

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON DIAMONDS

TAKEN FROM:

ELIZABETH SETON -- SELECTED WRITINGS
Edited by Ellen Kelly & Annabelle Melville.
Paulist Press

I highly recommend that you purchase this book and make it a "lifelong companion."

Please print out this PDF file... and read these wonderful words sitting quietly with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

I have left plenty of room for notes, markings, etc.

but what I like better my dearest Rebecca, (only think what comfort) they go to mass here every morning—ah how often you and I used to give the sigh and you would press your arm in mine of a Sunday evening and say *NO MORE till next Sunday* as we turned

from the church door which closed on us (unless a prayer day was given out in the week)—well here they go to church at 4 every morning if they please—

and you know how we were laughed at for running from one church to the other *Sacrament Sundays*, that we might receive as often as we could, well here people that love God and live a good regular life can go, (tho' many do not do it) yet they can go *every day*.—O my—I dont know how any body can have any trouble in this world who believe all those dear Souls believe—if I dont believe it, it shall not be for want of praying—why they must be as happy as the angels almost—

little Ann—is quite well now and so am I—but little prospect of home—

Oh joy joy joy a Captain B will take us to America—and only think of Mr. F's goodness as this Captain is a very young man and a stranger, and many things of war or dangers might happen on the voyage Mr. F will make it with us—Ann is wild with joy—yet often she whispers me Ma is there no catholicks in America, Ma wont we go to the catholic church when we go home—Sweet darling she is now out visiting some of the blessed places with Mrs. F. children and their governess—would you believe whenever we go to walk we go first in some church or convent chapel as we pass which we always foresee by a large Cross before it, and say some little prayers before we go further—Men do it as well as women you know with us a man would be ashamed to be seen kneeling especially of a week day—O my but I shall be with you again—

Two days more and we set out for HOME—this mild heavenly evening puts me in mind when often you and I have stood or rather leaned on each other looking at the setting sun, sometimes with silent tears and signs for that home where Sorrow cannot come—Alas how may I perhaps find mine—sorrow plenty—I was speaking of it the other Evening to Filicchi and he said in his dry English “my little Sister, God, the *Almighty*, is laughing at you he takes care of little birds and makes the lilys grow, and you fear he will not take care of you—I tell you he will take care of you”—

So I hope—dearest Rebecca you know we used to envy them that were poor because they had nothing to do with the world—

last hour in Leghorn

Oh think how this heart trembles—Mrs. F came while the stars

Thursday—

a cloudy day, and quiet—

Friday—

the complaint seemed lessened and ride again we must—took Madame de Tot, (the lady of the House) with us, and returned in better spirits and more able to help himself than when we went out, and I really began to think that riding must be good—but that was the last.—

Saturday—

constant suffering and for the first day confined in bed—the disorder of the Bowels so violent that he said he could not last till morning—talked with clearfulness about his Darlings thanked God with great earnestness that he had given him so much time to reflect, and such consolation in his Word, and Prayer, and with the help of a small portion of Laudanum rested until midnight—he then awoke, and observed I had not laid down I said no love for the sweetest reflections keep me awake—Christmas day is began—the day of our dear Redeemers birth here you know is the day that opened to us the door of everlasting Life—Yes he said “and how I wish we could have the Sacrament”—Well we must do all we can, and putting a little wine in a glass I said different portions of Psalms and Prayers which I had marked hoping for a happy moment and we took the cup of Thanksgiving, setting aside the sorrow of time, in the view of the joys of Eternity—oh so happy to find that those joys were more strongly painted to him—

On Sunday, OBrian came, and my W gave me in his charge to take me home with a composure and solemnity, that made us cold—did not pass a mouthful thro' my lips that day, which was spent on my knees by his bedside every moment I could look off of my W. He anxiously prayed to be released that day, and followed me in Prayer whenever he had the least cessation from extreme suffering—

Monday—

was so impatient to be gone that I could scarcely persuade him to wet his lips, but continued calling his Redeemer to Pardon and release him as he always would have the door of his room shut I had no interruption, Carlton kept Anna out of the way, and every promise in the Scriptures I could remember and suitable Prayer I continually

found in high Fever covered with irruptions which the Doctor pronounced *Scarlet*—O My—the darling tried to conceal all she could, but little guessed the whole consequence for the Doctor said the next day I must give up the voyage or the life of the child, and could you believe I was firm in choosing the latter, that is in trusting her life and my hard case to our God since there was no other Vessel for America in port—but Captain O came only to say that if he took us he could not get a bill of health for Barcelona where he was forced to leave part of his cargo and a quarantine there would ruin his voyage—the good man may have made this more evident because from my entrance in the ship the second time a most painful circumstance had taken place *thro' my ignorance*, and I was likely to have had a truly unhappy voyage, but what of that if I would at the end of it hold you and my darlings to my heart—well the hand of our God is all I must see in the whole—but it pinches to the soul.—

