ARCADIA

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A Student Journal for Faith and Culture

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Mother Teresa: Saint of the Peripheries

This year, Ines Angeli Murzaku, PhD, Professor and Director of the Catholic Studies Program, published a new book through Paulist Press focusing on the life and mission of the most celebrated woman-saint of the 20th century, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata. This highly anticipated book's theological framework is based on Pope Francis's theology of the peripheries and how this theology applies to the mission and work of St. Mother Teresa. This unique approach makes Dr. Murzaku's study simultaneously current, theological, Scriptural, and historical.

While she was a saint *of* the 20th century, Mother Teresa is most certainly a saint *for* the 21st century. As globalization simultaneously makes communication easier and threatens to dehumanize us, Mother Teresa's life, mission, and message breathe new life into us. Her valuing of the peripheries and loving the innermost part of each person—and Christ within each person—speaks of the tremendous worth of all of us and encourages us to build bridges across cultures.

In the following pieces, Dr. Murzaku explores the relevance of Mother Teresa to our time—particularly during the pandemic—and explains some of the main themes of her book.

The Masked but Unconquered Smile

by Ines Angeli Murzaku, PhD
Director of Catholic Studies Program

(Reprinted with permission from Catholic World Report; article published on May 20, 2020, at https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2020/05/20/the-masked-but-unconquered-smile/.)

I put on a nicely hand-made face mask and my sunglasses, and before rushing into the garage I did a quick check in the mirror. It had been a long time since I had been driving, been on campus, or even dressed formally.

I was rather shocked to see myself in the mirror, with my sunglasses and face mask on; I could not recognize myself. Actually, I was surprised by what I saw—or in fact what I did not see. I wondered about not being recognized by friends, co-workers, or students. I wondered how this will play out when we go back to work. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the mask has entered our lives. And the mask, combined with social distancing, will challenge and change nearly all of our interactions with others.

I am using the future tense here as New Jersey, my state, has still not been opened as I write this. As I was driving to my local supermarket, I could not help thinking about teaching and advising students while wearing a face mask. At least during this unusual semester, I could use all my verbal and facial abilities to teach online, which included smiles and laughs. Will people be able to smile or be expressive behind face

masks? It sounds like a small thing, but it really isn't. Bernard Lonergan SJ (1904–1984), a Jesuit philosopher, theologian and economist, used the phenomenology of a smile to explain the meaning of inter-subjective communications. For Fr. Lonergan, a smile is charged with meaning; a smile is meaningful. This is what he wrote in his last major work entitled *Method in Theology*:

> [A smile] is not just a certain combination of movements of lips, facial muscles, eyes. It is a combination with a meaning. Because that meaning is different from the meaning of a frown, a scowl, a stare, a glare, a snicker, a laugh, it is named a smile. Because we all know that that meaning exists, we do not go about the streets smiling at everyone we meet. We know we should be misunderstood … a smile, because of its meaning, is easily perceived. Smiles occur in an enormous range of variations of facial movements, of lighting, of angle, of vision. But even an incipient, suppressed smile is not missed, for the smile is a Gestalt, a patterned set of variable movements, and it is recognized as a whole.

Smiles come naturally and instinctively; one cannot learn to smile the same way one learns to ride a bicycle or to skate. Reading smiles on people's faces can lead one deeper into understanding their actions and even their souls. The temperature of the body and soul are revealed in a smile in an almost immediate revelation.

A smile was constant on St. Mother Teresa's face, even

when she was going through the dark night of the soul. Mother paid special attention to smiling and being joyful, and she required her sisters to smile abundantly. One of the resolutions she made during the 1956 retreat, and in which she persevered during her entire life, was to smile at God. Smile more tenderly, pray more fervently and all the difficulties will disappear, she insisted. Many scholars have asked the question: What was in Mother's smile, or what made her keep smiling for fifty years while going through an unusually prolonged spiritual darkness?

Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2008 visit to Lourdes, **reflected on the theology of smiling** as a gateway to the mystery of love and God who is Love. Reflecting on the smile of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Benedict said:

> In the very simple manifestation of tenderness that we call a smile, we grasp that our sole wealth is the love God bears us, which passes through the heart of her who became our Mother. To seek this smile, is first of all to have grasped the gratuitousness of love; it is also to be able to elicit this smile through our efforts to live according to the word of her Beloved Son, just as a child seeks to elicit its mother's smile by doing what pleases her.

As Mary taught Bernadette, to know Mary, she had "to know her smile." What, then, was Mother Teresa's smile? She provides an answer: "The greater the pain and darker the darkness, the sweeter will be my smile at God," she wrote in a letter on October 16, 1961. This is what Mother Teresa wrote to a schoolgirl:

> Whenever you meet anyone, greet him with a smile. The utility of smiling is that it will keep you always acceptable to everyone. At the same time, it will make you, your face, look beautiful. If you are ever angry, try to smile rather forcefully and soon you will see, you have forgotten your anger, smiling with everybody.

However, one does not smile with the mouth alone, for the whole face is engaged in a real smile. The sparkle Mother had in her smiling eyes never faded away. Angelo Cardinal Comastri told a personal story of Mother Teresa that has to do with her smiling eyes. The cardinal remembers Mother participating in a celebration of profession of new religious sisters in a Roman parish, when a photographer was bothering Mother by taking flash pictures right in front of her face. The cardinal intervened, asking the photographer not to bother Mother by taking pictures when she was praying. The photographer responded rather bluntly by saying that Mother Teresa was not attractive, but her eyes were the happiest that he had ever seen. How, the photographer wondered, was this possible? Cardinal Comastri was shocked by the comment and at the end of the celebration, he repeated to Mother what the photographer had commented about her eyes. To his great surprise and with her usual wit she responded: "My eyes are happy, because my hands have dried many tears. Try it, I can assure you that works like this."

The great poet and philosopher Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) reflected on the smile and smiling, and on how expressive one can be using the eyes. Dante made "the

smile" (*Sorriso*–noun and *sorridere*–the verb *to smile*) the hallmark of his work, and the reflection on the topic of *smile* marked one of Dante's original contributions to Christian art, poetry, and iconography, as well as to Christian and theological imagination. Smile accompanied Dante in his journeys toward the beatific vision of God as he was journeying through *Inferno* and *Paradiso*.

Until the middle of the thirteenth century, people in ecclesiastical circles argued about whether or not Christ had ever smiled during his life on earth. Yes, "Jesus wept" (Jn 11:35), but did he really smile? For Dante, the soul operates principally in two places or through two windows both located in people's faces: the eyes and the mouth. It is through these two "balconies," as he called them, that people reveal their souls: the gaze in the eye when people gaze at them intentionally and in the mouth through the sweet smile. He asks in ***The Convivio:***

> What is laughter if not a coruscation of the soul's delight–that is, a light appearing outwardly just as it is within? … She reveals herself in the eyes so clearly that the emotion present in her may be recognized by anyone who gazes at them intently. (Book 3, chapter 8)

Obviously, by wearing a face mask, the mouth will be impaired in making any expressions. What will remain to us in a post-pandemic world, at least for a while, will be the eyes, and the deep dive one will be eager to take through the window of a person's eyes to discern and understand the soul.

The hope for academia is that by September, we will be able to return to normal, to face-to-face classes on campus. Students will return and flock to what have now become ghost campuses. Maybe by then we will not be required to wear face masks, but even if the face mask will be a requirement, I hope that I will have learned to read people's faces and give a smile with my own eyes. The pandemic can never destroy or conquer human relations; it cannot atrophy our smiles. With face masks or without, I will continue to smile big any and every time, hoping to share some light from my soul with all I meet.

Catholic World Report Interview of Dr. Ines Murzaku About Her Book *Mother Teresa: Saint of the Peripheries*

On May 31, 2021, Catholic World Report published an interview that Dr Adam DeVille conducted with Dr. Murzaku. In the interview, reprinted here with permission from Catholic World Report, Dr. Murzaku discusses Mother Teresa's theology and spirituality, as well as her mission work. The interview is also available online at https:// www.catholicworldreport.com/2021/05/31/new-book-provides-a-theological-exploration-of-mother-teresas-life-and-mission/.

CWR: Tell us about your background.

Dr. Murzaku: I am a Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Director of the Catholic Studies Program and the Founding Chair of the Department of Catholic Studies at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. I earned a doctorate of research from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, part of the Pontifical Gregorian University Consortium, and have held visiting positions at the Universities of Bologna and Calabria in Italy and University of Münster in Germany.

My book publications include (sole author or co-authored): *Mother Teresa, Saint of the Peripheries* (Paulist Press 2021); *Life of St Neilos of Rossano* (1004) (Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press 2018); *Italo -Greek Monasticism from St Neilos to Bessarion*

(Ashgate-Routledge 2018); *Monasticism in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Republics* (Routledge 2016); *Monastic Tradition in Eastern Christianity and the Outside World: A Call for Dialogue* (Peeters University of Leuven 2013); *Returning Home to Rome? The Monks of Grottaferrata in Albania* (Analekta Kryptopherres 2009); *Quo Vadis Eastern Europe? Religion, State and Society after Communism* (Longo University of Bologna 2009); and *Catholicism, Culture and Conversion: The History of the Jesuits in Albania (1841-1946)* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, Pontifical Oriental Institute 2006).

I am a regular commentator to media outlets on religious matters and have worked for or collaborated with the Associated Press, CNN, *Catholic World Report, National Catholic Register*, Voice of America, Relevant Radio, The Catholic Thing, Crux, The Record, The Stream, Vatican Radio, and EWTN.

CWR: There is no shortage of books on Mother Teresa. What led you to write yours, and how does it stand out from some of the others?

