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September – October 2004

> Volume XX No. 5

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity

Volume XX, No. 5 September - October 2004

CARMEL CLARION

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CARMEL CLARION

Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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Editorial

In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus says,: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants . . ." (Mt 11,25). If there is any passage from Scripture which applies to the saints of Carmel it is this one. We just have to think of St. Therese, St. Teresa Margaret Redi, St. Teresa of the Andes, Bl. Mary of Jesus and finally Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity.

Each of these women entered Carmel at a very young age and completed the journey to the mountain top in a very short

time. Each of them brought to the fore an important teaching of the Gospel, giving to God's people a new and fresh insight to the mysteries of the faith.

In this edition of the Clarion three aspects of the faith, into which Bl. Elizabeth gives insight, are considered: suffering, the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity and our Christian vocation.

In reaching out to a family friend who was about to undergo painful surgery Elizabeth shared with her the fruits of her own sufferings and what they came to mean for her. She looked upon them as an invitation to share in Christ's sufferings and as a sign of God's love for us. She looked upon suffering as an opportunity to surrender in obedience to God's will, as Christ did.



Elizabeth proved to be a true daughter of Carmel and St. Teresa. She focused on one of the most central themes of the Teresian Carmel: the indwelling of the Trinity. This was the core of St. Teresa's teaching in the Interior Castle. His Majesty dwells in the seventh dwelling deep in the interior of each soul. Elizabeth puts into practice the teaching of her Holy Mother. Desiring to be 'established' in God at the center of her soul, as 'still' and 'peaceful' as if already in heaven. She is guided by Teresa in that she goes to the Trinity through the humanity of Jesus. She realizes that if she com-

pletely surrenders to Him she will be with the Trinity in the center of her soul.

Finally, in writing to a young girl in Dijon, Elizabeth lays out for her what it means to be 'called in Christ.' It is a summary of her spiritual teaching. One learned, not by years of theological study, but through prayer and contemplation a Christian theology imparted by the Holy Spirit.

In Elizabeth we encounter the mystery of God's election. We can only stand in awe as we try to understand and grasp the depths of Elizabeth's teaching. We pray that through her intercession we might, in some small way, be given a share in her spirit and come to be the 'praise of glory' she teaches us we all are called to be.

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.

Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

Fr. Salvatore Sciurba, OCD



Elizabeth Catez, the woman we know as Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, was born in France in 1880. Her good-natured father, Joseph, was in the military and moved around a great deal. Her mother, Marie, was strong-willed and somewhat Jansenistic in outlook. The birth was a difficult one, but Elizabeth was born healthy. When she was two years old the family moved to Dijon where her sister, Marguerite, was born. To the extent that "Guite" was easy-going, Elizabeth was difficult. Her mother described her as a "real devil" and "a big chatterbox!" Her father, whose health was deteriorating, retired early and died young,

When Elizabeth was seven, she began to prepare for her First Holy Communion. At that time she stated that she wanted to be a nun. Much to her mother's dismay. her parish priest confirmed the sincerity of her desire.

He recognized her deep integrity of character. Though her formal education was rather sketchy, Elizabeth showed great musical talent and was enrolled in the Dijon Conservatory of Music at the age of eight. She was an excellent pianist.

Elizabeth made her First Communion when she was eleven. She later explained that her love of God and prayer were such that it was inconceivable she give her heart to anyone but God. At this time she visited the nearby Carmel where she met Mother Marie of Jesus who explained to her that her name meant "House of God." The meeting made a lasting impression on both of them. Two months later she received the sacrament of Confirmation and we begin to notice a change, or rather, a development in her personality. She is described as "even-tempered and gentle."

At the age of thirteen she won the first prize in a competition at the Conservatory. This was also, however, the beginning of a period of scrupulosity. She prayed for the grace to die young and made a private vow of virginity. She began to write verse expressing her appreciation of beauty, her love of family and her religious sentiments. To supplement her education, Mme Catez engaged a tutor who had Elizabeth formulate her physical and moral portrait. She stated that her overall appearance was not displeasing and that she had a rather good character. Summer vacations and travel would broaden her horizons.

Elizabeth began to be homesick for Carmel. She was forbidden to visit the Carmel so she tried to absorb its spirit. She had a circle of friends and enjoyed social life, trips and dances. Nonetheless, a family friend said to her: "Elizabeth, you are not here. You see God" (Apostolic Process 648). In her late teens she attended parish missions and retreats. She made a general confession and was assured she had never lost her innocence and that she had a genuine vocation. Her sister, Guite, intervened for her before her mother. She pleaded with her to allow Elizabeth to go to Carmel, the only thing that would make her happy. Mme Catez would eventually permit her to enter at the age of 21. Elizabeth received an offer of marriage. Her response was: My heart is no longer free. I have given it to the King of kings and it is no longer mine to give away (Diary 124).

The year before her entrance Elizabeth had regular contact with Mother Marie of Jesus who was preparing a band of aspirants for entrance. That year she was involved in apostolic work with children. She was informed that her name would be Elizabeth "of the Trinity," not of "Jesus." How prophetic this was in light of the fact that from a young age she had a keen sense of the presence of the Trinity within her. The date of her entrance was fixed for August 1. She was designated to go to a new foundation but, as a concession to her mother, she was received in Dijon. Because of her mother's resistance to her vocation, her last night at home was intensely painful but she knew she had to answer the Lord's call.

