

# Mother Seton

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quired a violin which he brought home, believed to be the first genuine Stradivarius in New York.

After living briefly with the elder Seton at the family home on Stone Street, the young couple moved to their new home in the Battery, on New York's Wall Street, then a fashionable residence area.

### Three Children Born

In the four years they lived at 27 Wall Street were born Elizabeth's first three children, Anna Marie, William, and Richard. Richard's birth had nearly cost Elizabeth her life, and just before he was born another trial had been the sudden death of Grandfather Seton, thereby placing the affairs of Seton and Maitland upon the shoulders of her husband.

This event also left parentless six young children who were the last of a total of 15 children. The senior William had two wives, for he had married again at the death of his first wife. These became the responsibility of William Magee, the eldest, and therefore Elizabeth became the "mother" of six more children.

It was her doctor-father who delivered Richard, who was named after him. Dr. Richard Bayley literally blew the breath of life into the baby's lungs.

All this was in July and August in 1788. Before Mrs. Seton was fully recovered, there depended upon New York in September the yellow fever epidemic of that year, placing heavy burdens upon Dr. Bayley as health officer.

### Husband Catches Fever

At their summer house in the Bloomingdale area, then in the countryside, her husband William caught the fever, and there she stayed with her sick spouse and enlarged family. There were, she wrote, "18 in the family, in a house containing only five small rooms." At every turn, some small voice would call to her: "Sister" or "Mother."

Her husband was improving, though very weak, but the older children were beginning to catch colds in October. With the advent of cold weather the epidemic abated, and they could move back to the city.

As Grandfather Seton's house on Stone Street was practically empty because the furniture had been sold, she first had it papered, painted, and washed to remove all danger of fever, then transferred her furniture there from Wall Street.

Any housewife can imagine the situation. The energetic little Mrs. Seton, hardly recovered from childbirth, attacked pantries, closets, storerooms, cellar, and attic like a commanding general, and soon was ready to send for her enlarged family. Two older girls were sent to boarding school.

Two others took charge of the younger children, and Elizabeth found herself a school-teacher,

educating three small girls, Rebecca Seton

At these times of trial, there had come to Mrs. Seton's rescue her husband's sister Rebecca, who became her closest friend.

Six years apart in age, the two were together able to cope with the wholesale readjustments in family life. In Rebecca Seton the harassed young wife and mother found "the friend of my soul."

Whatever time she could spare from her domestic and social duties, young Mrs. Seton used in prayer, reading Holy Scripture, and meditating upon religion.

Adversity turned her thoughts upon the true remedy for earthly trials: The happy-exchange of transient suffering for eternal joy, as an extract from one of her prayers in that harrowing year shows:

"Almighty-giver of all mercies, Father of all, Who knowest my heart and pities its weakness and errors, Thou



RICHARD SETON Third of five children

knowest that the desire of my soul is to do Thy will. It struggles to wing its flight to Thee, its Creator, and sinks again in sorrow for that imperfection which draws it back again to earth . . .

I bow to Thee, my God, in cheerful hope that, confiding in Thy infinite mercy and assisted by Thy powerful grace, I shall soon arrive at that hour of unspeakable joy.

"But if it is Thy will that the spirit shall yet contend with its dust, assist me to conduct myself through this life so as not to render it an enemy, but a conductor to that happy state where all mortal contentions are done away, and where Thy eternal presence will bestow eternal felicity."

### Troubles Arise

Within two years, as she and her husband got settled with their own and the orphaned children, the Seton-Maitland firm came upon difficult times. Ships and cargoes were lost in the "undeclared war" with France, and to sea pirates; connecting firms in London, Hamburg and elsewhere failed; the company's payments were being stopped in England, where James Seton, William's brother, was having trouble collecting bills, and American banks were stopping payments also.

William's health was rapidly declining. By the summer of 1803 the family had a financial crisis.

(Next week's installment will narrate the travels of Mother Seton in Italy)

## BOOK SHELF

## Approach To Penance

By Br. Margaret Teresa, Nazareth College

"Approach to Penance," by Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. Sheed, Feb. 12, '58. 104 pp. \$2.50.

Inhaling, exhaling—thus we maintain natural life.

Prayer, penance, receiving, giving—thus we maintain spiritual life, thus we live in Christ. This simple image in "Approach to Penance" suggests the necessity of penance, the balanced use of it as a means to walk with God, even the naturalness and ease which come to be the manner of our best penance.

Though Father van Zeller includes somewhere in his close-packed argument the old ground of suitable penances and proper permissions, he gives this a small place.

