

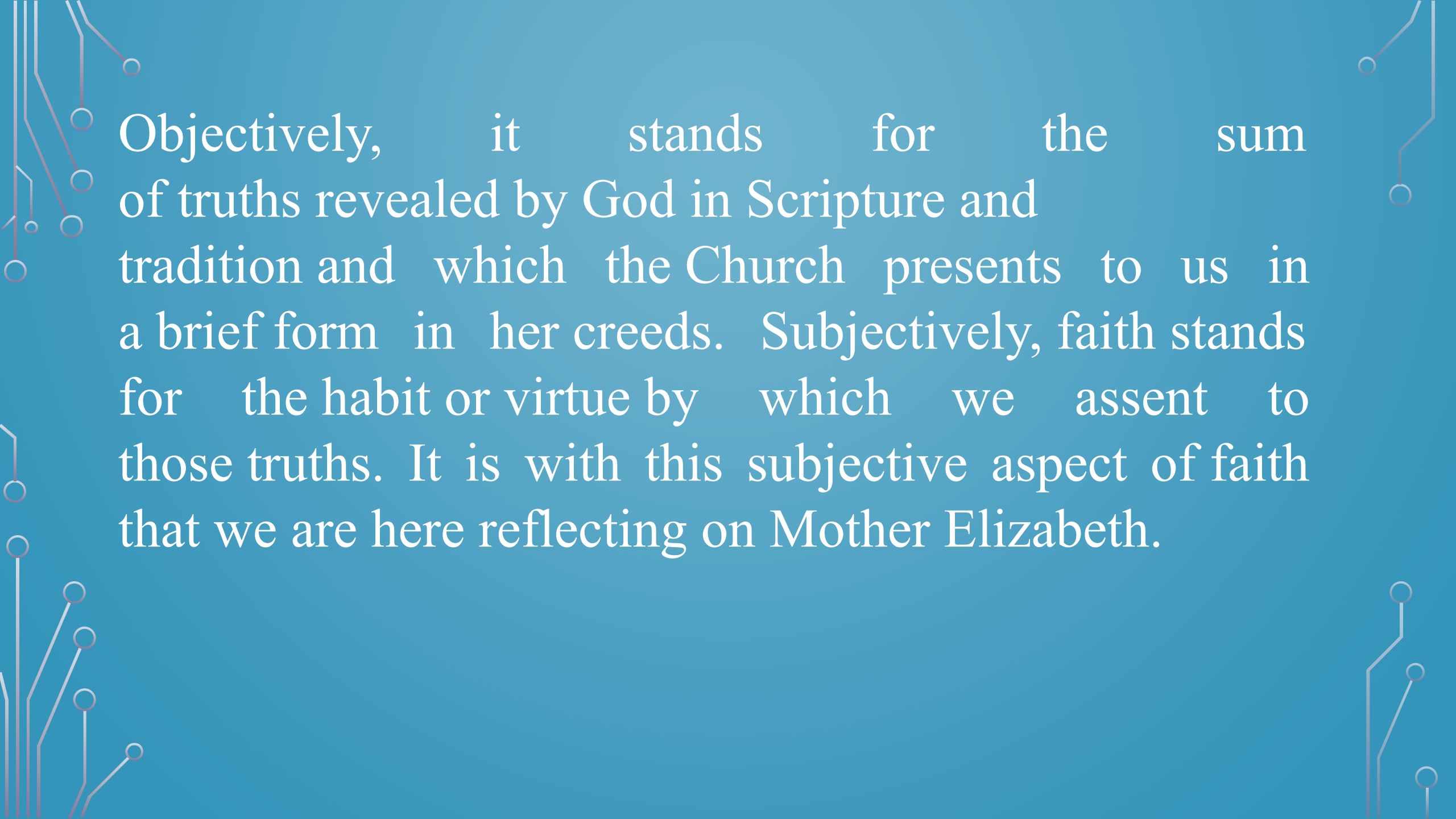
The background is a solid teal color. In the four corners, there are decorative white line-art patterns resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines connecting to small circles.

