

Mother Seton Guild Bulletin

ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE THE CANONIZATION OF MOTHER ELIZABETH ANN SETON

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Mother Seton's Devotion to Our Lady

"THE other day in a moment of excessive distress I fell on my knees without thinking when the Blessed Sacrament passed by, and cried in my agony to God to bless me if He were there, that my whole soul desired only Him. A prayer book of Mr. Filicchi's was on the table, and I opened to a little prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin begging her to be our Mother. I said it to her with such a certainty that God would surely refuse nothing to His Mother; that she could not help loving and pitying the souls He died for. . . . I felt I really had a mother, so I cried myself to sleep on her heart."

In this paragraph of her Journal for Rebecca Seton, written in Leghorn in the troubled days following the death of her husband, Elizabeth Seton records what may have been her very first prayer to the Blessed Mother of God. Surrounded as she was by the completely Catholic atmosphere of the Filicchi home, with its reverent and affectionate devotion to Mary, Elizabeth was just discovering the place that Mary holds in the hearts of "cradle-Catholics," and

in a moment of intense emotional suffering she had turned to her with something of spontaneous Catholic confidence.

One of the saddest effects of the secession from Catholicism in the sixteenth century is the estrangement of so many Christians from the Mother of God. Non-Catholics often seem almost uncomfortable in the presence of devotion to Mary. To those of the Faith this appears to be an unreasonable attitude, certainly untenable after thoughtful reflection. They are apt to be a little impatient with the prejudice that excludes the Blessed Virgin as an object of affectionate devotion. They often do not realize



how rigorously *she* is excluded from the religious training of non-Catholic children.

Elizabeth Seton had the usual Protestant thought on devotion to the Mother of God. Although hers was a naturally loving disposition, it was with difficulty that she brought herself to the Catholic way of thinking. Throughout the year of her struggle toward the Church there is evidence that the prejudice persisted. Even as late as September, 1804, she was writing to Antonio, "This is the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and I have tried to sanctify it, begging God to look on my soul and see how gladly I would kiss her feet because she was His Mother, and joyfully show every expression of reverence that even my Antonio would desire, if I could do it with that freedom of soul which flowed from the knowledge of His Will."

She could remember the day in the chapel on Monte Nero, in Italy, when faced with the reality of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist she had struggled with her doubts as to how it could be, and then, as she wrote to Rebecca, "the mother's thought came

also, how was my God a little babe in the first stage of his mortal existence in Mary," and that thought is followed by a pathetic, but very natural distraction, "but I lost these thoughts in my babes at home, which I daily long for more and more."

Elizabeth had lost her own mother when she was little more than a baby, and there never seems to have been any deep affection for her stepmother. The simple, childlike devotion of Catholics to their Mother in heaven charmed her. She wanted to share it, and share too, in the love of that all-powerful Mother. From New York she wrote to Amabilia (Continued on Page 2)

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
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Yearly Subscription \$ 1.00

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Mother Seton's Devotion to Our Lady

(Continued from Page 1)

Filicchi, "I beg her (Mary) with the confidence and tenderness of a child, to pity us and guide us to the true faith if we are not in it." Yet at the same time she was writing to Antonio to ask how one might believe "that the prayers and litanies addressed to the Blessed Lady were acceptable to God, though not commanded in Scripture."

God would resolve these difficulties for her Himself. In one of her letters to Antonio she begs his patience with her, reminding him that indeed she is well instructed in the Catholic religion, but that it is as yet only an intellectual conviction, and the gift of Faith itself has not yet been given her. She had not much longer to wait. Epiphany, 1805, brought her the peace of submission to the grace of conversion, and it was on the beautiful Feast of the Annunciation, two months later, that she received for the first time the God "who was a little babe in Mary." For the rest of her life that would be a cherished Feast Day. Only a year later she wrote to Antonio, now safe at home in Italy with his Amabilia, of her "celebration of the Anniversary of our most dear Mother," reminding him of his share in bringing her through so many anxieties to the altar of God. When the time came for her complete consecration to God by the vows of Religion, she chose the Feast of the Annunciation for her profession day.

With her conversion, Elizabeth slipped easily into the Catholic habit of noting Our Lady's feasts. She dates her notes and meditations with their titles. Of her beloved Harriet Seton she writes in *Dear Remembrances*, "Harriet's first Communion on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, September 24: her last Communion on the Feast of the Expectation, December 18." And when Annina lay dying, in February of 1812, and her mother made her meditations at her daughter's bedside, she wrote, "Feast of the Purification. At the feet of our Happy Mother, listening to the dear Simeon prophesying on the darling Babe, when He entered our chamber." The thought of the sword of sorrow plunged in Mary's heart, must have softened for her the anguish of the knowledge that these sick-room Communions must end soon in Viaticum for Annina.

