

Star of Wonder



What star led
Elizabeth
Prout?

PREPARATION FOR ELIZABETH PROUT'S DAY

11TH JANUARY

God speaks into the story

*If human hope is like a bird in flight
then story is the air. It's where we live.*

Story fuels the fire of the mind

For when we find our theme, we find ourselves.

*It is God who speaks into the story of our lives
for God is the meaning maker of the world.*

Rod Cameron OSA

The Australian Experience of the Sacred

If nothing happens by chance, then we are justified in seeing in the date of Elizabeth's death—during the octave of the Epiphany— a more than happy coincidence. Like the Magi she had her guiding star, for her it was the will of God.

Faithfully she followed it as it led her to the Catholic Church, then into the Institute of the Holy Infant Jesus at Northampton. As with the Magi her star was hidden for a while when for reasons of health she had to leave the Institute but its reappearance guided her to Manchester and it shone more clearly when it became evident that she was called on to found a new Congregation.

Later in Elizabeth's life as in that of the Magi a hostile force arose: there were those seeking to destroy the Infant Congregation but an angel in the shape of Father Bernard O'Loughlin guided the Congregation to safety.

*'Hope even when surrounded by unhappiness
the source of your joy is the eternal happiness of God'.*

There is no evidence that Elizabeth Prout had extraordinary gifts, but this one grace she did possess 'her whole life was governed by her desire to do God's will.' Her decisions were not the result of motives of convenience nor of human respect but came from a constant listening to the Spirit.

Prayer:

We thank God for Elizabeth Prout's docility to the Holy Spirit and ask her to obtain for us that we too—as individuals and as a Congregation—may stay always under the guidance of that same Spirit and follow the star of God's will no matter what the cost.

Like the Magi, Elizabeth Prout offered gifts to the Lord: the Gold was her compassionate love for the poor; the frankincense of her devotion to prayer; the myrrh of her patient endurance of suffering.

The troubles we have in life, if we see them as part of God's loving plan and accept them as being what he wants for us, will actually help us to grow in knowledge and love of him. Even when things are at their worst, keep your peace of heart and accept whatever God send you as being for your good.

St Paul of the Cross

In Elizabeth Prout's time there was no mention of Liberation Theology, no clear directives that the Church's option should be for the poor, yet she chose this path.

In order to dedicate her life once more to God Elizabeth could have entered one of the well to do Convents, but she showed a preference for the poor and the lowly. The humble and lowly were to be her religious companions and together with them she chose work with the underprivileged, not only in the schools and parishes but also in her own Convent.

Mother Margaret Mary may have had this in mind when she said with earnestness to Mother Joseph 'Be good to the poor of the Congregation.' Power, prestige and possessions had no place in Elizabeth Prout's scale of values.

We thank you God for Elizabeth Prout's spirit of compassion and love for the poor and ask that we may maintain in the Congregation the spirit of simplicity and humility which characterised it in its origin.

Love your brother/sister in God

love God in your brother/sister

Share with others

be with them in their sufferings

their joys, their hopes

May your favourite brothers/sisters be those who are poor

May all creation bring you to love God. St Paul of the Cross

The words 'Prayer, pray, recollection' occur frequently in the accounts we have of our Foundress. There is no doubt that Father Gaudentius wanted the Sisters of the Holy Family to be Mary and Martha.

Contemplation and action were to be harmoniously blended in their lives. Work was to be done in the Spirit of recollection. Moreover, Father Gaudentius was concerned about creating an environment conducive to prayer. However his guidance was limited to exhortations 'prayer, prayer, prayer—a thousand times prayer.' This was poor consolation of help to Elizabeth who needed more precise direction as she struggled to pray despite dryness, distractions, and desolations. But persevere she did in her efforts to pray and to pray continually.

We thank God for Elizabeth Prout's perseverance in prayer and ask for her help to make use of the spiritual riches we have at our disposal and of which Elizabeth would have availed had she had the opportunity.

Let the image of Jesus Christ shine forth in you. The person who lives in union with Jesus resembles him even externally, because s/he lives as Jesus lived.

St Paul of the Cross

Nowhere has Elizabeth left us an account of her reflections on the Passion, but her formation in Northampton, together, together with the guidance of the Passionist Fathers assured that she grasped what devotion to the Passion meant to them. She did not write about it. She lived it. There may have been some excesses, a seeking after suffering for its own sake. After all that was the theology of the day. However for the most part her sufferings were unavoidable, if she were to do God's will. And these sufferings Elizabeth united to Christ's sufferings in the Passion, as Father Gaudentius had counselled.

