

Mother Seton Guild Bulletin

ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE THE CANONIZATION OF MOTHER ELIZABETH ANN SETON

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The First Christmas in the Valley

The beautiful artistic sketch which graces this page of the BULLETIN bears the apt title: "Christmas Comes to the Stone House." It is as true to actuality as it possibly could be. There is realism here joined to artistic presentation. This is really the "Stone House" in winter dress, as known to those who have with evergrowing affection looked hundreds and hundreds of times upon this humble, historic building with its countless sacred memories.

The diary of those first few months of the Community life at Emmitsburg tells us that the winter of eighteen hundred and nine was exceptionally cold and severe. We know, too, from the pen of the chronicler that there was an abundance of snow. The artist's scene pictures for us, in exact representation, what we would have witnessed did we have the happy privilege of visiting Mother Seton during the month of December in the year of her coming to Emmitsburg.

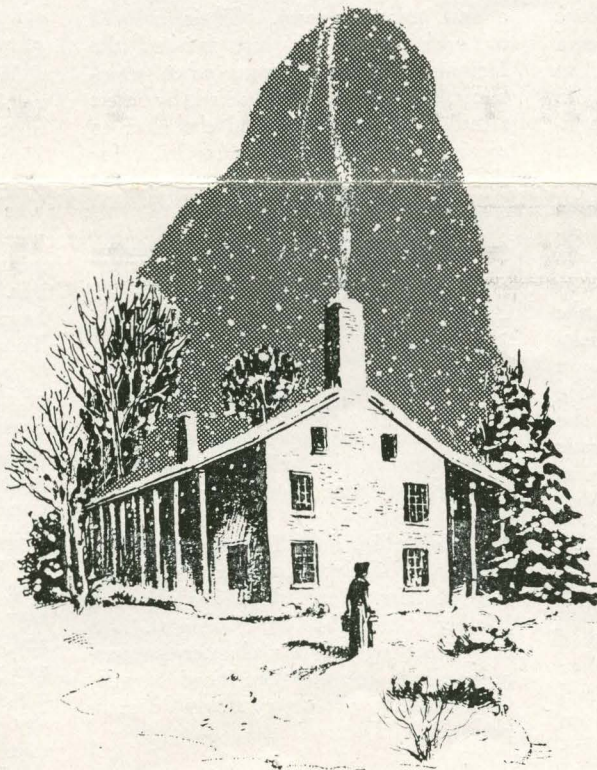
The imagination need not be very active to picture the first Christmas of Mother Seton's little group as it gathered to celebrate the first Nativity of its existence. Newly born it was and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Its suffering from the elements and from the inconvenience of its dwelling was akin to His suffering when He was cradled in the manger. What a striking resemblance there is here! The cold, cheerless stable at Bethlehem, the chill, damp rooms of the "Cradle of the Community." What holiness there was in Bethlehem as the God-Man came into the world and the angel choir sang its Glorias! What sanctity in the hearts of that group of holy women when during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass He Who was born of the Virgin Mary came to receive the welcome



Season's Greetings

*As we come to the New Year's dawning
With its promise of joys and fears
We send you our Christmas greeting
For this and for all the years.*

*May our Infant Savior Jesus
His blessings on you shed;
May the light of His love undying,
Illumine the paths you tread.*



which their sinless hearts so enthusiastically gave Him! One can almost hear the rustle of the angels' wings as they hovered over the "Stone House" on that first Christmas morning. Again they must have sung as only angels can sing: "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

