

# NOVENA

**with the Servant of God**

**Sister Eliška Pretschnerová OSF**

of the Congregation of School Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis  
(O.S.F.)

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## **Biography of Sister Eliška**

*Sister Eliška (Anna) Pretschnerová was born on September 26, 1911 in a solitary lodge in the Nymburk district in Bohemia (today's Czech Republic), into a family of a local count's gamekeeper. She was the third of five children. She grew up in a harmonious family, where the life of children and adults was interconnected through common work on their homestead. She recalls: "I know that I inherited my mother's diligence, which was a great asset for all my life."*

*While at home she was growing up in a natural Christian environment, at school –during the time of the young Czechoslovak Republic – she encountered the rejection of religion and the promotion of practical atheism. Her father wanted her to study at the Girls' Teacher Training School in Chrudim with the School Sisters, but Anna was afraid of going to a school run by religious, thinking they would force her to pray, and she arranged with her father that, should this happen, he would take her away from the school. But soon after arriving at the School, she discovered the beauty of the Gospel. She*

*recalls this: “You, Lord, had waited for me, and by Christmas I was already enraptured by Your love and wanted to enter the convent.”*

*After passing the school-leaving exam in 1930, she entered the postulancy of the School Sisters of Saint Francis. During her formation, Anna was influenced by the example of St. Francis and St. Clare, and she was enthralled by the figure of the recently beatified (1874) Agnes of Bohemia. A year later, Anna entered the novitiate, taking the name Eliška. She started to work single-mindedly to become a mature person and a good sister. A year later, she took her first vows, followed by perpetual vows in 1938. During World War II, she taught religion in the suburbs of Prague. In 1943, she became the superior of the Břevnov convent (in Prague). Afterwards, the convent was occupied by the Nazis, and the sisters had to move to the confined space of a small garden villa. Eliška became acquainted with German teachers, and when the German children were expelled, she would part with them cordially, despite the strong anti-German sentiment in Prague. After the war, she completed her studies at Charles University, and she began teaching mathematics and physics at the order’s secondary school in Vinohrady (Prague). Her pupils still remember her fondly. They would confide their worries and youthful confusion to her, and the smiling teacher would help them find the right way.*

*In 1947, she was put in charge of novices. Soon after that, on 25 February 1948, the communists took over Czechoslovakia. The generalate of the congregation moved to Rome, the Czech Province was established and Eliška became the provincial vicar. When she came to Vinohrady as the superior, she told the sisters: “Sisters, I’ve come to serve you. Please, help me.” However, the sisters did not remain in the secondary school much longer. The nationalization of schools had begun, and, in 1950, Sister Eliška had to “voluntarily” hand the house over to the state. In front of her signature, which was extorted by the*

communist State Police (*Státní bezpečnost, StB*), she wrote: “I give way to violence”.

*Eliška returned to the Břevnov convent, but on 14 September 1950, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, she and the other sisters were transported to an internment convent in Krnov. From there, a group of sisters (including her) moved to a hospital in Podbořany, from which German sisters had been expelled. Continuing to work while studying, she earned a diploma in nursing. Thanks to the sisters, the hospital became the best one in the Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) region, but, once again, the sisters had to leave. Sister Eliška then moved to the mental hospital in Budeničky. In 1954, she was appointed the provincial superior, local superior in Slatiňany near Chrudim (for 70 sisters), and the head of the Institute of Social Services. These tasks were too much for her, but she accepted everything as God’s will. In her diary, she wrote: “You, Jesus, were my strength in those difficult moments of my life. With Your help, I want to continue carrying my cross. Teach me to love it, teach me to suffer without complaint, teach me to suffer joyfully.”*

*She devoted herself fully to her duties and to her fellow-sisters. She tried to get to know their work, and she used to walk through all the wards. She saw how difficult it was to work with mentally handicapped people, and, together with the sisters, she sought a new approach toward the patients. And the patients soon started to love her. One of the boys laid aside a sweet bun for her at lunch, and when she returned in the evening, he shouted at her at the gate: “Eliška, I saved something for you!” and he took out the crumpled bun from underneath his shirt. To the boy’s great joy, she took it, and ate it right away in front of him. Eliška also took care of the health and fitness of the sisters. She wanted them to take regular walks, and to rest in the beautiful countryside and with their friends. At this time, Sister Eliška looked after the building of a home for retired sisters as well. She invested part of her life into it,*