On her entrance day a friend remarked that her eyes were luminous, transparent, that they shone with a heavenly light.

Elizabeth was received at the enclosure door by the sub-prioress, Mother Germaine of Jesus and then embraced by each nun. She was led to the choir where she offered herself completely to the Lord. She was touched by the simplicity of the monastery. She worked in the choir and in the tailor shop. She wrote a significant volume of letters; these were an extension of her prayer. She exercised a real apostolate through her correspondence and it would serve to reveal her spiritual development. Her reception of the habit was set for December 8, 1901.

The novitiate was a difficult time for Elizabeth for she would now live the life in all its austerity. At this time we come across the theme of homesickness for heaven. She





wrote: we possess our heaven within us, since He who satisfies the hunger of the glorified in the light of vision gives himself to us in faith and mystery. It seems to me that I have found my heaven on earth, since heaven is God and God is in my soul (L 122).

Her prioress entrusted to her a seminarian designated to go to the missions in China. This responsibility made Elizabeth pray even more intensely. This was a time of political uncertainty in France. Many religious had already left the country because of the government's anti-religious policy. Mme Catez was never really reconciled to her daughter's vocation and the thought that she might have to leave the country was most upsetting. The conflict between the love of her vocation and the love of her family caused Elizabeth enormous tension. In prayer it was a time of darkness; it might have also have been a time of renewed scrupulosity. The community was willing to allow her to make her solemn profession of vows, but was concerned about her emotional state. A Jesuit confessor was able to reassure her. She spent the night before her profession in prayerful vigil. On January 11, 1903, she professed her solemn vows. With her solemn profession inner peace returned. She could now say: He is my all, my one and only all. What happiness, what peace that gives to the soul, He is the only one, I have given him all (L 190).

As a professed nun, Elizabeth helped with the work of the turn, thus giving her some contact with those who came to the monastery. She also guided new postulants who were learning the customs of life in Carmel. They recognized that she lived in the presence of God. Elizabeth lived an intense inner silence, so absorbed was she in God. Jennifer Moorcroft states: "Elizabeth went unerringly to the great, central mysteries of the faith. She focused on the very being of God himself, bathed in the immensity of the life of the Trinity, of the overflowing love and unbounded richness of her 'Three' (*p. 107)."

When she was twenty-three years old, Elizabeth was diagnosed with Addison's disease. Although there were periods of remission, the last three years of her short life were characterized by fatigue and suffering. She recognized the redemptive value of her pain. She never fell into self-pity. Her correspondence shows that she saw each experience of suffering as a proof of God's love. She would recommend: Withdraw into the solitude He has chosen for Himself in the depths of your heart. He is always there, although you do not feel it He, through this continual contact, can deliver you from your weaknesses, your faults, from all that troubles you... He is always bending over you to carry you away and keep you safe in Him (L 249). She faced her suffering with courage, and the assurance of God's love for her enabled her to see purpose and meaning in her experience. As time went on she would be relieved of her duties and moved to the infirmary.

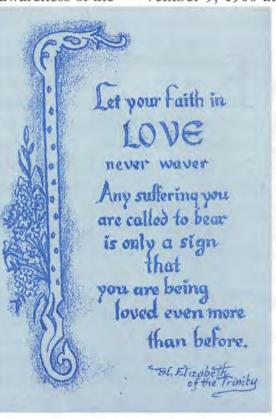
Elizabeth was deeply influenced by the writings of St Paul. His theme of predestination, his Christology and his awareness of the

presence of the Lord within resonated with her. His teaching that we must become the praise of God's glory gave Elizabeth a new insight into her vocation. She believed that the Lord had given her a new name, the "praise of glory," which symbolized a new calling with new graces and responsibilities.

Elizabeth's sufferings intensified. The priests who ministered to her were moved by both the intensity of her pain and the courage with which she bore it. Her brother-

in-law feared that she had not received adequate medical treatment. The treatments of the doctors he engaged only served to increase her distress. Elizabeth said that she could understand how people in pain could commit suicide, but she realized that God was always taking care of her.

Her correspondence at the end reflects her gratitude for the five years she spent in Camel as well as her faith. She wrote: 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" that has been the beautiful sun illuminating my life, making it already an anticipated Heaven; it is what sustains me today in



my suffering. I do not fear my weakness; that is what gives me confidence. For the Strong One is within me and His power is almighty (L 333). Elizabeth of the Trinity died on November 9, 1906 at 6:15 in the evening. She

> was only 26 years old. Her last words were: I am going to light, to life, to love.

> In addition to her correspondence, and her beautiful "Prayer to the Trinity," Elizabeth left us four major spiritual writings. They are: Heaven in Faith, The Greatness of Our vocation. The Last Retreat and Let Yourself be Loved. She tells us: "Let yourself be loved. All God wants of us is that we let him love us and let his love rouse us to love him in return. It's

so simple, (Moorcroft, *p. 1 85)."

Like St Therese, her Carmelite sister before her, Elizabeth realized that she too had a mission to accomplish. She wrote: I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them go out of themselves to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence within that will allow God to communicate Himself to them and transform them into Himself (L 335). May she continue in our day to exercise this mission on our behalf!