Christmas of eighteen hundred and nine began early for Mother Seton's Community. On this most attractive feast of our Divine Savior these holy women began their prayers long before the sun had arisen to give warmth to the earth. At four-thirty in the morning Mother Seton was accustomed to kneel before the tabernacle and invoke the Holy Ghost to fill her heart and the hearts of her children with the fire of His Divine Love. With special fervor, we may well imagine, this holy woman on this day of days called down the blessing of the Most High upon her little, poor and humble Community. During the hour of meditation her mind must have travelled back through the centuries to the little town of Bethlehem nestling among the hills of old Judea and, there in the shed which was the birthplace of her Savior, she must have spent the fleeting moments of her holy hour in fervent prayer. She must have thought of the poverty and suffering of the Infant. She must have compassionated with His Blessed Mother; she, too, had known motherhood. She must have held colloquy with her great patron, St. Joseph. Her heart must have burned within her as she compared the stable of Bethlehem with the wretchedness of the living quarters of the "Stone House." She must have thanked the Infant Savior for the sublime privilege that was hers of participating in the sufferings and

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want that so characterized His life on this earth. And in her fervor of mind, the scene about her must have changed. The Stone House no longer a wretched hovel, unfit for frail and delicate women, became like the stable of Bethlehem, made glorious by its royal guest, the "Cradle of the Community" a magnificent palace more beautiful than any that has housed the most majestic of earthly queens. With a heart filled to overflowing with love for the Infant Savior, carried out of her humble surroundings on the wings of fervent meditation, Mother Seton must have spent that first hour of her Christmas in the enjoyment of that peace which the Infant Savior came to give, that peace which surpasseth all understanding.

Then the Christmas Mass—the climax of her celebration. Father Du Bois had tramped through the cold darkness across the fields from the Mount. Perhaps Tom's Creek was frozen over that morning and the good and holy man was able to get across without the usual difficulty. However, he came, and there he was, as he had come so many times before with a fidelity that is beyond all praise. A model of priestly sanctity he prepared to offer the Holy Sacrifice for his beloved children. The silent welcome that he received can be well understood by all the Daughters of Mother Seton to whom the priest comes daily to offer the Holy Sacrifice. Such silence is the welcome befitting the King.

The humble chapel of the Stone House is hardly twenty feet square and to the present day it remains just like what it was on that first Christmas. In the northeast corner over near the window the small, rather tiny altar used on that occasion may still be seen. Grouped around the Table of Sacrifice were Mother Seton and her family of religious. One was missing who but two days before was laid to eternal rest at the foot of a large oak tree which she had playfully selected as her final resting place. During a beautiful autumn afternoon not long past, when in the full strength of her young life, she uttered what proved to be prophetic words. Harriet Seton did not live to celebrate the first Christmas in the Valley.

With tender and indeed tearful devotion this brave little band followed the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice. With the devout priest they humbly confessed their faults; attentively they listened to the sublime words of the Epistle and Gospel. And when the priest raised on high the bread and wine at the Offertory, they, too, raised their hearts and

Mother Seton Guild

Emmitsburg, Md.



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*V. Postulator for the Cause of
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minds to the Almighty and offered to Him their sacrifice. The bell of the Sanctus reminded them that soon the King of Kings would be present on the altar of their poor chapel. In breathless silence they saw their beloved father bend reverently over the species of bread and wine. In that little room so close were they to the celebrant that they heard clearly the sacred words of Consecration fall from his priestly lips upon the bread and wine of the sacrifice. It was so thrilling to them all this first Christmas Mass. The climax was but a few minutes away. Their beloved spiritual father had just finished the Domine, non sum dignus when trembling the devout family led by their saintly Mother approached the altar to receive into their pure hearts Him for Whom they had prepared so long and

York, Pa.—Mrs. Robert A. Angelo, National President of the N.C.C.W., has been very active in aiding the Cause of Mother Seton. In the next issue of the N.C.C.W. Bulletin Mrs. Angelo will publish an article on Mother Seton. The edition of the Bulletin will number slightly more than a million copies.

Philadelphia, Pa.—The Catholic Red Cross of Philadelphia, under the leadership of Mrs. Daniel Kee, has adopted Mother Seton as its Patroness. At every meeting of this chapter prayers are recited for the Beatification and Canonization of their newly chosen patroness.

so well. Here was the glorious moment of Christmas, the union of loving hearts, the Christ Child and her who loved Him so tenderly. The Mass is over. There remains still the sacred minutes of a fervent thanksgiving.