*and, with the assistance of artists, she transformed the local chapel in accordance with the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council.*

*Sister Eliška sought to encourage not only her own sisters, but those of other congregations as well. During the political thaw from 1967 to 1969, she organized meetings of sisters, where they discussed how to deal with the interventions of the state secret police, and how to secretly accept new members into religious orders. Together with enthusiastic religious priests, she established the Secretariat of Religious Societies. The thoughts of the Second Vatican Council started to penetrate into Czechoslovakia, and, thanks to them, Sister Eliška literally caught a second breath, as if tiredness had fallen off her. She wrote: “I see perfection differently than I saw it 3 or 4 years ago. The Council and the Holy Father John XXIII have opened windows, and a fresh, healthy air has blown into our life. This reviving process won’t be without its crises and struggles, but Christ’s gospel of love and peace slowly but surely is penetrating human hearts.” At the same time, she recognized the strong evangelizing contribution of the council renewal. She visited priests, collaborated with them, and gave advice and encouragement to people. In Slatiňany, a real samizdat<sup>1</sup> workshop was founded where the Council documents were copied and printed.*

*At the end of 1969, she passed her office to the new provincial superior, and she supervised a group of novices in a charity home in Cetechovice. At the end of 1970, she travelled from there to the General Chapter in Rome. She anticipated that she might be elected the Superior General, and she fought a great internal struggle. She wrote in her diary: “If I am elected, it is my duty to accept it. It is not my thing, it is Your thing – my always faithful, loving Christ.” On the next day, she was really elected. Eliška studied Italian and English intensively so that*

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<sup>1</sup> A clandestine publishing system within the Soviet Union and its satellite states, by which forbidden or unpublishable literature was reproduced and circulated.

*she could speak with the sisters. Her subsequent visitations of sisters in Italy, USA and Chile had a clear goal – they were visits of communities, and communities are people. She entered the everyday activities of sisters, and she always devoted the necessary time to them, listening, advising, encouraging and trying to connect them together. The sisters soon recognized that they were visited not by a boss, but by a loving person. She wrote: “I want to bring understanding and love to the sisters, and I leave the rest to You, Lord. I feel incapable and wretched, but I want to be Your instrument.”*

*In Rome, she also established contact with the Czech college for priests and theology students – Nepomucenum. She saw that many theology students had a strong feeling of being uprooted from their homeland, and she started to look after them. She would invite them to the Monte Porzio community, where there were Czech sisters, and she would work with them in the garden harvesting olives or fruit. But, above all: this was a home, with Czech food and Czech songs. Eliška got medical help for them in the hospital at the Generalate.*

*At the end of 1974, she travelled to Czechoslovakia to renew her passport, but she was detained for 14 months in the country; she was repeatedly interrogated, and lived in continuous expectation of imprisonment. She prayed: “Who else but You, Lord, gives me the strength so that, even though the future is uncertain, I remain calm? After all, for all I know, I might even be imprisoned here. I ask You for one thing: don’t let me betray You (I’m capable of that), don’t let me hurt anyone, don’t let me stop believing in people.” Then she was told to travel back to Rome immediately.*

*Then came another General Chapter, and she was re-elected. Eliška carried on, in the spirit of service, in her usual activities. She also helped with the work on the new Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. Before completing her term of office, she welcomed Pope John Paul II to Villa Betania Clinic. In 1983, her term*

*of office as Superior General ended, and Eliška returned to her homeland. She wrote in her diary: "I want to forget all the negative things, and, with a thankful heart, I want to take note of all the love which You have shown to me through people. I put my future in Your hands, my Lord, and I trust You boundlessly." Quietly and humbly, without thanks and celebrations, she returned to her homeland.*

*The autumn of her life had come, and the wide world had shrunk to the size of a small nation which she loved as her home and honored as her motherland. Sister Eliška lived in a home for elderly sisters in Hoješín. She had night shifts looking after sick sisters, worked in the garden, and translated for the other sisters articles which were suitable for formation. She regularly assembled young sisters, and visited communities, giving talks on the history of the congregation. She kept active, and her life was, as before, a harmony of sacrifice, prayer, and service.*

