

January 4, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHRISTMAS

Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg

GUIDED BY THE HEART

By Julie Mussché

“Do what we can and God will do the rest. What seems so impossible to nature is quite easy to grace.”

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON

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Reflection

Have you ever considered what life was like for people living in a large North American city around the time of the American Revolutionary War? New York City, for example, a significant center of trade, was crowded with a diverse population of established and wealthy families, the struggling poor, many of them newly immigrated or posted to the bustling urban center. There was no running water, gas, or electricity; transportation was by foot or horse; communication was done by pen and paper and word of mouth; social and medical care were limited by access and 18th Century innovation, and largely administered by religious or relief societies. Civil unrest, wars, and political, religious, and racial division were rife during this time and place. It was into this milieu and physical circumstances that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was born and called by God to serve in ministry.

Born in New York City in 1774, Elizabeth Ann grew up in a family of privilege. Her life experience was punctuated by loss and tragedy, starting with her mother's death when she was around three. Perhaps the complexity and compounding of losses over time drew Elizabeth to a more interior life and desire for God. She was raised as an Episcopalian and a big part of her church life revolved around charitable ministry with the poor and sick. Elizabeth married at age nineteen and mothered and nurtured five children.

With her husband's death while they both were residing in Italy in 1803, Elizabeth Ann was introduced to Catholicism and on returning to the United States, she converted. She grappled as a widow to support herself and her family, and eventually relocated to Maryland where she founded an academy focused on the education of Catholic Girls. The same year, Elizabeth Ann Seton founded a religious community which became known as the Sisters of Charity. She was the first U.S. citizen to be canonized, and has a lasting impact on Catholic schools and hospitals in the United States and the world. She is the patron saint of Catholic schools, widows, and seafarers. Today is the Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious. Happy Feast Day!



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For Pondering

- Have you experienced or seen the legacy of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton? Where or when?
- How are you inspired by her legacy to respond to God's call to serve others?

For Prayer

Oh Father, the first rule [of] our dear Savior's life was to do Your Will. Let His Will of the present moment be the first rule of our daily life and work, with no other desire but for its most full and complete accomplishment. Help us to follow it faithfully, so that doing what You wish, we will be pleasing to You. Amen.

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON

From: [Seton Shrine](#)

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