

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Church Patron Saint

Prayer

Lord God, you blessed Elizabeth Ann Seton with gifts of grace
as wife and mother, educator and foundress,
so that she might spend her life in service to your people.
Through her example and prayers, may we,
whose Faith Community is dedicated to her honor,
learn to express our love for you in our love for all your children.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Foundress of the American parochial school system

The first American Saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton was born in 1774 as Elizabeth Ann Bayley in New York City. She was brought up as an Episcopalian and married William Seton at the age of 19 in 1794. She went on missions of mercy to help poor widows and children in New York City, with her sister-in-law Rebecca and earned the nickname "Protestant Sisters of Charity." Her husband contracted tuberculosis in 1803 and the couple sailed to Italy so he could recuperate. William Seton died several months later in Pisa. Her husband's friends took Elizabeth in and introduced her to Catholicism. Upon returning to New York she joined the Catholic Church.

Elizabeth and her five children moved to Maryland, where she opened a school for girls. She formed a community based on the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of France. The rule was officially adopted and the Sisters of Charity became the first congregation of women religious in America. She worked to establish St. Joseph Academy, a school for indigent children in Emmitsburg, Maryland and was named Superior.

In the remaining years of her life, Mother Seton and the Sisters worked, with much effort, to teach children and establish orphanages, including one in New York. Through their love of Christ they brought education to the poor and set the groundwork for the parochial school system in the United States. On September 14, 1975 she was canonized a Saint by Pope Paul VI.