We thank God for Elizabeth's love of Christ Crucified and for her fortitude in bearing her many sufferings. We ask her to obtain for us the grace to be able to help others in their sufferings and to make our own sufferings a bond of union with the Crucified and Risen Lord.

The Passion of Jesus is totally the work of love. You should never lose sight of this. Yet do not think that because you seem to forget about the Passion, you are no longer sharing in it, since: 'All of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death.' St Paul of the Cross

'I cannot say one thing while I feel another and I know you would not wish me to do so, because you, like me, detest deceit.' So wrote Elizabeth to Father Gaudentius.

It was her love of truth that brought Elizabeth to the Catholic Church. Sincerity, candidness, forthrightness in her dealings with others remained characteristic of her in the religious life. She was a woman 'in whom there was no guile'. This uprightness required courage and allied to truthfulness these were natural virtues that God had given her.

Let us thank God for Elizabeth's integrity and courage and pray that like her we may acquire limpidity of soul, remembering that to the upright a light is given in the darkness.

When you place yourself peacefully at the feet of Jesus, be one with him as he hangs there, naked on the cross. In this way you are sure of being on the right path. Let yourself remain there, within God's heart, in a sacred silence of faith and love. By resting in God in this way you will learn the wisdom of the saints and God himself will make you able to proclaim his Gospel.

St Paul of the Cross

Many of those who are involved in the Charismatic Renewal have the gift of tongues and healing. We do not hear that Elizabeth had either of these. Her charism was more all-embracing and sprang from her eagerness to do God's will. She had a complete openness to the Spirit and a consequent readiness to change old ways for new: from Anglicanism she turned to the then despised Catholicism; despite her English upbringing she entered a convent of French speaking nuns; she left the security of a protective home to face the necessity of earning her living alone, and in a factory town.

Let us ask Elizabeth to obtain for us this readiness to listen as she did to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the courage and TRUST to carry them out.

In the deepest part of your being, your pains and worries are lost from sight. At the surface level you can do nothing except feel the pain you are going through, but on a deeper level you must try to be joyful because of what is God's desire, accepting this pain which goes on outside your 'interior castle' as coming from him, and from absolutely no one else. Remain in this interior desert of your heart no matter what you are doing.

St Paul of the Cross

Elizabeth could be called the patron saint of the humdrum. In a life devoid of pleasurable excitement, in the daily grind of dire poverty, in drab and depressing surroundings, she doggedly and gladly held on to her initial commitment.

Father Gaudentius had chastised her for what endears her to us, 'her ready laugh'. Had she learnt it from Father Ignatius who had said 'a joyous Deo Gratias' to meet every contradiction and every humiliation? Let us thank and praise God for things sweet and bitter, rough and smooth.

Let us thank God for Elizabeth's joy in the adverse circumstances of her life and ask her to obtain for us the deep inner joy in our vocation, of which Father Ignatius spoke, and the vision to appreciate the laughter hidden in lowly things.

Be joyful in the Lord because you have peace of heart. How great is the joy which makes us children of God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

St Paul of the Cross

The Magi warned by an angel went back another way. Our congregation guided by Father Ignatius and Elizabeth Prout changed route in 1863 when the new rule was approved in Rome.

Elizabeth's star led her home to heaven in the following year of 1864'.

Where is the star leading us in 2017?

Are we willing to find the alternative route?

"THE WAY IT IS"

"There's a thread you follow.

It goes among

things that change. But it doesn't change.

People wonder about what you are pursuing.

You have to explain about the thread.

But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can't get lost.

Tragedies happen; people get hurt

or die; and you suffer and get old.

Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.

You don't ever let go of the thread."

William Stafford,

Who will dare to dream, beyond all doubt?
God has chosen you, O Blessed Elizabeth Prout

A woman for all times
Of passion, love and truth
Broken for the broken
We pledge our lives anew.

Liam Lawton



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This octave of reflective prayer helps us in the lead up to January 11th,
day when we particularly remember and
celebrate Elizabeth Prout, Servant of God.

It was found in the Chapel at St Gemma's and
is ascribed to Sr Olivia Curran CP.

It has been reworked and added to but the writing in black and green has been
left as the original but the quotations from St Paul of the Cross
and other quotes have been added by Sr Brigid Murphy CP

I Will Not Die an Unlived Life

I will not die an unlived life
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance;
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

By Dawna Markova (Feb 11, 2008)

*May we find a way of harvesting the wisdom
of our Sisters for the future of the charism.*