

VOCATION AWARENESS LESSON

GRADE SIX

SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY: DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Objective: Through the life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, students will gain an understanding of vocation to the consecrated life.

Materials: Story of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton (provided), art supplies

Instructional Focus:

- I. Students will listen to age appropriate adaptations of the following vocabulary/definitions which are taken from the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.
 - Vocation- the call each person receives from God; everyone has been called to holiness and eternal life, especially in Baptism. Each person can also be called more specifically to the priesthood or religious life; to the married life; and to the single life.
 - Priest- a baptized man ordained through Holy Orders who with the bishop exercise the pastoral mission of the Church. They serve God's people in the work of sanctification by their preaching, teaching and offering the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the forgiving of sins. (A priest may be ordained as a diocesan priest or as a member of a religious community.)
 - Holy Orders- the sacrament in which a bishop ordains a man to be conformed to Jesus Christ by grace, to service and leadership in the Church. A man can be ordained as a deacon, priest or bishop.
 - Religious or Consecrated Life- a permanent state in life into which certain men or women freely commit themselves to a life of special service to Christ, marked by the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Students will read the short biography of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. In groups of three, the students will:

- discuss the events of her life, particularly her call to religious life
 - create a timeline which traces her vocational call to the consecrated life
 - write a corresponding narrative for the timeline.
- II. Students will present their timelines to the class. After the presentations, the class will summarize the events, life decisions, joys, challenges and qualities which led Elizabeth Ann Seton to sainthood.
- III. Students continue to work in a group setting to create a personal collage of words, pictures and drawings on the theme, “God’s Call to ME for Sainthood.” Collages are displayed when completed.

Optional Activities:

- I. In conjunction with Part I of the Instructional Focus, use the story of “The Prince and the Precious Gem” (provided) as an introduction to the notion of vocation.
- II. In groups of three, students create individual story webs describing the definition, qualities and witness of those who choose the consecrated life to serve God and His Church. Students then write a reflection paper on how consecrated women serve God and share with the class.

Resources for lesson and story of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton:

Daughters of Charity website: www.thedaughtersofcharity.org

Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, *Saints and Feast Days: A Resource and Activity Book*, Loyola Press, 2004.

Those who have purchased this book may reproduce its contents for use in educational settings.

“The Prince and the Precious Gem Story” adapted by Gilles Cote (Catholic Religious Education Webzine) from “Faut-il encore pratiquer?” by Bernard Bro. Used with permission.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Do you know who was the first person born in the United States to be declared a saint? She opened the first American Catholic parish school and orphanage. She founded the first American religious community of women and is often referred to as the patroness of the sea services. This person was Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton.

Elizabeth was born two years before the Declaration of Independence. Her father was a prominent New York physician. He did not attend church, but by his example he taught his daughter to love and serve the poor. Her mother and stepmother were devout Episcopalians who taught Elizabeth the value of prayer and reading the Scripture. Elizabeth's education and training prepared her for New York high society. At the age of 19, she married a handsome, wealthy businessman, William Seton. Furs and satins, parties and plays, an abundance of friends and money – all were part of the young couple's life. Will and Elizabeth were very much in love, and they loved their three girls and two boys.

Then in 1803 Will Seton's business went bankrupt and his health failed. The Filicchi family in Italy invited the Setons to visit so that Will could recuperate in the warm, sunny climate. The ocean voyage was rough. Then, because of a yellow fever epidemic in New York before the Setons left, the Italian government kept them isolated in an old fort for six weeks. If they did not get yellow fever, they would be allowed to enter Italy. Will Seton grew worse in the cold, damp room. Elizabeth, with the help of a Filicchi servant, cared for him. Finally they were released, but in a few weeks Will was dead.

Elizabeth widowed at 30 with 5 small children and many medical bills, returned to New York. While she was in Italy, the Filicchi family had taught her about the Catholic faith. Back in New York she began to attend St. Peter's, the only Catholic church in the city. When Elizabeth made her profession of faith in 1805, her family and friends turned against her, and she was on her own.

Elizabeth opened a Catholic boarding school for girls in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Women with the same ideals came to help her, and the school grew. In 1812 Elizabeth and these other women became a religious community, the Daughters of Charity of St. Joseph. From then on, these sisters served in hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages, homes for the mentally challenged and in schools.

As a religious sister, Elizabeth continued to cherish and guide her children. Her two sons joined the navy. Her daughters became nuns. We celebrate her feast on January 4.

The Prince and the Precious Gem

There once was a prince who had a very precious gem. This prized possession brought him much joy and he would proudly show it to all the visitors that came to his kingdom.

One day, quite by accident, the gem was damaged. To the prince's dismay, it was deeply scratched. The prince hurriedly summoned all of the jewelers in the kingdom, in the hope that one of them could repair it. They all refused to touch it. The damage, they said, was much too severe and any attempt to tamper with it could only result in further harm.

The prince had reluctantly accepted the verdict of the experts and was deeply saddened by his great loss. One day, however, he heard rumors that a new jeweler had come to his kingdom from a distant land. This gem cutter had a reputation for being not only very skilled, but very wise as well. This news revived the prince's hope of recovering his precious possession. He immediately sent for the wise gem cutter.

When the craftsman saw the scarred gem, he fell silent for several minutes, then turned to the prince who was waiting impatiently for a response. Finally, the wise man said: "Yes, I can give beauty back to this gem, but on one condition. You must entrust it to me; let me take it out of your castle. Such work requires quiet and solitude."

The prince was taken aback by this request. Even in its condition, the stone was still very precious to him and he did not want to risk losing it forever. He hesitated for a long time, all the while gazing into the eyes of the old man who stood before him.

Finally, he handed the gem over to the jeweler who took it and without saying another word, left the castle.



Three days later, when the anxious prince heard that the jeweler had returned, he rushed to meet him in the hall of audiences. The jeweler held out his hands, slowly removed the silk cloth that he wrapped around the stone and gave it to the prince. The prince looked at it and was astonished at what he saw. The scar was still there, but it was no longer ugly. The gem cutter had left it there and made of it the stem of a beautiful carved rose. The prince's gem was now more wonderful to behold than it had ever been.