# UNDERSTANDING THE FAITH JOURNEY OF MOTHER ELIZABETH

## I. Faith we need to understand:

In the Old Testament, (Pistis, fides) means essentially steadfastness, (cf. Ex 17:12), where it is used to describe the strengthening of Moses' hands; hence it comes to mean faithfulness, whether of God towards man (Deut 32:4) or of man towards God (Psalm 118:30). As signifying man's attitude towards God it means trustfulness or fiducia. It would, however, be illogical to conclude that the word does not, mean belief or faith in the OT; for it is clear that we cannot put trust in a person's promises without previously believing in that person's claim to such confidence.

In the NT the meanings "to believe" and "belief", for *pisteon* and *pistis*, come to the fore; in Christ's words, *pistis* frequently means "trust", but also "belief" (cf. Mt 8:10). In Acts it is used objectively of the tenets of the Christians, but is often to be understood "belief" (cf. 17:31; 20:21; 26:8). In Romans 14:23, it has the meaning of "conscience" — "all that is not of faith is sin" — but Paul uses it in the sense of "belief" (cf. Romans 4 and Galatians 3).

The image features a solid blue background with decorative white circuit-like lines in the corners. These lines consist of straight segments connected by small circles, resembling a stylized electronic board or network diagram. The lines are positioned in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners, framing the central text.

Objectively, it stands for the sum of truths revealed by God in Scripture and tradition and which the Church presents to us in a brief form in her creeds. Subjectively, faith stands for the habit or virtue by which we assent to those truths. It is with this subjective aspect of faith that we are here reflecting on Mother Elizabeth.

## The characteristics of faith

*Faith is a grace:* When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven". Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; someone must move the heart and convert it to God, and believe.

*Faith is a human act:* Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions, or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to "yield by faith the full submission to God.

## II. Characteristics of the Faith Journey of Mother Elizabeth

For Mother Elizabeth, all her actions, words and sufferings were animated by a very lively faith, and she herself lived by faith. It was in her home surroundings that she first found evidence of the faith she was to refine and affirm all through her life.

Beyond any doubt, she saw evidence of it in her parents. Mother Elizabeth never renounced her cradle-faith: at no time did the awesome trials she had to endure lead her to lose her complete confidence in God.

No doubt she questioned, searched and critiqued Catholic faith. But, she came out of her trials with her faith purified and intensified. Some of the important elements of her faith:

## 1. **Absolute confidence in God:**

She believes in a God who loves her, cares for her and cannot fail her. No other sort of faith could account for her attitude of simple, filial, and unshakable confidence in God. At a time when she was in a state of complete uncertainty about her immediate future and the future of her family, she abandons herself to God's care totally.

(Give examples of her total faith in God.....). She was also intensely united to God as a caring and loving Father.




## 2. Intensity of Prayer:

Mother Elizabeth was well aware that God can refuse nothing to the person who has surrendered all to Him. Her letters speak eloquently about it. With the boldness of a saint she asks God to grant her prayers. She prayed to God for the birth of a family, for a congregation and she knew that the Lord would grant her wish. Because the object of her request is dictated, as it were by her faith, the promise made in the Gospel (Lk 11,10). She gave most importance to prayer and time spent in the presence of God. She constantly dreamt of the congregation.

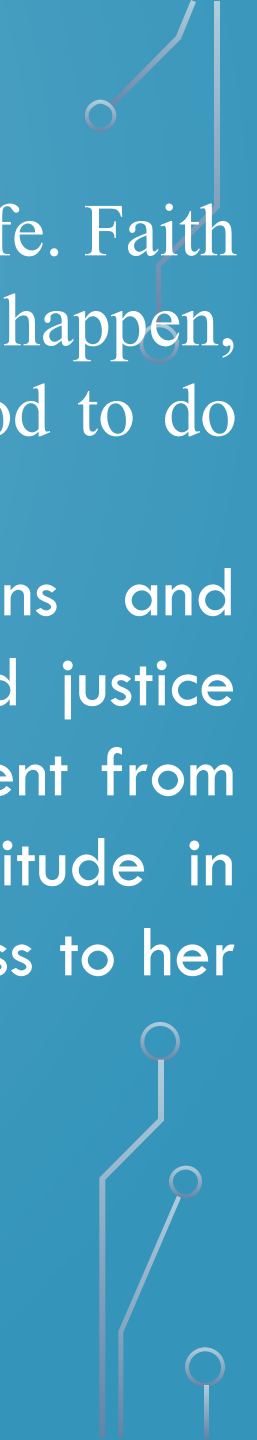
### **3. The virtue of faith in the utterances of Mother Foundress:**

