<sup>103</sup> Thus it is, thanks to love and through love, as the Apostle says, that we can be holy and immaculate in God’s presence,<sup>104</sup> and can sing with David: “I will be unblemished and I will guard myself from the depths of sinfulness within me.”<sup>105</sup>

### *Second prayer*

24. “Be holy for I am holy.”<sup>106</sup> It is the Lord who speaks. “Whatever may be our way of life or the clothing we wear, each of us must be the holy one of God.”<sup>107</sup> Who then is “the most holy”? “The one who is most loving, who gazes longest on God and who most fully satisfies the desires of His gaze.”<sup>108</sup> How do we satisfy the desires of God’s gaze but by remaining “simply and lovingly”<sup>109</sup> turned towards Him so that He may reflect His own image as the sun is reflected through a pure crystal.<sup>110</sup> “Let us make man in our own image and likeness”:<sup>111</sup> such was the great desire in the Heart of our God. “Without the likeness which comes from grace, eternal damnation awaits us. When God sees that we are prepared to receive His grace, His generous goodness is ready to give us the gift that will give us His likeness. Our aptitude for receiving His grace depends on the inner integrity with which we move towards Him.” And then God, “bringing us His gifts,” can “give Himself, imprint on us His likeness, forgive and free us.”<sup>112</sup>

25. “The highest perfection in this life,” says a pious author,<sup>113</sup> “consists in remaining so closely united to God that the soul with all its faculties and its powers is recollected in God,” “that its affections united in the joy of love find rest only in possession of the Creator. The image of God imprinted in the soul is formed by reason, memory, and will. As long as these faculties do not bear the perfect image of God, they do not resemble Him as on the day of creation. The form of the soul is God who must imprint Himself there like the seal on wax, like the stamp on its object. Now this is not fully realized unless the intellect is completely enlightened by knowledge of God, the will captivated by love of the supreme good, and the memory fully absorbed in contemplation and enjoyment of eternal happiness.” “And as the glory of the blessed is nothing else than the perfect possession of this state, it is obvious that the initial possession of these blessings constitutes perfection in this life.”<sup>114</sup> To “realize this ideal”<sup>115</sup> we must “keep recollected within ourselves,” “remain silently in God’s presence,” “while the soul immerses itself, expands, becomes enkindled and melts in Him, with an unlimited fullness.

## **Eighth Day**

[*First prayer*]

26. “Those whom God has foreknown, He has also predestined to become conformed to the image of His divine Son. . . . And those whom He has predestined, He has also called; and those whom He has called He has also justified; and those whom He has justified He has also glorified. What then shall we say after that? If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who will separate me from the love of Christ?”<sup>116</sup> This is how the mystery of predestination, the mystery of divine election appeared to the enlightened gaze of the Apostle. “Those whom He has foreknown.” Are not we of that number? Cannot God say to our soul what He once said through the voice of His prophet: “I passed by you and saw you. I saw that the time had come for you to be loved. I spread my garment over you. I swore to you to protect you, and I made a covenant with you, and you became mine.”<sup>117</sup>

27. Yes, we have become His through baptism, that is what Paul means by these words: “He called them”; yes, called to receive the seal of the Holy

Trinity; at the same time we have been made, in the words of St. Peter, “sharers in the divine nature,”<sup>118</sup> we have received “a beginning of His existence.”<sup>119</sup> . . . Then, He has justified us by His sacraments, by His direct “touches” in our contemplation “in the depths” of our soul;<sup>120</sup> justified us also by faith<sup>121</sup> and according to the measure of our faith in the redemption that Jesus Christ has acquired for us. And finally, He wants to glorify us, and for that reason, says St. Paul, He “has made us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light,”<sup>122</sup> but we will be glorified in the measure in which we will have been conformed to the image of His divine Son.<sup>123</sup> So let us contemplate this adored Image, let us remain unceasingly under its radiance so that it may imprint itself on us; let us go to everything with the same attitude of soul that our holy Master would have. Then we will realize the great plan by which God has “resolved in Himself to restore all things in Christ.”<sup>124</sup>

### *Second prayer*

28. “It seems to me that all is loss since I have known the excelling knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For love of Him I have forfeited everything. I have accounted all else rubbish that I may gain Christ. What I want is to know Him, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death. I pursue my course striving to attain what He has destined me for by taking hold of me. My whole concern is to forget what is behind and to strain forward constantly to what is ahead. I run straight to the goal, to the vocation to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.”<sup>125</sup> That is: I want only to be identified with Him: “Mihi vivere Christus est,” “Christ is my life!”<sup>126</sup>

All the intensity of St. Paul’s soul is poured out in these lines. The object of this retreat<sup>127</sup> is to make us more like our adored Master, and even more, to become so one with Him that we may say: “I live no longer I, but He lives in me. And the life that I now live in this body of death, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”<sup>128</sup> Oh! Let us study this divine Model: His knowledge, the Apostle tells us, is so “excelling.”<sup>129</sup>

29. And when He first came into the world what did He say? “You no longer delight in holocausts; so I have assumed a body and I come, O God,

to do Your will.”<sup>130</sup> During the thirty-three years of His life this will became so completely His daily bread, that at the moment of handing over His soul into His Father’s hands, He could say to Him: “All is accomplished,”<sup>131</sup> yes, all Your desires, *all* have been realized, that is why “I have glorified You on earth.”<sup>132</sup> When Jesus Christ spoke to His apostles of this food which they did not know, He explained to them “that it was to do the will of Him who sent Me.”<sup>133</sup> Also He could say: “I am never alone. He who sent Me is always with Me because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.”<sup>134</sup>

30. Let us lovingly eat this bread of the will of God. If sometimes His will is more crucifying, we can doubtless say with our adored Master: “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by,” but we will add immediately: “Yet not as I will, but as You will”,<sup>135</sup> and in strength and serenity, with the divine Crucified, we will also climb our calvary singing in the depths of our hearts and raising a hymn of thanksgiving to the Father. For those who march on this way of sorrows are those “whom He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His divine Son,”<sup>136</sup> the One crucified by love!

## **Ninth Day**

*[First prayer]*

31. “God has predestined us to the adoption of children through Jesus Christ, in union with Him, according to the decree of His will, to make the glory of His grace blaze forth, by which He has justified us in His beloved Son. In whose blood we have redemption, the remission of our sins, according to the riches of His grace, which has abounded beyond measure in us in all wisdom and prudence. . . .”<sup>137</sup> “The soul now a true daughter of God is, in the words of the Apostle, moved by the Holy Spirit Himself: ‘All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.’”<sup>138</sup> And again: “We have not received a spirit of slavery to be still led by fear, but the spirit of adoption as children in which we cry out: Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well; I mean heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ if only we suffer with Him so as to be glorified with Him.”<sup>139</sup> “It is to

bring us to this abyss of glory.<sup>140</sup> that God has created us in His image and likeness.”<sup>141</sup>

“See,” says St. John, “what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . Now we are the children of God, and we have not yet seen what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him makes himself holy, just as He Himself is holy.”<sup>142</sup>

32. This is the measure of the holiness of the children of God: “to be holy as God, to be holy with the holiness of God”;<sup>143</sup> and we do this by living close to Him in the depths of the bottomless abyss<sup>144</sup> “within.” “Then the soul seems in some way to resemble God Who, even though He delights in all things, yet does not delight in them as much as He does in Himself, for He possesses within Himself a supereminent good before which all others disappear. Thus all the joys which the soul receives are so many reminders inviting her to enjoy by preference the good she already possesses and to which nothing else can compare.”<sup>145</sup> “Our “possesses.” Father Who art in Heaven. . . .”<sup>146</sup> It is in “this little heaven”<sup>147</sup> that He has made in the center of our soul that we must seek Him and above all where we must remain.<sup>148</sup>

33. Christ said one day to the Samaritan woman that “the Father seeks true adorers in spirit and truth.”<sup>149</sup> To give joy to His Heart, let us be these true adorers. Let us adore Him in “spirit,” that is, with our hearts and our thoughts fixed on Him, and our mind filled with His knowledge imparted by the light of faith. Let us adore Him in “truth,” that is, by our works for it is above all by our actions that we show we are true.<sup>150</sup> this is to do always what is pleasing to the Father<sup>151</sup> whose children we are. And finally, let us “adore in spirit and in truth,” that is, *through* Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ, for He alone is the true Adorer in spirit and truth.

34. Then we will be daughters<sup>152</sup> of God; we will “know with an experiential knowledge the truth of these words of Isaiah: ‘You will be carried at the breast and He will caress you on His knees.’” In fact “God seems to be wholly occupied with overwhelming the soul with caresses and marks of affection like a mother who brings up her child and feeds it with her own milk.”<sup>153</sup> Oh! Let us be attentive to the mysterious voice of our Father! “My daughter,” He says, “give Me your heart.”<sup>154</sup>

## *Second prayer*

35. “God who is rich in mercy, impelled by His exceeding love, even when we were dead because of our sins, has brought us back to life in Christ Jesus. . . .”<sup>155</sup> “Because all have sinned and have need of the glory of God, they are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ, whom God has set forth as a propitiation for sins, showing both that He is just and that He makes just him who has *faith* in Him”<sup>156</sup> (St. Paul).

“Sin is such a terrifying evil that in order to seek any good whatsoever, or to avoid any evil whatsoever, no sin should be committed.” “Now we have committed very many.” How can we keep from “fainting in adoration when we plunge into the abyss of mercy and the eyes of our soul are fixed upon this fact: God has taken away our sins.”<sup>157</sup> He said so Himself: “I will blot out all their iniquities and I will no longer remember their sins.”<sup>158</sup>

“The Lord, in His mercy, willed to turn our sins against themselves to our advantage; He found a way to make them useful for us, to convert them in our hands into a means of salvation. But do not let this diminish in any way our horror of sinning, nor our sorrow for having sinned. But our sins” “have become a source of humility for us.”<sup>159</sup>

36. When the soul “considers deep within itself, its eyes burning with love, the immensity of God, His fidelity, the proofs of His love, His favors which can add nothing to His happiness; then, looking at itself it sees its crimes against this immense Lord, it turns to its own center with such self-contempt that it does not know how it can endure its horror.”<sup>160</sup> “The best thing for it to do is to complain to God, its Friend, of the strength of its self-love which betrays it by not letting it place itself as low as it would wish. It resigns itself to the will of God, and in self-abnegation, finds true, invincible, and perfect peace, which nothing can disturb. For it has plunged into such a deep abyss that no one will seek it there.”<sup>161</sup>

37. “If anyone should affirm to me that to find the bottom of the abyss is to be immersed in humility, I would not contradict him. However, it seems to me that to be plunged into humility is to be plunged into God, for God is the bottom of the abyss. That is why humility, like charity, is always capable of increasing.”<sup>162</sup> “Since a humble heart is the vessel needed, the vessel capable of containing the grace God wants to pour into it,” let us be

“humble.”<sup>163</sup> “The humble can never rank God high enough nor themselves low enough. But here is the wonder: their weakness turns into wisdom, and the imperfection of their acts, always insufficient in their eyes, will be the greatest delight of their life. Whoever possesses humility has no need of many words to be instructed; God tells him more things than he can learn; such was the case with the Lord’s disciples.”<sup>164</sup>

## Tenth Day

[*First prayer*]

38. “Si scires donum Dei. . . .”<sup>165</sup> “If you knew the gift of God,” Christ said one evening to the Samaritan woman. But what is this gift of God if not Himself? And, the beloved disciple tells us: “He came to His own and His own did not accept Him.”<sup>166</sup> St. John the Baptist could still say to many souls these words of reproach: “There is one in the midst of you, ‘*in you*,’ whom you do not know.”<sup>167</sup>

39. “If you knew the gift of God. . . .” There is one who knew this gift of God, one who did not lose one particle of it, one who was so pure, so luminous that she seemed to be the Light itself: “*Speculum justitiae*.”<sup>168</sup> One whose life was so simple, so lost in God that there is hardly anything we can say about it.

“*Virgo fidelis*”:<sup>169</sup> that is, Faithful Virgin, “who kept all these things in her heart.”<sup>170</sup> She remained so little, so recollected in God’s presence, in the seclusion of the temple, that she drew down upon herself the delight of the Holy Trinity: “Because He has looked upon the lowliness of His servant, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!”<sup>171</sup> The Father bending down to this beautiful creature, who was so unaware of her own beauty, willed that she be the Mother in time of Him whose Father He is in eternity. Then the Spirit of love who presides over all of God’s works came upon her; the Virgin said her *fiat*: “Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to Your word,”<sup>172</sup> and the greatest of mysteries was accomplished. By the descent of the Word in her, Mary became forever God’s prey.

40. It seems to me that the attitude of the Virgin during the months that elapsed between the Annunciation and the Nativity is the model for interior

souls, those whom God has chosen to live within, in the depths of the bottomless abyss. In what peace, in what recollection Mary lent herself to everything she did! How even the most trivial things were divinized by her! For through it all the Virgin remained the adorer of the gift of God!<sup>173</sup> This did not prevent her from spending herself outwardly when it was a matter of charity; the Gospel tells us that Mary went in haste to the mountains of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth.<sup>174</sup> Never did the ineffable vision that she contemplated within herself in any way diminish her outward charity. For, a pious author says, if contemplation “continues towards praise and towards the eternity of its Lord, it possesses unity and will not lose it. If an order from Heaven arrives, contemplation turns towards men, sympathizes with their needs, is inclined towards all their miseries; it must cry and be fruitful. It illuminates like fire, and like it, it burns, absorbs and devours, lifting up to Heaven what it has devoured. And when it has finished its work here below, it rises, burning with its fire, and takes up again the road on high.”<sup>175</sup>

### *Second prayer*

41. “We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be *the praise of His glory*.”<sup>176</sup>

It is St. Paul who tells us this, St. Paul who was instructed by God Himself. How do we realize this great dream of the Heart of our God, this immutable will for our souls? In a word, how do we correspond to our vocation and become perfect *Praises of Glory* of the Most Holy Trinity?

42. “In Heaven” each soul is a praise of glory of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, for each soul is established in pure love and “lives no longer its own life, but the life of God.”<sup>177</sup> Then it knows Him, St. Paul says, as it is known by Him.<sup>178</sup> In other words “its intellect is the intellect of God, its will the will of God, its love the very love of God. In reality it is the Spirit of love and of strength who transforms the soul, for to Him it has been given to supply what is lacking to the soul,” as St. Paul says again.<sup>179</sup> “He works in it this glorious transformation.” St. John of the Cross affirms that “the soul surrendered to love, through the strength of the Holy Spirit, is not far from being raised to the degree of which we have just spoken,”<sup>180</sup> even here below! This is what I call a perfect praise of glory!

43. A praise of glory is a soul that lives in God, that loves Him with a pure and disinterested love, without seeking itself in the sweetness of this love; that loves Him beyond all His gifts and even though it would not have received anything from Him, it desires the good of the Object thus loved. Now how do we *effectively* desire and will good to God if not in accomplishing His will since this will orders everything for His greater glory? Thus the soul must surrender itself to this will completely, passionately, so as to will nothing else but what God wills.

A praise of glory is a soul of silence that remains like a lyre under the mysterious touch of the Holy Spirit so that He may draw from it divine harmonies; it knows that suffering is a string that produces still more beautiful sounds; so it loves to see this string on its instrument that it may more delightfully move the Heart of its God.

A praise of glory is a soul that gazes on God in faith and simplicity; it is a reflector of all that He is; it is like a bottomless abyss into which He can flow and expand; it is also like a crystal through which He can radiate and contemplate all His perfections and His own splendor.<sup>181</sup> A soul which thus permits the divine Being to satisfy in itself His need to communicate “all that He is and all that He has,”<sup>182</sup> is in reality the praise of glory of all His gifts.

Finally, a praise of glory is one who is always giving thanks. Each of her acts, her movements, her thoughts, her aspirations, at the same time that they are rooting her more deeply in love, are like an echo of the eternal Sanctus.

44. In the Heaven of glory the blessed have no rest “day or night, saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. . . . They fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever. . . .”<sup>183</sup>

In the heaven of her soul, the praise of glory has already begun her work of eternity. Her song is uninterrupted, for she is under the action of the Holy Spirit who effects everything in her;<sup>184</sup> and although she is not always aware of it, for the weakness of nature does not allow her to be established in God without distractions, she always sings, she always adores, for she has, so to speak, wholly passed into praise and love in her passion for the glory of her God. In the heaven of our soul let us be praises of glory of the Holy Trinity, praises of love of our Immaculate Mother. One day the veil will fall, we will

be introduced into the eternal courts, and there we will sing in the bosom of infinite Love. And God will give us “the new name promised to the Victor.”<sup>185</sup> What will it be?

## LAUDEM GLORIAE<sup>186</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Jn 17:24.
- 2 SC 22 Cf. *Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington: ICS Publications, 1973) St. 1:3, p. 417.
- 3 Is 45:15, cited in SC 22.
- 4 “His own shadow”: the image is inspired by Ru 81: “Our shadow accompanies us everywhere. . . . That is the way love follows God. . . .”
- 5 “By baptism” “united”: cf. Rm 6:4–5.
- 6 Ep 2:6–7.
- 7 .Ep 2:19.
- 8 Elizabeth wrote “Son” with a capital letter. But since her intention was universal, we corrected it to a small letter.
- 9 Jn 8:35.
- 10 Jn 15:4.
- 11 Cf. Hs 2:14. This verse (very well-known) is also found in SC 376–377 and LF 566. Cf. *Collected Works*, SC, St 35:1, p. 543, LF, St 3:34, p. 623.
- 12 Cf. Ph 3:12.
- 13 At this period the image of the abyss in Elizabeth comes especially from Ruysbroeck (here Ru 52–53). Cf. L 292, n.2.
- 14 The “slope of love”: Ru 52. The “slope of humility”: Ru 101.
- 15 Ps 41:8. Cited in Ru 53.
- 16 Cf. Ru 40: “The impact takes place in the depths. . . .”
- 17 This image combines Ang 234 (“. . . the double abyss, where the divine Immensity encounters the nothingness of man,” also cited in GV 5) and (less pronounced) Ru 2, cited in L 298.
- 18 18. Cf. the “todo” of God in John of the Cross face to face with the “nada” (our nothingness) of man.
- 19 Ap 14:13.
- 20 Lk 17:21.
- 21 Cf. Ep 1:18.
- 22 LF 462. Cf. *Collected Works*, St. 1:9, p. 582.
- 23 LF 463. Cf. *Collected Works*, St. 1:9, p. 582.
- 24 LF 465–466. Cf. *Collected Works*, St. 1:13, p. 583.
- 25 Ru 9.
- 26 Lk 19:5.

- 27 Although the expression “interior abyss” (which we find again in L 292) is in Ru 158, Elizabeth is clearly echoing Ru 3– 5 where there is a commentary on Zacchaeus and in which “*this rapid descent which God demands* is simply an immersion in the *abyss* of the Divinity.” (We have italicized the words which she repeats.)
- 28 Ru 118.
- 29 This whole passage is taken from Ru 157–159, with some omissions.
- 30 Jn 14:23.
- 31 Ct 8:6–7.
- 32 Jn 14:31 and 8:29.
- 33 The expression, quite well-known, is found for example in SC 114, 228, 309, 310.
- 34 The reference to the example of Jesus in the following lines proves that Elizabeth is thinking of Jn 4:32.
- 35 Ru 9.
- 36 SC 351 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 32:2, p. 535). Elizabeth says “Seek self” instead of “Being occupied with self, of wanting nothing for self” of John of the Cross.
- 37 SC 350. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 32:1, p. 534.
- 38 Col 3:3.
- 39 SC 439 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:3, p. 564). Literally: “the fortress, the invincible citadel of interior recollection.” Cf. L 284, n.6.
- 40 SC 439. Literally: “set apart, stripped, alone, withdrawn from all creatures.” Cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:2, p. 563.
- 41 Ru 117.
- 42 “I die daily”: I Co 15:31.
- 43 A reminiscence of Jn 3:30 (which she cites in LR 39): “He must increase and I must decrease” (trans. from her *Manual*).
- 44 Cf. Ru 1–2. Ruysbroeck speaks of the just man. Elizabeth changes “he” and “his” to “I” and “my.”
- 45 Cf. Ga 2:20, cited in SC 127 (cf. following note).
- 46 Cf. SC 127 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:8, pp. 455–456). John of the Cross speaks of St. Paul, but Elizabeth changes “his” to “my.”
- 47 Cf. Rm 8:29: “the image of His Son,” often quoted by her.
- 48 Cf. Mt 17:5. Cf. PN 15, with n.31.
- 49 “God is a consuming fire”: Heb 12:29, citing Dt 4:24, quoted in LF 490 (cf. following note).
- 50 LF 490. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:2, p. 596.
- 51 Ruysbroeck wrote: “embrassement” (embrace), but Elizabeth twice changes it to “embrasement” (enkindling) thus prolonging the image of fire which she had just used. An unknown hand has added a second s.
- 52 Ru 72.
- 53 Cf. Ru 72–73. Elizabeth omits the word “dark” after “silence.” In the second part she changes “we” to “they.”
- 54 Cf. Ru 144–145. Quoting freely, Elizabeth changes, above all, “we” to “they.”
- 55 Cf. 1 Jn 1:3.
- 56 Cf. Ru 145.

