

Two Hearts - Home to the Holy Three

Sister Mildred Neuzil and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity



Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil in prayer

"The saints are like the stars. In his providence Christ conceals them in a hidden place that they may not shine before others when they might wish to do so. Yet they are always ready to exchange the quiet of contemplation for the works of mercy as soon as they perceive in their heart the invitation of Christ."

(Taken from sermon notes, St. Anthony of Padua)

St. Anthony of Padua's words describe the lives of these two contemporary women impelled to enter the cloister because they understood so deeply the meaning of the kingdom within; they were captives of the Divine Captive, the Indwelling Triune God, and knew that all else, as St. Paul would say, is rubbish. They understood the primacy of prayer and the interior life--that all real life is within--and that there can be no apostolate ordained by God that is not first rooted in a life of contemplation and the seeking of God's Will above all else. There must be some cloister, some sacred space, in every life and in every heart that is the dwelling place of God alone, where He is the Spiritual Director, the One Who calls and the One Who fulfills, the One Who is served. Otherwise, we are in danger of seeking our own will and our own glory. Both Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, visionary for the Our Lady of America® message, the central doctrine of which is the Divine Indwelling, and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, whose life and spirituality were centered in the Divine Indwelling, spoke of living their lives as a **Laudem gloriae, a praise of glory, God's glory, the Trinity**. Both women understood that to follow Christ meant sharing in His Passion and death, and that being chosen by Him entailed climbing up on His cross to be nailed there with Him. Every serious Christian becomes a victim soul in the degree of his or her love for and union with the Suffering Christ. Sister Mildred and Blessed Elizabeth welcomed suffering as a way to be more closely identified with and united to Christ, Bridegroom of their souls.

Bishop George J. Rehring of the Toledo, Ohio diocese had approved the printing of the **Our Lady of America® prayer leaflet** with the **explanation of the medal** and the **two prayers connected to the message of Our Lady of America®**. **Both prayers are essential to and inseparable from the message: the Prayer to the Immaculate**

Conception which acknowledges Our Lady's favor to America for honoring her as our Patroness under her unique privilege of the Immaculate Conception; and **the prayer to The Indwelling Most Holy Trinity** which speaks to the truth of the Divine Indwelling of the Trinity as the central doctrine of our Faith, of this message and for our Christian lives, for the Trinity is the only source of the holiness and purity to which we are called. Bishop Rehring counseled Sister Mildred that, in order for the message of Our Lady of America® to be properly promoted and accepted, it must be preceded with thorough education in the theology and the spirituality of the Divine Indwelling and with instruction on how to live the mystery of the Divine Indwelling in daily life. Sister Mildred and Blessed Elizabeth both knew and lived this mystery deeply. They knew that we, like Mary, must be God's dwelling place on earth, His temple, a tabernacle in flesh for the Triune God. Since Blessed Elizabeth preceded Sister Mildred in time, we will consider her spirituality of the Divine Indwelling first.

Blessed Elizabeth lost her father at a young age. Her mother was especially attached to her and her sister for that reason. Elizabeth enjoyed life but was a frequent visitor to the Carmelite convent near her home and began to long to enter it. She had to wait years for her mother to concede and grant that permission. Elizabeth considered herself a ***postulant outside the walls***. During a retreat, while she waited to enter Carmel, she wrote this beautiful prayer:

Jesus, my Beloved, how wonderful it is to love you, to belong to you, to have you for my only All! Now that you are coming every day to me, may our union be even closer. May my life be a continual prayer, a long act of love. May nothing whatever distract me from you, no noise or distractions. I would so love, my Master, to live with you in silence. But what I love most of all is to do your will, and since you want me to be in the world at present, I submit myself with all my heart for love of you. I offer you the cell of my heart to be your little Bethany; come and live there, I love you so much...I would like to console you and I offer myself to you as a victim, Master, for you, with you. I accept in advance every sacrifice, every trial, even that of no longer feeling you with me. I only ask one thing: always to be generous and faithful, always; I never want to take it back. I want to do your will perfectly, to respond always to your grace; I long to be a saint with you and for you, but I realize my weakness—be you my sanctity.

(Jennifer Moorcroft, HE IS MY HEAVEN, The Life of Elizabeth of the Trinity, ICS Publications, Washington, DC, 2001, Pg. 47.)