The rest of the day was spent in peace and quiet. There were the usual religious exercises. The hours of recreation when the thoughts of all turned back upon the days that they had passed in the Valley. It was a day of joy and happiness made all the more cheerful by the brightness and kindness of Mother Seton's loving heart. There was the trip down to the grove where under the spreading branches of that great oak tree, which still stands, they knelt at a fresh grave which only two days before did not exist. Perhaps, a tear or two was shed in remembrance of her upon whom death had come so swiftly as an untimely frost upon some fair flower of the field. Not for long was this sadness for the motherly heart of Elizabeth Ann Seton was not given to vain grief. She must support her dear children in their hour of sadness.

The trip over to Mount Saint Mary's in the afternoon was the last great event of the day. Vespers were to be sung and Benediction was to be given by Father Du Bois. The Sisters were to be welcomed by the priests and students of the Mount who always hailed their approach with shouts of joy. This hour at the Mount was filled with great happiness. The Christmas festivities, though simple, were such as to bring a feeling of warmth.

When Mother Seton and her happy family left the Mount late that afternoon the sun was slowly sinking over the high hill back of the college. Long shadows were falling across the Valley. The purple haze that gives the mountains their name of Blue Ridge was gathering thick and fast on their summit. Night had almost come upon the happy group as they crossed the ice at Tom's Creek to return to their humble "Stone House." There they partook of the evening meal. There they lived over in memory the events of the exciting day. There they spent the remaining hours in prayer and meditation before with happy hearts they retired to their humble resting place to spend in the chill attic the night of the first Christmas in the Valley. More than a century and a quarter of happy and holy Christmas feasts have come and gone in the Valley since that blessed day, but we wonder has any more holy, any more happy day been spent since that day when Christmas first came to the Stone House.

Vice Postulator's Column

During the fall months Father Burgio fulfilled the following engagements:

An extended trip through the Middle West enabled him to meet Archbishop McNicholas in Cincinnati and Archbishop Glennon in St. Louis.

While in Pittsburgh he visited the Motherhouse of the Greensburg Sisters of Charity and the Benedictine Archabbey at Latrobe, Pa. The Right Reverend Alfred Koch, O.S.B., Archabbot, very kindly promised Father Burgio that the intention for which the Divine Office would be offered in choir during the month of December would be the Beatification and Canonization of Mother Seton and also for the members of the Guild.

The Vice Postulator was able to visit the Motherhouse of the Cincinnati Sisters and the Sisters of the Western Province of the Daughters of Charity at Normandy, Mo. He addressed the seminarians of St. Mary's Seminary, Perryville, Mo., and the Kendrick Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Addresses were made to the following groups: The Ladies of Charity of the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington at Baltimore; the Sisters and Nurses of the Pittsburgh Hospital (Sisters of Charity of Greensburg); the pupils of the Immaculate Conception School, Baltimore; Sisters and Novices of the Motherhouse of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Providence, R. I.; Mothers' Club of St. Joseph's School, Martinsburg, W. Va.; the ladies of Kirkleigh Villa, Baltimore; the members of the Third Order of St. Francis at the Cathedral Chapter in Philadelphia; the members of the Catholic Women's Club, also the Sisters of the Holy Cross and students of the Sacred Heart Academy, both of Lancaster, Pa.

In the following parish churches Father Burgio, through the generosity of the pastors, preached at the Sunday Masses, distributed literature on Mother Seton's Cause and received donations in the interest of the Guild: Our Lady of Lourdes, Philadelphia, Pa., Right Rev. Msgr. Francis E. Hyland, Pastor; Sacred Heart, Lancaster, Pa., Rev. John J. Kealy, Pastor; St. Colman's, Ardmore, Pa., Rev. Eugene Kelly, Pastor.

