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# Jeanne of Flanders and the Patronage of the Chapel of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in Laon Cathedral

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JEANNE OF FLANDERS AND THE PATRONAGE OF THE CHAPEL OF SAINT ELIZABETH OF  
HUNGARY IN LAON CATHEDRAL

by

Abby Rose Armstrong

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts  
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at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2017



ABSTRACT

JEANNE OF FLANDERS AND THE PATRONAGE OF THE CHAPEL OF SAINT ELIZABETH OF  
HUNGARY IN LAON CATHEDRAL

by

Abby Rose Armstrong

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017  
Under the Supervision of Professor Richard A. Leson

This thesis provides a new argument concerning the patronage of the little-known chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Laon Cathedral. I examine unpublished documentary evidence that identifies the noblewoman responsible for the financing and construction of the chapel in the early fourteenth century. Circumstantial evidence indicates Jeanne of Flanders, a noble widow, also ordered the carving of relief sculpture of the Crucifixion and St. Elizabeth of Hungary along the chapel's north wall. In this thesis, I argue that Jeanne's actions fit the prescribed behavior for wealthy medieval widows, in that she expresses newfound authority and power in the wake of her husband's death, through the patronage of the chapel space. Jeanne's specific selection of the narrative of St. Elizabeth of Hungary for the chapel at Laon also paralleled her own interests as fourteenth century Flemish woman and pious widow.

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To  
my Sam,  
and my family,  
thank you.

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## I. Introduction: History and Architecture of Laon Cathedral

The city of Laon has played an important role in the ecclesiastical life of France since the end of the fifth century when it was first established as bishopric.<sup>1</sup> In the high middle ages, Laon was densely populated and prosperous. This was due in part to its militarily strategic location in the hills that bordered Picardy, the Ile-de-France, and Champagne, but also to the latter's famous vineyards which attracted wine merchants and intellectuals from medieval Paris and Flanders.<sup>2</sup> Laon was a locus of both royal and ecclesiastical power, serving the as the seat of the bailiffs of the Country of Vermandois and as a space for the proceedings of ecclesiastical courts.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1128, Laon was jointly governed by both the King of France and the presiding bishop. In 1136, the cathedral was granted royal protection and immunity from external authorities, giving Laon cathedral jurisdiction over its clergy and the citizens within the cathedral's walled enclave.<sup>4</sup> According to Hélène Millet, the cathedral's "power in the city was long-established, for over the years the chapter's staunch resistance to interference from outside had regularly brought it into conflict, sometimes violent, with both the bishop and with the secular authorities."<sup>5</sup> On account of the patronage of church and state, Laon became a prestigious intellectual center that drew scholars from universities and religious houses across northern France.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hélène Millet, *Les Chanoines du Chapitre Cathédral de Laon: 1272-1412* (Rome: L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE, 1982), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Yolanda Plumley, "Musicians at Laon Cathedral in the Early Fifteenth Century." *Urban History* 29, no. 01 (2002): 19-34, here at 19.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Millet, *Chanoines*, 20. My translation.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 34.

The first reference to a church building on the hilltop site of the current Laon Cathedral, dates to the third century, when Saint B  at is said to have assembled faithful followers in a subterranean chapel to celebrate the Holy Mysteries.<sup>7</sup> It is the site of this chapel that may correspond to a small vault still accessible under the apse of the cathedral.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the fifth century, a bishopric at Laon was established by the Archbishop of Reims, Remigius.<sup>9</sup> The Carolingians built a Cathedral on the site in the tenth century, but that structure would be destroyed by fire in the twelfth century, along with the Bishop's Palace, twelve churches, and several houses, during a revolt by the commune against the English Bishop Gaudry, who was also massacred, in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>10</sup> Rebuilding began under the auspices of Bishop Bartholomew de Vir, who was raised to the Bishopric of Laon in 1113. This project would not see completion until the early thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the rest of the twelfth century, the Laon Cathedral building project found itself lacking in funds. For this reason, cathedral canons toured across Europe to display those relics that had survived the cathedral's destruction. Through the parading of these unscathed relics across Europe, the canons would collect enough offerings to allow the cathedral to continue building for another year.<sup>12</sup> The final building campaign of the cathedral commenced around 1160 under the auspices of Bishop

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<sup>7</sup> Daboval, *The Town of Laon: A Short Historical Guide of the Cathedral and Principal Curiosities of the Town*, trans. by Maud E. Thorold (England, 1894), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Alain Saint-Denis, *Apog  e D'une Cit  : Laon Et Le Laonnois Aux Xlle Et Xllle Si  cles* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires De Nancy, 1994), 47.

<sup>10</sup> William W Clark, *Laon Cathedral: Architecture*, Volume 1 & 2 (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1987), 14. See also: Daboval, *Town of Laon*.

<sup>11</sup> Daboval, *Town of Laon*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 5.

Gautier de Mortagne (1154-1171) with the initiation of the first of five building phases. The cathedral was finished and fully operational around 1220 (**Figure 1**).<sup>13</sup>

The completed Laon Cathedral dominated the mountain town's cityscape, contributing in Millet's words, to an "...all-pervasive clerical presence in late medieval Laonnois society."<sup>14</sup> Prior to the French Revolution, the cathedral's holdings comprised four abbeys, two convents, and around 24 parishes and other urban churches dispersed throughout the city.<sup>15</sup> By the late thirteenth century, the chapter of Laon was the largest in France, comprising over eighty canons, who were in turn assisted by some forty chaplains, six choirboys, and various other personnel. The wealth of the established chapter increased rapidly after its founding due to donations and the increased patronage of cathedral parishioners. By the fourteenth century, the cathedral's assets included over twenty villages. The cathedral complex itself occupied nearly a quarter of the city and offered shelter and services to over 350 citizens.<sup>16</sup>

The ecclesiastical chapter of Laon was considerably populated, consisting of 83 canons over the period of 1270-1388, a number reduced to 82 canons after 1388.<sup>17</sup> The rich and

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<sup>13</sup> The present Laon Cathedral belongs to an architectural group of experimental designs in northern France dating to the early Gothic Period. The architects and builders of Laon Cathedral retained many features of the previous Romanesque period, such as nave bays with sexpartite rib vaults, but introduced rib vaulting and pointed arches—a new component of early Gothic design. In contrast to earlier Romanesque elevations, that of Laon includes a four-part elevation with addition of the triforium beneath the clerestory. Laon Cathedral's maximum elevation of eighty feet, although achieved without the use of exterior flying buttresses, was the smallest in terms of other Gothic buildings of the same period. The introduction of the triforium within the interior elevation of the church reflected the growing concern for verticality and dematerialization that defined the early Gothic period. The exterior of Laon Cathedral offers evidence of the transition between the Romanesque period and the early Gothic. On the west façade of the building, the Gothic features became clear in the massive rose window, porous towers, and cavernous porches, all of which contribute to an illusion of weightlessness.

<sup>14</sup> Millet, *Chanoines*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 20 referenced for above sentences.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

powerful chapter had much to offer anyone who was looking for financial security or advancements in the church.<sup>18</sup> Many of Laon's canons held positions in the royal administration or the papal curia, or served as chaplains for princes or of a high-ranking church officials.<sup>19</sup> However, once canons fulfilled the sacral and administrative duties specifically assigned to them, they were allowed to engage in other activities of their own choosing. This allowed for many canons to pursue parallel careers either in their own ecclesiastical fields or within the secular community.<sup>20</sup> In fact, individual canons often oversaw self-sufficient communities, powered by serfdom, in which they might live in seclusion and without want for anything.<sup>21</sup> In the early history of Laon Cathedral, communal habitation had been abandoned in favor of the cloistered life. By the late Middle Ages, however, many of the canons opted to live in town in houses specifically built for members of the chapter; these houses were built on a grand scale, reflecting their occupants' elevated status in society.<sup>22</sup> Within these houses, which sometime reached two or three stories high, canons lived in splendor, and even lived amongst their servants and even family members.<sup>23</sup> If canons chose not to reside within the canonical houses, they also had the ability to seek domestic arrangements in local rural communities. Canons rented small chapter estates, and offered opportunity away from the Church and city while they enhanced their incomes through secondary careers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>22</sup> Pumley "Musicians", 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 31.

It is through the lives and activities of the canons that we can begin to reconstruct a context for the series of lateral chapels added to Laon Cathedral, a development which took place from the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth century. At this moment, 28 additional lateral chapels were added to Laon Cathedral. These were presided over by the chapter's dean and 56 chaplains (two per chapel), who maintained the chapels, guided religious services, and performed the offices owed to chapels' patrons.<sup>25</sup> Laon's canonical organization thus supplies the framework through which to understand the dedication and patronage of the lateral chapels.

## II. The Lateral Chapels of Laon Cathedral

In the original building plan of Laon Cathedral, there existed only a small number of altars for worship. After the 1220 completion of the cathedral, however, and specifically in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, 28 chapels were added to the cathedral (**Figure 2**). There is little to no secondary scholarship concerning the building of these chapels at Laon Cathedral. It is helpful therefore to look to the Cathedral of Notre Dame of Paris, where the several additions of lateral chapels between 1228 and completed in 1320, offers a parallel to the developments found at Laon.<sup>26</sup> Mailan Doquang emphasizes the profound impact that the addition of these lateral chapels, the earliest dated examples of this type, had on the fabric of the Paris cathedral and its internal, liturgical functioning.<sup>27</sup> These lateral chapels at Paris functioned primarily as chantries, added to accommodate the surplus of endowments from

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<sup>25</sup> Daboval, *Town of Laon*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Hereafter referenced as Notre-Dame.

<sup>27</sup> Mailan S. Doquang, "The Lateral Chapels of Notre-Dame in Context," *Gesta* 50, no. 2 (2011): 137.

private masses commissioned in order to quicken the soul's release from Purgatory. They were therefore founded not only by clergy members but also wealthy lay patrons who desired the security of the prayers of the church for either themselves or loved ones after death.

In other words, the lateral chapels were crucial tools used by the laity to understand and grapple with rapidly changing ideas surrounding the afterlife, a consequence of the introduction of the doctrine of Purgatory. They were spaces which enabled the cathedral's administrators—the canons—to respond to the laity's desires for the intercession on behalf of and commemoration of dearly departed souls, both advancing the new doctrine of Purgatory and bringing more power and profit to the Church.<sup>28</sup> Essentially, lateral chapels provided discrete spaces to remember and commemorate the dead. Such spaces also allowed individuals to engage in self-representation.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, they served as venues for social display through the variety of referential objects that might be located inside, to include effigy tombs, donor portraits, and other commemorative objects.<sup>30</sup> In a sense, such chapels became another opportunity for donors to display their wealth and status, through the materials chosen to build the chapels, and the objects placed inside. In the words of Doquang, lateral chapels supplied “wealthy donors with appropriately dignified settings for their commemoration, while the quasi-private character of the spaces enhanced the founders' status.”<sup>31</sup> These aspects of lateral chapels at Paris apply equally to those of Laon Cathedral, including the subject of this study, the Chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

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<sup>28</sup> Doquang, “Lateral Chapels”, 137.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

The chapel space at Laon Cathedral presented a situation of negotiation between actors, the Canons and Jeanne of Flanders. Each party brought something valuable to the table; the Canons provided the space for which patrons could use for intercession, and Jeanne of Flanders brought the finances the cathedral desperately wanted. So, while it appeared that Jeanne acted within the confines outlined by the canons at Laon Cathedral, it is her status as a widow that allowed her to gain access into the cathedral to establish her agency.