Dr. Murzaku: Definitively not; actually, books on Mother abound. This includes popular-general public books, children's books, spiritual books, and the list can go on. However, there are not many scholarly and fewer theological books on Mother Teresa. By accident, I started this project. The spark and the first itch for the project came in 2016, the year of her canonization. My colleague Dr. Christopher Bellitto from Kean University and I were part of a CNN special on Mother Teresa, an extraordinary program, well researched and

professionally put together, to celebrate the celebrated saint of the 20th century. Since September 2016, researching and writing about Mother Teresa has been at the focus and center of my research. I felt that there was (and in fact still is) so much to be explored and analyzed about the woman from the Balkan peripheries who became Mother Teresa of Kolkata and from 2016 Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata.

It stands out as a book focusing on Mother, but this is a theological exploration of Mother's life and mission; Mother is not seen as isolated but in intimate connection to others who shaped, prepared, and impelled her for a mission in the faraway periphery of India. The book explores Mother's mysticism in connection to that of other mystics including Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Padre Pio, who shaped and trained Mother. Her feminine genius was to hold strong to the classics but also to mark her own novel mysticism *al femminile*.

Mother proposes novel theological, mystical missionary paths which she herself walked and on which she was incredibly successful. She was an active theologian, mystic, and missionary.

CWR: This is a very different book from your scholarly work on Greek monasticism in southern Italy. What, if any, connections do you see between these books?

Dr. Murzaku: Yes, and no. Yes, because Mother Teresa is a 20th-century saint, missionary, mystic. My books about Italo-Greek monasticism deal with Medieval monasticism and monastics, a very particular, extraordinarily austere and, dare I say, peripheral form of monasticism in Southern Italy.

However, I found Mother Teresa and her theology to be monastic. For example: in founding her new, periphery-bound order, Mother Teresa was revisiting the roots of Christian asceticism, keeping in mind the fleeing-the-world, ascetic principle. She was envisioning a place outside Calcutta, where the sisters would have a contemplative start in the order, which would prepare them for active, evangelical life. She was thinking of perfect and life-long-perfecting poverty, a poverty which for her was not a theological or academic abstraction but a living poverty: the most difficult part of applying the virtue of poverty. Poverty—besides being an ideal, a vow—should be a living reality and a guiding principle.

The two monastic giants—Saint Benedict of Norcia and Saint Francis of Assisi—and their respective Rules, coming from different centuries and contexts in the history of Christian monasticism, became the two pillars of Mother Teresa's religious community and the Constitutions she wrote for the Missionaries of Charity. She did not see any contradiction between the Benedictine and Franciscan Rules, as some traditionally have presented them; instead, both rules regulating monastic life were complementary, a complementarity she made a foundation and enriched further. Mother and her Constitutions moved a step further in combining Benedictine and Franciscan charisms into a rich synthesis particularly suited to her time and place.

It might be safe to say that Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity picked up and completed where these two traditional and fundamental orders left off, and this is the order's contribution to continuity and progress, while keeping faith with Scripture and the

Benedictine and Franciscan traditions alike.

CWR: "Peripheries," of course, is a word much on the lips of Pope Francis, with whom you begin your prologue, and conclude in your last chapter. Tell us a bit about the "theology of the periphery" and why the whole Church (and not just saints or popes!) must go to the peripheries.

Dr. Murzaku: The theological backbone of this book—where I place all the "actors," with Mother being the main character—is based on the theology of peripheries of Pope Francis. What is the theology of peripheries? "Go out, head for the peripheries"—the leitmotif of Pope Francis' pontificate. Since the very start of his papacy in March 2013, Francis has moved the Church from security to risk-taking, from inward looking to outward looking, from the center to society's edges. There is, in fact, much convergence between Mother Teresa and Pope Francis regarding the periphery.

Rather than a purely geo-political or geo-economic construction, for Pope Francis and Mother Teresa the periphery refers to a multiplicity of peripheries: geographical, existential, mystical, biblical, moral, intellectual, religious, and extending in all of these cases to include the female periphery (the periphery *al femminile*). While recognizing that peripheries have a variety of meanings and connotations, this study explores periphery and center in concert, as one cannot be concerned with the peripheries and justify neglect of the center. Mother Teresa certainly did not.

As the study explains, her mission was to bring the

periphery to the center and vice-versa. So, the center and periphery are explored not in opposition but in partnership. The study draws close parallels between Pope Francis' and Mother Teresa's theology of periphery. Both Francis and Teresa were centered in the periphery, and both served the Church from and in the geographic peripheries of Argentina and India, respectively. However, there is a "peripheral distinction" between the two: Mother Teresa's geography of serving the Church went from the Balkan periphery—Scopje—to the Indian periphery, or a full-circle periphery. On the other hand, Francis moved from the Argentinian periphery to Rome—the center. Nevertheless, both Mother Teresa and Pope Francis equally brought the periphery to the center of world's attention. They complemented each other.

CWR: I sometimes think of Dorothy Day in connection to Mother Teresa in that Day famously said she didn't want to be called a saint for that domesticated and dismissed her too easily and allowed the poor, whom she served, to remain invisible behind her halo. Has there been any danger of our doing that to Mother Teresa?

Dr. Murzaku: In fact, they met in 1970 when Dorothy Day visited Kolkata and spoke to the Missionaries of Charity novices. The two women had a lot in common in their radical response to the Gospel. As a society we need Mother Teresas and Dorothy Days—there is a thirst out there, especially among the millennials and Gen Z. I witness it among my students.

I'm not sure if there is damage done to Mother Teresa becoming Saint Mother Teresa with a halo. As she

herself said: "If I ever become a saint — I will surely be one of 'darkness.' I will continually be absent from Heaven — to light the light of those in darkness on earth." She promised to light the way and intercede for the people on earth. The poorest of the poor and the peripherals remained central to her, even from above and behind the halo.

CWR: It seems to me that Mother Teresa has sometimes been glibly regarded (even before her death and canonization in some quarters) as impossibly heroic and holy, and the problems of poverty so complex and intractable, that we throw up our hands in despair, seeing no way of conquering either our own vices or poverty. And yet, as you show, despair is misplaced insofar as she is the saint of the small, daily "humble work," our "little part" that advances our salvation. How did she, who was so widely and universally respected, not become self-important but maintain her focus on doing her little part each day with humility and love?

Dr. Murzaku: Self-importance, publicity was not her thing; we can say she was a monastic at her best who had won over self. She was not interested in publicity and public speaking. Mother was also concerned that the time she spent in travel and public appearances meant time away from her religious congregation and her poor. Focus and perseverance were centrally important to her. She remained totally focused and persevered in things that mattered, adopting the "little way" of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, doing ordinary things with extraordinary love, and depending on God with a childlike trust. It was the little way that united Thérèse and Teresa.

CWR: As you so powerfully illustrate, especially in your

fourth chapter, Mother Teresa's life was not easy, her spirituality not glib or facile. For long periods she felt not blinded by a halo but instead by spiritual darkness. When stories of her long dark night of the soul broke in the media a few years ago, they generated a lot of attention. Why do you think that was? Are there lessons from that period of her life and those struggles we need to understand more deeply?

Dr. Murzaku: Oh, yes, definitively. Mother taught, even when she was going through darkness. Darkness was brought by God, so she had accepted it as a gift. Atypically, Mother's darkness would remain until the time of her death, unlike the experience of other saints who suffered the dark night of the soul.

After 45 years of trial and darkness, Saint Paul of the Cross was able to find spiritual consolation—"from time to time only, the Lord granted him a short respite"—and especially during the five last years of his life, when he had an apparition of Our Lady of Sorrows, he seemed to have reached the beatitude of heaven. However, both Saint Paul of the Cross and Mother Teresa, who through darkness achieved union with Christ, sought to lift up others or to open the way for others to union or divinization, and this is one of their commonalities, besides creating new religious orders—Mother Teresa, the Missionaries of Charity, and Saint Paul of the Cross, the Passionists. Darkness led Mother Teresa to action and more service. Even in darkness she was going for *magis*—more actively helping the world's poor.

Darkness united her to Christ, to the poor, and to suffering humans who were working their way to redemption and divinization. As darkness increased, so

did her thirst for God and the redemption of souls. Lesson taught: Her darkness was an active participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ. Moreover, her own darkness could bring light to others bearing the same burden. Maybe Christians need a more nuanced spirituality of darkness, as at some point in spiritual maturation many Christians might go through doubt and darkness, and they should know how to search for and discern light in the darkness. Mother Teresa's spirituality can be an excellent guide in this element of Christian life: her faith had the force to turn darkness into light; with Mother, the sunshine of darkness was bright.

CWR: Mother Teresa moved from her native Albania to India, and both countries are marked by their religious diversity, with significant numbers of Muslims as well as Eastern Christians. (As you note, about 20% of Albanians in Mother's homeland were Greek Orthodox.) Do you know of any significant interactions she may have had, or writings from her about, these groups?

Dr. Murzaku: Of course, the interactions were intense, daily among families, because of intermarriage—it was a "dialogue of life" that went on among these communities. She had no prejudice; she was a daughter of multiculturality and multi-religiosity, so going to India, learning the languages and cultures of her adopted country might not have been hard for her. She was trained in the Balkan laboratory.

CWR: It is 30 years ago this month, as you note, that Mother Teresa was finally able, after the fall of communism in Albania, to open a Missionaries of Charity house in Tirana. How is her community faring

today, both in Albania and elsewhere in the world?

Dr. Murzaku: Pretty well. It continues to be a vibrant order even after Mother's death. In 2016, when Mother was canonized, there were 5,161 sisters and 416 brothers.

