

Father Dave's Homily

11/04/12 31B

-- Last month in my spare time, bit by bit, I went through the National Catholic Directory which lists parishes from all the dioceses in the US. There was an interesting fact I discovered: one saint's name by far dominated parishes founded in the last quarter of the 20th century.

-- Tuesday I asked some priests of our diocese and they couldn't guess the name. It was Elizabeth Seton. I suppose one reason is that she was proclaimed a saint in 1975. Another is that she was the first native-born American to be formally canonized a saint.

-- But I bring her up today because she demonstrated in her life what it means to follow the two great commandments given in our gospel. She was born Elizabeth Bailey to a devout Episcopalian family in New York.

-- As a young woman she married William Seton, a wealthy business man, and eventually had five children. He died ten years later when they were in Italy. They had been staying with a good Catholic family, and while there Elizabeth started visiting churches and spending time before the Blessed Sacrament.

-- After she returned to New York, she decided to become a Catholic and did so a year later. Since she needed to make a living to support her family, she started a school for girls in Baltimore at the request of Bishop John Carroll. Her own daughters attended the school, which only accepted tuition from those who could afford it.

-- With Cecelia O'Conway she started a religious congregation which became the Sisters of Charity. They founded orphanages in New York and Philadelphia. Meanwhile her sons went on to Georgetown College, and one of them had a son who became an archbishop.

-- She responded to God's love at various stages of her life as a wife, mother, educator and founder of a religious order. She had a special care for the poor and children who had lost their parents.

-- She and about 30 other men and women, many of whom were Americans, are highlighted in the *United States Catholic Catechism*. During this Year of Faith, their stories are well worth reading. For their stories show us what loving God and neighbor is all about.

-- There is no “cookie cutter” way to holiness. Each of us has our own vocation, and our particular circumstances in which we live it out. Whatever vocation we have, though, it must be grounded in love of God nurtured by regular prayer and worship.

-- And it must be lived out by our loving care and concern for those whose lives touch ours. We cannot save the whole world. But we can and must make the world a little better for at least some of those around us.

-- This weekend we remember in prayer those from our parish who have met the Lord this past year. And we recall loved ones who have gone before us over the years. Many of those people have been models of love of God and neighbor to us and many others.

-- As we call them to mind, may we resolve to spread God’s love in some small way to those around us in the coming year. May this Year of Faith be an opportunity for us to grow in our love of God through prayer, worship and some small sacrifices for the good of someone in need we know or know about.

-- For we, too, should hear the words of Jesus to the scribe in today’s gospel:

You are not far from the reign of God.