*Gradually, she had more health complications, and, during the last year of her life, she was confined to her bed. Shortly before her death, she was visited by Sister Luceta Macíková, then Superior General and long-term collaborator, who was attending a congregation meeting in Czechoslovakia. Only a fleeting flash of recognition appeared on Eliška's face.*

*On 4 May 1993, Eliška gave up her soul to the Lord, and on 8 May, she was buried in Slatiňany. At her funeral Bishop Karel Otčenášek of Hradec Králové presided, and among the concelebrants were ThDr. Karel Vrána, the Rector of the Nepomucenum in Rome, Vít Tajovský, the abbot of the monastery of Želiv, many religious and diocesan priests; participants included the Superior General and provincial superiors from throughout the congregation, many sisters from the Czech lands and Slovakia, as well as a large number of friends and collaborators. Many people both in Czechoslovakia and abroad recalled Sister Eliška, asked for her intercession, and some came to her*

*grave to pray. Sister Eliška lived a very simple life, and she was meek and quiet. The example of her life was a light to many people.*

*Because of this, the provincial superior of the School Sisters, S. M. Milada Kopecká, addressed Mons. Dominik Duka, and in 2001, he opened the beatification process in Hradec Králové, which was renewed in 2014 by Mons. Jan Vokál, the present Bishop of Hradec Králové.*

*Sister Eliška's reputation of sanctity has spread and keeps spreading, and the witnesses of her life recall her, appreciating the model of sanctity of her whole life and asking for her intercession – and their pleas are often answered. Therefore it is our wish that you, too, may come to know Sister Eliška and address her in your needs. That purpose can be served by this novena, in which we tried to capture the main features of the personality of the Servant of God, Sister Eliška, as she was perceived by those who knew her personally and as we can learn from her diary, supplementing these with thoughts from Pope Francis, whose teachings harmonize wonderfully with the life of Sister Eliška. Praise be to God who “does not let his faithful ones fall into oblivion”, as it is said in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. We ask God for the grace to imitate the life and virtues of Sister Eliška, to follow in her footsteps, and to remain faithful on our own path of holiness until we reach our life's goal.*

*Servant of God, Sister Eliška, intercede for us.*

*4 May 2015, on the 22nd anniversary of the death of Sister Eliška*

*Sister Zdislava Nosková OSF, postulator*

## **DAY ONE**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA AND HER HEALTHY HUMANITY**

#### **Testimony**

“Sister Eliška was, in the first place, a good person. She was able to talk to everyone, didn’t make distinctions between people, and could devote her time to them. She was able to advise and encourage, and she found something good in every person, which she then made use of when dealing with people. She was tactful, diligent, and modest. She didn’t spoil any fun.” *M. D.*

#### **From the diary of Sister Eliška**

“Recently, my soul has brightened up in other ways, too. Our ‘Christianity’ used to appear narrow-minded and lifeless to me. Christian life in the gospels seemed different to me from the way this life was practiced in the community. Many reproached me for my positive attitude toward people in the other camp, and, on the other hand, those people sensed that I respected them and treated me in a friendly way. I was not sure that my thinking was correct. And then Rome spoke: the generous gestures of the Holy Father, his love for all people, the Second Vatican Council, the approach of the Holy Father to the separated brethren – all of that strengthened my conviction that my understanding of Christian life is right. Thank you, Lord Jesus, thank you!”

#### **Pope Francis**

“Let us not forget the beauty of walking with the people. ...I encourage you to go out to meet others, to open doors and reach out to families, the sick, young people, the elderly, there where they live, looking for them, being at their side, supporting them, in order to celebrate the liturgy of life with them. In particular, it will be beautiful to accompany



families in the challenge to generate and educate their children. ...Let us go forth, animated by a common love for the Lord and for the holy Mother Church.” *From the prepared text of an address to the clergy and religious of Naples, 21 March 2015*

*The Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, Glory be.  
Servant of God, Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY TWO**

### **ELIŠKA – A WOMAN OF FAITH AND HOPE**

#### **Testimony**

“Sister Eliška was a woman of faith. She lived according to the truth. She was herself and she strove for the good. She was always honest and frank, and she aroused these characteristics in other people, too. Our world longs for wealth, power, and success, and it can lead us astray. Eliška’s striking blue eyes keep watching me, and I know that Eliška knew me and that she keeps encouraging me so that I, too, should live my calling as fully as she did.” *R. K.*

#### **From the diary of Sister Eliška**

“How I thank you, my Lord, that, in the times of turning and groping, you enlightened and strengthened me, that you sent me souls that supported me. You know how much anxiety I experienced when opening up new ways, how much misunderstanding from people. And now, when looking back and tracking the development, I can see that You have led and strengthened me. Be with me now as I’m beginning to be beset by old age, and I’m losing my strength, so that I can return Your gifts to You humbly.”