CWR: You make some comparisons between her and other hugely celebrated figures, including Saint Francis of Assisi. Tell us a bit about some of the similarities you see between her and *Il Poverello.*

Dr. Murzaku: Yes, there is a lot of Saint Francis in Mother Teresa, although they lived under very different historical and theological circumstances and centuries apart. Spiritually, Mother Teresa and Saint Francis of Assisi have many things in common, including family histories; holiness in littleness and dedication to the world's peripheries; bridge-building and peace-building; the same "I thirst" for Jesus Crucified; striving to be Christ-like via imitating Christ; a religious life of combined contemplation and action; the veneration of Mary; and the suffering, which for Saint Francis was visible and for Mother Teresa was invisible.

Both enjoyed grassroots saintly status well before the Church's official canonization, founded religious orders for men and women, and shared their love for Lady Poverty and the Church of the poor. Mother Teresa and Saint Francis of Assisi further both demonstrated complete dependency—both spiritual and material—on Divine Providence for the needs of their communities, with no worries about tomorrow but with a resolve to live in the present with complete trust in God. Both saints also shared the utmost care for society's discards,

peripherals, and sinners, which goes hand in hand with their love for the Creator and creation.

There is a mystical and "peripheral" connection between Mother Teresa and Saint Francis. What did Saint Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa have in common? As I show in my book, they shared **P**arents and Family; **P**eriphery of Prisoners and Lepers; and **P**eace and Joy.

CWR: Sum up your hopes for this book, and tell us who especially should read it.

Dr. Murzaku: My hope for this book was to offer a new and theological interpretation of the life and mission of Mother Teresa, beginning from her roots in Scopje (North Macedonia) to India, her second home. It is an Easter book, with hope in the redemptive work of the Lord. It models Mother's thirst for the love of Christ that every Christian should have. The student, scholar, the faithful – all will be able to find and construct their own devotion to "Mother Teresa." I have mine…

CWR: Having finished this book, what are you at work on now?

Dr. Murzaku: Well, for several years I have been researching and writing on the Italo-Greeks/Italo-Albanians or Arbëreshë of Southern Italy. It is a fascinating piece of ecclesiastical Byzantine history and theology—how these Byzantine communities united with Rome but not "uniate" have survived under Latin bishops. The Eparchy of Lungro (Calabria) of the Italo-Albanians celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2019. I think this is a good occasion to reflect on the 100 years of the eparchy and to appreciate the connection of its

establishment to the history of the Byzantine Church in Calabria and Sicily. I am excited about this project, as there is very little written in English about this church and its tradition. In a way I will continue to use Pope Francis' theology of the peripheries, because indeed the history of the Italo-Albanian church is peripheral and marginal to the history of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

ARCADIA

A Collection of Essays

This group of essays by Seton Hall University students and a faculty member span the topics of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Oscar Romero, and mitigating sewage leaks at Jennings Beach in Fairfield, Connecticut. While it might be surprising that we have chosen to include writing about saints and preventing pollution in the same section, these pieces share important themes: care for our common home and living out our Faith's call to fraternity.

Seton Hall Catholic studies major Giselle Pineda explores the life, conversion, and contributions of our university's patron to the U.S. education system, showing how her constant concern in life—caring for others—was central to her mission and faith. Faculty member Maribel Landrau, M.A.T., shares her enthusiasm for the faith and leadership of Saint Oscar Romero, who bravely took decisive action to protect the vulnerable of El Salvador, in the face of threats to his own life and safety. Clara Cusanelli, an environmental studies major on the policy track, presents a reflection on a beach she loves, and she proposes an evidence-based solution that would promote sustaining the natural resources of the area so that generations of humans—and wildlife—will be able to enjoy and thrive in the region of the Long Island Sound.

These three articles underscore the ways that a true sense of fraternity and dedication to stewardship work together, allowing us to build up God's kingdom on Earth.

Paving the Way for American Saints: Elizabeth Ann Seton

by Giselle Pineda

After the American Revolution (1775–1783), religion—especially Catholicism—was not a priority in America (History.com Editors). During this time, Catholics were a minority whom other groups saw as corrupt. However, this soon changed as people were converted, and Catholic communities became popular. Someone who played an important role in this shift is Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. Saint Elizabeth is the first American-born saint to be canonized and is the patroness of American Catholic Education (Traflet). Born on August 28, 1774, into an Episcopalian family, she learned to love service to others which, as Pope Paul VI stated, laid the foundation of her religious sense and Christian sentiment. Founding the Sisters of Charity and Saint Joseph's Academy allowed Saint Elizabeth to carry out her two great devotions "abandonment to the will of God and an ardent love for the Blessed Sacrament" (Franciscan Media). In her short 46 years, Saint Elizabeth was "a wife, mother, widow, sole parent, foundress, educator, social minister, and spiritual leader" ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton paved the way to sainthood for many Americans to follow.

The Catholic Church refers to families as the "Domestic Church" because it is here where children are exposed to their faith and where they learn the love of God. This held true for Saint Elizabeth's family, despite the fact that she was from a prominent Episcopalian Protestant family (Metz). Unfortunately, when Saint Elizabeth was

three years old, tragedy quickly struck, and her mother died ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Her father, Dr. Richard Bayley, a renowned surgeon, chair of Anatomy and Surgery at Columbia College, and the first health officer of the Port of New York, now had the task of raising his children on his own (Traflet). A year later, Dr. Bayley remarried; however, Charlotte, his new wife, rejected both Elizabeth and her older sister, Mary. Whenever, Dr. Bayley would travel for medical studies, the girls would stay with their uncle William Bayley (1745–1811) in New Rochelle, New York, where they were taught Episcopalian doctrine ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). While back home in New York City with her stepfamily, Saint Elizabeth would be given the charge of caring for her half-siblings; Emma, Richard Jr., Andrew Barclay, Guy Carlton, and William Augustus, who were between three and 12 years old (O'Donnell 42). Later, Dr. Bayley and Charlotte divorced, which caused Saint Elizabeth great pain because despite the mistreatment she received from Charlotte, Saint Elizabeth still considered her a mother. The years following her father and Charlotte's divorce, Saint Elizabeth struggled to find happiness and meaning in her life, causing her to fall into depression. Saint Elizabeth recalls the time where she thought of taking her life by ingesting "the little bottle" which was filled with laudanum (O'Donnell 53). Laudanum is an opiate that her father would use in small amounts in his patients' medication to help them with a wide range of health issues from diarrhea to pain of late-stage tuberculosis. Due to the fact that laudanum is an opiate, it can be addictive and even kill someone if ingested in a high dose. Fortunately, Saint Elizabeth did not ingest the bottle and her life-affirming decision led to her feeling a great sense of relief. She used this event as an

impetus for personal and spiritual growth. From this thought of suicide Saint Elizabeth came to learn "her own sinfulness and then…a rebirth in God's mercy" (O'Donnell 53). In an effort to be a better person, Saint Elizabeth decided to build a better relationship with her father by helping him with his research and transcribing passages from several books (O'Donnell 43). At this time, yellow fever and tuberculosis began plaguing the United States. Being the New York health officer, Dr. Bayley treated several patients suffering from these diseases. By watching her father work, Saint Elizabeth learned the various ways in which humans suffer, but she also came to learn her father's stance on disease and religion. Dr. Bayley blamed New Yorkers' own bad choices for much of the suffering, but he also believed that science and medicine—not prayer—improved the world. Having cared for several people suffering from tuberculosis (consumption, as it was most popularly known) and watching their health deteriorate from fevers, swollen glands, fluid-filled lungs, and even collapsed spines, Saint Elizabeth had her own fantasy of her future life. She dreamed of living in the countryside and gathering "all the little children round and teach them their prayers and keep them clean and teach them to be good," a life similar to those about which she read in her novels (O'Donnell 52).

In her journals Saint Elizabeth sums up her adolescence with five words "folly-sorrows-romance-miserable friendships," but her luck soon changed as social circles began to merge (O'Donnell 51). Saint Elizabeth came from a social circle of scientists, professors, and city officials. However, around the age of 19, she was introduced to the merchant and business social circles. William Magee Seton came from a prominent merchant

family. As New York's economy was on the rise and relied more on imported goods, William Seton Sr. (William Magee's father) sent his son to Italy to work with Filippo Filicchi, a close family friend and well-known merchant. William Seton Sr. hoped his son would learn the trade of merchant and acquire an interest in the family trade (O'Donnell 35). While in Italy, Filippo tried to convert William Magee to Catholicism but was unsuccessful. However, his efforts were not all lost because he was able to convince William Magee to help begin the process for an American bishop in the United States (O'Donnell 36). While William Magee was in Italy, Saint Elizabeth began to socialize with the merchant families, eventually meeting the Setons. When William Magee returned to America, he was introduced to Elizabeth Bayley, and it was love at first sight. They began courting in 1793 and married a year later on January 25, 1794. Having come a long way from wanting to die to falling in love with someone outside her social circle, Saint Elizabeth shows that not all saints are born and raised as devout Catholics without flaws.

As happens with many marriages, William Magee and Saint Elizabeth each had members of their families who did not approve of the other. However, William Magee and Saint Elizabeth were so deeply in love that they did not care about others' opinions and thoughts. The love they had for each other is evident in their letters to each other. In her letter dated July 23, 1794, Saint Elizabeth writes to her husband, William Magee, while he is away on business. Throughout this letter, Saint Elizabeth tells William Magee of her days and how much she longs for him to return home. She describes how much it hurts her to hear stories of William Magee, stating "[her] watery

eyes bear witness of the effect those thoughts have for every time [William Magee] is mentioned they prove that [she is] a poor little weak woman" (Seton 1.7). However, being a "poor little weak woman" did not bother Saint Elizabeth; she was happy to belittle herself for her husband. In an effort to comfort themselves, both Saint Elizabeth and William Magee would have pictures of each other. William Magee would carry a small portrait of Saint Elizabeth and he would talk to it about anything and everything that occurred on his trips (O'Donnell 56). Similarly, Saint Elizabeth would look at the picture and replay happy memories with her husband, but unlike her husband, she would not do so frequently. In her letter to William Magee, she tells him, "your picture is so melancholy that I don't love to look at it in your absence, it indulges too many fancys which my dismal imagination is ready enough to represent," displaying, once again, her pain at not having her husband by her side and her love for him because she loved him so much that she would cry at night due to their separation (Seton 1.7). William Magee and Saint Elizabeth quickly grew their family, having a total of five of their own children: Anna Maria (1795–1812), William (1796–1823), Richard Bayley (1789–1823), Catherine Charlton (1800–1891), and Rebecca Mary (1802–1816) ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton").

