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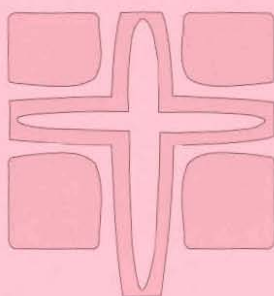
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# Elisabeth Leseur's Spirituality of the Communion of Saints

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*Janet K. Ruffing, R.S.M.*

## Introduction

The mystic, Elisabeth Leseur (1866–1914) creatively and originally responded to the spirit of her times in the way she understood and practiced her faith as a lay Christian. I believe she deserves to be better known as an important lay figure in the history of Christian Spirituality.<sup>1</sup> The specific challenges she confronted were many. First, her marriage at the age of twenty-three to Félix Leseur, an unbeliever in religiously hostile France, profoundly threatened her faith, and she struggled to regain that faith and live a robust committed dedication to God. Eventually, she adopted an apostolic strategy of unconditional loving presence to her beloved husband as well as to many in their agnostic circle. Second, her approach to spirituality from the beginning of her adult conversion was always thoroughly lay in character. She developed a rule of life that maintained a set of priorities related to her responsibilities within her marriage and family. Unable to bear a child, Elisabeth responded by maintaining deep involvement with their extended families, as well as by developing her own intellectual gifts through a disciplined program of study.

Third, she experienced many forms of suffering in her life, enduring many illnesses and dying from breast cancer in 1914. She turned this physical suffering as well as her spiritual isolation into a form of prayer and participation in redemption, making a pact with God offering her sufferings from breast cancer for the conversion of her husband. In addition to her physical and spiritual sufferings, Elisabeth constantly confronted deaths and life-threatening illnesses within her family. Her robust belief in the communion of saints gave meaning to these experiences of suffering and loss and filled her with hope for future reunion in heaven and ongoing relationship with her beloved dead.

Fourth, she had an expansive view of the world from extensive travel and reading. The Leseurs

counted among their friends, musicians, artists, writers, philosophers, politicians, doctors, and lawyers—believers and unbelievers alike. She recognized a special call to reach out to unbelievers. Fifth, she participated in the developing lay movements of her time, deeply affected by the social teachings of Leo XIII and the evangelizing efforts of the embryonic Catholic action movement. She also embraced contemporary developments in Catholic theology and spirituality—the beginnings of historical criticism and better understandings of the Scriptures, the early liturgical movement and a return to practice of frequent communion. She was deeply engaged in trying to harmonize faith and reason, faith and democracy, faith and culture. In many ways, she was clearly an exceptional prototype of a happily married lay woman, educated in her faith, immersed in society and carrying out in a secular context the specific forms of the lay apostolate that Vatican II would envision a half a century later.

## Elisabeth and the Communion of Saints

The theological theme that most informs Elisabeth Leseur's spiritual understanding and practice is a comprehensive intuition into the mystery of the communion of saints. Dom Germain Morin claims that this doctrine was "the great reality of her life,

Unable to bear a child, Elisabeth responded by maintaining deep involvement with their extended families, as well as by developing her own intellectual gifts through a disciplined program of study.

finding in it the Christian meaning of her friendships, her bereavements, her responsibilities, and her worries about those dear to her."<sup>2</sup> She describes how she pragmatically understands this doctrine in all of her major writings—in her journal, in her letters on suffering, in her first communion treatises to her niece and nephew, and even in her letter to Jeanne Alcan, published under the title, "Advice to an Unbeliever."<sup>3</sup>

**Elisabeth's writings both assume and explicitly express a belief in the reality of this relational community among the living and the dead, as well as those yet to be brought into its web of relationship. She is convinced that these relationships are not interrupted by death, but continue vibrantly in the present beyond the grave.**

