

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The Practice of Spiritual Direction
In the Life and Writings of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Of The Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Shin Ja Lee

Washington. D. C.

2010

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Shin Ja Lee, Ph. D.

Director: Raymond Studzinski, OSB, Ph. D.

Elizabeth Ann Seton became the first North American-born saint in 1975 and her sainthood was a fruit of her spiritual formation in the Episcopal and the Catholic Church. That formation qualified her as a spiritual director to her contemporaries. This dissertation examined what characterized her reception and practice of spiritual direction through an analysis of her letters, journals, meditations, her translations and works she copied.

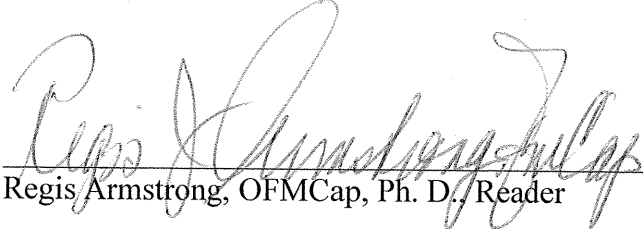
Part one of this dissertation begins with research on the North American Catholic spirituality of the 19th century in Elizabeth's time and continues with an investigation of Elizabeth's reception of spiritual direction. Part two investigates Elizabeth's qualifications as a spiritual director and her practice of spiritual direction of her contemporaries. In conclusion, this dissertation presents an analysis and evaluation of Elizabeth's spiritual direction.

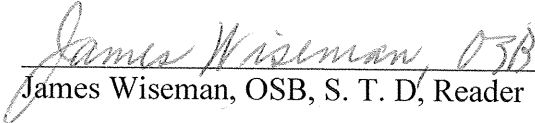
This dissertation demonstrates the nature of Elizabeth's spiritual direction as incarnational which was also characteristic of the "*Garden of the Soul Spirituality*" of her time, as exemplified in Richard Challoner's Garden of the Soul (1773). The prominent themes in her spiritual direction were the formation of faith, hope, and love via the process of conversion of heart, right discernment, and the Christ-centered life. She used the Scripture and spiritual writings including those of the Church Fathers as resources for her spiritual direction.

This dissertation claims that Elizabeth was a qualified spiritual director and her practice of spiritual direction contributed to the enrichment of the ministry of spiritual direction. Her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety led individuals to deepen their spiritual life by following her example of piety. Her emphasis on the Christ-centered life in her spiritual direction offered insight on the method and goal of spiritual formation. Her method of spiritual direction via her letters and writings contributed to the ministry of spiritual direction by encouraging individuals by their own letters and spiritual reflections to aid others in deepening their spiritual life.

This dissertation by Shin Ja Lee fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Philosophy approved by Raymond Studzinski, Ph. D. as Director, and by Regis Armstrong, Ph. D and James Wiseman, STD as Readers.


Raymond Studzinski, OSB, Ph. D., Director


Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap, Ph. D., Reader


James Wiseman, OSB, S. T. D., Reader

For Sister Marlene Mondalek and
The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

and

For My Mother and Family

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude and acknowledge the following people who helped me in various ways so that I could complete this dissertation:

- To Sister Marlene Mondalek, S.C. and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill and to my family for their continual encouragement and support which enabled me to write this dissertation.

- To Rev. Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B. who continually directed my writing, patiently critiquing each chapter and offering recommendations, affirmation and insight which enabled me to complete this work.

-To. Rev. James Wiseman, O.S.B. and Rev. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. who offered their precious time for reading my dissertation and important advice for this work.

-To Msgr. Robert Trisco and Sister Mary Elizabeth O'Brien who offered their insightful wisdom and contributed to the completion of this dissertation.

-To Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., archivist of the Daughters of Charity Emmitsburg, MD., who provided the manuscripts of the letters to Elizabeth from her spiritual directors which are cited in this dissertation. I also am grateful to Sister Betty Ann's archival assistants, Bonnie Weatherly, Selin James and Mary Ann Weatherly.

-To Sister Claire Debes, D.C with her provincial council and to Sister Vincentia Goeb, D.C. and the Sisters of the Bethany Community of the Daughters of Charity who offered me a home and loving care during the writing of my dissertation.

- To Sister Regina Bechtle, S.C., and Judith Metz, S.C., editors, and Dr. Ellin Kelly, the manuscript editor, of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings*, the publication of which was an invaluable aid in writing this dissertation.

-To Sister Kathleen Flanagan, S.C. who offered her research on Rev. John Henry Hobart.

INTRODUCTION

Was St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton a spiritual director in her own time? If so, what kind of formation did she receive to become a spiritual director? What are the characteristics of her spiritual direction in both her reception of it and practice of it? To investigate these questions, this dissertation will analyze her letters, journals, meditations, translations, and copied works, found in her *Collected Writings*, and also in her spiritual directors' letters to her.

The Catholic Church canonized St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton (1774-1821), the founder of the Sisters of Charity in America, as the first North American-born saint on September 14, 1975. Under the jurisdiction of the first American bishop, John Carroll, Elizabeth founded the American Sisters of Charity, in Maryland in 1809, and shared her spiritual life as a religious (1809-1821) with her contemporaries. Reverend Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was Elizabeth's spiritual director during her religious life and later became the founding bishop of the diocese of Vincennes, Indiana, stated in his writing dated January 5, 1821, the day after Elizabeth's death that Elizabeth was one of those elite souls like St. Teresa of Avila and St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

In the first place I will say as the result of my long and intimate acquaintance with her, that I believe her to have been one of those truly chosen souls (âmes d'élite) who, if placed in circumstances similar to those of St. Theresa [Teresa of Avila], or St. Frances de Chantal, would be equally remarkable in the scale of sanctity. For it seems to me impossible that there could be a greater elevation, purity, and love for God, for heaven, and for supernatural and eternal things than were to be found in her. But, we must leave to the Almighty His adorable designs, and the proper estimate of the degree of approximation of her heart to His.¹

¹ Simon Gabriel Brute, D.D., *Mother Seton* (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, published for only internal use in the community, 1884), 81-82.

As a witness of Elizabeth's saintly life, Bruté requested the Sisters of her religious community to preserve all of Elizabeth's writings and also to copy some of her letters given to her directees. These materials not only served to further her canonization but also are the content of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Collected Writings*.² Two Books in these collections include her journals and hundreds of her letters to her contemporaries, including many people who were not her religious sisters. Among the journals was her Leghorn journal, published in 1817 without her permission.³ The other two books in these collections consist of her spiritual writings including her translations and copied works based on the teaching of spiritual writers, such as the Church Fathers, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. She translated some parts of these spiritual writings from the French into English as resources for her own spiritual life and for her directees. Her translation of *A Treatise on Interior Peace*, written by Ambroise de Lombez, was published in 1996.⁴

The spiritual direction revealed in Elizabeth's writings flows from her spiritual formation in the Episcopal Church and later in the Catholic Church. Elizabeth was born into a prominent New York family and grew up in the Episcopal Church. Elizabeth's

² *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Collected Writings* (hereafter cited as *CW*), ed. Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, mss. ed. Ellin M. Kelly, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808* (New York: New City Press, 2000); *CW*, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820* (New York: New City Press, 2002); *CW*, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents* (New York: New City Press, 2006); *CW*, vol. 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents* (New York: New City Press, 2006).

³ Elizabeth's daughter, Catherine Seton, found the copy of her mother's journal which was titled, *The Memoirs of Mrs. S* (Elizabeth, NJ: Isaac Kollack, 1817). See *CW*, 2, sec., 7.98, 488, n. 1.

⁴ Ambroise de Lombez, OFMCap, *A Treatise on Interior Peace*, trans. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, ed. Marie Celeste, SC. (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1996).

early spiritual growth was rooted in the experience of God in her sufferings. Since she lost her mother at the age of two, Elizabeth experienced loneliness and suffering because of the struggle with her stepmother and sought consolation from the reciting of Psalms and other prayers and the reading of the Scriptures.

During the nine years of happy married life (1794-1803) with William Magee Seton, she entered a new stage of spiritual growth guided by the Scriptures. Under the influence of Reverend John Henry Hobart, who was the minister of Trinity Episcopal Church from December, 1800, and who later became a bishop, she grew spiritually and dedicated herself to charitable work for the poor and sick.

Elizabeth's encounter with Catholicism occurred in 1803 through a trip to Italy on which she embarked to help her husband recover from tuberculosis. In Italy, she experienced Catholicism through the Filicchi brothers, who had been friends of the Seton family and, after William's death, guided her to convert to Roman Catholicism. Her deep yearning for communion with Christ in the Eucharist and also the encouragement of Antonio and Filippo Filicchi, Bishop John Carroll, and Rev. Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, who became the first bishop of Boston in 1810, led her to become a Catholic in 1805. These four men continually supported Elizabeth and her family and guided Elizabeth in developing her spiritual life. From 1811, Elizabeth's friendship with Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was her spiritual director and who also received spiritual direction from her, nourished her growth in the spiritual life. Under the spiritual direction of Bruté, she deepened her spiritual life through meditation on the Scriptures, through reading a great

number of spiritual books from Bruté's library and through copying works and translating spiritual writings from French into English.

Elizabeth's correspondence and writings reveal her role as a spiritual director from her time, first of all, in the Episcopal Church and later in the Catholic Church. As the founder of the Sisters of Charity and of St. Joseph Academy in Maryland, she functioned as a spiritual director through her correspondence and spiritual writings including her copied works and translations of spiritual writings. She shared her spiritual wisdom with clergymen, friends, social leaders, students including graduates and their parents, as well as her children and religious Sisters and encouraged them all to incarnate the Christ-centered life in faith, hope, and love.

In this dissertation, I will analyze both the spiritual direction that St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton received and her own approach to spiritual direction as revealed in her correspondence and other writings.

In the first part of the dissertation, I will situate Elizabeth in 19th century North American Catholic spirituality. Then, I will analyze her correspondence and other writings and examine the spiritual direction that she received in her life both prior to and after her conversion. In this part, I will focus on the spiritual direction of Rev. John Henry Hobart of the Episcopal Church, the Filicchi brothers of Italy, and clergymen who included Bishop John Carroll, Bishop Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus and Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté.

In the second part, I will look into how Elizabeth began to function as a spiritual director through the analysis of her correspondence and other writings. Then I will

examine how she as a Christian and a religious assisted individuals to grow in faith, hope, and love in her spiritual direction.

Finally, I will investigate the nature of Elizabeth's spiritual direction and what themes were prominent in it. Then I will also examine what sources influenced her approach to spiritual direction and what was the model which she followed. Finally, I will assess what is distinctive in her spiritual direction given to her contemporaries and consider what significant contribution she has made to the ministry of spiritual direction.

There has been no detailed study of the practice of spiritual direction in the life and writings of St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton. *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Collected Writings* were published from 2000 to 2006. This dissertation will make a contribution not only to the study of the practice of the spiritual direction of Elizabeth, but also to the understanding of spiritual direction based on the early 19th century Catholic spirituality in North America.

PART 1

ELIZABETH SETON'S RECEPTION OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

CHAPTER ONE
NORTH AMERICAN CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY:
ELIZABETH ANN SETON'S TIME (1774-1821)

What was the nature of North American Catholic Spirituality in Elizabeth Seton's time? Philip Sheldrake notes that spirituality is "both multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary field" and demands "a proper understanding of the historical process."¹ It is necessary to trace the American Catholicism of Elizabeth Seton's time in the historical and cultural context because religious history cannot be separated from the history of the world.² What were the historical circumstances of Catholicism in North America at Elizabeth Seton's time? How did this culture impact North American Catholicism and the spiritual formation of Catholics? Elizabeth Seton's time coincides with the era of the birth of the United States and the age of John Carroll, the first bishop of the United States and a leading figure in the founding of the American Catholic Church.

Where is Elizabeth Seton's time (1774-1821) situated in the Catholic history of North America? Catholic historians have divided the history of American Catholicism according to each one's different point of view.³ However, they seem to agree that the late

¹ Philip Sheldrake, S. J., *Spirituality & History*, 2nd ed., rev. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 5.

² Sheldrake, 37.

³ The history of American Catholicism in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* is divided into five distinct periods: (1) the mission in Colonial America: 1492-1789, (2) age of John Carroll: 1789-1815, (3) Church of the early immigrants: 1815-1866, (4) immigration at high tide: 1866-1908, (5) maturing Catholic community: 1908 to 1965. See *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), s.v. "United States of America." William L. Portier divided American Spirituality into three divisions: (1) republican Catholicism: from the Revolution to 1830, (2) immigrant Catholicism: 1830-1960, (3) contemporary Catholicism: 1960-the present. See *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*

eighteenth and the early nineteenth century is the era of the formation of a unique American Catholicism with the birth of the American Catholic Church in the United States. Patrick W. Carey stated that American Catholicism had generally reflected upon “the meaning of Christ event within the context of European and American cultural and intellectual settings.”⁴ It is worthwhile to trace the brief history of Catholicism in the North America in the colonial period before focusing on Elizabeth Seton’s era because this early history of Catholicism also had an impact on the American Catholicism of Elizabeth Seton’s time.

1. Catholicism in North America in the Colonial Period

The history of Catholicism in North America began with the founding of Catholic missions by the Spaniards in the early sixteenth century. These Catholic missions extended to the present states of Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and California in the time

(1993), s.v. “American Spirituality,” by William L. Portier. James Hennessey divided the history of American Catholicism into three distinct periods: (1) the basic “American” period: 1634-1829, (2) Catholicism in the immigrant period: 1830-1960, (3) the third period: from 1960 (James Hennessey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1981], 5-6). Jay P. Dolan divided the American Catholic experiences into five distinct periods: (1) the colonial period: 1500-1780, (2) a republican interlude: 1780-1820, (3) the immigrant church: 1820-1920, (4) the end of an era: 1920-60, (5) the Catholic reformation: 1960-1984. See Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1985, 7-8. Patrick W. Carey divided American Catholic religious thought into six periods: (1) the Enlightenment: 1784-1842, (2) Romantic Catholicism: 1830-1888, (3) Vatican I and Papal Authority: 1869-1870, (4) Americanism and Modernism: 1880-1910, (5) social justice: 1840-1940, (6) Neo-Thomism and Catholic culture: 1920-1960. See Patrick W. Carey, ed., *American Catholic Religious Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), iii. Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M. divided the Catholic spiritual life in the United States into five distinct periods: (1) an Enlightenment Synthesis: 1776-1815, (2) the Immigrant Vision: 1830-1866, (3) the spirituality of Americanism: 1866-1900, (4) a fractured inheritance: 1900-1930, (5) seedbed of Reform: 1930-1965. See Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Maryknoll: New York, 1996), 2nd ed., vii-viii.

⁴ Carey, 4.

of the Spanish colonies.⁵ The first French settlement was located in the present state of Maine, and there was a record of a Catholic chaplain's presence in this area in 1604-1605.⁶ Around 1608, the French developed their colonies in Nova Scotia and in Québec which later was captured by the English during the Anglo-French War of 1627-29 and restored after the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye in 1632.⁷ Louisiana was governed by France from 1699 to 1766 and by Spain from 1766 to 1803; it became the territory of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.⁸ In the French colonies, missionaries were sent to the territories of the present states of Maine and New York, and "the region lying westward along the valley of the Mississippi."⁹ During this era, the Spanish and French missionary works mainly focused on the conversion of American Indians. Although some Indians converted to Catholicism, many missionaries were martyred, including many Jesuits. However, these Spanish and French colonies gradually disappeared because of their war with England.

The history of the English colonies of North America is different from that of the Spanish and French colonies. While the Spanish and French colonies were Catholic, most of the English colonies were Protestant. The English colonies were formed at Jamestown,

⁵ James MacCaffrey, *History of the Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed., rev. vol. II (St. Louis, MO: B. B. Herder, 1910), 267-68.

⁶ Hennesey, 23. For more research, see John Tracy Ellis, *Catholics in colonial America* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁹ MacCaffrey, 268.

Virginia, in 1607, Massachusetts in 1620, Maryland in 1634, and Philadelphia in 1684.¹⁰

Among these English colonists who played important roles in “the foundations of the future United States,” the Puritans, who established Massachusetts Bay in 1630, had strong power and developed “the intellectual center of English America” in the New England area.¹¹ The Puritans “strongly Calvinist in theology” represented the nonconforming group of England’s reformation and were severely “opposed to Roman Catholicism and to Catholicizing influences among the English.”¹²

England’s religious reformation in 16th and 17th century is central to understanding the “religious aspects of American colonization.”¹³ The early Protestant colonists in North America created an antagonistic climate toward Catholics and enforced the English penal laws on them. These Protestants’ experiences of threats by French soldiers and their Indian allies who were Catholics, and England’s continual war against the Catholic countries of France and Spain stimulated their disgust of Catholicism. These historical, religious, and political experiences made the English Protestant colonists set up anti-Catholic laws: Virginia’s Act against Catholics and Priests in March 1642; Massachusetts Bay’s Laws on Anti-priests on May 26, 1647, and an Act against Jesuits and Popish Priests on June 17, 1700.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hennesey, 36.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 36-37. The documents of these penal laws are in John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), vol. 1, 110, 111, 118.

In spite of the penal laws and the antagonistic climate toward Catholics, Roman Catholics settled in English colonies, mainly Maryland and Pennsylvania, but also Virginia, New York and New Jersey. Among them the most significant Catholic settlement was Maryland. Maryland was the only English colony in which the Catholic religion was legally permitted because this land was a proprietary colony granted by the charter of King Charles I issued in 1632 to a Catholic nobleman, Cecilius Calvert (1606-1675) who was the second baron of Baltimore and George Calvert's son.¹⁵ The charter encouraged "erecting and founding Churches, Chapels, and places of Worship" and noted that it should consecrate them "according to the Ecclesiastical Laws of our Kingdom of England."¹⁶

After receiving the charter, Cecilius Calvert planned to send his colonists to Maryland after a year-long campaign in which he would offer a substantial grant of land and implied freedom from "persecution on account of their religion" in the new colonies.¹⁷ However, Catholics were still safe under King Charles I and had not much interest in Calvert's project except for a small number of noble Catholics. Thus, he encouraged the Protestants to join his enterprise in Maryland and guaranteed the safety of their rights. As a result, the first colonists were three English Jesuits, "sixteen gentlemen

¹⁵ Ellis, 1, 95; Hennesey, 37-38; Dolan, 71-73. Maryland originally was given by the word of the King James I to Cecilius Calvert's father, George Calvert, the first Baron of Baltimore, who had served King James I as one of two principal Secretaries of State and resigned his office because of his Catholic faith. After the death of both King James and Sir George Calvert, King Charles I, the son of King James I gave Maryland to Cecilius Calvert, the son of Sir George Calvert. In the Charter the colony of Maryland was named in honor of the king's French Catholic wife, Henrietta Marie. The spelling of Cecilius appeared Caecilius in Hennesey and Cecil in Dolan.

¹⁶ Ellis, 1, 95-98, "The Charter of Maryland, June 20, 1632."

¹⁷ Dolan, 73.

adventurers most of whom were Catholic, and a host of servants, laborers, and artisans, the majority of whom were Protestants.”¹⁸

Cecilius Calvert was wise enough to recognize that this project of Maryland could quickly be ruined because of religious arguments, so that on November 13, 1633 before their sailing to Maryland he gave instructions to his colonists to observe silence on these matters at sea and in the new land. Emphasizing “unity and peace amongst all the passengers on Shipp-board” in his instructions, he asked not only that Catholics should be “silent upon all occasions of discourse on matters of religion” and all acts of Roman Catholics should be done “as privately as may be,” but also that “the said Governor and Commissioners” should treat the Protestants with mildness and favor as justice permitted and immediately send letters for peace to “the Governor of Virginia and to William Claiborne” after arrival in this new land.¹⁹ Thus, religious toleration was a key factor from the beginning of the Maryland colony.

Maryland was exceptional “in the history of English-speaking Roman Catholicism in America” because Catholics, the political and social elite of the colony, allowed universal religious toleration in this Protestant dominated world.²⁰ Calvert’s instructions revealed not only the clear picture of the Catholic situation in the Maryland colony but also Calvert’s view on the place of religion in this new land dominated by Protestants. Calvert’s primary concern was civil harmony, and he prescribed religion as

¹⁸ Dolan, 74. The first governor of Maryland was Leonard Calvert, the brother of Cecilius Calvert. Hennesey, 39.

¹⁹ “Baron Baltimore’s Instructions to His Colonists” is in Ellis, 1, 98-100.

²⁰ Hennesey, 40.

“a private affair, neither shaping the destiny of the colony nor impeding its progress.”²¹ In his instructions, Calvert encouraged the Maryland colonists to build a church or a chapel, but he did not refer to any particular denomination.²²

It was desirable not to mention any particular denomination because three-fourths of his colonists were Protestants. Calvert’s instructions to the colonies became not only the governing policy in the first years of the Maryland settlement, but also the basis of the law enacted by the Maryland Assembly in 1639 in which the Maryland law guaranteed that the “Holy Churches within this province shall have all their rights and liberties without mentioning any particular denominations.”²³ Religious toleration for Christians of all denominations, in reality, was preserved in Maryland, because these landowner Catholics heeded well Calvert’s wise instructions with prudence, until the Puritans overthrew Baltimore’s government and abolished Calvert’s policy in 1654.²⁴

Maryland Catholics experienced religious toleration for a while after Calvert regained power in 1658, but the Maryland Assembly controlled by the majority of Protestants established “the Church of England as the official state religion in 1692.”²⁵

²¹ Dolan, 74.

²² Ibid.

²³ Hennessey, 39-40. Dolan noted that “in the seventeenth century, religion was so bound up with politics that it could not remain a purely private affair. Thus, specific legislation had to be enacted that would prevent religion from becoming a socially disruptive force. For Lord Baltimore and the Maryland Assembly, the best way to achieve this was to guarantee the toleration of religion. This would safeguard the rights of the Catholic community, make the colony more attractive to Protestants living in Virginia and elsewhere, and undermine the charges made by Calvert’s opponents that Maryland was a seedbed of Papists.” Dolan, 76.

²⁴ Ellis, 1, 95.

²⁵ Dolan, 75.

Among the penal laws, “An Act to prevent the Growth of Popery within this Province” enacted in 1704 was one of the worst pieces of anti-Catholic law which aimed at the restriction of the Jesuits’ activities.²⁶ However, this law was modified within two months by the Assembly and allowed priests to perform services in Catholic homes “for a period of eighteen months.”²⁷

In this situation, Catholic landlords, “notably Henry Darnall, Charles Carroll, Richard Bennett and James Carroll,” presented their petitions in the name of their coreligionists to the Assembly to extend “the period in which private worship could legally take place,” and in 1707 the Assembly passed the law in which Catholics could have the right to private worship.²⁸ This law not only set “the pattern for private religious services in eighteenth century Maryland” but also “reinforced the domestic character of religion in the Catholic community.”²⁹ Although private worship was allowed to Catholics and the authority of Calverts’ government restored in 1715, the Maryland Assembly continually enacted a series of penal laws by which Catholics lost legal rights,

²⁶ Ibid., 84.

²⁷ The Assembly of Maryland not only prohibited “Popish Bishop, Priest or Jesuit” from persuading anyone “to embrace and be reconciled to the Church of Rome” and to baptize children “other than such who have Popish Parents,” but also forbade offering Mass or practicing the function of “a Popish Bishop or Priest.” Penalty for violations of these laws was “a fine and six months in jail.” For second offenders of this law, the penalty was “exile to England and a further sentence.” Dolan, 84.

²⁸ Dolan, 85.

²⁹ Ibid.

such as voting or education, and finally through “the Supply Bill of 1756” they imposed double taxation on Catholics.³⁰

In spite of religious and political discrimination in the seventeenth and in most of the eighteenth century, the Catholic community of Maryland unwaveringly kept their faith. The wills of Maryland Catholics witnessed how they tried to keep the Catholic faith and to support the church. In their wills, they often stated that “their heirs, especially their children” could not receive an inheritance if they gave up the Catholic religion. Many single Catholics left their inheritance to the church and witnessed through their wills how the Catholic Church had a significant meaning for them. Catholic widows also received “a larger portion of their husband’s estate than the law prescribed” because women had played an important role for survival of Catholicism. Women maintained “the rhythms of Catholic life in the home by observing the ritual of fast days and feast days,” and also raised children as Roman Catholics. In their wills, Catholics asked for a Catholic burial and chose fellow Catholics to supervise their estates. Around 60 per cent of the Catholics left inheritance for maintaining of the church and very often singled out Jesuit clergymen for bequests.³¹

How could Catholics in the colonial period sustain their faith in this harsh situation? The answer can be found in the uniqueness of Maryland Catholicism. Jay P. Dolan points out three distinctive features of the Maryland Catholic community in the

³⁰ Hennesey, 42.

³¹ Dolan, 83. Dolan noted that the research of the wills left by Maryland Catholics is seen in Michael James Graham, “Lord Baltimore’s Pious Enterprise: Toleration and Community in Colonial Maryland 1634-1724” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983), 97, 104, 123-5, quoted in Dolan, 459, n. 23.

seventeenth century: the adoption of religious tolerance, the Jesuits' mission activity, and "the upper-class nature of the Catholic community."³²

First, the adoption of religious toleration which originated from the instruction of Calvert became the continual policy in the government of Calverts, the lords of Baltimore, and the Catholics of Maryland. Second, the Jesuits' mission activity in Maryland contributed to building up Catholicism through their pastoral services and ministry. They were part of the history of Maryland Catholics because they came with the first colonists of Maryland and established the Jesuit mission in Maryland.³³

Among these Jesuits, Father Andrew White's report to the general of the Jesuits revealed the faith of Maryland Catholics. After a long journey by ship, upon disembarking on the island of Maryland, the present St. Clement's, the first action was the celebration of the Mass. White wrote:

On the day of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the year 1634, we celebrated mass for the first time on this island. . . .After we had completed the sacrifice, we took upon our shoulders a great cross, which we had hewn out of a tree, and advancing in order to the appointed place, with the assistance of the Governor and his associates and the other Catholics, we erected a trophy to Christ the Saviour, humbly reciting, on our bended knees, the litanies of the Sacred Cross with great emotion.³⁴

Unlike the Spanish and French Jesuits, the Jesuits in Maryland did not get any financial support from the government and had to earn their living from the plantations

³² Dolan, 79.

³³ Ellis, 1, 100. Ellis noted that "the most significant Catholic mission in colonial America" in many ways was that "inaugurated by three English Jesuits in southern Maryland in March 1634." They are "Fathers Andrew White (1579-1656) and John Altham (1589-1640) and Brother Thomas Gervase (1590-1637)."

³⁴ Ibid., 1, 104. The whole document of Father White is in Ellis, 1,106-108.

like other lay gentlemen in this new colony.³⁵ Jesuits also used their plantations as “the central headquarters of extensive missionary network.”³⁶ By the 1770s, the Jesuits expanded their plantations in seven different places.³⁷ They also traveled hundreds of miles on horseback to minister to Catholics who lived far away from their plantations. Visiting different neighbors’ plantations, Jesuits not only offered Mass and heard confessions, but also taught Christian doctrine and spent “a good deal of [their] time with Protestants, hoping to convert them.”³⁸ The Jesuits operated not only a small school at Newtown until the 1689 Protestant upheaval, but also “a lending library of religious and devotional literature” for the circulation of books among the community.³⁹

Third, “the upper-class nature of the Catholic community” provided the foundation for building up Catholicism in Maryland. The well educated Catholic landlords, such as the Darnalls, the Carrolls, and the Bennetts, had come from the gentry class of English society and had had political power because they had a very close relationship with Lord Baltimore. These landlords educated their children at home and usually sent their children to Catholic schools in Europe for higher education because

³⁵ Ibid., 1, 100-101.

³⁶ Dolan, 88.

³⁷ Raymond J. Kupke, “Dearest Christians: A Study of Eighteenth Century Anglo-American Catholic Ecclesiology,” in *American Catholic Preaching and Piety in the Time of John Carroll*, ed. Raymond J. Kupke (Lanhan, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1991), 57. Jesuits’ seven plantations were in Bohemia, Deer Creek, Newtown, Port Tobacco, St. Inigoes, White Marsh, and Tuckahoe. Dolan, 87.

³⁸ Dolan, 82. For more research, see Joseph C Linck, *Fully Instructed and Vehemently Influenced: Catholic Preaching in Anglo-Colonial America*, chap. IV: “The Example of Your Crucified Savior: Preaching the Spiritual Life” (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2002), 91-151.

³⁹ Ibid.

formal schools in the colonies were almost not existent, especially for Catholic children. These prominent Catholics not only offered their collection of books and their plantations for the formation of Catholic faith and the Sunday worship, but they also represented the Catholics' voice in many ways. Their descendants would also contribute to defending Catholicism and building up the United States in the social and political arenas.⁴⁰

Maryland Catholicism of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century revealed a very private and domestic character due to not only the social and political discrimination, but also the lack of clergy and the public places of religious practice for the congregation. Religion for the Maryland Catholics was a private matter, centered in Sunday worship which took place in private homes. The Catholic rites of passage and Baptism took place at the private farms, including Jesuits' farms.⁴¹

However, the private and domestic character of the Catholicism of Maryland dramatically changed from the middle of eighteenth century. Catholicism at this time revealed a more congregational character and made a major step toward an institutional church. There was an increase in the Catholic population, including priests, in Maryland and Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia.⁴² Many men and women from prominent families entered religious orders in Europe because they had not only faith but also the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 79-82.

⁴¹ Ibid., 83.

⁴² According to Dolan, by 1765 the number of Catholics in Maryland was around 20,000, which indicated almost "a tenfold increase since 1700 and a higher rate of increase than that of the population at large" because of "the large number of Irish immigrants" to Maryland. By 1765, the Catholic number of Pennsylvania was 6,000. Dolan, 87.

economic ability to pay the expensive cost of a trip to Europe.⁴³ Public gathering places for divine worship continued to be built on the Catholic owners' plantations from the time in which Catholics were legally discriminated until the time right before the American Revolution.⁴⁴ These public gathering places for worship functioned like today's local church, and preserved "parish registers for baptism, marriage, and death, detailing the performance of these rites of passage," and lists of parishioners as well as maintaining "parish devotional societies."⁴⁵ Thus, the Catholic community through these local parishes in the farms was more organized and experienced growth both in its numbers and its strength right before the American Revolution.⁴⁶

2. Catholicism in the Republican Period

On the eve of the American Revolution, two events in 1773 promoted the birth of the United States and that of the American Catholic Church. The first significant event was "the Suppression of the Society of Jesus" by the Brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* of Pope Clement XIV issued on August 16, 1773.⁴⁷ The Suppression directly impacted the

⁴³ Dolan noted that "thirty-six native Marylanders entered the Jesuit order prior to its suppression in 1773, and four young men entered seminaries affiliated with other religious orders," and that "a total of at least thirty-six women entered such orders as the Benedictines, the Poor Clares, the Carmelites, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians." Dolan, 86.

⁴⁴ Dolan, 88-89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁷ The Suppression of the Society of Jesuit occurred on July 21, 1773 by Pope Clement XIV and was announced according to the Brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* on August 16, 1773. This document declared that the Jesuit scholastics were freed from their simple vows and could choose any mode of life and that all Jesuit priests "must enter another religious Order" or become "secular priests under the jurisdiction of the Bishop where they might reside" (Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll: Archbishop of Baltimore (1735-1815)* (Westminster, MD., 1954),

ex-Jesuits in Maryland-Pennsylvania because they were the only priests in these areas. The English bishop, Richard Challoner, wrote to his Roman agent, Monsignor Stonor: “What am I going to do with those who are in America, living as they are in another world, without bishop or even a priest who is not a Jesuit?”⁴⁸ Although he, as the Vicar Apostolic of the London District, had jurisdiction over the English colonies of America, he had not exercised his authority over them because of geographical distance as well as the fact that the Jesuit’s mission in the English colonies in America was independent.

All of the 21 ex-Jesuits in the Maryland-Pennsylvania mission signed the acceptance of the suppression of the Society of Jesus and were under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of the London District, Richard Challoner.⁴⁹ Although they could continue to guide the Catholics in the same place, they lived in insecurity because the Bishop of England had the right to take all of the Jesuits’ property and goods. However,

48. Cf. Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore, Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (hereafter cited as *John Carroll*) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 35; Hennesey, 55. The sovereigns of Prussia and Russia refused the Suppression of Jesuits and Pius VII formally approved “by the Brief *Catholicae Fidei* the existence of the Society of Jesus in Russia” on March 7, 1801. Guilday 524-525; Melville, *John Carroll*, 193. However, the restoration of the Society of Jesus was formally declared by the Bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* on August 7, 1814. Guilday, 560.

⁴⁸ Thomas Hughes, S.J., *History of the Society of Jesus in North America* (New York: 1910), vol. i, part ii, p. 604, quoted in Guilday, 52.

⁴⁹ Propaganda sent out instructions related to this suppression to all the bishops and asked them to send a copy of the brief to each Jesuit house within their jurisdiction and to receive every Jesuit’s signature for formal acceptance of the non-existence of the Society of Jesus. This brief impelled all of Jesuits to enter another religious order or to be secular priests. Cardinal Castelli, Prefect of Propaganda in his letter to Bishop Challoner allowed the ex-Jesuits to remain in “the place where they were, if they submitted fully and sincerely.” Guilday, 48-51.

Bishop Challoner prudently refrained from interfering with the American missions staffed by the ex-Jesuits.⁵⁰

The suppression of the Society of Jesus paradoxically would promote the birth of the American Catholic Church. The suppression had an impact on the life of the Jesuit priest, John Carroll, who later became a leading figure in establishing the Catholic Church in the United States and became its first bishop. For two years from 1771, Carroll accompanied Charles, Lord Stourton, a son of an English nobleman on a European tour during which he gained experiential knowledge of the political, social, and religious situation of Europe and also enough information related to the rebellion of the American colonials toward England. Thus, he hesitantly accepted the position of “the prefect of the sodality at Bruges” in the summer of 1773.⁵¹ After the Pope’s declaration of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the Austrian commissioners invaded the Jesuit College at Bruges and temporarily arrested Jesuit priests, Angier, Plowden, and Carroll, on the night of October 14, 1773.⁵² They were released shortly after and ordered to leave the country.⁵³ Although many Jesuits remained in Europe after the suppression, Carroll made the decision to go back to his Maryland home because he was convinced that his

⁵⁰ Guilday, 52.

⁵¹ Melville, *John Carroll*, 35.

⁵² John Gilmary Shea, *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll, Bishop and First Archbishop of Baltimore: Embracing the History of the Catholic Church in the United States (1763-1815)* (Rahway, NJ: The Mershon Company Press, 1888), 42-43. Cf. Melville, *John Carroll*, 36.

⁵³ Guilday, 54. John Carroll received the invitation of Lord Arundell of Wardour to the post as a chaplain in the Wardour Castle in England, and also could teach in the Academy of Liège as one of the English gentlemen not as a Jesuit.

true mission at this time was in his homeland, and made the plan to sail for America in the spring of 1774.⁵⁴

The second significant event was the Boston Tea Party in December of 1773 that was “the symbolic beginning of the American Revolution” and led to a major change in “the history of colonial America.”⁵⁵ The revolutionary spirit had gradually formed in both Catholics and Protestants of the American colonies. Since the authority of the government of the Calverts had been restored in 1715, Maryland Catholics also had a great interest in the political world. Many Catholics in Maryland and Pennsylvania joined the revolutionary war and were engaged in political positions from the revolutionary time. The patriotic activity of the prominent Catholics stimulated both Catholics and Protestants to unite together for the common goal of American independence. Their common desire for liberty gradually had demolished the blockade of religious bias.⁵⁶ According to George Washington’s comment, “the vast majority of colonial Catholics” took a “patriotic part” in achieving the Revolution of 1776.⁵⁷

This revolutionary mind produced the republican mentality, which not only affected all Americans, but also dramatically changed Catholics’ status from “second-class citizens discriminated against politically, professionally, and socially,” to important members of the establishment of the United States by their participation in the American

⁵⁴ Melville, *John Carroll*, 25-26; Guilday, 53-54.

⁵⁵ Dolan, 96.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

struggle for independence.⁵⁸ The Maryland Catholics' political debut began with Charles Carroll of Carrollton (1737-1832), who was a cousin of John Carroll and studied together with him at St. Omer in Europe.⁵⁹

Charles Carroll earned fame as “a most flaming patriot” through his debate against Daniel Dulany’s attack on Catholics in the *Maryland Gazette*.⁶⁰ Not only was he a delegate to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1774 and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, but he also helped to draft the new state constitution which would protect religious liberty and end “the era of anti-Catholic penal legislation.”⁶¹

Charles Carroll’s political involvement also inspired prominent Catholics to participate in the political world and many of them were able to hold important positions in the state and later at the Federal government level. Along with Charles Carroll, Daniel Carroll of Rock Creek (1730-1796), who was the brother of John Carroll, and Thomas

⁵⁸ Ibid., 101.

⁵⁹ Charles Carroll of Carrollton was the son of Charles Carroll of Annapolis and grandson of Charles Carroll I, the Attorney-General to the colony of Maryland. He studied in Europe and received the best European education: “the classics with the Jesuits at St. Omer, poetry at Rheims, philosophy in Paris, and law in Bourges and London.” He returned to the Chesapeake area in 1764 and was engaged in the struggle for American independence. He was “a delegate to the Continental Congress” and one of the signers of “the Declaration of Independence.” He served in a number of important State and Federal offices from 1773 to 1800. Dolan 96-97; Melville, *John Carroll*, 1. The genealogy of John Carroll related to Charles Carroll is in Guilday, 17.

⁶⁰ Daniel Dulany wrote letters to attack Catholics and to support the heavy taxation on Catholics under his pseudonym of Antillon in the *Maryland Gazette*. Against Dulany’s attack, Charles Carroll wrote the first of a series of letters under the pseudonym of “First Citizen,” in defense of his religious beliefs and political conviction in the *Maryland Gazette* on May 6 and July 1, 1773. Charles Carroll’s letters of “First Citizen” are in Ellis, 1, 128 and Guilday, 73-74.

⁶¹ Dolan, 97.

FitzSimons of Pennsylvania (1741-1811) were also well-known Catholics who contributed to the founding of the new America.⁶² Thomas FitzSimons and Daniel Carroll were the only Catholic delegates among the delegates who drafted the federal Constitution at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia from May to September in 1787, and they fervently appealed to the people to ratify this Constitution.⁶³ Although Catholics were the minority in North America whose national culture had Protestant origins and were the victims of discrimination from this Protestant culture, these outstanding Catholics participated in molding not only the American culture in a new way but also North American Catholicism.

3. The Birth of the American Catholic Church

John Adams states that the real American Revolution took place “in the minds and hearts of the American people, and it gave birth to an ideology of republicanism that turned American society on its head.”⁶⁴ The revolutionary concepts revealed the spirit of

⁶² Daniel Carroll of Maryland, John Carroll’s brother, served in a number of important offices, such as delegate to “Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, United States Senator from Maryland, and as one of the three commissioners appointed by President Washington to survey the federal district.” He wrote a persuasive letter in which he argued for Marylanders to ratify the Constitution under the pen name, “A Friend to the Constitution” in *Maryland Journal*, October 16, 1787. The content of Daniel Carroll’s letter is in Ellis, 1, 157-159. Thomas FitzSimons of Pennsylvania was “a member of both the Pennsylvania legislature and the congress established under the Articles of confederation” and compelled “Pennsylvania’s early ratification of the Constitution” in his speech in the legislature on September 29 in 1787. He served as a member of the national House of Representatives in 1789-1795, as a president of the Chamber of Commerce, trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, trustee of the Bank of North America. He was also founder and director of the Insurance Company of North America. Thomas FitzSimons’ speech to urge Pennsylvania’s early ratification of the Constitution is in *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Daniel Humphreys, 1787), I, 131-132, quoted in Ellis, 1, 154-156.

⁶³ Ellis, 1, 154.

⁶⁴ Dolan, 101.

the Enlightenment which emphasized the supremacy of human reason, God as “an impersonal supreme being,” “infinite personal and social perfectibility,” and “a single natural universal religion.”⁶⁵ Many of the young leaders of the American republic, such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine were imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment and were deist in their viewpoint.⁶⁶ This mentality gave birth to republicanism which revealed an independent spirit with emphasis on individuality and equality and which would produce a new spirit of toleration in religious matters as well as “the democratization of the life of American church.”⁶⁷

When ex-Jesuit John Carroll returned from Europe to his homeland, Maryland, in 1774, after “an absence of twenty-six years,”⁶⁸ he was surrounded with this republican

⁶⁵ Carla Bang, “John Carroll and the Enlightenment,” in *American Catholic Preaching and Piety in the Time of John Carroll*, ed. Raymond J. Kupke (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1991), 110.

⁶⁶ Bang, 113. However, a seminar group of the Catholic University of America in 1989, including Joseph C. Linck, Raymond J. Kupke, Michael Sean Winters, Carla Bang, under guidance of Charles Edwards, S.J., stated that John Carroll was not affected by the Enlightenment thought, although Carroll was aware of it. Carla Bang emphasized that “Carroll remained an enlightened man of faith, but he was not a man of the Enlightenment.” Bang, 133.

⁶⁷ Dolan, 101.

⁶⁸ John Carroll was born in Upper Marlborough, Maryland, the son of Daniel and Eleanor Carroll, on January 8, 1735. His father, Daniel Carroll of Upper Marlboro belonged to the family of Keane Carroll of Ireland. He emigrated from Ireland to America at the beginning of the eighteenth century and became an outstanding Maryland merchant. John Carroll’s mother, Eleanor Darnall, also belonged to the famous Darnall family. Her grandfather, Colonel Henry Darnall, who was the brother-in-law of Lord Baltimore, came to Maryland in 1672 and soon became wealthy. Like many rich young girls of the Catholic families in Maryland, Eleanor Darnall studied in France and became a well educated woman of her time. The Carroll and Darnall families had leading roles in the English colonies in America and later in the United States. After study at the Bohemia academy on the Jesuits’ plantation, Carroll was sent to Europe with his cousin Charles Carroll and studied at the Jesuit College in the town of St. Omer in French Flanders from 1748. He entered the Jesuit novitiate at Watten in 1753 and finished his scholastic period in Liège. He made his profession in 1771. After completing his education he taught at the Jesuit College in Bruges. Thus, he lived in Europe for 26 years and he did not visit

atmosphere and with enthusiasm for American independence. John Carroll belonging to a prominent family of Maryland, also had zeal for American independence and was appointed as one of the revolutionary diplomats to Canada by the Continental Congress in 1776 along with Benjamin Franklin, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and Samuel Chase because the Congress wanted Canadian support in their resistance against the British.⁶⁹ While this diplomatic mission bore no fruit, John Carroll became well known to the political world because of this trip. John Adams in his letter to a friend described John Carroll as “a Roman Catholic Priest, Jesuit, and a gentleman of learning and Abilities.”⁷⁰ When Benjamin Franklin was a diplomat in France, he recommended John Carroll to be the superior of the American missions.

In the wave of American Independence, John Carroll fully recognized the need of ecclesiastical liberty for the sake of Catholicism in this new nation. In a letter to Charles Plowden dated February 27, 1784, Carroll wrote that “the temper of the age and of our people” requires “Ecclesiastical liberty” that would be “the lasting benefit of Religion.”⁷¹ He saw the urgency for the organization of the American Catholic hierarchy because the

his homeland at all during this time. In spite of Lord Arundell’s invitation to remain at Bruges, Carroll returned to America in June of 1774. Shea, 27-44; Guilday, 2-55; Melville, *John Carroll*, 1-38; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Carroll, John.” The Carroll genealogy is in Guilday, 17.

⁶⁹ Guilday, 94.

⁷⁰ Edmund C. Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1921), I, 352, quoted in Melville, *John Carroll*, 44.

⁷¹ Thomas O’Brien Hanley, ed., *The John Carroll Papers*, 3 vols. (Notre Dame Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), vol. I, 168. For more information on John Carroll’s documents, see Thomas W. Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered: Abstracts of Letters and Other Documents not Found in the John Carroll Papers* (Baltimore: Cathedral Foundation Press, 2000).

American independence movement against England practically prevented the American Church from maintaining the canonical relationship with the Vicar Apostolic of the London District. He circulated his own draft of a plan for clergy organization in 1782 and suggested a meeting of priests at White Marsh. During the meetings at White Marsh, one of the Jesuits' plantations, on June 27, 1783, John Carroll and ex-Jesuits discussed Carroll's draft and sketched a constitution on the government structure and rules for the clergy, and regulations for the management of the ex-Jesuits' plantations.⁷²

At this meeting they also made a petition to the Pope Pius VI in the name of "priests and missionaries in the thirteen united states of North America"⁷³ and sent it with the cover letter of John Carroll in 1783. In this petition with Carroll's cover letter, they explained that they could not as formerly receive spiritual jurisdiction from "bishops or vicars apostolic who live under a different and foreign government" because of the peculiar American situation and asked Pope Pius VI to confirm John Lewis, the Jesuit superior of American missions before the Suppression, as superior of the American mission, who could have authority to bless the oils and altar stones and administer Confirmation.⁷⁴

⁷² Hanley, 1, 71-76: "Constitution of the Clergy: White Marsh June 27, 1783 to October 11th, 1784."

⁷³ Ibid., 1, 68.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1, 78. In the letter of September 26 of 1783 to Charles Plowden, Father Carroll again noted that "a foreign temporal jurisdiction will never be tolerated here; & even the Spiritual supremacy of the Pope is the only reason why in some of the United States, the full participation of all civil rights is not granted to the R. C. [Roman Catholic]."

Responding to this petition, Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli (1730-1811), Prefect of the Propaganda, sent a letter dated June 9, 1784 to John Carroll:

In order to preserve and defend Catholicity in the Thirteen Unites States of North America, the Supreme Pontiff of the Church Pius VI., and this sacred Congregation, have thought it extremely proper to designate a pastor who should, permanently and independently of any ecclesiastical power, except the same Sacred Congregation, attend to the spiritual necessities of the Catholic flock. . . . Rev. Sir, you have given conspicuous proofs of piety and zeal, and it is known that your appointment will please and gratify many members of that republic, and especially Mr. Franklin, the eminent individual who represents the same republic at the court of the Most Christian King, the Sacred Congregation, with the approbation of his Holiness, has appointed you Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States of North America. . . . These arrangements are meant to be only temporary. For it is the intention of his Holiness soon to charge a Vicar-Apostolic, invested with the title and character of bishop, with the care of those states, that he may attend to ordination and other episcopal functions.⁷⁵

In this letter, the prefect of the Propaganda maintained that John Carroll was appointed as superior of the American Mission in consideration of America's unique situation and of John Lewis' old age and that Benjamin Franklin had an important role in this appointment. However, the prefect emphasized that the intention of the Holy See was to charge "a Vicar-Apostolic, invested with the title and character of bishop, with the care of those states" and he requested the report on "the state of the orthodox religion in those thirteen states" for the appointment of a Vicar-Apostolic in the near future.⁷⁶

Responding to the Propaganda's request, John Carroll sent "the first American report to Propaganda on Catholicism in the United States" dated March 1, 1785, to Cardinal Antonelli, Prefect of Propaganda. This report revealed the American Catholics' circumstances in the middle of the eighteenth century. The first part of the report was

⁷⁵ "John Carroll is Appointed Superior of the American Missions, June 9, 1784." Ellis, 1, 143-44.

⁷⁶ Ellis, 1, 143-44.

about the Catholic population. Catholics in Maryland were about 15,800: 9000 adult freemen above twelve years of age, 3000 children and the same number of slaves of all ages who had come from Africa.⁷⁷ Catholics in Pennsylvania were at least 7,000 including few Africans. Catholics in Virginia were not more than 200 and in New York were at least 1,500. Regarding the Catholics who lived in the territory from the Mississippi River to “the Atlantic Ocean, and from there to the boundaries of Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania,” Carroll reported that he heard that many numbers of Catholics who spoke French had lived there and that they were once under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Quebec. However, Carroll commented that he had no idea how to exercise his jurisdiction in these areas.⁷⁸

The second part was the report on “the condition, observance and abuses of the Catholic population.” Carroll reported that the majority of Catholics in Maryland were farmers except for “a few of the outstanding and wealthy families dating back to the first founding of the colony.” The Catholics in Pennsylvania were farmers except for the merchants and workmen who lived in Philadelphia and they were also faithful to the practices of their faith with the frequent reception of the sacraments. However, Carroll noted that they only were able to “attend the Mass and hear a sermon once a month or every two months” because of the lack of priests and geographical distances between missions. Regarding the abuses of the Catholic population, he expressed his concern

⁷⁷ The Catholic population of Maryland around this time was about 12% of this State. According to recent studies, total population of this State was 319,728 in 1790. David C. Skaggs, “Maryland’s Impulse Toward Social Revolution: 1750-1776,” *Journal of American History* LIV (Mar., 1968), 771, quoted in Hanley, 1, 182.

⁷⁸ Hanley, 1, 179-180.

about young peoples' "free conduct" which was cultivated by "the necessity of familiar relations with the non-Catholics and by the ideals derived from them," and by "a lack of care on the part of parents in educating the children in religion."⁷⁹

The third part was the report on "the number of priests, their education and means of support." According to this report, there were nineteen priests in Maryland and five in Pennsylvania. Among them, however, five were around seventy years old and were incapable of performing ministry and some of the others had poor health. Carroll also reported that the priests had "no ecclesiastical foundations here" and supported themselves by "proceeds from their farms" in general or by "the liberality of Catholics." He explained that the possessions of these Jesuits' farms were registered "in the name of private individuals and they would be handed on to their heirs by will." He also implied that there were plans for two colleges in Maryland for Catholics and others including "a seminary in which they [priests] could be formed in conduct and learning compatible with that state."⁸⁰ He also wrote a letter dated February 27, 1785 to Cardinal Antonelli, right before sending the report:

First of all, then, of the thirteen states which were at one time subject to the King of England, there were only two, Pennsylvania and Maryland, in which Catholics could dwell in complete safety. Even in these states legal precaution was taken that Catholics could take no part in civil, military, or any other public office. Now that the English yoke has been thrown off, and new laws have been passed in all the States, Catholics are able to live in complete safety and can practice their religion. In many places, however, they are not allowed to undertake public offices unless they renounce all foreign jurisdiction, be it civil or ecclesiastical. Thus, it happens that in many of these colonies, or States, as they are now called, Catholics are excluded from government. In four states at least, namely in

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1, 180-181.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1, 181.

Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, they enjoy the same rights as other citizens.⁸¹

In this letter, he continually noted that the priests and many outstanding Catholics, including some who held places in the Congress, hoped the Holy See would understand the hateful atmosphere in the United States toward all foreign jurisdictions and stressed their fear that the permission for the foreign jurisdiction for the Catholic Church would not be granted by the government. Then, he noted that the Episcopal Church elected their bishops according to the legal rights of this country.⁸²

In the unique situation of the new nation, the Maryland-Pennsylvania priests met in March of 1788 and drafted a petition to Pope Pius VI (1775-1799). In this petition, the priests emphasized their need for a bishop with ordinary jurisdiction and asked the Pope to give permission to allow them to elect their own bishop, at least for the first time, because of the unique American situation.⁸³

Responding to this petition, Pope Pius VI by the bull *Ex Hac Apostolicae* dated November 6, 1789, declared John Carroll, who acquired 24 votes of 26 priests present at the American clergy meeting, as the first bishop of the United States of America and chose the city of Baltimore as the site of the episcopal see according to the petition of the priests.⁸⁴ However, the bull emphasized that “for this first time only, we have allowed the priests exercising the care of souls in the United States of America, to elect a person to be

⁸¹ Ibid., 1, 170.

⁸² Ibid., 1, 171-172.

⁸³ Ellis, 1, 163.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1, 165.

appointed Bishop by us” and that all the clergy and the faithful dwelling of the United States of America should be “henceforward subject to the Bishop of Baltimore in all future times.”⁸⁵ This bull also approved that a bishop could establish the episcopal seminary.⁸⁶ John Carroll was consecrated as the first bishop of Baltimore by Bishop Charles Walmesley, O.S.B., Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, at Lulworth Castle, Dorset, England, on August 15, 1790.⁸⁷

In his first sermon on the “occasion of possessing his pro-Cathedral” in Baltimore, on December 12, 1790, Bishop Carroll stressed that everything should be “raised from its foundations” and gave his blueprint for the establishment of ecclesiastical discipline, “the religious education of Catholic youth,” an institution for training of future priests, and the safeguard of the faith of Catholics living in the pluralistic world.⁸⁸ He emphasized the unique circumstances of American Catholicism.

Jay P. Dolan pointed out that a distinctive vision of the American Catholic Church had emerged in the United States by 1790; the “republican blueprint envisioned a national, American Church which would be independent of all foreign jurisdiction and would endorse pluralism and toleration in religion” and the “democratization of local church.”⁸⁹ The Catholic Church in this republican spirit adopted the trustee system for the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1, 166.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1, 167.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1, 172: “Bishop Carroll’s Sermon on Taking Possession of His See, St. Peter’s Pro-Cathedral, Baltimore, December 12, 1790.”

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1, 172-173; Hanley, 1, 476-478.

⁸⁹ Dolan, 111.

government of the local church, endorsed using the vernacular in the some parts of the liturgy and supported “pluralism and toleration in religion.”⁹⁰

Carroll, as the first bishop of the United States, urged Catholics to preserve “a warm charity and forbearance toward every other denomination of Christians, and at the same time to preserve them from that fatal and prevailing indifference which views all religions as equally acceptable to God and salutary to men.”⁹¹ He tried not to alienate Protestants in Catholic teachings and services and was concerned about the language in the celebration of the liturgy and in the sacrament of matrimony.⁹² He desired the vernacular liturgy not only for “the poor illiterate Catholics” but also for Protestants in order to help their understanding of the liturgy as well as to share Catholic instructions based on the Gospel. His efforts were revealed in the regulations of the diocesan synod of 1791 in which the vernacular could be used in some parts of the liturgy and the sacraments.⁹³

Carroll’s inclusive spirituality is seen in his sermon of “the Last Judgment” which reflected on “the social, political, and religious convictions of a large portion of the Catholic community.”⁹⁴ Preaching “a communal spiritual life reflecting the compatibility

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ellis, 1, 172-173.

⁹² Chinnici, 16.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Chinnici, 5-6; John Carroll’s sermon, “The Last Judgment,” is in Hanley, 3, 390-93. Hanley assumed that the majority of the undated sermons of John Carroll were written around the time of his Episcopal consecration and that “the Last Judgment” would have been written in this time, although it was undated.

between Catholicism and the value of religious liberty” to the mixed congregation of Protestants and Catholics, Bishop Carroll addressed his audience as “Xtian [Christian] Brethren,” or “Xtian [Christian] and Catholic” and often used “‘Christian’ as the substantive term and ‘Catholic’ as the modifier” in other occasions.⁹⁵ Chinnici asserted that Bishop Carroll set religious pluralism as “the social foundation of Christian piety.”⁹⁶

Living in the world of pluralism and toleration, Catholics and Protestants had very cordial relationships during the 1780s and 1790s. They attended each other’s services and some Protestants not only sent their children to Catholic schools, but also donated their money and land for building of Catholic churches. Catholics and Protestants worked together in politics and often entered into mixed marriages.⁹⁷ There was a kind of ecumenical spirit.⁹⁸ The social and political consciousness in Catholicism was seen in the regulations of the first diocesan synod in which they approved the formal prayer of the church for the civil authorities composed by Bishop Carroll.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Chinnici, 6. Chinnici points out that Carroll’s use of terms is seen in various places: Hanley, 3, 407; 375; 392; 426; *Pastoral Letters of Archbishop Carroll to the Congregation of Trinity Church, in Philadelphia, 1797*; *Pastoral Letters of Archbishop Maréchal to the Congregating of Norfolk, Virginia, 1819*.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Joseph A. Agonito, “Ecumenical Stirrings: Catholic-Protestant Relations during the Episcopacy of John Carroll,” *Church History* 45 (September 1976), 358-73, quoted in Dolan, 102.

⁹⁸ The ecumenical spirit was evident in the event of the dedication of a Catholic Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in 1810. A Jesuit priest, John William Beschter preached in German and English to “a mixed congregation of Catholics and Protestants” with “three Lutheran, three Reformed, and one Moravian minister.” After the services, “all of clergy dined at the home of the local Lutheran minister.” Chinnici, “American Catholics and Religious Pluralism 1775-1820,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16 (Fall 1977), 727-28, quoted in Dolan, 102.

⁹⁹ Ellis, 1, 174. Bishop Carroll summoned the first diocesan synod of the United States in order to “consult together on the mode of continuing the Episcopacy of the United States.” This synod

The noticeable progress in the American Catholic Church was the establishing of religious orders and schools. Five women's religious communities were established in the United States: "the Carmelites, at Port Tobacco, Maryland, in 1790; the Visitation Nuns, founded at Georgetown in 1799; the Sisters of Charity, founded at Emmitsburg, Maryland, in 1809; and the Sisters of Loretto and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, both founded in Kentucky in 1812."¹⁰⁰ Except for the Carmelites, all of these communities served in the education of young women.

In 1791, Bishop Carroll founded a college and Jesuit novitiate at Georgetown and opened St. Mary's seminary and college in Baltimore staffed by priests of Saint Sulpice whom Carroll had invited. At the end of 1810, there existed three theological seminaries and three colleges for young men.¹⁰¹ There were also several academies for young ladies and the best known school among them was "St. Joseph's Academy at Emmitsburg, directed by Mother Seton."¹⁰²

took place in Baltimore on November 7-10, 1791. In this synod, the Bishop and his twenty-two priests outlined the regulations regarding "the administration of the sacraments, divine services, the conduct of the clergy, and the support of the churches." Ellis, 1, 174. The content of this synod is in Hanley, 1, 520-521.

¹⁰⁰ Dolan, 121.

¹⁰¹ The three theological seminaries were St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, the Jesuit novitiate at Georgetown, and St. Rose's Dominican novitiate in Kentucky; the three colleges were St. Mary's College in Baltimore, Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, and St. Thomas' College in Kentucky. Guilday, 601.

¹⁰² St. Joseph's Academy at Emmitsburg became very famous among upper-class families, both Catholics and Protestants, and also served orphans and poor children who paid little or nothing. Later a class for the poor was separate from that of the boarders who belonged to rich families. The poor children in their classes were able to learn skills for their future jobs. Mary Ewens, *The Role of the Nun in Nineteen-century America* (Salem, NH: AYER Company: 1984), 48; Melville, *John Carroll*, 223.

The geographical and numeric growth of the Catholic Church in the United States required the expansion of the government structure. Leonard Neale was appointed the coadjutor bishop to Bishop Carroll in 1795.¹⁰³

Pope Pius VII created four new dioceses by the Brief *Ex debito pastoralis officii*, and Baltimore as a metropolitan See by the Brief *Pontificii muneris*, both dated April 8, 1808. The bishops appointed to the new dioceses were John Cheverus, D.D. for the Boston diocese, Richard Luke Concanen, O. P. for the New York diocese, Michael Egan, O.F.M. for the Philadelphia diocese, and Benedict Joseph Flaget, S.S. for the Bardstown diocese in Kentucky.¹⁰⁴

Although American Catholicism had its origins in Europe, it also had “a peculiarly American history” in the process of interaction with the American culture.¹⁰⁵ American Catholics tried to understand both “the ultimate significance of the American experience from the Catholic perspective and to interpret the meaning of Catholicism

¹⁰³ Although Leonard Neale was appointed as a coadjutor of Bishop Carroll in 1795, he was consecrated as a bishop in 1800 because the Bull arrived late. Melville, *John Carroll*, 215.

¹⁰⁴ The record of the appointment of bishops is in *Propaganda Archives, Scritture riferite, America Centrale*, vol. iii, ff. 269-274, quoted in Guilday, 583 and Shea, 621. However, bishops of Boston, Philadelphia, and Bardstown were consecrated in 1810. While Bishop Concanen appointed as a bishop of New York was ordained in Europe in 1808, he died because of his illness on June 19, 1810 in Naples before coming to the United States. Guilday, 586. Father Anthony Kohlmann, S.J. became vicar-general during the vacancy of the New York Diocese. Thus, the American hierarchy was composed of “one archbishop, one coadjutor bishop, three suffragans bishops,” and one vicar-general during the interim of New York diocese around 1810. Guilday, 601. For information on the History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, see Thomas W. Spalding, *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁵ Hennesey, 4.

from the American perspective.”¹⁰⁶ They had to deal with the unique American issues, such as “the compatibility of republicanism and Catholicism, religious liberty, separation of church and state, the nature of Christianity and the church in a pluralistic society” in the theological point of view.¹⁰⁷ In the process of theological reflection on these issues, “The Catholic experience of Christianity and the American experience [were] mutually conditioned.”¹⁰⁸

By the time of Archbishop Carroll’s death in 1815, nonetheless, Catholicism in the United States had gone through a major transition. Since many foreign-born priests came to minister in the American Catholic Church, two different visions of what the Church should be existed together in the American Catholicism. While one attempted to mold “an indigenous church, an American Catholicism,” the other endeavored to transplant a continental European style of Catholicism in this new nation.

The conflict between these two different visions is revealed well in the use of the vernacular in the Church. While the diocesan synod of 1791 made “ample provisions for the use of the vernacular” in its regulations, Bishops, most of whom came from Europe, approved regulations to “limit the use of the vernacular in the administration of the sacraments and to exclude it from the Mass completely” in their meeting in 1810.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Carey, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Chinnici, 16.

The French-born Sulpician Ambrose Maréchal (1764-1828), the second successor of Archbishop John Carroll, sent the report of the American Catholic Church to Lorenzo Cardinal Litta, Prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, on October 16, 1818. The new Archbishop Maréchal reported a marvelous increase in Catholic population by the natural progress and the conversion of Protestants as well as by the immense number of immigrants coming from Europe every year. Reporting his visit of three religious congregations, he shared his reflection on how he admired sisters who had contributed to his flock by sharing of their abundant grace and by serving the people with “the greatest piety, fervor of spirit, strict discipline, and indeed all virtues” and how the Protestants also treated them with a “certain veneration.” Citing his difficulties related to “insufficient number of missionaries” and the lack of funds to support their education, he mentioned his anxiety concerning the schisms related to the ecclesiastical government. He explained that all the magistrates in the United States were elected “by popular vote” in the principle of civil liberty and that the Protestants did elect or dismiss their pastors in this spirit. In this atmosphere, he wrote, Catholics also had a tendency to adopt the same principle in ecclesiastical government and some of trustees who were elected by the local parish people had caused the problem.¹¹⁰

This report revealed the remarkable progress of the American Catholic Church on the one hand, but also exposed the conflict over the ecclesial government on the other. The conflict between building up an American Catholicism and transplanting a

¹¹⁰ “Archbishop Maréchal’s Report to Propaganda, October 16, 1818” is in Ellis, 1, 203-220.

continental European style of Catholicism made up “the opposing forces of an ongoing dialectic that would challenge Catholicism in the United States for decades to come.”¹¹¹

4. Garden of the Soul Spirituality in the Time of Elizabeth Seton

After his first visit to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Philadelphia John Adams, a non-Catholic, described his impression of Catholic services in a letter dated October 9, 1774 to his wife Abigail. John Adam’s glimpse of Sunday services in a Catholic Church revealed some aspect of Catholics’ spiritual life around 1774.

I heard a good, short moral essay upon the duty of parents to their children, founded in justice and charity, to take care of their interests, temporal and spiritual. This afternoon’s entertainment was to me most awful and affecting; the poor wretches fingering their beads, chanting Latin, not a word of which they understood; their pater nosters and ave Marias; their holy water; their crossing themselves perpetually; their bowing to the name of Jesus, whenever they hear it; their bowings, kneelings and genuflections before the altar.¹¹²

Dolan noted that the American Catholic community’s spiritual life until the middle of the eighteenth century was characterized by three distinct features: personalism, discipline, and sobriety. The spiritual manuals and instructions emphasized the individual’s practice of Christian life. Catholics disciplined their spiritual life not only by practicing morning and evening prayer everyday and attending Sunday liturgy when it was possible, but also by keeping various kinds of daily obligations and fasting according to the phases of the liturgical year. Their practice of annual examination of conscience and confession also impacted the spiritual formation of their lives. However, their spiritual life revealed sober piety and lacked “the enthusiasm of Evangelical

¹¹¹ Dolan, 123.

¹¹² “John Adam’s Impressions of a Catholic service, October 9, 1774” is in Ellis, 1, 132-133.

Protestantism” and “the visible intensity of Spanish Catholicism” which was emerging in the eighteenth century.¹¹³ Entering into the eighteenth century, the spiritual life of American Catholics revealed more public and congregational facets and emphasized active participation in the social and political life.

Spiritual books and manuals of prayers played crucial roles in the spiritual formation of the Anglo-American Catholics especially since there was a great lack of priests to minister to them on a frequent basis. *A Manual of Godly Prayers* for morning and evening prayer was an important spiritual source from early colonial times. From the eighteenth century, John Gother’s writings were becoming very popular among the Anglo-Americans and contributed to the formation of the American Catholic spirituality. Gother, who converted from Protestantism and became a Catholic priest in England, wrote “sixteen volumes of instructions, meditations, and prayers, before he died, in 1704.”¹¹⁴

Through his writings, Gother guided readers not only to foster devotion to Jesus and the events of his life, but also to learn how to live “a life conformed to the principles of the Gospel.”¹¹⁵ Gother’s writings revealed a very “personal and interior” type of piety. The style of Gother’s prayers looked “simple and straightforward resembling an overheard conversation between close friends.”¹¹⁶ Gother also urged Christians to enter

¹¹³ Dolan, 94.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ John Gother, *Instructions for Particular States and Conditions of Life*, ed. Rev. M. Comerford (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1888), p. 337, quoted in Dolan, 91.

¹¹⁶ Sister Marion Norman, “John Gother and the English Way of Spirituality,” *Recusant History*,

into personal communion with God in faith rather than emphasizing the exercise of external rituals. He stressed congregational participation in Mass by encouraging his readers to unite with the priest who was offering the Mass to Almighty God, instead of reciting the rosary during Mass which was the custom in the seventeenth century.¹¹⁷ Gother's spirit of devotion was "subtly undenominational" and very "practical and ethical rather than theoretical."¹¹⁸

Gother's works emphasizing "Scripture, the social mission of Christianity, and the apostolate of the laity," were very helpful not only for Catholics, but also for the Protestants because his spiritual guidance was very Christocentric and ecumenical.¹¹⁹ Gother also urged Christians to actively participate in the world. His instructions based on Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, Thomas á Kempis, and other spiritual writers, were the rich sources for spiritual formation and lasted long beyond the colonial time.¹²⁰

Along with Gother's spiritual instructions, Richard Challoner's writings began to play an important role in the spiritual formation of North American Catholics from the time of the Revolution. Challoner (1691-1781), who became a bishop and later the

vol. 11, no. 6 (October 1962), 313, quoted in Dolan 91.

¹¹⁷ Gother, *Instructions and Devotions for Hearing Mass* (London: T. Meighan, 1740), 4-5, quoted in Dolan, 93, n. 41.

¹¹⁸ Gother, *Instructions for Particular States and Conditions of Life*, 337, quoted in Dolan 91.

¹¹⁹ Chinnici, 9-10.

¹²⁰ Gother's influence lasted long and his instruction on "Suitable Behavior in Church" appeared in the section of the 1817 *Laity's Directory*. Chinnici pointed out that the "Suitable Behavior" indicated "awful strict silence, the most profound exterior respect, and penetrating inward devotion of heart." Chinnici, 10.

Apostolic Vicar of the London district, was deeply influenced by Gother's instructions from his early life. Like his master Gother, Challoner left a variety of spiritual writings before his death in 1781. He recapitulated Gother's spiritual instructions in many ways. Challoner's spiritual instructions were very similar to that of Gother, because both of them emphasized not only an interior and very personal piety but also authentic Christian moral life and active participation in society.

Like Gother, Challoner gave suitable instructions for Christian life. Emphasis on devotion at Mass was one of the common themes for both Gother and Challoner. Both of them urged Catholics, who did not have an opportunity to attend Mass, to “‘hear Mass in Spirit’ for a half hour alone or with family by reading the prayers in their pocket-size manuals.”¹²¹ Like Gother, Challoner underlined an interior, personal piety instead of emphasis on external rituals or devotions. However, Challoner's guidance on Mass was different from that of Gother. Although Challoner underscored the congregational aspect of the Mass, he did not include “the main prayer of the Mass in his manual” and put more emphasis on private devotion, “enabling the worshiper to follow the action of the Mass with appropriate prayers and instructions.”¹²² Challoner's spiritual instructions emphasized “a dignified piety, strong moralism,” and “the promotion of mental prayer for everyone.” His instructions provided “some knowledge of affective prayer” and “a conviction of the possibility of a direct, personal experience of God.”¹²³

¹²¹ Dolan, 93.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Chinnici, 10. For more information on *The Garden of the Soul*, see, Edwin H. Burton, *The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner (1691-1781)*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), I,

Among Challoner's writings, *Garden of the Soul*, first published in 1740, had a great influence on the formation of American Catholics' spiritual life, so that American spirituality from the period of the Revolution to 1830 was described as "Garden of the Soul spirituality" or "Republican spirituality."¹²⁴ Garden of the Soul spirituality stressed the importance of devotion to the Mass as well as communion, centered on the sacrament of penance and also the Christian moral life. Garden of the Soul spirituality was profound and powerful but very somber in character. This spirituality also encouraged Catholics to be actively engaged in the world, especially in "one's particular vocation in a manner consistent with the Christian gospel and the Commandments."¹²⁵ Garden of the Soul spirituality urged Catholics "to find God in a Christ-centered interior life."¹²⁶ The Christ-centered and affective spirituality emphasized "a life of concrete imitation of Christ" and moral conduct which was also seen in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Ignatius Loyola.¹²⁷

The spiritual life of American Catholics was formed not only by English Catholic spirituality revealed in that of Gother and Challoner but also by French and Ignatian spirituality because many American Catholics studied in Europe and some were guided by the Jesuit priests. Bishop Carroll's spiritual formation is a good example. Chinnici

127-136; Richard Lockett, "Bishop Challoner: The Devotional Writer," in *Challoner and His Church: a Catholic Bishop in Georgian England*, ed. Eamon Duffy (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 71-89.

¹²⁴ *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. "American Spirituality," 35.

¹²⁵ Dolan, 92-93.

¹²⁶ *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. "American Spirituality," 35.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

noted that Bishop Carroll was exposed to three streams of post-Reformation spirituality.¹²⁸ First, Carroll as an American-born inherited the English Catholic spirituality of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as that of Gother and Challoner. Second, he was deeply influenced by the French spirituality, especially by the *Introduction to the Devout Life* of Francis de Sales (1567-1622) and by Archbishop François Fénelon (1651-1715). De Sales' spirituality was revealed in Carroll's writings and some parts of Fénelon's letters were quoted in a *Catechism on the Foundation of Christian Faith* published in 1811 with Bishop Carroll's personal approval.¹²⁹

Third, Carroll's spirituality was also profoundly influenced by Ignatian spirituality, especially by two Jesuits, Alfonso Rodriguez (1538-1616) and Vincent Huby (1608-93), both of whom focused on the doctrine of charity and had a more humanistic approach to spirituality.¹³⁰ Bishop Carroll's spirituality rooted in the streams of post-Reformation spirituality not only represented the spirituality of many American-born Catholics in the early nineteenth century, but also had an impact on the American Catholics' spiritual life in his time because of his role as the first bishop of the United States.

Carroll, as the first bishop of the United States, developed his ecclesiology rooted in Christ-centered affective spirituality. His spirituality and ecclesiology contributed greatly to the spiritual formation of American Catholics in his time. His sermon on

¹²⁸ Chinnici, 11.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 10.

“Charity: Mark, VIII, 2” [Jesus’ feeding of four thousand], revealed Carroll’s Christ-centered and affective spirituality:

Ah, Christians, is it thus you have learned J Christ? . . . Hear his words & behold his actions. I am moved with compassion, says he to his Apostles, and feel for the situation of this multitude. . . . Let us meditate on these words and transfuse into our hearts the sentiments and affections of J Christ.¹³¹

Carroll stressed that “the origin of the church was in Jesus’ ministry” and developed an ecclesiology “dominated not by a concern for the institutional lines of authority but by communal spiritual growth and the encouragement of peaceful relationships among persons.”¹³² His sermon on Charity revealed that his spiritual ecclesiology integrated “the ministry of Jesus, eucharistic theology, and a vision of the church as founded on personal, familial, and communal responsibility.”¹³³

Carroll also guided the faithful to cultivate liturgical spirituality, morality and the interior disposition of fervor centered on affective love for Jesus Christ’s life. He tried to instill in the faithful liturgical spirituality which was the major element of piety in Gother’s *Instructions* and Richard Challoner’s *Garden of the Soul* because he believed that the Eucharist was the primary component of piety. Carroll’s liturgical spirituality is reflected in the decree of the 1791 Diocesan synod: “The sacrifice of the Most Holy Eucharist must be celebrated with all due honor and reverence, and the Faithful should be

¹³¹ Hanley, 3, 438. “Charity: Mark, VIII, 2” is in Hanley, 3, 436-43; part of this quote is in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. “American Spirituality,” 35.

¹³² Chinnici, 22.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

aroused more and more to the greatest devotion toward this immense pledge of divine mercy in our regard.”¹³⁴

Both decrees of the 1791 Diocesan Synod and the 1810 Bishops’ Meeting encouraged Catholics to participate in the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.¹³⁵ Through attendance at Mass, awareness of the centrality of the Eucharist and Penance, good preaching, and the availability of Epistles and the Gospels in English, Carroll hoped that Catholics would grow in the knowledge of the truths of their religion and practice it more fervently. The 1791 synod decree also stated that “the Gospel of the day shall be read in the vernacular” and that “some hymns or prayers be sung in the vernacular” during the services.¹³⁶ He supported the publication of the Rheims-Douay Version of Scripture in December 1, 1790 and the translation of the Epistles and the Gospels in English in a prayer book for Christians to read.¹³⁷ However, the resolutions made in 1810 at the bishops’ meeting urged the priests to use the Latin language instead of the vernacular in the Mass and administration of the Sacraments.¹³⁸

Carroll underscored the strong morality of the faithful related to practice of the Gospel’s teaching. In his sermon on “Charity: Mark, viii, 2,” he stressed that Christ demonstrated “the true spirit and character of Christianity” as “a spirit of charity &

¹³⁴ Hanley, 1, 528.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1, 531; 3, 134.

¹³⁶ Hanley, 1, 531. *The Office of the Holy Week, According to the Roman Missal and Breviary, Containing the Morning and Evening Service* (Baltimore, 1810) included “the whole liturgy in Latin and English,” quoted in Chinnici, 27.

¹³⁷ Chinnici, 28.

¹³⁸ Hanley, 3, 133.

compassion.”¹³⁹ In his sermon on “Charity: the Neighbor,” he urged the faithful to practice the “the real virtues of the disciples of the Gospel” and emphasized that “our heavenly Teacher descends into more particular details of Xtian [Christian] morality.”¹⁴⁰ Greatly influenced by Alfonso Rodriguez and Francis de Sales, Carroll avoided “the extremes of rigorism” in moral practice and emphasized the need for temperance, self control, voluntary mortification, meditation, and works of charity in order to lead a truly Christian life and considered that the sacraments are remedies for sin.¹⁴¹

Carroll also urged the faithful to have fervor which he defined as interiority, centered in “the will and its disposition.”¹⁴² In his sermon “Charity: John the Apostle,” he said, “transport yourselves now in spirit, my Xtian [Christian] Brethren, and behold the effects of the love of Jesus for his disciple” and see “him inflamed with the spirit of his Master.”¹⁴³ He appealed to the faithful to “turn back to the example of Christ”¹⁴⁴ Thus, he promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart practiced for long time in the American mission and requested “Propaganda to permit the Mass and Office of the Sacred Heart on the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi” in 1793 and again in 1802.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Ibid., 3, 437 and also quoted in Chinnici, 23. “Charity: Mark, viii, 2 is in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 436-443.

¹⁴⁰ Hanley, 3, 445. “Charity: The Neighbor” is in Hanley, 3, 444-446.

¹⁴¹ Chinnici, 29.

¹⁴² Ibid., 30.

¹⁴³ Hanley, 3, 444. “Charity: John The Apostle” is in Hanley, 3, 443-444.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 3, 438.

¹⁴⁵ Chinnici, 30.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart focused on identification with Jesus in all the ordinary activities of life. He had ordered 100 copies of *The Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion* published by the Jesuits at Georgetown in 1793 which indicated that the “heart” was the symbol of the whole humanity of Christ. *The Pious Guide* indicated that the “heart” was the symbol of “a heart full of love and breathing nothing but, the salvation of mankind” and of “a Heart that is offended, insulted and [despised] by unthinking man, by sinners void of all sense of gratitude and unaffected by his love.”¹⁴⁶ Carroll also encouraged the faithful to make meditations and retreats in order to cultivate a fervent heart toward God and develop more deeply their Christian moral life. In the preface to the American edition of *Spiritual Retreat* written by Père Vincent Huby, Bishop Carroll wrote:

The meditations now offered to the public in our language An inflamed love of God, and of his son JESUS CHRIST, was the prevailing and prominent affection Father Huby’s soul; and, in the ensuing meditations, he endeavours to transfuse into others the glowing sentiments of his own heart. Every religious truth; every subject on which he treats, leads him to, and is concluded with, fervent acts of love and adoration of God, and of compunction for having ever offended him.¹⁴⁷

The Ignatian method of meditation in Huby’s *Spiritual Retreat* focused on God’s love manifested in Creation, the Incarnation, and the Redemption and directed the faithful to the acts of adoration, compunction, and asking for grace.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ “Devotion to the Sacred Heart” in *Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion, Containing Various Practices of Piety Calculated to Answer the Various Demands of the Different Devout Members of the Roman Catholic Church* (Georgetown, 1792), pp. 13-61, quoted in Chinnici, 31.

¹⁴⁷ “Preface to *The Spiritual Retreat*” is in Hanley, 2, 135-136; Chinnici, 32.

¹⁴⁸ Chinnici, 32-33.

5. Summary

The Catholics in Carroll's time tried to integrate the post-Reformation Catholic spirituality and to create an American spirituality that was "Catholic, Christian, and American" in the unique social realities of religious pluralism and the republican mindset that emphasized civil harmony with an ecumenical and democratic spirit.¹⁴⁹ The spirituality of Carroll's time paralleled with Elizabeth Seton's time was strongly incarnational and promoted a very Christ-centered affective spirituality. The Christ-centered affective spirituality was fostered by fervent love for Christ's life revealed in Scripture and the Eucharist and by the practice of charity toward one's neighbors. Elizabeth Seton would become a part of this American Catholic spirituality by her conversion to Catholicism in 1805. Her fervent devotion to Jesus Christ was seen in an entry in her prayer book:

O my Lord Jesus Christ who was born for me in a stable, lived for me a life of pain and sorrow, and died for me upon a cross, say for me in the hour of my Death *Father forgive*, and to thy Mother behold thy child Say to me thyself this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise O my Saviour leave me not, *forsake me not*, I *thirst* for thee and long for thee fountain of living water – to *thy hands I commend my spirit*, now and forever Amen.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵⁰ *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, ed. Ellin Kelly and Annabelle Melville (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 337. This is cited also in *the New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. "American Spirituality," 35. Cf. *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Collected Writings* (hereafter cited as CW), ed. Regina Bechtel and Judith Metz, mss. ed. Ellin M. Kelly, vol. 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents* (New York: New City Press, 2006), 75, sec., 11. 51.

CHAPTER TWO

ELIZABETH SETON'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Elizabeth Bayley Seton's spiritual growth in the Protestant Episcopal Church can be divided into two different stages of her life. The first stage covers the period from her early childhood to 1800 which includes her married life. The second stage encompasses the period before her conversion to Catholicism, from 1801 to 1805. In this second stage, Elizabeth noticeably grew spiritually under the influence of Reverend John Henry Hobart who came to Trinity Episcopal Church as a minister at the end of 1800 and became the "chief bishop of the diocese and rector of Trinity Church"¹ in 1816.

1. Elizabeth Seton's Spiritual Growth in the First Stage of Her Life

Adrian Van Kaam emphasized pre-formation as well as formation in the theory of the science of formation:

Our life formation is first of all preformation. Before we are able to give form to our life, we are already preformed in a certain way. . . . The science of formative spirituality assumes that there is a mystery of formation at the root of all formation in universe, world and history, including all forms of human formation and preformation. . . . Within us, this mystery manifests itself in concrete form directives. Such forming directives are either preformed or adopted from our culture and its underlying form traditions.²

What was Elizabeth's pre-formation and did she develop her spirituality in the first stage of her life formation? Elizabeth was born into a prominent Episcopalian family

¹ Kathleen Flanagan, "The Influence of John Henry Hobart on the Life of Elizabeth Seton" (hereafter cited as diss.) (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1978), 85.

² Adrian Van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality*, vol. 1, Fundamental Formation (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 6.

and grew up as a devout Episcopalian. Her maternal grandfather was Reverend Richard Charlton who was the rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Staten Island from 1747 until his death on October 7, 1777.³ Her parents, Richard Bayley⁴ and Catherine Charlton⁵ were married at St. John's Episcopal Church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, on January 9, 1767. The celebrant at their wedding was Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler⁶ who was one of leading figures in the development of the American Episcopal Church. Elizabeth married William Magee Seton, "scion of a wealthy New York mercantile family with international connections, January 25, 1794."⁷ The Episcopal bishop, Rev. Samuel Provoost witnessed their marriage.⁸

³ CW, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 1.6, 4, n.1.

⁴ Dr. Richard Bayley (1744-1801) was "the son of William and Susannah LeConte (sometimes LeCompte) Bayley. He studied medicine under Dr. John Charlton and three times traveled to England to study, twice under the famous Dr. William Hunter. He married Catherine Charlton January 9, 1767" and "had three children, Mary Magdalen, Elizabeth Ann and Catherine who died as a young child. After the death of his first wife, he married Charlotte Amelia Barclay June 16, 1778. A well known surgeon, he had a special interest in public health and was the first health officer of the Port of New York as well as a noted authority on yellow fever. He died at the quarantine station on Staten Island August 17, 1801." CW, 1, sec., 1.64, n, 1.

⁵ Catherine Charlton (?-1777) was "the daughter of Rev. Richard and Mary Bayeux Charlton. Rev. Charlton was the rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Staten Island, from 1747 until his death October 7, 1777. Catherine died at Newtown (later Elmhurst), New York, May 8, 1777." Her brother Dr. John Charlton had a home there. CW, 1, sec., 1.6, 4, n, 1.

⁶ Flanagan, diss., 62-63. According to Flanagan, Rev. Thomas Bradbury Chandler was one of the proponents for "the high church position" revealed in Anglican theologians, such as Lancelot Andrews, William Laud, William Chillingworth and Charles Daubeny. As a Yale man and the advocator for episcopacy, he wrote "pamphlets defending episcopacy" and stated "the important role of bishop for the proper functioning of the Anglican Church." diss., 63.

⁷ Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, introduction to CW, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, xxi.

⁸ Annabelle M. Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: 1774-1821* (hereafter cited as *EBS*) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 7. The Episcopal bishop, Rev. Samuel Provoost, was one of the

What was the nature of the Episcopalian faith culture in Elizabeth's time? It is worthwhile to note what was going on in the Episcopal Church in the United States at the time of Elizabeth. The Anglican Church was established in North America at the beginning of the 17th century. It went through many struggles due to the American independent spirit and the issue of the episcopacy. Many American Anglican clergymen were far removed from their Anglican roots and from the supervision of the episcopacy of England. They argued for and against episcopacy in America.⁹

The establishment of an independent Protestant Episcopal Church was desirable in the United States. The delegates of the American Anglican Church began to shape their independent church at the Philadelphia Convention of 1785 and generally accepted the name "Protestant Episcopal" Church which had been approved by a state convention in Maryland in 1783. The Delegates at the 1785 convention produced the "Proposed Book" in which the "doctrinal base of Anglicanism was "comprised of the Scriptures and the three early creeds." They deleted "the Athanasian and Nicene Creed" and omitted the "descent into hell" from the Apostles Creed. They also made the smaller changes in "the doctrines of baptismal regeneration, priestly absolution, the place of the Trinity, and the value of prayers for the dead."¹⁰ These changes weakened their doctrines. However, most

important church men in the time of the establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. During the War of Independence, he gave support to the patriots against his English. He was consecrated in England in 1787 and became the first bishop of New York. He presided at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in the service following George Washington's inauguration in 1789. He had served at the Trinity Episcopal Church in New York until 1800.

⁹ Flanagan, diss., 55-65.

¹⁰ Ibid., 66-67.

of the ancient formularies were restored at their 1789 convention.¹¹ Elizabeth was born into this Episcopalian faith culture and her initial formation on faith, hope, and love took place in this culture.

Initial Formation of Faith, Hope and Love in the Experience of God as *Abba*

Joann Wolski Conn researched twelve recent books on spirituality and declared that contemporary spirituality tends to focus on the experience of God.

Aiming, ultimately, to promote the mature development of this experience [of God], contemporary Christian spirituality rigorously yet appreciatively examines the characteristics and complexities of this experience, especially as it is made available for study in texts which attest to it, such as Scripture or the late writings of holy women and men.¹²

Elizabeth revealed her experiences of God in her journals, letters, and instructions. It is necessary to trace Elizabeth's spiritual growth in her own writings. In her "Dear Remembrances,"¹³ Elizabeth stated that "it would be such INGRATITUDE to Die without noting them."¹⁴ In this journal, Elizabeth jotted down her earliest memory of faith in relation to the experience of her younger sister's death:

at 4 years of age sitting alone on a step of the door looking at the clouds while my little sister Catherine 2 years old lay in her coffin they asked me did I not cry

¹¹ Flanagan, diss., 69.

¹² Joann Wolski Conn, "Horizons of Contemporary Spirituality," *Horizons* 9, no. 1 (1982), 60-73.

¹³ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 510-523. Elizabeth Seton left a number of spiritual journals, notes, and letters. "Dear Remembrances" is her little notebook written between 1812 and 1818. It is Elizabeth's personal journal of her memories during the period of 1778-1812 that covered her childhood through the time of the death of her first daughter, Anna Maria. CW, 3a, sec., 10.4, 510, n. 1.

¹⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 510.

when little Kitty was dead? – no because Kitty is gone up to heaven I wish I could go too with Mamma.¹⁵

Elizabeth's formation of faith, hope, and love started from the experience of the suffering of loss. First she lost her grandfather, Rev. Mr. Charlton, and mother just a year before and then at the age of four she was faced with her younger sister's death. While it seems unusual to remember so explicitly an experience one had at the age of four, it implies how the experiences of the loss of her mother and sister had a deep impact on her heart. Although Elizabeth was an affectionate and an emotional person, she did not cry when her sister died because she believed that heaven is the ultimate place to go and now her younger sister would be happy with her mother in heaven. Her faith rooted in her family formation guided her to God in heaven in which she could meet her loving mother as well as her sibling. Elizabeth's expression, "sitting alone," illustrated her feeling of loneliness and being-abandoned. Her desire for heaven could overcome these negative feelings. Experiencing suffering in the death of her mother and sister, she implicitly set up her life goal which was to go to heaven. Her desire for heaven also appeared in this journal entry:

at 6 taking my little sister Emma up to the garret window showing her the setting sun told her God lived up in heaven and good children would go up there . . . teaching her prayers. . .¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid. According to editorial note, "Conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation were not standardized in Elizabeth's time. For example, she often used *ie* where *ei* is usual, and she did not consistently indent paragraphs." Quotations follow "her punctuation, capitalization, spellings, and misspellings in English and other languages as closely as possible except where such retention would result in confusion." See Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for *CW*, 1, xxvii. Elizabeth Seton's mother, Catherine Charlton Bayley died at Newtown [later Elmhurst according to editors], New York, 8 May 1777 and Elizabeth's younger sister Catherine died in October 1778. *CW*, 3a, 510, n.2.

¹⁶ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10.4, 510. "Charlotte Amelia (Emma) Bayley (1779-1805) was the daughter of Dr.

Through her faith culture, Elizabeth knew heaven is God's place and only good people can go there. It is very meaningful that she taught heaven to her step-sister who was only a one year old baby. It actually describes her faith and hope as well as her self image. When she taught her baby stepsister that "good children go to heaven," she revealed her hidden desire to be a good child. In spite of her desire to go to heaven, it was her younger sister who went to heaven with her mother and left Elizabeth in this world. Although Elizabeth did not articulate that her younger sister was better than she, that unexpressed thought might have caused her to have a poor self image. Her remark on "going to heaven" was her hope and this hope gave her strength to overcome her negative feelings of self. She now focused on heaven and taught prayer to the baby. Her desire for heaven naturally formed her experience of God and guided her life direction toward God.

To Elizabeth, heaven was the ultimate place of union with God and with the people she loved. Her search for the symbolic word of heaven appeared in her later writings. In her spiritual notes, she wrote about heaven in an imaginative way, when she experienced the death of a Sister in her religious community:

St. Paul taken to the 3d heaven (cf. Cor. 12:2) – his silence on what he had seen – well he may say it cannot enter our heart to conceive what heaven is – The Scriptures full of these expressions, the heart and flesh fainting at the thought. . . how can he conceive it – no, nor we what Heaven is! Only, immense splendors of inaccessible light! . . . O! Our Jesus receiving and adorning the Soul, – its robe of innocence, its crown – its seat of glory – the capacity bestowed for this immense enjoyment!¹⁷

Richard and Charlotte Amelia Barclay Bayley, and was Elizabeth's half-sister." *CW*, 3a, 510, n. 3.

¹⁷ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9. 7, 249.

Elizabeth nurtured her faith formation by reciting the Psalms. At age six, she learned Psalm 22[23]¹⁸ from her stepmother. In “Dear Remembrances,” she recalled it:

My poor Mother in law then in great affliction learnt me the 22nd [23rd] Psalm “the Lord is my Shepherd, the Lord ruleth me” – and all life through it has been the favourite Psalm “though I walk in the midst of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.”¹⁹

Reciting Psalm 22[23] became her favorite prayer and her strength in her childhood. Whenever she experienced loneliness and insecurity, she seemed to feel strong support from God who is the Shepherd, taking care of her. Psalm 22[23] and the *Our Father* were the contents of her prayer in her childhood and the source of her spiritual growth in the midst of suffering.

The Bayley household at that time did not provide Elizabeth with the care, love and security she needed. At the age of four, Elizabeth’s father married Charlotte Amelia Barclay who was only nineteen years old and eventually had seven children with Elizabeth’s father. The relationship between the stepmother and stepdaughters, Elizabeth and her older sister Mary, was an unhappy one from the early years of this marriage. In this miserable situation her only consolation was her father whom she loved so much. She wanted to be with him, but he was so busy because he was not only a practicing physician and professor of the medical school at Columbia University, but also a researcher of yellow fever. He provided his two daughters from his first wife with a very

¹⁸ Elizabeth’s mention of Psalm 22 is Psalm 23 in contemporary English Editions of the Bible. *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 510, n.5.

¹⁹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 510. Elizabeth’s stepmother, Charlotte Amelia Barclay Bayley (1759-1805) became the second wife of Elizabeth father, Dr. Richard Bayley, June 16, 1778. “They had seven children, but by the late 1790s Dr Bayley was estranged from her.” Elizabeth had much suffering in the midst of the family conflict, but she nursed her stepmother through her illness until her death on September 1, 1805. *CW*, 3a, 510, n. 4.

good education which included music and French, but he could not spend much time with them because he was so engrossed in his work. He often traveled to England for research sending his two daughters to his brother's home located in New Rochelle because of family disagreement. Elizabeth's life in New Rochelle was not much happier either because of her experience of loneliness and being alone:

At 8 years of age girls taking bird eggs - I gathering up the young ones on a leaf seeing them palpitate thinking the poor little Mother hopping from bough to bough would come and bring them to life - cried because the girls would destroy them, and afterwards always loved to play and walk alone - admiration of the clouds -delight to gaze at them always with the look for my Mother and little Kitty in heaven - delight to sit alone by the water side -wandering hours on the shore humming and gathering shells - every little leaf and flower or animal, insect, shades of clouds, or waving trees, objects of vacant unconnected thoughts of God and heaven.²⁰

Wherever Elizabeth went, she was alone. While Elizabeth's writing at this time depicts her loneliness and her sympathetic feeling even toward a bird, it also describes her sensitivity toward unjust behavior. Elizabeth could not bear the other girls' cruelty with nature and could not share her appreciation of nature with them. In Elizabeth's experience of suffering in the early years of her life, there are mixed emotions. While Elizabeth's feelings of misery, loneliness and anger for others' cruelty are negative feelings, she also felt joy, praise, trust and the desire for heaven which are religious affections. When she had negative feelings, she changed her focus from self-misery to the goodness of heaven and found joy there. She experienced the presence of God in heaven and cherished the beauty of God's creation in nature. In her later life, she shared this experience with her daughter. In the letter dated 1803 to her daughter Anna Maria, she

²⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10.4, 510-511.

wrote that “to examine the beautiful order of creation are more suited to fill the mind that is making acquaintance with their great Author.”²¹ Elizabeth guided her daughter to encounter with the great Author of creation, God. She nurtured her faith, hope, and love in her appreciation of nature and heaven.

However, the Bayley family conflict continued to have a negative impact on Elizabeth and her older sister. The miserable situation of the family is seen in her older sister’s letter to Elizabeth. Although it was written twenty years later when Mary, her older sister, revisited New Rochelle, she vividly described her painful memory to her younger sister, Elizabeth:

I can scarcely describe to you the state of mind I was thrown into by recalling scenes and persons that every year of my life seems to have been somehow connected with. Beginning with the unhappy situation of our Mother—our taking refuge in the same place [New Rochelle] on our Father’s going to England—the very painful events that succeeded our leaving there until we married. Even that eventful step scarcely enabled us to shake off all that was disagreeable attached to our situation before.²²

Elizabeth’s painful experience of these days is also seen in her journal, “Dear Remembrances”: “16 years of age – family disagreement – could not guess why when I

²¹ CW, 1, sec., 1.171, 219.

²² Archives of Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Saint Joseph’s Provincial House (hereafter cited as ASJPH), 1-3-3-11:3. Cf. Melville, *EBS*. Mary Magdalen Bayley Post (1768-1856) was the first daughter of Dr. Richard Bayley and Catherine Charlton and “married Dr. Wright Post June 10, 1790.” CW, 3a, 511-12, n. 6. Dr. Wright Post (1766-1828) studied “medicine under Dr. Richard Bayley and in Europe.” He was “a prominent New York surgeon and professor at Columbia College.” CW, 1, sec., 1. 4, 3, n. 1. “This conflict took place sometimes in 1790 or in 1791.” CW, 3a, 512, n. 9.

spoke kindly to relations they did not speak to me – could not even guess how anyone could be an enemy to another.”²³

Elizabeth’s father, Dr. Bayley, also could not tolerate this family disagreement and was very displeased with his second wife and with their sons.²⁴ In a letter dated in 1799 to her friend, Julia Scott,²⁵ Elizabeth noted that her father separated from her stepmother and asked her to “never admit a reconciliation”²⁶ with her stepmother. However, Elizabeth made reconciliation with her stepmother including her children and was present at the deathbed of her stepmother in 1805. In a letter to Julia Scott dated 1805, she confessed that she had had the inexpressible “satisfaction of attending Mrs. Bayley in her last hours” and that she believed “every mark of Peace and reconciliation” between them since 1804.²⁷ She also expressed her sorrow and concern about the soul of her deceased stepmother, who was estranged from her, in a letter dated 1805 to her Catholic friend, Antonio Filicchi.²⁸

²³ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 512.

²⁴ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.41, 65.

²⁵ Julia Scott’s full name was Julianna Sitgreaves Scott (1765-1842) and lifelong friend and benefactor since 1798. Elizabeth spent many hours with Julia when she was in suffering because of her husband’s death (1798). Julia regularly helped Elizabeth financially. Their correspondence continued from 1798 to Elizabeth’s death in 1821. *CW*, 1, 21, n. 1; 1, 11, n. 6; 1, 336, n. 1.

²⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 1. 37, 59.

²⁷ *CW*, 1, sec., 4. 3, 383.

²⁸ Antonio Filicchi with his older brother Filippo and their family associated with Seton family since 1788. Antonio Filicchi (1764-1847) and his wife Amabilia Baragazzi Filicchi (1773-1853) provided “hospitality to the Setons in their home at Leghorn after the death” of Elizabeth’s husband, William Magee Seton at Pisa in 1803. The Filicchi families were “instrumental in Elizabeth Seton’s conversion to Roman Catholicism and became lifelong friends, confidants, and benefactors to the Setons and later to the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s.” *CW*, 1, 253, n. 5.

When I see these poor souls die without Sacraments, without prayers, and left in their last moments to the conflicts of parting Nature without the divine consolations which our Almighty God has so mercifully provided for us, I feel then while my heart is filled with sorrow for them as if my joy is too great to be expressed at the idea of the different prospect I have before me in that hour thro' the divine goodness and mercy - but with this subject I could fill many sheets and yet never express what is in my heart.²⁹

Elizabeth suffered not only from family discord, but also from her love of her father. In "Dear Remembrances," she jotted down her experience of terror and fear because of her father's safety. She wrote that "12 years old foolish, ignorant, childish heart - home again at my Fathers - pleasure in reading prayers - love to nurse the children and sing little hymns over the cradle - a night passed in sweat of terror saying all the while OUR FATHER."³⁰

Elizabeth's experience of self-identity rooted in God emerged in her feeling of being-abandoned. Her loneliness reached its extreme at age fourteen when her older sister Mary married and her father went to England for a long time and did not communicate with her. In the midst of family turmoil, Elizabeth and her father developed an intimate relationship. Elizabeth's father, Dr. Richard Bayley, could not make a peaceful home for Elizabeth, but he loved his daughter. He was "most concerned about her happiness and her adjustment to life."³¹ They understood each other and her father recognized Elizabeth's intelligence through her school work. Elizabeth tried to please her father

²⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4. 4, 385.

³⁰ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 511. "Elizabeth would have been twelve in 1786-87. Dr. Bayley was lecturing on anatomy at New York Hospital. . . . Dr. Bayley was threatened by a mob during the Doctor's Riot of April 1788, which began over the source of cadavers used in experiments. This may be the terrifying incident to which Elizabeth refers." *CW*, 1, 511, n. 7.

³¹ Melville, *EBS*, 15.

through her studies. In her later life, when she was passing on a copybook to her first daughter, Anna Maria, she explained that this book “began when I was fifteen and written with great delight to please my father.”³² Thus, when she could not communicate with her father, she suffered not only from anxiety for her father’s safety but also from anger of being abandoned by her father whom she loved deeply. In her journal to Rebecca Seton³³ written in December 1, 1803, she described the sweet memory of her spiritual experience of God as father and her joy in the presence of God.

In the year 1789 when my father was in England I jumped in the wagon that was driving to the woods for brush about a mile from Home. . . I set off in the woods – soon found an outlet in a Meadow, . . . the air still, a clear blue vault above, the numberless sounds of spring melody and joy - the sweet cloves and wild flowers I had got by the way, and a heart as innocent as a human heart could be filled with even enthusiastic love to God and admiration of his works - still I can feel every sensation that passed thro’ my soul - I thought at that time my Father did not care for me - well God was my Father - my All. I prayed - sung hymns - cried - laughed in talking to myself of how far He could place me above all Sorrow - Then laid still to enjoy the Heavenly Peace that came over my Soul; and I am sure in the two hours so enjoyed grew ten years in my spiritual life.³⁴

In this extreme misery and anxiety, Elizabeth had an *Abba* experience in Grace. The phrase, “God, my Father, my All” was Elizabeth’s expression of faith, hope, and love and revealed the establishment of her intimate relationship with God. In her later writings, she often referred to God as “my father and my all.” She recalled a similar experience of God as father in her journal, “Dear Remembrances”:

³² CW, 1, sec., 1. 171, 219. “Elizabeth was passing on a copybook of poetry to her daughter. This book is now housed in the Archives at St. Joseph Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland as Rare Book #31, “EAS Copybook.” CW, 1, 219, n. 1.

³³ Rebecca Seton (1780-1804) was Elizabeth’s sister-in-law and dear friend. She died “immediately after Elizabeth’s return from Leghorn, Italy. Elizabeth often referred to Rebecca as her ‘soul’s sister’.” CW, 1, sec., 1.23, 38, n. 3.

³⁴ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 264.

14 years of age – at uncle [William] B[ayley]’s New Rochell[e] again. The bible so enjoyed and Thomson and Milton [...] hymns said on the rocks surrounded with Ice in transports of first pure Enthusiasm – gazing at the stars Orion – Walks among cedars singing hym[n]s – pleasure in everything. coarse, rough, smooth or easy, always gay – Spring *there* – joy in God that he was my Father insisting that he should not forsake me – my Father away, perhaps Dead . . but God was my Father and I quite independent of whatever might happen – delight of sitting in the fields with Thompson, surrounded by lambs and sheep, or drinking the sap of the birch, and gathering shells on the shore . . . at home.³⁵

Elizabeth depicted how she felt freedom and independence from the fear of insecurity in the absence of her father because she experienced that God as *Abba* would take care of her. She declared that she was quite independent. According to Eriksonian developmental stages, one of the adult identity phases is to find intimate relationships in early adulthood.³⁶ Elizabeth finally found her adult identity through her intimate relationship with God rooted in God as *Abba*, and this experience continually guided her life journey to center on God.

In her late teens, Elizabeth attended tea parties, evenings of music or dancing at the homes of the wealthy who belonged to the high class of New York society.³⁷ While

³⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 511. Elizabeth father was in England for “further medical studies, probable in late December 1788.” CW, 3a, 511, n. 8. Elizabeth’s mention of Thompson refers to “James Thompson’s *The Seasons*. It appeared in final form in 1744 and was a popular work in England for over a century.” Elizabeth as a schoolgirl copied a collection of poems which includes “an excerpt from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Book 1.” CW, 3a, 512, n. 8.

³⁶ *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 1994 ed., s.v. “Eriksonian Developmental Stages” by M.D. Berzonsky.

³⁷ Melville, *EBS*, 15. According to Melville, “New York society in the last decade of the eighteenth century was made up of three fairly distinct classes. The first was composed of ‘the constituted authorities, government officers, divines, lawyers, and physicians of eminence, with the principal merchants and people of independent property.’ The second was made up of the lesser merchants, retail dealers, and subordinate government clerks; the third consisted of ‘the inferior orders of people.’ The Bayleys and Posts belonged to the first group.” Melville cites Martha J. Lamb, *History of the City of New York* (New York, 1877), II, 440, as a source for this information. Melville, *EBS*, 305, n. 81.

she was attracted to this new world, she always tried to focus on the God-centered life.

In “Dear Remembrances,” she recalled her memory after attending these parties:

astonished at peoples care in dress, in the world etc. thousand reflections after being at publick places why I could not say my prayers and have good thoughts as if I had been at home wishing to Philosophies and give everything its place – not able though to do both – preferred going to my room to any amusement out of it.³⁸

Elizabeth later shared the distress she experienced between these kinds of parties and her prayer life with her daughter, Catherine, who was also called Josephine. Catherine kept her mother’s instructions on life in her special notebook which was called “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book.”³⁹ In this Red Book, Elizabeth’s instructions related to her social life are revealed:

You said a word to me about dancing – I don’t know much of the style of the present day, but when I was young I never found any effect from it but the most innocent cheerfulness both in public and private – I remember remorse of conscience about so much much time lost in it, and my trouble at being unable to say my prayers seeing always my partners instead of my God . . . also my vexation at the time it took to prepare dresses for balls.⁴⁰

While Elizabeth enjoyed her social life, she was also afraid of losing the God-centered life. In her journal, “Dear Remembrances,” she described her experience of the social party: “folly – sorrows – romance – miserable friendships – but all turned to good

³⁸ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 512.

³⁹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 489-509. Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book. Catherine’s Little Red Book, most of the entries written by Elizabeth, included “her original or copied motherly advice on morality, virtue, and religion for her daughter Catherine” who was “a young teenager (after 1816) to caution her against being caught up in the affairs of the world.” In this Red Book, Catherine wrote that “O may it be my daily study to follow the advice of the best of Mother[’]s,” and “treasured this book the rest of her life. After Catherine’s death, her niece Elizabeth Seton (1840-1906) gave it to the Sisters at Emmitsburg in 1896.” *CW*, 3a, 489, n. 1.

⁴⁰ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 492.

and thoughts of how silly to love anything in this world.”⁴¹ Elizabeth’s reflection revealed her discernment of the events of life and her decision to live in God’s love.

At age 18, Elizabeth dreamed “a little country home” in which she could gather “all the little children round” and teach them prayers and how to be good. She also wished to be a nun after reading the stories of the European convents in novels. She recalled this memory: “Passionate wishes that there were such places in America as I read of in novels where people could be shut up from the world, and pray, and be good always.”⁴² While she grew up as a gentle, kind, warm and affectionate person, she also experienced periods of extreme passion or melancholy moods. Facing her uncertain future, her emotions and moods were so changeable that her father became concerned about his daughter’s happiness. Elizabeth’s suffering seemed to end when she married William Magee Seton on January 25, 1794.⁴³ They had their own home at 27 Wall Street in New York. In “Dear Remembrances,” she confessed her mixed emotion:

my own home at 20 – the world – that and heaven too, quite impossible! so every moment clouded with that fear My God if I enjoy this, I lose you – yet no true thought of who I would lose, rather fear of hell and shut out from heaven.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 512.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Elizabeth’s husband, “William Magee Seton (1768-1803) was the oldest son of William and Rebecca Curson Seton” and “heir to the family import business after his father’s death. His declining health from tuberculosis led to his decision to make a sea voyage to Italy with Elizabeth. He died there December 27, 1803. *CW*, 3a, 513, n. 11. Their marriage record appeared in the *New York Weekly Museum* of February 1, 1794, and in the Seton Family Bible in which “William Magee Seton, on 25th Jan. 1794, by Rev. Bishop Provoost, in John Street, to E.A. Bayley aged 19 years and five months, daughter of Richard Bayley, M.D. of New York.” Melville, *EBS*, 23.

⁴⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 513.

After the long journey on the road of suffering from her early childhood to adolescent life, Elizabeth finally stabilized her life as a wife and mother. From 1795 to 1800, she gave birth to five children.⁴⁵ Her husband enjoyed playing a Stradivarius violin while Elizabeth was playing piano.⁴⁶ Music was a great family pleasure. She also enjoyed wonderful friendship with many people in her social circle, particularly with three women who became lifelong friends, Eliza Sadler, Julia Scott, and Catherine Dupleix.⁴⁷ Elizabeth nurtured her spirituality in these relationships and also shared her love of God with them.

Cultural Formation in Elizabeth's Education and Social Life

It would be interesting to trace what kind of formation she had received from her culture. In her culture, most girls who belonged to high society studied literature, French, music, and also some topics from philosophy, history, religion, and science under their private tutors. "A common educational practice during Elizabeth's time was to have students copy large blocks of material from available books" and often their copybooks

⁴⁵ Elizabeth children are "Anna Maria Seton (1795-1812)," "William Seton II (1796-1868)" whose son, Robert Seton (1839-1927), was an "ordained priest (1865), archbishop (1905) of Heliopolis," "Richard Bayley Seton(1798-1823)," "Catherine Charlton (Josephine) Seton (1800-1891) entered Sisters of Mercy of New York (1846), known as Mother Mary Catherine, R.S.M.," and "Rebecca Mary Seton (1802-1816)." Bechtle and Metz, genealogy for CW, 1: xxvi.

⁴⁶ CW, sec., 1.8, 8. William Magee Seton, Elizabeth's husband, brought "the first known Stradivarius violin to America" and enjoyed "playing the violin while Elizabeth was accomplished on the piano." Music was their family's greatest enjoyment. CW, 1, 8, n.5.

