

Mother Seton Guild Bulletin

ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE THE CANONIZATION OF MOTHER ELIZABETH ANN SETON

Approved by
The Holy See



Official Publication
of the Vice Postulator

NUMBER 35

EMMITSBURG, MD.

DECEMBER, 1950

The Heroic Faith of Mother Seton

TO Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton may truly be applied the words of Christ to the Canaanite in the gospel:—"O woman, great is thy faith!" The serenity of her soul had its source in the Apostle's definition of faith, which is "the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things which appear not."

An unshaken belief in heaven and things eternal touched her heart at the tender age of three. Elizabeth astonished her relatives because she failed to weep when her baby sister, Catherine, died. She did not cry "because Kitty has gone to heaven, and I wish I could go there, too, with Mama."

In May, 1789, Elizabeth's father, Dr. Richard Bayley, was in England. The young girl, then about fourteen, relates in her *Journal* of wandering one day in a meadow bright with the bloom and the song of spring. She discovered a chestnut tree covered with moss-grown roots. Elizabeth sat here and wept, for her heart ached with the pangs of loneliness.

"I thought at that time," she explained, "that my father did not care for me. Well, God was my Father, my all. I prayed, sang hymns, cried, laughed, talking to myself of how far He could place me above all sorrow."

Many years later, Rev. Charles I. White was to say of Elizabeth Seton in his eminent biography that "All things were weighed by her according to the standard of faith."

The sublimity of Sacred Scripture effected in Miss Bayley a daily strengthening of her faith. Her papers show that she spent many hours in transcribing notes and comments from the Bible. She was fa-

miliar with its contents, especially with the Book of Psalms, which seemed to be her favorite. Her belief in these holy instructions became an inextricable part of Elizabeth's life. One finds scriptural quotations jotted down everywhere in her *Journal*. Likewise, they are exquisitely interwoven in the delightful letters which she was always writing to her relatives and friends.

Years before her conversion to Catholicism, Elizabeth came into possession of a crucifix—the sign of man's redemption. Even then, the young girl walked in the way which would eventually lead her to the true faith. A belle of the Revolution, she lacked the ultra-Protestant spirit characteristic of eighteenth-century New York. She wore the crucifix with a devotion strange to see in a person who knew so little about the Catholic Church. Elizabeth wondered why Episcopalians did not wear this sacred emblem and love it as she did.

Then one day she discovered that Europe was filled with convents where women could live in retirement, devoting themselves exclusively to the service of God. Someday, perhaps, she too would be a nun. The thought filled her with delight.

What a perfect way of life was offered by these Catholic convents! How strange for a young, Protestant girl to be wearing a crucifix and to be musing about nuns in a cloister!

Elizabeth had once been fascinated by the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and had also dabbled a little in the works of Voltaire. Instinctively, however, she rejected these irreligious authors whose brilliancy of expression was fraught with error. How her young heart yearned for light as she groped in the shadows of Protestantism. (Cont. on P. 3)

A Christmas Prayer for You



From the White House at Emmitsburg rises the fervent petition that Mother Seton's unbounded Faith in the Christ Child may fill your hearts with the same heavenly love and spiritual consolations.

Mother Seton Guild

Emmitsburg, Md.



REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.

*V. Postulator for the Cause of
Mother Seton*

THE MOTHER SETON GUILD, as the Apostolic Postulation for the Cause of Canonization of Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in America, is part of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome.

The Guild is, moreover, an organization established in 1939, with the approval of the Holy See, to promote the Canonization of Mother Seton in every way possible, by means of literature, religious articles, etc.

The Bulletin is issued quarterly.

Membership in the Guild includes the privilege of receiving copies of the *Bulletin* gratis.

Address all communications to
Central Office of the

Mother Seton Guild

Knights of Columbus Building
Emmitsburg, Md.

Communities of the Sisters of Charity:

St. Joseph's College . . .	Emmitsburg
Marillac Seminary . . .	St. Louis
Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson . . .	N. Y.
Mt. St. Vincent . . .	Halifax
Mt. St. Joseph-on-the-Ohio . . .	Cincinnati
Convent Station . . .	N. J.
Seton Hill . . .	Greensburg

The expenses involved in the Cause are met by the donations of the clients of Mother Seton, and by the membership subscriptions to the Guild.

