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**Visions and the Image of Ecclesiastical Dignitaries
in the Pre-Reformation Period**

Late medieval pictorial legends included images of visions, which were closely associated with ecclesiastical dignitaries. When they appeared in the painting as visionaries, the vision mostly served to underline their exceptional status. These events, depicted at altar retables, frequently happened at the altar during the liturgy, reinforcing the existing social hierarchies and supporting the cult. The exceptional case of St Elizabeth shows how a vision of the princess could transform the basic structure to express the new power of laity in the cities. Sometimes, the saints appeared in the visions of other people, to illustrate their power over the consciousness of other people, even earthly rulers.