### **III. Jeanne of Flanders and the Chapel of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary**

The lateral chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Laon Cathedral was commissioned sometime during the first two decades of the fourteenth century, and certainly before 1316. It now stands at the intersection of the transept and nave on the cathedral's north side (**Figures 2-3**). Inside this small chapel on the north wall is a damaged poly-chromed sculptural arrangement, roughly 6' by 6' at its tallest and widest points, framed in a Gothic trefoil arch, and consisting of two different, but arguably related, iconographies deployed over two registers. Above is a Crucifixion flanked by the Virgin and John the Evangelist; below, is a standing image, presumably of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, flanked by two kneeling figures (**Figures 4-11**).

### **IV. New Documentary Evidence**

The circumstances surrounding the addition and dedication of the chapel of St Elizabeth of Hungary have recently been resolved through the identification and translation of a 1316 document written by the chapter of Laon Cathedral, now in Paris. Thanks to a new translation



of this document we can now definitively attribute the patronage of the Chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary to Jeanne of Flanders (c. 1272-1333).<sup>32</sup> This document unequivocally confirms her role in the construction of the chapel. It records that:

...moved by divine inspiration, [Jeanne] has constructed and built a certain chapel or oratory on the right side, at a place where we have been accustomed and been bound to furnish our chaplain on the one hand, and next to a column or pillar of the same church near which holy water in a place hollowed out of stone on the other hand, for the purpose of divine service and in honor of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, for the redemption of souls of her and her husband aforesaid, and has instituted two chaplaincies in it...

Jeanne of Flanders was born to Robert III of Béthune, the future Count of Flanders, and Yolande of Bourgogne. She married Enguerrand IV, Lord of Coucy and Viscount of Meaux, in 1288.

Enguerrand IV, a man of dubious notoriety, died in 1311, leaving no heir to the first house of Coucy. In the years that followed Enguerrand's death, Jeanne, who now enjoyed the title "Lady of Saint Gobain," would become abbess of the Cistercian convent of Saint-Sauvoir just outside of Laon.

In view of what we can reconstruct of Jeanne's bibliography, it appears that her patronage of the lateral Chapel of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary was undertaken for reasons like

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<sup>32</sup>My advisor Richard A. Leson has recently written about her prayer book and other aspects of her life, please see: Richard A. Leson, "Heraldry and Identity in the Psalter-Hours of Jeanne of Flanders (Manchester, John Rylands Library, Ms. lat. 117)," *Studies in Iconography* 32 (2011): 155-98.

The documents in question are Paris National Archives, L 734, Dossier 1, items 7, 7 bis. See Appendix for translation. Without a doubt, I would be lost without the help of the translation of this document by Jonathan Rose, Emeritus Professor of Law at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. It is through his work, and the help of many others including: Professor Richard Helmholz, University of Chicago Law School; Dr. Christopher Whittick, senior archivist in the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes, Sussex, UK; Professor Paul Brand, Medieval English Legal Historian of All Souls College, in Oxford, UK, and Dr. Susanne Jenks, English Legal Scholar and Historian, that granted me this invaluable piece of historical evidence. I am eternally grateful.

those outlined by Doquang with respect to the lateral chapels added to Notre Dame, Paris. Her establishment and patronage of the chapel was for the “redemption of souls of her and her husband,” a motivation that aligns not only with the laity’s concern with endowments of religious services for the deceased, but with the expected cultural performativity of a wealthy widow. On top of this, the document in Paris also grants to Jeanne perpetual authority to name chaplains to maintain the chapel upon the occasion of a vacancy in one of the two chaplaincies. A second document, of 1317, records how Jeanne exercised this right.<sup>33</sup> That year she nominated a cleric, Jehennon, son of Jean de la Fontaine, from Bucy, to the chaplaincy of the Saint Elizabeth on the feast day of St. Thomas of Canterbury (December 29) following the death of a former chaplain, Pierre.<sup>34</sup> As part of his appointment by Jeanne, Jehennon would also have “physical possession” of everything in the chapel and the customary practices that go with it.

The discovery of the Paris documents provides a platform upon which to speculate about the patronage, iconography, and meaning of the damaged sculptural arrangement inside the chapel. The relief figures were probably damaged, and symbolically “beheaded” during the time of the French Revolution. While the remaining sculptural fragments left over from the ravages of Revolution in the 1790s leave much to the imagination, there remain key iconographic features that allow for the identification of the Crucifixion image and circumstantial evidence that points to a probable identification of the figures in the lower register.<sup>35</sup> In what follows, I consider the thematic relationship between the two components of

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<sup>33</sup> Paris National Archives, L 734, Dossier 1, items 7, 7 bis.

<sup>34</sup> Paris National Archives, L 734, Dossier 1, items 7, 7 bis.

<sup>35</sup> Daboval, *Town of Laon*, 6: “In 1790, the Cathedral was closed for Catholic worship and despoiled of its riches and precious furniture...in the Great portico all the statues were knocked down and broken, and all of the statuettes which adorned the arches were decapitated and mutilated.”

the relief sculpture, and, in turn, how this imagery spoke to Jeanne's political and spiritual interests as a fourteenth century noblewoman and widow.

The sculptural arrangement on the chapel's north wall consists of two separate, but related compositions. The top portion consists of a Crucifixion that is related to an iconographic type that scholar Dóra Sallay classified as the "Eucharistic Man of Sorrows" flanked by the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist. The bottom portion of the arrangement consists of a standing female saint with two kneeling figures on either side of her. The female saint is surely St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the chapel's dedicatee. For many years, the identities of the two kneeling figures have been previously identified as two canons of Laon Cathedral, but I will argue below for an alternative identification. First, it is helpful to discuss the development of the iconography of the so-called Eucharistic Man of Sorrows (**Figures 8-9**).

## **V. The Fourth Lateran Council and the Increasing Devotional Emphasis on the Body of Christ**

In 1215, the nature of the Eucharist was further delineated with the Fourth Lateran Council's acceptance of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. This doctrine declared that the Eucharist contains the real body and blood of Christ, and that therefore the sacrifice of Christ is repeated each time the Eucharist is performed in the Mass. The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, a relatively unusual iconography, is essentially an iteration of the Christ as Man of Sorrows theme which emphasizes Eucharistic symbols. According to Sallay, it appears in Western medieval art from the middle of the fourteenth century until the later sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The following

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<sup>36</sup> Dóra Sallay, "The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows in Late Medieval Art," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 6 (2000), 45. I will be using Sallay's coined terminology of "Eucharistic Man of Sorrows" to reference this specific iconography.

discussion treats the earliest known examples of this iconography, its salient aspects, and devotional function of the motif.

As observed above, the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows developed as a strain of the Christ as Man of Sorrows tradition. According to legend, St. Gregory the Great founded the cult of the image of the Man of Sorrows after he witnessed a vision during the Eucharist (**Figure 12**).<sup>37</sup> The tale relates how St. Gregory, in order to assuage a woman's doubts about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, prayed for a miracle to occur while he said Mass. His prayers were answered as the consecrated host turned into a bleeding finger—convincing the non-believer of Christ's presence.<sup>38</sup> The account of the vision of St. Gregory enjoyed great popularity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through vernacular teachings on the Passion and the Eucharist aimed at the laity and spread by pilgrims across Europe.<sup>39</sup> The related imagery of the Man of Sorrows—a weary and suffering Christ sometimes surrounded by attributes of the Passion—was developed and adapted to fit a multitude of settings throughout the late medieval period (**Figure 13**). It is important to note that the Man of Sorrows imagery is indebted to the meaning and story of the Mass of St. Gregory and the disembodied finger.<sup>40</sup> In the illustrations of the Mass of St. Gregory, artists began to take liberties and depicted the

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<sup>37</sup> The Man of Sorrows image is sometimes referred to as the *Vir Dolorum* image. Because of this vision, St. Gregory would later grant indulgences to the faithful who chose to venerate the image. Bernhard Ridderbos, "The Man of Sorrows: Pictorial Images and Metaphorical Statements," In *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late Medieval Culture*, ed. A. A. MacDonald, H. N.B. Ridderbos, and R. M. Schousemann. (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 145.

<sup>38</sup> Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 308.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 309.

<sup>40</sup> For more general referential information on the Man of Sorrows image type, please see: Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public: Form and Function of Early Passion Paintings* (New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1990).

entire body of the suffering Christ. It is this elaboration on the Mass of St. Gregory that artists continued to develop into disparate depictions of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows.

## VI. The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows: Origins

In her study of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, Sallay stresses the importance of first understanding the difference between the iconography of the Man of Sorrows, a bleeding and suffering Christ sometimes surrounded with attributes of the Passion, and the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, a Man of Sorrows image that dynamically *interacts* with Eucharistic iconographic elements, often a chalice but occasionally also a host. Essentially, she argues that the latter iconographic tradition developed from the former.<sup>41</sup> The central inspiration for the two iconographic traditions, the doctrine of Transubstantiation and the cult of the Eucharist, was the same. In fact, as Sallay observes, it was the same doctrine that became the “heart of late medieval religiosity. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the two species of the Sacrament, the consecrated wine and host, became the objects of immense adoration in Western spirituality.”<sup>42</sup> Images played an important role in these developments.

Religious women were an important audience for imagery of the suffering Christ. In the thirteenth century, for example, this sort of iconography began to appear as part of *Pietà* scenes in chapels of Beguines, or communal, lay religious women, throughout Germany and the Low Countries. In such settings, the learned devout began to experiment with the visual language of the Eucharist.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, throughout the fourteenth century, devotional objects—

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<sup>41</sup> Sallay, “Eucharistic Man”, 45.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 308.

such as Books of Hours—contained prayers and images that venerated the body and blood of Christ or his wounds (**Figure 14**). Medieval audiences or owners who interacted with these objects could receive indulgences (and therefore salvation) through appropriate veneration practices prescribed by the Fourth Lateran Council. Devotion to the Eucharist, the Passion, and the *Arma Christi* led to the rise of powerful cults throughout the Christian World; cult veneration fostered the development for other types of visual representations of these ideas.<sup>44</sup> According to Sallay, Eucharistic devotion was the catalyst behind a plethora of new iconographic traditions (narrative, allegorical, and devotional in character) in late medieval art. The purpose of such imagery was to help the pious grapple with the mystery of the Eucharist. While Eucharistic imagery flourished throughout late medieval art, the most popular visual treatment of these themes, according to Sallay, was that of the *Vir Dolorum*, or the Man of Sorrows.<sup>45</sup>

The Man of Sorrows image is rooted ultimately in Byzantine devotional and artistic traditions. It draws its inspiration from a Byzantine icon type, the Passion portrait, which combines a close up bust-like image of Christ, similar to the icon of the Pantokrator, with that of the dead Christ, such as the depiction of the Crucifixion (**Figure 15**).<sup>46</sup> This combination of images eventually developed into the Man of Sorrows, an image of the suffering Christ isolated from the narrative context of the Passion, in either half or full-length figure, displayed alone or

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<sup>44</sup> In later centuries, Eucharistic imagery would become an influential theme for Flemish painters; Sallay, “Eucharistic Man”, 46-47.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 47. Other Eucharistic images developed during this period include: *Mass of St. Gregory*, *Ecce Homo*, *Lamentation*, *Mystical Mill*, *Mystical Winepress*, *Fons Vitae*, *Five Wounds of Christ*, *Sacred Heart*, *Christus in der Rast*, *Gnadenstuhl*, *Notgottes*, *Engelpietà*, and the *Veronica*.