It is amazing that such a young person could understand and live so intimately such a lofty theological mystery as the Divine Indwelling, that Sanctifying Grace and Presence of God within the soul through Baptism as the source of one's holiness and life. It is God within Who makes us holy as He is holy. Elizabeth knew that where God

is, heaven is. **“He is my heaven,”** she said of the Divine Indwelling God. She referred to the Trinity quite simply as **“my Three”**. Prayer for her was less about her words and more about a total collapse into the Presence of her Three, listening to them converse within her. She preferred to be silent in their Presence as her prayer of the heart. August 1, 1901, at age 21, her mother at last gave permission for Elizabeth to enter the discalced Carmelites in Dijon, France. There Elizabeth lived and suffered in union with Christ until her death so soon after in 1906. On November 28, 1984, Blessed John Paul II beatified Elizabeth of the Trinity. Her name **“Elizabeth” quite aptly means “house of God.”** Her religious name, **Elizabeth of the Trinity, summarized her whole spirituality**--living in the company of her Three who brought heaven to her as they made their dwelling place within her. In a letter to Mme. Angles, Elizabeth told her friend that this way of life **in union with the Divine Indwelling Trinity, is not just for nuns, but is for everyone.** She wrote:

I am going to give you my “secret”: think about this God who dwells within you, whose temple you are; Saint Paul speaks like this and we can believe him. Little by little, the soul gets used to living in His sweet company, it understands that it is carrying within it a little Heaven where the God of love has fixed His home. Then it is as if it breathes a divine atmosphere; I would even say that only its body still lives on earth, while the soul lives beyond the clouds and veils, in Him who is the Unchanging One. Do not say that this is not for you, that you are too wretched; on the contrary, that is only one more reason for going to Him who saves. We will be purified, not by looking at this wretchedness, but by looking at Him who is all purity and holiness. Saint Paul says that “He has predestined us to be conformed to His image.” In the saddest times, think that the divine artist is using a chisel to make His work more beautiful, and remain at peace beneath the hand that is working on you. (Moorcroft, Pg. 117.)

The life of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity provides a magnificent instruction for living in union with the Divine Indwelling. So, too, does the life of Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil who studied seriously the writings of Blessed Elizabeth, a soul so kindred to her own.

Mildred Neuzil was born in Brooklyn, NY, on August 2, 1916, ten years after Elizabeth’s death. Fittingly, Mildred was **baptized at Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn.** On September 12, 1930, at age 14, she entered the active order of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, Ohio. On August 15, 1933, she made her first vows and was given the name Sister Mary **Ephrem, a name which means “doubly blessed.”** Her first assignment was in Washington, D.C., the place of our national capital, so fitting as the future appearance of Our Lady would bear a message and a mission for America as a nation. It was equally fitting for the Catholic Church in America, also centered in Washington, D.C., which was undertaking construction of its national shrine to honor Mary as our Patroness under the title of her unique privilege of the Immaculate

Conception. Later, October 13, 1956, while construction of the lower level of the Shrine was underway, Our Lady appeared to Sister Mildred holding a small replica of the **finished** shrine in her hands. Our Lady said: **“This is my shrine...I am very pleased with it. ...Make it a place of pilgrimage. It will be a place of wonders. I promise this.”**

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, OH, Pg. 14.)

Sister Mildred made her perpetual vows on August 15, 1939. In the 1940's she had locutions with Our Lord which included a **special espousal with Him as His little white dove** and an understanding that **her mission was for the sanctification of the family through the Divine Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity and the imitation of the Holy Family, the trinity on earth.** In 1954 and 1955 she had the visions of St. Michael and St. Gabriel in preparation for Our Lady's apparitions, first as Our Lady of Lourdes on the eve of the North American Martyrs, September 25, 1956, and then under the new image of Our Lady of America© on September 26, 1956.

In May of 1958 Sister Mildred entered the cloister, a **papal enclosure**, which was started within the active order and was situated in the Our Lady of Nativity Convent in New Riegel, Ohio. In February of 1978, in order to preserve their contemplative way of life, **the group petitioned Pope Paul VI for separation from the active group.** It was granted and they were exclaustrated, separated, from the Sisters of the Precious Blood and thereafter moved to a home in Fostoria, Ohio, **to continue to live out their religious life in private vow, as members of the laity and not a religious order,** until such time when a growth in numbers would allow the establishment of a new order. **Having been a papal enclosure, the group had never been under the local bishop but was directly under Rome.** On January 10, 2000, Sister Mildred entered into her final Laudem Gloriam, the beatific vision.

With what one bishop called a **“tsunami of secularism”** hitting the Church in the wake of Vatican II, the contemplative life within the Church, which had always been held in primacy, took backstage to the new humanism and rush to social issues. Sister Mildred's contemplative group experienced the pain of that regrettable reversal. Blessed Elizabeth had endured the persecution of the Church in France during her lifetime. Should her sisters have been ordered from their convent and out of the country, she stated that she would not leave but would return to her home and stay close to Carmel. She did not fear persecution nor suffering. Her Carmelite community had a practice of placing a blackened cross without Christ's body on each nun's bedroom wall to remind them that they must provide the body for the cross if they are to be an authentic disciple of Christ. Sister Mildred understood that Carmelite practice very well. In a letter to her spiritual director, Father Paul Leibold, dated August 16, 1956, Sister Mildred recounts how Christ had appeared to her holding His cross and His crown of thorns and had invited her to be nailed to His cross for the salvation of souls.

