

**MISSION AWARENESS LESSON PLAN (Religion Curriculum)**  
**(Younger grades)**  
**ST. ELIZABETH SETON**

**Goal:** To learn a) about a positive role model (Outcome 4) and b) how one (e.g., St. Elizabeth Seton) can be a missionary by doing God's will and going wherever God seems to send you.

**Materials needed:** this lesson plan and accompanying story.

**Objectives:**

1. To learn about the story of a saint who was born in the United States (St. Elizabeth Seton)
2. To expand vocabulary with such words as: immigrants, saint, Psalms, nun, parochial, orphanage.
3. To observe what it means to do God's will.
4. To learn that people can become Catholics when they are older.
5. To learn that all of us are called missionaries, wherever we do God's work.
6. To develop good listening skills.

**Procedure:**

1. Prepare the children to listen to the story of a woman who is called a saint. (If you have a U.S. map, keep it available to point to New York.)
2. Tell or read the story of Elizabeth Seton (see accompanying sheet) as appropriate for your grade level.
3. Ask follow up questions (suggestions below).
4. Prayer: St. Elizabeth Seton, you did not complain when you were sad or when people were unkind to you. Help me to remember how much God loves me and that God will answer my prayers.
5. Present some follow up activity. A few suggestions are given below.

**Follow-up Questions:**

1. Where was Elizabeth Seton born?
2. What did Elizabeth notice about the immigrants from Ireland?
3. What were some of the sad things that happened to Elizabeth during her life?
4. What happened to Elizabeth when she went to Mass with her Catholic friends?
5. Did Elizabeth trust God? How do you know?
6. What do you remember about the school that Elizabeth started?
7. What part of the story of Elizabeth did you like best?

**Follow-up Activity:**

1. Illustrate any of the following: What do you think Elizabeth's school looked like? Draw a picture of Elizabeth, her husband William and their five children (3 girls and 2 boys). Draw a picture of Elizabeth, her 3 daughters and 7 other sisters on the covered wagon going to Emmitsburg.
2. Select 3 parts of Elizabeth's story (sequence). Draw a picture or write a sentence about each. Take the pictures or sentences home or to another class and tell Elizabeth's story.
3. Invite a member of Mother Seton's community (Daughters of Charity) to visit your school and tell about their foundress. The Daughters of Charity are in at least 3 schools here in L.A.

**MISSION AWARENESS LESSON PLAN (Religion Curriculum)**  
**(Older grades)**  
**ST. ELIZABETH SETON**

**Goal:** To learn a) about a positive role model (Outcome 40 and b) how one (e.g., St. Elizabeth Seton) can be a missionary by doing God's will and going wherever God seems to send you.

**Materials needed:** this lesson plan and accompanying story.

**Objectives:**

1. To learn the name and story of the first saint born in the United States.
2. To learn that one who is a convert, married with a family, and who lives only a short time can do great things for God.
3. To learn how Scripture (the Psalms) and the example of others can lead someone to God.
4. To learn that Elizabeth's trust in God was rewarded and that ours will be too.
5. To learn that someone's doing the right thing can make them unpopular with others.
6. To learn that all of us are missionaries, wherever we do God's work-that anyone who shares the good news of Jesus with others by word or action is a missionary.
7. To expand vocabulary: immigrants, quarantine, convert, nun, parochial, orphanage.

**Procedure:**

1. Prepare the class to listen to the story of a modern-day saint who was born here in the U.S. in New York (show N.Y. on map).
2. Read (or have read by a good reader) the story of St. Elizabeth Seton. Encourage students to take notes of interesting or important facts.
3. At the conclusion of the reading ask students to think of the Saint's life in three time frames-early, middle, late. Think about how God spoke to her in each of these time frames.
4. Prayer: St. Elizabeth Seton, you did not complain when you were sad or when people were unkind to you. Help me to remember how much God loves me and that God will answer my prayers.
5. Present some follow-up activity. A few suggestions are given below.

**Follow-up Questions:**

1. How was God's will made known to Elizabeth in each of the three periods of her life?
2. What facts about Elizabeth Seton are important in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States? (first native born saint and first Catholic parochial school and first orphanage)
3. What were some of the sad things that happened to Elizabeth during her life and how did she respond to them?

**Follow-up Activity:**

1. Ask for a group of volunteers to present a skit on the life of St. Elizabeth Seton to a younger class.
2. Invite a member of Mother Seton's community (Daughters of Charity) to visit your school and tell about their foundress. The Daughters of Charity are in at least 3 schools here in L.A.

## **ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON** **(younger students)**

This is the true story about the very first person born in the United States who was named a saint in the Catholic Church.

This woman's name is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. She and her husband, William, lived in New York and belonged to the Episcopalian Church. They had five children and were very happy until William's business began to have trouble. Then William himself became very ill. He needed a lot of rest. At that time, Elizabeth began to work with immigrants coming to the United States from Ireland. She was amazed at how happy they were even though they were poor and hungry. They prayed all the time; their faith was strong.