Quite naturally, Mother Seton's own motherhood colored and directed her love for God's Mother. Never did a mother love her children more passionately than did Elizabeth Seton. As she confessed

herself, she "doated on them," and she would have died for them without hesitation. Her meditations on Mary have in them all a mother's tenderness. Elizabeth knew so well the joy of holding her own baby in her arms, nourishing it at her breast, rejoicing in its utter dependence upon her. She could well imagine the joy of Mary with the Divine Child as warm and helpless in her arms.

In this Marian age of the twentieth century, when devotion to the Mother of God has had the powerful incentive of the apparitions at Fatima, it is difficult to realize that Mother Seton knew nothing of Fatima, or of Lourdes, or of Rue du Bac. She had been dead thirty years when Bernadette saw the beautiful Lady in the grotto at Massabielle, and a century before the children of Fatima told their amazing story. When little Catherine Labouré rested her folded hands on the knees of the Mother of God in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, Mother Seton was ten years in her grave. She never saw a Miraculous Medal.

Her devotion was the simple, loving confidence in Mary that has been a mark of good Catholics since the days of the Apostles. She saw in her a model and a guide, as she writes one September eighth, "Feast of the Nativity: Passed in illness, not without many sighs and aspirations to her whose example has been so often set before me. Her humble, meek, and faithful heart. . . ." She rejoices with Mary on the glory of the Assumption, accepting more than a hundred years before its promulgation, the implied doctrine, "Oh, the glory of Mary since her Assumption! Rejoicing of angels on her arrival in heaven. Her passing through the different hierarchies of angels and saints. Jesus crowning her. Her continual praise to God and intercession for us." On another Assumption Day she wrote, "Blessed Lord, grant me that humility and love which have crowned her for all eternity."

One of Mother Seton's loveliest tributes to Mary shows at once her love for the Blessed Mother, and her own gentle personality. "Jesus in Mary's lap, on her knees as on His Throne, while the rolling earth adorned with mountains, trees, and flowers, is the throne of Mary and her blessed Infant, playing in her arms."

On one of the pages in her "Following of Christ" there is a jotted reminder, "Beads to our Mother." It sums up the story. The prayer made so impulsively in Leghorn sixteen years before had been heard, Elizabeth had indeed found her "Mother in Heaven."

Cure Reported; Other Favors Acknowledged

Sister Ellen Francis, Promoter of the Cause of Mother Seton, Mount Saint Vincent College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, has forwarded to Father Burgio correspondence from Sister Mary Firma, in charge of the Mother Seton Guild in the Sacred Heart Convent, Bathurst, New Brunswick, and from Douglas Buraglia, regarding the recovery of a child who had been adopted by the latter and his wife. The cure of the baby, reported to be dying from severe burns, was attributed to Mother Seton's intercession.

In pledging the full support and enthusiasm of the Sisters for the Cause, Sister Ellen Francis stated that she found a growing interest and a deepening love for Mother Seton manifested in the letters received from the Community's various missions.

Sister Mary Firma reported that a telephone call to the convent requested asking the Sisters to make a Novena for a dying baby. So the Sisters and students began a novena to Mother Seton. The baby had received severe burns on face, neck, shoulder and arm. The baby had been in the hospital for two weeks. The doctor had no hopes of saving his life.

On the first day of the Novena, the disconsolate parents returned home from the hospital. Upon their arrival home, they found the leaflet, "Mother Seton's Gift of Faith," with the prayer, which had been sent them. They immediately started a Novena too. Their waking hours which followed were permeated with sorrow and resignation, until two o'clock in the morning when a call came over the phone from the hospital. Was it that the Angel of Death had claimed their baby? No—overwhelmed with joy, they received the news that there had been a miraculous change for the better. The doctor, a non-Catholic, was the first to utter that statement. The Sisters feel that Mother Seton was particularly interested in this Italian baby.

Following is the account of Mr. Buraglia:

"We adopted our little baby boy on January 7, 1952. He was 10 months old. Both my wife and I were very happy with our son. We never realized that a baby could do so much for our home.

"On February 19, 1952, at about 6:30 p.m., I placed our little boy on the floor to creep, when very suddenly the baby grabbed the cord of the percolator (the coffee had just stopped percolating and it was boiling hot), and pulled the coffee pot down on his head.



