



To Promote the Canonization of Mother Seton

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A Rose by Her Bedside

By MARY LOUISE CALLAHAN

PALE spring sunlight flooded the infirmary at St. Joseph's where the little Sister lay sleeping in a small white bed. The only sound in the long bright room was the even breathing of the patient and the brushing of the young green leaves of an oak tree against a window at one end of the sickroom.

Perhaps it was the sibilant sound of the foliage or the caressing warmth of the May sun on her face which awakened the patient. Again it may have been someone near her bed. Slowly she opened her eyes to the breathless beauty of spring in the valley. She had a feeling that something very special had just happened, something as joyful as springtime . . . as precious as prayer . . . as sweet as a rose. . . .

A rose! There it was beside her bed. A pink one, half-opened. Already she felt much better. She sat up and began to look about the room, holding the flower close. Everything in the room was clean and shining. The broad floor boards almost scrubbed white and the muslin curtains at the windows, crisply starched, gave mute evidence of the affectionate care lavished on the patients.

Suddenly the Sister realized why she was so happy this particular morning. Mother Seton had placed the rose by her bedside while she was asleep. Every day she visited the infirmary to cheer and comfort the sick members of the community. In an outburst of joy the patient wrote a poem to Mother Seton expressing her feelings on the visit and the gift of the rose.

Mother Seton had never been capped nor had she ever held a candle in her hand and recited the Florence Nightingale pledge nor did one write R.N. after her name. But she was the kind of nurse who could evoke poetry from a patient.

A daughter of brilliant Dr. Richard Bayley, port officer of New York and professor of anatomy at Columbia, Elizabeth had somehow inherited the medical touch from her father. She had a special knack for nursing. As a child she had become well-acquainted with the diseases and fevers peculiar to the 18th century. She had watched the sickly immigrants disembarking from the ships where her father exercised his authority

as medical officer. As a young mother she had begged Dr. Bayley to allow her to nurse the half-starved infants along with her own child. Of course the physician had to refuse his daughter, for by nursing the infected babies Elizabeth would have exposed her own child to the foreign fevers. But, at the same time, he was keenly aware of the charity in the heart of his child. Elizabeth's whole nature seemed to go out to the sick and the helpless.

She seemed to be in and out of the sickroom most of her life holding the hand of someone in agony . . . saying a prayer . . . giving medicine . . . consulting the physician . . . closing the patient's eyes for the last time. In 1800 she was at the bedside of Mary Seton Wilkes, a distant cousin of her husband, William, at the Wilkes' home in New York. She sat up two nights with the desperately ill woman until the crisis passed.

When Dr. Bayley succumbed at last to the yellow fever raging in New York it was Elizabeth who stayed at his bedside until the end came. The doctor applied opium and other remedies to no avail. The respected "blister" was tried, again and again, but the dying doctor did not respond. In his delirium he called out to Elizabeth to take care of the poor immigrants who were probably responsible for his illness as he had spent so much of his time with them. About the middle of August, 1801, he died with his hand in Elizabeth's.

She had married into a tubercular family as nearly all the Setons had tuberculosis in one form or another. When her husband's illness progressed

his physician advised him to make a sea voyage to Italy as a remedial gesture. Elizabeth, who accompanied her husband to Europe, nursed him all the way over, coaxing him to eat little syrups and jellies. After William's death in Pisa, Elizabeth had to nurse their eight-year-old daughter, Annina, who had contracted scarlet fever. Mrs. Seton came down with the same illness as a result of her careful attention to her child.

Her days in the sickroom were only beginning. Elizabeth and Annina returned to America in June 1804 to find William's sister, Rebecca, in the last (Continued on Page 2)



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Apostolic Postulation

FOR THE CAUSE OF
CANONIZATION
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

Elizabeth Ann Seton

Foundress of the
SISTERS OF CHARITY
IN AMERICA

HIS EMINENCE

GAETANO CARDINAL CICOGNANI
Prefect of the
Sacred Congregation of Rites

HIS EMINENCE

CLEMENTE CARDINAL MICARA
Cardinal Relator of the Cause

HIS EXCELLENCY

MOST REV. FRANCIS P. KEOUGH, D.D.
Archbishop of Baltimore

VERY REV. LUIGI BISOGGIO, C.M.
Postulator General (Rome)

REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.
Vice Postulator

Mother Seton's Daughters

Communities of the Sisters of Charity

- St. Joseph College Emmitsburg, Md.
- Marillac Seminary St. Louis, Mo.
- Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson,
New York, N. Y.
- Mt. St. Vincent Halifax, N. S.
- Mt. St. Joseph Cincinnati, Ohio
- St. Elizabeth's Convent, N. J.
- Seton Hill Greensburg, Pa.



