

THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER TO THE ORDER

On the occasion of the canonization of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity

Dear brothers and sisters in Carmel,

At a distance of one year from the canonization of the Martin husband and wife, we are getting ready to celebrate another grace-filled happening filling us with joy. On the 16th October, one hundred and ten years after her death, our sister Elizabeth Catez was written into the canon of saints of the Church, entering this way, with full rights, to form part of the great and glorious family of the saints of Carmel.

Many are the motives for thanking the Lord and reflecting upon the significance that this event can have in the journey our Order has embarked upon. The rich and stimulating teaching that Pope Francis proposes with his words and initiatives – I am thinking of the encyclical *Laudato si'* and the jubilee year of Mercy – can help us to gather various aspects of the relevance of the witness and spiritual teaching of this our famous sister, so loved and appreciated in spiritual circles, but still little known to the greater part of the faithful. And yet, what ought to render her interesting is her life as a vivacious young girl, sensitive, attractive, talented, generously committed to the life of the Church, tied to her family, exuberant in affection and capable of friendship, a lover of beauty and in all this conquered and focused upon the mystery of the Trinity which Jesus Christ revealed to us!

Elizabeth can help us to reach the abundant and ever fresh source of the Trinity, which gives vitality, significance, joyful perseverance in our consecration and mission. She offers to everyone a stimulating example of how immersion in the mystery of divine life allows us to find total fulfillment.

In this letter I wish to propose to you keys for rereading the writings of Elizabeth for the purpose of gathering from them their relevance, keeping in mind contradictory phenomena of the present age, always less capable of being characterized by good relationships because it is confused and discouraged; the anxiety of making oneself present to feel alive, by means of media visibility, that however does not manage to make us present to ourselves; the frenetic and noisy filling of time with activities that preoccupy and disturb us, which take away from us the time to listen, to talk and reflect in depth; the use of beauty and the selective aestheticism of reality for the purpose of consumption, which rejects gratuitousness by impeding the reception of the beauty inherent in things, as well as disfiguring nature; the widespread feeling of being on the edge of a precipice, in the power of unknown and uncontrollable forces, which renders vain every effort for good, in a world always marked more and more by violence, misery and uncertainty, without the possibility of getting near peace; suffering and death seen as a disgrace, emphasized or vainly fled from in our culture, which does not manage to realize the value of them.

How to consolidate our life?

A main line of thought unites the experience of Elizabeth from when she was a small child until, still young but more mature, she was to die: the intuition that the one important thing is «to live for love». The God who is capable of overcoming her fiery and choleric temperament and to captivate her sensitive heart thirsting for beauty, she found in Jesus crucified for love (cfr. *Letter* 133). In Him she saw and touched a love that was passionate and thrilling, which overcame her and, at a tender age, made her decide to be totally His. It is the contact that would happen on the most beautiful day of her life, the day of her first communion.

«in which Jesus placed his dwelling place in me/ in which God took possession of my heart/ so much and so well that from that hour/ from that mysterious conversation/ from that delightful, divine encounter/ my only desire was

to give my life/ to give back a little of his great love/ to the Beloved in the Eucharist/ who reposes in my weak heart/ inundating it with all his favours» (*Poetry* 47).

The difficulties she had to face in the process of becoming mature – such as the contrast between the desire to enter Carmel and the opposition of her most loved mother; the desire to remain recollected in intimacy with Jesus and to take part in the feasts by dancing, where young men fascinated by her beauty paid attention to her; the feeling of being called to solitude, which required detachment and separation, and being involved in so many artistic and social activities; giving her whole heart to God and at the same time being ready to help and be affectionate with her friends – they found their solution in the attraction exerted on her by «the too great love» of Christ, which shines forth from the cross, the wood that is capable «of lighting the flame of love» (*Letters* 138).

Among the passages most loved by Elizabeth is the beginning of the hymn in the letter to the Ephesians, where Saint Paul announces the glorious destiny of man by saying that we have been thought of, blessed and predestined from eternity «to be holy and faultless before him in love» (*Ep* 1:4). Because of this «souls who chat about their own self, who are preoccupied about their sensitivity, dally with a useless thought or whatever desire, scatter their strength», «as it is not ordered towards God» (*Last retreat*, 3). All that is not done for God is worthless (cfr. *Letters* 340). It empties instead of filling, it scatters instead of gathering together. It is not activity that disperses, but not believing «that a Being called Love dwells in us» (*Letters* 330), not being united to the Being who loves us, to the Father who in Christ who awaits us in his house and with his Spirit who sustains us on our journey.

