



Elizabeth Bergeron speaks to us...

Spring 2022

Some Key Moments in the Life of Elizabeth Bergeron

Elizabeth Bergeron is born in La Presentation, on May 25, 1851. She is the 4th of a family of 11 children.

Elizabeth is only eight years old when she hears that her brother Octave, aged of 10 years old, is getting ready to walk to the catechism within sight of his first communion. She nurtures the desire to join him. She takes advantage of a moment when she is alone with her mother to ask her permission to accompany her brother. Her mother reminds her that she is only eight years old, and that the Church requires that the children be aged between 10 and 12 years old. She adds that she will talk about it to her father. The answer from the father is more adamant: we must not make the priest's life difficult. Elizabeth is disappointed.

A page of the gospel comes back to her memory, the one from the episode when Jesus goes to the Temple unbeknownst to his parents. She decides to do the same. One Monday morning, she leaves the house discreetly. After a few hours of walk, a vehicle catches her up, and the driver invites her to take place beside him. Elizabeth accepts and asks to the good Samaritan to drive her to her uncle who lives in La Presentation. The latter is surprised of her visit at such an early hour. Elizabeth immediately formulates her request. "I want to follow the catechism and do my first communion. Can you keep me all week; I will go back Friday." The uncle has no objection but insists that her parents be informed first. We must understand that the little girl feared another refusal. However, at her insistence, the permission was granted.

The good priest observes her young student, questions her for a long time. Her attentive attitude edifies him, and the seriousness of her answers surprises him. The following Sunday, the priest meets the father and says to him: "I believe that it would be going against God's purposes to prevent Elizabeth to do her first communion." Elizabeth has won, or rather, God has won! Jesus will descend with joy in the heart of this privileged child. Once the ceremony over, she goes back home. She then rushes to hug her little sister by telling her: "I bring you Jesus."

In 1865 an economic crisis compels the family to emigrate to the United States. Elizabeth works in a cotton mill. There, she makes many friends among the youth, and she realizes they are completely ignorant about their religion. She then begs her father to consent to her a room of the family house to gather these youth and to teach them the catechism. The father hesitates, but in front of the determination of his daughter, he finally agrees.

We can already detect in Elizabeth the charism of faith education that inhabited her as well as her love for the youth, and especially her passion: make Jesus known. From the beginning of her teaching, a nice enthusiasm animates her. But suddenly, a doubt seeps into her soul. Without expressing it openly, it is like if she were questioning herself in these terms: "Do I have the right to accomplish such a ministry?" Her

meaning of the Church pushes her to consult a francophone priest. The latter, far from blaming her, congratulates her for her initiative. He even offers her to give her students an exam. Three weeks later, the good priest notices that the youth are ready to receive Jesus. He invites Elizabeth to accompany them for the big day of their first communion. Elizabeth has not only received the confirmation of her mission, but also her reward, for it was a great consolation for her to attend this beautiful liturgical ceremony where the youth that she taught and catechized were found fit to do their first communion.

One day when Elizabeth is alone at home, a beggar shows up at the door. Without hesitation, she welcomes him, and prepares him a lunch. She notices that the clothing of the poor is very dirty. An idea passes through her mind: she dares to lend the clothing of her father. While she washes the dirty clothes with the intention of giving them back to him, here comes back her mother from the village. What a surprise! Then, the poor man turns himself towards Mrs. Bergeron and says as a greeting: “You have an excellent child. Surely the Lord has His eyes on her.” If only he knew how right he is. This love of the poor, Elizabeth will concretize it during all her life.

When God wants someone somewhere, He conducts this person in mysterious ways, and sometimes even tortuous ways. It was the case for the vocation of Elizabeth. Six times the latter knocked at the door of the religious communities. Six times, she was told: “No!”

—First attempt: the Sisters of Charity, (*Grey nuns*) of St. Hyacinthe

—Then at the nuns Adorers of the Precious Blood, a contemplative community: “Your place is not here. God has marked it elsewhere.”

—At the Sisters of Mercy. In front of this third refusal, Elizabeth is disoriented. That is when her father loses patience: “That’s enough. It’s clear. Your place is among the people, Elizabeth!”

—After consultation, however, she attempts another try at the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. The answer is short: “You do not have enough instruction.”

—Elizabeth questions herself on the possibility of founding a Dominican contemplative religious community. The Dominican father who receives her is interested, but he demands from her an encounter with the bishop, Mgr. Zéphirin Moreau. The latter refuses this project altogether. There is already a contemplative community in the diocese.