Mr. Seton's health grew worse but Elizabeth read the Psalms from the Bible and they made her feel better. She told her children, "Don't worry; God will get us through this." She sold everything they had to get enough money to take her husband on a long sea journey to improve his health. But he died after they arrived in Italy. Elizabeth stayed there in Italy for some time with friends of hers. They were Catholic and she went to Mass with them. When she prayed to Jesus in front of the Blessed Sacrament she felt very peaceful. Finally, she decided to return to America.

Back in New York she rented a small apartment and opened a school. But she continued to think about becoming a Catholic. For a whole year she prayed and wondered and worried about the right thing to do. Finally one day she walked into a Catholic Church and told the priest: "I want to become a Catholic." Her friends didn't like her decision to be a Catholic. They took their children out of her school and she soon began to run out of money. She said to herself and to God, "What shall I do?" Her prayer was answered because she received a letter from a priest in Baltimore, Maryland asking if she would come there because they needed Catholic teachers. Trusting that this was God telling her what to do, Elizabeth set out for Baltimore with her children. The priest welcomed her and gave her a home in which to live and teach.

This was very good. But now Elizabeth had another problem. She wanted to become a nun, but how could she do that with five children to care for? But again God answered her question in this way: Bishop John Carroll in New York gave her permission to become a nun and to start a new group of sisters called the Sisters of Charity. As a sister, Elizabeth was called Mother Seton. Along with her new group of seven sisters and her three daughters she left Baltimore and set out in a covered wagon for their new home in Emmitsburg-fifty miles away. There she opened a school called St. Joseph's Free School. Both black and white children attended her school. Elizabeth's school was the first Catholic parochial school in the United States. Soon so many pupils came that the sisters had to build a larger school. The other wonderful thing that happened was that many women came to join them in their work. So they had to build a place to for them to live while they learned how to be sisters and teachers.

Elizabeth and her sisters also began the first Catholic orphanage in the United States in the city of Philadelphia. Elizabeth died in 1820; she was only 46 years old. But in her short life she never lost sight of her goal: to do God's will.

## **ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON** **(older students)**

About 25 years ago the Pope declared a new saint in the Church: Elizabeth Ann Seton. Two important things to remember about this saint are: 1) she was the first American saint who was born in the United States and 2) she was not always a Catholic. In her short life of 46 years, she was a society belle, wife, mother, teacher and Catholic nun. Here is her story.

She was born in 1774 and was named Elizabeth Ann Bayley. Her home was in New York City; her family was Episcopalian and very wealthy. She grew up learning French and music and good manners and she read her Scripture every day. On Sunday she went to the Episcopalian Church. When she was 19 she married a man named William Seton. At first all went well; they were happy and had five children. But then business problems in William's company caused them to have serious financial problems. After that, William became very sick with tuberculosis and needed much rest. At this time Elizabeth began to work with newly arrived immigrants from Ireland. She was saddened by the terrible condition of the immigrants but she found no despair in them. The immigrants prayed continually; they had strong faith.

There was much disease in the United States at this time. Yellow fever became an epidemic in New York. Elizabeth's father died of it. Her husband's tuberculosis also worsened. Elizabeth remembered the Psalms she had read in her childhood. They came back to her and put her heart at ease. She said to her children: "We will not worry; God will get us through this." She decided that what her husband needed was a sea journey. She sold everything; they had to get enough money for herself, her husband, and Anna-her oldest child-to go on a voyage. The younger children stayed in New York with friends. The journey went well and Mr. Seton improved. But when they arrived in Italy they could not leave the ship because of quarantine against the yellow fever epidemic in New York. She prayed, "Lord, please do something." But her husband grew worse and died, leaving Elizabeth a widow with five small children. She was able to move in with their friends in Italy, who invited her to go to Mass with them. When she knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, she was filled with a peace she had not known before. After a while, Elizabeth decided to leave Italy and get on with a life for herself and her children.

In New York she found a small apartment and decided to open a school for girls in her home. Soon she was making a fair living. Elizabeth began to think more and more about the Catholic faith. For a whole year she prayed and wondered and worried. Finally one day she walked into a Catholic Church and told the priest: "I want to become a Catholic." These words changed her life. Most of her friends thought she was making a big mistake by being a Catholic and they would have nothing to do with her. Parents took their children out of her school and soon she was running out of money. She was asking herself- "What shall we do?" when she received a letter from a priest in Baltimore asking if she would come there because they were in need of Catholic teachers. Trusting in God's direction, Elizabeth set out for Baltimore with her children. The priest welcomed her and gave her a home in which to live and teach.

During the next year, Elizabeth was faced with another problem. She wanted to become a nun, but how could she do that with five children to care for! Nevertheless Bishop John Carroll in New York gave her permission not only to become a nun but also to start a new community called the Sisters of Charity. As a Sister, Elizabeth was called Mother Seton. Along with her new community of seven sisters and her three daughters she left Baltimore and set out in covered wagon for their new home 50 miles away in Emmitsburg. There she opened St. Joseph's Free School. Both black and white children attended. Elizabeth's school was the first Catholic parochial school in the United States. Soon so many pupils came that the sisters had to build a larger school and then a convent to train novices so they might go out to other cities and teach. At the request of the Bishop of Philadelphia she opened the first Catholic orphanage there. During this time three of Elizabeth's children died. She herself died in 1820 at age 46. St. Elizabeth Seton never lost sight of her goal: to do God's will.