

January Holy Hero

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – Feast Day Jan. 4

Hello kids,

I was born Elizabeth Bayley in 1774, around the time of the American Revolution, and was raised in the high society of New York. My Protestant family taught me the value of prayer and Scripture, and the importance of loving and serving others. I had a great love of reading, especially the Bible, which became my comfort and support for the rest of my life. The early deaths of my mother and baby sister (1777 and 1778), showed me that life here on earth is only a temporary journey on our way to our true home with God in eternity.



At the age of 19, I fell deeply in love and married William Seton, a handsome and wealthy businessman. We were very happy in those early years and had 5 beautiful children. Our life together was all too brief; William soon became very sick with tuberculosis. At the same time his business was failing. While on a trip to Italy, at age 30, I was left widowed and penniless with 5 small children to support. It was then I began to see the beauty of the Catholic faith which I witnessed in action by my friends that lived there. Having lost my mother at such a young age, I found comfort in the idea that the Blessed Virgin was truly my Mother. I asked Mary to lead me to the True Faith of Jesus Christ and joined the Catholic Church in 1805.

In order to support my children, I accepted an invitation to Baltimore, Maryland from Archbishop Carroll to start the first free Catholic school in America. That same year, in 1809, I became a nun and founded the Sisters of Charity, which was the first American religious community for women, and was based on the Daughters of Charity established by St. Vincent de Paul in France. My community was very active in doing God's work; establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages, including the first parish school in the U.S. Through many hardships and trials in my life, I tried to accept and embrace the will of God. This acceptance became the cornerstone of my spiritual life.

Today, six American communities of Sisters trace their origins to the Sisters of Charity. "Mother Seton" also worked with the sick and poor, composed hymns and music, and wrote spiritual books. All this was done in her short life of 46 years while raising 5 children. The Basilica of the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where she lived for several years before her death in 1821. She was the first American-born citizen to be canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1975.