24th—

close work with little Ann—she is over the worst though with such care and attention of every body as would melt your heart.—my very soul seems in her sitting or laying all day and night by her side in this strange but beautiful land—

My sister dear how happy would we be if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they *possess God* in the Sacrament and that he remains in their churches and is carried to them when they are sick, oh my—when they carry the Blessed Sacrament under my window while I face the full loneliness and sadness of my case I cannot stop the tears at the thought my God how happy would I be even so far away from all so dear, if I could find you in the church as they do (for there is a chapel in the very house of Mr. F.) how many things I would say to you of the sorrows of my heart and the sins of my life—

the other day in a moment of excessive distress I fell on my knees without thinking when the Blessed Sacrament passed by and cried in an agony to God *to bless me* if he was *there*, that my whole soul desired only him—a little prayer book of Mrs. F's was on the table and I opened a little prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin begging her to be *our Mother*, and I said it to her with such a certainty that God would surely refuse nothing *to his Mother*, and that she could not help loving and pitying the poor souls he died for, that I felt really I had a Mother which you know my foolish heart so often

right to stay if I am wrong thy grace impart to find the better way."
not that I can think there is a better way than I know—but every one
must be respected in their own—

the other day a young Englishman brought the blood from my very heart to my face in the church of Montenay where the F. families took Ann and I to a lovely part of the country where Mr. F. had been concealed by the blessed inhabitants of the convent during some political revolution, and they invited us to hear mass in their chapel, *there* this poor young Englishman at the very moment the Priest was doing the most sacred action they call the elevation, (after the bread you know is blessed with the prayers as they do when we go to communion) just at that moment this wild young man said loud in my ear this is what they call *there* real *PRESENCE*—my very heart trembled with shame and sorrow for his unfeeling interruption of their sacred adoration for all around was dead silence and many were prostrated—involuntarily I bent from him to the pavement and thought secretly on the word of St. Paul with starting tears “they discern not the Lord’s body” and the next thought was how should they eat and drink their very damnation for not *discerning* it, if indeed it is not *there*—yet how should it be *there*, and how did he breathe my Soul in me, and how and how a hundred other things I know nothing about.

I am a *Mother* so the Mothers thought came also how was my GOD a little babe in the first stage of his mortal existance *in Mary*, but I lost these thoughts in my babes at home, which I daily long for more and more, but they wait a fair wind—

18th February—

Oh my God—GOD TRULY MINE or what would become of me—how can I tell you Rebecca my souls Rebecca how long before we meet. We were safe on board the vessel ready to sail next morn, had parted with our most kind friends, loaded with their blessings and presents, I with gold and passports and recommendations, for fear of Algerians, or necessity to put in any of the Mediteranean ports—but all that in vain—a driving storm at night struck the vessel against another, and in the morn instead of hoisting sail for America, we were obliged to return on shore—most kindly indeed welcomed by the Filicchis, but heart down enough at the disappointment—and imagine the rest when our sweetest Ann unable to hide her suffering was

sweet caresses of the darlings or bless their little dinner—O my God that day.” She became calm at last. She realized that if she had left home that morning a Protestant she had returned a Catholic, since she was now determined to go no more to Protestant churches. She explained to Amabilia:

I WILL GO PEACEABLY & FIRMLY TO THE CATHOLICK CHURCH for if Faith is so important to our salvation I will seek it where true Faith first began, seek it among those who received it from GOD HIMSELF. The controversies on it I am quite incapable of deciding, and as the strictest Protestant allows salvation to a good Catholic, to the Catholicks I will go, and try to be a good one. May God accept my intention and pity me.

On Ash Wednesday, February 27, 1805, silently thinking, “Here my God I go, *heart all* to you,” she walked into Saint Peter’s Church and, kneeling before the tabernacle with the great crucifix above it, said, “My God, here let me rest.” With Father Matthew O’Brien arrangements were made for her formal entry into the Church on March 14, with Antonio in attendance; on March 25 she made her first communion as a Roman Catholic. “The first thought I remember,” she reported to Amabilia, “was ‘let God rise, let his enemies be scattered’ for it seemed to me my King had come to take his throne.”