The great act of faith – Elizabeth reminds us, echoing the evangelist John — is to believe in this immense love God has for us (cfr. *Heaven in Faith*, 20). The unification of the person comes about then through the potency of the act of faith and reverberates in the feelings. Therefore to grow harmoniously, to be healed from the wounds of life and mature as a person, our objective ought not to be the cure of ones own self or the overcoming of our own weakness but, rather, to come out of ourselves, to leave aside our own self (cfr. *Last retreat*, 26) in an advantageous exchange with the self of Christ who «wants to consume our life to change it into his own: our own full of vice and his full of grace and glory, prepared exactly for us, if only we renounce our selves» (*Heaven in Faith*, 18).

The secret then is to recognize how much we are loved, fixing our eyes on the Master who came to light the fire of love and wants to see it burn in his disciples, so that it might spread visibly throughout the whole world. Divine love is so excessive and without measure, that it carries away the soul that permits him to do so, making it constant, no longer subject to the unforeseeable and inevitable disturbances of life, «because it sees the Invisible» and so then «it is no longer stopped by tastes or feelings»; it actually happens «that the more it is tried the more its faith grows, because it knows, so to say, how to overcome all obstacles so as to go to rest itself on the breast of infinite love, who does only works of love» (*Heaven in Faith*: 20). On the other hand, this is the human experience of the Son sent by the Father upon the earth and accepted by the humble Mother, this is the longing written into the being of every person, this is the grace of baptism which therefore constitutes a new birth, a permanent enlightenment for those who keep it in mind, the beginning of life eternal (cfr. *Heaven in Faith*, 2).

At the base of her immaturity lay indecision with respect to union with God, remaining centered upon herself and not choosing love. The action with which God transforms and unites us is a quasi physical phenomenon, a consummation of self love, of the fear of suffering, of vices, of aversion towards God, all of this requires us to let go our will in order to be grafted into love, the «double current between the One who is and the one who is not» (*Letter* 131).

Wretchedness, a place blessed by mercy

If we want to become – with our consecration and our work – an efficient sign of the Father's action «we are called to keep our gaze fixed on mercy» (*Misericordiae vultus*, 3). Often, in

fact, whether we formulate it, or it remains implicit, a question hovers in our mind which renders us sterile weakening our thrust and taking enthusiasm from us: what do I get out of my weakness? How much better it would be if it were not there, if only I were much stronger; if I were unassailable, how many problems less...and the ideal becomes unreachable! Thus the life of discomfort and frustration is set up before us.

Elizabeth reasons in a completely different manner, as also Pope Francis does, when contemplating the mystery of Jesus' passion, she says that the strength of tenderness is known only by accepting to enter into contact with the real life of others, without standing back at a distance from the human drama, by touching the suffering flesh of ourselves and others (cfr. *Evangelii gaudium*, 269-270). Speaking to her sister Guite, our saint suggests to her to cancel the word discouragement from her vocabulary: the more weakness is felt and the Lord seems hidden, the more it is necessary to rejoice, reminding yourself that «the abyss of your misery attracts the abyss of his mercy» (Letter 298). The interior life is fathomless because in it is the God who loves us without any shadow of change, an abyss of love that we possess within us (cfr. *Letter* 292).

If we use the light of faith we find trust and love, which permit us to descend into our depths, instead of remaining rigid on the rippling surface of the sea of life. In this way we experience the abyss that is God, inseparably tied to our being and, reaching the bottom, «the divine impact will take place; it is down there that the abyss of our nothingness, of our destitution will encounter the abyss of mercy, the immensity of all of God» (*Heaven in Faith*: 4).

