

TV Interview of St. Elizabeth Seton

I: Good Morning! We have an exciting show for you today. You are going to meet some special people who are a real inspiration for us today. Our first guest is Elizabeth Ann Seton, saint, teacher, and foundress of the Sisters of Charity. Please welcome her.

I: Good Morning, Elizabeth!

E: Good Morning.

I: You have the wonderful distinction of being the very first person born in the United States to be declared a saint by the Catholic Church. Tell us when and where you were born?

E: I was born in New York City in 1774. I was growing up during the years of the American Revolution. My father was a doctor. My mother died when I was three years old, but I had a happy childhood. I was very close to my dad who saw to it that I had everything I needed, especially a good education.

I: Elizabeth, I understand that you were well known throughout New York City as an educated, generous, and kind young women.

E: My deep faith enabled me to be all those things. I had a special desire to help the poor. I organized a group of women in my neighborhood to give aid to widows and orphans.

I: You soon met a young man named William Seton. You married him when you were just 20 years old.

E: Yes, we were very happy together. We wanted a big family and soon had five beautiful children – two boys and three girls. I was very happy with my life. But life never follows a straight road!

I: You mean there was sadness and hardships for you to endure?

E: Yes, within a few years my father died, my husband's merchant business started to fail, and worst of all, my husband fell seriously ill with TB. He died while we were on a trip to Italy.

I: It must have been such a sad time for you. How did you get through it?

E: It was sad but there was a blessing too. You see, when we were in Italy I got to know William's Friends, the Filicchi's. They were devout Catholics who taught me about their faith. I learned about God's presence in the Eucharist. I felt very prayerful and close to God when I went to Mass with them.

I: Is that what made you want to embrace the catholic faith?

E: Yes, when I returned to New York I thought, and prayed, and reflected about it for several months. I made up my mind to become Catholic. That was in March of 1805.

I: When the family business failed, how did you support your five children?

E: I had a good education so I decided to become a teacher. I moved to Baltimore. There I met Archbishop John Carroll. He asked me if I would like to start a school. As soon as I heard it I knew it was a good idea because I could educate my children and earn a living.

I: Did it work out as you thought it would be?

E: Even better than I thought! Our school soon outgrew the first building we were in, so we moved out to the country to a little place called Emmitsburg. From this school the idea for parish schools developed.

I: How is it that you started a community of sisters?

E: As our school grew so did our need for teachers. Pious young women joined me to teach. It soon became apparent that we wanted to live more for God and less for ourselves. So under Archbishop Carroll we organized into the Sisters of Charity.

I: As a community of charity what works did your sisters do?

E: Our goal was to meet the needs of the times. So the sisters opened schools, orphanages, and hospitals – not only in Maryland, but in Philadelphia and New York and many other places.

I: The Sisters of Charity are still in existence today. Tell us about them.

E: My original community has grown very big. There are several branches of Sisters of Charity. Thousands of sisters do God's work today. Besides educators they serve as pastoral assistants, social workers, spiritual directors, hospital workers, missionaries and in many more ways.

I: Elizabeth, your life and faith has had an important impact on church and society. You are an example to each one of us.

E: Thank you for joining us today. It has been our pleasure. Thank you.