When Saint Elizabeth was 24 years old and six months pregnant with her third child, Richard, she decided to "adopt" six more children. Having lost their mother at a young age, William Magee's halfsiblings were under the care of their father. Unfortunately, one day on his way to work William Seton Sr. took a fall. He was not able to survive the injuries of the fall and died, leaving his

children orphans. Saint Elizabeth knew these children would not be able to survive on their own and no one would step up to help them, so she did. She became their adoptive mother. Now a family of 10—Saint Elizabeth, William Magee, their two sons, and six of William Magee's half-siblings—the Setons moved back into William Magee's childhood home in New York City. Coming to the realization that having to care for eight children was too much to handle at once, William Magee and Saint Elizabeth decided to send William Magee's halfsiblings to boarding schools. Mary and Charlotte were sent to school in New Brunswick, New Jersey, at the ages of 12 and 14, respectively. Sam and Ned were both sent to a school in Connecticut. This left only Harriet (Hatch, as she was nicknamed) and Cecilia to be homeschooled by Saint Elizabeth (O'Donnell 74). Soon after sending the children to school, Saint Elizabeth's time to give birth arrived.

Unlike her previous deliveries, the birth of Richard Bayley Seton was complicated. Due to the risk of contracting tuberculosis, Saint Elizabeth chose to have a home birth, but little did she know the danger this would bring. Saint Elizabeth was so tired and physically exhausted that her body was not able to adjust for birth on its own, causing Saint Elizabeth's life to be at risk at the time of delivery. Furthermore, Richard Bayley Seton was not pushing nor facing the proper position to be delivered with ease. Realizing the severity of the situation, Saint Elizabeth sent for her father who arrived quickly. Dr. Bayley was able to safely deliver his grandson, Richard Bayley Seton, and protect his daughter, Saint Elizabeth. However, Richard Bayley continued to prove difficult because only after several

rescue breaths from Dr. Bayley did Richard Bayley begin to move and breathe on his own (O'Donnell 75). Soon after the birth of their fourth child, Catherine, Saint Elizabeth and her children moved to Staten Island where they shared a home with Dr. Richard Bayley, while William Magee stayed behind in the city (Traflet). Similar to their previous distance, Saint Elizabeth and William Magee were forced to live apart due to financial issues.

Toward the end of 1800, William Magee's business revenue was dropping rapidly. Despite William Magee's efforts to try to save his business with new and old clients, he realized there was nothing more to do that would save the company, except declare bankruptcy. The Bankruptcy Act of 1800 was a law passed by U.S. Congress that would offer creditor relief to merchants, bankers, and brokers who would petition (O'Donnell 92). In order for William Magee to be granted the petition he needed to declare himself bankrupt and lay out all his debts, assets, and an inventory of all family possessions. Saint Elizabeth recounts these times when she had to "transform evidence of [their] wear—pictures, handkerchiefs, linen, silver—into markers of their loss" (O'Donnell 92). Regardless of her own situation, Saint Elizabeth still felt the calling to help others. She became a part of the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children founded by Isabella Graham. Saint Elizabeth participated by visiting widows, listening to their testimonies of struggles to support their own children (O'Donnell 72). This same year, Saint Elizabeth experienced not only financial loss but also personal. One day while caring for the sick on the docks, she encountered her father who informed her that he had

contracted typhus (Traflet). At the time, typhus was a new disease in the United States; therefore, there was no cure, and victims would live out a slow death. On August 17, 1801, Dr. Richard Bayley took his last breath beside his daughter, Saint Elizabeth.

About a year later, Saint Elizabeth and William Magee welcomed their fifth child, Rebecca (Bec) Mary into their family on August 19, 1802. With little money and a sick husband, Saint Elizabeth "found herself again imagining death as a release" from her duties as a mother and wife (O'Donnell 78). However, unlike in her adolescence, during this period of wanting to feel relief, Saint Elizabeth would look at her death with a spiritual eye. She would talk about heaven as a prize to look forward to when someone dies; meanwhile, before, death was perceived as a way of stopping life, stopping struggle. Saint Elizabeth's reliance on faith and her spiritual health were what gave her the strength to continue to fight life's struggles and be able to endure the pain that she went through. Unfortunately, William Magee's tuberculosis was advancing, causing his health to worsen and Saint Elizabeth to worry about their future. Hoping that a change of scenery and atmosphere might benefit William Magee's health, Saint Elizabeth planned a trip to Italy where they would stay with William Magee's old friend Filippo Filicchi and his family. Originally this trip was supposed to take off on September 25, 1803, but it was postponed to a later date due to the delay in William Magee's British passport. Finally, sometime in mid-October, William Magee, Saint Elizabeth, and their eldest daughter Anna Maria, boarded the *Shepherdess*. While William Magee carried his business paperwork and contracts, Saint Elizabeth made sure to bring along

her bible and several works of Christian devotion, like John Henry Hobart's sermons. Bishop of New York John Henry Hobart (1775–1830) served as Saint Elizabeth's spiritual guide during her Episcopalian years. However, after Saint Elizabeth's conversion, he would become one of her biggest opponents. She would read her bible along with sermons and pray each day like a devout Protestant, hoping God would relieve her husband from his suffering and restore his health. Upon arrival at Livorno's harbor, the Setons were greeted from a distance by Filippo Filicchi, his wife, Mary, and Carlton Bayley, Saint Elizabeth's half-brother who was currently working as a merchant for the Filicchis' merchant house (O'Donnell 115). Due to the recent outbreak of yellow fever in New York and William Magee's cough and fever, the Setons were forced to quarantine for 30 days in Lazzaretto of San Jacopo. However, with the help of their connection to the Filicchis, their quarantine was able to be brought down to 25 days. Contrary to her beliefs, William Magee only got worse, with a few "good" days. During these 25 days, Saint Elizabeth would pray and write in her journals so that God may hear the suffering in her heart and comfort her husband (O'Donnell 118). On December 19, 1803, the Setons were released from quarantine, but the lack of strength William Magee had forced them to remain in Pisa, Italy. A week later, on December 27 at about 7:15pm, William Magee died in the care of his wife (O'Donnell 119). Saint Elizabeth was now an orphan, a mother of five biological children, and a widow.

Losing her one true love, William Magee Seton, was not the only life-altering event that took place in Italy. It

was in Italy where Saint Elizabeth was exposed to Catholicism and where her curiosity for the true Church began. Filippo Filicchi tried to teach Saint Elizabeth the Catholic doctrine, but his approach only confirmed Saint Elizabeth's thoughts on Catholicism being "less as a divinely inspired way of worshiping God than as an ethical system" like Protestantism (O'Donnell 45). Filippo continued to insist that Catholicism is the one true and good religion; meanwhile, Saint Elizabeth believed that "religion's central purpose was to produce ethical, happy individuals" for which reason she thought she would not be convinced to convert (O'Donnell 63). While in Italy, Saint Elizabeth would go to several museums and churches, and although they caused her to have some openness to the Faith, it was a Latin Mass being celebrated that sparked curiosity in Saint Elizabeth. At this Mass she was able to genuinely feel and experience the mystery of Transubstantiation, a Catholic belief of the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at consecration (O'Donnell 133). She now had a craving for God's presence and wanted to learn more about Transubstantiation because while she no longer believed it to be completely false, she was not sure it was true. Saint Elizabeth began reading more Christian texts providing her with the "most peaceful sensations and most perfect enjoyment of which the heart is capable" (O'Donnell 83). Although Saint Elizabeth had done her own research and had her own thirst for God, Antonio Filicchi (Filippo's brother) is accredited for Saint Elizabeth's conversion. Antonio took a different approach to trying to convert Saint Elizabeth; he would politely answer all her questions, show her the various churches in Italy, and lead by example via his actions to draw Saint Elizabeth in. Before her departure

from Italy, the seed of Catholicism had been planted in Saint Elizabeth so that contrary to the past where she "consoled herself with the idea in the end noting mattered" she now believed that there is a "possibility that one thing did matter, and it mattered very much: God's love" (O'Donnell 80). On her trip back home to New York, Saint Elizabeth did not tire of asking Antonio Filicchi more about Catholicism.

Having left New York as a devout Protestant and returning as a possible Catholic did not allow Saint Elizabeth to receive an all welcoming and non-judgmental reception from her friends and family. In her letters to her dear friend Julia Scott, Saint Elizabeth tells how her family and friends would treat her as if she were incompetent and untrustworthy to do things on her own. Before fully converting to Catholicism, Saint Elizabeth had many more inquiries about the faith and practices whose answers led her to the "belief in the Real Presence [of Christ in the Eucharist], devotion to the Blessed Mother and conviction that the Catholic Church led back to the Apostles and Christ" (Franciscan Media). After nine long months of discernment, Saint Elizabeth was received into the Catholic Church at St. Peter's Church in New York in March of 1805, where she also received the Sacrament of Holy Communion (Metz). A year later, on Pentecost Sunday, Saint Elizabeth received the Sacrament of Confirmation, taking on the name of Mary, in honor of the Blessed Mother of Jesus. As is practiced in the Catholic Church, for Confirmation the candidate must chose a saint's name so that this saint may serve for the candidate as an intercessor to God. Saint Elizabeth explains that "it was the authority not the vulnerability, of women within the Church that

moved her" to choose to add to her name so that her confirmation name was *Mary Elizabeth Ann* (O'Donnell 194). The authority Saint Elizabeth admired came from the fact that each of the names represented revered mothers of the Church. Mary is the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth is the mother of John the Baptist, and Ann is the mother of Blessed Mary.