For Elisabeth, the communion of saints was both a philosophical and a faith reality. Deeply influenced by a number of prominent Catholic literary and philosophical writers in France at the end of the nineteenth century, she developed a spiritual vision of the hidden supernatural life of each person, participating in a great exchange of spiritual goods with in the communion of saints. According to Georges Goyau, these writings "were dominated by the idea of the communion of saints and it was this that gave them their enthusiasm."<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of the communion of saints has historically carried a two-fold interpretation. During any epoch, one or another of these strands became dominant. Its earliest meaning seems to have been a "communion in holy things." This meant participation in the intimate sharing of life with Jesus and the followers of Jesus through the sacraments of initiation and a life of discipleship. One shares in the sacred mysteries, the Eucharistic meal

that constitutes the community of believers. The second meaning is related to the cult of the saints: a communion among holy persons, living and dead, especially the martyrs. By Elisabeth's time, the doctrine implied an underlying social solidarity in grace that taught that an individual Christian had the ability to effect good for the whole body of the church. A contemporary of Elisabeth wrote this interpretation in 1904:

Through the sacrament of initiation the baptized become members of the body of the Church: a body whose head is Christ, whose members are all the righteous, dead, living, and to come, from the beginning of the world until its final consummation. In addition, the holy angels themselves, to whatever hierarchy they belong, form part of this society. By entering into the Catholic Church, the new Christians thus find themselves in communion with all the saints of earth and heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Elisabeth's writings both assume and explicitly express a belief in the reality of this relational community among the living and the dead, as well as those yet to be brought into its web of relationship. She is convinced that these relationships are not interrupted by death, but continue vibrantly in the present beyond the grave.<sup>6</sup> A notion of a final consummation fuels her hope that the future lies in God's hands and that she will not only be united with God in heaven, but also after her own death, she will be reunited with her beloved friends and family, especially her husband once he receives the gift of faith. This is a vision of the profound interconnection of loving persons that reaches from the past, continues in the present among saints on earth and in heaven, and leans into a future that encompasses even more satisfying relationships after death.

Elisabeth clearly expresses the temporal dimensions of this mystery. All the living participate in this Christic life. The living include those who enjoy eternal life as well as those presently on earth. Among those on earth, a supernatural, spiritual communion exists among believers independent of physical proximity through partaking of the Eucharist—effecting literally a communion in the Risen Christ among everyone anywhere in the world who shares in faith or in the sacrament. This supernatural communion extends beyond the moment of reception of communion to a union of hearts and minds in personal prayer and in action for the good of others in daily life. Thus praying for one an-



other's intentions, and uniting together in offering sacrifices or being lovingly present to another, and engaging in the spiritual or corporal works of mercy are all activities expressive of this communion.

In Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the communion of saints, the view adopted by the Council of Trent, he combines these themes of participation in the spiritual goods of the church and the interchange between the persons themselves.<sup>7</sup> Aquinas's concluding section about the church on earth stated:

We should realize that not only is the power of Christ's passion communicated to us but that the merit of this life and of all the goodness achieved by the saints is also common to all those in charity, because all are one, according to Ps 118:63. "I partake, Lord, in the good things of all who fear you." It follows that whoever is in charity partakes in all the good that is done in the entire world. But those for whom that good was especially intended have a special part in it. For one person can make satisfaction for another . . . Through this communion, therefore, we obtain two things: first, participation in all the merits of Jesus Christ; then the communication of one person's good to another.<sup>8</sup>

According to this theology, the members of the communion of saints on earth can effect the spiritual good of others through intentional practices that draw on the grace of Christ. They can obtain spiritual benefits in the future lives of those on earth for whom they pray or offer their sufferings. They can do this only through their membership in the spiritual body of Christ. Thus, they share in the power of their head. She expresses these themes succinctly in a journal entry soon after her younger sister, Juliette, died:

Elisabeth's liturgical practice and sensibilities are suffused with the sense of the intimate connection between participation in the Eucharist now as a foretaste of the life to come and her expectation of even greater joy in heaven.

I believe that there is flowing through us—those on earth, those in purgatory, and those who have reached true life—a great unending stream made up of the sufferings, merits, and love of everyone, and that our least sorrow, our slightest efforts can through grace reach others, whether near or far, and bring them light, peace, and holiness.

