

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

### Year One: The life of St. Elizabeth

#### Month 8. Widowhood

Elizabeth's husband had planned for some time to go on crusade with the Emperor Frederick II, to free the Holy Land from Muslim control. He began his road south to embark in Italy in June 1227. Elizabeth rode to the very edge of his territories with him, because it was so hard to say goodbye. She was expecting their third child in less than three months.

Ludwig was waiting in Otranto, Italy to embark for the Holy land when a serious epidemic spread through the crusaders' camp. He died of it on September 11, 1227. The news was brought to Elizabeth shortly after her daughter Gertrude's birth. When she heard that her husband was dead, she cried, "A He is dead, dead, and the world and everything that is sweet in the world is dead to me!@

By the time, some months later, when her husband's remains were brought back from Italy, she had accepted her loss as God's will, as a sacrifice, and prayed in these moving words: " Lord, I give you thanks for having mercifully consoled me by these bones of my husband which I have so much desired. Great as was my love for him, you know that I do not begrudge the sacrifice that my beloved and I made of himself to you for the liberation of the Holy Land. If I could have him, I would give the whole world for him, and go begging with him forever. But I call upon you to witness that, I would not want to redeem his life, even if it cost but a single hair, if it were against your will. Now I recommend myself and him to your grace. May your will for us be done."

Elizabeth believed that our sacrifices to God should be made willingly and from a full heart: She said: "Give to the Lord what you have and gladly." She echoed Job's words: ""The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Gospel: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted (Mt. 5:4).