The intensity of her desire to find God’s will for her, during those months of indecision, left her with an unalterable commitment to “entire abandonment to His will” for the rest of her life. “There can be no disappointment,” she held, “where the soul’s only desire and expectation is to meet His adored will and fulfill it.” Her letters repeat this theme in such expressions as: “I would say nothing to Him but thy kingdom come all life long,” “but *His kingdom* in all,” and “if only His will is done.” When those she loved faced important decisions she would say, “Stay courageously in your station and wait until He makes [His will] clearly known to you.” In her own case, she believed this will could be suggested through the direction of the clergy. Her Paca Street School experiment was presented first by DuBourg as the will of God. The decisions regarding the formation of

a day they recieve ashes the beginning of Lent and the drole but most Venerable irish priest who seems just come there talked of Death so familiarly that he delighted and revived me—

[March 14, 1805]¹²

After all were gone I was called to the little room next the Altar and there PROFESSED to believe what the *Council of Trent* believes and teaches, laughing with my heart to my Saviour, who saw that I knew not what the Council of Trent believed, only that it believed what the church of God declared to be its belief, and consequently is now *my belief* for as to going a walking any more about what all the different people believe, I cannot, being quite tired out. and I came up light at heart and cool of head the first time these many long months, but not without begging our Lord to wrap my heart deep in that opened side so well described in the beautiful crucifixion, or lock it up in his little tabernacle where I shall now rest forever—Oh Amabilia the endearments of this day with the Children and the play of the heart with God while keeping up their little farces with them—Anna suspects—I anticipate her delight when I take her next Sunday—

So delighted now to prepare for this GOOD CONFESSION which bad as I am I would be ready to make on the house top to insure the GOOD ABSOLUTION I hope for after it—and then to set out a new life—a new existance itself. no great difficulty for me to be ready for it for truly my life has been well called over in bitterness of Soul these months of Sorrow past.

[March 20, 1805]¹²

IT IS DONE—easy enough—the kindest most respectable confessor is this Mr. O with the compassion and yet firmness in this work of mercy which I would have expected from our Lord himself—our Lord himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part of this Venerable Sacrament—for Oh Amabilia—how awful those words of unloosing after a 30 years bondage—I felt as if my chains fell, as those of St. Peter at the touch of the divine messenger—

My God what new scenes for my Soul—ANNUNCIATION DAY I shall be made one with him who said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you can have no part with ME—

I count the days and hours—yet a few more of hope and expecta-

tion and then—how bright the Sun these morning walks of preparation—deep snow, or smooth ice, all to me the same I see nothing but the little bright cross on St. Peters steeple—the children are wild with their pleasure of going with me in their turn.

25 March

At last Amabilia—at last—GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS—Now let all go its round—I HAVE RECIEVED HIM—the awful impressions of the evening before, fears of not having done all to prepare, and yet even then transports of confidence and hope in his GOODNESS—

MY GOD—to the last breath of life will I not remember this night of watching for morning dawn—the fearful beating heart so pressing to be gone—the long walk to town, but every step counted nearer that street—then nearer that tabernacle, then nearer the moment he would enter the poor poor little dwelling so all his own—

and when he did—the first thought I remember, was, let God arise let his enemies be scattered, for it seemed to me my King had come to take his throne, and instead of the humble tender welcome I had expected to give him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness that the deliverer was come, and my defence and shield and strength and Salvation made mine for this World and the next—

now then all the excesses of my heart found their play and it danced with more fervour—no must not say that, but perhaps almost with as much as the royal Prophets before his Ark for I was far richer than he and more honoured than he ever could be—now the point is for the fruits—so far, truly I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by him who came with so much Majesty to take possession of this little poor Kingdom—

an Easter COMMUNION now—in my green pastures amidst the refreshing waters for which I thirsted truly—but you would not believe how the Holy Week puzzled me unless at the time of the Divine Sacrifice so commanding, and yet already so familiar for all my wants and necessities—that speaks for itself, and I am All at home in it, but the other hours of the office having no book to explain or lead I was quite at a loss, but made it up with that only thought, My God is here, he sees me, every sigh and desire is before him, and so I would close my eyes and say the dear litany of JESUS or some of the psalms, and most that lovely hymn to the Blessed Sacrament ‘FAITH for all defects supplies, and SENSE is lost in