⁴⁷ Eliza Sadler was the wife of Henry Sadler, a wealthy English merchant and very often traveled to Europe. Elizabeth often referred her as Sad. CW, 1, 9, n. 7; 1, 7, n. 1; 1, 3, n. 1. Julia Scott was mentioned above, see n. 25. Catherine Dupleix was the wife of George Dupleix, a naval captain and often visited Ireland where her relatives lived. She converted to Catholicism sometime after 1808 and Elizabeth often called her as Du, Dué, or Kate. CW, 1, 126, n. 1.

were passed on to their children. Elizabeth's letter to her first daughter revealed this custom:

in short the portion of time the Mother or mistress of a family can afford for reading is so precious that she finds the necessity of dwelling on "the needful"<and must leave that> and I must leave it to *you* my love to finish what I have begun -⁴⁸

Elizabeth left three copy books and they are still extant.⁴⁹ Her first copy book has 61 pages, of which 30 pages are blank, and included the material from 1791, 1793, and 1794. This copy book contains "an outline of the contents of the copybook" and much of the content is "excerpted from Charles Rollin's *Ancient History*, Greek history, and the history of England."⁵⁰

Elizabeth's second copy book of 87 pages consists of selections from "such writers as William Shakespeare and John Milton as well as Robert Burns and other 18th century British poets." While much of this copy book contain "Biblical and classical allusions," it also includes Elizabeth's selection from "Part of the 7th Ode of Horace," and from "Robert Burns and William Cowper's works" that "celebrate simplicity and natural beauties." The themes of this copy book are diverse. Some themes are related to "pleasures of the mind, the meaning of life, and human struggles to achieve self-realization and happiness." Several selections by "Edward Young and Charles Churchill

⁴⁸ CW, 1, sec., 1.171, 219. "Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >). See Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures" for CW, 1, xxvii.

⁴⁹ The schemas of Elizabeth's three copybooks are in her *Collected Writings*. See CW, 3a, sec., 8.1, 2-4; sec., 8.2, 5-10; sec., 8.3, 11-17.

⁵⁰ The schema of this copybook includes several excerpts which were copied by Elizabeth's youngest daughter, Catherine, who later had Elizabeth's copybook. CW, 3a, 2, n. 1.

are satirical” and others “idealize friendship and love with poems recounting tales of faraway travelers or soldiers yearning to return to dear ones.”⁵¹

The third copy book used by Elizabeth originally belonged to her father and Elizabeth added other material to it. This copy book with 292 pages includes “excerpts on philosophical, historical, religious, and scientific topics.” This copy book also contained some notes of Elizabeth’s own and of her father Richard Bayley as well as of her daughter, Catherine Seton. Among these writings, the “selections in Elizabeth’s handwriting are identified and a few are transcribed on the chart.” Some of the material in this copy book would be used for Elizabeth’s own education or for part of her children’s education.⁵²

Elizabeth’s lists of books in her copy books including her brief comments on them provide not only the influences of her study but also speak to the culture of her time. The schema of the contents in Elizabeth’s copybooks provides “evidence of the breadth of her education.”⁵³ She was formed as a cultural woman as well as a woman of faith by working with these copy books and later they helped her educate her children. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth passed her copy books to her children because she hoped they would be useful for her children’s education. In a letter dated in 1803 to her first daughter, Anna Maria, Elizabeth wrote that the copy book would offer “instruction and amusement as well as give them an example of a good means” for “adding to the pleasure

⁵¹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 2, 5, n. 1.

⁵² *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.3, 11, n. 1.

⁵³ *CW*, 3a, 1, the editors’ “Note on Protestant Materials.”

of Study.”⁵⁴In a letter dated 1803 to her friend, Eliza Sadler, she portrayed her fourth child, Catherine, making copy books: “I see only my angel Cate (who is my right hand) adorned with her thousand graces making copy books at the table I write on and reminding me by every expression of the heaven we are travelling to.”⁵⁵

Elizabeth loved to read books including the Bible throughout her whole life. In a letter to her friend, Eliza Sadler, she described her most enjoyable time:

Mrs. Sad you go to Balls on Sunday night . . . what Balls or amusement can compensate for that quiet calm tranquility which Sunday and particularly Sunday Evening affords with Husband shaking his Slipper by a good coal fire and a volume of Blair.⁵⁶

In another letter dated in 1797, she wrote that “I am rocking the cradle with one hand, with a book on my knee.”⁵⁷She devoted many hours reading the available books, newspapers and magazines from her family’s library and from her friends. She also made time to read spiritual writings. In her letter to her first daughter, she revealed her passion for her reading and study, and also gave spiritual guidance in regard to reading books:

works of imagination and even <those> the wonderful productions of Science carry the thoughts but to certain confines . . . you<spend> give some time in every day if it is only half an hour to devotional reading - which is as necessary to the

⁵⁴ CW, 1, sec., 1.171, 219.

⁵⁵ CW, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 6.54, 153. Eliza Craig Sadler (d. 1823) as one of Elizabeth’s intimate friends often traveled to Europe with her merchant husband.

⁵⁶ CW, 1, sec., I, 1.8, 8. Elizabeth mentioned a volume of Blair which indicates a “book of sermons by Hugh Blair, minister of the High Church and professor of rhetoric and belles-lettres at the University of Edinburgh. In their original publication the ninety-one sermons formed five volumes.” CW, 1, 8, n. 2.

⁵⁷ CW, 1, sec., 1.11, 16.

well ordering of the mind as the <careful> hand of the gardener to prevent the weeds destroying your favourite [favorite] flower.⁵⁸

Elizabeth urged her daughter to devote even half an hour to devotional reading in order to prevent harm which might come to her from other books. Her advice to her daughter would become advice for herself. In her culture, Jean Jacques Rousseau was the most popular author in the “great era of America Deism, which extended from 1789 to around 1805.”⁵⁹ In her letters to Eliza Sadler in 1799, she expressed how she was so much attracted to Rousseau and called him “J.J” or “JJ.” Elizabeth exclaimed that “dear J. Jacques I find it – Rousseau!!!.”⁶⁰ She loved Rousseau’s work and noted that “Heaven – all Natures smiles on me, I have never known such intire [entire] content as since I have been at this little Home.”⁶¹ In some way, she was a devoted admirer of Rousseau and read three volumes of *Emilie* for a half hour every day with great delight and was very attracted especially to Rousseau’s idea on religion.⁶² However, she found the danger of Rousseau’s influences after her conversion to the Catholicism and mentioned it in her spiritual journal dated 1807 to Cecilia Seton.⁶³

⁵⁸ CW, 1, sec., 1.171, 219. “Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >).” Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for CW, 1, xxvii.

⁵⁹ Melville, *EBS*, 34. “Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French romantic philosopher and author of *Emile*.” CW, 1, sec., 1.48, 76, n. 2.

⁶⁰ CW, 1, sec., 1.48, 76.

⁶¹ CW, 1, sec., 1.52, 81.

⁶² CW, 1, sec., 1. 64, 95.

⁶³ Cecilia Seton (1791-1810) was Elizabeth’s sister-in-law and became Elizabeth’s spiritual friend after the death of Rebecca Seton. In spite of her family’s strong objection, she converted not only to Catholicism (June 20, 1806), but also “joined Elizabeth in Baltimore in June 1809 and shared the life of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s at Emmitsburg until her death April 17, 1810.”

My neighbor Mrs. P has given me a journal of the illness and death of her Niece—it concludes with their parting scene in which the dying woman expresses the utmost despair, and declares her mind in doubts of her Salvation had sought for consolation in the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau which had been her ruin, and warned all her friends to beware of them. . . . My Merciful Saviour [Savior] I too have felt their fatal Influence and once they composed my Sunday devotion - dazzled by the glare of seductive eloquence how many nights of repose and days of deceitful pleasure have I passed in the charm of their deceptions.⁶⁴

Elizabeth's cultural and social formation influenced her great interest in literature along with spiritual books. In her adult life, she enjoyed reading poems and classics and appreciated the beauty of nature. Her appreciation of the beauty of nature is revealed in her beautiful writing on "The most beautiful mild Evening" written in October 2, 1800.

The most beautiful mild Evening my eyes ever beheld, the moon perfectly unclouded—a large cloud like a Bank of pure snow arises behind the fort and gradually spreads toward New York retaining its whiteness from its centre but very dark beneath now and then lit up with lightning while the Sky over our *Establishment* and Long Island is clearest blue spangled with bright stars—this continued about a quarter of an hour the most perfect scene imagination could form a light wind rises, the thunder is heard—the clouds approach and by degrees cover the bright Moon, pass to Long Island and the fort is covered with as blue and spangled a sky as before this while the rain is beating over us.⁶⁵

The instructions and advice of Elizabeth's father, Dr. Bayley, were another source of formation which helped Elizabeth grow and mature. He directed her to cultivate a

She was also known as Sister Cecilia or Cecilia Theresa and was "elected to the first council of her community." *CW*, 1, 74, n.

⁶⁴ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.55, 475. After her conversion to Catholicism, Elizabeth found that these two writers were considered dangerous authors. Years later, Elizabeth's spiritual director, Father Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was an admirer of Elizabeth and called her Mother, shared Elizabeth's writings and knew that Mrs. Sadler introduced Rousseau to Elizabeth. Thus, he wrote his opinion on the opposite side of the second page of Mrs. Sadler's letter to Elizabeth. He noted that "+Never let go this Mother 1797!!! - *perverted to Rousseau and Emile* by her unhappy friend Mrs. Sadler." *CW*, 1, 176, n. 2. Rev. Bruté also wrote a note at the bottom of the Mrs. Sadler's letter dated in 1799 to Elizabeth that "+ Jean Jacques alas!" *CW*, 1, 91, n. 5.

⁶⁵ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.6, 19-20.

harmonious life, especially in her emotions and moods. In a letter to Elizabeth, he advised:

Calm that glowing of your soul, that warm emanation of your chest, for a more temperate climate. Impressions in that case will be less readily admitted, but their effects will last longer . . . new objects gives a turn to the mind, a different cast to the temper, - again - objects present strike our mind more forcibly than those more at a distance. Thus we intend one thing to day [today], we are diverted from it tomorrow, the next day new Ideas occur and our former intentions are forgotten. This cursed dysentery of the mind has been entailed on both senses with a remarkable constancy from the time of Adam and Eve.⁶⁶

Her father continually gave guidance to Elizabeth related to her changeable emotions, even after her marriage. In a letter to Elizabeth, he wrote that “you will always have the credit of acting well” and be “mistress of yourself,” if you guard yourself against “sudden changes of weather” and do not “dwell on trifles.”⁶⁷ He gave another instruction to her to learn “to laugh at all imaginary evil it will cheapen your path of life.”⁶⁸ Elizabeth assured her father that she had heeded his advice in her life. In a letter dated in 1800 to her father, she wrote:

once more I repeat - “Your spirit” Surrounds your child who checks each word you would prevent, and pursues every action that you would approve, particularly by those where the interest is greatest – a tincture of Vanity in this, but self-confidence is the result of *attention*, to which I cannot be remiss in *your Absence*.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ ASJPH, 1-3-3-9: 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1-3-3-9: 97.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1-3-3-9: 107.

⁶⁹ CW, 1, sec., 1.79, 116. “From 1798 to 1801 Dr. Bayley made regular trip to Albany each winter to report to the New York State Legislature in his capacity as health officer of the New York City Board of Health Commissioners. CW, 1, 61, n. 1.

The intimate relationship between Elizabeth and her father deepened after her marriage and they were able to share the joys and dreams of their lives. Elizabeth described their intimate relationship in a letter dated in 1796 to her friend, Eliza.

My Father is Health officer of New York and runs down in his Boat very often to see us . . . there never was such a pair, that he sees no such cheerful welcome expression in any other eyes in the world—You may believe it for there never was truer affection in any Heart than in Mine towards him.⁷⁰

Elizabeth expressed her great delight to her father in her letter written in 1799, when she read a French physician's admiring comment on an article written by Dr. Bayley, under pen name, 'the *Monitor*.' She reminded her father that this French physician praised this article as "the best thing written on the subject of yellow Fever and as the only one that pointed out its true cause and Origin." This event was an extraordinary joy for Elizabeth because she knew that some people did not support Dr. Bayley's dedication to this work as public health officer. Thus, she encouraged her father reminding him that this physician not only praised him as "the best friend of humanity," but also gave an admonition to Americans that they should recognize him "as their best adviser." She exclaimed that "the visual rays of our fellow citizens will in time be brightened by your labours [labors], and their attention awakened by the voice of truth and conscience."⁷¹

⁷⁰ CW, 1, sec., 1.9, 12.

⁷¹ CW, 1, sec., 1.65, 96. Dr. Bayley wrote this article under pen name, "the monitor," in 1796. Thus, Elizabeth called him "My Dear Mr. Monitor" in the beginning of this letter. The title of this article was "*An Account of the Epidemic Fever Which Prevailed in the City of New York During Part of the Summer and Fall of 1795*." He also wrote *Letters From the Health Officer to the Common Council of the City of New York* in 1799. CW, 1, 96, n. 2. The earliest biographer of Elizabeth, Charles I. White also mentioned Elizabeth's letter on this. See Charles I. White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton, Foundress and First Superior of The Sisters or Daughters of Charity in the*

expressed her shock at the misery of the sick immigrants and her empathy for the immigrant children. Her suffering was related to her empathy in taking other's pain as her own.

I cannot sleep—the Dying, and the Dead, possess my mind. Babys [babies] perishing at the empty Breast of the expiring Mother—and this is not fancy—but the scene that surrounds me—Father says *such* was never known before that there is actually twelve children that must die for mere want of sustenance, unable to take *more* than the Breast, and from the wretchedness of their Parents deprived of it as they have lain ill for many days in the ship without food, air, or *changing*. *Merciful Father*. Oh how readily would I give them each a turn of *Kits* treasure.⁷⁵

In this miserable situation, Elizabeth's only consolation was to trust in God, who is "a Father and Protector to the Orphan," and she exclaimed that God's "Protection is of more value than what the Whole world united can give."⁷⁶ She often depicted her father's dedication for the poor immigrants in Staten Island.

my Father was a Father – In offices of Humanity he never wearied every rising Sun found him already 2 and 3 hours engaged in them – and except the indulgence of an hours rest by the side of my Piano – his labours [labors] were unceasing.⁷⁷

Dr. Richard Bayley fearlessly worked for the poor immigrants and tried to "procure all possible comforts for the sufferers" of the immigrants in the quarantine.⁷⁸ Elizabeth admired this in her father and wrote about him:

⁷⁵ CW, 1, 181, sec., 1.137. Kit was Elizabeth's 4th child, Catherine Seton, born in 1800 and Elizabeth was still nursing her.

⁷⁶ CW, 1, sec., 1.95, 135.

⁷⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 8.8, 21-22.

⁷⁸ CW, 1, sec., 1.137, 181.

His voice is peculiarly adapted to cheer the desponding and encourage the trembling sufferer, who shrinks with fastidious delicacy from any of the remedies of the healing art. . . . Nature has endowed him with that quick sensibility by which, without any previous study, he enters into every character, and the tender interest he takes in the mind's pains as well as the body's, soon unlocks its inmost recesses to his view, and fits it to receive the species of consolation best adapted to its wants.⁷⁹

In her letter dated on October 2, 1800, Elizabeth wrote that her father visited the incoming ships at night time too and checked “the health of those arriving at the Port of New York.”⁸⁰ Contracting the dreaded disease, Dr. Bayley lost his life on August 17, 1801. He was buried on Staten Island in Richmond Church yard. Dr. Bayley nurtured Elizabeth's spiritual growth concerning the care of the poor with compassion and sacrificial efforts. The life of Dr. Bayley was the model of her life. She kept the copy of the Inscription of “Memorial to Dr. Richard Bayley” on a white marble tablet.

Doctor Richard Bayley of New York.
Who after practising [practicing] the various branches of his Profession
With unwearied diligence and high Reputation
for 30 years in that city
Projected a plan, and for five years conducted the operations
of a Lazaretto on this Island. –
Intelligent in divising, and indefatigable in pursuing
Plans subservient to the cause of Humanity
He continued to guard the Public Health with persevering Industry
And in the midst of dangers to perform with Invincible Fortitude
The hazardous duties of Health Officer
untill in the discharge of this Important trust
He was siezed with a Malignant Fever

⁷⁹ CW, 1, app., A-1.6a, 547. This was cited in Charles I. White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton: Foundress and First Superior of the Sisters or Daughters of Charity in the United States of America* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy & Co., 1868), 429, n. 3.

⁸⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 6, 20. Dr. Bayley, Elizabeth's father, was “a prominent surgeon and physician who was a leader in research on the group and public health issues, particularly yellow fever,” and also worked as “the public health officer of the city of New York,” at the Lazaretto which was a quarantine station for immigrants in the Staten Island. CW, 3a, 22, n. 1-3.

To which he fell a lamented Victim
And thus terminated a life of Great Usefulness
on the 17th August 1801 –
Aged 56 years.⁸¹

Dr. Bayley's dedication to public healthcare, especially for the poor and sick immigrants, strengthened Elizabeth's compassion for the poor and her dedication to social justice. As mentioned earlier, she seemed to have inherited from her father a gene for great empathy and social justice beginning with her protection of the bird eggs from children's careless playing when she was just eight years old.

In 1797, Elizabeth and her friends met at "the home of Mrs. Isabella Marshall Graham to form a society to aid destitute widows with children in New York City." They established "the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children" which was "the first charitable organization in the United States managed by women." Many of Elizabeth friends, including "Catherine Dupleix, Rebecca Seton, Sarah Startin, and Eliza Sadler" were active members. "The Graham-Windham Agency," a child welfare agency, "traces its roots to this society."⁸² Isabella Graham's letter dated 1798 revealed the services of the Widows Society.

we had planned a society for the relief of poor widows with small children, the success has been beyond our most sanguine expectations. We have now a hundred and ninety subscribers, at three dollars a year, and nearly a thousand dollars in donations. We have spent three hundred dollars this winter, and nearly all upon worthy objects. The poor increase fast: emigrants from all quarters flock to us, and when they come they must not be allowed to die for want. There are eight

⁸¹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.9, 22-23.

⁸² *CW*, 1, sec., 1.17, 27, n. 3.

hundred in the almshouse, and our society have [has] helped along many, with their own industry, that must otherwise have been there.⁸³

Elizabeth noted that she was at the Widows Society in a letter written in 1798 to her intimate friend, Julia Scott. Visiting the poor widows as a part of this Widows Society, she was astonished at their poverty and realized the blessings her family had. She wrote in her journal that “Widows Society . . . the miseries I saw.”⁸⁴ She witnessed the poverty of the immigrants, especially widows with children. She wrote about her charitable activity as a member of the Widows Society to her soul friend and sister-in-law, Rebecca Seton.

I have cut out my two *suits* to day and partly made one – heard all the lessons too and had a two hours visit from my Poor Widow Veley⁸⁵ – no work –no wood –child sick etc –and should I complain with a bright fire within – bright, bright *Moon* over my Shoulder and the Darlings all well hallooing and dancing.⁸⁶

Charles I. White pointed out that the members of the Widows Society “not only visited those who were in want, but labored with their hands to increase their means of rendering assistance.” He also stated that they were called “Protestant Sisters of Charity.”⁸⁷ Elizabeth served as a “treasurer for several years” of “the Society for the

⁸³ Ibid. This quote is based on “the Unpublished Letters and Correspondence of Mrs. Isabella Graham.” which was selected and arranged by her daughter Mrs. Bethune (New York, 1838). *CW*, 1, 27, n. 3.

⁸⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 513.

⁸⁵ Veley seems one of the widows whom Elizabeth helped through her service in “the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children.” *CW*, 1, 198, n. 1.

⁸⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.150, 198.

⁸⁷ White, 35.

Relief of Poor Widows With Small Children”⁸⁸ and ardently worked for this Widows Society. In a letter to Julia Scott dated 1st February 1802, she described her activity.

a thousand thanks for your remembrance of my poor Widows . . . indeed I have many times this winter called at a dozen houses in one morning for a less sum than that you sent for you may be sure these Meazles [Measles] cause wants and sorrows which the society cannot even half supply and in many familys [families] the small pox and meazels have immediately succeeded each other-⁸⁹

The Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children received a charter in 1802 and “petitioned the New York legislature on March 14, 1803, for permission to conduct a lottery to raise \$15,000 for low-rent housing for the widows and a school for their children.”⁹⁰ Elizabeth’s service for the poor widows nurtured her spiritual growth. She described the situation of the Widows Society and revealed her trust in God.

Who shall dare to distrust *His* mercy – this morning Sun found me without a *Penny* – it is now setting and *We* are worth 20 dollars in possession and the Ladies have to refund me *10*. tomorrow then we shall have 30–delightful. *the cruse does not fail*.⁹¹

Elizabeth experienced God’s providence and mercy for the poor widows and children in her service of the poor and exclaimed “the cruse does not fail” which referred to the scriptural passage, “the [widow’s] jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry” (cf. I Kings 17: 14-16).

⁸⁸ Melville, *EBS*, 33. Elizabeth’s name does not appear as a treasurer after 1804 in “*New York City Directory*, 1803-1804.” She went to Italy in October 1803 for her husband’s recuperation and lost her husband there. She came back to the United States in April, 1804 and became herself a widow with her children. See *New York City Directory*, 1803-1804, 61. Melville, *EBS*, 33, n. 48.

⁸⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.155, 202-203. Widows mean The Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children.

⁹⁰ Melville, *EBS*, 33-34.

⁹¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.196, 235.

In the midst of charitable activity, Elizabeth continually managed to find time for reading the Bible and spiritual books and for meditation. She shared her deep prayer experience with her father.

I have passed one of the most Elegant Evenings of my Life. it is now Eleven oclock[o'clock], and since seven I have never quited [quitted] my seat, and scarcely changed my posture . . . I have been reading of the 'High and lofty One who inhabits Eternity,' . . . How the World lessens and recedes –how calm and peaceable are hours spent in such Solitude, they are marked down for useful purposes and their Memory remains.⁹²

Elizabeth's prayer life started from her early childhood by reciting Psalm 23 and the Our Father, and continued into her teens. As mentioned earlier, she expressed how she enjoyed reading the Bible, spiritual books, and singing hymns at the age of 14.⁹³ After marriage, her spiritual growth deepened. Her note on a meditation dated December 31, 1799 revealed her joyful experience of meditation.

Sitting on a little Bench before the fire – the head resting on the hand, the Body perfectly easy, the Eyes closed, the mind serene contemplating, and tracing boundless Mercy and the source of all Excellence and Perfection—how pure the enjoyment and sweet the transition of every thought—the soul expands all Earthly interests recede—and Heavenly Hopes become anxious wishes . . . to find the Soul at Liberty—Heavenly Mercy—submissively, submit to thy Will, Adoring in sweet confidence of thy Mercy—preserve me but this Heavenly Peace, continue to me this privilege [privilege] beyond all mortal computation, of resting in Thee, and adoring Thee my Father—Friend—and never failing Support.— for this alone I implore, let all other concerns with their consequences be intirely [entirely] and wholly [wholly] submitted to *Thee*—⁹⁴

Elizabeth built up her faith, hope, and love of God by reading the Bible and spiritual books and through deep meditation. She practiced her faith, hope, and love by

⁹² *CW*, 1, sec., 1,38, 60.

⁹³ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10.4, 511.

⁹⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.4, 18.

the charitable work for the poor widows. Her practice of faith was the model for her family and friends.

2. Spiritual Growth in the Second Stage of Her Life under Influence of Rev. John Henry Hobart

Elizabeth's spiritual life made remarkable progress under the influence of Rev. John Henry Hobart who came to Trinity Episcopal Church on Broadway in New York in December of 1800.⁹⁵ Hobart preached at Trinity Church and also at St. Paul's and St. George's Episcopal Church. He quickly became Elizabeth's spiritual friend and her "spiritual director until 1805."⁹⁶

While Hobart's physical appearance was not attractive, he was a gifted minister with an "evangelical kind of preaching which was to sweep all the branches of Protestantism in the early nineteenth century." He proclaimed the scriptural message with enthusiasm. His swift and flexible voice "uttering sentiments which seemed to spring from strongest conviction and which were apparently extemporaneously expounded could only amaze his listeners," although some ministers criticized his method of preaching. John McVicker, who was "a fellow member of the ministry with him" and one

⁹⁵ Flanagan, diss., 158. "Rev. John Henry Hobart (1775-1830) was a curate at Trinity Episcopal Church on Broadway in New York" and was named "assistant bishop in 1811 and diocesan bishop and rector in 1816." He became "Elizabeth's spiritual director until 1805" and was "a trusted friend." Elizabeth became "the godmother of his daughter Rebecca," who later became a Roman Catholic after her marriage. Elizabeth often mentioned him as "H, HH, JHH, Hobe, and Hobes." However, Rev. Hobart was "bitterly opposed to Elizabeth's conversion to Roman Catholicism." *CW*, 1, sec., 1.103, 144, n.1; 3a, sec., 8.10, 24, n. 2.

⁹⁶ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.10, 24, n. 2.

of the early biographers of Hobart, illustrated how Hobart's homily was influential on his audiences.⁹⁷

He appeared in the pulpit as a father anxious for the eternal happiness of his children – a man of God preparing them for Christian warfare - a herald from the other world, standing between the living and the dead, between heaven and earth entreating perishing sinners in the most tender accents, not to reject the message of reconciliation which the Son of the living God so graciously offered for their acceptance.⁹⁸

When Hobart gave his sermon in the pulpits of Trinity, St. Paul's, and St. George's, he made "the sensation of the day" to his audiences and Elizabeth was "only one of many parishioners to fall under the spell of his oratory."⁹⁹ It is easy to trace Elizabeth's fondness of Hobart and her spiritual growth under his influence in her letters and journals. Elizabeth's admiration of Hobart is revealed in her letters written between 1801 and 1805. In a letter to Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth exclaimed that "Mr. Hobart this morning— language cannot express the comfort, the Peace the Hope" and noted that her husband, William, "did not understand" it.¹⁰⁰ In her Italy journal,¹⁰¹ however, she noted that

⁹⁷ Melville, *EBS*, 56.

⁹⁸ John McVicker, *The Early Life and Professional Years of Bishop Hobart* (Oxford: D.A. Tallboys, 1838), 190; quoted in Melville, *EBS*, 56.

⁹⁹ Melville, *EBS*, 56.

¹⁰⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.102, 144.

¹⁰¹ When Elizabeth with her husband and the first daughter traveled to Italy in 1803 for her husband's health, she kept journals for Rebecca Seton, who was her soul friend and sister-in-law. These Italy journals were often divided into two names. The first journal called the "Leghorn Journal" was published without her permission under the title of "Memoirs of Mrs. S" by Isaac A. Kollack in 1817. *CW*, 1, sec., 2.5, 246, n. 1. This journal covered their staying in the quarantine station in Leghorn, Italy, their release, and the death of her husband William. The second journal called the "Florence Journal," written from January to April of 1804, included Elizabeth's "impressions of Italy, her discovery of the Roman Catholic faith," "her first tentative steps to

When Hobart went to Philadelphia in February of 1802, Elizabeth asked him to carry her letter to her friend, Julia Scott, who was in Philadelphia. In this letter she described Hobart and asked her not to disregard going to the Church on that day, if Hobart invited her to come.

There are various kinds of attachments in this world. . . . some of esteem for virtues which we can neither approach nor assimilate to our own natures, and some – the unbounded veneration, Affection, Esteem, and tribute of “the Heart Sincere” – The Bearer of this letter [Hobart] possesses in *full* the reality of the last description in *my Heart* – and in fact I can give no stronger proof of the Affection and esteem I bear you than in expressing to you what I believe another would pervert or ridicule—

The soother and comforter of the troubled *Soul* is a kind of friend not often met with—the convincing, Pious, and singular turn of mind, and argument possessed by this most amiable being has made him without even having the least consciousness that he is so the friend most my friend in this world, and one of those who after my Adored creator I expect to receive the largest share of happiness from in the next.¹⁰⁶

Rev. Robert Seton, who was Elizabeth’s grandson and one of the early biographers of Elizabeth Seton, described Hobart as “a man, by manners and education, eminently fitted to captivate gentle spirits and lead them whichever way he would,” and remarked that “Elizabeth was, I may say, *infatuated* by this eloquent Reverend.”¹⁰⁷ Although other biographers have maintained that the word *infatuated* was

¹⁰⁶ CW, 1, sec., 1.155, 201-202.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Seton, ed., *Memoir, Letters and Journal of Elizabeth Seton: Convert to the Catholic Faith and Sisters of Charity* [hereafter cited as *Memoir*], 2 vols. (New York: P. O’Shea, Publisher, 1869), 1: 83. Robert Seton (1839-1927) was the 4th child of Elizabeth’s first son, William Seton II (1796-1868), and ordained Catholic priest in 1865 and became archbishop of Heliopolis in 1905. Bechtle and Metz, genealogy for CW, 1, xxv.

not an adequate expression of Elizabeth's spiritual friendship with Hobart, the core of this description was based on how much Elizabeth was attracted to his spiritual depth.¹⁰⁸

The friendship between Elizabeth and Hobart was mutual. Hobart visited Elizabeth's home and there was shared friendship between their families. When Elizabeth had to go to Italy hoping for the recovery of her husband's illness, he kept the Seton family's paintings and furniture in his house. He also was concerned about Elizabeth's safety on her trip. In his letter to Elizabeth, he joyfully informed her that her voyage, according to the newspaper, would be safe from the attack of "the Pirates of Barbary" because "the emperor had ceased hostilities and our frigates there have adequate protection from the other powers."¹⁰⁹ His admiration of Elizabeth is revealed in his letter to her.

Your furniture we gladly preserve as memorials of you, I never cast my eye on the escritoire without thinking of its inestimable owner, nor on the piano forte without having my soul in imagination enlivened and soothed by the chants of praise and consolation which it was my delight to hear burst forth from it. The sacred portrait of the Redeemer recalls to my mind the ardent piety of her who before this endeared memorial poured forth the emotions of holy love and gratitude.¹¹⁰

Hobart recognized Elizabeth's spiritual depth and admired her piety.¹¹¹ Both of them were very much attracted each other. What drew them to each other? It is important

¹⁰⁸ Melville pointed out that Madame de Barberey, who was the translator of Elizabeth's life into French, also hesitated on this word. Melville, *EBS*, 57, n. 61. Flanagan also commented that this word was a poor choice for description of Elizabeth's spiritual friendship. Flanagan, *diss.*, 160.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, *EBS*, 64, quoting the letter of Hobart to Seton, Nov. 23, 1803.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *EBS*, 61, quoting Letter from Hobart to Seton, New York, November 23, 1803.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, *EBS*, 57.

to know Hobart's theological stand and spiritual concern in order to examine his influence on Elizabeth's spiritual life.

Hobart studied at the newly founded Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia in his boyhood and later at the College of New Jersey, that was the predecessor of Princeton College and affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. As a student at Princeton, he studied the Scriptures and church history as well as Calvinist theology and Presbyterian ecclesiology. He knew that "the theology of the Protestant Episcopal church was different from that of the Presbyterians,"¹¹² and searched for the correct doctrines of his own Episcopal Church which was still developing its own identity in the United States. Although he did not totally agree with Presbyterian ecclesiology, the fruit of his studies at Princeton was the grounding of his theological stance in Scripture and church history.¹¹³ McVicker stated that Hobart's "religious convictions were drawn from the study of bible." Hobart "openly and studiously rejected all human authority" in forming doctrines. For instance, when he struggled with "the doctrines which the Church teaches," he would "still follow the Scriptures."¹¹⁴

Hobart was usually known as "an American proponent" of the high church tradition in Anglicanism and his writings revealed the influences of the promoters of this tradition, such as Richard Hooker, the Caroline Divines, which included Lancelot

¹¹² Kathleen Flanagan, "Some of Aspects of Elizabeth Seton's Spiritual/Theological World" (Hereafter cited as "ES' Spiritual/ Theological World), *Vincentian Heritage* 14, no. 2 (1993), 217.

¹¹³ Flanagan, diss., 81-82.

¹¹⁴ McVicker, 144, quoted in Flanagan, diss., 82-83.

Andrews, William Laud, and others.¹¹⁵ These Anglican theologians influenced Hobart's development of his unique theology in line with the high church tradition. It is helpful to consider some of these theologians who were predecessors of the high church tradition in order to understand Hobart's theology which impacted Elizabeth Seton's spiritual growth. It is interesting that Richard Hooker's name appeared in the preface of "Extracts from A Commentary of the Book of Psalms" which belonged to Elizabeth while she was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church.¹¹⁶

Richard Hooker (1553-1600) was considered "the first to articulate in a systematic fashion basic Anglican theology" grounded in the Scriptures and the Church Fathers, which became the corner stone for the high church tradition. He viewed the Anglican Church as one which maintained the catholic tradition, while refuting "the main points of Puritanism." He developed his theology of the church, ministry, and sacraments rooted in the Incarnation. "He did not agree with Tridentine theologians who stressed the visibility of the church as fundamental and essential."¹¹⁷

Hooker looked upon the church as "a human society which is unique because of the presence of Christ" and accepted "the three-fold ministry of the church as normative

¹¹⁵ Flanagan, diss., 3. "Hobart frequently alluded to Hooker, Andrewes, and others in his writings." "Hobart also provided the bibliography for a young man interested in the ministry, which lists the works of many of the great English divines. See John McVicker, The Early Life and Professional Years of Bishop Hobart (Oxford: D.A. Talboys, 1838), 271-272," quoted in Flanagan, diss., 3, n. 1.

¹¹⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 8.23, 41.

¹¹⁷ Flanagan, diss., 23. Cf. John S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition* (Sewanee, Tennessee: The University Press at the University of the South, 1963), 159-160. Flanagan, diss., 23, n. 13.

but saw it as something which evolved historically rather than being of divine decree.” “Using Scripture and the Fathers as a base,” he asserts that “Christian tradition affirms that Christ is present in the Eucharist and that the Eucharist is “an important means by which people could share in the merits of the passion and death of Christ.” He viewed “the Eucharistic action as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving but not as propitiation.” He rejected “both consubstantiation and transubstantiation as having no Scriptural warrant” and denied “any adoration or reservation of the elements.”¹¹⁸

The theological patterns set by Hooker were developed by the Caroline Divines who wrote during “the reigns of Charles I and II, roughly 1625-1700.”¹¹⁹ The characteristic feature of these Divines is “a consciousness that the Catholicity rather than the Protestantism was the decisive feature of the English Church.”¹²⁰ They got inspiration from “Erasmus [rather] than Luther.”¹²¹ They developed their theology based on Scripture and the Fathers and began “what later came to be known as the ‘high church’ tradition in Anglicanism.”¹²² Regarding the episcopacy, some of them thought that “it was essential for the church,” while others just favored it. They valued the liturgical rites. Many Anglican theologians including John Henry Hobart in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States developed the high church tradition based on the theology of

¹¹⁸ Flanagan, diss., 21-26.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

¹²⁰ *Dictionary of English Church History*, 1948 ed., s.v. “Caroline Divines”; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 33.

¹²¹ Flanagan, diss., 33.

¹²² Ibid.

Hooker and the Caroline Divines. Hobart mentioned these Caroline Divines, especially Andrews and Laud, as well as Hooker.¹²³

Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), known as Hooker's successor, articulated "a theology of church and of ministry, especially episcopacy, against the strong Puritan Party,"¹²⁴ and also established "the Anglican theology of church and of eucharist against the renewed Roman Catholic Party." His writings became "classics of spiritual literature and were treasured by later churchmen, both in England and in the United States."¹²⁵ He asserted that "the Episcopal office was truly apostolic and thus divine in origin" by "the evidence of Scriptures and the early Fathers."¹²⁶ His theology of Eucharist centered on "a belief in Real Presence, though not in transubstantiation" and he considered "celebration of the Lord's Supper and reception of communion" as "a central action of the Christian life."¹²⁷ Like Hooker, he considered the Eucharist "as a sacrifice, but not of propitiation."¹²⁸

William Laud ((1575-1645), who was the Archbishop of Canterbury and another important person among the Caroline Divines, strove to ensure that the Anglican Church flourished "as the Holy Catholic Church." He defended "Anglican positions concerning

¹²³ Ibid., 33.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 34. "For a clear explication of Andrewes' theology, see Maurice F. Reidy, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1955)." diss., 35, n. 21.

¹²⁷ Flanagan, diss., 37.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

the visible church, episcopacy and the sacraments” based on the early church Fathers. He was “a leading spokesman for what came to be known as the high church tradition.” He witnessed his high church position by his strong “Eucharistic piety, his belief in the Real Presence and in commemorative sacrifice, and his revisions of the communion Rite in line with an earlier more catholic form.” He rejected “any idea of the sacrament as an oblation for sin or as a new sacrifice.” He had many opponents among the Puritans as well as in his own party because of his “strong ecclesiastical rule and catholic tendencies.” Thus, later high churchman seldom referred to him, but two centuries later John Henry Hobart recognized him in his writings and was accused of being a “Laudian.”¹²⁹

Most Episcopalians were “Low Church,” or evangelical in “late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century” in the United States. The Low Church tradition valued “Scripture as the chief guide for the Christian” and considered “episcopacy as a valued but not inherently a necessary office in the church.” They attended weekly worship service which consisted of the “singing of hymns, praying psalms, reading from Scripture, and a lengthy sermon.” The Episcopalians in the Low Church tradition celebrated the Communion Service “about six times a year” and the use of “vestments or adornment of the church was minimal.”¹³⁰

In this situation, Hobart revitalized the high church tradition, thus challenging his contemporaries in the Low Church tradition. Hobart was the one who transmitted “the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 38-40.

¹³⁰ Flanagan, “ES’ Spiritual/ Theological World,” 218-219.

high church tradition from the English to the American Church” and his theology was “an important influence which helped to shape the development of the Protestant Episcopal Church”¹³¹ in the United States. He developed the ecclesiology of the Protestant Episcopal Church based on the high church tradition which stressed “the importance of a visible church structure, a threefold ministry, and a liturgical piety”¹³² which included Eucharistic piety. In his writing, *The High Church Vindicated*, Hobart viewed principles of the high churchman:

. . . who insist on the ministration and ordinances of the Church, as constituted by Christ and his apostles, because they are the means and pledges to the faithful of that salvation which is derived through the merits, and intercession, and sanctifying grace of a divine Redeemer; and who love and adhere to the Liturgy as embodying and powerfully exhibiting the evangelical truth and duty in the purest and most fervent language of devotion.¹³³

Hobart’s high churchmanship was, however, somewhat unique. He claimed that “all doctrine and piety be thoroughly grounded in the Scripture” and that any position without “specific scriptural warrant” was not acceptable. In comparison with the later high church tradition, he was “far more evangelical.”¹³⁴ In his essay, he stressed that the Protestant Episcopal Church is evangelical.

[The] succinct view of the prominent doctrine of our church will serve, I trust, to establish her claim to the title of evangelical, in the scriptural, the primitive, the sober, and the highest sense of the term - evangelical as proclaiming to all

¹³¹ Flanagan, diss., 141.

¹³² Ibid., 94.

¹³³ Ibid., 125, quoting Hobart, *The High Churchman Vindicated: In a Fourth Charge to the Clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York* (New York: T and J Swords, 1826), 19.

¹³⁴ Flanagan, diss., 94-95.

mankind not a nominal, but a real Saviour; offering to all the means of an interest in his salvation.¹³⁵

Hobart stressed that the Protestant Episcopal Church is “apostolic yet reformed and neither Protestant nor Roman.”¹³⁶ He accused both the Roman Catholic and Protestant in his writing, *The Corruptions of the Church of Rome Contrasted with Certain Protestant Errors*.¹³⁷ His point was that “the Church of Rome had detracted from the purity of apostolic faith because of its exaggerated claims, superstitions, and innovations,” such as “the development of papacy and the doctrine of papal infallibility,” while Protestant sects had gone to another extreme by emphasizing the right of private and unlimited judgment in doctrinal matters, and having little regard for the church “as a divinely constituted society.”¹³⁸ His claim was that “the English Reformation had purified the Church of Christ from aberrations and returned it to its apostolic foundations and pristine purity.” Thus, the Protestant Episcopal Church had “uniquely preserved the true apostolic church of Christ.”¹³⁹ He described his views on church doctrine and ministry in his early writings and continued this view in his later writings. In these writings, he emphasized “the apostolical foundation,” “the three-fold ministry,” “the universal call to

¹³⁵ John Henry Hobart, *The Clergyman's Companion, Containing the Occasional Offices of the Protestant Episcopal Church with Prayers Suitable to be Used by the Clergy of Said Church in the Discharge of Their Parochial Duties*. 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: T and J Swords, 1828), 2:40; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 98.

¹³⁶ Flanagan, diss., 94.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 94 and 119. For further research, see John Henry Hobart, *The Corruptions of the Church of Rome Contrasted with Certain Protestant Errors* (New York, T and J Swords, 1818), 12-21.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 118-119.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 141.

salvation,” “the beauty and importance of the feasts and fasts of the liturgical year,” and “the full and faithful celebration of the liturgy.”¹⁴⁰ In the preface of his writing, *A Companion for the Altar*, he presented two principles:

That we are saved from the guilt and dominion of sin by the divine merits and grace of a crucified Redeemer; and that the merits and grace of this Redeemer are applied to the soul of the believer in the devout and humble participation of the ordinances of the Church, administered by a priesthood who derive their authority by regular transmission from Christ, the Divine Head of the Church, and the source of all power in it.¹⁴¹

Flanagan pointed out that Hobart stressed the importance of the ministry of the church which includes the sacramental ministry and maintained that the ministry of the church was not only “a pledge of divine mercy and favor” but also “a means of continued divine consolation.”¹⁴² Thus, he helped to found General Theological Seminary and stated that “the objects of the seminary were to produce a learned, orthodox, pious, and practical ministry.”¹⁴³

Hobart’s first two books, *A Communion for the Altar* and *A Companion for the Festivals and the Fasts* published in 1804, revealed his emphasis on his church. Both works emphasized devotional life and reminded “the Episcopalian of the importance of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 138.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 133, quoting Hobart, *A Companion to the Altar*: (New York: T & J Swords, 1804), iv.

¹⁴² Ibid., 97. For further research, see John Henry Hobart, The Man of God. A Sermon at the institution of the Rev. George Upheld, M. A. (New York: T and J Swords, 1828), pp. 11-13.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 100.

the liturgical year and the saving power of the sacraments.”¹⁴⁴ He revealed his conviction on the sacraments in his writings.

We may sincerely repent of our sins; we may heartily believe the gospel; we may walk in the paths of holy obedience, but until we enter into covenant with God, by Baptism, and, ratifying our vows of allegiance and duty at the holy sacrament of the Supper, commemorate the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, we cannot assert any claim to salvation. We possess the necessary qualifications for it –but it is solemnly and formally conveyed to us only in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These are the only means by which we receive the inestimable blessings of redemption - the only pledges by which they are assured to us.¹⁴⁵

Hobart claimed baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the sacraments of the Protestant Episcopal Church.¹⁴⁶ The sacrament of baptism initiates the Christian life and the Spirit is given in the baptismal rebirth, and there is “value in a later ‘laying on of hands,’ as a rite of confirmation,” but it does not mean a distinct sacrament.¹⁴⁷ He maintains “An authoritative general absolution as part of the rite of Eucharist” performed by the churchman conforms to “the scriptural admonition, ‘whose sins you forgive . . . (John 20: 23),”” but he claims that private confession is not a sacrament because it is “non-apostolic” and “a manifestation of Roman corruption.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Flanagan, “ES’ Spiritual/ Theological World,” 219. For further research, see John Henry Hobart, *A Companion for the Festivals and the Fasts* (New York: T & J Swords, 1804).

¹⁴⁵ Hobart, *A Companion for the Altar*, 190; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 134-135.

¹⁴⁶ Flanagan, diss., 134.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 122. For further research, see Hobart, *The Churchman, The Principles of the Churchman Stated and Explained, in distinction from the Corruptions of the Church of Rome and from the Errors of Certain Protestant Sects* (New York: T & J Swords, 1819). 17-18.

¹⁴⁸ Flanagan, diss., 123.

Hobart emphasized the Lord's Supper. His Eucharistic theology was very important in his time in the United States. Although the Church of England emphasized "weekly celebrations of the Eucharist," as mentioned earlier, "the Protestant Episcopal Church of the early nineteenth century" in the United States did not celebrate the Eucharist frequently because of the influence of other Reformation churches.¹⁴⁹ Holy communion was only "celebrated on Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday, and a few other Sunday during the year," even in Trinity Episcopal Church in New York which was known as "high church" and also Elizabeth's worship place.¹⁵⁰ In this situation, Hobart reminded his fellow Episcopalians of their "rich tradition of liturgical piety," and encouraged people to "a greater love for the sacraments and to a more frequent celebration of the communion rite." However, frequent celebration of the communion rite was practiced only after Hobart's death.¹⁵¹

Hobart viewed the Eucharist as "a sacrifice of praise and as a memorial of Christ's saving death" as well as "channel of God's grace."¹⁵² He asserts that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is "the highest instituted means of sanctification and pledge of divine favour."¹⁵³ However, he claimed the Eucharist as "symbols and memorials of the body

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 131.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 133.

¹⁵² Ibid., 136.

¹⁵³ Hobart, The Churchman, 18; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 122.

and blood of Christ,”¹⁵⁴ while rejecting the Roman Catholic’s doctrine of transubstantiation. His Eucharistic doctrine was both “high church” and “evangelical.”¹⁵⁵

In *The Churchman’s Profession of Faith*, he viewed the differences between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, both they and we believe a commemorative oblation of the elements; but a propitiatory sacrifice, as they believe it, we utterly disclaim: and a corporal presence, or what they call Transubstantiation, we just reject; the cup of blessing as a part of the institution, is acknowledged by both; but a power of depriving the laity of that blessings, and the practice of the Romish Church, as founded on that pretended power, we must ever renounce and abhor . . .¹⁵⁶

Hobart also emphasized prayer life for both clergy and laity. He wrote about “meditations and prayers for the liturgical seasons and the feast of the Liturgical year” for the churchmen in *Companion for the Festivals and the Fasts*.¹⁵⁷ He also wrote the brief devotional books, *A Companion to the Book of Common Prayer, with an Explanation of the Service* and *the Clergyman’s Companion*. In these books, he persuaded the clergy and laity to realize “the value and importance of the prayer forms of the Protestant Episcopal Church” and to keep “their fidelity to those forms.”¹⁵⁸ He was not only “a significant

¹⁵⁴ Hobart, *The Churchman*, 23; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 122 (Emphasis in the original).

¹⁵⁵ Flanagan, diss., 140.

¹⁵⁶ Hobart, ed. *The Churchman’s Profession of his Faith and Practice as a Member of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*. 2nd ed. (New York: T & J Swords, 1825), 18; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 139.

¹⁵⁷ Flanagan, diss., 137.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 137, n. 69. For further research, see Hobart, “*A Companion to the Book of Common Prayer, with an Explanation of the Service* (New York: T & J Swords, 1805), 40-41.”

leader in the Protestant Episcopal Church's 'high church party,'" but also helped the church return to its liturgical traditions.

Hobart's theology inspired Elizabeth's faith life and nurtured the development of her spiritual growth. Melville pointed out that "the absorption of Elizabeth in spiritual concerns was very noticeable during the spring of 1802" and noted that she kept "a kind of journal of her meditations, parts of which have long been available to the public."¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth's letters, her spiritual journals and notes witnessed her tremendous spiritual growth after her encountering Hobart.

Elizabeth's copy of Hobart's sermons revealed the clue to his spiritual direction of her and how much his sermons impacted her spiritual growth based on faith, hope, and charity. When she sailed to Leghorn, Italy, hoping that the climate of Italy would hasten her husband's recovery from tuberculosis, she brought some religious books and her copy of Hobart's sermons. In her Leghorn Journal, she noted that I became "far more happy than I had been wretched" when she read her "little book of Dear H's[Hobart's] sermons" after her prayer.¹⁶⁰

What were the specific influences of Hobart on Elizabeth's spiritual growth? First of all, Hobart helped Elizabeth to build up her spiritual life rooted in the Scripture. His

¹⁵⁹ Melville, *EBS*, 57. Parts of Elizabeth's spiritual notes were already revealed in R. Seton, *Memoirs*, I, 84, 90 and White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton* (New York, 1853), 35-37; 56-57. Elizabeth's spiritual notes related to her time in the Protestant Church are in *Elizabeth Seton Collected Writings*. CW, 3a, 1-172.

¹⁶⁰ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 255-256. "The Archives of Mount St. Vincent has several manuscripts in Elizabeth's handwriting: folded page with the same watermark, sewn together. One, containing six separate sermons or commentaries, dated 1802 and 1803, is probably the 'book' of Hobart's sermons." CW, 1, 255, n. 13.

sermons were “always based on a text of Scripture”¹⁶¹ and it was like a commentary on the Bible. Flanagan stated that Hobart guided Elizabeth to “develop her knowledge of Scripture,”¹⁶² and nourished Elizabeth’s scriptural piety which was characteristic of her spirituality from her youth.¹⁶³ Elizabeth had cultivated her spiritual life based on Scripture and spiritual readings even before encountering Hobart. Her writings witnessed that she already had her own Bible from age of 14 and was immersed in the word of God.¹⁶⁴ While Elizabeth read and appreciated the Word of God in her own way, Hobart guided her to develop her knowledge of Scripture and directed her spiritual life to be more deeply rooted in the Word of God. Her *Collected Writings* witnessed Hobart’s influence on her scriptural piety. Since she had friendship with Hobart from 1801, her letters and journals show her combining her story with the biblical story. She frequently cited the scriptural phrases in her letters and journals after encountering Hobart. Her journal written in July 26, 1801, revealed how her meditation was based on the Scripture and how she naturally cited the scriptural phrases.

“O tarry thou the Lords leisure, be strong and He shall comfort thy heart, they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength” (cf. Ps. 27:14). Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted (cf. Mt 5:5) - These divine assurances sooth and encourage the Christians disturbed and dejected mind, and insensibly diffuse a holy composure. . . . the tumult of his Soul has subsided, and he is possessed by complacency, hope, and love. If a sense of this undeserved kindness fill his eyes with tears, they are tears of reconciliation and Joy, while a generous ardour [ardor] springing up within him sends him forth to his Worldly labours [labors]

¹⁶¹ Flanagan, diss., 228.

¹⁶² Ibid., 227.

¹⁶³ Ibid., “ES’ Spiritual/ Theological World,” 219.

¹⁶⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 511.

“fervent in spirit” resolving through Divine Grace to be henceforth more diligent and exemplary in living to the Glory of God and longing mean while for that blessed time when “being freed from the bondage of corruption” he shall be enabled to render to his Heavenly Benefactor more pure and acceptable service. (cf. Rom. 6: 17-23).¹⁶⁵

In her Leghorn Journal dated Dec. 4, 1803, she disclosed how she gained strength through the spiritual readings in the miserable situation of being detained in the Lazaretto quarantine.¹⁶⁶

the word—my Bible, commentaries, Kempis, visible, and in continual enjoyment – When I cannot get hours, I take minutes –Invisible, oh the company is numberless – some times I feel so assured that the guardian angel is immediately present that I look up from my Book and can hardly persuade myself I am not touched[.] ==poor soul my J[ohn] H[enry] H[obart] would say “she will lose her reason in that Prison” –more than that I sometimes feel that his angel is near and undertake to converse with it – but these enjoyments only come when all is quiet and I have passed an hour or two with King David, the Prophet Isaiah, or become elevated by some of the commentaries.¹⁶⁷

Hobart gave his copy of George Horne’s *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* to Elizabeth and this *Commentary* rekindled her love of God in Psalms.¹⁶⁸ She expressed

¹⁶⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 8.7, 20-21.

¹⁶⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2.6, 249. Elizabeth wrote that they were detained in the Lazaretto prison right after entering to the port of Leghorn because their ship was “the first to bring the news of yellow fever in New York.”

¹⁶⁷ CW, 1, sec., 2.6, 250. “Elizabeth’s style of frequently using equal sign (=), short dash (-), and long dash (-), as terminal punctuation is followed as closely as possible. See Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for CW, vol. 1, xxvii.

¹⁶⁸ The Commentary mentioned by Elizabeth is her Extracts “from Rev. John Henry Hobart’s copy of George Horne, Lord Bishop of Norwich, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Philadelphia: William Young, 1792).” Hobart gave his copy to Elizabeth “June 17, 1802.” She extracted “the first twenty-eight psalms” from this Commentary. Elizabeth then wrote “material on the front and back fly leaves and marked statements or wrote comments beside some verses or statements.” “In 1818, when Elizabeth was destroying papers and books from her early years, Rev. Simon Bruté asked for some of her Protestant materials so that he could better understand Protestantism. Thus, her copy of Horne came to Vincennes, Indiana, where Bruté served as the first Bishop. It is now #5082 in the Cathedral Library at Vincennes.” CW, 3a, sec., 8.23, 38, n. 1.

her ardent desire to love God “on the page opposite the title page” of this copy of the *Commentary*:

Adorable redeemer! – thy blood has purchased me, and I give myself wholly to Thee – The redeemed of thy mercy I will live only to thy glory – can I be reluctant in the service of a Master to whom I am bound by such tender and endearing ties-¹⁶⁹

In her Leghorn Journal, Elizabeth noted that she enjoyed the morning and day break reading “the commentary on 104th Psalm and sung hymns in bed till 10.”¹⁷⁰ In a letter to Rebecca Seton, she wrote that she could still hear those sweet words of Psalm 2 sounding in her ear when she awoke from her sleep in the morning.¹⁷¹ Since she learned Psalm 23 from her step-mother in her early year, she found strength and consolation in reciting Psalms as well as in reading the Scriptural phrases. Among her spiritual notes written during her time in the Protestant Episcopal Church, the “Notebook of Psalm 23 and Rev. John Henry Hobart’s Sermons”¹⁷² disclosed her love of the Psalms and her spiritual enrichment from Hobart’s sermon on Psalm 23. In this notebook, Psalm 23 is reflected in the light of the other Scriptural phrases in the Old and New Testaments:

Kempis referred to *The Imitation of Christ* “by fifteen century writer Thomas á Kempis” and this book belonged to “a classic devotional work and a favorite of Elizabeth.” *CW*, 1, sec., 2.6, 250, n. 4.

¹⁶⁹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 23, 39.

¹⁷⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.7, 265. “Ps. 104 appears as Ps. 105 in contemporary Catholic bibles.” *CW*, 1, 265, n. 30.

¹⁷¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.136, 180.

¹⁷² *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 25, 147-172. Elizabeth brought this note book with her when she was on travel to Italy. This notebook contains “her transcriptions of sermons by Rev. John Henry Hobart.” *CW*, 3a, 147, n. 1.

Blessed Psalmist of Israel! Thy heart was indeed touched by the spirit of God—when it poured forth this divine strain. . . .Who can read this tender and sublime Psalm without being affected by the strong and affecting exhibition which it affords of the mercy, the power, and love of Jehovah the everlasting shepherd, in his superintending and bounteous care of believers the “Sheep of his Pasture.”-If the holy David or any other righteous man under the *law* could rejoice in Jehovah as his Shepherd (cf. Mt 5: 5) with how much greater propriety can Christians take up the exulting strain whom Jesus the great Shepherd of Souls hath gathered into that fold the Christian church.¹⁷³

Elizabeth also had her spiritual notebook of “Extracts from George Glasse’s *Contemplations on the Sacred History*.”¹⁷⁴ Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, editors of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings*, assumed that this book might have belonged to Hobart. However, she selectively extracted the whole Salvation story of Jesus Christ from Zacharias (cf. Luke 1: 5-25; 67-68) and the Annunciation (cf. Luke 1: 64) to the Resurrection¹⁷⁵ and the Ascension.¹⁷⁶ The content of these Extracts revealed that Elizabeth had developed her scriptural knowledge and that she was deeply nourished by the salvation story of Jesus Christ. Elizabeth’s other spiritual notebook, “Pyamingo Reflections,”¹⁷⁷ also disclosed her deep spirituality based on the scripture. Most themes

¹⁷³ CW, 3a, sec., 8.25, 147.

¹⁷⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8.24, 82-146. “Elizabeth took these extracts from *Contemplations on the Sacred History*, altered from the Works of the Right Rev. Father in God, Joseph Hall, D.D., sometime Lord Bishop of Norwich by George Henry Glasse, 1761-1809, an abridgement of Hall’s *Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testaments*, by Joseph Hall, D.D., 1574-1656, Late Lord Bishop of Norwich. Hall’s multiply volumes were reissued during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.” Elizabeth extracted 45 of the 52 contemplations in “Glasse’s volume on the New Testament.” Her “extracts indicate what appealed to her, sometimes whole paragraphs, other times a few sentences.” CW, 3a, 82, n. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Mt 28: 1-5; Luke 23: 49-56; John 20:17; 15: 14-15; Luke, 24:13-35.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1: 6-11.

¹⁷⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 172-215. “The *Pyamingo Reflections* constitute a series of small notebooks begun by Elizabeth while sailing from Leghorn (Livorno), Italy, to New York in 1804. The

of this notebook were centered on “the sufferings and death of Christ with application to the life the Christians.”¹⁷⁸ Under Hobart’s spiritual guidance, Elizabeth continued to develop her scriptural spirituality. In the Leghorn Journal dated Dec. 4 1803, she again exclaims how the Word of God is truly building up the soul and giving strength to her.

My Father and my God –who by the consoling voice of his Word builds up the Soul in Hope so as to free it even for hours of its incumbrances [encumbrances] –confirming and strengthening it by the hourly experience of his indulgent goodness –giving it a new life in Him even while in the midst of Sorrows and care –sustaining, directing, consoling and Blessing thro every changing scene of its Pilgrimage making his Will its guide to temporal comfort and eternal glory – how shall this most unwearied diligence, the most cheerful compliance. The most humble resignation ever express my love, my joy, thanksgiving and Praise.¹⁷⁹

During her stay at Italy, Elizabeth continually read the scripture and helped her husband and daughter join with her in reading and listening to the scriptures. In the Leghorn Journal, she remarked that I “finished reading the Testament¹⁸⁰through, which we began the 6th October and my bible as far as *Ezekiel* which I have always read to *myself* in rotation.”¹⁸¹ The Word of God was the fountain of strength for Elizabeth and her family in the midst of suffering during their life of quarantine in Italy. She wrote that

Pyamingo was the ship on which Elizabeth Seton sailed. “Her reflections on spiritual subjects center chiefly on the sufferings and death of Christ with applications to the life of the Christian.” According to editors’ notes, the internal “evidence suggested that the material was probably copied from spiritual writers of the period. Some material in these reflections probably dates from a later period in her life.” *CW*, 3a, 172, n. 1.

¹⁷⁸ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 172, n. 1.

¹⁷⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.6, 250-251.

¹⁸⁰ The New Testament or Christian Scriptures.

¹⁸¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.7, 271.

she read the “Psalms and the 15th Chapter of Isaiah” to her husband after breakfast and said that this reading made her husband so delight that they were all merry.”¹⁸²

Secondly, Hobart’s emphasis on sin and the need for prayer also influenced Elizabeth’s spiritual growth. For Hobart, sin was directly related to redemption. Elizabeth’s writings revealed Hobart’s influence. She noted that she would “consider the causes of Sorrow for sin” in herself and “check and restrain all useless words.”¹⁸³ She also revealed her trust in God during her dark night of the soul.

My soul is sorrowful – my spirit weighed down even to the dust, cannot utter one word to Thee my Heavenly Father – but still it seeks its only refuge and low at thy feet waits its deliverance. . . .O Whatever is thy good pleasure thy blessed will be done. let me have but one wish that of pleasing thee but one fear – the fear of offending thee. . . . *Comfort thy Servants* whose trust is in Thee – bend our minds to thy Will – enlarge us with thy Grace – Sustain us with thy blessing – until through the grave and gate of death WE PASS TO OUR JOYFUL RESURRECTION.¹⁸⁴

Elizabeth’s prayer life sustained her life journey. Although her life journey was long and its burdens were heavy, she says, “the Lord delivers his faithful servants from all their troubles” and “sometimes even here allows them some hours of sweetest Peace as the earnest of eternal blessedness.”¹⁸⁵ She expressed her faith, hope and love based on her experience of communion with God.

Is it nothing to sleep serene under his guardian wing – to awake to the brightness of the glorious sun with renewed strength and renewed blessings (cf. Ps. 90) – to be blessed with the power of instant communion with the Father of our Spirits the

¹⁸² CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 261.

¹⁸³ CW, 3a, sec., 8.11, 25.

¹⁸⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8.11, 25-26.

¹⁸⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 8.10, 24.

sense of his presence – the influences of his love – to be assured of that love is enough to tie us faithfully to him and while we have fidelity to him all the surrounding cares and contradictions of this Life are but Cords of mercy to send us faster to Him who will hereafter make even their remembrances to vanish in the reality of our eternal <glory> felicity.¹⁸⁶

Hobart strongly emphasized the prayer life. In his writing, the *Clergyman's Companion*, he stated that “the Spirit of the ministry is a spirit of prayer” and emphasized that prayer is “the leading principle of our character.”¹⁸⁷ Hobart's influence on her prayer life is verified in her writings. In a letter to her father, Elizabeth asked whether her father had “any recollection of mild quiet evening hour at Staten Island” and shared her spiritual experience with him: “all Nature is hushed—so is my heart after throbbing and aching till nature is exhausted.”¹⁸⁸ She also exposed her spiritual experience in a letter to her soul friend and sister-in-law, Rebecca Seton. Elizabeth asked her whether she ever experienced “the awe of a solemn thought greatly heightened by viewing the Heavens in open space without an intervening object.”¹⁸⁹ She also revealed her experience of deep contemplation in her spiritual journal.

Friday the day after Ascension Yesterday I thought the hours passed in devotion, <to> my God, the most precious of any I had yet experienced – not called to any active duty more than that which every day presents <it seemed> it seemed as if conversation with God by prayer, and the quiet discharge of the necessary affairs of life produced the Sweetest peace this world afforded –¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 8.10, 24.

¹⁸⁷ John Henry Hobart, *The Clergyman's Companion* (New York: T & J Swords, 1806), vol. 2, 3; quoted in Flanagan, diss., 100.

¹⁸⁸ CW, 1, 148, sec., 1.107.

¹⁸⁹ CW, 1, sec., 1.136, 180.

¹⁹⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 8.17, 32-33. The Ascension of Jesus is described in Acts 1: 6-11. This note has no date, however, Rev. Simon Bruté wrote on the outside of the letter: “Protestant – before 1804.”

Thirdly, Hobart's emphasis on liturgical piety and especially the celebration of Eucharist energized Elizabeth's spiritual growth. As mentioned earlier, Hobart was the one who restored liturgical piety in the Protestant Episcopal Church. His emphasis on the celebration of the liturgy is revealed in Elizabeth's writings. In her spiritual notes, Elizabeth expressed her joy at the celebration of the Lord's Day in the presence of God and revealed Hobart's spiritual guidance.

This Blessed day – Sunday 23d May 1802 – my Soul was first sensibly convinced of the blessing and practicability of an entire surrender of itself and all its faculties to God – It has been the *Lord's day* indeed to me – tho' many many temptations to forget my heavenly possession in his constant presence has pressed upon me – but blessed be my precious shepherd in this last hour of *his day* I am at rest within his fold sweetly refreshed with the waters of comfort which have flowed thro the Soul of his Ministering Servant, our Blessed Teacher <and faithful Friend>¹⁹¹

Elizabeth's spiritual notes on the feast day of the liturgical year also witnessed Hobart's spiritual guidance. As mentioned earlier, Hobart's first two books, *A Companion for the Altar* and *The Companion for the Festivals and the Fasts*, reminded "the Episcopalian of the importance of the liturgical year and the saving power of the sacraments."¹⁹² Elizabeth referred to the liturgical celebration in her writings after she met Hobart. Her journal written on the feast of the Ascension Day revealed her spiritual growth in liturgical piety. In the note on meditation, she disclosed her reflection on what the feast of the Ascension Day meant to her and how it guided her everyday life.

CW, 3a: 32, n. 2. "Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >). See Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for CW, 1, xxvii.

¹⁹¹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.10, 23-24. Bechtle & Metz, the editors of *Elizabeth Seton Collected Writings*, explained that the references to a "blessed teacher" and "faithful Friend" may refer to Hobart. CW, 3a, 24, n. 2.

¹⁹² Flanagan, "ES' Spiritual / Theological World," 219.

Oh that my Soul <might> could go up with my blessed Lord – that it might be *where he is also* – thy will be done – my time is in thy hands – but O my Saviour while the pilgrimage of this life must still go on to fulfil [fulfill] thy gracious purpose let the Spirit of my mind follow thee to thy mansions of glory – to thee alone it belongs, recieve [receive] it in mercy, perfect it in truth, and preserve it unspotted from the world“Heaven cannot separate Thee from thy children, nor can earth separate them from thee” (cf. Rom. 8:35) raise <them> us up by a life of faith with thee. . . . Arrest O Merciful Father the Soul that flees thee or is in sensible to thy mercies – draw it by thy powerful Grace awaken it by thy subduing spirit, that convinced of its infirmities and bewailing its unworthiness it may throw <repose> itself on thy mercy and find pardon and Peace – through the merits of our adored Saviour.¹⁹³

Hobart’s Eucharistic theology greatly influenced Elizabeth’s spiritual growth in regard to the Eucharist. Hobart’s book, *A Companion for the Altar*, provided “daily meditations in preparation for receiving communion.”¹⁹⁴ Eucharistic piety was the center of daily life. Elizabeth mentioned for the first time the sacrament of Eucharist in her advice to Rebecca Seton revealing Hobart’s influence. In her letter dated July of 1801, she counseled Rebecca, “you never should violate a strict rule not to leave Home on any persuasion on *Sacrament* Sunday and to say openly to whoever may request it that it is *your rule*.”¹⁹⁵ During her trip to Italy, she mentioned her dream related to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. She wrote that “I was in the middle Isle of Trinity church singing with all my soul the hymns at our dear Sacrament.”¹⁹⁶ In her journal to Rebecca Seton, she recalled their desires for receiving the Eucharist.

¹⁹³ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 10, 24-25.

¹⁹⁴ Flanagan, “ES’ Spiritual / Theological World,” 219.

¹⁹⁵ CW, 1, sec., 1.135, 178. The Protestant Episcopal Church at Elizabeth’s time set aside “designated Sundays throughout the year on which Holy Communion was given.” CW, 1, 178, n.1.

¹⁹⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 251.

ah how often you and I used to give the sigh and you would press your arm in mine of a Sunday evening and say *no more till next Sunday* as we turned from the church door . . . and you know how we were laughed at for running from one church to the other *Sacrament Sundays*,¹⁹⁷ that we might receive as often as we could . . .¹⁹⁸

When Elizabeth was in the Lazaretto with her sick husband and her first daughter, she could not attend Mass and have the Eucharist. Her ardent love for the Sacrament of the Eucharist is expressed in her Leghorn Journal. She wrote of her desire to have communion in spirit:

tho' communion with those my Soul loves is not within my reach in one sense, in the other what can deprive me of it, "still in spirit we may meet" - at 5 o'clock [o'clock] here, it will be 12 there - at 5, then in some quiet corner on my Knees I may spend the time they are at the altar, and if the "cup of Salvation" (cf. Ps. 116. 13) - cannot be recieved [received] in the strange land evidently, virtually it may, with the Blessing of Christ and the "cup of Thanksgiving" supply in a degree, That, which if I could obtain would be my strongest desire - Oh my Soul what can shut us out from the love of Him who will even dwell with us through love.¹⁹⁹

Elizabeth's Eucharistic spirituality influenced her husband, William, who had constant suffering in sickbed in the Lazaretto in Italy. Elizabeth continually guided William to God and shared her faith, hope, and love of God. William was stimulated by Elizabeth's Eucharistic piety and wished to have the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In her Leghorn Journal, she described how she performed the eucharistic ritual in her own way.

well we must do all we can and putting a little wine in a glass I said different portions of Psalms and Prayers which I had marked hoping for a happy moment and we took the cup of Thanks giving setting aside the sorrow of time, in the

¹⁹⁷ CW, 1, sec., 2. 14, 297. "The Sacrament Sundays were held about six times a year in the Episcopal Church at the time. The service included Eucharistic prayer and communion as part of Sunday worship." CW, 1, 297, n. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 266.

views of the joys of eternity – oh so happy to find that those joys were more strongly painted to Him.²⁰⁰

Elizabeth's Eucharistic piety might be well known to the later writers of the Protestant Episcopal Church who lamented their Eucharistic theology and its rare practice. Bishop Charles Grafton, who was an advocate of the frequent practice of communion in the Protestant Episcopal Church and wrote his concern about it in his book in 1911, declared that "it is to be remembered that Miss [sic] Seton, a devout person, besought the rector of Trinity Church, New York, for more frequent celebrations [of the Eucharist]. She was refused, and subsequently joined the Roman communion, where she founded an order of the Sisters of charity."²⁰¹ Bishop Grafton's comments on Elizabeth's faith in the Eucharist conveyed somewhat the truth of Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism because she was strongly attracted to the sacrament of the Eucharist of the Catholic Church.

In her Journal to Rebecca Seton dated February 2, 1804, Elizabeth described her awe-inspiring experience of the Blessed Sacrament during her attendance at a Catholic Mass. She noted that "I dont [don't] know how to say the awful effect at being where they told me God was present in the blessed Sacrament." She was so astounded with the Mass and expressed that it "gave such strange impressions to my soul that I could but cover my face with my hands and let the tears run."²⁰² In the same journal but dated February 24 1804, she exposed her deep feeling toward the Eucharist:

²⁰⁰ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 273.

²⁰¹ Flanagan, "ES' Spiritual / Theological World," 220, quoting Charles C. Grafton, *The Lineage from Apostolic Time of the American Catholic Church Commonly Called the Episcopal Church* (Milwaukee, 1911), 275.

²⁰² CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 289.

My Sister dear how happy would we be if we believed what these dear Souls believe, that they *possess God* in the Sacrament [Holy Eucharist] and that he remains in their churches and is carried to them when they are sick, oh my - when they carry the B[lesse]d Sacrament under my Window while I feel the full loneliness and sadness of my case I cannot stop the tears at the thought my God how happy would I be even so far away from all so dear, if I could find you in the church as they do . . . the other day in a moment of excessive distress I fell on my knees without thinking when the Blessed Sacrament passed by and cried in an agony to God *to bless me* if he was *there*, that my whole Soul desired only him.²⁰³

Fourthly, Hobart's ecclesiology also guided Elizabeth to love God in the Church.

The Church, for Hobart, was an essential partner for "the Christian to hear and to respond to the Word of God" and he was against "a society or a pious group" which was not under the control of the Church.²⁰⁴ Flanagan summarized Hobart's doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The church. . . believed in God the Creator and Almighty, and in the Trinity. It believed in the Incarnation and in the spotless character of Christ. It believed that Christ suffered and died on the cross, and that Christ's death on the cross was a propitiation for sin. It believed in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and that he was head of the church. The church believed in the descent of the Spirit, repentance in the Holy Spirit and in the Spirit who draws all to God. The church must also evidence faith in Christ and in his merits, and proclaimed that all are called to holiness. Hobart believed that the ministry of the church was a pledge of divine mercy and favor and was a means of continued divine consolation. This ministry includes the sacramental ministry.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 292-293.

²⁰⁴ Flanagan, diss., 95.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 97. Flanagan summarized it from John Henry Hobart, *The Man of God. A Sermon at the institution of the Rev. George Upheld, M. A.* (New York: T and J Swords, 1828), 11-13. diss., n. 17.

Hobart stimulated Elizabeth's religious sensitivity and her love of the Church which was founded by Jesus Christ. Elizabeth's reflective copy of Hobart's sermon on religion given August 11, 1803, is found in her Protestant materials.

Do we wish to view religion delineated in the most lively colors, the nature and excellence of the Divine Law set forth in the most impressive and endearing manner – do we wish daily to estimate the awful severity of God's judgments, and the infinite consolations of his Mercies . . . do we wish to be directed and aided in all the exercises and duties of the spiritual life – do we want language to express the enormity of our sins, the depth of our contrition, and our need of the divine mercy and grace – do we wish to have our Faith established, our hope invigorated, and our love exalted . . . do we wish to anticipate on Earth the joys of Heaven – to be exalted to the celestial courts, and celebrate in strains worthy the harps of Angels, the praises of God Most High – We must have recourse to the Divine Compositions of the Psalmist of Israel – These divine Hymns should be the constant companions of the Pious, the subject of their daily meditations, their animating guide and assistant in all the exercises and duties of a Holy Life, – *Their companion to Heaven*. J H H.²⁰⁶

Hobart's view on religion is also revealed in Elizabeth's notebook on "Psalm 23 and Hobart's Sermon." In this reflective notebook, she wrote, "the comforts of Religion are a resource against despondency and affliction is the animating truth contained in my text."²⁰⁷ She expressed her understanding of religion in her dialogue with the officer of the quarantine of Leghorn. She emphasized that the first command of religion should be "love the Lord your God with all your Soul."²⁰⁸ When she encountered Catholicism while staying with the Filicchi family in Italy, she wrote to Rebecca Seton that "these dear people are so strange about Religion." She reported her conversation with Mr. Filicchi:

²⁰⁶ CW, 3a, 28-29, sec., 8.14. Elizabeth's reflection, written on 26 Sept. 26 1803, is possibly from her notes on Hobart's sermon on Religion given Aug. 11, 1803 and she put Hobart's initials at the bottom of this note. CW, 3a, 28, n. 1.

²⁰⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 25, 166.

²⁰⁸ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 260.

I asked Mr. F[ilicchi] something I dont know what about the different religions and he began to tell me there was only one true Religion and without a right Faith we would not be acceptable to God – O my Sir then said I if there is but one Faith and nobody pleases God without it, where are all the good people who die out of it – I dont know he answered, that depends on what light of Faith they had re[ceive]d, but I know where people will go who can know the right Faith if they pray for it and enquire for it, and yet do neither, much as to say Sir you want me to pray and enquire and be of your Faith said I laughing – pray, and enquire, said he, that is all I ask you.²⁰⁹

In his ecclesiology, Hobart asserts that the Protestant Episcopal Church is “the true church of Christ,” because this Church has the core elements of the church that is the visible, institutional, apostolic church, founded on Christ.²¹⁰ He emphasized “the universal call to salvation.”²¹¹ His ecclesiology contributed to Elizabeth’s search for the true Church of Christ. Hobart’s high church theology, which had some element of Catholicism, also helped Elizabeth later to find a home in the Catholic Church.

5. Summary

Elizabeth developed her spiritual life rooted in the Scriptures and deep prayer during her first stage of life. In the second stage of her life, she witnessed her tremendous spiritual growth, especially her deep affection toward the Eucharist and liturgical piety in her writings. According to Flanagan, Elizabeth’s natural piety was “channeled and developed” by encountering Hobart.²¹² Sharing friendship with Hobart, “Elizabeth resonated with Hobart” because he was one “who fanned the fires of divine love in her

²⁰⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.11, 290.

²¹⁰ Flanagan, diss., 229.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 158. Cf. Judith Metz, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton of New York: A Woman’s Life in the Early Republic.” Ph. D. diss., The Union Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2000, 197-198.

soul and one who seemed to desire the same kind of all embracing love for God which she desired.”²¹³ The pattern of worship in Elizabeth’s writings in the first stage of her life revealed the typical service of the Low Church that is “singing of hymns, praying psalms, reading from Scripture, and a lengthy sermon.”²¹⁴ Her writings after encountering Hobart disclosed her love of Eucharist and liturgical celebration as well as her scriptural piety.

Elizabeth’s spiritual life became richer by reading *the Commentary of the Psalms* and *the Contemplation of the Sacred History*. Hobart gave the theological foundation to Elizabeth’s spiritual growth. In the light of Hobart’s theological knowledge, she developed her spiritual life rooted in the Scripture, Eucharist, and love for the church. Elizabeth’s prayer life was nurtured by meditation, spiritual reading, Hobart’s sermons, and the celebration of the liturgical year. Hobart’s doctrine of the church and theology of Eucharist as well as his emphasis of the Word of God and the liturgical piety not only deeply contributed to Elizabeth’s spiritual growth, but also ironically offered a theological basis for her conversion to Catholicism. By painful discernment, Elizabeth would search for the true church in which she could unite with God in the Eucharist and in the vision of eternity. As she sailed back to America facing an uncertain future, she expressed her unflinching trust in God:

My hope, O Father of mercies, is in thee, for I know thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but would rather he should be converted and live, and while I receive from thy hand the stroke of death, I will bless thee and hope in thee. Oh, that I may bless and love thee eternally, and be accepted through the merits of Jesus Christ.²¹⁵

²¹³ Ibid., 158-159.

²¹⁴ Flanagan, “ES’ Spiritual / Theological World,” 218-219.

²¹⁵ CW, 1, sec., 2. 14, 302.

CHAPTER THREE
ELIZABETH SETON’S SPIRITUAL GROWTH
IN THE VIRTUOUS LIFE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE FILICCHI BROTHERS

Elizabeth Seton was in some way prepared to develop her spiritual life in Catholicism because of the spiritual guidance of Rev. John Henry Hobart of the Protestant Episcopal Church. As referred to in chapter 2, Hobart guided her, it seems, to grow in scriptural, Eucharistic, and liturgical piety as well as to believe that the true church was the Episcopal Church. Her faith experience in the Episcopal church would guide her to devote herself to unite with God in the Eucharist and the liturgy and to search for the true Church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and his apostles. God’s providence seemed to guide Elizabeth to come to Italy and receive spiritual formation from the Filicchi brothers, who were pious Catholics. The Filicchi brothers would plant the seed of Catholic faith in Elizabeth’s heart which would bear fruit in the development of her spiritual growth. In the depth of her spiritual growth, she would respond to God’s call to found a new religious community, the Sisters of Charity, in the United States.

**1. Elizabeth Seton’s Spiritual Growth
under the Guidance of the Filicchi Brothers**

Catholicism was introduced for the first time to Elizabeth by the Filicchi brothers¹ when she went to Leghorn (Livorno), Italy, with her husband and their oldest daughter,

¹ “There were two Filicchi brothers, Filippo and Antonio, and their families with whom Elizabeth was associated. Filippo Filicchi (1763-1816) spent the years 1785-1786 in the United States. It is fairly certain he was also in the United States in 1788. When he returned to Italy later that year, he was accompanied by young William Magee Seton,” Elizabeth’s husband. “It was during this visit that Seton became friendly with the younger brother, Antonio Filicchi, who was studying

Anna Maria. William Seton had visited “the important counting houses in Europe” as a part of learning the business in 1788 where he met Filippo Filicchi at “the Filicchi firm in Leghorn” and his younger brother, Antonio Filicchi, and developed a close friendship with them.² Because of these friendships, William Magee Seton could go to Leghorn, Italy, with his wife Elizabeth and daughter hoping to recover from his illness.

The Filicchi family took care of the Setons from the time of their arrival at the port of Leghorn until their return voyage to the United States. They continued to help them until Elizabeth’s death. When the Setons were detained at the quarantine of Lazaretto for a month, the Filicchi family assisted them in every possible way. When the Setons were released from the quarantine on December 19, 1803, the Filicchi brothers arranged lodging for them at Pisa, which was located “on the borders of the Arno” and “a few miles away from Leghorn.”³

Elizabeth expressed her deep appreciation for the Filicchi family in her letter to Rebecca Seton, her beloved sister-in-law: “the Filicchis do all they can to ease my situation and seem indeed that they cannot do enough - indeed from the day we left home

law in Rome. In 1789 Filippo went again to the United States, and it was probably at this time that he married Mary Cowper of Boston. Late in 1789 the Filicchi House of Commerce was publically established in Leghorn.” William Seton “again visited Leghorn” in 1791. “He had every reason to regard both Filicchi brothers as good friends. In 1794 Filippo Filicchi was honored by President George Washington with an appointment as United States Consul for the port of Leghorn.” *CW*, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 2.7, 253, n. 5. Antonio Filicchi was referred to in Ch. 2, n. 28.

² *CW*, 1, sec., 1.1, 2, n. 2.

³ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.7, 269. Elizabeth Seton with her husband and first daughter arrived at the port of Leghorn in Italy on November 19, 1803 and were detained at the quarantine of Lazaretto because the “ship was the first to bring the news of yellow fever in New York.” *CW*, 1, sec., 2.6, 249. They were released from the quarantine on December 19, 1803 and moved to a place at Pisa which Filicchi managed. *CW*, 1, sec., 2.7, 272.

we have met with nothing but kindness even in the servants and strangers.”⁴ Anna Maria says, “O Mamma how many friends God has provided for us in this Strange land, for they are our friends before they know us.”⁵ In her journal to Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth expressed her impression of them: “oh my [-] the patience and more than human kindness of these dear Filicchys for us - you would say it was our Saviour himself they recieved [received] in his poor and sick strangers.”⁶ Elizabeth felt that the Filicchis cared for her and Anna Maria as they would have cared for Christ himself.

After Elizabeth’s husband William died on December 27 of 1803,⁷ the Filicchi brothers showed great concern for Elizabeth and Anna Maria. Antonio’s letter to Elizabeth dated January 9, 1804, revealed how he tried to make a home for Elizabeth and also directed Elizabeth to discern the true religion in the light of eternal blessings:

my beloved Sister, . . . Your dear Wm. was the early friend of my Youth: You are now come in his room. - Your Soul is even dearer to Antonio, and will be so for ever. May the good almighty God enlighten your mind, and strengthen your heart to see and follow in Religion the surest true way to the eternal blessings! I shall call for you; I must meet you in Paradise, if it is decreed that the vast plains of the Ocean shall soon be betwixt us. Don’t discontinue meanwhile to pray, to knock at

⁴ CW, 1, sec., 2.8, 278.

⁵ CW, 1, sec., 2.9, 281.

⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2.14, 296. Elizabeth’s Journal to Rebecca Seton, see chap. 2, n. 101. Elizabeth often spelled Filicchi’s name differently. As referred to in chapter 2, according to the editorial note, “Conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation were not standardized in Elizabeth’s time. For example, she often used *ie* where *ei* is usual, and she did not consistently indent paragraphs.” Quotations “follow her punctuation, capitalization, spellings, and misspellings in English and other languages as closely as possible except where such retention would result in confusion.” Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for CW, 1, xxvii.

⁷ William Magee Seton, Elizabeth Seton’s husband, died of “tuberculosis December 27, 1803 at Pisa, Italy, and is buried in the cemetery of St. John’s Anglican Church at Leghorn, Italy.” CW, 1, 2, sec., 1.1, n. 2.

the door. I am confident that our Redeemer will not be deaf to the humble prayers of so dear a Creature.⁸

Antonio's first spiritual direction of Elizabeth was to guide her to encounter God in the Catholic Church. Like Jesus invited the two disciples of John the Baptist saying, "Come, and you will see" (cf. John 1: 39), Antonio's wife, Amabilia Baragazzi Filicchi, invited Elizabeth to *come* to the Catholic Church and *see* the presence of God there. Amabilia took Elizabeth and Anna Maria to Florence for sightseeing where they visited famous Catholic churches. Elizabeth was so deeply impressed by their beauty and historical value that she wrote her impressions in her "Florence Journal" written for Rebecca Seton who was also her soul friend.

When they visited the chapel, "La SS. Annunziata," the Most Holy Annunciation, Elizabeth knelt down and "shed a torrent of tears at the recollection of how long" she had been "a stranger in the house of [her] God." She was so touched not only by the beauty of the churches but also by the piety of "all sorts of people kneeling" around the altar who were "so intent on their prayers and Rosary that it [was] very immaterial what a stranger" did.⁹

Elizabeth could feel God's presence in the Church and also in the hearts of the faithful. She felt at home in the Catholic Church. When she visited the Church of San

⁸ Archives of Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD., St. Joseph's Provincial House (hereafter cited as ASJPH), 1-3-3-10: 1. Melville quoted some part of this letter, Annabelle M. Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton* (hereafter cited as *EBS*) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 77.

⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.10, 283-4. The Florence Journal was mentioned in Ch. 2, n.101. Elizabeth lodged in "the famous Palace of Medicis" and had four days for sightseeing. The Church of "La Santissima Annunziata (The Most Holy Annunciation) in Florence contains frescoes by Andrea del Sarto and sculpture by John of Bologna." *CW*, 1, 283, n. 5.

Lorenzo [St. Lawrence], she was so overwhelmed by its magnificent beauty that she expressed her feeling of awe in her Florence Journal:

as I approached the great Altar formed of all the most precious stones[,]marbles etc. that could be produced “My soul does magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour”(cf. Luke 1: 46-47) came in my mind with a fervor which absorbed every other feeling – it recalled the ideas of the offerings of David and Solomon to the Lord when the rich and valuable production of nature and art were devoted to his holy Temple, and sanctified to his service (cf. 1 Chron. 29).¹⁰

Visiting the Church of Santa Maria Novella, a life size picture of the descent from the Cross captured Elizabeth’s whole soul. She could identify the agony of Mary at the foot of the Cross with her own suffering. Through this experience she began to develop her piety and love for the Blessed Mother. In her Florence Journal, she wrote her impression:

A Picture of the descent from the Cross nearly as large as life engaged - *my whole soul*. Mary at the foot of it expressed well that the iron had entered into her - and the shades of death over her agonized countenance [countenance] so strongly contrasted the heavenly Peace of the dear Redeemer[’]s that it seems as if his pains had fallen on her - How hard it was to leave that picture and how often even in the few hours interval since I have seen it, I shut my eyes and recall it in imagination.¹¹

Attending Mass with Amabilia at the Catholic Church was another part of Elizabeth’s formation in the Catholic faith. The whole atmosphere of the Catholics’ sincere prayer and adoration of Christ in the Eucharist which she saw in the churches she visited enkindled her piety. Even though Elizabeth’s Eucharistic piety was based on the

¹⁰ CW, 1, sec., 2. 10, 285-286.

¹¹ CW, 1, sec., 2.10, 287. Elizabeth wrote vivid impressions of her sightseeing in her “Florence Journal to Rebecca Seton.” She gave the original of this journal to Antonio, but he copied it and returned the original to Elizabeth. CW, 1, 283, n.1. The Church of Santa Maria Novella is “a Dominican church dating to 1360 with famous frescoes.” CW, 1, 287, n. 19.

theology of the Episcopal Church, she had a hunger to receive the Eucharist because she believed that she could unite with God in the Eucharist. In her journal, “Dear Remembrances,” she expressed her anguish of heart:

the anguish of heart when the Blessed Sacrament would be passing the street at the thought was I the only one *he* did not bless? in particular the day he passed my window when prostrate on the floor I looked up to the blessed Virgin appealing to her that as the Mother of God she *must* pity me, and obtain from him that blessed Faith of these happy Souls around me . . . how earnestly I said it, how many thoughts on the happiness of those who possessed this the blessed Faith of Jesus still on earth with them, and how I should enjoy to encounter every misery of life with the heavenly consolation of speaking heart to heart with him in his Tabernacles, and the security of finding him in his churches – the reverence and love to Mrs. Amabilia Filicchi when she came home from COMMUNION.¹²

Elizabeth envied the Catholics who could go to Mass every day and receive communion if they were so prepared. Eucharistic and liturgical piety was an important factor in her spiritual formation by Rev. Hobart in the Episcopal Church. But she experienced a more profound meaning of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. When Amabilia took her to Mass at the Church on the feast day of the purification of Mary, she was deeply occupied by feelings of awe because she was told that “God was present in the blessed Sacrament”¹³ which was different from the episcopal theology.

Visiting the Church of Montenero at Leghorn, she was so indignant at a young Englishman who loudly said that “this is what they call their real *PRESENCE*,” at the “Very moment the Priest was doing the most sacred action they call the elevation” during Mass. She felt that her heart “trembled with shame and sorrow for this unfeeling interruption of their sacred adoration for all around was dead Silence and many were

¹² *CW*, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 10. 4, 516. Similar content is also seen in Elizabeth’s letter to Rebecca Seton. *CW*, 1, sec., 2. 11, 292-293.

¹³ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.11, 289.

prostrated.”¹⁴ She also expressed her doubt concerning the Catholic theology of the Eucharist:

[I] thought secretly on the word of St. Paul with starting tears ‘they discern not the Lords body’ (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 17-34) and the next thought was how should they eat and drink their very damnation for not *discerning* it, if indeed it is not *there* - yet how should it be *there*, and how did he breathe my Soul in me, and how and how a hundred other things I know nothing about. . . . I am a *Mother* so the Mothers thought came also how was my GOD a little babe in the first stage of his mortal existance *in Mary*, but I lost these thoughts in my babes at home, which I daily long for more and more, but they wait a fair wind.¹⁵

While Elizabeth was so attracted to Catholicism, she still had no definite thought of conversion. In a letter to Rebecca, she wrote that she was “laughing with God” when she tried to be serious and pray daily the words of Alexander Pope which the Filicchis taught her: “*if I am right O teach my heart still in the right to stay, if I am wrong thy*

¹⁴ CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 290-291. The Church in Montenero was “built by a branch of the Benedictines, the Congregation of Vallombroso. The chapel at Montenero was thought to be the scene of many miraculous cures. No Italian ship sailed past the chapel without saluting the painting of the Virgin Mary housed there.” CW, 1, 290, n. 7. Melville noted that “Forsyth’s handbook for tourists visiting Leghorn in the nineteenth century carried a description of a famous church which had been erected ‘by the piety of sailors to an old picture of the Virgin which had flown from India through the air and perched on top of this hill for their especial protection’” (Robert Seton, *Diary for 1919*, New York Historical Society, 77; quoted in Melville, *EBS*, 74. Cf. Robert Rev. Seton, D.D., ed., *Memoir, Letters and Journal, Elizabeth Seton, Convert to The Catholic Faith, and Sisters of Charity* (hereafter cited as *Memoir*) (New York: O’Shea, 1870), 1, 143, n. 1; Melville, *EBS*, 322, n. 48.

¹⁵ CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 291. In her *Journal*, “Dear Remembrances,” Elizabeth also recalled this same experience: “my first entrance in the church of the B[lessed] V[irgin] M[ary] of Montenaro at Leghorn at the elevation a young Englishman near me, forgetting decency, whispered ‘this is their REAL PRESENCE’ the shame I felt at his whisper and the quick thought, *if our Lord is not there why did the Apostle threaten – how can he blame for not discerning the Lord[’s] Body if it is not there – how should they for whom he has died eat and drink their damnation (as says the protestant text) if the blessed Sacram[en]t is but a piece of bread.*” CW, 3a: 516, sec., 10.4.

grace impart to find the better way.” Then she continued that it did not mean there was “a better way” than she knew, but everyone might “be respected in their own” religion.¹⁶

Because of Anna Maria’s sudden illness Elizabeth had to postpone their voyage to America until April of 1804. Thus, Elizabeth had greater opportunity for experiences of Catholicism in Italy. According to their belief that the Catholic Church was the true Church, the Filicchi brothers greatly encouraged Elizabeth to convert to Catholicism. Antonio Filicchi instructed her how to make the sign of the Cross which is the symbol of God’s tremendous love for humanity. In her Journal, “Dear Remembrances,” Elizabeth wrote that Antonio taught her “the sign of the cross” and with “what spirit to use it.” Amabilia also explained “why she used it [the sign of the cross] in the petition,” with the prayer, “lead us not into temptation.” Elizabeth was so impressed with the deep meaning of making the sign of Cross and wrote that learning to make the sign of the cross was like discovering “new and delightful secrets to me.”¹⁷ In her Journal, she described her deep impression on making the sign of cross in relation to the Book of the Revelation:

this Evening standing by the window the moon shining full on Filicchys [Filicchis] countenance he raised his eyes to heaven and showed me how to make the Sign of the CROSS – dearest Rebecca I was cold with the awful impression my first making it gave me. the Sign of the CROSS of Christ on me – deepest thoughts came with it of I know not what earnest desires to be closely united with him who died on it – of that last day when he is to bear it in triumph, and did you notice my dear one the letter T with which the Angel is to mark us on the forehead (cf. Rev. 7: 3) *is a cross*. – All the Catholic Religion is full of those meanings which interest me so.¹⁸

¹⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 290. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was “English essayist and poet.” CW, 1, 290, n. 6.

¹⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10.4, 516-517.

¹⁸ CW, 1, sec., 2. 14, 296.

Antonio and his family gave spiritual direction through the example of their lives. During the season of the Lent, the Filicchi family fasted until three o'clock in the afternoon everyday and Amabilia explained that she offered her "weakness and pain of fasting for sins" in order to unite with the Savior's suffering. Elizabeth was so moved by their sincere practice of Lenten fasting because it was very different from the practice of her own Church in New York. It was her recollection that Rev. Hobart said that fasting was just an old custom when she asked him "what was meant by fasting" while she read the phrase, "I turn to you in fasting weeping and mourning," from the prayer book of the Protestant Episcopal Church on Ash Wednesday morning. Watching the Filicchi family's practice of the Lenten fasting, she felt shame because she remembered that she went to the church on Ash Wednesday with "a hearty breakfast of Buckwheat cakes and coffee, and full of life and spirits with little thought of [her] sins." Thus, in her journal to Rebecca Seton, she wrote that she did not know how anybody could have "any trouble in this world who believes all these dear Souls believe" and continued that if she did not believe it, "it shall not be for want of praying."¹⁹

The Filicchi family practiced their faith through extreme care and concern for Elizabeth and her daughter. The Filicchi family's practice of God's love was tremendous. When Elizabeth planned to go back home to America on the ship *Pyamingo*, the Filicchi family was concerned about their safety during their voyage because the captain of this ship was so young and not known, and also many dangerous things due to war could happen. Thus, they arranged that Antonio Filicchi would accompany Elizabeth and her

¹⁹ CW, 1, sec., 2.14, 296-297.

daughter on their voyage to New York. Elizabeth expressed her joy and admiration for the Filicchi family's care in her journal to Rebecca Seton:

Oh joy joy joy a Captain B[lagge] will take us to America - and only think of Mr. Fi[ilicchi]'s goodness as this Captain is a very young man and a stranger, and many things of war or danger might happen on the Voyage Mr. F[ilicchi] will make it with us - Ann is wild with joy - yet often she whispers me "Ma is there no Catholicks [Catholics] in America, Ma wont we go to the Catholic church when we go home" -Sweet darling she is now out Visiting some of the blessed places with Mrs. F[ilicchi] children and their governess - would you believe whenever we go to walk we go first in some church or convent chapel as we pass which we always forsee by a large CROSS before it and say some little prayers before we go further - Men do it as well as women you know with us a man would be ashamed to be seen kneeling especially of a week day - O my but I shall be with you again.²⁰

The Filicchi brothers also supported Elizabeth's spiritual formation by giving her Catholic spiritual books which would guide her to a virtuous life because they recognized Elizabeth's fondness for reading spiritual books and her fluency in the French language. On the feast day of St. Francis de Sales, Filippo gave St. Francis de Sales' book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, to Elizabeth and said: "I will give you his devout life to amuse you." Reading this book, she was so attracted to Francis de Sales' spiritual instructions and wrote: "amuse it truly did – how many times I was on my knees from strong impression of its powerful persuasion begging our God to make me so and so, as he said."²¹

²⁰CW, 1, sec. 2.14, 297.

²¹CW, 1, sec., 2. 11, 289. Filippo Filicchi gave Elizabeth *Introduction á la vie devote, de Saint Francois de Sales*, Rouen, 1802. This book is in Archives of Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD., St. Joseph Provincial House, Rare Book, # 11. First French ed., 1609, nouvelle ed., Lyon: le Frères Bruyset, 1746. Elizabeth knew French and received strength from this book during her conversion struggle. CW, vol. 3b: *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, app., B-2, 612. "Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was bishop of Geneva, Switzerland, and author of many spiritual works, including *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609) and *Treatise on the Love of God*

In “Dear Remembrances,” she wrote that she was so “delighted in reading and kneeling at every page” of “the chapter on widows” in de Sales’ book and of “a book called *Unerring Authority of C[atholic] C[hurch]*” which was written by Rev. Richard Challoner and given to her by Filippo.”²² She was fascinated with the spiritual guidance of Francis de Sales in his writings and often referred to de Sales’ spiritual direction in her writings. St. Francis de Sales gave Elizabeth great spiritual direction to aid her in the living of a virtuous life. After her conversion to Catholicism, Elizabeth expressed how St. Francis de Sales had impacted her everyday life in her letter dated November 2, 1807 to Filippo Filicchi who had guided her to follow the spiritual direction of de Sales:

You will congratulate me for being quite in earnest in seeking “the Pearl (cf. Mt 13: 46). it is best to be obliged to conquer the principle most apt to blind me in my pursuit, and my daily object is to keep close to your first advise (with St. Francis) [de Sales] to take every event gently and quietly, and oppose good nature and cheerfulness to every contradiction, which succeeds so well that now it is an acknowledged opinion that Mrs. William Seton is in a very happy situation. . . . Mrs. William Seton is obliged to watch every moment to keep up the reality of this appearance, You know Filicchi what it costs to be always humble and satisfied, tho really when this disposition is familiarized it is the true treasure.”²³

(1616). He co-founded the Order of the Visitation (1610) along with St. Jane Frances de Chantal. De Sales was a friend of St. Vincent de Paul and greatly influenced his spiritual development. Elizabeth also often refers to his writings and his influence on her spirituality.” *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.26, 189, n. 40.

²² *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 517. “The ‘Chapter on Widows’ is in the third Part, Chap. 40,” in Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609). The book, “The *Unerring Authority of the Catholic Church*, is by Richard Challoner.” *CW*, 3a, 517, n. 28. Richard Challoner (1691-1781), *The Unerring Authority of the Catholic Church*, First pub. 1732, Philadelphia: T. Lloyd, 1789. *CW*, 3b, app., B-2, 611. As mentioned in the chapter 1 of this dissertation, Richard Challoner was a guiding figure in promoting the spirituality of *the Garden of the Soul* in the early 19th century Catholic Church of America.

²³ *CW*, 1, sec., 4. 56, 480.

Her writings revealed that Francis de Sales' instructions continually guided her spiritual development throughout her life and also the spiritual direction of her community. In her reflective writing on "the Living in the Presence of God" in her "Pyamingo Reflections," she emphasized that "a constant sense of [God's] presence" everywhere is the most important practice of "all the exercises" in a Christian Life and wrote: "Our obligation for this presence is founded on two principles of Faith – God is every where, and sees every thing. . . . The Majesty of his presence consecrates every part of the universe, and wherever I am, I may say with Jacob 'This place is Holy' (cf. Gen. 28: 16)."²⁴ She even used the language, the word *abjection*, which echoed Salesian spirituality, in the section on "Holy Indifference" in the same *Reflections*.²⁵

Filippo gave Elizabeth another book, Alban Butler's *Lives of the Primitive Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints* and guided her to grow in faith, hope, and love of God in the Catholic Church.²⁶ She read it on board the ship to America in 1804 and listed it as one of her spiritual reading books. This book nurtured Elizabeth's knowledge of lives of the Fathers and saints and her growth toward the sanctified life.

²⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 189. Elizabeth's reflection on "Living in the Presence of God" echoed Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Book 2, chap. 2, "A Short Method of Meditation, and First of the Presence of God, which is the First Point of the Preparation." CW, 3a, 189, n. 40. Elizabeth's spiritual instruction, "Exercise of the *Presence of God*," revealed similar content to this one. CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392.

²⁵ In the section on "Holy Indifference," Elizabeth used "the word *abjection*" related to the practice of humility and this word is "peculiar to Salesian thought and spirituality. Cf. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 3, chap. 6, 'humility is true knowledge and voluntary acknowledgement of our abjection'." CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 193, n. 53.

²⁶ CW, 3b, app., B-2, 611. Cf. Alban Butler (1710-1773), *Lives of the Primitive Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*, First published 1756-1759.

The writings of St. Bernard Clairvaux also played an important role for Elizabeth's spiritual growth. In her letter to Rebecca Seton dated on February 24, 1804, she expressed how she was so touched by a little prayer of St Bernard to the Blessed Virgin when she read it in the little prayer book which Amabilia had given to Anna Maria:

I opened a little prayer (the Memorare) of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin begging her to be *our Mother*, and I said it to her with such a certainty that God would surely refuse nothing *to his Mother*, and that she could not help loving and pitying the poor Souls he died for, that I felt really I had a Mother which you know my foolish heart so often lamented to have lost in early days, - from the first remembrance of infancy I have looked in all the plays of childhood and wildness of youth to the clouds for my Mother, and at that moment it seemed as if I had found more than her, even in tenderness and pity of a Mother - so I cried myself to sleep in her heart.²⁷

St. Bernard Clairvaux inspired Elizabeth's love for the Mother of Jesus. Her piety for Mary, as mentioned earlier, was aroused when she saw the painting in the Church of Santa Maria Novella of the descent from the Cross in which Mary was at foot of the Cross. She was also nurtured in her devotion to Mary by the Filicchi family's example and by her own spiritual readings. She revealed her piety for the Mother of Jesus in many places in her writings and wrote a reflection on "Mary our Mother."²⁸ She understood deeply the suffering of the Mother of Jesus through her own painful experiences of the loss of her loved ones and wrote her meditation on "Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin" and

²⁷ CW, 1, sec., 2.11, 293. "St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was a French Cistercian abbot, spiritual writer, and Doctor of the Church. He founded the monastery at Clairvaux and was known for his preaching and teaching. Much of his work was put into writing." CW, 3a, 209, n. 92. Elizabeth referred to St. Bernard Clairvaux and his guidance in her later writings: CW, 1, 293; 3a, 209, 314, 407, 516, 562; 3b, 258. Elizabeth lost her mother when she was three years old.

²⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 462-463.

on “Mary at the Sepulchre [Sepulcher] and Returning from the Way of Calvary.”²⁹ St. Bernard contributed to her spiritual growth in devotion to the Mother of Jesus and also to the awareness of the presence of God at her life. In her later writings, she often mentioned the teachings of Bernard Clairvaux. In her spiritual writing, “Exercise of the *Presence of God*,” she wrote a reflection based on St. Bernard’s sayings:

“Oh” says St. Bernard “how high is the excellence of a Christian Soul – since God is its *friend* [.]” the sun withdraws its light says Solomon, but our God does not withdraw, he watches our chamber in its darkness . . . he catches our first morning thought of love and gratitude, and inspires the pious movements of our heart when we retire to rest. Our God fails not in this watchful love, but how little mindful are we of it – his eyes are on us when we awake but are ours turned towards him; he wants to be the depositor of our first thoughts and intentions of the day – does our heart reach towards him.³⁰

The more the Filicchi brothers got to know Elizabeth’s spiritual depth, the more they tried to convert her to Catholicism. Charles I. White, the first biographer of Elizabeth Seton, noted that the Filicchi family “possessed the ability to guide her in the investigation of religious truth, and to remove much of the difficulty that was thrown in the way of her conversion.”³¹ Filippo was very concerned about the salvation of the souls of Elizabeth and her children and encouraged Antonio to steadily guide her to convert to

²⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 207-208.

³⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 407.

³¹ Charles I. White, D.D., *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton, Foundress and First Superior of the Sisters or Daughters of Charity in the United States of America* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy, 1868), 100. The first edition of this book was published in 1853, “thirty two years after” Elizabeth’s death. Rev. Charles I. White wrote “the first full-scale biography of Elizabeth Seton.” White’s work was “translated and adapted by Madame Hélène Bailly de Barberey and published in French as *Elizabeth Seton et Les Commencements de L’Eglise Catholique aux Etats-Unis* (Paris, 1868). After six French editions Joseph B. Code, C.M., translated de Barberey’s work back into English as *Elizabeth Seton by Madame de Barberey Translated and Adapted from the Sixth French Edition*, adding newly discovered material.” Bechtle and Metz, introduction to CW, 1, xvii.

Catholicism while he was attending to the family business in the United States. The Filicchi brothers thought that Elizabeth's coming to Italy itself was God's providence for the salvation of Elizabeth and her children and considered that their duty was to help Elizabeth to convert to Catholicism.

In order to direct Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism, Filippo gave Elizabeth Bossuet's *History of the Variation of Protestant Churches*³² and his manuscript, "Exposition of the Catholic Faith,"³³ whose contents were based on "the profession of the faith issued by Pope Pius IV in 1564" and Bossuet's work, *An Exposition of the Doctrine*

³² CW, 3b, app., B-2, 609. Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704), *History of the Variation of Protestant Churches*, first French ed., 1688.

³³ CW, 3a, app., A-8.27, 585-616. This manuscript is called "Filippo Filicchi's Exposition of the Catholic faith for Elizabeth Seton: Brief Exposition of the Catholic Faith" and is based on "the profession of the faith issued by Pope Pius IV in 1564." CW, 3a, 585, n.1. According to Robert Seton, by the request of Filippo Filicchi, Rev. Joseph Pecci, who was a friend of the Filicchi family and later became "provost of the cathedral and bishop of his native place," Gubbio, prepared this manuscript and Filippo translated it into English, Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 150-151. Melville agreed with Robert Seton's statement of ownership of this manuscript and supported his theory based on Antonio's letter to Rev. Pecci dated October 23, 1821. In this letter, Antonio informed Pecci of Elizabeth's death. Melville, *EBS*, 85, n. 15. However, "internal evidence indicates it was written by Filippo Filicchi." CW, 3a, app., A-8.27, 585. Recently the Archivist of St. Joseph's Provincial House in Emmitsburg, Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C. is working with the references of Melville's book, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, in order to update her references based on the present record groups of the Archives because Melville's references were different from the present record of the Archives. Regarding Filippo's Manuscript, McNeil offers other references which imply that Filippo Filicchi himself wrote this manuscript. According to McNeil, Bishop John Carroll's note to Antonio Filicchi dated September 9, 1804, revealed the ownership of Filippo's manuscript: "I now return you the valuable manuscript of your highly respected brother, and entertain an humble reliance that so much zeal united with so much knowledge, will finally produce its desired effect." White, 521. McNeil offered another source: in his letter to Charles White dated October 20, 1846, Antonio "states that Philip Filicchi provided a manuscript for Elizabeth which argued the claims of the Roman Catholic Church." Archives of The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph (hereafter cited as AMSJ, A 111 094. McNeil claimed that "Apparently Annabelle Melville did not see the Filicchi letter to Charles White." Unpublished additional note to Melville, *EBS*, n. 15, by Betty Ann McNeil. However, McNeil's new edition was published in 2009. See, Annabelle M. Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, 1774-1821*, ed., Betty Ann McNeil, D.C. (Hanover, PA: The Sheridan Press, 2009), 132-133, chap. 5, n. 14.

of the Catholic Church in Matters of Controversy. On her voyage to America, Elizabeth read Filippo's manuscript, "Exposition of the Catholic Faith" and reread it during discernment for her conversion. The Filicchi brothers gave her many spiritual books which would give her the knowledge of the Catholic faith and guide her to make the right discernment of the will of God for her salvation.³⁴

Under the spiritual direction of the Filicchi brothers, Elizabeth was intellectually well prepared for conversion to Catholicism and perhaps her heart was, too. On the day of her departure from Leghorn on April 8, 1804, she went to Mass and although she was not a Catholic, she entered the confessional where the priest was waiting to hear confessions. She did not explain why she was there, but she described the moment in the confession room in her "Dear Remembrances":

Ph[ilip] Filicchis last words "I meet you the day of Judgment" – so firm a heart that I would try to do the Will of God. *last* Mass in Leghorn at 4 in morning lost in the indiscribable [indescribable] reverence and impressions k[n]eeling in a little confessional, percieved [perceived] not the *ear* was waiting for me 'till the friar came out to ask Mrs. F "why I did not begin" – sun rise on her little balcony as I bade her a last Adieu – the last embrace of my little angel Georgino [Giorgio] and the beloved children of Antonio – our Lord and our God.³⁵

Leaving the port of Leghorn, she recalled all the events in Italy and tried to discern God's will for her. Remembering Filippo Filicchi's last blessings with "that of the truest friend" and his endeavor for Elizabeth's conversion as well as for her virtuous life, she felt a heart full of appreciation toward him and prayed: "May God bless you forever,

³⁴ Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704), *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church in Matters of Controversy*, first French ed. 1671. *CW*, 3b, app., B-2, 609. The names of the books given by Filicchi brothers to Elizabeth are in *CW*, 3a, app., A-8.27, 588, n. 7; 3a, app., A-8.27, 595, n. 14; 3b, app. B-2, 611, 626, 637, 638. See also the lists of books in *CW*, 3b, app., B-2, 609-615.