Only by recognizing this truth, which is the heart of the Gospel message, is it possible to recognize «God under the veil of humanity» (*Last retreat*: 4) and to hear from him the word in the present. If we want to find peace, we have to prostrate ourselves and throw ourselves «into the abyss of our nothingness»: from this will be born adoration, «from the ecstasy of love» (*Last retreat*: 21). From this derives trust: fear of our own weakness disappears, because «the Strong One is in me and his virtue is all-powerful; it operates, says the Apostle, far beyond what we could hope for» (*Letter* 333).

Therefore, how much hope is it possible to have if it is true that «the weakest soul, even the most guilty is the one that has more reasons to hope», given that «it possesses in itself a Saviour who wants to purify her in every moment» (*Letter* 249), since «his mission is that of pardoning» (*Letter* 145). We must see our nothingness, our poverty and powerlessness, recognizing calmly that we are not capable of progress and perseverance and place them before the mercy of the Master (cfr. *Heaven in Faith*: 12). In this way we can find freedom and peace which are the expression of reconciliation with ourselves in Christ – «He is in me, I am his sanctuary/ Oh, is it not the “vision of peace?”» (*Poetry* 88) – desiring the He grows in us and, through this growth, becomes known to mankind. Therefore sanctity is truly within reach because it is found in a movement of descent, not of elevation:

«The All-powerful needs to descend/ to pour out the torrents of his love./ He is searching for a heart that wants to understand him/ and in this one he makes his abode./ [...] “Look at me, you can better understand/ the gift of yourself, the annihilation/ To exalt myself I must always descend,/ that your repose might be in abasement!/ It is always here that meeting happens» (*Poetry* 91).

The Eucharist is the All of the Trinity who invades us

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the abyss into which Elizabeth, losing herself, finds herself (cfr. *Letter* 62). He is «an Immensity of love overflowing» (*Letter* 199), which soaks into and gives life to every fibre of being; that is poured into the soul in the measure that the person draws with faith on baptismal grace and is progressively conformed to Christ. The horizon of reality continues always to expand (cfr. *Letter* 89) and light is shed on everything, because Christ enters into the depths of the soul, «into those abysses in which only He lives» (*Letter* 125), making us participate in his way of looking at things, in his feelings, in his heart: «He *fascinates*, carries us away; under his gaze the horizon becomes so beautiful, so vast, so luminous...» (*Letter* 128). The Trinity is not an abstract and complicated truth but it is the life of the Three – as they are called –

who in their happy communion create the world and humanity involving them in the splendour of Love, Light and Life. God is the Father, his Son and their Spirit: our home, our intimacy, the paternal home from which we ought never leave» (*Heaven in Faith: 2*).

In the logic of faith, the existential roots and consequences of being Christian are strictly connected: to live in faith, to know the love of Christ crucified for us, to live in a light which renders beautiful even the most painful moments of life, to be transformed by the Spirit as happened in Mary, to live inhabited by the Trinity, to find the peace of heaven upon earth, for Elizabeth were synonymous.

The Eucharist is the key to this luminous and prophetic vision of life. In the experience of Elizabeth, from the day of her first Communion, sacramental Communion with Jesus and prolonged adoration of his constant giving of self to us were the experimental source, the door of communication, the place where flowed together all the illuminations and graces she received in her brief and most intense life. Entering the chapel while the Blessed Sacrament was exposed seemed to her «like glimpsing heaven, as it truly was, since the One whom I adore in faith is the same that those in glory contemplate face to face» (*Letter 137*). «Nothing tells us more about the love that is in God's heart than the Eucharist: it is union, consummation, it is he in us and us in him, is this not heaven upon earth? Heaven in Faith, in expectation of the vision face to face so desired». The wait for this encounter really makes «everything disappear and it seems you are already penetrating into the Mystery of God» (*Letter 165*). In the Eucharist the reality of heaven is made present, communicated and made personal for every soul by the Spirit, because heaven is «that which the Spirit creates in you» (*Letter 239*). The Eucharist is a reality so essential that Elizabeth committed herself to reach the goal of being worthy to receive the Eucharist daily (in a time when it was not the habitual practice): «Well then my God I have realized all my desires: to receive You every day and, between one Communion and the next, to live in union with You, in intimacy with You. Oh! This is Paradise on earth!» (*Diary, 150*). Like St Francis, Elizabeth considered the Eucharist strictly connected to Christmas, from which emanates the splendid light which makes visible to our eyes the disturbing Mystery of the Incarnation, the beginning of the fulfillment of salvation and the glorification of humanity through the outpouring of charity and intimate union with God, which by means of faith is accomplished in the human heart (cfr. *Poetry 75, 86, 88, 91*).

