

Formation program for the Eighth Centenary of St. Elizabeth of Hungary

Year One: The life of St. Elizabeth

Month 7. Meeting the poor

Elizabeth lived as a rich woman in a castle, but did not ignore what went on in the outside world. She became aware of the human misery that surrounded her. She went out to encounter and help the poor, and they in turn, changed her.

In his Testament, St. Francis said that the true beginning of his conversion was his encounter with the lepers. He saw the suffering of Christ in them. Elizabeth too saw Christ in the lepers. According to a legend, Elizabeth once placed a leper in the bed she shared with her husband. When Ludwig look at the bed, he saw Christ on the crucifix there. Elizabeth cared for the lepers by washing their feet, comforting them and giving them alms.

In 1226, during her husband's absence in Italy, there was a terrible famine in Germany. Elizabeth fed all of the poor by distributing her husband's personal grain harvest in our four corners of his domain. She also gave the food from her own mouth to those in need.

Elizabeth also founded a hospital for the poor at the foot of the Wartburg, and tended the sick, even the worst cases, with her own hands. She was not deterred by the terrible smells. She was so kind and affectionate that all the poor children would run to her and call her "mother."

Spiritual reflection:

Our encounter with the poor should lead us to see Christ in others, especially in their suffering. It should lead us to give them the most personal and loving attention, as we would to Christ, for they are his brothers and sisters. Our encounter with the poor should change us as well, by teaching us to sacrifice for others and live in a simpler way.

Gospel: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:35-36, 40)