SEGRETERIA DI STATO DI SUA SANTITÀ



TELEGRAMMA

NUM. DI PROTOC.	PAROLE	D A T A				ORE	MINUTI
3168		GIORNO Twenty-eighth	MESE May	ANNO 1952			

DESTINATARIO: Rev. Salvatore Burgio, C.M.,

DESTINAZIONE: EMMITSBURG, Md.

TESTO: OCCASION SILVER JUBILEE YOUR PRIESTLY ORDINATION HOLY FATHER GRANTS FACULTY
IMPARTING APOSTOLIC BLESSING ALL ATTENDING JUBILEE MASS

MONTINI SUBSTITUTE

THE cablegram from Rome, reproduced above, tops an imposing pile of congratulatory telegrams and letters received by the Rev. Salvator M. Burgio, C.M., Vice Postulator for the Cause of Mother Seton's Canonization, on the occasion of the silver anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, celebrated in June.

The messages came from Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Superiors General, the Mother General in Paris, and Superiors of Mother Seton's Daughters.

In addition to Jubilee Masses at the Tomb of Mother Seton in Emmitsburg, Md., in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Jenkintown, Pa., and in St. Peter's Church in Barclay Street, New York City, Father Burgio accepted the gracious invitations extended to him by the Sisters of Charity to celebrate his Jubilee at Seton Hill, Greensburg, Pa.; Mount St. Joseph, Ohio, and Convent Station, N. J. The Sisters of Mount St. Vincent, New York, attended the Mass in St. Peter's, New York City.

"As quickly as I could, I cut the clothes from him and called the doctor. He advised me what to do while he was on his way to our home. The baby looked frightful—it was a most gruesome sight. The left side of his face, neck, and arm down to his hand had turned a bloody red and his skin was hanging from his little hand in shreds.

"Immediately the doctor saw him, he arranged to have him taken to the hospital. His temperature remained almost normal that first night. But the next day it started to soar and it hit 106.8 degrees at about seven o'clock that evening. Our doctor called in the senior surgeon of the hospital, who examined the baby. He told us, 'It's a bad blow to you, there is little hope—a child under two years cannot sustain the degree of burns the baby re-

ceived.' The Bishop was called to confirm him, as they did not expect him to live that night.

"The Sisters of Charity at the convent were informed of the baby's condition. On February 25, they started a Novena together with the children who attend the convent school. On the night of February 25, the baby's condition seemed to be getting worse. The doctor asked us to leave the hospital and wait for word at home. We arrived home at 9:15 p.m. Just as we entered, a little girl knocked at our door. She had a message from the Sisters at the convent, who also sent a prayer to be said in honor of Mother Seton. Together my wife and I said the prayer and the rosary. At 2:00 a.m. the telephone rang; the nurse from the hospital was calling. She said, 'The baby's temperature is down to 102 degrees.' This was the first big drop in temperature since February 20 (five days).

"The following night, his temperature again climbed back to 105 degrees and higher, but we had more faith now in our hearts. We felt that our baby would get better, even though the doctor and the nurses informed us that he was not responding to treatment.

"On March 6, his temperature dropped

How happy this earth to possess Mary so long. A secret blessing to the rising church. The perfect praise arising from earth to the blessed Trinity so long as she remained. How darkened in the sight of angels when she was removed from it.

—MOTHER SETON

to normal, our baby was out of danger. On March 6 also, the Novena for the baby came to a close.

"To us it was a miracle, for no one connected with his case gave the baby a chance to live. The nurses and the priest at the hospital have since informed us that they did not think the baby could have lived through it. My wife and I know that it was only through prayer and faith that our baby was spared to us.

"We will be forever grateful to the kind Sisters and children who have offered their prayers to Mother Seton on our baby's behalf, for we may not have had our son with us today."

Mr. and Mrs. Buraglia are now members of the Mother Seton Guild and they read the Life of Mother Seton. They have asked more prayers—this time for conversions.

BUFFALO, N. Y.—A few months ago I had a major operation. This was necessary because examination revealed that I had cancer in the very early stages. I continued my little prayer to Mother Seton during my illness. After returning home, I had a pain which I was afraid might mean further trouble. I was quite worried, continued praying, and when I discussed this with the doctor on my next visit, he assured me it was a normal reaction and would disappear eventually. This discomfort has since left me. Enclosed herewith is a small donation in thanksgiving. I will continue to pray to Mother Seton for a complete recovery.—(Mrs. E. P. M.)

HOBOKEN, N. J.—Enclosed please find a donation which represents my first week's increase in salary. Thanks to the intercession of Mother Seton. Please remember my petitions in your prayers to Mother Seton.—(Miss C. M. H.)