#### **From a homily of Pope Francis**

“What am I to do? Believe. Believe that the Lord can change me, that He is mighty. Like the man did in the Gospel, the one with the son who was sick. ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ – ‘You may go. Your son will live.’ The man believed in Jesus’ word and he went. He believed that Jesus had the power to change his child, his son’s health. And he won. Faith means to make space for strength, the power of God but not in the strength of one who is very powerful, but the strength of one very powerful, but the power of one who loves me, who is in love

with me, and wants to rejoice in me. This is faith. This is believing: to make space for the Lord so that he can come and change me.”

*The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Glory be.  
Servant of God, Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY THREE**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA AND HER LOVE**

#### **Testimony**

“We admired her smile, her goodness, her modernity, her sense for young people. I was 23 years old, and, at this age, a young person recognizes immediately whether an older person understands the young. We used to come to Hoješín, when we were young and we looked after young people a bit – when I was dating my future husband, and during the first two years of marriage, before our children were born. In Hoješín, the sisters gave us asylum, we used to take kids there to attend some events, and we performed theatre there. Eliška supported the openness of Hoješín very much, and people used to come there a lot. She was remarkable for all this.” *H. N.*

#### **Resolutions from various spiritual exercises, as written down by Sister Eliška:**

- *I will strive for a deeper inner life, and I will lead consecrated souls to it, too.*
- *I will establish contact with the sisters, and be interested in their problems.*
- *I will be more interested in the work of sisters, I will visit and talk to them more often.*
- *I will help the sisters with any kind of work.*
- *I will try to serve everyone.*
- *I want to be calm and composed in my behavior.*
- *I want to be kind and just to everyone.*
- *I will try to treat everyone in a friendly way.*
- *I will trust people even if they disappoint me.*

“So many people that I met today wanted to hug and kiss me. I don’t deserve so much love. But maybe, Lord, they sensed my love for them?”

### **Pope Francis**

“True love is real, it is in the works it does, it is a constant love. It is not a mere enthusiasm. “Also, many times, love is a painful thing: the love we think of Jesus carrying the Cross. But the works of love are what Jesus teaches us in the passage from the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of St. Matathew. He who loves does these things: ...‘I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, and so on. Concreteness: even the Beatitudes, which are Jesus’ pastoral plan, are concrete. ... True love cannot isolate itself. If it is isolated, it is not love. ... It is a spiritualist form of selfishness, of seeking its own profit. It is selfishness.”

*From the homily at morning Mass in Casa Santa Marta, 7  
May 2015*

*The Lord’s Prayer,  
Hail Mary, Glory be.  
Servant of God,  
Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY FOUR**

### **ELIŠKA – A CONSECRATED WOMAN AND FRANCISCAN**

#### **Testimony**

“Several times, she visited our family with the mentally handicapped T. K. who lived in a retirement home. In this way, Sister Eliška looked after many handicapped people, and she didn’t care about her comfort. She reminded me of St. Francis, who, in his time, looked after the lepers and wretched people in Assisi.” *M. D.*

#### **From resolutions and prayers of Sister Eliška**

“I want to try to deepen in myself and in my sisters the Franciscan attitude toward life (simplicity, detachment from things, joyful behavior).”

“Christian perfection consists in love. Our Franciscan way toward it is poverty. We must be detached from this earth so that people believe us. Each of us is called to awaken joy and love.”

“I humbly beg You, Lord Jesus, that we may show a beautiful Christian life to our fellow citizens. And give us the opportunity to serve them.”