³⁵ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10.4, 517. Elizabeth sometime spelled Filippo as Philip and Filicchi as Filicchis.

and may you shine as the ‘stars in glory (cf. Sir 43: 9),’ for what you have done for me.”³⁶ In her Journal to Rebecca Seton, she expressed her reminiscences of her Italy trip:

My Father and my God - and yet I must always love to retrospect the wonderful dispensations - to be sent so many thousand miles on so hopeless an errand - to be constantly supported and accompanied by thy consoling mercy, through scenes of trial which nature alone must have sunk under - to be brought to the light of the truth, notwithstanding every affection of my heart and power of my will was opposed to it - to be succored and cherished by the tenderest friendship, while separated and far from those that I loved - my Father and my God, while I live let me praise – while I have my being let me serve and adore thee.³⁷

Sailing back to America from Italy, Elizabeth’s only hope in the midst of agony was God. She lost her husband and buried him in Leghorn, Italy. She was left alone with five children and no financial security. Her new experience with Catholicism challenged her to find the true church. While she was so much attracted to Catholicism and to her new Catholic friends, the Filicchi family, she was not sure whether the Catholic Church was the true church because of her formation under the Reverend John Henry Hobart in the Protestant Episcopal Church. In faith she knew God would take care of her as well as her children in this new stage of her life and would guide her to the true church. She tried to put her uncertain future into God’s hands. In her journal written on board ship, the *Pyamingo*, on April 23, 1804, she metaphorically expressed her trust in God even in the anxiety for future when the ship passed opposite the Pyrenees mountains.

The gentlest motion of the waves, which were as a sheet of glass reflecting the last rays of the sun over the mountains, and the rising moon on the opposite shore - and more than all, that cheerful content in my soul that always accompanies it

³⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.14, 299.

³⁷ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.14, 299-300. Elizabeth’s original letter was lost in the process of the French translation, but White kept the excerpt of this part of the letter in his revised book, *White*, 7th revised (1868), 101-102; *CW*, 1, 300, n. 13.

when it is faithful to its dear Master, has recalled the remembrance of precious hours, and makes me incessantly cry out, my God! my God! do not forsake me, The Pyrenees [mountains] divide Spain and Portugal from France - and Oh! how many miles divide me from the dear Highlands of *Home*. If the Pyrenees would form a bridge for me, what hardships would I think too great in crossing them. God - *Patience* - Hope.³⁸

The waves of God's grace would take Elizabeth to the new planet in her life journey and guide her to respond to the new vocation as a religious. However, Elizabeth had no idea then of her future and could only see the unknown prospects. Conversion to Catholicism was not an easy task for Elizabeth because her spiritual life was formed in the Protestant Episcopal Church from her childhood and all her friends and social group belonged to this faith tradition.

When Elizabeth returned to New York in June of 1804, she found her beloved sister-in-law Rebecca suffering from serious illness which eventually brought her death on July 8, 1804. Remembering the Catholic ritual for the sick, she wrote to Amabilia Filicchi how she missed the Catholic religion's many helps for poor sufferers on their "sick and dying bed." Beside Rebecca's death bed, she recalled the Catholic ritual in which the priest attended and watched one "in the weakness and trials of parting nature," and helped the soul to be born into the eternal life "with the same care" she and Amabilia watched their "little infants body in its first struggles and wants on its entrance into life." Elizabeth compared the care of a priest to help the soul's birth in heaven with that of a mother giving birth to her baby in this world.³⁹

³⁸ CW, 1, sec., 2.14, 301-2.

³⁹ CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 367.

After arriving at her home, Elizabeth had to face not only the severe illness of her soul friend, Rebecca, but also her helpless situation, a widow with five children and uncertain financial support, although her relatives would help with some money. In her journal to Rebecca, she wrote her state of mind with lamentation:

The Home of plenty and of comfort - the Society of Sisters united by prayer and divine affections - the Evening hymns, the daily lectures, the sunset contemplations, the Service of holy days, the Kiss of Peace, the widows visits - all - all - gone - forever - and is Poverty and Sorrow the only exchange. My Husband - my Sisters - my Home - my comforts - Poverty and sorrow⁴⁰

Not only was Elizabeth's life situation a source of anguish for her but also the arguments and controversy around her desire to convert to Catholicism caused her much suffering. According to Filippo Filicchi's advice, she announced her desire to convert to Catholicism to her Episcopalian pastor and friends from whom she had "received the first principles and affections" of Christian faith.⁴¹ When Rev. John Henry Hobart listened to Elizabeth's statement, he was astonished and questioned vehemently how she could abandon her forefathers' religion and make "a corrupt and sinful communion" with Catholicism. He inquired what answer she could give to the Almighty Judge because her choice was "not from the prejudices of education, not for want of better information, but in the opposition to light and knowledge."⁴² When she showed Filippo Filicchi's manuscript, "Exposition of the Catholic Faith," to Hobart in order to explain her interest in Catholicism, Hobart wrote "an eighty-page refutation" against "Filicchi's manuscript"

⁴⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.1, 308.

⁴¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.6, 315-316.

⁴² Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 187-188.

and gave it to her with a book, Newton's "*Dissertations on the Prophecies*."⁴³ After reading these writings and listening to their arguments on Catholicism, Elizabeth was so confused that she was not sure about which church was the true church.

Antonio Filicchi was concerned about Elizabeth's hesitation to convert and gave her the book, *England's Conversion and Reformation Compared*,⁴⁴ to help her make her decision about conversion to Catholicism. During his stay in New York, Antonio acknowledged her confusion and gave spiritual direction with strong admonitions. In his letter to Elizabeth dated July 26, 1804, he pointed out that she was "decidedly prevailed upon to deny" the truth and her mind was "over influenced by an unaccountable awe towards the friends of her old Communion." Then he persuaded her to make a sacrifice for the safety of her soul. He realized that Elizabeth needed more support from others and decided to plead with Bishop John Carroll to help her. He recommended "Bishop Carroll as the proper Person to enlighten" her mind and asked her to write a letter to him in order to know the truth. He himself wrote to Bishop Carroll regarding Elizabeth and their anxiety and asked him to give advice to her. He sent his letter with that of Elizabeth to Bishop Carroll and asked her to wait for a reply from the Bishop.⁴⁵

⁴³ Rev. John Henry Hobart's Response to "Filippo Filicchi's Exposition of the Catholic Faith for Elizabeth" is in Seton, 3a, app., A-8.28, 616-645. Thomas Newton (1704-1782), *Dissertations on the Prophecies* (first published, London, 1754-1758). CW, 3b, app., B-2, 614; CW, 1: 341.

⁴⁴ CW, 3b, app., B-2, 613. Robert Manning, *England's Conversion and Reformation Compared* (Antwerp, 1725). This book is "a Catholic Work of apologetics, first appeared in Antwerp in 1725." CW, 1, 318, n.4.

⁴⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:4.

According to Elizabeth's own writing, she received Bishop Carroll's letter, but she did not mention its contents. After receiving Bishop Carroll's letter, she expressed her joy at receiving it and assured Antonio that she would continually search for the true Church:

The Bishop's letter has been held to my heart, on my knees beseeching God to enlighten me to see the truth, unmixed with doubts and hesitations. . . . I read the promises given to St Peter and the 6th chapter John (cf. Mt 16: 18-21; John 6) every day and then ask God can I offend him by believing those express words - I read my dear St Francis [de Sales], and ask if it is possible that I shall dare to think differently from him or seek heaven any other way. I have read your Englands Reformation and find its evidence too conclusive to admit of any reply - God will not forsake me Antonio, I know that he will unite me to his flock, and altho' now my Faith is unsettled I am assured that he will not disappoint my hope which is fixed on his own word that he will not despise the humble contrite heart which would esteem all losses in this world as greatest gain if it can only be so happy as to please him.⁴⁶

Elizabeth got strength from the letters of Antonio and Bishop Carroll, but Rev. Hobart continually urged her not to have any interest in Catholicism because he believed that the Protestant Episcopal Church adhered to the primitive doctrine of Jesus. Elizabeth continually prayed, especially to the Blessed Mother, to seek the will of God. She jotted down her prayer on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin on September 8, 1804:

This is the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and I have tried to sanctify it begging God to look in my Soul and see how gladly I would kiss her feet because she was his Mother and joyfully show every expression of reverence that even my Antonio would desire if I could do it with that freedom of Soul which flowed from the knowledge of his Will.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.7, 317-318. Elizabeth wrote this letter to Antonio dated August 30, 1804, but there was no record of it in Thomas O'Brien Hanley, S.J., *The John Carroll Papers* (Hereafter cited *John Carroll Papers*), 3 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).

⁴⁷ *CW*, 1, sec., 37, 319.

Rev. John Henry Hobart and other gentlemen of the Episcopal Church lost their patience with her wavering attitude toward religion and left her to make a right discernment according to her best judgment. But she noted that she would “rather hope to God.”⁴⁸ She did not have any firm conviction concerning both religions as she read and reread their arguments against one another.

In her Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, she wrote her state of mind: “I got in a side pew which turned my face towards the Catholic Church in the next street, and found myself twenty times speaking to the Blessed Sacrament there instead of looking at the naked altar where I was or minding the routine of prayers.” She missed her spiritual experience of the church of SS. Annunziata in Florence and strongly desired to receive the Eucharist.⁴⁹ She expressed her understanding of Eucharist in the same Journal:

so often it comes in my head if the religion which gives to the world, (at least to so great a part of it) the heavenly consolations attached to the belief of the Presence of God in the blessed Sacrament, to be the food of the poor wanderers in the desert of this world as well as the manna was the support of the Israelites through the Wilderness to their Canaan (cf. Exod. 16), if this religion says your poor friend is the work and contrivance of men and priests as they say, then God seems not as earnest for our happiness as these contrivers, nor to love us, though the children of Redemption and bought with the precious blood of his dear son, as much as he did the children of the old law since he leaves our churches with nothing but naked walls and our altars unadorned with either the Ark (cf. Exod. 25: 8; 40: 34) which his presence filled, or any of the precious pledges of his care of us which he gave to those of old.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.8, 320.

⁴⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.31, 370. St. Peter’s Catholic Church is still in the next street over from St. Paul Episcopal Church.

⁵⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.31, 370-371.

However, she was still in doubt and could not make the right decision. Antonio's continual friendship and spiritual guidance was a source of her strength. She appreciated Antonio's endless patience and described their friendship in comparison with that of "Jonathan and David" (cf. 1 Sam. 18: 1). She wrote to Antonio: "you know my heart you know my thoughts, my pains and Sorrows hopes and fears - Jonathan loved David - as his own Soul."⁵¹ She revealed her inner state in her letter to Antonio:

In order to disclose to you the interior I must speak to you as to God - to him I say - when shall my darkness be made light - In the life of St. Augustine I read that 'where he is most active and obstacles seem greatest in the Divine Service there we have reason to conclude that Success will be most glorious.' - the hope of this glorious Success is all my comfort . . . This morning I fell on my face before God . . . and appealed to him as my righteous Judge if hardness of heart, or unwillingness to be taught, or any human reasons stood between me and the truth - if I would not rejoice to cast my Sorrows on the Bosom of the Blessed Mary - to intreat the Influence of all his Blessed Saints and angels, to pray for precious Souls even more than for myself, and account myself happy in dying for his Sacred Truth . . . and implore his Pity who is the source of life light and truth to enlighten my eyes that I sleep not in death.⁵²

Antonio incessantly guided Elizabeth to pray and read the lives of the Saints and other spiritual readings. She wrote to Antonio: "After reading the life of St. Mary Magdalen, I thought 'Come my Soul let us turn from all these Suggestions' of one side or the other and quietly resolve to go to that church which has at least the multitude of the wise and good on its side, and began to consider the first steps I must take." She continued: "the first step is not to declare I believe all that is taught by the council of

⁵¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3. 9, 325.

⁵² *CW*, 1, sec., 3.8, 321. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is "a fourth century Christian apologist and writer." *CW*, 1,321, n. 3.

Trent.” However, she confessed that “the tradition of the Church” in teachings of the Council of Trent had not yet “the true weight of authority in my mind.”⁵³

In his letter to Elizabeth dated October 8, 1804, Antonio encouraged her, saying that her two letters written to him were “admirable pieces” which revealed her “most exquisite virtue and elegance,” so that he enclosed them with his letter to Bishop Carroll and asked the Bishop to give her direction.⁵⁴ In another letter dated November 7, 1804, he gave further spiritual direction to Elizabeth:

Fight, my worthy friend, pray without seeing. The Merciful Redeemer of us all will at last come to your relief, wipe away your tears, exalt your humility, reward your fortitude. The Bishop has been very sick, & I am without his answer still.”⁵⁵

Meanwhile Filippo Filicchi from Leghorn sent his spiritual direction to Elizabeth through his letter dated October 17, 1804, when he heard of her confusion regarding conversion to Catholicism:

Trust in God. I would have taught you to repeat with the Royal Prophet. You could not miss to meet with contradictions. . . . I was however in hopes to have furnished you with remedy by giving you that excellent treatise of the Consolation of a Christian. . . . I trusted you would have learnt that as we cannot do a single thing good, nor even form a good thought of ourselves we must throw ourselves entirely in the mercy of God, that He has the power & the will to help us, . . . You pray to your Father, to your Creator & to your Saviour & you tremble. . . . St. Paul fallen from his Horse & called by Him when he knew not did not trouble himself. He calmly said. What will you have me do? . . . Pray - Pray constantly & with fervor, but calmly.⁵⁶

⁵³ CW, 1, sec., 3.8, 321-322. Mary Magdalen referred to possibly “St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi (1566-1607), a Florentine Carmelite and mystic.” CW, 1, 321, n. 4.

⁵⁴ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 11.

⁵⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:15.

⁵⁶ ASJPH,, 1-3-3-10:12.

Filippo was so worried about Elizabeth's salvation that he sent her another long letter dated October 22, 1804. He pointed out the error of the Reformers from his point of view and asked Elizabeth continually to pray "with fervor" and "with confidence." He admonished her "to be sincere in wish to know the truth" and firm in "resolution to follow it." He advised her not to think of the consequences for what related to her situation and reminded her of God's providence. He gave her the following guidance:

Let therefore prayer be your only adviser. - Abandon all others . . . Sincerity, confidence & perseverance in prayer. Calmness & tranquility in mind. - Courage & resolution in heart. a perfect resignation to Providence.⁵⁷

Responding to Elizabeth's question about the true church, Filippo again sent a long letter to her dated December 18, 1804, with theoretical explanations on why the Catholic Church was the true church. Firstly, he pointed out that the reformers admitted that the Protestant Church came "directly from the Roman Catholic Church" which was rooted in the "right succession from the Apostles" and the true church in "the first four ages." The reformers claimed that the Catholic Church was in error. Then, "the Reformers had erred themselves" because the bishop who ordained them came from the Catholic Church. Secondly, the clergyman of the Protestant church "abominated the Sacrifice of the Mass," but "St. Justin, who lived about fifty years after the death of the Apostle St. John," praised "the Sacrifice of Eucharist" and said that "it was offered by Christians throughout the World." Then, he gave a long list of the Church Fathers who advocated the sacrifice of Eucharist and concluded:

My dear Mrs. Seton keeps well in mind the following argument & do not trouble your head with controversies. All Christians admit that Jesus Christ has

⁵⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10-14.

established a Church & that he would be with it to the end of time. St. Paul calls it the Column of firmness & of Truth. There must therefore be a true Church & this must be as ancient at[as] Christianity itself. . . . Let us believe what she teaches as the true Church cannot err.⁵⁸

In her letter responding to Filippo dated probably after January 6, 1805, Elizabeth revealed her experience of the dark night. Rev. Hobart told Elizabeth that her desire to become a Catholic was a temptation and advised her to read “the Prophecies.”⁵⁹ She read it again, but was not convinced of its truth. She lost interest in everything and stayed “in tears and prayers.” She knew “the old gentleman,” which was Elizabeth’s term for the devil, would “trouble heart so eagerly seeking the Will of God,” so that against him she resolved to double “the only weapons” which were “humility, Prayer, and fasting,” and found her “mind gradually settle in Confidence in Christ and the infinite treasures of his Mercy.”⁶⁰ She continued:

I gave myself up to God and Prayer encouraging myself with the Hope that my unrighteousness would be no more remembered at the foot of the Cross, and that sincere and unremitted asking would be answered in Gods own time. . . . for some months I have stood between the two ways looking steadily upwards but fearing to proceed, never crossing the street that led to your Church without lifting up my heart for mercy and often in the Protestant Church finding my Soul at Mass in Leghorn I took down a volume of Bourdaloue who speaking of the wise Mens enquiry "where is he who is born King of the Jews (cf. Mt 2:2)," draws the inference that when we no longer discern the Star of Faith we must seek it where only it is to be found with the Depositors of his Word. Therefore once more I resolved after heartily committing my Cause to God again to read those books on

⁵⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:18.

⁵⁹ Rev. John Henry Hobart recommended “Thomas Newton’s *Dissertations on the Prophecies*” to Elizabeth to read. *CW*, 1, 341, n. 1.

⁶⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.17, 341.

the catholick faith which had at first won me to it and in consequence of so doing would certainly with a helping hand give my Seal to it.⁶¹

Antonio Filicchi, who was still carrying out the Filicchi business in the United States, was very anxious about Elizabeth's postponing conversion to Catholicism and again wrote to Bishop Carroll about Elizabeth's anguish and hesitations of her conversion. He begged the Bishop to give advice to her. In response to Antonio's request Bishop Carroll in a letter dated January 12, 1805 advised Antonio regarding Elizabeth:

As far as it is in my power to judge of her state of mind, from the account of it contained in your letters, I do not think it advisable for her, at present, to perplex herself with reading any more controversy. She has seen enough on that subject to assure herself of the true principles for settling her faith. . . . Indeed, when I read the words you copied from her letters, and her letters themselves, I remain convinced of the sincerity of her endeavors to make herself conformable in all things to the divine will; but afterwards a fear arises in my mind that God discovers in her some lurking imperfection and defers the final grace of her conversion till her soul be entirely purified of its irregular attachments. The ordinary course of providence, with respect to those, who are to be tried by interior darkness and tribulation to subject them to it, after their conversion is completed; and it often happens, that those trials become highly useful.⁶²

Bishop Carroll understood Elizabeth's confusion between two arguments of the true Church and advised both Antonio and Elizabeth to concentrate on the will of God and to trust his providence rather than focusing on intellectual debate. He directed Elizabeth to offer her agony for the purification of her soul. Elizabeth was truly in the interior darkness because she could not discern which church was the true church and to

⁶¹ CW, 1, sec., 3.17, 341-342. Elizabeth read one of volumes written by Rev. Louis Bourdaloue, S.J. (1632-1704). He was "a French Catholic spiritual writer whose collected sermons delivered in Paris fill dozens of volumes." CW, 1, 342, n. 4. She referred to a sermon of Bourdaloue: "now I read with an agonizing heart the Epiphany Sermon of Bourdaloue – alas where is my star." CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 372.

⁶² Hanley, 2, 470.

where the will of God was guiding her. In the midst of desperation she went to St. George Episcopal Church. She “looked straight up to God” and asked him to show her the way which God meant her to walk. Her Episcopalian friends looked on the Catholics as “a public Nuisance,” but she did not care about this matter, because she searched only for “God and his church” and expected to find “peace in them not in the people.”⁶³

In her Journal to Amabilia dated November 1, 1804, the feast of All Saints, she had expressed the helpless state of her mind and her hope of seeking only God’s grace:

I see FAITH is a gift of God to be diligently sought and earnestly desired and groan to him for it in silence since our Saviour says I cannot come to him unless the Father draw me - so it is - by and by I trust this storm will cease how painful and often Agonizing he only knows who can and will still it in his own good time.⁶⁴

Elizabeth diligently tried to seek God’s will and asked Antonio to send her the book, *L’Apocalypse avec une Explication* written by the Bishop of Meaux because she heard that it was “some address to Protestants” and she desired “much to see it.”⁶⁵ Meanwhile she earnestly read the writings of the Fathers of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, and other spiritual books. These spiritual readings gave strength to her and she could express her appreciation to Antonio:

You charge me not to neglect the lives of the Saints - which I could not if I would, for they interest me so much, that the little time I can catch for reading is all given to them, indeed they are a relaxation to my mind, for they lessen all my troubles and make them as nothing by comparison - when I read that St. Au[gus]tin[e] was long in a fluctuating state of mind between error and truth, I say to myself, be

⁶³ CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 373.

⁶⁴ CW, 1, sec., 3.31. 371-372.

⁶⁵ CW, 1, sec., 3.18, 343. Jacques Bossuet, *L’Apocalypse avec une Explication*, 1689. CW, 3b, app., B-2, 609.

Patient, God will bring you Home at last - and as for the lessons of self denial and Poverty If St. Francis De Sales and the Life of our dear Master had not before pointed out to me the many virtues and graces that accompany them I should even wish for them [in order] to be like those dear dear Saints in any respect. ⁶⁶

Antonio knew that Elizabeth needed another remedy for her anguish and found that therapy. When he was in Boston due to his business, he met admirable Catholic priests⁶⁷ and animatedly described them to Elizabeth. These Boston priests were worthy not only in their “Countenance, their conduct,” and their sermons, but also their doctrine was “acknowledged almost with enthusiasm by most Protestants themselves.”⁶⁸ He especially recommended Rev. John Cheverus as a spiritual director for Elizabeth. In his letter to Rev. Cheverus dated February 19, 1804, Antonio had explained that Elizabeth would be a good Roman Catholic with her five children and asked his help for Elizabeth who was now in the state of “scruples & anxietys [anxieties]” due to her choice of conversion to Catholicism. He also informed him that he had asked Elizabeth to write to Cheverus for “instruction, comport, advice” and petitioned him to help her. Then he sent his letter with Elizabeth’s letter to Cheverus.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ CW, 1, sec., 3. 9, 325.

⁶⁷ Antonio Filicchi mentioned Rev. John Cheverus and Rev. Dr. Francis A. Matignon (1753-1818). Reverend Matignon was “doctor of the Sorbonne (1785)” and came from France to the United States in 1792. He was a friend of Reverend Cheverus and gave spiritual direction with Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton. CW, 1, sec., 3.18, 343, n. 1.

⁶⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10-11.

⁶⁹ ASJPH, 26-0-2, Folder #6 [S-F Cop: Souvay-Filicchi Copy]. The Archives of Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, Saint Joseph Provincial House, has part of them. Souvay-Filicchi Copy was also called a “Souvay Collection (designated as UNDA MSVY)” at the University of Notre Dame. “This contains typescripts and photostatic copies of Seton letters used by Charles Souvay, C.M., who was one of the first to collect Elizabeth’s writings in connection with her cause for canonization.” Bechtle and Metz, Introduction to CW, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820* (New York: New City Press, 2002), xxiii. The Filicchi family preserved handwritings

Rev. John Cheverus sent a beautiful long letter to Elizabeth dated March 4, 1805. In this letter he expressed his admiration of Elizabeth's endeavor to find the truth and assured her: "The God of all comfort will perfect in you the good work which he has begun." Then, he encouraged her: "I would therefore advise your joining the Catholic church as soon as possible, and when doubts arise, say only: I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief."⁷⁰ Finally Elizabeth made up her mind to accept the Catholic faith. In her "Journal to Amabilia Filicchi," she declared:

I WILL GO PEACEABLY and FIRMLY TO THE CATHOLICK CHURCH – for if Faith is so important to our Salvation I will seek it where true Faith first begun, seek it among those who received it from GOD HIMSELF. . . . I am between laughing and crying all the while Amabilia – Yet not frightened for on God himself I pin my Faith.⁷¹

Antonio was so delighted when Elizabeth converted to Catholicism after receiving Rev. Cheverus' letter that he joyfully reported to Cheverus that Elizabeth accepted his advice as one of "a distinguished blessing from God" and that she made "the requisite profession of faith" of the Roman Catholic Church on March 14, 1805, in the presence of Antonio himself and Rev. Matthew O'Brien at St. Peter's Catholic Church. Antonio described Elizabeth as a person who witnessed "a pattern of piety & zeal" and asked Cheverus' to continue his direction of her because she admired his "advices and spiritual

of correspondences of Elizabeth, Bishop Carroll, Rev. Cheverus, and others in their own Family Archives, Leghorn, Italy. Melville, *EBS*, 96, n. 59.

⁷⁰ Archives of the Sisters of Charity, New York, St. Vincent (hereafter AMSV), 115, 1, 12. The same letter was reproduced in James J. Dougherty, ed., the *Life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle, One of Mother Seton's: First Companions, the Assistant Mother Under her for Eight years, and First Superioress of "The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul" in New York City* (Staten Island, NY: The Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, 1893), 25-27.

⁷¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.31, 374.

direction” which she received in his letters.⁷² Antonio gave the English Bible to Elizabeth in 1805 and this Bible would be Elizabeth’s everyday companion.⁷³

In her journal to Amabilia Filicchi, Elizabeth vividly described her conversion experience. After her profession of Catholic faith at St. Peter’s Church, she joyfully declared “I came up light at heart and cool of head the first time these many long months.”⁷⁴ She received the Eucharist for the first time on March 25, 1805 in the Catholic Church, the feast day of the Annunciation. On the way to the Catholic Church on her first communion day, she wrote that she counted every step “nearer that street,” and “nearer that tabernacle, then nearer the moment he would enter the poor poor little dwelling so all his own.”⁷⁵ She described her interior experience after receiving Communion in her Journal to Amabilia:

At last Amabilia - at last - GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS . . . I HAVE RECIEVED HIM – the awful impressions of the evening before, fears of not having done all to prepare, and yet even then transport of confidence and hope in his GOODNESS – MY GOD – to the last breath of life will I not remember

⁷² ASJPH, 26-0-2, Folder #6. Filicchi to Cheverus, New York, March 16, 1805. Rev. Matthew O’Brien received Elizabeth’s profession of faith as a Roman Catholic at St. Peter’s Church, Barclay Street, in lower Manhattan March 14, 1805. “Elizabeth mistakenly believed he was the only Catholic priest in New York.” *CW*, 1, sec., 3.17, 342. n. 6.

⁷³ Ellen M. Kelly, *Elizabeth Seton’s Two Bibles, Her Notes and Markings* (hereafter cited as *Two Bibles*) (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday visitor, Inc., 1977), 15, 25-26. This English Bible was “printed in the United States by Mathew Carey of Philadelphia in 1805” and “Douay-Rheims version.” Rev. Bruté also had the same edition of Elizabeth’s Bible. When he read the jottings in Elizabeth’s Bible, he was deeply impressed and suggested to Elizabeth that they exchange their Bibles. He asked Elizabeth to mark and write on his Bible like she did on her own. Thus, Elizabeth used and marked on Rev. Bruté’s Bible from 1813 to her death in 1821, while Bruté used hers. After her death, Bruté returned Elizabeth’s own Bible to her daughter, Catherine Seton, and brought back his own Bible.

⁷⁴ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.31, 375.

⁷⁵ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.31, 377.

this night of watching for morning dawn. . . . the first thought, I remember, was let God arise let his enemies be scattered (cf., Ps. 23:2) for it seemed to me my King had come to take his throne, and instead of the humble tender welcome I had expected to give him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness that the deliverer was come, . . . Salvation made mine for this World and the next – now then all the excesses of my heart. . . it danced with more fervor . . . perhaps almost with as much as the royal Prophets before his Ark, . . . truly I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by him who came with so much Majesty to take possession of this little poor Kingdom.⁷⁶

On her reflection after receiving Communion on the Easter Sunday, April 14, 1805, Elizabeth wrote: “Faith for all defects supplies and SENSE is lost in MYSTERY - here the Faithful rest secure, while God can Vouch and Faith insure.” Her Eucharistic piety guided her to unite with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. She could have confidence in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist by the Word and the faith given by God. She adored God through Christ in the Eucharist by praying the “litany of Jesus or some of the psalms” and singing the most lovely hymn, *Tantum Ergo*.⁷⁷ In the same Journal, she expressed her faith in God by receiving Christ in the Eucharist:

My God is here, he sees me, every sigh and desire is before him, . . . he has proved well enough to me there, what he is - and I can say with even more transports than St. Thomas MY LORD and MY GOD (Cf. John 20:28) . . . this Divine Sacrifice and Holy Eucharist, . . . I see more mystery in this blindness of redeemed souls than in any of the mysteries proposed in his Church - with what grateful and unspeakable joy and reverence I adore the daily renewed virtue of THAT WORD by which we possess him in our blessed MASS, and Communion - but all that is but Words since Faith is from God and I must but humble myself and adore.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 376-377.

⁷⁷ CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 377.

⁷⁸ CW, 1, sec., 3.31, 377-378.

Elizabeth found her happiness in the Eucharist. Whenever she knelt at the Altar of the Church, she enjoyed a kind of the “foretastes of Heaven he has provided” for his people on earth. The experience of the union with Christ in Communion helped her to accept difficult situations in her life. She said: “now every thing is easy, Poverty, suffering, displeasure of my friends all lead me to Him, and only fit my heart more eagerly to approach its only good.”⁷⁹

In her letter to Antonio, she happily reported that she could have communion three times a week and expressed that “without this heavenly resource” her soul would be “agitated and discomposed by the frequent assaults which in [her] immediate situation are naturally made on [her] feelings.” She also mentioned that she received “the counsel and excellent directions” from the Reverend O’Brien of St. Peter’s, although she was afraid to go to Him for confession when she had “so little or nothing to say.” However, she admitted that by confession she would be so free from those things which she could name in the midst of “a cloud of imperfection” at every moment of life and stressed that we could do all things through “Christ Who strengthens us.”⁸⁰

Antonio as a soul friend of Elizabeth was immeasurably happy with Elizabeth’s spiritual progress in Catholicism and expressed his joy and excitement and also gave her spiritual guidance concerning humility in his letter dated April 18, 1805:

I am most happy in the happiness your good soul experiences in its new state of faith. The God of truth rewards your courage. Be humble, and be sure of the incomparably happier destiny reserved for your struggles at the right side of Jesus in his heavenly mansion. If you should be called there before me, do not forget to

⁷⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.24, 353.

⁸⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.25, 356.

plead in my favour with St. Peter, as you acknowledge some part in me in your reconciliation to his Church. If I go first, I shall by all means have a seat left vacant for you.⁸¹

To be a Catholic in Episcopalian society in Elizabeth's time was not easy. In her letter to Antonio dated April 30, 1805, she wrote: "My old friend Mr. H[obart] thinks it is his duty to warn all my friends here of the falsity and danger of my principles, and of the necessity of avoiding every communication with me on the subject." When Mr. [Patrick] White, who was "an English gentleman" and "a complete scholar," planned to establish "a school for young Ladies, and perhaps Boys also," he suggested Elizabeth to teach them and be "an assistant in his school in case it succeeds." If she accepted his proposal, it would be very helpful for her children's education, but she wrote: "as in taking Medicine for a Disease I should willingly take it looking up to God for its success."⁸² She shared her hope rooted in God's will with Antonio:

Is it possible to retrospect the past, realize the present and meditate the heavenly Hope set before us, without freely and firmly yielding every power of my Soul to perform his Blessed Will and devoting every Affection in gratitude and love for such unmerited Mercy – Pray Pray that your dear Sister may attain the heavenly Grace of Perseverance – as my Whole Soul begs it for you.⁸³

However, the rumor was spread that Elizabeth with Mr. White planned to propagate Catholicism. From the beginning, the school of White and Elizabeth faced a crisis. The school had great financial problems and Elizabeth and Mr. White could not pay the house rent. Thus, Elizabeth with her children had to move to her sister, Mary

⁸¹ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 20.

⁸² CW, 1, sec., 3.26, 358-359.

⁸³ CW, 1, sec., 3.26, 359.

Bayley Post, and brother-in-law, Dr. Post's residence at Greenwich, outside of New York, and was not able to go to the Catholic Church.⁸⁴ In the letter to Antonio dated August 28, 1805, she sadly reported:

I found myself separated in a few hours from my Liberty in every respect. The dear early Mass etc.etc. no Saturday confession, Sunday Communion, or word of consolation from any one –but God is so rich in Mercy and so pitiful to a poor desolated Soul that these deprivations are made up in many respects, and at all events, I must and do adore his Almighty Will in every case, begging only for a happy exit and to receive my portion where no disappointments or sorrows can intervene.⁸⁵

Elizabeth worried not only about her inability to attend Mass and practice her religion but also she was concerned about the inconvenience she and her children were causing her sister's family. When Mr. John Wilkes proposed that Elizabeth take in the pupils of St. Mark's School conducted by Rev. William Harris as boarders, she immediately accepted his plan. She moved to the house on Stuyvesant Lane in the Bowery near St. Mark's Episcopal Church and made a cheerful home for around fourteen students along with her children.⁸⁶

In the midst of a difficult situation, Elizabeth was deeply concerned about her two sons. In her letter to Antonio dated October 2, 1805, she explained her two sons'

⁸⁴ Dr. Wright Post, who married Elizabeth's sister, Mary, had a residence on "Blessing Street (now Bleeker Street), Greenwich Village. This village was about two miles outside the town of New York and was considered to be a healthful region to which many residents fled during outbreaks of disease in the city. In fact the Setons left the city just as the yellow fever epidemic of 1805 was taking on alarming proportions." *CW*, 1, 382, n. 2.

⁸⁵ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.2, 382.

⁸⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.11, 396. John Wilkes was a husband of Mary Seton, the first cousin of William Magee Seton and partly supported Elizabeth family's living expenses after her conversion to Catholicism. *CW*, 1, sec., 1. 1, 2, n. 3.

situation: “If you could know the situation they are in here only your love for Souls independent of any personal interest for me would induce you to pity them in the ridicule [ridicule] they are forced to hear of our Holy religion and the mockery at the church and ministers . . . besides their minds are being poisoned with bad principles of every kind which I cannot always check or controul [control].” She asked Antonio to arrange for the boys to be educated at St. Mary’s College in Baltimore. She wanted her sons to receive Catholic education and to experience Catholicism.⁸⁷

Antonio understood Elizabeth’s concern and wanted to help her sons to grow in a Catholic atmosphere. In responding to Elizabeth in a letter dated October 8, 1805, Antonio assured her that he would take care of her sons’ education and suggested another plan for her boys. When he was on business trip in Montreal, Canada, he found “an eminent College and Seminary, which would prove preferable by far to that of Baltimore.” However, this college would not admit any “foreign student before 12 or 18 months to come” because the new building was not ready since it was “set on fire two years ago.” Thus, Antonio asked her for the next two years to let her boys prepare “themselves to appear well bred, to know how to write, and read well at least” during two years.⁸⁸ According to Elizabeth’s letter to Bishop John Carroll, Antonio also implied that

⁸⁷ CW, 1, sec., 4.5, 387-388. “Antonio Filicchi had promised to help pay” for Elizabeth’s sons’ education. “In 1791 the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Baltimore (later known as St. Mary’s Seminary) was founded by Rev. Charles F. Nagot, S.S. St. Mary’s College, adjoining it, was opened by rev. Louis William Dubourg, S. S., in 1799.” CW, 1, 387, n. 3. In her letter to Julia Scott dated January 20, 1806, Elizabeth wrote that Filicchi had taken upon her boys’ education and promised some position in the place related to his company when they grow up, and concluded that “they will go to the College immediately if he can obtain them a situation.” CW, 1, sec., 4.13, 401.

⁸⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 28, Antonio, Boston, to Seton, October 8, 1805.

Elizabeth with her daughters might be received in a convent in Montreal and could assist in teaching in the school. Antonio began to plant the seed of religious life in Elizabeth's heart.⁸⁹

When Antonio made a business trip to Baltimore, he visited Bishop Carroll and explained Elizabeth's social situation and her concern for her boys' education. Antonio reported to Elizabeth that he had visited both colleges at Baltimore and Georgetown and took "all the proper information" in order to consult with her.⁹⁰ Elizabeth's two sons were "enrolled at Georgetown from May 20, 1806, to June 22, 1808."⁹¹ In the letter to Elizabeth dated May 2, 1806, Antonio confirmed that Bishop Carroll and he would provide for all of her two sons' expenses at Georgetown. Then Antonio eased Elizabeth's anxious mind with his spiritual direction: "dear Sister, Trust in your God, and in God alone. Keep your friendship with St. Peter he will open the Gates of Heaven to you, and you will enter, and possess the eternal kingdom, where I shall be satisfied."⁹²

Another suffering was waiting for Elizabeth because of her Catholic faith. Elizabeth's spiritual life influenced her sisters-in-laws and they had a great interest in Catholicism. But they were afraid to take any further steps toward the Catholic faith except for Cecilia Seton who loved Elizabeth very much. Cecilia Seton converted to

⁸⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.27, 420.

⁹⁰ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-10:29. Georgetown was "a Catholic boys' school founded by Bishop John Carroll in 1792 and operated by the clergy in what is today Washington, D.C." *CW*, 2, sec., 5.1, 7, n. 24.

⁹¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.17, 406, n. 1.

⁹² *ASJPH*, 26-0-2, Folder #6, "Antonio, Philadelphia, to Seton, May 2, 1806." Folder # 6 has many different dated letters and each letter can be identified with its date and name.

Catholicism without discussing the matter with her brother and his family with whom she lived. When she was questioned by her brother and his wife regarding her conversion she responded to her sister-in-law in a letter dated July 25, 1806. She declared, “I was received into the Catholic Church on the 20th of June. I am settled, firmly settled, and not even death can move me.”⁹³

When the Seton family circle found out that “Cecilia was not only a Catholic but as firm as the Rock,” they were outraged toward both Cecilia and Elizabeth because they knew Elizabeth’s influence on Cecilia’s conversion. Cecilia packed her luggage and moved into Elizabeth’s house. Mrs. James Seton, Cecilia Seton’s sister-in-law, wrote that they wished Cecilia would return to their arms and religion after “‘a few weeks’ cool reflection.” She also warned that Cecilia would be estranged forever from their family circle and emphasized that “it necessarily *must* do,” if she continued her delusion.⁹⁴

The whole Seton family circle pressured Cecilia and Elizabeth. According to Elizabeth’s letter to Antonio dated August 10, 1806, they threatened Cecilia that she “should be sent from the country” and also intimidated Elizabeth that she “should be turned out a beggar” with her children. They assembled a family meeting and decided that each of family members was bound “never to speak” or visit either Cecilia or Elizabeth again, if Cecilia persisted in her new faith. When Cecilia moved to Elizabeth’s house in order to practice her new faith, they sent her “the most abusive letters” in which they disparaged the Catholic faith and its priests. Elizabeth expressed her dismay to

⁹³ Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 254. This letter was to respond to Mrs. James Seton’s letter.

⁹⁴ Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 256.

Antonio: “I have been in a sea of troubles since you left me but the guiding star is always bright and the master of the storm always in view.”⁹⁵

The conversion to Catholicism of both Elizabeth and Cecilia brought social and financial persecution to both. Elizabeth’s godmother in her Episcopal Church was a “rich and childless widow” and provided “financial assistance to Elizabeth” after Elizabeth’s return from Italy. After Cecilia’s conversion to Catholicism, she did not send Elizabeth any money and also “excluded Elizabeth from her will.”⁹⁶

Antonio gave spiritual guidance to Elizabeth in his letter dated November 3, 1806, written in London on the way to Leghorn, Italy:

I have received only a few days ago your long expected Letter of the 10 of August. If blessed those that are in tears, you, my poor beloved Sister, are blessed indeed. Courage & perseverance. The Crown of everlasting glory awaits only, you know, those who persevere to the end. Let your new St. Cecilia be one of your blessed Family, without being deterred by any one. Pity, pray for your Persecutors. Your forbearance, your fortitude, your charity, your piety will put them to blush at last. If not: God and I are your Protectors, of whom shouldst Thou be afraid.⁹⁷

After Cecilia’s conversion although Elizabeth tried to accept her persecutors in God’s love, her living situation, including financial support for her family, became very difficult. In this painful situation, Elizabeth experienced Divine Providence when she went to St. Peter’s Catholic Church for Mass and encountered the visiting priest, Rev. Louis William Dubourg who was then the president of St. Mary’s College in Baltimore. While offering the Mass as a guest priest at St. Peter’s Catholic Church, he saw for the

⁹⁵ *CW*, 1, sec., 424, 414.

⁹⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 1.16, 24, n. 4. Her name was Sarah Startin.

⁹⁷ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-10: 33.

first time Elizabeth “at the communion-rail.” According to White, he was deeply “struck with the uncommon deportment and piety of the communicant,” whom he later confirmed as Elizabeth Seton. She, “bathed in tears, received the Blessed Sacrament at his hands.” He was very curious about her and asked who she was at the breakfast table. While talking about her at the rectory, Elizabeth entered the rectory and the parish priest introduced her to him. He was so impressed with her piety and they had a long conversation. During their conversation Elizabeth shared her life situation and her Canada dream which Antonio planted in her heart. Dubourg expressed his willingness to help her fulfill her Canada dream.⁹⁸

Elizabeth expressed her joy in the letter to Antonio dated December 4, 1806: “You cannot imagine how much pleasure I have in the acquisition of Mr. Dubourg’s acquaintance (the superior of Baltimore College) - He would have sent me to Montreal in a moment, and shows us an interest and kindness more than I can express.”⁹⁹

However, Dubourg had another idea to fulfill Elizabeth’s dream. According to Elizabeth’s letter to Antonio dated March 14, 1807, after discussing his idea concerning Elizabeth with the Boston priests, Cheverus and Matignon who were Elizabeth’s spiritual directors, Dubourg persuaded Elizabeth that she could fulfill her dream in the United States instead of Canada. Her Boston priests did not leave her “any hope to their consent” to her “Canada Scheme.” Although she was still drawn to the Canada dream, she put her

⁹⁸ White, 199.

⁹⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4. 28, 423.

dream in God's hands. She stressed that she was confident that God would direct her way:

God will direct it –and that is enough . . . and cannot lead me wrong, according to the old rule I look neither behind nor before but straight upwards without thinking of human calculations.”¹⁰⁰

In her letter to Filippo Filicchi dated November 2, 1807, she noted that the Canada dream, which was Antonio's idea, had been “long contemplated in female fancy” as “one of the sweet dispositions of Providence among the many.” She might have thought of Filippo's spiritual direction in her discernment and decision making. She continued that she often read Filippo's letter in order to “encourage and strengthen” her “in the disappointment of not being permitted” to fulfill her dream of Canada.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless, Elizabeth's life situation was getting worse. She had to move to a smaller house because the number of her boarding students decreased and she could not pay the rental fee for the large house. In this helpless situation, Elizabeth experienced God's providential solution for her family. The details of the miraculous story of the Baltimore plan is delineated in her letter to her friend, Julia Scott, dated April 23, 1808:

-so sweet is the Providence that overrules us, at this very moment of solicitude for our destination when the present means fails. . . .Mr. Dubourg the President of St. Marys College in Baltimore . . . has offered to give me a formal grant of a lot of ground situated close to the College which is out of the town and in a very healthy situation and procure me immediately the charge of a half dozen girls and as many more as I can manage, added to this he will take my boys in the College, and the intire charge of them for a very small consideration in order that [Antonio] Filicchi's money may assist me in another way - much as this offer

¹⁰⁰ CW, 1, sec., 4. 31, 432. According to Antonio's letter to Elizabeth which was written in London on his way to Leghorn on September 15, 1805, he went back to his home, Leghorn, Italy in the fall of 1805. ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:31.

¹⁰¹ CW, 1, sec., 4.56, 479.

delighted me I urged my want of talents etc, he assures me that Madame La Comb whom he established in a much more unfavourable footing has now more than one hundred young persons in charge of the first families¹⁰²

To move to a totally unfamiliar place was not easy for Elizabeth. She prayed and discerned God's will for the Baltimore project suggested by Rev. Dubourg with her spiritual directors. In her letter to Antonio, she explained that she accepted Dubourg's Baltimore plan after consulting with the Boston priests, Rev. Cheverus and Dr. Matignon whom Antonio admired. They preferred Dubourg's project because they believed that the Baltimore project would be good for Elizabeth as well as for her children and also it would be good for Elizabeth to teach in the United States rather than in Canada. Her relatives also approved of her moving to Baltimore.¹⁰³

Elizabeth read God's will through her spiritual directors and her life situation, and made up her mind to move to Baltimore in faith and hope in God. At this time because of political circumstances she could not receive letters from the Filicchi brothers. She described her trip to Baltimore in her letter to Cecilia Seton who could not accompany her because she was helping her brother's children after the death of her sister-in-law. With her three daughters Elizabeth departed New York on June 9, 1808 by ship. On the way to Baltimore, she had hope as well as anxiety for her new life in the new world and she expressed it to Cecilia:

to-morrow - do I go among Strangers - No - has an anxious thought or fear passed my mind - No - can I be disappointed - No - one sweet sacrifice will unite Soul

¹⁰² CW, 1, sec., 4.73, 506-507. Madame La Comb is a "woman who ran a school for girls in Baltimore." CW, 1, 506, n. 4.

¹⁰³ CW, 2, sec., 5.4, 17-19.

with all who offer it - doubt and fear fly from the breast inhabited by him - there can be no disappointment where the Souls only desire and expectation is to meet his Adored Will and fulfill it.¹⁰⁴

Elizabeth arrived at Baltimore on June 16, 1808, the feast of the Corpus Christi which was a significant day in the Catholic Church for celebrating the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It seemed that Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament welcomed her children and her who adored Jesus so much in the Blessed Sacrament. When they reached the Church adjoined to St. Mary's College, the Mass of the celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi was just beginning. She described her first impression of the liturgy and of the people:

Thursday Evening Corpus Christi - my dear dear dear dear all I can tell you is a carriage conveyed us to the Seminary - the organs Solemn pause first - then the bursting of the Quire [choir] - this was the moment of the consecration of Mr. Dubourgs chapel -- we entered without a word - prostrate in an instant - St. M's voice resounded the Kyrie Eleison- human nature could scarcely bear it -- your imagination can never concieve the Splendor - the Glory of the Scene all I have told you of Florence is a Shadow - after Mass - I was in the arms of the loveliest woman you ever beheld Mr. D's Sister- surrounded by so many caresses and Blessings.¹⁰⁵

Elizabeth was enthralled with the majestic liturgy and could feel God's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. With her children she was overwhelmed with the people's warm welcome. They were surrounded by the Catholic culture and were so delighted with the new people with whom they could share their Catholic faith. Elizabeth could bring her two boys

¹⁰⁴ CW, 2, sec., 5.1, 5.

¹⁰⁵ CW, 2, sec., 5.1, 6-7. The Seminary adjoined St. Mary's College. CW, 2, 6, n. 18. Kyrie Eleison is "Greek word for 'Lord have mercy,' a prayer of the Mass." CW, 2, 7, n. 20. Mr. D's sister is Rev. Dubourg's sister, Françoise Victore Dubourg Fournier (1763-1825) who arrived at "Baltimore from Bordeaux in August 1805. She resided at St. Mary's college where she managed the household. She provided gracious hospitality to the Setons during their stay in Baltimore." CW, 2, 7, n. 22.

from Georgetown to St. Mary's College in Baltimore and settle down at the house on Paca Street as her home and boarding school. In her letter to Antonio dated July 8, 1808, she joyfully updated her life in Baltimore:

Should I my dear Antonio enter into a detail of the effects of the unexpected, and to me immense happiness of living in such Society as here surrounds us every Soul breathing only Divine Charity, the sweet company and friendship of one of the most amiable Women in the World, the sister of the Rev. Mr. Dubourg, . . . A chapel the most elegant in America, and very little inferior to some in Florence, so near my dwelling that I can hear the bell at the altar - Oh Filicchi: you, who knew so well how [to] pity your Sister will gladly receive the account of this happy reverse.¹⁰⁶

Elizabeth and the Filicchis had more difficulty in exchanging their correspondence from 1808 to 1815 because of “the Embargo Act.”¹⁰⁷ After receiving Elizabeth's letters dated in July and August of 1808, Antonio replied that he was so happy to see Elizabeth with her family in Baltimore. He was pleased with her move to Baltimore and assured Elizabeth that this would be good because the Boston priests, Cheverus and Matignon, approved it. He notified her that she could draw a thousand dollars from the Filicchi funds in New York for Elizabeth's new establishment at Baltimore. He also notified her that she could ask for more funds, if she needed, because her prayers brought more fortune to their mercantile business in spite of “all the embargoes, political & commercial troubles.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 5.4, 19.

¹⁰⁷ “President Thomas Jefferson signed the Embargo Act which prohibited foreign vessels from taking goods at American ports, and American ships from sailing to foreign ports. December 22, 1807, January 9 and March 12, 1808, brought new Embargo Acts. There was substantial opposition to these measures in the United States, and France retaliated. Merchants found means to evade these law's through smuggling.” *CW*, 2, sec., 5.4, 16, n. 2.

¹⁰⁸ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-10: 38.

It would be worthwhile to describe Elizabeth's life at the Paca Street near Baltimore. The house at the Paca Street was contiguous to the chapel of St. Sulpice and "hardly large enough to accommodate eight boarders" and Elizabeth's own family. When Rev. Dubourg invited Elizabeth to open the boarding school for girls in Baltimore, he had a dream of "the grand object of a Catholic and virtuous education" for girls. However, he wanted to fulfill this dream little by little. Thus, he was not "anxious to see the number of her pupils increased with too great rapidity." It would be easy for Elizabeth to have a small number of students in order "to establish that spirit of regularity and piety which must be the main-spring" of her teaching. If one year's experience produced the fruitful result, Elizabeth and he would consult God about "the means of perpetuating it, by the association of some other pious ladies who may be animated with the same spirit."¹⁰⁹

God's providence guided Elizabeth's life beyond Dubourg's plan. Elizabeth often said that God "sees differently from Man, and as obedience is His favourite [favorite] Service, and cannot lead me wrong, according to the old rule I look neither behind nor before but straight upwards without thinking of human calculations."¹¹⁰ God's plan for Elizabeth revealed itself in the things that happened to her. Elizabeth's students rapidly increased and she became very busy. In her letter to Antonio dated August 20, 1808, she wrote that she could rarely have time to pray and read a Kempis' book, if someone did not help her.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ White, 209, quoting Dubourg's letter to Seton, May 27, 1808.

¹¹⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 4. 31, 432.

¹¹¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 5.7, 29.

Very soon she found herself called to be the foundress of the first American religious congregation and would experience God's providence leading her to establish the school as well as her community in Emmitsburg, Maryland. God's call of Elizabeth to the religious life manifested itself through Rev. Pierre Babade. In the letter to Antonio dated August 20, 1808, Elizabeth wrote: "We have here a Venerable Patriarch who is always instructing me and referring to Bourdaloue [a French spiritual writer] and my Proues[prose]." Rev. Pierre Babade was a Sulpician and taught Spanish.¹¹²

Rev. Pierre Babade composed a poem, "the Seton Girls on their arrival in Baltimore" for welcoming Elizabeth and her daughters to Baltimore. While teaching religion at Elizabeth's school, he became the friend of everyone in the Paca Street house. Elizabeth's daughters were "delighted with all his attentions and wrote him countless little notes to which he replied." Elizabeth found him "the ideal confessor" for her.¹¹³ Babade seemed to recognize Elizabeth's outstanding spiritual life and he arranged for Elizabeth to start a religious community.

¹¹² CW, 2, sec., 5.7, 29. The Reverend Pierre Babade[Babad], S.S.(1763-1846) assisted "Rev. William Dubourg, S.S., in establishing St. Mary's College in Baltimore and taught Spanish there." Babade was "confessor and spiritual advisor" of Elizabeth and the founding sisters for a short time. He supported "the idea of establishing a religious community and brought the first recruit for the Sisters of charity, Cecilia O' Conway, from Philadelphia to enter the community in Baltimore." CW, 2, 21, n. 6. In her letters, Elizabeth frequently referred him as our patriarch. CW, 2, sec., 5.5, 24; 2, sec., 5.7, 29; 2, sec., 5.10, 34.

¹¹³ Melville, *Louis William Dubourg, Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas, Bishop of Montauban, and Archbishop of Besançon, 1766-1833* (hereafter cited as *DuBourg*) (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), 1: 192. Babade's poem for Seton Girls is in ASJPH, 1-3-3-4: 1. It was written in French. Cf. Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 2, 19-20.

In her letter to Cecilia Seton dated October 6, 1808, Elizabeth explained what happened to her and expressed her joy and expectation. She encouraged Cecilia who was hoping to join Elizabeth while taking care of her brother's children in New York:

it is expected I shall be the Mother of many daughters. a letter received from Philadelphia where my Blessed Father Our Patriarch now is on a visit, tells me he has found two of the Sweetest young women, who were going to Spain to seek a refuge from the World, tho they are both Americans, Cecilia and May [Mary], and now wait until my house is opened for them - Next Spring we hope - he applies to me the Psalms in our Vespers "the Barren Woman shall be the joyful Mother of children (cf. Ps. 113:9), and tells me to repeat it Continually - which you must do with me my darling. he says "I promise you, and wish you many crosses, which it will be my delight to bear with you my daughter - but they will brighten our crown, and glorify his name whose glory is our only desire."¹¹⁴

Rev. Babade recommended Cecilia O'Conway and Anna Maria Murphy Burke as postulants for the new community. Cecilia O'Conway joined Elizabeth on December 7, 1808 and became the first sister of the Sisters of Charity. Maria Murphy Burke joined Elizabeth during Holy Week of 1809. Cecilia O'Conway was later elected a member of the council of the community and wrote a *Memoir* of the early community life. In "Sister Cecilia O' Conway's Memoir, 1808-1815," she recorded that the first new Institution [Sisters of Charity] began on December 7, 1808. Very soon seven women including

¹¹⁴ CW, 2, sec., 5.10, 34-5. These two Philadelphia girls are Cecilia O'Conway (1788-1865) and Anna Maria Murphy Burke (d.1812). Cecilia O'Conway made her "first novitiate in Emmitsburg (1812-1813) and pronounced vows July 19, 1813." She was elected "treasurer of the community (1816-1817)" and "missioned to New York (1817) to work with the orphans, but she returned to St. Joseph's (1819) temporarily because of poor health." She was known as Sister Cecilia and loved Elizabeth so much. After Elizabeth's death she transferred to "the cloistered Ursuline community in Montreal where she was known as Mother Marie of the Incarnation." She kept "her happy memories and a correspondence with her Emmitsburg friends until her death." Anna Maria Murphy Burke joined Elizabeth in Baltimore during the spring of 1809. She was known as Sister Maria and sometimes was referred to "by her own surname, Murphy, or Burke, her step father's name." She died October 15, 1812 at St. Joseph's during the first novitiate of the Sisters of Charity and is buried in the original community cemetery at Emmitsburg." CW, 2,34, n.7.

Elizabeth's beloved sister-in-law, Cecilia Seton, joined Elizabeth's new community during her time in Baltimore.¹¹⁵

Elizabeth pronounced her private vows before Archbishop Carroll on March 25, 1809. In the letter to Filippo Filicchi dated January 21, 1809, Elizabeth informed him that she was making vows and declared, "I have long since made the Vows which as a religious I could only renew, and the thirst and longing of my soul is fixed on the cross alone." She stressed that she was entirely "detached from the world."¹¹⁶ She was ready to lead a new community. She informed her friend, Julia Scott of her new position: "It is true also that I shall be at the head of a community which will live under the strictest rules of order and regularity."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ CW, 2, app., A-5.10a, 713. According to "Sister Cecilia O'Conway's Memoir" of the community, the Sisters who joined Elizabeth's new community at Baltimore in 1809 were: Anna Maria Murphy Burke from Philadelphia in Holy week, Susan Clossy from New York on May 24, 1809, Mary Ann Butler on June 1, 1809, Rose Landry White and Kitty Mullen in June, 1809, right before the community's move to Emmitsburg. Rose Landry White (1784-1841) became the second mother superior of the Sisters of Charity after Elizabeth's death on January 4, 1821. She was also a widow and had two small children. CW, 2, sec., 6.3, 75, n. 2. In her community journal, Rose White recorded that Cecilia Seton, Elizabeth's sister-in-law, joined the community in the beginning of June, 1809. CW, 2, app., A-6.3a, 717; CW, 2, app., A-7.337, 780. "Register of Women Who Entered the Sisters of Charity During Elizabeth Seton's Lifetime (1809-1820)."

¹¹⁶ CW, 2, sec., 5.17, 53. Elizabeth Seton's religious vows made on March 25, 1809, were "private vows of chastity and obedience for one year to Archbishop John Carroll." However, she was "living in the spirit of the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience long before she made formal vows." It was "not until July 19, 1813, that she took her first vows as a Sisters of Charity." CW, 2: 53, n. 1. Cf. Robert Seton, *Memoir-Seton*, 2: 52; Melville, *EBS*, 141. Carroll became Archbishop when "on April 8, 1808, Pope Pius VII created Baltimore a metropolitan see and named the four suffragan sees as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown." Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore: Founder of The American Catholic Hierarchy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 225.

¹¹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 5.21, 62.

The Sisters in Elizabeth's new community donned a black religious habit similar to Elizabeth's widow costume on June 1 of 1809 and the next day, on the feast of Corpus Christi, they appeared "at the public service in St. Mary's chapel for the first time" with their habit and received holy communion which was like "the seal of their consecration to God." The people were deeply impressed by their presence and admired them.¹¹⁸ Mrs. Rachel M. Montgomery, who became friend of Elizabeth and her community through Mr. Cooper, wrote her impression of this new community in her letter to Elizabeth dated June 19, 1809: They are women "whose virtues and good example I trust will illuminate, our darkened hemisphere, and disperse the clouds of prejudice, which obscure the reasonable faculties of man."¹¹⁹

As head of the new community and school, one of Elizabeth's main concerns was to build a house for religious sisters and student boarders. In her letter to Antonio dated January 16, 1809, she explained the circumstances of her new mission and indirectly asked Antonio to assist their mission:

a religious establishment . . . can never take place but by the special protection of divine Providence which as it has already provided some excellent Souls with dispositions to embrace it, and fulfill the intention of instructing children in our religion, it seems that its Bounty will not be limited to a beginning –many parents have proposed sending their children to me to prepare for their first Communion from the recommendation of our Re. Archbishop [John] Carroll. . . . My life is a very happy one spent intirely between my school and the chapel which joins our dwelling. . . . I repeat it is not to make any formal request, but only by showing you the situation in which our Lord has placed us, give you the necessary intelligence to

¹¹⁸ White, 240-242.

¹¹⁹ ASJPH, 1-3-3-4:73. Rachel M Montgomery, Philadelphia to Seton, June 19, 1809.

direct you in doing his will for me, whether it is his pleasure to advance or retard my views his adored blessed will be done.¹²⁰

Elizabeth was occupied with the building plan and prayed God to reveal his will. In the letter to Filippo Filicchi dated January 21, 1809, she shared an inspiration which she received right after her communion. While she submitted all her “desires and actions in intire [entire] abandonment to His will” during communion, “the thought crossed [her] mind to ask Filicchi” for help with the building.¹²¹ After sending this letter, she continually sought God’s will in her prayer and got another insight during prayer after receiving Holy Communion. Elizabeth’s other insight was revealed in Rev. Dubourg’s letter. He described the mysterious story of Elizabeth’s inspiration which revealed God’s providence. After Mass Rev. Dubourg met with Elizabeth and she told him that she had a strong feeling that she had received a message from God after communion. Her inspiration was to ask Mr. Samuel Cooper to assist with her community’s building project. He told her to wait to ask him. On the same day, Cooper visited him and told Rev. Dubourg that he wanted to donate his wealth to Elizabeth so that she could instruct the poor children, if she were willing to do it. When Rev. Dubourg found out that there had been no communication concerning this idea between Elizabeth and Mr. Cooper, he was fascinated and experienced the providence of God in this event.¹²²

Elizabeth wrote to Filippo how the providence of God worked through Mr. Samuel Cooper who was then a seminarian at St. Mary's and had deep interest in Elizabeth and her

¹²⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 5.14, 45-47.

¹²¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 5.17, 52.

¹²² White, 232. Cf. Melville, *EBS*, 143-144.

work. Cooper was a wealthy man and entered to the seminary after his conversion to Catholicism. In the process of preparing for the tonsure, he wanted to donate his wealth for establishment of education for young Catholic girls. Cooper's dream was to establish "an institution for the advancement of Catholic female children in habits of religion" and to give them "an education suited to that purpose." He also expressed to Elizabeth his plan for "the reception of the aged and also uneducated persons who may be employed in spinning knitting, etc. etc. so as to found a manufactory on a small scale which may be very beneficial to the poor." She happily reported to Filippo Filicchi: "you see I am bound to let you know this disposition of Providence that you may yourself judge how far you may concern with it." In fact, she stressed that the Boston priests already had suggested a similar idea for Elizabeth before Cooper's suggestion.¹²³

Elizabeth noted that Samuel Cooper had purchased "a very valuable farm" which could be the place for Elizabeth's new community and school. This farm was situated in the valley of Emmitsburg, Maryland and near Mount St. Mary's College. She was so happy that she could continue her friendship with the Sulpician priests in Emmitsburg and be "always protected and taken care of as a part of their family."¹²⁴ Now her dream to be a religious as well as an educator for the poor seemed to be realized in Emmitsburg. She expressed her joy to serve the poor:

¹²³ CW, 2, sec., 5.18, 54-55. Tonsure is "a ritual which represented one of the steps toward priesthood in the Catholic Church." CW, 2, 54, n.1.

¹²⁴ CW, 2, sec., 5.21, 61-62. "Mount St. Mary's College near Emmitsburg, Maryland, was founded in 1808 by Rev. John Dubois, S.S., as a school for boys, and it later became a seminary as well. It was located at the base of St. Mary's Mountain on land donated by a prominent local Catholic family, the Elders." CW, 2, 62, n. 6.

-so far I can express, but to speak the joy of my soul at the prospect of being able to assist the Poor, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowful, clothe little innocents, and teach them to love God! - there I must stop.¹²⁵

A letter from the candidate Miss Sarah (Sally) Thompson of Emmitsburg to Elizabeth seemed a sign of God's blessing on Elizabeth and her new community established at Emmitsburg, Maryland. In her second letter to Elizabeth, Miss Thompson expressed her joy: "I told you that inexpressible was my joy when I heard that I was to have the happiness of becoming one of your children but my dear lady, I cannot cannot cannot tell you how much it added to my happiness when I heard that you were to become a neighbor of our mountain."¹²⁶ Thompson joined the community when Elizabeth and her Sisters, as the first team, moved into the old farm house, which was called the Stone House, on July 30, 1809. Her younger sister Eleanor also entered the community in September of the same year.¹²⁷ Her call to Elizabeth's community was God's providence. As a native of Emmitsburg, she along with her mother could offer much help for the community's living and settlement in Emmitsburg.

From Baltimore the second team of Elizabeth's community arrived at Emmitsburg on July 31, 1809, which was the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola "who was patron of the Maryland missions." Thus, July 31, 1809 was recorded as "the foundation day of the Sisters of Charity," and the Sisters began "a regular way of the life following an order of the day."

¹²⁵ CW, 2, sec., 5.21, 62. "Samuel Cooper paid \$6,961 for the Fleming Farm which included two tracts of 212 acres and 57 acres. The deed was recorded on April 26, 1809, in the name of Samuel Cooper and William Dubourg of Baltimore County and John Dubois of Frederick County, Maryland." CW, 2, 61, n. 4. Cf. Joseph B. Code, trans & adapted from 6th French ed., *Elizabeth Seton by Madame de Barberey* (Emmitsburg, MD: Mother Seton Guild Press, 1957), 247.

¹²⁶ ASJPH, 1-3-3-2:16.

¹²⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.7, 83, n. 1; 2, app., A-5.10a, 713; 2, app., A-7. 337,781.

According to Sister “Cecilia O’Conway’s Memoir,” the community had their “first retreat under the care” of their first Superior Rev. Dubourg on August 10, 1809.¹²⁸ On August 18, 1809 the Sisters at the Stone House elected a council to assist Elizabeth who was then the head of the Sisters of Charity.¹²⁹ Elizabeth described her community life at Emmitsburg and expressed her appreciation of Antonio’s contribution to the building of their house in her letter to him dated November 8, 1809:

In all my Communion you have a large place but one in every Week entirely yours. What else can I do my more than Brother, in return for your unfailing goodness to your poor Sister? that is all my possession except that joined with it the prayers of ten dear holy Sisters are daily offered for you, our Benefactor and friend. Now then you will laugh when I tell you that your wicked little Sister is placed at the head of a Community of Saints, ten of the most pious Souls you could wish, considering that some of them are young and all under thirty. Six more postulants (postulants) are daily waiting till we move in a larger place to receive (receive) them, and we might be a very large family if I received half who desire to come, but your Reverend Mother is obliged to be very cautious for fear we should not have the means of earning our living during the Winter. Yet as Sisters of Charity we should fear nothing. Your thousand Dollars will greatly relieve us dear Antonio may you be blessed for ever.¹³⁰

In her letter to Antonio dated May 20, 1810, she happily reported that they had a large school and twelve sisters were very happy because they were “night and day devoted to the sick and ignorant.” Now, they had “a very good house” which would be “the Mother House and retreat.” She proudly informed him that “All the clergy in

¹²⁸ CW, 2, 714, app., A-5.10a.

¹²⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6. 4, 77, n. 4. Sister Rose White was Elizabeth’s assistant. The first elected council was Sister Catherine Mullen, Cecilia O’Conway and Cecilia Seton. CW, 2, 77, n.4. “The Provisional Regulations for the St. Joseph Sisters.” CW, 2, app., A-6. 4a, 737.

¹³⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6.10, 89-90. Antonio Filicchi’s letter dated November 30, 1808 was the last letter which Elizabeth received “until the end of 1815 due to Napoleon’s Continental System.” CW, 2, 88, n. 4.

America support it by their prayers.” She could see “the seed of an immensity of future good” through the growth of her community and its mission. She praised God’s providence: “You must admire how Our Lord should have chosen such a one as I to preside over it, but you know he loves to show his strength in weakness, and his wisdom in the ignorant (cf. I Cor. 1:25), his blessed name be adored forever.”¹³¹

Although Elizabeth could not receive any letters from the Filicchis because of Napoleon’s war and his “Continental System,”¹³² she continually wrote to Antonio to inform him and Filippo of her situation. Elizabeth kept in mind their spiritual direction and guidance of her during her difficult time and she continued to share her life with them in her letters. Elizabeth’s health was getting weak and she had anxiety for her children, although she remembered the Filicchi brothers’ spiritual direction in which they always encouraged her to trust God’s providence. In the letter to Antonio dated June 24, 1811, she revealed how she practiced the spiritual direction the Filicchi brothers had given to her and reported the circumstances of the community’s mission:

Oh, Antonio, could you and Filippo know half the blessings you have procured for us all! . . . I give all up, you may be sure, to Him who feeds the birds of heaven (cf. Mt 6:26), as you say, but in the weak and decaying state of my health, which is almost broken down, can I look at the five without the fears and forebodings of a mother, whose only thought or desire is for their eternity? . . . Our success in having obtained the confidence of so many respectable parents who have committed the whole charge of their children to us, to the number of about fifty, besides poor children who have not means of education has enabled us

¹³¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.39, 127-128. The school opened February 22, 1810 in Emmitsburg. CW, 2, 127, n. A “very good house” was a newly built log house. Elizabeth called this house St. Joseph’s house and the first Mass was celebrated on March 19, 1810. The Filicchi family helped financially with the construction. Later this house was called the White House after it was painted white. CW, 2, sec., 6.12, 92, n. 4.

¹³² CW, 2, sec., 6. 9, 88, n. 4.

to get on very well without debt or embarrassment, and I hope our Adored has already done a great deal through our establishment. . . .No wars or rumors of war here, but fields ripe with harvest (cf. John 4:35).¹³³

When Elizabeth heard that Pope Pius VII was released from his detention at Fontainebleau and “departed for Rome as a result of the defeat of Napoleon in March and his abdication April 7, 1814,” she was so happy because under the guidance of Archbishop Carroll she had continually prayed for the Pope. Now communication would be possible because the mercantile vessels could cross the sea. In her letter to Antonio dated July 1, 1814, she shared her concern for her two sons with him. She desired for them to be priests, but they seemed not to have that gift. She also expressed her deep appreciation to the Filicchi brothers who guided her to live in God more deeply and helped her in many ways.¹³⁴ She also informed the Filicchis that one of her best friends became a Catholic.

My dear dear Antonio if you knew what God has done for me in calling us in his church, if you knew the daily Mass, and constant communions, the peace, and rest of his Sanctuary for your poor little American Sister, amidst all these rolling billows of our passage to Eternity you would say with me blessed be the hour you touched the American shore -- and poor good Mrs. [Catherine] Duplex too through storms and difficulties (to which mine were but gentle breezes) is safe also in the ark of refuge.¹³⁵

¹³³ CW, 2, 188-189, sec., 6.79.

¹³⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.167, 276-277. “Pope Pius VII was liberated from his imprisonment at Fontainebleau and departed for Rome as a result of the defeat of Napoleon in March and his abdication April 7, 1814. This changed the politics and markets of the world because communication and goods could now pass freely across the seas.” CW, 2, 276, n.1.

¹³⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6.167, 278. Catherine Duplex was one of Elizabeth’s best friends and “had converted in the fall of 1812.” CW, 2, 278, n. 8.

In her letter to Antonio dated December 20, 1814, Elizabeth asked Antonio to accept her son William to work in their company in Leghorn and direct his soul to God because she remembered the Filicchi brothers already had employed Elizabeth's two half-brothers in his company. She was very anxious for the future of her son, William, because she found that her son at the age of 18 had "a strong inclination to go to the Army or Navy." She worried that William would be faced with the greatest risk of his salvation and loss of faith, if he joined the armed forces. She stressed that her only concern was her sons' precious souls and "dear Eternity." She noted that her spiritual director, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, was willing to accompany William on his way to France and would arrange for him to go to Leghorn.¹³⁶

Elizabeth desired William's eternal life and hoped that William could develop deep faith under the Filicchi brothers' guidance and through their example. Although she had not received the Filicchi brothers' letter concerning their acceptance of her son, after consulting with Archbishop John Carroll, Bishop Cheverus, and Rev. Dubois who had guided William at Mount St. Mary's College, she was determined to send William to the Filicchi brothers accompanied by Bruté. Sending William to Filicchi brothers, she wrote

¹³⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6.177, 289. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté was Elizabeth's spiritual director and intimate soul friend. Elizabeth's half-brothers Guy Carleton Bayley and Richard Bayley, Jr. had worked "with the Filicchis in Leghorn (Livorno) as apprentices." CW, 2, 289, n. 2. Guy Carleton Bayley (1786-1859 married "Grace Roosevelt on November 4, 1813, and became the father of James Roosevelt Bayley (1814-1877)" who converted to Catholicism and became Bishop of Newark, and Archbishop of Baltimore. CW, 1, 249, n. 2. When Elizabeth and her husband went to Leghorn, he was there and welcomed them. Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley wrote *Memoirs of Bruté* based on Bruté's own notes and manuscripts. See James Roosevelt Bayley, *Memoirs of the Right Reverend Simon Wm. Gabriel Bruté, D.D., First Bishop of Vincennes: with Sketches Describing His Recollections of Scenes Connected with the French Revolution, and Extracts from His Journal*, New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1876.

again to Filippo Filicchi who did not receive it until July 29, 1815. In this letter, she noted that William could see “Catholics and Catholic religion” as they were in Italy “instead of the shadow” he saw it in the United States.¹³⁷

In the letter to Elizabeth dated August 12, 1815, Filippo Filicchi wrote that William seemed to have “a very good disposition” and “modest behavior.” If he would become useful and persevere in “the principles of Christian” morals, he said, you did not need to “be anxious for him.”¹³⁸ It was the last letter of Filippo to Elizabeth because he passed away in 1816. Elizabeth’s son William wrote to Rev. Bruté at the time of Filippo’s death:

Our beloved friend, Mr. Philip Filicchi, is in the agony of death; perhaps tomorrow thousands will bewail him. If virtue is a prize, they will lose indeed. The hundreds of poor fed at his hands, the orphans depending on his support, the prisoners relieved by his charity, will mourn a benefactor. But how tranquil must be the passage from this life to eternity of a soul unstained by crime; of one who has ever made his riches subservient to religion, and placed his honor, not in money, but in God!¹³⁹

When she heard of his death, she expressed her feeling to Rev. Bruté: “Filicchi gone – you will not forget him –if you know how much *I had counted* on his life. . .but

¹³⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.196, 331-332; sec., 6.196, 331-332. William could not communicate with the Filicchi brothers because of “the political turmoil due to the Hundred Days War of Napoleon,” thus, the Filicchi brothers did not know about his arrival. CW, 2, 332, n. 1.

¹³⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 44. William Seton was “apprenticed to the Filicchi mercantile firm in Leghorn (Livorno), Italy” from 1815 to 1817. “He served in the United States Navy (1818-1834) and married Emily Prime, the daughter of a New York banker.” His son, Robert Seton, was ordained a priest (1865) and became archbishop (1905) of Heliopolis. He edited Elizabeth’s correspondence and published *Memoir and Letters of Elizabeth Seton, converted to the Catholic Faith, and Sisters of Charity.*, CW, 2, 4, n. 8.

¹³⁹ Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 2, 224-225, quoting William Seton’s letter to Rev. Bruté dated August 22, 1816. Filippo Filicchi had died at Pisa August 22, 1816. CW, 2, 445, n. 1. Elizabeth often called Filippo as Philip.

God alone.”¹⁴⁰ However, William seemed not to have the needed skills for the Filicchi’s counting house. She wrote to Antonio about her anxiety over William although she remembered Antonio’s direction: “The first words you ever told me was to trust in God who took care of the young ravens and made the lilies grow” (cf. Luke 12: 22-34).¹⁴¹

In her letter to Antonio dated April 1, 1817, she mentioned William’s letter in which he told Elizabeth about his “want of capacity and Judgment” for the Filicchi family’s counting business, although he appreciated the Filicchi family’s most generous and noble treatment of him. She asked Antonio to discern William’s qualifications for his job there, and also about her second son, Richard Seton who was 18 years old.¹⁴²

In his letter to Elizabeth dated June 4, 1817, Antonio wrote that he agreed that William had no gift for counting work and worried that “he would not much improve his Catholicism though in a Catholic Country.” He discussed it with William in a very friendly way and both of them agreed that William return to the Unites States. Antonio suggested that he could replace Richard in William’s place, if she thought him “qualified for the task.”¹⁴³ He informed Elizabeth of William’s departure from Leghorn in his letter dated July 14, 1817.¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth sent her second son, Richard Seton, to Antonio and appreciated his help. Every year she hoped it would be last one where she had to ask him

¹⁴⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.60, 445.

¹⁴¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.19, 390.

¹⁴² *CW*, 2, sec., 7.81, 471.

¹⁴³ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-10: 46.

¹⁴⁴ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-10: 47.

for help, but she noted: “that is in the hands of our God.”¹⁴⁵ In the same letter to Antonio, she happily informed him of her community’s expansion to another area and the news that Rev. Dubourg who invited her to Baltimore had become the first bishop of Louisiana in 1812:

all our affairs at St Joseph go on with the blessing of God, Sisters are just now established in New York as in Philadelphia for the care of orphans, three branches are gone from our house to sow the little mustard seed [cf. Luke 13:19] - and religion smiles on our poor country in many ways -- the arrival of Bishop Dubourg with his 40 missionaries a great benediction, the interior settlements being many some wholly without priests to break the bread of life [cf. John 6: 35] to them.¹⁴⁶

Elizabeth became very sick in 1818 and everyone expected her death. In her letter to Antonio dated August 8, 1818, Elizabeth told him of her severe illness: “it is rather suspected that I your poor little sister am about to go and meet your Philipppo, but nothing of health can be certain and calculated at my age 45 . . . I know not, all I know is that we must all be ready for this dear dearest thief who is to come when least expected.” She continued that the “orphan asylums in New York and Philadelphia” promised more than they could have hoped and that Bishop Connolly of New York spoke very affectionately of Antonio.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ CW, 2, sec., 7.117, 507.

¹⁴⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7.117, 508. The Sisters of Charity sent three sisters to New York at the request of Bishop John Connolly of New York. Bishop John Connolly O.P. (1747/48 or 1751-1825) was “consecrated second bishop of New York in 1814. He asked Rev. John Dubois, S.S., the superior, to send the sisters to New York. CW, 2, 493, n. 1. Beyond the mission of St. Joseph’s Valley, the three missions of the Sisters of Charity at Elizabeth’s time were Philadelphia, Mount St. Mary’s and New York.” CW, 2, 493, n. 1, n. 3. Rev. William Dubourg as “first bishop of Louisiana and Florida” invited “numerous missionaries to America, including the Congregation of the Mission founded by St. Vincent de Paul.” CW, 2, 508, n. 4.

¹⁴⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7.175, 57.

In her letter to Antonio dated September 27, 1818, Elizabeth wrote that her community could “fill it with Sisters and children,” if they had “another house as large as the one” they were now in. Thus, they were “obliged to refuse [new applicants] continually for want of room.”¹⁴⁸ As Elizabeth's health declined she wrote to Antonio that their schools and “the orphan schools” show “the hand of God continually in their success and progress.” She also told Antonio of her serious decline in health: “Death has been some time past grinning at me, and threatening his visit, I show him his Master, and give it all in the hands of our God most cheerfully.”¹⁴⁹

Knowing Elizabeth's death was at hand, Antonio assured her of her readiness for eternity and also gave her a good report on her second son, Richard Seton, because he knew the mother's anxious heart. In his letter to Elizabeth dated March 8, 1819, Antonio wrote that he heard “a full account of [her] actual situation, cares, and merits” through letters from Rev. Samuel Cooper and other priests and encouraged her to prepare herself for the eternity:

My holy beloved Sister. . . . [all of your effort] will be your immense reward for an eternity, if you persevere faithful to his Will. To your prayers, I doubt not, I owe the uninterrupted prosperity of all my concerns in this world, and I am confident that, when you will be in Heaven, you will not let the door be shut against your own true brother and friend, who so fortunately contributed to open it

¹⁴⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7.181, 580. Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal, S.S. writing in his Diary notes: “Sisterhood fine and very precious institution. Sixteen vowed sisters, eighteen novices, two postulants – thirty-six plus three in New York and three in Philadelphia. Sixty-seven boarders.” CW, 2, 580, n. 3. Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal, S.S.(1768-1828) was “born in France” and ordained in 1792. Right after his ordination, he came to the United States and “joined the Sulpicians in Baltimore.” He served “as coadjutor to Archbishop Leonard Neal, S.J., then, became Archbishop of Baltimore” on December 14, 1817, after the death of Rev. Neal. “He died January 29, 1828.” CW, 2, n. 1, 481.

¹⁴⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.192, 593.

for you. . . .Your giant Richard is very well. he gives me perfect satisfaction in his moral & religious conduct. Little by little he will be himself, I hope, dayly better pleased with his lot with me, as well as I shall be myself with him, as he will try to be, and become, useful in my Counting house. He is good enough now to give some part of his time and patience in teaching the English language to my little ones Maria & Julia.¹⁵⁰

In the letter to Antonio dated April 18, 1820, Elizabeth updated her community's news. They had received another request to send sisters to New York in order to take "8 hundred children of the state school besides their orphan asylum." She joyfully exclaimed: "our poor little mustard seed (cf. Luke 13: 19) spreads its branches well."¹⁵¹ Meanwhile Elizabeth did not receive any mail from her son, Richard, and worried about him. Since her illness had gotten worse she was staying in a room beside the chapel so that she could make adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. She wrote to Antonio on April 18, 1820:

I long to hear that you are all well, the love of my heart can never grow cold to you and your dear family while it has a beat of life. Richards last letter to us was in September six months ago - I cannot help being a little anxious and praying very fervently that all may be well, but after the first start of Nature from time to time I drop all, most cordially and sincerely trusting our heavenly Providence, which has blessed us so far beyond all hope, for my part I try to make my very breathing a continual thanksgiving and no one can better understand my heart in [that] than my dear Antonio who knows so well [what] I have been, and the long burning I deserve instead of living in the very Sanctuary of the divine presence going to sleep at night [waking] in the morning almost before the blessed [altar] for we have but a partition between my little room and our chapel.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 48.

¹⁵¹ CW, 2, sec., 7.240, 644. "By this time in New York, the Sisters of Charity had the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum located in St. Patrick's Parish and a pay school which began in January 1820 for families who could not send their daughters to St. Joseph's. In May of the same year, the Sisters of Charity also opened the New York Free School." CW, 2, 644, n. 5.

¹⁵² CW, 2, sec., 7.240, 643-644.

In his letter to Elizabeth dated August 8, 1820, Antonio shared his opinion of Richard and told Elizabeth of Richard's departure from Italy in late July. Knowing Elizabeth's serious illness, he sent Elizabeth his encouragement and expressed his expectation to meet her in heaven:

Consider me, beloved Sister, firm at all times as a Rock in my brotherly sentiments for you. I do not entertain the hope of being any more near you in this world: but be it your daily and earnest prayer, I beseech you, dearest holy Sister to be allowed to shake hands with me in the next. Amen.¹⁵³

In her last letter to Antonio before her death, dated October 19, 1820, she wrote about receiving "the last Sacrament" three weeks before and expressed how his help produced abundant fruits in the United States: and how much she appreciated him:

This then is the earthly fruits of your goodness and patience with us these 20 years but happily - all is written in heaven. . . . now to take another side of your question could you but know what has happened in consequence of the little dirty grain of mustard seed (cf. Luke 13: 19) you planted by God's hand in America. the number [of] orphans fed and clothed publick and private etc. - Our Arch Bishop [Ambrose Maréchal, S.S.] is going to take a company of us to Baltimore in the house where our Bishop Carroll of happy memory lived[.] at Conawagoa dutch settlement they now prepare us an extensive establishment. we take Dutch or any trusting to God and educate them with as much care and daily regularity as our pay Boarder so as to extend their usefulness whenever OUR SWEET PROVIDENCE may call I [tr]ust of such an opportunity.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ ASJPH, 26-0-2, Folder #6, Antonio Filicchi to Seton, Leghorn, Italy, August 8, 1820.

¹⁵⁴ CW, 2, sec., 7.265, 669-670. Elizabeth was "critically ill, and Rev. John Dubois, S.S. administered the last rites of the Church, today called the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick" (CW, 2: 670, n. 5). She used her favorite "scriptural allusion" of the mustard seed because "Antonio Filicchi had provided substantial support at the time of the foundation of the Sisters of Charity, for instance, the construction of St. Joseph's House." CW, 2, 670, n. 2. Although Elizabeth discussed opening the Baltimore mission with Archbishop Maréchal, the Sisters of Charity actually opened "St. Mary's Free School and Asylum at Baltimore on July 4, 1821, after her death." CW, 2, 670, n. 3. Conewago was "a hub of Jesuit missionary activity in southern Pennsylvania near Hanover with many settlers of Germanic origin, sometimes referred to as Pennsylvania Dutch." This mission actually opened on June 19, 1834 CW, 2, 670, n. 4.

Antonio received Elizabeth's death announcement and the descriptive letter of Elizabeth's last days written by Rev. Bruté from Bishop John Cheverus. Elizabeth passed away on January 4, 1821. In responding to Bishop Cheverus in a letter dated November 5, 1821, Antonio expressed his condolence and solace when he heard of "the last happy days" of "heavenly Mrs. Seton." His letter revealed his grief and concern for Elizabeth's children's future.

Though too well acquainted with the declining state of health of that dear Sister, and prepared for the mournfull event, the account of her death had not yet reached me, and my heart bled at it, but surely she is now the happiest of us all, after so severe a trial as that she experienced all along her course of life in this vale of misery. That young Josephine has found an affectionate Mother in Mrs. Harper at Baltimore is consoling. I should be much gratified indeed in hearing that both Wm. & Richard Seton too would prove themselves deserving of the esteem, and patronage of their Mother's friends, and I am confident that Bishop Cheverus will not neglect them as much as it may be in his power, particularly in regard to keeping them in the right way for their souls. The heavenly Mrs Seton in her last letter to me, dated in October 1820, directed me the following remarkable sublime words about them: "For many years I have had no prayer for my Children, but that our blessed God would do every thing to them, & in them in the way of affliction, and adversity, if only He will save their Soul."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ ASJPH, 26-0-2, Folder #6, Antonio Filicchi to Bishop Cheverus, Leghorn, Italy, November 5, 1821. Elizabeth had five children, but lost her two daughters before her death. Her first child, Anna Maria Seton, had died March 12, 1812. CW, 1, 9, n. 6. and her fifth and youngest child, Rebecca Mary Seton on November 3, 1816. CW, 1,211, n.5. Her first son, William Seton after returning to the United States from Leghorn "served in the United States Navy (1818-1834) and married Emily Prime (1804-1854), the daughter of a New York banker." CW, 2, 4, n. 8. William's son, Robert Seton (1839-1927) was ordained in 1865 and became "archbishop (1905) of Heliopolis." Bechtle and Metz, genealogy to CW,1 xxvi. Robert Seton wrote *Memoir, Letters and Journal, of Elizabeth Seton*. Richard Seton, her second son, "served in the United States Navy (1822-23) and became the United States Assistant Agent in Monrovia." Two years after Elizabeth's death, he died in 1823 at sea. "He was serving in this capacity at the time of his death which was a result of an illness contracted while nursing the first American consul in Liberia, Jehudi Ashmun, who recovered." CW, 1,40, n. 1. Catherine Charlton Seton was the fourth child. "After Elizabeth's death Catherine traveled with her brother William and his family before entering the Sisters of Mercy in New York (1846) where she did prison ministry and became the assistant of her order (1846-1871). She died in 1891 as a Sister of Mercy." She often was called Josephine which was "probably her Confirmation name." CW, 1,124, n. 2.

2. Summary

The Filicchi brothers were excellent spiritual directors for Elizabeth. They directed her to accept the Catholic faith and to pursue the virtuous life. Under the spiritual direction of the Filicchi brothers, Elizabeth developed not only her scriptural, Eucharistic, and liturgical piety, but also her ecclesiastical piety in the Catholic Church. As mentioned earlier, Filippo Filicchi guided Elizabeth to the Catholic Church through his manuscript on the Catholic belief and with other books on the Catholic faith, such as Richard Challoner's *The Unerring Authority of the Catholic Church in Matters of Faith*. Antonio introduced Elizabeth to Archbishop John Carroll and Bishop John Cheverus who not only played a great role in her conversion and in the establishment of the Sisters of Charity, but also became her lifelong spiritual directors. The Filicchi brothers planted not only Catholic faith but also the seed of ecclesiastic piety in Elizabeth's soul through their instruction on the true Apostolic Church.

Under the spiritual direction of the Filicchi brothers, Elizabeth deepened her biblical piety. They knew Elizabeth's love of the Word of God. Using the Scriptural story related to "the Would-be-Followers of Jesus" in the Gospel Luke, Filicchi reminded Elizabeth of how people, who received Jesus' call (cf. Luke 9: 57-62), postponed to follow him for various reasons and urged her to accept Jesus' invitation to the Catholic Church.¹⁵⁶ Antonio gave *The Holy Bible* to Elizabeth as a gift for her conversion to Catholicism in 1805. This Bible became Elizabeth's lifelong companion and her various inscriptions and notes in pages of this Bible witnessed how she loved the Word of God.

¹⁵⁶ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 14.

As referred to in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth as an Episcopalian already had a burning heart toward union with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Filippo guided Elizabeth to love Jesus Christ in the Eucharist by referring to the sayings of the Church Fathers who praised “the Sacrifice of Eucharist.”¹⁵⁷ The Filicchi brothers witnessed the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist through their life example and letters. In her letter to Antonio’s wife, Amabilia, Elizabeth expressed her exhilaration after her first communion in the Catholic Church. The Eucharist was the heavenly food for Elizabeth in her journey toward union with God. Elizabeth also developed her liturgical piety in the spiritual direction of the Filicchi brothers. Among the books given by these brothers, she especially loved Rev. Louis Bourdaloue’s *Sermons*¹⁵⁸ which helped her to appreciate deeply celebrations of a feast day. She often noted a feast day in the beginning of her letters.

Elizabeth deeply valued Filippo’s spiritual direction. When she heard of Filippo’s illness she wrote to Antonio dated August 20, 1808 and asked Antonio to tell his brother Filippo how she as his novice longed for his spiritual direction:

tell your dear Brother I long for a little sermon from him on Christian perfection, which tho so high an Ambition, I am daring to gaze at with longing desire - he knows that one page from him has more effect on his Novice than many volumes from the pen of a stranger. the books he has given me are now doubly a treasure.¹⁵⁹

Antonio Filicchi became a soul friend of Elizabeth and continually took care of her and her children from the time he accompanied her on her return voyage to America

¹⁵⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:18.

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth’s reference on Bourdaloue’s *Sermon*: see n. 61 in this chapter.

¹⁵⁹ CW, 2, sec., 5.7, 29.

until her death. As mentioned earlier, Antonio also planted the seed of religious life in Elizabeth's heart through his Montreal project. They encouraged one another to grow in the virtuous life and accompanied each other in their journey to God. In her letter to Antonio dated January 16, 1809, Elizabeth expressed how she always appreciated the Filicchi brothers' great help in her journey to the Catholic Church:

our Rev. Mr. [Pierre] Babade who is a saint, said Mass this morning for my Leghorn Brothers [Antonio and Filippo Filicchi] and I offered my Communion for the same intention as this holy season was precisely the time that the divine Light of Faith which I so long resisted forced its way with an overwhelming power which made me to see and taste its infinite sweetness – Of Antonio where would the poor Mother and her children be if she had not been delivered from darkness and error.¹⁶⁰

Antonio and Filippo kept many letters of Elizabeth and bishops' letters related to Elizabeth in their family archives because they valued her spirituality. In his letter to Elizabeth dated April 18, 1805, Antonio expressed not only his friendship and his concern for her but also his appreciation of her:

My Letters in broken English cannot convey to you but the repetition of my first professed sentiments of esteem, friendship, eternal concern for your welfare: but yours are to me a lesson for language & style, a pattern of friendly expression, a living example & excitement to virtue & Godliness, a true blessing in my present wandering, uneasy life.¹⁶¹

When Elizabeth was distressed because of her financial difficulty due to her intention to convert to Catholicism, Antonio and his brother Filippo helped Elizabeth and her children financially and were able to ease some of her anxiety concerning her financial situation:

¹⁶⁰ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 46.

¹⁶¹ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:20.

It grieves me profoundly to keep your anxiety so awoken; but according my sacred principles, and my most solid affection, how can I spare you, my worthy [worthy] Sister? I renew here in writing my solemn promise that I shall be at every event your most affectionate & sincere friend till my last breath, ready to do every thing in my power in your favor for the best comfort of this mortal and unhappy life. In my absence from New York or from America my purest friendship will remain with you as long as I shall live, to your support unshaken, and to that effect an honorable Person will be pointed out to you, to whom you will be pleased, you shall apply in my name in every emergency without any other compass or controul but the extent of my sufficiency your wants and should I lie before you, my Brother, you know, will be happy to perform my wishes in his own account.¹⁶²

The Filicchi brothers truly supported Elizabeth and her children and even donated their wealth to the establishment of the Sisters of Charity. Elizabeth expressed that her gratitude and affection for the Filicchis could not be diminished by “time or separation,” rather it had been “daily increased.” Truly, the Filicchi brothers’ spiritual guidance was the “invaluable treasure” for Elizabeth.¹⁶³ She continued,

if you could know how many many favours and consolations are daily bestowed on your American Sister your heart would overflow with thankfulness -- and you may be sure that if yourself and your Filippo [Filicchi] does not recieve your centuple (Hundredfold, cf. Mt 19:29) even in this world it is not for want of constant fervent prayers of your prodigal child to which indeed you need not give much credit, but when I repeat to you that I am so happy as to recieve the Bread of Angels [Holy Communion] so often, (sometimes for two weeks together every day), how can I help hoping that the incessant prayers will be recieved which is offered to and by and through Him from whom all blessings flow.¹⁶⁴

On the other hand, Elizabeth’s letters nourished the Filicchi brothers’ spiritual life. Antonio often expressed his gratitude to Elizabeth because he became more Christian and

¹⁶² ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:4. Antonio to Seton, July 26, 1804.

¹⁶³ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 44.

¹⁶⁴ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 44-45. The last sentence of the quote seemed that “Elizabeth may be paraphrasing the doxology of the Mass.” CW, 2, 45, n. 4.

believed that the prosperity of the Filicchi's company was due to Elizabeth's fervent prayer. Antonio's letter to Elizabeth revealed his gratitude to Elizabeth:

I looked more direly on you as my principal Intercessor, and you must have had certainly a great share in my delivery. What wonder then in my readiness to be serviceable to you! Through your good example they find me now a better Christian than I was, & through you my Mercantile concerns are blessed by God with an uninterrupted success. I shall not therefore be so fool as to desert your cause. Pray only our Divine Redeemer to extend his mercy towards me to the most important welfare in our next life. If I have been happy enough to be the instrument of introducing you to the gates of the true Church of Christ here below. Keep me fast by you when called up stairs: we must enter together within in Heaven. Amen.¹⁶⁵

Through their life-long spiritual friendship, Elizabeth and the Filicchi brothers guided one another to grow toward their sanctity. Their correspondences proved that they developed their spiritual life in humility, perseverance, and abandonment of self in order to follow the will of God in faith. In hope they entrusted everything to the providence of God and endured the difficulty of the present moment of life in the light of Eternity. They supported one another to practice the love of God for His people. Their common goal was salvation of the soul and union with God in eternity. They served each other's sanctity through their prayers and actions. The Filicchi brothers deepened their spiritual life through the spiritual friendship with Elizabeth and participated in building Elizabeth's community.

As a whole, the Filicchi brothers as spiritual directors laid the cornerstone for Elizabeth's spiritual growth as a virtuous Catholic and as a foundress of the Sisters of Charity. Their preservation of letters from Elizabeth and others related to her in their

¹⁶⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10:26.

family archives contributed to the process of Elizabeth's canonization as a saint.

Elizabeth's sainthood and the Sisters of Charity are indebted to the Filicchi brothers.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIZABETH SETON'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

TOWARD UNION WITH GOD UNDER GUIDANCE OF THE CLERGY

Elizabeth Seton's spiritual growth as a Catholic and a religious was nurtured not only under the guidance of the Filicchi brothers but also by the prominent clergy in the early 19th-century Catholic Church in the United States. In her letters, Elizabeth mentioned many clergy who guided her spiritual journey. Rev. Matthew O'Brien¹ and Rev. Michael Hurley² gave spiritual guidance to Elizabeth from the time of her conversion to Catholicism in New York until she moved to Maryland. Rev. Dr. Francis A. Matignon³ and Rev. John S. Tisserant,⁴ who were Bishop John Cheverus' close friends, gave spiritual advice to Elizabeth for a while. Rev. Louis William Dubourg,⁵ who later

¹ "Rev. Matthew O'Brien came to New York from Albany sometime before 1802." As mentioned earlier, he received Elizabeth's "profession of faith as a Roman Catholic at St. Peter's Church, Barclay Street, in lower Manhattan March 14, 1805" and served as confessor of Elizabeth for a while. *CW*, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 3. 17. 342, n. 6.

² Rev. Michael Hurley, O.S.A. (1780?-1837) was "raised in Philadelphia although he was probably born in Ireland." He entered "the Order of St. Augustine in 1797" and "served at St. Peter's Catholic Church in New York from 1805-1807." Elizabeth and Cecilia Seton admired him and called him "St. Michael," "St. M.," or "why so." He later became "pastor of St. Augustine's in Philadelphia (1820) and superior of the Augustinians in the United States" in 1826. *CW*, 2, sec., 5.1, 5, n. 13. He had been "instructing Anna Maria, Elizabeth's first daughter, for her First Communion which she made July 16, 1806, at St. Peter's." *CW*, 1, 413, n. 2.

³ Rev. Dr. Francis A. Matignon (1753-1818) was a "doctor of the Sorbonne (1785)" and came from France to the United States in 1792. He was a friend of Reverend Cheverus and gave spiritual direction with Cheverus to Elizabeth. *CW*, 1, 343, n. 1.

⁴ Rev. John S. Tisserant, a French émigré became Elizabeth's "spiritual advisor during the first year after her conversion and was her sponsor at Confirmation when he served in Elizabethtown, New Jersey." *CW*, 1, 382, n.3.

⁵ Rev. Louis William Dubourg, S. S. (1766-1833) was born at Cape Haytien "in the French part of the island of St. Domingo," and received "a very superior education from the Sulpicians of

became the first Bishop of Louisiana in 1812, played an important role in the life of Elizabeth and the Sisters of Charity because his “invitation to Elizabeth to come and teach in Baltimore led to the establishment of the first native sisterhood in the United States, the Sisters of charity of St. Joseph’s” in 1809.⁶ Actually it was Rev. Pierre Babade who initiated the establishment of the Sisters of Charity. Babade, who was Elizabeth's confessor, admired Elizabeth's spirituality and introduced “the first recruit for Elizabeth to establish the Sisters of Charity.”⁷ Rev. John Dubois, S. S. helped Elizabeth and her community when they settled in Emmitsburg and became the third superior of the Sisters of Charity in 1811. Dubois played an important role in translating and drafting the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity based on the *Common Rules* of the French Daughters of Charity.⁸ He served the Sisters of Charity as a director “until 1826 when he was appointed bishop of New York.”⁹

France.” The French Revolution “obliged him to seek refuge first in Spain, and, in 1795, in the United States, where he became President of St. Mary’s College, in Baltimore.” Robert Seton, D.D., ed. *Memoir, Letters and Journal of Elizabeth Seton, convert to the Catholic Faith, and Sister of Charity* (hereafter cited as *Memoir*), 2 vols. (New York: P. O’Shea, Publisher, 1870), 1, 271, n. 1. He “briefly served as the community’s first Superior (1809). As first bishop of Louisiana (1812), Dubourg invited the first priest of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) to begin a mission in North America in 1836.” After he “resigned his Episcopal See in 1826,” he returned to “France where he became bishop of Montauban (1826-1833) and archbishop of Besancon (1833).” *CW*, 1, 419, n. 4. Cf. Annabelle M. Melville, *Louis William DuBourg, Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas, Bishop of Montauban, and Archbishop of Besancon* (hereafter cited as *DuBourg*) (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986).

⁶ *CW*, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 5.1, 6. n. 19.

⁷ Rev. Pierre Babade [sometimes Babad], S.S. (1763-1846) assisted Rev. Dubourg in “establishing St. Mary’s College in Baltimore and taught Spanish there.” He was poetic and wrote poems for Elizabeth's family. Elizabeth Seton chose him as “her confessor and spiritual advisor.” *CW*, 2, 21, n. 6.

⁸ “The Daughters of Charity were founded in Paris in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac for the service of the poor. Because the Daughters of Charity were not a consecrated

Although there were many clergy who guided Elizabeth in her spiritual journey, three members of the clergy played significant roles as lifelong spiritual directors for Elizabeth as well as for her children. Archbishop John Carroll,¹⁰ Bishop John Cheverus,¹¹ and Bishop Simon Gabriel Bruté,¹² like the Filicchi brothers, were not only spiritual directors but also supported Elizabeth and her children in various ways until Elizabeth's death. Whenever Elizabeth had to make an important decision in her life, they all joined in her discernment and guided her to find and follow the will of God in the events of her life as a mother and the foundress of the Sisters of Charity.

religious community, the sisters were not subject to the restrictions of the cloister and were able to work among the people. They quickly expanded to other European locales. The French emigré Sulpicians were familiar with the work of this group." *CW*, 2, 98, n. 2.

⁹ Rev. John Dubois, S.S. (1764-1842) was "born in France and ordained in 1787." He came to "the United States in 1791 as a refugee from the French revolution." He founded "Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary in Emmitsburg" in 1808 and became "the third superior of the Sisters of charity" in 1811 and continued in that position until 1826 when he was appointed "bishop of New York (1826-42)." He "withdrew from the Sulpicians" at "the time of his Episcopal appointment" *CW*, 2, 74, n. 1.

¹⁰ Rev. John Carroll was referred to in chap. 2. John Carroll became the first bishop of the United States in 1789 and the first Archbishop in 1808.

¹¹ Rev. John Cheverus (Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, 1768-1836) came from France to the United States "on October 3, 1796." Annabelle M. Melville, *Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, 1768-1836* (hereafter cited as *Cheverus* (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1958), 43. He was appointed "the first bishop of Boston in 1808," although his consecration ceremony as a bishop occurred in 1810 at Baltimore. He played an important role in Elizabeth's decision to convert to Catholicism and continually "befriended and advised Elizabeth Seton after her conversion. After resigning as bishop of Boston, Cheverus became the archbishop of Bordeaux (1826-1836) and was named cardinal shortly before his death." *CW*, 1, 343, n. 1.

¹² Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté de Remur, S.S. (1779-1839) was "born in France" and became "a physician in 1803." He was "ordained to the priesthood in 1808" and arrived in June 1810 in the United States. "He brought an extensive library of several thousand volumes with him which he shared with Elizabeth. She translated some of these books in order to share them with the sisters." He served at "St. Mary's College and Seminary, Baltimore" and "Mount St. Mary's, Emmitsburg, Maryland, where he developed deep spiritual bonds with Elizabeth Seton. He became the spiritual director and chaplain for the Sisters of Charity (1818-1834) and later the first bishop of Vincennes, Indiana (1834-1839)." *CW*, 2, 2, n. 1.

While the Filicchi brothers guided Elizabeth to deepening faith, hope, and love of God in the Catholic Church and to grow in the virtuous life, these outstanding clergymen directed Elizabeth to unite with God through purification and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. They also directed her to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ. This chapter will examine Elizabeth's spiritual growth under the spiritual direction of Bishop John Cheverus, Archbishop John Carroll, and Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté.

1. Elizabeth Seton's Spiritual Growth under the Guidance of Rev. John Cheverus

As was stated in the previous chapter Elizabeth came to know Rev. John Cheverus through Antonio Filicchi. Antonio believed that Cheverus could help Elizabeth in her discernment concerning her conversion as well as in her spiritual life. In his letter to Elizabeth dated October 8, 1804, Antonio expressed his admiration of the Boston priest, Rev. John Cheverus: "Every Sunday our Church is mostly crowded by them to hear the sermon of our learned & eloquent Cheverus, and some Conversions from time to time take place without any murmuring at all."¹³

The spiritual relationship between Elizabeth and Cheverus was carried out through their exchange of letters from 1805 until Elizabeth's death. They met only twice when Cheverus came to Baltimore for his consecration as Bishop of Boston and on the occasion of Archbishop Carroll's death anniversary Mass. Elizabeth's letters to Cheverus and all the correspondence he had received in the United States are not extant because they were destroyed during a ship wreck on his return voyage to France in 1823. However, Elizabeth's joy and sorrow in her life journey were revealed in Cheverus'

¹³ Archives of Daughters of the Charity, St. Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, MD. (hereafter cited as ASJPH), 1-3-3-10-11.

letters to her. His letters illustrated how he directed Elizabeth to grow in her spiritual life in the midst of suffering and uncertainty.

Elizabeth hesitated for almost a year in great distress before making her decision to convert to Catholicism. Antonio Filicchi recommended Rev. John Cheverus as a spiritual director to Elizabeth and urged her to ask his advice concerning her decision to convert to Catholicism. In his letter dated March 4, 1805 responding to Antonio's request that he direct Elizabeth, Cheverus enclosed a letter to Elizabeth assisting her in her discernment. First of all he told her that "the reading of controversial books would be perfectly useless" in her present state of mind because she had "read and heard enough to be acquainted with the arguments on both sides." In the same letter, he guided her to turn her heart to God and ask Him to strengthen her faith:

Your earnest wish to find out the truth, your fervent prayers, your fastings, etc., will obtain from the Father of lights, "who seeth in secret," that he should bestow upon you the precious gift of faith. The God of all comfort will perfect in you the good work which he has begun. . . . I believe you are always a good Catholic. The doubts which arise in your mind do not destroy your faith, they only disturb your mind. Who in this life, my dear Madam, is perfectly free from such troubles? "We see as through a glass in an obscure manner," we stand like Israelites at the foot of the holy mountain, but in spite of dark clouds and the noise of thunder, we perceive some rays of the glory of the Lord and we hear His divine voice. I would therefore advise your joining the Catholic church as soon as possible, and when doubts arise, say only: I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief.¹⁴

¹⁴ Archives of the Sisters of Charity, Mount St. Vincent, New York (hereafter cited as AMSV), 115,1,12, Cheverus to Seton, Boston, March 4, 1805; James J. Dougherty, ed., the *Life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle, One of Mother Seton's: First Companions, the Assistant Mother Under her for Eight years, and First Superioress of "The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul" in New York City* (Staten Island, NY: The Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, 1893), 25-27. The original of this letter is in Archives of Mount Saint Vincent, New York. The first biographer of Elizabeth Seton, "Father White in his life of Mother Seton remarks that he had searched for this letter in vain. Mother Jerome chanced to find it" (Dougherty, 25). "On the margin of this letter, written in Mother Seton's own hand are the following words: 'Bishop Cheverus' first letter in answer to an earnest entreaty for his advice. Entered the Church immediately on the 14th of March 1805" (Dougherty, 28). Melville quoted a part of this letter in her works, *Cheverus* (102, n. 16) and

Right before receiving Cheverus' letter, Elizabeth courageously visited for the first time St. Peter's Catholic Church on February 27, 1805. Cheverus' letter ended her long wandering search for the true Church and his advice became an impetus for Elizabeth's decision making. Elizabeth perceived God's presence with her through her persistent prayer for God's help. She received enormous strength from Cheverus' advice and finally made up her mind to convert to Catholicism. She valued Cheverus' advice and wrote her reflection on the back of Cheverus' letter to her: "Bishop Cheverus first letter in answer to an earnest entreaty for his advice – Entered the church immediately after – 14 March, one year after returning from Leghorn-" In this reflection, she jotted down her thoughts in the form of a little poem:

.....
 In His Name was all our trust
 He will hush each doubt and fear
 And take His Wanders Home
 O yes my only love

Yes we'll meet again my love
 Soon we'll meet upon that shore
 Where the weary are at rest
 And the wretched sigh no more

With our Jesus we will dwell
 He will wipe our ears away

And our longing souls enjoy
 The Vision of Eternal day-¹⁵

Elizabeth Bayley Seton, 1774-1821 (hereafter cited as *EBS*) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 96, chap. 5, n. 60.

¹⁵ *CW*, vol. 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 11.1, 1-2, "This reflection is written on the outside of a letter Elizabeth received from Rev. John Cheverus dated March 4, 1804." *CW*, 3b, 1, n. 1.

In her draft letter to Cheverus written after March 25, 1805, Elizabeth joyfully reported her conversion to Catholicism and exclaimed: “what God has done for me so beyond my most lively hopes.” She shared with Cheverus her gratitude and her heart:

My joyful heart offers you the tribute of its lively gratitude for your kind and charitable interest in its sorrows when it was oppressed with doubts and fears; and hastens after completion of its happiness to inform you that thro' the boundless Mercy of God and aided by your very satisfactory council [counsel], my Soul has offered all its hesitations and reluctancies [reluctances] a Sacrifice with the blessed Sacrifice of the Altar on the 14th March and the next day was admitted to the true Church of Jesus Christ with a mind grateful and satisfied as that of a poor shipwrecked mariner on being restored to his Home.¹⁶

Elizabeth's letter revealed how the spiritual direction of Rev. John Cheverus purified her soul in darkness and freed her from the valley of doubt and confusion. After receiving her first communion on “the happy day of the Annunciation,” Elizabeth felt that she entered into a new life in God:

it seemed indeed to be admitted to a new life and that Peace which passes all understanding- with David I now say “Thou hast saved my Soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling,” and certainly desire most earnestly to “walk before him in the land of the living” (cf. Ps. 116) esteeming my priviledge [privilege] so great and what he has done for me so beyond my most lively hopes that I can scarcely realize my own blessedness.¹⁷

¹⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 3, 20, 346. This draft letter is “the only extant example of many letters Elizabeth Seton wrote to Rev. John Cheverus. The actual letter she sent in 1805 was apparently destroyed along with all the correspondence Cheverus had received during his years in America as a priest and later the bishop of Boston when he was shipwrecked off the French coast in 1823.” *CW*, 1, 346, n. 1. Rev. Cheverus' letter to Elizabeth was preserved in the Filicchi Family's Archives because Elizabeth often sent Cheverus' letters to her to Antonio in order to share his spiritual guidance with him. See, Elizabeth's letter to Antonio. *CW*, 1, 364. As referred to in an earlier chapter, according to the editorial note, “Conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation were not standardized in Elizabeth's time. For example, she often used *ie* where *ei* is usual, and she did not consistently indent paragraphs.” Quotations “follow her punctuation, capitalization, spellings, and misspellings in English and other languages as closely as possible except where such retention would result in confusion” (Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for *CW*, 1, xxvii).

¹⁷ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.20, 347.