I believe that in eternity we shall find again our beloved ones who have known and loved the cross, and that their sufferings and our own will be lost in the infinity of divine Love and the joy of final reunion.

I believe that God is love, and that suffering, in his hands, is the means his love uses to transform and save us.

*I believe in the Communion of Saints, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.*<sup>9</sup>

It is in this theological context that Elisabeth prays and offers her sufferings for her husband's conversion. Her vision of the communion of saints and of shared heavenly life is deeply relational. From the time of her First Communion,<sup>10</sup> she had a vivid sense of heaven as participating in God's presence, and she looked forward to a reunion of those living on earth and the beloved dead with God in heaven. To Soeur Goby, she writes about her sense of continuity in loving relationships: "How good it is to love and to know that these great loving relationships come from God and will return to him, and that after having grown through sorrow, these relationships will end in joy and in the most radiant union!"<sup>11</sup> Thus, heaven meant shared life with God and reunion with all of her beloveds.

Elisabeth's liturgical practice and sensibilities are suffused with the sense of the intimate connection between participation in the Eucharist now as a foretaste of the life to come and her expectation of even greater joy in heaven. She writes to Soeur Goby shortly before All Saints Day:

We will be closely united in spirit during the next few days . . . as our thoughts focus on the heaven we so desire, on the holy souls there, some of whom are dear to us, and all of whom we shall one day know or be united with again, on our blessed Lord, the center and joy of heaven, on the Blessed Virgin for whom we both have such filial affection. Let us think of the happiness that awaits both of us at the end of the darkness and sufferings of this world, knowing that we will be forever united in the fullness of life, light and love that God is preparing for us and helping us attain. If a few hours spent closely united before the tabernacle could be so happy and

sweet, what will eternity be when, in addition to that unity, that full and lasting joy, the beatific vision will also be ours and we will know and love God forever. Occasionally at communion we receive a glint of this eternal union, in the midst of the corporal burdens and miseries that are part of the sufferings of life . . . what will it ever be like when we have truly reached our destination?

In our spiritual union, we remember the poor souls in purgatory, especially those dear to us, and for whom I hope we will be united in prayer. I love these two feasts of All Saints and All Souls. They constitute the communion of saints, one of the most consoling, beautiful and greatest joys of the spiritual life. For those who, like myself, can do so little by way of an active life, how sweet it is to know that in God's hands, pain and suffering become acts of bounty, and through the heart of Jesus are transformed into sources of grace for others.<sup>12</sup>

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In relationship to her husband, she could not bear to imagine heaven without Félix. Because he had not received the gift of faith, she suffered from the inability to share with him the spiritual reality that was so important to her. She longed for a fuller communion of shared life in God than they were able to enjoy during their marriage. It was this she wanted so passionately and for which she made her secret pact with God, offering her suffering during her final illness for his conversion.<sup>13</sup>

After Elisabeth's death from breast cancer, her husband tells the remarkable story of his conversion through his wife's direct influence from beyond the grave.<sup>14</sup> During the last few years of Elisabeth's life, Felix had become more sympathetic to her spiritual inclinations when he witnessed her forbearance during many periods of ill health and

intense physical suffering. Because he saw that she drew strength from her religious practice, he would on occasion accompany her to church, go with her on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, and make the preparations in their room for her to receive communion in her last illness. As Elisabeth wrote to Soeur Goby, his attitudes were changing, but it was not yet faith. Felix had begun to glimpse something spiritual or supernatural about his wife at some of these moments, but could not let the thoughts in for very long because of his materialistic convictions. Elisabeth was convinced that only God can give the grace of faith and believed God would convert him after her death. On her deathbed, she had asked her sister to destroy her journal, but to save another document, her spiritual testament. Amelie prevailed upon Elisabeth to let her preserve the journal as well because she suggested that it might help Felix understand his wife's life better and be of some comfort to him.