- 57 Ru 147.
- 58 Lk 12:49.
- 59 SC 307–308. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:1, p. 520.
- 60 Jn 15:15, cited in SC 308 (cf. preceding note).
- 61 SC 308. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:2, pp. 520.
- 62 Cf. SC 314. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:10, pp. 522–523.
- 63 Ps 58: 10, cited (without “all”) in SC 313. Everything between quotation marks starting with “inclinations” is taken from SC 313.
- 64 SC 306, with some grammatical adaptations. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 27:8, pp. 519–520.
- 65 SC 313.
- 66 Ap 3:20.
- 67 Cf. Mt 13:16.
- 68 Elizabeth enlarges (as in the typography of Ru 64) the word *now* and sets it off with quotation marks.
- 69 This whole passage on “the coming” of the Master is taken from Ru 64–65 (with some insignificant omissions). She replaces the expression “Spouse” of Ruysbroeck by her own cherished name “Master” (twice) and “Christ” (once). In HF 18 she will change it once to “He.” Did she do this because of Guite who is married (to a human “spouse”)?
- 70 Jn 6:56.
- 71 The text of Ruysbroeck which we have already been reading since “The first sign . . .” reads here: “Now the love of Jesus is avid and generous.” Elizabeth omits the expression “avid” (which nevertheless she will copy further on). She also changes the name of “Jesus” to “Christ.”
- 72 This whole number HF 18, from “The first sign . . .” is taken from Ru 151–154, with some omissions.
- 73 Lk 22:15, this text is also part of the citation of Ru 154.
- 74 Heb 11:6.
- 75 Heb 11:1.
- 76 Note to Heb 11:1 of Canon Gaume in Elizabeth’s Manual, p. 838.
- 77 SC 31. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 1:11, p. 420.
- 78 SC 122. Literally: “The possession of truth in an obscure manner.” Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:3, p. 454.
- 79 SC 121. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:2, pp. 453–454.
- 80 SC 122, containing Jn 4:14.
- 81 SC 124. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:4, p. 454.
- 82 SC 126, containing 1 Co 13:10. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:6, p. 455.
- 83 1 Jn 4:16.
- 84 ‘The mystery hidden’: Col 1:26.
- 85 Elizabeth quotes here from memory the letter recently received from P. Vallée (cf. L 304, n.10); here is the original passage: “We have known the love God has for us, *and we have believed in it*. . . . To believe that we are loved like that is our great act of faith; it is the way to repay our crucified God love for love; it is the ‘mystery hidden’ in God’s heart for all ages and finally penetrated, and our whole heart thrills under the life which overflows into it—and for which it was made.”

- 86 Ep 2:4.
- 87 Heb 11:27.
- 88 Cf. PN 15.
- 89 Lk 7:50.
- 90 Mt 6:22.
- 91 Almost this whole number 21 from “simplicity of intention,” is taken from Ru 33–35, with some omissions, among others, the more difficult words “transcendence” and “essence.”
- 92 Ru 36. Ru 35–6 speaks of “the touch” of Christ; Elizabeth adds her personal note: “touch of the Holy Trinity. . . .”
- 93 Ru 37.
- 94 Ep 1:4.
- 95 Ru 68.
- 96 *Elévations à Dieu sur tous les mystères de la religion chrétienne*, Besançon-Lille-Paris, 1845, p. 250: “in the beginning, without beginning, before all beginning, beyond all beginning. . . .”
- 97 Jn 1:1.
- 98 Doubtless Elizabeth means to say that in one sense there had not been a beginning since from all eternity God was already thinking of us.
- 99 From “The Father contemplates. . . .” is taken from Ru 67.
- 100 Ru 67–69 (*passim*), with certain grammatical adaptations.
- 101 Ru 66.
- 102 Ru 66.
- 103 Ru 70. Literally: “imprints on the ravished soul,” etc.
- 104 Cf. Ep 1:4.
- 105 Ps 17:24 (v. 26 in the *Manual* which gives this translation).
- 106 1 P 1:16, citing Lv 11:44–45.
- 107 Ru 157.
- 108 Ru 113.
- 109 LF 564. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:33, p. 622.
- 110 Cf. L 269, n.11.
- 111 Gn 1:2
- 112 Ru 48, with some grammatical adaptations at the end.
- 113 This “pious author” is first of all St. Albert the Great, *De l’Union avec Dieu*, Fribourg, Saint-Paul, 1895, 136 pp. But Martin Grabmann (cf. *Benediktinische Monastschrift*, 2, 1920, pp. 201ff) has shown that this treatise is in reality by a Benedictine monk Jean de Castel. See art. *Johannes von Kastl*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, V. col. 1049. Note that in this whole number 25, Elizabeth is merely copying her “retreat devotion” of 1904 (explanation, cf. PN 16, n.1).
- 114 *Op. cit.*, pp. 10–13. Elizabeth says “perfect image” instead of “perfect imprint” of the text.
- 115 *Op. cit.*, p. 4, with some grammatical adaptations.
- 116 Rm 8:29–31, 35. Elizabeth writes “me” instead of “us,” a moving personal accent in the midst of the great sufferings she had already experienced.
- 117 Ez 16:8. Elizabeth follows the translation of SC 252, in the feminine (“soul”).

- 118 2 P 1:4.
- 119 Heb 3:14.
- 120 Elizabeth refers to SC 211–212. Cf. *Collected Works*, ST 19:4–5, p. 489.
- 121 Cf. Rm 5:1.
- 122 Col 1:12.
- 123 Cf. Rm 8:29.
- 124 Cf. Ep 1:9–10.
- 125 Ph 3:8, 10–14.
- 126 Ph 1:21.
- 127 Elizabeth explains here the center and end of this retreat which she will give Guite: union with God through union and conformity to Christ.
- 128 Ga 2:20.
- 129 Cf. Ph 3:8.
- 130 Heb 10:5–7 (paraphrase).
- 131 Jn 19:30.
- 132 Jn 17:4.
- 133 Jn 4:34.
- 134 Jn 8:29.
- 135 Mt 26:39.
- 136 Rm 8:29.
- 137 Ep 1:5–8.
- 138 LF 523, containing Rm 8:14. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:34, p. 608.
- 139 Rm 8:15–17.
- 140 This whole phrase with the biblical allusion is from SC 423. (cf. *Collected Works*, St 39:4, p. 558).
- 141 Cf. Gn 1:26.
- 142 1 Jn 3:1a, 2–3.
- 143 Echo of I Jn 3:3, which she has just quoted.
- 144 “Bottomless Abyss”: Elizabeth’s formula which she will repeat in HF 43 and LR 1.
- 145 SC 229–230. (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 21:12, p. 493. Elizabeth omits “substantial and permanent goods” after the word “possesses.”
- 146 Mt 6:9.
- 147 Cf. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, chap 28 (29 in Bouix trans. vol. III, p. 202 which we cite here): “Those who can thus enclose themselves in this little heaven of their soul where He dwells. . . .” Teresa is commenting on the Our Father (which Elizabeth has just quoted); she also had a great love for the Samaritan woman, and put the emphasis on “works” and “acts” (cf. notes 13 and 14). Elizabeth enters here more explicitly into St. Teresa’s thought.
- 148 Reminiscence of SC St 1: it is “in the inmost depths of the soul” that we must “seek” God (SC 26) and “remain” (SC 29) with Him. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 1:3, p. 417; St 1:9, p. 419.
- 149 Cf. Jn 4:23.
- 150 Teresa of Avila insisted on this, and it was well known in Carmel. For ex. *Interior Castle*, III, 1 (trans. Bouix, t. III. pp. 377–378 and *ibid* VII, 4 (pp. 611–613).

- 151 Cf. Jn 8:29.
- 152 “Daughters,” in the feminine. Elizabeth always thinks of Guite. In the citation of SC which follows, child is also in the feminine (“la”) as seen below in Pr 23:26.
- 153 SC 299, with grammatical adaptations, containing Is 66:12. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 27:1, p. 517.
- 154 Pr 23:26.
- 155 Cf. Ep 2:4–5.
- 156 Rm 3:23–26.
- 157 Ru 169. Elizabeth omits “neither mortal nor venial” after the word “committed.”
- 158 Is 43:25.
- 159 Ru 169–170.
- 160 Ru 97. Elizabeth changes “man” of Ruysbroeck (and the grammatical structure in the masculine) to “soul.” Slight omissions: among others, the word “essence” (of God).
- 161 Ru 98. Same change to the feminine as in the preceding note.
- 162 Ru 99. With a slight omission. Elizabeth adds the “me” in “affirm to me.”
- 163 Ru 100, with slight omissions.
- 164 Ru 102. With omissions.
- 165 Jn 4:10.
- 166 Jn 1:11.
- 167 Jn 1:26. Elizabeth adds and underlines, putting it between quotation marks ‘*in you*’. This is a reminiscence of Lk 17:21 (which she quotes several times and which she loved so much): “The kingdom of God is within you.” This is how her *Manual* translated it according to the exegesis of the time. The “within” had a strong resonance for Elizabeth.
- 168 “Mirror of justice,” from the Litany of Loretto.
- 169 “Faithful Virgin,” from the Litany of Loretto.
- 170 Cf. Lk 2:19 and 51.
- 171 Lk 1:48.
- 172 Lk 1:38.
- 173 Cf. “The Virgin remains the wholly adoring one of the gift of God”: a text that she had written on a little piece of embroidery work made by her during her illness. Cf. L 286, n.4.
- 174 Cf. Lk 1:39–40.
- 175 Ru 224. Elizabeth calls here “contemplation” what Ruysbroeck calls “freedom”: free will under the gift of fortitude.
- 176 Ep 1:11–12. Elizabeth enlarges the words (here in italics) “the praise of His glory” as in the following paragraph and at the end (cf. n.22).
- 177 Cf. SC 127. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:8, pp. 455–456.
- 178 Cf. 1 Co 13:12, cited in SC 408 (cf. n.16).
- 179 In this long quotation from SC (cf. following note), Elizabeth adds this allusion to Rm 8:26 of her dear St. Paul.
- 180 Cf. SC 408–409, from “her intellect . . .” *Collected Works*, St 38:3. p. 554. It will be noted that Elizabeth, in gleaning these texts, omits the expression “in the spiritual marriage.” Is it because Guite is married or because of personal discretion?
- 181 Cf. LF 615: (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:77, p. 640) “we could call it a crystal which, penetrated by the rays of the sun, reflects back its own splendors. “ For the image of the crystal see also L

269, n.11.

182 LF 529 (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:1, p. 610). Cf. also Ru 68, where the Father gives His Son “all that He has and all that He is” (“except the personal relation of the Father”).

183 Ap 4:8, 10.

184 Probable reminiscence of 1 Co 12:11: “It is one and the same Spirit who effects all these things. . .”

185 Cf. Ap 2:17.

186 Elizabeth enlarges the name she gives herself *Laudem gloriae* (here in italics) and writes it in the middle of the line. On this name, cf. L 250, n.16 and 17.

## **II The Greatness of Our Vocation**

# THE GREATNESS OF OUR VOCATION

## Introduction

**A**lthough the *Last Retreat* was written a few days earlier than the pages we are going to read, we have put it in third place, for it combines the more mystical tone of *Heaven in Faith* and the more ascetical tone of *The Greatness of Our Vocation*.

This “spiritual treatise” of September, 1906, is written to a young girl of Dijon; Françoise de Sourdon, age nineteen. The bonds of a long friendship already united her to Elizabeth, as the twenty-six letters that Elizabeth addressed to her witness, and which cover a period of more than eight years.<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth sees a little of herself in the young Françoise: “You have a temperament like mine, so I know what you can do” (L 98). But Françoise does not know how to direct her vitality as well as Elizabeth does, who often has to call her to order in a friendly way.

A difference of seven years in age gives Elizabeth’s friendship a certain maternal aspect and, once a Carmelite, she will spontaneously call herself Françoise’s “little mother” (for example L 98, 128). We recognize this note of tenderness in the pages which follow, her very last letter, with the play on her name “Framboise” [Raspberry] and the use of the familiar “tu.” If witnesses describe for us a somewhat capricious child who clung to her before her entrance, Elizabeth had, nonetheless, a keen sympathy for the young girl of whom she said: “What a character!” (L 178)

Here as in *Heaven in Faith*, the suffering Carmelite does not lose sight of her correspondent, which gives to these pages two particular characteristics adapted to Françoise’s personality.

First of all, a tone of *magnanimity*, and Elizabeth feels that the best of Françoise is capable of attaining it. Four years before she had already written her: “I understand that you need an ideal, something that will draw you out of yourself and raise you to greater heights. But, you see, there is

only One; it is *He*, the *Only Truth!* Ah, if you only knew Him a little as your Sabeth does! *He fascinates*, He sweeps you away; under His gaze the horizon becomes so beautiful, so vast, so luminous. . . . My dear one, do you want to turn with me towards this sublime Ideal? It is no fiction but a reality.” (L 128)

And finally, an *ascetic* note, for Françoise does not possess Guite’s maturity and inner richness. She must still conquer herself. So Elizabeth cannot tell her as much about her desires for mystical union. In fact, the “questions” (GV 2) Françoise asked have somewhat oriented the response. If the explanation is more ascetical, and thus is a good complement to *Heaven in Faith*, the end proposed remains just as lofty.

The letter to Françoise becomes a long meditation, a little treatise:<sup>2</sup> “Let’s *treat* humility first of all . . .” begins Elizabeth on a serious note (GV 2).

These pages turn around the axis of humility-magnanimity. Humility leads us to the forgetfulness of ourselves, to the death of the old man, in order to make us free, happy, and Christlike. Conscious of our “greatness” (GV 4), we will follow Christ, our image and model. Associated in his Passion, for the Church, we can draw near “our eternal predestination” (GV 9).

We have entitled these pages *The Greatness of Our Vocation*, because of the horizons they open up. A year earlier, Elizabeth had already written: “Oh, Framboise, how God has enriched us with His gifts; He has predestined us to divine adoption and thus to be heirs of His heritage of glory!” (L 238) A few days before, moreover, she was again speaking of “the greatness” of “this vocation” (LR 36).

Around the 9th of September, 1906,<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth completed in pencil the three ruled sheets folded in two;<sup>4</sup> it had taken her “many days.” The writing betrays her physical exhaustion, especially at the end. She is already “extremely weak; I feel as if I were going to faint at any moment.” But we notice the touch of humor when she describes her long letter as a “journal.”<sup>5</sup> She feels her young life is being harvested—she herself uses the image of the “sickle,” but her faith tells her that it is “love” that is consuming her (GV 7). Two months before her death, she writes from the infirmary: “I feel already as if I were almost in heaven in my little cell, alone with Him alone, bearing my cross with my Master” (GV 13).

## Notes

- 1 The first one is letter 16 of August 9, 1898 (Vol III).
- 2 Just as Ms B of Thérèse of Lisieux was originally a letter to her sister Marie. The *Souvenirs*, from the first edition, gives a special place to “this beautiful letter” and quotes it integrally (pp. 222–228). P. Philipon also makes it a separate little chapter in his book.
- 3 Cf. L 310, n. 1. Note the great resemblance between the first seven lines of GV 7 and L 309, also written around the 9th of September.
- 4 Two sheets, 26.8 x 21.5 cm. and a fragment of 26.8 x 14.6 cm. By folding them in two Elizabeth obtained twelve pages. In numbering the paragraphs, we began fresh paragraphs with numbers 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12.
- 5 Same title for her long and very beautiful letter to Guite, L 298 of July 16, 1906.

# THE GREATNESS OF OUR VOCATION

## Text

J.M. + J.T.

1. Here comes Sabeth at last to sit down by her dearest Framboise and visit—with her *pencil!* I say pencil for the heart-to-heart communion was established long ago, and we are now as one. How I love our evening rendez-vous;<sup>1</sup> it is like the prelude of that communion from Heaven to earth that will be established between our souls. It seems to me that I am like a mother bending attentively over her favorite child: I raise my eyes and look at God, and then I lower them on you, exposing you to the rays of His Love. Framboise, I do not use words when I speak to Him of you but He understands me even better for He prefers my silence. My dearest child, I wish I were a saint so that I could help you here below while waiting to do it from Heaven. What I would not endure in order to obtain for you the graces of strength that you need.

2. I want to answer your questions. Let's treat humility first; I have read some splendid pages on it in the book I spoke to you about.<sup>2</sup> The pious author says that nothing can “disturb” the humble. He possesses “invincible peace for he has plunged into such an abyss that no one would go that far to look for him.”<sup>3</sup> He also says that the humble person finds his greatest pleasure in life in feeling his own “weakness” “before God.”<sup>4</sup> Little Framboise, pride is not something that is destroyed with one good blow of the sword! Doubtless, certain heroic acts of humility, such as we read of in the lives of the saints, give it, if not a mortal blow, at least one that considerably weakens it; but without that grace we must put it to death each day! “Quotidie morior,” exclaimed St. Paul, “I die daily!”<sup>5</sup>

3. Framboise, this doctrine of dying to self is the law for every Christian, for Christ said: “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself.”<sup>6</sup> But this doctrine which seems so austere, takes on a delightful sweetness when we consider the outcome of this death—life in

God in place of our life of sin and misery. That is what St. Paul meant when he wrote: “Strip off the old man and clothe yourselves anew in the image of Him who created you.”<sup>7</sup> This image is God Himself. Do you recall His wish which He so clearly expressed on the day of creation: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”?<sup>8</sup> Oh! you see, if we would think more about the origin of our soul, things here below would seem so childish<sup>9</sup> that we would have only contempt for them. St. Peter writes in one of his epistles that “we have been made sharers in His divine nature.”<sup>10</sup> And St. Paul recommends that we “hold firm to the end this beginning of His existence which He has given us.”<sup>11</sup>

4. It seems to me the soul that is aware of its greatness enters into that “holy freedom of the children of God” of which the Apostle speaks,<sup>12</sup> that is, it transcends all things, including self. The freest soul, I think, is the one most forgetful of self. If anyone were to ask me the secret of happiness, I would say it is to no longer think of self, to deny oneself always. That is a good way to kill pride: let it starve to death! You see, pride is love of ourselves; well, love of God must be so strong that it extinguishes all our self-love. St. Augustine says we have two cities within us, the city of God and the city of SELF.<sup>13</sup> To the extent that the first increases, the second will be destroyed. A soul that lives by faith in God’s presence, that has this “single eye” that Christ speaks of in the Gospel,<sup>14</sup> that is, a purity of “intention” that seeks only God,<sup>15</sup> this soul, it seems to me, would also live in humility: it would recognize His gifts to it—for “humility is truth”<sup>16</sup>—but it would attribute nothing to itself, referring all to God as the Blessed Virgin did.

5. Framboise, all the movements of pride that you feel within yourself, only become faults when the will takes part in them! Without that, although you may suffer much, you are not offending God. Doubtless self-love is at the bottom<sup>16a</sup> of those faults which, as you say, you commit without thinking, but that, my poor darling, is, in a way, part of us. . . .What God asks of you is never to entertain deliberately any thought of pride, and never to act on the inspiration of pride, for this is wrong. And yet, if you find yourself doing either of these, you must not become discouraged, for again, it is pride which is irritated.<sup>17</sup> You must “display your misery”<sup>18</sup> like Magdalene at the Master’s feet, and ask Him to set you free. He so loves to

see a soul recognize its weakness. Then, as a great saint said, “The abyss of God’s immensity encounters the abyss of the creature’s nothingness,”<sup>19</sup> and God embraces this nothingness.

6. My dearest child, it is not pride to think that you do not want to live an easy life; I truly believe that God wants your life to be spent in a realm where the air breathed is divine. Oh! You see, I have a profound compassion for souls that live only for this world and its trivialities; I consider them as slaves, and I wish I could tell them: Shake off the yoke that weighs you down; what are you doing<sup>20</sup> with these bonds that chain you to yourself and to things less than yourself? It seems to me that the happy ones of this world are those who have enough contempt and forgetfulness of self to choose the Cross as their lot! What delightful peace we experience when we place our joy in suffering!

7. “In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the passion of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church.”<sup>21</sup> The apostle finds his happiness in this! The thought pursues me and I confess that I experience a profound inner joy in thinking that God has chosen to associate me in the passion of His Christ. This way of Calvary I climb each day seems to me more like the path of Beatitude! Have you ever seen those pictures depicting death reaping with his sickle? Well, that is my condition; I seem to feel myself being destroyed like that. Sometimes it is painful for nature and I can assure you that if I were to remain at that level, I would feel only my cowardice in the face of suffering. But that is looking at things from the human point of view! Very quickly “I open the eye of my soul in the light of faith.”<sup>21a</sup> And this faith tells me that it is love who is destroying me, who is slowly consuming me; then I feel a tremendous joy, and I surrender myself to Him as His prey.<sup>22</sup>

8. Framboise, to attain the ideal life of the soul, I believe we must live on the supernatural level, that is, we must never act “naturally.” We must become aware that God dwells within us and do everything with Him, then we are never commonplace, even when performing the most ordinary tasks, for we do not live in these things, we go beyond them! A supernatural soul never deals with secondary causes but with God alone. Oh! How its life is simplified, how it resembles the life of the blessed, how it is freed from self and from all things! Everything for it is reduced to unity, to that “one thing

necessary,”<sup>23</sup> of which the Master spoke to Magdalene. Then the soul is truly great, truly free, for it has “*enclosed its will in God’s.*”<sup>24</sup>

9. My Framboise, when we contemplate our eternal predestination, visible things seem so worthless. Listen to St. Paul: “Those whom God has foreknown, He has also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”<sup>25</sup> (That is not all, my little one, you are going to see that you are one of the number of the “known”!) “And those He has known He has called”: it is baptism which has made you a child of adoption,<sup>26</sup> which has stamped you with the seal of the Holy Trinity! “And those whom He has called, He has also justified”: how often you have been justified by the sacrament of penance and by all those touches of God in your soul, without you even being aware of it!

“And those whom He justified, He has also glorified.” That is what awaits you in eternity! But remember that our degree of glory will depend on the degree of grace in which God finds us at the moment of death; allow Him to complete His work of predestination in you. To do this listen to St. Paul again who will give you a program of life.