Elizabeth expressed her enormous experience of liberty to Cheverus when she received her first communion in the Catholic Church March 25, 1805, the feast of the Annunciation: “you dear Sir could never experience but may picture to yourself a poor burdened creature weighed down with sins and sorrows receiving an immediate transition to life liberty and rest.” Then, she begged him to give “advice and counsel” in order to keep her “inestimable blessings” and to pray for her to “be faithful to God and persevere to the end.”¹⁸

In his first letter to Elizabeth, Cheverus also guided her to “be very prudent” in her fasting and “other voluntary mortifications.” He recommended a book, St. Francis de Sales’ *Devout Life*, and asked her to read often the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th “chapters of St. John, particularly the last.” He also invited her to read “the following of Christ” because “many passages [were] exactly suiting” her present situation. He promised her that he should “answer with pleasure and in the best manner” he could, whenever she would please to favor him with a letter.¹⁹

Elizabeth was so happy because she already had read the books which Cheverus recommended and the reading of the Scriptures was her life-long habit. She joyfully responded to Cheverus that she was happy that she had already enjoyed the books and the Gospel of St. John he recommended, but she would again attentively read the instructions of these books and John’s Gospel:

¹⁸ CW, 1, sec., 3.20, 346-347.

¹⁹ AMSV, 115, 1.12, Cheverus to Seton, Boston, March 4, 1805; This letter was also reproduced in Dougherty’s *Life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle*, 27.

true there are many good books, but directions personally addressed from a revered source most forcibly [forcibly] impress - for instance many years I have preferred those Chapters you appoint in St. John - but from your direction make it a rule to read them constantly. [T]he Book you mentioned ‘the following of Christ’ has been my consolation . . . also in reading the life of St. Francis de Sales I felt a perfect willingness to follow him and could not but pray that my soul might have its portion with his on the great day – the Sermons of Bourdaloue have also greatly helped to convince and enlighten me, for many months past one of them are always included in my daily devotions.²⁰

In a letter to Antonio, Elizabeth described her feeling concerning Cheverus and her envy of Antonio who would receive blessings from Cheverus “by being in Boston.” She continued: “I assure you mine often involuntarily turns to your interesting description of Cheverus and his manner of Instruction, for it requires indeed a mind superior to all externals to find its real enjoyment here.”²¹ Longing for Cheverus’ letter of spiritual direction, she noted that she was impatiently waiting to hear from him who would prepare good advice and instructions for her.²²

In his letter to her dated October 22, 1805, Antonio assured Elizabeth of Cheverus’ friendship: “If it may cheer & comfort you to hear of his regard & affection for you & children, I am authorized to repeat you in his name, that his sentiments stand unbroken & unconquerable, that he has been, is, & will be your real friend for ever with all his power.”²³

²⁰ CW, 1, sec., 3.20, 347-348. Thomas á Kempis, *The Following of Christ*.

²¹ CW, 1, sec., 3.22, 350.

²² CW, 1, sec., 3.26, 358; 1: sec., 3.28, 362. Cf. CW, 1, sec., 3. 25, 357.

²³ ASJPH, 1-3-3-10: 27.

Antonio knew of Elizabeth's desire to receive Cheverus' spiritual direction and already had informed Cheverus in his letter dated March 16, 1804, how Elizabeth was longing for his advice and indirectly asked him to continue to give spiritual direction to Elizabeth:

Taught by me to put the proper value on your advice and spiritual direction, and sensible of your goodness from the manner in which you have been pleased to answer her first application, she will occasionally avail herself of the permission you grant her of addressing you; and to God, I know, you will look for reward of your trouble.²⁴

Rev. John Cheverus accepted Elizabeth and Antonio's petition for his continual advice and direction. When he learned that Rev. John Tisserant was planning to go the New York area, Cheverus sent to Elizabeth through him a *Prayer Book*, which had been printed in 1803 by him for the parishioners of his Church in Boston, with his own letter dated June 1, 1805. In this letter, he told her that Tisserant was both "learned & pious" and could share good conversation with her, if she "wanted advice upon any particular subject." Cheverus stressed that she could always ask his opinion "without any fear of doing it too often," and promised that he would answer her "esteemed letters with punctuality & in the best manner" he was able.²⁵ Then, he guided her to keep peace in the midst of her anxiety and doubts and call upon Jesus for his help with an earnest heart:

I beg of you to accept of as a small token of my friendship & respect, I would send some other book, but, but what Mr. Filichi told me, I believe you have got a copy of every one I have here. I hope you continue to enjoy that happy peace

²⁴ Melville, *Cheverus*, 103, quoting Antonio to Cheverus.

²⁵ ASJPH, 1-2-3-1:2. The *Prayer Book* given by Cheverus seems to be the "Roman Catholic Manual, or a Collection of Prayers, Anthems, and Hymns." *CW*, 3b, 71, n. 1. Cf. *CW*, 1, 347, n. 8. The original of this prayer book is "at the University of Notre Dame Archives, but the title page is missing." *CW*, 1, 347, n. 8; 3b, 631.

which surpassed all understanding. Should it however be disturbed by doubts, anxieties & c., do not get discouraged. In the midst of the storm & when Jesus seems to be asleep, call upon him with earnestness, he will arise & everything will be calm within you. . . .I sincerely regret my duty will not allow me to accompany Mr. Tisserant to New York. Be so kind as to remember me in your prayers. May you, like the Blessed Virgin and the other holy women who were with the apostles, be filled with the Holy Ghost.²⁶

According to Rev. John Cheverus' letter to Elizabeth dated November 30, 1805, Elizabeth had sent him a letter dated October, 1805. In this letter to him, she thanked Cheverus for sending the *Prayer Book* and asked him to confirm whether the College at Montreal could accept her two sons or not. Cheverus knew about Elizabeth's Canada dream. However, Cheverus informed her that the college at Canada gave "no hopes of the immediate admission" of the Seton boys because of their renovation of the building. With a great concern, he wrote: "Mr. Filichi will try in Baltimore or in George Town & I think that he will succeed. His recommendation alone will have a great weight, the venerable Bishop himself knows & respects you & will feel highly interested in the welfare of yourself & family."²⁷

When Rev. John Cheverus learned about Elizabeth's agony due to her conversion to Catholicism, he counseled her to participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ in the midst of her difficult life situation. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth was confronted with social and economical difficulties because of her conversion. The Episcopalian minister, Rev. John Henry Hobart warned the Episcopalians not to have any

²⁶ ASJPH, 1-2-3-1:2.

²⁷ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:3.

discussion with Elizabeth on the subject of Catholicism.²⁸ He also opposed the establishment of the school of Mr. White with Elizabeth because he worried about the influence of Catholicism on young girls and boys. Hobart even reproached the Episcopalian clergyman who gave the permission to Mr. White to open the school. Elizabeth's friends, Eliza Sadler and Catherine Duplex, explained to Hobart that Mr. and Mrs. White were Protestant not Catholic and Elizabeth's intention was not to proselytize, but to earn bread for her children. Hobart acknowledged the concern of Elizabeth's friends and he promised to use his influence to help Elizabeth, but the damage was already done.²⁹

Rev. John Cheverus was deeply concerned about Elizabeth's miserable situation and gave spiritual direction to her in a letter dated November 30, 1805. First of all, he guided her continually to pray. He also advised her on how to deal with the accusations of her persecutors and encouraged her to demonstrate clearly and in a simple way the reasons for her decision to convert to Catholicism. Then, he guided her to recognize Jesus' suffering in her afflictions and agony, and urged her rather to have joy in hope because she was united with Christ through her suffering:

I am aware of the difficulties & troubles you must have to encounter in the midst of your acquaintances. When those who raise objections, expect an answer, give them some short & clear reason of that hope which is in you. . . . Silence is the best answer to the scoffers. But whether you speak or be silent let your heart cry to the Lord in the hour of temptation. . . . Be not anxious, my dear Madam, but rather rejoice [rejoice] in hope. Jesus has received you in the number of his true disciples, since like them you rejoice [rejoice] in your sufferings & afflictions. Like the Blessed Apostle whose festival we celebrate today, you

²⁸ *CW*, 1, sec., 3. 26, 358.

²⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.28, 362.

welcome the Cross as the greatest blessing & think yourself happy in being fastened to it. May god Almighty maintain you in those sentiments. May the love of Jesus keep you[r] heart during this holy time & prepare it to become a sanctuary worthy of him!³⁰

Rev. John Cheverus was a sensitive and compassionate man. He was a virtuous priest and excellent spiritual director for Elizabeth. His letters prove it. When he learned of Antonio's returning home in Italy, he consoled Elizabeth and gave spiritual direction on the true friendship: "I am sorry . . . that we must bid him adieu. . . . I have known him enough to esteem him & regret sincerely that he must live far from us. More than any other you will miss this true friend of your soul, but after an absence of few moments true Christian friends will meet in the heavenly kingdom to be parted no more."³¹ When Cheverus received a letter from Elizabeth in which she highly praised him, he found himself to be pleased by her words, so that he wrote back to her: "you will never again write to me anything which has been said in my praise, but pray for me that I may be always sincerely humble & perfectly sensible of my unworthiness & misery."³² He simply wanted to communicate his desire to be always humble. However, Elizabeth was so shocked at his response and sent him an apology. When he received Elizabeth's apology, he realized that she was thinking him angry with her. In desperation, he wrote to his friend Tisserant who was then in Elizabethtown near New York and asked him to explain his intention to her. In his letter to Tisserant dated March 9, 1806, Cheverus wrote:

³⁰ AJSPH, 1-3-3-1:3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 1-3-3-1:4.

She owes me no excuse, but unfortunately, knowing very well that vanity is not dead in me, I begged her not to repeat to me praises made by those I love and respect. It is a temptation too delicate and to which I do not wish to be exposed. Thank you for having told her that I have no anger against her. If some words of mine made her believe it, I beg her pardon.³³

Although Rev. John Tisserant explained to Elizabeth Cheverus' real intention not to be exposed to vanity, Cheverus also sent his apology to Elizabeth: "I received your last favour containing apologies for the contents of the preceding one. I am sorry if my letter made you suppose for a minute that I was angry with you. Never have I had any other sentiments towards you but those of the most sincere respect & friendship & with these I do & always shall remain." With this letter he also sent five volumes of Jean-Baptiste Massillon's sermons on Advent and Lent.³⁴ He wanted to express his desire to continue his friendship with Elizabeth.

Rev. John Cheverus expressed his admiration of Elizabeth in his letter dated January 28, 1806: "Happy those who like you feel their heart warm & observed with joy & peace in the breaking of the heavenly bread, in the celebration of the holy festivals &c. &c."³⁵ He already recognized Elizabeth's Eucharistic and liturgical piety.

Elizabeth appreciated Cheverus' spiritual guidance and his friendship, and so did Cheverus appreciate and value his relationship with Elizabeth. Both of them shared their

³³ Melville, *Cheverus*, 106, n. 27, directly quoting Cheverus to Tisserant. ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:22.

³⁴ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:5. Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663-1742), "[*Sermons for Advent and Lent*], [*Oeuvres complètes de Massillon eveque de Clermont*], first edition, 1745, reprinted many times. It is not clear "which edition Cheverus sent Elizabeth." CW, 3b, 627. Jean-Baptiste Massillon was "rated with Bossuet and Bourdaloue as one of the great French writers of sermons." CW, 1, 347, n. 8. "Many of Massillon's sermons were delivered during the reign of Louis XIV of France." Melville, *EBS*, 117, n. 79.

³⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:4.

life story and walked together toward God. Cheverus knew all about Elizabeth and her children's lives and he shared his life, too. In a letter to Elizabeth, he shared his grief over his one year old brother's death in France and asked Elizabeth to pray for him.³⁶

His spiritual direction was so precious that Elizabeth often sent Cheverus' letters to Antonio hoping that Cheverus' spiritual direction would help him too. She wrote:

Judging your Heart by my own you will be pleased that I enclose you [Rev. John] Cheverous letter which I beg you will keep as Gold untill [until] we meet again - I cannot part with it without reading it many times - and while my soul is lifted in thankfulness and joy for its privilege of asking and recieving [receiving] advice and being numbered among the friends of so exalted a Being as your Cheverous its sensibilities are increased and every power brought in action in the remembrance that it is to my Brother, Protector, Friend, Benefactor that I owe this, among the numberless favours [favors] it has pleased God to bestow on me thro' you.³⁷

Concerning her sister-in-law, Cecilia's intention to convert to Catholicism Elizabeth felt guilty because she had influenced her to think of conversion and now Cecilia was suffering from the opposition of her family and friends. Elizabeth asked Cheverus for spiritual guidance. Cheverus had a deep insight into the human psyche. When he received Elizabeth's letter, he knew that Elizabeth was afraid that Cecilia would die because of her frail health and blamed herself for aggravating Cecilia's illness. He soothed her mind first in his letter to her dated January 28, 1806. He assured her that her "conscience ought to be free from scruples about the past," since she had done everything in "discretion & prudence." He guided Elizabeth to focus on God rather than to center on

³⁶ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:7.

³⁷ CW, 1, sec., 3. 29, 364.

her troubled mind. Then, concerning Elizabeth's worry about Cecilia's salvation, if she died before her conversion to Catholicism, Cheverus wrote the following:

Your beloved Sister has been made by baptism a member of the Church. Wilful error, I have reason to think, has never separated her from that sacred body. Her singular innocence of mind & ardent piety have also, very likely, preserved her from offending God in any grievous manner, & I hope in consequence that, even if she cannot receive the Sacraments, she will be a member of the triumphant Church in Heaven, although it would be to her an unspeakable advantage to receive them, Sacraments & would render her salvation more secure. Dreadful indeed is the situation of those who being cut off from the Church or having offended the Almighty, depart from this work [world] without those heavenly remedies which the Church has in store for her dying children.³⁸

Regarding Elizabeth's question on whether to continue to encourage Cecilia to convert, Cheverus tried to put himself in Elizabeth's position and prayed for wisdom to deal with this delicate issue. He directed Elizabeth continually to visit Cecilia and to try to open Cecilia's heart to Jesus Christ. He even advised Elizabeth to plant the dream of the religious life in Cecilia's imagination:

I am at a loss myself how to give an answer to this question. I have for these few days consulted in prayer the Father of lights, I have endeavoured to place myself in your situation. Here is the result which however I propose to you with the utmost diffidence. . . . I would recall to her when opportunities should offer, the amiable & pious wish of living one day in a convent & there to become a member of the Church. . . . at present it is enough to know Jesus & him Crucified, to put all her trust in him, to suffer with him. . . . The most embarrassing circumstance will be when you will see her near the period of the fatal disorder. Then perhaps you will be with her oftener & alone. Let the love of our adorable Saviour in his Sacrament & on the Cross be the subject of your discourse. You might also mention the anointing of the Sick in St. James, & if she desires it & it can be done, procure to her the blessing of receiving the last Sacraments.³⁹

³⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:4.

³⁹ Ibid.

Rev. John Cheverus knew that the whole weight of the Seton family's displeasure would fall upon Elizabeth if Cecilia had to face death, so he reminded Elizabeth that God had given her strength to bear it and would "make rich amends by his interior consolations."⁴⁰ Thus, under these most difficult circumstances Elizabeth continued to grow spiritually under Cheverus' spiritual direction.

After Cecilia's conversion to Catholicism, Cheverus often asked Elizabeth how her "heroic young sister"⁴¹ was. As mentioned earlier Cecilia's conversion created a huge problem for Elizabeth's family. Elizabeth and her children were not only isolated from their family and social group but also ridiculed by them. Elizabeth again wished to move to Montreal for the sake of her children's education and her own secret which was that she and her daughters together could live in the convent and she could assist teaching.⁴²

The providence of God led Elizabeth in unexpected ways through Rev. Louis William Dubourg. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Dubourg wanted to help Elizabeth to fulfill her dream of Canada. However, as a "man of enlarged views and remarkable enterprise," he could envision the fulfillment of Elizabeth's dream in a different place.⁴³ He thought that Elizabeth could fulfill her dream in the United States instead of Montreal, Canada. When he visited Boston, he discussed his idea concerning Elizabeth's Canada

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:7.

⁴² CW, 1, sec., 4.27, 420.

⁴³ Charles I. White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton: Foundress and First Superior of the Sisters or Daughters of Charity in the United States of America* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy & Co., 1868), 199.

dream with the Boston priests, Matignon and Cheverus, who had been Elizabeth's spiritual directors.⁴⁴ Rev. Dr. Matignon's letter carried by Dubourg to Elizabeth proved this fact. In his letter to Elizabeth dated November 25, 1806, Matignon said that he and Cheverus discussed with Dubourg the idea for Elizabeth's Canada dream. He with Cheverus prayed together to God to manifest "His will" for Elizabeth's future. He wrote to Elizabeth after consulting with Cheverus:

Now, however, after calmly considering, we three are unanimously of opinion that the best plan to be followed is the one that Mr. Dubourg will open to you in person. I repeat, then, distinctly that what he will tell you is to be credited as embodying our sentiments no less than his own. I can now only invoke God's blessing upon your views, and implore Him to assist you in following them up to His greater glory. You are, I can not but believe, called on to do great good in the United States, and it is in this country, preferably to any other, that you should remain. For the rest, God has His own good time in which to perfect His designs.⁴⁵

Rev. John Cheverus also sent a letter of encouragement to Elizabeth and shared his discernment about Dubourg's idea with her. In his letter to Elizabeth dated January 21, 1807, he expressed his opinion: "Dr. Dubourg was to converse with you about another project which I should prefer, hoping it would do better for your family, & being sure it would be very conducive to the progress of Religion in this country." He had no doubt that she would be satisfied when she got "acquainted & converse with the worthy, pious & earned Dr. Dubourg."⁴⁶ Cheverus guided Elizabeth to recognize the presence of God in

⁴⁴ CW, 1, sec., 4.27, 420. n. 1.

⁴⁵ Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 272, translating and quoting ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:37. The original was written in French.

⁴⁶ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 7.

this new plan. Then, he inspired her to experience the sweetness of the Lord and to desire union with God and the sacred heart of Jesus Christ:

I hope, my dear Madam, you continue to taste & see how sweet is the Lord. Beware of scruples & anxieties. With all our faults & imperfections let us fly to the bosom of our heavenly Father, or to the pierced heart of our dear Saviour. There we may rest in peace, no evil shall come to us.⁴⁷

Knowing of Elizabeth's friendship with Antonio Filicchi Cheverus sent Elizabeth a letter from Antonio expressing his concern for Elizabeth's two sons' education in Montreal. Cheverus also wrote to Elizabeth dated June 8, 1807: "I shall answer Mr. Filicchi by the first opportunity. He had a letter from me very shortly after he wrote the one I have received. When you wrote [write]to him, be so kind as to give him my very affectionate & respectful compliments & assure him that Dr. Matignon & myself will always think ourselves happy in corresponding with & being of any service to his dear & respectable Sister in New York."⁴⁸

After receiving Cheverus' letter, Antonio reassured Elizabeth: "Be sure that he [Cheverus] longs most heartily with Dr. Matignon to be serviceable to you & family. Trust to their advice. Their high principles must be to you a perfect guarantee of their friendship."⁴⁹ In his letter to Elizabeth dated February 3, 1808, Cheverus reported the illness of his best friend Dr. Matignon and wrote that Elizabeth should be healthy until she could see all her children "grounded in the faith & immovable in the hope of the Gospel." He expressed how he desired to meet Elizabeth and her children and that "it

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1-3-3-1: 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1-3-3-10: 37.

would be a heartfelt pleasure for him” when they could share their common faith together.

He again pronounced his joy at receiving Elizabeth’s letter:

Your letters will be always welcome messengers & can never be troublesome. It will be always a real satisfaction for me to correspond with you & to be reckoned in the number of your friends. Your affectionate & respectful, humble Servt. John Cheverus⁵⁰

The providence of God for Elizabeth’s future was more concretely revealed through Rev. Louis William Dubourg who invited Elizabeth to Baltimore. He invited Elizabeth to come to Baltimore and open the school. This invitation implied a total life change for Elizabeth. Part of Dubourg’s invitation was quoted in Elizabeth’s own writings:

[Dubourg said] come to us Mrs. Seton we will assist you in forming a plan of life, which while it will forward your views of contributing to the support of your children will also shelter them from the dangers to which they are exposed among their Protestant connections - and also afford you much more consolation in the exercise of your Faith than you have yet enjoyed. We also wish to form a small school for the promotion of religious instruction for such children whose parents are interested in that point.⁵¹

In his letter to Elizabeth dated May 2, 1808, Dubourg reported that he had sent a letter to the Boston friends, Rev. John Cheverus and Rev. Dr. Matignon, and submitted “the scheme which now engrosses all [his] thoughts” to them because he knew their consideration of Elizabeth. He continued:

Should they [Boston priests] approve of it, I would be for your coming hither in two or three months, and taking the lease of a newly-built house which, in every point of view, would perfectly suit all our ideas, at least during the first year,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:94, Photostat.

⁵¹ CW, 2, sec., 5.4, 18.

which would give you sufficient time to reflect and consult on the propriety of building, and on the most eligible spot and plan.⁵²

Rev. John Cheverus shared his discernment on Elizabeth's future in his letter to her on May 12, 1808. Cheverus informed her that he and Matignon had received Dubourg's letter regarding "the project of an establishment in Baltimore" and they agreed "in all points with him." Then he encouraged her again: "Such an establishment would be a public benefit for Religion, & we hope, a real advantage to yourself & amiable family. We infinitely prefer it to your project of retreat in Montreal."⁵³ Cheverus guided Elizabeth to open her eyes not only to see her future but also to realize that she could serve the Catholic Church in America.

After receiving Cheverus' spiritual guidance, Elizabeth made up her mind to accept the Baltimore project because she recognized the will of God through not only her prayer but also through her spiritual directors and supporters including some relatives. They all approved her moving to Baltimore.⁵⁴ Elizabeth had another sign of the will of God through Cheverus' letter in which he informed her that Mr. Filicchi had assured Dubourg that he would support Elizabeth's new project:

Mr. Dubourg writes that Mr. Filichi has authorised you to draw on his correspondent in New York for any necessary [funds] to begin a useful establishment & this same worthy friend wrote to me on the same subject these very words: Money shall not be wanting. You know very likely what is the amount of the funds Messieurs Filichi have in this country, & what is their fortune at home. You know the sincerity of their offers & you may no doubt, avail yourself of them to the extent which prudence, but not a extreme delicacy or

⁵² Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 2, 14.

⁵³ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:9.

⁵⁴ CW, 1, sec., 4. 74, 508.

timidity, should dictate. I know nothing about the affairs of these gentlemen, but I know full well the good & generous heart of our worthy friend, & his tender affection for his respectable sister Mrs. Seton.⁵⁵

Elizabeth's only concern was her beloved sister-in-law, Cecilia Seton. Cecilia was devastated when she realized it was impossible to go to Baltimore with Elizabeth. In his letter to Elizabeth dated June 8, 1808, Dubourg advised Elizabeth that Cecilia's "earnest wish to accompany" her seemed to need more time due to her family situation and expressed his joy for Elizabeth's coming to Baltimore:

I remain more and more satisfied . . . it is the will of God you should make it, so great is the number of circumstances concurring in its favor - among others, I cannot help being struck at the unanimity of all your friends, both worldly and spiritual in recommending and encouraging it, and particularly at the eagerness with which every member of our community has received the overtures I have made them on the subject. There is not one of my respected Brethren, but anticipates the greatest advantages from the meditated institution and is ready to promote it to the full extent of his power. Let us then now place our whole confidence in Him, who chooses thus to make unknown his holy will, and be ready to meet with joy every contradiction or ill success which might attend our compliance.⁵⁶

Elizabeth responded to the will of God revealed through her spiritual directors and friends and moved to Baltimore. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth would not only open her school but also establish a new religious community with God's providential guidance. The year 1808 was not only a remarkable year for Elizabeth who would become the foundress of the Sisters of Charity but also for Rev. Cheverus who was nominated as "bishop of the newly created diocese of Boston"⁵⁷ even though his consecration as the first bishop of

⁵⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:9.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1-3-3-2:1.

⁵⁷ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 47, n. 10.

Boston by Archbishop John Carroll did not occur until November 1810. When Cheverus acknowledged his nomination as a bishop, he expressed his heart to Elizabeth in his letter to her dated April 13, 1809:

I hope I shall be permitted to remain as I am, & that we shall be placed here under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of New York. This appears to me the best plan for the present & for many years to come, & if there must be a Bishop in Boston, I ought not to be the man. This affair has given me more anxiety & grief than I can tell I will say no more about it. I will not damp your heavenly joys by my gloomy reflections.⁵⁸

Elizabeth's heavenly joy was to begin a religious community by the providence of God through Rev. Pierre Babade. She already accepted Cecilia O'Conway, who became the first Sister of the Sisters of Charity, in December 1808 and other candidates were waiting to enter the Community. When Bishop Cheverus got the news that Elizabeth pronounced private vows on March 25 of 1809, his joy was immense and he expressed his delight and prophesied about the future of Elizabeth's new community, the Sisters of Charity:

I often wished I could have been in Baltimore on the 25th, but though in Boston, I was with you, & so was Dr. Matignon, & every day sometime before & ever since, when I have gone to the holy altar, you have been there with me. How admirable is divine providence! I see already numerous choirs of Virgins following you to the Altar, I see your holy order diffusing itself in the different parts of the U.S. spreading everywhere the good odour [odor] of J.C., & teaching by their angelical lives [life], & pious instructions how to serve G. in purity & holiness. I have, no doubt, my beloved & venerable Sister, that He who has begun this good work, will bring it to perfection. How happy will be our dear friend Mr. Filichi, when he hears of your[+] profession! . . . I have no doubt he will be eager to lend a helping hand to your holy & useful establishment, but what Dr. Dubourg proposed is not in my power.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:10.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:10.

While Elizabeth was so happy that her beloved sister-in-law, Cecilia, could join the Sisters of Charity in June 1809, right before her community's move to Emmitsburg, she also had to face Cecilia's death in Emmitsburg on April 17, 1810. In the letter to Elizabeth dated January 24, 1810, Bishop Cheverus informed her that he with Matignon had offered "the holy Sacrifice for the repose of the soul" of Cecilia. He consoled Elizabeth and also encouraged her to endure her suffering for the establishment of the Sisters of Charity:

What a happy death! May my last end be like her! Our penance is to be appreciated rather by its fervor than by the length of time. She who loved much became in a moment a Saint & the friend of Jesus. I am glad your dear Cecilia has been spared. I wish her & your other venerable & pious sisters to serve & edify the Church upon earth, for sometime at least, before they are received into the triumphant church in heaven. . . . I look upon your trials, difficulties & c., as the stamp of divine favour & protection upon your establishment. Remember St. Theresa, St. Frances Chantal & . . . Like them I hope, you will become Saints & the mother of many Saints.⁶⁰

Since Elizabeth heard of the nomination of Rev. John Cheverus as the first bishop of Boston, she looked forward to seeing him because he would be in Baltimore for his consecration. In her letter to Antonio dated January 16, 1809, she wrote that Rev. John Cheverus would be in Baltimore in a short time and she exclaimed: "Oh how happy will I be to see him dear Antonio. What pleasure we will have in speaking of you."⁶¹

In another letter to Antonio dated May 20, 1810, she enthusiastically wrote again that the consecration would bring Cheverus to Baltimore and of course he would "visit the Sisters of Charity." She exclaimed: "Oh how happy happy I shall be, may be he will

⁶⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:11.

⁶¹ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 46.

call me to Boston to settle a branch of us there – to be sure, fine hopes in the brains of your poor sister. I long and wish to serve our Lord with every breath I draw.”⁶² Melville pointed out that if Cheverus had “a choice he would have brought Mother Seton’s daughters to Boston” and could “imagine no greater blessing than having Mother Seton herself.”⁶³

Elizabeth and Bishop Cheverus finally did meet face to face for the first time when he visited Elizabeth and her community in Emmitsburg after his consecration as the first bishop of Boston on November 1, 1810 “at St. Peter’s Pro-cathedral in Baltimore.”⁶⁴ The newly consecrated Bishop Cheverus visited Emmitsburg from November 21 to 24 with the new bishop of Philadelphia, Michael Egan, and stayed with “Rev. John Dubois on Mount Saint Mary.”⁶⁵ Dubois was so happy with Bishop Cheverus’ visit because they were friends from their early school years and he knew of his friendship with Elizabeth.⁶⁶ Thus, he sent Elizabeth a note suggesting that by using her “insinuating eloquence” she could ask Bishop Cheverus to stay until Sunday and he had “no doubt that bishop Cheverus would most cheerfully agree to stay.”⁶⁷ But Bishop Cheverus had to leave with Bishop Egan on November 24 because of his busy schedule

⁶² *CW*, 2, sec., 6.39, 129.

⁶³ Melville, *Cheverus*, 213.

⁶⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.64, 163, n. 1.

⁶⁵ Melville, *Cheverus*, 122.

⁶⁶ Richard Shaw, *John Dubois: Founding Father* (New York: United States Catholic Historical Society, 1983), 4.

⁶⁷ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-5:17.

which had already been planned. In her letter to Eliza Sadler dated to November 21, 1810, Elizabeth joyfully expressed her first encounter with her beloved Bishop Cheverus and told her that he would carry her letters to Eliza in New York where he would stop “to administer Confirmation when returning to Boston.” Elizabeth wanted Bishop Cheverus to meet her intimate friend. She animatedly described her first encounter with Bishop Cheverus:

It will please you to see our Blessed [John] Cheverus, because he carries your friend and the Darlings in his very heart, and we love him with a sentiment not easily described but which you may very well imagine who can conceive what kind of ideas we attach to him -- independent of his uncommon amiable manners . . . look at his purple ring and remember how often We kissed it and if you have the happiness to hear him preach you will participate in the consolation I have greatly wished You to enjoy - yet every body has different coloured eyes and different ears on such occasions and perhaps ours may not agree - but I believe they will.⁶⁸

In her letter to Archbishop John Carroll dated November 29, 1810, Elizabeth reported: “I need not tell you Our consolation in receiving [receiving] the blessed Bishops nor how many benedictions they poured upon us -- We have been very sensible of this special favour.”⁶⁹ During Bishop Cheverus’ visit it seems that Elizabeth shared her anxiety over her children with him. In her letter to Antonio dated June 24, 1811, she told him of Cheverus’ encouragement: “Our blessed Bishop [John] Cheverus seemed to have many hopes of them [her sons] when he came to see us last winter, and encouraged me to believe he would do all he could for their protection. To him and your Filicchi hearts, I

⁶⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.64, 163-164.

⁶⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.65, 165.

commit them in this world.”⁷⁰ When she found that Antonio might not have received her letter, she wrote again. In her letter to Antonio dated July 1, 1814, she again informed him of Bishop Cheverus’ visit to Emmitsburg:

The glad and happy news of the Restoration of our holy Father, and the quick thought again I shall hear from my dear Filicchi all struck at one moment, and the next was to write you also as soon as possible. . . . the Blessed Bishop [John] Chevrous has indeed been all the way to our mountains to say "Be blessed" -- his blessing you know Antonio clothed in all his Episcopal dignity - he was like a father to us, and spoke of you almost with extravagance, esteem and veneration does not say half he expressed about you.⁷¹

Bishop John Cheverus was very helpful to Elizabeth and her community in adopting the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* and in his consideration of the American situation. Rev. Benedict Flaget and Rev. John Baptist David planned to unite Elizabeth’s community with the Daughters of Charity of France. When he was in France, Flaget “arranged for a group of French Daughters of Charity to make a foundation and incorporate” the Sisters of the Sisters of Charity “as members of their community,” but the French Sisters could not come to the United States because of Napoleonic policies of France during Elizabeth’s time.⁷²

Unlike Rev. Benedict Flaget and Rev. John Baptist David, Rev. John Dubois opposed the Sulpicians’ control over Elizabeth’s community and the union of her

⁷⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6.79, 189.

⁷¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.167, 276-278. “Pope Pius VII was liberated from his imprisonment at Fontainebleau and departed for Rome as a result of the defeat of Napoleon in March and his abdication April 7, 1814. This changed the politics and markets of the world because communication and goods could now pass freely across the seas.” CW, 2, 276, n. 1. This letter is “Elizabeth’s first letter to her dear friend and benefactor Antonio Filicchi in four years.” CW, 2: 276, n. 2.

⁷² CW, 2, sec., 6.76, 185, n. 3.

community with the French Daughters of Charity at that “particular time and under these particular circumstances.” Cheverus as a friend of Dubois supported independence of Elizabeth’s community and also was concerned about Elizabeth’s position, if the French Sisters governed her community.⁷³ He gave guidance to Elizabeth in his letter dated January 4, 1811 and his guidance helped Elizabeth and her community to keep their own distinctiveness in the adoption of the *Rules*:

I concur in opinion with Mr. Dubois about the propriety of your establishment remaining independent from, the Sisters [Daughters] of Charity & continuing to be merely a house of education for young females. . . However I have some reason to think as you do, that very likely things will speak for themselves & show the usefulness & necessity of leaving you in your present situation. Have another conversation with the Rev. Mr. Dubois on the subject & then do with simplicity what he will prescribe or even wish.⁷⁴

The year 1812 was the most difficult year for Elizabeth because of the death of her oldest daughter Anna Maria who was like a friend to her. She died March 12, 1812. Anna Maria’s life until her death revealed Elizabeth’s influence on her spiritual life. According to Sister Rose White’s Journal, Anna Maria Seton made “her vows on her deathbed and expired like an angel.” Sister Rose White wrote that she showed “the necessity of placing all our hopes in God and clinging to Him alone.” She depicted Anna Maria’s last moment: “Her last movement was to raise her eyes to Heaven and clasp her hands” and passed away as the Sisters prayed.⁷⁵

⁷³ Melville, *EBS*, 163.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 163, quoting Cheverus to Elizabeth (AMSV, I, 2).

⁷⁵ *CW*, 2, app., A-6.3a, 732. Rose Landry White (1784-1841) was “a native of Baltimore who married Captain Joseph White in 1799. When her husband was lost at sea, she was left with two small children. She found support from Rev. John David, S.S., who directed her to charitable work and to Elizabeth’s new community in June 1809.” She was “elected Assistant to Elizabeth”

Everybody who knew Anna Maria including Elizabeth's spiritual directors loved her. Her death was a big crisis for Elizabeth. Rev. John Dubois described Elizabeth's devastation due to her beloved daughter's death. He wrote: "I fear the terrible trial she has had in the death of Anina."⁷⁶ Bishop Cheverus consoled Elizabeth after receiving Elizabeth's letter dated February 12, 1812 written before Anna Maria's death. He presumed that Elizabeth would have already faced her daughter's death when she received his letter to her. Thus, in his letter to her dated February 26, 1812, he gave a remedy for Elizabeth to get out from her extreme suffering of the loss:

Your truly moving & edifying letter of the 12th came to hands yesterday. Shortly after you wrote it, I expect that your happy Daughters [daughter] resigned her pious soul in the hands of her Saviour. I bless the God of infinite mercy who has granted to her to die the death of the Saints & has endowed her dear Mother with the Faith & courage of the Mother of the Maceabees [Maccabeus] of St. Smyphorian &c. Whenever your feelings & occupations will permit, give me a detail for the delightful things you had not time to mention, I promise you to treasure them up in my heart, & they will be no less acceptable to my dear. . . Dr. Matignon. We have united our prayers & sacrifices & we feel in the same manner on the present mournful – no - glorious & happy event. Oh that I would go to you now, or rather that I could have been witness of the last moments! May we all die like her, & be united with her in the bosom of our heavenly & merciful Father.⁷⁷

When Bishop Cheverus did not receive letters from Elizabeth, he knew that she was still mourning. Thus, in his letter to her dated April 12, 1812, he stressed that it was "an age since" he had "heard from her" and longed for a letter from her "with account of

in 1812 and appointed "Sister servant at the Asylum in Philadelphia" in 1814 and in New York in 1817. After Elizabeth's death, she was "elected to succeed Elizabeth as Mother (1821-1827) and reelected Mother of the community (1833-1839)." *CW*, 2, 75, n. 2.

⁷⁶ Melville, *EBS*, 188, quoting Dubois to Bruté dated May 7, 1812.

⁷⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:12.

[her] dear Daughters & sons & [her] dear sisters.” Then he stressed that he had “never ceased to remember” her, “particularly at the Altar.” He wanted her to overcome her sorrow, thus, he tried to turn her interest to other matters. In this same letter, he recommended a candidate to join Elizabeth’s community. He introduced a 22 year old young woman who had received “a pretty good English education” and expressed her “strong desire to join” Elizabeth’s sisterhood.⁷⁸ However, in his letter to Elizabeth dated January 20, 1815, he sadly informed her that this candidate had given up on her vocation and found that she was not the right person for religious life.⁷⁹

Bishop Cheverus was also concerned about Elizabeth’s children and expressed his true concern for them: “Every day I beseech the author of all blessings to continue to bless you & your dear children. Even your dear Sons will be preserved in spite of the dangers & temptations of the world. The children of so many prayers & tears cannot perish.” In the same letter, he noted Dr. Matignon’s serious illness and also expressed his delight at the news of the re-opening of the Filicchi business in the United States. He wrote that the Filicchi brothers had published “a notice in the gazette of this country, advising their friends & the public that in consequence of the happy changes in Europe they have resumed their commercial concerns.”⁸⁰

Bishop Cheverus continually kept up his friendship with Elizabeth and he shared whatever news he heard related to Elizabeth. In his letter dated June 25, 1816, he got the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:13.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:14.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

news from a gentleman who met Antonio many times in Italy. According to him, Antonio praised Elizabeth's son, William, who was "everything he could wish, high in the confidence" and "love of the whole family."⁸¹

Elizabeth experienced more suffering to unite herself with the suffering of Jesus in the loss of her youngest daughter, Rebecca Seton. She wrote of Rebecca's death to Bishop Cheverus, but he had left Boston three days before Elizabeth's letter arrived and was on "his way to Baltimore" and "probably Georgetown" according to Rev. Matignon's letter responding to Elizabeth's. Matignon assured Elizabeth that he would inform Cheverus of Rebecca's death and told Elizabeth that Bishop Cheverus might visit her as soon as he could. Rev. Dr. Matignon had always supported Elizabeth and wrote a long letter to her because he knew that it would take a long time for Bishop Cheverus to get the news of Rebecca's death and answer Elizabeth due to his busy schedule in different places. Knowing Cheverus' heart toward Elizabeth, he reminded Elizabeth:

it is now that you have proved her mother indeed, & brought her forth not to a life which is a lingering death, & may end in an eternal one, but to a life of glory & immortality. Weak nature suffers pangs, it is true; so it did in the mother of the Macchabees. God be praised who has imparted you some of the fortitude of that holy <mother> pattern to all ages. . . . Happy mother, whose labours in the instruction of a beloved daughter are so well repaid by the security of her eternal happiness, while we poor wanderers are still tossed by the waves, & in danger of perishing! . . . Your sister in law was baptised [baptized] & confirmed on all Saints day, & made her 1st communion the Sunday after, perhaps at the very hour that good . . . Bec's soul was taking her flight to heaven.⁸²

Bishop Cheverus learned of Rebecca's death late in November and encouraged Elizabeth to see Rebecca in heaven with eternal joy and without pain: "Shall I say I

⁸¹ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:15.

⁸² Ibid., 1-3-3-1:36.

condole with you? No, I congratulate you that from your maternal bosom your angelical little Rebecca has fled into the bosom of her heavenly parent.” Then he expressed his heart:

I celebrated Mass early in the morning at the chapel of the Nuns of the Visitation. How forcibly did it recall to my mind (& more still to my heart) the happy day I spent with you & the good sisters at Emmettsburgh [Emmitsburg] six years ago? Prayed for you & them & had the comfort to know that you were praying for me.⁸³

During his visit to Baltimore and Georgetown, Bishop Cheverus spent his every minute attending the services and ceremonies of the churches and seminaries. In his letter to Elizabeth he informed her that he would “officiate & preach” at “a solemn anniversary service” for the death of Archbishop John Carroll at the cathedral.⁸⁴ Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was then Elizabeth’s spiritual director, attended this Mass and was so moved by Cheverus’ preaching. He wrote his impression of Cheverus’ preaching to Elizabeth because he knew that Cheverus had been her spiritual director:

All hearts still moved by the good de Cheverus. Nothing, my mother, could express to you what he said. You have had the pleasure of hearing him, you know his manner, so mild, so sensible, and the subject! The worthy archbishop would have been charmed himself, and I could see him stretched out at the bottom of his tomb, listening with pleasure and smiling at his second successor, for it appear it shall be so. He will surely be coadjutor and surely one cannot hear it without desiring it. . . . On Monday morning, if he says Mass for you, he could give you the anniversary sermon of the Archbishop, and in the midst of his daughters, hearts so devoted, repeat to you this address so delicious which we have just heard.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:16.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Melville, *Cheverus*, 184, quoting Bruté to Seton, Dec., 3, 1816. ASJPH, 1-3-3-13-17B; ASJPH, 1-3-3-13: 46 at the present. The original of this letter was written in French and was translated in English.

It was a well known fact among the priests that Bishop Cheverus should be coadjutor of Archbishop Leonard Neale⁸⁶ because the Archbishop's health was poor. Cheverus asked Elizabeth to pray for him: "I had not the smallest suspicion of what the Most Rev. Archbishop wanted of me. Dear Sister, Pray to our Lord to look down on this Diocese & to preserve it & myself from what is intended. The very idea of it is more than I can bear."⁸⁷ However, the priests of the Archdiocese loved Cheverus and hoped he would accept the position of coadjutor. Sending a message to Elizabeth that Bishop Cheverus' was to visit Emmitsburg, Rev. John F. Moranvillé expressed his admiration of Bishop Cheverus:

. . .the amiable and universally beloved bishop of boston goes to visit you and your D. family. How welcome he will be to you all! An angel in your holy retirement! He has done a great deal for us here. he practised the 1st Sunday in my church, after having done it twice in two others. . . . Of confirmation with a sweet and prophetick exhortation before and after which moved every heart. in the afternoon he consecrated the bell of my church, a ceremony which never took place before in this country, but explained and performed by this heavenly prelate in the most interesting manner all that he said upon the subject was noble and effecting. how happy, did we wish for to one another, were our metropolitan church blessed with such another[?!]! We hope that god will direct things so as to make them subservient to the good of this vast and 1st catholick diocese.⁸⁸

The Sulpician Priest, Rev. Ambrose Maréchal wrote to Archbishop Neale about the qualification of Cheverus as a coadjutor:

⁸⁶ Rev. Leonard Neale, S.J. (1746-1817) was "president of Georgetown College (1791-1806)" and was "named coadjutor" for Bishop John Carroll in 1800." After the death of John Carroll, he became the "second Archbishop of Baltimore (1815-1817)." CW, 2, 469, n. 4.

⁸⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:16.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1-3-3-2: 37. Rev. John F. Moranvillé (1760-1824) was "born in France" and ordained in 1784. He came to the United States in 1794 and "in 1804 he became pastor of St. Patrick's church in Fells Point near Baltimore. He was known for his sanctity and guided several women to join the Sisters of Charity." CW, 2, 94, n. 3.

It is M. Cheverus, Bishop of Boston who is destined to be elevated to this post. Every one rejoices and with reason. For one can not see a more apostolic prelate. He is humble, learned, zealous, eloquent, pious and singularly active and vigorous. Indubitably [indubitably] no one, in this country can compare with him. If God grants our wishes, he will be our first pastor and deserves to be.⁸⁹

Bishop Cheverus was a very humble man and did not think of himself as a suitable person for coadjutor because this position meant he would be Archbishop after Neale's death. He was also concerned about his Boston Diocese which was poor and demanded his continual dedication. Finally he consented to put his name as a candidate for "coadjutor if he could remain in Boston while Neale's health persisted."⁹⁰

However, God seemed to listen to Bishop Cheverus' petition to stay at Boston. Bishop Dubourg, who became the first bishop of Louisiana in 1812 and was visiting Europe in 1816, "strongly urged Rome to name Maréchal as Neal's coadjutor." Reflecting on "the two recommendations of the Archbishop of Baltimore," Rome chose Maréchal because he could help Neale while living near the Seminary of Baltimore which was his wish. By choosing Maréchal, they could also escape from having to choose successor to Cheverus in Boston. When Bishop Cheverus learned that Rome nominated Maréchal as a coadjutor of Archbishop Neal, he was relieved of his anxiety.⁹¹ He wrote to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté:

⁸⁹ Melville, *Cheverus*, 186, quoting "Maréchal to Neale," December 30, 1816 (Archives of Archdiocese of Baltimore, 12-AJ-3.). Ambrose Maréchal, S.S. (1768-1828) was born in France and came to the Baltimore "to join the Sulpicians" after his ordination in France in 1792. He served "as coadjutor to Archbishop Leonard Neal" and became the archbishop of Baltimore on December 14, 1817. *CW*, 2, 481, n. 1.

⁹⁰ Melville, *Cheverus*, 185.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, *Cheverus*, 186.

I was in troubled waters until the refreshing news from Rome. The nomination of the dear and worthy Prelate-elect will give new luster and solidity to your holy society, the nourishing mother and model for the clergy. I congratulate you as well as your worthy colleagues . . . The learned and pious Mr. Maréchal was the object of their first wishes. . . . I thank God it was only a dream.⁹²

Although Bishop Cheverus' schedule was very busy, he made time to visit Elizabeth because he was asked "to confer tonsure at Mount Saint Mary's and to officiate at confirmation for St. Joseph's School," which was Elizabeth's school. But he really wanted to visit Elizabeth and to console her in suffering the loss of her daughter, Rebecca Seton.⁹³

Bishop Cheverus' last visit Elizabeth was very moving. He spent two days with Elizabeth from December 7 to 8 of 1816. Although Elizabeth was weak because of her illness, Cheverus could feel her sanctity and admired her achievements in the community and school. In his letter to her dated December 30, 1816, he expressed his delight in visiting Elizabeth's community: "excellent Sisters, their happy and edifying pupils, the Mother with her children in heaven and on earth." He continued that he would always remember the 7th and 8th "of December because these dates were "treasured up in the memory and affections" of his heart.⁹⁴

In the letter to Antonio dated February 24, 1817, Elizabeth happily told him of Bishop Cheverus' visit to Emmitsburg:

⁹² Ibid., *Cheverus*, 187, quoting Cheverus to Bruté, March 24, 1817 (Archives of University of Notre Dame, hereafter AUND).

⁹³ Ibid., *Cheverus*, 185.

⁹⁴ Ibid., *EBS*, 248, quoting AMSV, 1.5.

the blessed Bishop [John] Chevrous, has been again to see us and leaving Benediction everywhere - he is so delighted with our community that he has adopted it in his very heart - what a glorious thing for our [church] of America if he should succeed in the charge of our Venerated Archbishop - it is said he will, Bishop Neal being now so incapable thro' old age.⁹⁵

In her letter to Antonio dated November 11, 1818, Elizabeth notified him of the “most happy death” of Rev. Dr. Matignon and informed him that Bishop Cheverus had been “in extreme distress at the Death of Rev. Dr. Matignon.” She commented that “a beautiful providence” had sent Matignon as “a worthy assistant” of Bishop Cheverus, but who could “supply the loss of such a friend.”⁹⁶ She could understand the pain of the loss of a loved one.

Bishop Cheverus truly wanted to invite Elizabeth’s community to his Boston diocese, but he had no choice because the arrangements for other Sisters to come had already been made by another priest. Sending the news of the establishment of Ursulines in his diocese, Cheverus disclosed his mind in his letter to Rev. Bruté dated January 5, 1820: “Just between us, I would have preferred your Sisters, and above all the Mother, but the testament was positive.”⁹⁷ In the letter to Elizabeth dated August 22, 1820, Bishop Cheverus told her that he went to Canada and brought back with him “two professed Nuns (Ursulines) & two novices who will make their solemn vows in St. Ursula’s

⁹⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.78, 468-469.

⁹⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.192, 592-593.

⁹⁷ Melville, *EBS*, 248, chap. 11, n. 119, quoting Cheverus to Bruté (AUND).

Festival.” Then, he asked Elizabeth to pray for them and “for the poor Bishop” who has been “obliged to consent to be their director.”⁹⁸

Elizabeth’s time in this world was very close to the end. When Bishop Cheverus received the news on Elizabeth’s serious illness, he was so sad and wrote to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté: “I hope our holy Mother may still be preserved for her children. Our Ursulines have joined me in asking this favor of God.”⁹⁹ Bishop Cheverus sent a letter to Elizabeth dated December 17, 1820. This letter would be his last letter to Elizabeth. He expressed his wish to be with Elizabeth in this world, although he knew that it would be better for Elizabeth to be with Christ in heaven. He knew Elizabeth’s concern for her children after her death and expressed his paternal love for her children:

Ma bien chere & vénérable Soeur [my very dear and Respected Sister] Though it be better to be absent from the body & to be with Christ, still I cannot help rejoicing [rejoicing] that you remain in the flesh & that your dear Soul has not left its prison. My dear Ursulines have prayed with me for yourself & your blessed family & we are very grateful for your kind remembrance of us. If you are well enough, write me few lines. My paternal regard to the dear Josephine. Have you any news from William & Richard? To all your dear Sisters I beg to be most respectfully & affectionately remembered. You are every day with me before the Lord & you know how much I love you in the bowels of J.C.¹⁰⁰

Elizabeth’s death on January 4 of 1821 saddened Bishop Cheverus, although he believed that she would be in heaven. During his episcopacy in Boston, he lost his three soul friends, Archbishop John Carroll, Rev. Dr. Matignon, and Elizabeth Seton. He was the one who informed Antonio Filicchi of Elizabeth’s death and sent him Bruté’s

⁹⁸ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 17.

⁹⁹ Melville, *Cheverus*, 214, quoting Cheverus to Bruté, December, 19, 1820 (AUND).

¹⁰⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 18.

descriptive letter of Elizabeth's death with his own. In a letter to Bruté dated December 17, 1820, Cheverus expressed his own heart to him who was also Elizabeth's spiritual director: "I can never think of the Mountain nor the Valley without a thrilling heart."¹⁰¹ The spiritual friendship between Bishop Cheverus and Elizabeth would continue in Christ and in their ultimate home in heaven.

Bishop Cheverus was a qualified and faithful spiritual director to Elizabeth from 1805 until her death. He was a "humble, learned, zealous, eloquent, pious" man,¹⁰² and also had a deep psychological insight into human nature. He could read and sense the human psyche and used this insight to guide Elizabeth's heart to see and taste God's compassionate love and blessings in the midst of her agony and suffering. He encouraged Elizabeth to deepen her spiritual life through her prayer and her spiritual readings.

Under the spiritual direction of Bishop John Cheverus, Elizabeth made important life decisions which eventually led her not only to be a Catholic and a religious founder but also to be a saint. In the process of Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism, Cheverus guided Elizabeth to make right discernment in the light of the Holy Spirit and fervent prayer rather than focusing on debates concerning the true church. His spiritual direction was an impetus for Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism. Through his wisdom and prayer, he directed Elizabeth to accept Dubourg's invitation to go to Baltimore and open a school for girls. When he gave spiritual guidance to Elizabeth to accept Dubourg's plan in Baltimore, he foresaw the fulfillment of her dream in the United States and her

¹⁰¹ Melville, *EBS*, 248, quoting Cheverus to Bruté, December 17, 1820 (AUND).

¹⁰² Ibid., *Cheverus*, 186, quoting "Maréchal to Neale," December 30, 1816.

contribution to the young Catholic Church in America. He recognized the need of spiritual leaders to guide many young souls through religious education in the United States. Thus, Elizabeth as a foundress of the Sisters of Charity could dedicate herself to open the school in which she could provide education for girls whether they were rich or poor.¹⁰³

Bishop John Cheverus guided Elizabeth to see and taste God's blessings and compassion in the midst of her suffering and painful life events including the loss of her loved ones. These unwanted life events were an opportunity for purification of the soul. He saw the process of purification, illumination, and union with God in Elizabeth's spiritual journey toward God. He persuaded her to participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ and to live a Christ-centered life. Whenever Elizabeth participated in the passion of Jesus Christ and practiced His love, she would be closer and closer toward union with God. Cheverus himself revealed his humble and Christ-centered life in his letters to Elizabeth. Under the careful and conscientious spiritual direction of Bishop Cheverus, Elizabeth grew in her awareness of God's providence in her life, continued to seek God's will in the events around her, united herself with Christ in her sufferings, and longed for complete union with God.

¹⁰³ In a letter to Julia Scott dated July 4, 1808, Elizabeth referred to her school in Baltimore where the student body was composed of "day scholars" and boarders. *CW*, 2, 15. In her letter to the same person dated October 10, 1808, she had only four boarders. *CW*, 2, 37. When the community moved to Emmitsburg, Elizabeth continued this school for students who could afford tuition, but she also opened a free school for poor girls on February 22, 1810. This became "the first free Catholic school for girls taught by sisters in the United States." *CW*, 2, 122, n. 2.

When Bishop Cheverus learned of the birth of Elizabeth's new community in Emmitsburg, as mentioned earlier, he prophesized that "numerous choirs of Virgins"¹⁰⁴ would follow Elizabeth and her community, the Sisters of Charity, would spread to the different parts of the United States. This prophecy was realized in the last 200 years as the Sisters of Charity founded by Elizabeth Seton spread not only throughout North America but also around the world.

2. Elizabeth Seton's Spiritual Growth under the Guidance of Archbishop of John Carroll

Elizabeth's spiritual relationship with Bishop John Carroll began before her conversion to Catholicism. During her struggles concerning her conversion, Antonio encouraged Elizabeth to write to the Bishop to ask his advice and guidance concerning her desire to convert to Catholicism. In her letter to Bishop Carroll dated probably July 26, 1804, she explained how Antonio Filicchi had "most kindly befriended" her in "endeavoring to enlighten and instruct" her mind to accept Catholicism. Then she described her state of mind:

the first impression I recieved from him that I was in error and in a church founded on error Startled my Soul and decided me to make every enquiry on the subject - the Books he put into my hands gave me an intire conviction that the Protestant Episcopal Church was founded only on the principles and passions of Luther, and consequently that it was seperated from the Church founded by Our Lord and his Apostles, and its ministers without a regular succession from them - Shocked at the idea of being so far from the truth a determination of quitting their communion and uniting myself with yours became the earnest desire of my Soul which accustomed to rely Supremely on Divine Grace was easily satisfied on those points of difference and peculiarity in your Church when it was persuaded

¹⁰⁴ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:10.

that it was the true one - under these impressions it remained until my arrival in New York.¹⁰⁵

Elizabeth explained that Filippo Filicchi guided her to make known her intention to convert to Catholicism to Rev. John Henry Hobart, the pastor of her Protestant Episcopal Church and she did. Hobart was astonished at Elizabeth's statement and zealously lectured her that the Episcopal Church was the true Church while rejecting Filippo's teaching on the Catholic Church. Elizabeth's mind was confused by Hobart's instruction. She described how her mind was turned away from Catholicism because of Hobart's opposition:

You will naturally observe to me that I must have expected an opposition where parties are opposed - certainly, and had the opposition rested on Transubstantiation or any point of faith be assured that my Faith would not have stopped at any point that your church has yet proposed to me - but in the decided testimonies that are given me by the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church that they are a True Church I acknowledge that the foundation of my Catholick principles is destroyed and I cannot see the necessity for my making a change - It is necessary to inform you that I have felt my situation the most awful manner and as the Mother and Sole parent of five children have certainly pleaded with God earnestly and I may strictly say incessantly as it has been the only and supreme desire of my Soul to know the Truth.¹⁰⁶

Elizabeth's searching for the truth was rewarded by a letter from Bishop John Carroll. In her letter to Antonio dated August 30, 1804, Elizabeth expressed that she was so touched by the Bishop's letter and described her state of mind to Antonio telling him that she fervently prayed to God to enlighten her to see the truth through the Bishop's letter.¹⁰⁷ Watching Elizabeth's struggle, Antonio again sent a letter in which he begged

¹⁰⁵ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.6, 315.

¹⁰⁶ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.6, 316.

¹⁰⁷ *CW*, 1, sec., 3.7, 317-318. This bishop's letter was not found, but Elizabeth's letter to Antonio proved that she had received a letter from Bishop Carroll. This letter is not found in Thomas

the Bishop to give some instructions so as to help Elizabeth. Bishop John Carroll's letter responding to Antonio dated January 12, 1805, revealed his spiritual guidance for Elizabeth. Reading Elizabeth's letter, he recognized Elizabeth's spiritual maturity and recommended a spiritual book for her: "Indeed, when I read the words, you copied from her letters, and her letters themselves, I remain convinced of the sincerity of her endeavors to make herself conformable in all things to the divine will." The Bishop guided Antonio to have Elizabeth read Thomas á Kempis' book, *The Following of Christ*, especially "the ninth chapter of the second book, entitled, *Of the Wants or Absence of Every Comfort*," when she felt her soul was "weighed down with trouble and anxiety." He perceived Elizabeth's confusion as a result of her reading both sides of the arguments, the pros and cons for converting to Catholicism. He did not think that it was "advisable for her at present to perplex herself with reading any more controversy" because she had "enough on that subject, to assure herself of the true principles for settling her faith."¹⁰⁸

On the other hand Bishop John Carroll searched for the divine will in Elizabeth's interior darkness. He thought that God might discover "some lurking imperfection" in her and deferred "the final grace of her conversion, till her soul be entirely purged of its

O'Brien Hanley, ed., *The John Carroll's Papers* 3 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976). Charles I. White was "unable to discover it in 1842-1843 after a careful search. One hundred years later the letter is still missing." Melville noted that "this letter is not available" and its "contents can only be approximated from the references made in Filicchi's letter to Carroll, October 4, 1804, and Mrs. Seton's letter to Filicchi, August 30, 1804." Melville, *EBS*, 87, n. 24. In his writing, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton*, White quoted Antonio Filicchi's letter to Bishop Carroll dated August 22, 1804: "I was made happy with the honor of your kind letter of the 20th of August, and I went immediately out of town to communicate and leave it for perusal to the worthy lady who still labors under doubts and anxieties in her most sincere wish for truth." White, 117.

¹⁰⁸Hanley, 2, 470; Robert Seton, *Memoir*, 1, 206-207.

irregular attachments.” He thought that she might need the purification of her soul in order to receive God’s enlightenment. Thus, he directed Antonio how to guide her to prepare her soul for conversion to Catholicism:

Her great business now should be to beseech our Divine Redeemer to revive in her heart the grace of her baptism, and to fortify her soul in the resolution of following unreservedly the voice of God speaking to her heart, however difficult and painful the sacrifice may be which it requires. Having confirmed herself in this resolution, it must be to her a matter of the first importance to inspect the state of her conscience, and to judge herself impartially and with the utmost sincerity, divesting herself as much as she can, with the aid of Divine Grace, not only of every sinful attachment, but of every affection that has not God for its source, its motive, and its object. . . I have the fullest confidence, that after being put to the severe and most distressing trial of interior darkness, doubts, and terrors of making a wrong step, our merciful Father in heaven will soon send her relief, & diffuse light and consolation in her heart.¹⁰⁹

Bishop Carroll’s guidance given to Elizabeth revealed the fundamental direction for the soul’s journey to union with God. In the process of purification of the soul, he urged Elizabeth to examine her sinful attachments and affections in the light of Divine grace to see whether they were rooted in God in their sources, motives, and objects. He stressed that God’s mercy would guide her to Him through her total abandonment of self and detachment from matters which did not belong to God.¹¹⁰ Knowing the Bishop’s concern for Elizabeth, Rev. Matthew O’ Brien at St Peter’s Church reported to the Bishop Elizabeth’s state of mind as he perceived it: “Mrs. Seton is yet in the scale. Mr. Filicchi is here and has good hopes.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ellin M. Kelly, compiled & ed., *Numerous Choirs: A Chronicle of Elizabeth Bayley Seton and Her Spiritual Daughters* (hereafter cited as *Numerous*), vol. 1, *the Seton Years*. 1774-1821

When the Bishop finally heard of Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism, he was so pleased, but very soon he recognized Elizabeth's suffering due to the hostility of some of her acquaintances who were against her conversion. Bishop Carroll was concerned about Elizabeth's suffering and wanted to help her. When he found out that his good friends James and Joanna Barry had "formed an acquaintance" with Elizabeth, he was happy for both of them. While Elizabeth was helping the Barry family to settle in New York, the Barry family could console Elizabeth as Catholic friends. In the Bishop's letter to Joanna Barry dated March 19, 1806, he wrote about Elizabeth's situation and Antonio Filicchi's visit to him: "her situation and sacrifices have interested me much in her favour; her zealous and highly respectable friend Mr. Felicchi is here, and is to favour me to day with his company."¹¹²

Through Antonio Filicchi, Bishop Carroll learned that Elizabeth was William Magee Seton's wife. The Bishop was familiar with the Setons before he knew Elizabeth because he had used "the services of the Seton mercantile firm as an avenue for his correspondence with Rome."¹¹³ Actually he got the news of the death of Elizabeth's husband, William Magee Seton, through Filippo Filicchi's letter to him dated February 2, 1804. Filippo Filicchi had been friends with Carroll since 1785.¹¹⁴ Through Antonio, he was

(Evansville, IN: Mater Dei Provincialate, 1981), 90, quoting O'Brien to Carroll, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 5-V-4.

¹¹²Hanley, 2, 506.

¹¹³ Melville, *DuBourg*, 148. Cf. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore* (hereafter *John Carroll*) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 108.

¹¹⁴ Melville, *John Carroll*, 107-108.

getting know Elizabeth's social and economic situation and understood Elizabeth's concern for her boys who were surrounded by the Episcopalian atmosphere and her desire to educate her boys in the Catholic culture. He decided to help the Seton boys with Antonio.

In his letter dated April 8, 1806, to Mr. James Barry, Bishop Carroll verified that he would provide "means for their reception & education of [her] two sons at George Town College for at least some years." He trusted that "in the meantime providence would open other resources," although Mr. Filicchi seemed "rather disposed at present to advise their Mother to send them to Montreal." However, he noted that nothing would be "determined before his return to New York city."¹¹⁵ In another letter, he sent his regards to Elizabeth through his letter to Joanna Barry.¹¹⁶ Finally he informed Elizabeth that he and Antonio Filicchi would be responsible for the payment of Elizabeth's two sons' studying at Georgetown.¹¹⁷

Elizabeth met Bishop Carroll for the first time in May 1806 when he came to give confirmation at St. Peter's Catholic Church in New York. In her letter to Antonio, she expressed her joy and delight: "imagine how happy I have been this week under the direction of our very dear Bishop Carroll and in the long wished for gift." She received confirmation from Bishop Carroll on May 25, 1806. She added the confirmation name of "Mary to the Ann Elizabeth" and she was delighted because she thought that these names

¹¹⁵ Hanley, 2, 510.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2, 517.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2, 520-521.

contained “the moments of the Mysteries of Salvation.”¹¹⁸ Whenever Bishop Carroll wrote to Elizabeth, he also added Mary in front of Elizabeth Seton. The Bishop continually cared for the Seton boys at Georgetown and became Elizabeth’s spiritual father and director as well as for her children until his death.

As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth’s sister-in-law Cecilia Seton’s conversion to Catholicism caused a huge storm in Elizabeth’s life and in the lives of her children. In her letter to Bishop Carroll dated November 26, 1806, she described her most difficult situation. Since Cecilia’s conversion, her relatives and acquaintances refused to let her visit their homes and pressured Cecilia to “relinquish the Catholic Faith.” When Cecilia moved into Elizabeth’s house in order to protect her faith, they declared that she should “never re-enter theirs” nor ever see her relatives again. Elizabeth worried about her children’s Catholic faith in this situation. If her children continually listened to their Episcopalian relatives’ negative talk and complaints about the Catholic Church, she feared they would lose their Catholic faith. In the same letter she told the Bishop of accidentally meeting Rev. Dubourg who was visiting St. Peter’s Catholic Church and his encouragement of her Canada dream. With excitement and also with uncertainty in the same letter she asked Bishop Carroll to help her discernment:

Accidently meeting Mr. Duburgh as he passed thro' New York he entered into conversation with me respecting my little Boys and my intentions for them -I told him Mr. [Antonio] Felicchi's earnest wish was to place them at Montreal and mentioned also that he had given me a distant hope that I might myself, with my little girls be recieved in a convent there, and perhaps be so happy as to make myself useful as an assistant in Teaching, This Hope which had hitherto been but as a delightful dream to me and appeared too much happiness for my earthly pilgrimage, Mr. Dubourgh brought in the nearest point of view and has flattered

¹¹⁸ CW, 1, sec., 4.19, 408.

me with the believe that it is not only possible but may be accomplished without difficulty. . . . the embracing a Religious Life has been from the time I was in Leghorn so much my Hope and consolation that I would at any moment have embraced all the difficulties of again crossing the Ocean to attain it, little imagining it could be accomplished here.¹¹⁹

Elizabeth needed spiritual direction for her right discernment in this regard. She wrote to the Bishop: “I could not venture to take a further step in so interesting a situation without your concurrence and direction which also I am assured will the more readily obtain for me the blessing of Him whose will alone it is my earnest desire to accomplish.”¹²⁰

Elizabeth went through more suffering due to her social and financial situation because of her Catholic religion. It seemed that she had to move out of New York. Thus, she wrote again to Bishop John Carroll. In her letter to Bishop Carroll dated January 23, 1807, Elizabeth described her difficult situation because of her relatives’ persecution and reminded him of Dubourg’s plan which was now supported by the Boston priests, Cheverus and Matignon. She continued that she would wait “the Manifestation of the Divine Will –the will of a Father most tender who will not let go the child afraid to step alone.”¹²¹ In his letter responding to Elizabeth dated May 23, 1807, Bishop Carroll first of all expressed his concern and compassion for her difficult situation and praised her virtue and example:

yet your example & patient [patience], I may add, joyful suffering, must produce, and has already worked their effect on the consciences of those, who place a

¹¹⁹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.27, 420-421.

¹²⁰ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.27, 420.

¹²¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 4.30, 428.

higher value on their salvation, than all earthly things. For your perseverance I feel no apprehension but great is my solicitude for those who are debarred from receiving the instruction, you could so well give them, and deprived of the bread of life; but shall I trust in God's fatherly goodness towards them, who is so able to counteract the experiments and delusions, which human prudence or errors cast in the way of his favoured [favored] servants.¹²²

In the same letter, Bishop Carroll assured Elizabeth that he never missed to inquire of her two sons' health and behavior to the directors of Georgetown, when the opportunity arose, and received good reports about them. Then he shared his thoughts about Dubourg's plan for Elizabeth and expressed his admiration of her along with his spiritual guidance:

The Rev. Mr. Dubourg has often conversed with me on subjects relating to your city that is our church there, & its member-; but never communicated the result of his consultation with your invaluable friends at Boston suspecting you and others, who like you have risked all for the sake of gaining Christ. But <tho> I am entirely ignorant of all particulars, yet, to approve the plan to which you allude, it is enough for me to know that it has the concurrence of Dr. Matignon and Mr. Cheverus. . . . Whatever I learn or hear of you, increases my solicitude, respect & admiration - but attribute no merit to yourself on this account. Whatever is estimable in you, either by nature or grace, is God's gift and his property.¹²³

Although Bishop Carroll did not know the details of Dubourg's plan for Elizabeth, he approved it because Rev. John Cheverus and Rev. Dr. Matignon did support it and he respected them. Elizabeth expressed her appreciation for Bishop Carroll's guidance and at the same time informed him of her continual trials due to the resentment of her relatives. In this difficult situation, Elizabeth became more attached to her Canada dream where she felt she could raise her children in a Catholic environment and teach some children while living in the convent. She was anxious to leave New York for the sake of

¹²² ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:39; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 21.

¹²³ Ibid.; Hanley, 3, 21-22.

her children's Catholic faith, although she was concerned about her sister-in-law, Cecilia, who was living with her brother and took care of his children after the death of his wife. She petitioned the Bishop to give guidance for her discernment of the Canada project in her letter to him dated November 13, 1807:

I shall feel every thing reconciled by your decission [decision] and in every event be convinced it is the Will of God - if you think the Boys may properly be removed to Montreal and that I may remove with them it will be my greatest security to be authorized by your Judgment and permission which however I shall not mention to any one but Our dear Barrys and those reverend gentlemen who interest themselves in our eternal Welfare.¹²⁴

Bishop Carroll sent his advice to her in his letter dated December 2, 1807. He raised three questions to her in discerning her Canada dream. First, was she able to manage financial support for education and maintenance of her boys and girls? Second, if her daughters would be "dissatisfied and unhappy at Montreal, or their health injured by the climate," was she "confident of being enabled to reestablish" herself at New York? Third, could she receive agreement from her supporters about her moving to Canada?¹²⁵

In her letter to Bishop Carroll dated February 28, 1808, Elizabeth expressed her thanks for his advice. Concerned about her sons at Georgetown she asked Bishop Carroll whether he could arrange for her sons to visit home in New York, because she knew that Mr. Barry, the friend of both the Bishop and Elizabeth, could accompany them on their trip to New York from Baltimore. If this arrangement would be impossible, she would go to see them in August during their vacation.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ CW, 1, sec., 4.57, 483-484.

¹²⁵ ASJPH 1-3-3-1:40, Carroll to Seton, December 2, 1807; Hanley, 3, 31.

¹²⁶ CW, 1, sec., 4.66, 496.

Knowing Elizabeth's motherly concern and anxiety for her two sons, in his letter to her dated March 28, 1808, Bishop Carroll promised that he would write to the president of Georgetown asking him to consider the possibility of her two sons visiting home and believed that the president would make good decision concerning his request. It happened that Rev. Dubourg had to go to New York so the Bishop arranged for her two sons to visit Elizabeth accompanied by Rev. Dubourg. The Bishop expressed his heartfelt sentiments: "I am with sentiments of the truest esteem for yourself, and if, I may so express myself, of paternal affection for your dear young family."¹²⁷ Elizabeth joyfully expressed her gratitude for the Bishop's "affectionate regard" for her and her children and his arrangement for her sons' visit.¹²⁸

Bishop John Carroll's arrangement for the Seton boys' visit accompanied by Rev. Louis William Dubourg moved Elizabeth closer to resettling in Baltimore because Dubourg and Elizabeth's meeting this time produced a more concrete plan for her future. At this same time news reached America that Pope Pius VII had designated Baltimore an Archdiocese and appointed John Carroll as Archbishop of Baltimore on April 8, 1808.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 41; Hanley, 3, 51.

¹²⁸ CW, 1, sec., 4.72, 505.

¹²⁹ On April 8, 1808, On the 8th of April, 1808, Pope Pius VII, by his Bulls "Pontificii Muneris" and "Ex debito Pastoralis Officii," appointed Father Richard Luke Concanen to the see of New York; Father Michael Egan to the see of Philadelphia; Rev. John Cheverus to the see of Boston, and Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget to the see of Bardstown." The "Pallium for Archbishop Carroll, were confided to the Bishop-elect of New York." John Gilmary Shea, *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll, Bishop and First Archbishop of Baltimore: Embracing the History of the Catholic Church in the United States (1763-1815)* (Rahway, NJ: The Mershon Company Press, 1888), 622.

According to *The Sulpicians in the United States*, Elizabeth with her daughters sailed for Baltimore on June 9, 1808 and arrived there on “Corpus Christi day.” She soon had “a circle of interested friends in the Maryland City.” She opened the school in September 1808 and “there was no lack of pupils.”¹³⁰

Elizabeth with her children could breathe Catholic culture in Baltimore and she was able to share her faith with the children in her little school. Since Elizabeth opened the school in Baltimore, Archbishop John Carroll supported Elizabeth in many ways. In her letter to Antonio dated January 16, 1809, she happily reported, “many parents have proposed sending their children to me to prepare for their first Communion on the recommendation of our Rev. Archbishop [John] Carroll.”¹³¹

Archbishop Carroll introduced Elizabeth to prominent people in Baltimore society. She mentioned that she was “instructing and preparing for the greatest of all blessings” a niece of Judge Nicholson who had been put in her care by Archbishop Carroll who supported her.¹³² When Cecilia O’Conway joined Elizabeth in December of 1808, and other women also planned to join Elizabeth, the Sisters of Charity began to form as a religious community. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth professed private vows for one year to Archbishop John Carroll in Baltimore in March 25, 1809.¹³³ Very soon Elizabeth’s community moved to Emmitsburg, Maryland.

¹³⁰ Charles G. Herbermann, LL.D., *The Sulpicians in The Unites States* (NY: The Encyclopedia Press, 1916), 221.

¹³¹ CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 46.

¹³² CW, 2, sec., 5.14, 46-47.

¹³³ CW, 2, sec., 6.70, 172, n. 5.

After establishing her religious community in Emmitsburg on the feast day of St. Ignatius Loyola on July 31, 1809, Elizabeth wrote to Archbishop Carroll dated August 6, 1809. She informed him that her community had the consolation of observing regulations which would hereafter govern them. She described how Rev. Dubois, who was the parish priest and the president of Mount St. Mary's College, took care of them with all kindness and charity and informed the Archbishop of her two sons' transfer to Mount St. Mary School where she could see them often.¹³⁴

To understand Elizabeth's spiritual growth, it is necessary to describe her life as a superior of the religious community. She was appointed as Mother of the Sisters of Charity by Archbishop of John Carroll in the spring of 1809.¹³⁵ Rev. Louis William Dubourg was the first director of this community. Melville pointed out that Dubourg had "no basic training in directing religious woman" and "his whole career had focused on the training of young men and boys."¹³⁶ In the beginning of the religious life of Elizabeth's community in Emmitsburg, Dubourg made a rule concerning the Sisters' correspondence and distributed to them a copy of the rule which permitted "everyone to write once in two months to the Director they prefer, on subjects of direction which

¹³⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.4, 77. Elizabeth called her community St. Joseph Sisters in the beginning because their location was St. Joseph Valley. Later they were called the Sisters of Charity. The Provisional Regulations for the St. Joseph Sisters appears in Seton. CW, 2, app. A-6-4a, 737-740. Rev. John Dubois, S.S. allowed Elizabeth and her sisters to use "his log cabin on St. Mary's Mountain" until "repairs were completed on the farmhouse they were to occupy." CW, 2, 74, n. 1. "Mount St. Mary's College near Emmitsburg, Maryland, was founded by Rev. John Dubois, S.S., as a school for boys, and it later became a seminary as well." CW, 2, 62, n. 6.

¹³⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6.70, 172, n. 3.

¹³⁶ Melville, *DuBourg*, 1, 189.

[were] designated.”¹³⁷ After moving to Emmitsburg, Elizabeth and the Sisters had been receiving spiritual direction through written correspondence from Rev. Pierre Babade who had been their confessor and spiritual director in Baltimore.¹³⁸

Elizabeth did not know that there had been disagreement on “method and policy” of education between Dubourg and Babade since 1799. During their preparation for opening a school in Cuba in 1799, they found that they had very different points of view and experienced difficulty. They met again at St. Mary’s College which was then five years old. Dubourg was the president of this college. Babade was known as “loyal opposition” within the college faculty. Dubourg asked for the removal of Babade from the college to Rev. Jacques André Emery who was then the general superior of his congregation. Emery admitted that Babade was too brusque and had too little thought of others’ feelings, but he knew he was a fine man. He had no intention of removing Babade from St. Mary’s College in Baltimore because it would weaken the College.¹³⁹ Thus, Babade could stay at the college. He directed the Sisters including Elizabeth’s girls and her sister-in-law, Harriet Seton, who came with Cecilia Seton in order to care for her in her illness and was staying with the Sisters for a while. When Babade came to know the policy on correspondence given to the Sisters by Dubourg, he sent a note to Elizabeth in his letter dated August 30, 1809 to Harriet Seton who was not a religious Sister, and thus

¹³⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.4, 78.

¹³⁸ Melville indicated that Dubourg and Babade “had already found that they disagreed on method and policy” when “they tried to start a school in Cuba in 1799.” Melville, *DuBourg*, 1, 190.

¹³⁹ Melville, *DuBourg*, 1, 190-2, quoting Emery to DuBourg, August 30, 1809. Jacques André Emery was the general superior of St. Sulpice; Melville, *John Carroll*, 119.

she had no obligation to obey Dubourg's regulation. He expressed his opinion to Elizabeth:

Mr. Tessier has given me a hint which has made me determined to explain to him the mystery of our liaison. He accused me in the name of my confreres of having mixed into a work which does not concern me and which Providence had addressed to another. I explained to him the difference between the exterior in which I have never interfered and the interior in which no one but myself could intervene. I recalled to him the principles touching on vocations and the Will of God regarding the confidential and directional ministry.¹⁴⁰

Rev. Pierre Babade pointed out the difference between the confessor and director. He claimed that he had no intention to interfere with Dubourg's leadership of Elizabeth's community and expressed his willingness to give spiritual direction as the Sisters' confessor. Elizabeth and the Sisters were very fond of Babade's spiritual guidance which they received during the sacrament of confession and wanted to receive his spiritual direction even by correspondence because he lived in Baltimore. As head of this new community, Elizabeth was troubled by this situation and decided to write to Archbishop John Carroll for the sake of her Sister's spiritual life. She shared her own experience of Babade as a confessor in her letter to Bishop Carroll dated around August 6, 1809. While she had had nine different priests as confessors, only Babade was the one to whom she could open her heart. From him she could "draw the consolation and instruction so necessary" in her situation. She stressed that other Sisters were also very fond of his spiritual direction and they asked her to write to the Archbishop. The policy given to them seemed "a severe regulation" and hindered them from receiving good advice from Babade. She valued religious life and could accept this policy, even though her heart was

¹⁴⁰ CW, 1, 197, quoting & translating Babade to Harriet Seton, August 30, 1809. ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 64 [French]. Rev. John Tessier, S.S. was "the superior at St. Mary's at the time" CW, 2, 189, n. 4.

“torn to pieces.” But the others could not bear it in the same way as she did. This rule had been “the source of a thousand temptations,” and removed “all comfort in devotion” from her. However, she would continually abandon herself to God and invite all her “dear companions to do the same.” She concluded that she prayed only “the adored will be done” and earnestly asked Bishop Carroll to bless them and pray for them. Then, she stressed: “all will be well.”¹⁴¹

At the request of her Sisters, Elizabeth wrote again to Archbishop Carroll on September 8, 1809, because they heard that Babade would make a short visit to Emmitsburg and hoped they could receive spiritual direction from him during their confession. Dubourg informed them that he was not sure whether Bishop gave Babade “permission to hear” the Sisters. She continued: “his ever blessed adorable will be done, but as he permits us to desire and express that desire to you as our Father you will not be displeased with me for again troubling you on a subject on which you seemed already to have made known your intentions.”¹⁴²

In the meantime Rev. John Dubois got the news Dubourg would be changed as the director of the Sisters. In his note to Elizabeth dated October 6, 1809, Rev. John Dubois informed Elizabeth of the appointment of Rev. John Baptist David as the second director of her community and revealed little hope that this decision could be changed even after Elizabeth’s meeting with Dubourg or the Archbishop:

the 1st mention is made of the appointment of Mr. David as Superior of the Sisterhood without any reflexion whatever on that subject - I suspect one of the

¹⁴¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.4, 77-78.

¹⁴² *CW*, 2, sec., 6.6, 81.

Letters addressed to you come from Mr. David give it no immediate answer but wait for the answer of Mr. Dubourg or rather for the visit of the bishop. both with what yr own reflexions will suggest to you, will enable you to form a final opinion on a subject of too much consequence to be treated slightly you know not . . .¹⁴³

Elizabeth was astonished at the news of appointment of Rev. John David because she had no idea of this change. She just hoped that the Sisters could receive spiritual direction from Rev. Pierre Babade. She expressed her distress and painful heart at the news of the change of director in her draft letter to Rev. William Dubourg:

My Father - the pleading of so weak a creature does not merit your attention I know - yet once more be patient with one you have born with so long - it seems but a dream that things are as they are that you have given your children to a Father in law while their real Father still lives and loves them with a Parents tenderness -- and why - the Mother is worthless - pity them - pity her try her once more and if she ever even vexes you again quit her and them forever - the Rev. Mr. [John] David may make an excellent Superior - his merits as a Father are undoubted, but our Lord did not give him that place with us - the charge was pointedly given to you my perverseness has driven.¹⁴⁴

Elizabeth was totally dismayed by this news of change and did not want Rev. Dubourg's to resign as director of her community. Her draft letter revealed her distress. The next page of this draft was torn away and she had jotted down her state of mind on the reverse of this page:

Jesus Lover of my Soul
Let me to thy Bosom fly
Leave ah Leave me not alone
Still Support and comfort me - Hide me.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ ASJPH, 1-3-3-5: 16.

¹⁴⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.8, 86-87. She compared John David to a step father.

¹⁴⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6.8, 87, n. 3.

Archbishop Carroll's visit to Emmitsburg on October 20, 1809, was a joyful event not only for St. Joseph parishioners but also for Elizabeth and her Sisters. During his visit Archbishop Carroll confirmed Elizabeth's first daughter, Anna Maria and her sister-in-law, Harriet Seton at the chapel of the Sisters of Charity.¹⁴⁶ There was no record of whether Elizabeth discussed the change of directors with the Archbishop during this visit. After the Archbishop's visit, Rev. Dubourg visited Elizabeth and brought a new candidate recommended by Rev. Anthony Kohlmann for Elizabeth's community.¹⁴⁷

Dubourg's visit gave consolation to Elizabeth. They had a good dialogue. When Elizabeth again asked Dubourg to "resume his former post," he promised her that he would speak about her wish, if he had the opportunity. But he informed her that the appointment depended on the decision of the Sulpician superior and the Archbishop.¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth hoped that Dubourg might continue and sent a letter to Archbishop Carroll. In her letter to him dated November 2, 1809, Elizabeth told him of Dubourg's visit to Emmitsburg and wrote that she was "not without hope" that he would "again resume his

¹⁴⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6.6, 81, n. 3. Harriet Seton was Elizabeth's sister-in-law and wanted to be a Catholic, but she could not make her decision in New York because she was afraid of her family's strong objection. She came to Elizabeth's place accompanying Cecilia Seton because of her illness and continually took care of her in Emmitsburg. After preparation, she professed the Catholic faith on September 24, 1809 and received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop Carroll. She died on December 22, 1809 in the convent due to her sudden illness and was buried in the cemetery of the Sisters of Charity, even though she was not a religious sister. CW, 2, app., A-6.3a, 722-724.

¹⁴⁷ Rev. Anthony Kohlmann, S.J. (1771-1836) was "an Alsatian-born Jesuit who arrived in New York in the fall of 1808." He served "as pastor of St. Peter's and administrator of the diocese of New York from 1808 to 1815." He was a "spiritual advisor of Cecilia Seton" and opposed Cecilia's going to Baltimore, but he sent "the candidates, Mrs. Corish, a widow, and her two daughters, Margaret (later Sister Benedicta) and Jane (later Sister Camilla), to the Sisters of Charity." CW, 2, 46, n. 9.

¹⁴⁸ Melville, *DuBourg*, 1, 200.

charge as Superior” of her community. She heard that Rev. John Baptist David would accompany “his friend bishop-elect of Bardstown, Kentucky, Rev. Benedict Flaget”¹⁴⁹ to Kentucky. Thus, if David was appointed as a director of her community at this point and then he left to Kentucky, her community would have had “three changes in one year.”

She continued to express her concern to the Archbishop:

since it is our first Superior I have offended to him I ought to be permitted to make the reparation, if it may be allowed - Yet if it is the will of our Lord it should not be so, I must do my best to make all go right . . . to you I attempt no justification - you know all - being a convert, and very much left to my own devotion, how gratefully attached must I be to the one who has shown an unceasing care for my Soul and done every thing to enlighten it, and discover to it the full consolation of our holy Faith. in my place my dear Father you would have experienced my trial, but you would at once have offered it up to God -- I am late in seeing the necessity of this measure, but not too late I hope since it is never too late with our good Lord and he can dispose every heart to accommodation -- you will see how good a child I am going to be . . . but I will do my best as I have promised you in every case. that I am sure of your prayers for my advancement is one of my greatest comforts.¹⁵⁰

Elizabeth received “a reprimanding letter” from Rev. Charles-François Nagot who was then the superior of Sulpicians in America. In this letter dated November 9, 1809, Nagot refused to reinstate Dubourg as the Sisters’ superior and emphasized that “it was God’s will” that Rev. John Baptist David was appointed superior of Elizabeth’s community.¹⁵¹ Nagot’s letter humbled Elizabeth and wrenched her heart. She expressed her anguish to the Archbishop in a letter dated December 14, 1809:

¹⁴⁹ Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, S.S. (1763-1851) was “a French émigré priest serving in the United States and bishop-elect of Bardstown, Kentucky.” *CW*, 2, sec., 5.19, 58, n. 5.

¹⁵⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.9, 87-88.

¹⁵¹ *CW*, 2, 91, sec., 6. 12, n. 1; *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-2:7, French.

I have had a great many very hard trials my Father since you were here, but you of course will congratulate me on them as this fire of tribulation is no doubt meant to consume the many imperfections and bad dispositions our Lord finds in me - indeed it has at times burnt so deep that the anguish could not be concealed, but by degrees custom reconciles pain itself and I determine dry and hard as my daily bread [cf. Mt. 6:11] is to take it with as good a grace as possible, when I carry it before our Lord sometimes he makes me laugh at myself and asks me what other kind I would choose in the Valley of tears [cf. Ps. 23:4] than that which himself and all his followers made use of –¹⁵²

Elizabeth knew what Archbishop Carroll's spiritual direction would be on this subject. She accepted this heart breaking experience as a purification of her imperfection and her suffering as the way of discipleship in Jesus Christ. She had to go through another suffering because of her sister-in-law, Harriet's sudden death on December 23, 1809. Her only consolation was that Harriet had accepted the Catholic faith and had a beautiful death in God. In the letter to the Archbishop dated January 19, 1810, Elizabeth reported the sudden death of Harriet Seton and described how Harriet was anxious to receive communion and how she beautifully sang "almost incessantly" Hymns, while she was dying.¹⁵³ Although Elizabeth tried to unite her suffering to that of Jesus Christ, she was in distress. Archbishop Carroll sent his consolation with his spiritual direction to Elizabeth on December 28, 1809:

It seems to be the order of divine providence to lead you to perfection thro' the road of sufferings, interior & exterior; and may you always correspond with the graces bestowed on you and walk in the way of the cross with resignation and consequently with much spiritual profit.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *CW*, 2, sec., 6.12, 92.

¹⁵³ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.20, 101-102.

¹⁵⁴ Melville, *EBS*, 173, quoting Carroll to Elizabeth Seton (*AMSV*, I, 16).

The newly appointed Rev. Superior of her community, John Baptist David, heard of Harriet's death and Elizabeth's grief. In his letter dated December 28, 1809 he sent words not of understanding or consolation but words of admonishment on her distress at the loss of Harriet and in the same letter requested Elizabeth to send the report of her school. He wrote:

Let us adore the unsearchable, but always wise and merciful ways of Providence; and let us more than ever convince ourselves, that Jesus wishes to be the sole possessor of our hearts, to abandon themselves with perfect resignation into his hands . . . having no other thought, in troublesome and painful encounters, than to submit lovingly to whatever God will be pleased to ordain.¹⁵⁵

In the same letter, David gave instruction to Elizabeth: "Take care, Dear Mother, to establish very strict regulations," and added, "I have begun to write some regulations for the organization of the school at St. Joseph's. I will complete them as soon as I can, and after having proposed them to the approbation of my Brothers, I will send them." At the end of letter, he told her that he would send the finished copy to Elizabeth "for her revision."¹⁵⁶ In the process of making his policy for Elizabeth's community and school, he did not consult with the Sisters. David resided in Baltimore and ordered Elizabeth to do whatever he directed her to do. He showed no concern or compassion for Elizabeth who was mourning the sudden loss of Harriet and at the same time in the process of moving into the newly built house, St. Joseph's house, which was later called the White House.

¹⁵⁵ Melville, *EBS*, 172, quoting David to Seton (AMSV, I, 23.)

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 174, quoting David to Seton (AMSV, I, 23).

The manner of Rev. John Baptist David was so different from that of Elizabeth's spiritual directors who always expressed their care and concern for her in gentle and respectful way. Elizabeth had a hard time adjusting herself to David's policy and orders. She described her state of mind frankly in her letter to Archbishop Carroll dated January 25, 1810. Her letter reflected David's view of Elizabeth and her community. She told the Archbishop that the provisional rule of her community had been "very imperfectly observed" and that her community depended so much on "the Mother of the Community." She candidly told the Archbishop: "[I am] all in the wrong - *not from discontent with the place. . . nor with the intention of our institution* for I long to be in the fullest exercise of it - but circumstances have all so combined as to create in my mind a confusion and want of confidence in my Superiors which is indscribable [indescribable]."¹⁵⁷ Then, she petitioned the Archbishop:

if my own happiness was only in question I should say how good is the cross for me this is my opportunity to ground myself in patience and perseverance, . . but as the good our Almighty God may intend to do by means of this community may be very much impeded by the present state of things it is absolutely necessary You as the head of it and to whom of course the Spirit of discernment for its good is given should be made acquainted with it before the evil is irreparable. . .I have endeavoured [endeavored] to do every thing . . . but after continual reflection on the necessity of absolute conformity with him, and constant prayer to our Lord to help me, yet the heart is closed and when the pen should freely give him the necessary detail and information he requires it stops, . . an unconquerable reluctance and diffidence takes place of those dispositions which ought to influence every action and with every desire to serve God and these excellent beings who surround me I remain motionless and inactive. it is for you my most revered Father to decide if this is temptation or what it is.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.23, 106.

¹⁵⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.23, 106-107.

Archbishop Carroll's letter responding to Elizabeth revealed his surprise about David's proposed plan to appoint Sister Rose White, who was sent by him to the Sisters of Charity, as the head of the community. In his letter dated March 10, 1810, Archbishop expressed his astonishment to Elizabeth and wrote: "I have not heard for a long time, the slightest mention of a proposed change in the government of S. Josephs nor of settling our dear Rose herewith, and at the head of a colony from your house." He did not hear anything directly from Rose White who was visiting in Baltimore. He seemed very distressed about the authority of Sulpicians over the Sisters of Charity. He pointed out that the authority of Sulpicians over Elizabeth's community was due to "partly the choice" of the Sisters, and "partly the approbation of the Superior." It was true that he never formally appointed the Sulpicians as directors of the Sisters of Charity. Dubourg's invitation to Elizabeth resulted in the establishment of the new community and Elizabeth and her Sisters took for granted that he would be their first director while Dubourg was appointed by his superior, not by the Archbishop. Thus, the Sulpicians naturally took over the governance of Elizabeth's community. The Sulpicians of Baltimore reported their work to the Archbishop in his diocese. However, there is no record that they helped this community financially.

The Archbishop consoled Elizabeth: "This happy issue may be promoted, as you know, by a perfect abandonment of yourself, as far as regards your individual allotment to the will of heaven, declared to you by the voice of that authority, which is appointed to

direct and constitute you in your office!”¹⁵⁹ Then, he shared his view on the change of Elizabeth’s position as head of the community:

If you should ever be permitted to resign your maternal charge over your Community, I would rejoice on your own individual account; but my hope for the continuance of the establishment would be very much weakened; and all your friends would feel their anxiety for your lovely children highly increased. You have had heavy trials in pursuing the way to perfection, and heavier perhaps still remain, during these, you will never lose sight of the consoling words of Christ, take courage; for I have overcome the world. . . . May it please the divine goodness to lead you on by his plenteous graces to the highest degree of perfection, and I pray you heavenly Father to bless in like manner all your dear children, spiritually and naturally such.¹⁶⁰

Archbishop Carroll did not want Elizabeth to resign. He was concerned about the progress of community and school, especially about parents who sent their children to Elizabeth's school because of Elizabeth’s outstanding spirituality and teaching knowledge. In a letter to Elizabeth dated March 11, 1810, the Archbishop encouraged her to “progress more and more towards the union” of her “soul with God” and guided her not to engage in “the things of the earth.” He directed Elizabeth continually to dedicate herself to the community and the school: “It is not to flatter or nourish pride, the seeds of which are sown in every heart, That I declare an opinion and belief, that its ultimate success under God, depends on your sacrificing yourself, notwithstanding all the uneasiness and disgust you may experience, and continuing in your place of Superior.”¹⁶¹ While he highly admired Elizabeth’s life, he always guided her to be humble. He

¹⁵⁹ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:43; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 113-114.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 42; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 114-115.

encouraged Elizabeth to unite with God by her total abandonment of self and acceptance of sacrifice.

Elizabeth's suffering was multiplied by the death of Sister Cecilia Seton. Accepting the advice of the Archbishop and Dr. Pierre Chatard, Elizabeth took her to "Baltimore for medical treatment," but she died on April 17, 1810 in Baltimore.¹⁶² Rev. John Baptist David arranged for a seminarian to go with Elizabeth and her Sisters on the journey to Baltimore and to accompany them on their return to Emmitsburg bearing the coffin of Cecilia. Elizabeth sent an appreciative letter to David and added that since Sister Rose White was not in Emmitsburg at that time she asked him what she should do concerning the announcement of the change of her position: "I shall wait for further directions before announcing to the Sisters the change that is intended in my situation as in Roses [White] Absence no one else would be willing to take the place of Mother without your immediate order . . . at all events I shall be satisfied."¹⁶³

According to Elizabeth's report to Rev. John Baptist David in her draft letter, Elizabeth and her community had 30 children in their school and opened St. Joseph's Free School which had enrolled 5 boarders from Fredrick County. Regarding the religious life of the Sisters, she reported that the Sisters observed "the rule to the utmost of their power except the habit of Silence" because workmen were still working in the convent and the situations surrounding them were not conducive to keeping the rule of

¹⁶² *CW*, 2, sec., 6.31, 119, n. 1. Dr. Pierre Chatard of Baltimore was "a physician who had studied in France before settling in Baltimore where he and his wife, Marie Françoise, became friends with the Setons and the Sisters of charity. His granddaughter entered the Sisters of charity August 28, 1857, and became Sister Juliana Chatard (1832-1917)." *CW*, 2, 38, n. 3.

¹⁶³ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.34, 120.

silence. She was not sure that this circumstance interrupted the Sisters' peace or mutual charity. But they were "always carefully bent on preserving it." Two or three Sisters did not seem happy because of their family circumstances, but "not [from] any disgust with their vocation". She concluded that he could judge these Sisters' state when he visited them. She also sent the financial report to him.¹⁶⁴

Anna Maria, who remained in Baltimore after the death of Cecilia Seton, informed her mother that the Archbishop told her privately that Elizabeth might come to Baltimore with a few Sisters in the fall and probably would stay at Baltimore, but it was still uncertain.¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth seemed to have a new hope for opening school with the Sisters who would want to come with her to Baltimore, if Archbishop Carroll arranged it. In her letter to the Archbishop dated June 15, 1810, Elizabeth wrote: "if it should please our Lord to suggest to you any plan of bringing us nearer to you, you may know how far my means may go." Then she informed him that she had some amount of money which the Archbishop could use if necessary for the new plan for her and her Sisters.¹⁶⁶

In his letter to Elizabeth dated July 18, 1810, Archbishop Carroll noted that he did not hear any word from Rev. John David or any members of the council "concerning a change" in Elizabeth's house, "if any be intended." The Archbishop noted that the Sulpicians seemed to hesitate making their final decision which was to assign Sister Rose

¹⁶⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.36, 122. As mentioned earlier, St. Joseph's Free School, "the first free Catholic School" in the United States for the girls in the poor began "February 22, 1810." *CW*, 2, 122, n. 2.

¹⁶⁵ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-9:37.

¹⁶⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.47, 143.

White to “the Government of the monastery,” while limiting Elizabeth “to the school.”¹⁶⁷

The Archbishop stated to Elizabeth that he would resist the Sulpicians’ plan for removing Elizabeth as the head of the community because he thought that it would not be good for the progress of the community and the mission:

I once thought, that this might be attended with some relief of your present disquietude, and should still think so, if merely your individual self were interested; but, be it said, without giving food to natural self-love, it would be in my opinion a fatal change to the prosperity of the Sisterhood, and prove ultimately detrimental to any project of your removal to Baltimore. . . . Therefore if it should be again proposed to me, it is my determination to resist the proposal, till Mr David has finished his visitation, & made his report-¹⁶⁸

Archbishop Carroll expressed his concern to Elizabeth in this painful situation, although he knew that this proposal would not create “any uneasiness on” her account because she had gone through “many trials in overcoming the obstructions interior and exterior” from the time of her conversion. Then he gave spiritual guidance to Elizabeth:

To these other difficulties equally or more painful succeeded; but it has still pleased god to reserve mother, which must naturally disappoint your expectations, more than any . . . preaching . . . one; that is, you are destined to be tried by disapprobation and humiliation, where you expected to meet confidence and tranquility. this was wanting perhaps to perfect your other sacrifices, and to operate in your heart an entire disengagement from human things and expectations; even the consolations of religious retirement.¹⁶⁹

In his letter to Elizabeth dated July 18, 1810, Rev. John Baptist David informed her that his visit to Emmitsburg would be delayed until the end of July because he heard that his room was not yet ready since the new convent building was still under

¹⁶⁷ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 44; Hanley, 3, 119-120.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

construction. He also expected to meet Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget who would bring the rules of the “Sisters [Daughters] of Charity” with him from France for Elizabeth’s community. He told her that Dubourg would accompany him in order to make a retreat in Elizabeth’s old Stone House. He also notified her that he would bring “a certain number of boarders” and also three women to join Elizabeth’s community with Sister Rose White who were then in Baltimore. He requested Elizabeth to send “a list of books” which were in her community because it might be necessary to “form a little library for the use of the Sisters.”¹⁷⁰

In her letter responding to Rev. John Baptist David dated July 23, 1810, Elizabeth informed him that she had sent the written list of the English spiritual books at St. Joseph’s house and explained that “the lives of the Saints” were given by her friend Filicchi to her children and were worn out by a year “of use in community.” She also reported that they had some good French books which she sometimes translated. She also sent her greetings to Sister Rose White who was visiting Baltimore.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-2:10. At the request of Rev. John David, S.S. and Archbishop John Carroll, Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget obtained “a copy of *the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* while on a trip to Europe and brought it to Emmitsburg (1810) for the use of Elizabeth and her sisters.” When he was in France, he also visited “a manufactory at Issy, a suburb of Paris, where the Daughters of Charity served orphan children as well as providing employment to the aged and uneducated. Mr. Samuel Cooper, who had donated the Emmitsburg property, had expressed a wish that a manufactory be established at Emmitsburg.” *CW*, 2, 58, n. 5. The Sisters of Charity were “not nuns” according to “ecclesiastical law,” because nuns made “public solemn, perpetual vows and lived in a cloister. The Sisters of Charity [Elizabeth’s time] were active women religious who made private, annual vows in the tradition of St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul.” *CW*, 2, 172, n. 4.

¹⁷¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.51, 148. “Sister Rose White was in Baltimore on business, probably regarding her son, Charles, who returned with her and enrolled in Mount St. Mary’s” (*CW*, 2, 148, n.3). Cf. “Sister Rose White’s Journal.” *CW*, 2, 728. Elizabeth often translated a part of the French Spiritual Books into English for the Sisters.

Rev. John Baptist David arrived at Emmitsburg with Sister Rose White and three candidates for the Sisters of Charity on the first of August.¹⁷² David's visit seemed to cause a storm in Elizabeth's community. In her letter to Archbishop John Carroll, Elizabeth shared her distress as well as that of the Sisters. During his visitation David announced his intention to give the Sisters "a retreat immediately" before leaving for Kentucky. Elizabeth and the Sisters were shocked because they had just finished a retreat with Rev. John Dubois and had made a general confession with him. Their hearts were now "quiet and tranquil" by "a new set of examinations." To Elizabeth and the Sisters it was not reasonable to have a retreat with David who would be leaving for Kentucky with Flaget, because the Archbishop had told Elizabeth that they would be receiving a new Rev. Superior of the community who would be appointed as soon as possible.¹⁷³ During the annual retreat, usually the director gave instructions related to the *Rules*. Furthermore, the new *Rules* which Flaget brought were not ready for the community. As head of her community, Elizabeth could see the problem of David's request and needed guidance for her community in this situation. Thus, she wrote to Archbishop Carroll:

why should it be agitated before the regulations are made which are hereafter to bind them and why should they be made by a Superior on the point of leaving us to be revised and probably new molded by his successor and thereby subjecting us to a new change - I do beg and intreat you as you so much wish our peace and tranquility not to consent to a retreat until you have given a formal approbation. I would not urge you my Reverend Father on the subject if I had not witnessed the effect on the minds of our Sisters when the retreat was proposed at the time of Mr.

¹⁷² CW, 2, app. A-6.3a, 728.

¹⁷³ CW, 2, sec., 6.59, 157-158. Archbishop Carroll "wrote to Elizabeth September 11 telling her that Bishop Benedict Flaget, S.S., intended to take Rev. John David, S.S., with him to his new diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky. This would necessitate the appointment of a new superior." CW, 2, 157, n. 1. This letter was not found in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*.

Dauids Visitation in the summer and the great disappointment it will cause when they will find there are no more regulations after the retreat than before - and certainly if any are proposed to us without going thro' the necessary discussion and approbation I can never give the example of Accepting them.¹⁷⁴

Elizabeth also sent the letter to Rev. John Baptist David who seemed to want to set up a kind of policy for the life of the Sisters of Charity before leaving for Kentucky with Flaget.¹⁷⁵ In her letter to David, Elizabeth candidly expressed her concern about having a retreat immediately with him at this point:

what object can a retreat have at this time except it is to be followed by an immediate application of those rules so long looked for, rules which are to be discussed and presented to the Bishop for his approbation and afterwards to serve as a guide to the Superior providence may assign us - of what use can it be to discuss those rules with any other than the one who is to take your place of Superior as he may on many points think differently from yourself and of course his opinion will subject us to new changes and uncertainty -- or if as it has been rumored there is to be no formal appointment of Superior to our house our Rev. Director [John Dubois] as being best acquainted with localities can best point out to our Reverend Bishop the different motives for whatever plan is to be adopted - being now not even possessed of the constitutions. . .¹⁷⁶

Elizabeth learned that David and Bishop elect Flaget made “plans not to leave for Kentucky” until May 1811. David had no intention of giving up “the reins at St. Joseph’s.”¹⁷⁷ In her letter to the Archbishop dated December 5, 1810, Elizabeth told him that David required her to send “the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity which Rev. Mr.

¹⁷⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.59, 157-158.

¹⁷⁵ Rev. John Baptist David was “preparing to accompany Bishop-elect Benedict Flaget, S.S., to Bardstown, Kentucky. In the meantime there was talk of establishing a mission of the Sisters of Charity in Baltimore. The Sequence of events is unclear, but it was causing a great deal of anxiety in the community.” *CW*, 2, 178, n. 2.

¹⁷⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.60, 159. Elizabeth was right that the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity written in French “required translation into English” and would have “some minor revisions before presented to Archbishop John Carroll for approval.” *CW*, 2, 165, n. 4.

¹⁷⁷ Melville, *EBS*, 178.

[Benedict] Flaget brought” to him. But Elizabeth wanted the Archbishop to look at them first when he had time. She petitioned the Archbishop, who was her “Father and first Superior,” to make a decision for her who had an “ever unsettled mind on the subject” of her situation.¹⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Elizabeth received a letter from her friend, Mrs. Margaret George in Baltimore, and learned what was going on in Rev. John Baptist David’s mind. At a dinner table in Baltimore, Margaret met David and during their conversation she learned that he would endeavor to establish a sisterhood without a school in Baltimore and appoint Sister Rose White as the superior.¹⁷⁹ In her letter to the Archbishop dated March 16, 1811, Elizabeth noted: “I imagine that the Rev. Superior intends before he goes, to establish the house he proposed without a school in order to leave this one to me for the exclusive purpose of Education, which idea he suggested when he was last here to Mr. Dubois.”¹⁸⁰

Meanwhile Rev. John Baptist David ordered Elizabeth to announce that he proposed Sister Rose White as a Mother of Elizabeth’s community. He summoned Sister Rose to come to Baltimore, but she was very sick and could not go. He impatiently demanded Elizabeth immediately to send Sister Rose White to Baltimore in spite of the risk to her health even though he knew that she was very sick and still weak. Elizabeth felt sorry for Rose White. Elizabeth made the announcement of the change in the leadership of the community to her Sisters. Since Sister Rose knew David’s proposal of

¹⁷⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.65, 164-165.

¹⁷⁹ *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-2:19. Mrs. Margaret George entered the Sisters of Charity on February 4, 1811. Melville, *EBS*, 178, chap. 8, n. 139.

¹⁸⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.73, 179.

her appointment as a Mother of community, her demeanor had undergone an entire change and had been “very unfavorable” to her own happiness and to all of Sisters, although she was “truly valued by” Elizabeth and the Sisters. Some Sisters had a difficult time accepting Sister Rose as a Mother.¹⁸¹ Nonetheless Elizabeth believed that they would endeavor to follow whatever David directed. She continued:

in giving this little detail do I pain your dear Fatherly heart - you know human nature too well not to have foreseen [foreseen] what I have told you. but believe me nothing has ever taken place (notwithstanding this cloud and dust) but what would have comforted and edified you through out = every one is so much bent on serving our Lord that the most our Enemy could obtain has been a moment of reserve, but the Communion or confession of the next day has been sure to mend all again. Mr. [John] Dubois has had a most difficult business to be sure, and I shall forever honor and revere his unwearied patience and goodness of heart.¹⁸²

Finally, Rev. John Baptist left for Kentucky with Bishop Flaget. David could not carry out his plans for the appointment of Sister Rose White as the new Mother of the Sisters of Charity nor for the establishment of new community without a school at Baltimore. The whole situation with David took its toll on the young community causing them anxiety and uncertainty. Elizabeth expressed her concern to Archbishop Carroll about the future director of her community in her letter dated May 13, 1811:

your observation that our reverend confessor [Rev. John Dubois] has the whole labour of two offices is so true . . . being on the spot he sees things in a different point of view from those who are distant, consequently my mind must often be influenced by his opinion while my actions should concur another way, Rev. Mr.

¹⁸¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.73, 179. In her letter to Archbishop John Carroll dated May 13, 1811, she again mentioned that “any one in this house and Mr. Dubois himself” would candidly tell the Archbishop regarding her change of attitude after she knew that she would replace Elizabeth. CW, 2, 185.

¹⁸² CW, 2, sec., 6.73, 179. “Rev. John David, the superior, resided in Baltimore. Rev. John Dubois, S.S., on the other hand, resided in Emmitsburg and was in regular contact with the sisters during this time of turmoil.” CW, 2, 179, n. 4.

[John] Dubois an economist and full of details dictated by habits of prudence - Rev. Mr. [William] Dubourg all liberality and schemes from a long custom of expending - in spirituals also the difference is equally marked and their sentiments reflected from their habits . . . but I must abandon it to Almighty God - as it must be a very delicate point for you to decide, and I should be very unwilling to take the responsibility of having influenced you, and I open my heart on the subject only because I believe our Lord requires me to be explicit on it. Rev. Mr. Dubois in one point has always had my preference as a Superior - he always and invariably has recommended me to refer constantly to you, which is not only in the order of Providence but the only safety I can find for the peace of my mind.¹⁸³

Elizabeth had good reasons for considering Rev. John Dubois her choice for the third director of her community. Dubois had resided in the Emmitsburg area and knew well her community's situation. He with some Sulpicians had a different view of Elizabeth's community. Through Bishop Cheverus, she knew Dubois opposed the Sulpicians' control over Elizabeth's community and also opposed the union of her community with the French Daughters of Charity at that time. Melville pointed out that there was possibility that Dubois helped Elizabeth to write "the detailed queries about her own position" to the Archbishop.¹⁸⁴

When Elizabeth read the *Common Rules* of the Daughters of Charity of France, she found some concern in the adoption of it to the present state of her community. While the Daughters of Charity devoted themselves to educate children who could not pay, the Sisters of Charity dedicated themselves to educate both rich and poor girls. Actually Elizabeth's community received tuition from the rich families for their daughters and used the surplus for the education of poor girls. In her letter to the Archbishop, Elizabeth expressed her queries regarding the permanent adoption of the *Common Rules of the*

¹⁸³ CW, 2, sec., 6.76, 184.

¹⁸⁴ Melville, *EBS*, 163.