In this intimate transfusion of love, human experience changes radically. What can we discover and “touch with the hand” – of ourselves, of God, of others, of reality – by communicating with full confidence in the mystery of faith?

1) *In reality, we are another humanity*. If we think for a moment of the increasing burden there is – in our relationships, in complying with public opinion, in the growing up of young people – the visibility of our own image and making oneself “available” through snapshots of our own daily life showing our wish to be “for others”, all this makes us aware of how different is what Elizabeth has to tell us and her own personal experience. For her it was not possible to be truly oneself and make oneself present to the other in a real and not transient manner, except by placing oneself in the depths in which we find our human image in the divine person of Christ– the visible image of the Father.

When a person does not know herself or does not become known as a space of personal communication, she does not represent and is not worth anything. Instead, by opening herself to the splendors of faith, the person «discovers her God present, living in her; she in turn remains present in him, in holy simplicity, and He guards her with jealous care» (*Last retreat: 5*). Everything becomes precious if we discover this invisible intimacy and seek to join our human experience with his, fixing our gaze on the mysteries of his life, seeking to intuit his feelings, which stand out in the Gospels, in order to make them our own: «it seems to me that it is necessary to come so close to the Master, to communicate with your soul, to make yourself aware of all of his movements and then depart like him into the Father's will» (*Letter 158*). The worth of our quotations would shoot up to the stars becoming through interior identification «the sacrament of Christ»; in every expression of our existence – joyful or sad, strength or weakness – we can «give to our all-holy God, the all-loving God crucified». This entails «allowing oneself to transform into the one same image with

him» by means of «faith, which gazes and prays without ceasing; the will, imprisoned and which no longer turns back; a true heart, pure, which beats under the blessing of the Master» (*Intimate notes* 14). This Pauline-Carmelite mystic overcomes the vain attempt to find oneself in the recognition of others, by which we expose our superficiality and our inability; we find ourselves and the other by searching for the Other, keeping ourselves aware that we are – all of us – made in the image of Christ:

«That I may be for him another humanity in which he renews all his Mystery. And you, O Father bend down upon your poor little creature, “cover her with your shadow” (cfr Mt 17:5) and see in her nothing but the “Beloved in whom you have placed all your delight” (cfr. ivi)» (*Intimate notes* 15).

2) *To become persons of communication, who radiate him.* Every person carries within himself those who have played an important part in his life: the persons who generate him, those who have contributed to his formation, those who have been at his side in the crucial moments of life. On meeting together, we encounter and communicate also something of the persons we carry in our being.

The sublime mystery of the «new incarnation», that is accomplished in the soul, allowing oneself to love from the Crucified one, right down to one's own wretchedness, loving him in our turn out of gratitude “until we are drained”, is the «no longer I, it is He who lives in me» (*Poetry* 75), which allows Love incarnate in Christ to radiate out (Cfr. *Intimate notes* 15). The communion, which people of good will are searching to build and which in our epoch continues to be wounded and offended, can be realized only in the measure the divine will of «restoring all things in Christ» is realized. The road is marked out and Elizabeth describes it in this manner: Let us contemplate this adored image, holding ourselves without ceasing under the light which emanate from it so that it becomes imprinted in us; then we will face up to everything with the same attitude our holy Master would use» (*Heaven in faith*: 27).

Love of Christ, the Church and people go hand in hand and support each other in turn. Unifying ourselves with Christ in order to have «the soul full of his soul, full of his prayer, all the being captured and given» and «enter into all his joys, share all his sadness», makes us «to be fruitful, co-redeemers, generating souls to grace, multiplying the adopted children of the Father, Christ's redeemed, coheirs to his glory» (*Intimate notes* 13). To render glory to God is to render Christ visible – his life – in our existence. Here is revealed that inconstancy and listlessness in prayer are proportional to how much we are not aware of this vocation which is our identity: «I will be in communion by it with the One who is a consuming fire, so that by this he transforms me continually into himself, so that she may render him glory» (*Letter* 328). But the soul, touched by the Holy Spirit, «will become like a flame of love that spreads out into all the members of the Body of Christ which is the Church» (*Letter* 250). Only thus «by our generosity/ will we help holy Church/ and love will be seen to reign/ a prelude of divine dwelling» (*Poetry* 94); «to live by love, to live by his life/ is what makes us his apostles./ So great is the power of a captive soul/ I believe that she obtains everything» (*Poetry* 77).