10. “Walk in Jesus Christ, rooted in Him, built up on Him strengthened in faith and growing in Him in thanksgiving.”<sup>27</sup> Yes, little child of my heart and soul, walk in Jesus Christ: you need this broad road, for you were not made for the narrow paths of here below! Be *rooted* in Him. This implies being uprooted from self, or doing everything as if you were, by denying self each time you meet it. Be *built* up on Him, high above everything that is passing, there where everything is pure, everything is luminous.

11. Be *strengthened in faith*, that is, never act except in the great light of God, never according to impressions or your imagination. Believe that He loves you, that He wants to help you in the struggles you have to undergo. Believe in His love, His *exceeding* love,<sup>28</sup> as St. Paul says. Nourish your soul on the great thoughts of faith which will reveal to you all its richness and the end for which God has created you! If you live like this, your piety will never be a nervous exaltation as you fear but will be *true*. Truth is so beautiful, the truth of love. “He loved me and gave Himself up for me.”<sup>29</sup> That, my little child, is what it means to be true!

12. And, finally, *grow in thanksgiving.*<sup>30</sup> That is the last word of the program and is but the consequence of it. If you walk rooted in Christ,

strengthened in your faith, you will live in thanksgiving: the love of the sons of God! I wonder how a soul that has sounded the depths of love the Heart of God has “*for it*” could be anything but joyful in every suffering and sorrow. Remember that “He has chosen you in Him before the creation of the world to be immaculate and pure in His presence in love”;<sup>31</sup> again it is St. Paul who says this. So do not fear struggles or temptations: “When I am weak,” exclaimed the Apostle, “it is then I am strong, for the strength of Jesus Christ dwells in me.”<sup>32</sup>

13. I wonder what our Reverend Mother is going to think when she sees this journal. She does not let me write any more for I am extremely weak, and I feel as if I would faint at any moment. This will probably be the last<sup>33</sup> letter from your Sabeth; it has taken her many days to write, and that explains its incoherence. And yet this evening I cannot bring myself to leave you. I am in solitude; it is seven-thirty, and the community is at recreation. As for me, I feel already as if I were almost in heaven here in my little cell, alone with Him alone, bearing my cross with my Master. Framboise, my happiness increases along with my suffering! If you only knew how delicious the dregs are at the bottom of the chalice prepared by my Heavenly Father!

A Dieu, beloved Framboise; I cannot go on. And in the silence of our rendez-vous you will guess, you will understand, what I do not tell you. I send you a kiss. I love you as a mother loves her little child. A Dieu my little one. “In the shadow of His wings may He guard you from all evil.”<sup>34</sup>

S.M. Eliz. of the Trinity

Laudem Glorïae

(This will be my new name in Heaven.)

A very respectful and loving remembrance to your dear mama and regards to dear Marie-Louise.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L 310, n.2.

<sup>2</sup> The anthology of Ruysbroeck (cf. L 288, n.7). “Spoke”: during a visit in the infirmary parlor a little before the 2nd of August (cf. L 302).

- 3 Ru 98.
- 4 Ru 99.
- 5 1 Co 15:31.
- 6 Mt 16:24.
- 7 Cf. Col 3:9–10.
- 8 Gn 1:26.
- 9 Perhaps this word came to her mind because she is writing to Françoise whose caprices she sometimes had to criticize (cf. L 98, 123, 128, 167).
- 10 Cf. 2 P 1:4.
- 11 Cf. Heb 3:14.
- 12 Cf. Rm 8:21.
- 13 *De Civitate Dei*, *passim*. Whereas Augustine speaks of the city of God and the earthly city, Elizabeth applies it to the “self” (which she underlines above and below) probably referring to what P. Fages said (after praising this book) in the 9th conference of his Retreat for the Community in 1904: “St. Augustine does not hesitate to say that we have within us two cities which are: divine love and self-love.” *De Civitate* 14:28 indicates them only as *cause*.
- 14 Mt 6:22, cited in Ru 34 (cf. the following note).
- 15 Ru 34.
- 16 Cf. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, VI, 10 (trans. Bouix, III, p. 566) “Humility is nothing else than walking in the truth.”
- 16a Elizabeth wrote “*fonds*” (instead of “fond”) but it is probably a mistake in spelling, as in HF 32 in speaking of “l’abîme sans fonds”; she corrects it herself in HF 36.
- 17 The manuscript is mutilated here but the words can easily be restored “s’irrite,” “Madeleine,” “qu’il,” “reconnaitre.” And on the back, in number 7: “Dieu” (the word is almost entirely effaced but is attested by the first copies), “passion.”
- 18 The proximity of the quotation from Angela di Foligno (cf. the following note) shows that it is probably a reminiscence of Ang 115 (where the expression is repeated twice) rather than of Ru 2, a text, moreover, already cited in HF 12 (cf. *ibid.*, n.15).
- 19 Cf. Ang 234: “. . . the double abyss, where the divine Immensity encounters the nothingness of man.” Elizabeth seems to be quoting from memory.
- 20 While expressing a very personal conviction, Elizabeth is probably recalling the exclamation of St. John of the Cross in SC 425–426 (cf. *Collected Works*, St. 39:7, p. 559), where he speaks of the “glorious destinies” of man: “O souls created for these wonders and called to realize them in yourselves, what are you doing? In what miserable nothings are you wasting your time? Your ambitions are but baseness. . . .”
- 21 Col 1:24.
- 21a “To open the eye of the understanding (the soul) in the light of faith”: formula of Catherine of Siena. Cf. L 199, n.9.
- 22 Cf. PN 15. On the origin of the use of “prey” in Thérèse of Lisieux, cf. L 125, n.3.
- 23 Cf. Lk 10:42.
- 24 Cf. Ru 157.
- 25 Rm 8:29. Then she also develops verse 30.
- 26 Cf. Rm 8:15. On this role of baptism, cf. Rm 6:3–4.

27 Col 2:6–7, a citation that she gradually develops.

28 Cf. Ep 2:4.

29 Ga 2:20.

30 Elizabeth writes: “croisse.” She underlines *rooted* and *built up*. So, logically, we did the same for *strengthened in faith* and *grow in thanksgiving*, the words taken from St. Paul.

31 Cf. Ep 1:4. Notice that Elizabeth puts the words of St. Paul in the feminine singular to adapt them to her correspondent.

32 Cf. 2 Co 12:10, 9.

33 It is in fact her last letter to Françoise. The writing reveals Elizabeth’s physical exhaustion.

34 Cf. Ps 90:4, 10, 11.

## **III Last Retreat**

# LAST RETREAT

## Introduction

From her cell in the infirmary, the 14th of August, 1906, Elizabeth of the Trinity announces to Mother Marie of Jesus (Prioress of the Carmel of Paray-le-Monial, and her former Prioress at the time of her entrance in Carmel, who had just recently come to Dijon) that tomorrow evening she will begin her annual retreat. She knows all too well it is the last one. “I am delighted to meet you on my great journey. I leave with the Blessed Virgin on the eve of her Assumption to prepare myself for eternal life. Our Mother [Mother Germaine] did me so much good by telling me that this retreat would be my novitiate for Heaven, and that on the 8th of December [fifth anniversary of her clothing], if the Blessed Virgin sees that I am ready, she will clothe me in her mantle of glory. Beatitude attracts me more and more; between my Master and me that is all we talk about, and His whole work is to prepare me for eternal life” (L 306). The same idea recurs in Letter 307 the next day.

Elizabeth had “asked for the grace of a retreat” until the “31st of August.”<sup>1</sup> The Prioress, who has had in her hand for just a few days the notebook of *Heaven in Faith*, and who for some time now has been thinking of the obituary circular that she must soon write on the young dying nun,<sup>2</sup> in her turn makes an apparently innocent request, “that she simply note down any spiritual insights<sup>3</sup> that she received.” Elizabeth “understood and smilingly agreed.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Description and Dating*

A little notebook,<sup>5</sup> written in ink, entrusts to us the account of her spiritual insights.

It was not until the 24th of September<sup>6</sup> that Elizabeth gave up her notes to her Prioress, wrapped in very poor brown paper (preserved) which contains this inscription: “The last retreat of Laudem Glorïae.”<sup>7</sup> Is it a “title” (one

which, in fact, is fitting) as Mother Germaine suggests?<sup>8</sup> Or is it not rather a simple *chronological indication*, as we are inclined to think: “this retreat has been my last, soon I will be no more?”<sup>9</sup>

On opening the notebook we read at the top of the first page before the text begins: “Thursday, August 16. First day,” and nothing else; Elizabeth gives no title. As in *Heaven in Faith*, this absence indicates at least a great lack of pretension.

The “16th day” brings us logically to the 31st of August for the conclusion of the retreat; the text seems in fact to be quite in keeping with the liturgy of that day, the Dedication of the Churches of Carmel.<sup>10</sup> However, Elizabeth does not give up her notebook until the 24th of September and this “sixteenth day” also reflects, as it were, Poem 115, prepared for this same date.<sup>11</sup>

So we could ask ourselves if the writing really was completed on the 31st of August or if it were continued afterwards. Or again, if the notebook is a second redaction from a first copy which Elizabeth perhaps destroyed. It is impossible to solve these questions, but it seems very probable that the writing actually coincided with the sixteen days of the retreat and was written directly in the notebook.<sup>12</sup>

The *handwriting*, painstaking and laborious, witnesses to Elizabeth’s physical exhaustion.

Somewhat revised, the text was published in the first edition of the *Souvenirs* in 1909.<sup>13</sup>

### *A Retreat of an Invalid*

Because of Elizabeth’s illness, her retreat does not proceed as in other years. On the one hand she no longer goes with the community to the Divine Office and meals; on the other hand the solitude and silence during the day cannot be as absolute. There are visits from the infirmarians who bring the little nourishment that she can still take, make the bed for the exhausted invalid, clean the room, and take care of her. And there are also the physician’s visits. One other Sister at least (very old, who will die five days after Elizabeth) is also living in the infirmary. Elizabeth has seen her mother again in the infirmary parlor during these days (cf. L 308, n.3): she did not

want to tell her family about her retreat<sup>14</sup> in order not to deprive them of the consolation of one more visit before her approaching death. During this period she does not always stay in her cell but takes advantage of the “good weather” to “go out on the terrace.”<sup>15</sup>

Elizabeth spends her days in prayer, reading, silence, and rest, It is in the evening, when there is less likelihood of being interrupted by the visits of the infirmarians, that she writes her retreat notes.<sup>16</sup> Mother Germaine says that these pages were “written during the course of painfully sleepless nights, and in the grip of such violent pains that the poor child felt as if she would faint” (S 215). The little lamp by whose light she writes down her thoughts<sup>17</sup> is like a symbol of her desire to offer herself to “the consuming fire” of God (LR 19), enlightened only by “the beautiful light of faith . . . which alone should light my way as I go to meet the Bridegroom” (LR 10).

The retreat notes do not necessarily indicate her prayer of *that day*, nor the quoted texts, her daily reading. Elizabeth’s prayer is made up much less of ideas than of a loving, persevering, believing attention to a Presence who dwells in her and a Love which claims her. It is the *totality* of thoughts expressed in the *Last Retreat* which illustrates her interior life at this time.

### *Keys to Reading*

Without claiming to exhaust the wealth of these very dense pages, we will content ourselves with indicating some indispensable keys to reading for a good understanding.

1. *An autobiographical background.* If the “days” and “prayers” of *Heaven in Faith*, written *in the form* of a retreat, wish simply to offer material for reflection close to the reality Elizabeth was living, the *Last Retreat*, on the other hand, has a real autobiographical richness and a chronological significance. It translates the dominant spiritual realities of these sixteen days of retreat, just as Mother Germaine had desired.

“Sister Elizabeth told her Mother Prioress one day that she had tried to explain in this little collection of notes how she understood her work of praise of glory.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, that is what she herself wrote during this retreat: “to learn” this work (LR 1), “to conform my life . . . that I may fulfill my work of ‘Laudem Gloriam’” (LR 9; cf 20). “Laudem Gloriam”

repeated in the *Last Retreat* 25 and 42, really is the personal name that she chose for herself; it is not the “soul” in general, but Elizabeth Catez, Elizabeth of the Trinity. Each time that we see here the personal pronouns “I,” “me,” or the possessives “my,” “mine,” we must give them their full personal weight. And when we meet the expression “soul” we must understand once more “I,” “Elizabeth.”

Basing herself on the conversations which she had with Elizabeth during or after her retreat, Mother Germaine, in an excellent position to verify the agreement between what was written and what was lived, assures us: “During these blessed days . . . her beloved Master spoke to her . . . not in words,<sup>19</sup> but by opening up new horizons. . . . It would have been difficult for her to put down in writing what she received from God in the simple yet profound manner of which we have spoken. Nevertheless, it seems in looking over these pages written by this predestined soul, we could entitle them ‘Personal Souvenirs’” (S 212–15).

Elizabeth does not speak as a theoretician (whether of theology or mysticism, it does not matter); she gives a testimony. Even more than her *Poems*, the *Last Retreat* belongs to the genre of diary.

2. This autobiographical background better explains, for three reasons, *the presence of suffering* in the *Last Retreat*.

The recurrence of increased physical suffering<sup>20</sup> necessitates an unceasingly reaffirmed and deepened identification with the Crucified One. For she suffers cruelly. Recently she confessed to Mother Marie of Jesus: “When I lie down on my little bed, I think that I am going up to my altar and I tell Him, ‘My God, feel free to do what ever You want!’ Sometimes anguish overcomes me but then I gently calm myself and say to Him, ‘My God, that does not count.’”<sup>21</sup> When she tries to eat a little more than usual, the consequences are very painful: “That upset my stomach, increased my vomitings and so forth” (L 305). “I am attentive to my stomach and, for love of God, I do what I can to not let it die of hunger” (L 309), she wrote a few days after her retreat. “I am extremely weak; I feel as if I would faint at any moment” (L 310). Never did they give her either sedatives or morphine. So it is hardly a hyperbole when she writes in her retreat: “He has substituted me for Himself on the cross” (LR 41). But it is moving to rediscover in the bride climbing to Calvary with her crucified King (LR 13)

the young girl of seventeen and eighteen who confessed she was “proud and happy to climb Calvary,”<sup>22</sup> eager to “share” the crosses of the Beloved.<sup>23</sup> The desire to accept suffering is sustained by an attitude of faith (LR 10, 34), even in the face of “abandonment, helplessness, and anguish” (LR 39), and by “a wholly confident faith” in the reiterated forgiveness of God (LR 31).

What is she to do with her suffering? During her prolonged retreat she seeks to live out the answer in an even better way, the answer she had clearly given a few hours before: “This is what I am going to be taught: conformity, identity with my adored Master, the One crucified by love. Then I can fulfill my work as praise of glory. . . .”<sup>24</sup> As Mother Germaine emphasizes, what her Master tells her during these days (“not in words”) concerns “His Passion”; the new horizons which He opens up to her are “the love hidden in the Cross.” He makes her “understand that her dreams of union will find their realization in suffering”; “more than ever ravished by love,” Elizabeth submits with her whole heart (S 212–13). All this is vigorously reflected in her notes, and conformity to Christ crucified also encompasses the redemptive value of suffering for the Church.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, we might wonder if the desire not to increase the pain of her family led Elizabeth to limit herself in *Heaven in Faith*, destined for Guite, to some general considerations on suffering. But with Mother Germaine she has nothing to hide in this domain.

3. Suffering impels Elizabeth to *a pronounced Christocentrism*. Physical pain, joined to a voluntary search of the death of the old man (LR 24), is lucidly placed at the service of the ideal of conformity with “the One crucified by love” (LR 1). Before being “transformed from glory to glory in the image of the Divine Being,” we must become “conformed to the image of the Word Incarnate, the One crucified by love” (LR 12). No name for God recurs as frequently as “Master,” that is, Christ. The *center* does not exclude the totality of her vision of God: Elizabeth of the Trinity knows that she is “the daughter of God, the bride of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit” (LR 25), but first of all: bride! In the extension of her Christocentrism is Mary. “This Mother of grace will form” Elizabeth’s soul in the image of “her first-born, the Son of the Eternal One” (LR 2). Mary, who was beneath

the cross of Jesus, is also close to the invalid: “to teach me to suffer as He did” (LR 41).

4. In speaking of the *Last Retreat*, Mother Germaine called Elizabeth the soul of one idea<sup>26</sup>: the central idea which she untiringly repeats of *union with God on earth as in Heaven!* Conformity to Christ takes place in faith, a total entry into his concrete desires, even in crucifying circumstances, and loving attention to his Presence in the very depths of Elizabeth’s recollected heart. She wants “to walk without deviating from this magnificent road of the presence of God” (LR 23); this requires interior silence and forgetfulness of self. As in *Heaven in Faith*, this union with God even in this life is expressly formulated in the first and last “day”: these are the piles that support the bridge. In the middle of the *Last Retreat*, the seventh and eighth “day,” a new formulation of this union without prospect of end will be as the third support of the bridge. Read with particular attention the first ten lines of the *Last Retreat* 1, 17, 20, and 42.

As in *Heaven in Faith*, a profound musical unity<sup>27</sup> underlies the *Last Retreat*. The union sought for is at the service of the song of *praise*. The great perspectives of eternity, often opened up by St. Paul, are enriched by those of St. John in the Apocalypse.<sup>28</sup> This can be no surprise: Elizabeth is writing the last pages of the book of her life, and she will soon pass from the earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly Jerusalem. In this last phase of her life, there is already a presence of Heaven, an abundant life of God. It will be noted with what ease, in some way connatural, Elizabeth moves in *Heaven in Faith* and the *Last Retreat* among the passages of St. John of the Cross who speaks of the high mystical degrees of the spiritual betrothal and spiritual marriage. Her most profound aspirations coincide with the Pauline vision of conformity to Christ and the Johannine vision of praise and adoration, as it is expressed in the Apocalypse. Like John, Elizabeth has become a prophet of the divine. Soon she will hear the voice of the Bridegroom say “Come!” Like the singer John, the musician Elizabeth intones a hymn that will never end: “Since my soul is a heaven where I live while awaiting the heavenly Jerusalem, this heaven also must sing the glory of the Eternal, *nothing* but the glory of the Eternal” (LR 17).

5. Now we can better understand the meaning of the *biblical citations*. When Mother Germaine, who already possessed the notebook of *Heaven in*

*Faith*, asked Elizabeth to write her reflections of these days of solitude, she doubtless suggested to her not to take such long extracts from Ruysbroeck or others but to speak from the depths of her own heart. This Elizabeth will do, but not without frequent recourse to Scripture.<sup>29</sup>

Elizabeth is dazzled by the magnificent divine reality that is expressed there. To open Scripture is to plunge into the truth; it is to have recourse to the objectivity of faith which must govern our whole spiritual journey. There we find God's "plan" for us (LR 32 and 6), His "mystery" (LR 2) and His "secret" (LR 6 and 2), the "dream" (LR 8) and "desire" of the Creator (LR 23). There we find the "explanations" (LR 6) of His "counsel" (LR 32 and 23), and "will" (LR 22), of "the work" of Christ (LR 31) and of our "vocation" (LR 36). Scripture shows us "the way" (LR 24) and a "rule of life" (LR 32), it "teaches" us (LR 37), "instructs" us (LR 29 and 32), and in it we can "study this divine Model" (LR 37). Scripture is the "word" . . . sharper than any two-edged sword" (LR 27). There is something "strong and magnificent" to be found there, she had said not long before (L 305).

This adherence to Scripture enables Elizabeth to establish herself in faith, beyond "feelings, memories, impressions, etc.,—the *self*, in a word!" (LR 26) It gives a note of virility that well suits this officer's daughter, the spiritual daughter of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Mother Germaine still recalls these days of retreat. "Never did we discover her being turned in on self" (Circ 9).

Like Mary (Elizabeth repeats it twice, LR 2 and 40), she keeps in her heart and ponders what she hears and reads in Scripture. She nourishes herself on the Word of God and the prophets which are given for our teaching; she assimilates it in her own flesh. When she brings forth the Word again, it has become her own, soaked in her heart, sometimes in the blood of her suffering. To quote Scripture, especially in a retreat, is for Elizabeth to repeat to herself her Master's "call" (LR 26), to listen to Him again like Mary Magdalene seated at His feet. Had she not promised in her prayer *O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore*: "O Word eternal, Word of my God, I want to spend my life listening to You, I want to become wholly teachable so that I may learn all from You" (PN 15)? The Word was stored in the *depths* of her heart, and it is from there that it resounds; history, so to speak, is transcended. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

When my Master makes me understand these words in the depths of my soul, it seems to me that He is asking me to live like the Father ‘in an eternal present’” (LR 25). Here, to quote Scripture is to marvel, to beat in unison, to say yes and commit oneself, to disappear in the Beloved. Here, to quote Scripture is, in the last analysis, to pray.

Is the *Last Retreat* a “masterpiece”? We do not like that word in this context. It makes us think too much of something that one *does*. The *Last Retreat* is *born* of a thirst for total truth in God, of a donation down to the most intimate fibers of the heart to the “One crucified by love.” It is not a “beautiful” spiritual treatise that we are going to read. It is a cry of love before the “exceeding love” of God (LR 34), a cry issuing from the “depths of the bottomless abyss” (LR 1). The Breath of God passes from the heart to the pen.