Daughters of Charity for Elizabeth's community and also her position when the French Sisters arrived:

How could you have expected my Reverend Father that the regulations of the house would have been concluded before the departure of Rev. Mr. David, since his calculations are turned on the arrival of the French Sisters, what authority would the Mother they bring have over our Sisters (while I am present) but the very rule she is to give them? - and how could it be known that they would consent to the different modifications of their rule which are indispensable if adopted by us. What support can we procure to this house but from our Boarders, and how can the reception of Boarders [be] sufficient to maintain it [in] accord with their statutes. how can they allow me the uncontrolled privileges [privileges] of a Mother to my five darlings? - or how can I in conscience or in accordance with your paternal heart give up so sacred a right.¹⁸⁵

Elizabeth's queries were very effective in adoption of the *Common Rules* of the Daughters of Charity as the *Constitutions* of the Sisters of Charity. The *Common Rules* were modified "in order to adapt them to American conditions" by Elizabeth and Rev. Dubois as well as by the Archbishop and the authority of Sulpicians. In these modified *Rules*, "the secondary purpose" of Elizabeth's community was "the education of girls." This draft was translated by Rev. John Dubois.¹⁸⁶

In her letter to Archbishop Carroll dated September 5, 1811, Elizabeth commented that the *Constitutions* proposed were very similar to those of "the original manuscript of the Sisters in France," and expressed her favor of this proposal: "I never had a thought discordant with them as far as my poor power may go in fulfilling them." Although Rev. Dubois was very concerned about Elizabeth's unique situation, his draft of *Rules* could not cover Elizabeth's unique situation. Elizabeth noted that an individual was

¹⁸⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.76, 185.

¹⁸⁶ *CW*, 2, 195, n. 1-2, Sec., 6.83.

surely “not to be considered where a public good” was in question. But she stressed that she would gladly make “every sacrifice” for her first and inseparable “obligations as a Mother” of her children.¹⁸⁷ She expressed that she was ready to accept the decision of the Archbishop for her and would consider it as the will of God:

You my most Venerated Father know also every thing that has past from my first Union with this house until the present moment, temptations trials and etc - and now I cast all at the feet of the Adored, placing every consideration and all my concerns in your hands as his Representative to decide my fate.¹⁸⁸

Rev. John Dubois made the final draft of the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of the United States* and Archbishop Carroll and Rev. John Tessier¹⁸⁹ “formally approved it on January 17, 1812.” The Archbishop gave his “provisional approval” to this document in his letter to Elizabeth dated September 11, 1811:

Shall I confess that I am deeply humbled at being called on to give a final sanction to a rule of conduct & plan of religious government, by which it is intended to promote & preserve amongst many beloved spouses of Jesus Christ, a spirit of solid & sublime religious perfection? When I remember how many prayers, fastings, watchings &c were employed by the holy founders of religious institutions to obtain light & assistance from the Holy Ghost to render their constitutions & rules adapted to the objects of their pious zeal, I am so sensible of my unworthiness, that I would certainly decline from the task, if I did not entertain a confidence that it may please God to bestow a blessing on the ministerial acts of the ministers of religion, whom he has constituted to which blessing they are not entitled, if only their private worth were considered - Under this impression therefore, I shall & do now give my approbation to the

¹⁸⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.83, 195-196.

¹⁸⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.83, 195.

¹⁸⁹ Rev. John Mary Tessier, S.S. was “superior at St. Mary’s Seminary and second superior of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States (1810-1829).” CW, 2, 195, n. 3.

Constitutions exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois after they shall have received the alterations suggested by him.¹⁹⁰

The Archbishop gave more information concerning the process of adaptation of the Common Rules to Elizabeth's community. There was a different opinion about "all the material points," but the Sulpicians had given it up in "their last deliberation." He stressed that he could not approve the Constitutions, as modified in the copy, if the Sulpicians did not agree. Dubois had not "exhibited the rules" and "particular duties of the Sisters" in this copy, but they agreed that Elizabeth and the Rev. Superior would be the best judges of those concerns. He continued: "Your own particular situation required special consideration on account of your dear children - It seemed to me that only general principles for you & your family's case should be now established, grounded on justice & gratitude & that any special considerations should be deferred to the period when the circumstances may require them."¹⁹¹

The Superior of St. Sulpice of America, Rev. John Mary Tessier, approved the modified Rules for Elizabeth's community and the special permission given to Elizabeth to "remain the legal guardian of her children" despite her vows. Tessier presented these

¹⁹⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 45; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 155-156. "This Rule is a transcription of the handwritten copy made by Rev. John Dubois, which the Sulpicians and Archbishop John Carroll adapted from the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* in France (ed. René Almeras, 1672), brought to the United States by Bishop Benedict Flaget, S.S., in 1811." CW, 3b, app., A-12.3, 499, n. 1. "The *Regulations of the Society of the Sisters of Charity in the United States of America*, was approved by Archbishop John Carroll and initiated with the Sisters when the first novitiate began in February 1812." CW, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, 442, n. 38. This "Rule of 1812" is in Seton, 3b: 499-540. A compiled document of "The *Constitutions of the Sisters of charity* from 1812 to 1850" is in CW, 3b, app. A-12. 4, 541.

¹⁹¹ Ibid; Hanley, 3, 156.

modified Rules to Archbishop Carroll “to obtain his approbation” and also nominated Rev. John Dubois as the third “Superior General” of the Sisters of Charity.¹⁹²

Archbishop Carroll clarified the relationship between Elizabeth’s community and the Sulpicians. He happily announced that Elizabeth’s community would be free from the jurisdiction of the Society of St. Sulpice:

I am rejoiced likewise to know that the idea of any other connexion [connection] than that of charity, is abandoned between the daughters of St. Joseph’s & the Society of St. Sulpice; I mean that their interest, administration & government are not to be the same, or at least under the same control. This removes many inconveniences for you & for Messrs of St. Sulpice- No one of that body but your immediate Superior, residing near you, will have any share(d) in the government or concerns of the Sisters except (on very rare & uncommon occasion) <but> the Superior of the Seminary of Balte., but not his society. This however is to be understood so, as not to exclude the essential superintendence & control of Archbp over every Community in his Diocese -¹⁹³

The Archbishop gave the guidelines which Elizabeth’s community would follow. First, the community would “render their plan of life useful to religion & the public.” Second, the community should “confine the administration” of their own affairs, the internal and “domestic government as much as possible” to their “own institutions once adopted” and within their own walls. He stressed that the Superior or confessor of Elizabeth’s community would “need be informed or consulted in the matters where the Mother and her Council” needed his advice.¹⁹⁴

Archbishop John Carroll valued education as an important mission of the Sisters of Charity and advised: “A century at least will past before the exigencies & habits of this

¹⁹² Herbermann, 224-225.

¹⁹³ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 45; Hanley, 3, 156-157.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

country will require & hardly admit of the charitable exercises towards the sick, sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our largest city; and therefore they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable & permanent object of their religious duty.”¹⁹⁵ He and Elizabeth already foresaw that the Catholic mission in America at that time differed from that of France. That was a reason why they changed a part of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity in order to adjust it to American Catholic situation. Then, he expressed his congratulations to Elizabeth:

I shall congratulate you & our beloved Sisters, when the Constitution is adopted. It will be like freeing you from a state in which it was difficult to walk straight, as you had no certain way in which to proceed - In the mean time assure yourself & them of my utmost solicitude for your advancement in the service & favor of God; of my reliance on your prayers; of your prosperity in the important duty of education which will & must long be your principal, & will always be your partial employment.¹⁹⁶

Elizabeth and the Sisters formally adopted the Constitutions on January 17, 1812, “which had been approved by Archbishop John Carroll and Rev. John Tessier, S.S.”¹⁹⁷ Elizabeth appreciated these *Rules* and later wrote to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté: “I am so in love now with the rules that I see the bit of the bridle all gold, and the reins all of silk.”¹⁹⁸ Elizabeth and eighteen Sisters completed “their novitiate and became the first Sisters of Charity to make vows on July 19, 1813.”¹⁹⁹ They renewed “their annual vows

¹⁹⁵ Ibid; Hanley, 3, 157.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.120, 231, n. 3.

¹⁹⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.146, 259.

¹⁹⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6.133, 245, n. 2. See “First Vow Formula” in Seton, 2: 757, app, A-6. 134a. “The wording of the vow formula is almost identical to that used by St. Louise de Marillac and the French Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.” CW, 2, 245, n. 1.

on the feast of the Annunciation, usually celebrated on March 25.”²⁰⁰ During 1812, Rev. John David founded the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in Kentucky and asked Elizabeth to send Sr. Rose White with some Sisters to teach his community. He even proposed that this “Kentucky sisterhood should be united to Elizabeth’s community.” However, he wanted to start the novitiate in Kentucky and also to change some part of the Constitutions of Elizabeth’s community. Elizabeth with Archbishop Carroll and Rev. John Dubois decided not to accept David’s plan,²⁰¹ but the Sisters shared their Rules and habits with this infant community.²⁰²

Elizabeth happily wrote that Archbishop John Carroll was “now more our protector than ever” and “more truly attached to us” in her letter to Antonio Filicchi who was a friend of both Elizabeth and the Archbishop. She also noted that Archbishop Carroll finally took “the superior charge of [her] house which at first he had bestowed on another.”²⁰³ The Archbishop continually sent girls to Elizabeth’s school in Emmitsburg including his great niece.²⁰⁴ He was getting weaker in his old age so that he could not often communicate with Elizabeth and her Sisters. In his letter to Elizabeth dated March 29, 1814, he revealed his thankful heart to God for the achievement of Elizabeth’s community:

I have suffered many opportunities to escape without finding any testimonial of my sincere and fatherly sollicitude [solitude] for your heavenly establishment =

²⁰⁰ CW, 2, sec., 7.80, 470, n. 2.

²⁰¹ Melville, *John Carroll*, 247-248.

²⁰² CW, 2, sec., 6.172, 283, n. 1.

²⁰³ CW, 2, sec., 6.79, 189.

²⁰⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.138, 250.

yet how many reasons have I to thank divine providence for affording such a protection, & shield for my diocese(s) against the inroads of irreligion and impiety for my diocese, as . . . the prayers and examples of your blessed Society offer? . . . Most earnest recommending myself to your . . . prayers & those of your holy Community . . .²⁰⁵

In her letter to Archbishop Carroll dated November 8, 1814, Elizabeth joyfully reported her community's new mission in Philadelphia. Three Sisters would go to manage "an asylum for needy children" in Philadelphia; it was "the first mission of the Sisters of Charity beyond St. Joseph's."²⁰⁶ Knowing the Archbishop's feeble health, she also sent him the prayers of all her children and the Sisters, especially for celebrating his feast day.²⁰⁷ In her letters to the Archbishop written in 1815, Elizabeth happily informed him that her son, William Seton, went with Rev. Bruté to France and then to Filicchi's place in Leghorn in Italy in order to work under Filicchi. She shared and consulted the Archbishop on the matters of the community and school as well as concerns about her children.²⁰⁸ Although the Archbishop was very feeble and could "scarcely hold a pen," he sent a letter to Elizabeth dated October 27, 1815, with a fifty dollar donation from a lady and Filicchi's letter to him because there was news of Elizabeth's son William.²⁰⁹

In her letter to Antonio dated November 20, 1815, Elizabeth informed him of the serious illness of Archbishop Carroll:

²⁰⁵ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1:53b; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 267-268.

²⁰⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.172, 283, n.1.

²⁰⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.20, 291-292.

²⁰⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.209, 348-345.

²⁰⁹ Melville, *John Carroll*, 282, quoting John Carroll to Seton (AMSV, 1.21).

We are all every part of the Church as well as individuals, in a most anxious moment over the situation of our Blessed Archbishop Carroll - his life seems in eminent danger - for my part was it not for the long habit first learnt me by you dearest Antonio to look direct at our God in every event, I would tell you that it is a great affliction to me, but all must take the course of the Adorable Will - yet we beg more with tears than words if he [will] be yet spared.²¹⁰

Elizabeth also expressed her anguish of heart at the Archbishop's sickness to Rev.

Pierre Babade: "oh could I be by his bedside to get it before he goes - goes, indeed to recieve [receive] his great reward may we not fully hope my Father. the hand of God is all I can see in an event so severe both privately and [publicly]." ²¹¹

Archbishop John Carroll passed away on December 3, 1815.²¹² Elizabeth considered the Archbishop her spiritual father and had developed a deep spiritual relationship with him. She called him as "My dear and tender Father"²¹³ or "My Father in God,"²¹⁴ and called herself his "affectionate child."²¹⁵ In her letter to the Archbishop dated August 9, 1811, she expressed her trust in him: "but to whom shall I write freely and without reserve if not to you = if there was any thing in it which should not have been written to anyone, forgive, and only consider the intention."²¹⁶

²¹⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6.214, 357.

²¹¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.216, 360.

²¹² Melville, *John Carroll*, 284.

²¹³ CW, 2, sec., 6.4, 76.

²¹⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.6, 80.

²¹⁵ CW, 1, sec., 4.62, 491.

²¹⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6.82, 193.

Archbishop John Carroll always expressed his paternal love in his letters to Elizabeth and took care of Elizabeth's two sons' education at Georgetown. Like a real father, whenever he visited Georgetown he met Elizabeth's sons and consulted with their professors, then informed Elizabeth of her sons' wellbeing. When Elizabeth's sister-in-law Cecilia Seton became very sick, he advised Elizabeth to take her to Baltimore for medical treatment.²¹⁷ When the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity were adopted, the Archbishop considered Elizabeth's role as mother and gave her special permission to take care of her children while at the same time living religious life.

When Elizabeth's new community and school were established in Emmitsburg, Archbishop Carroll was so happy and sent many daughters of his friends to be enrolled in the school. In her letter to Antonio, Elizabeth wrote that "Our blessed Archbishop is so fond of our establishment that it seems to be the darling part of his charge," and he intended to open a similar one at Baltimore "to perform the same duties there."²¹⁸ He introduced his friends to Elizabeth so that they could help her community and school.

Both Elizabeth and the Archbishop shared their American spirit. They also foresaw education as the urgent need of the American Catholic Church at their time. As mentioned in chapter 1, the hospitals and social welfare organizations were run by the Protestants, while the Catholics' care of the poor or sick was home visiting. Most of the schools at that time served the Protestants. The need for Catholic education was great. Both Elizabeth and the Archbishop were practical and had zeal for serving the poor. They saw the need to

²¹⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.31, 119, n. 1.

²¹⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.39, 27. This plan did "not happen until after Elizabeth's death" *CW*, 2, 127, n. 7.

educate not only the children of wealthy Catholics but also the children of the poor. The Archbishop strongly supported the autonomy of the Sisters of Charity.

The Archbishop made sure that in adopting the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* care was taken to make the necessary changes according to the needs of the American circumstances. He highly valued Elizabeth's deep spiritual life built on her painful experiences of suffering. In the beginning of his spiritual direction, he guided Elizabeth to accept her suffering as purification of her soul. When he penetrated Elizabeth's deep spirituality, he was aware of God's providence guiding Elizabeth's soul to Him through her participation in the suffering of Christ. Thus, he directed Elizabeth to embrace her suffering as "the road of perfection" and to "walk in the way of the cross with resignation."²¹⁹ Whenever Elizabeth was in the midst of suffering, he encouraged her to recognize God's plenteous graces guiding her to "the highest degree of perfection" amid her heavy trials. He encouraged Elizabeth to unite with God by her total abandonment of self and of earthly things:

In the meantime, let it be your only concern to progress more and more towards the union of your soul with God, and an entire disengagement from the things of the earth.²²⁰

Under the guidance of Archbishop John Carroll, Elizabeth tried to live a Christ-centered life at every moment of her life and guided people whom she met to God. Both Archbishop John Carroll and Elizabeth contributed greatly to building the Kingdom of God in the Catholic Church of America at the beginning of the 19th century.

²¹⁹ Melville, *EBS*, 173, quoting Carroll to Elizabeth Seton (AMSV, I, 16).

²²⁰ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1; 42; Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 3, 114.

3. Elizabeth Seton's Spiritual Growth Under the Guidance of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté

Elizabeth Seton's spiritual life profoundly matured under the guidance of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté who later became the first Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana in 1834. The correspondence between Elizabeth and Bruté revealed their spiritual journey together toward union with God in eternity. The spiritual friendship between Bruté and Elizabeth developed over a period of ten years from 1811 until her death in 1821. In his writing *Mother Seton*, Bruté wrote:

I have known her from 1811 to 1821. I have seen her, habitually, during my sojourn at Mount St. Mary's from 1812 to 1815, besides the continual correspondence which the Superior of St. Joseph's, believing that good resulted from it, permitted us. This correspondence continued after my return from France, and whilst I was President of the College in Baltimore from 1815 to 1818. From August, 1818 to 1821, January 4, the day of her death, I was confessor at St Joseph's, and her own.²²¹

Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley wrote *Memoirs of the Right Reverence Simon Wm. Gabriel Bruté*, based on "a large number of manuscripts of Bruté" and the testimony of Bruté's old friends whom he met.²²² According to Bayley, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté had an extraordinary background of education. He studied "Mathematical science," and "Chemistry and Natural Philosophy" besides his medical study. He also had outstanding knowledge of

²²¹ Simon Gabriel Brute, D.D., *Mother Seton* (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, published for only internal use in the community, 1884), 82.

²²² After the death of Bishop Bruté, Monsignor De la Hailandiere, the successor of Bishop Bruté in the See of Vincennes, presented a large number of notes, memoranda, and manuscripts of Bishop Bruté to the Bishop of New York. Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley was able to have access to all of the material of Bruté and edited his manuscript. James Roosevelt Bayley, D.D. ed., *Memoirs of the Right Reverend Simon Gabriel Bruté, D.D., First Bishop of Vincennes: with Sketches Describing his Recollections of Scenes connected with the French Revolution and Extracts from His Journal* (hereafter cited as *Memoirs-Bruté*) (New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1876), 7.

the literature of French writers and Latin poets and studied “the Greek Fathers of the Church” even before entering the Seminary.²²³ During his study at Medical School, he became “a member of the Society formed by the saintly Abbé Delpuits, an ex-Jesuit, who preserved so many youths from the evil principles of the day.”²²⁴ When he graduated from Medical School, he received “the first prize” among eleven hundred students and earned a medical doctor's degree. Although he was “immediately appointed a physician to the 1st Dispensary in Paris,” he refused it and entered “the Seminary of St. Sulpice.”²²⁵

²²³ Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 32. Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley was a son of Guy Carleton Bayley who was Elizabeth Seton's half-brother. Thus he was Elizabeth Seton's nephew. *CW*, 2, 72, n. 1. James Roosevelt Bayley was “ordained for the Episcopal Church in 1835,” then he converted to Catholicism influenced “by the writings of John Henry Newman.” He was “ordained a Catholic priest” in 1844 and named secretary to the then Bishop John Hughes of New York” in 1848. “It was during this period that he came across the Bruté journals and manuscripts and began putting them in order, hoping to publish both a life of Bishop Bruté and an eye-witness account of the terror of the French Revolution.” He was “appointed the first Bishop of Newark (N.J.)” in 1853. In the same year his first book, *A History of the Catholic Church in New York City*, was published. “Two years later, he completed the French Revolution memoirs of Bishop Bruté which was later published by D. & J. Sadlier & Co.” The life of Bruté was “an introduction to” this *Memoirs*. He became the Archbishop of Baltimore in 1872 and died in 1877. He was buried at the cemetery of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg. Albert J. Nevins, M.M., ed., *Frontier Bishop, the Life of Bishop Simon Bruté by James Roosevelt Bayley, First Bishop of Newark* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1971), 10. The great part of Bayley's *Memoirs of right Reverend Simon Bruté* published in 1865 was made up of “the original notes and records of Bishop Bruté.” Because of a great demand for the *Memoirs*, “a revision of the volume appeared in 1876” (Mary Salesia Godecker, O.S.B., *Simon Bruté de Rémur, First Bishop of Vincennes* (Hereafter cited as *Simon Bruté*) (St. Meinrad, IN: St. Meinrad Historical Essays: 1931), xx).

²²⁴ Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 39, n. 25.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41. A friend of Bruté wrote that “M. Bruté de Rémur, who obtained the first prize at the Medical College, an angelic young man, watched at the bedside of the dying youth on Easter night” (Godecker, *Simon Bruté*, 26, quoting Abbé C. Bruté Rémur, *Vie de Monseigneur Bruté de Rémur*, 77). “Bruté was graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in the year 1803” and was “unanimously accorded the first prize, or Corvisart prize, by the impartial decision of his professors. By the favor of Napoleon, he received ‘an official appointment as Physician to the First Dispensary in Paris’, but he declined it because he wanted to be a priest. Mary Salesia Godecker, O.S.B., “Right Reverend Simon William Gabriel Bruté De Remur, First Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana, Part II. Priestly Career in Maryland: 1810-1834” (hereafter cited as diss.) (Ph. D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1929), 2, 6; Herbermann, 267.

During his study at the Seminary, he read “the works of the Fathers of the Church, the acts and canons of her Councils, as marking her tradition,” and from “this time until the end of his life everything that he read or studied was with this view” in mind. He was ordained a Sulpician priest in 1808 and became “a professor of Theology in the Diocesan Seminary of Rennes.” However, his zeal and devotedness to God’s love seemed to urge him to serve as a missionary in a foreign country. In his spiritual notes of retreat during this time, he wrote that he was ready to be detached from home and family and to make the sacrifice of himself for missionary work if God so willed it.²²⁶

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté recognized the will of God for his missionary dream when he met the bishop-elect of Bardstown, Kentucky, Benedict Flaget, in 1810. Flaget persuaded him to join the Sulpicians’ mission in America, and also Archbishop John Carroll invited him to work in his Archdiocese of Baltimore. Bruté accepted their invitation to be a missionary in the United States. With Flaget Bruté “sailed for America on June 10,” 1810, from France and arrived at Baltimore on August 10, 1810. The Sulpician priests at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore received him “as an affectionate brother and the nation tendered him the welcome of a loyal citizen.” While “Bruté’s primary motive in leaving his native land” was to devote his life to the missionary work in America, the Sulpicians in Baltimore recognized his gift and experience of teaching so that he was appointed as a “professor of Philosophy in St. Mary’s Seminary at Baltimore.”²²⁷

²²⁶Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 44-46; Foreign Missionary Series, *The Life of Simon William Gabriel Bruté, D.D., First Bishop of Vincennes* (London: Burns, Oats, and Company, 1870), 103-106.

²²⁷Godecker, diss., 2, 9-12.

Archbishop John Carroll already had recognized Bruté as a valued professor and spiritual director. When Rev. John Dubois asked the Archbishop to appoint Bruté as his assistant in Emmitsburg, the Archbishop refused because he wanted Bruté beside him. His letter to Rev. Dubois dated December 22, 1811, revealed how the Archbishop valued Rev. Bruté:

I had great objections to the removal of Mr. Bruté from the Seminary on motives of public utility and for my own satisfaction. . . . It is of the first importance to have a person of Mr. Bruté's talents, to say nothing of his other qualities, at the Seminary. He personally would lose nothing by being at Emmitsburg; he would continue to lay in new stores of knowledge, as well as here: but it is important to the interests of religion to form some at least of our young clergymen to erudition; to teach them to acquire biblical, theological; and Ecclesiastico-historical knowledge in an eminent degree. Who but Mr. Bruté can be their guide in these pursuits?²²⁸

During the summer vacation of 1811, Rev. Simon Gabriel Brute visited Mount St. Mary's near Emmitsburg and temporarily assisted Rev. John Dubois. He also visited the Sisters of Charity at St. Joseph's Valley in Emmitsburg and met Elizabeth for the first time. Brute noted: "I first saw Mother in 1811. - She read with me the 'Following of Christ' to form my English pronunciation - marked out especially Chapter Twenty-first, Third Book."²²⁹ Elizabeth also described her first impression of Bruté in her letter to Archbishop Carroll dated August 9, 1811:

Mr. Bruté in the purity of his heart is doing his very best, and much more than it could possibly be supposed so young a man would venture on to second all the plans [the Constitutions] laterly adopted. sometimes I am tempted to tell him all;

²²⁸ Hanley, 3, 165.

²²⁹ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 52; *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 4, 523, n. 46.

but it seems to me Our Lord says every moment trust all to me = to him and to you my Venerated Father I trust all indeed all His and yours in Him.²³⁰

Elizabeth intuitively felt that she could open her heart to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, even though he was younger than she. Godecker noted that Bruté and Elizabeth were “kindred souls, possessing minds of the same delicate mould, and from their first meeting they sympathized heartily.”²³¹

Both Elizabeth and Bruté were attracted to each other’s spirituality. While Bruté read *The Following of Christ* with Elizabeth to practice his English pronunciation, they were able to share their spiritual thoughts and concerns. There were so many things they could share because both of them were great readers and had knowledge of contemporary books and also of the classics including spiritual classics. As mentioned earlier, Bruté as a seminarian developed his spiritual and theological knowledge based on “the Works of the Fathers of the Church, acts and canons of her Councils,” as well as other spiritual readings.²³² It was already noted that Elizabeth became very familiar with the teachings of the Council of Trent during her process of conversion to Catholicism and these, along with the Fathers’ works, had become her favorite spiritual reading. Under Bruté’s spiritual

²³⁰ Seton, *CW*, 2: 194, sec., 6.82. Bruté was reading the draft of the adopted Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity. According to editors, “Elizabeth’s style of frequently using equal sign (=), short dash(-), and long dash (--), as terminal punctuation is followed as closely as possible.” See Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for volume one” *CW*, 1, xxvii.

²³¹ Godecker, diss., 2: 45; *Sketches of the Life of Felix de Andreis* (Baltimore, MD: Kelly, Hedian, & Piet, 1861), 80-90.

²³² Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 44; Foreign Missionary Series, 103.

direction, she further developed her knowledge and love of the Church Fathers and later wrote “Instruction Compiled from Fathers and Councils.”²³³

While Elizabeth developed her spiritual growth by uniting with Jesus Christ on the Cross through her extreme suffering, Bruté also grew in spiritual depth through his painful experience of suffering during the French Revolution. They were able to share their spiritual experiences from the depth of their souls based on their participation in the suffering of Jesus. Furthermore Elizabeth was fluent in French so when Brute could not express himself as he wished in English she could understand his French and could respond to him in French. From their first encounter, they were able to share spiritual subjects with each other. Bruté stated that Elizabeth “herself loved to treat only of spiritual things.”²³⁴ In his writing, *Mother Seton*, he jotted down his remembrance of Elizabeth’s spiritual sharing on July 5, 1821, 6 months after her death:

In the beginning of our acquaintance, she often spoke to me of Saint Francis Xavier, towards the close of her life more frequently of Saint Francis de Sales. . . , she had a great love for St. Theresa [Teresa of Avila], and she asked me in 1820, the year before her death to lend her again that Saint’s life in two volumes by Mr. Boucher. I think she translated some passages from it. Saint Theresa’s liberty of spirit with her directors, her gayety, her contempt of what people called her sanctity and extraordinary graces, accorded more with Mother’s own turn of mind, - more so, even, than the character of Saint Frances de Chantal, whose humble and faithful devotedness to Saint Frances de Sales probably pleased her less.²³⁵

²³³ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 5, 247-248. “The Fathers of the Church were early Christian leaders whose collective teachings are regarded in the foundation of orthodox Christian doctrine. The Councils of the Church are official gatherings of church leaders who assist with decision-making in church matters.” CW, 3a, 247, n. 1. In this instruction, Elizabeth referred to St. Justin Martyr, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Cyprian, Tertullian and others.

²³⁴ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 83.

²³⁵ Bruté, 86-87. In her letter to Cecilia Seton written in 1806, Elizabeth guided her, who was faced with family’s persecution because of her conversion of Catholicism, to remain in her “interior castle.” CW, 1, 411. According to editors’ note of *Seton Collected Writings*, “Elizabeth

From the beginning of their first encounter, Bruté recognized the purity of Elizabeth's soul to seek only God and valued his spiritual friendship with her. When Bruté learned of the severe illness of Elizabeth's daughter, Anna Maria, he managed to visit her often. In her letter to Rev. Pierre Babade, Elizabeth wrote that Seraphim [Bruté] had been "an angel of consolation to the poor little sufferer [Anna Maria] every visit"²³⁶ He was present on Anna's last day on earth. In her Journal of "Annina's Last Illness and Death," Elizabeth wrote:

Mr. Bruté came, her desire to receive our Lord she expressed in every way and had begged for preparation prayer, . . . He told her he would say Mass for her suggested many things for the moment to which she replied with all her soul, tho' a little before he came she had appeared to wander a little . . . when Mr. Bruté left her for the altar she called after him, earnestly repeated she prays for all, all her dear Sisters, Seminary, and all as he had suggested.²³⁷

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté had the opportunity to know the beauty of the Elizabeth's soul and also her agony after the death of her first daughter through Rev. John Dubois' letter to him. Dubois did not know how he could help Elizabeth in her distress at the loss of her eldest daughter so he asked Bruté to help her in his letter dated May 7, 1812:

God grant that you may some day know this soul. What character! But like gold brocade, rich and heavy, how hard to handle. . . . As for my part, poor fellow, what can I do? I can say no more; the double role I play here imposes silence. Try to open a heart such as this one – one talks of the surface, the tinsel, one fears to reveal the essential. As a result, you can only judge by appearances and beat around the bush. I have been tempted a hundred times to give up this charge. What a soul it would take,

may have been aware of the spiritual classic," *Interior Castle*, written by St. Theresa of Avila (1515-1582). *CW*, 1, 411, n. 2.

²³⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.92, 205. Elizabeth often called Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté as "G, the brother, Seraphim, the President" after he became of the president of St. Mary's (*CW*, 2: 1, sec., 5.1).

²³⁷ *CW*, 2, app. A-6.99a, 757. "Elizabeth Seton's Journal of Annina's Last Illness and Death."

it needs a saint of the first caliber – a St. Francis de Sales –and I am only an ugly little wretch.²³⁸

Unlike Rev. John Dubois, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté instinctively understood Elizabeth's soul and Elizabeth also perceived Bruté's beautiful soul. The providence of God it seemed arranged these two souls to meet and nourish each other's journey to God. In the summer of 1812, Bruté was assigned as an assistant to Rev. John Dubois by Rev. John Tessier, the superior of the Sulpicians of America, although Archbishop John Carroll was not happy with this assignment.²³⁹

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté arrived at Emmitsburg on September 28, 1812 and assisted Rev. John Dubois at Mount St. Mary's College, at St. Joseph parish, and at Elizabeth's community.²⁴⁰ He was a gift to Seminarians at Mt. St. Mary's and to the people of St. Joseph parish including Elizabeth's community. Sister Mary Salesia Godecker described Bruté in her dissertation, "Right Reverend Simon William Gabriel Bruté" written in 1929:

He was a man of utter unselfishness and simplicity, watchful and mindful of all opportunities to lessen the burdens of others, to increase their comforts in life, and yet at the same to instill into their hearts a greater knowledge and love of God. To foster in his students a profound attachment for our Blessed Mother, as well as to increase this devotion within his own heart, he carried stones to a suitable spot on the mountainside and erected a grotto [to Mary].²⁴¹

²³⁸ Melville, *EBS*, 188, quoting Dubois to Bruté [AMSM].

²³⁹ Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 48-49. Archbishop John Carroll was very distressed by Bruté's new mission and he expressed his disagreement in his letter to Rev. John Mary Tessier, the Superior of St. Sulpice in America, dated on September 13, 1812.

²⁴⁰ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 163.

²⁴¹ Godecker, diss., 2, 19-21.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté arranged for Mt St. Mary's College to offer theological courses because he was a qualified and experienced professor of theology and philosophy as well as natural science. He was "an efficient educator" and "possessed the happy faculty of knowing how to make school-life agreeable as well as profitable to his students." He had gifted hands. During his study of "Physics in Paris he also pursued courses in drawing and singing," and used his skill for making "many of articles used in the class-room," at "the poverty-stricken" Mt. St. Mary's. While teaching and working as a vice president of Mount St. Mary's, he made maps and a globe "neatly carved from a block of wood."²⁴² In a letter to her son, William, who was then in France, Elizabeth wrote: "I have the globe our blessed Mr. [Simon] Bruté made for the mountain standing in our room, and even at night by the light of the lamp often look at France as the spot on the globe containing my dearest treasure-"²⁴³ Bruté also drew many objects related to Elizabeth and her community.²⁴⁴ He also left a record of historical events for future generations. His notes and manuscript on the beginning of the Catholic Church of America greatly aided later historians who wrote about the American Catholic Church.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Godecker, diss., 2, 19-21. After ordination, Bruté received an invitation from the Bishop of Nantes, but he refused it and accepted the invitation of the Bishop of Rennes, who was the Bishop of Bruté's home town and knew Bruté's "value not only as an instructor, but as a model for the young Levites of his Diocese. The Bishop of Rennes appointed him Professor of Theology in the Diocesan Seminary." Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 45-46.

²⁴³ CW, 2, sec., 6.194, 313.

²⁴⁴ Among Bruté's sketches, the sketches of "St. Joseph's Valley and the Sisterhood" and "the Sisters' dormitory" drawn in 1819 are seen in CW, 3a, 583 and the originals of these sketches are in Archives of St. Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg.

²⁴⁵ Godecker, *Simon Bruté*, xix-xx.

Aside from his many talents which he used for the Church and for God's people the most important gift that Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté had was his deep spiritual life which influenced all he did and all he was..²⁴⁶ His deep spirituality contributed to the spiritual growth not only of seminarians and parishioners but also of Elizabeth, her children and her Sisters. At the request of Dubois, Bruté nurtured the Sisters' spiritual growth and celebrated Mass on weekdays for them. Bruté had many opportunities to meet Elizabeth and deepened their spiritual friendship through sharing of their spiritual life. Melville explained that "their dependence upon each other grew rapidly" from "the moment of their meeting," whether Bruté was "at the Mountain, in Baltimore, or in far-away France."²⁴⁷ In his book, *The Sulpicians of the United States*, Herbermann wrote that Bruté was "in many ways the counterpart" of Elizabeth "in character and disposition."²⁴⁸

In his writing, *Mother Seton*, Bruté expressed that Elizabeth reminded him of his own mother in France because he found "much resemblance between them," especially in their disposition.²⁴⁹ In his writings, he called Elizabeth "My mother" and Elizabeth's daughters "My Sister Anna" and "My little Rebecca."²⁵⁰ Their correspondence witnessed to

²⁴⁶ Bruté had a deep Marian piety as a Sulpician priest. "The Grotto on St. Mary's Mountain above Mount St. Mary's was a natural setting formed by the great trunk and thick roots of an ancient fallen tree which overhung the bed of the mountain stream." He "adorned it with an old cross, and it became a place of reflection and prayer, especially as a Marian shrine." Elizabeth and her sisters went there every Sunday. *CW*, 2, sec., 6.41, 131, n. 1.

²⁴⁷ Melville, *EBS*, 229.

²⁴⁸ Herbermann, 226.

²⁴⁹ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 87.

²⁵⁰ Bruté, *Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté (Bishop of Vincennes) in His Connection with The Community: 1812-1839* (hereafter cited as *His Connection*) (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, published for only internal use in the community, 1886), 207. This book consisted of

the spiritual sharing of their souls. Bruté's letter to Elizabeth revealed how similar their spiritual journey toward God was:

We have perhaps, one and the other, the same trouble of soul without communicating it to each other. Let us then bring it to the Adorable Bosom where all should be lost and resigned. Drawn from nothingness, overwhelmed with His benefits, and with incomprehensible hopes in view, *eternal* life, and even resurrection of the *flesh*, let us abandon all to Him, and let us weep until the end, in our Lord, for our sins, and the sins of the world. Drawn from nothingness, yet His images, His children, redeemed even by the Blood of our Lord made man to die on the Cross for us, . . . what happiness! But, sin, sin on all sides, . . . what horror! The soul is rent! Let us be humble, and let us persevere by His grace alone. Let us persevere for Him, to render Him what we owe Him, the love and praise of Heaven . . . of Eternity!²⁵¹

It is significant to recognize that Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté reflected Elizabeth's spirituality in this letter. Both of them yearned for union with God eternally in heaven through participating in the suffering of Jesus Christ and through total abandonment of self. Both Bruté and Elizabeth used the same language of the soul based on their own struggles, suffering, and also on their faith, hope, and love of God. Although they had made their own life journey in different countries and different situations, their spiritual journey toward God was very similar. Their road to union with God was to follow the will of God through self-abandonment and perseverance in humility.

Among their common language, *eternity* had an important place in their writings. From 1799 Elizabeth had used the word, *eternity*, *eternal*, or *eternally* in her writings. In her letter to her father, Dr. Richard Bayley, dated February 2, 1799, she wrote that she had "the

Bruté's letters and meditations related to Elizabeth with her children and her Community and privately printed for the use of the community of Sisters of Charity. The great part of Bruté's letters had no date.

²⁵¹ Bruté, *His Connection*, 3.

most Elegant Evenings” of her life and had been reading of the “High and lofty One who inhabits Eternity.” Receiving spiritual direction from Rev. Bruté, she used this word more frequently in her writings.²⁵² Elizabeth had a habit of jotting down her reflections or notes on any space in her spiritual books. Her beautiful reflection was written on “left side, page following title page” of Thomas à Kempis’ *The Following of Christ*:

O *Divine love* – O *my Jesus* – O *my Eternity* – be the music of my heart, my morning comes here below a taste and anticipation of my celestial bliss –life of quiet peaceable penance short and passing, in exchange for eternity of torments *deserved*–

He takes in *time*, to restore in Eternity – not the cross of our own choice – *he* only knows how to crucify. *his will* includes the grace of every victim, as the manna every taste.

Oh my God, *forgive* what I have been, *correct* what I am and *direct* what I shall be. From break of day I see thee till the dead of night – all is solitary where thou are not, and where thou art is fullness of joy.²⁵³

In *Elizabeth Seton’s Two Bibles, her Notes and Markings*, Ellin M. Kelly pointed out: “If Mother Seton and Father Bruté had a common watchword, it was ‘eternity.’ He frequently began his notes to her and his meditations for the Sisters with ‘O Eternity,’ or he used ‘Eternity’ as the heading for his correspondence.”²⁵⁴ In the collection of his letters and meditations related to Elizabeth and her community, he disclosed his spiritual yearning for eternity:

²⁵² CW, 1, sec., 1. 38, 60. According to the index of the Collected Writings of Elizabeth, the word, Eternity or eternal, used around 14 times in the first volume and around 98 times in the second volume. After meeting Bruté, she used it around 74 times among 98 in the 2nd volume. In the volume 3a and 3b, she wrote her spiritual notes or advice related to eternity.

²⁵³ CW, 3b, sec., 11.52, 79.

²⁵⁴ Ellin M. Kelly, *Elizabeth Seton’s Two Bibles, her notes and markings* [hereafter cited as *Two Bibles*] (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday visitor, Inc., 1977), 52.

Ah! This world, atom disappears . . . What then?
 O immense Eternity!
 Beautiful Eternity!
 Glorious . . . Never-ending . . .
 Delights . . . peace . . . love . . .
 And what society!
 O MARY!

Joseph, the two Johns, Peter, Paul . . . the myriads, the angels of orders known, and
 unknown, our dear friends already there.²⁵⁵

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté as spiritual director and soul friend of Elizabeth immediately recognized that the words, *eternity*, *heaven*, and the *will of God* were symbolic language which had played the role of a guiding light for Elizabeth's spiritual journey. When he noticed Elizabeth's spiritual state after the death of her first daughter, he recorded his observation of her state of mind in his writing *Mother Seton*, and quoted a part of Elizabeth's letter given to him in this note:

Anna died the twelfth of March – Mother then much tried, as if, she said, she had taken too much complacency and joy in the holy dispositions of that blessed child.

Eternity at every line in her letters and the WILL.

“Adorable will of our adored be accomplished forever! Our present life can be but for moment, and then O, our dear, dear Eternity!”-March 20, 1812 [from Elizabeth's letter].²⁵⁶

After the death of her daughter, Anna Maria, Elizabeth continually experienced the dark night of the soul. In her letter to Bruté dated September 22, 1812, she revealed her dark night:

on the grave of Anina - begging crying to Mary to behold her son and plead for us, and to Jesus to behold his Mother (cf. Jn. 19:26-27) - to pity a mother - a

²⁵⁵ Bruté, *His Connection*, 25-26.

²⁵⁶ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 105. Rev. Bruté quotation is from Elizabeth's letter to him written March 20, 1812. Anna died March 12, 1812 when she was “almost seventeen years old.” Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 159.

poor poor Mother - so uncertain of reunion -- then the Soul quieted even by the desolation of the falling leaves around began to cry out from Eternity to Eternity thou art God (cf. Ps. 90:2) - all shall perish and pass away - but thou remainest forever - then the thought of our dearest stretched on the cross and his last words coming powerfully, stood up with hands and eyes lifted to the pure heavens crying out forgive they know not what they do (cf. Luke 23:34). Did She? adored, did she know? - and all the death-bed scene appeared —²⁵⁷

In order to console Elizabeth's soul, Bruté drew "delicate sketches showing Anna's angelic form hovering near the altar to share her mother's communion joys."²⁵⁸ In his letters of direction to Elizabeth, he consoled her and guided her to look up to heaven and see everything at the present moment in the vision of eternity in the hope of reuniting with her beloved ones in heaven. He also urged her to think of the community and school children:

Eternity-Eternity. Anina is there. What thinks she of this little nothing of our earth? She remembers only the little Valley, her mother, her sisters, her dear children, and cries with a voice to be every where understood, in the room, the little chair, the little wood. Eternity – Eternity – to love and serve Him, only to be loved and eternally loved, served and praised in Heaven. O Mother! How much good to do in your blessed family. What a celestial commission entrusted to you. Mother of the Daughters of Charity to whom also, so much is to do for GOD and souls through their short life, Mother, with them of so any children, now the first fruits of your charitable cares . . . A thousand thought, but not a word more . . . Eternity – Eternity—Eternity! JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH!²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.118, 228-229.

²⁵⁸ Melville, *EBS*, 230. Some of Melville's references are different from the present record of the Archives of St. Joseph Provincial House. The Archivist Sister Betty Ann McNeil had worked with these references of Melville's book, *EBS*, and offered the accurate information. According to the record of ASJPH, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté's sketch is in ASJPH, 1-3-3-13, #150: "Pen & ink sketch by Bp. S. Bruté of E.A. Seton & Josephine Seton at communion; Anina & Rebecca departed-rising from altar."

²⁵⁹ Bruté, *His Connection*, 84-85. Rev. Bruté often used the Daughters of Charity instead of the term Sisters of Charity. Anina was a nickname of Anna Maria Seton and she taught little children in Elizabeth's school.

In her notes of “Instruction of First Communion class,” Elizabeth expressed her wish for union with God in the vision of eternity:

“Thou has the words of Eternal life” (cf. John 6:68), said St. Peter to thee my Savior[.] With grateful joy I repeat it with him dear Lord –unworthy sinful child I am, but “to whom indeed should I go but to thee, thou hast the words of Eternal life,” on *that word* with thy blessed apostles I rely for my Eternity and firmly believe as if like St. Thomas I could see and touch thy sacred wounds (cf. John 20: 24-25) I believe and adore in union with the myriads of faithful souls who believe and love with thy faithful apostles, . . . “Thou has the words of Eternal life” our Jesus. – joyfully we received them *particularly* in this blessed mystery of thy love so glorious, and so far above all human comprehension – it is our happiness that you can do so much more for us than we can understand (cf. Eph. 3: 20).²⁶⁰

For both Elizabeth and Bruté, the word *eternity* was an emblematic expression of the immensity of God, his Kingdom, and his infinite love revealed in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The contemplation of the immensity of God enlightened both Elizabeth and Rev. Bruté to realize who they were. Bruté directed Elizabeth to realize who the human person was in the light of eternity. He used the word “atom” as an expression of the nothingness of self: “O Incarnation! . . . O Communion! . . . Eternity, for my soul of nothingness, - my atom!”²⁶¹ He jotted down his meditation on eternity which gave strength and courage to Elizabeth who was surrounded by suffering:

Life a moment, yet how long! All earth an atom . . . I, an atom. . . JESUS, infinite Love . . . infinite! I, destined to love eternally. O eternity! O Anina there, . . . O Eternity! Eternity! The thought of Heaven . . . Communion silence, love, Eternity!²⁶²

²⁶⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 266-267.

²⁶¹ Bruté, *His Connection*, 62.

²⁶² Bruté, *His Connection*, 21.

Since receiving spiritual direction from Bruté, Elizabeth used the word “atom” in her writing. She jotted down her overwhelming experience of God after communion:

Now my God O God immense God will your atom ever forget this Epiphany 1815 –
the gratitude of a thousand years penance would be little after it –
My Jesus – Our Jesus / My God- . . . O God! - . . . O his Kingdom
Your lifted chalice alone can thank ? - O his Kingdom.
Poor Souls unconscious. / - there the point of points . . .²⁶³

Like the Kingdom of God, *eternity* for both Elizabeth and Bruté had begun here and now and colored every moment of life through its splendid light. In the light of *eternity*, the life given by God had meaning and the present life would be a road to *eternity*. Both Elizabeth and Rev. Bruté could penetrate the mystery of *eternity* hidden in the present moment of life. In *Mother Seton*, Bruté wrote:

Eternity immense, endless, incomprehensible Eternity! Who reflects enough that all, and every least thing which is going on here below is of an eternal amount, eternal effect, eternal increase of the raise and love we owe to our GOD and that bliss His goodness offers us!²⁶⁴

Elizabeth’s reflection on “Advent and Christmas Meditations” revealed Bruté’s spiritual guidance on how to live out everyday life in the light of eternity:

O! heavens, mountains, forest, every tree be ye silent, my soul, and every faithful soul – ye his own image, ye, ye the brethren of his give that praise and prepare it for a whole Eternity; O! souls redeemed, O! ETERNITY O! JESUS, O! Eternity.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ CW, 2, sec., 6.181, 296. According to the editors’ note, “in 1803 John Dalton (1766-1844) first proposed the atomic theory. Elizabeth may have used this term to indicate her smallness or sense of humility.” CW, 2, 296, n. 3. Elizabeth used the word “atom” after meeting Bruté. She used this word for the first time in her letter to Eliza Sadler dated May 12, 1811.

²⁶⁴ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 53.

²⁶⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9.18. 367. Most of the “Advent and Christmas Meditations” may be composed by Rev. Bruté, Rev. Babade, or another spiritual writer. Elizabeth and the Sisters used it as a source of meditation and the content “may also reflect comments dictated by Elizabeth” because a “note at the end of one meditation noted that “this point is not finished but Mother will add what it wants.” CW, 3a, 337, n. 1.

For both Bruté and Elizabeth *eternity* was the source of strength and endurance in their life journey. Eternity was like the lens or prism glass through which they could understand the true meaning of the suffering of Jesus on the Cross as well as that of their own. *Eternity* was like spring water giving life in the midst of suffering. Under Bruté's spiritual direction, Elizabeth realized how the will of God guided her to join herself to the suffering of Christ for her own redemption through her experience of the bitterness of life and to learn more deeply from the Mother of Sorrows:

O Lord Save us, and we will sing our Psalms "all the days of our life in the house of the Lord" (cf. Ps. 27:4) all the days of that whole Eternal we begin even now, these first present days of trial in grace, and the glorious future *ones* – oh! Here below we can enjoy our peace "but in bitterness, *most bitter*" the feelings of our misery, and the misery of others, often overpower bitterness . . . but thy will and thy peace . . . O! Saviour for the heart that loves thee. . . –ask it for us O! Mother of sorrows, . . . a Mother of sorrow but the Model of our own bitter "peace."²⁶⁶

While *heaven* was Elizabeth's life goal in order to meet her mother and beloved ones in her early years of spiritual formation, *eternity* in her spiritual formation under Bruté was the light of grace guiding her to eternal union with God in her spiritual journey. Her reflection on Bruté's funeral sermon for Sister Maria Murphy revealed their vision of eternity present in each moment of life:

Yes to heaven – O heaven – Eternity to see face to face! To praise with angels - to love incessantly, Eternally with God.

Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!!! . . .

But eternity even now, Eternity takes its endless course for the Soul – a delightful, an inexpressibly delightful course for the blessed Soul which watched so well for it during its short time of trial. . . . Our Mother the church tenderly intreats [entreat] us to put up our prayers for departed friends, that through the <merits> communion of Saints, the merits of our Redeemer may still be applied if

²⁶⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 352.

necessary to them. . . .and prepare our Way to the land of the Living, of ETERNAL REUNION.²⁶⁷

Their vision and certainty of eternity gave Elizabeth and Bruté a foretaste of eternal union with God through Holy Communion and by living in the presence of God at each moment of everyday life. Bruté shared his contemplation with Elizabeth:

O my Mother! My Mother, - my friends, - souls I love! What is this life? How can we do with *words* for the *things* that fill our heart, that surround us. GOD all present. . . . JESUS in His blessed Host. . . .Communion. . . . Eternity ready to swallow us Heaven above. . . .

O JESUS! O Eternity!

Truly, as St. Paul says, we see in a mirror, and speak as children; but *Eternity* is at hand!²⁶⁸

Both Bruté and Elizabeth's writings revealed characteristics of the French School of Spirituality which was characterized as "a spirituality of profound transformation and exquisite adoration." The spiritual heritage of Bruté as a Sulpician priest was rooted in the French School of Spirituality. The founder of St. Sulpice, Rev. Jean Jacques Olier, was one of the major figures of the French School of Spirituality which was initiated by Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle in the 17th century.²⁶⁹

The 17th-century French School developed and was cultivated during the movement of "the renewal in biblical and patristic studies," and "the Catholic Counter reformation, especially [stressing] the need for the reformation of the clergy." The French School writers, including Cardinal Bérulle and Rev. Olier, had "a strong contemplative,

²⁶⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11.9, 8-9. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté wrote at the top: "These lines are written about the good Sister Maria Murphy who died October 15, 1812." According to the editors' note, this is "probably a funeral sermon given by Bruté, followed by other reflections." CW, 3b, 8, n. 1.

²⁶⁸ Bruté, *His Connection*, 90.

²⁶⁹ *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. "French School of Spirituality."

apostolic, and missionary spirit” and “professed a Trinitarian theology.” They believed that men and women were “called to commune intimately in the divine life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The characteristics of the French School of spirituality were “theocentrism, Christocentrism, Mary, and the priesthood.” The fundamental spiritual attitude of their theocentrism was “grounded in awe and adoration toward God.” In their Christocentrism, Christ was stressed “as the incarnate Word” and each person was called to conform oneself to “Jesus Christ especially in his ‘states’ (*états*),” namely, “the interior dispositions through which he faithfully lived out the mysteries of his incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension.” Mary, the Mother God had “a very important theological and affective place in the French School” because she was “chosen to bring forth the eternal Word into this world.” The French School writers also contributed to renewal of the priesthood because they believed that “the renewal of the faithful would bear fruit only if their pastors were deeply spiritual and learned men.”²⁷⁰

The French School writers urged the faithful “to participate in the mysteries of Christ.” In his writing *Grandeurs de Jesus*, Bérulle stressed that “the goal of Christian life is to reproduce on earth the adoration and servitude of Christ in heaven.”²⁷¹ In his book *Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues* (1657), Olier wrote: “Our Lord Jesus

²⁷⁰ Ibid. Jean-Jacques Olier: William M. Thompson, ed., Lowell M. Glendon, trans., *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 217-276. Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle (1575-1629) was considered “the fountainhead” out of which the French School of spirituality flowed. Bérulle and his successor Charles de Condren (1588-1641) “with the Oratory, Olier with the Sulpicians, St. Vincent de Paul with the Vincentians (*Lazaristes*), and St. John Eudes with the Eudists created institutions imbued with the spirit of the French School to train men worthy of the vocation to the priesthood.” *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. “French School of Spirituality.” Cf. Raymond Deville, S.S., “The Seventeenth-Century School of French Spirituality,” *Vincentian Heritage*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1990), 17-28.

²⁷¹ *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1990, ed., s.v. “Spirituality.”

Christ came into this world to bring love and respect for his Father and to establish his reign and his religion. . . .His incessant desire was to open the minds and hearts of the faithful to his religion.”²⁷² Bruté, who was a Sulpician, reflected the French School spirituality in his spiritual notes:

My GOD . . . infinite glory, beauty, goodness!
 We shall see our JESUS . . .
 My JESUS . . . that Divine Humanity at the Right Hand !
 We shall see MARY . . . the Saints . . .the Angels. . .
 O! lost in the blaze reflecting it as mirrors!
 And what will we do?
 Praise and love, and be happy . . .
 And all that for Eternity . . . an endless, everlasting.
 E-t-e-r-n-i-t-y! –
 What a love for GOD, - what an ardor at prayer.
 What a love for JESUS, - what a union to His grace and merits.
 What a zeal too for neighbor, - for poor sinners.²⁷³

According to Sister Regina Bechtle, S.C. and Judith Metz, S.C., the editors of *Collected Writings of Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, “Love, total surrender, and abandonment to the will of God” were “key themes in the spirituality of the seventeenth century French School with which Elizabeth became familiar through the Sulpician Priests.”²⁷⁴ They summarized other characteristics of the French School spirituality:

Other characteristics of the spirituality of the French School were 1) emphasis on God’s grandeur and adoration of the triune God; 2) a mystical Christocentrism leading to total identification with Jesus in his life and mysteries; 3) devotion to the Holy Spirit and Our Lady; 4) a mystical sense of church; 5) a view of human nature as weak and sinful but, at the same time, capable of union with God; 5) an

²⁷² *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. “French School of Spirituality.” Rev. Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1657) founded “the Society of St. Sulpice (1641) and was a close friend and collaborator of St. Vincent de Paul.” *CW*, 2, sec., 2.297, 691, n. 6.

²⁷³ Bruté, *His Connection*, 172-173.

²⁷⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10.1, 432, n. 14.

apostolic, missionary, and pastoral zeal; 7) a concern for the formation and holiness of priests.²⁷⁵

The central theme of the French School of spirituality is “the mysticism of ‘nothingness’ by which a person experiences the self-emptying of Jesus Christ in his passion.”²⁷⁶ Sisters Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz explained that “the language of self-abandonment and self-annihilation (French: ‘*anéantissement*’)” was one of characteristics of the French School of spirituality.²⁷⁷ Elizabeth’s writing witnessed that she was influenced by the French School Spirituality. She used three characteristic words of this School, *Amour*, *anéantissement*, *abandon*:

Eternity always at hand! Oh Anina [Anna Maria Seton] I look to the far, so far distant shore, the heaven of heavens – a few days more and Eternity – *now* then, all resignation love abandon. rest in him – *the heart in sweet bitterness Amour, anéantissement, abandon.*²⁷⁸

In her other notes Elizabeth also employed the exact terms of the French School, such as *adoration*, *abandonment*, and total *annihilation* of the self.

It is not the soul that is guilty of all this, the evil spirit is most active, it is true, but the good one sits in anguish at the foot of the cross, looking over all this desolation, adoring, subjecting, abandoning all to him, seeing only him, annihilating itself and all creatures before him, saying amen to the resounding alleluias . . .²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 432, n. 14; Deville, 17-28.

²⁷⁶ *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1990, ed., s.v. “Spirituality.”

²⁷⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7.320, 705, n. 1. Rev. “Jean Jacque Olier, founder of the Sulpicians, taught that spiritual growth is fostered by acknowledging one’s utter inability to do anything without God’s help and by surrendering one’s life to the Spirit.” CW, 2, 705, n. 1.

²⁷⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 432.

²⁷⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.320, 705.

Elizabeth also reflected the French School spirituality in her admiration and respect for the priesthood because she saw Christ in the priests. Bruté's writing reflects Elizabeth's respect and love for the priesthood:

How just, wise, enlightened, pious, religious in all relations. As a sheep in the flock, what reverence, tenderness and interest she felt for her Superior –For their holy life,-for seeing them true priests – Ah! That priests felt for themselves as she felt they should be. How did she suffer even at their imperfections! At their faults how sorrowfully, yet how charitably! ²⁸⁰

Although Elizabeth was influenced by the Sulpician priests who were her directors, the spiritual elements of the French School were not unfamiliar to Elizabeth. These elements were present in the early 19th century American spirituality whose main tenets were found in Rev. Richard Challoner's "Garden of the Soul spirituality," in the French Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and the Jesuit Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola. The Garden and Soul spirituality urged the Christian "to find God in a Christ-centered of the interior life" and emphasized "a life of concrete imitation of Christ" and a moral life which was also seen in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Ignatius Loyola.²⁸¹ Her writings revealed that a Christ-centered interior life was the foundation of her spiritual formation and disclosed her mystical experiences in her contemplation. She also had deep devotion to the Blessed Mother and could find the deeper meaning of the role of the Blessed Mary in the incarnation and redemption of Jesus Christ. Thus, she was very familiar with the French School spirituality and ready to embrace it.

²⁸⁰ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 70.

²⁸¹ See chapter 1 in this dissertation, "North American Catholic Spirituality: Elizabeth Seton's Time (1774-1821)"; *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. "American Spirituality."

There were other factors which attracted Elizabeth to the French School spirituality. Elizabeth's spiritual development based on Scripture and spiritual readings including the writings of the Fathers of the Church was an avenue to understand and accept the French School of spirituality under the spiritual direction of Rev. Bruté. Furthermore, her passionate and poetic sensitivity was also stimulated by the French School's writing which was "lyrical, poetic, and passionate in its love of Jesus Christ and, through his Spirit, in its devotion to the Father."²⁸²

Thus, the French School of spirituality enkindled Elizabeth's spiritual ardor more vividly through Bruté's spiritual direction. Bruté as a Sulpician naturally guided Elizabeth to live out the French School spirituality. Bruté's writings echoed this spirituality and its style, and so did that of Elizabeth. In his writing to Elizabeth, he introduced a part of a letter of Rev. Jean Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians:

Here is a passage of the twenty-first letter of Mr. Olier. I am reading his letters for the first time. I am charmed. "I cannot suffer, nor enjoy anything but JESUS in MARY, and MARY in JESUS, my all in Heaven, and on earth, and this constitutes my present life . . . this alone makes all my life, all my joy, all my health, all my happiness." Ah! We say so, you and I, with all our hearts, but let us endeavor to say it in a manner as pure as he did, . . . Let us consider well in this regard the life of this worthy Mr. Olier; the excellent works with which it has been so abundantly filled as missionary, as writer, as curate of St. Sulpice, . . . as founder of Seminaries which have given so many thousands of holy priests, and hundreds of good bishops to the Church of France. O, how pure must have been his abandon to JESUS and MARY! May it be yours, my Mother, may it be mine for twenty-two, or twenty-seven, forty - seven, or fifty years, yet how little it will be for *Eternity*!²⁸³

Elizabeth's writings again indicate the influence of the French School of Spirituality. In a letter to Bruté, she wrote that she never forgot Mr. Olier and copied Olier's words in

²⁸² *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. "French School of Spirituality."

²⁸³ Bruté, *His Connection*, 87-89.

French from one of Bruté's meditations. The essential idea of Olier's words was: "When in your whole life you had won only a single soul, it [your life] would have been well employed since the son of God had given his [life] and poured out all his blood – ah for Quin – do do my soul."²⁸⁴

Elizabeth also mentioned the name of Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle who was a major figure of the French School with his successor, Rev. Charles Condren: "St. Vincent [de Paul], Mr. Bourda[lou], Boudon, Borroul [Bérulle] so zealous in this peace – proficiency of the Soul in it. So many faults avoided, so many virtues improved – abundant graces proceeding from it . . . Be meek and humble and you shall find peace."²⁸⁵

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté guided Elizabeth to the mystic world of the French School spirituality. He enkindled in her soul the desire to unite with God by participation in the life of Jesus Christ on earth and reminded her that Jesus was with her from the moment of his trial in the desert to the road to His Cross. He directed her to contemplate the love of the Trinitarian God:

Let us unite ourselves to our good JESUS, who has thought individually of us, of you, of me, - alas! of each one of those innumerable souls which cover the earth, and they forget Him! They do not love Him! Ah! They do not think of Him, do not know Him, for they would love Him, and would not crucify Him, in this glory of love, and sweetness which surround Him. Mother! He thought of us in His desert, at night on the mountain, in the garden of agony on the cross. Can we

²⁸⁴ CW, 2, sec., 7.297, 691, n. 6. Elizabeth's copy of Olier's words in French: Quand dans toute votre vie vous n'aimez que une seule ame elle amoit ete bien employee puisque le fils de Dieu amait bien donner la sienne and repandu tout son sang - ah pour Quin - do do my soul. CW, 2, 691.

²⁸⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1. 464. "Rev. Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704), Boudon, and Rev. Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629). The first two wrote spiritual books that Elizabeth is known to have used. Bérulle was a contemporary of Vincent de Paul and a major figure in the French School of spirituality." CW, 3a, 464, n. 92.

believe this without uniting ourselves to Him with our whole soul, uniting ourselves to Him, losing ourselves in Him, and abandoning all to Him.

O Heavenly Father! O Saviour! O Consoler!

Father, Son, Holy Spirit!

Holy Trinity!

Triple love, Only Love! All Love,

All Goodness! All Pity!²⁸⁶

In her reflection note written on the feast of St. John and the Holy Innocents in 1814, Elizabeth reflected Bruté's spiritual guidance concerning the love of Jesus for her even at the moment of His Passion:

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" – and "who leaned on his breast at supper" (cf. John 13: 23-24) – We – not on his breast but he on ours indeed – our life in him – wrapt [wrapped] in him – for us he put himself in agony ah for Me myself – for me every stripe of flagellation – for me every thorn – for me the spear and nails on calvary – that spear passed thro my very name written on his heart – O written even as the name of his very disciples and good shepherds – now from his tabernacle here – to our very heart!²⁸⁷

Like Bruté, Elizabeth jotted down her Trinitarian faith in the flyleaves of her Prayer book which was Rev. Cheverus' gift to her in 1805:

Blessed the Eternal Father who adopted me his child

Blessed the eternal Son

who merited for me this adoption and *sealed* it with his blood

Blessed the holy Spirit who confirmed this adoption by the grace of divine love and shed it in my heart-²⁸⁸

In his spiritual direction to Elizabeth and her Sisters, Bruté showed them that their union with God could begin here and now:

²⁸⁶ Bruté, *His Connection*, 140-141.

²⁸⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11.10, 26. See Ellin Kelly and Annabelle Melville, eds., *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 330. Hereafter cited as *Selected Writings*.

²⁸⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 51, 72. This note is in p. 59 of Elizabeth's Prayer Book given by Cheverus. Elizabeth wrote "prayers and petitions on its flyleaves and in other pages in the book where space was available." CW, 3b, 71, n. 1.

Our Lord loves us from eternity to eternityA love of union. The union begins here below every way, every means: - *presence* all around, and in our heart, - *talk* in prayer, - *life*, breathing, and now this blessed evidence, and test more. *Communion* to this very sacred humanity He took for us, made glorious for us; then truly, *all* did He *deliver* Himself to me even here below. O, the ardor to meet such a proffer! Prepare, enjoy, improves; before, during, after each of our so frequent, - never too frequent communions if in love, since it meant them the daily food and life! And to the last of her councils, the Church constantly reminded us of the primitive “Daily” mentioned in the Acts. O! Come, if free – come, if heavy laden! Come, if strong, and if weak in love! Come, if only you hate sin, and wish to hate it more, - love your JESUS, and want to love Him more, - feel, but fight your misery. Come! HE IS ALL to all, and in all!²⁸⁹

Like Bruté Elizabeth expressed her deep desire for union with God and it was interesting that she used capital letters for JESUS. Bruté usually used capital letters whenever he jotted down the name of Jesus. In her reflective note on “Thy King comes meek and *lowly*” (cf. Zech. 9. 9) in her instruction on “First Communion,” she wrote:

Come my JESUS my only hope, since you condescend to come to me I go out to meet you as my King and my God . . . and what is my hope and desire but to be united to thee how can my desires refrain to meet those of my God, my Saviour, my King, only desirable indeed and beautiful above all, so lovely indeed in himself but so unspeakably beautiful and good to me – oh can my desires fall short, can I remain insensible to My God . . to the supreme the incomprehensible honour and happiness he offers me , , No no my JESUS, do but speak to my unworthy soul, my JESUS. do but pardon your unworthy child . . the only cry of my heart is come oh my JESUS come.²⁹⁰

Like Bruté, Elizabeth stressed living in the presence of God in many places of her writings. Her “Exercise of the Presence of God” reflected the similar theme of Bruté’s instruction on the presence of God , although this part of her writing seemed to reflect the instruction of St. France de Sales. However, both Elizabeth and Bruté loved de Sales’

²⁸⁹ Bruté, *His Connection*, 210-211.

²⁹⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 273.

spiritual direction so that she could nurture her spiritual growth by sharing it with Bruté.

She wrote her reflection on living in the presence of God:

God is so infinitely present to us that he is in every part of our life and being – nothing can separate us from him, he is more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves, and whatever we do is done in him . . . yet the same words might too justly be addressed to us which St. John the Baptist said to the Jews “*you have one* in the midst of you whom you know not,”(cf. John 1: 26) and whose presence you forget to respect and honour.²⁹¹

To live in the presence of God on earth is to accept the kingdom of God in one's heart here and now. To serve the kingdom of God is to offer everything to God in total abandonment and humility. The sign of the kingdom of God was peace and joy. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté guided Elizabeth to live and serve the kingdom of God:

The kingdom of GOD is within ourselves, - His throne in our hearts, and we continually free to come to Him, and cherish His blessed presence. Let us then try to keep it better and offer Him along the day all our thoughts, and all our feelings, and all our trials, and all our temptations. Extremely humble, as it becomes poor sinners, but also full of peace, and joy, and confidence as become children, and Daughters of Divine Love.²⁹²

In her note on her Retreat Meditations, Elizabeth also reflected on and desired to live in the kingdom of God. She believed that the Holy Spirit would guide her to live in and serve the kingdom of God. Her reflective note echoed Bruté's spiritual direction:

Thy Kingdom come O Father which is all justice, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost – O the Holy Ghost he is our spouse – . . . he will inspire all with a new sense of that high reverence we owe to the majesty of our supreme Lord, that tender love and trust with which we must live under his law, the courage and fidelity, the cheerfulness and eagerness with which every duty to him must be discharged, the zeal we must have to support and promote his interest in every other soul and to

²⁹¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392. “A similar treatment of this theme is found in St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part Second, chap. 2, “A Short Method for Meditation, and the First of the Presence of God.” CW, 3a, 392, n. 1.

²⁹² Bruté, *His Connection*, 26-27.

cherish it first in each other as being so specially <bound> united to him together by the bands of our common love and service, ah! blessed father thy Kingdom come indeed, favour us much, we resolve to review strictly how till now we have served thee, to spare no trouble, to mend every thing bad and deficient and so well to improve thy new graces as to become a little better and more worthy our dear name *the daughters of Love*.-²⁹³

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté as the spiritual director of the Sisters of Charity urged Elizabeth and her community Sisters to fulfill their vocation through their fervent living as the Sisters of Charity. Bruté's instruction is revealed in Elizabeth's writing: "*Let us be courageous with love and zeal to fulfil [fulfill] the Will and order of Providence, nor refuse to live the longest life – a nothing to Eternity.* – the most generous Saints desired to remain – courage *Sisters of Charity* your admirable name must excite in you every preparation to do justice to your Vocation."²⁹⁴ Bruté seemed to study St. Vincent's writings and loved his spirituality. He wrote:

I see surely also through Providence what I said on the first little page, what can still be waiting for you and that simple beginning of beginnings of Saint Vincent's spirit and work . . . O! profound abandon, the blessing or the ruin equally given up to the Beloved Himself. Only your intentions, my poor, unable, momentary help and His own Mighty Will unknown. That is order; that is blessing enough for us, the rest, abandon.²⁹⁵

He guided Elizabeth and her community Sisters not only to live their religious life "with the three vows on [their] heart as legibly written for Him,"²⁹⁶ but also to grow in

²⁹³ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 316.

²⁹⁴ CW, 3b, sec., 11.9, 8. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté wrote at the top of this reflective note to Elizabeth: "These lines are written about the good sister Maria Murphy who died October 15, 1812." This is "probably a funeral sermon given by Bruté, followed by other reflections." CW, 3b, 8, n. 1.

²⁹⁵ Bruté, *His Connection*, 64. "Rev. Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1657) founded the Society of St. Sulpice (1641) and was a close friend and collaborator of St. Vincent de Paul." CW, 2, 691, n. 6.

²⁹⁶ Bruté, *His Connection*, 213-214.

their three virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity based on the Instruction of St. Vincent de Paul. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth and her community Sisters adopted the *Common Rules* of the Daughters of Charity and tried to live out the Vincentian spirit. The spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity were their three principal virtues.²⁹⁷ Bruté gave Elizabeth and the Sisters his instruction on these three principal virtues of the Sisters of Charity:

In [On] your three virtues:

Humble, to meet your humble JESUS. An humble one meets willingly her peer. To fear your humble JESUS! O blessed fear of humility, He loves it, provided it goes to meet His own encouragement. He calls – go!

Charity meets charity in the fountains. Where else will you let down your bucket? O come! You want still more of charity. He Himself is the plenteousness and overflowing. Come for yourself, and for all that are trusted to Him. Come! and if you would have still more of love, He will give. . .

Simplicity – A child? Yes, so. Sent, invited, Superiors, Rules, Gospel, all – O then, cease the “But, but!” Simplicity uses them not. – “I come, *sent*.” Well enough! “But-” No “but,” dear soul! Who sent? “Those who had seen me wholly, fairly shown, within and without, as I might possibly let me be seen.” Well enough, I tell you; and better sent by *them* than by *self-confidence*. O Simplicity, simplicity, couldst thou ever betray the soul that trusts thee!²⁹⁸

Among Elizabeth’s writings on these three virtues, her instruction of humility reflected Bruté’s guidance. Like Bruté, Elizabeth sought the true model of humility in the

²⁹⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 13.9, 455. From the beginning of the Daughters of Charity, “the core values of humility, simplicity, and charity formed the basis of a communal spirit shared by generations of Vincentian women. They may have been derived from St. Francis de Sales’ ‘Instruction for Widows’ previously published in his *Instruction to the Devout Life*. Later St. Vincent de Paul designated the same values for the Daughters of Charity as their characteristic virtues: ‘The Spirit of your Company consists of three things: to love Our Lord and serve Him in a Spirit of humility and simplicity. As long as charity, humility, and simplicity exist amongst you, one may say: The Company of Charity is still alive.’” Cf. St. Vincent’s Conferences, “On the Spirit of the Company,” February 9, 1653. CW, 3b, 455, n. 2.

²⁹⁸ Bruté, *His Connection*, 212-213.

incarnation of Christ. Her reflective note on the *day of humility* in “Meditations for the days of the Christmas season” echoed Bruté’s instruction on humility:

Begin the day by adoring the Supreme Majesty of God on his heavenly throne surrounded by Seraphims – then Adore with the Angels this same Majesty humbled in the Manger, in the form of a Babe consider it is for love of you he lies there, though you are but as Nothing before him and have no claim to his love since you have merited Hell by your sins – watch your thoughts, words, looks, and actions through the day that None may escape you contrary to humility, and often say to our Lord.– O give me a humble heart –²⁹⁹

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté encouraged Elizabeth to translate the lives and writings of St. Vincent and St. Louise and she selectively translated “Life of Vincent de Paul”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.19, 386-387.

³⁰⁰ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 1, 217-272. & sec., 13.2, 273-354, sec., 13.2; Her selective translation is also seen in *Extract From St. Vincent’s Life*. CW, 3b, sec., 13.23, 491-496. This *Extract* was taken “from Abelly 2:7 and 2: 105ff .CW, 3b, 491, n. 1. Bruté’s advice to Elizabeth for translation of these two saints is in 3b, 217, n. 1. “St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660) was a priest and influential leader of the church in seventeenth century France. He founded the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and along with St. Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity. He also worked for the establishment of seminaries and provided spiritual and educational opportunities for priests through his Tuesday Conferences. The American Sisters of Charity founded by Elizabeth Seton were modeled on the French Daughters of Charity.” 3a, 236, n. 31. “Elizabeth’s translation of St. Vincent de Paul’s life is presented in [volume 3b] in the order in which it appears in her copybooks.” The section 13.1 based on “an annotated English edition, cf. Louise Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul: Founder and First Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*, ed. John Rybolt, C.M., notes by Edward Udovic, C.M. and John Rybolt, C.M., 3 vols” (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City Press, 1993). “For the original text where Elizabeth began her translation, cf. Abelly 3: 200. Cf. following document. Louis Abelly (1604-1691) attended Vincent de Paul’s Tuesday Conferences and was deeply influenced by him. He gave missions in the French countryside, became vicar general of Bayonne, then bishop of Rodez.” CW, 3b, 217, n. 1. The section CW, 3b, 13.2 is “the translation of Elizabeth’s second copybook of the biography of St. Vincent de Paul. For an annotated English edition, cf. Abelly. For the original text where Elizabeth began her translation, cf. Abelly, 2: 210. Additionally, in translating the material in document 13.2., Elizabeth skipped some sections and then included them later in the document. Unless specified otherwise in notes, these transcriptions are presented according to the sequence translated by Elizabeth Seton. Where possible, chapter titles, sub-titles, and page references are supplied from the English edition of Abelly (1993). Since Elizabeth’s reading of Abelly was most likely for personal devotion and religious formation purposes rather than historical information, she translated almost all of some sections, but in other cases she translated only a few of Abelly’s paragraphs. What she included and what she excluded provide some insight into her intention in rendering this translation. In cases of direct quotations,

and “Life of Louise de Marillac” which was the first English translation from Rev. Nicolas Gobillon, *La Vie de Madame Le Gras*.³⁰¹ Through her translation of these two patron saints of her community, she and her Sisters could learn not only the lives of these two saints, but also their spiritual legacy. When she translated St. Vincent’s instructions, she focused on the three virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity:

Mr. Vincent finding himself almost without knowing it or thinking of it, the author of his charitable work, and the Spiritual Father of this Community, . . he therefore gave them as a first and fundamental maxim to keep well in mind that they were destined by the will of God to serve our Lord JESUS CHRIST corporally and spiritually in the persons of the poor . . and to prepare themselves worthily for such an employment and to become good Servants of such a master in an office so sacred and holy they must first labour earnestly for their own perfection . . . doing all their exercises in the Spirit of HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY,

the proper diacritical markings have been added where necessary.” CW, 3b, 273, n. 1. In the section 13.2, Elizabeth translated “lengthy excerpt from Chapter Four, ‘Spiritual Retreats,’” after “a short paragraph from the beginning of Chapter Three” from Abelly, 2: 229. CW, 3b, 273, n. 2.

³⁰¹ CW, 3b, sec., 13.3, 355-385; 386-395, sec., 13.4. The section 13.3 is “Elizabeth’s translation from Rev. Nicolas Gobillon, *La Vie de Madame Le Gras* (Paris: 1676), the first in English. For a modern English translation, cf. *The Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras* (London: 1984)” (Ibid., 3b: 355, n. 2). “St. Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) was born in Paris, married, and had one son. After her husband’s death she collaborated with St. Vincent de Paul in work with the Ladies of Charity, and in 1633 she co-founded with him the Daughters of Charity.” CW, 2, 98, n. 2. “Because Louise de Marillac’s husband was a simple squire who belonged to the bourgeoisie and not to the aristocracy, she was not able to carry the title of Madame, reserved for women of the nobility, but instead was known as Mademoiselle.” CW, 3b, 355, n. 3. The section 13.4 is “a continuation of Elizabeth’s translation from Rev. Nicholas Gobillon’s *La Vie de Madame Le Gras* (Paris: 1676). There is no modern English translation for the following material. Gobillon writes in several parts called books with several chapters each. Elizabeth did a selected translation of books 1-4; cf. preceding document. In book 5 she translated chap. 4, thoughts on vocation, and chap. 5, on the vows.” CW, 3b, 386, n.1. “Nicolas Gobillon (1626-1706) was a priest at the Church of St. Laurent in Paris that Louise de Marillac attended. He greatly admired Louise and was her first biographer, publishing the *Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras* in 1676.” CW, 3a, 430, n. 11. According to the Archivist, Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., the manuscript of Elizabeth’s first English translation of the text by Nicolas Gobillon, the *Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras*, dated September 17, 1818 was “a selective translation,” but gave readers “insight into the mind and heart of Elizabeth by reflecting on the selections of Louise’s life and spirituality which Elizabeth Seton chose to instruct her Sisters of Charity.” *Life of Louise de Marillac Mademoiselle le Gras*, Handwritten Translation from French by Elizabeth Bayley Seton (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, 2000).

and CHARITY, in union with those our Lord did when on earth, and for the same end, which excludes all Vanity, self love, human respect, and gratification of Nature - ³⁰²

Bruté directed Elizabeth to acquaint herself with St. Vincent and St. Louise: “The spirit of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jean Frances de Chantal is that of St. Vincent – The latter besides being your own is so well expressed in his Life and conferences. Read again also the Life of good Madam Legras.”³⁰³

Celebrating the feast of St. Vincent, Elizabeth meditated on his life and jotted down her reflection:

St. V[incent] de Paul – his birth- slavery in Tunis – at Rome breathing the air which St. Peter had breathed - imbibing his spirit – in the land watered with the blood of the Martyrs – his return to France – the *atoms* compared each springing from a low origin but spreading their extensive influence so differently – parallel between St. Vincent extending the Kingdom of God – he calls and is answered – Peace, love, Benevolence and utmost charity attend his summons.³⁰⁴

In her reflection on “St. Vincent’s Day in “Retreat Meditations,” Elizabeth asked St. Vincent to take care of her little community: “O second father O St. Vincent most precious to every heart here – take among us thy blessed day and permit us thy latest daughters and the least of all ah! permit us to be thine also forever.”³⁰⁵ For her Sisters and people on their missions, Elizabeth also translated “Instructions for the Daughters of

³⁰² CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 279-280. This is Elizabeth’s translation (Abelly 2: 292). “Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, the founders, gave humility, simplicity, and charity to the Daughters of Charity as their characteristic virtues.” CW, 3b, 280, n. 18.

³⁰³ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 90.

³⁰⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 1, 466.

³⁰⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 329-331.

Charity” which included the Christian catechism, theological, cardinal, and principal virtues, and other instructions, and “Daughters of Charity at Brienne.”³⁰⁶

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté offered another avenue for Elizabeth’s spiritual growth. Bruté “brought an extensive library of several thousand volumes with him which he shared with Elizabeth”³⁰⁷ and added more whenever he found good books. Elizabeth borrowed many books from his library of over 5,000 volumes.”³⁰⁸ As mentioned earlier, she was a great reader and copied some parts of spiritual books even before she met Bruté. Like a fish swimming in the water, Elizabeth immersed herself in the spiritual books she borrowed from Bruté’s library and shared her spiritual knowledge with others. According to the “Book Chart” in the Collected Writings, she borrowed around 49 books from

³⁰⁶ Elizabeth selectively translated the Instruction of the Daughters of Charity. These instructions are in Seton, 3b: sec., 13.8 [442-455] and 13.9 [455-463]. “The source document for this Seton Translation is ASJPH RB #27: Rev. Edme Perriquet, C.M., *Instructions pur Le Séminaire des filles de la Charité* (Pairs, 1755). The Christian doctrine sections of this work may have been based on the popular catechetical publication of St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), namely, *Dottrina Cristiani Breve*, a small catechism for children (1597) and *Dichiarazione piu copiosa Coriosa della Dottrina Cristiani* (1598), a more extensive treatment of Christian doctrine for teachers. Both St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac made catechetical formation for the Daughters of Charity a priority. Cf. #208: Louise de Marillac to Sister Elizabeth Turgis, March 6, 1648, Sullivan, 239; *Conferences*, ‘Catechisms,’ March 16, 1659. Louise de Marillac composed a similar catechism on the basics of the Christian faith which also highlighted selected prayers, Eucharistic liturgy, Penance, daily practices, sacraments, and a prayer to be said before making an examination of conscience. Cf. Document 824, ‘Catéchisme Réduqué par Louise de Marillac,’ Elizabeth Charpy, D.C., *La compagnie des Filles de la Charité Aux Origines Documents* (Paris, 1989), 958.” CW, 3b, 442, n. 1. “Daughters of Charity at Brienne” was about the story of three sisters who died “from diseases resulting from their care of the dead and wounded” during the battle at the Siege of Brienne. CW, 3b, 467-468, n. 1-2.

³⁰⁷ CW, 2, sec., 5.1, n. 1. Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley wrote that Bruté began “to collect a library, which became afterwards a large and valuable one, and this may be said to have been the only property he ever owned” (Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 44).

³⁰⁸ CW, 3b, app., B-2, 607. When Bruté became the first bishop of Indiana, he brought his books there. Bruté books are now in the Old Cathedral Library, Vincennes, IN.

Bruté's library.³⁰⁹ When she died, she still had around 30 books from Bruté's library with her and these books were returned to Bruté. In his *Mother Seton*, Bruté referred to the books returned to him after Elizabeth's death:

The books which I lent to Mother, and which are returned to me to-day. O, my GOD! what good thoughts she had over many of these pages! – and, I hope, communicated to others, and even translated that she might possess them. – O, my GOD! what trembling of the heart for me, - what profound sorrow to have so poorly assisted such a soul!³¹⁰

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté also encouraged Elizabeth to translate other French spiritual books into English for the access of others. Among Elizabeth's translations of the French works, *A Treatise on Interior Peace* written by a French Capuchin, Ambroise de Lombez, was a remarkable work. According to the forward of Rev. George A. Maloney, S.J., Elizabeth's translation of *A Treatise on Interior Peace* was "the first American-English translation in the United States" and the teaching of this *Treatise* was "consistent with that of all other earlier Christian spiritual authors from the great ascetics

³⁰⁹ CW, 3b, app., B-2, 616-634.

³¹⁰ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 54. Book list given by Bruté referred to only 30 books which were only the books returned to him right after Elizabeth's death, thus this list did not include the whole list of books which Elizabeth had borrowed from him. [Book list by Bruté, 54-56]: 1. Les réflexions de Mad. La Valliere sur la miséricorde de Dieu. 2. Les opuscules divers d' A' Kempis, I will return these two to Josephine. 3. La Vie de St. Ignace, and nine pages of translation. 4. Les Oeuvres de Ste. Thérèse. 5. Les Méditations de St. Jure, le Livre des Elus, etc. en 5 Vol. 6. Les Epîtres de St. François de Sales. 7. Ses Entretiens. 8. M. Bouillon Adoration de la Providence. 9. Vie cachée en Dieu. 10. La Mort du Juste, du P. Lallemant. 11. La douce Mort. 12. Les Saints Désirs de la Mort. 13. Les Essais de Morale. 14. Lettres Spirituelles, sur la Vie Religieuse. 15. Lettres Spirituelles, du P. Surin. 16. Consolation dans les Souffrances, don de Nagot. 17 L'Otave du St. Sacrement, - traduite. 18. Les Vies des Fondateurs des Retraites en Bretagne. 19. Vie de Mme. Combé, Fondatrice du Bon Pasteur. 20. Mémoires de – Retrouvillier. 21. Relation des Déportés à Rochefort. 22. Emblemata Eucharistica. 23. Lequel est le meilleur, du gouvernement doux, etc. 24. Les Paroles des Saints. 25. Doctrine Spirituelle du Père Surin et de Berthier. 26. Catéchisme des Filles de la Charité, et Maximes de St. Vincent. 27. Directeur des Novices du Carmel. 28. JESUS Mourant – de Duguet. 29. L' Oratoire du Cœur. 30. L'Education des Filles par les Ursulines. 31. Lettre Circulaire de la Visitation, lors de leur Fondation en Pologne.

and mystics of the desert of the fourth century through the Middle Ages down to our present time.”³¹¹ In his *Mother Seton*, Bruté wrote that Elizabeth “translated in 1819 Saint Ambrose’s treatise on Holy Virginité and remarked that this translation “gave her pleasure.”³¹² Sister Marie Celeste, SC, the author and editor of several books on Elizabeth Seton, remarked that “Elizabeth translated numerous works from French to English which remain unpublished” and that they included “the biographies of Saints and the works of notable French theologians.”³¹³

³¹¹ George A. Maloney, S.J., foreword to Ambroise de Lombez, OFM, Cap, *A Treatise on Interior Peace* (hereafter cited as *Interior Peace*), trans.. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, ed., Marie Celeste, SC. (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1996), xvi-xvii. This book published in 1996 is basically Elizabeth’s translation. Lombez’s *Treatise, Traité de la Paix Interieure*, was “first published in Paris in 1756” and “more than thirteen editions in Paris.” Because of its popularity, “it was reprinted at Lyons, France in 1820, and at Lille, France in 1828 and 1836. More recently, it appeared again in Paris in 1922; and in 1961 the French-Canadian edition for Montreal, Quebec, Canada, was published by Fides in Paris.” Marie Celeste, S.C., preface to *Interior Peace*, xix.

³¹² Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 87.

³¹³ Marie Celeste, S.C., preface to *Interior Peace*, xix. Elizabeth translated some parts of many spiritual books [most of them borrowed from Bruté]: these book lists are in CW, 3b, app., B-2, 616-633: 1, Louis Abelly, *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* (CW, 3b, sec., 13.1 & 2). 2, Abelly, *La conduit de l’église Catholique touchant le culte du très saint sacrement de l’Eucharistie* (“Eucharistic Emblems” on Bruté’s list). 3, Arnauld del d’ Andilly, *Oeuvres de Sainte-Therese* (“portions of St. Teresa of Avila’s works; CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5). 4, Jean-Baptiste-Elie Avrillon, *Conduite pour passer saintement le temps de l’avent* (White, 1949, 298), 5-6. Guillaume Francois Berthier, S.J., *Les Psaumes traduits en francais avec des notes et des réflexions & Réflexions spirituelles, Tomes I-V* [White as “Various passages from the works of Berthier” (White, 1949, 298). 7, Dominique Bouhours, S.J., *La vie de Saint Ignace, fondateur de la compagnie de Jésus* (Life of St. Ignatius; CW, 3b, sec., 13.13). 8, Joseph Duranti de Bonrecueil, *Les oeuvres de Saint Ambroise sur la virginité* (White, 1949, 298). 9, Ambroise de Lombez, OFM, Cap, *Traité de la paix Interieure* (*A Treatise on Interior Peace*: published in 1998). 10-11, Francis de Sales, *A portion of the Conferences of St. Francis de Sales* (White, 1949, 298) & *Epitres spirituelles*. 12, Louis du Point [Dupont], *Méditations sur les mystères de la foy* (White, 1949, 298). 13, [Nicolas] Gobillon, *La Vie de Mademoiselle Le Gras, fondatrice et premiere superieure* (Elizabeth made the first English translation of this book from French. See Seton, 3b, sec., 13. 3 & 4). 14, l’Abbé Jauffre, *Des Services que les Femmes Peuvent Rendre à la Religion* (CW, 3b, sec., 13. 3 & 4). 15, Claude Judde, S.J., *Retrait spirituelle pour les personnes religieuses & Collection complete des oeuvres spirituelles du P. Judde, recueillies par M. l’Abbe le Noir-Duparc*, Possible source of “Two Standards excerpt” in notebook (AMSJ A 111 074, pp. 155 ff. ; CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5). 16,

After Elizabeth's death, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté consoled her only remaining daughter, Josephine [Catherine] Seton, by sharing his pain and sorrow at the loss of Elizabeth:

One day more, my dear Josephine, and so near that 4th! [the day of Elizabeth's death] Can I pass the whole day without trying my poor little union to your sorrow? – If a priest, and all for spirituals, yet is not this the most sacred care I could assume, if GOD gave me grace for it, or, if I know better how to transmit indeed to your heart the tender grace of that great Father of Orphans, - only Father! – only Friend! Ah, my Josephine! Though I write to you with tears, - and not the first of the day, - happily, the first at the altar, and so many since, reviewing books so well used by Mother: - though, I say, dear child, no heart but feels your exceeding pain now, yet *God*, - your GOD alone, will remain within your heart the true Father, and faithful Friend. . . .If you love Him and submit to Him, - two words that are continually coming to you from that sacred grave, - or rather, from beyond, - *love, submit*, - yes, to that most high most amiable Will, says your own mother, which in death was her *all*.³¹⁴

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté sent Elizabeth's death announcement to her friends. In his letter to Antonio Filicchi, Bruté wrote that Elizabeth was “filled with affection and gratitude towards” Filicchi and his family to the last day. He described Elizabeth' love of Communion: “the most striking trait of this long preparation for departure was the ardor

Marie de l'Incarnation (Marie Guyart), *Lettres de la Venerable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation Première Supérieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France Divisées en deux Parties* [“Marie of the Incarnation, French wife, mother, and widow, founded the first Ursuline convent in North America in Québec City in 1639”; CW, 3b, sec., 13.6]. 17, Vincent de Paul, *Conférences spirituelles pour l'explication des regles des Soeurs de Charité*. 18, R. Watson, D.D., *Catechism of the Daughters of Charity & [Instructions pour Le Séminaire des filles de la Charité* (Rev. Edme Perriquet, C.M.)] [ASJPH RB # 27; CW, 3b, 13.8]. The books copied or adapted by Elizabeth Seton: 1, Alphonsus de Liguori, *Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary for Each Day of the Month* [Elizabeth copied and adapted excerpts in a notebook: CW, 3a, sec., 10.1]. 2, Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte- Guyon, *Moyen court et facile de faire oraison* [A Short and Very Easy Method of Prayer]: Elizabeth adapted her “prayer of the heart” excerpt from Guyon (CW, 1, 1.389 to Cecilia Seton, October 7, 1805).

³¹⁴ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 57, 59. Josephine, whose given name was Catherine Seton, was Elizabeth's fourth child and this name may be “either her Confirmation name or reflect an informal name change as the community commenced.” CW, 2, 112, n. 1.

of her desire for Communion. Communion was her all, and it was particularly so during her sickness.”³¹⁵ Then, he expressed his own experience of Elizabeth’s soul to Antonio:

What a profoundly religious, and loving soul! What simplicity, what recollection in her expectation of her divine Master, and in her abandonment to Him! – abandon more perfect in proportion as her weakness augmented and her end approached! . . . O profound faith! O such tender piety! O true humility with so much intelligence! O goodness beyond all goodness! . . . Her elevated character, indulgence, compassion for poor sinners; charity so watchful never to speak ill of others, to always find excuses, or else to maintain silence. O attachment and gratitude for her friends, respect so religious for the ministers of our Lord, and for the smallest matters of religion! . . . O Mother, excellent Mother be thou then blessed!³¹⁶

Elizabeth had already introduced Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté to Antonio Filicchi in her letter to him dated January 1815 when Bruté accompanied her son, William, to Europe. Elizabeth’s letter revealed her admiration of Bruté who was highly considered by Archbishop John Carroll and Bishop John Cheverus who were also Elizabeth’s spiritual directors. She wrote:

My dear Antonio this letter will introduce to you the Rev. Mr. [Simon] Bruté, a most distinguished Soul as you will know in a moment, if you have ever the happiness of a personal acquaintance - there is no possible recommendation I could give him which would not be ratified by our Reverend Archbishop [John Carroll] and the Blessed [John] Chevrous [Cheverus] by whom he is most highly loved and esteemed, our Archbishop indeed values him as an inestimable treasure in the church and you will find if you have the happiness to know him yourself that his uncommon PIETY, learning and excellent qualifications (and even his family since you Europeans take that in account) entitle him to the distinguished friendship and regard of Mr. Filippo [Filicchi] and yourself -- he has adopted the *great* interests of my William so generously, that with yourselves I consider him our truest friend in God.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 62.

³¹⁶ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 64-65.

³¹⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.185, 300.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté was an excellent spiritual director of Elizabeth for ten years until her death and guided her to reach the summit of her spiritual development. Under Bruté's spiritual direction, Elizabeth could fully develop her desire to be in union with God in eternity. Bruté himself was a saintly priest. In his *Memoirs of the Right Reverence Simon Wm. Gabriel Bruté*, Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley described Bruté:

His humility, piety, and learning made him a model of a Christian priest; and the impression his virtues made upon both ecclesiastical and lay students surpassed all oral instruction. . . . The Sisters of Charity in this country also owe a debt of gratitude to him. Mother Seton found in him an enlightened director and friend, and his advice and influence was most beneficial to her young community at St. Joseph's."³¹⁸

Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley viewed Brute correctly. It was true that the Sisters of Charity owed a great debt to Bruté. He not only preserved and collected Elizabeth's writings but also wrote his reflections on her spiritual life based on his notes. In his *Mother Seton*, he wrote: "For it seems to me impossible that there could be a greater elevation, purity, and love for God, for heaven, and for supernatural and eternal things than were to be found in her."³¹⁹ He did not hesitate to announce Elizabeth's sanctity and continually wrote about her:

Her views, however, were not exaggerated but characterized by a true wisdom, and extremely averse to all vain speculation, or building castles in the air. O, the noble and right mind! Soul ardent and humble at the same time! O, how deeply impressed was she with the only greatness of GOD, and the real nothingness of the pretended greatness of His servants, beholding, adoring and praising in their works the will of GOD alone! "He is all!" "GOD is all!" she would say continually; or with a motion of the shoulders, the eyebrows or lips, without uttering a word, would express the feelings of her soul when she heard any one

³¹⁸ Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 52-53. Cf. Foreign Missionary Series, preface, v.

³¹⁹ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 81-82.

speaking with rapture of the saints without looking chiefly to GOD, the *Dieu seul* as explained by Mr. Boudon.³²⁰

It was Bruté as Elizabeth's spiritual director and confessor who recognized her sanctity and preserved Elizabeth's writings. From the time of his early friendship with Elizabeth, he asked Elizabeth to keep her papers when she had begun to destroy her writings and documents mostly related to her period as a Protestant. Bruté noted: "I have seen many letters, and some rules of the time which she destroyed. My opinion was to keep them for notes and memorandums of St. Joseph."³²¹ By his request Elizabeth gave Rev. John Henry Hobart's "personal copy of *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*" to Bruté "with her extensive marginal notes."³²² Bruté read Elizabeth's letters and writings written from 1799 and added his notes or classified them.³²³ After reading Elizabeth's correspondence, he even drew "a pointing hand in the margin" on the important parts of it which needed attention in his opinion. For instance, he wrote his note with a pointed hand at the top of Elizabeth's descriptive letter to Cecilia Seton of her journey to Baltimore: "Her journal sailing from New York to Baltimore 1808 – preserve it – see below (a

³²⁰ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 85-86.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, *Mother Seton*, 51.

³²² *CW*, 1, sec., 4.52, 466, n. 4. Hobart gave "his personal copy of *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, by the Anglican bishop George Horne (Philadelphia: William Young, 1792)" to Elizabeth in 1802 and she gave it later to Bruté. This book is "in the collection of the Old Cathedral Library, Vincennes, Indiana." *CW*, 1, 1, 466, n. 4.

³²³ For instance, he added his note on the pages or top of Elizabeth's letter which referred to Jean Jacques Rousseau: "+ Jean Jacques alas!" *CW*, 1, 91, n.5. "*Oh Read at the End*, O providential, 1799-185-1821." *CW*, 1, 96, n. 3; "+ Never let go this Mother 1797!!! – perverted to Rousseau and *Emile* by her unhappy friend Mrs. Sadler" *CW*, 1, 176, n. 2. He added "on the address page: 'To her father 1801(early in the year)'." *CW*, 1, 147, n. 3. On Elizabeth's letter giving spiritual guidance to Cecilia Seton, he noted: "after her conversion some most beautiful thoughts." *CW*, 1, 412, n. 9.

pointing hand).”³²⁴ He also drew “Elizabeth holding a cross and tablet on which ‘The Will of God’ inscribed.”³²⁵

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté seemed to foresee Elizabeth’s canonization. Not only did he preserve and collect Elizabeth’s writings, but he even copied some of Elizabeth’s notes and letters to other persons. For instance, he copied Elizabeth’s writings to George Weiss who received spiritual direction from Elizabeth so that future readers could read Elizabeth’s letters to Weiss through Bruté’s handwritten manuscripts.³²⁶ Thus, Bruté contributed not only to the growth of Elizabeth’s sanctity through his spiritual direction of her but also preserved resources useful to the cause of her canonization through his collection and preservation of Elizabeth’s writings.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté served as “the spiritual director and chaplain for the Sisters of Charity” from 1818 until his consecration of Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana, in 1834, although his spiritual friendship with Elizabeth began in 1811 and he gave spiritual direction to Elizabeth until her death.³²⁷ When he became the first bishop of Vincennes, Indiana, and had to give his time to his diocese, he requested the Sisters of Charity to preserve Elizabeth’s letters and writings:

³²⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 5. 1, 2, n. 1.

³²⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.38, 124, n. 1.

³²⁶ Many of Elizabeth’s notes and letters given to George Weiss were manuscripts of Bruté’s hand writing. See *CW*, 2, sec., 6.5, 79; 2, sec., 6.38, 124; 2, sec., 6.55, 155; 2, sec., 6.58, 156; 2, sec., 6.102, 215; 2, sec., 6.129, 242; 2, sec., 6.130, 243; 2, sec., 6.137, 249; 2, sec., 6.153, 264; 2, sec., 7.279, 681. Bruté’s excerpt on Elizabeth’s note to Weiss is in *ASJPH*, 1-3-3-12: 102 (12). *CF. CW*, 2, 6.123, 235.

³²⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 5.1, 2, n. 1.

This collection of Papers contains a number of important document[t]s for the Early history of the Sisters and of Mrs. Seton – their examination and further use was properly deferred at some years distance and ought yet remained suspended for some more – in the mean time they ought not to be destroyed – as in a critical review and final use whatsoever, some times a few apparently useless lines supply a data or compleat [complete] the proper qualification of some fact –

As, of course such papers contain occasionally part, lines, or expressions that ought to remain sufficiently a matter of trust and special confidence, they should be kept locked in a private place, and only a proper person engaged to prepare them for use. Should Providence offer yet a chance to him who so far preserved them and saved many from destruction, - to whom even a good part belonged personally, which he thus confidently leaves, that he might bestow the time and attention he is now denied for other best use, he claims humbly and affectionately to be called upon for it –³²⁸

The encounter of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté and Elizabeth Seton was providential because they contributed to each other's spiritual growth toward sanctity. The seeds of spiritual friendship in their first encounter bore fruit through their sharing of the life of their souls and through their mutual encouragement. Both of them gave and received spiritual direction from each other through sharing their spiritual gifts and wisdom. Bruté wrote a letter to Elizabeth on May 19, 1821, more than three months after her death. This letter indicates Elizabeth's spiritual growth under his spiritual direction and his spiritual development under Elizabeth's influence:

O, my Mother! be blessed Heaven, I hope already! Many times pressed to write of you this morning, at least this line of my conviction, how sincere, holy, elevated, humble, kind, merciful, eager to do good, attached to faith, loving your JESUS, ardent for His divine presence in the Eucharist you were! –What a mind, a heart, a soul I have known and enjoyed, and lost. O! my whole life to remember you, and to cherish the remembrance! – How much of grace I have received by you! You said you did by me, but, alas! . . . May your children be happy, and never forget what a mother GOD gave them! May Josephine, William, Richard be happy, be virtuous, be true Catholics, and remain, Ah! Remain faithful amidst so many

³²⁸ *CW*, 3b, app., A-12, 564. 5. Bruté became a bishop of Vincennes of Indiana, thus, he had to give his energy and time for this new created diocese. "The Bruté Collection in ASJPH is extensive." *CW*, 3b, 564, n. 1.

dangers they will encounter. – Mother! how pleased I feel to have written some lines, - Alas! Foolish, if not to feed my heart and renew impressions which drew me so forcibly to my GOD. My GOD! my GOD! Thou alone! O Mother! *Eternity* we said and you are in now!³²⁹

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté was “a genuine mystic whose life reflected a union of holy action and divine contemplation.”³³⁰ Bruté guided Elizabeth’s soul to the world of the mysticism of the French School. Both of them contemplated their adorable God through their efforts to live in the presence of God at every moment of life and served the people of God in many ways. For both Elizabeth and Bruté the ultimate purpose of life was the eternal union with their adorable God in heaven. Love (*amour*), self-annihilation (*anéantissement*), and abandonment was their road to union with God. They adored the Triune God and tried to live in the Christ-centered life in Grace with the Blessed Mother as their model. Bishop Simon Bruté again attested to Elizabeth’s sanctity in his letter commemorating her death anniversary. In this letter to the Sisters of Charity dated on January 4, 1839, which would be his last year on earth, he wrote:

4th. Of January, 1839, Vincennes, 700 miles from St. Joseph’s Valley. 4th. Of January, 1821. Eternity . . . for this special remembrance I do mark a moment once more on earth this early morning when Mother Seton lay in her silent, cold, stiff clay, the soul gone to her Saviour after her fervent last appeal: “Blood of JESUS, purify me!” and last perfect adorations and submission to the only Will, as Pius VII’s Prayer expressed it for her, “May the most high and amiable Will of GOD be praised, and exalted in all!” . . . all was told of that soul, and heart, and mind so much as it had pleased GOD your foundress should for His glory possess above any common level, that it was enough for one of her little letters for Archbishop Carroll, one half hour introduction for Mr. Gaston, one same half hour another times for Archbishop

³²⁹ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 66-67.

³³⁰ Godecker, *Simon Bruté*, 392-393.

Maréchal to feel so charmed and delighted as to be obliged to express it: “What a woman that good Mrs. Seton” I, - I bear that witness.³³¹

Bishop Simon Bruté became very weak because of his passionate dedication for the people in his diocese and passed away “on the morning of the 26th of June,” 1839, at Vincennes, Indiana.³³² Godecker noted: “Eternity had been for him a living reality throughout life. Eternity was ever in his heart, on his lips, and incessantly flowed from his pen. In fact it was the sacred keynote of the bishop’s life.”³³³ He would join Elizabeth in union with God in *Eternity* because both of them dedicated their lives to build up the Kingdom of God through their examples of holiness and through their selfless endeavors in the American Catholic Church at the beginning of 19th century.

4. Summary

Elizabeth’s sainthood is due to her spiritual directors as well as her spiritual endeavor in the midst of severe trials. Through the kindness of the Filicchi brothers, Elizabeth received marvelous spiritual direction from Archbishop John Carroll and Bishop John Cheverus who guided her not only to accept and grow in the Catholic faith, but also to be a foundress of the first women’s religious congregation in the United States. Elizabeth as a religious encountered Rev Simon Gabriel Bruté and developed the most intimate spiritual relationship with him. Rev. Bruté was an excellent spiritual director for Elizabeth and also a humble directee of Elizabeth.

³³¹ Bruté, *His Connection*, 569-571

³³² Bayley, *Memoirs-Bruté*, 104.

³³³ Godecker, *Simon Bruté*, 398.

Bishop John Cheverus became Elizabeth's spiritual director from 1805 until her death. With his profound spiritual wisdom and psychological insight, he guided Elizabeth to make her conversion to Catholicism and to respond to God's call to be an educator and enter religious life. He also guided her how to direct her sister-in-law who was struggling on the road to conversion to Catholicism due to her family's persecution. With the spiritual direction of Cheverus, Elizabeth deepened the Christ-centered life. Whenever Elizabeth went through distress, Cheverus encouraged her to rejoice in her sufferings and afflictions because Jesus received her "in the member of his true disciples."³³⁴ He also stimulated Elizabeth's biblical piety. Cheverus guided Elizabeth to read some chapters of the Gospel of St. John as well as other spiritual books, when she was in distress.³³⁵ In his letter concerning Elizabeth's children, he prayed for God's blessings on her children that they be "grounded in the faith & immovable in the hope of the Gospel."³³⁶

Elizabeth developed her Eucharistic piety with the spiritual direction of Cheverus. Cheverus instructed her: "Let the love of our adorable Saviour in his Sacrament & on the Cross be the subject of your discourse."³³⁷ Elizabeth deepened her Eucharistic piety by participation in the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. Under Cheverus' guidance, she could develop her liturgical piety by reading the *Roman Catholic Manual* given her by Cheverus and Rev. Louis Bourdaloue's sermons which became the spiritual book for her

³³⁴ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 3.

³³⁵ CW, 1, sec., 3.20, 347.

³³⁶ ASJPH, 1-3-3-1: 94.

³³⁷ Ibid., 1-3-3-1: 4.

daily devotion. He revealed his liturgical piety to Elizabeth in his letter and suggested how to grow in the celebration of a feast:

Like the Blessed Apostle whose festival we celebrate today, you welcome the Cross as the greatest blessing & think yourself happy in being fastened to it. May god Almighty maintain you in those sentiments. May the love of Jesus keep your heart during this holy time & prepare it to become a sanctuary worthy of him!³³⁸

Under the spiritual direction of Cheverus, Elizabeth could also develop her ecclesiastic piety. He expanded Elizabeth's vision of Church from the private to public point of view. When Elizabeth had to make a decision on opening a Catholic school in Baltimore to aid Rev. William Dubourg, Cheverus directed Elizabeth to see the need of the spiritual leaders in the Catholic Church in the United States and encouraged her to contribute herself to the Kingdom of God through her gift of teaching in the Church. He was one who helped Elizabeth to grow in the love of the Church and to expand the Kingdom of God by her service in the Catholic Church. As mentioned earlier, he prophesied that the Sisters of Charity would stretch to different parts of America when he heard of the birth of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg. Under Cheverus' direction, Elizabeth deeply nurtured her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical and ecclesiastical piety.

Archbishop John Carroll played a great role in the formation of Elizabeth's soul from his first encounter with her when she was in a struggle due to her conversion until his death in 1815. Elizabeth considered him her spiritual father and he took care of Elizabeth and her children in his paternal love. As mentioned in chapter 1 in this dissertation, John Carroll as American-born and a former Jesuit developed his spirituality rooted in the English and French Catholic spirituality of the seventeenth and eighteenth

³³⁸ Ibid., 1-3-3-1:3.

century as well as in Ignatian spirituality. Under the influence of this post-Reformation spirituality, he developed his biblical, Eucharistic, and liturgical piety. As a first bishop and later archbishop of the Catholic Church in the United States, Carroll developed his ecclesiology rooted in Christ-centered affective spirituality. As a spiritual director of Elizabeth, he spontaneously shared his spirituality with Elizabeth.

As a spiritual director, the Archbishop recognized God's grace guiding Elizabeth to the perfection of a virtuous life through extreme suffering. When Elizabeth had to go through innumerable trials, he directed her to embrace her trials as "the way to perfection" in grace and remember "the consoling words of Christ" and to achieve "the highest degree of perfection" in the Christ-centered life.³³⁹

The Archbishop recognized Elizabeth's important role as an educator and foundress of the first American religious congregation for the catholic church. When Rev. John David attempted to replace Elizabeth as Superior with another sister, Archbishop John Carroll encouraged Elizabeth to continue as Superior for the sake of education and her religious congregation in the Church.³⁴⁰ He helped Elizabeth's infant community to grow into the congregation of the Sisters of Charity by sending many children to her school and by approval of its Constitutions. The archbishop guided Elizabeth to grow in her ecclesiastical piety in various ways. In her letter to Antonio Filicchi, she stated that "we are all every part of the Church as well as individuals."³⁴¹ Under the spiritual direction of

³³⁹ Ibid., 1-3-3-1: 43; Hanley, 3, 113-114.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 1-3-3-1: 42; Hanley, 3, 114-115.

³⁴¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.214, 357.

Archbishop John Carroll, Elizabeth deepened her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety in a Christ-centered life.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté became Elizabeth's spiritual director from 1811 to her death in 1821. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth's spiritual life deeply matured under the guidance of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté who later became the first Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana in 1834. From the first moment of their encounter, they perceived each one's beauty of soul and walked together on their soul's journey toward union with God. The humble Bruté received spiritual and cultural guidance from Elizabeth. He urged her to translate many portions of spiritual writings from French into English, thus, Elizabeth's acquaintances could read these spiritual writings and develop their own spiritual life. As a spiritual director and confessor he was one who recognized Elizabeth's sanctity and collected as many of her writings as he possibly could. He even himself copied her letters given to others and asked others to preserve Elizabeth's letters and writings to the Sisters of Charity. All of these materials served for Elizabeth's canonization. Elizabeth's sainthood owes much to him in many ways.

As a Sulpician priest, Bruté's spirituality was rooted in the French School Spirituality. Bruté as a Sulpician obviously directed Elizabeth to live out the French School spirituality. As mentioned earlier, the French School writers, including Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle and Rev. Jean Jacques Olier, who was the founder of the Society of the St. Sulpice, manifested a contemplative, apostolic, and missionary spirit in Trinitarian theology. They advocated that human persons were called to intimately participate "in the divine of life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" and especially in the mysteries of Christ.