#### **Pope Francis** (*Homily in Assisi, 4 October 2013*)

“His encounter with Jesus led (Francis of Assisi) to strip himself of an easy and carefree life in order to espouse ‘Lady Poverty’, and to live as a true son of our heavenly Father. This decision of Saint Francis was a radical way of imitating Christ: he clothed himself anew, putting on Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor in order to make us rich by his poverty. In all of Francis’ life, love for the poor and the imitation of Christ in his poverty were inseparably united, like two sides of the same coin. What does Saint Francis’s witness tell us today? What does he have to say to us, not merely with words – that is easy enough – but by his life? The first thing he tells us is this: that being a Christian

means having a living relationship with the person of Jesus; it means putting on Christ, being conformed to him. ...The second witness that Francis gives us (is) that everyone who follows Christ receives true peace, the peace that Christ alone can give, a peace which the world cannot give,” ...Love for all creation, for its harmony, Saint Francis of Assisi bears witness to the need to respect all that God has created and as he created it.... And above all Saint Francis witnesses to respect for everyone, he testifies that each of us is called to protect our neighbor”.

*The Lord's Prayer,*

*Hail Mary, Glory be.*

*Servant of God,*

*Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY FIVE**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA – THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY**

#### **Testimony**

“Eliška had many friends, but she must have had many enemies, too. Not everyone likes it when someone tells them the truth. Definitely. But she never grew bitter, and she didn’t show anything. There are authorities one is afraid of, but her? Authority radiated from her, but it embraced, too. She had these characteristics in her. She definitely must have struggled in her life.” *Z. V.*

“When meeting her, I always felt encouraged – she was never “preachy”, but spoke in a matter-of-fact and concrete way. Her whole being and look encouraged you. She made time for people. In her presence, I felt safe, like with a very close person. She seemed calm, and I never had to be afraid of what I would say and how.” *P. D.*

#### **Thoughts of Sister Eliška**

“A superior should always try to win the sympathies of subordinates, because, in this way, she makes obedience easier for them. If she can’t do it, one can see that something is not in order.”

“I want to love the souls entrusted to me, and I will look after them in a motherly way. I will be tactful and kind even to sisters who are not pleasant, and to those who cause me trouble. I want to create a pleasant and warm home for the sisters here. From time to time, I will make them happy, too.”

“My Jesus, free me of all narrow-mindedness, so that I can fly up to Your realm of freedom and love. Teach me to infect the souls entrusted to me with love for you and all beautiful things. I want to give them freedom, so that they can grow and live in a generously Christian way.”



## **Pope Francis**

“Consecrated life, has of course, ‘lights and shadows’. There is always a temptation to give more emphasis to the shadows, at the expense of light. This leads us, however, to fold in on ourselves, to continuously complain, to always blame others. And instead, ... let us allow the beauty of our vocation to appear in us and in our communities, so that it may be true that ‘Where there are religious, there is joy’. ... I would like to ask you: how is the ‘atmosphere’ in your communities? Is there this gratitude, is there this joy of God who fills our heart? If this is there, then my hope has been realized that none of us be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for a ‘gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom’. ...I hope you may bear witness, with humility and simplicity, that consecrated life is a precious gift for the Church and for the world. A gift not to be withheld for oneself, but to share, bringing Christ to every corner of this city.”

*From the prepared text of an address to the clergy and religious of Naples, 21 March 2015*

*The Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary,  
Glory be.  
Servant of God,  
Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY SIX**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA – A DAUGHTER OF THE CHURCH**

#### **Memories of her**

“When the Council was over, Sister Eliška stood up in the refectory and said: ‘Sisters, the Council is over. The Church has spoken. And it is up to us to take action now.’” *V. G.*

“Sister Eliška realized how much work was needed for the thinking of the Council to reach people. I have beautiful memories of Sister Eliška when we experienced the renewed liturgy in the monastery chapel. Sister Eliška freed all employees to attend. She saw the strong evangelizing benefit of the liturgical renewal, and therefore she reached beyond the borders of her own congregation. She visited priests in their parishes, debating with them, even passionately, and encouraging them. She assisted them in solving concrete spatial problems when introducing the renewed liturgy, and helped them find arguments for their negotiations with State authorities charged with preserving historical buildings. She got the sisters to help in the spreading the Council thinking, and they spent their nights translating and transcribing the Council documents. This samizdat workshop made a great contribution to the task of the Council renewal.”

P. A. S.

#### **After visiting US provinces, Eliška wrote:**

“It is inevitable that there are twists and turns following the Council. New ways are being sought, and that is never easy. When looking for new ways, it’s necessary to hold onto the essential – for us it is the Gospel. I see the situation optimistically. I am convinced that the Church will emerge cleansed from the crisis after the Council – consecrated life will find its content, although it will be different from

what it was before. In my opinion, a substantial element in the search for new ways is dialogue.”