* He is my Heaven: The Life of Elizabeth of the Trinity (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2001)

Elizabeth of the Trinity and Saint Paul

Francisco Brandle



E ight days after her entrance into Carmel Elizabeth was filling out a form in which among other things she was asked what her favorite book was. Curiously she answered, "The soul of Christ. In it I discovered all the secrets of the Father who is in heaven." (NI 12). This is such a beautiful affirmation of how she passed her life in the Dijon Carmel. To read that hidden book was not a question of several moments of interior recollection, of seeking material silence in a corner, she had to learn to read that book through life itself. For this teachers were necessary who would teach her to read her favorite book, and she found in the letters of St. Paul one of the best ways of doing this.

In the School of St. Paul

Elizabeth writes in a letter to Fr. Angles, dated June, 1905, that she frequently read St. Paul's letters, which gave her great joy (L30). In those years the Apostle is for Elizabeth her "dear St. Paul" (L239), because what he writes captivates her heart, so much so that she becomes clothed in the pauline language as no one else in the history of spirituality. She does so to the extent that she can be called "the Carmelite of St. Paul."

For her, his writings are simple and, at all times, profound (cf. L250), because they were written by a man who has a full and generous heart (L264). In the same year that we find all those testimonies in her letters concerning the Apostle, Elizabeth prepared for herself some tables of St. Paul's letters. This explains the 405 quotes from St. Paul in her letters. Her veneration and love of Paul lasted throughout her entire life. Mother Germana recalls that she called him the father of her soul. She also recalls another very emotional event. During the first days of November, 1906, Elizabeth, although she could hardly communicate with anyone dictated her farewell letters and only a few days before her death. One she wrote to Dr. Barbier not only thanking him for his care during her illness, but to everyone's surprise she also wrote: "It made me so happy to see you appreciate my dear St. Paul that I am asking you, so as to complete my happiness, to accept as a last goodbye from your little patient, a last testimony of her af-

fectionate gratitude, the book of those Letters from which my soul has drawn so much strength for the trial" (L340). Without any doubt, the Pauline Letters were that light in which one tries to identify oneself with the soul of Christ; the book which she preferred to read in order to discover the Father's mind, since He chooses us from all eternity, in order that we can be conformed to the im-

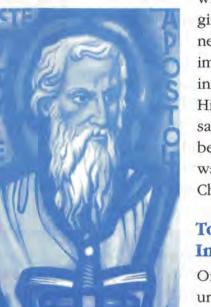
age of his Beloved Son (Rom 8,29) and "appointed to live for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1,12).

Divine Election

It is probable that before a recent birth our thoughts lingered on the mystery of divine election. However, the free election before the creation of the world is the point of departure for all human existence ,which is nothing other than a history of the love of God Himself. What for us is difficult,

was easy for Elizabeth, who writes to her sister who was about to become a mother for the second time, "Oh, little sister, how He is blessing your little nest, how He loves you in entrusting these two little souls 'whom He chose in Him before creation that they might be holy and spotless in His presence in love'" (Eph 1,4; L 227).

Her sister would continue to be a witness as to how far Elizabeth penetrated this mystery, when she read again in "Heaven in Faith" written for her, many quotes from Ruysbroeck's works, interwoven in Elizabeth's works, which reflected what she was living (HF 22). It is love which puts spirit into the cold and calculated expression; the election is understood from the excess of love with which God calls us into existence. The excess of love (Eph 2,4) marks the entire spiritual process. Our salvation history has its beginning in that divine election born in His eternal love, from His immense charity which calls us to identify ourselves with His Son. To respond to this call can be born of no other thing than not being conscious of this excessive love



with which our existence begins. To work with righteousness one must go beyond mere impressions, one must believe in love: "Believe in His love, His excessive love, as St. Paul says" (Eph 2,4; GV 11). If we begin here, we can learn the way to configuration with Christ.

To Be Conformed to the Image of His Son

On her death bed, Elizabeth understands suffering in a way very distinct from how it was

usually understood. It is easy to suffer as a fountain of merit and as a means of satisfaction for one's personal sin and the sin of the world. With that notion Elizabeth would have been frustrated. Nobody but she, with such strength and power, could show us how suffering is of value insofar as it enables us to conform ourselves to the image of the beloved Son and this on a twofold level: the assimilation of the image of the Son in the events of daily life; and in that which shows if the communion has been authentic, our offering unto death and the acceptance of it as the way of fulfilling the will of the Father.

It was not an easy task. Her "Spiritual Diary" written before her entrance into Carmel

is witness to her battles and promises. Her life was already marked by a climate of expiation for each moment. Nevertheless, her spirit opened itself to a vision more in line with the Gospel. It is Jesus, together with the maternal help of Mary, who uncovered for her the true sense of the immolation of the Cross. Elizabeth's heart grew in a love which aspired only to share Jesus' sufferings, because they are the sign of his offering. She desired to attain in her life another great Pauline assertion: "I live, not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2,20). "That sacrifice is nothing more than love put into action. '(He) who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2.20)" (L250) - she wrote to Fr. Andrew Chevignard, the young recently ordained priest. For this it was necessary to enter within the sufferings of Jesus and to reach with Him the perfect communion with the Father's Beloved. In Christ, our model, we can learn how to live in that openness to the Father's will. To change it into our food (Jn 4,34). Our life will be a continual communion, everything will be as a sacrament by which we communicate with God.