HE IS NOT talking about having a dash at the imitations of saints during Lent—advises, in fact, forgetting all the spectacular penances we ever heard of. His subject "is living for God, wanting to do what God wants us to do—and this we feel no sickly repulsion for, this appeals.

Though he speaks to "ex-fal-se" saints and to expenients who "feel they have found a better way," he also addresses the great majority who forget their promises. "Walk before Me and be perfect" means, he thinks, not running crazily into exhaustion, nor lying down on the job, but keeping on.

OUR BEST PENANCE, he

says encouragingly, is God-sent. It is "passive penance," it is "God pruning the fruitful branch. . . . The main work is done on the branch; there is little enough that can be done by it.

The primary function of the branch is to abide in the vine and be true to the principle of growth. "It is . . . axiomatic, then, that the trials which God allows us are to be preferred before any which we could devise for ourselves. To these we must try to respond . . . voluntarily."

"God may try the intellect, the will, the memory, the imagination, the physical side of our natures." "A soul habitually on the alert to serve God by prayer and penance is in a state of positive receptivity," does penance by the quality of its Fiat under the permissive will of God.

THE NEED for various kinds of penance is discussed, exterior and interior, active and passive; there must be some active tokens of generosity, the branch must shake off a twig here and there "to show God that it is in perfect agreement with his action."

The most frequently recurring counsel is that of self-forgetful-

## Pope Pius Receives Allied Forces Chief

Vatican City (NC) — Pope Pius XII received Admiral Sir Charles E. Lamb, Commander in Chief of the allied forces in the Mediterranean, in a special audience here.

Admiral Lamb was accompanied by his wife and the British naval attache in Rome.

ness, keeping one's eyes on Christ—and perhaps a close second to it the suggestion—that penance goes unobserved, seeks no notice, has a soldierly power to wear the armor of joy. A third hint is charity: "Deal thy bread to the needy, and despise not thine own flesh." The author knows souls—we meet ourselves coming and going in these chapters.

Go through the Missal "with an eye for references to sin, repentance, and pardon," advises the final chapter. Or do this with just the Ordinary of the Mass. In the mystery of the Lamb of God will be found the fullness of service—in His Sacrifice.

A book for every state in life, based on Scripture and experience. A book suggesting where we may begin: "A man may mortify his anger and impose upon himself the strictest rule of patience without any one's permission or worry about the effect on his physical condition.

He may do violence to his curiosity, to his tendency to dramatize, to his habits of procrastination, rash judgment . . . these may be treated with the greatest firmness."



JELLY RIPPLE sweetheart cake was national winner two years ago for Bob Koran of Steubenville, O., Catholic Central. Now, with state National Cherry Pie contest, Steubenville are wondering if Bobby "Can Bake a Cherry Pie?" (NC Photo)

# 'Faith' Won't Hurt Catholic Candidate

Boston — (NC) — An interpreter of national voting patterns said here a future presidential candidate who is a Catholic will be helped, rather than hindered, by his religion.

Dr. Laurence Fuchs of Brandeis University, who has studied voting behavior since World War II, made this statement in an address to faculty members and students at Boston University's Citizenship Project.

DR. FUCHS said he believes that anti-Catholic voting sentiment on the Presidential level has been diminishing for the past 15 years and what remains of it is now to be found largely in areas that are politically unimportant.

He cited the rural south and, to a lesser extent, the rural mid-West as still anti-Catholic areas. But he claimed that there has been a fading of bias there in addition to a declining population.

Prof. Fuchs said another important factor is the steadily growing Catholic population, which he maintained is increasing at a greater rate than that of non-Catholics in the urbanized and industrial states which carry large electoral vote blocs.

The Brandeis analyst said he found much less religious influence in potential votes for a high

national office, such as the presidency, than for local offices.

He added that he thinks the effect of the Soviet challenges in defense, education and economic fields will far outweigh any religious factors in future national elections.

PROF. FUCHS said that in 1956 he consulted with nearly every state delegation at the Democratic National Convention, and found a wide sentiment for a Catholic on the ticket.

He asserted that it was Massachusetts Sen. John Kennedy's youth that prevented him from being nominated as the vice presidential candidate that year and not his religion.

## Polish Bishop Dies After Consecration

Czestochowa, Poland (NC) — Auxiliary Bishop Szecepan Sobalkowski of Kielec died here Feb. 12 while offering Mass at the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. His death occurred less than 24 hours after his consecration as bishop.

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