### **Pope Francis**

“This is the Church, the vineyard of the Lord, the fertile Mother and the caring Teacher, who is not afraid to roll up her sleeves to pour oil and wine on people’s wound, who doesn’t see humanity as a house of glass to judge or categorize people. This is the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic and composed of sinners, needful of God-s mercy. This is the Church, the true bride of Christ, who seeks to be faithful to her spouse and to her doctrine. It is a Church that is not afraid to eat and drink with prostitutes and publicans. The Church that has the doors wide open to receive the needy, the penitent, and not only the just or those who believe they are perfect! The Church that is not ashamed of the fallen brother and pretends not to see him, but on the contrary feels involved and almost obliged to lift him up and to encourage him to take up the journey again and accompany him toward a definitive encounter with her Spouse, in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the Church, our mother!”

*From the address at the close of the Synod  
of Bishops, 18 October 2014.*

*The Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary,  
Glory be.  
Servant of God, Sister Eliška,  
pray for us!*

## **DAY SEVEN**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA AND CRISES OF LIFE**

#### **Testimony**

“She must have had her own troubles, but she never spoke about them among us in our office. To complain about somebody or something – I never heard anything like that from her. But when she couldn’t help someone, didn’t have the opportunity to encourage them, you could see that she was sad.” *J. V.*

“Even when something weighed down on her, she never pushed people away from her, indicating, ‘I’m not in the mood today’ She never did that.” *Z. V.*

#### **Sister Eliška recalls**

“In April, the Provincial Superior came and told me that the Venerable Mother wished me to move to another community. About three times, I begged the Venerable Mother not to have to, because I knew what awaited me. Sometimes I experienced deadly anxiety, perhaps even greater than if I had been leaving this world. After much struggle, I obeyed. And here my way of the cross begins, where there already have been several stations. I don’t like remembering all that, and won’t write about it anymore.

You, Jesus, were my strength in those difficult moments of life. With your help, I want to carry my cross. Teach me to love it, teach me to suffer without complaining, teach me to suffer joyfully.”

**Pope Francis** addressed a 97-year-old sister who had come to the audience and whom he had greeted personally, and said: “I exchanged a few words with her, she looked at me with clear eyes, she looked at me with that smile of a sister, mother, and grandma. In her I would like to pay homage to perseverance in consecrated life. Some believe that

consecrated life is heaven on earth. No! Maybe Purgatory.... But not Heaven. It isn't easy to go forward. When I see a person who has spent her life, I give thanks to the Lord. Through you, sister, I thank all men and women religious, thank you very much!" *From his address to the religious of Rome, 16 May 2015*

*The Lord's Prayer,  
Hail Mary,  
Glory be.  
Servant of God,  
Sister Eliška,  
pray for us!*

## **DAY EIGHT**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA – SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

#### **From her biography**

“Sister Eliška’s strife for spiritual life and growth in virtues is characterized by a lifelong consistency and thoroughness. Her diary testifies to her regular examination of resolutions and strict self-reflection. If we use the Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5, 2–10) as the measure of the quality of life, the effort for three of them exceeds any common measure. These are the blessings of the meek, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.”

P. P. P.

#### **Sister Eliška**

“Every Sunday, I’d like to write down a review of the whole past week. I want to begin my after-Council novitiate in this way (Eliška is 56 years old!). I’d like to be raised up above all the troubles of life, and dwell for a while in Your realm of love, my Jesus! Recently, I’ve started again to long for a closer union with You – grant me, good Lord, a moment’s refreshment (resting) on Your loving Heart. What will be the program of my ‘weekly review’?”

1. Forget everything around me,
2. go through the whole week and realize what was correct, and where I failed to do good,
3. go through the names of the sisters, and think of what I owe each of them,
4. look forward and talk about my plans to the Divine Master,
5. ask for help and blessing.