Jesus came to me holding a large cross and a crown of thorns. He said to me smiling, as though He knew what the answer would be (He did of course). "I come with My cross and My crown of thorns; will you accept Me My spouse?" You know the *only* answer I could give, Father. Who could refuse Jesus anything? During the night I awoke and Jesus said to me, and He said it with a profound emphasis, "I have placed you upon the Alter of Sacrifice."

[On the] anniversary of my perpetual union with Jesus, He asked me again, "Bride of My Heart, do you still wish to suffer all things to give Me to souls?" I answered, "Yes, dear Lord, I am poor and wretched and unworthy, but you know what is in my heart." He said, "My little white dove, will you then continue to wear the Crown of Thorns, and permit yourself to be nailed to the Cross?" I told Him in the best way I could, how much I desired Him to do with me just as He desired. So in this way my desires are wholly united to His.

When I received my last Obedience, Father, it was a bit of a let-down, as you can guess. Yet I tried to rise above my feelings realizing that God works all things for our good and His Glory. I am glad that Our Lord is not afraid to use me in any way that He pleases. There are times when pain blurs my vision a bit, but it is not long before His enlightening Grace makes me see again with that clear light God reserves for the lowly and pure of heart. At this time, Father, Our Lord assured me of His continued help. He said to me that evening after I had received the Obedience, "I will be with you wherever you are, spouse of My Heart. You have nothing to fear." This was after I had said to him, "Dear Lord, what are You doing to me?"

Here are some words spoken to me since.... "My Heart speaks to the humble. It is they who hear My Voice." "Be humble My children, be humble and pure of heart. Then will I come and dwell with you."

"My little white dove, how humility and simplicity are despised by the proud of this world. Oh what a loss they suffer. For despising the humble Christ will judge them." "By My humility and simplicity of Heart I glorify My Father more than all the Angels and Saints together. So it is that the humble soul glorifies God more than all the great of the world."

Like Blessed Elizabeth, Sister Mildred, too, had a **secret** revealed to her by St. Joseph himself, the Hidden Saint, model of the contemplative life, for there is not a word spoken by Joseph recorded in Scripture; yet, after Mary, he is greater than all the angels and saints in heaven in the order of grace. This is Sister's account as written to her spiritual director. We invite you to ponder on it.

Like His Holy Spouse, St. Joseph also never ceases to remind me of my first duty, the first duty of every soul, especially for the chosen, of living with God in the interior castle of our hearts. So on March 30th, before voicing his own requests, St. Joseph spoke of this first duty which comes before all others.

"It is time. Kneel my beloved daughter, for God is about to reveal to you a secret of the interior life. Few there are who learn it, and fewer they who live it in its fullness. This SECRET, dear child, is living with Him Who is within you and has made of your soul His Kingdom. There are many who know this

Doctrine, but few to whom God reveals its secret operation. Few souls there are who empty themselves of all things that they may possess this SECRET OF SECRETS, this ultimate glory of all living, this union with the Divine, ending in Eternal Vision.

This Secret cannot be written, lovely child. Its deepest meaning will be made known to you in the interior depths of your child-like soul, in your humble heart, where LOVE has found Its resting place, Its palace beautiful. They who would possess for themselves this mysterious workings of the Divine Secret must strive to cultivate in *silence* and *humility* this love for the Eternal Being within them. We lived this life, beloved child, so to attain It souls must imitate as far as possible the fullness of our union with The Indwelling God.”

Having learned well that secret of the Eternal Being dwelling within her, it is no wonder Sister Mildred’s heart overflowed with this prayer of praise to the Holy Trinity.

Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity

O my Love, my only Good, Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, hidden in the depths of my soul. To You, to Your honor and glory, I dedicate my life. May every thought, word and deed of mine be an act of adoration and praise directed towards Your Divine Majesty enthroned in my heart.

O Father, Infinite Goodness, behold Your child, clothed in the likeness of Your Son. Extend to me Your arms that I may belong to You forever.

O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father.

O Holy Spirit, Fire of Everlasting Love, consume me on the altar of Divine Charity, that at the end of life, nothing may remain but that which bears the likeness of Christ.

O Blessed Trinity, worthy of all adoration, I wish to remain in spirit on my knees, to acknowledge forever Your reign in me and over me, to Your everlasting glory.

Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the pure heart of St. Joseph, I consecrate my life to Your adoration and glory. At the moment of death, receive me, O my Triune Love, that I may continue my adoration of love through all eternity. Amen (200 days)

Nihil Obstat: ----- Daniel Pilarczyk, S.T.D.
Imprimatur: ----- † Paul F. Leibold, V.G.
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