It was what she had been discovering in the reading of the Pauline letters in those final years of her life in Carmel. "St. Paul, in his magnificent letters, preached no other thing than this mystery of the charity of Christ." For the way of surrendered love uncovers the ultimate meaning of human existence: each person is called to be "a praise of glory" (Eph 1,12).

Praise of Glory

On discovering the true meaning of the Apostle's text, Elizabeth recalls for us that from that moment she embraced that as her vocation. It was near the end of 1905, there



were not many more days left to her on earth, but she already knew that she was able to live her vocation in the desert. Before she had intuited the goal that we are called to be this "praise of glory," but now she lives it in its fullness. It is the consummation of the life she offered.

No one can doubt that it is the vocation to which we are all called. As she wrote to her sister, Margarite, in her work "Heaven in Faith." There in poetic form she is going to make known what for her it means to be a "praise of glory": It is to live in God, to be totally identified with His will. It is to be 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 by its suffering and offering. It is a soul that gazes on God in faith and simplicity. It is like a crystal though which He can radiate and contemplate all His perfections and His own splendor of the divine life. A "praise of glory" is, finally, a being 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 (HF 43).

She will return to record with other words and in another more doctrinal tone what it means to be a "praise of glory" in her "Last Retreat." She now compares herself with Christ who is the perfect glory of the Father. It is not a question of several meanings, but one word: if one has walked the way of configuration with Christ, he will attain identification with Him where he will be able to manifest it continually before the Father's eyes. Identified with Christ, who has uncovered her vocation as a "praise of glory," she will attain what the Father comes to give her in order to give her her inheritance. The way has already been traveled by Mary, as the first believer, and she now is joined to the Cross, and is offered to us as a mother. Elizabeth knows that in those moments each one should take up his own cross, now that Jesus had returned to the Father, we are in the crucible of salvific suffering that make up for the things that are lacking in the passion of Christ for His body, the Church (Col 1,24), and the Virgin is still there to tell us and teach us those final songs of His soul, which no one besides her, His Mother, could overhear (LR 41).

Elizabeth of the Trinity bringing to life the pauline doctrine, assimilating its meaning in a living prayer (Oh My God, Trinity Whom I adore!) will be a witness that the life of a Christian is developed in the key of eternity. It will feel peace, death and resurrection, free of all its miseries. Because every believer will come to affirm: "I live not I. My Master lives in Me" (Gal 2,20; LR 31).

Quotations from Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity

I had such a love for prayer, and for God, that even before my first communion, I could not understand how anyone could give their heart to another. From then on I was determined to love only Him, and to live only for Him.

Abandonment—that is what surrenders us to God.

983

R

Surrender yourself and all your preoccupations to Him. . .

Ro

Always love prayer, and when I say prayer, I don't mean so much imposing on oneself a lot of vocal prayers to be recited every day, as that elevation of the soul toward God through all things.

A soul united to Jesus is a living smile which radiates Him and which gives Him!

Everything passes! In the evening of life love alone remains. . .

Ro

R

I am going to Light, to Love, to Life! (Her last words)

The Fellowship of His Sufferings': The Example Of Elizabeth Of The Trinity

Jennifer Moorcroft



To discuss suffering is not easy; it is perhaps the thorniest issue with which we have to grapple in our lives. However, Elizabeth of the Trinity has valuable things to say to us on the subject. She died of Addison 's disease, at that time incurable, and the last two years of her life were a painful and agonizing climb to her own Calvary. What she had to say was forged on the fiery anvil of her own experience.

Why Me?

We frequently ask this question: Why me? Is God punishing me in this sickness? Or if it is someone else whom we know and love, someone living a good life: why should the innocent suffer? How can a good God send sickness and tragedy?

Suffering is not God's will for us, but a consequence of sin. We live in a fallen world in which sickness, pain and adversity are an inevitable part. Jesus was filled with compassion for those who were suffering, and much of his ministry was taken up with healing. But at the same time, he has invested suffering with something valuable and precious. He actually took on himself our pain and sickness, and voluntarily died an agonizing death for us. In so doing, he transformed suffering, and he asks us all to take up our own cross daily and follow him. In this context, far from being a sign of his displeasure, the invitation to have a share in his sufferings is a sign of his love for us.