The process of actually converting to the Catholic Church was long and hard but practicing the Catholic teachings came rather easily to Saint Elizabeth. As Pope Paul VI stated in his speech at Saint Elizabeth's canonization, "[Saint Elizabeth] found it natural to preserve all the good things which her membership in the fervent Episcopalian community had taught her, in so many beautiful expressions, especially of religious piety" (Paul VI). Saint Elizabeth did, however, find it difficult and frustrating to find a church in New York City that would "live inside" Catholicism as the Italians, and not simply "take from it what might be useful" (O'Donnell 140). Fearing her children might live non-Catholic lives or that she might die without having taught them the faith, Saint Elizabeth decided to send her boys to Catholic schools. William and Richard, who at first showed enthusiasm for Catholicism and were now beginning to drift away, were sent to Georgetown, in Washington, D.C., for school. Catherine remained with her mother in New York, being homeschooled. Anna Maria and Rebecca both died in their adolescence, both due to tuberculosis. Desiring to feel God more personally and wanting to do Catholicism "right," Saint Elizabeth took the Archbishop of Baltimore's offer and moved to Baltimore with Catherine.

Rev. Louis William Dubourg and Archbishop John Carroll had invited Saint Elizabeth to Baltimore after having heard about the work she was doing with the Society for the Relief of the Poor Widows with Small Children (1797). They were impressed at how she "nursed the sick and dying among family, friends, and needy neighbors" ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Both men hoped she would be inspired to do the same in Baltimore and start a congregation of religious women to teach girls in the area. Seeing the Catholic community in Baltimore and how they imitated the Italian Catholics, Saint Elizabeth decided to move. Once she moved, she found a support system in Emmitsburg, Maryland, that helped her found the American Sisters of Charity. Bishop Pierre Babade and Rev. Dubourg helped Saint Elizabeth brainstorm an American version of the Ursuline convents. They wanted to build a community that would not only serve the poor, the wealthy, and children but also spread Catholic teachings where Catholics were scarce (O'Donnell 229). Thus, the birth of the United States' first apostolic community of religious women, the American Sisters of Charity. Taking her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in March of 1809, Saint Elizabeth Seton became the first Sister of the congregation. This was also the first time that she wore what would be the formal religious habit of her motherhouse. The habit the American Sisters of Charity adopted consisted of a "black dress with a short shoulder cape and a white muslin cap with crimped border tied under the chin by means of a black crepe band"; they would also wear a "rosary draped from the leather belt that served for cincture" (Delozier). The American Sisters of Charity quickly began to grow when six new sisters followed Saint Elizabeth's example and took their

vows. Cecilia Mara O'Conway of Philadelphia, Mary Ann Butler of Philadelphia, Susanna Clossey of New York, Catherine Mullen of Baltimore, Anna Maria Murphy Burke of Philadelphia, and Rosetta Landry White of Baltimore proudly took their vows and habit as the first official sisters of the American Sisters of Charity ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). On July 31, 1809, the American Sisters of Charity moved from Baltimore to Emmitsburg so that they could establish their Motherhouse on the land that was donated to them (Delozier). The following year, on the Feast of Annunciation, March 25, 1810, 18 more women took their vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and service, and joined the American Sisters of Charity ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton").

Saint Elizabeth would often describe the work of the American Sisters of Charity as the mustard seed of faith because they "embraced every occasion to visit the sick" and had "entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country" (Metz). Being the American mustard seed of Catholicism, the Sisters would be sent to various locations on the East Coast of the United States. One was St. Joseph's Asylum, which was the first Catholic orphanage in the United States ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). As part of their mission, which was established in January 1817, the Sisters of Charity vowed to work on "the education of young females" by interlacing "social outreach with education in the faith and religious values" ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). The sisters at Emmitsburg would teach the young girls in the area the Catholic faith, similar to modern-day Sunday school, but Saint Elizabeth wanted to do more. Saint Elizabeth wanted "all children, boys

and girls, to receive free education"; therefore, she founded the first Catholic School at the Pace Street House in Baltimore, naming it St. Joseph's Free School (Delozier). Despite starting with only three students, St. Joseph's Free School came to be the outline for the American parochial school system.

Having had taken a vow of poverty, the sisters did not have the funds necessary to purchase land and start their dream school. Fortunately, when something is God's will, He will ensure it happens, St. Joseph's Academy was no different. A young convert and seminarian, Samuel Sutherland Cooper, purchased land near Emmitsburg with the purpose of establishing an "institution for female education and character formation rooted in Christian values and the Catholic faith" ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Around this time, he also met Saint Elizabeth, who was known to be a teacher for the young children that would go to the Motherhouse. Cooper gave the land to Saint Elizabeth on the condition it would be a school for girls, which is exactly what Saint Elizabeth made of it. On February 22, 1810, the doors of St. Joseph's Free School proudly opened its doors for the first time to needy girls of the area, becoming the first free Catholic school for girls in the United States ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). A few months later, the American Sisters of Charity founded St. Joseph's Academy, which, unlike the Free School, was not free. The Academy was a boarding school for students, both boys and girls, who paid tuition. The money earned from tuition would allow the Sisters to support their charitable school, St. Joseph's Free School for girls. One of the biggest distinctions that St. Joseph's Academy had was that it was open to both boys and girls, as well as

Catholics and Protestants. Unlike most Catholics at this time, Saint Elizabeth believed that "the ill effects of Catholic self-seclusion outweighed those of mixing [Catholics and Protestants]"; in fact, she hoped that by "exposing Protestant children to the Catholic atmosphere of St. Joseph's [she] might plant seeds of the faith without sowing conflict" (O'Donnell 341). Saint Elizabeth strongly believed that by simply exposing children to the Catholic faith and a loving Catholic environment, they would come to want to learn more about Catholicism, thus leading them to eventually fall in love with God through Catholicism, and convert.

Having been exposed to yellow fever and tuberculosis at a young age, Saint Elizabeth soon succumbed to tuberculosis. She was no longer able to carry out her Motherly duties and was soon bedridden. Toward what seemed to be the last of her days, Rev. Dubois gave Saint Elizabeth absolution and the opportunity to renew her vows (O'Donnell 408). Fortunately, Saint Elizabeth was able to recover some of her strength and continue her vocation. In December that same year, Saint Elizabeth became ill again and once more received absolution from her sins along with receiving the last rites (O'Donnell 418). As sisters came into her room to care for her and say their goodbyes, Saint Elizabeth's final teaching was to "be children of the Church" (Paul VI). Two nights later, Saint Elizabeth breathed her last breath, on January 4, 1821, at the age of 47. Her remains are sealed in the Basilica of Saint Elizabeth in Emmitsburg, but her name continues to live on.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton left her mark not only on Catholicism but also on America's education. St Joseph's Academy and School sent sisters to an orphan asylum in

Philadelphia, Mount Saint Mary in Emmitsburg, and even New York. The sisters sent to New York founded a branch of the American Sisters of Charity in the city (O'Donnell 336). Thirty-five years after Saint Elizabeth's death, Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley of Newark named Seton Hall College, later University, in honor of his aunt, Saint Elizabeth (Delozier). Her love of God and thirst to learn more about Catholicism allowed Saint Elizabeth to be able to understand her mission as an apostle of service, through which she was able to honor Jesus through service to the poor ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Saint Elizabeth did much more than found two religious groups.

In Saint Elizabeth's canonization speech, Pope Paul VI defines a saint as "a person in whom all sin—the principle of death—is cancelled out and replaced by the living splendor of divine grace." In other words, a saint is someone who attains the highest level of perfection a human can reach on Earth. For many, this described Saint Elizabeth; therefore, on June 7, 1911, Saint Elizabeth's case for canonization was first introduced to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints by Archbishop of Baltimore James Gibbons (Delozier). Saint Pope John XXIII declared Elizabeth venerable on December 18, 1959, then beatified her on March 17, 1963 ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Almost ten years after being beatified, Elizabeth Ann Seton was canonized on September 14, 1975, by Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's Square shrine. Three miracles were investigated and verified for canonization to proceed. The first was the various cancer cures of Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer of Washington, D.C. The second was the miraculous cure of Ann Theresa O'Neill of Baltimore from acute lymphatic

leukemia. Lastly, Carl Kalin of New York was cured from a rare form of encephalitis after asking Saint Elizabeth to intercede for him ("The Life of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton"). Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, whom we celebrate on January 4, is the first daughter of the United States to be glorified as saint. She paved a pathway not only for women to pursue sanctity but also for education all throughout America.

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Saint Oscar Romero: A Martyr for a New Era

by Maribel Landrau, M.A.T.
Assistant Director and Adjunct Faculty Member,
University CORE Curriculum

Oscar Arnulfo Romero Galdamez! What a long name for a saint! That is a mouthful. Well, we Latinos you carry our mother's last name along with our father's name. Saint Oscar Romero was one of eight children born to Santos Romero and Guadalupe de Jesus Galdamez in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador. The town of Ciudad Barrios was accessible only by horseback or by foot during Romero's childhood. It was close to the Honduran border (Walters 2). It was not a rich town, but it was economically stable. One of his siblings died young. Romero was the second child. Romero had a sister that was illegitimate, and apparently, she grew up in Barrios too.