#### **Pope Francis**

“God thinks about each of us, and he thinks good things, he likes us and ‘dreams’ about us. He dreams about the joy we’ll bring him. Therefore the Lord wants to recreate our hearts and enable the victory of joy. Have you ever thought of that? I am in the mind and in the heart of the Lord! The Lord is able to change my life! He has many plans and he says: I have not chosen you because you are the strongest, greatest the most powerful. I have chosen you because you are the smallest of all, one could say the most miserable of all. I chose you as such. And that is love. I do not think that this can be explained by any theologian; it is impossible to explain. You can only reflect on it, dream and weep from joy. The Lord can change us.”

*Morning homily at Casa Santa Marta, 16 March 2015*

*The Lord’s Prayer,*

*Hail Mary,*

*Glory be.*

*Servant of God,*

*Sister Eliška, pray for us!*

## **DAY NINE**

### **SISTER ELIŠKA AND THE SANCTITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE**

#### **A memory of her**

“In the morning, I used to go to work by train. In the garden around the institute, alfalfa was sown, and people would cut it. One morning, I came after 6 o’clock, and what I saw: Sister Eliška, her apron rolled up, barefoot, and she was cutting the grass. Then she came to the office, and I told her: Eliška, what kind of a superior are you? All bedraggled – I recall that her knuckles were all bloody – and she answered: You know, if I want to lead the sisters, I have to set the example. We also used to paint the fence around the institute with her, and to go singling beet belonging to the agricultural co-operative. We used to gather mushrooms and forest fruits for the institute. Eliška didn’t aggrandize herself at all.”

Z. V.

#### **Eliška, alone, at evening prayer**

“Sisters feel well in our community– thank you for that, my Lord. We have frequent visitors. At first, it used to irritate me and disturb my work, but now I’m beginning to understand that it is your will, Lord, and I accept it gladly. May we be able to show to all our visitors how good it is when sisters dwell in unity.”

“May we show a holiness that is healthy, human, and natural. That’s the kind of sanctity I want to strive for.”

#### **Pope Francis**

“Each one of us can make a little examination of conscience, we can do it right now, each one respond to himself, in silence: how have we responded up to now to the Lord’s call to sanctity? Do I want to become a little better, a little more Christian? This is the path to holiness. When



the Lord invites us to become saints, he doesn't call us to something heavy, sad... quite the contrary! It's an invitation to share in his joy, to live and to offer with joy every moment of our life, by making it become at the same time a gift of love for the people around us. If we understand this, everything changes and takes on new meaning, a beautiful meaning, a meaning that begins with little everyday things.”

*From the general audience*

*catechesis, 19 Nov. 2014*

*The Lord's Prayer,*

*Hail Mary,*

*Glory be.*

*Servant of God,*

*Sister Eliška,*

*pray for us!*

## **A THOUGHT FROM POPE FRANCIS AT THE CLOSE OF THE NOVENA**

“In order to be saints, there is no need to be bishops, priests or religious: no, we are all called to be saints! So, many times we are tempted to think that sainthood is reserved only to those who have the opportunity to break away from daily affairs in order to dedicate themselves exclusively to prayer. But it is not so! Some think that sanctity is to close your eyes and to look like a holy picture. No! This is not sanctity! Sanctity is something greater, deeper, which God gives us. Indeed, it is precisely in living with love and offering one’s own Christian witness in everyday affairs that we are called to become saints. ...God gives you the grace to become holy. God communicates himself to you. Always, in every place, one can become a saint, that is, one can open oneself up to this grace, which works inside us and leads us to holiness.”

*From the general audience catechesis, 19 Nov. 2014*

**A prayer to be granted a request through the intercession of Sister  
Eliška Pretschnerová**

*Almighty and good God,  
your servant, Sister Eliška,  
fulfilled the gospel of your Son Jesus Christ  
with her whole life.  
In Franciscan simplicity and poverty,  
she served her fellow sisters, the church and all people.  
Even in difficult conditions and circumstances,  
she did not lose faith and hope  
and showed respect to all people.  
Give us the grace to follow the example of her life,  
grant us her beatification,  
and, at her intercession, answer the prayer  
which we place before you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Please report any prayer granted to the address: [eliskaosf@gmail.com](mailto:eliskaosf@gmail.com)  
or Postulace sestry Elišky, Radimova 2, 169 00 Praha 6, Czech  
Republic

or Suore Francescane Insegnanti  
Via Nicolò Piccolomini 27, 00165 Roma, Italy  
<http://www.sstorsf.org>

**NOVENA with Sister Eliška**

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