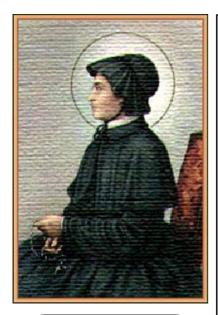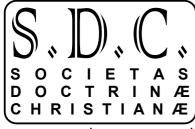# Lives of Saints

St Elizabeth Ann Seton

1774 - 1821
Feast day: 4th January

> "The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God, secondly, to do it in a manner he wills it, and thirdly, to do it because it is his will."
>
> *St Elizabeth Ann Seton*

I was born in America, on August 28, 1774, just two years before the Declaration of Independence. By birth and by marriage I was linked to the first families of New York, and enjoyed the advantages of high society. I was brought up a staunch Episcopalian. Through my mother and my stepmother I learned the value of prayer, scripture and a nightly examination of conscience. My father, Dr Richard Bayley was not exactly a church-goer, but he was a great humanitarian, teaching me to love and serve others. My mother died when I was only 3 years old, and my baby sister died one year later. This gave me a feel for eternity and the temporariness of life. I tried to face these experiences with courage and cheerfulness.

At 19 I married William Magee Seton, a handsome, wealthy businessman. We had five children. Unfortunately William died of tuberculosis and left me penniless. I was 30 years old when he died. He died in Italy and that is where I came in contact with Catholicism. I was received into the Church on Ash Wednesday, 1805. Unfortunately, many of my friends deserted me when I did.

When I returned to America, I opened a school in Baltimore, and founded a religious community. These were the Sisters of Charity, the first native American religious community for women.

During my lifetime I suffered great trials. As an adolescent I suffered the fear that my father did not love me (I had a stepmother), and later, I suffered the heartache of a wayward son, sickness, misunderstanding and the death of loved ones. I had no extraordinary gifts. But I was a dedicated volunteer in charitable organizations, an educator and a catechist and I had two great devotions: abandonment to the will of God and an ardent love for the Blessed sacrament.