

31. October 2025
THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS
Blessed Elizabeth of Hungary:
Religious by resignation and then by choice

Blessed Elizabeth of Hungary—who, although related, should not be confused with Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, also known as Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia—was the daughter of King Andrew III. Orphaned at an early age, she suffered under the harsh yoke of a stepmother who rejected her: Queen Agnes of Habsburg. She was destined to marry Prince Wenceslaus of Bohemia. However, after her father's death, Elizabeth was stripped of her royal inheritance, causing Wenceslaus to lose interest in her. Elizabeth was imprisoned with her stepmother in the royal palace in Budapest and was then intended to become the wife of the Duke of Austria. But events took a different turn.

When her stepmother's father was murdered, her stepmother took her to Swabia to seek revenge. Once there, she decided that Elizabeth should enter a convent but allowed her to choose it freely. Elizabeth, who was 16 years old at the time, resigned herself to her fate and chose the Dominican convent of Töss. Her stepmother insisted that she take the habit and make her vows after only fifteen weeks. The young woman, the legitimate heir to the throne of Hungary, gave in.

One might think that, given her painful history and forced entry into the convent, the nuns would encounter a moody, sorrowful princess. But it turned out to be quite the opposite. Elizabeth embraced the yoke of religious life so wholeheartedly that one might have thought she had entered the convent of her own free will. Her fellow nuns loved and respected her because she was diligent in fulfilling her religious duties and kind to everyone—even to those who were not kind to her.

However, she faced a great trial when the Duke of Austria arrived in search of his fiancé. When he found her in the convent, he became enraged, tore the veil from her head, and claimed his rights as her future husband. After he calmed down, he asked her kindly, "Come with me! Return to Austria! I will never hold it against you for having taken the veil."

A great struggle then raged within her. She had been forced to enter the convent, and now her fiancé was asking her to take her rightful place again. The young woman asked for time to reflect and begged God to show her His will. However,

the Lord had already drawn her to His heart and used all the adverse circumstances to lead her to a nobler vocation. She was to be the bride of Christ.

The struggle was hard, but she was determined. Elizabeth renounced the duke and the world. From then on, none of her noble relatives ever concerned themselves with her again. She had made her decision; she had accepted the cross of the Lord. As a nun, she prayed fervently. Toward the end of her life, she endured a serious illness with patience and complete surrender to God.

Why does the life of Blessed Elizabeth make us reflect? If we examine her time in the convent, we see little difference from the lives of other religious individuals who attained holiness in monasteries. Perhaps what is particularly meritorious and humble about her is that, despite her noble origins, she never claimed privileges and lived as a simple, poor sister.

What is undoubtedly special about her life is the story of her vocation. In this context, does Simon of Cyrene, who was forced to carry Jesus's cross, not come to mind? The Holy Scriptures do not reveal how Simon's story ended. Did he become a disciple of the Lord and allow himself to be touched by the Savior's suffering? In the case of Blessed Elizabeth, however, we do know—and her testimony teaches us a lesson.

The princess accepted a vocation she did not freely choose. Moreover, while still very young and unprepared, she was forced to take the habit without her consent within a few weeks. As we have heard in her story, she accepted this fate with resignation and endured religious life with joy. However, it is ultimately essential to embrace such a vocation voluntarily. Since she did not make this decision voluntarily at first, she was tested when the Duke of Austria came with the intention of marrying her. It was then that she made her free decision.

This teaches us that an involuntary life situation that we have not chosen can become voluntary when we accept it. Consider, for example, the burden of an illness one did not choose. By accepting it, it becomes a blessing.

Blessed Elizabeth became a blessing for the convent. She gave her “yes” to the Lord's way after the fact, so to speak, and embraced her vocation. St. Augustine coined the phrase, *“If you are not called, make yourself worthy of the call.”* This is what happened with Blessed Elizabeth. The Lord had always called her, but she did

not realize it. Then, God used all the adverse circumstances to lead her where He wanted her to be. She made a free decision so that God's plan could come true.

Blessed Elizabeth, pray for us, that we may recognize and live our vocation, even if it has come to us through circumstances beyond our choice.

Meditation on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/10/29/>

Meditation on today's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/2020/10/30/>