#### **Felix's Experience of Elisabeth after her Death**

After the funeral, Amelie gave Felix both documents. Bereft, he visited Elisabeth's grave daily and read her journal and eventually other books in her library. Although his reading had not yet displaced his philosophy, he said, "I learned to know Elisabeth and to love her truly, and I was glad that her thoughts had reached me in so direct a manner that I could preserve of her a complete and consoling memory, that nothing and no lapse of time would ever render less vivid."<sup>15</sup> Felix then recounts a series of uncanny experiences in which he felt he was influenced directly by Elisabeth after her death.

June 10, 1914, slightly more than two months after Elisabeth's death, he accepted an invitation to travel by car with a good friend who encouraged him to get out of the house and into the countryside. The next morning, appreciating the beauty of the countryside, he experienced a vivid sense of his wife next to him saying, "I am grieved." He was emotionally overwhelmed and reasoned that if Elisabeth was alive as he had just experienced her, then there is a God and the existence of the supernatural is true. This conclusion began to open his mind to the possibility of spiritual experience. Later in the day, Felix found himself compelled to

light a candle in Rocamadour, a place of pilgrimage for Elisabeth's intention. He then went to visit people closely associated with his wife—Mamie, her childhood nurse, and Soeur Goby her spiritual friend. On the way to Beaune to see Soeur Goby, Felix asked to go by way of Paray-le-Monial. He was drawn there purely by the memory of his wife's having visited there once, although he remained contemptuous of anything connected with devotion to the Sacred Heart. He was quite unmoved by the Chapel of the Visitation but went into the Cluniac Basilica, and felt Elisabeth's presence again even more clearly than before. There he knelt and prayed fervently to Jesus, present in the tabernacle, with a true interior movement of his heart, as well as begging Elisabeth to pray for him.

When he returned to Paris, he diligently tried to forget these experiences and threw himself into daily life. He tried to convince himself that he had felt nothing more than simple grief reactions, remembering his wife rather than experiencing her in a new way. He continued to read her journal daily and visit her grave, but resisted changing his beliefs in any way. Some three weeks later, he visited Christian friends in Rheims and discovered in his friend's wife the same kind of ardent faith Elisabeth had. "God was once more shining before my eyes."<sup>16</sup>

In July when he returned to Paris, he had to cope with the beginning of World War I and was commissioned by his company to transport all of their assets to Bordeaux for safe-keeping. By the time he tried to leave, the car he had hired did not materialize, and he managed to secure a seat in someone else's at the last minute. After driving south and transferring to a very crowded train, he again received direction from his wife, " Lourdes is the real object of your present journey; you ought to go to Lourdes; go to Lourdes."<sup>17</sup>

Although his thoughts alternated between this breakthrough of the supernatural into his consciousness and his former rationalism, he felt as if Elisabeth was guiding his thoughts. Before going to Lourdes, he went to visit mutual friends in the Garonne valley and began to share with them what had been going on inside of him since he began to feel Elisabeth alive and guiding him. He even read some of her journal to them. He spent a week in Lourdes, revisiting the places he had been with Elisabeth in 1912. He kept to himself, but Elisabeth

was with him everywhere. One morning, soon after his arrival, he prayed on his knees in the Grotto for the gift of faith, repeating this prayer each day. During this time at Lourdes, he felt at peace and his sorrow assumed fresh meaning.

When he returned to Paris, he felt himself a changed man. He began to practice his faith again, to meditate on the Gospels, to read some of Elisabeth's Christian books. He visited the cemetery daily, reflecting and feeling encouraged to continue in this direction. He emphasizes that this process lasted four months subject to no exterior influences, talking to no priest or religious. He then spoke to his parish priest, but was not yet ready to make his confession. A short time later, he met a friend who asked how he was doing. This friend helped him by making an appointment for him with a Dominican priest who later became his spiritual director. Felix met with him as scheduled, made some changes in his life, and returned for confession two weeks later, completing his reconciliation with the church by receiving communion.

