

Welcome to the First Saturday Mass for the World Apostolate of Fatima, Saginaw Division. As always, we thank Deacon Roger and Holy Family Parish for hosting these events. We have been doing this continuously for 15 months. Know that our prayers and sacrifices are bearing fruit. A special thank you to the priests who heard confessions ... as well as the priest concelebrants. Please pray for our priests, and that our diocese may be blessed with many more holy vocations.

Today is the Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, who lived from 1774 - 1821. She is the first native-born American saint, and was canonized in 1975. She is credited with establishing the first Catholic school as well as founding the first American order of religious sisters.

She was born into a socially prominent family that was among the earliest settlers in the New York area. Her family members were devout Episcopalians. That is, they weren't Catholic.

Her mother died when she was 3 years old, and her father remarried, but the marriage ended in separation.

She married William Seton, a wealthy businessman in the import trade. But because of the loss of several of his ships at sea, he went into bankruptcy. He suffered with tuberculosis, and went to Italy, hoping that the warmer climate might help. He died while in quarantine, leaving Elizabeth and their children stranded in Italy.

Her late husband's business partners took them in, and through this contact was introduced to Catholicism. On her return to the United States, she entered the Church. She ran an academy for girls, but suffered due to anti-Catholicism.

She was invited by the Sulpicians to start a girls school in Emmitsburg, and it was here that she founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph.

She died of tuberculosis at the age of 46.

Mother Seton's life teaches us that even in the troubles we encounter - for her, deaths and financial struggles - we can always grow in holiness and virtue. How we meet life's difficulties when we do so with the help of God's grace, is often much more important in our lives than what the

world might consider success. We see this in the life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Indeed, in the first reading today from St. John's First Epistle, we are told that we must choose between good and evil - between Christ and the Devil. These daily choices form us into the people that we are. While God's grace calls us to become the people He has created us to be.

We must make use of God's grace throughout the day ... constantly ... to make the appropriate choices. On our own, we are left to the whims of the world. With Christ, no matter what happens, we will be victorious.

And as we hear in the Gospel, St. John the Baptist identifies Our Lord as the Lamb of God. A title unique to the Gospel of John and also found in the Apocalypse.

We are called to recognize Jesus in the events of our day, and like St. Andrew in today's Gospel, who brought St. Peter to Jesus, we too must bring others to Christ.

The Five First Saturdays are our prayers and sacrifices of reparation to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Our Lady. Our Blessed Mother's request, through Sister Lucia, are that we go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, recite five mysteries of the Rosary, and meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary for 15 minutes. All of this is to be done in a spirit of reparation for sins against Our Lord and Our Lady.

Our Lady promises the graces necessary for salvation; through her maternal mediation ... provided we approach this devotion with the proper disposition. The infinite graces of Christ's sacrifice are available to us. What we do with those graces is up to us. So often, we fail to engage the graces granted us. If only we recognized God's constant grace poured out!

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us - through the intercession of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton - pray for the graces we need to persevere in our daily lives ... to grow in holiness and virtue ... so that we might see and experience the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.