Father Burgio wishes to thank very kindly the pastors who have in every way possible contributed to the success of these visits to their churches. Through them great help has been extended to the Guild in carrying out its program.



Mother Seton Junior League, Resurrection School, Cincinnati, Ohio

A Novena of Masses to close on the Feast of Christmas will be offered for the living and deceased members of the Mother Seton Guild.

Please include in your intentions the success of the Cause.

Favors Acknowledged

Since our plan for spreading devotion among the school children has been in operation, we have received a great number of letters telling us of favors granted through devotion to Mother Seton. Some of these letters mention the fact of favors being granted without stating what the favors were. Many of the other letters have been more precise.

It is obviously impossible for us to give here more than a very small fraction of the acknowledgments sent in to us. Hardly a day goes by without some recognition of a favor granted.

Troy, N. Y.: From a Sister of Charity we received the following:

"In our visits to the homes we meet a great many Italians. While at Emmitsburg, I dedicated my work with them to Mother Seton. Since my re-

Washington, D. C.—The Guild wishes to acknowledge with thanks a gift by Rev. James J. Kortendick, S.S., of a copy of the first edition of the Life of Mother Seton by Father Charles White. This work, printed in 1853, is still the outstanding life of Mother Seton and a very valuable source book for all students of her life.

turn to the Mission, one man, who was away from the Sacraments twenty years, returned a few weeks ago. Two Italians, young ladies, who had been brought up in an Italian Protestant Church here in the City were Baptized and received First Communion recently. The latter received a special favor through Mother Seton's intercession and have asked for membership in the Guild as a result."

Lowell, Mass.: The mother of a family of four vivacious youngsters writes the following:

"I am pausing at 9:30 in the middle of the Saturday morning uproar of four children in the house to forward you some wonderful news—all through Mother Seton."

The news was the extraordinary solution of a family problem which involved the faith of two little girls, nieces of the writer. The circumstances were so involved and the solution so sudden that the outcome seemed hardly short of the miraculous.

Cleveland, Ohio: In a letter written to a friend we read:

"Did I tell you about the man who had the gangrenous leg and who is cured and working? Rosanne had been saying a novena through Mother Seton for him. I should like to write to the Mother Seton Guild about it. He told me that the doctor expected to amputate his leg and that he himself 'couldn't believe his eyes' when he took the bandages off the day before he went to take the physical exam for the job."

This case will be carefully investigated by the Guild.

School Activities

The outstanding activity of the past several months since the beginning of the present school year has been the adoption by many of the Sisters' schools of the simple plan suggested by the Guild for furthering devotion to Mother Seton among the pupils of our parochial schools and the institutions of higher education. The plan simply stated is as follows.

The pupils are asked to pledge themselves to say every day devoutly the prayer for Mother Seton's Beatification and Canonization. This very brief prayer is recited in unison by some classes. The pupils are asked also to pledge one Holy Mass and one Communion a month for the same intention. To those who promise to fulfill these conditions is given the privilege of having their names inscribed on the class Honor Roll. The Honor Roll attractively engraved is forwarded to the Sister on application to the Vice Postulator, Father Burgio. Each class is urged to subscribe to the MOTHER SETON GUILD BULLETIN at a cost of only twenty-five cents a year. It is hoped in this way to keep an ever-increasing number of Mother Seton's clients fully informed of everything that goes on in reference to her Cause.

The Vice Postulator addressed a letter to the Mothers General and to the Vistatrices of the Several Communities of Mother Seton's Daughters. From all, word was received praising the plan and offering full support and cooperation. The Superiors of the various houses have received or will soon receive letters from the higher superiors expressing their desire that the Sisters lend every effort to advance this simple plan.

Though this activity so far has been restricted principally to the educational institutions under the direction of Mother Seton's Daughters, it is hoped that in the near future the field will be greatly broadened and the schools under the care of the other religious Communities of the country will be enrolled in this crusade of prayer.