Central Office

Mother Seton Guild

EMMITSBURG, MD.

Guild Membership

- Yearly \$1.00
- Perpetual \$10.00
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Address all communications to
REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.
Vice Postulator

A Rose by Her Bedside

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stages of the Seton disease. Although grieving over the loss of her husband, Mrs. Seton lost no time in reaching Rebecca's bedside. The two had been deeply attached since Elizabeth's marriage and Mrs. Seton was keenly touched by her sister-in-law's sufferings. She wanted to help the patient both physically and spiritually. Besides tender nursing she wanted to fill the young woman's soul with peace. With no special formula of prayers for the dying somehow she managed to comfort Rebecca.

One can judge from the patient's own words that her heart was at peace. Later on Elizabeth told her friends about Rebecca's last moments. "You will have heard before this," she said, "of the departure of our dear angel. She suffered extremely an hour Friday night, so much so that we thought all was over, but she recovered her senses again and became perfectly composed and seemed free from pain. On Sunday she was delighted with the beauty of the morn, and pointed to the clouds that were brightening with the rising sun and said . . . 'Oh, my Sister, that this might be my day of rest . . . shut the windows and I will sleep.' I raised her head to make it easier and immediately without the least struggle she gave her last sigh."

As the years passed Elizabeth's footsteps were to become familiar sounds in the infirmary. In the early Emmitsburg days when damp rooms, scanty food and crowded conditions encouraged illness, she was called upon constantly to exercise her skill at nursing.

Her young sisters-in-law, Harriet and Cecilia Seton, both frail, had followed her from New York to Maryland. In a short while Harriet fell prey to some sort of fever accompanied by headache and nausea and was the first to be buried at St. Joseph's. This was in December, 1809.

After Harriet's death Sisters Susan and Martina Quinn and Annina Seton came down with pulmonary ailments. Cecilia Seton, who undoubtedly had consumption, grew weaker from day to day and was unable to walk without fainting.

At the beginning of 1810 Elizabeth wrote to a friend: "You must not think our courage fails. Oh, no, when the clock struck 12 last night and ended the old year, Annina in my arms in a violent ague, I felt happy, embracing my lot with joy."

Cecilia was taken to Doctor Chatard, a Baltimore specialist, but he could do nothing for the young girl. She died the week after Easter, 1810. Elizabeth, who had had no formal nurse's training, was getting it by the long, rugged road of experience. Her patients were many and always dear to her. Some (her children) left a mark of sorrow in her heart until the day she died.

Elizabeth's oldest daughter, Annina, her confidante and friend, showed definite signs of the family's physical weakness at seventeen. As usual everything was done to forestall the disease and, as usual, nothing seemed to help very

Poem to Mother Seton

"The morning was beautiful, mild and serene;
All nature had waked from repose;
Maternal affection came silently in
And placed near my bosom a rose.

"Poor nature was weak, and had almost prevailed
The wearied eyelids to close;
But the soul rose in triumph and joyfully hailed
The sweet queen of flowers—the rose.

"Whitsuntide was the time, 'twas the season of love;
Methought the Blest Spirit had chose
To leave for a while the sweet form of a dove
And come in the blush of a rose.

"Come, heavenly Spirit, descend on each breast,
And there let thy blessings repose,
As thou once did on Mary, the temple of rest,
For Mary's our mystical rose.

"Oh, may every rose that springs forth evermore

Enkindle the hearts of all those
Who wear it or see it, to bless and adore
The hand that created the rose!"

—Composed in the early 19th century by a convalescent Sister at St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, after Mother Seton visited the infirmary and placed a rose by her bedside.

much. Mother Seton took her on long horseback rides through the valley and, as they rode, a sword passed through the mother's heart. She listened to Annina's cough and sorrowfully observed her thin little body. It was obvious the young girl was declining. This time it was hard being a nurse; now Elizabeth was a mother watching her child suffer.

But she said "I have never had more tranquillity than during these exterior pains—exterior, for my children are good, and if they are taken, will go but a little while before and no doubt smooth the way I must follow." When

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Emmitsburg Students Tour Mother Seton Guild

A GLIMPSE into the maze of activities connected with a Cause of Canonization was granted to forty students of St. Joseph's High School, Emmitsburg, Md., on a recent visit to the offices of the Mother Seton Guild, Emmitsburg, where they enjoyed the rare opportunity of a tour through the building under the direction of the Vice Postulator himself, Rev. Salvator M. Burgio, C.M.

Accompanied by Sister Mary Elizabeth of the school faculty, the boys and girls, who initiated the trip themselves, little realized the vast amount of clerical work, letter-writing, research (not to mention prayers) necessary in connection with the Cause of Mother Seton. Living so close to the Guild they had a desire to know more about its activities.