<sup>46</sup> Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 91-92.

with lamenting witnesses (**Figure 16**).<sup>47</sup> Often, this depiction of Christ accentuated his vulnerability and humiliation—the “human nature of the Savior.”<sup>48</sup> Sometimes it emphasized the five wounds of the Crucifixion with a display of Christ’s bloodied and beaten body, surrounded by elements of his suffering: the *Arma Christi* (**Figure 17**). According to Sallay, it is important that all of Christ’s wounds be visible in a Man of Sorrows image to suggest the “dead Christ amongst us.”<sup>49</sup> This arrangement of images alone is inherently Eucharistic as it demonstrates the bleeding Christ; the Eucharistic overtones of the bleeding Man of Sorrows image would later be bolstered by the addition of one or more additional Eucharistic symbols.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, with the rise of the Eucharistic cult in Western Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Man of Sorrows iconography became one of the most widely represented subjects in late medieval art. The success of this image lay in its straightforwardness. As Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham have observed, “for those believing in Christ’s death and resurrection as the road to salvation, the portrayal of Jesus suspended between earthly and eternal life...not only affirmed their faith in his divinity but also vindicated their hope that they too could attain everlasting life.”<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, this popular theme was adapted to fit different media, the requirements of diverse patrons, and the desires of the devout who looked upon it for guidance and salvation.<sup>52</sup> Compared to the multiple

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<sup>47</sup> Sallay, “Eucharistic Man”, 47-48.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Colum Hourihane, “Defying Terms: Ecce Homo, Christ of Pity, Christ Mocked, and the Man of Sorrows,” In *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, ed. Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham, (Board of Trustees of Western Michigan University, 2013), 19.

<sup>50</sup> Sallay, “Eucharistic Man”, 45.

<sup>51</sup> Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham, *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows* (Board of Trustees of Western Michigan University, 2013), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 1.

narratives of the Passion, the synthesis of narrative seen in a Man of Sorrows image facilitated use of images by the devout for meditative contemplation in a devotional or mystical context as prescribed by Lateran Council IV.

Sallay, however, focuses on a subset of Man of Sorrow images, those which include or emphasize important Eucharistic symbols, such as the chalice, host, and/or stalks of wheat or grapevines (**Figure 18**). These iterations of the Man of Sorrows theme are relatively rare.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike the typical Man of Sorrows iconography which could include the instruments of the Passion the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, in contrast, presents Christ not with the *Arma Christi*, but with the liturgical furnishings and items of the Eucharist. It is this variant of the Man of Sorrows tradition that is found on the north wall of the Chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Laon Cathedral.<sup>54</sup>

As Sallay indicated, the depiction of a Christ with a chalice or a host is not uncommon; these elements occur as part of the “passion context” created when using elements of the *Arma Christi*.<sup>55</sup> However, in the mid-fourteenth century, a new iconography of the chalice (with or without the host) standing near the Man of Sorrows and sometimes even connected to Christ by a stream of blood from his wounds began to develop. In this instance, the chalice no longer is part of the *Arma* assemblage as the other instruments of the Passion have fallen into the background or disappeared entirely; rather the chalice is now a dynamic participant in the Eucharistic ritual, the animate recipient of Christ’s blood.<sup>56</sup> The Crucifixion in the Chapel of St.

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<sup>53</sup> Sallay, “Eucharistic Man”, 47.

<sup>54</sup> The Laon relief was unknown to Sallay when she created her survey.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 49-50. See image 2 for a reference to a Eucharistic Man of Sorrows.



Elizabeth of Hungary at Laon belongs in this iconographic category; at the foot of the cross, the figure of a skeletal Adam, rises from a sarcophagus. Adam holds aloft a golden chalice to catch the blood flowing from the wound of Christ above him. The meaning is clear: Adam, a biblical type for Christ, receives the Eucharistic blood, as Christ redeems the mistakes of Adam (and Eve) in Original Sin.

The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows with a chalice seemed to have emerged in the medieval Bohemian-Silesian region (present day Central Europe, to include Poland, parts of the Czech Republic and Germany). There, major cults dedicated to relics of Christ's Passion and devotion to the Eucharistic developed during the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV.<sup>57</sup> According to Sallay, the earliest examples of this imagery mix several familiar elements, such as the *Arma Christi* and half-length images of the dead Christ, with additional "new" motifs such as a full-figured representation of Christ or even a living Christ looking down at the chalice as his blood streams directly into it (**Figure 19**).<sup>58</sup> In terms of location, some of the earliest representations come from Silesia, but the theme would quickly spread to Hungary, Austria, Italy, Spain, England, Sweden, and Denmark in the fourteenth and into the fifteenth centuries.<sup>59</sup> Just like the Man of Sorrows image, the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows lent itself to nearly every type of medium: miniatures, engraved metal plates, stained glass, panel paintings, frescos, and wood or stone reliefs. Sallay observes that three-dimensional examples include sculpture in-the-round, are particularly unusual because the chalice and bloodstream were delicate and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 51.

vulnerable to damage.<sup>60</sup> The Laon image belongs to this rare group and because of this is an important survival.

Throughout the nearly two hundred years that the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows appeared in Western art, it also experienced several permutations depending on its location and use. When considering the sculptural relief at Laon, it is important to note those iterations of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows image most similar to the Laon relief. For instance, when looking at the placement of the chalice itself, it can always be found on the right side of Christ since his side wound is also on his right side.<sup>61</sup> Also, it seems that full-figured representations of Christ are favored over half-length types; or, half-length types become “rationalized” in a new way, as the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows may be in half-length because he appears from his sarcophagus or behind a parapet. This can be seen in a *Man of Sorrows* image, made of gilt copper and enamel from the mid-fourteenth century from Italy (**Figure 20**). Returning to the full-length figure of Christ, the need for the chalice to be located precisely next to the side wound was so strong that sometimes the chalice floated in midair beside the wound. In another attempt to remedy this compositional issue, the chalice may also be held under the wound by an angel, a saint, a priest, a monk, Ecclesia, or Adam. This compositional element can be seen in the Crucifixion image from the Psalter of Robert de Lisle of 1339 (discussed below) (**Figure 21**). Additionally, this can also be seen in a *Christ with Charity* image by a Northwest German Master, dated to 1470, and a *Christ with Ears of Wheat and Grape Vine*, by the studio of Friedrich Herlin in 1469 (**Figures 22 and 18**).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 53.

## VII. The Function of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows Imagery and Mysticism

Like images of the Man of Sorrows, images of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows were far more fluid and open to interpretation than the written documents on Church doctrine or liturgical practices. This is especially important to remember with respect to the popular mysticism that emerged in connection with the concept of the Eucharist and Transubstantiation beginning in the thirteenth century. Sallay discusses the significant rise in accounts of mystical visionary experiences reported by nuns and Beguine communities that include motifs identical to those found in Eucharistic Man of Sorrows images, as well as the large concentration of these images in Central European secular churches during the fifteenth century.<sup>63</sup> These phenomena speak to the character and concerns of the image's audience and its overall devotional function.

Sallay's geographical survey of the examples of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows shows that a large majority of such imagery was located within secular parish churches, specifically in locations within the church that reminded viewers of the actual presence of Christ's body (like the altar, tabernacle, or engraved on an actual chalice).<sup>64</sup> However, there are also instances in which the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows was positioned in a place without any immediate Eucharistic connection or importance. Such locations could include areas reserved for the laity like church entrances or exteriors, on epitaphs, tombstones, and even on a variety of non-liturgical objects. Sometimes, these objects also included inscriptions.<sup>65</sup> Sallay is surely right

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 59-60.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 60-61.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 63.

that, regardless of its location, the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows proclaimed an association with the origin of the Eucharist. Most importantly, these images were instructive and taught the complicated dogma of Transubstantiation to the laity. Evidently, the doctrine of Transubstantiation had already been in place for nearly 150 years when the first iterations of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows began to appear. Therefore, teaching the Eucharist to the masses remained a constant duty for the clergy throughout this period.<sup>66</sup> The audience of these teachings included members of high nobility, the same group that sponsored the production of many of the extant examples of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows theme.

Consider the fourteenth century, English manuscript, the fragmentary De Lisle Psalter (MS Arundel 83 II), a completed in 1339. According to Lucy Freedman Sandler, this manuscript comprises a Sarum calendar and 24 illustrations: 13 moral, devotional, and theological diagrams; nine images from the life of Christ, and two facing miniatures.<sup>67</sup> Robert de Lisle's patronage of the manuscript, which includes a Crucifixion that belongs to the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows type, offers a parallel to Jeanne of Flanders' presumable patronage of the Laon relief. De Lisle was born to a noble family in 1288, and was summoned to Parliament as a baron in 1311.<sup>68</sup> After the death of his wife in 1339, he divested himself from his remaining property to prepare himself for the entry into the Franciscan convent of London, Greyfriars. He entered and was ordained in 1341, and died there in January of 1344.<sup>69</sup> As indicated by an inscription within the manuscript and probably as part of his divestment the De Lisle Psalter was probably

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>67</sup> Lucy Freeman Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert De Lisle in the British Library* (London: H. Miller, 1983), 11-12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 12.

left to two of his daughters, as indicated by an inscription within the manuscript. These two sisters would later go on to become nuns themselves at the Chicksands Priory in Campton, Bedfordshire.<sup>70</sup> The psalter is a summative testament to Robert's wealth and devotion to his king and the Franciscan order.

The De Lisle Psalter's *Crucifixion* image (folio 132) provides an opportunity to begin to consider the intended audience of a Eucharistic Man of Sorrows image like that found at Laon (**Figure 21**). It consists of an elaborately patterned and framed image of Christ as Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, flanked by Mary and John the Evangelist. Below Christ is the first man, Adam, rising from his grave on Golgotha to collect the blood of the "new Adam's" side wound in a golden chalice. Above the framed scene are a set of two angels, holding the discs of the Sun and Moon, and a pelican also shedding its blood to nourish its young.<sup>71</sup> Each component of this image remains isolated by architectural framing and tracing, forever separated from the scene before them. The viewer of this image, perhaps Robert himself, was left to contemplate Christ's bodily sacrifice undertaken for the absolution of Adam's original sin. This arrangement of figures closely mirrors the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows iconography in the Chapel of St. Elizabeth at Laon (**Figures 8-11**). Considering the similar dating to Laon Cathedral, the patronage of the object by a nobleperson, and his ties to Franciscan doctrine, folio 132 of the *De Lisle Psalter* serves as an excellent model when considering secular devotional interests and Jeanne's similar motivations selecting this iconography. In each case, this particular iconography was judged appropriate for the devotional interests or tastes of a member of the nobility.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 23.

When considering Jeanne, it is helpful to remember that she was raised in Flanders in the Lowlands—near Germany. Her understanding of the Eucharist likely centered on the ideas of Christ's suffering and humanity arrived at a century earlier through the Fourth Lateran Council. Jeanne, and many others of her time, would have found the imagery of the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows to be particularly attractive as a devotional theme. Jeanne's Flemish upbringing is also important to a consideration of the second half of the sculptural iconography of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel at Laon. The cult of St. Elizabeth of Hungary enjoyed great popularity in Flanders, particularly among the Beguine communities of the Low Countries. Indeed, familiarity with Elizabeth of Hungary's life and miracles was a regular feature of the cultural life of such religious women in Flanders.

### VIII. St. Elizabeth of Hungary: A Hagiographic Analysis

Since the document of 1316 credits Jeanne of Flanders with the construction of the chapel of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, it is reasonable to conclude that Jeanne also selected the chapel's dedicatee. Why might Jeanne have chosen Elizabeth?

Elizabeth of Hungary, sometimes referred to as Elizabeth of Thuringia, was a Hungarian princess canonized in 1235 by Pope Gregory IX. Her life provides an exceptional lens through which to approach issues of gender, marriage, motherhood, and widowhood in the late medieval period and in doing so to elucidate interests of Jeanne of Flanders. The ways in which Elizabeth interacted with her husband, Ludwig IV, Landgrave of Thuringia, and with her guardian confessor and spiritual director, Conrad of Marburg, provide scholars with a paradigm of the development of female spirituality during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Through a close examination of Elizabeth's hagiographic narratives, their attendant iconographic tradition, and their potential audience, it becomes possible to understand why Elizabeth was of particular interest to Jeanne.