During her life in Carmel, and especially after her own health began to deteriorate, Elizabeth wrote letters to Madame Angles, a close family friend, in which she explored many aspects of the mystery of suffering. This woman had been traumatized by being given insufficient anesthetic during surgery and was facing the prospect of yet another operation. Elizabeth tried to reassure Madame Angles that her suffering was a gift from God: "I see the Master is treating you like a 'bride' and sharing His Cross with you. There is something so great, so divine in suffering! It seems to me that if the blessed in Heaven could envy anything, it would be that treasure." (L 207)

Obedience, not Sacrifice

If the invitation to have a share in Christ's sufferings is an expression of God's love for us, then embracing whatever cross God sends us is an expression of our love for him. However, sickness and pain remain an evil and should not be sought for their own sake. Elizabeth was taught this lesson even as a young girl. Her mother, for example, discovered that she was skipping breakfast and gave her a scolding. Elizabeth noted in her

diary: 'Should I carry on?... I don't think so!' (D 6) Before Elizabeth's entry into Carmel, the then prioress, Mother Mary of Jesus, had to curb her excessive penances. She forbade her to wear a hairshirt and told her to pray that her severe headaches would cease, as well as the effects of bronchitis. "I have no desire to be cured," Elizabeth wrote in a notebook, "it's so good to suffer for the 'Beloved,' so I'm making this prayer under obedience" (IN 9). She was learning that obedience and surrender to his will are much more pleasing to God, a message that she passed on to Madame Angles: "Forgetting yourself with respect to your health does not mean neglecting to take care of yourself, for that is your duty and the best of penances, but do it with great abandonment, saying 'thank you' to God no matter what happens"(L 249).

Opening Caverns of the Heart

There are sufferings which cannot be avoided, which God permits, and which he can use to draw us, if we would, closer to him. Suffering can make us feel helpless and not in control of our own destiny, or even abandoned by God. We might want to bear it for love of God, but feel we are not doing it very well. All this is part of the suffering; it is the process by which God is hollowing us out, humbling us, to give us a greater capacity to receive more of himself: "Believe that at those times He is hollowing out in your soul greater capacities



"When your soul is burdened and fatigued by the weight of your body, do not be discouraged, rather go by faith and love to Him who said: 'Come to me and I will refresh you."

to receive Him, capacities that are, in a way, as infinite as He Himself" (L 249). It is often only when we look back, when the time of trial has passed, that we see it really had been a time of grace and growth.

Elizabeth does not deny that it can drain our inner resources. Madame Angles was feeling the weight of her fatigue and depression, unable to rise above her physical condition. Elizabeth, too, was experiencing the utter fatigue that was a symptom of her disease, but said that this experience of our weakness should not discourage us. Rather, it should make us throw ourselves into the arms of God:

"When your soul is burdened and fatigued by the weight of your body, do not be discouraged, rather go by faith and love to Him who said: 'Come to me and I will refresh you.' As for your spirit, never let yourself be depressed by the thought of your sufferings. The great Saint Paul says: 'Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.' It seems to me the weakest, even the guiltiest, soul is the one that has the most reason for hope; and the act of forgetting self and throwing oneself into the arms of God glorifies Him and gives Him more joy than all the turning inward and all the self-examinations that make one live with one's own infirmities, though the soul possesses at its very center a Savior who wants at every moment to purify it." (L 249)

Strength in Silence

These words give us an insight into how Elizabeth approached suffering. It was by the way of silence. From the beginning of her religious life it was her watchword, and she followed the Carmelite observance of silence with great fidelity. But it was more than external silence: it was a silence that went to the very heart of her being. To be silent is to refuse a listening ear to the clamoring of 'self,' in order to attend to the word of God within. At every moment, with great gentleness, Elizabeth taught herself to turn away from preoccupation with self, so as to listen to her Savior who dwelt in the center of her being and who at every moment wanted to purify her. This unremitting effort in bearing smaller things-like the cold of the unheated Carmel of those days, the fatigue of daily work, forgetfulness of self-schooled her for the greater Calvary which lay ahead:

"My Rule tells me: 'In silence will your strength be.' 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,' to have this 'single eye' which allows the light of God to enlighten us. A soul that debates with its self, that is taken up with its feelings, and pursues useless thoughts and desires, scatters its forces, for it is not wholly directed toward God" (LR 3).

This gathering up of her whole being into the one act of love gave her immense selfcontrol as her illness took hold. She herself saw it as part of her 'priesthood.' Each one of us shares in the priesthood of Christ, offering to him ourselves, our daily lives, our praise; uniting ourselves and all that we are with, above all, the holy sacrifice of the mass. That also includes whatever sufferings come our way. As she began to realize the seriousness of her illness, Elizabeth turned to the writings of St Paul, which meant so much to her, to find out from him what her role should now be. She came across the passage: 'That I may know him ... and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death' (Phil 3:10). Jesus did indeed ask her to follow him on her own way to Calvary, a path she trod with immense dignity. In her Last Retreat, Elizabeth unconsciously painted her own self-portrait:

"'The queen stood at your right hand': 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. 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." (LR 13)

Breaking-Point and Beyond

For all Elizabeth's calm and self-control, the severity of her sufferings would sometimes overwhelm her. One day, she pointed to the window and said to Mother Germaine, "Mother, are you happy to leave me alone like this?" When the prioress did not understand what she meant, Elizabeth continued, "T'm suffering so much that I understand now how people can commit suicide." Yet her faith gave her the strength she needed, and she continued: "But don't worry. God is looking after me."

Without faith, it is easy to think of death as an acceptable solution to suffering. Some months ago, a young man dying of AIDS stated categorically, in support of euthanasia, that there was no value in suffering. This is not something to which a Christian could subscribe. With the pressure to legalize 'mercy killing' as a continuing issue, Elizabeth of the Trinity can teach us the value and dignity of uniting our suffering with that of Jesus. It will not only make us more like him, but also give us a privileged sharing in his redeeming work.