Yearly Subscription . . . \$ 1.00
Perpetual Membership . . . \$10.00
Deceased may be enrolled

She Prayed for Sight, and Now She Sees!

A NINE-YEAR-OLD girl doomed to blindness was one of the members of the Boston pilgrimage to the tomb of Mother Seton in Emmitsburg in the summer of 1949. The intention of the pilgrimage was primarily to beseech Mother Seton's intercession for the restoration of the little girl's sight. When the Boston pilgrims returned to Emmitsburg on July 1 this year, they were again accompanied by the same child, now bright-eyed and clear-sighted. She and her father and other relatives were there to pour out their hearts in gratitude for the blessing of vision restored to her.

She is Catherine Anne McPartlin, daughter of Patrick McPartlin, of Dorchester, Mass. Born July 2, 1940, she was a healthy child for the first eight years of her life. One day in November,



CATHERINE ANNE MCPARTLIN

1948, she went to classes as usual at St. Ann's Parochial School in Dorchester. She became ill there and returned home with a fever of 104 degrees. The family doctor diagnosed her ailment as inflammation of the throat glands and infection of the right ear. For four days, sulfa drugs were administered. The fever rose to 105 degrees. The treatment was changed to penicillin.

After two days, Catherine began to lose her sight, a development which she tried to conceal, as she did not wish to worry her father. Mr. McPartlin noticing that Catherine would turn her face from him when speaking with him and would grope for her food, began to suspect that the child's vision was failing.

He asked her if she could see. She wouldn't admit at first that she was having any trouble with her sight, and tried to bear her sufferings cheerfully. Finally, she confessed that she could no longer see very well.

When her temperature became normal, after three weeks, she was taken to an eye specialist. He diagnosed her condition as most unusual. The cornea of the eye had decayed. He held out no hope, predicting that Catherine would be blind within three months.

In desperation, her father consulted some 40 different specialists. From none of them did he receive any encouragement that the child's sight could be restored. None could definitely diagnose the ailment.

In March, 1949, Catherine was admitted to the County Hospital for observation. Two weeks of tests and studies revealed no authoritative cause of the child's threatened blindness. She was not totally blind, but saw things only as indistinguishable blurs.

While she could not go to school, Catherine maintained a cheerful disposition. She never complained, and she felt all along that eventually she would be cured, so that she could fulfill her aspiration to become a Religious and dedicate her life to teaching. That was the situation when the first Boston pilgrimage to Emmitsburg was conducted in the summer of last year.

At the Tomb of Mother Seton, this small child of weak sight and strong faith prayed as she had never prayed before. And even on the bus and train carrying her with the other pilgrims back to New England there was evidence that her sight was strengthening to conform with the abiding strength of her faith. She could already see more clearly.

Her eyesight continued to grow stronger and sharper, and within two weeks she regained her normal sight. She returned to school in October, 1949, a little more than a year after she was first stricken, and three months after she had sent up her petitions for the recovery of her sight, at the Tomb of Mother Seton in Emmitsburg.

"Christmas day is begun. The day of our dear Redeemer's birth is the day that opened to us the door of everlasting life."

—MOTHER SETON

The Heroic Faith of Mother Seton

(Continued from Page 1)

Mrs. Seton knew that true rest does not exist on earth, but she firmly believed that it awaited her in heaven, for had not God, her Father, promised so?

When her husband, William Magee Seton, became dangerously ill, his physician advised a sea voyage. So, the Setons sailed for the sun-bright land of Italy, under the severe disapproval of relatives who believed that William was not strong enough to make the trip. The young Setons were also plagued with financial losses at this time—a factor which would have depressed the ordinary person. But Mrs. Seton was not an ordinary person! Her faith in God remained undaunted. Just before leaving for Leghorn, she wrote:

"We will, dear Eliza, rest upon Him, our only strength, and my soul is thankful, for surely, with all the many calls we have to resign our hopes in this life, we naturally without one lingering pain must seek our rest above. Can it be that we will be there to separate no more? With the strong and ardent faith with which I receive and dwell on this promise, all is well and resting on the mercy of God."

Elizabeth had great faith in the belief that God, her Father, was always near her. Strong was her conviction that He would strengthen her to meet the most severe trials of her life. To His wisdom she committed all her cares and allowed nothing to disturb the peace in her soul which came from abandoning herself to Divine Providence. A favorite reflection of hers was that "God is God" and she learned to "view God in all things."