According to me Mother Elizabeth was granted an extraordinarily deep insight into the mystery of the cross because she had obtained this through her prayers and faith. I am not exaggerating this but, in my simple faith I have come to understand this way. Look at her life from the time she was an adolescent. See how it took shape and see how she handled her work, her spiritual life, her relatives, her economic issues, her future, her vocation and the future of the congregation. You can add many more to this list.



Her teachings on faith, hope and charity are scattered all throughout her life. Faith is the foundation of hope. It makes prayer powerful, causes miracles to happen, gives strength and joy in trials even to enduring death. Faith enables God to do His work in us.

She had great respect for the religious freedom of non-Christians and non-Catholics, whom she received gladly under her roof. She practiced justice towards God and neighbour, temperance, self-control, reserve, detachment from the honours and things of the world, humility, chastity, obedience, fortitude in tribulation, perseverance in her praise and service of God, and faithfulness to her religious consecration.



#### 4. Simple Faith of Mother Maria Elizabeth:

As for me the faith of Mother Elizabeth was very simple. It was also pure. Faith will be pure if it rests on the rock of the Word of God. Elizabeth lived so intensely in the familiar presence of God that she had no difficulty in believing in divine actions even when things went wrong. She had no difficulty in accepting the legitimate intervention of the Church about her congregation.

True faith must make us faithful and find its expression in faithfulness in imitation of St. Joseph, Mary and other saints. Pure faith animated by pure love helped Mother Elizabeth to remain faithful throughout her life; she showed firm faith which enabled her to overcome all her trials. Her simple faith admitted her into the 'mysteries of Jesus': Jesus the crucified.

The Servant of God was like a garden in which the sun of charity brought to bloom the flowers of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. She was filled with care and concern for her Sisters, for the poor, the sick, the persecuted Jewish people, for the children to whom she taught Christian doctrine, for her family and for the people of Sweden and Rome. She was a humble Sister and most obliging to all who sought her help. She always felt a sense of duty and great joy in sharing with others the gifts she had received from the Lord, and this she did with gentleness, graciousness and simplicity.

## 5. The faith of Mother Elizabeth led her to practical commitment:

Mother Elizabeth was faithful to God; by her fidelity to God she made others to become faithful to God. Her faith found its expression in many other humanitarian activities like feeding the poor, caring for the sick and the abandoned, educating the ignorant, taking care of the vulnerable etc. The deep faith in God drove her to see God suffering in human beings. She saw the crucified Christ in daily life. This is height of spirituality.

We can see that she got involved in spiritual and corporal acts of mercy all the time. Her faith found its lively expression in concrete actions. This is the beauty of her charism. Recall the incident of Elizabeth being locked accidentally inside the mortuary. How without any fear she moved from one dead body to the next and she brought a apparently dead man back to life. When some one asked about it, she said, “donot ask how it happened. I donot know. God did it. I was only a simple tool.”

## 6. Mother Elizabeth---- "Blessed is she who believed":

The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomed the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that "with God nothing will be impossible" and so giving her fiat: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."

From the very beginning of her Foundation Elizabeth was particularly attentive to the formation of her spiritual daughters, for whom she was both a mother and a guide. She implored them to live in close union with God, to have a fervent desire to be conformed to our Divine Saviour, to possess a great love for the Church and the Roman Pontiff, and to pray constantly that there be only one flock and one shepherd, adding, "This is the prime goal of our vocation." She also devoted herself to fostering a unity of spirit within the Order. "The Lord has called us from different nations," she wrote, "but we must be united with one heart and one soul."

St. Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed. For which quality of Maria Elizabeth you call her holy and saintly? Share.