MYSTERY—here the Faithful rest secure, while God can Vouch and Faith insure"—

but you would sometimes enjoy through mischief, if you could just know the foolish things that pass my brain after so much Wonderful Knowledge—as I have been taking in it about idol worshipping etc. etc. even in the sacred Moments of the elevation my heart will say half serious dare I worship you—Adored Saviour—but he has proved well enough to me *there*, what he is—and I can say with even more transports than St. Thomas MY LORD and MY GOD—truly it is a greater Mystery how Souls for whom he has done such *incomprehensible things* should shut themselves out by incredulity from his best of all Gifts, this Divine Sacrifice and Holy Eucharist, refusing to believe in spiritual and heavenly order of things, *that WORD* which spake and created the Whole Natural Order, recreating through succession of ages for the body, and yet he cannot be believed to recreate for the soul—I see more mystery in this blindness of redeemed souls than in any of the mysteries proposed in his church—with what grateful and unspeakable joy and reverence I adore the daily renewed virtue of THAT WORD by which we possess him in our blessed MASS and Communion—but all that is but Words since Faith is from God and I must but humble myself and adore—

Your A— goes now for England and will soon be with you I trust—Much he says of my bringing all the children to your Gubbio to find peace and abundance, but I have a long life of Sins to expiate and since I hope always to find the morning MASS *in America*, it matters little what can happen through the few successive days I may have to live for my health is pitiful—yet we will see—perhaps our Lord will pity my little ones—at all events, happen now what will I rest with GOD—the tabernacle and Communion—so now I can pass the Valley of Death itself.

Antonio will tell you all our little affairs

Pray for your own EAS.¹³

Oh, cross of my Saviour, may your image be ever imprinted on my heart, under your shade let me live & die, labour & rest, act & pray, suffer and be consoled. Oh Love! love—my Jesus! You shall not suffer alone, shall not love alone—I will—I will—even unto Death—Eternity!!!

Mother Seton and the Eucharist

After making her first communion as a Catholic, Elizabeth Seton said, “Truly I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by Him who came with so much majesty to take possession of this little poor Kingdom.” The Holy Eucharist was, indeed, to become the keystone of her spirituality, giving meaning to both the suffering and bliss of her existence. This meaning was not conferred simultaneously with the gift of faith. A decade or more after her conversion, reminiscing over her difficulties in 1804 with the Catholic teaching on communion, she confessed to her spiritual director that she was in church many times before she dared look at the host at elevation, so daunted was she by the fear of idolatry. “There,” she added, “you read what I wd have carried to the grave, only I wish you to know well . . . the impossibility of a poor protestant to see our *meaning* without being led step by step & the veil lifted little by little.” Happily, the existing papers of Elizabeth Seton make it possible to trace the lifting of the veil in her case, to reveal with luminous clarity the place the Eucharist came to hold in her spiritual life.

As an ardent Episcopalian adult, particularly under the influence of John Henry Hobart in her late twenties, she had already a deep reverence for communion Sunday and the symbolism of bread and wine. (She mentioned once going from church to church on “Sacrament Sunday” with a relative “that we might receive as often as we could.”) Her “Dear Remembrances” reveal that in her chagrin at missing a Sacrament Sunday in the rush of preparations for the voyage to Leghorn, she most reverently drank, on her knees behind the library door, “the little cup of wine and tears to represent what I so much desired.” In the same way, while imprisoned in the Italian lazaretto some months later, she again tried to substitute for communion, recording in her journal for Rebecca in Advent:

Though *communion* with those my *Soul loves* is not within my reach in one sense, in the other what can deprive me of

Whether it was the Shepherd in her favorite psalm, or the crumbs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, her reveries were never distant from the Scriptures she had loved all her life, and all of them returned her to the same truth—it was an ample table, the altar where Bread of Angels was daily made. And her hunger was great, as revealed in her ejaculations: "Oh, Food of Heaven, how my soul longs for you with desire! Seed of Heaven, pledge of its immortality, of that eternity it pants for. Come, come my Jesus, bury yourself within my heart."

As her physical forces dwindled inexorably, her ardor only intensified. Describing one of her communions during those months, Bruté recalled:

Her joy was so uncommon that when I approached, and as I placed the ciborium upon the little table, she burst into tears and sobbing aloud covered her face with her two hands. I thought first it was some fear of sin, and approaching her, I asked . . . "Have you any pain? Do you wish to confess?" "No, no only give him to me," as she said with an ardour, a kind of exclamation and her whole pale face so inflamed that I was much affected and repeating, "Peace dear Mother, receive with great peace your God of peace," I proceeded to give her communion.

Writing to Antonio Filicchi of her last days, Bruté commented that the chief characteristic of her preparation for death was the ardor of her love for Communion. "Communion was all to her."

On Saturday, December 30, 1820, Bruté gave her Holy Communion as Viaticum. On Sunday she received communion with the community, and on January 1 she partook a third and last time. On the previous night, the Sister who watched with her had urged her to drink after midnight the potion meant to ease her pain, but she refused to break her fast. "Never mind the drink," she whispered. "One Communion more and then Eternity."

Annabelle Melville