## Notes

- 1 S 212–13. The indication “three weeks” of Circ 9 is thus too generous for these sixteen days.
- 2 Cf. *supra*, p. 31.
- 3 S 214. “At our request, she jotted down the lights from her retreat,” says Circ 10.
- 4 “I have this detail from Mother Germaine herself,” notes P. Philipon in *The Spiritual Doctrine . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
- 5 12.8 x 8.5 cm. containing 58 ruled sheets, that is, 116 pages. Elizabeth writes only three lines on p. 115 and leaves p. 116 blank (as well as p. 45). Whereas at the beginning she writes only on every other line of the ruled paper, beginning with LR 39 (“which we draw . . .”) and up to and including LR 41, she compresses her handwriting and writes on each line for fear that the notebook will not suffice. She resumes her normal writing for the sixteenth day. The hardback cover is bound in black oilcloth. In numbering the paragraphs we began new paragraphs with nos. 4, 8, 10, 16, 23, 28, 33, 34, 43 and 44.
- 6 She gives up this notebook “prepared with all the loving attentions of a daughter’s heart, on the occasion of an anniversary” (S 214–15). This was the twelfth anniversary of Mother Germaine’s profession; the tradition of the Carmel of Dijon confirms this. The “loving attentions” are P 115 and 116, and L 316.
- 7 This is also probably what Elizabeth said in giving up her notebook (S 214).
- 8 “Title given by our dear Sister” she wrote in the foreword of the second edition of the opuscle LR (cf. *supra*, p. 92, n.11).
- 9 If Elizabeth had envisaged it as a title, would she not have spontaneously written “last retreat” instead of “*The last retreat*” (moreover, Mother Germaine herself omits *The*—a revealing omission)?
- 10 Cf. LR 42, n.3.
- 11 In comparing LR 44 and P 115, we find in both texts the quotation “Immensus Pater, etc., “ “a spacious place,” the idea of the descent, the “repose” in the “Trinity” eternally. But there are also

differences, and the expression “a spacious place” already appeared in LR 16 and 27.

- 12 The punctuation, full of errors, and some thirty corrections, erasures, additions, almost always insignificant, simple expressions of her fatigue (see however an important correction, LR 31, n.14), argue for a single and immediate redaction. The small additions of words show that Elizabeth reread her texts. As for the synchronization of the “days” of the notebook and the actual days of the retreat, we can exclude the possibility that a hypothetical (and improbable) redaction after the 31st of August, might have been made later than September 14th. Otherwise Elizabeth would surely have quoted Angela di Foligno’s thought on the suffering Christ which so impressed her at this time: “Where does He dwell but in suffering?” (cf. L 311, n.3) The texts of the *Souvenirs* which we will read later also argue in the same sense, although the *Souvenirs* does not respect historical facts which overlap each other more than once. Mother Germaine’s veracity is quite apart from her sense of historiography.
- 13 The “fifteenth day” is missing in the editions of 1909 and 1910 (and in the first edition of the opuscle mentioned in n.8). In the *Souvenirs* of 1911, p. 299, Mother Germaine explains why: she had already “given in several places extracts” from this fifteenth day.
- 14 She does not tell her mother either before (L 305), nor during (L 308). She did not speak of it to Guite as in preceding years (cf. L 211 and 245): Mother Germaine’s letter to Mme. Catez on August 29, shows that Guite would like to come the 31st. Mother Germaine, who does not breathe a word about the retreat, asks only that she come the 1st of September.
- 15 Cf. Mother Germaine’s letter of August 29th, in PAT. For “the terrace” and “the infirmary” see in Volume II, Plan 2, nos. 3 to 11.
- 16 One recalls the account of Therese of Lisieux during her illness (but not in retreat it is true), relating good-humoredly how her Sisters, whom she did not want to learn about the nature of her work, came constantly to interrupt her in the writing of her autobiography (MS C, 17 r°/v°). It is understandable that Elizabeth would want to keep her work secret, except from her Prioress who came to give her her blessing around 10:30 P.M., as she did to the other Sisters also according to the usual custom.
- 17 Cf. Mother Germaine’s testimony (PO 86).
- 18 Mother Germaine in the Foreword cited in n.8.
- 19 Cf. what Elizabeth wrote in LR 25: “When my Master makes me understand these words in the depths of my soul. . . .”
- 20 Cf. our introduction to the fourth section of *Letters from Carmel*, in Volume II.
- 21 Cf. L 306, n.1.
- 22 For ex. in the *Poems of her Youth*, P 39, with n.5 (Volume III).
- 23 Cf. in her *Diary*, D 7, with n.13 (Volume III).
- 24 L 307. Cf. L 306 of the evening before: “I so want the Father to be able to recognize in me the image of the One crucified by love. . . .”
- 25 She wants to be “one of the redeemed who in its turn must redeem other souls” (LR 13). She knows she is associated in Christ’s “work of redemption” (LR 13 and 41) She repeats Col. 1:24; that she “suffers in her body what is lacking in the passion of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church” (LR 13 and 41, as well as in the letters of this period).
- 26 In a note of LR, p. 7 of the opuscle indicated in n.8.
- 27 Cf. *supra*, p. 86.
- 28 In particular the fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth “days.” Cf. S 211: “At this time the most beautiful passages of the Apocalypse captivated Sister Elizabeth. . . .”

29 Here is the list of *explicit* citations, more numerous than in HF (while omitting references to the words of the “Master” and also vague allusions to Scripture suggested by Elizabeth’s quotation marks): *St. Paul* 40 times (LR 2, 3, 5, 6 [2x], 7 [2x], 8, 9, 11, 13 [2x], 16, 20, 21, 22 [2x], 23 [2x], 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 [2x], 29 [2x], 30 [2x], 32 [2x], 33 [2x], 34 [2x], 36, 37, 38, 40, 43); *St. John* 4 times (LR 2, 9, 15, 22); *St. Peter* twice (LR 22, 29); *John the Baptist* once (LR 39); *Isaiah* once (LR 8); *Song of Songs* once (LR 1); *Prophet Hosea* once (LR 27); *Psalms* 18 times (under different names: David, psalmist, prophet, royal prophet, a psalm; cf. LR 34, n.12; strictly speaking she is mistaken only once in LR 12): LR 10, 12, 16, 17 [2x], 18, 20, 21 [2x], 25 [2x], 27, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44; *St. Dionysius* (the pseudo-Aeropagite) once (LR 26); the *Rule of Carmel* once (LR 3); *John of the Cross* 4 times (LR 19, 21, 28, 43); *P. Lacordaire* once (LR 21); *Ruysbroeck* 4 times (under the expressions “pious author” in LR 7, “great mystic” in LR 11, “a mystic” in LR 21, “pious writer” in LR 28).

# LAST RETREAT

## Text

### First Day

*Thursday August 16*

1. “Nescivi.”<sup>1</sup> “I no longer knew anything.” This is what the “bride of the Canticles” sings after having been brought into the “inner cellar.”<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that this must also be the refrain of a praise of glory on this first day of retreat in which the Master makes her penetrate the depths of the bottomless abyss so that He may teach her to fulfill the work which will be hers for eternity and which she must already perform in time, which is eternity begun and still in progress.<sup>3</sup> “Nescivi”! I no longer know anything, I do not want to know anything except “to know *Him*, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death.”<sup>4</sup> “Those whom God has foreknown He has also predestined to become confirmed to the image of His divine Son,”<sup>5</sup> the One crucified by love. When I am wholly identified with this divine Exemplar,<sup>6</sup> when I have wholly passed into Him and He into me, then I will fulfill my eternal vocation: the one for which God has “chosen me in Him”<sup>7</sup> “in principio,” the one I will continue “in aeternum” when, immersed in the bosom of my Trinity, I will be the unceasing praise of His glory, *Laudem gloriae ejus*.<sup>8</sup>

2. “No one has seen the Father,” St. John tells us, “except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.”<sup>9</sup> It seems to me that we can also say, “No one has penetrated the depths of the mystery of Christ except the Blessed Virgin. “John and Mary Magdalene penetrated deeply this mystery; St. Paul often speaks of “the understanding of it which was given to him”;<sup>10</sup> and yet, how all the saints remain in the shadows when we look at the Blessed Virgin’s light!

This is the unspeakable “secret” that she kept in mind and pondered in her heart<sup>11</sup> which no tongue can tell or pen describe! This Mother of grace<sup>12</sup> will form my soul so that her little child will be a living,<sup>13</sup> “striking” image

of her first-born,<sup>14</sup> the Son of the Eternal, He who was the perfect praise of His Father's glory.

## Second Day

3. "My soul is always in my hands."<sup>15</sup> My Master sang this in His soul, and that is why in the midst of all His anguish He always remained the calm and strong One. My soul is always in my hands! What does that mean but this complete self-possession in the presence of the peaceful One? There is another of Christ's songs that I would like to repeat unceasingly: "I shall keep my strength for you."<sup>16</sup> My Rule tells me: "In silence will your strength be."<sup>17</sup> It seems to me, therefore, that to keep one's strength for the Lord is to unify one's whole being by means of interior silence, to collect all one's powers in order to "employ" them in "the one work of love,"<sup>18</sup> to have this "single eye" which allows the light of God to enlighten us.<sup>19</sup> A soul that debates with its self, that is taken up with its feelings, and pursues useless thoughts<sup>20</sup> and desires, scatters its forces,<sup>21</sup> for it is not wholly directed toward God. Its lyre does not vibrate in unison and when the Master plays it, He cannot draw from it divine harmonies, for it is still too human and discordant. The soul that still keeps something for self in its "inner kingdom,"<sup>22</sup> whose powers are not "enclosed"<sup>23</sup> in God, cannot be a perfect praise of glory; it is not fit to sing uninterruptedly this "canticum magnum" of which St. Paul speaks<sup>24</sup> since unity does not reign in it. Instead of persevering in praise through everything in simplicity, it must continually adjust the strings of its instrument which are all a little out of tune.

4. How indispensable this beautiful inner unity is for the soul that wants to live here below the life of the blessed, that is, of simple beings, of spirits. It seems to me the Master had that in mind when He spoke to Mary Magdalene of the "Unum necessarium."<sup>25</sup> How well that great saint understood this! "The eye of her soul enlightened by faith"<sup>26</sup> recognized her God beneath the veil of His humanity; and in silence, in the unity of her powers, "She listened to what He told her."<sup>27</sup> She could sing, "My soul is always in my hands," and also this little word: "Nescivi"! Yes, she knew nothing but *Him*! There could be noise and excitement around her: "Nescivi"! They could accuse her: "Nescivi"! Neither empty self-esteem nor exterior things could draw her out of her "sacred silence."<sup>28</sup>

5. It is the same for the soul that has entered into the “fortress of holy recollection”:<sup>29</sup> the eye of its soul, opened in the light of faith, discovers its God present, living within it; in turn it remains so present to Him, in beautiful simplicity,<sup>30</sup> that He guards it with a jealous care. Then disturbances from without and tempests from within may arise; its self-esteem may be wounded: “Nescivi”! God may hide Himself, withdraw His sensible grace: “Nescivi.” Or, as St. Paul writes: “For love of Him I have forfeited everything.”<sup>31</sup> Then the Master is free, free to flow into the soul, to give Himself “according to His measure.”<sup>32</sup> And the soul thus simplified, unified, becomes the throne of the Unchanging One, since “unity is the throne of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Third Day**

6. “We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be the praise of His glory.”<sup>34</sup> It is St. Paul who announces to us this divine election, St. Paul who penetrated so deeply the “mystery hidden from eternity in the heart of God.”<sup>35</sup> Then he gives us light on this vocation to which we are called. “God,” he says, “chose us in *Him* before creation that we might be holy and immaculate in His presence, in love.”<sup>36</sup> If I compare these two explanations<sup>37</sup> of the divine and eternal unchanging plan, I conclude from them that in order to fulfill worthily my work of *Laudem Gloriam*, I must remain “in the presence of God” through everything; and that is not all: the Apostle tells us “in charitate,” that is, in God, “*Deus Caritas est . . .*”;<sup>38</sup> and it is contact with the divine Being that will make me “holy and immaculate” in His eyes. . . .

7. I relate all this to the beautiful virtue of simplicity of which a pious author wrote: “It gives the soul the repose of the abyss,”<sup>39</sup> that is, rest in God, the unfathomable Abyss, prelude and echo of the eternal sabbath<sup>40</sup> of which St. Paul spoke when he said, “We then who have believed shall enter into this rest.”<sup>41</sup>

The glorified have this repose of the abyss because they contemplate God in the simplicity of His essence. “They know Him,” says St. Paul again, “as they are known by Him,”<sup>42</sup> that is, by intuitive vision, a simple gaze; and

that is why, the great saint continues, “they are transformed from brightness to brightness into His very Image by the power of His Spirit”;<sup>43</sup> then they are an unceasing praise of glory of the divine Being who contemplates in them His own splendor.<sup>44</sup>

8. It seems to me that it would give immense joy to the Heart of God if we would perfect in the heaven of our soul this occupation of the blessed and cling to Him by this simple contemplation which resembles that of man in the state of innocence before original sin when God created him “in His image and likeness.”<sup>45</sup> Such was the Creator’s dream: to be able to contemplate Himself in His creature and see reflected there all His perfections, all His beauty as through a pure and flawless crystal.<sup>46</sup> Is not that a kind of extension of His own glory?

The soul, by the simplicity of the gaze which it fixes on its divine object, finds itself set apart<sup>47</sup> from all that surrounds it, set apart also and above all from itself. Then it is resplendent with this “knowledge of the glory of God,”<sup>48</sup> of which the Apostle speaks, because it permits the divine Being to be reflected in it, “and all His attributes are communicated to it.”<sup>49</sup> Truly this soul is the praise of glory of all His gifts; through everything, even the most commonplace acts, it sings the canticum magnum, the canticum novum . . . ,<sup>50</sup> and this canticle thrills God to His very depths.

“Your light,” we can say with Isaiah, “shall rise up in darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The Lord will give you rest continually, and will fill your soul with His brightness; He will strengthen your bones, and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail. . . . I will lift you above the high places of the earth. . .

<sup>51</sup>

## **Fourth Day**

9. Yesterday St. Paul lifted the veil a little and allowed me to gaze on “the inheritance of the saints in light,”<sup>52</sup> that I might see what their occupation is and try, as far as possible, to conform my life to theirs so as to carry out my work of “Laudem Gloriam.”

Today it is St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved,<sup>53</sup> who partially opens “the eternal gates”<sup>54</sup> for me, that I may rest my soul in “the heavenly

Jerusalem, sweet vision of peace!”<sup>55</sup> First of all he tells me there are no lights in the city “for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” . . . <sup>56</sup>

If I want my interior city<sup>57</sup> to have some similarity and likeness to that “of the King of eternal ages”<sup>58</sup> and to receive this great illumination from God, I must extinguish every other light and, as in the holy city, the Lamb must be “its only light.”

10. Here faith, the beautiful light of faith appears. It alone should light my way as I go to meet the Bridegroom. The psalmist sings that He “hides Himself in darkness,”<sup>59</sup> then in another place he seems to contradict himself by saying that “light surrounds Him like a cloak.”<sup>60</sup> What stands out for me in this apparent contradiction is that I must immerse myself in “the sacred darkness”<sup>61</sup> by putting all my powers in darkness and emptiness; then I will meet my Master, and “the light that surrounds Him like a cloak” will envelop me also, for He wants His bride to be luminous with His light, His light *alone*, “*which is the glory of God.*”

It was said of Moses that he was “unshakable in his faith, as if he had seen the Invisible.”<sup>62</sup> It seems to me that this should be the attitude of a praise of glory who wishes to continue her hymn of thanksgiving through everything: “unshakable in her faith, as if she had seen the Invisible”; unshakable in her faith in His “exceeding love.”<sup>63</sup> “We have known the love of God for us, and we have believed in it.”<sup>64</sup>

11. “Faith,” St. Paul says, “is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>65</sup>

What does it matter to the soul that is absorbed in recollection of the light which these words create in it, whether it feels or does not feel, whether it is in darkness or light, whether it enjoys or does not enjoy. It feels a kind of embarrassment in making any distinction between these things; and when it still feels affected by them, it holds itself in deep contempt for its lack of love and quickly looks to its Master that He might set it free. In the expression of a great mystic it “exalts” Him “on the highest summit of the mountain of its heart, above the sweetness and consolations that descend from Him for it has resolved to go beyond everything to be united with Him whom it loves.”<sup>66</sup> It seems to me that to this soul, unshakable in its faith in the God of Love, may be addressed these words of the Prince of Apostles,

“Because you believe you will be filled with an unshakable and glorified joy.”<sup>67</sup>

## Fifth Day

12. “I saw a great multitude which no man could number. . . . These are they who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He who sits upon the throne will dwell with them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst anymore, neither shall the sun strike them nor any heat. For the Lamb will be their shepherd, and He will lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. . . .”<sup>68</sup>

All these elect who have palms in their hands,<sup>69</sup> and who are wholly bathed in the great light<sup>70</sup> of God, have had first to pass through the “great tribulation,” to know this sorrow “immense as the sea,”<sup>71</sup> of which the psalmist sang. Before contemplating “with uncovered face the glory of the Lord,”<sup>72</sup> they have shared in the annihilation of His Christ; before being “transformed from brightness to brightness in the image of the divine Being,”<sup>73</sup> they have been conformed to the image of the Word Incarnate, the One crucified by love.

13. The soul that wants to serve God day and night in His temple—I mean this inner sanctuary of which St. Paul speaks when he says, “The temple of God is holy and you are that temple,”<sup>74</sup> this soul must be resolved to share *fully* in its Master’s passion. It is one of the redeemed who in its turn must redeem other souls, and for that reason it will sing on its lyre: “I glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ.”<sup>75</sup> “With Christ I am nailed to the Cross”<sup>76</sup> And again, “I suffer in my body what is lacking in the passion of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church.”<sup>77</sup>

“The queen stood at your right hand”:<sup>78</sup> such is the attitude of this soul; she walks the way of Calvary at the right of her crucified, annihilated, humiliated King, yet always so strong, so calm, so full of majesty as He goes to His passion “to make the glory of His grace blaze forth” according to that so strong expression of St. Paul.<sup>79</sup> He wants to associate His Bride in His work of redemption and this sorrowful way which she follows seems

like the path of Beatitude to her, not only because it leads there but also because her holy Master makes her realize that she must go beyond the bitterness in suffering to find in it, as He did, her rest.

14. Then she can serve God “*day and night in His temple*”! Neither trials from without nor from within can make her leave the holy fortress in which the Master has enclosed her. She no longer feels “*hunger or thirst*,” for in spite of her consuming desire for Beatitude, she is satisfied by this food which was her Master’s: “the will of the Father.”<sup>80</sup> “*She no longer feels the heat of the sun*,” that is, she no longer suffers from suffering. Then the Lamb can “*lead her to the fountain of life*,” where He wills, as He wills, for she does not look at the paths on which she is walking; she simply gazes at the Shepherd who is leading her.<sup>81</sup> God bends lovingly over this soul, His adopted daughter, who is so conformed to the image of His Son, the “firstborn among all creatures,”<sup>82</sup> and recognizes her as one of those whom He has “predestined, called, justified.”<sup>83</sup> And His fatherly heart thrills as He thinks of consummating His work,<sup>84</sup> that is, of “glorifying”<sup>85</sup> her by bringing her into His kingdom,<sup>86</sup> there to sing for ages unending “the praise of His glory.”<sup>87</sup>

## Sixth Day

15. “And I saw, and behold, the Lamb was standing upon Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice like a voice of many waters, and like a voice of loud thunder; and the voice that I heard was as of several harpers playing on their harps. And they were singing as it were a new song before the throne; and no one could learn the song except those hundred and forty-four thousand, for they were virgins. These follow the Lamb wherever He goes. . . .”<sup>88</sup>

There are some who even here below belong to this “generation pure as the light”;<sup>89</sup> they already bear on their foreheads the name of the Lamb and of His Father. “*The name of the Lamb*”:<sup>90</sup> by their resemblance and conformity with Him whom St. John calls “the Faithful and True”<sup>91</sup> and whom he shows us “clothed in a robe stained with blood”;<sup>92</sup> these also are the faithful and true, and their robe is stained with the blood of their

constant sacrifice. “*The name of His Father*”: because He radiates in them the beauty of His perfections. All His divine attributes are reflected in these souls, and they are like so many strings which vibrate and sing “*the new song*.” They “*also follow the Lamb where ever He goes*,” not only on the highways that are broad and easy to travel but down the thorny paths, along the brambly ways. That is why these souls are *virgins*, that is, free, set apart, stripped;<sup>93</sup> free from all save their love,<sup>94</sup> set apart from everything, especially themselves, stripped of all things both in the supernatural order as well as in the natural order.

16. What a going out from self that implies! What a death! Let us say with St. Paul, “*Quotidie morior*.”<sup>95</sup> The great saint wrote to the Colossians, “*You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*.”<sup>96</sup>

That is the condition: we must be dead! Without that we may be hidden in God at certain moments; but we do not LIVE habitually in this divine Being because all our emotions, self-seekings and the rest, come to draw us out of Him.

The soul that gazes steadfastly on its Master with this “single eye which fills the whole body with light”<sup>97</sup> is kept “from the depths of iniquity within it”<sup>98</sup> of which the prophet complains. “The Lord has brought it into “this spacious place”<sup>99</sup> which is nothing else than Himself; there everything is pure, everything is holy!

O blessed death in God! O sweet and gentle loss of self in the beloved Being which permits the creature to cry out: “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in this body of death, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”<sup>100</sup>

## **Seventh Day**

17. “*Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*.”<sup>101</sup> This is what the heavens are telling: the glory of God.

Since my soul is a heaven in which I live while awaiting the “heavenly Jerusalem,”<sup>102</sup> this heaven too must sing the glory of the Eternal, *nothing* but the glory of the Eternal.