**Felix's narrative is infused with his own incredulous feelings. How can such an unspiritual man experience such persistent connection with his dead wife if she is not somehow mysteriously living in some other way?**

Felix's narrative is infused with his own incredulous feelings. How can such an unspiritual man experience such persistent connection with his dead wife if she is not somehow mysteriously living in some other way? He considers himself the most unlikely subject for such irrational experiences. His conversion transforms his entire world. He realizes more than in all their married life how much his wife loved him, how much she suffered for him, how much she respected him as he was. He discovers he can only reciprocate this love by following Elisa-



beth's guidance and by embracing the source of her own love by gradually opening to the faith that is offered through God's grace. Thus, his conversion narrative justifies and embodies the spirituality of the communion of saints that so inspired Elisabeth's entire spiritual life. Elisabeth's writings testify to her belief in this interpenetrating spiritual world of life on earth and life in heaven. In this love story, Elisabeth's relationship with her husband is the means God uses to bring her beloved Felix into this same communion of love after her death.

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### A Note on Method

My work on Elisabeth Leseur is historical and hermeneutical work on a well-documented lay woman. It began, of course, with my own interests when I first read most of her corpus. I was intrigued by her intellectual life, her feminism, her friendship with a hospital Sister, and many other textual clues for which I was unable to account. My original research project was to translate her letters to Soeur Goby and write a critical introduction to her approach to suffering and her spiritual friendship with an active apostolic religious woman. When that plan expanded to become a volume in the Classics of Western Spirituality Series, it became an entirely different project.

As a classic, it required writing a critical introduction to texts from her entire corpus that I selected for this volume and placing Elisabeth Leseur in her full historical context. In this short essay, I treat one of the central themes of her writings and

try to make the case that the doctrine of the communion of saints was deeply believed and concretely appropriated in Elisabeth's life. The practices it inspired and the hope it engendered in her life had a particular historical shape that continued to develop and unfold within the church and was reflected profoundly in Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, which devoted several paragraphs to this aspect of ecclesiology.<sup>18</sup> The more I learned about Elisabeth and about Parisian Catholic life in the late nineteenth century among the elite upper class, the more I realized how much lay involvement in a variety of pastoral activities had already been promoted in France more than fifty years before the council. But there was also the uncanny convergence of a shared strategy of loving presence among Elisabeth, Charles de Foucauld, and Therese of Lisieux. Something had to be going on in Catholic culture that accounted for their approaches independently of one another. This I found in local French Catholic practice and teachings.

I continued to shift my perspective as I discovered more textual evidence through archival work in Paris and in Rome. These changes in my understanding of Leseur's significance informed my selection of texts for the volume. Including her *Journal* was always part of the plan, but I chose to create a more contemporary translation rather than use those done in the first two decades of the twentieth century. As I began to read Elisabeth as a prototype of Vatican II laity, I realized that her treatises to her niece and nephew on the occasion of their first communions were articulations of lay vocation in distinctively gendered ways. The selection of letters from those published under the title of *Letters to Unbelievers*, never before available in English, required representing each of the correspondents and the distinctiveness of her approach to each one. In these, she demonstrates a model of genuine and authentic loving dialogue across differences of religious belief. All were friends; all were different kinds of unbelievers—Jeanne Alcan, a non-practicing Jewish woman; Aimee Fievet, a single woman and professional educator; and Yvonne Le Gros, a believer married to Felix Le Dantec, a philosopher who published a book on atheism. Every so often, Elisabeth wrote to Le Dantec as well as to Yvonne, this longtime friend of Leseur's family. Sources included nineteenth-century French histories in both

French and English, Elisabeth's unpublished letters in typescript, photographs, testimony from the *Transumption* introducing Elisabeth's cause for canonization, letters and notes from her nieces and nephews, news paper clippings, a catalogue of Elisabeth's library, the original hand-written letters of Soeur Goby, her correspondent in her *Letters on Suffering*, never translated into English before, judgments of theological censors related to her status as servant of God, personal prayer books and missals, her first communion journal, a file folder that identified her with a moderate strand of French feminism, and much more.