Elizabeth, without being stubborn, has, however, a lot of will. On the advice of her director, who assures her that the Lord surely has special plans for her, she requests another interview with her bishop. If the welcoming is rather cold, Mgr. Moreau takes, however, the time to listen to Elizabeth. In front of such insistence from this young girl, he wonders if she is not inhabited in a privileged way by the Holy Spirit. The interview is ended by this sentence: “Continue to pray.” Confident and serene, Elizabeth follows the advice of her bishop. After a few days, she is invited by Mgr. Moreau himself to come and meet him. A dialogue begins: “To what have you thought since our last conversation?” “To pray and to abandon myself to the Lord.” “Elizabeth, I want to use you, not to found a contemplative community, but a community of teaching nuns. Are you ready?” Stun by this request, she wonders if she is not dreaming. This same man who rejected her request not so long ago, asks her to found a teaching community? Elizabeth does not fail to remind him. “I barely know how to read, and I do not know how to write!” Not taken aback by his visitor, the bishop responds: “The Lord has founded his Church with ignorant and see how she spreads in the whole world. The weaker the instrument, the greater is the glory that He gains. Think about it and come back to give me your answer.”

After eight days of reflection, Elizabeth goes back to her bishop to give him a positive answer in these terms: “If you think that I can answer your project despite my ignorance and my inaptitudes, I am at your disposal.” “I accept you,” the bishop answers her. “It is the good Lord who chose you. He will give to you

from day to day what you need. You will have to suffer greatly, but do not have any fear. The good Lord will always be with you if you practise humility and if you entrust yourself to His divine Providence.”

On September 12, 1877, with three companions, Malvina Blanchette, Éloïse Saint-Germain and Valérie Langevin, Elizabeth founds the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Hyacinthe to assure the instruction and education of boys and girls from the rural parishes of the Diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe. She is 26 years old. Fully conscious of her limits, she endorses the position and the task that are assigned to her with courage and an absolute trust in the One who strengthens her, according to the motto of her bishop. As in any foundation, the beginnings are hard. The sisters live in extreme poverty. The challenges, the humiliations, the critics, the jibes, even the calumnies do not fail. And this, so much from the members of the clergy than from the diocesans. Elizabeth does not nurture any bitterness; no malicious word comes out of her lips. She remains standing and confident in the One who, once more, strengthens her.

Barely two years after the foundation, namely on September 12, 1879, without warning the foundress, Mgr. Moreau designates a new superior to lead the community: Sister of the Precious Blood (*Henriette Dufresne*). According to him, this person is more fit to respond to the demands of the school boards. Elizabeth accepts her deposition and readjusts her will to the one of the Lord in all humility. Without drama, she continues to collaborate closely with the bishops and the authority of the community. She consequently becomes Assistant General and will stay there 46 years. She fulfills her position with caution and wisdom. In the important decisions, she is always consulted. She is the true councillor. She remains attentive to the growth and the proper functioning of the Institute. She will be its soul until the end.

Discreet animator close to the sisters, she welcomes the confidences, soothes, and encourages. She sees to the health of each one, fills the maternal needs of those who are sick and constitutes herself an infirmary in times of epidemic. Serene and welcoming, Elizabeth attracts the hearts. Her confident faith in the goodness of God and her radiating charity conquer the people who approach her. Youth and old of all classes of the society come to expose their problems. All these confidences become the object of her prayers. All her life will be a listening and an answer to the calls from God, the Church and the youth.

Thérèse Chauvin, SJSH



Elizabeth dies on April 29, 1936, at the age of 84 years and 11 months. After having spent 46 years at the Mother House, her mortal remains rest at the Mausoleum of the Catholic cemetery of St. Hyacinthe Cathedral.

Since 1968, her tomb is visited by many people and favours are obtained.

Her venerability has been recognized by the Church on January 12, 1996.

Recognition to the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron

A new life begins for a young person in medicine: This morning, I received some great news. A few years before, I had confided to you Laurence, my little girl. I was worried. I tell you that Mother St. Joseph protected her well. She just graduated as a doctor from Laval University.

J.-M. H..., Victoriaville, QC

Successful operation: S. went through a delicate surgery close to the column. She had requested that the surgeon be guided to not be paralyzed after the surgery. Good news! The operation went well with not so many sequelae. Thank you to Mother Bergeron

S. S..., Sorel-Tracy, QC

“I had confidence”: Mr. J.C. has put his trust in the Venerable Elizabeth. He was to go through a colonoscopy; he was worried. He hoped that all would go well and that nothing suspicious would be found. He thanks the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron because all went well. He had no unpleasant surprises. He asked to thank all the people who joined his request by their prayers. J. C..., Granby, QC

Granted health: I thank you, Elizabeth, to have, once again, listened and answered my requests. After 20 months of absence in Florida, she gave us health to be able to enjoy this chance and this opportunity that we have to be able to go for the winter. I ask her to protect us on the road and to give us the health in order to be able to enjoy our stay fully. I implore her to also keep an eye on all our kin and especially on D. so that she does much better following her last hospitalization. I believe in you, Mother St. Joseph, and I thank you wholeheartedly to listen to me, you are my Guardian Angel. L. R..., Saint-Jérôme, QC