The characteristics of the French School of spirituality were theocentrism, Christocentrism, devotion to Mary, and appreciation of the priesthood.³⁴²

Elizabeth already had developed the Christ-centered life in her Trinitarian piety and had deep devotion to the Mother of God. The French School of spirituality enkindled Elizabeth's spiritual enthusiasm more vividly through Bruté's spiritual direction. She developed her deep respect of priesthood by this spirituality and in the light of this piety she guided young seminarians and priests to embrace the priesthood of Jesus Christ for people in the Church. The correspondence between Bruté and Elizabeth witnessed her development of the characteristics of the French School. Under the spiritual direction of Bruté, Elizabeth deeply breathed the French School spirituality in her soul and her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety grew richer by encounter with this spirituality.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté also guided Elizabeth to the mystic world of the French School spirituality. The French School spirituality focused on a "mysticism of nothingness" in following "the self-emptiness of Jesus Christ in his passion"³⁴³ They urged the faithful to adore the grandeur of God through "amour, Anéantissement, and abandonment." Her writings witnessed Bruté's spiritual direction. As mentioned earlier, she used three characteristic words of this School in her writing: "*now* then, all

³⁴² *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. "French School of Spirituality."

³⁴³ *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1990, ed., s.v. "Spirituality."

resignation love abandon. rest in him – *the heart in sweet bitterness Amour, anéantissement, abandon.*”³⁴⁴

The mysticism of nothingness of the French School is revealed in the correspondence between Bruté and Elizabeth. Bruté himself was a mystic and Elizabeth’s writing witnessed her mystical experience in contemplation. Their common language for exploring the mystic world was *eternity*. For Elizabeth and Bruté the word *eternity* was the contemplative word for the immensity of God and the nothingness of human person who was only an *atom*. Bruté directed Elizabeth to realize who the human person was in the light of the immensity of God in eternity and to contemplate the enormous love of God revealed in the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus Christ in the Trinitarian vision. It is worthwhile to repeat expressions of Bruté and Elizabeth’s contemplation. Bruté exclaimed: “I, an atom . . . JESUS, infinite Love . . . infinite! I, destined to love eternally. . . O Eternity! Eternity! The thought of Heaven . . . Communion . . . silence, love, Eternity!”³⁴⁵ Elizabeth echoed Bruté’s spiritual direction: “O *Divine love* – O *my Jesus* – O *my Eternity* – be the music of my heart, my morning comes here below a taste and anticipation of my celestial bliss.”³⁴⁶ Under Bruté’s spiritual direction, Elizabeth explored the mystic world and reached to the union with God in *eternity*.

Archbishop John Carroll, Bishop John Cheverus, and Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté contributed to Elizabeth’s development toward sanctity. They directed Elizabeth to grow

³⁴⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 432.

³⁴⁵ Bruté, *His Connection*, 21.

³⁴⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 11.52, 79.

in the Christ-centered life and service for the people of God in the Church. They recognized Elizabeth's seed of sanctity in her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastic piety and directed her to union with God. When she went through the dark night of the soul in the midst of trials, they encouraged her to embrace her brutal trials as the purification of the soul. She could experience the illumination of God in this dark night through these three directors. They were the instrument of the Holy Spirit to guide Elizabeth to sainthood.

PART 11

ELIZABETH SETON'S PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

CHAPTER FIVE

ELIZABETH SETON'S ROLE AS A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:14-16).

Like the Parable of the Lamp in the Gospel of Mathew, Elizabeth's holiness nurtured by the guidance of her spiritual directors and her own endeavors in grace provided light for many people's spiritual development. Through her correspondences and writings, she shared her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety with individuals and tirelessly appealed to them to listen to God's invitation to salvation and to live a Christ-centered life which would lead them to eternal union with God.

Elizabeth's correspondence and works displayed her role as a spiritual director. She wrote hundreds of letters, journals, spiritual reflections, and instructions, which contained scriptural passages and guidance she had gleaned from spiritual writers along with her reflective notes. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Elizabeth's Leghorn Journal was published in 1817 under the title of *Memoirs of Mrs. S.* without her permission by Isaac A. Kollack.¹ It was not clear how he got this journal, but Kollack

¹ Elizabeth's Leghorn Journal was referred to in n. 101 of chapter 2 of this dissertation. When Elizabeth's daughter, Catherine, was in Baltimore, she examined “a copy of the version of her mother's Leghorn (Livorno) journal, *The Memoirs of Mrs. S . . .* (Elizabeth, NJ: Isaac Kollack, 1817). Elizabeth was upset by this publication because the journal did not reflect her current Catholic beliefs. Catherine assured her mother that there was nothing recognizably Protestant in the journal. Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S., believed that Elizabeth had trusted Rev. Henry Hobart and had given the journal to him, but he had betrayed her trust by having it published. However, Hobart denied it.” *CW*, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 7.98, 488, n. 1.

seemed to recognize Elizabeth's deep spirituality revealed in this journal and its value as spiritual guidance for the readers.

Elizabeth was not only a prolific writer but also a copier and translator of spiritual writings. While she avidly read spiritual readings, she selectively copied or translated them from French to English and jotted down her own reflections on them. Her selective translations and copies of the spiritual classics including the writings of the Church Fathers, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius, and St. Teresa of Avila, reflected the depth of her spiritual knowledge. She prepared her instructions and directed her children, students, sisters, and others in light of the wisdom and knowledge she had gained in her extensive study and translations of the spiritual classics which became the "sources for the instructions and meditations she prepared for sisters and students."² For instance, her translations of the writings and lives of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac contributed to the spiritual formation of the early Sisters of Charity. In her letter to a clergyman, she wrote: "Bourdaloue is always the fountain of my Sunday instructions, because I can draw so many little streams to apply direct to our own wants."³

The American Catholics in her time had limited spiritual resources because a number of the French spiritual works were not yet translated into English and even the English ones were available to limited numbers of the Catholics. For instance, in her "Journal 1815" written for Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté who was visiting France, she asked Bruté to bring back her copy of the Roman Breviary because Rev. John Dubois wanted it:

² CW, 2, 218.

³ CW, 2, sec., 7.326, 708. "Elizabeth was familiar with Bourdaloue's sermons, which she may have used in preparing her regular conferences to the sisters and to school children." CW, 2, 708, n. 1.

“your Brother [Rev. John Dubois] begs you to bring your poor little bad *Mother a Breviary*, one side English or French - it is his very very particular wish.”⁴ In the letter to Sister Cecilia O’Conway dated July 6, 1818, Elizabeth guided her to “go to Communion almost everyday, and keep on my dear translations and meditations” for her guidance.⁵ Her translations and copies of the spiritual writings were precious resources for her acquaintances.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté verified that Elizabeth was translating “constantly French Books for [the sisters] or copying anything that might be useful for them.”⁶ She used them for students and others, too. Elizabeth’s translation of *A Treatise on Interior Peace*⁷ written by Ambroise de Lombez reveals the spiritual guidance of her time, and also gives insight to today’s readers. Whoever reads Elizabeth’s correspondences and

⁴ CW, 2, sec., 9. 6.195, 323. n. 33. Elizabeth selectively copied a portion of the Breviary related to some of her favorite themes. According to the editors’ note: “Ardently devoted to the Eucharist, Elizabeth seems to have copied from the Roman Breviary many of the readings for the Office of the feast and its octave, selected from the Fathers of the Church.” CW, 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, 535, n. 27. “The breviary contains the official prayer of the Church, then called the Divine Office, which consists of psalms, scripture readings, and readings from the Fathers of the Church for designated times throughout the day for each liturgical season.” CW, 2, 323, n. 33. For instance, “6th Lesson, 2nd Nocturn, Feast of Corpus Christi” originated from “Sermons of St. Thomas Aquinas who composed the liturgical offices for this feast that was instituted in 1264 by Pope Urban IV. At that time Corpus Christi was celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost Sunday or on the Sunday that followed.” The editors stated: “A note in Bruté’s papers which can be dated 1813 or before asks to borrow ‘the little big book of prayer in which you have in English the offices of the church . . . for every day of the year.’ English-Latin versions of Vespers were in use at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it can be assumed that a complete vernacular Breviary existed although no publication information has been located. A 1908 version of the Roman Breviary was used for these notes.” CW, 3a, 535, n. 27.

⁵ CW, 2, 567, sec., 7.171.

⁶ CW, 3a, 218. According to editors note, this note is in the letter of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté to Antonio Filicchi dated May 5, 1821. CW, 3a, 218.

⁷ See n. 311 and n. 313 in chapter 4.

works notices not only her soul's spiritual journey to God, but also her insightful spiritual direction which still appeals to today's readers. In this chapter, Elizabeth's role as a spiritual director and her qualifications as a spiritual director will be explored.

1. Elizabeth Seton's Role as a Spiritual director

How did Elizabeth function as a spiritual director? The analysis of Elizabeth's correspondences and her writings including her journals, translations and works she copied reveal the various dimensions of her spiritual direction. She wrote many letters to her children, friends, students and their parents, and priests, and shared her spiritual life and wisdom based on the Scripture and spiritual writers. Elizabeth's life experiences as a wife, mother of five children, educator, prolific writer, translator, and founder and spiritual mother of the Sisters of Charity aided her in the direction of others. She developed spiritual friendships with her relatives, friends, sisters, students, seminarians, priests and bishops and shared her spiritual wisdom through her correspondences and works. All human relationships were very precious to Elizabeth because she was aware of God's blessings in human relationships. To her, friendship was an avenue to grow together in faith, hope, and love of God in grace. In a letter to Julia Scott on November 16, 1802, she revealed how much she valued all human relationships in God's providence:

religion does not limit the powers of the affections, for our Blessed Saviour Sanctifies and approves in US all the endearing ties and connections of our existence [existence], but Religion alone can bind that cord over which neither circumstances, time, or Death can have no power - Death on the contrary perfect[s] that union which the cares, chances or sorrows of life may have interrupted by opening the scene where all the promises hopes and consolations

we have recieved from our Redeemer will have their triumphant accomplishment.⁸

According to Bishop Robert F. Morneau, “*Spiritual direction, though interpersonal, contains a highly communal and ecclesial dimension.*”⁹ He explains that our “personal lives cannot be affected without simultaneously impacting all those people who are part of our lives.”¹⁰ Elizabeth spontaneously shared her experiences of God with others and guided them to live in God. In a letter to Julia Scott dated September 20, 1809, Elizabeth revealed why she urged her to taste the goodness of God: “the nearer a soul is truly united to God the more its sensibilities are increased to every being of his creation much more to those whom it is bound to love by the tenderest [most tender] and most endearing ties.”¹¹

Elizabeth could not hold the gift of her faith just for herself. The more she developed an intimate relationship with God, the more she was concerned about her acquaintances’ salvation and seemed to feel an urgency to encourage them to embrace God’s infinite love for their own salvation and for the glory of God. Actually she functioned as a spiritual director even before she began her religious life because she wanted her acquaintances to achieve eternal union with God in grace.

As a religious she continually guided individuals around her. In her reflection concerning “the 1st communion at St. Mary’s Mount” written on February 2, 1813, she

⁸ CW, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 1.165, 212-213.

⁹ Robert F. Morneau, *Spiritual Direction, A Path to Spiritual Maturity* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 94.

¹⁰ Morneau, 95.

¹¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.7, 82.

reminded her readers of St. Paul's proclamation concerning the day of salvation: "St. Paul 2, Cor. Ch VI. – and we helping do exhort you, that you recieve [receive] not the grace of God in vain – behold, now is the day of Salvation (2 Cor. 6: 1-2)"¹² Like St. Paul, she assiduously proclaimed the salvation of God and guided all in her letters and works to live in the light of God's grace.

Bishop Robert F. Morneau described the three goals of spiritual direction as "the affective goal of transforming our heart," "the cognitive goal of thinking like Christ," and the "behavioral goal of living the gospel."¹³ Elizabeth's correspondence and works witnessed that as a spiritual director she achieved these goals in her spiritual direction. Her spiritual direction was holistic. By guiding individuals to convert their heart toward God and to grow in faith, she carried out "the affective goal of transforming the heart." Through working as a co-discerner for one's vocation in life in the light of Jesus Christ, she achieved "the cognitive goal of thinking like Christ." She awakened individuals to discern who they were in the presence of God and where they were in their life journey to God. She directed them to live in the hope of eternal union with God through the right discernment of everyday life in the light of God's will. She also accomplished the "behavioral goal of living the gospel" by sharing her biblical piety. As a spiritual director she proclaimed the Word of God through her correspondences and writings. In her spiritual direction she focused on the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ. As a

¹² *CW*, 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 11.9, 13. The complete verses of 2 Cor. 6: 1-2 are: "We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: 'In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you [Is. 49.8].' Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

¹³ Morneau, 82.

spiritual director she led her directees to live in the rhythm of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and to incarnate the love of Jesus Christ in their everyday life.

In her various relationships, as a Christian and later as a religious she truly functioned as a spiritual director. What then was her specific function in her role as spiritual director? As witnessed in her correspondences and writings Elizabeth's specific function as a spiritual director was threefold. She was a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith, a co-discerner for one's vocation in life, and an advocate of the Christ-centered life in the Church.

A Facilitator of Conversion to the Life of Faith: Formation of Faith

Raymond Studzinski maintained that the spiritual director is "often called upon to function as a reminder of what God has done and is doing in a person's life."¹⁴ In the similar context, Bishop Robert F. Morneau described that "a central task" of the spiritual director is "to help individuals perceive the reality of God in their lives."¹⁵ Elizabeth's writings demonstrated that she was truly a reminder of the presence of God in one's life. Through her writings, she led individuals to recognize God as a creator, a redeemer, and a sanctifier in the universe and in their personal lives. She was a facilitator leading her directees to the conversion of one's heart to God. She urged individuals to open their hearts and embrace God's invitation to salvation. She planted the seed of faith in the heart of her acquaintances and directed them to develop their spiritual life based on Jesus

¹⁴ Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., *Spiritual Direction and Midlife Development* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1985), 136.

¹⁵ Morneau, 96.

Christ. As a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith she was an instrument in the formation of faith in those whom she directed.

As a spiritual director she facilitated faith formation for her husband and children, her friends and students. She guided them to receive and keep faith in God and in the Church. In her letter to her son, William, dated November 25, 1814, she instructed her son to keep faith: “take a few little moments in the church to say in union with your Mothers heart to place yourself again and again in the hands of God - do my dearest one.”¹⁶ In “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book,” which was Elizabeth’s instruction written for her daughter, Catherine, Elizabeth wrote: “look well to RELIGION *through your life*, and I repeat to you it has been from the first, as it now is, the solid joy and triumph of mine.”¹⁷ In her letter to Julia Scott dated October 23, 1810, she encouraged her to accept God from her heart: “You know that the peace and confidence of the soul in her Creator must be her true happiness and the end for which it was created. To enjoy we must love, and to love we must sacrifice. – old preacher you see cannot be still – patience dearest.”¹⁸ Elizabeth’s “Journal to Rebecca Seton” written during her trip to Italy provided another

¹⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6.174, 285.

¹⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 489. “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book (489-509,” written and given by Elizabeth to her daughter, Catherine Seton, consisted of “motherly advice on morality, virtue, and religion for her daughter Catherine. It was written when Catherine was a young teenager (after 1816) to caution her against being caught up in the affairs of the world. Catherine treasured this book the rest of her life.” Catherine Seton’s appreciation of this instruction is revealed in her note: “O may it be my daily study to follow the advice of the best of Mothers.” Catherine kept this little book until her death. “After Catherine’s death, her niece Elizabeth Seton (1840-1906) gave it to the Sisters at Emmitsburg in 1896.” CW, 3a, 489, n. 1.

¹⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.62, 161.

example of Elizabeth's role as a facilitator of conversion of heart for her husband, William, and daughter, Anna Maria Seton.¹⁹

How did Elizabeth play her role as a facilitator of conversion to God? Elizabeth offered some methods or strategies for growth in faith formation to her directees. Examples of these methods and strategies are found in "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book." Her first strategy for faith formation was always to remember the *ultimate goal of human life* given by God from creation. She gave spiritual direction concerning the ultimate goal of human life to her daughter, Catherine: "Two great objects require all our attention in this world – The glory of God, and the salvation of our soul. To these two ends all our views and plans and actions should tend." She gave the reason why the human being had to think and act in this way: "We are created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1: 27) and we should breathe and act but for his glory. . . . Our destination is heaven and *there* every thought and design of our mind should be sent."²⁰

Elizabeth's second strategy for faith formation was to maintain a *pure intention* in all one's actions. In her instruction to her daughter, Catherine, she stressed: "now it is certain that without a pure intention in our actions we can never procure any glory to God, or merit of salvation for ourselves – for without the intention an action is but as a shell or a shadow, a body without a soul which can be neither pleasing or acceptable to God."²¹ She explained further how important it was to have a pure intention:

¹⁹ CW, 1, sec., 2. 5-7, 246-276.

²⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 505-506. Cf. CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 410.

²¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 505.

The intention in order that it may sanctify our action must first be to *please* God, and *for him*, as its principal object and end – it must extend to every action of our life as not one can be sanctified but by the grace of *intention* – We need not renew our intention in every action, but must watch not to retract our first morning offering, or to turn wilfully [willfully] from our first great end proposed namely to *please God* . . . watch then my Soul not to do an action through habit and custom . . . Nor through vanity and Pride . . . Nor through self love which like a gnawing worm destroys every thing it fastens on – Nor by any *vile interest* for it would dishonour [dishonor] and debase us-²²

Elizabeth's third strategy for faith formation was to live in the Word of God. As a facilitator of conversion to God she introduced the Word of God to her directees through her writings and encouraged them to listen to God's word and to embrace God from their hearts. Whenever she sent letters to her acquaintances, she used many scriptural passages including her meditations on them. Thus, her readers listened to the Word of God and were led to meet Him in their own life situations. She also offered resources for their understanding of the Word of God and wrote various materials concerning the Word of God. For instance, her "Gospel of Matthew Notebook" consisted of her selective excerpts from the chapters 3 to 5 of the Gospel of St. Matthew and her copies from "various spiritual writers and readings from the Divine Office."²³ In her "Pyamingo Reflections,"²⁴

²² CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 505-506. Cf. CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 410.

²³ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 524-583, n. 4 & 5. According to the editors' note, "A label on page" of this document shows "that it was accessioned into the library at Mount St. Mary Seminary of the West (Archdiocese of Cincinnati) in 1927. Archbishop (later Cardinal) Joseph Bernardin of Cincinnati presented it to the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati at the Mass at St. Peter in Chains Cathedral in celebration of the canonization of St. Elizabeth Bayley Seton September 14, 1975. The notebook has a leather cover, 192 pages of written material, and measures 7 3/8 x 4 5/8 x 3/4. The pages are numbered in another hand." CW, 3a, 524, n. 1.

²⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 172-215. "The *Pyamingo Reflections* constitute a series of small notebooks begun by Elizabeth while sailing from Leghorn (Livorno), Italy, to New York in 1804" and some added "material probably dates from a later period in her life." CW, 3a, 72, n. 1.

she wrote “Tears of St. Peter”²⁵ and “Confession of St. Thomas (cf. John 20: 24-29)”²⁶ based on the Gospel story and these stories were meant to lead the readers to transform their heart toward Jesus Christ. In “the Seed and the Harvest (cf. Mt 13: 1-9),”²⁷ she stressed that Jesus taught us how the seed of the Word of God would grow and bear fruit.

Elizabeth also gave spiritual guidance on how to grow the seed of faith planted by God after conversion to God. She offered practical means for continual growth in Christian piety whose ultimate goal was to glorify God and attain salvation. To those whom she directed and guided she stressed that Christian piety should be “habitual not by fits” and gave directives concerning how to deepen Christian piety in their everyday lives. In “the 1st communion at St. Mary’s Mount,” she presented means for nurturing the habitual life of Christian piety:

its means are – the presence of God – good reading, prayer, the sacraments . . . good resolutions often renewed – the remembrance of our last ends – and its advantages – habits which secure our predestination, making our life equal, peaceable and consoling – leading to the heavenly crown where our perseverance will be eternal!!!²⁸

To live in the *presence of God*, Elizabeth encouraged individuals to develop the habit of reading spiritual books, of praying often, of making good resolutions, and of participating in the sacramental life of the church. She offered spiritual resources for individuals. She loved St. Francis de Sale’s writings, translated them and used them with

²⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 203-205. Cf. Mt 26: 31-35, 69-75; Mk 14: 27-31; 66-72; John 18: 25-27.

²⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 210-211.

²⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.4, 245-247.

²⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11.9, 12. This document is a part of “departed St. Teresa’s day,” which presumes “probably a funeral sermon given by Bruté” and includes “other reflections.” CW, 3b, 8, n.1.

her meditative notes as resources for her spiritual instruction concerning the presence of God. In her “Living in the Presence of God” based on St. Francis de Sales’ writing, she stressed: “Of all the exercises in a christian Life there are none more strongly recommended or more carefully practiced by the Saints of God, than that of a constant sense of his presence.”²⁹ In a similar context, she also wrote the “Exercise of the *Presence of God*” which is reminiscent of “St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part Second, Chap. 2.”³⁰

To live in the presence of God, Elizabeth urged her directees in many of her letters to pray. In prayer, the faithful would meet God and listen to His guidance for them. In her letter to Cecilia Seton dated October 8, 1805, she advised her to pray:

We must pray literally without ceasing – without ceasing, in every occurrence and employment of our lives. You know, I mean that prayer of the heart, which to God, as in a constant communication with him.³¹

As a facilitator of the faithful life Elizabeth guided individuals to deepen their Christian piety by participation in and appreciation of the sacraments of the Church. In her note, “Octave Sts. Peter and Paul 1818,” she shared her experience of the sacramental life in the Church: “Will not Jesus Christ be with me. Was I not signed with the cross of my salvation in *Baptism* with the unction of the Holy Ghost in *Confirmation*. do I not eat the bread of the strong in the holy Eucharist. AM I NOT WASHED IN HIS BLOOD in

²⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 189.

³⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392, n.1.

³¹ CW, 1, sec., 4.6, 389.

the Sacrament of Penance and do I not hope to die prepared by the Sacred Unction which opens heaven to us as we quit the earth (cf. Rev. 7:12).”³²

As a lover of the Eucharist Elizabeth fervently urged individuals to unite with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. She gave instructions concerning the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. In her “Instruction Compiled from Fathers and Councils,” she introduced the Catholic Church’s tradition concerning Mass and Eucharist:

the most ancient of the Fathers have left us an account of the manner of celebrating Mass in their time – St. Justinian [Justin Martyr and] St. Cyril of Jerusalem etc. so that any impartial reader of Antiquity will find the whole church at Mass the 4th and 5th century – even in the 3rd and 2nd century . . . St. Ignatius [of Antioch] the disciple of St. John[,] the holy martyr Ireneus [St. Irenaeus,] St. Cyprian [of Carthage,] St. Martial, and Tertullian for teaching the doctrine of the Mass – The word consubstantial was first made use of to express the Divinity of Christ against the Arians by the council of Nice[a] was this coining a new article of faith or only coining a new word to express the ancient faith and distinguish Catholics from Arians. In like manner the word Transubstantiation was first used in the fourth Lateran council to express the ancient faith in relation to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.³³

Elizabeth’s correspondences and writings demonstrated her role as a facilitator of conversion to God which led to a deepening of faith. As a spiritual director, she guided individuals to recognize God’s presence in their lives which also strengthened their faith life. To focus on and grow in the life of faith, she offered the strategies of maintaining a pure intention and living according to the Word of God. She guided them to live in the

³² CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 81-82. “Elizabeth wrote the following prayers and notes in her copy of *The Following of Christ*. . . . The book is now in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. The placement of Elizabeth’s notations is indicated in the text in brackets.” CW, 3b, 77. n. 1. “Elizabeth’s baptismal record was destroyed in a fire at Trinity Church, New York City, during the American Revolution. This passage was cited as verification of her baptism at the time she was canonized a saint.” CW, 3b, 82, n. 7.

³³ CW, 3a, sec., 9.5, 247-248.

presence of God. She guided persons to conversion to the life of faith which led them eventually to the formation of faith in their hearts.

A Co-Discerner for One's Vocation in Life: Formation of Hope.

Elizabeth's correspondences and writings reveal her function as a co-discerner for one's vocation in life. To Elizabeth, the fundamental vocation of life was the glorification of God and the salvation of the soul in the hope of union with God. Elizabeth guided her directees to discern their thoughts, words and actions in their everyday life in the light of this ultimate goal. In her spiritual direction, she continually urged her directees to discern this absolute vocation of human life in the hope of eternal union with God.

Elizabeth also assisted individuals to discern their life decisions in the light of their vocation as a Christian lay person, religious, or priest. For instance, when she noticed one seminarian left the seminary in doubt of his priestly vocation, she sent her advice to him in the following letter:

after all the choice of a clergyman[']s] life is but placing yourself in a situation to fulfil the solemn duties you engaged in at your Baptism, have since renewed in confirmation, and must at all times be convinced are the only pledges of eternal Peace to your Soul and which you are not the less strictly bound to fulfil because you see the greater number of your fellow creatures live in neglect and disregard to them -A man may be a very good man in the pursuit of any other Profession - but certainly that of a Clergyman is the easiest, surest road to God, and the first, the highest, and most blessed that can adorn a Human Being.³⁴

How did Elizabeth function as a co-discerner? First of all, Elizabeth directed individuals to discern everything in the light of the Holy Spirit who would lead them to

³⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.304, 696. "Mr. Smith may be either Joseph L. Smith, Jr., or his brother Leonard, both early students at Mount St. Mary's when their sister, Henrietta, attended St. Joseph's Academy. [Elizabeth's children,] Richard and Catherine Seton were friends with the Smiths of Carrollton Manor, who were related to the Catons, Carrolls, Harpers, and Jamisons." *CW*, 2, 695, n. 1.

eternal union with God. According to Raymond Studzinski, “*Spiritual direction is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit and an occasion for the experience of God’s grace*” and “a skilled and effective director draws people’s attention to the presence of the Spirit in human experience.”³⁵ Likewise Elizabeth guided individuals to live according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in continual prayer. Her spiritual direction on God’s grace to one of the Sisters echoed Studzinski’s guidance for a spiritual director:

Alone in the secret of your heart reflect, my child, what multiplied graces you have received in the course of your life, since your earliest infancy God has shed them on you incessantly. Say to your soul, what use have I made of the grace of my God? If I had corresponded with it, I should now be a saint, but alas! what am I before him? What shall I say to my God, when on one hand he will show me all that he has done for me and my salvation, and on the other, all that I have done against him, and my abuse of his grace. What a moment for me when I shall behold the beautiful Heaven, and the dreadful Hell before me, quite uncertain to which I will be sent – What now can I do to repair the past?³⁶

Secondly, Elizabeth presented the will of God as the norm of discernment in their journey to God. To herself the will of God was the roadmap in her journey toward eternal union with God and the first standard of discernment for her life's decision in grace. She often shared her life experiences of following the will of God with individuals, especially with someone who needed spiritual guidance. One of these cases was Rev. John Francis Hickey who received spiritual guidance from Elizabeth. In her letter to Hickey dated June 14, 1819, she described her life based on the will of God:

³⁵ Studzinski, 135.

³⁶ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.9, 262. This document has the small title, “Mother Seton’s last writings.” *CW*, 3a, 254. Although this document did not appear in Elizabeth’s own handwriting, the content was Elizabeth’s instructions given one of her sisters and eventually given all sisters. *CW*, 3a, 254, n. 1. According to the editors’ note, “Elizabeth often directed others, including her daughter Catherine, to copy selections for community use.” *CW*, 3a, 218.

I am so much better - cannot die one way it seems, so I try to Die the other, and keep the straight path to GOD ALONE the little daily lesson to keep soberly and quietly in his presence, trying to turn every little action on his will, and to praise and love through cloud or sun shine, is all my care and study – Sam [Elizabeth's name for the devil] offers his battles from time to time, but our beloved stands behind the wall (cf. Song of Songs. 2.9) and keeps the wretch at his distance.³⁷

As a co-discerner Elizabeth offered resources on discerning the will of God. Through her reflection, “7 Degrees [toward union with God]” in “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,”³⁸ she directed the readers to recognize the importance of the will of God in human life: “1st. We are not to be satisfied with having high ideas of the will of God considered *in itself* which is but as a *first step* towards our union with him. We must try to learn what his divine will is in regard to ourselves as a *second step*, without which the first would avail but little.”³⁹ She guided her directees to discern every step of their life and follow the movement of grace: “You know every step we take all day long is a step

³⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7.214, 614. Elizabeth’s quotation from Song of Songs (2:9): “My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Here he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattices.” Rev. John Francis Hickey (1789-1869) was “the first priest ordained at Mount St. Mary’s and the first American member of the Sulpicians. When he was a young priest, Elizabeth once reprimanded him because of a careless sermon. At Mount St. Mary’s (1814-1818) he had a reputation as a disciplinarian and as an English scholar. After an interlude in Baltimore, he returned to Emmitsburg around 1825 where he remained despite the Sulpicians’ withdrawal of sponsorship of Mount St. Mary’s. He became the fifth superior (1830-1841) of the Sisters of Charity while he was also pastor of St. Joseph Church in Emmitsburg (1825-1841).” CW, 2, 317, n. 6.

³⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 532-535. According to editors’ note, “Elizabeth copied selected excerpts from the Gospel of St. Matthew, chaps. 3 to 15. These parts were not included in her *Collected Writings*. She explained ‘her original intention’ of this writing to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté: ‘When first rec[eive]d into the church [1805] your little mother meant to have gathered every word our Saviour ever said in the *Gospels* – but coming to St. Joseph’s there are Testaments for a sick bed as handy as this little book, so I left the dear work for one more useful tho’ none c[ou]ld be half so dear, or pleasing.” CW, 3a, 524, n. 4. “The rest of the notebook contains excerpts copied by Elizabeth from various spiritual writers and readings from the Divine Office. In her role as Mother of the Community, she probably used this material for instructions and meditations for the sisters and students, as well as for her personal devotion.” CW, 3a, 525, n. 5.

³⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 532.

of *nature*, or a step of *grace*.”⁴⁰ Then, she offered the life of Jesus Christ as a concrete example of following the will of God:

our Saviour came from heaven only to do the will of his Father and when the bitter chalice was presented to him, bathed in his bloody sweat he cried, *Thy Will* O my Father, thy will, not mine be done (cf. Mt. 26: 36) – He knew his Father's Will, but for us we must beg earnestly that he will send his light from above to enlighten that night in which our *Senses*, *Mind*, and *will* are lost, and so lost in the ignorance and corruption of our Nature that we have no possible means of finding our road to heaven but by a persevering attention to the path our Saviour himself has trodden – in this path we will find many enemies to combat, trials to endure, and obligations to fulfil [fulfill], but he has not only traced it out with his blood, but he even goes on before us, pours on us the abundance of his graces for our Strength and comfort and holds out the Eternal crown which he prepares for us (cf. James 1: 12).⁴¹

Elizabeth as co-discerner reminded her directees of free will which would lead the soul either to salvation or destruction. She stressed that the “noblest gift of God” to the human person was “free will.”⁴² She directed individuals to use this free will in fulfilling the will of God which would lead them to eternal life and taught them how to discern and to follow the will of God in concrete life situations.

Thirdly, Elizabeth guided individuals to discern the movement of spirits in their soul. She introduced St. Ignatius’ “Rules for Discernment of Spirits” to her directees. She wrote “St. Ignatius’s Spiritual Doctor for Beginners”⁴³ and “St. Ignatius’s Spiritual

⁴⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 9, 258.

⁴¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 532.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ CW, 3a, sec., 9.2, 236-241. “This instruction is based on ‘Rules for Discernment of Spirits I’ from *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. The *Spiritual Exercises* is a classic handbook of Christian spirituality first published in Rome in 1548. Designed to be used over a four-week period under the guidance of a spiritual director, it is a manual for spiritual growth. Through a series of disciplined meditations, contemplations, and practices, the retreatant is led to a deeper awareness of self, love of Christ, and imitation of him in self-giving service. St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-

Doctor for the Advanced.”⁴⁴ She stressed that St. Ignatius’ first rules would help the beginners to “purify their souls from bad customs, and establish themselves in the fear of God and horror of sins.” The second rules of St. Ignatius, she said, would help the advanced souls to “apply themselves seriously to Acquiring Virtues.”⁴⁵

By providing St. Ignatius’ spiritual direction for the discernment of spirits for the beginner and the advanced, Elizabeth guided her directees to discern the movement of spirit in their souls and how to develop their virtuous life through the right discernment. She also offered her translation of a short introduction of St. Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* in order to help the practice of them:

[St. Ignatius] wrote his *Spiritual Exercises* which are not only a collection of meditations and considerations, but are a converse[ation] with ourselves and God in Prayer, and a way of conversion and reformation never marked out before by which he not only shows us how we are to forsake and get free of our sins, but also how we may reach the highest perfection. and there is as much difference in this book, and others which treat of the four ends [death, judgment, heaven, and hell] and Christian Doctrine as there is between theory and practice.⁴⁶

Elizabeth expressed her experience of the battle between the good and evil spirits in her letters. She often named the devil “Sam” and the good spirit “good angel.” In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté who became the president of St. Mary’s College in

1556) was the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Born in Spain, he experienced a spiritual conversion as a young man and devoted his life to God. His most important writing is the *Spiritual Exercises*.” *CW*, 3a, 236, n. 1.

⁴⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.3, 242-245. “This instruction is based on ‘Rules for the Discernment of Spirits II,’ from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.” *CW*, 3a, 242, n.1.

⁴⁵ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.3, 242.

⁴⁶ *CW*, 3b, 468, sec., 13.14. “Written on the back in Rev. Simon Bruté’s hand: ‘Mrs. Seton a page of her translation of the life of St. Ignatius.’ This is possibly from Dominique Bouhours, *La Vie de Saint Ignace, fondateur de la compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Mabre-Crimois, 1679).” *CW*, 3b, 468, n. 1.

Baltimore, Elizabeth gave him spiritual direction concerning temptation in his new role as a president through her imaginative scenario in which a good and evil spirit try to influence the new president of the college. It would be worthwhile to read her scenario, even though it is long:

Sam [devil]

Now we'll catch Monsieur le President

1st we will fill his head with plans of reformation - every Successor improves on his predecessor - to be sure - of course with the Succession comes multiplied distractions of thought, complaisances, etc that alone a fine trap if there was no other but (O joy to the grinner) we will watch him too by endless conversations and opinions (to be sure a president must be *full* of opinions) this Seraphim[']s wings shall be clipt [clipped] and the modest, retiring, devout spirit shall swell, and fill, and push, [we] insist . . .

(O be joyful what a change we will see) and this Simple heart, loving now to serve but his God in and the Salvation of Souls, shall be plunged in the labyrinths of science and grow fat as a doctor . . (oh we will have fun this next year 1816) short thanksgivings, quick preparations, forced offerings . . . this Jesufied⁴⁷ . . . yet with a full confidence the grace and the trial will be proportioned -- but whether the grace will be . . . silence to them *if* - to our God I trust *all*⁴⁸

2nd good Angel

well at least he will have abundant Sacrifice of dearest, choicest consolations - he will act in full opposition to his own choice - his daily bread (cf. Luke 11:3) will be dry and hard - he will be a bond of union and peace (cf. Eph. 4:3) to his Confreres [Bruté's fellow Sulpicians] a *spirit* of purest, ardent piety to worldings - and an example of cheerful and tender forbearance to his pupils - poor dear G [Gabriel]. after a little while of subjection and patience to his wild heart it *shall* be set free from the yoke, improved and experienced, to return with new ardour [ardor] to its more Simple and heavenly delights.⁴⁹

Elizabeth's imaginative story reveals not only her understanding of the human psyche, but it also reveals her spiritual direction on discernment of the good and evil spirits in their movement in the soul.

⁴⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.3, 368. "A pejorative reference to rich and powerful clerics in the Catholic church." *CW*, 2, 368, n.3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*. "Elizabeth was speaking in her own voice in this paragraph." *CW*, 2, 368, n. 4.

⁴⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.3, 367-368.

Fourthly, Elizabeth as a co-discerner guided individuals to discern who they were in the presence of God. She stressed that “the foundations of study” should be “the *knowledge of God and self*.” For aiding self-knowledge, she even quoted *the oracle of Delphi* in her instruction given to her daughter, Catherine Seton:

KNOW THYSELF
ALL Wisdom centres (centers) there
To none man seems ignoble but to man.⁵⁰

Elizabeth reminded her directees that the knowledge of God and self would shed light on discernment of everyday life events. She wrote: “We are but like grains of sand, with which the wind [scatters], if we do not attach ourselves immoveably to that *point of support*[.] Man never more diminutive nor more grand, than when he considers himself in relation to *his God* – He must perceive an infinite being whose image he is and in whose sight he is but == ==*AN ATOM*.”⁵¹

On the other hand, Elizabeth often reminded her directees that the human person was created in the image of God. She stressed that the first and last end of each person was “to be like himself” in the grace of our savior. In her “St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

⁵⁰ CW, 3a: 495, sec., 10.3. “This injunction [KNOW YOURSELF], carved into the lintel at the Greek Temple of Apollo at Delphi, is a basic tenet of spiritual growth in all traditions” (CW, 3a: 495, n. 14).

⁵¹ CW, 3a, 508, sec., 10.3. “Elizabeth often used this image [atom] to speak of human finitude in the face of God’s immensity” (CW, 3a: 508, n. 35). As referred to in an earlier chapter, “Elizabeth’s style of frequently using equal sign (=) . . . as terminal punctuation is followed as closely as possible.” Bechtle and Metz, editorial procedures for CW, 1, xxvii).

Notebook,”⁵² she reminded the readers of the human person as the image of God in creation:

Creation – ourselves made in his image – to be like himself – himself our first and last and only end – our first parents depart also from this first end of our creation (cf. Gen. 1: 26; 3: 8-19) but can have no reproach from us who with the multiplied means and lights of our Redemption continually depart from it by the perversion of our last end.⁵³

Fifthly, as a co-discerner Elizabeth guided individuals to discern their outlook based on their senses, mind, and will which were often wrapped in illusion. Through her instruction in the “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book,” she guided her daughter to discern the truth hidden in the midst of everyday life: “we paint pleasure to our idea as full of charms and delights without looking under her Veil where true misery and Slavery would be found, why will we live in these illusions?”⁵⁴ To overcome these illusions, she gave instruction to Catherine: “The great art of life my beloved is to see things on a large scale and to look behind the curtain.”⁵⁵ To find the right direction in their journey to God, she suggested that individuals discern everything in the light of an eternal and global vision, and also to have psychological insight in their relationships with others.

According to Bishop Robert F. Morneau, “*Spiritual direction is optometric in fostering a vision that is global and eschatological, immanent and transcendent.*”⁵⁶ First

⁵² CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 424. “A handwritten note on page 2 of this book reads: ‘This book was given to Sister Elizabeth [probably Boyle] nearly all in it was written by the hand of our much loved Mother Seton.’” CW, 3a, 424, n. 1.

⁵³ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 450.

⁵⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 497.

⁵⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 496.

⁵⁶ Morneau, 95.

of all, Elizabeth guided her directees to see, think, and act in the light of eternity. Her notion of *eternity* was eschatological, immanent and transcendent. Eternity to her indicated the mystical world of God:

imagination fails – it has no hold, no measure – only a *vast, unbounded* infinite uncertainty of thought[.] It is Eternity – Time is stopped. . . . What a number of years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds, are absorbed by *Eternity*, which is always the same, and remains immovable in the midst of *change and Revolutions*.⁵⁷

Eternity to Elizabeth was also the dynamic energy acting here and now and guiding human life toward union with God in grace. In her Journal 1815 written for Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté while he traveled in France, she exclaimed: “the eye on Eternity - that the only remedy.”⁵⁸ In “Dear Remembrances,” she wrote: “*Eternity!* That voice to be every where understood Eternity! – to love and serve Him only- who is to be loved and *eternally* served and praised in Heaven.”⁵⁹

Elizabeth also directed individuals to have global vision in the discernment of their life journey to God. When her son planned to live in Italy in order to learn business skills from the Filicchi brothers, she gave him instructions concerning life in a foreign country. The 7th instruction among them revealed her spiritual direction on global vision:

I beg you so much not to give way to National prejudices, but to allow for many customs and manners you will see, - why should not others have their peculiarities as well as we have ours - try to please every one you must be with and to do every obliging action in your power, I never remember to have failed in this but I repented it - and let your father's daily good rule be Well in your Mind, first given

⁵⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 508.

⁵⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.195, 328.

⁵⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10.4, 523; Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., ed., *Light & Grace, Elizabeth Seton on Life, Faith, and Eternity* (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, 2009), 1, 8. This little booklet is arranged for daily reflections and had the date without page numbers.

by our Lord as the great point of charity to consider how you would wish another to do to you (cf. Mt 7:12).⁶⁰

Elizabeth as a co-discerner guided individuals to have psychological insight in order to understand and help others in God. As a religious educator, she sent many letters concerning her students to their parents in order to help them to understand their daughters. She also sent letters to priests, sharing her insights on their ministries and priesthood. For instance, when Elizabeth heard that Rev. John Hickey severely scolded his younger sister, Ellen [Eleanor], who was a student of St. Joseph's Academy, she sent him a letter on how to deal with a young girl in trouble dated March 19, 1818:

When you ask too much at first you often gain nothing at last - *and if the heart is lost all is lost*, if you use such language to your family they cannot love you, since they have not our Microscope to see things *as they are*. Your austere hard language was not understood by Ellen. . . . do not push her away . . . she could see but unfeeling reproach, and perhaps some disregard of the dear COMMAND of our God, gently gently my Father in God and son in heart, do you drive so in the tribunal [The confessional] I hope not - the faults of young people especially such faults as Elenors must be moved by prayers and tears because they are *constitutional* and cannot be frightened out - I have said much harder things to her than you do, but turning the tune in her own heart.⁶¹

In a word, Elizabeth was a co-discerner with individuals in their life journey toward union with God. To Elizabeth, discernment of matters in everyday life was the

⁶⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6.182, 297. Elizabeth gave 10 instructions to her son, William, when he traveled to Italy to receive instruction and learn business skills from the Filicchi Brothers. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté was so impressed with this and "he made a copy, heading in French: 'Instruction donnez par la mère a William en janvier 1815 toutes tache de ses larmes.' [Instructions given by Mother to William, January 1815, all stained with her tears]." CW, 2, 296, n. 1.

⁶¹ CW, 2, sec., 7.147, 536. Eleanor Hickey attended Elizabeth's school, St. Joseph's Academy in 1817 and 1818. CW, 2, 536, n. 2. "Eleanor Hickey (1801-1858), a younger sister of Rev. John Hickey, S.S., was a student in the Academy, but eventually she was sent home in 1819 by Elizabeth for misconduct. Later in 1830, at the age of 29, she became a Sister of Charity and was known as Sister William Anna. In 1846 she became a founding member of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of New York." CW, 2, 482, n. 3.

important process in the fulfillment of the fundamental human vocation which is a call to the glorification of God and the salvation of one's soul. As a co-discerner, she guided individuals to discern everything according to the will of God in the light of the Holy Spirit. She helped individuals to discern the movement of the spirit in their souls through the use of St. Ignatius' *Rules for Discernment of Spirit* and also through sharing her own spiritual and psychological insights. She inspired individuals to know God and self in grace and directed them to discern who they were in the presence of God. She led individuals to discern their senses, mind, and will which would often lead the person to illusions. To overcome these illusions, she directed them to have an eternal and global vision for the right discernment of their life situations. She also encouraged individuals to be aware of the psychological condition of others so as to assist them in discerning matters related to their life situation. She was truly spiritual and psychological co-discerner who guided individuals to make the right choice in their journey to union with God in hope.

An Advocate of the Christ-Centered Life in the Church: Formation of Love

Elizabeth functioned not only as a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith and as a co-discerner of the fundamental vocation of human life, but also as an advocate of the Christ-centered life. Her correspondences and writings revealed Elizabeth's role as an advocate of the Christ-centered life in the church. The Christ-centered life was the final step of spiritual formation which led to union with God. She urged individuals to maintain the Christ-centered life in her meditation written in December 12, 1808:

what is the universe to us – Jesus our all is ours, and will be ours forever – and yet we are not our own – but *his* to whom he has committed us – O happy bondage! – sweet servitude of love . . . and purify = look up my soul, fear not, the

love which nourishes us is unchangeable as Him from whom it proceeds – it will remain when every other sentiment will vanish – and could we desire more than to draw continual refreshment from a stream so near the fountain head – so pure so sweet a stream!⁶²

Elizabeth guided individuals to unite with God by participation in the life of Jesus Christ. Like the great spiritual directors, she presented the life of Jesus Christ as the fundamental model for the Christian life. Through her meditative note, “Friday the day after Ascension,” she stressed the life of Jesus Christ as the path to union with God: “by submission to his will -O Lord keep us in thy way, direct us in thy paths – recall our wanderings make us to hear thy voice with gladness - and to rejoice in thy Salvation.”⁶³

In her reflective note written on the blank space of her book, *The Following of Christ*, she presented three conditions for the love of Jesus Christ in everyday life: “3 conditions of love are to SERVE him, *imitate* him, and *suffer* for him.”⁶⁴ Through her correspondences and writings, she stirred the individual’s heart to imitate the love of Jesus Christ, to participate in the suffering of Jesus through their own distress, and to serve Jesus Christ in persons, especially in the poor.

First of all, Elizabeth as an advocate of the Christ-centered life urged individuals to imitate Jesus Christ in their everyday life. She reminded individuals that the human person was created in the image of God and Jesus Christ witnessed it in his Incarnation. Thus, she guided them to follow the life of Jesus Christ for the fulfillment of this purpose

⁶² CW, 3b, sec., 11.2, 2.

⁶³ CW, 3a, sec., 8.17, 33. This document has no date. The editors classified it in Elizabeth’s Protestant Materials.

⁶⁴ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 79. She wrote it on left side of “page following the title pages” of the *Following of Christ*.

given to them by God's creation. In "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book," she revealed her spiritual direction: "We are *followers of Christ* and every action of our life should be done in union with him-since from him only they can draw either value or merit."⁶⁵

Elizabeth directed individuals to imitate Jesus Christ as the absolute model of their life because he was truly the way, truth, and life and His life on earth was a concrete paradigm for Christians on their journey toward union with God. In the blank space of her *Prayer Book*, she expressed her love of Jesus Christ and shared it with individuals as a roadmap to imitate him in their own life:

Unite me to thyself O adorable victim, life giving heavenly bread feed me, Sanctify me, reign in me, transform me to thyself – live in me, and let me live in thee, let me *adore* thee in thy life giving sacraments as my God – *listen* to thee as to my Master – *obey* thee as my King – imitate thee as my Model – Follow thee as my Shepherd – love thee as my Father – seek thee as my Physician who will heal all the maladies of my Soul – be indeed my *Way, truth, and life*, sustain me O heavenly Manna through the desert of this world, till I shall behold thee UNVEILED in thy Glory. – Corpus Christi 1816.⁶⁶

To imitate Jesus Christ as a life model, Elizabeth offered resources concerning the life of Jesus through her instructions and sharing her prayers. In her instruction, "First Communion"⁶⁷ written for her students, she introduced Jesus Christ from his Incarnation to his Passion based on the Scriptures. She led the first communicants to participate in the whole life of Jesus Christ through her "Glad tidings" (cf. Luke 2: 10), "Sincere *love* of

⁶⁵ CW, 3a, 506. sec., 10.3.

⁶⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 11.51, 76. Elizabeth wrote this reflective note on "right side, second back flyleaf" of this *Prayer Book* given by Bishop John Cheverus in 1805. According to the editors' note, "This book was probably the *Roman Catholic Manual, or Collection of Prayers, Anthems, hymns, etc.* (Boston, 1803), which Cheverus had had printed. Elizabeth used the prayer book until her death, and from time to time she wrote prayers and petitions on its flyleaves and in other pages in the book where space was available." CW, 3a, 71, n. 1.

⁶⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 264-274. "These meditations are preparation for First Communion that the students at St. Joseph's Academy often made at Christmastime." CW, 3a, 264, n. 1.

JESUS,” “the Holy Sacrifice,” “Memorial of the passion of our JESUS” which was “a Eucharistic hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas,” and “Thy King comes meek and *lowly* (cf. Zech. 9:9).”⁶⁸ She also presented her reflective prayer on the *Anima Christi* “attributed to St. Ignatius Loyola.”⁶⁹

To imitate Jesus Christ Elizabeth encouraged individuals to live in the rhythm of liturgical celebrations. For Elizabeth, to live in the rhythm of the liturgical celebrations was to celebrate each day with Jesus Christ in the Church through his feasts as well as the feasts of Saints. Through her writings, she offered resources concerning the feasts of the Lord, the Blessed Mother, and the saints. For instance, through “Advent and Christmas Meditations,”⁷⁰ she guided individuals to the scriptural story of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In her “Meditations for the days of the Christmas Season,”⁷¹ she gave spiritual direction on how to prepare each day for this liturgical celebration and to give homage to

⁶⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 267-274.

⁶⁹ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 51, 74-75. This reflective prayer was written on right side of “first back flyleaf” and this was her favorite prayer. CW, 3b, 75, n. 4.

⁷⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.18, 337-382. “Most, if not all, of the handwriting of these Advent and Christmas meditations, written in a copybook, does not appear to be Elizabeth’s, nor is the spelling consistent with her usage. The document seems to have been copied, possibly by her daughter Catherine.” “The phrasing and style of the meditations suggest that they may have been composed by Rev. Simon Bruté, Rev. Pierre Babade, or another spiritual writer. In one of Elizabeth’s notes to Bruté when he was in Baltimore, she writes that they are using his Christmas meditations again, but these are not the same as Bruté’s 1828 meditations transcribed by Martha Daddisman. The content may also reflect comments dictated by Elizabeth. A note at the end of one meditation – ‘this point is not finished but Mother will add what it wants’ – supports this interpretation. The document illustrates the scripturally-based spirituality that shaped the early community and is akin to the *Lectio Divina*, a meditative reading of Scripture leading to prayer.” CW, 3a, 337, n. 1.

⁷¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.19, 383-391. “This document is dated 1817.” CW, 3a, 383, n.1.

the Infant Jesus Christ in the light of his Passion. In this meditation, she gave each day a special name in order to prepare for the Christmas Day.⁷²

Elizabeth urged individuals to meditate and contemplate God with their whole heart in order to imitate him. In her instruction in “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book,” Elizabeth guided her daughter to remain at the feet of Jesus Christ and contemplate His love. She shared her experience of contemplation with her daughter: “How glows the heart – all lost in love beholding thee Father of Angels, but friend of man his saviour [Savior] God, who snatched the smoking brand from out the flames, and quench’d [quenched] it in THY BLOOD.”⁷³ She explained to Catherine that the fruit of contemplation would be peace and joy in her life:

This communication with God my C [Catherine] gives an unspeakable sweetness and joy to the heart, under its influence we feel light and gay, the temper is calmed and softened so that good humour [humor] and cheerfulness cost nothing; what we love, in this happy turn of piety, we love still better, every thing around us looks smiling, and we enjoy a foretaste of *ETERNAL LOVE*.⁷⁴

As an advocate of the Christ-centered life, Elizabeth encouraged and guided individuals to prepare their whole heart, will, and desire to embrace the love of God. Her instruction was “to possess the *love of God*” in their heart and secondly to give entire abandonment “to *that love* that He [might] take entire possession” of them “in whatever

⁷² *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.19, 383-391.

⁷³ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 502.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

way He please[d].” The third instruction was “to have no desire but *for it*” even though they did not “enjoy *this love*.”⁷⁵

To imitate Jesus Christ, Elizabeth led individuals to live the virtues of Jesus Christ, which were “*meekness, humility, patience, resignation, and gratitude*.”⁷⁶ In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, she wrote: “God-God-God-that the Supreme delight that his is God and to open the mouth and heart wide that he may fill it – but to be patient gentle humble- how little of that thro’ my torrents of daily tears and affections.”⁷⁷ She experienced how difficult it was to maintain purity of heart. She guided her students to avoid sin and keep the purity of their hearts through instruction on “Confession Before Communion” which was probably given by the priest-director of her community. This instruction included “topics such as contrition, mortal and venial sin, and conversion.”⁷⁸

Secondly, as an advocate of the Christ-centered life she urged individuals to participate in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ in their midst of suffering and

⁷⁵ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 79, This was on the page 8 in chapter 1 of *The Following of Christ*, Book 1.

⁷⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 11.51, 74, It was written on the page 249 of her *Prayer Book*.

⁷⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7.286, 684.

⁷⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9.11, 275-307. “These instructions are not in Elizabeth’s handwriting although her writing appears throughout the text as though she were checking it and filling it out. Part of the text is in her daughter Catherine’s hand. These are possibly instructions given by one of the priest-directors taken down by one of the listeners. . . .The great emphasis on lack of true contrition for sin, the possibility of committing sacrilege, and the implicit sense of probable condemnation of the guilty soul are not consistent with Elizabeth’s usual sense of God as merciful and forgiving. The narrative on the sacrament of Penance in *The Real Principles of Catholics: or Catechism for the Adult* by J.H.C. (London, 1749) parallels many elements in the instructions found in this manuscript.” CW, 3a, 275, n. 1. “Retreat of Soul and Body” in this document indicates “rigorist moral attitudes of the time, perhaps even some Jansenist tendencies Rev. John David, S.S., the priest-superior of the Sisters of Charity from 1809 to 1811, was a representative of this tradition.” CW, 3a, 278, n. 8.

distress. She emphasized that Jesus Christ suffered for the salvation of human persons in His love. The passion of Jesus Christ was an important subject in her writings. For instance, the theme of her “Pyamingo Reflections,” was centered “chiefly on the suffering and death of Christ with application to the life of the Christian.”⁷⁹ Through this writing, she invited individuals to be with Jesus Christ from the time of his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane until his death in her reflection on Louis Bourdaloue’s writing on it:

Reflect on our Adored Master in the Garden of Gethsemany (cf. Mt 26: 36-45; Mk 14: 32-42; Lk. 22: 39-46) – Prepared to consummate by a painful and ignominious [ignominious] death the work of our Redemption, he prays, not once, but thrice, not for a few moments, but for three hours. . . . In this hour of horror every passion of Sorrow and dismay had arisen against him and the pangs of his soul and strength of his agony were so great as to occasion the bloody sweat which fell from his Body to the earth – abandoned apparently by Heaven as well as by mankind he addresses himself to his Father, but his Father answers not.⁸⁰

Elizabeth understood the distress of her acquaintances in suffering because suffering was the companion of her whole life. She experienced that she could accept this mysterious suffering in grace only in the light of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. In “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book,” she shared her experience with her daughter: “when I lay my Sorrows at the foot of the cross it seems to me they vanish before so great an object, or become endeared by participation with him who was *sorrowful* unto Death for me.”⁸¹ Thus, she directed individuals in suffering to focus on the Passion of Jesus and to offer their suffering to Him. When Cecilia Seton was in distress because of her family’s

⁷⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 172. n. 1.

⁸⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 173. Elizabeth’s manuscript, “Prayer of Our Lord,” was based on “extracts from Louis Bourdaloue, S.J., *Oeuvres Complètes de Bourdaloue* (Lyon, 1864).” CW, 3a, 173, n.5.

⁸¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 501-502.

persecution due to her conversion to Catholicism, Elizabeth guided her: "I would repeat to you the story of his sufferings and anguish, who chose them for his companions from the cradle to the grave."⁸² Likewise, when George Weis, who became Elizabeth's spiritual friend, was faced with suffering, she guided him to meet Jesus on the Cross in a letter to him dated May 13, 1810:

Is it possible my kind my good George who wishes only to make the happiness of others, and fill them with Joy, should be himself a victim of sorrow . . . I entreat you in the name of our adored to take courage, and look to the crown before you - if you sink so soon in the days of trial, My friend, how will we be able to keep in the bloody footsteps of our Leader - oh look upon him; see his look of love and sorrow while he looks behind after you, and calls "come, follow me."⁸³

Thirdly, as an advocate of the Christ-centered life Elizabeth guided individuals to incarnate the love of Jesus Christ through their own service. She reminded them of Jesus' word, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you," then, continued: "The Charity of our Blessed Lord in the course of his ministry had three distinct qualities which should be the model of our conduct - it was gentle benevolent and universal."⁸⁴ She urged individuals to serve people in this spirit of Jesus.

Elizabeth encouraged individuals to serve Jesus Christ in his people. In the letter to Julia Scott dated December 6, 1808, she expressed her delight to join in the ministry of Jesus Christ at every moment and indirectly guided her friend to join in this mission: "Oh

⁸² CW, 1, sec., 4.12, 398.

⁸³ CW, 2, sec., 6.38, 124-125. "George Weis, a resident of Baltimore who lived near St. Mary's Seminary, was a carpenter and contractor who built St. Mary's Chapel in Baltimore and Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg. He and his family developed a lasting friendship with Elizabeth and her companions as they were preparing to leave for Emmitsburg in 1809. He developed a deep spiritual relationship with Elizabeth and remained a helpful friend of the community during his lifetime." CW, 2, 75, n. 1.

⁸⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 193.

how sweet to be every moment employed in the service and in the sight of the dearest and most generous of Masters who repays with the tenderness of compassionate love even the good will of his child however imperfect its execution. but you do not understand - poor Julia.”⁸⁵

Through her translation of the biography of St. Vincent de Paul, she reminded her early sisters of St. Vincent’s teaching on the ministry:

Mr. Vincent finding himself almost without knowing it or thinking of it, the author of this charitable work, and the Spiritual Father of this Community, resolved to employ his thoughts and care for the perfection of it – he therefore gave them as a first and fundamental maxim to keep well in mind that they were destined by the will of God to serve our Lord JESUS CHRIST corporally and spiritually in the persons of the poor.⁸⁶

Elizabeth guided her sisters in community to live the true spirit of serving Jesus Christ through her “Retreat Meditation,” especially through her reflection, “The Sisters of Charity meditate on the Service of God.”⁸⁷ She directed the sisters with the challenging question in this writing: “Jesus lives in us, that we are a part of his Body, and as the beating of the heart sends the blood to every part of the body to nourish it does the life of our Jesus animate us – do we indeed give him the true *Service of the heart* without which whatever else we give has no value.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CW, 2, sec., 5.13, 43; McNeil, 6, 1.

⁸⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 279-280. Cf. Abelly 2: 292. According to the editors’ note, three virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity are the characteristic virtuous for the Daughter of Charity given by their founders of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. CW, 3b, 280, n. 18.

⁸⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 331-332. Elizabeth wrote this meditation probably during the retreat of July 1813 under direction of Rev. John Dubois who was the priest director. CW, 3a, 315, n. 1. “Retreat Meditation” is seen in CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 315-332.

⁸⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 332.

Elizabeth tirelessly encouraged the Christ-centered life to individuals. She urged them to imitate Jesus, to suffer for him, and to serve him through their ministries and love of neighbor. To live in the Christ-centered life, she guided them to contemplate him and possess His love in their hearts. She reminded that to live the Christ-centered life was to serve him in their service to others, especially the poor.

2. Elizabeth Seton's Qualifications as a Spiritual Director

Elizabeth's qualifications as a spiritual director were manifested everywhere in her correspondence and writings including her translations and copies of spiritual writings.

First of all, Elizabeth was a very qualified spiritual director from the point of view of her own spiritual life. She developed her spiritual life based on the Scriptures, the works of spiritual writers, the teaching of Church Fathers and the Councils of the Church. Through her deep prayerful life and by the aid of her spiritual directors, she developed her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety, and understood God as a triune God. For instance, in the letter dated Nov. 19, 1802 to her sister-in-law, Cecilia Seton to whom Elizabeth often gave religious instruction, she shared her faith in the Trinity:

*Father of Angels and of men
Saviour who hast us bought
Spirit by whom we're born again
and sanctified and taught
Thy glory holy three in one
Thy children's song shall be
Long as the wheels of time shall run
and to Eternity.⁸⁹*

⁸⁹ CW, 1, sec., 1.166, 215.

In her writings, Elizabeth often expressed the Trinitarian God as creator, savior, and sanctifier or comforter. In her “Retreat Meditation,” written probably in 1813, she wrote “one only heavenly Father, one only same Saviour *Jesus*, one only same Spouse and Sanctifier of all the Holy Ghost.”⁹⁰

Secondly, in her practice of spiritual direction Elizabeth’s emphasis on grace strengthened her qualifications as a spiritual director. Bishop Robert F. Morneau stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual direction: “*Spiritual direction is primarily the work of the Spirit and the director must learn to facilitate and not obstruct the action of grace.*”⁹¹ Elizabeth’s writings revealed the important role of the Holy Spirit in her life and in her instruction of others. In her journal to her sister-in-law, Rebecca Seton to whom Elizabeth often gave religious instruction through her correspondences, she wrote: “O my God imprint it on my Soul with the strength of thy Holy Spirit that by his Grace supported and defended I may never more forget that Thou are my all, and that I cannot be recieved [received] in thy Heavenly Kingdom without a pure and faithful Heart supremely devoted to thy Holy Will. - O keep me for the sake of Jesus Christ.”⁹² She guided individuals to be aware of the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives and to live in his grace. Actually her favorite instruction given to her directees was on “the grace of moment.” In her letter “To a Sister Being Sent on Mission” dated after October 1814, she directed her: “Knowing as I do so well your heart’s full desire to serve our Lord purely, I

⁹⁰ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.15, 327.

⁹¹ Morneau, 90.

⁹² *CW*, 1, sec., 2. 5, 247.

can say nothing to you, dearest soul, but to keep well to what you believe to be the grace of the moment.”⁹³

Thirdly, Elizabeth’s goal in giving spiritual guidance to her directees demonstrated her qualifications as a spiritual director. Thomas Merton said: “The spiritual director’s function is to verify and to encourage what is truly spiritual in the soul.”⁹⁴ In her spiritual direction, Elizabeth clearly presented the ultimate goal of human life as the glory of God and the salvation of the soul. The aim of her direction was to guide individuals to achieve this goal in grace.

Fourthly, Elizabeth’s holistic way of spiritual direction manifested her qualifications as a spiritual director. Thomas Merton wrote: “The spiritual director is concerned with the *whole person*, for the spiritual life is not just the life of the mind, or of the affections, or of the ‘summit of the soul’ - it is the life of the whole person.”⁹⁵ As a facilitator, co-discerner and advocate, Elizabeth guided individuals to transform their affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of human life in grace. She also functioned as spiritual director, psychological advisor, and mentor of the moral life. For instance, in her letter to her son, William, dated November 20, 1814, she expressed her understanding of his anxiety concerning his future and encouraged him: “I know how you feel, and the ardour of your desire - but be a man and a Christian both.”⁹⁶ When her

⁹³ CW, 2, sec., 7.314, 702.

⁹⁴ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1960), 8.

⁹⁵ Merton, 6.

⁹⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6. 173, 285.

former student, Sarah Cauffman, asked advice about a suitor, Elizabeth gave instruction to her in a letter dated February 19, 1818: “if you must reject my precious child do it with reason and a candid statement of your reasons, then if they are approved or condemned you will have acted like a Christian, and your mind will be at peace however painful the exertion.”⁹⁷

Fifthly, Elizabeth’s resources used in her spiritual direction revealed in her correspondence and writings offered evidence of her qualifications as a spiritual director. First of all, she used the Word of God in her direction. Her letters combined passages of scripture and her meditative reflections so that she helped her readers to taste and meditate on the Word of God. As seen in the previous chapters, she not only read numerous books which included the writings of the Church Fathers, the classics and her contemporary spiritual writers and wrote her meditations, but also selectively copied or translated some of them. She offered these abundant spiritual resources to her directees so that they could breathe in the wisdom and guidance from these spiritual writers.

Lastly, Elizabeth’s methods and means used in her spiritual direction also manifested her qualifications as a spiritual director. First of all she guided individuals to convert their heart to God and directed them to deepen their life of faith through participation in the sacramental life in the Church. The second step in Elizabeth’s spiritual direction was the formation of hope. She directed individuals to discern their life in the hope of union with God. Through the Rules of the Discernment of Spirits she guided individuals to discern what God’s will was in their lives. She helped individuals to discern who they were and where they were through the lens of an eternal and global

⁹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7.140, 528.

vision. And in their relationships with others she encouraged them in their discernment to be aware of the psychological aspects of the person.

The third step in Elizabeth's spiritual direction was formation of love. She led individuals to live a Christ-centered life. She guided them to imitate Jesus Christ, participate in his Passion, and incarnate His love in their service for people. Through these three steps of spiritual direction, she guided individuals to grow in the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love and to unite with God through living a Christ-centered life in grace.

3. Summary

As a spiritual director Elizabeth's goal was to encourage individuals to unite with God in everyday life through living a life centered on Christ in grace and through continual growth in faith, hope, and love. Elizabeth guided her family, friends, religious sisters, priests, and students through her many letters and writings which included her translations and copies of spiritual writings. She functioned as a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith, as a co-discerner of the fundamental vocation of human life as well as to the specific vocations of the religious life, priesthood and lay life. Living the fundamental vocation of human life led the individuals to hope in eternal union with God at the end of their life's journey. She also functioned as an advocate of the Christ-centered life. She urged individuals to incarnate the love of Christ in everyday life through imitation of Jesus Christ and participation in his Passion.

As a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith, Elizabeth offered spiritual strategies to her directees. She guided them to realize the ultimate goal of their lives, which was to glorify God and to attain the salvation of their souls, and to focus on this

goal with a pure intention. Then, she guided them to listen to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in order to achieve this goal. She also presented means to her directees for their continual growth in the life of faith. Elizabeth encouraged her directees to be faithful to prayer and meditation, spiritual reading, and participation in the sacramental life of the Church as means to living in the presence of God.

As a co-discerner, she guided her directees to discern everything in the hope of eternal union with God. She urged them to discern matters according to the will of God in grace. As an aid in the discernment process she offered St. Ignatius' Rules for Discernment of Spirits and her own experience of the battle between the good and evil spirits. She guided individuals to know God and self and urged them to discern who they were and where they were in the presence of God. She led them to examine their senses, mind, and will, which often led to illusions. To overcome these illusions, she directed them to discern things in view of eternity not forgetting that they lived in a world which was global. She also urged her directees, in order to have a true picture of the reality of their relationships, to be mindful of the psychological aspects of the persons with whom they lived.

As an advocate of the Christ-centered life, Elizabeth guided individuals to imitate Jesus Christ throughout their whole life by participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ through their own sufferings and by the imitation of Jesus in all aspects of their lives. Like other saints in the Church, she realized that the Passion of Jesus Christ was the unique way to grasp deeply the true love of God for her and to understand the mystery of suffering in human life. She herself experienced communion with God through her participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ in her sufferings. She urged individuals in

distress to look at Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives and on the Cross and to meet Him in their own suffering. Thomas Merton's insightful meditation on the Passion of Christ confirms Elizabeth's qualifications as a spiritual director:

since all grace flows from the pierced side of Christ on the Cross, the Passion of Christ is in fact the meritorious and efficient principle of our union with God and of our supernatural transformation. This is clear in the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians in which the Apostle declares that Christ on the Cross restored peace between man and man as well as between mankind and God. Christ has in fact taken all our enmities and "killed them in Himself upon the Cross," so that He is our "peace" and in Him we are all united, in one Spirit, with God the Father (cf. Ephesians 2: 11-22). Clearly the Cross and Resurrection of Christ are the very center of Christian mysticism.⁹⁸

Elizabeth guided individuals to incarnate the love of Jesus Christ in their service. Sharing the spiritual instruction of St. Vincent de Paul with the sisters and others, she reminded them that they actually served Jesus Christ in their service to others and urged them to serve the people of God in the spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity. Many parts of her writings were centered on Jesus Christ and his love. To Elizabeth, the Christ-centered life was the way to the truth and life in God. She truly functioned as a facilitator of conversion to the life of faith, a co-discerner in the life journey toward God, and an advocate of the Christ-centered life.

Regarding the qualifications of Elizabeth for her role as a spiritual director, first of all, she had a deep spiritual life rooted in her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety and her faith was rooted in the Triune God. Her correspondence and writings manifested the depth of her spiritual knowledge through her spiritual readings and translations as well as works she copied. They included writings of the Church Fathers, Saints, spiritual writers, and teachings of the Councils of the Church. She had

⁹⁸ Merton, 64.

psychological insight which helped individuals to discern self and others in grace. She was well prepared as a qualified spiritual director in her spiritual life and in her knowledge of spiritual matters and the human psyche.

Elizabeth's dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in her spiritual direction also manifested her qualification as a spiritual director. Thomas Merton described the qualifications of a spiritual director which Elizabeth possessed: "A spiritual director is, then, one who helps another to recognize and to follow the inspirations of grace in his life, in order to arrive at the end to which God is leading him."⁹⁹ Elizabeth led others in their discernment to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit leading them to ultimate union with the Triune God.

Elizabeth's holistic approach in spiritual direction well qualified her as a spiritual director. She directed all dimensions of persons' lives in their affective, cognitive, and behavioral life and gave them not only spiritual but also psychological advice. Her qualifications as a spiritual director were revealed in the resources she used in guiding her directees. Through her writings which included translations and copies of spiritual writings, she guided individuals to develop their lives based on the wisdom of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church including the Church Fathers, the classic and her contemporary writers.

Thomas Merton wrote: "the spiritual director in primitive times . . . was a spiritual father who 'begot' the perfect life in the soul of his disciple by his instructions first of all,

⁹⁹ Merton, 9.

but also by his prayer, his sanctity and his example.”¹⁰⁰ Like the spiritual mothers and fathers of the desert, Elizabeth assiduously guided individuals to be born again as children of God and to discern the will of God in grace and in the light of eternal and global vision. She inspired her directees to hope for eternal union with God. She led them to imitate Jesus Christ, to suffer with him, and to incarnate his compassionate love through their loving service in their everyday life. She functioned as a spiritual director through her prayers and the example of her life centered on the life and love of Jesus Christ. She functioned as a very well qualified spiritual director not only through her instructions, prayer, example and true sanctity but also through her life of faith, hope and love.

Elizabeth facilitated the formation of faith, hope and love in the hearts of her directees, thus manifesting her qualities as a spiritual director. She guided individuals to conversion to a life of faith. As they discerned the ultimate goal of their lives, she led them to hope for eternal union with God. She directed them to center their lives on Christ participating in his sufferings and in his service of love.

¹⁰⁰ Merton, 9.

CHAPTER SIX

ELIZABETH SETON'S SPIRITUAL DIRECTION 1:

CONVERSION TO THE LIFE OF FAITH

What then must be his seed of Faith, of his WORD – of his blood – of his Cross – of *his flesh in the Eucharist* deposited in our hearts thro' the Winter of Life[.] What must be their fruit in the harvest of Eternity . . . Oh exulting – delightful Prospect – joyful anticipation – how endearingly should we cherish this precious *FAITH*, this glorious and ineffable *hope*, this first seed of *Love* now shooting in our hearts during the trial of Winter patience and of life which so soon will pass away and bring us to the harvest of delights in Eternity!!!!!!

Elizabeth Seton's meditation, "Gospel good seed and cockle"¹

Elizabeth Seton's meditation, "Gospel Good Seed and Cockle" (Mt 13: 24-30), summed up her own spiritual endeavors and the spiritual direction which she gave to others. Jesus Christ was the center of her life and of her spiritual direction. For their own salvation and for the glory of God she assiduously guided individuals to grow in faith, hope, and love. Her correspondence and writings revealed how she directed individuals to grow in these theological virtues. To share spiritual wisdom with individuals was her vocation which began when she was an Episcopalian and continued throughout her life as a Catholic.

Although Elizabeth declared that she had lived in the spirit of the vowed life in faith, hope, and love even before entering religious life, her spirituality and her vocation as a spiritual director grew deeper in her religious life. When she made private vows to Archbishop John Carroll on March 25, 1809, she wrote in a letter to Filippo Filicchi dated January 21, 1809: "I have long since made the Vows which as a religious I could only renew, and the thirst and longing of my soul is fixed on the cross alone." She continued

¹CW, vol. 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 11.9, 11.

that she was entirely “detached from the world” and avoided “all singularities of every kind, except that of a religious appearance.”²

Elizabeth, as a spiritual director, guided individuals to live in faith, hope, and love given by grace. Her vowed life of poverty, chastity and obedience shed light on the deeper meaning of these theological virtues and enriched her spiritual direction based on these virtues.

In her “Retreat Meditation,” she stated: “*Poverty* we offer to him, our entire poverty and detachment of all things[;] we offer it united to his own, made by the merits of his own a most rich and abundant poverty[.] now truly poor of spirit we shall be like the angels of our beloved who possesses but him.”³ To Elizabeth, the spirit of poverty and detachment from all things influenced her spiritual direction on the faith journey to God.

Elizabeth’s vow of obedience was to participate in the obedience of Jesus Christ to the Father and to have hope only in God. She expressed it: “we offer thee obedience[.] O dear Lord obedience unto death united to thine (cf. Phil. 2: 8) . . . O powerful Lord make us obedient. . . let [the daughters of thy love] be made like the Angels who have no will but thine[.] thy will now be done among us as it is in heaven (cf. Mt 6:10).”⁴ In her spiritual direction, she guided individuals to imitate the obedience of Jesus Christ in the hope of attaining union with God.

Elizabeth’s vow of chastity was to participate in the love of Jesus Christ and to be a messenger of his love. She understood the vow of chastity in the light of charity. In “Gospel

² CW, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 5. 17, 53.

³ CW, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 9.15, 330.

⁴ Ibid.

of Matthew Notebook,” she led the Sisters to be one with Jesus Christ and His people: “as much delicacy for the point of Charity as for that of Chastity - our Jesus praying we sh[oul]d be one - as he [is] one with his Father (cf. John 17:21). . . .Peace with our Neighbours (neighbors) in the immense Ocean of Love - Sisters of Charity Spirit of the house - the Spirit of Peace and union best service.”⁵

The more Elizabeth lived the theological virtues in the spirit of poverty, obedience and chastity, the more she felt the urgency to proclaim God’s saving grace to individuals around her and guided them to grow in faith, hope, and love in order to unite with God and with their loved ones in eternity. In her “Union in God,” she guided individuals to remember that:

God is like a looking-glass in which souls see each other. The more we are united to Him by love, the nearer we are to those who belong to Him. Jesus Christ encompasses all places and all his members centre in Him; we need but prostrate at His feet to find them. They may be hidden from the eyes of our body, but not from the eyes of our soul and of Faith.⁶

Elizabeth as a Christian and as a religious shared her wisdom with individuals through her spiritual direction. In the previous chapter we saw how she manifested her three major functions as a spiritual director. In this chapter the subject of her spiritual direction will be explored in relation to her functions as a spiritual director on the conversion to the life of faith.

As a spiritual director, Elizabeth was concerned about the faith formation of individuals. In her “The Sisters of Charity Meditate on the Service of God,” she inspired

⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10.1, 460.

⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 11.29, 42.

her Sisters to consecrate themselves to God for the true service of faith and gave them guiding questions:

Do we give him the Service of *Faith* in applying to our Spiritual duties - in improving instructions, preparing for the Sacraments - confiding in his Grace and assistance in our Spiritual and temporal wants as a child trusts to its tender Father, do we look at the trials he sends us with the eyes of our Faith seeing in our weakness and repugnances our true Penance and using them as means of expiating our sins. . . . Do we consecrate ourselves to God as our *All in all* with the true service of the heart?⁷

In her meditation on “All Our Piety,” Elizabeth presented the goal of the formation of faith in everyday life: “All our piety should have no other tendency than to unite us to God by knowledge and love, to make it reign in us by an absolute and continued dependence, by a faithful correspondence to his interior attractions and movements.”⁸ In the practice of spiritual direction, she used *four strategies* as the guide lines which would help individuals to make their conversion to the life in faith.

1. The Ultimate Goal of Human Life

Elizabeth’s *first strategy* for the conversion to the life of faith was to focus on the *ultimate goal* of the human vocation given by the Triune God from the creation. She stressed that God created human persons to participate in his glory through union with him and to receive the salvation of their souls through Jesus Christ. Thus, Elizabeth directed individuals to live everyday life in the light of these ultimate goals because the human person, as the image of God, was destined for union with God from creation. In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she instructed that “to please God” in everything should be “a holy habit” in every moment of life:

⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.15, 331-332.

⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11.3, 3.

it must be a holy habit in us of doing every thing [everything] to please God, and seeking only the glory of his Name. pagan[s] and philosophers have done wonders thro' natural compassion, and a sense of duty to those who depend on them, but the actions of a Christian must proceed from the Spirit of God, and be always directed for his GLORY. the practice of the Presence of God is the great means to secure our Purity of intention.⁹

Elizabeth's spiritual direction to her daughter, Catherine Seton, revealed her guidance on how to live this ultimate goal. In "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book," she instructed her daughter to recognize the greatness of soul and the glory of God: "the KINGDOM of heaven is more worthy of your ambition and since *glory* is your passion show your greatness of soul by spurning all low passions and disdaining all Perishable Objects."¹⁰ In the same writing, she directed her daughter to think of the ultimate goal in everyday life:

Why did God place me in this world? he could have done without the whole world, so he certainly had no need of *me*, but since he has made me, I am made only for *himself* - His right over me is as unchangeable as his own existence - The *intelligence* he has given to my soul is only that I *may know HIM*, The *free heart* he has bestowed on me, is given only to *love him*.¹¹

To Elizabeth, the ultimate life goal was to place God at the center of everyday life. Thus, she diligently directed individuals to make a great effort to know God and to love God in their everyday life. Her dedication to the faith formation in individuals' lives appeared in her correspondence from her time in the Episcopal Church. When her sister-in-law, Cecilia Seton, lost her parents at age of 7, Elizabeth became concerned about Cecilia's faith development and guided her to consider God as her father and as her

⁹CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 533.

¹⁰CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 501.

¹¹CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 507.

principal study in everyday life. Elizabeth's letter to Cecilia Seton dated November 19, 1802, revealed her spiritual guidance.

Let your chief study be to acquaint yourself with God because there is nothing greater than God, and because it is the only knowledge which can fill the Heart with a Peace and joy, which nothing can disturb - Father of all Beings how extensive are thy mercies! How great how inexpressible. It is in Thee we live and move and have our being . . . Thy paternal cares are over all mankind. . . .

*As a little child relies
on a care beyond his own
Knows he's neither strong nor
wise Fears to stir a step alone
let me thus with Thee abide as
my Father guard and guide.*¹²

In a letter to her first daughter, Anna Maria, written on her 8th birthday on May 3, 1803, Elizabeth directed her to be a child of God throughout her life: "this is your Birth day - the day that I first held you in my arms - May God Almighty Bless you my Child and make you his Child forever - your Mother's Soul prays to Him to lead you through this world, so that we may come to his Heavenly Kingdom in Peace, through the merits of our blessed Saviour."¹³

As a religious, Elizabeth gave similar spiritual direction to a former student in a letter probably written after 1818. She reminded her of the religious education she received at her first Communion class at St. Joseph's Academy and urged her to place God at the center of her life:

God bless you, my loved child, Remember Mother's [Elizabeth's title] first and last lesson to you: seek God in all things. In all your actions submit your motives to this unerring test: "Will this be approved by God's all-seeing eye?" If you do

¹² CW, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 1.166, 214. The meditation in this letter may not be Elizabeth's own composition. CW, 1, 214, n. 1.

¹³ CW, 1, sec., 1.168, 217.

this, you will live in His presence and will preserve the graces of your First Communion.¹⁴

In a letter to her former student, Emily, Elizabeth directed her to deepen her faith in God and in everlasting life and to sincerely recite the creed in appreciation of its heavenly meaning:

do not accustom yourself to recite carelessly your blessed creed which from the very first word is so full of heavenly meaning and to the very last excites our delighted admiration and boundless hopes . . . say it in these days of your fervent preparation with redoubled attention from the first word "*I believe in God*," to the last "*and life everlasting*."¹⁵

In her spiritual direction, Elizabeth gave guidance in accordance with each one's faith development. For the ones who had little interest in religion or the faithful life, she directed them to pay attention to the life beyond this world and to their own salvation in eternity. She was concerned for their souls and hoped to unite with them in God.

Elizabeth's spiritual direction to Julia Scott revealed her eagerness for Julia's conversion to the life of faith. Grateful to her dear friend, Scott, who continually supported her family in many ways, Elizabeth truly was concerned about her friend's salvation and guided her to grow in faith. In a letter to her dated September 20, 1809, Elizabeth guided her to think of the peaceful life in God and the last moment of her life:

God is my witness I would this moment gladly give my life to obtain for you the comforts to be obtained in that hour - the Peace of a Soul going to its kindest dearest tenderest friend - hush - you understand - when I think of you sometimes I could go and tear you away from all and wrap you in the bosom that loves and has

¹⁴ CW, 2, sec., 7.329, 710.

¹⁵ CW, 2, app., A-7.334, 774. Emily's last name is not recorded in Elizabeth's *Collected Writings*.

loved you so long - what would I not do to give you only a little taste - dear dear friend - you laugh - but while you laugh *consider*.¹⁶

In another letter to Scott dated March 26, 1810, Elizabeth expressed her concern about her religious state and guided her to recognize the faith in God hidden in her inner heart: "tell me how your dispositions have been[.] I never recollect hearing you express any other sentiment but simple Veneration, but I know your heart is all alive, and may be acquainted with a language in which it has never spoken to its friend."¹⁷ Then, she directed Scott to recognize the love of God surrounding her and to respond to that love. She knew her friend's desire for a happy life, so that she urged her to seek the true happiness that only God offered. In the same letter, she expressed her concern for Scott's eternal happiness and directed her to embrace God's love in her life:

My own dear and a thousand times dear Julia - Your account of yourself and what is most dear to you is more interesting to the very soul of your friend than you can imagine - What would I consider my life if it could obtain your true happiness, you know what happiness, not that of the present passing hour of course, but that which is infinite - do not imagine your own friend is looking on the gloomy side for that soul so precious, not so, but wishes ardently wishes that you could taste the peaceful disengagement which some are enjoying without being indifferent to their active duties - but patience dearest only be not insensible to the thousand countless motives we have to love the best of Beings and it will grow right at last, - that is if you will love. for my part I find so much contentment in this love that I am obliged to put on my consideration cap to find out how any one [anyone] can raise their eyes to the light of heaven and be insensible to it.¹⁸

Whenever Elizabeth thought of Scott's life centered in worldly things and not focused on the life of faith in God, she urged her to find true happiness in God. In a letter to Scott dated December 2nd 1811, Elizabeth shared her imagination on Scott's life

¹⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6.7, 85-86.

¹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.30, 117.

¹⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6.30, 116.

“surrounded by circles, smiling and bowing, dissipating care,” then guided her to think of her precious soul in the midst of the business of life: “You precious soul what are you doing now, how many dreams of pleasure are passing thro' your fancy.” Then, she directed her to think of “long long long life” and lift up her heart to God: “my Julia - should I ever have the pleasure of seeing you in a tabbed-cap and grey gown with eyes and heart directed upwards . . . tho' this cap and gown are not of much consequence how can the dear heart go up, while so busy here below.”¹⁹ In a letter to Scott dated February 18, 1812, she advised her to imagine the life after death and shared her wish to be with her in God:

but you worldly ladies look upon all our Faith and hope with quite another eye -at least my own friend acknowledge the hour may be near - there is no saying wait - and will you not use your beautiful soul in considering what you would wish in that hour - my Julia - my friend - dear and truest friend - I must be silent - but my life would not be worth a thought if it could contribute by its sacrifice to the happiness I desire for you.²⁰

Elizabeth continually directed Scott to turn her heart to God and to convert to the Catholic faith which was often misunderstood by her Episcopalian friends. In a letter to Scott dated July 24, 1817, she explained her Catholic faith: “For that Religion you think folly, madness, bigotry, superstition etc etc etc, I find it a source of every consolation.” She reminded her that “without a right Faith no one can please God,” which was stressed in the Episcopal Church, and guided her to seek the right faith in the Catholic Church. Sending her constant prayer for her soul, she guided her to embrace God who had loved her so much: “Well dearest one I carry you constantly in my heart before him who loved

¹⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.89, 201-202.

²⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 98, 211.

us, and so much more than any friend can love a friend - may he bless you, strengthen you, and make you truly pleasing to him.”²¹

Elizabeth shared her experience as a Catholic with individuals and guided them to place religion at the center of their life. In a letter to her Episcopalian relative, she expressed her joy as a Catholic: “How many times did rapturous joy and adoration fill the whole soul of thanksgiving that I am permitted to dwell in this divine region . . . to be a Catholic! Heavenly mercy! I would be trampled on by the whole world.”²² In a letter dated February 1817 to Eliza Sadler, who was in a similar religious situation as Scott, Elizabeth shared her faith experience with her friend and expressed her wish that her friend could share in her faith. She explained that “our Views of Faith (for that most delicate and sacred subject I have long since learned to leave to God except where my duty is explicit) but as it relates to our taste and habits of life - mine being so exactly what you would most fondly delight in, that over and over I have said most frequently and now say to myself if only did Sad could see it and know it.”²³

To individuals who were surrounded by worldly temptation and whose faith seemed faded, Elizabeth gave spiritual direction in order to preserve and deepen their life of faith. In her instruction written in January 1815 for her son, William as he was leaving to go abroad, she urged him to cultivate the faithful life by living in prayer and keeping the commandments of God:

²¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.101, 492.

²² *CW*, 2, sec., 7.328, 709.

²³ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.72, 462-463.

And my William - my soul's darling the first object of every care and anxiety of my heart . . . be not my dear one so unhappy as to break willfully any command of our God, or to omit your prayers on any account - Unite them always to the only merits of our Jesus and the Maternal prayers of our Mother[Mother of God] and his - with them you will always find your own poor poor mother - you cannot even guess the incessant cry of my Soul to them for you . . . from the first moment I recieved you in my arms and to my breast you have been consecrated to God by me and I have never ceased to beg him to take you from this World rather than you should offend him or dishonour [dishonor] your dear Soul and as you know my stroke of Death would be to know that you have quitted that path of Virtue which alone can reunite us forever.²⁴

In another letter to William dated February 1815, she expressed her anxiety about him traveling to another country and guided him to remain steadfast in his life of faith: “yet never did I give up my child to our God, as at this very time - and your yourself my dear one let your heart look [to] him - trust him confide all to him and be sure as I told you to remain faithful to your exterior duties.”²⁵ She was also concerned about her second son, Richard, as he planned for his future after his graduation from Mount St. Mary’s and guided him to trust God and to be good: “Our God will do all for You, but you must and shall be good - and your little Mother will fight all your battles 'till you are able to fight ours dear Goliath (cf. 1 Kings 17) of my heart.”²⁶

Elizabeth frequently gave spiritual direction to her former students and guided them to continually cultivate their faith development. In a letter dated August 26, 1817 to her former student, Mary Diana Harper who was studying in France, Elizabeth wrote encouraging her to be mindful of Elizabeth's instruction to her and of God's action in her life:

²⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.182, 298.

²⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.187, 304.

²⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.22, 394.

my Mary dear do not let your beloved Soul be buried in this low world, look very often above it - keep account of the many Particular graces it has been adorned with, and I hope still possesses . . . it is not easy for me to express to you my interest in you, and the event of the first scene of your early days at St. Josephs - probably I will only see it from that world where I hope to meet you triumphant over all the obstacles to your happy Eternity.²⁷

In another letter to Harper dated December 9, 1817, she urged her to set religion in the center of her heart in order to live in faith which would lead her to overcome her difficulties and lead her to peace in God: "I repeat you my old prophecy if you do not give religion its proper place in your heart, you will be truly wretched since any one of your passions (and you know how well I am acquainted with the little torments) are enough to destroy your Peace, while the whole of them under the controul [control] of sweet Piety, may be even turned to good account."²⁸

In a letter to Ellen Wiseman, a former student, dated June 19, 1820, she reminded her of the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul and urged her to renew her faith. She guided her to come back to the Lord without delay:

My own own Ellen I will not say it is a mothers heart just over you in my so dear Communion of St. Peter and Paul our sweet Saviour himself I know has blessed you - And think how I would beg you, supplicate you this day to keep near to him by the only means, and not let the wall of partition be raised again in your dearest heart as it was before our last happy meeting. wake up your Faith, you know our Lord never meant us to mind who we go to, if they do but take us to him, and the longer you stay back you will know the harder it is for you to go forward; and at last what does it end in dearest, to go through double thrible pain and exams,

²⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.113, 504-505. Mary Diana Harper, a daughter of Robert Goodloe Harper, was "an early student at St. Joseph's Academy until around 1815. She was sent to France in 1816 for further education." *CW*, 2, 505, n. 3.

²⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.128, 517.

which will not be pains of grace and merit, but of your weakness and want of courage in delaying oh do dearest write me you have been.²⁹

2. The Pure Intention

Elizabeth's *second strategy* for the conversion to the life of faith was to have a pure intention in order to unite with God in the everyday life. In her "Gospel of Matthew Notebook," she explained that the habitual "Practice of *Purity of intention*" was a "step towards" God and explained why every person had to have a pure intention:

the eye is the light of the body (cf. Mt 6:22) said our Lord, that is, the state of our Soul depends on our *intention* - if our intention is to do the *will of God* in every thing [everything] we do, we shall be *rich in merits* - but this purity of intention in our actions and desires can only be depended on when they do not oppose the law of God, and do not expose us to lose the state of grace.³⁰

In the same writing, Elizabeth continually guided individuals to reflect on their views and motives in their actions in the light of the intentions of Jesus Christ while he was on earth: "every duty should turn to God [and] your whole intention bent to please him. . . . Try to think in your different actions, *views*, and *motives*, what were the views and motives of our Saviours [Savior's] actions while on earth."³¹ In her "Purity of Intention," she emphasized how beautiful the pure intention would be in the eyes of Jesus Christ: "What would be the whole world to me without the approving smile of my Jesus and with it what reprof [reproof] of contempt could be too hard to bear."³²

²⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.250, 656. "Ellen Wiseman was a student who entered St. Joseph's Academy in 1811." CW, 2, sec., 6.82, 194, n. 3.

³⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 533.

³¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 525.

³² CW, 3b, sec., 11.13, 30.

In her reflective writing “Exercise of the Presence of God,” based on St. Francis de Sales’ writing, she stressed that “the nature of our intention” should be “*to please God, and for him* as its principal object and end,” and guided individuals to purify their intention in order to achieve union with God in grace.³³ In her reflective writing “Advent and Christmas Meditation,” she guided individuals to prepare their hearts with a pure intention toward God in order to encounter the infant Jesus in the season of Advent and Christmas: “a pure and fervent intention to please our Lord, and obtain the blessing of our first being, our first preparation to his merciful visit - to *embrace the means* which will make it most holy, comes of course, and if the intention be earnest, our first means will be to follow most carefully.”³⁴

Elizabeth gave similar guidance on the pure intention to her daughter, Catherine. In “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book,” Elizabeth urged her daughter to cultivate a pure intention in grace in order to *please* God and to do everything *for him*. She continually stressed how important it was to direct and purify one’s intention fixed on the final goal of life even in the small actions of everyday life:

there is no action so small which may not be made great and precious before God by an upright and pure intention - how great then is our error, blindness and misery to lose the merit of our actions as we do continually for want of directing and purifying our intention by which we might lay up [layup] treasures of merits (cf. Mt 6:20), and continually brighten our Eternal *Crown* - O My soul who can measure our loss through the dissipation and negligence of our past life - Alas! Say St. Augustin [Augustine] why in the little while we have to live why do you

³³ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 410. The almost same instruction is seen in “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book. CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 505-506.

³⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 341.

lose such inestimable treasures - You have them in your own hands, and it depends only on yourself to *secure them*.³⁵

In “Mother Seton’s Last Writings,” Elizabeth guided the Sisters on how having a pure intention would make their lives ever more alive:

Sister M - goes always on *intentions*, and she is right, dear Mary Vincent, for intentions well directed, and from a *pure heart*, are the peace of your good interior life. St. Augustine says our least action when done for God, is precious to him, while the greatest actions, without this pure intention are worthless and contemptible in his eyes. With what a lively, cheerful heart we go to work, even when the thing we are to do displeases poor nature, if only grace cries out courageously, “*it is all for you, my God*.”³⁶

In a letter to her son, William, dated June 17, 1815, she begged him to keep his intentions pure: “Others when you have so long known the blessed value of *intentions*, Keeps yours straight up and look to him who dispenses *all*, and all so surely for the best.”³⁷ In a letter to him dated February 16, 1818, she again begged her son to live the Christian life with a pure intention: “all your own Mother can beg is that you may keep well with your good pilot, and as says old Burns this correspondence fixed with heaven will be your noble anchor - to go when you can to the Sacraments as a child to his Father will be a main point for that and the next best is to look to your Mothers old rule of intentions the comfort of my life.”³⁸

When Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté became the president of St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, Elizabeth reminded him of the importance of the pure intention in his work. In

³⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10.3, 505.

³⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9 .9, 257.

³⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.194, 314.

³⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7.137, 524.

a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté dated June 1816, Elizabeth sent him her prayers and guided him to have a pure intention in the practice of his office as a president:

Your little silly woman in the fields [Elizabeth herself] . . . will now hold closer and closer to him who will do all in you, as he does in my poor little daily part, and try always . . . every moment to bring to you the support [of] Mothers prayers, her cry to him for your full fidelity, as for our poor Williams “deliverance from Evil” (cf. Mt 6:13) You know G[briel]. . . the many mistakes all swallowed and comforted by intention intention intention.³⁹

Elizabeth’s life was an exemplar of preserving a pure intention. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was her spiritual director and also her directee, witnessed how she tried to keep her pure intention. In his memorial reflection on Elizabeth’s spiritual life written on January 4, 1823, the second anniversary of her death, Bruté wrote: “Mother was so impressed with the sanctity of God, so penetrated with the necessity of keep[ing] her intentions pure.”⁴⁰

3. The Word of God

Elizabeth’s *third strategy* for the conversion to the life of faith was *the Word of God*. As referred to in the earlier chapters, she built up her spiritual life based on the Word of God from her time in the Episcopal Church. The word of God was the fountain of her spiritual direction. Rev. Charles I. White, the first biographer of Elizabeth Seton, noted the importance of the Bible in her life:

Her reading was extensive and of a miscellaneous character: but the Holy Scripture was pre-eminently the study of Mrs. Seton. Even before she was a Catholic, she was in the habit of poring over the Protestant Bible, especially the

³⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.31, 402.

⁴⁰ Simon Gabriel Brute, D.D., *Mother Seton* (Emmitsburg, MD: The Daughters of Charity, published for only internal use in the community, 1884), 130.

Book of Psalms, and frequently would shut herself up in a room with darkened windows, for the more quiet pursuit of this her favorite occupation.⁴¹

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté wrote not only of Elizabeth's biblical piety but also of her spiritual direction to him through the Word of God. In his work, *Mother Seton*, Bruté described Elizabeth's biblical spirituality and also his experience of her spiritual direction through the Word of God:

O, divine word, - divine law of my God, psalms, hymns, canticles to her, as if breathing out, from a Moses', an Isaias', a David's, a Daniel's, a Job's, a Jeremiah's heart - from the heart of Zacharias, of Simenon, of John, of MARY herself! May I feel the devotion Mother felt when opening the sacred page when listening to the voice of the Church, nay, as it were of the heavens above during the divine service of this exile; but the exile as yet, but the traveling below! O, the faith, and love of Mother!⁴²

In her spiritual direction, Elizabeth guided individuals to meet God through the Word of God. After her conversion to Catholicism, Elizabeth used the Catholic Bible from 1805 to 1813 given to her by Antonio Filicchi, which is now referred to as *the Notre Dame Bible*. When Bruté saw Elizabeth's Bible which was underlined and marked, he was so impressed that he suggested to her that they exchange their Bibles in 1813 and asked her continually to mark and write notes in his Bible, too, because he could receive spiritual direction from the Word of God through her marks and notes on the Bible. Thus,

⁴¹ Charles I. White, D.D., *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton, Foundress And First Superior of the Sisters or Daughters of Charity in the United States of America*, 7th revised edition (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy, 1868), 388. Cf. Ellin M. Kelly, *Elizabeth Seton's Two Bibles: Her Notes and Markings* (hereafter cited as *Two Bibles*) (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday visitor, Inc., 1977), 27; CW, 3b, sec., 11.53, 88.

⁴² Brute, *Mother Seton*, 143-144. Cf. Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 30.

from 1813 until her death, Elizabeth used Bruté's Bible which is now called *The Vincennes Bible*.⁴³

Elizabeth's referred to this arrangement in her letter to Bruté dated September 2, 1816: "you may be a little mortified at the perpetual interlinings in your bible . . . till all was read, I was not struck that you might not like it, but you know how to excuse - I wish I had offered you mine exactly the same."⁴⁴

In her *Elizabeth Seton's Two Bibles*, Ellin M. Kelly pointed out that Elizabeth read "both Bibles with pen in hand as the markings and numerous ink blots confirm."⁴⁵ Kelly shared her research on Elizabeth's two Bibles:

Elizabeth Seton used her pen in rather distinctive ways through both Bibles. Her grandson cited two devices: "side-markings" (marginal lines) and "underlinings." In addition to marginal lines, she used single or double diagonal or vertical lines to indicate the beginning and end of longer passages. As a variation of this she used an initial (either a 'P' or a 'G'), indicating the beginning of a passage, together with diagonals at the end. In the first Psalms she employed a plus sign or an x to identify specific Psalms, and she used x's, dots, dashes, or dittos to mark specific verses. But the most original . . . markings are her personal notes,

⁴³ Bruté witnessed Elizabeth's use of these two Bibles. Both Bibles were editions of the Douay-Rheims version published by Mathew Carey. Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 15. In his personal letter to the Sisters of Charity written in January 8, 1821, he wrote: "The Bible which Mr. Filicchi had sent to her at the time of her conversion in New York, in 1805, was in my possession; I returned it yesterday, the 7th, to Josephine, upon receiving the one which I had let in its place in 1813." Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 56; Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 23; *CW*, 3b, 86-87, 11.53. Later Josephine, which was Elizabeth's daughter Catherine's other name, gave this Bible to her nephew, Monsignor Robert Seton who was Elizabeth's grandson, and he "presented this copy to the Notre Dame." Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 20; *CW*, 3b, 86-87, 11.53. This Bible is in the rare book section in the library of the University of the Notre Dame in Indiana. In his note to the Sisters of Charity dated August 1834, "after he had been named bishop of Vincennes," Bruté wrote in "the lower left corner of the title page of the Vincennes Bible": "This Bible was in the hands of Mother Seton at her death, 4th January 1821 and had been so since 1813." Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 23; *CW*, 3b, 86, 11.53. This Vincennes Bible is in "a locked case at the Old Cathedral Library in Vincennes, Indiana." Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 15; *CW*, 3b, 84, 11.53.

⁴⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.47, 422.

⁴⁵ Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 31.

especially in the Vincennes Bible which she knew would be returned to Bruté one day.⁴⁶

Elizabeth read the Bible and also copied the Word of God in her notebook. As referred to in an earlier chapter, she selectively copied the chapters from 3 to 15 from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Later she explained why she did not continue it in her letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté: “When first rec[eive]d into the church [1805] your little mother meant to have gathered every word our Saviour ever said in the *Gospels* - but coming to St. Joseph’s there are Testaments for a sick bed as handy as this little book, so I left the dear work for one more useful tho’ none c[oul]d be half so dear, or pleasing.”⁴⁷

Elizabeth naturally shared the Word of God with individuals through her correspondence and writings. In her “Instructions on Religious Life,” she guided the Sisters to live with the Word of God: “As a Christian and as a Religious I will listen to the word of God which tells me . . . who doth the will of God shall live forever”⁴⁸ She gave spiritual direction based on the Word of God to individuals through her reflection on “The Exercise of the Presence of God”: “Our Lord himself said ‘if you will love me and keep my word *we* (I and the Father) will come and dwell and remain in you’ (cf. John 15: 10) - He will himself take care of all our concerns and hold the place of friend, Father, Brother, *ALL* while our heart will be to him as an interior heaven on earth in which he

⁴⁶ Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 32-33; *CW*, 3b, sec., 11.53, 89-90.

⁴⁷ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 525, n. 4. Elizabeth’s selective copies were in her work, “Gospel of Matthew Notebook” (pp. 4-51). But her copies are not transcribed in the *Collected Writings*. *CW*, 3a, 525, n. 4.

⁴⁸ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.1, 233. “It [Instruction on Religious Life] appears that this material was copied from a treatise on the proper living of religious life.” *CW*, 3a, 219, n. 1.

will take his delight.”⁴⁹ In a letter to her daughter, Anna Maria, dated August 10, 1803, she directed her to learn from the parable of the ten virgins in the Gospel and to grow as a wise virgin in her faith and responsibility:

My dearest Anna must remember that our Blessed Lord gave us the Parable of the Wise and the foolish virgins (cf. Mt 25: 1-13) to make us careful to choose our part with the wise ones and to keep in readiness for his coming - which will be in an hour we know not of, and should he find us dear child out of the road of our duty like sheep gone astray from their Shepherd where shall we hide from his presence who can see through the darkest shades and bring us from the farthest ends of the world - If we would please Him and be found among his Children we must *learn what our duty is, pray to Him for Grace to do it*, and then set out whole Heart and Soul to perform it - and what is your duty my dear dear Child - You know it, and I pray God to keep you in it that in that blessed day when He shall come to call us to our Heavenly Home we may see our (dear) Anna in the number of those dear children to whom he will say “Come ye blessed of my Father” (cf. Mt 25: 34) - Oh may He grant this for the sake of our dear and merciful Redeemer - is the Prayer of your own dear Mother.⁵⁰

Elizabeth’s spiritual direction based on the Word of God was vividly delineated in her Journal to Rebecca Seton. As referred to in the previous chapters, Elizabeth traveled to Leghorn, Italy, with her husband and her first daughter in hopes that her husband’s health would improve in the mild climate of Italy. It was especially providential both for her husband who had little interest in faith and for her daughter aged eight in forming her spiritual life.

During their trip to Italy, Elizabeth conducted a family prayer service which included the reading of the Bible each day. Through this prayer service she guided her sick husband as well as her daughter to ponder the Word of God and to turn their hearts to God, their protector. She described how her daughter was so moved after reciting the

⁴⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 402. She underlined three times the word, “All.” CW, 3a, 402, n. 25.

⁵⁰ CW, 1, sec., 1.169, 217-218.

92nd Psalm and listening to her instruction on this Psalm: “My dear little Anna shed many tears on <my> her Prayer book over the 92nd Psalm in consequence of my telling her that we offended God every day. . . . Considering the Infirmary, and corrupt Nature which would overpower the Spirit of Grace, and the enormity of the offence to which the least indulgence of them would lead me.”⁵¹

Elizabeth’s spiritual direction seemed very effective for her daughter’s relationship with God. Elizabeth wrote in her journal that after reading the Scripture “a great deal” and “long and earnest Prayer,” they went to bed, but Elizabeth could not rest. She thought that her daughter was asleep, but she could hear her daughter’s whispers: “Come hither all ye weary Souls.” Elizabeth jotted down: “I changed my place to her arms - the rocking of the vessel and breaking of the waves were forgot the heavy Sighs and restless pains were lost in a sweet refreshing sleep - Adored Redeemer it was thy word, by the voice of one of thy little ones, who promises indeed to be one of thy Angels.”⁵² When they arrived at the port of Leghorn in 1803, they were detained at the quarantine of Lazaretto because their ship was “the first to bring the news of yellow fever in New York.”⁵³

Living in the quarantine, her husband’s illness was worsening and their life was miserable. In this distressful situation, she directed her husband and daughter to feel the

⁵¹ *CW*, 1, sec., 2. 5, 247.

⁵² *CW*, 1, sec., 2.5, 248.

⁵³ *CW*, 1, sec., 2.6, 249. The reference of Elizabeth’s Leghorn Journal is seen in n. 101 of the chap. 2 of this dissertation. The Leghorn Journal covered the Setons’ (Elizabeth, her sick husband, her first daughter) staying in the quarantine station in Leghorn, their release, and the death of her husband.

presence of God as they prayed and read Scripture together. In her Journal dated November 29, 1803, she wrote: “after Breakfast read our Psalms and the 15th Chapter of Isaiah to my W.[William] with so much delight that it made us all merry - He read at little Ann[']s request the last chapter of Revelations, but the tones of his voice no heart can stand.” She continually described their prayer life to Rebecca Seton: “Sung Hymns – read promises to my Willy shivering under the bed clothes - and felt that the Lord is with us – and that he is our All - the fever comes hot - the bed shakes even with his breathing – My God, my Father.”⁵⁴

Knowing William’s shameful feeling concerning his halfhearted faith life, she reminded him of what God had done and was constantly doing in his life and encouraged him to embrace God as his loving Father:

Dear W [William] it is not from the impulse of terror you seek your God, you tried and wished to serve him long before this trial came, why then will you not consider him as the Father who knows all the different means and dispositions of his children and will graciously recieve [receive] those who come to him by that way which he has appointed - you say your only hope is in Christ what other hope do we need?⁵⁵

While Elizabeth functioned as a facilitator of conversion to God for her dying husband, she also grew spiritually and shared her faith experience with her husband. Through the scriptural readings, praying together, and faith sharing, Elizabeth’s continual guidance seemed to bear fruit. She described how her husband, William, gradually turned his heart toward God:

often when he hears me repeat the Psalms of Triumph in God, and read St. Paul[']s faith in Christ with my Whole Soul, it so enlivens his Spirit that he also

⁵⁴ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 261.

⁵⁵ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 262.

makes them his own, and all our sorrows are turned into joy - Oh well may I love God - well may my whole soul strive to please him, for what but the strain of an Angel can ever express what he has done and is constantly doing for me - While I live - while I have my being in Time and thro' Eternity let me sing praises to my God.⁵⁶

Elizabeth's Leghorn Journal illustrated her excellent role as a spiritual director guiding her husband to God. She directed him to increase his faith, hope, and love of God in grace and to embrace his death in hope of eternal union with God. William's transformation of heart is revealed in this Journal entry dated December 13, 1803, to Rebecca:

No sufferings, nor weakness nor distress (and from these he is never free in any degree) can prevent his *following* me daily in Prayer, portions of the Psalms, and generally large Portions of the Scriptures - if he is a little better he enlarges his attention if worse he is the more eager not to lose a moment, and except *the day* which we thought his last, he has never failed one day in this course, since our entrance in these *stone wall* the 19th November - he very often says *this* is the period of his life which if he lives or dies he will always consider as Blessed - the only time which he has not lost.⁵⁷

Caring for her husband's soul and body, Elizabeth consoled and soothed him in "those hours of affliction and pain" and directed him to transform his heart to "Hope and Christian triumph." When she heard of William's "pronouncing the Name of his Redeemer" which she taught him, she was so happy and exclaimed: "Oh if I was in the dungeon of this Lazaretto I should bless and Praise my God for these days of retirement and abstraction from the world which have afforded leisure and opportunity for so blessed a work."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 265.

⁵⁷ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 269.

⁵⁸ CW, 1, sec., 2.7, 270.

As a spiritual director, Elizabeth guided individuals to reflect on the Word of God through her correspondences and writings. For faith formation, she often used the *Parable of the Sower* in the Gospel of Matthew. Through her “The Seed and the Harvest” (Mt 13: 1-9), she guided individuals to listen to Jesus’ interpretation of the parable and to realize how God already planted the seed of faith in many ways in their lives:

our Jesus interprets the Gospel let us listen as to himself and in presence of our angels and the saints –
 [1st] - the seed how abundant! –
 the first lessons of our parents teaching JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH,
 -oh let them be our last words also –
 2 your Catechism, your blessed Faith, Hope, love, and last end taught
 3 prayers, exams, confessions and oh your first COMMUNION!
 4 Advices and corrections of so many pious friends –
 5 the good examples you received, and alas the bad ones too, to warn you
 6 the Divine grace given with all this so abundantly, like the sun, moisture, gentle showers and dew on your soul.⁵⁹

As Elizabeth reminded individuals of how God planted the seed of faith in their heart through various means, she then guided them to discern their life as the ground in which the seed is to grow:

2nd -The ground
 1st hard ground proud, conceited, dissipated, worldly , , no deep roots.
 2 Divine grace plowing and working it but still is corruption pushing out on every side, or its hardness resisting its thorns and briars tearing the very hand that would cultivate it.
 3rd -the growth of the plant
 1st little roots, stem, bud, leaf our thinking, speaking, and acting
 2 blossoms, fruits, the canker of pride and self love
 3 the spirit, love and inspirations of our divine planter contending against these enemies.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 4, 245-246.

⁶⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.4, 246.

Finally, Elizabeth explained the trials hidden in the process of the growth of the seed and directed them to think of the harvest of God's seed in their final moment of life:

4th -The Harvest

1st winter, first trials, crosses, and the mysteries of Faith.