Recent work by scholars Kenneth Baxter Wolf and André Vauchez has helped us to shed light on the life of St. Elizabeth and the models of holy marriage, motherhood, and widowhood that she supplied.<sup>72</sup> The events of Elizabeth of Hungary's life were written in the mid-thirteenth century, almost immediately following her death. This was due in part to efforts of her

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<sup>72</sup> See Kenneth Baxter Wolf's extensive book, *The Life and Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from Her Canonization Hearings*, and André Vauchez's article, "Between Virginity and Spiritual Espousals: Models of Feminine Sainthood in the Christian West in the Middle Ages". The primary source scholarship surrounding Elizabeth is best represented by her collection of canonization documents and testimony from the trials. In addition to this, Elizabeth's life has been recorded repeatedly in a variety of different hagiographic narratives and vitae.

confessor, Conrad of Marburg. Conrad's *Summa vitae* (1232), the principle document of Elizabeth's canonization trial, as well as a multitude of miracle depositions made between 1233 and 1235, provide the substance for many later hagiographic narrative accounts of Elizabeth's life. Indeed, her life was reiterated in several *vitae* eventually synthesized by the Cistercian abbot Caesarius of Heisterbach (and later by others), who completed his *Vita sancta Elyzabeth Lantgraviae* between 1236-37. This work was commissioned at the request of the Marburg House of Teutonic Knights who took over Elizabeth's canonization process after Conrad of Marburg's murder in 1235.<sup>73</sup>

Over time, Elizabeth's *vita* changed, each author retelling her story in a slightly different fashion, highlighting different aspects of her personality and her experience in order to gain the most didactic leverage from her narrative. Such transformations of Elizabeth's life reflect partisan ideals and motives, making it all the more difficult to discern fact from fiction. Did Elizabeth really feel the emotions ascribed to her in these accounts, or experience all the spiritual moments mentioned in her *vitae*? Are these rhetorical devices meant to cement the case for her canonization process? Alternatively, could some details of her life reflect the political or ideological aims of others? Where the latter is concerned, it is clear from Caesarius of Heisterbach's version of Elizabeth's *vita* that he struggled with fitting Elizabeth's happy marriage and motherhood into the more traditional mold of female sainthood prescribed by the Catholic Church.<sup>74</sup> To circumvent this problem, Caesarius attempted to turn the marriage to

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<sup>73</sup> Anja Petrakopoulos, "Sanctity and Motherhood: Elizabeth of Thuringia," in *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder Bakker. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 265-266.

<sup>74</sup> Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, ed. *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 16.



good use by offering it as a model for the Christian ideal of marriage for pious couples:

Elizabeth obeys her husband according to custom, while in turn her husband is patient with her stronger obedience towards God.<sup>75</sup> Other *vitae*, for example the *Ordo Praedictorum* (1289-1297), by the Dominican monk Theoderic of Apolda, concentrated more on Elizabeth's lay spirituality in order to position her as a model for "identification and emulation for a woman of a more ordinary sort."<sup>76</sup>

Medieval Christian communities often relied on two types of information to help them discern saints from ordinary devout people, namely "...evidence of holy behavior in this life and evidence of successful intercession in the next."<sup>77</sup> For those involved in the canonization process, the latter information tended to be the most telling evidence for sanctity and the subject of proof during canonization. Therefore, Wolf asserts, what happened during a saint's lifetime was often recorded as a "conceptual afterthought, the *ex post facto* product of a desire to present the life of the saint as an appropriate prelude to a miracle-working afterlife."<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth's *vitae*, Wolf argues, exemplified this phenomenon insofar as her first hagiographer, Caesarius, understood her life in a way that was consistent with the "...ample evidence of her effective intercession after her death."<sup>79</sup> The popular circulation of *vitae* assigned to saints' distinct personalities, effectively enabling the laity to select a "heavenly patron" with whom they could identify in order to achieve a meaningful link between the "physical and

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<sup>75</sup> Petrakopoulos, "Sanctity and Motherhood", 267-277.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>77</sup> Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Life and Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from Her Canonization Hearings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 43-44.

metaphysical dimensions of their universe.”<sup>80</sup> As we shall see, there is ample circumstantial evidence, both from Elizabeth’s *vitae* from what we know of the life of Jeanne of Flanders, to suggest that Jeanne may have found Elizabeth an attractive exemplar. Indeed, Jeanne may have desired to emulate also Elizabeth in her own everyday life, the events of which in many ways paralleled that of Elizabeth.

The earliest accounts of Elizabeth’s life can be gleaned from documents related to her canonization trials, primarily those written by her Confessor, Conrad of Marburg, and those produced by witnesses that addressed the papal commission in January of 1233.<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth was born in 1207 to King Andrew II of Hungary and Queen Gertrude of Carthina. She was betrothed to her future husband Ludwig of Thuringia at the age of four and sent to the Thuringian court to be trained in the customs of the people for whom she would be queen.<sup>82</sup> As a child, she applied herself to “serious concerns, shunning idle games, avoiding worldly success and prosperity, and advancing always in reverence toward God.”<sup>83</sup> Her *vitae* even record moments of her childhood where she would give up “vain pastimes” such as playing with her maids outside, and stayed awake at night to recite her daily prayers.<sup>84</sup> In 1221, while living out her “state of virginity prudently and innocently” she married Ludwig at the age of 14 (he was 20) under her father’s orders.<sup>85</sup> Where her time as a young queen is concerned, Elizabeth’s

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 44-45.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>82</sup> Ingrid Peterson, "Thirteenth-century Penitential Women," *Studies in Spirituality* 12 (2002):43-60, here at 53.

<sup>83</sup> Jacobus De Voragine, William Granger Ryan, and Eamon Duffy, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 689.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 689.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 690.

*vitae* briefly mention the fact that she gave birth to three children during her time as a young queen, and note that after the birth of her children she closely modeled the behavior of the Blessed Virgin.<sup>86</sup> Scholars have shown how Elizabeth's role as a saintly mother was emphasized in her very first *vita*. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, for example, discusses the rise of the motherly saint, and argues that models of holy motherhood like that of Elizabeth allowed for women to gain positive notoriety in the public sphere, thus allowing for their rise to sanctity.<sup>87</sup> Mulder-Bakker invites us to consider the connection between saintly mothers and the needs of the medieval people who devoted cults to them. The development of the saintly mother paradigm was representative of changing ideas where female sanctity was concerned, ideas which extended to marriage, sexuality, childbirth, and the saintly family.<sup>88</sup>

According to Franciscan tradition, Elizabeth's identification and empathy for the poor began as a small child. While this trait appeared unbecoming for woman who was a candidate for queenship, it is these values that her husband, Ludwig, cherished the most in her; he even defended her works of charity before the court of Thuringia.<sup>89</sup> During her marriage to Ludwig, Elizabeth became a public advocate for the suffering outcasts of society and those who were also voluntarily poor, particularly the Franciscans. She established hospitals and regularly washed the feet of local lepers, publicly sharing her husband's goods with the poor (almsgivings) and speaking out against the injustices brought upon them.<sup>90</sup> One of Elizabeth's

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<sup>86</sup> De Voragine et al., *Golden Legend*, 691.

<sup>87</sup> Mulder-Bakker *Holy Mothers*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>89</sup> Peterson, "Penitential Women", 53. The scholarship surrounding Elizabeth's influence on Franciscan practice and orders is written mostly by Franciscans themselves, and can also be found in the various patronage situations related to images commissioned for churches or secular spaces.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 54-55.

recorded miracles involves her carrying bread to some of the poor against her husband's or a relative's wishes (the person in question is unclear). This person called to her to ask what she had hidden under her cloak. "Roses," she replied. Instead of reprimanding her for hiding and giving away bread to the poor, the person angrily tore away Elizabeth's cloak, only to find that the bread had been turned miraculously into roses, thus saving her from rebuke. The bread, in turn, shifted back into its original form when she distributed it to the poor.<sup>91</sup> Another miracle recalls how Elizabeth allowed a leper to lay in the bed that she shared with her husband. Her mother-in-law, horrified by this action, fled to report the matter to Ludwig. When Ludwig arrived, he removed the covers, only to find a figure of the crucified Christ miraculously stretched out in the bed instead of the leper, further proof of God's protection of Elizabeth.<sup>92</sup> These incidents, and particularly her relationship with lepers, would become regular elements of the visual tradition associated with Elizabeth.

In 1227, Ludwig died on crusade at Otranto.<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth's *vitae* differ as to whether at that time she fled to Marburg "with her husband's consent and the marriage right safeguarded" or if her departure was a result of her sadness over his death on crusade.<sup>94</sup> In any event, Elizabeth piously embraced the state of widowhood. *The Golden Legend's* entry on Elizabeth describes her "taking care not to be defrauded of the reward of a widow's continence and to gain the sixty-fold fruit by observing the Decalogue together with the seven works of mercy."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Fernando Lanzi and Gioia Lanzi, *Saints and Their Symbols: Recognizing Saints in Art and in Popular Images* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 159.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>95</sup> De Voragine et al., *Golden Legend*, 693.

In contrast, some accounts note that once the news of her husband's death was made public, Elizabeth was shamefully banned from her country and deemed a "prodigal, wasteful woman."<sup>96</sup> In any case, Elizabeth abandoned her children and court and submitted herself to a priest-confessor, Master Conrad of Marburg, an "ascetic preacher of the crusade with papal license...whose possible religious affiliation with a religious order is unknown," under whose tutelage she would live out the rest of her short life.<sup>97</sup>

Elizabeth's relationship with Conrad is the subject of great scholarly debate. Dyan Elliott's work explores the benefits Conrad derived from of the relationship.<sup>98</sup> Elliott examines the calculated behavior of Conrad and how he essentially used Elizabeth's obedience to him and her intensive spirituality for his own advantage—specifically in strengthening his connections to the Pope. Elizabeth's *vitae*, in which Conrad had a hand, highlight how closely she worked with him, pledging herself completely to him in an attempt to "gain merit and imitate the example of her Savior, who became obedient even unto death."<sup>99</sup> There are countless examples of Conrad "correcting her disobedience, "for instance stripping her naked and flogging her for missing a sermon he was preached (**Figure 23**).<sup>100</sup> As observed above, the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 693-694.

<sup>97</sup> Ottó Gecser. *The Feast and the Pulpit: Preachers, Sermons and the Cult of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, 1235-ca. 1500*. Spoleto, Italy: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012. ix. See also Elliott, Dyan. *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, 89: Richer's *Gesta Senoniensis ecclesiae* (1254-1264) refers to Conrad as a Franciscan, possibly due to Elizabeth's own patronage and fledging affiliating with the order. And, although he never explicitly speaks of Conrad as a Dominican, Thomas of Cantimpré's sixteenth century editor of *De apibus* notes that many other chroniclers document Conrad as Dominican—some even listing him as their first martyr.

<sup>98</sup> See Elliott's chapter on Elizabeth and Conrad of Marburg in her book *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages*.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 691.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 691.

majority of her testimony in Elizabeth's canonization trials for sainthood came from Conrad's *summa vitae*. Wolf states that Conrad probably did this to "bask in the proximity to this saint in the making. Focusing on those aspects of Elizabeth's life that he knew best...he simultaneously underscored the role he played in shaping her holy life."<sup>101</sup> Wolf argues that Conrad's records of Elizabeth's life, and how he controlled her after her death, were as much about him as they were about Elizabeth—that is every aspect of his account of her life reflected favorably on him.<sup>102</sup> In the version of Elizabeth's *vita* written by Conrad, he enjoys many roles, including spiritual advisor, "autocrat who demanded total obedience," and finally "awestruck observer who marveled at Elizabeth's determination."<sup>103</sup>

During her time at Marburg, Elizabeth, dressed in rags and often engaged in long periods of fasting and sleepless vigils as instructed and demanded by Conrad. She continued her work with the poor, "never letting anyone go hungry and supplying the needs of all so liberally that she was acclaimed as the mother of the poor."<sup>104</sup> She also continued her collaborations with the Franciscans, giving alms and spinning wool, and refusing any attempt by her father, the King of Hungary, to return to her paternal home. Conrad then began to separate her from any company or any person to whom she grew attached, sending away her remaining service maids and leaving her in isolation.<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth spent much of her time caring for the sick in hospitals, which probably led to her untimely death at the age of 24. On her deathbed, Elizabeth "hummed a sweet melody", remaining cheerful and pious throughout her last hours.