Romero was baptized as a toddler in 1919 by Father Cecilio Morales. Some scholars speculate that as a baby Romero suffered from a sickness that threatened his life, and the sacrament was, therefore, urgent. His father was not religious but taught his children prayers. However, his mother was a devout Catholic and led her family in praying the rosary every night. All children in the Romero household worked the land and helped their parents. Romero was not healthy enough to do hard labor and helped his father at work receiving and transmitting telegrams (Walters).

As a child, Romero was not the typical kid playing with cars or toys. He would put on his mother's aprons and

start a procession. He would run through the streets of town, calling kids outside, and pretending he was Father Oscar Romero. Talk about early signs! One story that I always remember teaching my students is the day that Bishop Juan Antonio Duenas came to visit Ciudad Barrios. Romero dressed up and followed the bishop everywhere. Can you imagine having a kid chasing after you all day while you are trying to complete an episcopal visit? Finally, I guess frustrated a bit, Bishop Duenas asked little Oscar: "What would you like to be when you grow up?" No surprise here, Romero said: "I want to be a priest." According to Romero, Bishop Duenas answered: "You, my boy, are going to be a bishop!" (Walters 4).

At an early age Romero showed passion for school and learning. He attended school for the first three grades and then was tutored by a teacher. However, his father wanted him to be a carpenter. At the age of 12 he pushed Romero to learn the trade of carpentry. Some say that his father had no interest in Romero becoming a priest because of his own lack of faith. After some convincing, his father allowed the young Romero to enter the San Miguel Minor Seminary at the age of 13. It is interesting that the people from town (the mayor of Ciudad Barrios and the vicar general) knew that Romero was meant for something other than carpentry (Walters 6). The seminary was run by the Claretians, which is an order whose members are called to work with the poor and have a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Romero grew to love this devotion and kept it all throughout his life. At the age of 20 Romero lost his father, and his mother became ill. Two of his brothers took over the household responsibilities (Walters 7).

Road to Priesthood

Bishop Duenas, the same clergyman who told Romero he was going to become a Bishop, sent him to Rome in 1937. He was sent to live at the Colegio Pio Latino Americano in Rome. This Colegio specialized in preparing young Spanish-speaking men from Central and South America for the priesthood. He would attend Gregorian University, which was founded in 1858 and staffed by Jesuits. It is worth mentioning that one of his classmates with whom he developed true friendship was Rafael Valladares. He was different from Romero. For starters, he was Bishop Duenas's nephew and came from an aristocratic Salvadoran family. Though the two young men were coming from different social backgrounds, their friendship grew (Walters 15). While in Rome, Romero became more strictly devoted to the doctrines and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. We can call it conservative, and this was referred as to *La Romanita*. During his time in Rome Pope Pius XI was the pontiff. Bishop Romero was a devoted admirer of Pope Pius XI.

In 1942 he was ordained as a priest at the age of 25, and he and headed back to his homeland of El Salvador. Coming back to his motherland ordained as a priest, he faced a lot of challenges. Father Romero celebrated his first Mass in his hometown of Ciudad Barrios on January 11, 1944, and 26 years later he was consecrated Bishop of El Salvador. Prior to becoming bishop, he served as Bishop Machado's secretary. The Diocese had half a million Catholics and only 25 priests. The amount of work that Romero had was stressful. Father Walters in his book *Pastor, Prophet, Martyr* narrates an anecdote from Romero (that reminded me of my own pastor) that while he was listening to confession, he fell

asleep. He was also diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (Walters 33). Romero was overworked by the responsibilities that Bishop Machado had entrusted to him. Some of his brother priests were jealous of all the power the bishop had given him. They accused him of being a communist, but also of taking both sides, with the rich and the *campesinos* (the peasant farmers).

Rutilio Miracle

During the early 1970s the political and economic situation in El Salvador got worse, and Bishop Romero was aware of how the people of El Salvador were suffering with their living conditions. His friend—a Jesuit priest, Father Rutilio Grande—was very vocal about the atrocities the military government was committing against the campesinos, and this put him at risk (Walters 86). Father Grande was the only Jesuit priest with whom Bishop Romero had a friendly relationship. They had similar upbringings, and he was the only priest that Romero felt he could trust. Father Grande's ministry among the campesinos was noticed by the landowners (the rich) and by the military government. As expected, on March 12, 1977, Father Grande was brutally assassinated. There were four companions with him, including two children and one teenager. The children were let go so they let the people know what happened, but the adult and teenager were slaughtered. This was a turning point for Romero. President Romero (no relation) assured the bishop that the government had nothing to do with it. When Bishop Romero arrived at Aguileras and saw the bodies of his friend, Father Grande, and his companions, he changed completely. Some scholars have referred to this as the *Rutilio Miracle*. He was upset and full of grief. What

exactly is the Rutilio Miracle? Romero changed from the shy and timid priest; he embraced the teachings of the Gospel of Liberation advocated during the Medellin Conference (Walters 89).

Going against the Vatican and the nuncio, Bishop Romero canceled all regular activities and classes of the parochial schools throughout the country. The purpose of this was to give teachers and administrators time to discuss the issues facing the country and the Catholic Church. Not only did he defy the Vatican with this decision, but he also then declared the following Sunday, March 20 (after Grande's assassination) a *Misa Unica*! What this meant was that the whole country would celebrate one Mass. He encouraged all Catholics in the country to attend Grande's funeral in the Cathedral. He issued a dispensation to all Catholics from attending Mass in their own parishes. If they could not attend the funeral, they could listen to the broadcast by radio. This was unprecedented; 100,000 people attended that day, filling the streets near the cathedral (Walters 87). He assured the people of El Salvador that he was going to get to the bottom of this atrocity. He was talking not only to the people but also to the military government: "As Christ's humble successor and representative here in the archdiocese: the one who attacks one of my priests, attacks me" (Walters 88).

The Voice of the Voiceless

After reaching that turning point that included grief, anger, and sadness for the people of his country, Romero continued to condemn the military government of President Romero. He used his platform (his pulpit) during his homilies and quickly became the *Voice of the*

Voiceless. He became what he called himself: *God's microphone*. However, he condemned violence altogether, violence perpetrated not only by the military but also by the guerrillas.

During these challenging times and frustrated with his own clergy brothers, Romero visited Rome a few times. He needed to justify his words and defend against the criticism the military government leveled against him. The visits were not successful with the officials of the Congregation of Bishops. However, during one of the trips to the Eternal City, Bishop Romero was granted an audience with the Holy Father Paul VI. The visit went well, and before Romero left the Holy Father encouraged him: "Courage! You are the one in charge."

One of the many times that Romero used his position as Archbishop of El Salvador to condemn the atrocities committed by the military government and trying to stop his message, his network facilities were bombed (Walters 149). However, this did not stop the archbishop.

One significant fact is that he took it upon himself to reach out to the sitting President Jimmy Carter of the United States, requesting him to stop aid to El Salvador. The answer of the United States federal government was a *politically correct* answer. He tried for a second time but decided that instead of sending a letter he would read it aloud (February 17, 1980) during one of his sermons. As you can imagine, this did not sit well with Rome or with the United States. A few days before his assassination, Romero received a visit from Robert E. White, the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, who came to deliver a reply to Romero's letter to President Carter. The letter was signed by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

Again, the United States' response was intended to appear to be humanitarian, even if it did not truly represent a humanitarian response: "We will use our influence to avert any misuse of our assistance in ways that injure the human rights of the people of El Salvador and will promptly reassess our assistance should evidence of such misuse develop" (Walters 148).

Modern Martyrs

Unfortunately, days after this letter, Romero was brutally assassinated with a shot to his chest while celebrating a first anniversary Mass of the death of the mother of one his friends . Romero's funeral brought many bishops and clergymen from all over the world. The streets around the Cathedral in El Salvador were full of his people, the campesinos that loved and admired him. Unfortunately, his brother clergymen from El Salvador sat in a form of protest during the funeral, since they disagreed with his stance on the military government. Before the funeral Mass ended a bomb exploded in the Cathedral Plaza, followed by gunshots. The funeral turned into a massacre and blood bath. Bishop Romero's body was brought inside the Cathedral to the crypt that was arranged for him. With a handful of his brothers, Oscar Arnulfo Romero Galdamez was buried. No crowds inside, a simple prayer, and a farewell to a modern martyr (Walters 155–156).

He was canonized on October 14, 2018, by Pope Francis, and he became the first saint of El Salvador. It is interesting to note that Romero was canonized along with Paul VI, whom he greatly admired—the same pontiff who had believed in him and encouraged him: "Courage! You are the one in charge."

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Reducing Sewage Leaks: Long Island Sound at Jennings Beach, Fairfield, Connecticut

by Clara Cusanelli

In the past, raw sewage has leaked directly upstream from Jennings Beach. This geological issue is primarily caused by a breakdown of pipes in and above the ground. Natural erosional processes of weathering take place due to water flow, temperature changes, and wind, where sewage pipes become damaged and eventually malfunction, as occurred in 2019, when an old, weathered sewage pipe near Jennings Beach failed (Teixeira, 2019). The geological process responsible for this leak impacted the water quality of Jennings Beach and surrounding beaches for several days following the leak. Water quality tests revealed that the water was unsafe for swimming, and the recreational beaches were closed to public access. I can personally attest to this, as my friend and I took a trip to Jennings Beach before knowing of the leak. We saw caution tape and signs warning of the poor water quality lining the beach access area as we approached.