L = Letters of Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity. D = Diary. IN= Intimate Notes. LR =Last Retreat.

The Greatness Of Our Vocation

Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

This "spiritual treatise" of September, 1906, is written to a young girl of Dijon; Francoise 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 covered a period of more than eight years.

2

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 rendezvous; 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. 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." He also says that the humble person finds his greatest pleasure in life in feeling his own "weakness" "before God." 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!"(1 Cor 15,31).

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" (Mt 16,24). 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."

(Col 3,9-10). 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?" (Gn 1,26). Oh! you see, if we would think more about the origin of our soul, things here below would seem so childish 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" (2 Pt 1,4). And St. Paul recommends that we "hold firm to the end this beginning of His existence which He has given us" (Heb 3,14).

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, (Rm 8,21) 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 selflove. St. Augustine says we have two cities within us, the city of God and the city of SELF. 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, (Mt 6,22) that is, a purity of "intention" that seeks only God; this soul, it seems to me, would also live in humility: it would recognize His gifts to it-for "humility is truth" but it would attribute nothing to itself, referring all to God



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 of those faults which, as you say, you commit with-

out 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. You must "display your misery" 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," 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 tru-



ly 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 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"(Col 1,24). 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." 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.

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 in 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 is reduced to unity, to that "one thing necessary, (Lk 10,42) of which the Master spoke to Magdalene. Then the soul is truly great, truly free, for it has "enclosed its will in God's."

9. My Framboise, when we contemplate our eternal predestination, visible things seem

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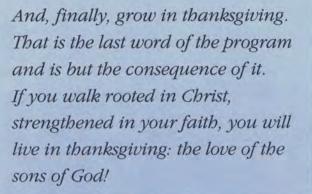
2131 Lincoln Road N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002. so worthless. Listen to St Paul: "Those whom God has foreknown, He has also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rm 8,29). (That is not all, my little one, you are going to see that you are one of the number of the "known"!) "And those He has known He has called": it is baptism which has made you a child of adoption, (Rm 8,15) 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 pre-destination 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" (Col 2,6-7). 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, (Ep 2,4) 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" (Gal 2,20). That, my little child, is what it means to be true!

12. And, finally, grow in thanksgiving. 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 sor-Remember row. that "He has chosen you in Him before the creation of the world to be imIt is not by looking at our miseries that we will be purifiedbut by looking at Him, who is all Purity and Danctity.

maculate and pure in His presence in love"; 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" (2 Cor 12,10,9).

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 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 rendezvous 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" (ps 90,4, 10,11).

S. M. Eli. of the Trinity Laudem Gloriae

(This will be my new name in Heaven.)

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

Excerpted from: The Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity (Washington DC: ICS Publication, 1984() vol. 1, pp. 124-129.

🖂 Letters to the Editor

Great articles about Edith Stein in the latest Carmel Clarion, and as always the "Friends of Teresa" is always so interesting.

> Prayerfully, T.A., San Antonio, TX

Into The Divine Presence: Elizabeth In The Radiance Of Teresa

Shirley Darcus Sullivan

LODE CONSUMPE may entire being for your Glory that it may be poured out Drop by Drop for your CDURCD.

Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

E lizabeth of the Trinity is best known for her teachings on the indwelling of God. In this, she was truly a daughter of Carmel. She loved St. Teresa from her youth; and her diary, written before she entered Carmel, contains the notes of how, as a young girl, she nourished herself on the works of Teresa. In Elizabeth's later writings, too, we can discern the presence of this great doctor of prayer, for they can be read as an original commentary on St. Teresa's approach to the spiritual life

Structure of the Soul

In the Interior Castle, Teresa offers a wonderful picture of the soul. As we see from the opening chapter, she compares the soul to a beautiful 'diamond' or 'crystal' which has many facets. The soul is also like a 'castle' which has many 'dwelling places' or 'mansions;' there are seven sets of mansions. The innermost, seventh mansions are the

goal of the journey. It is here that God dwells. Teresa describes in detail the nature of each dwelling place, showing in her description of them the joys and difficulties of the spiritual journey. The seventh mansions are a scene of great joy because there, the presence of God is recognized and known. The will of the soul and the will of God have become identified. Here, the soul is strengthened to love and to do works of service.

While Teresa presents this detailed picture of the soul, Elizabeth speaks of the indwelling of the Trinity. She does not refer explicitly to Teresa's 'castle' but draws on her image of the 'crystal,' linking it to her experience of the presence of the Trinity within: "Saint Teresa says that the soul is like a crystal in which the Divinity is reflected... [May I be] wholly pure, wholly transparent, so that the Trinity can be reflected in me as in a crystal" (L 136.131). Referring to the Persons of the Trinity as 'my Three,' Elizabeth had an intensely deep and delicate relationship with them in her soul. In the

opening lines of her well known prayer, Elizabeth clarifies her experience and the state to which she aspires:

"O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to forget myself entirely that I may be established in You as still and as peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing trouble my peace or make me leave You, O my Unchanging One, but may each minute carry me further into the depths of Your Mystery." (PT)

Elizabeth finds the Trinity in the depths of her being. She desires to be 'established' in God at the center of her soul, as 'still' and 'peaceful' as if already in heaven, and seeks to know

more and more fully the 'Mystery' of God. What Elizabeth describes here savors of Teresa's seventh mansions.