Mr. Seton, whose illness was believed to be yellow fever by the Italian port officials, was imprisoned in the Lazaretto at Leghorn, along with Mrs. Seton and their daughter, Anna Maria. As Mr. Seton appeared to be dying, the Capitano asked the lovely American lady if she would have someone in the room with her.

"Oh no! what had I to fear? And

what had I to fear? . . . Well, I was alone; dear, indulgent Father! could I be alone while clinging fast to Thee in continual prayer or Thanksgiving, prayer for him, and joy, wonder, and delight. . . ." This was her answer.

Later on, her husband was removed to Pisa where he died. Their friends, the Filicchis, took Mrs. Seton and Anna Maria with them to their home in Leghorn. As Mrs. Seton and her little daughter crossed the threshold of the palatial Italian residence where the kindest of friends awaited them, she was overcome suddenly with a sense of loneliness.

"My God, you are my God," she

dear souls believe . . . that they possess God in the sacrament, and that He remains in their churches, and is carried to them when they are sick! Oh, my! when they carry the Blessed Sacrament under my window, while I feel the full loneliness and sadness of my case, I cannot stop the tears at the thought. My God! how happy I would be, even so far away from all so dear, if I could find You in the church as they do, . . ."

Her faith in the sacraments was firm, for when Elizabeth made her first confession she said of her confessor:—

"Our Lord Himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part of this venerable sacrament; . . ."

And on March 25, 1805, the date of her first Communion:—

"At last God is mine, and I am His. Now let all go its round. I have received Him."

Mother Seton was overwhelmed daily with delight in the knowledge that God is actually present on the altar under the appearance of bread and wine.

"Jesus is everywhere," she exclaimed, "in the very air I breathe; yes, everywhere, but in His sacrament of the altar as present actually and really as my soul within my body; in His sacrifice daily offered as really as once offered on the cross. Merciful Saviour! can there be any comparison to this blessedness? Adored Lord,

increase my faith, perfect it, crown it, Thy own, Thy choicest, dearest gift. Having drawn me from the pit, and borne me to Thy fold, keep me in Thy sweet pastures and lead me to eternal life."

It was her custom when she encountered some problem in the classroom to retire to the chapel where she would kneel before the Blessed Sacrament "to implore the assistance of Him Who is the fountainhead of all true wisdom."

Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was so ardent that Elizabeth Seton truly belongs to those souls described by Thomas a Kempis who "crave with heart



whispered, raising her exquisitely dark eyes to the blue heavens, "and so I am now alone in the world with you and my little ones; but you are my Father, and doubly theirs."

Even before this holy woman savoured the sweetness of the Blessed Sacrament, she mused wistfully about the Divine Presence and wished the Episcopal Church could claim this sublime consolation so cherished by Catholics. During her visit to Italy, she was delighted when she saw the Blessed Sacrament carried in procession beneath her window.

"How happy would we be," she wrote to a friend, "if we believed what these

and lips to receive their God, the fountain of living waters, and can allay or satisfy their hunger only by feasting with all spiritual avidity and sweetness on His sacred body."

"O vera ardens fides eorum probabile existens argumentum sacrae praesentiae tuae"; are the beautiful sentiments of the saintly a Kempis when speaking of those persons whose truly burning faith "is a demonstrative existing argument of Thy sacred Presence."

So did Mother Seton's soul burn with the desire to receive her Lord, for she, even as the disciples, knew Him "in the breaking of bread" and her heart adored His as He walked with her along the way.

Having received this cherished gift of Faith from her Father in heaven, the Servant of God desired to propagate it. From this wish came the care which she exerted to raise her own children in its fold; to found schools which would instruct both poor and rich girls in the principles of Christian Doctrine; to establish a religious community in a country strongly infected with Anglicanism.

In speaking of her children to her great friend and benefactor, Antonio Filicchi, Mother Seton declared that "Our Lord knows I would never grieve to see them even beggars if they preserve and practise their faith;— . . ."

In 1812, Mother Seton's eldest daughter, Anna Marie, was dying. Archbishop Carroll wrote these words to the heroic mother who was also the Superior at St. Joseph's:—

"While the situation of your dear Anna Maria fills with sorrow the hearts of your and her friends, they have at the same time occasion to bless God for her singular resignation of herself into the arms of Providence, her humble confidence in divine mercy, and your truly christian fortitude, the effect of lively faith."