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<sup>101</sup> Wolf, *St. Elizabeth*, 46-47.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>104</sup> De Voragine et al., *Golden Legend*, 692.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 695.

At the stroke of midnight, on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1231, she is said to have proclaimed: “Now is the time when almighty God calls those who are his friends to the celestial nuptials” and breathed her final breath.<sup>106</sup>

After she died, her body laid unburied for four days but no unpleasant odor arose from her corpse. In fact, her *vitae* point out that she actually smelled of a rather pleasant aroma that refreshed everyone, a typical indication of a deceased person’s sanctity. Flocks of small birds clustered on the roof of the church in which her body lay, filling the air with their song and melodies, while mourners came to clip off wisps of her hair or garment to save as relics. After the four days, her body was finally entombed in at Marburg. It was said that oil flowed freely from the monument.<sup>107</sup>

## **IX. Elizabeth in the Afterlife**

From the moment of her entombment, Conrad and Elizabeth’s devout followers began to record her saintly deeds and miracles, starting with the events that made up her last few hours. Elizabeth, according to her *vitae*, was deemed saintly in death for five reasons. First, her singing on her deathbed was evidence for the intense joy she felt as she prepared to meet eternal salvation; it “drove away the devil.”<sup>108</sup> Second, her cleanliness and purity remained even in death, as her body elicited a fragrant aroma. Third, her dignity was honored by the joyful singing of birds, comforting the soul in the hour of death.<sup>109</sup> Fourth, as a result of her mercy and

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 698.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 699 referenced for paragraph.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 699.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 699.

pity, oil flowed from her dead body because “in her lifetime she abounded in works of mercy.”<sup>110</sup> And, finally, (and perhaps most importantly in terms of her canonization) Elizabeth, after having left her earthly body, was glorified with a multiplicity of miracles.<sup>111</sup>

As observed above, the medieval church required two types of evidence for the identification of a saint: a record of holy behavior during the candidate’s lifetime, and evidence of miraculous activity after their death. The latter was especially important to consider, as the rise of new cults in the early Middle Ages relied on the spread of *fama sanctitatis* (“fame of holiness”) which took the form of reports of healing miracles associated with the suspected saint’s tomb.<sup>112</sup> The logic, according to Wolf, was simple: while it would seem unlikely that an unholy person may exhibit saintly behaviors or perform miracles in their lifetime, it was even *more* unbelievable that such things could happen to the body of someone after death.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the earliest and most reliable sources pertaining to Elizabeth’s canonization concern miracles associated with her tomb and intercession after her death.<sup>114</sup> The earliest of the recorded 60 miracles, whose collection was spearheaded by Conrad of Marburg, involved a cure that took place a little less than five months after Elizabeth’s death.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, many of the reports of the miracles and the depositions that took place lack detail and are inconsistent. The depositions revealed a side of Elizabeth the saint that was in stark contrast to Elizabeth the earthly woman. Those who prayed to Elizabeth

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 699.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 699.

<sup>112</sup> Wolf, *St. Elizabeth*, 4.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 5.



for assistance soon included promise gifts and favors in exchange for Elizabeth's blessing, grace, or cure for their ailments. Given what we know about Elizabeth during her life, it might seem strange that she would prefer offerings to pious or charitable deeds. Yet not one of her depositions include a promise of the latter sort.<sup>116</sup> Saints, regardless of the humility they practiced during their lifetime, were expected to "bask in the glow of public adulation and do whatever it took to maintain that aura."<sup>117</sup> In death, Elizabeth seemed to have been extra susceptible to this form of "flattery" or "self-aggrandizement" as she was a new saint trying to compete with more established ones; no matter how humble, every single gift or token left at her tomb resulted in a harnessing of her power for every visitor to her shrine.<sup>118</sup>

In January of 1233, the first commission for Elizabeth's canonization was convened in Marburg. During this time, the committee heard, evaluated, and recorded the sworn testimony of witnesses to Elizabeth's posthumous, intercessional miracles.<sup>119</sup> This resulted in a recorded 105 miracles, of which twenty-four additional miracles would be added at the second papal commission in 1235.<sup>120</sup> The most important information gleaned from the second commission in 1235 was the testimony of Elizabeth's four closest companions. These were Guda and Isentrud, two women of high standing who knew Elizabeth from 1222 to 1228; and Irmgard and Elizabeth, two of Elizabeth's servants from 1228 to 1231. Their testimony was compiled and is more commonly referred to as the *Dicta quatuor ancillarum*.<sup>121</sup> After hearing this testimony

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 194.

and the evidence presented by the commission, Pope Gregory IX canonized Elizabeth in Perugia on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1235, four years after her death.<sup>122</sup>

## **X. Saint Elizabeth as Lay [Woman] Guide**

Throughout her lifetime, and after her especially after her canonization, St. Elizabeth of Hungary offered an attractive model of conduct for a broad range of pious laypeople. As evident from her many *vitae* and a multitude of images, her identity could be orchestrated or reformulated to suit a variety of interests in response to the needs or wishes of authors or patrons. A major constituency of Elizabeth's devotees included married women and mothers, persons whose station in life was not regularly reflected in the canon of saints. It is perhaps not surprising that Elizabeth's hagiographers, to include Conrad, stressed her propensity for subordination; in other words, it was Conrad and subsequent male writers who defined the parameters of saintly marriage and motherhood. This was not necessarily an easy task. Elizabeth was not a virgin but had been happily married and had given birth to three children. In terms of hagiography, these circumstances proved to be a challenge to translate, as most female saints of the time were either unhappily married or virginal. New solutions were necessary. As a wife, Elizabeth was willingly subordinate to Christ as she would be her husband. The relationship between a woman and Christ developed into a profoundly important marriage-type for medieval women to pursue in the eyes of the Church. To make her more appealing for canonization, and to facilitate her developing cult, Elizabeth's motherhood was figured in terms Anja Petrokopoulos describes as "...opportunities to recommend the pious

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<sup>122</sup> Peterson, "Penitential Women", 54.

work of educating one's children in the service of god...one of the major spiritual endeavors of the saint seems to be extending or even transferring the love of a mother for her children to all children."<sup>123</sup>

Even after abandoning her children for a vow of chastity, Elizabeth's hagiographers specifically documented her acts of charity through motherly language and metaphors, highlighting her specific attention to and concern for poor and sick infants and children. In widowhood, Elizabeth continued such acts of charity, acting as an accessible model for those who nursed the sick, and widows with inheritances and properties.

Elizabeth experienced a less than kind subordinate relationship with her confessor, Conrad of Marburg. Conrad, employing some of the same tactics that one would use to "expose heretical depravity and orthodox sanctity," shaped Elizabeth's spirituality through his own exacting vision.<sup>124</sup> Through Conrad's iteration of her life, Elizabeth's spiritual conduct proved to be an excellent model for the fight against heresy and heretical thinking, not so much as evidence or proof for a particular side of a doctrinal argument, but through her unwavering and unquestioning submission to ecclesiastical authority.<sup>125</sup> In his retelling of events, Elizabeth solidifies her submission to Conrad further by rejection of her social position and the affluence that came with it in exchange for the directions of a lowborn secular priest, namely himself.<sup>126</sup> In a general sense, the tension between Conrad and Elizabeth, confessor and confessee, offers a paradigm for relations between secular noblewomen and the church. Returning to Jeanne of

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<sup>123</sup> Petrakopoulos, "Sanctity and Motherhood", 271.

<sup>124</sup> Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 85.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 89.

Flanders' patronage of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel at Laon, it is worth pondering whether her patronage of the chapel at Laon was the result of similar influence by the canons of the cathedral. Jeanne's agency in this affair may have been prompted by her relationship with the canons. As a devout and pious woman, Jeanne would have wanted to provide endowments for masses to be said on behalf of her family's souls in purgatory; the canons, needing her money, provided her with that opportunity.

Throughout the remainder of her life, and even in death, Conrad's power over Elizabeth appeared to replace the relationship she had had with her husband, Ludwig, after his death: "Elizabeth's now permanent vow of obedience to Conrad would be colored by the heightened level of obedience exacted in marriage," Elliot argues, as defined by the new, more strict, canon laws that tightened a husband's control over his wife.<sup>127</sup> This is also exemplified through the transferring of Elizabeth's property to Conrad in her widowhood, extending Conrad's control over her. As confessor, Conrad's persuasive sacerdotal authority was largely derived from his ability to consecrate hosts and hear confessions; the priest, in the wake of Lateran IV, was "progressively perceived as standing *in loco Dei*," an idea hardly lost on Elizabeth and her perception of him.<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth's handmaiden, in her testimony at the canonization trial, reported the true fear Elizabeth felt for her confessor:

"She also said that the blessed Elisabeth was especially afraid of Master Conrad, but in the place of God [*in loco Dei*], saying 'If I am so afraid of a mortal man, how much more is the omnipotent God to be feared, who is the lord and judge of all.'"<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 95.

Elizabeth submitted to Conrad due to his “virtually unassailable position of authority” as a surrogate for God and husband.<sup>130</sup> Conrad even took the role of husband in death, as he was buried next to Elizabeth inside the Marburg basilica.<sup>131</sup>

Elizabeth’s fear of Conrad and of God produced an undisputable illustration for the desired attitude of the laity concerning the priesthood in the wake of Lantern IV.<sup>132</sup> She proved to be an undeniable example of the anti-heretical initiative against the growing Cathar dualism present in the Catholic faith, a heresy that troubled the Church throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this context, Elizabeth’s obedience to the clergy acted as a model of proper conduct against the proponents of the Albegensian heresy, whose practitioners, among other heretical convictions, harbored contempt for Catholic clergy. There are certain hagiographical prominences that emphasize Elizabeth’s tendencies to “police the sacramental system by reminding individuals not to neglect baptizing their infants and urging the sick to confess and communicate.”<sup>133</sup> The sources in which history has reconstructed Elizabeth’s sanctity and the events that led her to it are all part of her contemporary church and state politics. Petrakopoulos explains, “the image of Elizabeth, whether as widow or wife, so often invoked as an example for women to follow or chosen by women to follow and to authorize their own *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.”<sup>134</sup> Her potential as a cultural symbol and her accessibility to women of the medieval era was due in part to her ability to portray the ideal.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>134</sup> Petrakopoulos, “Sanctity and Motherhood”, 285.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 285.

While her virtues and exemplary characteristics would eventually prove attractive to a wide variety of medieval people (regardless of gender or class or order), her examples of chastity and charity and humility were specifically deployed in her function as the ideal medieval woman—especially that of the rich aristocratic woman of royal or noble birth.<sup>136</sup> Her *vitae* constructs her as an ideal “pedagogic instrument” for such audiences.<sup>137</sup> Communication of Elizabeth’s virtues also took place through imagery, the pictorial content of which was presumably devised in connection with patrons.

## **XI. The Iconography of St. Elizabeth of Hungary**

Elizabeth was a particularly important saint for laypersons who aspired to engage in a religious lifestyle equal in rigor to that of the newly founded mendicant orders. These new groups, such as the Beguines (lay religious women), were often controversial; the Catholic Church was not certain how to respond to these new models of the religious life. Similarly, the shaping of Elizabeth’s narrative after her death also proves that she was a figure that the Church struggled to control. Indeed, Elizabeth’s model offered a great deal that was attractive to religiously independent lay people, for whom the saint became a champion. Elizabeth’s imagery was heavily promoted by Beguine communities and by other parties who identified with her as a model of charity, widowhood, and motherhood. She became the patron saint of several of these new and controversial communities to include the Franciscan Tertiaries, the Franciscans as a whole, and the Knights of the Teutonic Order.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, because of her

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 285.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 285.