3) *Living suffering as a blessing.* It is true that we are not created to suffer but to be joyful, not to die but to live, and we should add: not to possess ourselves egoistically but to give ourselves generously. At the basis of fear and refusal of suffering can be found a closing off, a deep solitude, the idol of physical beauty and efficiency, arrogance, in the last analysis the lack of an unfathomable experience – to put it as Elizabeth would – of divine-human love. Elizabeth had lived this, she was immersed in it and it was let overwhelm her so much as to request it insistently for herself and persons dear to her, in her intimate conversations with the Three.

Terms which – just to hear them said – evoke sentiments of sadness, make us suspicious and do not please us, such as victim, sacrifice, immolation, renunciation, forgetfulness of self are the only ones which set out, in Scripture and spiritual experience, that necessity of Easter and the truth of love for someone. Elizabeth understood this well and so she said: «Let us ask him to make us

true in our love, that is to transform us into victims of sacrifice, since it seems to me that sacrifice is no other than to translate love into action» (*Letter* 250). For this, it is a source of happiness to think «that the Father has predestined me to be conformed to his crucified Son» (*Letter* 324).

The Eucharist is a sacrament of communion, a banquet of heaven, a joyful feast because someone has been immolated, sacrificed, annihilated for us. We can then perceive the theological-spiritual centering of expressions such as the following and the beauty of the Eucharistic perspective that opens: «Adored Master, you search for a host/ and in your charity want/ because you dream that there rise up to the Father/ sacrifice and adoration» (*Poetry* 91).

Peace and repose are not born from the absence of problems and sufferings, but when you «know how to appreciate the happiness of suffering and see in it the revelation of “immense love” (*Ep* 2:4) of which St Paul speaks» (*Letter* 323 bis); if «pain is the revelation of love» it becomes precious and blessed and can become «my favourite dwelling place, it is there that I find peace and repose, there where I am sure to meet my Master and to live with him» (*Letter* 323). Because of this, a Christian should not have any other ideal than that of «being transformed into Jesus crucified» (*Letter* 324): by discovering that Christ dwells in pain, she will receive strength in the painful and frustrating happenings in life. So in the light of eternity, sacrifices, struggles, troubles are reasons for joy, not for sadness (cfr. *Heaven in faith*: 30); the secret is to learn to take refuge always «in the prayer of the Master; on the cross he saw you, prayed for you and that prayer and this prayer is eternally alive and present before the Father and this will save you from your suffering» (*Letter* 324).

Suffering, from being a “proof” of the lack of love, becomes an “echo” of divine life which knocks to enter into the heart and shed light on humanity. In the most painful sickness he becomes signs of hope for those who stand beside us and the one who suffers without hoping, if we live the sickness as the mystery of Christ dead and risen from the dead, who celebrates his Mass with his disciple (cfr. *Letter* 309).

4) *Time is redeemed*. The light of eternity gives the correct perspective on reality because, giving to life the sense of a good origin and end, it places them within a process in which the single happenings are made relative and redeemed by a process of receiving absolution that would make them break open, overloading them with expectations. At the same time, the fulness of personal being is being prepared by all the choices we make, the actions we commit, the words we utter: «life is such a serious thing: every minute is given to us to “take root” even more in God» (*Letter* 333) and to arrive at resembling in life the divine model, in a union always more intimate with Him.

The Trinity «desires to have us with itself, not only in eternity, but now in time, which is eternity commenced and yet always in becoming» (*Heaven in faith*: 1). What should we do so that this process happens in us? The secret is «to forget about yourself, to abandon yourself, not to rely on yourself, to look only at the Master, look only to him, to receive in the same way that joy or pain come directly from his love» (*Letter* 333).