### Elisabeth as Distinct from Her Husband's View

Because Felix Leseur eventually became a Dominican priest and promoted the cause for his wife's canonization, he wrote extensive factual and interpretive accounts of his wife's life in which he figures quite prominently. For Elisabeth to be interpreted today, her life needed to be retrieved and distinguished from her husband's interpretation and promotion. All these other sources helped me establish a complementary, yet different view. Elisabeth Leseur's canonization process presents her as a long-suffering, spiritually abused wife at the hands of her unbelieving husband. Reticent about disclosing personal religious experience, the primary sources—her own writings—portray a woman who deeply loves her husband, has many interests in common with him, yet suffers from their differences around belief and religious practice. Felix's testimony about how he came to understand and appreciate his wife more deeply after her death through her continuing felt presence in his life convinced him of the reality of the spiritual world.

Here we see a demonstration of the lived experience of the communion of saints in action in both of their lives, played out differently for each because of the differences in their starting points. Elisabeth lives, suffers, prays, and hopes on the grounds of this doctrine and its relationship to the whole of Christian belief. Felix encounters its effects in his life, the most unlikely agnostic subject to be having uncanny experiences, hearing voices, and praying for the faith he had spent a great deal of his life ridiculing and rejecting. Her canoniza-

tion process could present her as a doctor of the church, or as a model of religious tolerance and loving dialogue across difference, or as a model for spouses who do not share faith, or as a model for the fruitfulness of suffering.

On a more personal note, while I was working on this volume, my mother was dying; I was experiencing the great divide between belief and unbelief within my family of origin; and I worked in French and Italian archives with back pain—my first clue that I had three herniated disks in my lower back. Elisabeth Leseur's writings continue to challenge me in terms of what I believe and how I respond to these enduring themes in human experience—coping with physical pain, facing death and dying of family and friends, and the isolation of being a woman of faith in a partially unbelieving family.

As I was finishing this paper, I received a letter from another woman expressing the effective significance of Elisabeth Leseur today. "For several years I have been interested in Elisabeth and hoping for progress in her cause for beatification. My husband is an unbeliever as Felix was, so I like to think of her as my big sister in heaven! I think she is a marvelous example of holiness and hope for those of us who have been praying for years for the conversion of loved ones."<sup>19</sup>

### Notes

- 1 For an earlier and more expansive treatment of these themes see my: "Elisabeth Leseur: A Strangely Forgotten Modern Saint" in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, ed. Ann Astell (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 117–129.
- 2 Emilien Lamirande, *The Communion of Saints*. The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Vol. 26, Trans. A. Manson (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963), 125–6.
- 3 She wrote to Jeanne Alcan, this explanation of the communion of saints in second half of 1910 Elisabeth believed applied to non-believer and believer alike:

Christians believe that a mysterious, spiritual solidarity exists among themselves and all other children of the same God. We call this solidarity the communion of saints; the efforts, merits, and sufferings of each individual benefit the rest. A similar law exists in the natural order, and if we think about it a little we shall be convinced that our words and actions have a deeper and more far reaching effect than we often imagine. Therefore, it is an absolute





- duty for everyone who understands what "absolute" and "duty" mean, to say and do nothing that is evil or even indifferent, since there is no neutrality in matters of morality. From that, arises the obligation to make a sustained effort on a daily basis to work at interior perfection, because, whether we intend it or not, the effect we have on others will be the reflection and expression of what we are within. Let us create an interior treasure of noble thoughts, energy, and strong, intense affection, and then we may be sure that sooner or later, perhaps without our being aware of it, the overflow will affect the hearts of others. *Elisabeth Leseur: Selected Writings*, Trans. Janet K. Ruffing. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005), 202–203.
- 4 Adrien Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France*. Vol. 2, *Under the Third Republic* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 320. Goyau gave this assessment as cited in Dansette, "With Huysmans and Baumann, this writing acquired an exegesis of suffering. With Léon Bloy, Claudel, and Rette a philosophy of life, and with Péguy an understanding of the life of the Church." 320. Although Dansette disagrees with Goyau and makes more distinctions among the way these writers applied Catholic doctrine to social concerns, Elisabeth was clearly influenced by these Catholic intellectual currents.
  - 5 Dom Germain Morin, cited in Lamirande, 24.
  - 6 She explains the influence of the saintly dead in the lives of those on earth to her niece in a first communion essay:
 

