



***A Contemplative Prayer Lenten Retreat
Prayed in the Spirit of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
March 2025***

*Prepared for the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
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In this mini retreat we are looking to the life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. On March 1st, 2025, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth hosted Betty Ann McNeil, Daughter of Charity, who served as the Seton Shrine Archivist for many years. She has written and researched extensively on the life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

In her talk she shared with us the themes of Elizabeth's life such as "Hazard Zet Forward," "Grace Surmounts Adversity," "Hope Does Not Disappoint," and "Dwelling in the Shadow of the Cross." She shared with us the inspiring legacy of Elizabeth's life as she navigated many difficult journeys. Throughout her life she continued forward, always striving for and believing in hope. This is the same hope that we bring forward during Lent and in our daily lives as well.

Below you will find a simple Lectio Divina Exercise based on Mark 5: 21-43. In this passage, you will find women searching for hope and new life – and how Jesus helped them to live into healing and wholeness. The Lenten Journey is an opportunity to learn how to heal and how to bring wholeness and hope to those around us. I hope that this contemplative prayer moment offers the peace you need as you travel on your own Lenten Journey.

For additional resources on St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, please try some of these links connected to the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine. They are listed on the next page.

- **15 Days of Prayer with Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton**, written by Betty Ann McNeil, DC: <https://setonshrine.org/lift-up-my-soul-15-days-of-prayer-mother-seton/>
- **Seton Reflections:** <https://setonshrine.org/katharine-drexel-and-elizabeth-ann-seton-sister-saints-who-changed-education-in-the-united-states-forever/>
- **Into God's Light with Elizabeth Ann Seton** - Seven Easter reflections by author Paula Huston to help youth who may be struggling with life's difficulties: <https://setonshrine.org/intogodslight/>

In this contemplative prayer session, we focus on praying with one's imagination, we first settle in by bringing our awareness to the present moment. Next, you can read through the passage from Mark and use some of the techniques that follow the reading. Lastly, take time in silence to reflect on the story and where God might be leading you during this Lenten Season.

To begin, settle in...

Bring Awareness to Your Feelings, Tensions, Worries, etc.

You can begin with eyes open or closed. We will tap into the sensations of our breath and body. Take a moment to see how you feel. Become aware of how you may be feeling emotionally, physically, and just in general. Take a moment to really notice all of it and then to affirm for yourself that you have the ability to relax and to move into something new.

Engage in Simple Breathing and Stretching Techniques

Allow yourself a moment to sit up tall and take a long deep breath and slowly release the breath. Practice taking a large, gentle, inhale and then allowing the breath to fill the diaphragm as much as possible, as slowly as possible. Then, gently allow yourself to release the breath slowly. This gentle and long exhalation is key to our ability to relax and feel calm.

Faith lifts the staggering soul on one side, Hope supports it on the other, Experience says it must be and love says let it be.

Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings, Volume 2, pg. 117.

Next, take time to read...

Mark 5:21-43

New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat^[a] to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing^[b] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Footnotes

- a. [Mark 5:21](#) Other ancient authorities lack in the boat
- b. [Mark 5:36](#) Or ignoring; other ancient authorities read hearing

[New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition \(NRSVCE\)](#)

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As you read...

Pray with Your Imagination - One of the ways of praying comes from the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. Here, we take time to imagine ourselves as an actor in the scene of the Gospel stories. We try to bring all elements of our senses into the visualization as we enter this living scene. This living story and our part in it, offer us a fresh perspective and way to “see” or “hear” in the ways that the Spirit is leading us. It also helps us to understand the actions and gifts of Jesus and how these may be a blessing to us as well. Below are some other ideas for using your imagination and creativity to visualize something new.

Visualize a Peaceful Place - Now, as we have used the breath and the body to bring a sense of calm, bring your attention to your imagination. As you are able...begin to imagine a peaceful place for yourself. Try to imagine the location, the weather, and the surroundings. Try to bring as much detail to the scene as possible. Try to bring your senses into the image as well. Notice colors, sounds, smells, the sensation of weather, perhaps even textures that you notice.

Visualize Yourself in the Scene - Now, try to bring an image of yourself within the scene. Begin to see yourself again with as many details as possible. See if you can notice where you are, what you are doing, what you are wearing and even the expression on your face. Try to see yourself in the best light possible, imagining all of the things you hope for and would love to see for your own life. See if there are characters in the scene that you might speak with or learn from. Try to capture an image from this scene, one that you can refer to at another time.

Return Home - Now we will gently return. After capturing this image or what you have learned, see if you can gently return to this image of your peaceful place or where you began. When you are there – again, pause and see if there is something you would like to remember about this peaceful place or what you saw as you imagined yourself in the scene. Take time to reflect on the questions or even spend time in silence to see what the passage has to say.

Do what we can and God will do the rest. What seems so impossible to nature is quite easy to grace.

Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings, Volume 3a, pg. 568.

Finally, reflect...

1. Take time to reflect on how you felt before the meditation and afterwards.
2. Where did you see yourself as a participant in the story?
3. Where there any characters in the scene with whom you might imagine yourself speaking to?
4. If so, what might you be discussing or asking?
5. Were there any insights on a current situation in your life? If so, what were they?
6. Was there anything about the story that spoke to you or helped in a decision or discernment?

*Certainly He will open the door, probably as generally happens
in such cases, when we least expect it.*

Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings, Volume 2, pg. 285.