Closing the beaches protects swimmers, but it does not protect the organisms living near the shore. Tidal marshes, snails, clams, and seagulls are exposed to concentrated harmful substances, such as fecal coliform. These contaminants can lead to bacterial infections in humans and organisms who come in contact with the surrounding water. The *Long Island Sound Study* (2021) observed that salinity in the Jennings Beach area should not exceed 23 parts per thousand and has recorded salinity levels in the Jennings Beach area are between 27 and 33 parts per thousand following a sewage leak

(Webster et al., 2015). Additionally, the high amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus contained in raw sewage increase levels of nutrients that can cause algal blooms. These algal blooms reduce the dissolved oxygen available for organisms living in the water. Repeated sewage leaks can cause higher salinity, dead zones (hypoxia), and bacterial infections that will permanently reduce the populations of shoreline organisms. In the long run, reduced populations place the ecosystem in imbalance, which can have serious ecological impacts and cause overpopulation of harmful organisms which further degrade water quality. With continued sewage leaks, there is less pure water available to dilute the contaminated water, and soon problems like bacterial infections and dead zones will regularly occur long after leaks take place. In the long term, these contaminants travel further into the Long Island Sound, which can harm open water populations like striped bass and blue crabs.

This water quality issue is partly caused by the procrastination of local, state, and national authorities in acting on the preventative maintenance and replacement of water and sewage pipes. Geologic processes may be the initial cause of these sewage leaks, but not acting to control or alleviate them only leads to preventable negative effects. As sewage leaks continue in the region, water quality will only worsen over time. This can be seen in data from the Long Island Sound Study, which reveals that fecal coliform bacteria levels in the Jennings Beach area are almost twice as high as the dictated limit by the State of Connecticut (State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, 2002). If officials were to work to address these leaks through improving sewer infrastructure and plant seagrass beds to naturally purify the water, these contaminants would

be significantly reduced. By planting seagrass beds and adding water-filtering shellfish, like clams and oysters, to the shoreline, environment pathogens, such as avian influenza, are absorbed and deactivate. When planted underwater, these naturally enhanced ecosystems reduce disease-causing bacteria by 50% (Solie & Wear, 2020).

A short-term plan that the local governments usually rely on is dilution. The local authorities in charge of the shoreline rehabilitation have emphasized simply waiting and testing the water until water quality levels are deemed safe enough to resume swimming, fishing, and other beach activities. There are typically no efforts to clean the water after spills This practice is not sustainable because as sewage leaks continue to occur, there will not be enough uncontaminated water with which to dilute the raw sewage. This may be effective following individual leaks, but it does not prevent future leaks from happening.

Government agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recommend dilution (Solie,2021). Instead, I propose that the remediation process should change its focus. Dumping sewage in this part of Connecticut is prohibited (EPA, 2020), and there are no protocols in place for how to treat sewage that has been spilled into the water. The sewage that spilled into Jennings Beach was raw, as it was in the process of being sent to a treatment plant (Terzi, 2019). Dilution may work over a few days, but this is not a sustainable practice if sewage continues to pile up. Since Jennings Beach is in Long Island Sound, it is also cut off from major ocean currents that would more easily carry away the contaminants. Even if the sewage is diluted enough near the shore where the water is tested to allow

swimming, sewage can change ocean temperatures and cause habitat destruction on the ocean floor (DeepOceanFacts, n.d.). There must be sanctions in place. The Clean Water Act (CWA) should be amended to prevent this contamination from occurring in the first place. The CWA can mandate that infrastructure must be upgraded to prevent sewage leaks.

Local environmental law can also help clean up these spills. Just an hour south of Jennings Beach, in New York City, the East River suffered contamination from sewage until the EPA mandated under the CWA that New York City's sewage system must be upgraded to prevent leaks into the river. This led to the city investing in their sewage treatment, and 60% less pollutants entered the river thereafter. Additionally, seagrass was planted to rehabilitate areas the pollution had impacted most (Solie & Wear, 2020). If this solution saw such success so close to Jennings Beach, it should be explored.

I propose a plan that offers several long-term solutions that need to be implemented carefully to ensure success. Expanding environmental law requires exhibiting the correct oversight on state and local actions to make sure new regulations are followed and enforced. Governments need to have the capacity and motivation to oversee the implementation and continued use of new regulations. If federal and state policymakers take time and money to create legislation to strategically expand environmental law, but new rules are not followed, then the situation will not improve.

Planting seagrass beds around the immediate area of Jennings Beach and around the Long Island Sound will help to purify the water during ongoing and future

sewage leaks, restoring the shellfish populations. Through public education, the general population can learn how shoreline organisms offer protection against past and future leaks. This solution requires assembling teams to nurture oyster restoration and to plant native seagrass beds. These organisms will need to be properly monitored to ensure they continue to thrive underwater. As long as the beds are funded properly and carefully implemented and maintained, they will serve as a long-term sustainable solution for Jennings Beach.

Of course, implementation will require funding. Any environmental law that mandates sewage system upgrades can require states to spend up to millions of dollars. While worth the cost for long-term improvements to water quality and protecting against future damage from geological processes, not all state budgets have funding allocated for these processes. Funding also comes into play when planting seagrass beds and restoring shellfish beds, as this process requires skilled and knowledgeable individuals to decide where and how to install these seagrass beds. While students, families, and community volunteers can partner with the Billion Oyster Project to engage thousands of K–12 students, reintroduce millions of oysters, and restore lost habitats, motivating people to care about their environment (Malinowski, 2020), states, such as Connecticut, need proper funding to ensure these solutions are carried out to their fullest extent and reach their true potential.

As mentioned, the dilution method is widespread among Connecticut and national beaches. When sewage leaks, or any other events that harm the water quality, for that matter, occur, the water quality is tested, and if deemed

unsafe, then swimming is prohibited. This was most recently used in July of 2020 in New Haven, a city 25 miles north of Jennings Beach. In a similar event, a sewage leak resulted in unsafe water quality and the contaminants were given time to dilute before any swimmers, boaters, or fishers were allowed back in the water (Stewart, 2020). This successfully saved people from encountering any harmful substances in the water due to the leak.

Let us follow the lead of other places where environmental law expansion was successful. In New York City, when sewage treatment plants dumped contaminants into the Long Island Sound, increasing nitrogen levels in the East River, the EPA Agency mandated that the city must improve and upgrade its sewage infrastructure. Pipelines and treatment plants were upgraded, which resulted in 60% less nitrogen in the water over time (Solie, 2021). The hypoxia cleared up, which reflects lower nitrogen and high dissolved oxygen levels. In this case, the upgrades cost the city 1 billion dollars, but considering the smaller size and population of Fairfield, improvements will most likely not be as expensive. This shows how expanding and enforcing environmental law can work, and that it should be applied to Fairfield. Seagrass beds have been effective along the Spermonde Archipelago in Indonesia. Where shoreline levels of a harmful fecal Enterococci bacteria were measured to be dangerously high, the offshore the levels were much lower. In Indonesia the offshore waters benefit from large seagrass beds that soak up harmful contaminants (Solie & Wear, 2020). This naturally sustainable solution relates to Jennings Beach because in both cases the Enterococci bacteria

entered the water through poor sewage management, and seagrass can live and thrive in the Long Island Sound climate (Solie, 2021). By maintaining sewage pipe infrastructure, amending and enforcing environmental laws, actively restoring seagrass with shellfish beds and educating the public, habitats, wildlife, and human resources will continue to be enjoyed by the community and preserved for future generations.

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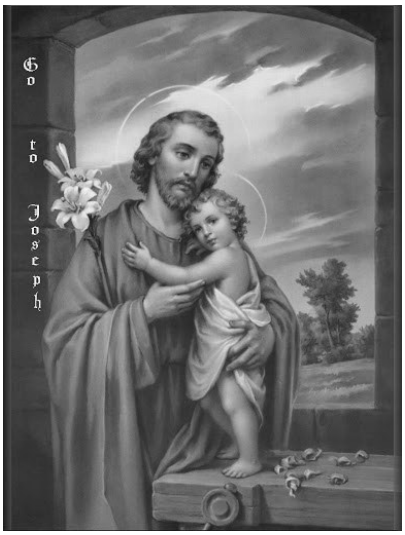
Year of Saint Joseph

Through his apostolic letter *Patris Corde*"(*With a Father's Heart*), Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Saint Joseph, which began on December 8, 2020, and ends on December 8, 2021.



In this pandemic year, as Pope Francis has noted, the silent work and faithfulness of so many millions of people are the saving graces to those who suffer. It is in this spirit that this year's reflection on Saint Joseph is intended to provide a gateway for understanding and appreciating the ways in which work in the family and in society at large can be our way of participating in God's work of creation and healing.

In honor of the Year of Saint Joseph, for 2021, the Catholic Studies Program's annual Archbishop John J. Myers Lecture Series on Law, Society, and Faith had a theme of "The Year of Saint Joseph. The three events in this series—a panel discussion, a lecture, and a virtual tour of Saint Joseph Shrine in Sterling, New Jersey—highlighted the ways in which this Patron of the Universal Church, though silent in Scripture, can enrich

our faith, understanding, and commitment to living Christian values in our world.

Archbishop Myers, after whom the lecture series is named, had a special devotion to St. Joseph, recognizing the influence of St. Joseph's virtue on Jesus's own human development. In his homily at the Men's Commission Mass on March 5, 2016, at Seton Hall University, Archbishop Myers remarked: "As a good father, St. Joseph taught his virtue to Jesus. A just man, obedient to the law and humble before God, he taught Jesus these and other human virtues. Thus, when Christ matured, not only was His Heavenly Father revealed, but also something of St. Joseph's own virtue."

In the past year, we have seen how much we have to learn from Saint Joseph's silent, steadfast faithfulness to God, and we realize more than ever how much we benefit from his intercession. We invite you to reflect for a moment on the significance of this Year of Saint Joseph and to join in this prayer from *Patris Corde*.

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

Answering *Fratelli Tutti*'s Call to Friendship

The 2021 Catholic Studies Program essay contest invited the students of New Jersey's Catholic high schools to reflect on the theme of friendship.

