November 17th: Saint Elisabeth of Hungary

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:27-38): Jesus said to his disciples, «(...) Give to the one who asks and if anyone has taken something from you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have others do to you. If you love only those who love you, what kind of graciousness is yours? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do favors to those who are good to you, what kind of graciousness is yours? Even sinners do the same.

»Lend when there is nothing to expect in return. Then will your reward be great and you will be sons and daughters of the Most High. For He is kind towards the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (...)».

Saint Elisabeth of Hungary (1207-1231)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today I would like to speak to you about St Elizabeth of Hungary, also called St Elizabeth of Thuringia. Elizabeth spent only the first four years of her childhood at the Hungarian court. In fact, complying with the customs of that time, Elizabeth's father had arranged for her to become a Princess of Thuringia. Elizabeth left her homeland with a rich dowry and a large entourage.

They reached Eisenach after a long journey and made the ascent to the Fortress of Wartburg. It was here that the betrothal of Ludwig and Elizabeth was celebrated. Despite the fact that political reasons had determined their betrothal, a sincere love developed between the two young people, enlivened by faith and by the desire to do God’s will. Elizabeth diligently practiced works of mercy.

Elizabeth's marriage was profoundly happy: she helped her husband to raise his human qualities to a supernatural level and he, in exchange, stood up for his wife's generosity to the poor and for her religious practices. The farewell to her husband was a hard trial, when, at the end of June in 1227 when Ludwig IV joined the Crusade of the Emperor Frederick II. However, fever decimated the troops and Ludwig himself fell ill and died.

—Elizabeth spent her last three years in the hospital she founded, serving the sick and keeping wake over the dying. She always tried to carry out the most humble services. In the night of 17 November (1231), she fell asleep gently in the Lord. The testimonies of her holiness were so many that after only four years Pope Gregory IX canonized her.