On the first floor they saw a real business office completely equipped with desks, files, an addressograph, a mimeograph, typewriters, a telephone and other equipment. In the stock rooms to the rear of the main office they found merchandise pertaining to the Cause and stacks of office supplies.

Of the many facets of information Father Burgio could have opened to the group in connection with Mother Seton's Cause, he particularly stressed the MOTHER SETON GUILD BULLETIN as one of the greatest means of promotion. The BULLETIN alone connotes a host of activities. Each article written about Mother Seton is preceded by research on the part of the Guild archivist. Articles must be edited and art work arranged. Printers and artists must be contacted. Stencils are cut on the addresses of thousands of members who receive the BULLETIN four times a year. The addressograph comes into use when mailing time arrives.

After the group had viewed the Vice Postulator's files and learned how records are kept on the data from favors and miracles, Father Burgio displayed a reliquary in which first class relics of various saints are shown in ornamental silver and gold receptacles. He showed the students oil paintings of Mother Seton and her children and those of her benefactors, Filippo and Antonio Filicchi, which adorn the walls of the office.

Father then conducted the boys and girls to the "heart of the Guild," the archives, located on the third floor of the building. He explained how the Guild staff has built up a bibliography and library through the years. He showed them photostatic copies of letters written by Mother Seton and her contemporaries and told them that the "Guild strives to secure a photostatic copy of any letter ever written by Mother Seton or any document pertaining to her Cause by checking with the originals in other archives." He called these efforts to gather together all the important documents, letters, etc., and to file them properly, "a herculean task."

Father Burgio was bombarded with questions by the en-

thusiastic student group. One question was "How can we help to promote Mother Seton's Cause?" The Vice Postulator declared that "Prayer, united with sacrifice, is the best way to help, for the success of the Cause depends so much on Almighty God Who alone can bless it with favors and miracles."

He said, "You can't love someone you don't know, therefore each one of you must make a special, personal effort to know Mother Seton better, to become more devoted to her, to be more interested in her as a friend, before trying to impart devotion to others. Remember, a cold stove gives forth no heat."

So the students learned that if they are to fill others with the fire of love for Mother Seton they, themselves, must become a true friend to her. Student campaigns, lectures and clubs in her behalf will follow automatically.

In the promotion of the Cause Father Burgio again mentioned the MOTHER SETON GUILD BULLETIN as a wonderful means of helping the Cause, for each BULLETIN represents a member and every member means a new friend of Mother Seton.

Before leaving the office each student received a souvenir, literature and a novena leaflet on which prayers are inscribed asking God to obtain the canonization of Mother Seton.



Favors Acknowledged

Cincinnati, Ohio.—One month ago my little nephew was at death's door due to hemorrhages after removal of his tonsils and adenoids. The doctors did not expect him to recover. After his third hemorrhage I said, "Mother Seton, you just have to help us." I was desperate and physically exhausted. I gave my sister

a relic of Mother Seton to pin to his clothing. From that day on his bleeding lessened.

I had read of Bishop O'Shea's great help from Mother Seton and I felt she would do no less for us. The little boy had about 18 transfusions and is doing better every day.—M. E. F.

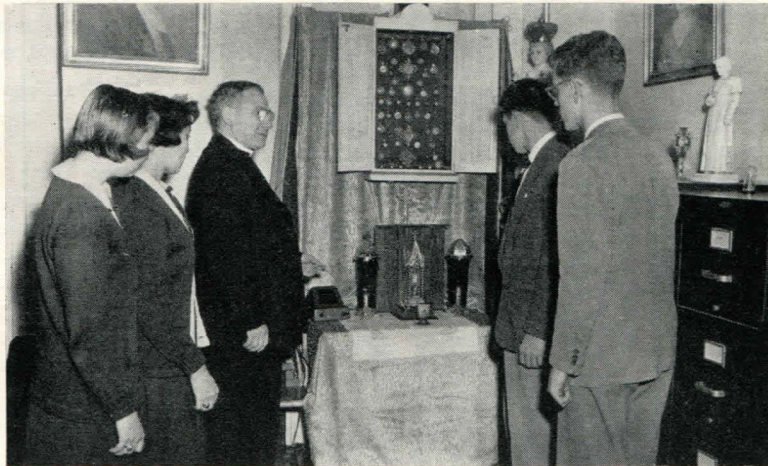
* * *

Norfolk, Va.—I prayed to Mother Seton to help my baby when he became ill with diabetes. Shortly after I made the novena prayers the hospital called me and told me I could take my baby home. When I saw him he was much stronger and hasn't had to take any insulin.

I feel that Mother Seton has helped him and I shall continue to pray for her beatification. I am enclosing a donation to help this wonderful Cause and I shall send more whenever I can to show my gratitude for Mother Seton's help.—Mrs. H. E. W.