“Day to day passes on this message.”<sup>103</sup> All God’s lights, all His communications to my soul are this “day which passes on to day the

message of His glory.” “The command of the Lord is clear,” sings the psalmist, “enlightening the eye. . . .”<sup>104</sup> Consequently, my fidelity in corresponding with each of His decrees, with each of His interior commands, makes me live in His light; it too is a “message which passes on His glory.” But this is the sweet wonder: “Yahweh, he who looks at you is radiant!”<sup>105</sup> the prophet exclaims. The soul that by the depth of its interior gaze contemplates its God through everything in that simplicity which sets it apart from all else is a “*radiant*” soul: it is “a day that passes on to day the message of His glory.”

18. “Night to night announces it.”<sup>106</sup> How very consoling that is! My weaknesses, my dislikes, my mediocrity, my faults themselves tell the glory of the Eternal! My sufferings of soul or body also tell the glory of my Master! David sang: “How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” This: “I will take up the cup of salvation.”<sup>107</sup> If I take up this cup crimsoned with the Blood of my Master and, in wholly joyous thanksgiving, I mingle my blood with that of the holy Victim, it is in some way made infinite and can give magnificent praise to the Father. Then my suffering is “a message which passes on the glory” of the Eternal.

19. “There (in the soul that tells His glory) He has pitched a tent for the Sun.”<sup>108</sup> The sun is the Word, the “Bridegroom.” If He finds my soul empty of all that is not contained in these two words—His love, His glory, then He chooses it to be “His bridal chamber”; He “rushes” in “like a giant racing triumphantly on his course” and I cannot “escape His heat.”<sup>109</sup> He is this “consuming fire”<sup>110</sup> which will effect the blessed transformation of which St. John of the Cross speaks when he says: “Each seems to be the other and the two are but one”:<sup>111</sup> a “praise of glory”<sup>112</sup> of the Father!

## **Eighth Day**

20. “And they do not rest day and night, saying, Holy holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who will be for ages unending. . . . And they fall down and worship Him and they cast down their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are you, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. . . .”<sup>113</sup>

How can I imitate in the heaven of my soul this unceasing occupation of the blessed in the Heaven of glory? How can I sustain this uninterrupted praise and adoration? St. Paul gives me light on this when he writes to his followers his wish that “the Father would strengthen them inwardly with power through His Spirit so that Christ would dwell through faith in their hearts, and so that they would be rooted and grounded in love.”<sup>114</sup> To be rooted and grounded in love: such, it seems to me, is the condition for worthily fulfilling its work as praise of glory. The soul that penetrates and dwells in these “depths of God” of which the royal prophets sings,<sup>115</sup> and thus does everything “in Him, with Him, by Him and for Him” with that limpid gaze which gives it a certain resemblance to the simple Being, this soul, by each of its movements, its aspirations, as well as by each of its acts, however ordinary they may be, “is rooted” more deeply in Him whom it loves. Everything within it pays homage to the thrice-holy God: it is so to speak a perpetual Sanctus, an unceasing praise of glory!

21. “They fall down and adore, they cast down their crowns. . . .” First of all the soul should “fall down,” should plunge into the abyss of its nothingness, sinking so deeply into it that in the beautiful expression of a mystic, it finds “true, unchanging, and perfect peace which no one can disturb, for it has plunged so low that no one will look for it there.”<sup>116</sup>

Then it can “adore.” Adoration, ah! That is a word from Heaven! It seems to me it can be defined as the ecstasy of love. It is love overcome by the beauty, the strength, the immense grandeur of the Object loved, and it “falls down in a kind of faint”<sup>117</sup> in an utterly profound silence, that silence of which David spoke when he exclaimed: “Silence is Your praise!”<sup>118</sup> Yes, this is the most beautiful praise since it is sung eternally in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity; and it is also the “last effort of the soul that overflows and can say no more . . .” (Lacordaire).<sup>119</sup>

“Adore the Lord, for He is holy,”<sup>120</sup> the Psalmist says. And again: “They will adore Him always because of Himself.”<sup>121</sup> The soul that is absorbed in recollection of these thoughts, that penetrates them with “this mind of God”<sup>122</sup> of which St. Paul speaks, lives in an anticipated Heaven, beyond all that passes, beyond the clouds, beyond itself! It knows that He whom it adores possesses in Himself all happiness and all glory and, “casting its crown” before Him as the blessed do, it despises self, loses sight of self, and

finds its beatitude in that of the adored Being, in the midst of every suffering and sorrow. For it has left self, it has “*passed*”<sup>123</sup> into Another. It seems to me that in this attitude of adoration the soul “resembles those wells” of which St. John of the Cross speaks,<sup>124</sup> which receive “the waters that flow down from Lebanon,” and we can say on seeing it: “The impetus of the river delights the City of God.”<sup>125</sup>

## **Ninth Day**

22. “Be holy for I am holy.”<sup>126</sup> Who then is this who can give such a command? . . . He Himself has revealed His name, the name proper to Him, which He alone can bear: “I am Who Am,”<sup>127</sup> He said to Moses, the only living One, the principle of all the other beings. “In Him,” the Apostle says, “we live and move and have our being.”<sup>128</sup> “Be holy for I am holy!” It seems to me that this is the very same wish expressed on the day of creation when God said: “Let us make man in Our image and likeness.”<sup>129</sup> It is always the desire of the Creator to identify and to associate His creature with Himself! St. Peter says “that we have been made sharers in the divine nature”;<sup>130</sup> St. Paul recommends that we hold on to “this beginning of His existence”<sup>131</sup> which He has given us; and the disciple of love tells us: “Now we are the children of God, and we have not yet seen what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him makes himself holy, *just as He Himself is holy.*”<sup>132</sup> To be holy as God is holy, such is, it seems, the measure of the children of His love! Did not the Master say: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”?<sup>133</sup>

23. Speaking to Abraham God said: “Walk in My presence and be perfect.”<sup>134</sup> This then is the way to achieve this perfection that our Heavenly Father asks of us! St. Paul, after having immersed himself in the divine counsels,<sup>135</sup> revealed exactly this to us when he wrote “God has chosen us in Him before the creation of the world, that we might be holy and immaculate *in His presence* in love.”<sup>136</sup> It is also by the light of this same saint that I will be enlightened so that I might walk without deviating from this magnificent road of the presence of God on which the soul journeys “alone with the Alone,”<sup>137</sup> led by the “strength of His right arm,”<sup>138</sup> “under the protection of His wings, without fearing the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by

day, nor the evil that stalks in darkness, nor the attacks of the noonday devil.<sup>139</sup>

24. “Strip off the old man in whom you lived your former life, “ he tells me, “and put on the new man, who has been created according to God in justice and holiness.”<sup>140</sup> This is the way set forth; we have only to strip off self to follow it as God wills! To strip off self, to die to self, to lose sight of self. It seems to me the Master meant this when He said: “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself.”<sup>141</sup> “If you live according to the flesh,” the Apostle also says, “you will die, but if you put to death in the spirit the works of the flesh, you will live.”<sup>142</sup> This is the death that God asks for and of which it is said: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”<sup>143</sup> “O death,” says the Lord, “I will be your death”;<sup>144</sup> that is: O soul, my adopted daughter, look at Me and you will forget yourself; flow entirely into My Being, come die in Me that I may live in you!

## **Tenth Day**

25. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>145</sup> When my Master makes me understand these words in the depths of my soul, it seems to me that He is asking me to live like the Father “in an eternal present,” “with no before, no after,” but wholly in the unity of my being in this “eternal now.”<sup>146</sup> What is this present? This is what David tells me: “They will adore Him always because of Himself.”<sup>147</sup>

This is the eternal present in which *Laudem Gloriam* must be established. But for her to be truly in this attitude of adoration, so that she can sing, “I will awake the dawn,”<sup>148</sup> she must also be able to say with St. Paul, “For love of Him I have forfeited everything”;<sup>149</sup> that is: because of Him, that I may adore Him always, I am “alone, set apart, stripped” of all things, both with regard to the natural as well as the supernatural gifts of God. For a soul that is not thus “destroyed and freed”<sup>150</sup> from self will of necessity be trivial and natural at certain moments, and that is not worthy of a daughter of God, a spouse of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. To guard against this natural life the soul must be wholly vigilant in her faith<sup>151</sup> with her gaze turned towards the Master. Then she “can walk,” as the royal prophet sings, “in the integrity of her heart within her house.”<sup>152</sup> Then she “will adore her God

always because of Himself” and will live, like Him, in that eternal present where He lives. . . .

26. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” “God,” says St. Dionysius, “is the great solitary.”<sup>153</sup> My Master asks me to imitate this perfection, to pay Him homage by being a great solitary. The divine Being lives in an eternal, immense solitude. He never leaves it, though concerning Himself with the needs of His creatures, for He never leaves Himself; and this solitude is nothing else than His divinity.

So that nothing may draw me out of this beautiful silence within, I must always maintain the same dispositions, the same solitude, the same withdrawal, the same stripping of self! If my desires, my fears, my joys or my sorrows, if all the movements proceeding from these “four passions”<sup>154</sup> are not perfectly directed to God, I will not be solitary: there will be noise within me. There must be peace, “sleep of the powers,”<sup>155</sup> the unity of being. “Listen, my daughter, lend your ear, forget your people and your father’s house, and the King will become enamoured of your beauty.”<sup>156</sup>

It seems to me that this call is an invitation to silence: listen . . . lend your ear. . . . But to listen we must forget “our father’s house,” that is, everything that pertains to the natural life, this life to which the Apostle refers when he says: “If you live according to the flesh, you will die.”<sup>157</sup> To forget “your people” is more difficult, I think, for this people is everything which is, so to speak, part of us: our feelings, our memories, our impressions, etc., the *self*, in a word! We must forget it, abandon it, and when the soul has made this break, when it is free from all that, the King is enamored of its beauty. For beauty is unity, at least it is the unity of God!

### **Eleventh Day (continued)**<sup>158</sup>

27. “The Lord brought me into a spacious place, because He was gracious toward me. . . .”<sup>159</sup> The Creator, seeing the beautiful silence which reigns in His creature, and gazing on her wholly recollected in her interior solitude, is enamored of her beauty and leads her into this immense, infinite solitude, into this “spacious place” sung of by the prophet, which is nothing else but Himself: “I will enter into the depths of the power of God.”<sup>160</sup> Speaking through his prophet, the Lord said: “I will lead her into solitude

and speak to her heart.”<sup>161</sup> The soul has entered into this vast solitude in which God will make Himself heard! “His word,” St. Paul says, “is living and active, and more penetrating than a two edged sword: extending even to the division of soul and spirit, even of joints and marrow.”<sup>162</sup> It is His word then that will directly achieve the work of stripping in the soul; for it has this particular characteristic, that it effects and creates what it intends,<sup>163</sup> provided however that the soul consents to let this be done.

28. But it is not enough just to listen to this word, we must keep it!<sup>164</sup> And it is in keeping it that the soul will be “sanctified in the truth,” and that is the desire of the Master: “Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.”<sup>165</sup> To the one who keeps His word has He not made this promise: “My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home *in him*”?<sup>166</sup> It is the whole Trinity who dwells in the soul that loves them in truth, that is, by keeping their word! And when this soul has realized its riches, all the natural or supernatural joys that can come to it from creatures or from God Himself are only an invitation to reenter into itself in order to enjoy the substantial Good that it possesses, which is nothing else than God Himself. And thus it has, St. John of the Cross says, a certain resemblance to the divine Being.<sup>167</sup>

“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” St. Paul tells me “that He works all things according to the counsel of His will,”<sup>168</sup> and my Master asks me also to pay Him homage in this regard: “to do all things according to the counsel of His will.” Never to let myself be ruled by impressions, by the first impulses of nature, but to let the will gain self-mastery. . . . And for this will to be free, it must be, in the expression of a pious writer, “enclosed in God’s will.”<sup>169</sup> Then I will be “moved by His Spirit,”<sup>170</sup> as St. Paul says. I will do only what is divine, only what is eternal, and, like my Unchanging One, I will live even here below in an eternal present.

## Twelfth Day

29. “Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.”<sup>171</sup> God has said: “Be holy, for I am holy.”<sup>172</sup> But He remained hidden in His inaccessible [light<sup>173</sup>] and the creature needed to have Him descend to it, to live its life, so that following in His footsteps,<sup>174</sup> it can thus ascend to Him and become holy

with His holiness. “I sanctify myself for them that they also may be sanctified in the truth.”<sup>175</sup> Here I am in the presence “of a mystery hidden from ages and generations,” the mystery “which is Christ”: “your hope of glory,”<sup>176</sup> says St. Paul! And he adds that “the understanding of this mystery” was given to him.<sup>177</sup> So it is from the great Apostle that I am going to learn how I may possess this knowledge which, in his expression, “surpasses all other knowledge: the knowledge of the love of Christ Jesus.”<sup>178</sup>

30. First of all he tells me that He is “my peace,”<sup>179</sup> that it is “through Him that I have access to the Father,”<sup>180</sup> for it has pleased this “Father of lights”<sup>181</sup> that “in Him all fullness should dwell, and that through Him He should reconcile to Himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the Blood of His Cross. . . .”<sup>182</sup> “You have received of His fullness,” the Apostle continues, “you were buried with Him in Baptism, and in Him you rose again through faith in the working of God. . . . He brought you to life along with Him, forgiving you all your sins, cancelling the decree of condemnation which weighed on you: He abolished it by nailing it to the Cross. Despoiling Principalities and Powers, He victoriously led them away as captives, triumphing over them in Himself . . . ,”<sup>183</sup> “to present you holy, pure, and without reproach before Him. . . .”<sup>184</sup>

31. This is Christ’s work in every soul of good<sup>185</sup> will and it is the work that His immense love, His “*exceeding love*,”<sup>186</sup> is eager to do in me. He wants to be my peace so that nothing can distract me or draw me out of “the invincible fortress of holy recollection.”<sup>187</sup> It is there that He will give me “access to the Father” and will keep me as still and as peaceful in His presence as if my soul were already in eternity.<sup>188</sup> It is by the Blood of His Cross that He will make peace in my little heaven, so that it may truly be the repose of the Three. He will fill me with Himself; He will bury me with Him; He will make me live again with Him, by His life: “*Mihi vivere Christus est!*”<sup>189</sup> And if I fall at every moment,<sup>190</sup> in a wholly confident faith I will be helped up by Him. I know that He will forgive me, that He will cancel out everything with a jealous care, and even more, He will “despoil” me, He will “free”<sup>191</sup> me from all my miseries, from everything that is an obstacle to the divine action. “He will lead away all my powers,”<sup>192</sup> making them His captives, triumphing over them in Himself. Then I will have

wholly passed into Him and can say: “I no longer live. My Master lives in me!”<sup>193</sup> And I will be “*holy, pure, without reproach*” in the Father’s eyes.

## Thirteenth Day

32. “Instaurare omnia in Christo.”<sup>194</sup> Again it is St. Paul who instructs me, St. Paul who has just immersed himself in the great counsel of God<sup>195</sup> and who tells me “that He has resolved in Himself to restore all things in Christ.”

So that I may personally realize this divine plan, it is again St. Paul who comes to my aid and who will himself draw up a rule of life for me. “Walk in Jesus Christ,” he tells me, “be rooted in Him, built up in Him, strengthened in faith, growing more and more in Him through thanksgiving.”<sup>196</sup>

33. *To walk in Jesus Christ* seems to me to mean to leave self, lose sight of self, give up self, in order to enter more deeply into Him with every passing moment,<sup>197</sup> so deeply that one is *rooted* there; and to every event, to every circumstance we can fling this beautiful challenge: “Who will separate me from the love of Jesus Christ?”<sup>198</sup> When the soul is established in Him at such depths that its *roots* are also deeply thrust in, then the divine sap streams into it<sup>199</sup> and all this imperfect, commonplace, natural life is destroyed. Then, in the language of the Apostle, “that which is mortal is swallowed up by life.”<sup>200</sup> The soul thus “stripped” of self and “clothed”<sup>201</sup> in Jesus Christ has nothing more to fear from exterior encounters or from interior difficulties, for these things, far from being an obstacle, serve only “to root it more deeply in the love”<sup>202</sup> of its Master. Through everything, despite everything, the soul can “adore Him always because of Himself.”<sup>203</sup> For it is free, rid of self and everything else; it can sing with the psalmist: “Though an army encamp against me, I will not fear; though war be waged upon me I will trust in spite of everything; for Yahweh will hide me in the secrecy of His tent”<sup>204</sup> and this tent is nothing else but Himself. I think that is what St. Paul means when he says: “be rooted in Jesus Christ.”

34. And now what does it mean *to be built up in Him*? The prophet<sup>205</sup> also sings “He has set me high upon a rock, now my head is held high above my enemies who surround me”;<sup>206</sup> I think that this can well be taken as a figure

of the soul “built up in Jesus Christ.” He is that rock on which it is set high above self, the senses and nature, above consolations or sorrows, above all that is not *Him* alone. And there in complete self-control, it overcomes self, it goes beyond self and all else as well.

Next St. Paul advises me to *be strengthened in faith*: in that faith which never lets the soul doze but keeps it wholly vigilant beneath its Master’s gaze, wholly absorbed in recollection of His creating word,<sup>207</sup> in that faith “in His exceeding love,”<sup>208</sup> which permits God, St. Paul tells me, to fill the soul “*with His fullness.*”<sup>209</sup>

35. Finally, he wants me “to grow in Jesus Christ through *thanksgiving*”: for everything should end in this! “Father, I thank You!”<sup>210</sup> My Master sang this in His soul and He wants to hear the echo of it in mine! But I think that the “new song”<sup>211</sup> which will most charm and captivate my God is that of a soul stripped and freed from self, one in whom He can reflect all that He is, and do all that He wills. This soul remains under His touch like a lyre, and all His gifts to it are like so many strings which vibrate to sing, day and night, the praise of His glory!

## **Fourteenth Day**

36. “It seems to me that all is loss since I have known the excelling knowledge of my Lord, Jesus Christ. For love of Him I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish that I may gain Christ, so as to be found in Him, not with my own justice but with the justice that comes from God through faith. What I want is to know Him, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death. I pursue my course, striving to attain to what Christ has destined me for by taking hold of me; my whole concern is to forget what is behind and to strain forward constantly to what is ahead; I run straight to the goal . . . , to the prize of the heavenly vocation to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.”<sup>212</sup> The Apostle has often revealed the greatness of this vocation: “God,” he says, “has chosen us in Him before the creation of the world that we might be holy and immaculate in His presence in love. . . . We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be the praise of His glory.”<sup>213</sup>

37. But how do we respond to the dignity of this vocation? This is the secret: “Mihi vivere Christus est! . . . Vivo enim, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus. . . .”<sup>214</sup> We must be transformed into Jesus Christ; again it is St. Paul who teaches me this: “Those whom God has foreknown, He has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”<sup>215</sup>

It is important then that I study this divine Model so as to identify myself so closely with Him that I may unceasingly reveal Him to the eyes of the Father. First of all, what did He say when He came into the world? “Here I am, O God, I come to do your will.”<sup>216</sup> I think that this prayer should be like the bride’s heartbeat:<sup>217</sup> “Here we are, O Father, we come to do your will!”

38. The Master was truth itself in this first oblation! His life was as it were but the consequence of it! “My food,” He liked to say, “is to do the will of Him who sent Me.”<sup>218</sup> It should also be that of the bride, and at the same time the sword that immolates her. . . . “If it is possible, let this cup pass me by, yet not as I will but as You will.”<sup>219</sup> And then she will joyfully go in peace to every sacrifice with her Master, rejoicing to “*have been known*” by the Father since He crucifies her with His Son. “Your decrees are my inheritance forever; they are the joy of my heart”:<sup>220</sup> my Master sang this in His soul, and it should echo resoundingly in that of the bride! It is by her constant fidelity to these “*decrees*,” whether exterior or interior, that she will “bear witness to the truth”<sup>221</sup> and will be able to say “He who sent me has not left me alone. He is always with me because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.”<sup>222</sup> And by never leaving Him, by remaining in closest contact with Him, she will radiate “this secret power”<sup>223</sup> which saves and delivers souls. Stripped and set free of self and all else, she can follow the Master to the mountain<sup>224</sup> to pray there with Him in her soul, “a prayer of God.”<sup>225</sup> Then, still through the divine Adorer, He who is the great praise of glory to the Father, she will “ceaselessly offer a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips praising His name”<sup>226</sup> (St. Paul). And, as the psalmist sings, she will praise Him “in the expansion of His power, and for the immensity of His grandeur.”<sup>227</sup> we could find no other way to express the force of the text” (p. 205).