2 good spring succeeds, prayers, communions, struggles for Perfection

3rd Death puts his scythe to the harvest – oh when! perhaps before the summer fruits –

4 The great calling to account and Judgment

5 the gathering the fruits in the Barn, or casting out in the fire.(cf. Mt 13:30)

Oh who minds these sacred things! who listens to God made man! speaking from his manger, his cross, and his Tabernacle – speaking in our hearts – may we but fully understand – our Eternity will come so soon.⁶¹

Giving the corn field as an example of harvest, she led individuals to imagine how one ear of corn was planted and produced multiple grains by God and directed them to embrace God's loving seed in their heart and develop the seed of faith:

present as a figure *one Ear of corn*. behold the work of our heavenly father – what was its first beginning - look at this separate [separate] grain - recollect the time when it was first planted in the earth and covered with the frost and snows of winter or trampled over in mire and mud - and afterwards behold all the fields covered with green and gradually adorned with these beautiful plants - they rise to the height [height] of 8 and 10 feet, thousands of shocks appear in one View spreading their long broad leaves on bending stalks in shining verdure delightful to the eye. on the very summit of the plant the towering plume appears containing within it the fruitful ear wrapt [wrapped] round in silken folds which produces the multiplied grains pressed close together on every side - from whence - whence did they proceed? from one single grain - and by what power - our Heavenly Father.⁶²

For the conversion of the heart, Elizabeth offered her meditation on “THE TEARS OF ST. PETER” in the Gospels (cf. Mt 26: 69-75; Mk 14: 27-31, 66-72; John 18: 25-27). In this meditation, she guided individuals to join in the contrite heart of St. Peter who “went out and wept bitterly” after denying Jesus three times:

⁶¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.4, 246-7.

⁶² CW, 3b, sec., 11.9, 10.

the fall of St. Peter was indeed deplorable but the sincerity of his repentance and penance will be our instruction to the end of time - My Lord and Saviour how often have I imitated your apostle in his infidelity, most happy now could I imitate his tears and penance - his tears were continual, they ceased not to flow through his whole life, his Sorrow was a bitter Sorrow from the first hour of his Offence to the last hour of his life - Compassionate redeemer give one look on my heart, and give it this Sorrow for my Sins to go with me to my grave. . . . How many tears have I shed in my life my adorable Saviour Some most bitter for temporal afflictions, hope disappointed, or friends departed, how many profane tears, angry tears, tears quite graceless if not Sinful - but tears of Sorrow for sin, of sincere contrition how few in comparison . . . My God you see my heart, you know it better than I know it myself, my whole life has been a life of offence - oh that it may be now a life of true repentance, I know it is not always in my power to weep, and you ask only the tears of the heart oh give me then a heart truly contrite (cf. Ps. 51), my sins have been my own work, but the grace of repentance can come only from you, open then my heart to that grace, - let me weep constantly for My Sins, wash them out with your own blood through it alone I can hope for pardon.⁶³

Through the gospel story of St. Peter's tears, Elizabeth encouraged individuals to weep for their sin and to meet God's mercy in Jesus Christ who forgave St. Peter. She invited individuals to be conscious of their sins and with a contrite heart to unite with Jesus Christ. She shared her own contrite heart with them: "O my divine Saviour how many looks of Mercy have you also given me, how many graces you have sent me, by how many voices you have called me - how long will I remain insensible, and without a true repentance how long resist - your voice and be deaf to the remorse of my conscience how do the tears of St. Peter condemn my momentary Sorrow and defective penance My Saviour my God look with Pity on me."⁶⁴

For individuals who had doubts about their faith, Elizabeth guided them in her meditation on "THE CONFESSION OF ST. THOMAS" (cf. John 20: 24-29). In this

⁶³ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 204-205.

⁶⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 204.

Gospel story, she focused on St. Thomas's words, "*my Lord and My God*" uttered from a contrite heart and guided individuals to meet Jesus Christ as he comes to meet them in the Eucharist:

My Lord and My God, These words express the wonder and admiration of St. Thomas, seeing the goodness of our Lord, in coming to him after his unbelief and boldness, in requiring to see and touch him - But we have much more reason to admire and wonder at the goodness of our Lord in coming to us, when he visits us in Communion what then should be our deep humility before him, our Excessive Sorrow for having offended him our Anticipation of that last visit he will make us, in a death-bed Communion - our last action in this world, our body dissolving through pain and suffering - our at the Moment of going forward to its Eternity - Oh then in that how earnest will be the cry of our panting heart - My Lord! and My God!⁶⁵

Elizabeth stressed that St. Thomas' confession was the confession of his faith, hope, and love of Jesus Christ. Sharing her meditation on St. Thomas, she directed individuals to embrace God as "*my Lord and My God*" in their everyday life and grow in faith, hope, and love:

My Lord, and My God, is also a sentiment and profession of Faith which St. Thomas used to repair his past infidelity - He owned by it the divinity of his Redeemer and then he hastened to preach it over the whole world My Saviour! . . but what they believed I believe, what they hoped for I hope for, where they are gone I trust through thy grace to arrive, and through all my life while waiting the coming of thy glory, *I will rejoice to Adore thee My Lord and My God* - My Lord and My God - St. Thomas also Expressed a strong act of Love in these words - his words he signed with his blood - But how different is our love what are our best services to God? . . . our poor actions are called Merits, that is, our Saviour covers them with his own Merits, could we die for him like St. Thomas what would even our death be in view of his Heavens his immense love and Eternal bliss.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 210-211.

⁶⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 211.

4. Living in The Presence of God

Elizabeth's *fourth strategy* for the conversion to the life of faith was *living in the presence of God*. To deepen the life of faith, Elizabeth emphasized living in the presence of God in everyday life. She shared the teachings of the Church Fathers concerning the presence of God in her reflection, "Exercise of the Presence of God":

The exercise of the presence of God says St. Ambrose is a sovereign means to keep us from sin. St. Augustin [Augustine] says our God has his eye on us in all our combats as a king who attends his army in battle; on one hand he has every grace and help ready the moment you apply to him, and on the other crowns and rewards to recompense the least victory gained over his enemies and yours - the same saint says that the most powerful means to destroy these enemies is joy of our heart in the Presence of God, for by this we carry our Paradise with us where ever we go, and rise above the clouds and illusions of our passions.⁶⁷

Elizabeth gave individuals some direction on how to live in the presence of God based on the teachings of St. Francis de Sales revealed in his books, including *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

First of all, Elizabeth presented the general principle of faith in order to help individuals to live in the presence of God. She stressed that to live in the *presence of God* was everyone's obligation because of "two principles of Faith" which were "God is everywhere and sees every thing [everything]."⁶⁸ In her meditative writing on "Living in the Presence of God" based on St. Francis de Sales' writings, she gave spiritual guidance on why each one had to live in God's presence:

The Majesty of his presence consecrates every part of the universe, and wherever I am, I may say with Jacob "This place is Holy" (cf. Gen. 28: 16-17) . . . St.

⁶⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 401. "St. Ambrose (340-397), bishop of Milan, one of the most illustrious of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church" (CW, 3a, 401, n. 22). "St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), one of the most influential Christian apologists and writers." CW, 2, sec., 8.26, 174, n. 8.

⁶⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 189.

Augustin figured it to himself a vast Ocean . . . is it not then just that man as an intelligent and reasonable being should make it a duty of religion to be also with him in heart and mind - always considering himself in God and God in him as there is such essential connection between God and him. . . . At the same time God is every where, he sees every thing. I sh[oul]d then endeavour [endeavor] never to lose sight of him and to remember that he witnesses not only my Actions but my most secret intentions (cf. Ps. 139: 2-4). . . . the presence of God is to the souls of the Just the Most consolatory support thro the difficulties and trial of their spiritual warfare for what is more comforting than the reflection God is with me although he is God, he, cares for me he will not forsake me - Is not this thought *more than* enough to soften every pain and to strengthen me in <every> all combats to which I may be exposed. and let the righteous rejoice, and how can they do otherways [othewise] since “they always see the face of God and are always in the presence of God”(cf. Ps. 68: 8).⁶⁹

In another reflection on the “Exercise of the Presence of God” based on St. Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life*, she again reminded individuals of God’s presence in every moment of their lives:

you know the general principle – that God is every where – on the throne of his glory among the blessed indeed, but also throughout the whole Universe which he fills governs and preserves, ruling it by his wisdom and power . . . this we learn in our infancy, learn it as an act of memory in childhood yet in the practice of life, we live along as if we scarcely remembered that *God see[s] us*. - God is so infinitely present to us that he is in every part of our life and being - nothing can separate us from him, he is more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves, and whatever we do is done in him.⁷⁰

In the same writing, Elizabeth guided individuals to realize that God was in their soul, had been in their soul as a consuming fire and was “the very life” of the human person. Like a fish could not survive outside of water, she stressed, the human person

⁶⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 189-190. “Material crossed out in the original appears in angle bracket (< >).” See Bechtle and Metz, Editorial Procedures for CW, vol. 1, xxvii.

⁷⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392. “A similar treatment of this theme is found in St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part Second, Chap. 2, ‘A Short Method for Meditation, and the First of the Presence of God’.” CW, 3a, 392, n.1.

could not have a life without God. She directed them on how sin hindered them from living in the presence of God:

What a deep thought, that God himself is the very life of our being, that he dwells in the Soul of each one of us as in his own element - "He is a consuming fire" (cf. Heb. 12: 29) says the Apostle and while we carry this ever active fire within us we yet remain cold, and our icy hearts unconscious of his presence . . . and why . . . (SIN or the impurities) SIN or the impurities it has contracted in our nature covers this divine fire. . . If a Fish is drawn from the water which is its element, it suffers and pines even should it be put in silver vessels paved with precious diamonds, the less of its element it there enjoys the more it suffers and dies at last when wholly deprived of it . . how true a figure of our Soul with our God . . . riches, pleasures, joys without him can but give death, while the most poor abandoned pauper POSSESSED of his love, *enjoys him*, and *in him* all that heaven or Earth can give.⁷¹

Secondly, Elizabeth, again reflecting on the writings of St. Francis de Sales, guided individuals to embrace God as a Father "from whom we proceed, in whom we live" and "whose goodness and providence cherishes and preserves us through every moment of our life." She described God's love: "*our look of love at him, draws back a look of love on us*, and his divine look enkindles that fire of love in us which makes us remember him continually." She stressed that "the best means to increase the *love* of God in our heart" was to "consider him as our *tender Father*."⁷²

Elizabeth described the infinite mercy of God toward the human person. In her reflection on "Exercise of the *Presence of God*," she described the merciful triune God:

God in his continual presence with us is our Father. . . a Father infinitely more tender than any earthly Father can be, a Father rich in mercies, ever ready to forget our faults when we detest them, and to be present at all our wants . . . he fills us with his mercies which are new every morning, he covers us with his wings carries us on his shoulders, and cherishes us as a mother nurses the child of her bosom, our names says the prophet are written in his hand . . . the hairs of our

⁷¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 395-396.

⁷² CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 401.

head he has even numbered - how happy should we be if our eyes were open to this truth, if we saw by Faith, with the eyes of our Soul every where [everywhere] within and without us the 3 persons of the adorable Trinity with their divine attributes.⁷³

Elizabeth gave individuals concrete exercises on living in the presence of God. The first and second exercises were “a simple but loving remembrance of God” and “a secret desire to please him, which is in itself a mark of our love and wish to serve him.” The third exercise was that the soul has “a secret recourse to him in all its actions.” She explained: “a happy Soul accustomed to this exercise will have a secret recourse to him in all its actions, carrying him with it through every difficulty and pain, so that he is light to its darkness, and strength to its weakness, by which it will do and effect what in itself had been impossible, and in the joy and confidence of this holy presence finds its heaviest burthens [burdens] light and easy.” The fourth exercise was “a respectful *Silence* before the divine Majesty, a silence which the Great St. Denis [called] the *highest praise*.”⁷⁴

Elizabeth especially stressed the importance of interior silence. In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she gave instruction on interior silence: “When your exterior duties oblige you to break silence, keep your interior silence by remembering that you are under the eye of God, that he sees you, and Judges what you are doing.”⁷⁵ She guided individuals to listen to the wisdom on silence from the teachings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. Augustine:

⁷³ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392-393. According to editors, this paragraph reflected the scriptural phrases: “Eph. 2: 4; Ps. 103; Lam. 3: 23; Ps. 91:4; Is. 49: 22; and Mt. 10.30.” CW, 3a: 393, n. 5.

⁷⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 397-398. St. Denis was “an early bishop of Paris, and martyred about 275. However, this probably refers to Pseudo-Dionysius (d.500?) whose writing strongly influenced later spiritual authors. He taught that while we can speak of God, all human words fall short of God’s being.” CW, 3a, 398, n.14.

⁷⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 525.

St. Teresa says on this point, we lose a great treasure by turning a deaf ear to God and forgetting that we should *hearken* as well as speak to him for we never speak from the heart to him but he answers back to the heart if we would but listen to him - St. Augustin [Augustine] says the Eternal word and the Soul have a language understood by each other. The language of God is his goodness by which he communicates himself to the Soul, and the language of the Soul is the desire and fervour [fervor] with which it approaches him to receive these Communications - to hear him and speak to him – and this takes place in a single moment by the exercise of that *Silence* before the Divine Majesty of which we have spoken.⁷⁶

The fifth exercise for living in the presence of God was “an interior abandon which the Soul makes of itself to God with all its powers and faculties which it yields up wholly to his divine will as to its sovereign Master.” Elizabeth stressed that this interior abandon was “made by a single interior word *All is yours my God* I desire nothing but yourself - *my life my all my only good* - and thus it withdraws from all created things and rests in God.”⁷⁷

Living in the presence of God was the important way to make a conversion to the life of faith, to share God’s love with others, and to achieve union with God. Sharing her reflection on “the Exercise of the *Presence of God*,” Elizabeth guided individuals to deepen their life of faith by these exercises keeping in mind the last moment of their lives on earth: “while if we are attentive to the interior recollection of the presence of God we become enriched with the gifts of his grace which will obtain us those of his glory, and after living in his presence and love we will die thinking of him and loving him.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 398.

⁷⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 398-399.

⁷⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 400.

In her spiritual direction, Elizabeth also pointed out “the most particular obstacles,” which hindered continual living in the presence of God, in her reflection on “the Exercise of the Presence of God.” As she instructed her daughter Catherine, she guided individuals to recognize these obstacles in their hearts: “the principal [obstacles] are *Pride*, and the love of our own satisfactions and conveniences - immortification of the heart and senses, passion for talk and knowing what passes - busying ourselves with the doings of others; in short the voluntary distractions we allow ourselves in points where neither duty or charity call for our attention.” She especially pointed out that “*Conversations* not of absolute charity and duty,” such as “*the love of talk*” and “*Curiosity*,” are obstacles which occur in everyday life and she gave spiritual guidance to overcome these obstacles: “conversations with God are secure from both these difficulties” and we begin here below those heavenly communications which will be the Joy and bliss of our dear Eternity.”⁷⁹

Elizabeth described how precious life would be if lived in the presence of God: “The happy Soul well practiced in the exercise of the Presence of God goes simply to him in all things without seeking itself its only object being to serve and please him in every event, and tend towards him with all its power With St. Augustin[e] they can say by experience ‘Lord we were created for you, and will be ever restless till we rest in you’ (*Confessions*, Book 1, 1).”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 404-405.

⁸⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 401-402.

Elizabeth stressed that to live in the presence of God was to gain immeasurable blessings which God generously bestows on each person. In her reflection on “Living in the presence of God,” she presented the “sure means” of living in God’s presence:

the sure means of acquiring and <finding> preserving this inestimable Blessing is earnest prayer, constantly demanding this rich gift in the words of the Royal Prophet “Lord direct my way in thy Sight,” and never let me wander from my God, - Silence, and retirement, regular hours of communion with God and separation [separation] from the tumult of the world. Order in action, doing nothing but in the spirit of obedience to God and the accomplishment of his good will and pleasure seeking God in things the most indifferent, . . . considering the creature *only* as his image and mirrors to represent to us his perfections - the heavens as the throne of his glory, the earth as his footstool (cf. Is. 66: 1).⁸¹

Prayer Life

Elizabeth suggested prayer as the first sure means of living in the presence of God in order to deepen the life of faith and to grow in intimate relationship with God. According to Raymond Studzinski, “Spiritual direction provides the opportunity for an in-depth exploration of a person’s prayer, one’s intimate relationship with God. . . . By actively pursuing a better prayer life, a person begins to purify his or her image of God.”⁸²

Elizabeth guided individuals to make a habit of a presence of God in the spirit of prayer and recollection. In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she gave instruction on this aspect: “Your first step in this heavenly way is to contract a habit of the presence of God and the spirit of recollection - and let Divine Love cast out Fear (cf. 1 John 4:18),

⁸¹ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 191.

⁸² Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., *Spiritual Direction and Midlife Development* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1985), 9.

fear nothing so much as not to love enough.”⁸³ She suggested the Blessed Virgin Mary as a model of prayer and directed individuals to learn how to pray from her by using meditation on “Jesus in Mary” as detailed in her “Advent and Christmas Meditations”:

The devotion of Mary, her presence of the Lord along the day, and when the different signals of prayer were given through Nazareth, her prayers with Joseph, her prayer alone in his absence, when he at his work, when she at her own, her prayer alone at home quiet at her silent work of clothes, of victuals, of order through the house; a work in poverty, self-denial all over prayer, mortification, penance, humility, duty and obedience to the simple Guardian of Jesus, she his own Mother, so worthy to be served by Angels, ah! the work of Mary, what a continual prayer to her Jesus, what a perpetual sacrifice; angels, Angels, thou good guardian Angel of Mary, did you see something of her interior, was something of that manner of prayer, and love, and all her piety known to you? O! my soul at least every most perfect thing thou hast been taught by Jesus, and dost not alas, practise [practice], think how Mary did, beg her, and her Infant, beg thou shouldst do better.⁸⁴

Elizabeth reminded individuals that God listened to their *prayer* when they prayed with a contrite heart in faith, hope, and love: “There *are three* particular points on which God will always listen to us with most pleasure, the declarations of our *Sorrow for Sin*, our *Faith love and hope* on the mysteries of Redemption, *our gratitude* for his deliverance from the many dangers of our *past* life, and *present* desires of better service and *fidelity*.”⁸⁵

Elizabeth directed the first communicants to prepared their heart by prayer and offered her prayer as guidance in her instruction on “First Communion”: “My Saviour, my Jesus, I come at last to my happy days of preparation, to the sweet call so long desired

⁸³ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 525.

⁸⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9.18, 364-365. “The document seems to have been copied, possibly by her daughter Catherine. The phrasing and style of the meditations suggest that they may have been composed by Re. Simon Bruté, Rev. Pierre Babade, or another spiritual writer.” CW, 3a, 337, n. 1.

⁸⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 409.

to make ready for my first Communion, to receive *thee my own Saviour*, to begin my dear union here with thee which I hope to carry on so happily through *life, Death, and Eternity*.”⁸⁶

Elizabeth pointed out why many people could not taste a deep prayer. In “Mother Seton’s Last Writings,” she directed the Sisters to look up and remember the presence of God in order to avoid distraction and constantly to guard their senses:

First, it requires a constant guard over our senses - What sort of interior life would you lead if every time the door opens, or if any one passes you, you must look up - if you must hear what is said though it does not concern you - or if you remain silent, and in your modest attention to your duty, what would be your *interior life*, if you let your thoughts wander from God? - I once heard a silent person say, that she was listening to every thing [everything] round her, and making her *Judas* reflections on all that was said or done. - And another, that she delighted in silence because she could be thinking of her dear people.⁸⁷

In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she directed individuals to focus on the presence of God in their prayers and in their mission. She emphasized that their every action of itself would become a prayer, if they lived and acted in the presence of God:

When you are at Prayers or Adoration [of the Blessed Sacrament], be before the tabernacle like an angel if it was clothed with a human body – if you could always remember your good angels watchful care to catch your prayers and thoughts which must be presented to God by him, and accounted for what they are, how many distractions it would save you - and when from spiritual exercises you again return to duty of exterior cares . . . every action of itself a Prayer, being done for his glory and love, and as a penance and satisfaction for your sins. Some happy Souls, offer hour after hour for the souls of others, who they desire to assist in this world or the next.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 264.

⁸⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 9, 254.

⁸⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 525.

In her correspondence written from June of 1809 to 1821, Elizabeth mentioned *prayer* 430 times. She sent her prayer to her loved ones, the poor souls and individuals in distress. In the letter to Rev. Pierre Babade, S.S. dated October 1816, she expressed her trust in prayer: “All we can do worth doing for our friends in this world is to pray - I wish I was good that my prayers might be good - do pray for me more than ever - never so much necessity as now.”⁸⁹

Elizabeth invited individuals to pray everyday in order to live in the presence of God. In a letter to Scott dated June 14, 1814, she advised her to promise to pray with her: “Well Julia dear trouble trouble everywhere till - but we must be good first - will you pray do do - try to promise me that whenever you see the sun set you will lift your heart with mine and pierce beyond his golden clouds - do do.”⁹⁰ In a letter to Jerome Bonaparte, who was a student of Mount St. Mary, dated June 1816, Elizabeth guided him to the life of prayer: “Dear Jerome[,] It is a great pleasure to me to send you the *Agnus Dei* - I wish I had one handsomely covered - but you will mind only the Virtue of the prayers our holy Father has said over it - I earnestly beg our Lord to preserve in you the graces he has so tenderly bestowed on you - take care yourself not to lose them[;] pray for me and I will for you[,] your true friend EAS.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.52, 427-428.

⁹⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6.164, 274.

⁹¹ CW, 2, sec., 7.30, 401. “Jerome Bonaparte, son of Elizabeth Patterson and Jerome Bonaparte and a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, was a student at Mount St. Mary’s and looked to Elizabeth for guidance and encouragement.” The usage of *Agnus Dei* “here refers to a small piece of pure wax, bearing the impress of a lamb supporting the standard of the cross, which was worn devoutly about the neck or suspended in a glass frame from the wall.” CW, 2: 401, n. 1& 2.

Elizabeth's influence on her first daughter's prayer is revealed in Anna Maria's letter to Henrietta Seton written July 3, 1811: "here is the first day of advent and we are chiefly to keep in mind the judgment day - never cease praying my sweet friend that we may meet one another joyfully in that day of terrors - when we think of the Eternity which follows *we may well tremble* . . . I hope you have had the happiness of recieving [receiving] our dearest Lord and that you did not forget your poor friend."⁹²

Elizabeth continually prayed for the conversion of a "poor soul that was still wandering in the devious paths of error or was but nominally a member of the true Church" and asked her students to join with the prayer for the poor soul: "Pray, then, my beloved ones pray much for your parents; pray for the gift of perseverance; and Mother begs you to pray most earnestly for the conversion of a dear friend of mine in New York, to whom I have never written on the subject of religion. Pray, my dear ones, that this soul may be added to the fold."⁹³

Elizabeth sent her prayers to individuals in distress and guided them to pray to God in their midst of suffering. When Joanna Gould Barry, who was her Catholic friend from New York, became very sick, Elizabeth sent her a letter and prayer: "if even I could follow your footstep, and mix my tears with yours the comfort would be all mine, but in prayer, in communion, there the most unworthy, and the desires of the poorest are

⁹² CW, 2, app., A-6.77, 743.

⁹³ CW, 3b, sec., 11.42, 58. Cf. CW, 3b, 58, n. 1.

accepted, and there alone is my hope of drawing on you the consolation I so abundantly wish for you.”⁹⁴

When Mrs. Fox, who was a mother of three students attending St. Joseph Academy, was in distress because of one of her daughters, Elizabeth sent her a letter in July 1816: “if prayers would keep you warm you had enough indeed to keep all colds and pains from you - Eliza [Fox] can never look at me without the tears starting, but she stops it as quick - a little kiss, and a look up is all I can give in place of her dearest Mother, but soon you will have her always, and I will see no more the one I love next to my own. - so goes this world dear friend.”⁹⁵

When she knew the painful suffering of Sister Cecilia O’Conway because of her situation in New York, Elizabeth sent her letter dated February 16, 1818, stressing the importance of prayer: “believe me dearest praying is a hundred times better than writing, the longer I live the surer I am of that . . . to prayers faithful enough indeed, the 30 days, in evening adoration and morning Mass so constant - truly it is the hardest of all trials to see souls so dear in pains we cannot remedy - My Cicil - our God!”⁹⁶ In a letter to her son, William, dated April 6, 1818, she urged him to pray: “remember my favourite Xaviers

⁹⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.84, 196. Robert and Joanna Gould Barry were very close to Archbishop John Carroll and became Elizabeth’s friends. They lost their daughter before January 1809. *CW*, 2, sec., 5.15, 49, n. 4). Mrs. Barry died October 18, 1811. *CW*, 2: 180, n. 5, sec., 6.73.

⁹⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 44, 417.

⁹⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 139, 526.

[Xavier] prayer when you are in the raging tempest - ‘Compassionate lover of souls save us.’⁹⁷

Elizabeth gave individuals excellent direction on prayer through her correspondence and by sharing her own experience of contemplation. She guided Cecilia Seton to taste contemplative prayer based on the teaching of St. Thomas of Jesus who was one of the Hermits of St. Augustine:

By carefully elevating the mind to God often in the day - resigning ourselves to Him - blessing his holy name - thanking him for his favours [favors] imploring his help - speaking to him affectionately - and sighing after the possession of Him we perpetually entertain the fire of Divine Love - and it frequently happens at these moments that God will grant what we do not obtain by hours of prayer to teach us that it is to his Good we owe Our happiness, more than to our own case – “and that all he asks of us is the Heart.” These sweet instructions, dearest, I transcribe for you from (St. Thomas of Jesus one of the Hermits of St. Augustine) that they may comfort you as they have me -he says also (most for my consolation) that our dear Lord often separates [separates] us from Whatever we love most, that Himself may take their place in our hearts - divesting us of every thing [everything] else that we may be alone with Him, and thereby enjoy unutterable Peace.⁹⁸

As referred to in the previous chapters, Elizabeth revealed her mystical experience in prayer in her correspondence. In a letter to Cecilia Seton dated July 8, 1807, Elizabeth shared her experience of contemplation with her:

How often have I felt my Soul awakened by thy Light, and warmed by the fire of thy Love. . . . How happy is that moment O divine JESUS! how pure is that Light - how ineffable [ineffable] is that Communion of thy Blessings! Thou knowest O Lord how precious that gift is, and thy Creature that receives [receives] it knows also - Ah! if It were faithful, if It never departed from Thee - if It knew how to preserve the Grace it had received, how happy would it be! and yet this is but a drop of the infinite Ocean of Blessings which thou art one day to Communicate to It. . . O Soul of my Soul - what is my Soul and what Good can it have without

⁹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7. 153, 547.

⁹⁸ CW, 1, sec., 4.51, 463-464. Thomas of Jesus “also called Thomas de Andrade.” CW, 1, 464, n. 1.

possessing Thee . . . Life of my Life! what is my Life when I live not in Thee . . . Is it possible that my Heart is capable of possessing Thee - of enjoying Thee all alone - of extending and dilating itself in Thee - . . . can thy Creature thus be elevated above itself to repose in thy Breast, and after that depart from Thee? bury itself in the Earth? . . . Ah Lord I know not what I ought to say to Thee: but hear the Voice of my Love and of my Misery; live always in me, and let me live perpetually in Thee and for Thee as I live only by Thee.⁹⁹

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté shared his memory of Elizabeth Seton concerning her prayer life in his *Mother Seton*: “May I pray, May I read, May I feel as she did, for what soul more eminently religious have I ever known? More sensible of the immense import of these two words duly realized FAITH *and* LOVE?”¹⁰⁰

Look Up

Emphasizing the life of prayer in order to live in the presence of God, Elizabeth also offered her directees a kind of mantra or a guiding word which would swiftly lead the soul into the presence of God in the midst of distress. This mantra, which she used in her correspondence, was *look up, looking straight upward, or gazing upwards as usual*, which led individuals to shift their focus from their own distress to the presence of God.

Jean Flannelly pointed out that Elizabeth’s favorite word, “*look up*,” seemed to have its origin in the Scriptures. As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth used two Bibles in her life as a Catholic and religious. Flannelly mentioned that Elizabeth “marked numerous passages from the stories of Abraham” in her two Bibles and two “passages relevant to ‘look up’ are in Genesis 15: 5-6 and 22: 13.”¹⁰¹ She explained:

⁹⁹ CW, 1, sec., 7.324, 447-448.

¹⁰⁰ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 143.

¹⁰¹ Jean Flannelly, S.C., “Elizabeth Ann Seton: Model of Contemplative Presence for the 21st Century,” *Vincentian Heritage* 21- 2 (2000), 6.

In the first instance Yahweh assured Abram of the covenant and instructed him to “look up at the sky and count stars, if you can.” In the latter passage, the heir who was key to the fulfillment of the covenant had been born and Abraham was stopped from doing this by the angel of God, and “looking up he saw a ram.” Thus, “look up” is pregnant with meanings - an act of faith-hope in the God who guides history, and in God’s holy people to their fulfillment, and a bed-rock conviction that God will always provide. We do not have to look far in Elizabeth’s writings to find her expression of these same sentiments.¹⁰²

Look up or *look straight upward* was Elizabeth’s favorite mantra and had a biblical origin. Elizabeth was a lover of the Word of God. It was natural to her to pick biblical language as her mantra as well as a guiding word in her spiritual direction. Her mantra, *look up*, was a guiding light in her own life. In a letter to Antonio Filicchi dated September 27, 1804, she described the ritual she performed with her children every night: “They wait on their knees after prayers till I bless them each with the Sign of the Cross and I look up to God with a humble hope that he will not forsake us.”¹⁰³

Elizabeth used her mantra, “*look up*,” in her spiritual direction to her acquaintances. In a letter to Cecilia Seton dated September 3, 1807, she directed her to look up to the sweet love of God instead of lamenting her distressful situation and gave her instruction based on the sayings of Rev. Michael Hurley who was their friend: “Look up sweet Love - ‘God is wonderfully adorable in his ways and as I am persuaded they are all founded in equity and that Salvation is alone his work, I submit to whatever trials he may please to expose me.’”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ CW, 1, sec., 3. 9, 324.

¹⁰⁴ CW, 1, sec., 4. 51, 464.

By sending the wish of her daughter, Rebecca Seton who was on her sickbed, to William in a letter written on the feast of Assumption, she directed her son to live everyday in faith in order to meet his sister in heaven someday: "I hardly know how to tell you your sweet Bec [Rebecca] suffers more - and more - look up to our God. . . . Our love for you is the point of greatest Pain, she speaks of your precious soul and her hopes of our eternal reunion with delight and tenderness quite inexpressible - and on that we must rest my Souls beloved."¹⁰⁵ In another letter to her son, William, she continually urged to him to "look UP in full hope and Confidence,"¹⁰⁶ or "Look up -my only remedy."¹⁰⁷ In a letter to her daughter, Catherine, dated July 4, 1820, she guided her to look up to the blue sky and love God: "Peace and Love My Souls Darling, look up at the blue heavens and love him, he is so good to us - Bless you forever."¹⁰⁸

Elizabeth assiduously directed her friends and students to look up to God and live in the presence of God. In a letter to Scott dated May 20, 1815, Elizabeth guided her to look up to God and to focus on the presence of God in the midst of her life: "dear dear friend I repeat again and again *look up*, oh yes look up with your own friend - if I did not life would be a burden indeed."¹⁰⁹ In a letter to Ellen Wiseman dated August 20, 1818,

¹⁰⁵ CW, 2, sec., 7.46, 418.

¹⁰⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7. 54, 429.

¹⁰⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7. 67, 455.

¹⁰⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7. 253, 660.

¹⁰⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6. 193, 312.

she directed her: "Oh look up Ellen look up, in all."¹¹⁰ In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel

Bruté dated January 1816, she wrote:

Yes our dear President, you will you shall have prayers plenty of these most innocent hearts, and I say so often *I have a Jesus to offer* - and look up *confidently* - he will not leave you who have left all for him (cf. Mt 19: 27), nor leave you in weakness while loading yourself for his Sake[,] no no no G -*he will not-* so we press the Crucifix close on the heart, and trust All.¹¹¹

In her spiritual direction, Elizabeth used the words, *look steadfastly upwards* or *gaze upwards*, as her mantra which would guide individuals to the presence of God and to grow faith, hope, and love of God. In her "Spiritual Journal" to Cecelia Seton written on the feast of St. Augustine and her birthday, Elizabeth shared her own spiritual experience and led Cecelia to think of her life's goal: "And now - the sacrifice of all again renewed - it waits thy will in certain Hope - pressing forward to eternity - reaching for the things before[,] looking steadfastly upwards - how sure how real its happiness - quiet and resigned in affliction - it finds no bitterness in Sorrow unmixed with Sin."¹¹² In a letter to Cecilia Seton written during Elizabeth's voyage to Baltimore, she expressed her trust in God: "Mother's heart in firm and steadfast Confidence looking straight Upwards - Oh how many many times has it prepared for Death since we came on board."¹¹³ In a letter to Eliza Sadler dated September 14, 1812, Elizabeth directed her to *gaze upwards*: "We are all going on in peace - Mother gazing upwards as usual."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ CW, 2, sec., 7. 176, 574.

¹¹¹ CW, 2, sec., 7. 1. 366.

¹¹² CW, 1, sec., 4. 55, 473.

¹¹³ CW, 2, sec., 5. 1, 4.

¹¹⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6. 116, 226.

The Sacramental Life

Elizabeth suggested the *sacramental life* as the second sure means of living in the presence of God. She wrote many instructions concerning the sacramental life of the Church. In her “Confession Before Communion” based on one of the priest-directors’ instructions, she taught the seven Sacraments of the Church to the first communicants:

You know very well my dear Children that the sacraments are divided into two kinds, the Sacraments of the dead and those of the living - the first are called Sacraments of the dead because they are instituted in order to restore to life the Soul which is spiritually dead, either by original or actual sin. There are two, baptism and penance - the other five are called Sacraments of the living because in order that they may be duly received, our Soul must be in a state of grace, that is must be united to God, pure in his sight, and free from Sin, at least from mortal Sin.¹¹⁵

Elizabeth stressed that the sacraments of the Church are the source of grace from God and the way to the sanctification of one’s life in faith. She guided individuals to realize that they had a new life through Baptism and that they continued to receive gifts of grace through their confirmation. She taught individuals that they were called to be united with Jesus Christ through the sacraments of the Church and shared her reflection on this theme in her “Advent and Christmas Meditations”:

And again from that wonderful *word* of the prophet we should conclude in practical Sanctification - O! my soul, that sevenfold spirit that anointing in one person, the blessed humanity of my divine Saviour - through him also must sacredly anoint and seal to Eternity my Soul - for if I live at all, not I, but he lives in me, and has he not made us indeed one with him through all his divine *Sacraments* - given the new birth of his own life in Baptism - united his whole in the *blessed Eucharist* - poured the gifts in Confirmation.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9.11, 275. “In Catholic theology a sacrament is a sign and cause of God’s saving presence. There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation (formerly Penance), Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick (former Extreme Unction), Holy Orders, and Matrimony.” CW, 3a, 275, n 2.

¹¹⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9.18, 363.

Elizabeth guided her children to maintain their life based on the sacraments of the Church. In a letter to her youngest daughter, Rebecca, she reminded her of God's gift through her confirmation and guided her to preserve that gift in her life: "*Be good* is all Mother can say . . . If you have indeed received the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Ghost, Oh carefully carefully preserve the Gift."¹¹⁷ She always worried about her son, William, in foreign country and was concerned about his life of faith. In a letter to her son, William dated July 24 or 25, 1817, she instructed him to practice the sacramental life: "could I hear that you still love and revere your God and religion and sometimes Approach the Sacraments with the fidelity of a Christian what delight it would be."¹¹⁸ In a letter dated February 16, 1818 to William, Elizabeth gave instruction: "go when you can to the sacraments as a child to his Father."¹¹⁹

In her "Retreat Meditation" written in 1813, she encouraged the Sisters to live the sacramental life of the church: "ah! we should not in vain be named the Daughters of his charity we promise him in this retreat first to detest and expiate by all means of prayers, Sacraments and good works of every duty our past venial sins, then 2ndly To avoid them now most carefully through his grace which we ask in union with our spotless Mother Mary and our most pure guardian Angels."¹²⁰

Elizabeth instructed individuals on the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance): "The sacrament of penance consists as you know of three parts, Contrition[,] confession

¹¹⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6.158, 268.

¹¹⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7.100, 491.

¹¹⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.137, 524.

¹²⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.15, 323-324.

and Satisfaction that *is* these three conditions are requisite in order to receive absolution of our sins.”¹²¹ In her spiritual direction to the Sisters, Elizabeth gave them the instruction on the sacrament of reconciliation and encouraged them to renew their life:

pray try my daughters to be more faithful to him, and not to be always repeating the same faults in the Confessional, for since our weakness is so great that we must always carry something there yet at least let it not be always the same thing, since our faults at last take such deep root that it becomes very difficult to draw them out, and these roots even often produce others, like a plant which is watered every morning grows with double vigour [vigor], and though it might at first have been pulled up with the hands, at last it must be dug out with a hoe, - we must beg earnestly that he will make us know ourselves before the hour of Death and his dreadful Judgment - we who have the happiness and honour to be espoused to him in this life *who will then be our Judge*.¹²²

In “Confession Before Communion,” she instructed individuals about the sacrament of reconciliation: “Since the Eucharist is a Sacrament of the living, in order to receive it worthily we must either have preserved our [bapti]smal innocence, or we must have repaired it by the [Sacra]ment of penance.”¹²³ She guided her son, William, to receive the communion with the sacrament of reconciliation. In the Easter season she sent a letter to William on April 5, 1816, and appealed to him to receive the sacraments of penance and Holy Communion at Easter: “this morning I found myself praying for your confessor, that will make you laugh . . . so anxious that he should lead you well - I beg so hard you may be an ‘honest man’ as you say at Easter for you know an honest man gives to God his due as well as to man - is it not so -”¹²⁴

¹²¹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.11, 285.

¹²² *CW*, 3a, sec., 10.5, 552-553.

¹²³ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.11, 275.

¹²⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 7.12, 383.

In her correspondence, Elizabeth reminded her former students of the sacramental life of the Church learned from the time of their schooling and guided them to faithfully receive them. In a letter to Eliza Wyse dated May 18, 1816, Elizabeth encouraged her to receive the sacraments of reconciliation and communion through an indirect question: “I know you laugh at that - you do not tell me a word whether you go often to Confession to COMMUNION.”¹²⁵ In a letter to Ellen Wiseman dated October 1818, Elizabeth shared her anxiety concerning her son Richard’s sacramental life with her and gave direction to her concerning her reception of the sacrament of penance:

could I but know if Richard went to Confession – alas alas! . . . do do do "be Good" and mind that so precious Soul - I feel uneasy about your being so hard pushed by our good Pere [Babade], and fear that it will keep you from frequenting the only strength of our Soul - Speak to him plainly if it is so, and tell him it keeps you back - what a triumph to old enemy it would be if you were kept from our Lord by the very means he appointed to bring you to him.¹²⁶

Elizabeth’s dearly loved sacrament of the Church was the Eucharist. As referred to in the previous chapters, the main reason of her conversion to Catholicism was the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. She instructed individuals to be aware of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist through her “Instruction Compiled from Fathers and Councils”:

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says since therefore Christ himself does affirm *this is my Body* who from henceforth dares to be so bold as to doubt it – and *this is my blood* (cf. Mt. 26:26-29) who can doubt and say it is not his blood. Catech[esis] 4
St. Gregory Nyssan says “I do therefore rightly believe that the Bread Sanctified by the word of God is changed into the body of God the word[”] – Orat[io] Catec[hetica] c. 37

¹²⁵ CW, 2, sec., 7.24, 396.

¹²⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7.184, 583.

St. John Chrisostom[:] He that wrought these things in the last supper is the author of what is done here. we hold the place of ministers but he that sanctifies and changes them is Christ himself. Hom 83 in Matt.

How could transubstantiation be coined into an Article of Faith by the Lateran Council which was held in 1215 when Berengarius was the author of a Heresy against it in the 11th century and condemned by a national council the last of which held at Platentin Anno 1094 defines “the Bread and wine when they are consecrated upon the Altar are truely and essentially changed into the Body and blood of Christ.[”]¹²⁷

Elizabeth loved the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and continually copied excerpts from the Father’s sayings and shared them with individuals. She introduced the teachings of St. Ambrose concerning the Eucharist in her spiritual direction: “Approach then this Lord of angels and you will be *filled* since he is the true bread - approach him and you will be *refreshed* since he is the true fountain, approach and you will be enlightened since he is the true light . . . ask himself *who he is* and he will answer you, *I am the bread of life*, they who come to me shall hunger no more, and they who believe in me shall never thirst (cf. John 6: 35).”¹²⁸ She also gave instruction based on the writing of St. Chrysostom:

It is this Sacrament (cf. John 10: 11) which will renew in you that royal image which God imprinted on us. [I]t is this which will continually nourish and refresh

¹²⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.5, 248. “The Fathers of the Church were early Christian leaders whose collective teachings are regarded as the foundation of orthodox Christian doctrine. The Councils of the Church are official gatherings of church leaders who assist with decision-making in church matters.” CW, 3a, 247, n. 1. “St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315?-386?) is known for his brilliant “Catechesis” addressed to baptismal candidates and to newly baptized Christians.” CW, 3a, 247, n. 2. “St. Gregory of Nyssa (335?-395?) was a bishop, theologian, and Father of the Eastern Church. He wrote many treatises, some against Arianism and others on mystical theology and doctrinal matters. His most important theological text is his large ‘Oratio Catechetica,’ a forty-chapter defense of Catholic teaching against Jews, heathens, and heretics.” CW, 3a, 248, n.8. “Berengarius of Tours (999-1088) was an early medieval writer who attempted to explain the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. His writings centered on Christ’s spiritual presence which led his teachings to be condemned by the Council of Vercelli in 1050, the Council of Rome in 1079, and the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.” CW, 3a, 248, n.9).

¹²⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 547-548.

your Soul and preserve its grace and beauty. [T]he common food we take does not immediately turn to the nourishment of our body but this heavenly food as soon as we have taken it, penetrates to our very Soul and fills it with a Virtue wholly divine (a good Communion) it drives the spirits of darkness far from us, and draws the Angels of light around us to adore the Lord of Angels - demons take their flight, and angels flock around that body and blood which washes our Soul, adorns and beautifies it, makes it more bright than fire, more shining than gold - opens heaven to us and seals us with IMMORTALITY.¹²⁹

Elizabeth copied some parts of the teachings of the Church Fathers from her Roman Breviary which dealt with the Eucharist and used them in her spiritual direction. This is revealed in her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook.” One of them was the teaching of St. Cyprian: “Jesus Christ is the Bread of life (cf. John 6: 35), and *our bread*. As we call God *our Father* because he is the Father of those who know and believe him, so we call Jesus Christ *our bread* because he is the bread of All who know and receive [receive] him in his Sacrament it is this bread we daily beg for this bread of life.”¹³⁰ In the same Notebook, she introduced some part of the sermons of St. Thomas Aquinas from the “Office of B[lessed] Sacrament” and shared it with individuals:

the Sacrament Purifies us from sin - increases Grace and all virtues in us – strengthens and restores health to the Soul crowning it with the abundance of all Spiritual graces. It is offered in the church for the living and the Dead that having been instituted for the Salvation of all it may be of service to all - none can explain the sweetness and delights of this mystery, all sweetness and delight being there in their source - the living memorial of that incomparable love which our Saviour testified in dying for us . . . he being on the Point of Passing out of this world to his Father, and having celebrated the Passover with his disciples, instituted in this last Supper he made with them this Great Sacrament (cf. John 13:1), as the perpetual monument of his PASSION, the Accomplishment of the figures of the old law, and the greatest of all miracles. he left it to his church to be

¹²⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 542. “John Chrysostom, Homily 46 on the Gospel of John.” CW, 3a, 542, n. 53.

¹³⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 537. Cf. “St. Cyprian (200?-258), ‘Treatise on the Lord’s Prayer,’ chap. 18.” CW, 3a, 537, n. 32.

an incomparable consolation in his absence to his faithful *in all their Afflictions*.¹³¹

Elizabeth invited individuals to embrace God's love by participation in the Eucharist. In her "Union in God," Elizabeth expressed her appreciation of God's blessings received through the Eucharist and urged individuals to join with her in receiving these blessings through this sacrament: "Ever dear and esteemed friend of my heart - May I address you on the fervent love and charity of our *Good God* toward us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar - Can we ever be grateful to him for that - much less the numberless numberless blessings he sheds on us each day of our lives - join with me and let us thank him from the bottom of our hearts for all both spiritual and temporal."¹³²

In her "My Flesh Is Meat Indeed" (cf. John 6: 56), she expressed her faith and knowledge concerning the Eucharist and again invited individuals to meet Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: "The Body of J[esus] C[hrist] Become[s] our nourishment, his Blood our drink, his Divinity residing corporally within us, – such is my dear Brethren the effect of his tenderness, the prodigy of his Almighty power, the effort of infinite love, and the love of a God. - this Mystery has been the object of our Faith in all Ages, of our Admiration

¹³¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10.5, 535-536. "Cf. 6th Lesson, 2nd Nocturn, Feast of Corpus Christi, from Sermons of St. Thomas Aquinas who composed the liturgical offices for this feast that was instituted in 1264 by Pope Urban IV. At that time Corpus Christi was celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost Sunday or on the Sunday that followed. Ardently devoted to the Eucharist, Elizabeth seems to have copied from the Roman Breviary many of the readings for the Office of the feast and its octave, selected from the Fathers of the Church. A note in Bruté's papers which can be dated 1813 or before asks to borrow "the little big book of prayer in which you have in English the offices of the church . . . for every day of the year." English-Latin versions of Vespers were in use at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it can be assumed that a complete vernacular Breviary existed although no publication information has been located. A 1908 version of the Roman Breviary was used for these notes." CW, 3a, 535, n. 27.

¹³² CW, 3b, sec., 11.29, 43.

and Gratitude.”¹³³ She continually urged those whom she directed to be one with Christ in the Eucharist: “I will rest on this idea which is so proper to direct and support you in the engagements you have entered into with J[esus] C[hrist] And to possess your hearts in these happy moments you are to pass with him to renew that fervour [favor] which will conduct you to the foot of his Altar not only at the time particularly appointed, but as often as your time and occupations permit.”¹³⁴

In her spiritual direction to the First Communicants, she gave them instruction on the mystery of the sacrament of the Eucharist and guided them to commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ for us in the sacrament of the Eucharist:

My Jesus, my Lord and my God how glorious indeed is[are] the tidings for me that you will come to visit me, to live with me - My Jesus, *my Victim*, crucified for me upon the cross, shedding the blood of my Redemption, and now still *my sacrifice* in the sacrament of his love, O my soul the glad tidings for us, with what sacred care must we prepare for this dear COMMUNION in which we will commemorate the passion and death of our JESUS, have him as it were bleeding from his cross, and receive him in our hearts as in *a tabernacle of love* oh how carefully must we try to purify and adorn it.¹³⁵

Elizabeth directed the first communicants to ask Jesus Christ to help them to understand the mystery of the Eucharist and to unite with him in holy communion: “our Jesus, compassionate Saviour teach me your glorious mysteries, teach me your poor child thro’ all my whole life how to know, to *believe*, to *offer* and *unite* at that sacred altar, – and Oh above all how to receive thee - *thee* thyself my JESUS.”¹³⁶

¹³³ CW, 3b, sec., 11.30, 43.

¹³⁴ CW, 3b, sec., 11.30, 44.

¹³⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 266.

¹³⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 269.

Elizabeth directed the first communicants to believe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and to prepare their heart in faith: “O our divine Saviour let our Faith be an acceptable offering while we adore thee in thy real presence though yet unseen and delight to call thee with St. Thomas ‘*My Lord and my God*’(cf. John 20:29).”¹³⁷ She instructed them to ask Jesus Christ to increase their faith and love: “Oh my Saviour teach my soul indeed thy sacred Faith and love before thy holy altar and how to secure thy mercies there - how to enjoy and not prophane [profane] such mysteries of love.”¹³⁸ She continually directed them to respond in faith, hope and love to the love of Jesus Christ revealed in his incarnation, passion, and the Eucharist:

here with the blessed morning sacrifices I may send up my acts of *Adoration*, Faith, and hope, and love, of sorrow for my sins and desires for your blessing on all my preparations of duty and love through the day, for us to have such an offering our own Saviour and Redeemer who seeing we had nothing we could offer but our poverty and misery, came himself to be made our own *victim* of praise and love in the *manger*, on the *cross*, in the blessed *sacrifice* of our altars, and in the sacred holy *Communion* for which we now prepare – our Jesus, our compassionate Saviour, oh prepare us indeed.¹³⁹

Elizabeth urged the first communicants to appreciate the immensity of God’s love revealed in the Eucharist and to offer their every desire, affection, and resolution in the preparation of the sacrament of the Eucharist:

Know our true happiness my soul in the presence of our Blessed Lord at his altar we are like helpless destitute children who can do nothing, have nothing, and must perish if left to our selves, but on invention of the infinite love of our Jesus he unites us with himself and makes us a part of himself both in soul and body, so that we may have recourse to him as to a tender parent; we can lay at the foot of

¹³⁷ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.10, 269.

¹³⁸ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.10, 270.

¹³⁹ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9.10, 268.

his altar every affection, every desire of our heart, all our resolutions, and sacred preparations for our dear approaching Communion – he is all goodness – What may we not hope if we are only faithful to our grace.¹⁴⁰

Elizabeth's teaching on the sacrament of the Eucharist reflected her own love of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. She actually shared her Eucharistic piety with the first communicants in her writing:

Oh happy blessed call to my dear communion, (,) my JESUS first called me from *nothing*, drew me in pity to him, loved me first with an Eternal love, and then called me to love him, gave himself for me, after I had become the *slave of sin*, <gave> bled and died for me upon the cross, after being a little Infant for me in the manger. and now with more than a Mothers love my Jesus You bid me come and be fed and nourished even with your own sacred flesh, your blood, soul and divinity . . . Well indeed may I fear to approach unworthily to such a Saviour , , oh my Jesus it is thy love and mercy which calls me to thee, let then that same love and mercy prepare me for thee.¹⁴¹

Elizabeth had lived her whole life deeply devoted to Jesus present in the Eucharist. In her meditation, “Exercise of *the Presence of God*” based on St. Francis de Sales’ teaching, she described the life lived in loving awareness of the gift of the Eucharist:

When we awake in the night to remember him who dwells in inaccessible light . . . joining the multitudes of holy Souls who are singing his praise and adoring him in heaven and on Earth – and we who possess the actual presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament should unite our hommages [homage] to those which he offers day and night to his Father from our tabernacle in his quality of *Victim* and intercessor.¹⁴²

In his *Mother Seton*, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté wrote of “Elizabeth Seton’s Last Day[s]” from January 2 to January 4, 1821, the day of her death. In his description of those last days, he wrote that “one of the nurses offering her a drink she refused a

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9.10, 264-265. “Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >).” Bechtle and Metz, Editorial Procedures for CW, 3a, xxvi.

¹⁴² CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 404. Elizabeth underlined three times on *Victim*. CW, 3a, 404, n. 29.

moment in hope she said that on the morning she might be granted one communion more.”¹⁴³ In a letter to Antonio Filicchi, Bruté informed him of Elizabeth’s death and stressed that “the most striking trait of this long preparation for departure was the ardor of her desire for Communion. Communion was her all, and it was particularly so during her sickness.”¹⁴⁴ He wrote his account of Elizabeth Seton on the second anniversary of her death, January 4, 1823, and remarked that Elizabeth “aspired to attain the most secret, intimate and faithful union possible. Her love for the adorable Eucharist still impresses me deeply.”¹⁴⁵

Elizabeth gave instructions concerning the sacrament of Extreme Unction [Anointing of the Sick]. Through her instruction on “*Death in desire*” based on the writing of St. Francis de Sales, she explained the sacrament of Extreme Unction and guided individuals to prepare themselves for a sudden death: “Extreme Unction being the Sacrament which is to give us grace to Die well, consider . . . such as sudden Death, loss of Reason etc. try then to be now in the right disposition for it, and do what hereafter may not be in your power . . . beg our Lord the source of every Grace to give himself the effect and grace which this Sacrament is intended to produce in our Souls.”¹⁴⁶ She also taught the prayer for the anointing of the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, and feet and continually guided them to grow in faith, hope, and love in order to meet Jesus Christ:

¹⁴³ CW, 2, app., A-7.268, 768-769; Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 63.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹⁴⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 413.

Your acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition of course preceded this moment, and now you have but to consider WHO is in your heart, JESUS your *Saviour now*, JESUS who is to be your *Judge*, beg him with the publican to be merciful to a miserable Sinner (cf. Luke 18: 13), and repeat your Acts of Confidence and Resignation now as you would desire to make them in Death.¹⁴⁷

Elizabeth's instruction on the sacrament of Extreme Unction gave a great deal of consolation to her daughter, Rebecca on her deathbed. In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté dated October 1816, she described Rebecca's eagerness for God's blessing through the sacraments of the Church:

the poor little heart beating so violently with continual violent pain in it she could not keep quiet and was earnest for extreme unction . . . afterwards with her usual throw of her arms round my neck she said with overflowing heart "come oh my Mother dearest I have recieved ABSOLUTION - Absolution!" she repeated . . . Sweet but awful moment adding "oh I am so comforted" – "Yes" I said "Rebecca now you know the blessing of our true church, the Church of God" – "true dearest Mother once I thought in my trouble about going to Confession that the Protestants were happy in having no such Mortification but now oh my Saviour dearest Lord I see the true blessing and grace of what I then thought hard" . . . "rejoice that our Lord gives me such an opportunity to prepare to die - tomorrow extreme Unction a great Sacrament my Mother" and then she gave the most lively expression of the helps she expected from it – "and Communion on next day my Mother if I live - Communion - our Jesus our All do not be sorrowful a moment my Mother I shall not go so far from you . . I am sure our Lord will let me come and comfort you."¹⁴⁸

5. Summary

Elizabeth assisted individuals to cultivate the life of faith in daily life and guided them in accordance with each one's growth in faith. For the ones indulged in worldly things, she led them to think of the life beyond this world and guided them to make every effort to attain their salvation. For the ones whose faith seemed to fade, she urged them to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7.55, 430-431.

put religion at the center of their life and to renew their faith through participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

To aid faith formation, she offered four strategies which led them to grow in the life of faith. The first strategy was to focus on the ultimate goal of human life which led the human person to receive the salvation of the soul and participation in the glory of God. The second strategy was to maintain the pure intention. She guided individuals to reflect on their thoughts, words and actions from the point of view of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Giving instruction on the pure intention based on the St. Francis de Sales, she emphasized that their principal object and end should be to please God and to do everything for Him. The third strategy was the Word of God which was the source of Elizabeth's spiritual direction. Through the *Parable of the Sower* in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. Mt 13: 1-9), she stressed that God planted the seed of faith in the hearts of individuals and guided them to make their heart as a good ground and bear fruit in grace. She led them to conversion through the sharing of her meditation on the tears of St. Peter (cf. Mt 26: 69-75) and directed them to have faith based on the confession of St. Thomas (cf. John 20: 24-29), "my Lord and my God." Her spiritual direction leading to her husband's conversion was a good example on how the Word of God had the power to transform the heart. The fourth strategy was living in the presence of God. Introducing the teachings of St. Francis de Sales and the Church fathers, she guided individuals to remember that God's majesty makes holy every part of the universe and that God is everywhere and sees everything.

To live in the presence of God, Elizabeth guided individuals to deepen their prayer life and to participate in the sacraments of the Church with sincere preparation. To

promote their prayer life and awareness of the presence of God, she gave those whom she directed a mantra, *look up, looking straight upward, or gazing upwards as usual*, which would lead them to lift their heart to God and to pray to him. She suggested the sacramental life as the second sure means of living in the presence of God. She gave instruction concerning the life of the Sacraments of the Church and offered her directees the teachings of the Fathers of the Church on the sacraments of the Church. She guided them to participate in the sacraments of the Church.

Elizabeth gave spiritual direction concerning the conversion to the life of faith to individuals and offered some strategies to help them deepen their faith life. She guided them to live according the ultimate goal of union with God, focusing on the glory of God and the salvation of their souls. To attain this goal she stressed the necessity of having a pure intention. She encouraged them to listen to and to learn by reading the Word of God and to live in the presence of God. She offered her own life as an example. In a letter to a Sister, Elizabeth expressed the experience of the presence of God on her death bed:

I do not suffer, I am weak, it is true; but how happy and quiet the day passes! If this be the way of death, nothing can be more peaceful and happy; and if I am to recover, still, how sweet to rest in the arms of our Lord! I never felt more sensibly the presence of our Dearest than since I have been sick; it seems as if our Lord or his blessed Mother stood continually by me, in a corporeal form, to comfort, cheer, and encourage me, in the different weary and tedious hours of pain. But you will laugh at my imaginations; still, our All has many ways of comforting his little atoms.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.331, 710.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ELIZABETH SETON'S SPIRITUAL DIRECTION 2:

DISCERNMENT OF ONE'S VOCATION IN LIFE

Elizabeth as a spiritual director assisted individuals to discern their life circumstances in order to fulfill their vocation in life as a Christian, religious, or priest through the sharing of her spiritual and psychological wisdom. To Elizabeth, the goal of spiritual direction concerning the discernment of one's vocation in life was to unite with God in the daily living of each one's special vocation. Thomas Merton explained the root meaning of spiritual direction:

the root meaning of spiritual direction. . . is a continuous process of formation and guidance, in which a Christian is led and encouraged in his special vocation, so that by faithful correspondence to the graces of the Holy Spirit he may attain to the particular end of his vocation and to union with God. This union with God signifies not only vision of God in heaven but, as Cassian specifies, that perfect purity of heart which, even on earth, continues to sanctify and attains to an obscure experience of heavenly things.¹

As a co-discerner, Elizabeth's crucial task was to guide individuals to discern their vocation in the hope for eternal union with God. In her retreat meditation, "The Sisters of Charity meditate on the service of God," she shared this view with the Sisters and urged them to discern their service in this light:

Do we serve God in Hope, looking to his promises, confiding in his love, seeking his kingdom, and leaving the rest to him - do we rely on his merits, his pains, his sufferings fulfilling our common duties in union with him - our contrition united to his contrition, our tears to his tears, looking forward to the time when he will

¹ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1960), 5-6.

appear when we shall see him as he is (cf. 1 John 3: 2), see him in his glory, and be glorified with him - rejoicing in Hope! - for Hope *shall never* be confounded.²

To Elizabeth, hope for eternal union with God in grace was a guiding light in the discernment of the everyday life journey because the life on earth was a path toward this ultimate goal. She tirelessly guided individuals to be aware of the fundamental goal of their vocation which is eternal union with God and to discern their life's issues from this point of view. To assist individuals to know where God might be calling them, she offered them some methods of discernment which would lead them to fulfill their vocations given by God in their life.

1. Discernment in the light of the Holy Spirit

Elizabeth emphasized the Holy Spirit as the most important resource for the discernment in the journey toward the union with God. She experienced the guiding light of grace in her own life. In a letter to a clergyman, she shared her spiritual journey from the dark night to the illumination of grace which led her in the right direction toward God and stressed the great role of grace given by God:

And the soul, burying itself in the chaos of mystery, always rested in stupidity within; but without[,] played with children, amused with the sisters, yielding to all minutiae, attentive to all necessities, with the liberty with which a philosopher suffered and endured, lending the machine for the beauty of order; not one spark of grace can the soul discern in it all, but rather a continuation of the original fault, of desire to do, to be loved, to please! and, so far from the simplicity of grace which would turn every instant to gold, it felt ashamed when returned to the tabernacle, as if it had played the fool, or acted like those women who try to please company and show all their ill-humors at home. . . . Yet it might be a grace, for as often he saw it was no more in my choice to hinder these evaporations than to stop the giddiness of my head in a fever; and they (the community) are so loving, so fixed on Mother's every look, clouds or sunshine, so depending,

² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 332.

sometimes I would shudder at the danger of such a situation, if it was not clear as light that it is a part of the materials he takes for his work;³

Elizabeth's Trinitarian piety helped her to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. She acknowledged that God was truly a creator, redeemer, and sanctifier in the spiritual journey of human life. In her reflection on "Almighty Giver of All Mercies," she shared her Trinitarian piety with individuals and guided them to recognize the works of the Triune God in their own lives:

O Almighty Father - O Blessed spirit, comforter . . . of the sick and sorrowing Soul, O Saviour Eternal Redeemer of Sinners, who gave thy Life to save us - assist a miserable Sinner who strives with the corruption of Sin, and desires above all things to break the Snares of the enemy - I am O Lord like one in the net of the fowler (cf. Ps. 124:7), set me now at liberty, cleanse me and fit me for thy presence and the Soul that now sorrows shall rejoice.⁴

To help the discernment of her directees, Elizabeth guided individuals to be aware of God's infinite love and continual care for them and His presence in their everyday life. In the reflection, "Exercise of the Presence of God," she stressed God's continual love and care for them through the work of the Trinity:

Why did he give us our Saviour to be our Brother and the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, if he did not mean that we should be *one with him* - Why would our Saviour remain with us in the blessed Sacrament of the altar, and remain *in us* also with the Father and the holy Spirit as he declared himself, unless it was to banish that servile fear from our heart so opposed to the confidence and love he requires of us;⁵

Elizabeth directed individuals to discern everything in the light of the Holy Spirit in order to choose the right path toward union with God. In her journal to Rebecca Seton

³ CW, 2, sec., 7.318, 704.

⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8.22, 37.

⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 405.

dated November 11, 1803, she directed her to live in the Holy Spirit and taught her the prayer to the Holy Spirit:

the Spirit of Grace . . . would lead me - in the anguish of my Soul shuddering to offend my Adored Lord - I have this day solemnly engaged that through the strength of His Holy Spirit I will not again expose that corrupt and Infirm nature to the Smallest temptation I can avoid - and therefore if my Heavenly Father will once more reunite us all that I will make a daily sacrifice of every wish even the most innocent least they should betray me to a deviation from the Solemn and sacred vow I have now made - O my God imprint it on my Soul with the strength of thy Holy Spirit that by his Grace supported and defended I may never more forget that Thou are my all.⁶

In her correspondence, she often emphasized living in *the grace of moment*. According to Regina Bechtle, the grace of moment was “a recurring theme in her spirituality.”⁷ In “Instructions on Religious Life,” she guided the Sisters to live every moment of life in the grace of moment:

A great esteem of their present grace, truly the grace of the moment - a grace from eternal love, thought of for us by our Jesus in his cradle, at Nazareth, in the desert - especially in the desert where he made his great retreat for us - where he permitted himself to be tempted for us (cf. Mt 4: 1-16), to comfort us in our temptations - We must be prepared to meet them, to resist them, as we are sure we must meet them in one shape or other, even in this moment of our best graces. . . . To be deeply recollected not only in our separation from our common exertions and in our exterior composure but in the true peace and calmness, composure, stillness and solitude of the interior having our conversation in heaven (cf. Phil. 3: 20), with our heavenly Father, our Jesus, our Sanctifier in the true Spirit of prayer, the means of all means to secure the best graces.⁸

In giving spiritual direction, Elizabeth often referred to the grace of moment which would lead the soul to be open to the Holy Spirit. In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel

⁶ CW, 1, sec., 2. 5, 247.

⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9.1, 235, n. 28. Cf. Regina Bechtle, *The Spirituality of St. Elizabeth Seton From an East-west Perspective*, Translated by Sung-Hae Kim, Seoul, Korea: Spiritual Life Publication, 2002, 86-88.

⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9.1, 235.

Bruté dated June, 1816, she guided him to open his mind and heart to the grace of moment: “but for the advices which would assist I am truly silly, going as you know to meet every body [everybody] in the grace of the moment, which we never can know till we find the humour [humor] and temper of the one we are to meet with.”⁹ In another letter to Bruté, she directed him to offer his restless soul to the grace of the moment: “again your restless thoughts strike me to the Soul - you made the lesson of “the grace of the moment.”¹⁰

When Elizabeth’s friend, George Weis, had trouble in business and was in distress, Elizabeth directed him not to “lose a moment of this time of grace and benediction for laying up your heavenly treasure (cf. Mt 6.20).”¹¹ When she knew that Sister Cecilia O’Conway was suffering in her mission community, in a letter dated November 20, 1818, she guided her to live in the grace of moment in the midst of darkness:

My precious Cis I write from the big book with many tears this morning the sentence “Good and faithful servant enter the Joy of thy Lord - thou has been faithful over a little.”(cf. Mt 25:21.). Oh my Cis how little is all that passes with this life - yet my Mother you say they are of Eternal consequence - they are - and therefore we must be so careful to meet our grace - if mine depended on going to a place to which I had the most dreadful aversion, in that place there is a store of grace waiting for me - What a comfort - the black clouds I forsee [foresee] may pass by harmless, or if in that Providence of grace they fall on me, Providence has an IMMENSE PARAPLUI(Umbrella) to hinder or break the force of the storm - what a comfort -Isaac come forth - the wood and fire are here let not the Victim

⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7.31, 402.

¹⁰ CW, 2, sec., 7.208, 607. “This probably indicates the influence of St. Vincent de Paul on Elizabeth. She had completed a translation of the life of Louise de Marillac by Nicholas Gobillon and was probably working on a translation of the first biography of Vincent de Paul by Louis Abelly at this time. An often cited theme of Vincent is ‘Grace has its moments’ (Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, C.M., March 16, 1644).” CW, 2, 607, n. 6.

¹¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.129, 243.

be wanting - poor Father Abraham in a black cap with limping leg is going up the hill, come along my son (cf. Gen. 22:1-19).¹²

Elizabeth urged individuals to live according to the Holy Spirit in order to make the right discernment in their everyday life. She showed them how to live according to the Holy Spirit based on the instruction of St. Francis de Sales: “to live according to the spirit - is to love according to the spirit - to live according to the flesh - is to love according to the flesh - for love is the life of the Soul - as the soul is the life of the body. . . . to live according to the spirit is to act-to speak-to think in the manner the spirit of god requires of us.”¹³

2. Discernment according to the Will of God

Elizabeth as a co-discerner offered *the will of God* as the second method for discernment of life’s concerns and challenges in the journey toward God. She guided individuals to learn from Jesus Christ whose standard of discernment was the will of God. Emphasizing that the first rule of Jesus Christ was “to do his *Father’s will*,” she gave the following instruction: “well then, the first end I propose in our daily work is to do *the will of God* - secondly, to do it in the manner he wills it - and thirdly, *to do it because it is his will*.”¹⁴ Then she gave further guidance on how to discern the will of God in daily life by sharing of her own experience:

I know what his will is by those who direct me, whatever they bid me do, if it is ever so small in itself is the will of God for me. - Then do it in the *manner* he

¹² CW, 2, sec., 7.195, 595.

¹³ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 82-83. Cf. Rom. 8: 4-6 She wrote it on the end pages (236-238) of her book, *The Following of Christ*. This book is “now in the Archives of the Sisters of charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.” CW, 3b, 77, n. 1.

¹⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9.9, 255.

wills it - not sewing an old thing as if it were new, or a new thing as if it were old - not fretting because the oven is too hot, or in a fuss because it is too cold etc. etc. - You understand, not flying and driving because you are hurried, nor creeping like a snail because no one pushes you - Our dear Saviour was never in extremes. And the third object is, *to do this will, because God wills it*, that is to be ready to quit at any moment, and do any thing [anything] else we may be called to do.¹⁵

To make the right discernment, she directed individuals to learn from the obedience of Jesus Christ to his Father: “be faithful in your union with our saviour [savior] in every action along the day - doing them all in him and with him for the same end he did his, which was to glorify his Father, and do his Will.”¹⁶ In “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” Elizabeth guided individuals to think of “*honouring [honoring] the will of God, embracing the will of God, and confiding in the will of God*” in the discernment of their every action.¹⁷ She guided them to see everything in the light of the will of God: “Keep in mind that not the least thing can happen to you without the will of God with regard to you (whatever fault another may have in it) deposit then in the heart of your Saviour.”¹⁸

Raymond Studzinski pointed out that discernment in spiritual direction “always focused on God’s action in a person’s life and on what an appropriate response to God’s action should be.”¹⁹ Elizabeth guided individuals to discern the will of God in their lives and to follow His will because they would receive God’s abundant blessings when they

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 528.

¹⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 533.

¹⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 526.

¹⁹ Studzinski, 77.

followed His will. Furthermore she guided them to make a habit of seeking and following the will of God in their everyday life. In her “Exercise of the Presence of God,” she wrote:

little by little (if we are resolute and faithful) almost insensibly we will find that God will at last crown our perseverance, and what seemed at first so difficult will not only be our joy and consolation, but become as easy and habitual as our very breathing the air around us, and as St. Bonaventure expresses it the pious and tender movement of our will will carry us on spiritual wings to God, as quickly and with as little deliberation as we draw a sigh or respiration.²⁰

In her correspondence also, Elizabeth directed individuals to discern the will of God in their lives. In her Journal to Rebecca Seton, she guided her to think about the will of God by sharing her own experience: “I cannot be recieved in thy Heavenly Kingdom without a pure and faithful Heart supremely devoted to thy Holy Will. - O keep me for the sake of Jesus Christ.”²¹ In a letter to her friend, Eliza Sadler, dated May 12, 1812, she led her to think of the will of God by sharing her wish to live according to God’s will: “You believe me when I say with my whole soul his will be done forever.”²² In another letter to the same person dated September 14, 1812, she again stressed: “for never by a free act of the mind would I ever regret *his will*. . . *HIS WILL forever*.”²³

Elizabeth was concerned about individuals who were suffering and guided them to discern their sufferings in the light of the will of God which would eventually lead them to his blessings. While she was in a sorrowful state after the loss of her daughter, Anna Maria, on March 12, 1812, she guided her benefactor and friend, George Weis, to

²⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 404.

²¹ Ibid., CW, 1, 247, sec., 2. 5.

²² Ibid., CW, 2, 217, sec., 6.104.

²³ Ibid., CW, 2, 227, sec., 6.116.

discern the will of God in his suffering and see things in the light of eternity in a letter dated March 20, 1812: “Adorable will of our adored be done forever. Our life now can be but for a moment - and then - o our dear, dear Eternity.”²⁴ In another letter to Weis, dated March 26, 1813, she directed him to look at things in light of the will of God: “I never thought of sending you so small a gift, as I know it would be but as one penny to you - but his will forever in the smallest as well as in the greatest thing I know you say Amen.”²⁵

In a letter to Scott dated February 16, 1816, Elizabeth indirectly guided her to discern God’s will in the events of her life by sharing her own experience and emphasized that everything happened by God’s providence: “Our God is God - all as he pleases - I am the happiest creature in the thought that not the least thing can happen but by his will or permission, and all for the best - Our God! echo it back dearest one, Our God and love your poor bad Betsey Seton.”²⁶ When she received a letter from her former student, Juliana White, and found that she was suffering, she encouraged her to realize how God was pleased with her fortitude in suffering and how suffering led her close to the fountain of goodness in a letter dated February 1817:

Your little word about the pain on your heart went deep to mine which loves you with a double love seeing how much our Lord is pleased to try your fortitude and piety, and my hope always remaining that at last seen our changeable life in its true colours [colors] you will be better able to make a choice Perhaps of the *better part* (cf. Luke 10: 43) which can never be taken away and suffers no change but

²⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6. 102, 215.

²⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6.129, 242.

²⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7. 6, 373.

in getting closer and closer to the fountain of all good . . . many thoughts of you, but all in our God that you may but do his Will.²⁷

As a co-discerner, Elizabeth assisted individuals to discern God's call in many ways. She directed individuals, who were attracted to the religious or the priestly life, to discern their vocations in the light of the will of God. In a letter to Cecilia Seton who had a great desire to be a Sister in Elizabeth's community, Elizabeth guided her to wait for a sign of the will of God in discerning her vocation:

My own dear Child - I think I can see your dear and tender heart after all its struggles resting in quiet repose on the bosom of our adored Lord . . . so be it dearest and while his adorable ever blessed will is accomplishing in your own Sister here, do you stay courageously in your station and wait until he makes it as clearly known in you. and for this end I shall let our dear honoured Bishop [John Carroll] read your last letter and that part of Mr. [James] Redmonds - which relates to you, and then whatever he decided I shall conclude to be the will of God, and will never say one word more about your joining me until it pleases him to shew us it is right. you see it my darling but I fear you cannot fly it. . . . However Fear must not dwell in our breast a moment - *Hope* and *Jesus* is our banner.²⁸

When her friend from New York, Rose Stubbs, asked her for direction concerning the discernment of her religious vocation, Elizabeth in a letter dated January 24, 1810, explained the mission of her community and guided her to follow the will of God:

Now my dear to answer to some observations in your letter - you say very true that a religious life cannot be embraced without many considerations . . . but knowing your love of religion and your dear parents great love for it I only mentioned to you that there was such a home for you . . . as to the rest Almighty God will do what is right - Our Community increases very fast, and no doubt will do a great deal of good in the care of the sick and instruction of children which is our chief business. . . . Oh what a comfort while the church of God is reduced to such distress and seems as it were abandoned to its enemies he permits us to serve him in peace in this happy corner, where he stays with us even under our very roof - we have an elegant little Chapel . . . remember it is your home and your dear Sisters in any day when your dear parents and almighty God may think

²⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7. 76, 465-466.

²⁸ CW, 2, sec., 5. 22, 64.

proper, and this I tell you only for your and their comfort in case any thing happened to them.²⁹

When a seminarian, Mr. Smith, one of the early students at Mount St. Mary's, had gone home because of doubts concerning his vocation to be a priest, Elizabeth sent him a letter asking him to discern God's holy call concerning his vocation. She directed him to realize how precious the vocation of the priesthood was:

My Heart has gone Home with you as a Parent follows the child she loves when she sees it treading in uncertain steps doubtful whether it will find the right way - To be engaged in the Service of Our Adored Creator, to be set apart to that service, and thereby separated [separated] from all the contentions the doubts and temptations that surround the man whose lot is cast in the busy scene of the World, is in itself a sufficient plea on the side which I wish you to engage - but to be placed as a representative of God Himself - to plead for Him, to be allowed the exalted privilege of serving Him continually, to be his Instrument in calling Home the wandering Soul and sustaining, comforting and Blessing your fellow creatures - are considerations which bear no comparison with any other and should lead you to consider the very possibility of your realizing the Hope they present as the Most precious and valued gifts this life can afford.³⁰

In the same letter, Elizabeth pointed out that the vocation of the priesthood came from God and reminded the young seminarian that he had responded to God's call in grace in the beginning and directed him to discern sincerely whether it was God's will that he become a priest:

let me in the exercise of Sincere friendship remind you that every thing [everything] "Good is from above" (cf. James 1:17) and you cannot of yourself have the good and exalted desire you expressed this Evening. The grace of even wishing to belong to God must come from Himself, and be cautious my dear dear

²⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6. 22, 104-105. At this time Elizabeth was concerned about the future of the Catholic Church because "Pope Pius VII had been made a prisoner by Napoleon Bonaparte at Grenoble, Savona, and Fontainebleau successively." Later when "the Allies entered Paris in March 1814, he returned to Rome amidst great rejoicing. Pius VII lived until 1823." CW, 2, 105, n.6.

³⁰ CW, 2, sec., 7. 304, 695-696. "Mr. Smith may be either Joseph L. Smith, Jr., or his brother Leonard, both early students at Mount St. Mary's when their sister, Henrietta, attended St. Joseph's Academy." CW, 2, 695, n.1.

friend how you damp or check that good gift which should be cherished as the richest mercy - and I pray that those dear friends whose opinion will be your guide may consider how much they may one day wish that they had encouraged, without regard to temporal interest, the disposition on which your eternal interests are depending.³¹

Elizabeth also guided individuals who had doubts concerning their present vocation and were thinking of transferring to another one to discern what God's will was concerning their true vocation. She was especially concerned about Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté because she knew his wish to be a missionary in the foreign country and heard a rumor that he might not come back to the United States from France. In her Journal 1815 written for Bruté while he was in France, she helped him in his discernment of God's will for him by reminding him how good he was in his present vocation as a spiritual director for her community:

O Yes the only *real* - our spiritual world how *real* and unchangeable its dear dependencies - no dividing oceans, variations of time and the painful etceteras - *these* I am ever praying and begging for the accomplishment of his will and the establishment of his Kingdom *in* and through his so dear Missioner [Rev. Simon Bruté] - distance and time forgotten - wrapt! //yet such continual gathering of clouds - I read again the hundred *direction* papers of the two years past with yet greater delight than the first reading and gather new courage and stronger Faith as when they were first applied - the grace as present as when they came fresh from the hot press of the burning heart - now cold perhaps - and *surely* far and far away.³²

Although Rev. Simon Gabriel Brute wished to work for the poor as a missionary, when he came back to the United States from France, he found that he had been appointed president of St. Mary's College in Baltimore, MD. Elizabeth encouraged him to accept this position as the will of God, although she knew that Bruté desired to serve

³¹ CW, 2, sec., 7. 304, 696.

³² CW, 2, sec., 6.195, 330.

the poor. In a letter to him dated January 1816, she expressed her compassion toward him who was engaged in endless discussions and myriad details instead of serving the poor and encouraged him to follow the will of God even in the least of things he did:

You would never believe dear G[briel] the good *Your return* does to this soul of your little Mother . . . giving up *again* the full liberty you lawfully and justly possessed - exchanging for a truly heavy chain, and the endless labyrinth of discussions and wearisome details to give the softest expressions – in proportion as my PRIDE in you increases my own littleness and empty Sacrifice to our beloved is more evident, and I am ambitious (indeed G often with many tears) to get up with you a little by a generous *will*, and more faithful service in the little I can do - and really take it as my most serious affair to pray *well* for you, and get prayers from *All*.³³

In a letter to Bruté dated June 1816, Elizabeth encouraged him to practice God's will of the present moment: "in this little life of your Mother not a moment since I saw you to write a word but the meditation, or a Volume would have not been enough to say half the heart that fastens to yours more and more if possible . . . well, I will see you go to do his will of the present moment with no other sighs or desires but for its most full and complete accomplishment."³⁴ She helped Bruté to be confident that he was continually doing the will of God from the moment of his decision to come back to the United States, although he could have chosen to live in his own country, France. She directed him to find the will of God in whatever he did in his president's office:

You did not leave All the whole delight of your France and family but to do his only Will . . . "Lo I Come" (cf. Ps. 40: 8-9) Oh the grace of that word to my Soul this week of grace - Oh the thirst to do that will . . . and the greater thirst that *he* may do it to its full Consummation who came so far to meet it . . . whose responsibilities are of an Eternal Consequence - My Son - be most careful to find

³³ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 1, 365. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté returned "from Europe in November 1815 and began to serve as president of St. Mary's College in Baltimore, a post he held until 1818." *CW*, 2, 365, n.1.

³⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 31, 401-402.

the will, not by the dear coaxing your Mother charged you with, but by a Prayer of *full* confidence such as Your Silly Sinner dares to use, to compel him to do only his will in this moment of Suspension . . . from the last look out of the gate I hastened to the dear bench in the choir (where the clay of the so “beautiful feet” (cf. Is. 52: 7) yet remained and left their full blessing of Peace) to begin this *FULL PRAYER* . . . to take him by storm G[briel] - I will be faithful to it, you know how many times a day and the nights so near him until we know the FINAL word.³⁵

Bruté seemed to think again about his old dream to be a missionary in China or India, while he was president of St. Mary’s College in Baltimore. When Elizabeth received Bruté’s letter concerning his plan to go to Canada as a missionary with Rev. Samuel Cooper and to serve the native people there, she sent him a letter in November 1818 urging him again to discern God’s will. She expressed her understanding of his dream because it was also her hidden dream and shared the result of her discernment which was to do whatever was given to her at this moment in grace. Then, she guided him to discern whether his plan was based on his own will or the will of God:

Blessed you Your little Bête Mother [foolish mother] is lost these days past in your Canada letters - O my - to see Man a wild Savage - a polished savage, Man in any state, what a Savage unless he be in Christ . . . Oh blessed I gasp with desires to him whom you are now carrying in and on your breast for your full whole accomplishment of his blessed will . . . Oh G if I was light and life as you are I would shout like a madman alone to my God and roar and groan and sigh and be silent all together till I had baptized a 1000 and snatched these poor Victims from Hell - and pray Madame Bête say you, why does not your zeal make its flame through your own little Hemisphere? - true, - but rules, prudence, subjections, opinions etc dreadful walls to a burning SOUL wild as mine and sombodys - for me I am like a fiery Horse I had when a girl, whom they tried to break by making him drag a heavy cart, and the poor beast was so humbled that he could never more be inspired by whips or caresses, and wasted to a skeleton till he died . . . but you and Mr. Cooper might waste to Skeletons to some purpose, and after wasting be sent still living to the glories of the Kingdom - in the meantime that Kingdom come (cf. Mt 6:10) - every day I ask my Bête Soul what I

³⁵ CW, 2, sec., 7. 47, 421. “Elizabeth slept in the room by the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved.” CW, 2, 421, n. 13.

do for it in my little part assigned, and can see nothing but to smile, caress, be patient, write, pray and WAIT before him.³⁶

Knowing Bruté's agitated mind due to his dream to be a missionary, Elizabeth again sent him a letter directing him to be aware of the grace of the moment and to discern the will of God in the light of present situation:

I owe you perhaps my very Salvation by the faults and sins it has saved me from, yet Physician you will not heal yourself (cf. Luke 4: 23) - you surely would not leave your Brother [Rev. John Dubois] now, and if our God does indeed graciously destine you for China will he not seeing the overflowings [overflowing] of your boiling heart for it open an evident door - the "infidelities" blessed which may keep his designs suspended - at that another thing - that the point of reparation! and WE WILL DO OUR BEST.³⁷

The writings of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté witnessed how Elizabeth's direction helped him to discern the will of God in his vocation. In his writing, *Mother Seton*, Bruté reviewed Elizabeth's spiritual direction concerning the discernment of his dream to be a foreign missionary:

On the contrary, she told me that her joy before God would be to see me in China, in regard to which I had sometimes expressed to her my feeble thoughts which would have pleased her more, had they been more generous, and more faithful. At other times she rather reproached me for entertaining such foreign thoughts instead of yielding myself with a good will to the Providence of God, in those places, and occupations to which He called me at the time.³⁸

When Sister Cecilia O'Conway continued to have difficulties at her assignment in New York, she asked Elizabeth to guide her in discerning her wish to transfer to a cloistered community. Knowing Cecilia's love of God and her suffering at the mission

³⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7. 193, 593-594.

³⁷ CW, 2, sec., 7. 208, 607. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté had been "trained as physician in France." CW, 2, 607, n.7. "Simon Bruté had the heart of a missionary and may have dreamed of serving in the foreign missions in China. A few years later, Bruté was accepted as a missionary in New Holland, Australia, but he never went there." CW, 2, 607, n. 8.

³⁸ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 84-85.

community, Elizabeth sent her a letter concerning discernment of her vocation and directed her to discern the will of God in the light of the present situation in 1817:

I do not feel the least uneasy about you - if you suffer so much the better for our high journey above - the only fear I have is that you will let the old string pull too hard for solitude and silence, but look to the Kingdom of souls - the few to work in the little Vineyard (cf. Luke 10:2.), this is not a country my dear one for Solitude and Silence, but of warfare and crucifixion - You are not to stay in his silent agonies of the garden at night, but go from post to pillar to the very fastening on the cross and mind my lady how you dare glance a thought at pulling out the nail (cf. Luke 22:39-46) which he put in with my hand while his own so dear will hammer it up to the very head I expect - I beg him with a mothers agony to do it softly and tenderly - would wish so to hold your dear head while he does it, but he answers no one held his and . . . but yet he will hold himself supporting with one hand, and fastening with the other - My Celia - child of my Soul to OUR GOD I commit you.³⁹

Elizabeth continually guided Sister Cecilia to do her best in the present moment and discern the will of God in the midst of her distress: "My Souls Cicil . . . God is God, in it all - if you are to do his work the strength will be given, if not my Cis, someone else will do it and you come again to your corner - no great affair where his dear Atom is, if only his will is done."⁴⁰ In another letter to Sister Cecilia dated January 24, 1819, Elizabeth again directed her to discern her doubt of the present vocation according to the will of God:

My own loved Cecil - It is a dark gloomy morning so I take it to say the little painful word to her my Soul loved, who it appears is very sick of the old sickness she and I so often nursed before - but say beloved Soul how many times did we agree, that if there could remain a doubt about the present situation, the fears that would follow a change brought about by our own Will, and against the will of all those who are answerable, after a clear statement of the doubts has been so often made, how often did we not agree that all this considered it was better to go on,

³⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 107, 498-499. "Cecilia had a penchant for contemplation and the cloister. Eventually, in 1823, she transferred to the Ursulines in Montreal and was known as Mother Marie of the Incarnation until her death there." *CW*, 2, 499, n. 2.

⁴⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 116, 506.

and take the abundant sweet heavenly grace from day to day, only seeking and seeing him in all our little duties (so small an offering) - and taking from the hands of all around us every daily cross and trial (cf. Luke 9:23) as if he gave it himself - so you and I agreed and since I staid quietly on this one principle I have had rest for Soul and Body, but you have been in the clouds again beloved - Oh may they soon disperse . . . May our ALL guide, direct and controul and comfort you - I carry you before him continually in my heart is all I can do.⁴¹

As a co-discerner, Elizabeth helped priests to fulfill their office in grace and aided them to discern how they executed their office as a priest according to the will of God. She guided a young priest, Rev. John Hickey, to sincerely perform the office of his priesthood according to the will of God who called him to do His work on the earth. While she attended the Sunday Mass in the Church, she was dumbfounded when she listened to the homily given by Hickey. Although Hickey was a good man, it seemed that he did not prepare his homily and did not deliver the Gospel message because of his incoherent talk. In a letter to Bruté in France dated May 8, 1815, she expressed her concern about Hickey's preaching at the Sunday Mass at the Church and described her spiritual direction to him:

in the mean time gave our Rev. J[ohn] Hickey a scolding he will remember - the congregation so crowded yesterday - and so many strangers to whom he gave a sermon so evidently lazy and answered this morning "I did not trouble myself much about it Mam" O Sir, that awakens my anger do you remember a priest holds the honor of God on his lips do you not trouble you to spread his fire he wishes so much enkindled, if you will not study and prepare while young, what when you are old - there is a Mothers lesson - "but prayer" - yes prayer and *preparation too*. blessed Soul God has not given - yet, he may give.⁴²

⁴¹ CW, 2, sec., 7.202, 600-601. "Old sickness" is underlined twice. It may refer to Cecilia's persistent penchant for a more contemplative and cloistered life than that of the Sisters of Charity." CW, 2, 600, n. 1.

⁴² CW, 2, sec., 6.195, 323.

Elizabeth assisted Rev. John Hickey to prepare good sermons, but he did not make much progress in it. In her Journal to Bruté, she described her spiritual direction to Hickey: "I pray for him more than ever for your crazy English, and scold him with all authority of an *Ancient* . . . my friend if your subject is unintelligible for want of preparation and connection what becomes of *Your* grace and *theirs* - he shrugs his shoulders and says "pray for me" - so it goes - O Eternity."⁴³ She continually gave spiritual direction to Hickey to discern what the priesthood meant for him according to the will of God. In a letter to him dated February 28, 1820, she directed him:

My heart and soul this week past has been under the press of the Beatitude 'Blessed are the Pure of heart they SHALL SEE GOD!' (cf. Mt 5:8). O my Brother take the Words on Yours, and my Sunday dear Communion I will beg our God to write them on it. Happy happy are you to love All for him, every bent of your hearts affections, every power of your Soul turned Wholly to him, without even the mixture of the innocent sojourning awhile with your old Father and dear Brother - how much Purer is your service where you are above the mist of earthly attraction. . . . Your Father and Brother here are doing what would seem far beyond human possibility, but God will support and in his own time give them help no doubt.⁴⁴

In another letter to Hickey dated July 2, 1820, written six month before her death, Elizabeth guided him to think of the will of God by sharing the joy of her approaching death in her acceptance of God's will:

We see when our Lord wills a thing how quick it comes about . . . Oh my father friend could I hear my last stage of cough and feel my last stage of pain in the tearing away my prison walls how would I bear my joy - thought of going home called and by his Will what a transport but they say don[']t you fear to die, such a sinner must fear, but I fear much more to live and know as I do that every evening

⁴³ CW, 2, sec., 6.195, 331. Elizabeth helped Bruté's English, especially in his sermon.

⁴⁴ CW, 2, sec., 7.237, 640-641.

examine finds my account but lengthened and enlarged - I don[']t fear Death half as much as my hateful vile self.⁴⁵

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté praised Elizabeth's spiritual direction concerning the priesthood. In his writing, *Mother Seton*, he stated: "No soul has so forcible excited mine to see what it is to be the priest of my God, Pray, my Mother, yes, pray for me."⁴⁶ He expressed how Elizabeth helped his priestly vocation: "You whom I like to call a mother here, as I call one in France . . . you have so well helped me better to know, yes better still, a priest of his as I was, to know my happiness and desire, but alas, so vainly desire to impart the same to others to know and love and say Jesus."⁴⁷

3. The Discernment of Spirits

Elizabeth as a co-discerner offered individuals the discernment of spirits as the third method in their journey toward eternity in the hope of the union with God. As referred to in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth wrote the instructions based on "Rules for Discernment of Spirits" I and II in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. In the writing, "St. Ignatius's Spiritual Doctor for Beginners," she guided individuals to be aware of the movements of spirits in their souls:

The soul being a spirit it can only be acted on by GOD, or his Angels, or the Demons, as it sometimes is by itself – God and his angels can lead us only to what is good, the Demons only to evil, the soul itself may lead us to both good and evil. Here are some marks by which we may know under which of these influences the

⁴⁵ CW, 2, sec., 7.252, 658-659.

⁴⁶ Bruté, *Mother Seton*, 70.

⁴⁷ ASJPH, 7-3-1-3, #B164, "Simon Bruté to Elizabeth Seton," quoted in Annabelle M. Melville, Betty Ann McNeil, D.C. ed., *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: 1774-1821* (Hanover, PA: The Sheridan Press, 2009), 337, chap. 12, n. 7.

soul may be acting, that she may know herself better and use the necessary remedies.⁴⁸

To help the discernment of Spirits, Elizabeth also offered individuals “*The Two Standards*” written by A. Claude Judde, S.J. who explained St. Ignatius Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*. She guided individuals to look at two “generals [Jesus Christ and Satan] at War with each other [who] assembled their troops to engage in battle” and urged them to follow Jesus Christ instead of the evil one because Jesus would offer “the permanent happiness to which this mortified and painful life would lead.”⁴⁹

To assist individuals in progress in the life of faith, Elizabeth offered “Ignatius’s Spiritual Doctor for the Advanced,” based on “the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits II.” She guided individuals to discern the movement of the soul in the light of St. Ignatius’ teaching:

The property of God and his good angels is to infuse true Spiritual joy in the soul, and banish the trouble and sadness which the Devil tries continually to sow in it; He has many ways of introducing his reasonings [reasoning] in our hearts with those of the good spirit, but there is an easy rule for discerning their different persuasions - the good spirit is always marked by Peace, the evil by trouble - the impressions of the good spirit are simple and natural, the soul understands itself, and is easily understood - the evil spirit on the contrary perplexes and embarrasses. . . . so often the simplest soul *loving God* has more light and consolation in an interior life than can even be conceived [conceived] without the experience of it, and its reasonings [reasoning] are so true and precise as to prove they come only from God, who acts upon it as on a new Creation saying again “let there be light,” (cf. Gen. 1: 14) and light is made, without predisposition or preparation – therefore the church calls the Holy Spirit “Spirit Creator.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 2, 236-237.

⁴⁹ CW, 3a, sec.,10.5, 573. “A. Claude Judde, S.J. (1661-1735). In his *Spiritual Exercises* St. Ignatius Loyola places this meditation on the fourth day of the second week. He uses the metaphor of Christ and Satan as commanders of two opposing armies, each trying to win the allegiance of the soul.” CW, 3a: 573, n. 123.

⁵⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 3, 242-243.

Elizabeth explained how to discern feelings of consolation based on St. Ignatius' teaching and guided individuals to be careful in their feelings of consolation:

When our consolations are preceded by sensible [sensible] causes they may come either from the good or evil spirit, yet the effects of the two are very opposite, that from the good spirit enlightning [enlightening] and strengthening us in what is good, that from the enemy leading always to relaxations and evils. the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Luke 24: 13-35) were surprised not to have known it was our Saviour who talked with them by the fire of charity which burned in their hearts while conversing with him - and so the good spirit will ever add to our love, excite us to duty and sacrifice, while the evil one makes us dissipated, presumptuous [presumptuous], and self indulgent.⁵¹

Using St. Ignatius' teaching on the discernment of Spirits, Elizabeth continually guided individuals to carefully discern the movements of spirits: "Every thing [everything] evil must be inspired by the evil spirit, but every thing [everything] good may not be inspired by the good spirit the intention even does not always secure us." Thus, she directed them to discern the movement of spirits by its fruits: "the tree is known by its fruits (cf. Mt 12: 33) better than by its look or even by its root - In short the true mark of the Good Spirit is Peace and tranquility, which preserves its impression - trouble and hurry must always be feared being always on the side of the Enemy."⁵² Then, she concluded that "the most essential mark of the GOOD Spirit is PEACE, that it acts in the soul like a gentle dew falling on sponge or a smooth substance - while the evil one is always in noise and agitation, and like rain falling on rough or stony ground."⁵³

Elizabeth's interest in the movement of spirits is revealed in her writings and correspondence. In "Gospel of Matthew Notebook," she directed individuals to equally

⁵¹ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 3, 243.

⁵² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 3, 244.

⁵³ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 3, 245.

receive good or evil in grace because God might permit them for the purification of the soul and to do the will of God trusting always in the providence of God:

But as we know from our first set out in our Pilgrimage of this world towards our Eternity, that we have always *good* on the one hand and *evil* on the other, our *third* step towards God must be to have a great Confidence in his Providence with regard to the good and evil which he permits or sends to us, receiving [receiving] them *equally*, as in the order of Grace, and *from his own hand* this *3d* step is most essential to lead us towards the main object of doing *his will*, one only *evil* can happen to us which is sin, all other trials *whatever they may be*, are meant only to try us, to purify us, and draw us to that region we are called to by detaching us from this earth where we would gather roses though we know they are covered with piercing thorns. We must let this world go round us with all its changes, and *wait in Peace* for that eternal day in which we will see the *goodness* of our God in every thing that has happened in it.⁵⁴

In a letter to an unknown person, Elizabeth stressed the movement of the evil spirit in the soul and guided this person to remember the good spirit at the foot of the cross: “the evil spirit is most active, it is true, but the good one sits in anguish at the foot of the cross, looking over all this desolation, adoring, subjecting, abandoning all to him, seeing only him, annihilating itself and all creatures before him, saying amen to the resounding alleluias, and willing any moment to go into hell itself, rather than add one more offence to the mountain it has laid already upon him.”⁵⁵

In a letter to a clergyman written after 1810 Elizabeth described how Sam [her nickname for the evil spirit] seduced her soul to commit sin and indirectly guided him to be aware of the movements of the evil spirit in him:

And if you knew only one-half my reluctance to give an instruction or a catechism . . . but the Dearest says, “You shall, you must, only because I will it;

⁵⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 532-533.

⁵⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 320, 705. As referred to in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth used the languages of the French School of spirituality, such as “annihilating (French, “*anéantissement*”), “self-abandonment and self-annihilation.” *CW*, 2, 705, n. 1.

trust your weak breast and turning head to me; I will do all. And Sam [Devil] is so cruel, whenever there is an evident success, he pushes and says, "See how they are affected! how silent and attentive! what respect! what look of love!" and tries to make distractions in every way. The poor, poor soul don't even look toward him, but keeps direct forward with our Dearest, but with such a heavy, heavy heart at this vile mixture. So, in the refectory sometimes, the tears start and the weakness of a baby comes over me; but our Dearest again says, "Look up; if you had your little morsel alone, of another quality, no pains of body or reluctance to eat, what part would I have in your meal? But here is your place: to keep order, direct the reader, give example, and eating cheerfully the little you can take, in the spirit of love, as if before my tabernacle. I will do the rest. Abandon all!" Abandon all! All is abandoned. But pray, pray for your poor one continually.⁵⁶

Elizabeth copied excerpts from the writings of the various saints and the Church Fathers in her "Gospel of Matthew Notebook" and introduced their instructions to individuals. One of them was St. Teresa of Avila's teaching concerning the work of the evil spirit: "The greatest Prejudice the Enemy can do us, without our percieving [perceiving] it, is to persuade us that we possess virtues which we have not, in order to prevent our endeavours [endeavors] to acquire them, and to lessen our humility."⁵⁷ Using the instruction of St. Teresa of Avila, Elizabeth continually guided the Sisters who were experiencing progress in virtue:

The greatest Prejudice the Enemy can do us, without our perceiving it, is to persuade us that we possess virtues which we have not, in order to prevent our endeavours (endeavors) to acquire them, and to lessen our humility. . . . If we think that our Lord has given us any virtue in particular, we must consider it as a gift which may be taken from us at any hour, as often happens, by his order who gave it. . . . Who will dare count on the virtues they posses, since at the time we want them most we find ourselves without them – rather we must acknowledge our Poverty – that we are always in debt, and have nothing to pay with. – the treasures of our Soul are in the hands of God and not in our own When God begins to bestow on us some little virtue, we must watch most carefully not to

⁵⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7. 326, 708-709.

⁵⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 551. Elizabeth's excerpts are in "*The Way of Perfection*, chap. 38." CW, 3a, 550, n. 71. Elizabeth copied "selectively and freely from St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection* (1565-1566?) and her *Life* (1562)." CW, 3a, 550, n. 70.

love it. we must be most exact on the point of detachment, for as long as we have any attachment, if it was even to a little vanity we can never advance in the way of virtue.⁵⁸

Introducing the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul, Elizabeth cautioned the Sisters not to give bad example and not to bring a bad habit into community because the evil spirit would seduce other sisters to imitate it. She guided them to continually pray to God to help them in this situation:

Whoever would well consider the evil of introducing a bad custom in community they would rather die than be the cause of it – for the Death of the body is but a small matter, while an evil drawn upon Souls is endless in its consequence and we have seen it too often that the new comers and the tepid will imitate only one evil example before them sooner than 50 good ones, because the enemy of Souls will continually bring this evil one before them and efface from their remembrance the virtues they have seen, unless they are conscious of the danger and continually beg the help of God and their good angels.⁵⁹

Elizabeth also introduced excerpts from St. Teresa of Avila's writings concerning how to avoid the evil spirit: "While we see the enemies of God uniting in the world and conspiring against him - how happy should we be to unite together in loving him, and helping each other to serve and glorify him It is a most important lesson to us, to act with great love towards each other."⁶⁰

4. Discernment Concerning the Knowledge of Self and of God

Elizabeth as a co-discerner guided individuals to acquire self-knowledge and knowledge of God as the fourth method for the discernment concerning their life's

⁵⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 551-552.

⁵⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 557. Cf. St. Vincent de Paul, *Conferences*, "On the Love of Our Vocation," December 25, 1648. CW, 3a, 557, n. 78.

⁶⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 550. Elizabeth's comments are interspersed throughout. It is known that Elizabeth borrowed books from Bruté's library and translated portions of them. Among his books was Arnauld d'Andilly, *Oeuvres de Sainte-Therese* (Paris: Denys Thierry, 1687). These sections of Teresa's writings may be from this source." CW, 3a, 550, n. 70.

vocation in God. She stressed that “the foundations of study” should be “the *knowledge of God and self*.”⁶¹

In her own experience and in her spiritual direction, Elizabeth found that the soul at times was blind concerning the knowledge of God and self. In a letter to Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté dated August 18, 1817, Elizabeth lamented how a lady whom she met did not know herself and God, even though she believed herself to be a pious Christian:

after passing a day with this poor Mrs. W[alker] and hearing her sentiments on her family affairs and affections, I see plainly why so many Souls remain in their deep darkness why the light shines so full in darkness and yet is not perceived [perceived] (cf. John 1:5.) - our God - they think they know him and love him, but have not the least glimpse of what Spirit he is of or their direct contradiction to it - Oh the deep sad impression to my soul - but we must pray this lady declares the Catholic Faith is the true Faith - but I see plainly she has obstacles to grace which our God alone can remove - Oh then to pray pray is all I see - She kept my heart so well under the press shewing [showing] all her oppositions to the reign of our Jesus (herself obstinately bent to support them) that I spent truly a day of tears and interior cry to him, to see how they bind his blessed hands, pervert his word, and yet hold up the head in boast that they are true Christians - let my heart then bleed with yours.⁶²

Elizabeth continually reminded individuals to be aware of their blindness in regard to self-knowledge. In spiritual direction, Elizabeth guided individuals using many times the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. In her “St. Teresa,” she shared St. Teresa’s reflection on self knowledge: “I seem really not to know myself. Sometimes I feel such courage and so strong a heart that it seems to me nothing is too much to do for God, and even on trial I found I was sincere . . . while the very next day I find myself so faint

⁶¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 508.

⁶² CW, 2, sec., 7. 109, 500.

hearted, that it seems to me I could not kill a fly for love of him if I had to meet the smallest opposition in doing it.”⁶³

Elizabeth reminded individuals of their blindness to their own faults and instructed them using the teachings of St. Teresa of Avila: “often we are very insensible to our faults - but is it not true that the least touch of a pin or thorn is felt by a living person, if then our Souls are not dead, but animated with the love of God should we not be very sensible to the least thing which is contrary to the duty and obligations we owe him.”⁶⁴

Elizabeth pointed out the fundamental poverty of human beings and guided individuals to be aware of God’s gifts in their lives. In “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” Elizabeth again referred to the teachings of St. Teresa of Avila as she directed individuals who presumed they were virtuous:

Who will dare count on the virtues they possess, since at the time we want them most we find ourselves without them - rather we must acknowledge our Poverty - that we are always in debt, and have nothing to pay with. - the treasures of our Soul are in the hands of God and not in our own and we know not the moment he will be pleased to leave us in the prison of our poverty and misery oppressed with want, and *that*, even through Mercy, to teach us to be humble, and convince us still more that we are nothing without him. When God begins to bestow on us some little virtue, we must watch most carefully not to love it. we must be most exact on the point of detachment, for as long as we have any attachment, if it was even to a little vanity we can never advance in the way of virtue.⁶⁵

In “7 Degrees [toward Union with God]” in “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” Elizabeth guided individuals that to know their own weakness was the important step

⁶³ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 551. Cf. *The Way of Perfection*, chap. 38.

⁶⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 552.

⁶⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 551-552. Cf. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, chap. 38; *Life*, chap. 31. CW, 3a, 550-551, n. 71 & 72.

toward the union with God: “the *Knowledge of our own corruption and weakness*, humbles us deeply before him - when we reach this step, and begin in earnest our combat with our bad nature we declare war with all the enemies of our Salvation which try to support our miserable Pride which would follow us even in our Poverty[,] Silence[,] Devotions or even in our humility.”⁶⁶ In another spiritual direction to the Sisters in the same writing, “Of Those who live *out of Enclosure*,” she gave the following guidance: “we may gain more grace in one day in which we are humbled by God and gain a knowledge of ourselves.”⁶⁷

Elizabeth often described herself as an atom in comparison with the immensity of God. She stressed how the human person as an atom was wrapped in God’s tender mercy. In a letter to a young lady, she described God as “the Father, the most tender Father of all” and herself as “his atom.”⁶⁸ In another letter to a clergyman, Elizabeth indirectly guided him by sharing her knowledge of God and self and her dependence on God’s grace in her weakness: “I am [an] atom! you are God! . . . Oh, my Father, all in my power is to abandon and adore. How good he is to let me do that!”⁶⁹

In her writings, Elizabeth guided individuals to remember that they were created in God’s image which would shed light on their discernment on everything in their lives. In her “St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Notebook,” she reminded persons who they were in the presence of God:

⁶⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 533.

⁶⁷ CW, sec., 10. 5, 3a, 555.

⁶⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7. 327, 709.

⁶⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7. 318, 704-705.

Behold O Lord thy poor ungrateful children prostrate at the feet of thy Mercy and acknowledging their unworthiness - Thou has created us after thy own Image out of nothing - thou has redeemed us with thy only Sons precious blood - thou hast sanctified us by thy holy Spirit and called us to thy holy Faith from amongst so many who are buried in the darkness of ignorance and infidelity - thou hast saved our childhood and youth from many dangers and sins – thou hast preserved our lives when thou mightest have struck us suddenly dead. . . . thou kept us *as the apple of thy eye, and as the Eagle enticing* her young to fly and hovering over them with her Spread wings, thou has taken us and carried us on thy Shoulders (cf. Deut. 32: 11).⁷⁰

In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” Elizabeth directed individuals to be aware of the image of God in each person and accept others’ conduct which sometimes gave them pain: “Often we are pained by the conduct of others, sometimes to such excess that our converse with them becomes almost insupportable -What true misery that is - cannot we find the least excuse for them, these souls made like ourselves in the image of God, redeemed in his blood, destined to the same heaven and eternity with ourselves.”⁷¹ In a letter to her son, William, dated August 4, 1815, she wrote: “O *do do* be a true man in the image of your God - cherish and keep that Soul pure so dear to him and to your Own.”⁷²

To know the self in the presence of God was the important starting point in the discernment of life’s issues in their journey toward the union with God in hope. Thus, Elizabeth directed individuals to ask God to open their eyes so that they may truly know themselves before God who is everywhere:

Let us humbly beg with the poor man in the gospel “*Lord grant that I may see*” (cf. Mk 10:51) . . . for tho’ we see not yet where can we go from his Spirit, where can we hide from his presence as the Psalmist expresses (cf. Ps. 139) -neither

⁷⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 1, 427. Elizabeth wrote this notebook based on the writing of a mystic, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi. CW, 3a, 424, n. 2.

⁷¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 527.

⁷² CW, 2, sec., 6. 199, 337.

heaven or hell or the uttermost parts of the sea can cover us from him . . . as birds in changing their places find the air wherever they fly, and fish who live in the water are surrounded by their element wherever they swim, so wherever we go we must find God every where, he is more within us, than we are in ourselves.⁷³

5. The Discernment of One's Outlook based on Senses, Mind, and Will

Elizabeth as a co-discerner guided the individuals to discern their senses, mind, and will in connection with imagination and passions and stressed the need of discernment because senses, imagination, and passion often led the person to illusion and hindered one's progress in the virtuous life. In her spiritual direction, she assisted individuals to discern their imagination and passion which were formed by their senses, mind, and will.

Raymond Studzinski gave a similar direction concerning the discernment of one's feelings, memories and imagination:

Discernment . . . engages persons holistically, in their feelings, memories, and imaginings. Within the framework of general moral principles, discernment helps people to make specific judgments about moral actions which are consistent with their graced life stories and consistent with their community's tradition of acting in response to God's call.⁷⁴

Elizabeth guided individuals to discern how the evil spirit led the soul to illusion through their senses, imagination, and passion. In the instruction to her daughter, Catherine, she wrote: "Demons of every kind busy in poisoning the senses of both men and women, and forging them chains of passion and illusions by which they will hold them for Eternity."⁷⁵

⁷³ CW, 3a, sec., 9.20, 392.

⁷⁴ Studzinski, 77.

⁷⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 497.