<sup>138</sup> Lanzi and Lanzi, *Saints and Symbols*, 160.

work with the sick, she became the patron saint of hospitals and hospital workers and those sick with ringworm—whom she cured.<sup>139</sup> Because she often took bread to the poor and participated in charitable work, she became the patron saint of bakers, beggars, of charitable associations, Sisters of Charity, widows, orphans, and those wrongly accused and persecuted without cause.<sup>140</sup> All such persons would find the depiction of the saint appropriate and desirable in a place of worship or work.

There is no limit to the media in which Elizabeth of Hungary is depicted; they range from marginal illustrations and decorative initials in manuscripts to church stained glass and statuary. Iconographically, there are some recurrent aspects of Elizabeth's appearance in art. While these attributes of Saint Elizabeth's iconography were not entirely codified by the early fourteenth century, she is generally displayed as young (having died at age 24), beautiful, dressed in royal robes, and crowned. She carries roses in the folds of her cloak or in and around her persons and sometimes holds or distributes bread. She may carry a Bible, or hold a small model of the Church of Marburg (**Figures 24-29**).<sup>141</sup> The representation of Elizabeth on the "Elizabeth Seal" of Sophie of Brabant (c. 1273) shows her making a sign of benediction with one hand and holding a Bible in her other hand. The composition of the seal is very close to that of the sculptural grouping in the lower register of the Laon relief (**Figures 4-5.2, 28**). Elizabeth's crown may sometimes actually be three crowns which refer to her royalty, her piety, and her

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 160. See also, Eileen McKiernan González, "Reception, Gender, and Memory: Elisenda de Montcada and her Dual-Effigy Tomb at Santa Maria de Pedralbes," In *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin, 317. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

continence.<sup>142</sup> There may also be images of Elizabeth that directly reference her experience with miracles, such as the Miracle of the Roses or the Leper who turned into a Crucified Christ (**Figures 30-32**). Once again, because of her association with the sick, Elizabeth is also sometimes shown surrounded by lepers, although, it should be noted that this image did not find popularity until after the fourteenth century (**Figures 34-35**). Because of her connections with the Franciscans, and the fact that Conrad of Marburg was also a Franciscan, Elizabeth is sometimes shown not in royal garb, but instead in the Franciscan habit—even though she was never a tertiary (**Figures 26, 28, 31, 34-36**).<sup>143</sup> This also causes her to be displayed with other Franciscan figures or patrons (**Figures 27 and 37**). The most consistent imagery, however, shows Elizabeth performing her acts of piety (**Figures 33-34, 38-40**).

The stained-glass program of the “Elizabeth Window” in the Elisabethkirche in Marburg, Germany provides an example of Elizabeth’s iconography in narrative form as it relates to moments of notable piety outlined in her numerous *vitae*. This stained-glass window serves as an example of the laity or religious groups who patronized Elizabeth’s image, and some of the specific moments of her life that they may have wanted to emulate. The Elisabethkirche was built by the Order of the Teutonic Knights over the tomb of St. Elizabeth in 1235-1283 and quickly became an important pilgrimage stop during the medieval period. The Elizabeth window consists of two lancets of images and one top, central image, detailing some of the deeds of Elizabeth, the birth of Christ, and Elizabeth’s Coronation in Heaven. The left lancet, from the bottom up, consists of the following scenes: Elizabeth feeds the Hungry, Elizabeth

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 160.



gives the Thirsty drink and washes feet, Elizabeth clothes the naked, Elizabeth nurses the sick, and Elizabeth visits prisoners (**Figure 33**). The right lancet, from the bottom up, contains: the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Elizabeth leaving her husband, Elizabeth learning of her husband's death, Elizabeth taking the habit, Elizabeth distributing alms, and Elizabeth on her deathbed. The top roundel consists of Elizabeth and St. Francis before Christ and Mary as they are crowned in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Marburg window speaks to the types of themes at stake in the veneration of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary—namely charitable deeds and the imitation of Christ's works of mercy, both themes that align with Franciscan interests.<sup>144</sup> Imagery like that in the Marburg windows served to communicate Elizabeth's identity and basic tenets of Franciscan piety to popular audiences. Even to the illiterate viewer, these images demonstrated what would need to be done in order to achieve salvation. While none of the Marburg scenes are portrayed in the Chapel of Saint Elizabeth in Laon, they would have been recalled by her image and offered a model for emulation. Jeanne of Flanders, in her contemplation of Elizabeth, would likewise be reminded of the saint's virtuous life and ponder how she, too, might strive to do pious deeds.

## **XII. Jeanne of Flanders as an Active Patron**

As demonstrated by the studies above, the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel attests to Jeanne of Flanders' authority as a noble widow. The chapel's dedication to Elizabeth strongly

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<sup>144</sup> Ivan Gerát, "Dei Saturitas. St. Elizabeth's Works of Mercy in the Medieval Pictorial Narrative". In *Insights and Interpretations: Studies in Celebration of the Eighty-Fifth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane, 168. (Princeton University Press: 2002).

suggests Jeanne's sympathy toward Franciscan doctrine. I would like to argue that despite the shifts in inheritance practices that took place in the eleventh century and developments that limited women's access to power, women like Jeanne of Flanders, continued to access their power and agency. Agency access occurred often during widowhood, when relatively fewer social restrictions were placed on medieval women. The St. Elizabeth Chapel, and the sculptural decoration inside, is one such instance of Jeanne exercising this power.

Jeanne came from a long line of powerful Franco-Flemish noblewomen who used their authority on behalf of religious institutions in their native country of Flanders. Jeanne's great-grandmother, Margaret II, and her great-aunt, Jeanne, Countesses of Flanders, were two of the most influential female patronesses during their rule of Flanders and Hainaut, a period which lasted almost the entire thirteenth century. These women exercised the most authority when it came to the establishment of Beguinages, or communal complexes meant to house Beguines throughout the Low Countries.<sup>145</sup> As a chaste widow known for her charity and good deeds it is no coincidence that St. Elizabeth of Hungary's cult spread quickly throughout the Low Countries, possibly due to Bishop John II of Liège's participation in her canonization. This led to her selection as patron for many Beguinages across Europe.<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth's popularity further spread through her children, especially her daughter Sophie of Brabant, and son Henry II—whose marriage to Beatrice of Brabant in 1239 brought new attention to Elizabeth's life in the

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<sup>145</sup> Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 105. These sisters founded several beguinages in Ghent (Patron saint is Elizabeth), Bruges, Lille, Douai, Kortrijk, Valenciennes, Mons, Ypres, and possibly courts of Cambrai, Ter Hooie and Poortakker in Ghent. 105.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 88.

Low Countries.<sup>147</sup> As previously mentioned, Elizabeth's association with hospital work and the sick, led to hospitals, patronized by Beguinages, to formally honor Elizabeth and her charitable work.<sup>148</sup>

Jeanne's family's relationship to Beguines and Beguinages aligns closely with interests of her immediate family as well—particularly, her father, Count Robert III of Béthune, and his defense of Beguines against the Clementine Decree *Cum de quibusdam mulieribus* (c. 1318-1320). This legislation, stemming from the Council of Vienne in 1312, marked a change in the ways in which lay religious movements—like the Beguines and Beghards—were perceived throughout Europe.<sup>149</sup> Robert's decree defended the Beguinages of Flanders against the accusations of the Council of Vienne, which wanted to dissolve the “suspicious” Beguine and Beghard practice, and prevented Beguines from living together in communal beguinages. Robert requested in his petition to Pope John XXII that Beguines be allowed to continue to their way of everyday life in their communities. The comital family of Flanders was intimately familiar with beguinages; there were nearly 50 in Flanders during the time of this decree, confirming that these institutions were part of the very being of Flanders and Flemish life.<sup>150</sup> Robert cited Beguinages as productive places for women of all ranks to inhabit—especially those who were having issues finding spouses. Frequently, Robert invoked his right as heir to a beguinage

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>149</sup> Walter Simons, “In Praise of Faithful Women: Count Robert of Flanders's Defense of Beguines against the Clementine Decree of *Cum de quibusdam mulieribus* (ca. 1318-1320),” in *Christianity and Culture in the Middle Ages: Essays to Honor John Van Engen*, ed. David C. Mengel and Lisa Wolverton, 331-57 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

: Robert's defense letter was recovered in draft form in the archives of the beguinage of Our Lady of Ter Hooie in Ghent, 332.

<sup>150</sup> Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 332-333.

foundation previously set forth by his famed ancestors, the Countesses Jeanne and Margaret II, nearly a hundred years earlier.<sup>151</sup> For Robert, it was a matter of preserving his family's name and heritage, as well as the Flemish institution of the Beguinage. Based on circumstantial evidence, we can infer that Jeanne, during this time, would have encouraged her father to support the beguines.<sup>152</sup> The Council of Vienne's accusations, and Robert III's petition for the protection of the beguinages of Flanders, coincide with the construction of Jeanne's chapel at Laon. Hailing from an area saturated with beguine communities who honored Elizabeth, and descending from a long line of powerful women who also patronized Elizabeth's image, Jeanne of Flanders fits perfectly into the narrative of the promotion of Elizabeth's cult. A widow herself upon the chapel's completion in 1316, Jeanne probably selected Elizabeth on account of the many parallels she perceived between her own life and that of the saint, as well as her family's defense of other pious laywomen, threatened by the decrees of the Council of Vienne, who similarly adopted Elizabeth as their emblem.

Stylistically speaking, the bottom half of the sculptural decoration of the Elizabeth chapel in Laon bares striking similarities to the "Elizabeth seal" of Sophie of Brabant—Saint Elizabeth's daughter, from a charter dated to 1273 (**Figure 28**).<sup>153</sup> Sophia, following her mother's death, sought out possibilities in art and architecture to demonstrate the position of her family and to endorse the veneration of her mother, Saint Elizabeth.<sup>154</sup> While there is little

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 338.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 340.

<sup>153</sup> State Archives Marburg, Urk. A II, Marburg, German Order, Sept. 13, 1273

<sup>154</sup> Stefanie Seeberg, "Women as Makers of Church Decoration: Illustrated Textiles at the Monasteries of Alternberg/Lahn, Rupertsberg, and Heiningen (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> C.)," In *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin, 363. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

evidence of Sophia's patronage of art and architecture during her residence at Marburg after her mother's death, evidence of her propagandist use of her mother's image for the expression of her own power is manifest in the wax seals and coins from the time of her regency in Thuringian court.<sup>155</sup> Sophia's wax seal shows Elizabeth of Hungary in a wimple, with two individuals in prayer on either side: to the saint's right is her grandson, Landgraf Heinrich I, and to her left Duchess Sophie of Brabant, her daughter. Compositionally speaking, the figure of Elizabeth flanked by two kneeling supplicants found on the wax seal is nearly identical to the arrangement in Laon, which suggests that the chapel arrangement could have been inspired by the wax seal. Given the importance of the ranking of Sophie of Brabant as daughter to Saint Elizabeth, and in light of Jeanne's familiarity with Elizabeth and her cult, the image could have indeed been known by Jeanne and used as a reference in the sculpting of the relief. I believe it more likely, however, that the two supplicants' in the Laon composition, refer not to Heinrich I or even the cathedral canons, but rather to the patron herself—Jeanne and her husband, Enguerrand of Coucy.