39. Then, when her hour of humiliation, of annihilation comes, she will recall this little phrase, “Jesus autem tacebat”;<sup>228</sup> and she will be silent, “keeping all her strength for the Lord”;<sup>229</sup> this strength which “we draw

from silence.”<sup>230</sup> And when the hour of abandonment, of desertion, and of anguish comes, the hour that drew from Christ this loud cry, “Why have You abandoned Me?”<sup>231</sup>, she will recall this prayer: “that they may have in themselves the fullness of My joy”;<sup>232</sup> and drinking to the dregs “the cup prepared by the Father,”<sup>233</sup> she will find a divine sweetness in its bitterness. Finally, after having said so often “I am thirsty,”<sup>234</sup> thirsty to possess You in glory, she will sing: “Everything is consummated; into Your hands I commend my spirit.”<sup>235</sup> And the Father will come for her to “bring her into His inheritance,”<sup>236</sup> where in “the light she will see light.”<sup>237</sup>

“Know that the Lord has marvelously glorified His Holy One,” David sang.<sup>238</sup> Yes, the Holy One of God will have been glorified in this soul, for He will have destroyed everything there to “clothe it with Himself,”<sup>239</sup> and it will have lived in reality the words of the Precursor: “He must increase and I must decrease.”<sup>240</sup>

## **Fifteenth Day**

40. After Jesus Christ, doubtless at the distance that there is between the Infinite and the finite, there is one who was also the great praise of glory of the Holy Trinity. She responded fully to the divine election of which the Apostle speaks: she was always “*pure, immaculate, and without reproach*”<sup>241</sup> in the eyes of the thrice-holy God. Her soul is so simple. Its movements are so profound that they cannot be detected. She seems to reproduce on earth the life which is that of the divine Being, the simple Being. And she is so transparent, so luminous that one would mistake her for the light, yet she is but the “mirror” of the Sun of Justice: “*Speculum justitiae!*”<sup>242</sup>

“The Virgin kept all these things in her heart”:<sup>243</sup> her whole history can be summed up in these few words! It was within her heart that she lived, and at such a depth that no human eye can follow her. When I read in the Gospel “that Mary went in haste to the hill country of Judea”<sup>244</sup> to perform her loving service for her cousin Elizabeth, I imagine her passing by so beautiful, so calm and so majestic, so absorbed in recollection of the Word of God within her. Like Him, her prayer was always this: “*Ecce, here I am!*” Who? “The servant of the Lord,”<sup>245</sup> the lowliest of His creatures: she,

His Mother! Her humility was so real for she was always forgetful, unaware, freed from self. And she could sing: “The Almighty has done great things for me, henceforth all peoples will call me blessed.”<sup>246</sup>

41. This Queen of virgins is also Queen of martyrs; but again it was *in her heart* that the sword pierced,<sup>247</sup> for with her everything took place within! . . . Oh! How beautiful she is to contemplate during her long martyrdom, so serene, enveloped in a kind of majesty that radiates both strength and gentleness. . . . She learned from the Word Himself how those must suffer whom the Father has chosen as victims, those whom He has decided to associate with Himself in the great work of redemption, those whom He “has foreknown and predestined to be conformed to His Christ,”<sup>248</sup> crucified by love.

She is there at the foot of the Cross, *standing*, full of strength and courage, and here my Master says to me: “Ecce Mater tua.”<sup>249</sup> He gives her to me for my Mother. . . . And now that He has returned to the Father and has substituted me for Himself on the Cross so that “I may suffer in my body what is lacking in His passion for the sake of His body, which is the Church,”<sup>250</sup> the Blessed Virgin is again there to teach me to suffer as He did, to tell me, to make me hear those last songs of His soul which no one else but she, His Mother, could overhear.

When I shall have said my “consummatum est,”<sup>251</sup> it is again she, “Janua coeli,”<sup>252</sup> who will lead me into the heavenly courts, whispering to me these mysterious words: “*Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi; in domum Domini ibimus!*”<sup>253</sup>

## Sixteenth Day

42. “As the thirsty doe longs for the springs of fresh water, so my soul longs for You, O God! My soul thirsts for the living God! When will I appear before His face? . . .”<sup>254</sup>

And yet, as “the sparrow has found a home,” and “the turtledove a nest in which she may lay her young,”<sup>255</sup> so *Laudem Gloriae* has found while waiting to be brought to the holy Jerusalem, “*beata pacis visio*”<sup>256</sup>—her retreat, her beatitude, her anticipated Heaven in which she begins her life of eternity. “In God my soul is silent; my deliverance comes from Him. Yes,

He is the rock in which I find salvation, my stronghold, I shall not be disturbed!”<sup>257</sup>

This is the mystery my lyre sings of today! My Master has said to me as to Zacchaeus: “Hurry and come down, for I must stay in your house today. . . .”<sup>258</sup> Hurry and come down, but where? Into the innermost depths of my being: after having forsaken self, withdrawn from self been stripped of self in a word, *without self*.

43. “I must stay in your house!” It is my Master who expresses this desire! My master who wants to dwell in me with the Father and His Spirit of love, so that, in the words of the beloved disciple, I may have “communion”<sup>259</sup> with Them. “You are no longer guests or strangers, but you already belong to the House of God,”<sup>260</sup> says St. Paul. This is how I understand “belong to the House of God”: it is in living in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in my interior abyss, in this “invincible fortress of holy recollection”<sup>261</sup> of which St. John of the Cross speaks!

David sang: “My soul falls down in a faint for the courts of the Lord.”<sup>262</sup> I think that this should be the attitude of every soul that enters into its interior courts to contemplate its God and to come into closest contact with Him: it “falls down in a faint” in a divine swoon before this all-powerful Love, this infinite Majesty who dwells within it! It is not life that abandons the soul, but rather the soul that scorns this natural life and withdraws from it. . . . For it feels that this life is not worthy of His rich essence<sup>263</sup> so it dies and flows into its God.

44. Oh! How beautiful is this creature thus stripped, freed from self! It can “use the ascensions in its heart so that it may pass from this valley of tears” (that is, from all that is less than God) “to the place which is its goal,”<sup>264</sup> this “Spacious place,”<sup>265</sup> of which the psalmist sings, which is, it seems to me, the unfathomable Trinity “Immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus sanctus!”<sup>266</sup> It ascends, it rises above the senses, above nature; it transcends itself; it goes beyond every joy and every pain and passes through the clouds, not stopping until it has penetrated “*into the interior*”<sup>267</sup> of Him whom it loves and who Himself will give it “the repose of the abyss.”<sup>268</sup> And all that without leaving the holy fortress” The Master had said to it: “Hurry and *come down*. . . .”<sup>269</sup> It is also without leaving it that the soul will live, like the immutable Trinity, in an *eternal present*,<sup>270</sup>

“adoring Him always because of Himself,”<sup>271</sup> and becoming by an always more simple, more unitive gaze, “the splendor of His glory,”<sup>272</sup> that is, the unceasing praise of glory of His adorable perfections.

## Notes

- 1 Ct 6:11, cited (also in Latin) in SC 291 (cf. the following note).
- 2 Cf. SC 291 and 292. (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 26:14, p. 514).
- 3 Elizabeth loves this definition of time which she had already given in HF 1. Is it her own inspiration?
- 4 Cf. Ph 3:10.
- 5 Rm 8:29.
- 6 This term probably stems from her recent reading in Ruysbroeck, for ex. in Ru 44, 45, 46, 68. There, however, it concerns the exemplar of our spirit in God; here Elizabeth applies it to Christ of whom Paul has just said that He is our “image.”
- 7 Cf. Ep 1:4. The “in principio” (“in the beginning”) is inspired by this election “before the creation of the world” (in the same verse Ep 1:4), willed “for eternity.”
- 8 Ep 1:12. On this name which Elizabeth gives herself, cf. L 250, n.16 and 17.
- 9 Quoting from memory, Elizabeth combines Jn 6:46 (or a reminiscence of Jn 1:18 or 1 Jn 4:12) and Mt 11:27 (whose beginning verse is very close to that of Jn).
- 10 Cf. Ep 3:3–4.
- 11 Cf. Lk 2:19.
- 12 From the Litany of Loretto. The Virgin venerated in the Carmel of Dijon (cf. Plan 1, no 8) was “Our Lady of Grace.”
- 13 Elizabeth is probably thinking of SC 126 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:6, p. 455) in which John of the Cross describes how perfect love can “reproduce” “the features of the Beloved in such a vivid and intimate way,” “such a striking resemblance,” “a ravishing picture.” She will quote this page in LR 19 (cf. *ibid.*, n.11).
- 14 Cf. Lk 2:7.
- 15 Ps 118:109.
- 16 Ps 58:10, taken from SC 313 (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:8, p. 522). (Cf. HF 16, n.15 and 16).
- 17 *Rule of Carmel*, partially citing Is 30:15, which Elizabeth abridges still more.
- 18 Cf. SC 313.
- 19 “The single eye” of Mt 6:22, found in the description of Ru 34 on “singleness of intention.” Cf. HF 21, with n.17.
- 20 A reminiscence of the doctrine on detachment set forth in SC 312 (Elizabeth has just referred to the following page 313, cf. n.4) in which John of the Cross speaks of “*useless things*, of *taking up ones thoughts*” (the words that recur in Elizabeth are in italics) of “useless pastimes,” and of a “host of other such useless things.” Cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:7, p. 522.
- 21 Cf. Ru 33: “Singleness of intention gathers together into unity of spirit the scattered forces of the soul. . . .”
- 22 LF 626 “the inner kingdom of the soul.” Cf. *Collected Works*, St 4:5, p. 644.

- 23 Ru 157. Cf. GV 8.
- 24 “Great canticle.” But St. Paul does not use this expression.
- 25 “The one thing necessary”: cf. Lk 10:42.
- 26 Catherine of Siena. Cf. L 199, n.9.
- 27 Cf. Lk 10:39.
- 28 Ru 29.
- 29 Cf. SC 439. Literally: “the fortress, the unassailable citadel of interior recollection” (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:3, p. 64.) Cf. L 284, n.6.
- 30 Elizabeth, who has just sung in LR 3–4 of “beautiful inner unity,” here calls it “beautiful simplicity,” recalling pp. 33–37 of Ru which she had recently quoted at length in HF 21. She considers them so to speak as synonyms when writing: “the soul thus simplified, unified” or “an always more simple, more unitive gaze” (cf. *infra* 44).
- 31 Cf. Ph 3:8.
- 32 Expression of Catherine of Siena (Elizabeth heard it from P. Vallée (cf. L 291, n.3); the Lord told her, “Your measure will be my measure.” The thought was revived by P. Vallée’s recent letter to Elizabeth (cf. L 304, n.10) in which he wrote, “(Christ) is finally free to give Himself in His measure, to fill her with His grace. . . .” Cf. also Ru 178: “He possesses God without measure and is possessed by Him.”
- 33 Ru 178. Elizabeth adds “Holy.” But whereas Ruysbroeck speaks of unity in God, Elizabeth changes the perspective by speaking of the unity of the perfect soul.
- 34 Ep 1:11–12.
- 35 Cf. Ep 3:9.
- 36 Ep 1:4.
- 37 That is: the predestination to be praises of glory, and, also, to be that in the presence and love of God.
- 38 “God is Love”: 1 Jn 4:16.
- 39 Cf. Ru 35: “(Simplicity of intention) will give us the repose of the abyss.”
- 40 Cf. He 4:9 where the word “sabbath” appears in the trans. of the *Manual*. In a note Canon Gaume explains: “Rest means the true sabbath of God which we will celebrate eternally, the perfect rest after the labors of this life . . .” (p. 812). This is probably the origin of the expression “eternal sabbath” in Elizabeth as she is approaching her death.
- 41 Heb 4:3.
- 42 Cf. 1 Co 13:12.
- 43 Cf. 2 Co 3:18.
- 44 Cf. this same elaboration in HF 43 (on “praise of glory”) with note 17. Canon Gaume notes in the margin of the verse cited: “This refers to Him who is the glory and splendor of the Father; like living mirrors we receive in ourselves and reflect the divine Image . . . (p. 622).
- 45 Gn. 1:26.
- 46 The crystal: cf. L 269, n.11. Given the citation of note 16, Elizabeth is thinking here especially of LF 615.
- 47 “Set apart”: on the echo of John of the Cross, cf. L 220, n.4.
- 48 2 Co 4:6.
- 49 Cf. LF 615 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:77, p. 640).

- 50 “The great canticle”: cf. *supra*, LR 3, n.9. “The new canticle”: cf. Ap 14:3.
- 51 Is 58:10–11, 14, taken from SC 384–385. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 36:2, p. 546.
- 52 Col 1:12.
- 53 Cf. Jn 13:23.
- 54 Ps 23:7 and 9.
- 55 Cf. hymn *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem* from Vespers of the Common of the Dedication of a Church.
- 56 Ap 21:23. The same verse (and not v. 11, since it speaks of the *only* light) is repeated further on.
- 57 Elizabeth interiorizes “the holy city, the new Jerusalem” (Ap 21:2) in the “heaven of the soul,” as she will do *infra*, 17. (To be compared with “the city of the soul” in SC 206 [cf. *Collected Works*, St 18:7, p. 484]).
- 58 1 Tm 1:17. Elizabeth writes “immortels” (unless this was added by an unknown hand). We correct it after St. Paul, as S 272 of 1909 had already done.
- 59 Cf. Ps 17:12 (v. 13 in her *Manual*).
- 60 Ps 103:2.
- 61 Ru 73 and 145.
- 62 Cf. Heb 11:27.
- 63 Cf. Ep 2:4.
- 64 1 Jn 4:16.
- 65 Heb 11:1.
- 66 This phrase is taken from Ru 9–10. The expression “exalts”: Ru 9.
- 67 1 P 1:8. Elizabeth really writes “(joie) glorifiée,” as in the text of Peter and that of her *Manual*.
- 68 Ap 7:9, 14–17. The text is repeated in the course of the following lines.
- 69 Cf. Ap 7:9.
- 70 “Great light”: Is 9:2. Lesson from Christmas Matins. But the expression appears here in the context of the light of God of the apocalyptic city (cf. *supra*, 9).
- 71 It is the prophet Jeremiah and not the “psalmist”: Lm 2:13. Lesson from Matins of Good Friday.
- 72 2 Co 3:18.
- 73 Cf. 2 Co 3:18.
- 74 1 Co 3:17.
- 75 Cf. Ga 6:14.
- 76 Ga. 2:19. “Clouée” in the feminine, it is the redeemed and redeeming soul; it is also Elizabeth suffering on “the altar of her bed.” Cf. her testimony to Marie of Jesus some weeks before, in L 306, n.1; and soon to her Mother in L 309.
- 77 Cf. Col 1:24.
- 78 Ps 44:11.
- 79 Ep 1:6.
- 80 Cf. Jn 4:32–34.
- 81 Cf. Ps 22:3–4.
- 82 Although the expression that Elizabeth places in quotation marks comes directly from Col 1:15, the Carmelite is surely thinking at the same time of Rm 8:29 (which she loved so) “. . . conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the first-born among many brothers.” The word “conformed” of Elizabeth and her following citation prove it.

- 83 Cf. Rm 8:30.
- 84 Cf. Jn 17:4.
- 85 Jn 17:4.
- 86 Cf. Col 1:13; “. . . brought into the kingdom of His Beloved Son.”
- 87 Ep 1:12.
- 88 Ap 14:1–4, with some omissions in v. 3–4.
- 89 Sg 4:1. These words appear in the first antiphon of Matins of the Common of Virgins.
- 90 Further on Elizabeth underlines and puts between quotation marks: “*The name of His Father.*” For parallelism and the sake of clarity we do the same here.
- 91 Ap 19:11.
- 92 Ap 19:13.
- 93 The language here (as well as the distinction of the two orders) is inspired by John of the Cross. “. . . set apart, stripped . . .”; SC 439 (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:2, pp. 563–564). (Cf. also L 220, n.4).
- 94 “Free from all save their (or his) love”: words attributed by Elizabeth to Mgr. Gay in L 199.
- 95 “I die daily”: I Co 15:31.
- 96 Col 3:3.
- 97 Cf. Mt 6:22.
- 98 Cf. Ps 17:24.
- 99 Ps 17:20 (22 in the translation of her *Manual*).
- 100 Ga 2:20.
- 101 “The heavens are telling the glory of God”; Ps 18:1. For this psalm Elizabeth will follow the trans. of Eyragues.
- 102 Heb 12:22.
- 103 Ps 18:3 (v. 2 in her *Manual*).
- 104 Ps 18:9.
- 105 Ps 33:6 (trans. Eyragues).
- 106 Ps 18:3 (v. 2 in her *Manual*).
- 107 Ps 115:3–4 (trans. from her *Manual*).
- 108 Ps 18:5.
- 109 The words between quotation marks are also taken from Ps 18:5–6 in Eyragues’ translation. Note however that John of the Cross also explains (without referring to this psalm): “like the Bridegroom comes forth from His bridal chamber” (LF 635). (Cf. *Collected Works*, St 4:13, p. 648). It is there that Elizabeth could have read Ps 44:10, “The queen stood at your right hand . . .” in this translation which she cited two days previously, cf. *supra* 13.
- 110 Cf. Heb 12:29, repeating Dt 4:24. John of the Cross cites it in SC 434 when speaking of the “transformation.” Cf. *Collected Works*, St 39:14, p. 562.
- 111 SC 126. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:7, p. 455.
- 112 Ep 1:12.
- 113 Ap 4:8, 10–11, with slight adaptations. The text will be repeated further on.
- 114 Cf. Ep 3:16–17.

- 115 The expression “depths of God” (which “the Spirit penetrates”) is found in 1 Co 2:10, but the fact that Elizabeth attributes it to the “royal prophet” seems to reveal the presence of John of the Cross. In SC 391 (st. 36), he speaks of “the depth” (or the “depths” of God), which the soul (as in Elizabeth, and not “the Spirit,” who *alone* can penetrate these depths in 1 Co 2: 10–11) wishes “to penetrate and he reinforces his explanation by a phrase from the “Royal Prophet”; then he recommends—by referring to Ep 3:17, the text which Elizabeth just cited—“to be rooted in love” (SC 394). Cf. *Collected Works*, St 36:13, p. 549.
- 116 Ru 98, with slight grammatical adaptations. But Elizabeth replaces the word “invincible” of Ruysbroeck with a term dear to her: “unchanging.”
- 117 “To fall down in a faint”: Ru 191, 231. The word “faint” recurs often in Ruysbroeck, for ex. Ru 99, 100, 178. (She had already copied the “to faint” of Ru 169 in HF 35). But we find “to fall down in a faint” in SC 109 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 11:4, p. 449), which even cites Ps 83:3 in this translation (different from the *Manual* or Eyragues), and again in LF 551 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:20, p. 618). The expression is also found in Ang 147, but Elizabeth has not yet really “discovered” this book at this time.
- 118 Ps 65:1 (trans. Eyragues).
- 119 *Sainte Marie-Madeleine*, *op. cit.*, p. 83. Literally: “. . . her silence, which is an act of faith and humility is also the last effort of a soul that overflows and can say no more.”
- 120 Ps 98:9.
- 121 Ps 71:15.
- 122 Cf. Rm 11:34 and 1 Co 2:16. Her *Manual* translates: “the mind of the Lord.”
- 123 Elizabeth’s quotation marks and underlining: does she mean to make an allusion? She had already used this expression in PN 13 of 1902, and quite recently, “wholly passed into” in HF 44, repeated in LR 31. She certainly could have heard it from P. Fages who said in his retreat of 1904, speaking of the gift of the Incarnation (first conference) “. . . I am immersed in the counsels of God. [And Elizabeth copied this thought in her personal notes of this retreat: cf. PAT.] Is that not enough to make you live in ecstasy, out of self, wholly passed into, wholly lost in the thought of God?”
- 124 LF 536. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 3:7, p. 613.
- 125 Ps 45:5, in the translation of LF 536.
- 126 1 P 1:16, citing Lv 11:44, 45.
- 127 Ex 3:14.
- 128 Ac 17:28.
- 129 Gn 1:26.
- 130 2 P 1:4.
- 131 Heb 3:14.
- 132 1 Jn 3:2–3.
- 133 Mt 5:48.
- 134 Gn 17:1. This text was on the wall of the little staircase (cf. Plan 1, between no. 16 and 17).
- 135 Ep 1:11 speaks of the “counsel” in which St. Paul “immerses himself” as Elizabeth says. The same phrase is copied from P. Fages, cf. *supra*, 21, n.l l. Coincidence or influence?
- 136 Ep 1:4.
- 137 Teresa of Avila: cf. L 109, n.5.
- 138 Lk 1:51.

- 139 Cf. Ps 90:4–6. Elizabeth writes, as in her *Manual*, “demon *du midi*.”
- 140 “He,” that is, St. Paul: Ep 4:22, 24. Taken in this translation and form from LF 521–522. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:33, p. 607.
- 141 Cf. Mt 16:24.
- 142 Rm 8:13. Translation from LF 521. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:33, p. 607.
- 143 1 Co 15:54, also from LF 524. Cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:34, p. 609.
- 144 Ho 13:14. With “the Lord says” at the end, just as in LF 524 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 2:34, p. 609). Probably Elizabeth had read and meditated this day on LF 520–527.
- 145 Mt 5:48.
- 146 Ru 67: “God contemplates Himself in a simple gaze, with no before or after, in an eternal now.”
- 147 Ps 71:15, repeated further on.
- 148 Cf. Ps 56:9 (trans. of Eyragues).
- 149 Cf. Ph 3:8.
- 150 Placed in quotation marks by Elizabeth, this formula is probably not a borrowing, but summarizes what she has just said, following John of the Cross: “. . . My soul is set apart, stripped, alone, withdrawn from all creatures, spiritual and material.” . . . (SC 439) *Collected Works*, St 40:2, pp. 563–564.
- 151 Cf. PN 15.
- 152 Ps 100:3 in the trans. of the *Manual* which has “purity” instead of “integrity.”
- 153 In the library of her Carmel there were the *Oeuvres de Denys l’Aréopagite*, translated by J. Dulac, Paris, Martin-Beaupré, 1865, 672 pp., as well as the little treatise *Théologie mystique* of Dionysius the Aréopagite (in the trans. of 1845 by Mgr Darboy) cited in L Chardon, *La Croix de Jésus*, t. II, Lethielleux, 1895, pp. 425–437. We did not find the citation there. Elizabeth is only summarizing the idea of the transcendence of God which is so strongly emphasized by Dionysius. She had surely heard of it. Apart from this allusion there is nothing to prove that she read anything by the Aréopagite.
- 154 SC 441 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:4, p. 564). John of the Cross often speaks of these “four passions: joy, hope, sorrow, and fear” (SC 218), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 20:4, p. 489) for ex. again in SC 223–230 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 20: 9–13, pp. 491–493), SC 296–297 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 26: 18, p. 516), 310 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:4, p. 521).
- 155 The expression “sleep of the powers” is in Teresa of Avila, *Life*, ch. 16 (trad. Bouix, tome I, 1857, p. 191). It is the third degree of prayer. However, it may be that Elizabeth is thinking rather of St 26 of the *Spiritual Canticle* on the inebriation of love after having drunk in the “inner cellar of the Beloved”: “the three powers of the soul are inebriated together on their Beloved” (SC 287), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 26:8, p. 513). This is the strophe of the “Nescivi,” the word with which this *Last Retreat* begins.
- 156 Cf. Ps 44:12–13.
- 157 Rm 8:13.
- 158 Elizabeth herself indicates: “(continued).”
- 159 Ps 17:20 (v. 22 in her *Manual*).
- 160 Ps 70:16.
- 161 Ho 2:14.
- 162 Heb 4:12.