Prayer

Teresa has much to say about the nature of prayer. She describes the prayer of those who are beginning, those who have made some progress, and those who are advanced. In her prayer to the Trinity, Elizabeth presents the petitions of one who aspires to experience the seventh mansions and know their joys. In its opening words, Elizabeth addresses God as Trinity. As the prayer continues, she asks that her soul may be a dwelling place for the Trinity and that she be 'wholly surrendered' to divine creativity.



Elizabeth then addresses Jesus. She knows that if she is to pour out love to her neighbor, she must be entirely filled with Jesus. She asks him to 'substitute' himself for her. She realizes, too, that she must be totally attentive to him as 'Word of my God,' so that through times of light and darkness she will remain in his presence. Elizabeth is reflecting the strong admonition that Teresa gives to her sisters, that at no time may we bypass the humanity of Jesus: "For you to see ... that the further a soul advances the more it is accompanied by the good Jesus, we will do well to discuss how, when His Majesty desires, we cannot do otherwise than walk

always with Him" (IC VI:8:1). As Teresa shows, the call to contemplation does not involve any movement away from the incarnation. Elizabeth recognizes that Jesus dwells within her and that, in surrender to him, her life will be changed. It will become a 'radiance' of his life.

Elizabeth now addresses the Holy Spirit. She calls on him so to fill her being that she may become 'another humanity' in which Jesus can renew his life. Elizabeth entrusts herself to the Spirit, as Teresa did when endeavoring to explain the fourth mansions: "I really need to entrust myself, as I've already done, to the Holy Spirit and beg Him to speak for me from here on" (IC IV:1:1). She sees herself, as Elizabeth does, suffused with the Spirit and prays that the Spirit will fill her and be the source of her wisdom.

Elizabeth then prays to the Father, asking him to 'bend lovingly' over her who is his 'little creature.' Here we have the image of a father comforting his child. Teresa, likewise, encourages her daughters to address God in prayer as a loving Father.

"All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself, and not turn away from so good a Guest, but with great humility speak to Him as to a father. Beseech Him as you would a father." (WP 28:2)

Teresa gives advice on how to pray; Elizabeth gives the prayer itself. But the relationship between the soul and the Father is really the same.

Love

In a short document which she left to her prioress, Let Yourself be Loved, Elizabeth opens up a beautiful way of responding to God's love. We are called to love God with our whole being. Elizabeth urges her prioress to surrender to the overwhelming love that God has for her. She suggests that her superior open herself more and more to God so that she might experience his great love for her. Speaking of Jesus she says:

"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! "(LL 5)

Elizabeth emphasizes the effect of God's love on the soul, how it transforms and energizes it. In responding fully, the soul becomes a vessel to pour forth God's love to others.



Elizabeth once again echoes ideas that we find in Teresa. In her Meditations on the Song of Songs, Teresa speaks often and fully of God as lover of souls. She describes a deep form of prayer that lies beyond the grasp of the intellect:

"The soul, at least if it loves, does not know how nor does it understand what it loves. The King's most intense love, which has brought the soul to this high state, must have joined this soul's love to itself in such a way that the intellect does not deserve to understand; but these two loves become one again. Since the soul's love is brought so truly close to the love of God, how can the intellect reach that far?" (M 6:11)

Elizabeth herself, while close to the ideas of Teresa, is focusing on one aspect of God's love. God, she suggests, overwhelmingly longs for human beings. We are called to recognize that this is so, and to respond with childlike confidence and surrender.

Scripture

An important feature of Elizabeth's spiritual-

ity is her use of scripture. To passage after passage she applies the truth that shaped her life: God dwells within the soul. Teresa, similarly, uses scripture frequently in her writings. She wrote a whole work on the Song of Songs; and she gave a commentary on the 'Our Father' in the Way of Perfection. In speaking of the Song of Songs, she relates:

"These words must contain great things and mysteries since they are of such value that when I asked learned men to explain what the Holy Spirit meant by them and what the true meaning was they answered that the doctors wrote many commentaries and yet never finished explaining the words fully. "(M 1:8)

Teresa goes on to say that she will offer an interpretation that may prove consoling to others, and that it is permissible to offer her understanding of scripture.

Elizabeth follows the pattern set by Teresa. Staying carefully within the teachings of the church, both women nonetheless enter deeply into scripture, finding in it lessons of prayer. Elizabeth in particular sees in biblical passages confirmation again and again of the life of the Trinity unfolding within. We see an example of this in what she says of John 15:4: "'Remain in Me.' 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." (HF 3)

Elizabeth sees in this passage an invita-

tion to dwell deep within the soul. There, one is to abide, regardless of circumstances and events that may occur. She clarifies beautifully the range of activities one can carry on within: pray, adore, love, suffer, work and act. With its focus totally on Jesus, the soul is transformed in its every activity.