Recent scholars, especially Erin Jordan, have sought to dispel some of the common misnomers about the concept of female agency in the thirteenth century.<sup>156</sup> Jeanne's actions as a widow and as an abbess of Sauvoir in the patronage of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel demonstrate her desire to promote both a spiritual and secular agenda. The spiritual agenda was explicitly laid out in the charter dictated by the Chapter of Laon Cathedral which mentions Jeanne, "moved by divine inspiration, has constructed and built a certain chapel...for the

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 363.

<sup>156</sup> See: Erin L. Jordan, "Female Founders: Exercising Authority in Thirteenth-century Flanders and Hainaut". *Church History and Religious Culture* 88, no. 4 (2008): 535-61.

purpose of divine service and in honor of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, for the redemption of souls of her and her husband.”<sup>157</sup> As previously mentioned, this particular action was in line with the laity’s reaction to the Catholic dogma of the afterlife permeating throughout medieval Europe. The building of a lateral chapel provided a space for offices to be said by a chaplain for the saving of souls, thereby decreasing time in Purgatory. In this sense, the sculptural arrangement of both the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, an instructive image about the concept of transubstantiation for the laity, and Elizabeth of Hungary, a prescriptive model for ecclesiastical obedience and pious widowhood, makes perfect sense.

Yet, the patronage of this chapel and its sculptural decoration accomplished something far more for Jeanne than the salvation of her soul or that of Enguerrand’s from damnation. This is a sign of her wielding of power, highlighting the connection between the control of property and marital status.<sup>158</sup> While it is certainly important to acknowledge the significance of Jeanne’s actions for the saving of her husband’s soul, it could also be possible that the death of her husband finally gave Jeanne the freedom and unrestricted access to her own property and inheritance for perhaps the first time in her life.<sup>159</sup> Jeanne, and many, many other medieval women, understood and complied with their rights as wives. Yet, they also understood their rights as widows and that the deaths of their husbands provided them with prime opportunities, not necessarily found in marriage, to exercise authority on behalf of themselves.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, it is important to also separate Jeanne’s patronage of her family

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<sup>157</sup> Paris National Archives, L 734, Dossier 1, items 7, 7 bis.

<sup>158</sup> Jordan, “Female Founders”, 556.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 557.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 557.

chapel as a private action, as this "...suggests a much sharper demarcation between public and private spheres than existed in the thirteenth century. It also underappreciates the political significance of their actions."<sup>161</sup> To afford the expenses that came with the building and maintaining of a private chapel demonstrated a sign of wealth and power to those who could not. Jeanne not only commissioned the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel at Laon Cathedral, but also exercised control and maintained lifetime appointments to the chaplaincy that sustained her space. To place religious patronage in the private sphere of the performativity of what it means to be a medieval widow overlooks the many other ways that women like Jeanne, and her great-great aunts Jeanne and Margaret II, used their agency and power as means to obtain notoriety as both public and political figures.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 560.

## FIGURES



Figure 1: West Façade  
*Laon Cathedral*  
Laon, France  
Begun c. 1190

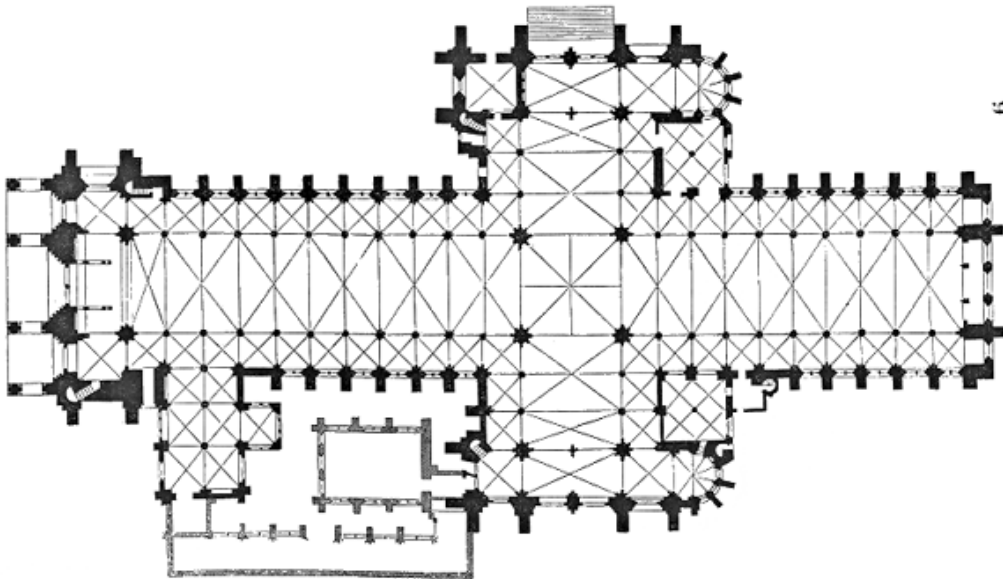


Figure 2: Eugène Viollet le Duc, *Floor plan of Laon Cathedral*, Laon, France, 19<sup>th</sup> century





Figure 3: *St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel (Petite Sacristie)*, Lateral Chapel-*Laon Cathedral*, Laon, France, begun c. 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, screens added in 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries

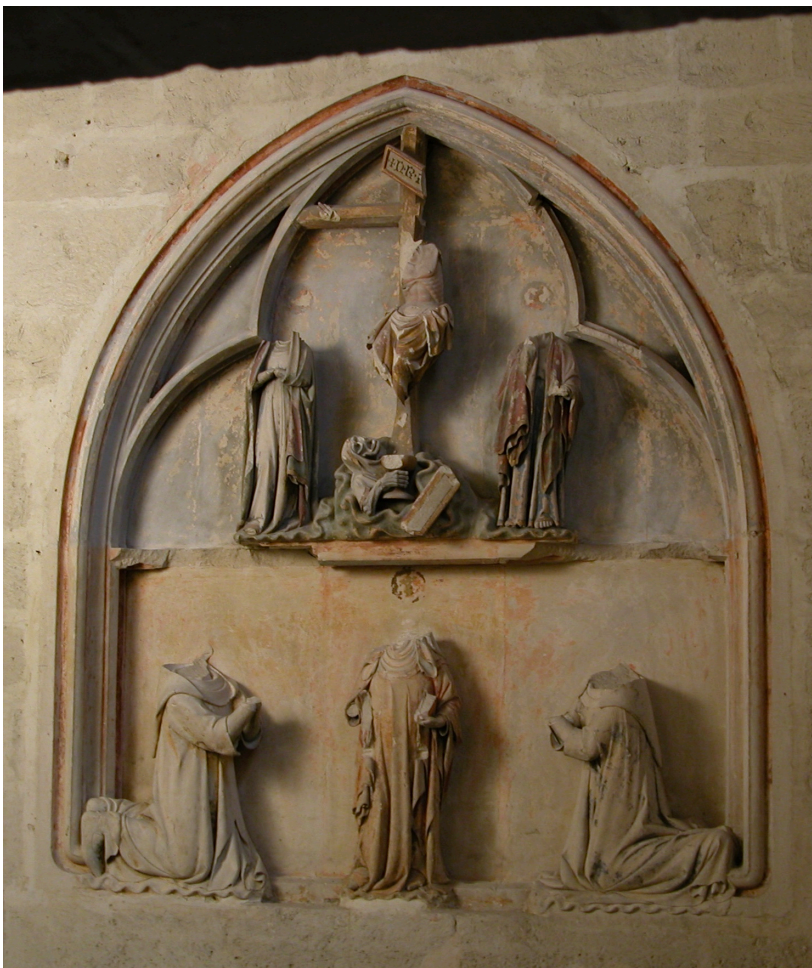


Figure 4: *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary with Canons or Patrons, and Eucharistic Man of Sorrows with Virgin and John the Evangelist*  
 St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral  
 Laon, France  
 Begun after c. 1315



Figure 5.1, DETAIL: *St. Elizabeth*  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral  
Laon, France, begun after c. 1315



Figure 5.2, DETAIL: *St. Elizabeth (with Bible?)*  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon  
Cathedral, Laon, France, begun after c. 1315





Figures 6, DETAIL (two views): *Canon/Patron 1*, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral Laon, France, begun after c. 1315



Figures 7, DETAIL (two views): *Canon/Patron 2*, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral Laon, France, begun after c. 1315





Figure 8, DETAIL: *Adam (?) with Chalice*  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral  
Laon, France, begun after c. 1315



Figure 9, DETAIL: *Eucharistic Man of Sorrow*  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Chapel-Laon Cathedral  
Laon, France, begun after c. 1315



Figure 10, 11, DETAILS: *The Virgin (L) and St. John the Evangelist (R)*, St. Elizabeth of Hungary  
Chapel-Laon Cathedral, Laon, France, begun after c. 1315



Figure 12: *Triptych of the Mass of Saint Gregory*  
 Tempera on wood  
 Westphalia, Germany  
 End of the 15<sup>th</sup> century



Figure 13: Sloane MS 2683, f. 65v





Figure 14: Book of Hours, MS M. 90, fol. 130r, France (perhaps Verdun and Paris), c. 1375



Figure 15: Bilateral Icon of the Passion, Kastoria, 12<sup>th</sup> century



Figure 16: Don Silvestro dei Gherarducci, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin Mary, St. John, and a Donor*, Florence-Italy, Gold Leaf and Tempera on Panel, c. 1365

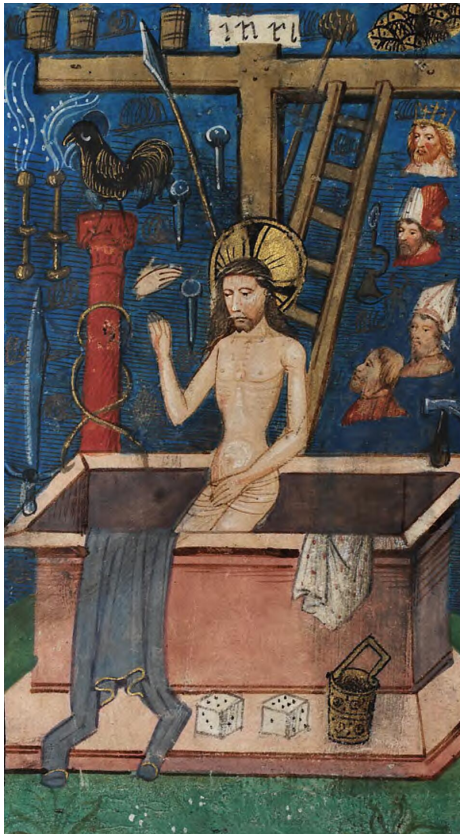


Figure 17: "Christ as the Man of Sorrows", De Gray Hours f. 203v, c. 1390





Figure 18: Studio of Friedrich Herlin  
*Christ with Ears of Wheat and Grape Vine*  
1469

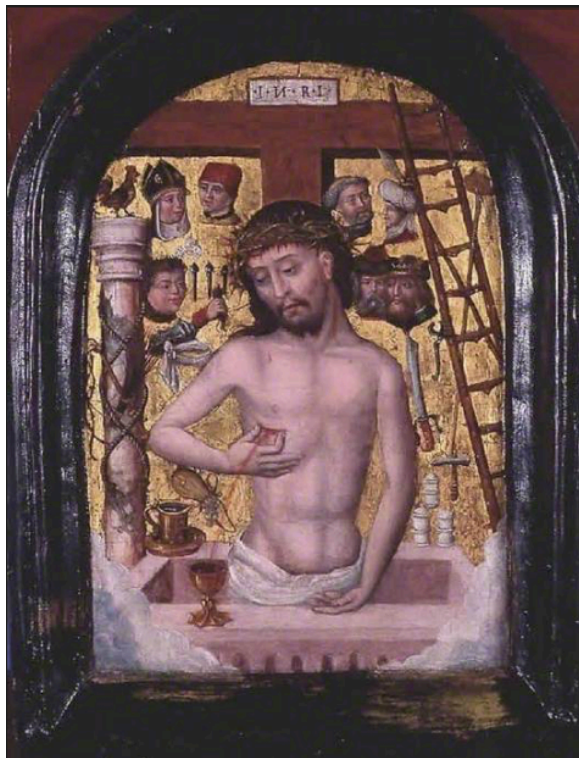


Figure 19: *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*  
Oil on Panel, 1450-1500