- 163 Possibly Elizabeth is recalling here the doctrine of Teresa of Avila on “interior locutions” (*Interior Castle*, VI, 3) or that of John of the Cross on “substantial words” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, ch. 31). Nothing proves that she read these pages, but this doctrine was quite familiar in Carmel.
- 164 Cf. Jn 14:23. Also perhaps Ja 1:22–23.
- 165 Jn 17:17.
- 166 Jn 14:23.
- 167 Cf. especially SC, strophe 39: “like God” (SC 422), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 39:4, p. 558), “truly gods, like God” (SC 425), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 39:6, p. 559). Also strophe 36: “more and more like the Beloved” (SC 387), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 36:4, p. 547) and strophe 12: “a striking resemblance” (SC 126), (cf. *Collected Works*, St 12:6, p. 455).
- 168 Ep 1:11.
- 169 Ru 157. Cf. GV 8.
- 170 Rm 8:14.
- 171 “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”: Jn 1:14.
- 172 1 P 1:16, citing Lv 11:44, 45.
- 173 “Inaccessible Light”: cf. 1 Tm 6:16.
- 174 Cf. 1 P 2:21: “. . . Christ . . . left you an example that you might follow in His footsteps.”
- 175 Jn 17:19.
- 176 Cf. Col 1:26–27.
- 177 Ep 3:4.
- 178 Cf. Ep 3:19.
- 179 Ep 2:14.
- 180 Ep 2:18.
- 181 Ja 1:17.
- 182 Col 1:19–20.
- 183 Col 2:10, 12–15, with some small omissions.
- 184 Col 1:22, repeated a little further on.
- 185 A first version follows here: “will, and that is what He wants to do in me, to be my peace so that nothing [here again a first version: “may stop me”] may draw me out of the bosom of the Father, so that I may remain there as still and as peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity.” In these last words we recognize PN 15 (“O My God, Trinity Whom I Adore”). Did Elizabeth find that union with God expressed in this way resembled too greatly that of Christ “in the bosom of His Father”? Afterwards she glued a half-sheet over this first version and wrote a second definitive text. She made this correction *immediately*: the proof of it is that after the last word of the first version “eternity,” the line remains blank. After the part that is pasted over her writing continues as usual.
- 186 Ep 2:4.
- 187 John of the Cross. Cf. L 284, n.6.
- 188 Cf. PN 15.
- 189 “For me to live is Christ”: Ph 1:21.
- 190 Cf. *To Live by Love* by Thérèse of Lisieux, a poem that Elizabeth loved: “But if I fall at every passing hour: / helping me up . . . You Jesus] will give me Your grace. . . .” Cf. L 214, n.9, as

well as *infra*, 33, n.4.

- 191 In this context the word reveals an allusion to Rm 7:24: “Unhappy man that I am! Who will free me from this body of death?” Below, 35 and 44, Elizabeth repeats her biblical binomial “despoiling,” “freed.” “Despoiling” comes from Col 2:15.
- 192 Taken from Col 2:15, cited *supra*, 30. Note that Elizabeth intends the word “powers” in a psychological sense: the powers of the soul.
- 193 Cf. Ga 2:20.
- 194 “restores all things in Christ”: Ep 1:10. She immediately cites it in French, Ep 1:9–10.
- 195 Cf. Ep 1:11 (see already *supra*, 23, n.9).
- 196 Col 2:6–7. Elizabeth applies this text to herself in the feminine; she will comment on it gradually. As she herself underlined the first three elements, we logically underline “to be strengthened in faith” and “thanksgiving.”
- 197 “At each passing moment”: a probable echo of Thérèse of Lisieux, cf. L 214, no.9.
- 198 Rm 8:35. Elizabeth writes “me” instead of “us.”
- 199 Perhaps in the background there is the image of the vine and its branches, and the command of the Lord “Remain in me” (“established in Him” Elizabeth says). Cf. Jn 15:4–5.
- 200 2 Co 5:4.
- 201 We also find these words in 2 Co 5:4, but she vitalizes them by and in the much richer context of Col 3:9–10: “Strip off the old man . . . and clothe yourselves in the new . . . in the image of Him who created you,” and of Ga 3:27 (as well as Rm 13:14): “clothed in Jesus Christ.”
- 202 A reminiscence this time of Ep 3:17: “rooted and grounded in love.”
- 203 Ps 71:15.
- 204 Ps 26:3, 5 (trans. Eyragues).
- 205 Several times Elizabeth gives to the “psalmist” the name of “prophet.” It will be noticed that, in the literature of that period, David is often called the king of the prophets.
- 206 Ps 26:5–6 (trans. Eyragues),
- 207 “Creating Word”: expression that Elizabeth heard at Carmel, notably from P. Vallée, for ex., in his Discourse for the feast of St. John of the Cross, November 24, 1901, and twice in the fourth evening conference of the Retreat of 1902. The expression obviously refers to Gn 1.
- 208 Ep 2:4.
- 209 Ep 3:19.
- 210 Jn 11:41.
- 211 Ap 14:3.
- 212 Ph 3:8–10, 12–14. Perhaps she copied here her “retreat devotion” of 1905 (PN 16). Adaptation of verse 10.
- 213 Ep 1:4, 11–12.
- 214 “Christ is my life! I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”: a combination of Ph 1:21 and Ga 2:20.
- 215 Rm 8:29.
- 216 Heb 10:9, citing Ps 39:10–11.
- 217 First version crossed out: “the breathing.”
- 218 Jn 4:34.
- 219 Mt 26:39.

- 220 Ps 118:111.
- 221 Cf. Jn 18:37.
- 222 Jn 8:29. Elizabeth writes: “seule,” in the feminine.
- 223 Cf. Lk 6:19.
- 224 This refers to Lk 6:12, as the following note proves.
- 225 Lk 6:12: “He spent the night there in a prayer of God” (trans. of the *Manual*), Canon Gaume notes: “Literal translation; we could find no other way to express the force of the text” (p. 205).
- 226 Heb 13:15.
- 227 Ps 150:1–2 (trans. Eyragues).
- 228 “But Jesus was silent”: Mt 26:63.
- 229 Cf. Ps 58:10 in translation of SC 313, cf. *Collected Works*, St 28:8, p. 522.
- 230 Cf. Is 30:15, cited in the *Rule of Carmel*.
- 231 Mt 27:46.
- 232 Jn 17:13.
- 233 Cf. Jn 18:11.
- 234 Jn 19:30.
- 235 Lk 23:46.
- 236 Cf. Col 1:12–13.
- 237 Cf. Ps 35:10. Cf. Ps 35:10.
- 238 Ps 4:4.
- 239 Cf. Ga 3:27. Cf. also *supra*, 33, n.8.
- 240 Jn 3:30.
- 241 Col 1:22.
- 242 “Mirror of Justice”: from the Litany of Loretto.
- 243 Lk 2:19 and 51.
- 244 Lk 1:39.
- 245 Lk 1:38.
- 246 Lk 1:49, 48.
- 247 Cf. Lk 2:35.
- 248 Cf. Rm 8:29.
- 249 “Behold your mother”: Jn 19:27.
- 250 Col 1:24.
- 251 “It is finished”: Jn 19:30.
- 252 “Gate of Heaven”: from the Litany of Loretto. This is the name that Elizabeth often gives the Blessed Virgin during the last months of her life (cf. S 204).
- 253 The handwriting is enlarged. “I rejoiced when they said to me: Let us go up to the house of the Lord”: Ps 121:1 (we give the trans. of the *Manual*). Three times a day the Sisters recited this psalm as they entered Choir.
- 254 Ps 41:1–2 (trans. Eyragues). Elizabeth adds the adjective “thirsty.”
- 255 Ps 83:3.
- 256 “Blessed vision of peace”: from the hymn *Coelestis urbs Jerusalem: Vespers of the Common of the Dedication of a Church*. Notice that having begun her *Last Retreat* on the sixteenth of

August, the “sixteenth day” is the thirty-first, on which the Dedication of the Churches of Carmel was celebrated. The biblical texts cited in notes 2, 3, 5, 9, and 11 belong to the liturgy of this day.

257 Ps 61:2–3 (trans. Eyragues).

258 Lk 19:5.

259 1 Jn 1:3.

260 Ep 2:19.

261 Cf. SC 439 (cf. *Collected Works*, St 40:3, p. 564). Cf. L 284, n.6.

262 Ps 83:3. But “falls down in a faint” is the translation she had read in SC 109 (cf. *supra*, 21, n.5).

263 That is, the divine life which is already given us and which awaits its full revelation. It is as much the doctrine of John and Paul as of John of the Cross which seems to be in the background here (in particular the death of love in LF 478–480) cf. *Collected Works*, St 1:30–31. pp. 593–594.

264 Cf. Ps 83:6 (according to her *Manual*) but Elizabeth herself seems to translate “ascensiones” (Latin) by ascensions (her *Manual* says “roads,” Eyragues says “paths”). She does not go up, like the psalmist, to the earthly Jerusalem, but towards the heavenly city: hence her idea of “ascension!”

265 Ps 17:20.

266 “Immense Father, Immense Son, Immense Spirit”: from the Athanasian *Creed* which was recited at Prime on the feast of the Trinity and often on Sundays.

267 Her underlining. She means: *into* the “house” of God, “into the bosom” of the Trinity, where she will enter by the act of “dying and flowing into her God,” as she has just explained in 43, *supra*.

268 Ru 35.

269 In her explanation Elizabeth places the emphasis on “come down, “ that is “without leaving the holy fortress, “ but by entering further into her “interior abyss” (*supra*, 43). That is why for a good understanding of the text we have underlined the words *come down*. She “ascends” and “descends” at the same time: in both cases the movement is vertical.

270 Cf. the “eternal now” of Ru 64 and 67 already cited in HF 17.

271 Cf. Ps 71:15.

272 Heb 1:3. There it refers to Christ. In Heaven Elizabeth will be completely united to Him.

## **IV Let Yourself Be Loved**

# LET YOURSELF BE LOVED

## Introduction

*L*et Yourself Be Loved is a very rich text, but one that does not easily yield up its “secrets,” the word which Elizabeth wrote on the little envelope<sup>1</sup> containing these deeply personal lines<sup>2</sup> written during the last days of October 1906.<sup>3</sup> Before this document was found in 1934 on the dead Prioress’ table,<sup>4</sup> how many times had she not examined its promise! It was in her worn-out *Grace Book*<sup>5</sup> that we discovered the note (containing the words of the Lord addressed to Bl. Angela di Foligno) that accompanied and completed the message.<sup>6</sup>

We must read these pages in a triple light. In our General Introduction,<sup>7</sup> we have already placed in its *prophetic context* this text written at the time when the testament letters were multiplying. Elizabeth’s posthumous mission: to help others to live “in communion with Love” (LL 4 and 6), takes on here an accent, more clearly formulated than ever, of abandonment and of faithful return made to a wholly prevenient Love. We also note Elizabeth’s complete silence about her suffering, so completely has it disappeared behind the message that Elizabeth wants to communicate and the deep gratitude that she feels for the Prioress who has been for her God’s instrument.

We must also place these pages in the context of an *almost sacramental spirituality* which developed greatly during her last illness.<sup>8</sup> In the task of the Prioress, Elizabeth sees a *mediation* like “another Christ.” She is the “priest” who received the religious vows of the “victim” handing over her whole life to God; again, it is the Prioress who helped her to offer her sufferings and her approaching death (in conformity with the One crucified by love, and for the Church). After the apostolate that Mother Germaine exercised in Elizabeth’s regard as her Mistress of Novices (the sharing of the bread of the Word is another aspect of her quasi-sacerdotal action) Elizabeth now assures her: “In my turn I am going to fulfill a priesthood

over your soul. It is Love who associates me with His work in you, this time I will be your little Mother” (LL 3–4).

And finally, we must see them in a *deeply and nobly human context* for we sense behind these lines the loving concern that the Prioress carries in her heart. Desirous of leading her community to a high ideal, it is not without apprehension that she bears the burden of her responsibility. She, the timid and reserved one, must have felt in her heart, perhaps with anguish,<sup>9</sup> the request that the Lord addressed to the first Pastor of the Church: “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” (Jn 21:15). Elizabeth will reverse the perspective: “Let yourself be loved more than these”; an emphasis repeated six times, which justifies the title we have given these pages.

Germaine greatly loved the person and spirituality of Thérèse of Lisieux of whom, as mistress of novices, she had often spoken to Elizabeth. The disciple takes up the teaching of the mistress: the Thérésian tone is manifest in this “vocation” of opening to prevenient and condescending Love.

Her very spiritual vision does not prevent Elizabeth from humanly feeling very close to her of whom she said she could not tell her “all she had been for her” (cf. LL 1). She had been the Prioress’ first postulant, first novice, first professed,<sup>10</sup> and now the first one to die. When we see in how many ways these two women were close to each other, we can better surmise how much this closeness between them was founded in God. Elizabeth’s message, human and mystical, has all the intensity of a last “A Dieu”—as she loved to write—which will be but the beginning of a new “intimacy” (LL 4), lived in God, present on earth as in heaven.

We must not see simply a *teaching* of Elizabeth in this predication of a divine and merciful love, but the expression of an attitude that had long been hers, although she often had to live it in faith: as a young lay woman she complained to Mother Marie of Jesus “of not doing anything (during prayer), so enraptured was she by Him who did everything.”<sup>11</sup> “I have only to love Him to let myself be loved,” she wrote in 1903 (L 177). And during her illness in 1906: “There is a phrase from St. Paul that is like a summary of my life, and which could be written on every one of its moments: *Proper nimiam charitatem*. Yes, all these floods of graces are because He has loved me exceedingly” (L 280). This wholly confident “*Let Yourself Be Loved*” is

like the pause in a long symphony of love, the first note of the eternal Sanctus.

Should we not also read these pages as an invitation to live “in communion with Love, believing in Love” (LL 4)?

## Notes

- 1 The little envelope, 11.1 x 7.2 cm., bears on the front the words: “Secrets for our Reverend Mother,” and on the back a seal of red wax, a solemn symbol!
- 2 Two sheets of ruled paper, 26.9 x 10.4 cm. Folded in two they thus presented eight small pages which were folded again to fit in the envelope. The letter is written in ink. There was also a note of which we will speak in note 6. Since we numbered the pages, we began new paragraphs before numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6.
- 3 This is the date that Mother Germaine wrote on it. According to her Obituary Circular (pp. 6–7), Elizabeth had asked her Prioress “for some paper to write on” (and thus for the permission) before writing this last sign of her gratitude. Mother Germaine read these pages (as foreseen in LL 1) only after Elizabeth’s death. According to an oral tradition of the Carmel of Dijon, she sometimes spoke of this letter but never allowed it to be read.
- 4 Cf. Mother Germaine’s Obituary Circular, p. 7.
- 5 *The Blessing for Meals with Thanksgiving and other Prayers for the Use of Carmelite Religious*. Oudin, Poitiers, 1863, 217 pp. + 45 manuscript pages. Prioress eight times, Mother Germaine made much use of this book.
- 6 A little note, 10.4 x 6.5 cm., written on both sides in ink. Elizabeth first lightly ruled the paper with pencil and then framed the text in ink. The convergence of several elements makes us conclude that this little note belonged to LL: a) it is cut with scissors so as to fit in the little envelope; b) it is in the same writing and the same ink; c) the feebleness of the handwriting suggests a late period; d) the citations from Bl. Angela di Foligno also suggest the last days; e) the citations tie in very well with the theme of LL (cf. “loved by Him to this extent, in this way, loved by an unchanging and creative love . . . ,” LL 5); f) the “I” of Jesus implies also the “I” of Elizabeth present in Germaine another theme of LL; both will be “in the depths of her soul” (LL 4 and 7); g) the privileged place of the note in Mother Germaine’s Grace Book; h) the absence of any other plausible explanation.
- 7 Cf. *supra*, pp. 28–30.
- 8 Cf. our work *Elisabeth ou l’Amour est là*.
- 9 Mother Germaine’s Obituary Circular says, in connection with LL: “In fact, it seems that our venerated Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity had received an intimate revelation (enlightened by God) on the state of suffering that her beloved Mother was experiencing, the Lord having permitted this richly endowed soul to feel in her depths only poverty, humility and fear” (p. 7).
- 10 As a young professed, she remained three more years in the novitiate.
- 11 Cf. our introduction to the *Diary*, Volume III.

# LET YOURSELF BE LOVED

## Text

J.M. + J.T.

1. My Cherished Mother, my Holy Priest,<sup>1</sup> when you read these lines, your little Praise of Glory will no longer be singing on earth, but will be living in Love's immense furnace;<sup>2</sup> so you can believe her and listen to her as "the voice" of God. Cherished Mother, I would have liked to tell you all that you have been for me, but the hour is so serious, so solemn . . . and I don't want to delay over telling you things that I think lose something when trying to express them in words. What your child is coming to do is to reveal to you what she feels, or, to be more exact; what her God, in the hours of profound recollection, of unifying contact, makes her understand.

2. "*You are uncommonly loved,*"<sup>3</sup> loved by that love of preference that the Master had here below for some and which brought them so far. He does not say to you as to Peter: "Do you love Me more than these?"<sup>4</sup> Mother, listen to what He tells you: "*Let*<sup>5</sup> yourself be loved more than these! That is, without fearing that any obstacle will be a hindrance to it, for I am free to pour out My love on whom I wish! '*Let yourself be loved more than these*' is your vocation.<sup>6</sup> It is in being faithful to it that you will make Me happy for you will magnify the power of My love. This love can rebuild what you have destroyed. *Let yourself be loved more than these.*"

3. Dearly loved Mother, if you knew with what assurance I understand God's plan for your soul; it appears to me as in an immense light, and I understand also that in Heaven I will fulfill in my turn a priesthood over your soul. It is Love who associates me with His work in you: Oh, Mother, how great and adorable it is on God's part! And how simple it is for you, and that is exactly what makes it so luminous" Mother, *let yourself be loved more than the others; that explains everything and prevents the soul from being surprised. . . .*

4. If you will allow her, your little host<sup>7</sup> will spend her Heaven in the depths<sup>8</sup> of your soul: she will keep you in communion<sup>9</sup> with Love, believing in Love; it will be the sign of her dwelling in you. Oh, in what intimacy we are going to live. Cherished Mother, let your life also be spent in the Heavens where I will sing in your name the eternal Sanctus.<sup>10</sup> I will do nothing before the throne of God without you; you know well that I bear your imprint and that something of yourself appeared with your child before the Face of God. I also ask you not to do anything without me; you have granted me this. I will come to live in you. This time I will be your little Mother. I will instruct you,<sup>11</sup> so that my vision will benefit you, that you may participate in it, and that you too, may live the life of the blessed!

5. Revered Mother, Mother consecrated for me from eternity,<sup>12</sup> as I leave, I bequeath to you this vocation which was mine in the heart of the Church Militant and which from now on I will unceasingly fulfill in the Church Triumphant: “*The Praise of Glory of the Holy Trinity.*”<sup>13</sup> Mother, “let yourself be loved more than these”: it is in that way that your Master wills for you to be a praise of glory! He rejoices to build up<sup>14</sup> in you by His love and for His glory, and it is He alone who wants to work<sup>15</sup> in you, even though you will have done nothing to attract this grace except that which a creature can do: works of sin and misery . . . He loves you like that. He loves you “more than these.” He will do everything in you. He will go to the end: for when a soul is loved by Him to this extent, in this way, loved by an unchanging and creative love, a free love which transforms as it pleases Him, oh, how far this soul will go!

6. Mother, the fidelity that the Master asks of you is to remain in communion with Love, flow into, be rooted<sup>16</sup> in this Love who wants to mark your soul with the seal of His power and His grandeur. You will never be commonplace if you are vigilant in love! But in the hours when you feel only oppression and lassitude, you will please Him even more if you faithfully *believe* that He is still working, that He is loving you just the same, and *even more*: because His love is *free* and that is how He wants to be *magnified* in you; and you will *let* yourself be loved “*more than these.*” That, I believe, is what this means. . . . Live in the depths of your soul!<sup>17</sup> My Master makes me understand very clearly that He wants to create marvelous things there: you are called to render homage to the simplicity<sup>18</sup> of the

Divine Being and to magnify the power of His Love. Believe His “voice” and read these lines as if coming from Him.

[Elizabeth now illustrates her convictions with a long quotation from Blessed Angela di Foligno. All these words are addressed by Jesus or the Holy Spirit to Blessed Angela<sup>19</sup>]

7. Oh! I love you, I love you more than anyone else in this valley! [of Spoleto]. . . . It is “I”<sup>20</sup> who come, and I bring you unknown joy. . . . I will enter into the depths of your being.

O my spouse! I have rested and reposed in you; now possess<sup>21</sup> yourself and repose in Me! . . .

Love Me! All your life will please Me, provided that you love Me! . . . I will do great things in you; I will be made known in you, glorified, and praised in you! . . .