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Enclosed is a small offering to further the Cause of Mother Seton. Having one weak eye and doing close work all morning, my eyes felt very strained and blurred, and I felt I could not keep working the rest of the day. In my relief period, I placed Mother Seton's relic on my eyes and asked for help. My eyes felt clear and strong from then on, and have continued to feel so since. I know that Mother Seton heard my prayer.—(Miss A. T.)

NEW WATERFORD, N. S.—The Sisters have enjoyed the Mother Seton film, obtained through my brother, who has had great devotion to her for years. She kept him working on his feet for ten years with very little sleep. He suffers from chronic asthma, but kept on the

job to put his son through college. He says, "Mother Seton has helped me hundreds of times at work when I could not go a step further. I would manage to hide and demand her help, which I immediately received. My strength would return, and I could carry on. I can say she saw that my son finished college, because I was short of money and could not loaf. Without Mother Seton I never would have had the courage to push along. I would speak to her and tell her my troubles."

He recently suffered severe coughing spells every 15 minutes. He appealed to Mother Seton for help. He recovered from this attack and went for 20 hours without coughing, something he had not done for years. He had lost his appetite and 30 pounds in weight.

May God bless your efforts in the Cause of our dear Foundress!—(Sister M. A.)

HOBOKEN, N. J.—We had a case in court and I promised Mother Seton if the case was settled without going before a jury, I would send her \$5.00 in thanksgiving, so when our case was called the Judge said, "Can't this matter be settled without going to court?" So our lawyer and theirs got together and decided on a settlement and I know it was only through the intercession of Mother Seton and the good Saints my prayers were heard, for which I am most thankful.

I sincerely hope that Mother Seton will continue to hear my prayers and help me to obtain other favors which I seek. I will continue to pray that Mother Seton will soon be declared a Saint by Holy Mother Church.—(Miss H. W.)

EAST ORANGE, N. J.—On March 18 I lost my engagement ring—a one-half carat diamond solitaire setting—in the building where I work with hundreds of other employees. A thorough search was made on the first floor of the building, an advertisement was put in the paper, and it was also reported to the police. In spite of all this, the ring could not be found. However, Thursday morning at Mass I read the canonization prayer to Mother Seton. At 3 p.m. the same day, the ring was returned to me by another employee in the same building. I believe that this was in answer to my prayer to Mother Seton, which had been given to me by a Sister of Charity in St. Vincent's Hospital.—(Miss C. E. S.)

CINCINNATI, OHIO—In fulfillment of an earnest promise, I desire to make this report of a great favor, the cure of my son, received through the inter-

cession of Mother Seton.

In 1943, at the age of 7, he became afflicted with severe headaches, vomiting and petit mal. These attacks usually lasted several days and occurred once a month. About a year later the attacks developed into convulsions. Four different doctors treated him. He had drugs every day from luminal to phenobarbital and later sodium bromide. None of these drugs had any effect. He was so nervous that he could not eat without tapping his feet or his hands. The last doctor that we visited, the fifth, gave him Dilanten. He put the boy in the hospital for X-rays and various tests to find the cause, which was migraine headaches. This doctor said that he could never be completely cured but the attacks could be lessened.

I had made many novenas and prayed constantly for my son's complete cure but always with the idea in mind that God *had* to cure him. A Sister from the Sisters of Charity gave me the Prayer for Beatification of Mother Seton, and a medal and pieces of cloth that had touched the relics of Mother Seton. I said this prayer every day and promised Mother Seton that if she would intercede for me and obtain from Almighty God the cure of my son, I would write to Your Holiness myself and report the cure.

This prayer I started when my son was 8½ years old, and I never stopped. The last of September, 1944, the month before he was nine years old, his last big convulsion occurred, when I told the Sacred Heart that I would not ask for his cure any more if only the Sacred Heart would just give me strength each month to bear my cross as He wanted me to. My boy has never had a convulsion since and never gets any headaches except what can be cured by an aspirin. A year after the attacks stopped, when he was 10 years old, I had to send him to Good Samaritan Hospital for a brain wave test and the doctor said then that his brain waves were normal and that he was cured. He is now 15 years old, strong, healthy, and in the third year at St. Xavier High School, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He plays in the school band and orchestra. I have waited all these years, until my boy had gone through the period of adolescence, to make sure before writing this report, that these attacks would not recur, and they have not. He is certainly cured.

I will pray every day the rest of my life, thanking Mother Seton for interceding for me with Almighty God, and asking her to thank God for me and tell Him how much I love Him.—(Mrs. L. M.)