Figure 20: *Man of Sorrows*, Gilt Copper and Enamel, Italy, Mid 14<sup>th</sup> century



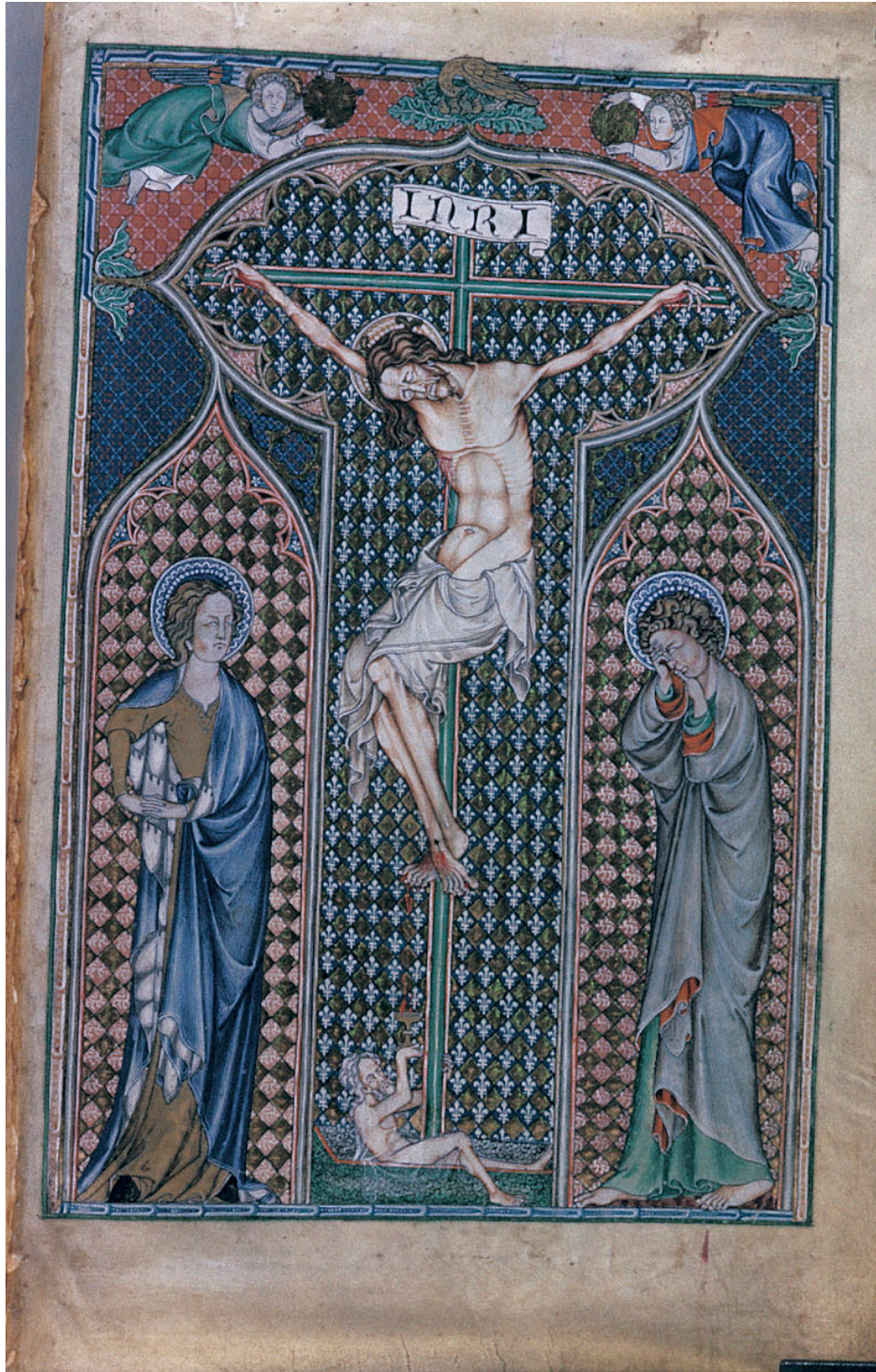


Figure 21: Arundel MS 83  
II, f. 132r, 1339





Figure 22: Northwest German Master, *Christ with Charity* 1470



Figure 23: *Conrad of Marburg flogging St. Elizabeth*, *Psalterium*, Library of Augustinian Convent of Genlis, Paris, Bibl. St. Geneviève, MS 2689, f. 12, c. 1260



Figure 24: Ludwig Juppkes  
*Elizabeth of Hungary*  
 Elisabethkirche, Marburg  
 Polychromed and gilded wood  
 1511



Figure 25: *French Elizabeth*  
 Elisabethkirche, Marburg  
 Polychromed and gilded wood  
 c. 1470





Figure 26: Giotto, *St. Elizabeth with Roses in her Lap*, Fresco, Bardi Chapel-Santa Croce Florence-Italy, 1317



Figure 27: Lippo Vanni  
*Triptych of Virgin and Child with St. Elizabeth of Hungary and Donor*,  
Tempera and Gold Leaf on wood, 1340



Figure 28: *Elizabeth in Wimple with Landgraf Heinrich I and Duchess Sophie von Brabant* ("Elizabeth Seal" of Sophie of Brabant)  
State Archives Marburg, Urk. A II  
Marburg, German Order  
Sept. 13, 1273



Figure 29: Pietro Nelli  
*St. Elizabeth of Hungary*  
Tempera and Gold leaf on panel  
1365





Figure 30: *Elisabethaltar*, with *Legend of the Crucified in Bed* to left  
Fresco, Elisabethkirche, Marburg, 14<sup>th</sup> century



Figure 31: *St. Elizabeth and the Leprosus Turning into the Crucified Christ*, Krumauer Bildercodex  
Liber depictus, Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 370, f. 93r



Figure 32: *St. Elizabeth with  
Roses in her bed*  
ÖNB Cod. 1921, f. 226



Figure 33: *Saint Elizabeth caring  
for the sick*  
Stained Glass  
*St. Elizabeth stained glass window*  
Elisabethkirche, Marburg  
c. 1236-1249



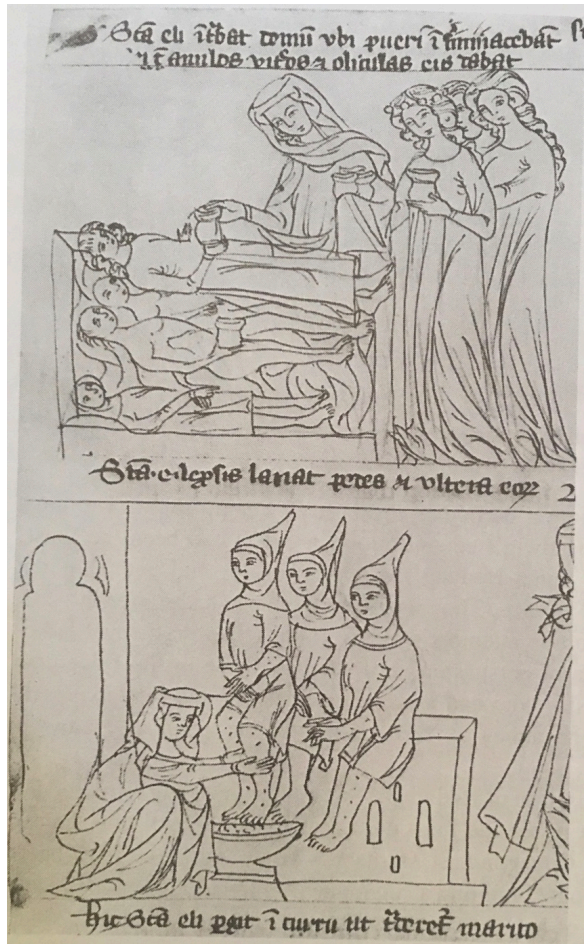


Figure 34: St. Elizabeth caring for the Sick  
*Krumauer Bildercodex*  
 Liber depictus, Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 370, f. 89v



Figure 35: St. Elizabeth washing the foot of  
 a leper, *Le livre d'images de Madame*  
 Marie, Paris, Bib Nat, Nouv. Acq. fr. 16251,  
 f. 103v, 1268-1292





Figure 36: *St. Elizabeth Taking the Veil*  
 St. Elizabeth Reliquary  
 Wood, Silver, stones, and Glass  
 Hermitage, St. Petersburg, c. 1250



Figure 37: *The Grave of Elizabeth*, Carved relief, Elisabethkirche, Marburg, 14<sup>th</sup> century





Figure 38: *St. Elizabeth Donating her Clothes to the Beggars*, St. Elizabeth Reliquary, Wood, Silver, stones, and Glass Hermitage, St. Petersburg, c. 1250



Figure 39: *St. Elizabeth Distributing Alms* St. Elizabeth Reliquary, Wood, Silver, stones, and Glass, Hermitage, St. Petersburg, c. 1250



Figure 40: *St. Elizabeth Feeding the Hungry* St. Elizabeth Reliquary Wood, Silver, stones, and Glass Hermitage, St. Petersburg, c. 1250

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## APPENDIX

Paris National Archives, L 734, Dossier 1, items 7, 7 bis, translation:

The *Officialis* of Laon to all those who shall inspect these presents. Be it known that we have seen, read, and retained certain letters of the venerable men, G. the Dean and the Chapter of the Church of Laon as inscribed below, affixed with their seal and containing the following: To all those who shall inspect these presents. G. the Dean and the Chapter of the Church of Laon, salutation in him who is the true salvation of all men. Out of the zeal of intimate affection and the plenitude of full devotion, and also the fullness of benevolence, which the noble woman, Lady Joan of Flanders, lady of St. Gobain, widow of the esteemed and powerful Lord Enguerrand, her husband, formerly lord of Coucy, dignified by illustrious, distinguished blood and distinguished by other diverse virtues, has and has heretofore held towards us and our church, to which very many pay respect as we fervently know, as their works of great merit have made manifest in clear and unconcealed evidence, has now moved us to assent to her honest petitions and writings in so far as we can as we are bound to in the sight of God. Therefore, because the aforesaid Lady, moved by divine inspiration, has constructed and built a certain chapel or oratory on the right side, at a place where we have been accustomed and been bound to furnish our chaplain on the one hand, and next to a column or pillar of the same church near which holy water in a place hollowed out of stone on the other hand, for the purpose of divine service and in honor of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, for the redemption of souls of her and her husband aforesaid, and has instituted two chaplaincies in it and there placed two chaplains, first having sought and obtained license from us, as is more fully contained in letters of the aforesaid Lady specially executed, having retained to ourselves the right of patronage or presentation to those chaplaincies whenever it shall happen to be vacant so long as human life shall last, to ensure the knowledge of the present and for the memory of future times, we have determined and do declare by the tenor of these presents that this action pleases us and that we wish grant and together assent that the same Lady, for as long as she shall live as is aforesaid, may present suitable persons, whether one or more, to the said chaplaincies, or either of them when they shall happen to be vacant, and that at her presentment, we shall be bound to confer upon the persons presented by her, the persons



presented to us by her being eligible for such chaplaincies as is proper, and to receive those persons to the same.

Given at Laon in our chapter under the application of our seal the ninth day of the month of March, in the year of our lord 1316, in witness of which sight the seal of the court of Laon appended to the present letters we have caused our own seal to be appended the sixteenth day of March aforesaid in the aforesaid year.