

# Vinspiration

## St Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born on 28 August, 1774, in New York City. She was born to Dr Richard and Catherine Bayley, and baptized into the Episcopal Church. At the age of 3 Elizabeth's mother dies in childbirth. Dr Bayley remarries which changes Elizabeth's status in the family and her relationship with her father.

Elizabeth was in her late teens when she met William Magee Seton, the oldest son of a wealthy and distinguished shipping family of New York. They fell in love and married on 25 January, 1794, and five children were born to them between 1795 and 1802. When they arrived in Livorno the whole family was placed in quarantine; soon after William dies.

While waiting to return to the United States, Elizabeth and Anna Maria spend several months with the Filicchi family who were business associates of William Seton. It is her first exposure to Catholics, and she was deeply impressed by their piety.

On her return to New York Elizabeth embraces the Catholic faith and is baptized in March 1805, a choice which triggered 3 years of financial struggle and social discrimination. They were encouraged to travel to Italy to help William's health, Anna Maria their eldest child joins them. When they arrived in Livorno the whole family was placed in quarantine; soon after William dies.

To support her children Elizabeth opened a school in New York City. It developed a good reputation and the Society of St Sulpice invited Elizabeth to open a school for girls in Baltimore. In June 1808 Elizabeth and her family traveled to Baltimore to open the school. Along the way other women joined her in establishing the school.

The whole group moved on to Emmitsburgh, Maryland, where the Sisters of Charity of St Joseph's was established on July 31, 1809. Elizabeth was named first superior and served in that capacity until her death in 1821.



**FEAST DAY**  
January 4

**BEATIFICATION**  
Pope John XXIII  
March 17, 1963

**CANONISATION**  
Pope Paul VI  
September 14, 1975

### Writings ...

“Here I stand with hands and eyes both lifted to await the Adorable Will of God. (Dirvin, *Mrs Seton*, pp.304-305)

“*The only word I have to say to every question is: I am a mother. Whatever providence awaits me consistent with that plea, I say Amen to it.*” (Dirvin, *Mrs Seton*, pp.304-305)

“Many seek to love God by different methods but there is none so short and so easy as to everything for his love, to see this seal on all our actions.” (Kelly and Melville, *Selected Writings*, p357)

“*Good will, simplicity, and confidence, are the keys of the Sanctuary of Divine Love.*” (Kelly and Melville, *Selected Writings*, p357)

“What was the first rule of our dear Saviour's life? You know it was to do His Father's Will.” ((Charles I. White, *Mother Seton: Mother of Many Daughters*)

“*We must pray literally without ceasing – without ceasing; in every occurrence and employment of our lives.*” (Dirvin, *Mrs Seton*, pp.181-182)

### Who is Elizabeth Ann...

-  New York socialite
-  Mother of five children
-  Dedicated volunteer
-  Convert to Catholicism
-  Devoted wife
-  Educator, social minister and catechist
-  Spiritual leader and formator
-  Founder of Sisters of Charity of St Joseph

# St Elizabeth Ann Seton

## Elizabeth Ann's Spirituality



Hunger for the Word of God: the Bible was her constant companion throughout her life.

Thirst for the Eucharist: her belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist sustained in the mission of charitable service.

Pursuit of the Will of God: this is an important and constant thread throughout Elizabeth's life.

Reliance on Divine Providence: Elizabeth relied heavily on God despite trials and misfortunes.

Acceptance of the Cross of Christ: the experience of being in quarantine enabled her to embrace the cross of Christ more fully in its varied forms of poverty, illness, loss and injustice.

Confidence in Mary as the Mother of God: Elizabeth appreciated the intercessory role of Mary in the Church.

Promise of Eternity: she looked forward to God's promise of eternity.

Beauties of Creation: Elizabeth encountered God amid the created beauty of her natural environment.

**Something to think about ...** Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

How do I nurture my faith?

*How do I feel about sharing my faith with others?*

How had confidence in God's love lifted me out of the turmoil of a situation?

*Do I use all of my experiences as subjects of my conversation with God?*

In what practical ways can I recall God's presence each and every day?

*What is the state of my own belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?*

What Biblical passages touch my heart, drawing me into intimacy with God?

*How has God used me as an instrument of providence to bring hope, compassion, and care to people in need?*

How are the whisperings of the Spirit calling me to live Gospel values in my daily life?

**Let us pray...**

O God, I pray with Elizabeth Ann Seton for the grace to hear what you want to say to me and to stake my life on your word as she did. Amen.

First American Saint



## Bibliography

15 Days of Prayer with St Elizabeth Ann Seton Betty Ann McNeil DC Ligouri, Missouri, 2002

Praying With Elizabeth Seton Margaret Alderman and Josephine Burns DC St Mary's Press, Minnesota, 1992

Mrs Seton: Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity, Joseph. I. Dirvin, New York, 1962)



## Web Resources

[www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org)

[www.filles-de-la-charite.org](http://www.filles-de-la-charite.org)

[www.secretariadojmv.org](http://www.secretariadojmv.org)

VINCENTIAN  
FAMILY  
CELEBRATION

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