Your dear godmother [Juliette] eagerly looked forward to this day and hoped for a complete union of all our souls, during your first sacramental encounter with Jesus.

Who among us, if we are really Christians, can say that her hopes were mistaken, and that providence did not fulfill her intense desire? If only we knew how to withdraw for an hour into our depths, where God dwells, and how to contemplate the eternal realities, as much as our weakness allows, we should grasp how much love and how much fulfillment of our desires is really hidden in our great sorrow. It only seems to feel more painful because it happened so close to your eagerly awaited first Communion. No, dear, none of us will really be missing from our family gathering . . . From now on, we will continue to experience your godmother's influence throughout our lives. She will guide our consciences, strengthen our wills, obtain the peace and strength to accomplish our work in the world and to fulfill the particular mission given to each of us. Your godmother will do more for you than if she were still on this earth. She protects you and will continue to do so, and her love for you is greater now that she lives in God's infinite love. *Selected Writings*, 168–169.
  - 7 Elisabeth had a much underlined copy of the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* which reinforced this belief.
  - 8 Cited in Lamirande, 29. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Creed* (1273), concluding section.
  - 9 *Selected Writings*, 155–6.
  - 10 According to the notes she recorded in her *Journal D'Enfance* in preparation for her First Communion, there are more than twenty references to heavenly life. One of her own classmates died before their First Communion ceremony. In this journal, Elisabeth records an almost ecstatic experience imagining what heaven would be like and how wonderful it would be to be with God. She had a vivid sense of continuity between the present life and the next life. Her first communion prayer book is organized according to the liturgical year. It includes many prayers, canticles, and hymns. For each major feast and liturgical season, a brief catechesis about why a feast is celebrated is followed by suggestions about appropriate dispositions or attitudes one ought to cultivate in celebrating it, and resolutions one ought to make for one's own life. *Manuel des Catechismes ou Recueil, Billets, Cantiques, etc. par m. L'Abbe Dupanloup, Eveque d'Orleans* (Paris: F. Rocher, n.d.), 48–55.
  - 11 Letter XXVIII, *Lettres sur la souffrance*, April 20, 1912.
  - 12 *Lettres sur la souffrance*, October 28, 1911.
  - 13 I strongly contest Valerie Raoul's interpretation of Elisabeth's journal writing and her offering of her sufferings for her husband's conversion as emotional blackmail. Raoul reduces Elisabeth's mystical sense of the communion of saints to purely commercial metaphors. Elisabeth does not write her journal for Félix's benefit. She agrees to save the journal in order to comfort Félix rather than coerce his conversion, a strategy that was not in harmony with her deep respect for people's individual paths. "Women's Diaries as Life-Savings: Who Decides Whose Life is Saved?" *Biography* 24.1 (2001): 140–151.
  - 14 See Felix Leseur's "Introduction" to *The Spiritual Life: A Collection of Short Treatises on the Inner Life*, a volume of essays written by Elisabeth that Felix collected in this volume, Translated by A. M. Buchanan (London: Burnes, Oates, Washbourne, 1922), 6–30.
  - 15 *The Spiritual Life*, 8.
  - 16 *The Spiritual Life*, 16.
  - 17 *The Spiritual Life*, 20.
  - 18 *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 48–51. Architecturally, Our Lady Queen of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles embodies the pilgrim church, in the company of the communion of saints, processing toward the new Jerusalem.
  - 19 Marian Ziegler, May 4, 2005.