The response to our appeal has been most gratifying. More than fifty per cent of the schools of some of the Communities have put the plan in operation. What has given us the greatest satisfaction is this. Since the school children have started their campaign of prayer we have noticed an increasing display of interest in Mother Seton's Cause from all quarters. We are unable to attribute this to anything else but the power of prayer. Especially noticeable is the large number of favors that have

been received in the office during the last six or eight weeks. We wish to place as much emphasis as possible on this outstanding result. It is, indeed, most heartening to all who have a deep interest in Mother Seton.

It will not be possible, for lack of space and because daily we are receiving the names of new schools joining our plan, to list the names of the parochial schools and high schools that have adopted the plan up to the present. However, in the next issue of the BULLETIN we promise a long, surprisingly long list of such schools. May we urge those Sisters Superior and Sisters Servant who have not, because of the pressure of their many duties, enrolled their school to give our plan their immediate consideration. In this way they will do much, much more probably than they can ever imagine to further Mother Seton's Beatification and Canonization.

The number of communications from the various schools has been so great that it is physically impossible to give anything like adequate recognition to each individual letter.

Detroit, Mich.: The following letter was particularly welcome and very encouraging to us here at the office. We are printing it here with the consent of the good Sister of the Cincinnati Community, who wrote it, but we are withholding her name on her request:

"Please send me at your earliest convenience thirty-five subscriptions to the MOTHER SETON BULLETIN. The remittance will follow shortly. . . . The Mother Seton League here at St. Leo High is planning to accomplish great things in the name of our dear 'Lady of the Flaming Heart' as I love to call her. One activity that appeals very strongly to the girls is that of assisting the Cornette Sisters at Providence Hospital in the care of some two hundred and fifty babies at the



*St. Euphemia's Seton Crusaders
Emmitsburg, Md.*

Sarah Fisher Home. I have dubbed this group 'The Setonettes,' and they gladly spend, in turn, two hours each day in baby care, taking care of the 'Foundlings' who number two hundred eighty-five. Another committee, 'Seton Sewers' are making baby blankets and clothes for the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor. Another group, the 'Salvage Setoneers' collects Christmas cards for scrap books for Children's Hospital and pamphlets for the Service men. If it is feasible we hope to have a Seton dramatization for January 4. Our set-up for the year falls naturally into two main divisions: Spiritual and Corporal. Under the former we have five bands who assist at daily Mass and receive Holy Communion on their assigned days. They also attend, in turn, the weekly Holy Hour in a body. They are spreading the prayer for Mother Seton's Canonization as well as encouraging the reading of her life by various authors. At the monthly meetings we shall hold a Round Table discussion of her life and the works of the Community of the Sisters of Charity. Later in the year we hope to send into the Guild office a more definite account of the spiritual and corporal activities of our dear Mother's Cause. May we ask for nine copies of the Honor Roll mentioned in Lotus Leaves, our missionary magazine?"

Never have we had the privilege of seeing such a simple and sublime example of Catholic Action in practical operation as is outlined for us by this zealous Sister's letter. Our thanks and congratulations to her!

Emmitsburg, Md.: The students of the upper grades of St. Euphemia's School visited the office of the Guild during October and afterwards made a school pilgrimage to Mother Seton's Tomb. This pilgrimage will be a monthly feature of the Seton Crusaders, as will also be the meeting of their study club. The pupils showed surprising interest and enthusiasm in Mother Seton's Cause. The school has wholeheartedly adopted the Guild plan.

There are many other letters in our files that we would like to offer the readers of the BULLETIN for their reading and edification but space will not permit. Unfortunately, our BULLETIN must be restricted to its present size. Later on it may assume greater proportions. Letters have come to us from schools of all the Sisters and they have been gratefully received because of their encouraging messages. Please pardon us for not printing your letter!