## Notes

- 1 On this appellation “priest,” cf. L 320, n.3.
- 2 For “Love’s furnace” and the background of Thérèse of Lisieux: cf. L 190, n.3.
- 3 Elizabeth enlarges these words that we put in italics. This expression comes perhaps from P. Vallée. In the Retreat that he preached for the community in 1902, we find the formula: “so uncommonly rich in love” (second morning conference), and “there is in God an uncommon tenderness” (fourth morning conference). Could he have used the expression again in the two sermons that he preached in Carmel’s chapel on the 13th and 14th of October 1906, and in the conversation that he had then with Elizabeth? On the 10th of January, 1907, P. Vallée wrote to Mme. Catez that Elizabeth’s last weeks were “so uncommonly, so divinely beautiful.”
- 4 Jn 21:15.
- 5 Elizabeth emphasizes the word “let” three times in a row by enlarging it a little: the fourth time (at the end of 3) she even writes it with a capital after a *comma*. We put the word then, in *italics*, including the fifth and sixth time it occurs. Until the end of this paragraph 2 it is the Lord who is speaking (“Me,” and “My”).
- 6 Perhaps a reminiscence of the “vocation” of love according to Thérèse of Lisieux (HA p. 208)? Cf. *Story of a Soul*, p. 194. Cf. L 250, n.17.
- 7 “Host” that the Prioress-priest offered to God when she received her vows in 1903, and will offer in a few days when Elizabeth gives up her life: cf. L 320, n.3. [The French word *hostie* means both victim as well as *host*. Elizabeth intends both meanings here. Tr.]
- 8 Elizabeth will be there in Jesus in the sense of his promise to Angela di Foligno (Ang 59) which Elizabeth will quote *infra*, 7.
- 9 “Communion”: a frequent allusion to 1 Jn 1:3 as in LL 6.
- 10 “Eternal Sanctus”: cf. L 250, n.18.

- 11 As Mother Germaine, Elizabeth's mistress of novices and Prioress, had instructed her . . . "This time," it will be she who instructs her.
- 12 "From eternity": the background of the divine "election" "before creation" (Ep 1:4), the divine "predestination" "according to the counsel of his will" (Ep 1:11).
- 13 Cf. Ep 1:12. Elizabeth enlarges her writing. Here in italics.
- 14 Cf. Col 2:7.
- 15 Biblical expression taken from Ep 1:11 (cf. L 224), as in LL 6.
- 16 Cf. Ep 3:17.
- 17 Elizabeth will also be "in the depths of your soul" (cf. LL 4), with the Master.
- 18 "Simplicity" was a characteristic of Mother Germaine.
- 19 Cf. Ang 59–61. In the French the participles remain in the masculine: it is *Jesus* who is speaking. Elsewhere (cf. for ex. LR), Elizabeth uses the feminine when she applies these words to herself.
- 20 The word is in italics in Ang 59. Elizabeth enlarges it and puts it in quotation marks.
- 21 Ang 59 says here: "pose" (rest). Elizabeth writes "possède" (possess). We retain her nuance. Could it be an error in transcription as Mother Germaine supposed when later she wrote over it "pose"?

# O MY GOD, TRINITY WHOM I ADORE<sup>1</sup>

November 21, 1904<sup>2</sup>

J.M. + J.T.

O my God, Trinity<sup>3</sup> whom I adore, help me to forget<sup>4</sup> myself entirely that I may be established in You as still<sup>5</sup> and as peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing trouble my peace or make me leave You, O my Unchanging<sup>6</sup> One, but may each minute<sup>7</sup> carry me further into the depths of Your Mystery. Give peace to my soul;<sup>8</sup> make it Your heaven,<sup>9</sup> Your beloved dwelling<sup>10</sup> and Your resting place.<sup>11</sup> May I never leave You there alone but be wholly present, my faith wholly vigilant,<sup>12</sup> wholly adoring,<sup>13</sup> and wholly surrendered to Your creative Action.<sup>14</sup>

O my beloved Christ, crucified by love, I wish to be a bride<sup>15</sup> for Your Heart; I wish to cover You with glory;<sup>15a</sup> I wish to love You . . . even unto death!<sup>16</sup> But I feel my weakness, and I ask<sup>17</sup> You to “clothe me with Yourself,”<sup>18</sup> to identify my soul with all the movements of Your Soul, to overwhelm me, to possess me,<sup>18a</sup> to substitute Yourself for me that my life may be but a radiance of Your Life. Come into me as Adorer, as Restorer, as Savior. O Eternal Word, Word of my God,<sup>19</sup> I want to spend my life in listening<sup>19a</sup> to You, to become wholly teachable<sup>20</sup> that I may learn all from You. Then, through all nights, all voids, all helplessness,<sup>21</sup> I want to gaze<sup>22</sup> on You always and remain in Your great light. O my beloved Star,<sup>23</sup> so fascinate me<sup>24</sup> that I may not withdraw from Your radiance.

O consuming Fire,<sup>25</sup> Spirit of Love, “come upon me,”<sup>26</sup> and create in my soul a kind of incarnation<sup>27</sup> of the Word: that I may be another humanity<sup>28</sup> for Him in which He can renew His whole Mystery. And You, O Father, bend lovingly over Your poor little<sup>29</sup> creature; “cover her with Your shadow,”<sup>30</sup> seeing in her only the “Beloved in whom You are well pleased.”<sup>31</sup>

O my<sup>32</sup> Three, my All, my Beatitude, infinite Solitude,<sup>33</sup> Immensity in which I lose<sup>34</sup> myself, I surrender myself to You as Your prey.<sup>35</sup> Bury

Yourself in me that I may bury<sup>36</sup> myself in You until I depart to contemplate  
in Your light the abyss of Your greatness.<sup>37</sup>

November 21, 1904

## *Annotations*

1. This prayer is written in ink on a very thin sheet of paper, lightly ruled, 14.1 x 9.3 cm. The sheet has been detached from Elizabeth's "personal notebook" (cf. PN 13, n.1); the facing page is still there; the torn edges fit together and the two sheets show the same brown stains caused by a dried flower that Elizabeth kept in this place. Between the first two sheets a similar little flower is still to be found with the same stains. The autograph, dated but without a title, has nineteen lines of text on the front page (besides J.M. + J.T. at the top) and thirty-four lines on the back (not counting the date). From the very beginning of this sheet, Elizabeth had compressed her handwriting by writing two lines for every line of paper; thus she was aware that otherwise her prayer would have gone beyond the limits of the sheet. This also proves that she tore out the sheet *before* writing on it since the notebook still contains seven blank pages. Doubtless she detached the sheet in order to carry this prayer around in a book (for ex. her *Manual* or the *Spiritual Canticle* by St. John of the Cross) so that she could read it again more easily. The page is not folded. Did she make a rough copy? At first sight the compressed writing on the front would suggest that she had a clear idea of what was to follow; nevertheless several autographs of the letters show the same compactness on the back page, even from the first line (for ex. L238, 241). It would seem more likely that there was no rough copy and that the prayer sprang from the fullness of her heart. The handwriting is peaceful and even; there is only one correction (cf. n.36). The edition of 1911 of the *Souvenirs* mentions for the first time, in a note, that "this prayer of Elizabeth of the Trinity was found without a title in her notes" (p. 305). It already appeared in the first edition of 1909 (pp. 299–300), but the Obituary Circular dated December 18, 1906, did not yet mention it. In the annotation of this very rich prayer, our intention is only to explain the provenance, or preparation in her writings, of certain formulas and images.

2. Feast of Mary's Presentation in the Temple. On that day, after Mass, the Carmelites renewed their religious vows in the oratory. Elizabeth wrote her prayer in the course of the day or during the hour of great silence; there was no work on that day. It is very important to note that on that same morning the retreat preached by P. Fages, a Dominican, ended. Begun the

evening of November 12th, it lasted for eight full days. The complete text is kept in ACD. In PAT one will find Elizabeth's personal notes with the corresponding passages, as well as the general scheme of the retreat. It was centered on "the Mystery of the Incarnation" or, as the preacher indicated, on "that beautiful, lovable figure, adorable above all, who is called Our Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 9). In our opinion, this retreat was more on the level of the audience than that of P. Vallée in 1902.

3. This prayer of Elizabeth, however personal it may be in its conception, is not without relation to two other prayers that she loved. First of all Thérèse of Lisieux's *Act of Oblation* which Elizabeth, with her good memory, must have known practically by heart. It begins with the same words: "O my God, (blessed Trinity)," and reveals a fundamental affinity of structure (cf. AL). Then, the prayer of St. Catherine of Siena, *O eternal Trinity (Dialogue, chap 167, trans. Cartier, Paris, 1855, p. 224)* which Elizabeth had copied (cf. L 115) and which she kept in her books. The conclusion of PN 15 alludes to the prayer of Catherine again (cf. n.37).

4. Elizabeth wrote: "oubliez."

5. "Still" (immobile): this word does not describe a physical attitude, much less a psychic inertia. It sums up, it seems, *an ideal* and *an attitude* of inner peace described in the *Spiritual Canticle* and the *Living Flame* of John of the Cross, a book "so desired" and so "precious" (L 106), which is the whole nourishment of my soul" (L241). The word "still" reflects first of all *the ideal* of the transformation in God, of the spiritual marriage described in SC, St 20–21, and 40. "The Son of God," the mystical Doctor explains (SC 217 ff), "established [this is the expression Elizabeth uses here but it was also dear to P. Vallée] the bride in perfect possession [cf. in Elizabeth the idea of the soul already in eternity] of peace" [Elizabeth wishes to be "peaceful"]. He then reviews all the spiritual faculties and the appetites with their passions showing how God "quiets" (SC 218) "the restlessness and irritability that used to afflict it" (SC 219), "the fatigue and anguish occasioned by inordinate affections and activities," in short "their inordinate movements" (SC 234). It is to these "movements" (a word repeated six times in these pages 218–234) and it is in this sense that the ideal of Elizabeth is opposed when she wants to become "still" without inordinate movements: "May nothing trouble my peace," she says immediately after in

her Prayer. It is not excluded that, by nature impulsive and choleric (cf. D 1 and 34; PN 12), she had remembered well what John of the Cross said about “anger” in particular: “An impulsive movement that troubles peace” (SC 234). Nevertheless, she is echoing here more probably Thérèse of Lisieux’s “profession note” which she had copied before her entrance: “Let none of the things of earth trouble my peace” (HA p. 129). The word “still” also evokes and sums up for Elizabeth an *attitude* of spirit, notably the contemplative attitude of peaceful silence and loving attention during the graces of infused prayer which John of the Cross abundantly describes in LF III, 557–605. “Its attitude is to remain, so to speak, passive, without making any *movement* [italics ours], without applying itself to anything else than this loving, simple attention, fixed on its object alone, somewhat like one who opens his eyes to gaze lovingly. God then wants to commune with the soul by a simple and loving knowledge; the soul also, must receive it simply and lovingly . . . in complete detachment from all things, in absolute rest, in perfect calm, *like God Himself*” (LF 564–565; cf. in Elizabeth the idea of the soul already in eternity).

One must not be like children who “fidget with their feet” says John of the Cross (and Elizabeth will refer to this example in L 231) or like “a painting which might happen to move while the artist is painting it” (LF 604). Still: without “making me leave you,” Elizabeth prays again. This is what she heard from P. Fages and noted down two days before: “The soul cannot leave Christ. . . .” (cf. PAT)

6. “Unchanging,” a word with a Valléen background, but it must be interpreted in Elizabeth’s sense: “He who always remains while all passes and all changes around us!” (L 107) “Unchanging Beauty” (L 121 and 212; P 84 and 85), “Unchanging Love” (L 210).

7. Cf. P 90 of the preceding month: “So that infinite Love / At each passing moment / May carry it [the soul] away and consume it in Him.” Also the previous evening P. Fages said of the Blessed Virgin that, “at each moment she increased, she accumulated grace. . . .”

8. “Give peace” at a truly profound level, as the context demands. Perhaps a reminiscence of what Elizabeth had read in St 24 (p. 265) of the *Spiritual Canticle*, or the double repetition of the “dwelling at peace” in the

poem the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (St 1 and 2)? Cf. L 165: “Let us make for Him in our soul a dwelling wholly at peace.”

9. The idea of “the heaven of the soul” abounds in her *Letters from Carmel* from the beginning. Notice in particular L 210 of August 21, 1904, in which is found the formula “the heaven of our soul.” A few days earlier Elizabeth had noted down these words spoken by P. Fages: “the faculties of the soul must be as calm and peaceful as . . . a tranquil lake in which the whole sky is reflected.” Notice in this phrase the word “peaceful” which she had already used in this prayer.

10. Cf. L 165, cited n.8. Nine days before she had written: “We will ask Him . . . to establish His dwelling in our souls” (L 213). Perhaps also a reminiscence of Jn 15.4: “*Dwell* in me, and *I* in you.”

11. Allusion to Bethany (Lk 10). Cf. PN 5 and L 145, in which “Bethany” and “rest” are associated.

12. L 150 speaks of “wholly vigilant”; L 165 of “wholly vigilant in faith.” The image is also, in part, indebted to P. Vallée, who spoke of the “wholly vigilant” soul (Retreat of 1900, second Conference) or “very vigilant in faith” (Retreat of 1902, second Conference in the evening) or “completely vigilant” (*ibid.*, fourth Conference in the morning).

13. “Adoring”: we often find the expression in her previous writings (L 150, 204; P 88). And “wholly adoring” in L 131, 135, 158, 185; P. 86, 90.

14. P. Fages often spoke in his retreat of “the action” and the “creation” of the Holy Spirit. But Elizabeth most probably learned this expression “creative action” from P. Vallée, who used it in his “Homily for the Veiling of Marie of the Trinity,” in his Retreat of 1900 (twice) and in his Retreat of 1902 (four times).

15. Cf. PN 13.

15a. “to cover with glory”: a probable reminiscence of Heb 2:7 and 9, where the “humiliated Christ (cf. “crucified” in Elizabeth’s prayer) is then “crowned with glory,” an expression in its turn taken from Ps 8:6. (She had also read in SC 113 the expression “clothe with glory” and in SC 153–154 “to fill with glory.”) It was in January of this year that she formulated her desire to be a “praise of glory” of the Lord (L 191).

16. Note the fusion of two representatives of this total gift, Teresa of Avila and Thérèse of Lisieux, in L 169 (n.4) where Elizabeth writes “I wish to love you so . . . even unto death.”

Her *Poems*, both those she wrote as a young girl as well as those she wrote as a Carmelite, often express this desire of loving unreservedly.

17. In her *Act of Oblation*, filled with the same desire of total love, Thérèse of Lisieux had used the same words: “But I feel my weakness, and I ask You . . .” (HA p. 249). We find the same manifestation of weakness and the same appeal to the substituting holiness of God, formulated in Thérèse’s terms, in PN 4, 5, and L 149, 184, and 212.

18. Cf. Ga 3:27 (“to be clothed with Jesus Christ”). In her *Act of Oblation*, Thérèse of Lisieux had asked God “to be Yourself my holiness,” but she also wanted to “be clothed with Your own Justice” (HA pp. 249–251).

18a. The two words “overwhelm” and “possess” (associated in the second morning Conference of the Retreat of 1902 of P. Vallée) are already found together in Elizabeth’s writings: cf. L 185 and 192. As for the formula “identify my soul with all the movements of Your soul,” it was already presented in full in L 156 and 175, and in part in L 121, 133, 138, and P 85. Cf. also the desire to be “transformed” in God, in L 164, 179 and 185.

19. We found in Elizabeth’s Breviary a picture of Thérèse of Lisieux at the harp (Celine’s design in 1901). All around it, in the hand of Sister Genevieve of Dijon, we read the second stanza—very Trinitarian—of *To Live by Love* (HA p. 330) which includes the expression “Word of my God.” The invocation “Eternal Word” is obviously well known; let us note however that Elizabeth had copied it (cf. PAT) from Thérèse (*Only Jesus*): “My Only Love, Jesus, Word Eternal” (HA p. 362).

19a. At the top of her personal notes of P. Fages’s retreat, Elizabeth had written this phrase that we do not find in the preacher’s text: “I want to spend my life gazing on my living God” (cf. PAT). Was this her retreat resolution? Cf. also L 149: “A whole life to be spent in silence and adoration, a heart-to-heart with the Spouse!” and P 88 of Christmas 1903: “May I spend my life, O Word, in listening to you. . . .”

20. “Teachable”: an expression that P. Vallée used once in his Retreat of 1897, three times in that of 1900, and twice in that of 1902. In translating “Docibiles Dei,” he makes reference to the Vulgate: Jn 6:45.

21. We recognize in “nights,” “voids,” “helplessness,” accents of John of the Cross, but also (following him) of Thérèse of Lisieux in her description of the “poor little bird” who, “helpless” and in the “night” looks in the direction of the hidden sun (HA pp. 212–214; Ms B 4v<sup>o</sup>–5r<sup>o</sup>); cf. the following notes.

22. Cf. L 190, n.3. Therese says: “*I want to remain there, gazing until death on my Divine Sun . . . the Star of Love.*” The sentence is preceded by the affirmation: “I dare to *gaze* on the Divine Sun of Love.” She reaffirms: “As long as You [my Beloved *Star*] wish, I will remain with my eyes fixed on You: I want to be *fascinated* [Thérèse is the one who underlines] by Your divine gaze; I want to become the *prey* of Your Love” (HA pp. 212–214). We have italicized the words that recur in Elizabeth’s Prayer. At the beginning of the year, Elizabeth had already written: “. . . if my gaze remains always fixed on Him, my luminous Star, oh, then all else disappears . . .” (L 190).

23. Cf. preceding note.

24. Cf. n.22.

25. Heb 12:29, citing Dt 4:24.

26. The quotation marks indicate a borrowing. It concerns Lk 1:35: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you” (trans. in her *Manual*). Elizabeth was very fond of this passage. It is the central theme of P 79, and she had evoked it a month before in P 90. Notice however that the retreat which had just ended strongly emphasized the awareness of the work of the Spirit in souls. P. Fages had recalled the scene of the Annunciation (“the magnificent scene,” p. 157) no less than *ten* times, in a rather elaborated manner. Three days before, in the eleventh Conference on “the operations of grace,” he had concluded: “If you are awaiting the movement of life, formulate your request: ‘Spirit of God, come upon me as you came upon the chaos of the world, as you came upon the Virgin Mary to create in her Our Lord.’ Do you want the Word to live in you; do you want the Incarnation to bear its fruit in you? There is only one way. The Holy Spirit caused the Son of God to be conceived and grow in the womb of the Virgin. Well, it is He again

who will cause Him to live and grow in you” (pp. 160–161). We will return to this in greater detail in AL.

27. Cf. the preceding note. In her Christmas poems, Elizabeth loved to evoke “the new incarnation” in us: P 75, 86, and soon P 91. Cf. also L 187: “. . . a birth no longer in the crib, but in my soul, in our souls. . . .”

28. The expression, which could have reached Elizabeth by various ways, is found in Mgr. Charles Gay, *De la Vie et des vertus chrétiennes considérées dans l'état religieux* (vol. I Poitiers-Paris, Oudin, 1874, p. 103): “You are another humanity for Jesus Christ. . . .” The text is applied directly to religious, but earlier he had already designated every Christian “a secondary humanity that Jesus deigns to join to His own” (p. 42).

29. The conjunction “poor little” is typical of Thérèse of Lisieux. Elizabeth uses it for the first time in her *Letters from Carmel* in L 190 (in which we note the Thérésian passage of the gaze always fixed on the Star). This passage, already studied in notes 21 and 22, speaks of the “poor little bird” and, in a larger context, we find: “poor creature” (HA p. 202), “helpless and imperfect creature” (HA p. 209), “the littlest of creatures” (HA pp. 209–210), “weak creature” (HA p. 213). . . .

30. The context (see following note) reveals that Elizabeth is referring to the “overshadowing” of Mt 17:5 (scene of the Transfiguration of Jesus) rather than to Lk 1:35 (the Annunciation). In both cases the *Manual* translates it “to cover with his shadow.”

31. Cf. Mt 17:5 where the *disciples* on Mount Tabor are “overshadowed with a cloud.” Elizabeth must be thinking less explicitly of the scene of the baptism of Jesus in Mt 3:17: the presence of “the overshadowing” and the word “*all*” (my delight) are missing from it.

32. In her preceding letters and poems she often spoke of *these* or *the* “Three.” Here we find “my” Three. Circ 4 affirms: “. . . ‘her Three’ was her expression.”

33. “Solitude” in the sense of the transcendence of the Immanent: the Letters sing of the intimacy that He establishes with us. Note the juxtaposition of “Beatitude” and “Solitude.” From the door of her cell, three meters away, Elizabeth could read the motto of Saint Bruno written on the wall: *O beata solitudo, O sola beatitudo!*

34. On the Thérésian accent of “lose,” cf. L 110, n.3. “The Immensity”: “An immensity of love that inundates us on all sides,” she wrote seven months before (cf. L 199 and n.13); and three months before: “It is like an abyss of love in which I lose myself” (L 208 and n.4).

35. Cf. n.22. Also L 125, n.3 and L 41, n.7.

36. A term equivalent to “hidden”; allusion to Col 3:3 (cf. L 158 n.5. Elizabeth first wrote: “Bury me . . .” then corrected it to “Bury Yourself in me.” She wrote: “ensevelisez-vous.”

37. Taken from the Prayer of St. Catherine of Siena (cf. n.2): “. . . because I have seen in Your light the abyss of Your greatness . . .” (the version copied by Elizabeth, cf. L 115).

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[go-to-zlibrary.se](http://go-to-zlibrary.se)

[single-login.ru](http://single-login.ru)



[Official Telegram channel](#)



[Z-Access](#)



<https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Z-Library>