And when the young girl died: . . . "Nature, indeed, was hushed on this occasion," writes Rev. Charles I. White, "that faith might have its perfect triumph."

The loss of this lovely child in the bloom of life wounded Mother Seton in such a way that only God knew the ultimate hurt which her heart had received. In a certain numbness of spirit, Elizabeth wrote to a friend:—

"The separation from my angel has left so new and deep an impression on my mind that, if I was not obliged to live in these dear ones (her children) I should unconsciously die in her:—unconsciously, for never, by a free act of the mind, would I ever regret His Will."

Here, again, a great faith sustained the soul of this valiant woman.

After her conversion, Elizabeth Seton

sincerely embraced all that the Church taught, keeping the precepts of the Church as the law of God, Himself. She believed that the Sovereign Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and was deeply grieved when Pius VII was imprisoned by a powerful tyrant. She prayed ardently that the Holy Father would be restored to the Eternal City.

Next to the Pope, Mother Seton venerated Bishops, humbly submitting to their authority. She had, also, a great respect for priests, and never failed in her obedience to those clergymen who were placed over her institution.

Having lost her earthly mother when she was a very small girl, Elizabeth deeply loved the Blessed Virgin and considered the Queen of Heaven her own dearest mother. She taught all those under her charge to venerate the Mother of God. She asked her children and the Sisters in the Community to pray frequently to Our Lady. The Sisters fer-



On this Altar in the chapel of the historic White House where Mother Seton heard daily Mass during her years in the Valley, the Christmas Novena of Masses will be offered for the intentions of the Members of the Mother Seton Guild.

vently recited her office every day and offered the whole rosary to her at stated times.

Mother Seton also had a great devotion to certain saints and had faith in their intercession in heaven. Among those to whom she was most attached were St. Francis de Sales, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary and foster father of Our Lord, under whose patronage she had placed her community from the very beginning. She also had confidence in the protection of the guardian angels and offered prayers to them for guidance.

Her passionate consecration to prayer revealed the depths of Mother Seton's faith. When she recited the "Te Deum" after Mass, her soul shone forth in her face. Another favorite prayer was the

"Magnificat," the words of which she repeated with animation. Elizabeth was also devoted to the "Apostles' Creed," the "Psalms" and the "Benedicite" or "Canticle of the Three Children."

In watching her as she spoke to God, her dark eyes riveted on the tabernacle, one sensed that here was a rare appreciation of the Divine Presence . . . an incomparable faith . . . an exalted belief in God, in His wisdom, His mercy, His goodness, His perfection.

The words of the Lord to Edom found in the prophecies of Jeremiah are poignant and portray the sublime faith of the Servant of God. "Leave thy fatherless children," he cried, "I will make them alive: and thy widows shall hope in me."

It was the day on which God was calling Mother Seton home to himself. With supreme faith and resignation the tired little Sister of Charity abandoned her children, her community, her all to the Providence of her Maker. On her deathbed she declared to one of her spiritual directors that God's greatest gift to her had been "that of being brought into the Catholic Church."

The French priest, Simon Brute, tried to tell about the ardent expressions of faith observed in the saintly Foundress. Artist that he was, after a few inadequate exclamations, he was lost in his own descriptions.

"It would be a source of so much edification," he sighed, "if it could be communicated such as I felt it."

Favors Acknowledged

Chicago, Ill.—This is a note of thanksgiving which I promised for a favor received. A nephew was stricken with bulbar polio—very serious. I began a Novena to Mother Seton the night he was taken to the hospital. Today, less than two months later, he is a well child, completely recovered, with no trace of paralysis. Many thanks to Our Blessed Mother and Mother Seton. (Mrs. T. K.)

West Point, Iowa—I had begged Mother Seton to pray for my sister, so that an X-ray would disclose no evidence of tuberculosis. My prayer was answered. I promised that I would send in a letter acknowledging the favor and also enroll again in the Mother Seton Guild. Enclosed is the blank and an offering. (Miss M. P.)

Cincinnati, Ohio—The following favors have been received through the intercession of Mother Seton: two scientific papers published, financial aid, good health. While none of these favors is miraculous, I promised to report them if received. I am happy to be able to add these to the favors received through Mother Seton. (M. A.)