On the eve of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi in 2020, Pope Francis put out his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, echoing the way the pope's namesake addressed his brothers and sisters—all humankind—as "brothers and sisters all." Of all years in our lifetime, 2020 most powerfully proved both the challenges and the great value of friendship. In his encyclical, Pope Francis calls all of us to true friendship with others. We can do God's work of driving away loneliness, isolation, and despair by having an open heart, engaging with others, and remembering the deep connections among all humanity. Our focus on true friendship should not be limited by our immediate environment; in fact, over the past year, through virtual communication, we have found new ways to forge connections with others around the world. True concern for others extends beyond our immediate social circle, leading us to dialogue and political action that show not merely tolerance but generous hospitality. "Us vs. them" is replaced by "all of us together."

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic gives us all an opportunity to reflect on how we will accept the

challenge to become better friends to those in our immediate community and to those around the world.

In response to our call to the students of New Jersey's Catholic high schools, we were edified by the essays in which students defined fraternity in creative ways and shared their keen insights on how friendship and fraternity can be applied during the pandemic.

We are confident that you will enjoy reading the following winning essays. We are grateful to all of the essay contest entrants for, in a spirit of friendship, offering their prayerful and hopeful ideas about how to live out the call to be true brothers and sisters to all.

2021 Essay Contest Winners

First Place:	William Heffernan – Oratory Preparatory School, Summit
Second Prizes:	Olivia Riesett – Sacred HEART Academy
	Colleen Smith – Notre Dame High School, Lawrenceville

All essays in this section refer to *Fratelli Tutti*, which is available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

Finding Opportunities in a Challenging Year

by William Heffernan

Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* defines fraternity as "a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance." This characterization could not have been more pertinent to our lives over the past year. When quarantine hit mid-March last year, geography and distance were not the only obstacles that fraternity had to overcome. People's health, public safety, and social distancing, among other challenges, stood in the way of experiencing that love in person. Going over to a friend's house, seeing people at school, or attending any other social gathering became impossible. Despite these challenges, fraternity, friendship, and love prevailed.

On the global level, the pandemic brought out fraternity and friendship in the large majority of people. Nurses and doctors worked and are continuing to work countless hours and dedicating all their time and energy to helping those affected by the coronavirus. Everyday people made masks and thank-you videos, donated food, and supported local restaurants. My family participated by making masks, shopping for our elderly neighbors, and organizing a thank-you video to send to teachers who had to work hard to adjust to remote learning. Fraternity and friendship lived in these everyday acts of kindness. The worst brought out the best, and these small acts should not stop when the pandemic ends. I now know how easy it is to show gratitude and how much of an impact it has on those around us. It is also very easy to do small things for strangers or even our

neighbors. I am hopeful that more people will also realize the importance and benefits of friendship and continue giving to others.

On a more personal level, fraternity has always been a large part of my life. I am the middle of three boys in my family. I only have male cousins, all of whom live no more than ten minutes away and go to an all-boys Catholic school. I am constantly surrounded by fraternal relationships and friends. I did not realize just how important these relationships were until I could not see my friends and family in person. However, the strongest relationships were able to overcome the challenges and distance, just like Pope Francis said in *Fratelli Tutti*. I have found ways to connect with friends virtually and socially distanced outside. We were able to give each other laughs, love, and comfort during the loneliness of isolation. Still, no one was there more for me than my two brothers. Whether it was the endless hours of football in the front yard or just hanging out around the house, we were there for each other every day and still are. As much as it was difficult and I miss life pre-COVID, I am grateful for the new appreciation of friendships and family I have gained from quarantine. I value being able to sit next to a fellow classmate in class, to be able to joke around a bit or even just ask him how to do a math problem.

I think that the pandemic is a great opportunity to look at things from a different perspective. It is a great opportunity to continue the gratitude and charity that started during quarantine towards friends and strangers all over the world. It is a great opportunity to build fraternity, friendship, and love with everyone, especially those closest to us.

Friendship Through the Struggles

by Olivia Riesett

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish martyr who knew what it is like to struggle, observed, "God sends us friends to be our firm support in the whirlpool of struggle." This year has been a whirlpool of struggle of the kind Saint Maximilian Kolbe mentions, and that Pope Francis writes about in detail in *Fratelli Tutti*. From the problems caused by the pandemic, to racial injustices, to a hyper-partisan election, there have been myriad situations to which people have had to adjust. Many have suffered from social isolation, and some have not survived. These people have been suffocated, not allowed the breath of fresh air their families, friends, and counselors brought. Yet those who seem to have survived without extensive damage are those who have stayed connected with supporters.

On the night of his betrayal, Christ commanded His friends to "love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34). It is through this love that followers would be recognized as His disciples. Social friendship means to care for, have respect for, and love all people, even if we wouldn't choose them as our personal friends and irrespective of any differences. The lockdown has offered us many opportunities to be better disciples of Christ and spread universal fraternity with love as Christ commanded, and as Pope Francis stated in *Fratelli Tutti*.

We all have companions on this jarring journey who might aggravate us, but we are still called to extend an

arm of friendship to them with the love of Christ. Our neighbors might not be our closest friends, but we are still called to show compassion towards them and their struggles, as Pope Francis urges us "to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment" (77). Now is the time for families to step up and to lead our society through teaching the virtues and the power of fraternity, as Pope Francis recommends in Number 114.

As the pope quotes from one of his prior Messages in *Fratelli Tutti*, "every threatening situation breeds mistrust and leads people to withdraw into their own safety zone." We have observed this happening this year, as people retreated into echo chambers, unwilling to dialogue with those who have opposing views. This occurred regarding the information related to the outbreak of the pandemic, racial injustices, and the election in the fall. Others were already living the self-centered lifestyle the pope mentioned in Number 19, stating that their "individual concerns are the only thing that matters," and the pandemic only heightened their isolation. We can cultivate a culture of fraternity by not shying away from dialoguing, truly dialoguing, not "the feverish exchange of opinions on social networks" which are "merely parallel monologues" (200) about these situations or reaching out to those who isolate themselves; we can even use modern technology to aid in this endeavor.

Sadly, this pandemic has shown not only the kindhearted side in people, but the selfish side also. Many chose isolation for physical health over improved

mental health through physical socialization. Many chose hoarding supplies over surrendering their physical needs to Christ and sharing their stashes with those who are in dire straits. As the world is beginning to operate on a relatively normal basis again, we now have a choice between cultivating a positive influence through assisting the disadvantaged or staying secluded in our own immediate circle, neglecting our duty as Christians. Another danger in sight is that because we lean on words and pictures to convey our emotions in texts, there is the risk of misunderstanding the real meaning which wouldn't be a problem if we were able to detect physical cues and inflections. There are also tendencies towards focusing on what we've lost or what there is to gain, rather than what we have to give.

By reaching out and showing compassion for those around us, we are obeying Christ's command in John 13:35 to love one another as He has loved us. The pandemic has offered many opportunities to really love those whom we might neglect otherwise and demonstrated the power of respecting all people. Everything which has happened within the past year has caused us to remember and seriously take to heart the words of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, to remember that God gives us friends who are our reinforcements and braces when the road gets rocky and full of ruts.

Sharing Through Service: The Key to Friendship

by Colleen Smith

Fratelli Tutti, written in October of 2020 by Pope Francis, calls for us to live a way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi proposed long ago. We are called toward fraternity and social friendship as a single, human family and not as isolationists living away from others. This "Social Encyclical" demonstrates a specific vision for building a better world that is more peaceful and just for the benefit of all people globally. All of mankind is asked to reflect on and recognize the many social injustices that exist in the world, such as poverty, racism, and abortion. Pope Francis asks us "go outside the self" in order to find "a fuller existence in another." This unselfish lifestyle is at the heart of this writing.

Fraternity exists in social circles, institutions, and even politics. It is the act of existing in a loving, unselfish manner that integrates and lifts up those who are suffering or in pain. The pontiff explains that "we were made for love" and God calls us to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person. Fraternity is brotherhood. We are asked to choose kindness towards all brothers and sisters in this world because it removes cruelty, oppression, judgment, and loneliness. Social friendships are critical in today's distorted world. Reminding us that "[e]ach of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable," our pope eloquently expresses how human compassion enables us to work for the common good and view everyone on this Earth with a purpose and as a gift from God.

When we embrace fraternity in our social friendships, we learn to live for others instead of ourselves. The pandemic has created tremendous separation and isolation for millions of people globally. Yet, thousands have found ways to connect with each other and join forces for the betterment of their communities. In my own town, there were food drives for the underprivileged and unemployed. Children and teens made and delivered cards to the elderly and first responders. Meals were made and brought to those working on the front lines, caring for the sick. Scenes like these were repeated over and over around the world. Humankind naturally collaborated and bonded like never before. People recognized the frailty of human life and the vulnerability of all of us in this world. When people were unable to assist in person, people reached out to the needy through social media to find a connection. Pope Francis references the right of all to live with dignity and that this right knows no borders. The pandemic, while long and grueling, has brought about kindness and compassion and showed the endurance of the human race.

The pandemic has created much suffering and death. Physically, thousands of lives were lost too soon, and families mourned around the world. Grandparents have been unable to see their grandchildren in over a year. Many are alone and depressed. School children have missed out on socialization, and adults around the world have been dealt the heavy burden of wondering what lies ahead for their families. The call for peace that Pope Francis promotes is essential during this challenging time in our world. Peace will lead to a calm and unified world where all lives matter and people are treated as God intended. *Fratelli Tutti* reminds us to never become

indifferent to our neighbor. We must form a society that always performs service for others. With a spirit of fraternity, we can share our resources and our hearts with those in need.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,
pray for us!