Successful operations: I have several examples that my prayers work. My last example is a neighbour who got two surgeries in the same leg, and he thought he could no longer walk. No later than yesterday, I saw him walking without limping! I took advantage of it to thank Sister Bergeron. L. A..., Laval, QC

No unpleasant surprise: During a recent check for my wife Cynthia, an unexpected mass was observed, probably from a cancerous origin. After other tests at the hospital, it was determined that Cynthia was in good health. There is no longer any indication of health problems. D. M..., Vermont, USA

“I had confidence”: Mr. J.C. has put his trust in the Venerable Elizabeth. He was to go through a colonoscopy; he was worried. He hoped that all would go well and that nothing suspicious would be found. He thanks the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron because all went well. He had no unpleasant surprises. He asked to thank all the people who joined his request by their prayers. J. C..., Granby, QC

Rapid tests found for COVID-19: We want to thank Mother Elizabeth to have helped us in finding rapid tests to detect COVID-19. We could not find tests in any drugstores. All of a sudden, we had a flash, SHOPPERS DRUG MART. There were still five boxes of tests at this location. This depends on MOTHER ST. JOSEPH. We did our tests and we were positive. It was difficult to foresee, because, except the cold, we had no symptoms. THANK YOU, dear Mother Elizabeth.

J. H. and L. C..., Beloeil, QC

Improved health: Throughout the month, my mother C. M. experienced difficulties to wake up and climb the stairs. She was very preoccupied by the possibility of a hip fracture that could conduct to a major surgery to replace the hip. Fortunately, the problem was related to arthritis, and not a hip fracture. My mother is now feeling much better and her health improved. Her doctors are surprised by her quick recovery.

D. M..., Vermont, USA

Happy in my new job: I am always in recognition and gratitude towards you, “the Sisters,” and, of course, the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron. I would like to thank you again for your prayers so appreciated. Each day, I thank God for having the chance to be in contact with you. The answers that I have received are always encouraging and full of hope during these difficult moments. I am now happy in my new job with a nice and respectful team!

M. B..., St. Hyacinthe, QC

The treatment works well... a new life begins...: Our prayers are well answered for my grandson. Thank you, Mother Elizabeth! He is very well. He found a job in Sherbrooke; this will help him pay his studies, his dwelling and to meet all his needs. His treatment, for cystic fibrosis, goes well, he is very compatible. Thanks to you and your community for all your goodwill.

F. N..., Val-David, QC

Good Mother Elizabeth, we trust...

Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron's friends have confidence in her. The Sisters pray our Lord for you and with you, so that by her intercession, your requests may be answered. Confidence! She will not remain deaf to your requests. In a special way, we entrust to her: Adam, Gabriel, Gabrielle, Mariette and Layla's family.

We ask Elizabeth to continue to be close
To each of you who put your trust in her.

Various information



Available videos

To get to know Elizabeth Bergeron, **three videos are available** on our website www.sjsh.org: a story about Elizabeth Bergeron's life, another about her journey since her death and *Elizabeth Bergeron opens her heart*. They were made by Aude Leroux Lévesque and her company Bideshi Film. You can watch the video of **the moving of Elizabeth Bergeron's tomb** (October 30, 2014). **Other video**: Celebrating the unveiling of Elizabeth Bergeron's painting at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, June 27th 2018. (duration 50 minutes). A **virtual tour of the mausoleum** is also available on our website. **Good viewing...**

Communications

To communicate the favors granted by the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron's intercession, to recommend her your intentions, to obtain information, to make appointments or to receive, free of charge, by e-mail or by mail, the Elizabeth Bergeron speaks to us bulletin, please address your requests to... ..

Elizabeth Bergeron Centre

2545, Dessaulles Street, St. Hyacinthe, (QC) J2S 0K2
(450) 768-1800, poste 194

ceb@sjsh.org

www.sjsh.org

Important

Thank you for **notifying us** when you change your postal address.

You can read our e-newsletter "Elizabeth Bergeron speaks to us ..."
in the section Elizabeth-Bergeron on our web site.

Mausoleum of the Catholic cemetery Of St. Hyacinthe Cathedral

1075, Girouard Street East, St. Hyacinthe, (QC) J2S 7R1

Opening hours

Tuesday to Saturday between: 10:00 am and 4:00 pm
(450) 774-4664

Welcome to all the friends
of the Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron

To discover

A painting of Elizabeth Bergeron,
created by the artist Pierre Lussier,
is on display in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré
in the lower basilica
at the entrance of the Très-Saint-Sacrement Chapel.
Hoping to see you there.

On January 12 and April 29, a Mass is celebrated for the intentions of the Benefactors and Friends of the Cause of Venerable Elizabeth Bergeron. The present publication does not wish to prevent the judgment of the Holy Church; it wishes to conform in all its decisions.

With the permission of the St. Hyacinthe Ordinary