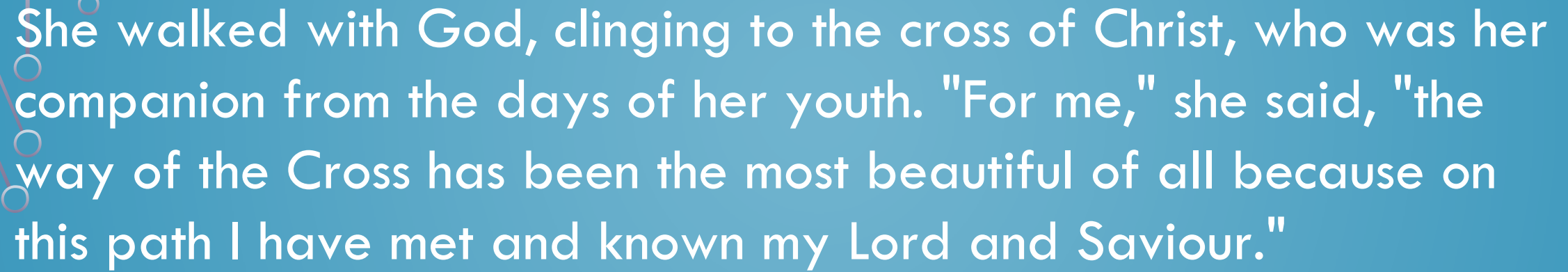
Throughout Mary's life and until her last ordeal when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God's word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith. Do you see some traits of Mary's faith in Mother Elizabeth? What are they?



In the divine Heart of Jesus we will always meet one another and there we seek our strength to face the difficulties of life. May we be strengthened to practice the beautiful virtues of charity, humility and patience. Then our religious life will be the antechamber to Heaven.“


On other occasions she said, "Our religious houses must be formed after the example of Nazareth: prayer, work, sacrifice. The human heart can aspire to nothing greater.“

Throughout her life she remained faithful to what she had written in 1904: "Dear Lord, I do not ask to see the path. In darkness, in anguish and in fear, I will hang on tightly to your hand and I will close my eyes, so that you know how much trust I place in you, Spouse of my soul." Hope in God and in His providence supported her in every moment, especially in times of testing, solitude and the cross. She put the things of Heaven before the things of earth, God's will before her own, the good of her neighbour before her own benefit.



She walked with God, clinging to the cross of Christ, who was her companion from the days of her youth. "For me," she said, "the way of the Cross has been the most beautiful of all because on this path I have met and known my Lord and Saviour."

Unremittingly her physical suffering went hand in hand with her moral suffering. The cross became particularly heavy and painful during the final years of her life, when the Holy See prepared the Canonical Visit of her Order as her health got progressively worse.



## 7. Perseverance in faith was a great gift for Mother Elizabeth:

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to us. We can lose this priceless gift, as Paul indicated to Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith." To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the Word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; It is very important to see how Mother Elizabeth persevered in her faith despite the situation looking apparently a failure.

## MOTHER ELIZABETH A REAL SEARCHER

Mother Elizabeth often visited many churches. She met Jesuits, Dominican nuns, Carmelites, Seventh day Adventists, Jewish Synagogue, spent time in the library, in the chapel, with the poor in New York, and in front of Mary's statute etc. A real searcher..

What am I seeming for? What am I searching for?

How do I look for God, for meaning in my life?

“IT IS HERE I WISH YOU TO SERVE ME”

Around 1904, Maria had gone to the House St. Bridget in Rome. She went into the church and in deep prayer for a long time she heard, “It is here I wish you to serve me”.

Maria asked, “were there any Birgitta sisters and where? The Carmelite Superior said, I cannot answer that; You may write to them to Sweden; there are some other convents; I would think poor, small, may God in His Goodness prevent them from dying out...”

1. How did Mother Elizabeth live and grow in her faith?

2. How did she persevere in her faith till the end?

3. What are those aspects that nourished the faith of Mother Elizabeth?

4. Can we say that the faith of Mother Elizabeth was "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church? Reflect.