In this contemplative dimension it becomes possible to read happenings, from the smallest to the greatest, as an expression of the Father’s will – as Christ did –, so that for those who believe «every circumstance, every happening, every suffering as every joy is a sacrament» (*Heaven in faith*: 10). In everything it is possible to communicate with him, reality becomes meaningful, events become connected, points come together allowing us to see into a beautiful texture, wise, suitable for our own human growth. If the eternal Word has entered into reality and is united in some manner to every person, then «through everything I can, right from this earth,/ contemplate him in the light of faith/ [. . .] unite myself to him, touch him with faith» (*Poetry* 91).

Elisabeth had learnt this in the long wait to enter the monastery, which favored an interiorization of the place of contemplation and of union with God, so as to live it in mundane circumstances, being concentrated on what was essential in the vocation and Christian witness: the realities of faith, the realism of the divine will, the presence of God in the midst of daily events.

It is no longer possible to experience that “there is not enough time”, or have experience that what we are doing is draining our life away, because we do not find any meaning or because it

represents an escape from ourselves. Faith, if we have not tamed it, keeps us awake, attentive to gather God's graces which cross our path every day, gathered «in the light of his creative word, in that faith "in the excess of his love" (Ep 2:4) which enables God to fill the soul "according to its capacity" (Ep 3:19)» (Heaven in faith: 34).

5) To live "from within", grateful and connected to true life. Sanctity is to live «in contact with him in the depths of an unfathomable abyss, from within» (Heaven in faith: 32). "From within" is the expression which sums up the charism and eternal mission of Elizabeth of the Trinity: to live in relationship with God, the mystery of the Church, friendships, activities, the worries of existence, the events or ones own era, deliberately and tenaciously within the most strict union with the Word incarnate, crucified and risen, who is being given constantly to every creature. Dwelling within the Mystery of faith corresponds to passing from ones own ego to the shore of the divine ego and the consequent opening out of life's horizon and view; to be consolidated in faith is the only thing necessary for our life, since it allows us to «not act except under the great light of God, never according to impressions and imagination» (The greatness of our vocation: 11). It is the experience of heaven upon earth, of the realism of divine life in the communion of saints, of perceptible realization – already present, even if not yet in fulness – of the words of truth and life that revelation hands over to us as our luminous inheritance as children of God.

Praying to be entirely present in the adored Trinity, awake in faith and abandoned to its creative action, Elizabeth desired that «ever instant carry me deeper into the depth of your Mystery» (Intimate notes: 15); to live "from within" means to rest your being totally in the Trinity, «God wholly love»: this intimacy «has been the beautiful sun shining on my life, making it an anticipated heaven; it is what sustains me today in suffering» (Letter 333). If we permit infinite beauty to imprint itself on us it is possible, even in a world where «everything is contaminated», to be persons «beautiful with his beauty, luminous with his light» (Letter 331), who grow in gratitude and always share in the joy of God's children (cfr. The greatness of our vocation: 12), capable of catching a reflection of his beauty and love in nature and persons.

A healthy relationship with creation entails «the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change» (Laudato si': 218), by recognizing gratefully that the world is a gift received from the Father's hands. This recognition propels us to act with spontaneity and respect, without surprise towards whatever actuality, aware that all beings form together a wonderful universal communion. The world «is not contemplated from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has united us to all beings» (ivi, 220), secure that «Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light» (ivi, 221). Thanks to the sacraments – particularly in the Eucharist – in which nature is assumed into God and transformed into mediation, «we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane» (ivi, 235) than that of profit and exploitation. It is extraordinary the agreement between Elizabeth and Pope Francis, who aims at laying the foundation of an integral ecology:

«The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist fulness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. [...] The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration» (ivi, 236).

Mary, a model of listening which makes fruitful

«Recollect yourself, within your soul/ the mystery is fulfilled./ Jesus, Splendour of the Father,/ has taken flesh in you./ With the Virgin Mother/ clasp your Beloved/ he is in you» (Poetry 86). Mary is the creature who cannot be related but only contemplated, because she has penetrated in a unique way the mystery of Christ; her help can be invoked, we can learn from her how to guard the gift, by placing oneself in her maternal hands: «This Mother of grace will form my soul so that

her tiny daughter may be a “radiant”, living image of her first born, the Son of the Eternal one, he who was the perfect praise of glory of his Father» (*Last retreat: 2*).