* * *

Houston, Texas.—I am enclosing a small offering in thanks to Mother Seton for her intercession in relieving me of a painful stomach condition. I pray to her every day.—Mrs. C. H. P.



Students from St. Joseph's High School, Emmitsburg, view reliquary in Mother Seton Guild during tour conducted by Father Burgio, Vice Postulator. In the display are many relics of canonized saints among whom America prays Mother Seton may one day be numbered.

A Rose by Her Bedside

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Annina died Mother Seton carried her maternal grief to the tabernacle. This was in the spring of 1812.

Again she brought love of the highest type to the infirmary when her youngest daughter, Becky, developed a tumor on her leg following a fall on the ice. For several years Bec limped about the convent grounds at Emmitsburg trying not to reveal too much of her misery. After a year or so her condition became so painful she had to sit up most of the time. It was an agony for the little girl to lie down at all as her illness progressed. Night after night Mother Seton held Bec in her arms until the mother developed a limp of her own from sitting in such a position for so long a time. Bec was sent to Baltimore to Dr. Chatard who advised warm baths and friction. Both were tried but, in the end, Elizabeth had to give Bec back to God as she had already done with Annina.

When the little girl died Father DuBois of Mount St. Mary's College said that "The Mother is a miracle of divine favor. Night and day by the child, her health has not appeared to suffer. She held the child in her arms without dropping a tear all the time of her agony and even eight minutes after she died. Mulierem fortem."

The majority of Mother Seton's patients were victims of tuberculosis and, as there was no cure for this particular disease during her lifetime, she often engaged in a hopeless struggle trying to bring the sick ones back to health. There was a tragic lack of sulfas, penicillin and antibiotics with which to combat the

onslaughts of illness. There were no sparkling enameled, chromium trimmed operating rooms, no skilled surgery, only mild opiates, syrups, the blisters and prayers.

However, Elizabeth gave more than her hand to the profession of nursing; she gave her heart. When she failed to help the patient get well, she at least helped him to die well.

She tells in her own words how she combined prayers with nursing . . . "A night of watching and fevers with many Glorias. How joyfully faith triumphs; it is in the hour of pain and affliction it feels its joy. While like a bird of passage tired, how sweet to see her always before, beckoning the harassed soul to bear up its wings and press forward!" Only a woman like Elizabeth could have mixed her fevers and Glorias so well.

Mother Seton took other talents into the sickroom with her. She gave courage to the patient with her softly-whispered words of eternity making him eager to enter the new life. Her cheerfulness fell like spring sunshine over the bleak sickroom, sometimes better for the patient than medicine. She restored faith, renewed hope, encouraged laughter, inspired prayer. She was kindness, charity, patience and love.

It was not a question of choice whether Elizabeth wanted to nurse or not. The people closest to her were never quite well and her nursing talents were called upon so often that her administrations were hardly less than professional. But Elizabeth was not only skilled; she was dedicated. As she placed a flower by someone's bedside, she saw Christ in the patient.

Favor Acknowledged

New Waterford, Nova Scotia.—My brother lately met with an accident and badly sprained his ankle which caused him to use crutches, but, as usual, he called on Mother Seton to help him and even made a mark just below the knee and begged her not to allow the swelling to go beyond that and it reached the mark and no further.

He prayed and talked as if she were visibly present and told her he was willing to suffer but please not to allow or let him be a cripple. His sons urged him to consult a doctor, but he would have it that Mother Seton was more powerful and so his faith in her is stronger for the experience. Hence, I believe, the best place to put his small donation is in your hands for the Cause.

I also have great devotion to Mother Seton, for I know that many are the favors she obtained through the daily prayers of my class.

Years ago when I was in charge of a convent where a long over-due sum of money was due us with no sign of it ever being paid (and we needed the money) we made a novena to Mother Seton, placing all the letters of apologies, excuses, etc., which this debtor had sent us beside her picture. The Sisters and our pupils prayed fervently and at the end of the novena, to our great joy, we received a check for the whole debt plus the amount required for the exchange.

Thus Mother Seton really helped the gentleman to obtain the money required and relieved us as well. She suffered financially, hence she came to our aid.—Sister M. A.

Mother Seton Guild

Emmitsburg, Maryland

Form 3547 Requested

The Mother Seton Guild, as the Apostolic Postulation, is the official organization for the Cause under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Rome.

Guild members not only share in the noble work of making Mother Seton better known and loved by means of literature, etc., but their membership subscriptions and donations make possible this promotion.

The MOTHER SETON GUILD BULLETIN is issued quarterly to Guild members.



A New Member of the Guild Means a New Friend of the Cause