As seen above in her prayer to the Trinity, Elizabeth's spirituality revolved around her awareness of the divine indwelling. She experienced this truth in herself and found it confirmed by spiritual authors. Teresa presents the same teaching in The Interior Castle, saying: "Here all three Persons communicate themselves to [the soul], speak to it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves Him and keeps His commandments." (IC VII:1:6)

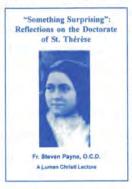
God dwells at the center of the soul, our Companion and Goal. Our deepest prayer will bring us into his presence, drawn and transformed by love.

Elizabeth was able to absorb aspects of the teachings of Teresa and to build upon them. She draws us ever inward, helping us to have a foretaste of the beauties of Teresa's seventh mansions. The same beauties are found in Elizabeth's prayer, in her words on love and on scripture. Her spirituality, securely founded in silence and reflecting light from Teresa, draws us surely into the divine presence.

L = Letters of Bl Elizabeth of the Trinity PT = Prayer to the Trinity. LL = Let Yourself be Loved. HF = Heaven in Faith. IC = Interior Castle

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God is Love St. Teresa Margaret: Her Life

Margaret Rowe

St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart was born into a large devout family in Arezzo, Italy in 1747. From the earliest days of her childhood, Anna Maria was filled with a deep love of God, questioning the adults around her as to

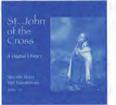


"Who is God"? Already she was dissatisfied with answers given her. Only the contemplative life of a Carmelite nun could begin to quench her thirst to know and give herself completely to God. Her entire life was driven by the desire to "return love for love." She entered the Carmelite convent in Florence at the age of seventeen, advanced rapidly in holiness, and died an extraordinary death at twenty-two. Her spiritual director reflecting on her death remarked, "She could not have lived very much longer, so great was the strength of the love of God in her."

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FRIENDS OF TERESA Diego de Cetina

sa di

Daniel Maroto, O.C.D.

Not every reader of St. Teresa knows that an unknown and almost anonymous confessor gave her immense spiritual help. I am referring to her first Jesuit confessor, Diego de Cetina. Not only do I want to make historical note of him, but I also want to give to him the title of "spiritual teacher" of St. Teresa.

Teresa never mentions Diego's name in her writings. He is like an asteroid which appears in her life, illuminates it in her first moments of mystical experience and then disappears in silence. However, she had with him a providential meeting, one of the most profound of her life. It is difficult to document her first meeting with him, but it had to be after 1554 when the Jesuits established the college of San Gil in the heart of Avila. The Saint had already had the experience of an initial "conversion," before a "very wounded Christ" that she analyzed in depth with all the feelings which paralyzed her: sorrow of past sins, a traitor to Christ's love, repentance, tears of compassion, etc. (L9-10). The problem of the affective turmoil continued without resolution. The encounter with Christ's image was accompanied by the first mystical graces with their corresponding psycho-physical phenomena: tears, consolations, etc.

Before the invasion of the mystical graces, Teresa sought help from confessors, friendly councilors, Francisco de Salcedo, a married layman and a relative and the priest Gaspar Daza, of the priestly school of Master Avila. The two of them applied principles of spiritual discernment, which the Saint also accepted at that time (L9,9; 23,11; 34,9, etc.), although later her own experience and better knowledge

caused her to change her opinion (CV16,2-3). The principle said: mystical graces are gifts (rewards) which God grants to persons already saints and experienced in the ascetical life and the exercise of virtue. As a result, if they appear in imperfect persons or sinners God is not their cause, but they are caused by the persons themselves or the devil. That was the case with Dona Teresa who-according to the two censors-did not merit to receive from God such "mercies." The conclusion was logical and the judgment desolating: "...both of them (said) the cause was the devil" (L23,14). At this moment of turmoil, fear, desolation and doubts, Diego de Cetina came on the scene.

From Teresa we know only the bare essentials, the meeting was short and that his spiritual direction was fruitful and effective. She does not give us his name, or the year they met or the place where the meeting



took place. All we know from her is that he was a Jesuit, "a saintly person (L 23,9; 23,15) who was famous in Avila for experience in spiritual things" (L23,14). The fact that she first confessed to Diego de Cetina was revealed by her friend Dona Guiomar de Ulloa, who knew him well since her house was close to the Jesuit house in Avila.

Diego was born in Huete (Cuenca) in 1531, he studied philosophy at the University of Alcala, made his novitiate with the Jesuits in Salamanca in 1551. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1554 after studying theology for one year at the University of Salamanca. In 1555, he resided at the College of San Gil in Avila. In the brief time he was in Avila he met with Dona Teresa de Ahumada at the convent of the Incarnation. On leaving Avila he returned to Salamanca to complete his studies in theology. He died in 1572.

It is interesting to note that at the time he met St. Teresa, he was only 24 and a recently ordained priest who had very little theological training. His self-esteem was very low. He had bad health-he was possibly sent to Avila from Salamanca to recuperate. Documents show that he was not highly regarded by his superiors as a preacher or confessor.

Despite what others thought, Teresa's judgment of him was very kind and motherly. When she came to editing her Life ten years later she would recall her meeting with him with tenderness, calling him "a holy man:" (L 24,2). She also said, "After I spoke with the servant of God-for he was very much so and most wise-all about my soul, as to someone who well knew this language, he explained to me what I was experiencing and greatly encouraged me. He said it was very recognizably from God's Spirit..." (L 23,16).

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