In her everything happens within and for this reason she is the model of the disciple who allows himself to be reached and transformed by the living Word of the Father, remaining docile to the creative action of the Spirit; Mary, that disciple of her Son, teaches us to adore in silence, to suffer and stand beneath the cross, to contribute to the work of redemption; humble, free from oneself, forgetful of self, full of charity and ready to hasten to help, always recollected «within herself with the Word of God» (*Last retreat: 40*). Elizabeth had a deep admiration for the Virgin Mother, displayed wonderment at her humble greatness, which had made heaven open, the one in whose womb the Three were able to find in their creature a dwelling place (cfr. *Poetry: 79*):

«Think what ought to be in the soul of the Virgin when, after the Incarnation, she possessed in herself the Word incarnate, the Gift of God. . . In what silence, in what recollection, in what adoration she must have buried herself in the depth of her soul to clasp that God whose Mother she was» (*Letter: 183*).

Mary is the intrepid witness to an enormous event; which took place in the strength of silence which made her capable of listening deeply, who consented to the Spirit imprinting in her the eternal Son: she teaches us how to prepare «a very calm dwelling place in our soul, in which always resounds the canticle of love, of thanksgiving» (*Letter 165*); she tells us how to listen: «Make it so that I listen to you always,/ unchangeable in my faith,/ that in everything I adore you/ and live only for you» (*Poetry 88*). The passion to listen to him is a taste for harmony, a capacity to be in tune with the soul of Christ, aware that He «has so many things to tell us» (*Letter 164*). In fact, like Mary we too are «at One» with the Lord, who gives himself to us and dwells in our soul. From this arises the need for silence, which is so difficult to reach, «in order to listen to him always and to penetrate deeper and deeper into his infinite being; identified with Him who loves, she found him everywhere, she saw him shining in everything» (*Letter 133*). In the person is born a praise without end, an adoration of the gift of God that increases charity and the passion to make Christ known, to the point that “praise of glory” becomes the new identity:

«A praise of glory is a soul who dwells in God, who loves him with a pure and disinterested love, without looking for herself in the sweetness of this love; who loves him beyond all his gifts and also when none have been received; [. . .] she is a soul of silence which is held like a lyre under the mysterious touch of the Holy Spirit, so that he makes divine harmonies come out of it; she is a soul who gazes at God in faith and simplicity, she is a mirror that reflects in everything that which he is; she is like a fathomless abyss in which he can run, expand himself; [. . .] in the end a praise of glory is always occupied in thanksgiving. All her actions, her movements, her thoughts, her aspirations, while they make her take root more deeply in love, are like an echo of the eternal *Sanctus*» (*Heaven in faith 43*).

Conclusion

Elizabeth of the Trinity is a precious gift for us and for the Church in this age marked by crises of identity, depression, indifference, unrestrained yearnings, defacement of nature and manipulation of what is human. She gives in a strong, beautiful and convincing manner witness to the realism of the truths in which we believe and she helps us to grasp that, if we do not recover the eschatological dimension of our faith, this loses effectiveness and becomes useless, without biting and transforming strength.

We know what is her mission, what she is doing, in what she requests us to collaborate, with ardent and thankful love to the Trinity:

«In heaven my mission will be to attract souls, helping them to come out of themselves to cling to God in a wholly simple and loving manner and to keep them in this great interior silence, which allows God to imprint himself in them, to transform them into himself» (*Letter 335*).

Let us thank her for the words written in her last letter that, knowing her heart, we know are also directed to us:

«Dear little brother, before going to heaven, your Elizabeth wants to tell you yet another time of all her affection and her desire to assist you, day by day, until you reach heaven [. . .] You will have to put up with struggles, you will meet obstacles along the road of life, but do not become discouraged, call me! Yes call your little sister, in this way you will increase the happiness of her heaven: she will be so happy to help you to win, to remain worthy of God.... When I will be close to God, recollect yourself in prayer, we will find one another even better» (*Letter 342*).