Elizabeth stressed that the blindness of the soul “enslaved by sensible objects” was not capable of discerning spiritual things, while the soul in purity would recognize God’s presence beyond the sensible things. In her reflection, “Exercise of the Presence of God,” she gave insightful direction:

Truly blind indeed is the Soul who sees not God in every thing - wretched they who are enslaved by sensible objects . . . The mind becomes sluggish and heavy by its attachment to the things of the earth . . . the eyes of the Soul are obscured by sin, and incapable of discerning spiritual objects. Oh then Blessed are the pure of heart . . . They see God (cf. Mt 5:8) . . . he manifests himself to them with inconceivable love, it is easy to see that purity of heart must be the best disposition to obtain this precious gift . . . for although it is certain that those who seek God sincerely will find him, and those who apply their attention to this adorable presence will with his help acquire a holy habit of it, yet he will discover himself in a far different manner to those who renounce themselves and all things for him . . . such Souls receive his most precious favours [favors], and walk in his presence continually and securely.⁷⁶

Elizabeth also guided individuals to discern their imagination which would produce good and bad results. On the one hand, she valued imagination because it would help one’s pious feelings. She explained how the Scriptures used images which evoked the human imagination and religious feelings. In her “Innocent Representations,” she emphasized the role of imagination in the religious service and pointed out that “images of Cherubim” appeared in 30 places in the Scriptures:

How can those innocent representations of God in that natural faculty of man, *imagination*, be forbidden [forbidden] - which 1st. from the very nature of man tend to support and increase his pious feelings - 2ly which were expressly directed to be described in the visions <of> inspired by God both in the ancient and the New Testament - 3ly which form the ground of all the Scriptural language which in a thousand nay we might say ten thousand places speaks of the Lord in a language quite figurative - 4ly which it is not even in our power to prevent from continually rising in our mind. . . . What application can be made by the most malignant and distorted genius of this reference Revel. 17.v. 12 [Rev. 17: 12] to

⁷⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 393-394.

images God has commanded *images* to be made and actually made use of in the religious service is evident from a hundred passages.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Elizabeth guided the individuals to discern imagination. She stressed that imagination sometimes became the instrument of evil and caused “the excessive fear” in the soul.⁷⁸

Elizabeth also instructed individuals on passions which led the soul to illusions. In “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she guided individuals to discern passions rooted in the depth of their hearts and to guard their passions in the light of faith, grace, and reason:

one particular passion generally takes the strongest root in us . . . that eagerness to follow our first impression without waiting the orders of Faith, grace, or reason. to overcome this we must check ourselves even in things of duty, going peaceably about them, and deferring when possible whatever we desire most to hasten . . . an excellent rule for our conversations and actions is *to try* always to be so master of them as to be able to give a reason for them *instead* of what so often happens and forces us to say, *I dont know why I did or said it, it was anger I was vexed etc.* This war with our passion and constant guard against them is a hard and true penance, but we must never forget that by our constancy in it we will gain a fund of unalterable peace and that innocence of Soul, and Purity of heart which is a foretaste of assurance of our Eternal felicity.⁷⁹

Elizabeth gave concrete direction in the discernment of passions connected to the senses and imagination. In the instruction to her daughter, Catherine, she guided her to discern “the *Passions* represented on a theatre” or by the amusing books in which “virtue

⁷⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 32, 53-54. “On a small scrap of paper, Elizabeth appears to be commenting on an unidentified text dealing with religious images.” CW, 3b: 53, n.1. In her “School Book (#31),” she comments that “Imagination brings interior harmony” in the book, *The Pleasure of Imagination: A Poem in Three Books*, Book 1, written by Mark Akenside (1721-1770). CW, 3a, sec., 8.2. 5. As mentioned earlier, “Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >).” Bechtle and Metz, Editorial Procedures for CW, 3a, xxvi.

⁷⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 1,471.

⁷⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 571.

itself [was] put in a false point of view” and gave her instruction for the right discernment on them:

the passions awakened and excited by the most interesting representations loosen the bridle which reserve and modesty hold at other times on the senses and imagination, and Virtue and innocence are soon imperceptibly ensnared by the false glare around them. Sentiments which may even be correct in themselves, or on paper, receive a poison gloss from the lips and attitudes of those who express them in this scene of art and illusion, whose powerful attraction can scarcely be repelled after indulgence. . . .With respect to Romances my C[atherine] (not to speak of those which are absolutely Vicious and grossly opposed to Virtue) this kind of reading must tend to the corruption of the mind because it . . . inspires a vague and restless sensibility which creates fictitious wants and desires, makes the heart sigh for what it can never possess, and it wakens passions which Virtue must suppress, and <which> in the absence of a real object fixes it in imaginary reveries which absorb its faculties and let loose the bridle of the senses.⁸⁰

In “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” Elizabeth offered three rules for the discernment on the sources of human passions based on the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul. The first rule is to discern what “troubles our peace.” She guided individuals to examine why their heart was agitated and vexed. The second rule is “what most commonly occupies our mind and thoughts.” She directed them to discern whether they originated from “our God, our Perfection, and Eternity” or from the “coming and goings of the world etc.” The third rule is “what is it that comforts and consoles us in our troubles.” She suggested the following questions to aid in their discernment: “Is it the thought of God, of our submission to his will, the sight of a crucifix, our joy to suffer

⁸⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 3, 499-500. “In the late eighteenth century, romantic novels became extremely popular. Women authors began to write stories with women heroines, containing themes that appealed to women. As a young adult Elizabeth read avidly in this genre, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile*. Her later advice to her daughter reflects a more spiritual outlook, wary of the wiles of the world.” CW, 3a, 499, n. 18. See Angle brackets (<>), n. 77 of this chapter.

something with him . . . happy the soul in this disposition.”⁸¹ She again urged individuals constantly to beg God’s grace in order to avoid the blindness of the soul by attachment to passion and imagination which lead the soul in the opposite direction of virtue:

to avoid this dreadful blindness we must constantly beg of God not to give us up to the desires of our own heart . . . expiate our faults by daily penance, and say to our Saviour with the cry of our heart *Oh grant that I may see* (cf. Mk 10: 51), or with the leper Lord heal me (cf. Mk 1: 40) . . . and turn our actions to the points quite opposite to our passion . . . Silence and meekness in what offends us . . . not a word or suggestion to obtain our desires . . . no indulgence of thoughts and imaginations on our likes or dislikes, which often are as dangerous as if we brought them to reality . . . no wish about coming or going in others or ourselves whether we are here or there, with this or that one. Our *true friend* whom we will never never lose in any time or place, who remains when all others go, our *faithful friend* for life and Death and after Death, is with us, and looks so sorrowful when we let any object or passion take his place in our heart.⁸²

6. Discernment in Light of Eternal and Global Vision and Psychological Insight

As a remedy for preventing illusion in one’s senses, mind, and will and for better understanding the person’s heart, Elizabeth directed individuals to see things in the light of eternal and global vision and to understand the psychological aspects of persons.

First of all, Elizabeth instructed individuals to discern everything in the light of *eternity*. As referred to in the previous chapters, eternity was Elizabeth’s most important instruction concerning the soul’s union with God. In her *Two Bibles*, Ellin M. Kelly pointed out that Elizabeth’s great interest in eternity was evident in her markings on two Bibles which she used in her life time as a Catholic and as a religious. Kelly continued: “Her grandson cited the ‘eternity’ written in the Notre Dame Bible, but also prominent is

⁸¹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 570.

⁸² CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 571. Cf. St. Vincent de Paul, *Conferences*, “On Meekness and the Practice of Mutual Respects,” August 19, 1646. CW, 3a, 570, n. 117.

her underlining of the phrase ‘from eternity to eternity’ three times in the Notre Dame Bible and once in the Vincennes Bible.”⁸³

The vision of eternity influenced Elizabeth in her own discernment and in her spiritual direction. In “Exercise of the Presence of God,” she urged her directees to be aware that they were called to enjoy eternal life because they were created in the image of God. She directed them to put everything in the hands of God who created the soul to enjoy eternity:

but I commend my *soul* to thy hands, thy hands which have supported and preserved my Being those hands which have been ever open to fill me with every blessing (cf. Ps. 104:28) - to them I commend my Soul *created* in your image <and> *redeemed* in your blood, and destined to *enjoy* for Eternity the fruits of your Mercy - I commit it to your hands my God, it is your own, and it ought to be eternally yours - oh then take and possess it *forever*.⁸⁴

As referred to in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth shared her love of eternity with Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté. By sharing her spiritual experience with Bruté, Elizabeth guided him to discern and live in the light of eternity. In the Journal to Bruté written on the day of Corpus Christi, 1815, she described her desire for the eternity: “*Wrapt in him*, with all that love him, how closely then with *the heart of Eternity*.”⁸⁵ In a letter to Bruté written on the feast of St. Stephen in 1816, she reminded him of the awareness of eternity in the life of the coming year: “tomorrow 1817 - Very well - Eternity hastens - heart dances while it tries to be serious on that point of points - happy Eternity to You blessed

⁸³ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 53, 91; Kelly, *Two Bibles*, 41.

⁸⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 416-417. According to the editors, the word, *forever* is “underlined three times.” CW, 3a, 417, n. 48. See Angle brackets (< >), n. 77 of this chapter.

⁸⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6. 195, 326.

President of St. Mary's.”⁸⁶ In a letter to him written in spring of 1819, Elizabeth shared with him her contemplation of eternity:

G[briel], “blessed” mind not my follies, I see the everlasting hills (cf. Bar. 5: 7) so near, and the door of my Eternity so wide open that I turn too wild sometimes . . . yet if I am not one of his Elect it is I only to be blamed, and when *going down* I must still lift the hands to the very last look in praise and gratitude for what he has done to save me - What more could he have done (cf. Micah 6:3) - that thought stops all.⁸⁷

In another letter to Brute, she stressed eternity again: “Eternity Eternity Eternity[-] A 1000 times sounding in the heart, with views of 10000's of 10000's angels and saints - the vacant throne - Suspended crown - our only beloved Interceding [Interceding].”⁸⁸

In her correspondence with former students, Elizabeth continually directed them to be aware of eternity in their everyday life. In a letter to Sarah Cauffman dated August 1813, Elizabeth guided her to live in the perspective of eternity: “we look to the heart - could you have been with us in our dear little retreat and have shared the love preparations and comforts of our Sacred Octave of the Assumption - a feast it was indeed truly a heavenly one - Oh my Sarah dear, absence from those we love!!! what will be the absence of Eternity how hard I should now feel mine from you if that dear and happy perspective was not before us.”⁸⁹ She guided Ellen Wiseman to keep eternity in sight in her everyday life in a letter dated July, 1816: “it is all but a moment and then our Eternity

⁸⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 66. 454.

⁸⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 208, 606.

⁸⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 296, 689.

⁸⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 136, 248-249.

- mind it my own dear child and keep it well in sight.”⁹⁰ In a letter to Emily, she directed her to discern her reception of Holy Communion in the light of eternity:

You know how the first Christians so well “discerning” our God in his divine Sacrament (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 29), yet received him every day as the holy Church would wish all the faithful to do inviting them daily to receive with the priest at the altar . . . Oh then my child I repeat to you what is it too much for Souls to be in constant preparation for communion, & every hour of life ready for their Eternity . . do do be ready, and beg the same for me, for what is our communion on earth but the very same as our communion above - and must therefore be a “Judgment” a “discerning” but oh never never a “condemnation” - forbid it sweet Lord, never let it be a condemnation to my child.⁹¹

In her correspondences to her friends, Elizabeth also directed them to live in the light of eternity. In a letter to Rose Stubbs dated January 24, 1810, she informed her of the death of her sister-in-law, Harriet Seton who became a Catholic in Emmitsburg, and guided Rose to live in the sight of eternity: “What is this World my dear girl - what can be our hope in it - heaven and eternity - is the only point worth thinking of.”⁹² When George Weis underwent a lot of suffering, she directed him to embrace suffering in the light of eternity in a letter dated August 28, 1810: “George is then sick and suffering; added to your daily cup that is hard indeed, but we must often draw the comparison between time and eternity, - that is the remedy for all trouble.”⁹³

Elizabeth tirelessly led her friends to think of everything in the light of eternity. Her letter to her friend, Julia Scott, revealed her direction concerning the discernment in the light of eternity. In a letter to Julia, she guided her to think of eternity in the midst of

⁹⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 35, 406.

⁹¹ *CW*, 2, app., A-7. 335, 777.

⁹² *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 22, 104.

⁹³ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 58, 156-157.

everyday life: “Sometimes the thought of you all makes me cheerful, I see you whirling about and you look all gaiety. at others sickness, sorrow, and dejection obtrude even against reason. dear dear dear a thousand times dear Julia. Eternity. do you ever see it in its long long never ending day or night.”⁹⁴ She again urged her to discern the life’s challenges in the perspective of eternity in a letter dated August 11, 1813:

if you yourself could be made to see with the eyes of your Soul and pierce these clouds of mortal cares which conceal from you the perspective of Eternity I would be glad to see you too - dare I say it - yes to see you under the iron hand which would conduct you to the feet of your Father who when once you acknowledged his claims would hold you near him by silken cords.⁹⁵

Elizabeth indirectly guided Scott to live in the light of eternity. In a letter to her dated May 20, 1815, Elizabeth expressed her hope of meeting her in eternity: “my dear dear dear Julia our Eternity - O will we meet there - and this dearer part of self too - our God - all must be committed to him.”⁹⁶ She again reminded her of eternity in a letter to her dated February 19, 1819: “An Eternity of happy years to my Julia where only you can know how dearly you are loved by your EASeton.”⁹⁷

Elizabeth gave instruction concerning discernment in everyday life in the light of eternity to her son, William who was in Italy for his job training under the Filicchi brothers’ supervision. In a letter to him dated January 1815, she wrote: “Our God - Our

⁹⁴ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 80, 191.

⁹⁵ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 134, 247.

⁹⁶ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 193, 313.

⁹⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 201,599-600.

Eternity - the last and only word!”⁹⁸ In a letter to him dated May 18, 1815, she indirectly guided William by expressing her wish to meet him in eternity: “O my William tears will overpower and my Soul cries for our Eternity! My dear dear one if the world should draw you from our God, and we not meet there! that thought I cannot stand - I will *hope*, *do hope* - my God who knows a mothers Soul sees, and he will pity.”⁹⁹ In another letter to him, she directed him to see things in the light of the eternity: “To Eternity Eternity - God bless you my William ah be faithful to him - any thing [anything] else is less than Nothing - alas! alas! alas! that is light so bright so evident, yet “light I leave in darkness.”¹⁰⁰ She again expressed her hope to live with him in eternity and gave instruction in a letter dated October 9, 1815:

you must now My Son take up your poor Grand Father [William] Setons “Hazard it forward” since Mr. Filicchi assures me that *if you preserve your good principles and keep in the path pointed out to you, I need have no more anxiety for you[.]* My Souls William now every tie of gratitude, honor, and integrity must bind you to *that path* - it will not be a human *hazard* with us but a stake for our Eternity together.¹⁰¹

Elizabeth’s second instruction is to have a *global outlook* to ensure a broader discernment and awareness of the world. When she heard of the dangerous situation in Europe because of the rumor of war, she encouraged her son, William, to trust God’s protection and to enlarge his outlook through his experience in a foreign country in a letter dated August 14, 1815:

⁹⁸ CW, 2, sec., 6. 182, 298.

⁹⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6. 192, 309.

¹⁰⁰ CW, 2, sec., 7. 273, 678.

¹⁰¹ CW, 2, sec., 6.208, 347. According to the editors, “the motto of the Seton coat of arms is ‘Hazard zit forward’ meaning ‘Risk to go forward’.” CW, 2, 347, n. 3.

Our God [only knows] but I know that at all events I shall be glad that your [character] has been strengthened and enlarged by being a little out of your Native land - Make the best use you can of the time be it longer or shorter, and above all mind [the point] *of points* since our dear Eternity *together* depends on it.¹⁰²

In another letter to William, she directed him to see the goodness in making friends in a foreign country and to be well-mannered in his relationships: “be cautious and prudent, my son, with strangers till you know that they mean good to you . . . and as you will be so long among strangers take at once a habit - of kind friendly behavior [behavior], but be firm in never indulging a disposition to jest or laugh at others, it would be a great Mark of ignorance and ill Manners in both the countries you go to.”¹⁰³ In a letter to William dated February 16, 1815, Elizabeth again guided him to have the global outlook:

for my dear one your poor Mother looks only at Souls I see neither American [n]or English, but Souls redeemed, and lost. - but you must - your case is quite different - love your country - yet also all countries my William - see things as they are.¹⁰⁴

Elizabeth reflected her global outlook in matters of ministry. In the Journal to Bruté written on the feast of St. Anthony of P[audua], 1815, she expressed her joy to teach the catechism to the African American Children: “O infinite goodness - and I have all the Blacks . . . for my share to instruct - excellentissimo!”¹⁰⁵ In the same Journal, she informed that she accepted the Protestant students at St. Joseph’s Academy because she believed that they needed the education, although Rev. John Dubois did not like this idea:

¹⁰² CW, 2, sec., 6. 200, 338.

¹⁰³ CW, 2, sec., 6. 182, 297.

¹⁰⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6. 189, 306.

¹⁰⁵ CW, 2, sec., 6. 195, 330.

we have eleven Protestant girls entered since you are gone - one to day [today] from a heart broken Father who begged she might receive [receive] the strongest religious impressions “the only consolation in this life” he added - I gave only the silent bow with eyes *full* from the heart - our God - my tongue was fastened for he was an *elegant* refined man of the high world, so.¹⁰⁶

As an educator and a spiritual director, Elizabeth tried to practice her global outlook in her care of each student. In a letter to Eliza Sadler dated August 3, 1810 or 1811, she described her respect and love of each one’s uniqueness: “you know I am as a Mother encompassed by many children of different dispositions - not all equally amiable or congenial, but bound to love, instruct, and provide for the happiness of all, to give the example of cheerfulness [cheerfulness], Peace, resignation, and consider individuals more as proceeding from the same Origin and tending to the same end than in the different shades of merit or demerit.”¹⁰⁷

Elizabeth’s third instruction concerning the discernment of life issues is to understand one’s behavior with *psychological insight* in order to guide one to God. When Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté became the president of St. Mary College, she guided him to understand the American parents of his students from a psychological point of view:

I will tell you in what I know American parents to be most difficult - in hearing the faults of their children - in twenty instances where you see the faults are not to be immediately corrected by the parents, but rather by good advices and education, it is best not to speak of them to Papa and Mamma who feel as if you reflected on their very self and while to you it will be “Yes Sir, I know, I percieve [perceive],” in the heart they think it is not so much, and they will soften and excuse to the child what they condemn to us, and our efforts afterwards avail very little - so that a big point.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ CW, 2, sec., 6. 195, 329.

¹⁰⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6. 54, 154.

¹⁰⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7. 1, 366.

Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté seemed frustrated in his role as a president at the St. Mary's College in Baltimore. Elizabeth sent him not only prayers but also direction on how to make peace in his social relationships. In a letter to him written in February 1817, she consoled him and guided him to think of his attitude toward self and others by giving him a few witty questions:

Are we not ashamed to exercise enmity in so short a life [?]
 = has he displeased thee once, how many good offices he has done thee.
 = is he wise, then it was not done without reason. is he Simple, he deserves Compassion
 = is he angry let him come to himself. is he a Superior suffer then what God has set over thee God endures so much without thundering, shall my ears be so delicate - shall a silly word, a cold countenance -PATIENCE is the Virtue of the Perfect - God has taken for his symbol of Reconciliation a bow [rainbow] without arrows (cf. Gen. 9: 13-14) says St. Ambrose to instruct us that his divine Majesty is Sweet and Peaceful –
 = will not pardon? - oh worse that Turk or Moor[,] for Turks have their feast called Behiram wherein all injured are pardoned, so then go out from Gods church if thou wilt not pardon or at least open not thy mouth before the Wounds of Christ which bleed against thee.¹⁰⁹

As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth helped Rev. John Hickey, who was very upset because of his sister, Eleanor Hickey's behavior at the school. In a letter to Hickey dated February 19, 1819, she pleaded with him to understand Eleanor by sharing her psychological insight concerning her and guided him to understand her movement of heart and to urge him to sanctify himself for souls:

I believe indeed the little soul does try, but she is as *blind* as myself, others see our faults so much plainer than we do - pray for us you most blessed and lofty of all human characters - do sanctify yourself for our poor souls and do many more for when you stand intercess[or] between heaven and earth. . . .Ellen in my poor opinion would be as well at home as here, less occasion of offence here my blessed Brother, but more grace to account for She is one of those should be assured, who will not turn to God but through severe chastisement the sooner it begins I should suppose the better, . . we must look up (cf. Luke 24:51), his ways

¹⁰⁹ CW, 2, sec., 7. 77, 466-467.

are all beautiful, he will hear our prayers by and by and in the meantime I trust she will get the good and purifying whippings which alone will awaken her.¹¹⁰

However, Elizabeth eventually had to dismiss Eleanor Hickey from the school because of her continual misconduct.¹¹¹ Sending her home, she pointed out her departure from the light of grace and gave guidance to her brother, Rev. John Hickey, in order for him to discern her behavior. In a letter to Hickey dated June 1819, she assisted him to be sensitive to Eleanor's way of thinking and told him that the best thing he could do for her would be to show her an example of a life lived in faith, hope, and love. She directed him to become a divine model for her and also to for his students at St. Mary's College by imitation of Jesus Christ because that was only way to change her and young students' hearts:

Ellen you will find after living in clouds of divine light goes away in darkness quite eager to escape from his torrents of Grace, and who makes the difference who but our God not your merits or mine my Brother - I live in the midst of so many beautiful Souls in the Silence of daily tears and inexpressible sorrows to see how faint is the light even of the most luminous, and when I am tempted to depart from my humble Patience and waiting for his own moments in others souls I find my own only grows darker and more perplexed - happy happy you blessed J.H. [John Hickey] who have an Authority to push others on - Yet remember, your old Mother begs you, that the whole spirit of your divine model was in his "learn of me I am meek and humble of heart"(cf. Mt 11:29), [and] would I dare remind you who know it so well, only for this case of William and Ellen whom you can only serve by drawing their love and Veneration, and being their elder Brother you might deviate a little almost without thinking of it - I never had a heavier heart for a child that left us than for Ellen, but who knows how it may turn to the GREATER GLORY of our only beloved.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 204, 602-603.

¹¹¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 215, 615, n. 4,

¹¹² *CW*, 2, sec., 7. 215, 615. According to the editors' note, "Rev. John Hickey, S.S., was now a teacher at St. Mary's College, Baltimore." *CW*, 2, 615, n. 2.

7. Summary

Elizabeth gave spiritual direction on the discernment of one's vocation as a Christian, religious, or priest. To assist in the discernment of one's vocation, she offered some methods which would lead a person to discern the right path toward the union with God.

The first method was to discern their lives in the light of the Holy Spirit. She offered her favorite mantra, the "grace of moment," which would lead them to open their eyes and heart to the Holy Spirit. The second method was attention to the will of God. She stressed that the most important rule of Jesus Christ was to do the will of God. The will of God was a key in the discernment of one's vocation. She guided persons, who had uncertainty on their present vocation, to discern the will of God in the midst of confusion. Elizabeth also aided priests to do the work of Jesus Christ in their priestly office and to grow in the virtuous life as a priest.

The third method in Elizabeth's spiritual direction was the discernment of the movement of Spirits. She directed individuals to discern the movement of spirits in their mind and heart by sharing her own experience on how the good or evil spirit affected her mind and heart. She recommended her Instruction based on "Rules for Discernment of Spirits" from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola and her translations of spiritual writers, such as St. Teresa of Avila and St. Vincent de Paul.

The fourth method in her spiritual direction on discernment was to cultivate the knowledge of God and self. Pointing out the blindness of the soul at times, she guided individuals to know self in God. She reminded her directees that they were created in the

image of God. She also guided them to be humble in the face of the majesty of God and to appreciate God's mercy and compassionate love for them.

The fifth method was to discern their senses, mind, and will which at times gave rise to passion and imagination and to beware of illusions originating in the imagination or in passion which could be the work of the evil spirit. The last method was to discern by eternal and global vision and to understand persons with the psychological insight in order to guide them to God.

Elizabeth was an excellent co-discerner for her directees and for those with whom she corresponded. She aided individuals to fulfill their vocation in everyday life by guiding them to discern life's issues in the light of the Holy Spirit and the will of God. She directed individuals to discern the movement of spirits and to make decisions in the light of eternal and global vision. She guided them to know God and self which would help them to make the right discernment and urged them to discern their senses, mind, and will which influenced the imagination and passions. She helped individuals to understand others from a psychological point of view. She used the traditional and contemporary methods in the discernment of life's issues in the journey toward the union with God in hope.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ELIZABETH SETON'S SPIRITUAL DIRECTION 3:

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

According to Thomas Merton, the “whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man’s life . . . to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul.”¹ He emphasized that spiritual direction is “concerned with the whole person” as “a son of God, another Christ, seeking to recover the perfect likeness to God in Christ, and by the Spirit of Christ.”²

Elizabeth’s goal in her own spiritual life and in her spiritual direction was the Christ-centered life. She often emphasized that the human person was created in the image of God and guided individuals to imitate Jesus Christ who revealed the perfect image of God. In her “St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Notebook,” she called Jesus the “image of the Father and eternal word of the father.”³ Thus, she guided individuals to incarnate the spirit of Jesus Christ who is the model for all human persons created in the image of God.

To Elizabeth, the road map for the Christ-centered life was revealed in Christ’s incarnation, passion, and ministry. As referred to in an earlier chapter, she assisted individuals to imitate Jesus Christ, to suffer for him, and to serve him in his people, especially in the poor.

¹ Merton, 8.

² Merton, 6-7.

³ CW, vol. 3a, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, sec., 10. 1, 427.

1. Imitation of Jesus Christ

As an advocate of the Christ-centered life, first of all, Elizabeth directed individuals to imitate Jesus Christ in their everyday life. As a religious, she invited the Sisters to be faithful to God and his people because they were created in the image of God and made for him. In “Instructions on Religious Life,” she instructed the Sisters to be aware of who they were and how to live:

I shall be faithful to the practice of daily calling to mind the recompenses promised to those who love and serve God - I shall regard myself as something sacred and Holy; my soul made to the image of God - has been made but for him he has marked and sealed it for himself by the sacraments of salvation and the Blood of Redemption my body has become his Temple and my heart should ever remain the pure and unblemished tabernacle of his Holy Spirit - I live not now I, but Jesus Christ liveth in me (cf. Gal. 2:20) - who loved me and delivered himself for me.⁴

In a letter to her former student, Emily, Elizabeth indirectly suggested that each one should imitate the image of God revealed in Jesus Christ: “Emily my dear child be also happy and be more faithful than I have been - you ask my pardon and shall I not also tell my child to forget the many moments of ill temper she may have seen in me I who should have been to her a living image of her Jesus her meek and humble Jesus.”⁵ In another letter to the same person, she instructed her to remember that she was created in the image of God:

see yourself as his own child his own image is spirit, his truth and love and immortality breathing in you, yes my child you are his image your immortal soul can never die - What amazement for your whole life & mine that we are the image

⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 1, 233. “It appears that this material was copied from a treatise on the proper living of religious life.” CW, 3a, 219, n. 1.

⁵ CW, 2, app., A-7. 333, 773.

of our infinite God, the children of his Kingdom and his very Eternity – think much of this I intreat [entreat] you.⁶

In the spiritual direction concerning the imitation of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth guided individuals to begin with the knowledge of the depth of the love of Jesus Christ toward them. Reminding them that Jesus Christ had “abridged 613 precepts of the old testament under the laws of *LOVE*,”⁷ she urged them to realize the love of Jesus Christ embracing them at every moment of their life. On the blank space of page 16 in her *Prayer Book*, she wrote: “We may be sure that our Saviour offers himself *for each one* of us every time *we* offer our whole Soul and body there with him.”⁸

To feel the deep love of Jesus Christ was the first step toward the transformation of the soul. Thus, to aid individuals to experience the depth of love of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth described the love of Jesus Christ who was incarnated and had suffered for each of them. To assist individuals to understand the love of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth led them to feel his love revealed in his incarnation by participation in the liturgical celebration of Advent and the Christmas season. She gave them instructions concerning the true meaning of Advent and Christmas based on the teachings of one of her spiritual directors and helped them prepare to receive the infant Jesus in their hearts.

In her meditation on “God My Saviour” (cf. Luke 1: 47) in connection with chapter 12 of the Book of Isaiah, she directed individuals to proclaim Jesus Christ as their Savior with joy and fervent love:

⁶ CW, 2, app., A-7. 334, 774.

⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 79. This was written on the top of p. iii of her book, *The Following of Christ*.

⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 51, 71.

“Behold God is my Saviour” behold my soul and adore, - adore and bless thy Saviour, thy God, an Infant in Mary - behold thy Jesus so near, - and says the prophet “thou shalt say in that day, I will give thanks to thee O Lord, for thou wast angry with me, thy wrath is turned away, and thou hast comforted me”(cf. Is. 12:1). . . . “God my Saviour” my Jesus, my Saviour, all now but boundless love and Gratitude. . . . “God is my Saviour” I do behold him so near at hand in a ninth month, so wonderfully come to me in Mary, the Virgin Mother - “God is my Saviour” I will deal confidently, and will not fear because the Lord is my strength, and my praise, and he is become my salvation (cf. Is. 12: 2).⁹

In her reflection on “The Voice in the Wilderness Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord” in “Advent and Christmas Meditation,” she guided individuals to listen to the cry of John the Baptist and to prepare their hearts with fervent love for the Infant Jesus: “the actual preparations of love, desire, confidence, full joy, full - abandon - when John the Baptist cries at last from the Altar ‘behold the Lamb of God’ (cf. John 1: 27-29) - and we humbly answer - ‘I am not worthy,’ yet only a word, only a glance of Jesus, as he comes, and I will feel but the joy and trust of his adorable presence.”¹⁰

In a letter to one of her former students written in December 1810, she directed her to live in the spirit of Jesus Christ in the season of Advent: “Now, this beautiful season of Advent, - do try to take its spirit, my friend; to think of it as the last! You have so many opportunities to love our Jesus in his poor - to make the little Babe so many presents before Christmas comes. You know in our sweet meditations it says, now he is our tender Babe, stretching his arms and offering his tears for us, by-and-by our awful Judge!”¹¹

⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 349.

¹⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 342.

¹¹ CW, 2, sec., 7. 316, 703.

As a preparation for Christmas, Elizabeth offered individuals instruction for each day before Christmas and gave the theme of each day. In her instruction “Day of Faith” in her “Meditations for the Days of the Christmas Season,” she guided individuals to prepare their minds and hearts for encounter with the infant Jesus:

go in spirit to the Manger as soon as you awake and make your profession of FAITH at the feet of your Infant saviour [savior]- adore the Eternal Word in his silence, his almighty power in his weakness - the God of Heaven in a stable - his immensity inclosed [enclosed] in the Body of an infant - beg him to perfect your Faith by humility and fervent charity - and do all your actions in a spirit of Faith. Say with the disciples - “Lord increase my Faith” (cf. Luke 17: 5).¹²

Elizabeth guided individuals to contemplate the full meaning of Christmas with the Blessed Virgin Mary: “from Mary we say thou her divine Infant art sent and nigh, the ninth month far spent - a throne prepared in Mary - a throne a Manger; oh truly a throne in Mary ‘in that day man shall bow down to his Maker - and his eyes shall look to the holy one in Israel’(cf. Isa. 17: 7) - come oh Lord - come Infant Lord humble thyself in the manger we shall bow down and our eyes shall see.”¹³

The Blessed Virgin was a model of the imitation of Jesus Christ. Elizabeth directed individuals to be aware of Jesus in Mary’s womb for nine months and learn her sacred affection for her son, Jesus Christ. She urged them to abide with Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, in their hearts and to feel their “delight through what she [might] have felt during a time so ineffable, particularly this last ninth month.” She continually guided them to have devotion to Mary in their imitation of Christ:

Mary and the divine Infant, his presence, his secret continual influence, the continual aspiration of her soul towards him, her morning evening, perpetual

¹² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 19, 385.

¹³ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 343.

sacrifice, the fire ever burning anew over the Altar, or rather so warmly hidden within - O! my soul first of all the religion, devotion of Mary, and all her usual and more particular exercises during such a time, alas! what shall I say, what have the Angels themselves seen, what have they known, my secret to me, my secret to me, should Mary answer to the whole universe heavens as well as to our earth - a morning walking, a first adoration of that Mother, her union, her offering for each day, her review of the ancient times, the fault, the ruin, the promises; a view of the Mystery performed, her Lord incarnated in her, dwelling in her . . . his frequent dwelling in thee, midst of thee, unite, O! my soul, know how to unite thy own mysteries to those of Mary, *so dear*.¹⁴

To aid individuals to imitate the love of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth directed them to experience his love in the Eucharist in the Church. In her meditation on “A Church - A Sanctuary Then Eternity” in “Advent and Christmas Meditation,” Elizabeth directed individuals to look at the Church in the light of the book of Isaiah (cf. Is. 59: 21-60: 22) and to meet Jesus Christ at the altar of the Church:

O! Jesus save and redeem, call and gather “The flocks of Cedar shall be gather[ed] together unto thee” O! Church to be bought in blood “they shall be offered upon thy acceptable Altar, and I will glorify the house of my majesty” (cf. Is. 60: 7) . . . O! Church, O! Sanctuary, O place of the feet, house of his majesty – O! Altar, acceptable Altar, true Bethle[h]em of his new travelling to us, Glorious and beautiful manger of the new birth ready for us . . . O, my Church says the Infant, thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the breasts of kings; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Israel.¹⁵

Elizabeth instructed individuals that the love of Jesus Christ was revealed in his establishment of the Eucharist in the Church. Although Jesus manifested his love through his incarnation and passion, she stressed that he wanted to do more. In her meditation “My Flesh Is Meat Indeed,” she led them to realize that Jesus Christ “incarnates himself

¹⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 364.

¹⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 18, 351. “A Church – A Sanctuary then Eternity” appears “to be an extended reflection on Is. 59: 21-60: 22” (CW, 3a, 350, n. 73).

anew” in the sacrament of Eucharist in the Church and to realize his love toward each person in the Eucharist:

No his love was not exhausted, it was not even satisfied by all that he had <done> suffered for us, he yet would do something more. . . . the tender love of our Divine Saviour still invented a new work, to recommence again all he had done and if it may be so said to recommence it again at every moment. - yes D[ear] B[rethren] in this Sacrament J[esus] C[hrist] incarnates himself anew, he again buries himself in the obscurity of his hidden and innocent life, again he instructs, and models his disciples, again he is exposed to the hatred and fury of his enemies again he suffers, again he dies - thus the holy Fathers have called this Sacrament the extension and continuation of the Incarnation.¹⁶

To appreciate the love of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth delineated the life of Jesus Christ from his nativity to his presence in the Eucharist. She wrote down her meditation on the love of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist and used it as the instruction to the first communicants. In her instruction “Glad Tidings” (cf. Luke 2: 19)” in her “First Communion,” she directed the first communicant to feel the love of Jesus from the glad tidings of his birth to the Eucharist:

I bring you glad tidings of great joy said the angels of Bethlehem , , and for us my soul what glad joy indeed - the sweet Infant then born for our Salvation will now come to unite with us in the sacrament of his love - like our blessed Mother we will possess him our creator and make him *our own* who was born *for me*, lived *for me*, died *for me*, and now yet *stays on earth* to be with me, *my Father, my Brother, my companion and friend*.¹⁷

In her instruction “Thy King Comes Meek and Lowly”(cf. Zech. 9. 9) in her “First Communion,” she energized each communicant to embrace Jesus Christ as “my King and my God” and directed them to be united with Jesus in the Eucharist: “O sweet condescension of my Lord - and what is my hope and desire but to be united to thee how

¹⁶ CW, 3b, sec., 11.30, 44-45. As mentioned earlier, “Material crossed out in the original appears in angle brackets (< >).” Bechtle and Metz, Editorial Procedures for CW, 3a, xxvi.

¹⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 265.

can my desires refrain to meet those of my God, my Saviour, my King, only desirable indeed and beautiful above all, so lovely indeed in himself but so unspeakably beautiful and good to me.”¹⁸

In a letter to Emily, Elizabeth directed her to embrace the infinite love of our Saviour, especially in his holy sacrament: “Love believes all things (cf. 1 Cor. 13: 7)) - I intreated [entreat] you in my last dearest child to think well of the *infinite love* of your divine Saviour in his holy sacrament of his mercies in your creation and redemption of the glorious Eternity now waiting for you if you are faithful through your trial upon earth.”¹⁹

Elizabeth pointed out that the Eucharist is a mystery, but another mystery is our indifference for him in the Eucharist. In her meditation on the Eucharist, she gave instruction based on the Gospel of St. John: “the institution of the Eucharist was the effect of the love J[esus] C[hrist] always had for us, and would have until death, and <shall> considering the sacrament of our Altars in relation to what J. C. Has done for us, and what we refuse to do for him, I discover in it a double mystery - Mystery of the inconceivable love of J. C. For us, and the yet more inconceivable mystery of our Indifference for him.”²⁰

In her correspondence to Emily, Elizabeth pointed out “the deadly insensibility and ingratitude of this world” toward the love of Jesus Christ and guided her to

¹⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 273.

¹⁹ CW, 2, app., A-7. 335, 775.

²⁰ CW, 3b, sec., 11.30, 44. See Angle brackets (<>), n. 17 in this chapter.

understand deeply the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ's incarnation and passion as well as His presence in the Eucharist and to embrace his love from the depth of her heart:

And in this one watch of love how can we help grieving for the deadly insensibility and ingratitude of this world, so indifferent to the love in his incarnation among us, & his blood shed for us his love in the delight he takes to be at all times among us, & communicate himself to us in every mystery of that love we lost *our Eden* and he offered us *his calvary* & his tabernacles not his presence of the *ark* and the *cherubim* (cf. Num. 7: 89), but the presence of his own glorious flesh thinly veiled under the feeble appearances of his Sacrament - "What is this" said the Israelites when they saw the Manna of the desert fall from heaven (cf. Exod. 16: 13-15), but it is we who should cry out with admiration seeing with grateful wonder our true manna our Jesus daily coming to us from heaven with a miraculous goodness infinitely greater than can be conceived or expressed.²¹

In her "All Our Piety" she emphasized that our heart is God's house and His seat as well as His tabernacle, but she lamented how our heart was so easily agitated by distraction and would not recognize God in it:

Our heart is always his throne but it is a tottering one which threatens immediate ruin. It is his seat but an uncertain one where he cannot find repose. When the Prophet said that Gods dwelling [is] in peace (cf. Is. 54:10) - it is not that he does not likewise dwell in the soul of the agitated but he is there as a stranger – since the confusion that reigns does not permit him to hold familiar conversation with her – and the agitation which she then suffers threatens him with soon being driven away. . . . it is his house that he wishes us to build for him where he can have a (safe) and permanent habitation. . . . The true symbol of a soul in which trouble makes various chances by the passions which renders it always (unequal) and indifferent to itself - the Saints suffered [unclear] time tribulation when the waters penetrated to their hearts - their interior pains are accompanied with trouble and various movements but all these prove, if I may say so, that in the interior of their souls they enjoyed the most intimate peace - God is not agitated in the interior of his *Tabernacle*.²²

Elizabeth continually guided individuals to remember that God is always in their heart and wants to have intimate conversation with them and not to let their hearts be

²¹ CW, 2, app., A-7. 335, 776.

²² CW, 3b, sec., 11. 3, 3.

troubled because of sins, but to trust in God's mercy. In a letter to Emily, she directed her to ask the compassionate Savior to print "the fire of his love" in her heart and to thank him. She urged her to respond to the love of Jesus with fervent love from her whole heart:

Well may we be lost in gratitude while we say "*He loved me and gave himself for me*" (cf. Gal. 2: 20) - my child beg him to print these blessed words with the fire of his love on your heart, often repeat to yourself *for me he came, for me he died* and now *to me* he gives himself only let my love answer the love of my compassionate Saviour - and thank him my happy child for the Faith he has given you so many there are who measure his love by their own, not seeing that their compassionate Lord who stopped not at a *manger* or a *cross*, will stop neither at the poverty of our Altars or our heart - it is they who stop and remain far from his Mercies because they are blind to his love believing he once endured the most cruel outrages for them blasphemies stripes & crucifixion yet they will not believe the last excess of his love and his communications to the souls who eagerly & faithfully receive him - but you my child stand by the side of St. Peter & uniting with his *Faith* say "to whom indeed my Lord should I go, *thou* hast the words of Eternal life" (cf. John 6: 68).²³

Elizabeth's similar direction appeared in another letter dated May 29, 1814, to Mary Smith or Sister Stanislaus of the Infant Jesus, who was a former student of St. Joseph and later entered the Carmelite Monastery. Elizabeth urged her not to be troubled about sins and encouraged her to live in Jesus Christ:

To day [today] we both had the happiness of recieving [receiving] our only beloved through whom we hope to receive the blessed Spirit, as he sent it on to the disciples, you know how tenderly our dear Lord speaks to them in the holy Gospel of to day [today] where he tells them so sweetly as if to give them comfort "let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid"(cf. John 14:1) - then let us trust in his dear mercy, and let not our hearts be so much troubled about our sins as to forget to trust in him, no, how could he call himself our tender and dear Father if he had not compassion on his children - I was reading to day [today] about those who are in trouble of mind it says that when we are troubled we forget how good our Jesus is, we do not think of how merciful he has been to us - *ah let us not be so* I told my Jesus this morning when I had the happiness of recieving [receiving]

²³ CW, 2, app., A-7. 335, 775.

him, I said, ah could I say with St. Paul “it is not I who lives, but it is Jesus lives in me”(cf. Gal. 2:20).²⁴

Like St. Paul’s saying in the letter to Galatians, Elizabeth directed individuals to let Jesus Christ live in their hearts. In her spiritual direction to a Sister, and eventually to all Sisters, she taught them that the interior life is to imitate the life of Jesus Christ in everyday life: “I once read, or heard, that an interior life meant but the continuation of our Savior’s life in us - That the great object of all his mysteries was to merit for us, the grace of this interior life, and communicate it to us - it being the end of his mission to lead us into that sweet land of promise, a life of constant union with himself.”²⁵ Similar direction appeared in her reflection “*Sincere love of JESUS*” in her “First Communion.” In this reflection, she reminded the first communicants to be faithful to their adorable savior in their every thought and action and at every hour:

“If any one love me he will keep my commandments”(cf. Eph. 3: 20), these also are your own words my adorable Saviour, and I know from them I must prove my love to you by my fidelity , , Oh then my JESUS let me watch from my first morning thought, let my first waking care be to turn my desires towards that happy day when you will come to me dearest Lord as your altar or your tabernacle, and receive you in my heart my *victim* and my *sacrifice* – let indeed your coming be present to me in all my thoughts and actions and strengthen me to overcome for your sake every weakness poor nature experiences in my daily task of duty, so that every hour may be sanctified in the spirit of preparation for your

²⁴ CW, 2, 2 sec., 6. 161, 71.

²⁵ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 9, 254. “A very similar theme is found in Jean-Jacques Olier’s *Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues*, especially chap. 3, ‘Concerning the Second Way We Must Conform to Jesus Christ.’ Olier says ‘the Christian Life . . . is the Christian person living interiorly, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, in the same way Jesus Christ lived.’ Cf. William M. Thompson, ed., trans Lowell M. Glendon, S.S., *Bérulle and the French School* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 223-227. Rev. Simon Bruté asked Elizabeth to translate excerpts from Olier’s works.” CW, 3a, 254, n. 3. “Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1637) was a French priest and founder of the Society of St. Sulpice. He was active in the reform of seminaries and was part of the seventeenth century French School of Spirituality.” CW, 3a, 254, n. 3.

blessed visit so near, and all my actions done with pure desires and faithful intentions, that they may all be made acceptable for this dear and sacred end.²⁶

To aid individuals to undertake the journey toward transformation of their heart toward the love of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth urged them not only to taste and know the love of Jesus Christ but also to love him with their whole heart. In her “Love with Thy Whole Heart” based on the Word of God in Deuteronomy (6:5) and Matthew (22:37), she gave the following spiritual direction:

By *the heart* we understand the most secret part of the Soul, Where joy, and sadness, fear, or desire, and whatever we call sentiments or affections is formed – then the love of God *in the heart* is that sweet attraction which draws us incessantly to him, which desires to enjoy him, delights to be busied with him, tastes always a new pleasure in him as the confident of its joys and its pains, it lives under the liveliest impressions of its sovereign Good and intimately enjoys his continual presence –

-to love him with the whole heart *is all*. also we must include our *whole strength* by doing all that we can for him, and *referring to him* whatever we do for others. and with our *whole mind* by remembering him continually and filling it with him as much as we can. love is paid by love – and the tenderest Mother has not more delight in holding her little dear beloved in her arms than this child of divine love (the happy Soul he dwells in) delights to dwell in the bosom of this best and dearest of Fathers.²⁷

To be one with the heart of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth gave instruction concerning living continually in the love of Jesus Christ: “1st - to bear with and put up with every kind of pain and trial for the sake of this love, 2nd - to keep the heart disengaged from every object for the sake of this *love*, 3rd - to have no intention in any thought word or

²⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 267-268.

²⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 1, 449.

action but to please this *love*, [4th] - to speak little and speak low remaining in the heart of secret love.”²⁸

Through the sharing of her favorite prayer, *Anima Christi*, which was recited by the Sisters at her deathbed, she directed individuals to imprint the love of Jesus in their heart by this prayer:

Soul of Jesus sanctify me
 Blood of Jesus wash me
 Passion of Jesus comfort me
 Wounds of Jesus hide me
 Heart of Jesus recieve [receive] me
 Spirit of Jesus enliven me
 Goodness of Jesus pardon me
 Beauty of Jesus draw me
 Humility of Jesus humble me
 Peace of Jesus pacify me
 Love of Jesus inflame me
 Kingdom of Jesus come to me
 Grace of Jesus replenish me
 Mercy of Jesus pity me
 Sanctity of Jesus sanctify me
 Purity of Jesus purify me
 Cross of Jesus support me
 Nails of Jesus hold me
 Mouth of Jesus bless me

in life, in death – in time and Eternity – in the hour of Death defend Me,
 call me to come to thee, recieve [receive] me with thy Saints in glory everlasting.²⁹

2. Participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ

In giving spiritual direction, Elizabeth’s second guideline for the Christ-centered life was to participate in the Passion of Jesus Christ in the midst of the dark night of the

²⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 79-80. This was also on page 8 in chapter 1 of *The Following of Christ*, Book 1 (CW, 3b: 80). Elizabeth underlined twice the word, love, in the 2nd instruction (CW, 3b, 79, n. 3) and three times in the 3rd instruction (CW, 3b, 80, n. 4).

²⁹ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 51, 74-75. “This prayer, the *Anima Christi* attributed to St. Ignatius Loyola, was a favorite of Elizabeth, and she wrote several reflective modifications of it.” CW, 3b, 74, n. 4.

soul in suffering. Thomas Merton pointed out the significant role of the Passion of Jesus Christ in one's transformation: "this life of grace is the life of Christ, the true Son of God. We share God's life through the merits of the Passion of Christ. By participating mystically in his Passion and death we become sons of God by adoption as He is the Son of God by nature."³⁰

The Passion of Jesus Christ played a significant role in Elizabeth's own spiritual growth and in her spiritual direction of others. In the midst of suffering throughout her lifetime, she sought the meaning of suffering in the Passion of Jesus Christ and encountered Jesus Christ on the Cross in her own suffering. She followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ to Calvary and participated in his Passion through her own suffering. The Passion of Jesus Christ was truly a guiding light to her in her life's journey to union with God as well as to that of her directees in her spiritual direction.

To assist individuals to seek the meaning of their suffering, Elizabeth guided them to concentrate on Jesus Christ on the Cross and to think of their suffering in comparison with the suffering of the Lord. In "The Passion of Our Lord" in her "Pyamingo Reflection," she encouraged them to find the meaning of their suffering in the light of the Passion of Jesus Christ:

Who is it that Suffers? - it is Christ the king of Glory, the Lord of heaven and earth the holy of holies, the Son of the living God, God himself - him in whom his Father is well pleased (cf. Mt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5) our Saviour, our redeemer, our Lord our all - and for whom does he Suffer - for me - a worm of the earth (cf. Ps. 22:6) deserving only to be trodden under foot. . . .where is my heart? am offended and complain feel a coldness and indifference to the person who inflicts it . . . refuse to bear the least part of your pains though you suffered for my Sanctification and eternal happiness - but let it be so no longer let me now walk in

³⁰ Merton, 66.

your footsteps, and permit me not to lose the merits of your Sufferings and Death my God, my Saviour, pity the Soul redeemed by your precious blood.³¹

Elizabeth directed individuals to keep in mind that Jesus purchased their souls with his blood and led them to appreciate the love that Jesus had for them. In “Mother Seton’s Last Writings,” she instructed a Sister concerning the Passion of Christ: “‘Not a single grace is given you, but was bought with the blood of JESUS, your compassionate Saviour - not one grace is given, but might by your fidelity to it, become for you an *eternal treasure* - not one grace is given you, but you must give an account of it in your hour of Death and Judgment’ - This letter is signed Xavarius [Xavier]— take it my child, - I suppose you know its meaning.”³²

In the instruction to the first communicants, Elizabeth directed them to realize the Passion of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. She shared her reflection on a Eucharistic hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas, “Memorial of the Passion of Our JESUS” in her “First Communion,” and led them to meditate on the love of Jesus Christ manifested in the Eucharist which was established by his sacrificial death for them:

O sacred presence of that precious flesh crucified for me, that divine blood shed for me upon the cross, the whole now ready to be delivered for me in my blessed communion. . . . My Saviour let me truly declare thy holy passion in my blessed first Communion, let my happy redeemed soul thus abiding in thee be found cleansed and restored to her heavenly beauty. O will it be so indeed will I be found by thee so well prepared by that merciful shedding of thy blood upon Mount Calvary, that blood shed there for me myself thy own poor child of tears and blood - O my Soul can it be that we were so exceedingly dear to our dying Lord , , have we yet begun to make a return for this unspeakable love, do we well apply those streams of saving blood which flow down from the everstanding [ever

³¹ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 199-200.

³² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 9, 257. According to the editors’ note, “A possible reference to St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), an early member of the Society of Jesus and a missionary to India and Japan, or to Sister Mary Xavier Clark.” CW, 3b: 37, n. 12.

standing] cross to heal and save us are we ready to receive the sacred body to be as it were entombed in us, we its new sepulchre [sepulcher], O Soul of mine soul of mine, *are We ready*.³³

Elizabeth continually directed the communicants to offer their love to Jesus Christ who was born on the earth and died for them in his love: “Oh by this most holy sacrifice pity me my Lord. It is the only offering I can worthily make thee - it is my all, since it is thyself my Jesus, my victim of sin, my redemption, my cleansing and reconciliation; My JESUS who paid for me in the manger, was nailed for me to the cross, bleeding and dying for me, saying for me to his Father ‘Father forgive,’ and to his Mother ‘Behold thy child’ (cf. Luke 22: 34; John 19: 26-27).”³⁴

In her correspondence, Elizabeth gave the similar guidance concerning the love of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist in the light of his Passion. In a letter to Emily, she directed her to know how Jesus had loved her in his Passion and Eucharist: “Your Jesus is all love on his part, for what does he offer you, but his own sacred Body crucified for you[,] his blood shed for you, his soul which loved you even with ardent desires of passion & Death for your sake.”³⁵ In another letter to her, Elizabeth led her to meditate on the love of Jesus Christ on the Cross in the Eucharist and to be one with him in her communion.

May its heavenly light fall upon your soul and your heart be all love for your Saviour whom you will find in the sad experience of life is *so little loved*, who came as said the beloved disciple to his own, and they received him not, to the world and it know him not (cf. John 1: 10-11) - but you will be in your true joy and happiness receiving him humbly & lovingly, only be earnest for your Grace that that life may be strengthened in you which your Jesus bought for you with his

³³ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 272. Elizabeth underlined three times to the sentence, “are we ready.” CW, 3a, 272, n. 14).

³⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 10, 269.

³⁵ CW, 2, app., A-7. 333, 773.

blood, that life he now brings you again in our blessed first communion, oh *receive & secure it forever.*³⁶

Elizabeth directed individuals to contemplate the Passion of Jesus Christ with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sharing her contemplation on “the good Friday,” she urged them to be one with Jesus Christ on the Cross with Mary:

1st I stand upon Mount Calvary - my Saviour is there hanging on the cross these three hours of his suspension between heaven and Earth. - the deepest darkness surrounds - his Divine soul is absorbed in unutterable thought, feelings of inconcievable [inconceivable] anguish - prayers, offerings, last consummations of the Mysteries of our Salvation - My Soul - see - attend - remain in silence, adoration, union, - My Jesus - my God - Eternity. - Blessed Mary - beloved disciple - holy Women - adoring Angels! I unite with you - I am with you.³⁷

When Elizabeth meditated on the Passion of Jesus Christ and participated in his suffering, she was deeply moved by the deep sorrow of the Blessed Mother. Although she loved Mary throughout her life, her devotion to her deepened as she contemplated Mary’s suffering with her son, Jesus Christ. In her meditation on “Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin” (cf. Luke 2: 34-35) in her “Pyamingo Reflection,” she guided individuals to know the suffering of Mary with her son, Jesus Christ in the Passion and to have her as a model in following Jesus on his road to Calvary:

Mary is justly called by the church the Queen of Martyrs because her martyrdom [is] in her heart which carried the piercing Sword from the moment Simeon revealed to her in the temple the Mystery of the Salvation and reprobation of the world Struck with his prophecy how often must her thoughts have carried her to Calvary, and represented to her the Death of her Son in the anticipated anguish of her Soul how often did she see the delicate beautiful body of her little Jesus arrived to that growth and moment it would be exposed to the fury of Murderers, covered with wounds and blood, torn with Scourges – how often gazing on his pure and lovely forehead She already Saw the piercing thorns and trickling blood, his heavenly countenance disfigured with blows and Spits – the heavy cross upon

³⁶ CW, 2, app., A-7. 334, 774-775.

³⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11.21, 37.

his blessed shoulders the gall and vinegar instead of the Virginal Milk She saw the hammer – the nails which pierced his hands and feet his Sleep of Death in the cold and silent tomb, who now reposed so Sweetly in her arms – O Mary our Mother lead us with you the way of Sorrow our Jesus has traced out, keep our heart united with your pains, that at last we may share your glory.³⁸

In the same meditation on “Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin,” Elizabeth directed individuals to stay with “Mary at the foot of the cross uniting with her adoration, love, and deepest contrition for our Sin and the Sins of the whole world and her offering of her Divine Son to his Eternal Father in expiation and atonement for them.” She guided them to unite “with the heart of our Divine Mother through all the different Stages of the passion of our Jesus” and to meditate on the passion of Jesus Christ with her: “while we meditate [on] his Sufferings to be ready and willing as she was *to share them* to mix our abundant tears with torrents of his blood, and while our hearts are Softened by his sufferings and touched with love to take every means in our power to *prove that we love him* by imprinting his image upon them, and bear a Special part in this deepest Suffering of Mary.”³⁹

In her meditation on “Mary at the Sepulcher and Returning the Way of Calvary,” she followed the footsteps of the sorrowful Mother through the lens of her motherhood and guided individuals to feel and see the Passion of Jesus Christ through the eyes of Mary: “We go with our blessed Mother to the Sepulchre [Sepulcher] Joseph of Arimathia and Nicodemus had wrapped in spices and fine linen the adorable Body of Jesus (cf. Luke 23:50-56) - that body she had wrapt so often in his infancy . . . and held delighted in her bosom is now wrapt up for the tomb - She takes the last look, he is placed within it,

³⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 205.

³⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 206-207.

the door is closed. . . She repeats the name of her Jesus, but answers no more.”⁴⁰ She continually led individuals to walk with Jesus Christ in his passion following the footsteps of the Blessed Mother, even walking with her on her return to Jerusalem:

Mary reenters Jerusalem - the beloved city her Jesus had wept over (cf. John 11: 35), now overtrod [over trod] with his blood - here he passed tied and bound from tribunal, . . . by this street he was conducted to Herod, sent back as a fool to Pilate (cf. Luke 23: 7-11) - here the cruel scourging (cf. Mt 27:26; Mk. 15: 15; John 19: 1), here the crowning with thorns (cf. Mt 27:29; Mk. 15:17; John 19:2)[,] here loaded with the cross (cf. John 19: 17) - there sinking under it covered with sweat and blood - she meets those whose loud outcries had Solicited his Death (cf. Mt 27:23; Mk 15:14; Luke 22: 20-21; John 19:6) every sad remembrance accompanies her to her sad home - to the house of John (cf. John 19: 26-27) - in whom she has now adopted the redeemed Souls of her Jesus. O Mother of tenderest mercy mine also you have adopted in him - I cast myself with confidence in your arms - you are also *My Mother* I your child left to you by your Jesus unworthy as I am - you are the refuge of sinners, to the bosom of your Mercy I commit myself in his merits you will not reject the child of his tears and blood.⁴¹

To Elizabeth, human suffering was the bridge to the union with Jesus Christ on the Cross. In her spiritual direction, she guided persons not only to find the meaning of their suffering in the light of the Passion of Jesus Christ, but also to walk with Jesus Christ as he carried the heavy Cross and died on it for all humanity. Her spiritual direction to George Weis is a good example of how she directed a person who was suffering.

In her spiritual direction to Weis, Elizabeth first led him in faith to recognize God’s providence and blessings hidden in suffering. In a letter to him, she directed him to have patience in his suffering: “Your bitter word gave me both comfort and pain - to find you in such good disposition for your cross, and to hear it still weighs so hard upon you,

⁴⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 207.

⁴¹ CW, 3a, sec., 8.26, 208.

as I had hoped your business so distressing to you was now settled - but remember our Master has his own time for every thing [everything], and you and I may as well take it patiently as fret under the bridle, and depend upon it *our* day will come too.”⁴² In a letter to him dated August 26, 1809, she urged him to embrace his suffering in order to partake in glory with Jesus Christ: “if in this world he gives them to you as to me in crosses and contradictions[,] let us live by faith since we know it is much better to suffer for a time that we may afterwards partake of His glory.”⁴³

Elizabeth’s second direction to Weis was to meet Jesus Christ at Calvary in his suffering and to follow him. Calvary was the place of “the rendezvous” for the suffering soul and Jesus Christ. In a letter to him dated May 13, 1810, she guided him to “see his love and sorrow” for him at Calvary and to follow Jesus:

if you sink so soon in the days of trial, My friend, how will we be able to keep in the bloody footsteps of our Leader - oh look upon him; see his look of love and sorrow while he looks behind after you, and calls “come, follow me” - Calvary is the rendezvous - there my dear George both you and I *must* meet him - meet him - - we must be crucified - it is in vain to start, or think of escaping - oh that the Adored would give you a spark of the fire he has put in my heart since I bid you the last *A Dieu* - but I will use that fire to beg [that] you may be supported, or carried through this deluge of sorrow which has beset you.⁴⁴

In an letter to Weiss dated August 28, 1810, Elizabeth again stressed that suffering would be the place of a true rendezvous with Jesus Christ on the Cross and

⁴² CW, 2, sec., 6.43, 135.

⁴³ CW, 2, sec., 6.5, 80.

⁴⁴ CW, 2, sec., 6.38, 125. “George Weis, a resident of Baltimore who lived near St. Mary’s Seminary, was a carpenter and contractor who built St. Mary’s Chapel in Baltimore and Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg. He and his family developed a lasting friendship with Elizabeth and her companions as they were preparing to leave for Emmitsburg in 1809. He developed a deep spiritual relationship with Elizabeth and remained a helpful friend of the community during his lifetime.” CW, 2, sec., 6.3, 75, n. 1.

encouraged him to follow the footsteps of suffering Jesus Christ in the light of eternal happiness:

my friend, how insignificant will the present moment appear when we enter that great ocean. How much we will then wish we had doubled our penances and sufferings while that moment lasted. How we will laugh when we look behind, at the troubles we have endured and which will then appear in their true light. And that bright and glorious Cross which we now drag through the mud and dirt how beautiful and lovely it will appear when we find it opens the door of our eternal happiness to us. O, my dear friend, follow on with courage. You do not suffer alone, you well know, and remember there is but one place of true *rendez-vous* for true souls.⁴⁵

Elizabeth continually guided Weis to walk courageously with Jesus Christ in his own suffering and urged him to have faith. In a letter to him dated March 1813, she encouraged him to march with his captain, Jesus Christ, with faith: “faith, faith my dear xxx [George.] The captain marches on - oh yes we follow dearest, we follow - dear friend do no[t] say I do not sympathize with your poor suffering heart, *I do I do*, and would joyfully now take all its sorrows if you might have the blessing of them.”⁴⁶ In a letter to him dated March 19, 1814, she again sent her encouragement: “as often I look at the crucifix I think of you as if I could see your name was written there on our crucified lord, as indeed it is, my poor xxx [George], with my poor bad name and the thousands who forget him even more than we do, so we must remember them before him these beautiful days to come.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ CW, 2, 157, sec., 6. 58.

⁴⁶ CW, 2, 243, sec., 6.130.

⁴⁷ CW, 2, sec., 6. 153, 264-265. As referred to in the previous chapter, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté copied Elizabeth’s correspondence because he thought that her letters would be the important sources for her sanctification. “The text is in the handwriting of Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S. Bruté sometimes substituted “xxx” for a person’s name in the material he copied.” CW, 2, 264, n. 1.

Elizabeth's third recommendation to Weis was to look up to eternity in the midst of suffering. She guided him to courageously embrace his suffering as the process of purification of the soul for eternity: "Your troubles I find like my own are multiplied, and so will our comforts be when this dark night of life is over . . . for you I hope your cross may increase till it purifies you like pure gold. . . be good my friend - have confidence, never let the comparison of time and Eternity slip a moment from your mind - I find this cures all sorrow."⁴⁸

To Elizabeth, the light of eternity illuminated the suffering soul to look up to its true happiness with God. In a letter to Weis dated July 30, 1812, she reminded him that Jesus was a carpenter like him and encouraged him to have courage: "look only forward to our long long Eternity . . . my poor poor George take courage - sow in tears to reap in joy (cf. Ps. 126:5), look to the master Carpenter you follow after - I would be very sorry he would divide our lot from his and treat us better than he did himself."⁴⁹ In her letter to him dated March 1813 she continued to encourage George to look beyond his present sufferings to eternity:

This may be his way to *compel your friend to listen*. he has treated me so and for this I bless him most of all - where would I be now if he had not scourged and bound me, and in his infinite goodness he may do the same for your poor xxx [George] what matters by whose hands - if I get to his kingdom what matters how-Keep up your courage and look to eternity this unhappy life cannot be much longer for you or me now.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ CW, 2, sec., 7. 278, 680.

⁴⁹ CW, 2, sec., 6. 114, 224-225.

⁵⁰ CW, 2, sec., 6. 130, 243.

Elizabeth continually guided him to keep eternity as a guiding light on his road toward union with God by participation in the passion of Jesus Christ in his suffering:

try every day to get nearer and nearer to the dearest & best of masters - he will turn all your bitters to delights as he does mine - to rejoice in him is enough, every thing is converted to precious treasure, and our poverty spiritual and temporal becomes riches. I recommend you with all your trials & troubles to our Lord daily - my poor xxx [George], count them all for Eternity! - look at Eternity with a steady Eye and lifted heart and all, all with Jesus.⁵¹

Elizabeth's fourth recommendation to Weis was to make communion with the suffering Jesus Christ in his suffering. While the experience of suffering would be an avenue of purification of the soul, the contemplation of the Passion of Jesus Christ would illuminate the soul to be one with Jesus Christ on the Cross through each one's own suffering. In her meditation, "Of the Communion of the *Cross*" in "Exercise of the *Presence of God*," she underlined that each person in his or her own suffering would be united with Jesus Christ through "the communion of his Cross":

It is strictly true that altho' there is no possible advantage to be compared with the happiness of receiving our Lord and Saviour in the holy Eucharist who is our very life in all our sufferings,(,) yet we also receive him by the Communion of his Cross, that is to say, we may *unite with him, we draw his spirit in us*, and it is very certain that we receive no grace in the communion of the holy Eucharist but in proportion as we receive it in the communion of *the Cross*. . . .The great advantage of the Communion of the Cross is, that we receive it when *our Lord* himself pleases, and at the time he sees best.⁵²

⁵¹CW, 2, sec., 7. 279, 681. "This text is in the handwriting of Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté," and has the heading, "Union to God – Eternity kept constantly in sight" which seemed written by Bruté. CW, 2, 681, n. 1.

⁵² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 20, 419-420. According to the editors' note, "Several ideas expressed in this meditation are similar to those found in *Imitation of Christ*, one of Elizabeth's most cherished devotional books." Cf. Book 2, chap. 12.4: "The cross . . . is always ready and everywhere waits for thee. Thou canst not escape it, withersoever thou runnest." Cf. also Book 2, chap. 12.5: "If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee and bring thee to thy desired end." CW, 3a, 419, n. 65.

To assist individuals to make communion of the Cross in daily life, Elizabeth gave them instruction concerning how to remain in the spirit of the Jesus Christ on the Cross in her “Day of Suffering”: “Begin the day by asking pardon of God for the different faults you have committed in the Sufferings he has sent you - make up for them this day in part, by Mortifying yourself, and refusing such gratifications as <would give> are in your own power - if you watch you will not fail to find occasions. - Show us Lord thy Mercy and grant us thy Salvation (cf. Ps. 85:7).”⁵³

In her meditation on “Passion Week,” Elizabeth guided individuals to remember Jesus in their everyday life as their own victim and to renew all the affections of their souls for his sufferings. She also directed them to pray for priests and to remain at the foot of the Cross with the Blessed Mother:

Jesus our Victim - to pray especially that his Priests may become true Victims - to read some part of his passion and meditate on it every day - renew all the affections of our Soul to his sufferings - in the Spirit of the church. . . . in the Same Spirit to mourn in deep contrition for our Sins, and renew in earnest our Spirit of Penance. - to stay with Mary at the foot of the Cross (cf. John 19: 26) in continual Offerings to the eternal Father of this Victim of our Salvation for the Sins of the whole world as well as Our Own.⁵⁴

Introducing Jesus’ “Seven Last Words” in her reflective notes, “Thou hast covered him,” Elizabeth led individuals to listen to his words on the Cross and to be one with Jesus Christ in their suffering.⁵⁵ In a letter to “an Unknown Person,” she guided her/him through her own meditation to recognize the silent voice of Jesus Christ in the midst of distress and to be one with him on the Cross.

⁵³ *CW*, 3a, sec., 9. 19, 384-385. See Angle brackets (< >), n. 17 in this chapter.

⁵⁴ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8.26, 199.

⁵⁵ *CW*, 3b, sec., 11. 19, 35.

Alone on a rock this afternoon, surrounded by the most beautiful scenery, adoring and praising Him for his magnificence and glory, the heavy eye could find no delight; the soul cried out, O God! O God! Give yourself. What is all the rest? A silent voice of love answered, *I am yours*. Then, dearest Lord! keep me as I am while I live; for this is true content, - to hope for nothing, to desire nothing, expect nothing, fear nothing. Death! Eternity! Oh, how small are all objects of busy, striving, restless, blind, mistaken beings, when at the foot of the cross these two prospects are viewed!⁵⁶

The Passion of Jesus Christ was a road to union with God for Elizabeth.⁵⁷ She directed individuals to be the “faithful imitator” of Jesus Christ and to achieve union with him in their own suffering through participation in his Passion. In her “Gospel of Matthew Notebook,” she guided individuals to resemble Jesus Christ especially in times of suffering: “a true lover of our Saviour has a thousand inspirations in different ways to resemble him. - since the Soul must be held from him by the prison of the body, at least it may have the joy of appearing continually before him as a victim of love, and his faithful imitator in suffering.”⁵⁸ She stressed that “the spirit of penance [would] show us a thousand ways of union with the cross going or coming, sitting or standing.”⁵⁹ In her spiritual direction, she led individuals to embrace their suffering as the way of

⁵⁶ CW, 2, sec., 7.324, 707-708. A rock in this letter means “possibly the rock grotto on the hill near St. Mary’s Mountain.” CW, 2, 707, n. 1. “Elizabeth’s words are similar to the *Suscipe*, a prayer attributed to St. Ignatius Loyola, part of which reads, “Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me” (*Spiritual Exercises*, no. 234) and “it echoes the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila: “Who has God wants for nothing. God alone suffices.” CW, 2, 707, n. 2.

⁵⁷ At the beginning of her selective translation of the Life of St. Louise de Marillac, Elizabeth copied Louise’s words concerning suffering: “Suffer with Him in continued union with his thorns, nails, and spear; listen to every word he says till consummatum est” (Nicolas Gobillon, *The Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras* (Paris, 1676), the selective and handwritten translation by Saint Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Emmitsburg, MD: Sisters of Charity, 1818).

⁵⁸ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 561.

⁵⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 562.

purification and to recognize the light of illumination revealed in the Passion of Jesus Christ that led them to the union with God.

3. Serving Jesus Christ in His People

As a spiritual director and an advocate of the Christ-centered life, Elizabeth's third and last guide for the Christ-centered life was to incarnate the love of Jesus Christ in their heart and serve Jesus Christ in His people, especially in the poor. In "Maxims from St. Paul" in her "Instructions on Religious Life," she directed the Sisters to practice charity in the spirit of their vow of chastity:

The end of the Commandment is Charity. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. Lifting up pure hands . . . chaste not double-tongued . . . faithful in all things. They that have ministered well shall purchase to themselves a good degree - Bodily exercise is profitable to little but piety is profitable to all things. Be then an *example* in *word*, in *conversation*, in charity, in faith in chastity - Neglect not the grace which is in thee: meditate on these things that thy proficiency may be manifest to all. Keep thy self chaste. We brought nothing into this world and certainly we can carry nothing out - pursue justice, piety, faith, charity, patience, meekness.⁶⁰

Elizabeth guided individuals to practice Jesus' commandments of love in their lives. In a letter to Cecilia Seton dated June 29, 1806, she gave the following instruction: "Your Peace is from God, it is the Sweet Reward he has promised to his Children - Docile to his commands and fervent in their Love their Very Sacrifices become their pleasures, being Accompanied by the conscious Joy of pleasing Him they Love above all - My soul has felt this Joy in Unison with Yours, but it has been the Joy of tears - such as We experienced together When Adoring in his presence 'Our hearts burned within Us'

⁶⁰ CW, 3a, sec., 9.1, 234.

(cf. Luke 24: 32).”⁶¹ In another letter to her dated June 7, 1807, she congratulated her in progress in the practice of love and encouraged her to imitate Jesus Christ: “Precious dear Cecilia/My hearts Darling cherish that emanation of Love and Kindness to every one [everyone] which He gives you from Himself that it may adorn the Cross you bear in his Name. . . . My darling Soul - think of him[,] love him, and look to him, and never mind the rest - all will be well.”⁶²

To aid individuals to incarnate the love of Jesus Christ and to serve him in his people, Elizabeth guided them to learn the virtues of Jesus Christ revealed in his ministry and to practice them in their service. In her translation “Charity of Christ,” which were extracts from Bourdaloue’s *Retrait Spirituelle*, she reminded individuals of Jesus Christ’s counsel: “This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you” (cf. John 13: 34).⁶³ Then, she introduced three distinct virtues which appeared in the ministry of Jesus Christ. They were the virtues of gentleness, benevolence, and universal charity. She stressed that these three virtues should be the model in all of their conduct and gave them instruction concerning each of these three virtues of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

First of all, Elizabeth described how gentle Jesus was with people even with those who were against him and “how many rebukes and contradictions did he submit without complaining.” She pointed out that his gentleness “appeared in his exterior manner and in

⁶¹ CW, 1, sec., 4.21, 410.

⁶² CW, 1, sec., 4.38, 442.

⁶³ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 193. Elizabeth’s translation came from “Bourdaloue’s *Retrait Spirituelle* (7 day, 1st Meditation). Cf. *Oeuvres Complètes de Bourdaloue*, vol. 6.” CW, 3a, 193, n. 55.

⁶⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 193.

his forbearance and moderation in all things”(cf. Phil. 4:4-5) and portrayed Jesus’ patience and gentleness with his apostles: “his apostles . . . were often unable to comprehend his instructions obliging him to repeat and reexplain [explain again] the same things - often they contended and disputed together and he made peace among them by his mediation - he lived with them[,] conversed with them and patiently accommodated himself to their tempers - Thus he might justly say to us ‘come learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart’ (cf. Mt 11:28).⁶⁵ Then, she guided them to reflect in their heart in the light of these virtues and urged them to incarnate Jesus’ meekness and gentleness in their relationship with others:

I must live with beings who have each their peculiarities of disposition caprices prejudices and errors as every human creature has, nor can I expect to change them as power is not given me and I can never accomplish it, therefore it is absolutely necessary for obtaining Peace and perfecting Charity that I accommodate myself to them as much as possible and conciliate them by gentleness and kindness - “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”(cf. Mt 5:4). that is they shall conciliate all hearts, - am I of this number - or rather how many times have I to reproach myself, how many times instead of a charitable consideration for my neighbour [neighbor] I have shown pride, resentment, and disdain. how many times I have used sharp words quick replies or contempt without the least sense of my improper conduct or consideration of my fault.⁶⁶

Elizabeth underscored the virtues of the humility and meekness of Jesus Christ revealed in his nativity and guided individuals to ask Jesus for a meek and humble heart: “Thou hast covered him with glory and honour [honor] and set him over the works of Thy hands (cf. Ps. 8:6). . . . A meek and humble heart, my dear one - that once gained All would be secured for time and Eternity. . . . Praise grant me to know and love [thee] more

⁶⁵ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 193-194.

⁶⁶ *CW*, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 194.

and more in thy Sacrament [of] love, to give thee the most [perfect] thanksgiving in a life of daily. . . faithful Service. . . O that I may [ever] more recieve [receive] thee.⁶⁷

To aid individuals to grow in the virtue of humility, Elizabeth introduced St. Vincent de Paul's instruction on the motives of humility:

Mr. Vincent had two particular motives of Humility on which every principle of his conduct turned . . . speaking of them in his congregation he said: "If we would study ourselves we would see plainly that nothing is more just and reasonable than that we should despise ourselves". . the corruption of our Nature, our tendency to dissipation and inconstancy, the darkness of our mind, and irregularity of our will . . impurity of our affections. . . . The second motive in the practice of this virtue was the example of our Lord. . "What" said he "was the life of this divine Saviour but a continued humiliation active and passive. . . this Humility was so dear to him that he never quitted it while on earth."⁶⁸

In her translation of "His Meekness" in "Life of St. Vincent de Paul," Elisabeth wrote: "Charity in its perfection says the blessed F[rancis] de Sales when it is not only patient but meek and gentle . . . meekness being the blossom of this divine Virtue, which beautifies it the more in proportion as it represses the sallies of nature, which would so often cover themselves with the cloke [cloak] Zeal and take the appearance of Virtue." Then, she pointed out the virtue of meekness in St. Vincent: "Mr. Vincent was naturally of a bilious temper very quick and subject to anger . . yet he had so intirely [entirely] overcome this passion by the perpetual practice of meekness that he very seldom showed the least marks of it."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 19, 34-35.

⁶⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 353. Cf. Louis Abelly, *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* [*La vie du vénérable serviteur de dieu*, Vincent de Paul] (Paris, Florentin Lambert, 1664), 3: 196.

⁶⁹ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 340. Cf. Abelly, 3: 164.

In her “Days of Humility,” Elizabeth guided individuals to be aware of how Jesus Christ humbled himself as a baby in the manger and to reflect on their “thoughts, words, and actions” in the spirit of the nativity: “Begin the day by adoring the Supreme Majesty of God on his heavenly throne surrounded by Seraphims [Seraphim]- then Adore with the Angels this same Majesty humbled in the Manger, in the form of a Babe consider it is for love of you he lies there, though you are but as Nothing before him and have no claim to his love since you have merited Hell by your sins - watch your thoughts, words, looks, and actions.”⁷⁰

Secondly, Elizabeth directed individuals to learn the virtue of the benevolence of Jesus Christ in his ministry and reminded them of how Jesus Christ practiced his benevolence toward everyone:

The same charity which Our Lord exercised to those with whom he conversed and lived, <provided> called forth the effects of his Divine power in actions of tenderness and mercy, for such was the warmth [of] his Benevolence that it led him over towns and villages, going about from place to place doing good to every one; casting out Devils, comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, <and> raising the dead, preaching the Kingdom of God, and continually working for the Salvation of Souls (cf. Mt 4: 23-24).⁷¹

Then, she guided them to practice Christian charity based on Jesus’ benevolence in their life by offering them her meditation on the practice of Jesus’ benevolence:

I am not enabled as Jesus Christ to do miracles for others, but I may constantly find occasions of rendering them good offices and exercising kindness and good will towards them - these are the fruits of Christian charity - but am I not among the number of those indifferent Souls who think only for themselves and who will not suffer any inconvenience for others, or if I am under a particular obligation to help them or administer to their necessities how do I perform it - exactly willingly and affectionately? at least am I so charitable as to wish them good, if I cannot

⁷⁰ CW, 3a, 387, sec., 9. 19.

⁷¹ CW, 3a, 195, sec., 8. 26. See Angle Brackets (< >), n. 17 in this chapter.

procure it, am I interested for them sharing in their sorrow, compassionating their pains or <partaking> rejoicing in their joy – *for Christian charity requires all this* of me Our Lord has expressly forewarned [forewarned] us that we shall receive from his father according to what we have done to our Brethren and his, and therefore how can I hope that God will bestow on me his graces and benefits if my heart is shut up from his members and children.⁷²

Thirdly, Elizabeth directed individuals to learn the virtue of the universal charity of Jesus Christ in his ministry: “the son of God and after him his disciples has recommended the practice of *universal* charity as the most essential obligation - expressing in common terms love your Brethren, love your neighbour [neighbor] - If you do good only to those who do good to you, says our Lord, do not even the publicans [do] the same (cf. Mt 5:46), but Evangelical charity sh[oul]d have a character distinct and Holy.”⁷³ She urged them to practice Christian charity based the Scriptures: “Bless them that curse you[,] do good to them that hate you[,] pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you (cf. Luke 6: 28) - how rare and how eminent is this degree of charity - yet rare and exalted as it is - still it is our duty, and Christianity and consequently religion can acknowledge no other <charity> as genuine and true, nor will any other be recompensed by God.”⁷⁴ She directed them to ask God to give them this universal charity and to reflect on their own heart in comparison with the benevolence of Jesus Christ:

Give me O my God this patient and unalterable charity - this Benificent [beneficent] Charity which refuses nothing this universal charity which excepts nothing. O Lord however patient my Charity may be towards my Brethren it can never be compared with that which thou has shewn me, never can I have so much to bear from them as thou hast still to bear from me. . . . but my shame is redoubled when [I] consider my coldness and negligence in the exercise of that

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 195-196.

⁷⁴ CW, 3a, sec., 8. 26, 196.

Charity which thou art ready to accept as done to thyself, when thou hast even presented thyself as the motive, promised to account it and make it meritorious in thy Sight - Ah my God if indeed I love thee how can I do otherwise than love those thou hast substituted for thyself - are they not my Brethren - do I not love Thee in loving them - what I <give> do to them is it not done to thee and surely this consideration is enough to soften the most insensible heart.⁷⁵

In "Retreat Meditation," Elizabeth urged the Sisters to imitate the compassionate heart of Jesus Christ and to practice his universal charity to all in their ministry and in community by asking themselves: "our Charity, does it extend to all - is our love for all in our Jesus - is our whole heart truly his, do we unite it so closely with him that life soul and body all are all devoted to him and with St. Francis do we seek if there is the smallest hidden fiber of that heart not his, to tear it out and break its root, and with St. Paul can we say we are hidden with him in God (cf. Col. 3:3)."⁷⁶

Elizabeth offered the example of the virtue of charity in her "Gospel of Matthew Notebook" and directed the Sisters to have a compassionate heart toward other's faults or weakness: "a heart filled with charity cannot help being deeply struck with the faults a Sister commits, especially when they are open and known - but this charity cannot be better shown than by bearing with them patiently and feeling for them the greatest compassion, and by this means we will also find others ready to support our own faults which though we may not percieve [perceive] them."⁷⁷ In her reflective note written at the end page of her book, *The Following of Christ*, she gave them a similar instruction and urged them to live according to the Holy Spirit:

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 332.

⁷⁷ CW, 3a, sec., 10. 5, 558. Cf. *Conferences*, "Explanation of the Rule" June 14, 1643." CW, 3a, 558, n. 80.

[a] Sister made crabbed and uncivil and yet not for any pleasure I take in her or any interest whatever but for the good pleasure of God I cherish I accost her and even caress her – this love is according to the spirit To live according to the spirit is to act –to speak – to think in the manner the spirit of God requires of us. . . . I feel sad therefore I would not speak – Paroquets and magpies would do the same - I am *sad* but as charity requires I would speak – I *will speak* - spiritual persons do so - I am despised and am angry - so monkeys and peacocks would be - I am despised and rejoice – so the Apostles did – to live then according to the spirit is to do what *faith, hope* – and *charity* teaches [us] either in Spiritual or *temporal things*.⁷⁸

In her instruction on “Day of Charity,” Elizabeth guided individuals to be guarded in their daily actions in the light of Jesus’ charity and to practice this universal charity to whomever they met: “Be very guarded this day in every Action not to wound this heavenly Virtue God commands us to love one another even with all our faults - say nothing, do nothing then to pain any one, carry those who give you pain in your heart before God, and think of their Virtues instead of their faults.”⁷⁹

Elizabeth led individuals to grow in the virtue of charity in order to serve God in his people. In her translation, “His Charity Towards His Neighbor” in “Life of St. Vincent de Paul,” she introduced St. Vincent’s instruction on Charity: “every thing [everything] produces its own kind and likeness, as a mirror represents objects before it ugly or beautiful . . . so our good or bad qualities are outwardly expressed, especially the virtue of charity which of herself is so communicative that she produces charity, and a heart truly filled with this heavenly ardour [ardor] will communicate its fire all around it; every thing [everything] breathes and speaks charity in a charitable Soul.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ CW, 3b, sec., 11. 52, 82-83.

⁷⁹ CW, 3a, sec., 9. 19, 386.

⁸⁰ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 331.

Elizabeth reminded individuals of the aim of service. Sharing the instruction of St. Vincent de Paul, she guided them to do their service for the glory of God and according to the will of God. In her translation of “his imitation of J[esus] C[hrist]” in “the Life of St. Vincent,” she explained St. Vincent’s approach to service:

the whole spirit of the life of Mr. Vincent invariably tended to one only point both in regard to himself and others, which was the greater glory of God and the accomplishment of his most holy will . . . this was the sole aim of all his undertakings, desires and intentions and he tried to lead every thing [everything] to this object by every advice, counsel, exhortation and help, Spiritual and temporal, every where [everywhere] and in every thing [everything] seeking only the Kingdom of God, and the accomplishment of his will on earth as it is done in heaven . . . to this end his constant care was to walk in the footsteps of his divine Master, traced out by his word and example which he had ever present to his mind.⁸¹

Elizabeth even added her own instruction to this translation and encouraged the Sisters to unite their actions with that of Jesus Christ: “you will take a firm resolution to keep a strong hand at the work of your own perfection, while you are labouring [laboring] for the Salvation of others in order to do this perfectly, you must act always *in the Spirit of our Lord uniting your actions with his, thereby giving them a noble and divine origin*, and dedicating them always to his greater glory . . . if you do this, God will bless you.”⁸²

Elizabeth stressed the purity of intention in the service of God in his people. In her translation “Life of St. Vincent de Paul,” she again urged individuals to learn from St. Vincent whose actions centered on the glory of God and what was pleasing to him: “he often said God does not observe the exterior of our actions so much as the degree of love with which we do them, as well as the pure intention which accompanies them . . . if we

⁸¹ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 1, 252.

⁸² CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 327.

really wished to please God in great actions, we must first accustom ourselves to please him in small ones.”⁸³

Elizabeth emphasized that the practice of charitable service is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. In her translation “His Zeal for the Glory of God and Salvation of Souls” from the “Life of St. Vincent de Paul,” she encouraged the Sisters to serve the people with zeal and patience in the spirit of poverty and humility and introduced St. Vincent’s letter to his Missioners: “Oh! how blessed are they who give themselves to God to do what our Lord and Saviour has done, and to follow his example of poverty, humility, and patience . . . his zeal for the glory of God and the Salvation of Souls . . . living by his spirit and shedding [shedding] with the odour [odor] of his life, the merit of his actions, for the Sanctification of Souls for whom he would even die.”⁸⁴

As foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, Elizabeth emphasized the service of Jesus Christ in the poor. In her translation “Special Charity toward the Poor,” from the “Life of St. Vincent de Paul,” she introduced St. Vincent’s instruction concerning the service of the poor and directed the Sisters to consider the poor as their masters and to serve Jesus in them: “Mr. Vincent insinuated in his company the *love of the Poor* in every possible way . . . ‘God loves the Poor’ he would say, ‘and loves those who love them . . . they are our Lords and masters and we are unworthy to serve them.’”⁸⁵

⁸³ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 298.

⁸⁴ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 326. Cf. Abelly, 3: 99.

⁸⁵ CW, 3b, sec., 13. 2, 334. Cf. Abelly 3: 117.

Elizabeth reminded the Sisters of their vocation as the servants of the poor and directed the Sisters to serve Jesus Christ “corporally and spiritually in the persons of the poor” in “the Spirit of HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY, and CHARITY, in union with those our Lord did when on earth, and for the same end, which excludes all Vanity, self love, human respect, and gratification of Nature.”⁸⁶

As referred to in the earlier chapters, Elizabeth dedicated herself to serve Jesus Christ in the poor in her married life and in her religious life. In her correspondence, she shared the joy of her service in Jesus Christ. In a letter to Julia Scott dated March 23, 1809, she described her delight in the service Jesus Christ in the poor: “so far I can express, but to speak the joy of my soul at the prospect of being able to assist the Poor, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowful, clothe little innocents, and teach them to love God! - there I must stop.”⁸⁷ In a letter to Antonio Filicchi dated May 20, 1810, she informed him of her joy with the Sisters in the service of Jesus Christ: “I have a very very large school to superintend every day, and the entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country round. All [are] happy to [be] the Sisters of Charity who are night and day devoted to the sick and ignorant.”⁸⁸ In a letter to Rev. John Hickey written before March 19, 1818, she shared her happiness in the service of Jesus Christ in his people: “how can we be happy

⁸⁶ *CW*, 3b, 279-280. sec., 13. 2. Cf. Abelly 2: 292. Three virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity are the characteristic virtuous for the Daughter of Charity given by their founders, of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. *CW*, 3b, 280, n. 18.

⁸⁷ *CW*, 2, sec., 6, 2, 62.

⁸⁸ *CW*, 2, sec., 6.39, 127.

enough in his service.” Then, she gave advice to him to have “the sweet Spirit of our tender Compassionate Saviour” in his service of people.⁸⁹

Elizabeth encouraged her friends to participate in the service of the poor through their financial support. She invited the Filicchi brothers to join with her in service to the poor. For instance, in a letter to Antonio Filicchi dated May 20, 1810, she appealed to him: “consider how can I apply to them for means which would go to the support of a Religion and institution they abhor, while what is taken from you is promoting your greatest happiness in this World, and bringing you nearer and nearer to the Adored in the next - but again let me repeat if I have gone too far stop me.”⁹⁰

In a letter to Robert Harper dated December 28, 1811, she invited him to help her in the mission of Jesus Christ:

Sir, Will you permit the great distance between us to be forgotten for a moment and suffer the force of those sentiments which your liberallity [liberality] and kindness to us have created to act without reserve in speaking to you on a subject I believe you think interesting . . . the promising and amiable perspective of Establishing a House of plain and useful Education, retired from the extravagance of the world - connected also with the view of providing Nurses for the sick and poor, an abode of Innocence and refuge of Affliction is I fear now disappearing under the pressure of debts contracted at its very foundation. . . .What is our resource - if we sell our house to pay our debts we must severally return to our separate homes - must it be so - or will a friendly hand assist us, become our guardian protector, plead our cause with the rich and powerful, serve the cause of Humanity, and be a Father to the Poor. . . .how dare I ask you dear Sir the Question - but if addressing it to you gives you a moments displeasure - forgive . . . and be assured whatever may be your impression of it arose from a

⁸⁹ *CW*, 2, sec., 7, 147, 536.

⁹⁰ *CW*, 2, sec., 6, 39, 129.

heart filled with the Sentiment of your generosity and overflowing with Gratitude and Respect.⁹¹

In her spiritual direction on the Christ-centered life, Elizabeth led individuals to imitate the love of Jesus Christ in their life and meet Jesus Christ on the Cross in their suffering and urged them to participate in his Passion. Lastly, she invited individuals to continue the mission of Jesus Christ on earth in their concrete situation imitating the virtues of Jesus Christ. As foundress of the Sisters of Charity, she was concerned with the service for the poor. Introducing St. Vincent de Paul's instruction, she guided them to serve Jesus Christ in the poor. She practiced the charity of Jesus Christ in her mission and also invited people to join in Jesus' mission to the poor by their prayer and financial support. To promote the Christ-centered life in one's daily life was the final goal of her spiritual direction to individuals.

4. Summary of Elizabeth's Spiritual Direction

Elizabeth's correspondence and writings revealed that she shared her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, ecclesiastical, and Marian piety with individuals in her spiritual direction. As a Christian and as a religious, she assiduously directed individuals to cultivate the Christ-centered life in faith, hope, and love to achieve union with God. As a religious, she enriched her spiritual direction based on the theological virtues through her vowed life of poverty, obedience, and chastity. She deepened the meaning of the theological virtues and committed herself as a spiritual director in the spirit of the vowed

⁹¹ *CW*, 2, sec., 6. 93, 205-206. "Robert Goodloe Harper (1765-1825), a lawyer, was elected to the House of Representative (1794) and to the Senate (1815). He sent three daughters to St. Joseph's Academy where he served as financial and legal advisor to Elizabeth." *CW*, 2, 205, n. 1.

life. In her retreat meditation written during her preparation for formal vows, she expressed how her vowed life energized her to serve others in the love of Jesus Christ:

- how Especially [we] rejoice in the blessed name we bear and our Sacred vows we have made or desire to make to our Lord those vows, the pledge of our only love, only union with our almighty Spouse, . . . Ah! thus consecrated to thee O Lord thus abundantly blessed by the holy exercises of our retreat and renewing fervently in the day of our dear father St. Vincent every best resolution of love and service . . . let our Souls of poverty, obedience, and chastity be souls of all virtues.⁹²

To promote the Christ-centered life, Elizabeth guided individuals to imitate Jesus Christ and to participate in his Passion through their suffering, and also to continue his charitable work for his people, especially in the poor.

In her spiritual direction on the imitation of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth guided individuals to realize Jesus Christ as a perfect model of the image of God and to imitate him. To aid in the imitation of Jesus, Elizabeth assisted individuals to be aware of his love in the liturgical celebrations of the Church, especially in Advent and the Christmas season. She led them to meet the infant Jesus in the nativity and to feel his love in his incarnation, passion, and the Eucharist. She guided them to contemplate Jesus Christ in the manger with the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary and encouraged them to have Mary as the model of their love of Jesus. She directed them to feel the love of Jesus Christ in his establishment of the Eucharist and the Church for them. Then, she urged them to prepare their heart in order to fully embrace the love of Jesus Christ and to let him live in their heart.

In her spiritual direction on the participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ in their suffering, Elizabeth guided individuals to embrace the Passion of Jesus Christ as a

⁹² CW, 3a, sec., 9. 15, 330-331.

guiding light in the midst of their suffering. She assisted them to find the meaning of their suffering in the light of the Passion of Jesus Christ. She stressed that Calvary is the place of their rendezvous with Jesus Christ in their midst of suffering. To aid individuals to participate in the Passion of Jesus Christ, she shared her meditation on “Good Friday” and “Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin” (cf. Luke 2: 34-35). She encouraged them to walk with Mary on her return from Calvary and to contemplate the suffering of Jesus Christ at each place on the road. In her correspondence, she encouraged individuals in suffering not only to find the meaning of suffering but also to be one with Jesus Christ on the Cross.

In her spiritual direction on serving Jesus Christ in the people, Elizabeth reminded them of Jesus’ commandments, to love God and neighbor, and guided them to incarnate his love in service for his people. To better serve people, she guided her Sisters to learn the virtues of Jesus Christ in his ministry. Emphasizing Jesus’ virtues of gentleness with humility and meekness, benevolence, and universal charity in his mission, she encouraged them to incarnate his virtues in their own life of service. Based on the instruction of St. Vincent de Paul, who embodied the virtues of Jesus Christ, she guided them to do their service for the glory of God and according to the will of God. As a foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, Elizabeth encouraged the Sisters to serve Jesus Christ in the poor in the spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity. She emphasized that their charitable work is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ in his people, especially in the poor and invited her friends to join with her charitable work through their financial support.

Elizabeth shared the deep meaning of the theological virtues in the light of her religious vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, in her spiritual direction. She offered

many strategies and methods as well as the instructions of spiritual writers including the Fathers of the Church. As mentioned earlier, in her spiritual direction, she offered her favorite mantras, such as, “look up,” “eternity,” “the grace of the moment,” and “the will of God.” Her spiritual direction to George Weis is the good example on how she encouraged him to live in Jesus Christ by sharing her mantras:

my dear friend, look up towards Eternity and do not lose a moment of this time of grace and benediction for laying up your heavenly treasure (cf. Mt. 6:20). [E]very moment of your patience and submission in this hard trial will be a triumph to you hereafter and oh joyful thought is *now* to our Jesus - *our* Jesus.⁹³

Elizabeth aided her directees to convert to the life of faith and to make the right discernment in the light of grace and the wisdom of the Church’s teaching. The goal of her spiritual direction was to lead her directees to live the Christ-centered life. Jesus Christ as a perfect model of the image of God was the ultimate model for human beings in the journey toward union with God. To incarnate the Christ-centered life on earth, she directed individuals to imitate the life of Jesus, to be one with him on the Cross through their own suffering, and to serve him in his people, especially in the poor.

⁹³ CW, 2, sec., 6. 129, 242-243.

CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION: THE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF
ELIZABETH ANN BAYLEY SETON'S
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

What was the nature of spiritual direction for Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton in both reception and practice and what themes were prominent in it? What sources influenced her approach to spiritual direction and what was the model which she followed? What was distinctive in her spiritual direction and what was her contribution to the ministry of spiritual direction?

This dissertation investigated all of these questions through analysis and evaluation of Elizabeth's reception and practice of spiritual direction as revealed in her *Collected Writings* and in her spiritual directors' letters to her. Elizabeth's *Collected Writings* consisted of her letters, journals, meditations, instructions and her translations and works she copied based on spiritual writings. According to *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, a journal or autobiography of "a holy man or woman" reveals one's "lived dynamic of the Spirit in the development of the spiritual journey."¹ Likewise, their letters offer "an important source of spirituality":

These letters and many others are an important source of spirituality. Letters are spontaneous, personal, and often written more freely than other genres of spiritual writings. Although they contain elements of the journal and the autobiography, letters are unique in that they illustrate a spirituality formed in the experience of personal relationship, and thus they manifest a spirituality formed in dialogue.

¹ T Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographies in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University, 1988), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (1993), s.v. "Spiritual Writing, Genres of."

Letters are intensely relational, and they thereby offer an understanding of the manifold interpersonal dynamics of various spiritual experiences.²

Elizabeth's letters and journals revealed not only how Elizabeth formed her own spirituality, but also how she contributed to the spiritual formation of her contemporaries in interpersonal relationship. To assist individuals' spiritual formation, she shared her meditations, instructions, translations and copy works based on the teachings of the spiritual writers to guide them to grow in the Christ-centered life. Through the analysis of her correspondence and writings, it is clear that she was a qualified spiritual director in her own time and still imparts spiritual wisdom to whoever reads her *Collected Writings* today.

The nature of Elizabeth's spiritual direction in both reception and practice revealed in her *Collected Writings* and her spiritual directors' letters to her is clearly incarnational. Chapters one to four illustrated the nature of her reception of spiritual direction and the other chapters showed her practice of spiritual direction that was based on her incarnational spirituality. Elizabeth's spirituality also reflected early American Catholic spirituality and to some degree Episcopalian spirituality as revealed in chapter one.

Chapter one presented the characteristics of the American Catholic Spirituality from the period of the Revolution to 1830 which paralleled the lifetime of Bishop John Carroll and that of Elizabeth (1774-1821). Joseph P. Chinnici described American spirituality in this era as "Catholic, Christian, and American" in the unique social realities of religious pluralism and the republican mindset that emphasized civil

² Ibid.

harmony with an ecumenical and democratic spirit.³ The spiritual life of American Catholics in this era was formed by English Catholic spirituality revealed in that of John Gother and Richard Challoner and also by French and Ignatian spirituality. Especially, *The Garden of the Soul* written by Challoner had a great influence on American Catholics. Thus, American spirituality in this era was described as “Garden of the Soul Spirituality” or “Republican Spirituality.”⁴ This spirituality emphasized “a life of concrete imitation of Christ” and moral conduct which was also seen in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Ignatius Loyola.⁵ American spirituality in this era was very Christocentric, affective, and ecumenical and emphasized Scriptures and the social mission of Christianity.⁶ Bishop John Carroll as an American-born former Jesuit was a concrete example of this era and shared this spirituality with Elizabeth through his spiritual direction. In this period, the Catholic theological and spiritual movement was congenial with that of the Episcopalians, whose leading figure was Rev. John Hobart who was Elizabeth’s spiritual director in the Episcopal Church. Thus, Elizabeth’s spiritual piety was formed in this incarnational spirituality in both the Episcopal and Catholic Church. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* cited one of Elizabeth

³ Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Maryknoll: New York, 1996), 2nd ed., 34.

⁴ *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. “American Spirituality,” 35.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Chinnici, 9-10.

Seton's meditations on Jesus and His life written in her prayer book as an example of this incarnational spirituality.⁷

Chapter two examined Elizabeth's spiritual formation in the Episcopal Church. In her first stage of life, Elizabeth developed a spiritual life based on reciting Psalms and meditation on the Scripture in the midst of her experience of suffering and accepted God as her Father who always was with her. In this stage, her writings also revealed her cultural formation based on her education, readings of literature, and social life. In the second stage of her life, she manifested a tremendous growth in her spiritual life due to the influence of Rev. John Henry Hobart who was Elizabeth's pastor in the Episcopal Church. In her letter to her friend, Julia Scott, dated November 16, 1802, Elizabeth wrote:

my habits both of Soul and Body are changed - that I feel all the habits of society and connections of *this* life have taken a new form and are only interesting or endearing as they point the view to the next.- we will never differ on this point . . . you will then allow and exult in acknowledging that the "way of the world" is not the way of God and as he has set us a pattern for our imitation.⁸

Hobart advocated the high church tradition in the United States. In his theology of high church, he emphasized the visible church structure, theology of Eucharist, the Word of God, the liturgical celebration, and social action for the poor. Under his spiritual direction Elizabeth developed her scriptural, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety and participated in charitable work for the poor. Paradoxically, Hobart offered a theological basis for Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism. Because of Hobart's spiritual

⁷ *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, s.v. "American Spirituality," 35.

⁸ *CW*, vol. I, *Correspondence and Journals, 1793-1808*, sec., 1.65, 212, Elizabeth had written "few letters in the whole of 1802. She had become engaged in keeping a spiritual journal which possibly replaced some of her letter writing." *CW*, 1, 212, n. 1. "'Way to Him' is underlined twice." *CW*, 1, 212, n. 2.

direction, Elizabeth easily found a home in the Catholic Church and deepened this spirituality which she shared with individuals in her own spiritual direction.

Elizabeth's incarnational spirituality developed under the spiritual direction of the Filicchi brothers, who were the Italian friends of the Seton Family and very pious Catholics. Through the analysis of Elizabeth's own correspondence and the letters of the Filicchi brothers to her, chapter three examined how Elizabeth deepened her incarnational spirituality. After the death of Elizabeth's husband, William Magee Seton, in Italy, the Filicchi brothers arranged for Elizabeth to visit the Catholic Church in Leghorn [Livorno] and in Florence and continually guided her to read Catholic spiritual and doctrinal books.⁹ They directed Elizabeth to convert to Catholicism and to grow in faith, hope, and love in the Catholic Church. In their spiritual direction, they encouraged Elizabeth to meet Jesus Christ in the Scripture, the Eucharist, liturgical celebration, and the Catholic Church, and guided her to grow in the virtuous life through their instructions, gifts of the spiritual books, and their own example of caring for those less fortunate. Reading spiritual writings under their direction, Elizabeth was moved especially by the Eucharistic theology based on the Fathers of the Church and the liturgical celebration revealed in Rev. Louis Bourdaloue's *Sermons*¹⁰ which helped her to appreciate the deep meaning of feast days. Later in her life she often noted the feast day at the beginning of her letters. Under the guidance of the Filicchi brothers, Elizabeth developed her incarnational spirituality based on her biblical, Eucharistic, and liturgical piety.

⁹See the detail in chapter 4.

¹⁰ See Elizabeth's reference to Bourdaloue's *Sermons*, *CW*, 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 6.181, 296.

Chapter four dealt with Elizabeth's spiritual growth under the spiritual direction of three prominent clergymen: Rev. John Carroll, the first bishop and Archbishop of the Catholic Church of North America, Rev. Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus [John Cheverus], who was a French emigré and the first Bishop of Boston, and Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté, who was a French Sulpician priest and the first Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana. Under their spiritual direction, Elizabeth enriched her incarnational spirituality. While Cheverus and Carroll directed Elizabeth to be a Catholic and the foundress of the first American religious congregation and shared English and French Catholic spirituality as well as Ignatian spirituality with her, Bruté led her to the mystic world through his Sulpician heritage of the French School of Spirituality, which also emphasized incarnational spirituality and valued the role of the Blessed Virgin and of the priesthood in Christ. Thus, the common nature of their spiritual direction was very incarnational. Their direction to Elizabeth was based on the Scripture and emphasized the Christ-centered life. Under the spiritual direction of these prominent clergymen, Elizabeth deepened her scriptural, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety as well as her devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and made a great effort to live the Christ-centered life in her own life and urged her directees to center their lives in Christ.

Chapters five to eight displayed Elizabeth's prominent role as a spiritual director and the themes, sources and models which she followed in her practice of spiritual direction. Chapter five examined Elizabeth's function and qualifications as a spiritual director. Elizabeth did not hide her lamp under a bushel. She had shared her incarnational spirituality with others. As a spiritual director, she functioned as a facilitator of

conversion to the life of faith, a co-discerner for one's vocation in hope toward union with God, and an advocate of the Christ-centered life in love of Jesus Christ. Regarding her qualifications as a spiritual director, her correspondence and writing showed ample evidence that she was a very qualified spiritual director based on her own spiritual life and her goal and method of spiritual direction. She led individuals to meet the triune God and to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The goal of her spiritual direction was to assist individuals to accept God's invitation to the salvation of the soul and to participate in the glory of God through the Christ-centered life. Her method was very holistic. She guided individuals to transform the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of life toward union with God. In her spiritual direction, she offered excellent resources from the Scriptures and from spiritual writings.

Elizabeth's role as a facilitator for conversion to the life of faith, as a co-discerner of one's vocation in life in hope toward union with God, and as an advocate of the Christ-centered life in love of Jesus Christ revealed the prominent themes of her spiritual direction. Chapters six to eight illustrated how she concretely practiced these major themes in her spiritual direction in the light of incarnational spirituality.

Chapter six presented Elizabeth's first theme in her spiritual direction. This first theme in her spiritual direction was the formation of faith. She gave spiritual direction on conversion to the life of faith. Faith formation was the first step to incarnate the spirit of Jesus Christ in one's life. To assist faith development, she directed individuals, as made in the image of God, to establish the ultimate goal of human life which was the salvation of the soul and the glory of God. She led them to maintain a pure intention toward this

goal and to live in the presence of God depending on the Word of God, prayer, and the sacraments of the Church.

Chapter seven examined Elizabeth's second theme in her spiritual direction. This second theme in her spiritual direction was the formation of hope. She gave spiritual direction on discernment concerning one's vocation in life in the hope of ultimate union with God. It was the second step toward incarnation of the spirit of Jesus Christ in one's life. As a co-discerner she assisted individuals to fulfill their vocation as a Christian layperson, religious, or priest. Elizabeth offered several methods to her directees in order for them to make the right discernment on their journey toward union with God. She assisted individuals to discern things in the light of the Holy Spirit and the will of God and directed them on how to discern the movements of the soul based on St. Ignatius Loyola's "Rules for Discernment of Spirits" and her own experience. To aid in their discernment of God's will she guided her directees to seek self-knowledge through examining their affections, mind and will. Elizabeth stressed the need to keep the vision of eternity before them and to have a global outlook. She also emphasized the importance of psychological insight in order to arrive at a right discernment.

Chapter eight dealt with Elizabeth's third theme in her spiritual direction. This third theme in her spiritual direction was the formation of love of Jesus Christ. She gave spiritual direction on the Christ-centered life, which was the goal of spiritual formation. To develop the Christ-centered life, first of all, she guided her directees to imitate Jesus Christ, especially his love toward humanity. Secondly, she encouraged individuals to participate in the Passion of Jesus Christ through their own suffering. She stressed that

their suffering was the place of rendezvous with the suffering Jesus and was the sure means of union with Jesus Christ. Her spiritual direction on suffering reflected the process of the soul's union with God through its purification and illumination in grace. Lastly, she urged individuals to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ for his people. She stressed the importance of serving Jesus Christ in the poor. These three themes in Elizabeth's spiritual direction facilitated the formation of faith, hope, love, and also the transformation of heart, mind, and action in order to incarnate the spirit of Jesus Christ on earth.

Chapter nine displayed an analysis and evaluation of Elisabeth's spiritual direction. There were many sources which influenced Elizabeth's approach to spiritual direction. Beside the Scriptures, Elizabeth read many spiritual and doctrinal books introduced to her by her spiritual directors. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté shared his library of around five thousand classic and contemporary books with Elizabeth and encouraged her to translate some of them from French to English. In her letter to Sister Cecilia O'Conway dated July 6, 1818, Elizabeth described her daily life: "go to Communion almost every day, and keep on my dear translations and meditations."¹¹ Elizabeth assimilated many of these spiritual writings and the wisdom of these spiritual writers influenced her spiritual direction. Her main sources for guidance in her spiritual direction were the Scriptures, *The Following of Christ* written by Thomas á Kempis, and the spiritual writings of the Church Fathers, St. Francis de Sales, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and Louis Bourdaloue. The spiritual guidance of these holy men and women were

¹¹ CW, vol. 2, *Correspondence and Journals, 1808-1820*, sec., 7.171, 567.

Elizabeth's model in her spiritual direction on the development of faith, hope, and love in her directees. In her spiritual direction on the life of faith, she used the scriptural passages, especially the parables of the Gospel, and the teachings of the Church Fathers and St. Francis de Sales. In her spiritual direction on the discernment of spirits, she depended on St. Ignatius's teaching. St. Vincent de Paul's instruction was her model in her spiritual direction on the Christ-centered life, especially concerning the service of the poor. Thus, through these spiritual writers, she led individuals to deepen their inner life by living in the presence of God and through the right discernment God's will. She encouraged them to incarnate the spirit of Jesus Christ in their own life and to serve him in others.

Elizabeth's spiritual direction was very distinctive in her time. She was truly an outstanding spiritual director to her contemporaries. She was well-qualified, having knowledge of the soul and psychological insight. She assiduously wrote hundreds of letters to individuals and guided them to grow in the Christ-centered life. She directed individuals based on the authentic teachings of spiritual writers and offered them as resources to her directees. She guided individuals to listen to the Word of God and to the guidance of the spiritual writers. Her translations and works she copied were a significant contribution to her contemporaries because the Scriptures and spiritual books were not easily available to everyone in her time.

Elizabeth's role as a spiritual director and her practice of spiritual direction contributes to the ministry of spiritual direction. Her biblical, Eucharistic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical piety urges readers of her writings to deepen their spiritual life by following the example of her piety. Her emphasis on the Christ-centered life in her direction offers

insight on the manner and the goal of spiritual formation. Her method of spiritual direction via her letters and writings contributes to the practice of spiritual direction and encourages everyone to help others to grow spiritually through their own letters and by sharing of their spiritual reflections.

This dissertation on Elizabeth Seton's spiritual direction contributes to the understanding of the spiritual direction based on the North American Catholic spirituality in the early nineteenth century. Whoever reads Elizabeth's correspondence and her spiritual writings recognizes not only her soul's spiritual journey to God, but also her astute spiritual guidance of her contemporaries. This dissertation gives insight to spiritual directors on the goals and methods of spiritual direction.

Prior to this study, there has been no detailed study of the practice of spiritual direction in the life and writings of St. Elizabeth Seton. In the *Collected Writings*, the editors, Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, commented that there are topics "to be probed in depth, for example, . . . themes such as the trajectory of Elizabeth's spiritual development. . . ." ¹² This dissertation probed the depth of Elizabeth's spiritual development and also her spiritual direction to individuals by giving concrete examples from her own letters and writings as well as letters from her own spiritual directors.

¹² Bechtle and Metz, introduction to *CW*, vol. 3b, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents* (New York: New City Press, 2006), xx.

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