

Sisters of Charity of New York 1817-2017

Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Patrick's Cathedral



A Bicentennial Tribute • 200 Years of Service

Designed for Saint Patrick's Cathedral New York by DCAK-MSA Architecture.

Composite Photo by Andrey Kamenskiy, 3D City, Inc.

Standing Strong Together

New York has always been a city of opportunity, home to people of many diverse races, religious beliefs, and social and cultural practices. In the past, as now, many who had prior claim on the advantages of citizenship treated those arriving on its shores with suspicion and even hostility.

Our story is the story of women who were and continue to be, over two hundred years, educators, advocates and healers for all in need especially the poor.



In 1817 Mother Seton sent three Sisters to her native New York to staff the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum at Saint Patrick's parish on Prince and Mott Streets. This painting by foremost church artist Italian Pietro Gagliardi hangs today at Mount St. Vincent and was presented to the Congregation in 1873 by 'Honest' John Kelly, a prominent New York politician who attended Saint Patrick's School in the 1830s.



*Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine
in Saint Patrick's Cathedral*

The new Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in Saint Patrick's Cathedral interweaves memory, art and technology to commemorate both the saint and 200 years of service of the Sisters of Charity of New York. "It's a great blessing for the Cathedral to honor Saint Elizabeth and the remarkable work that the Sisters of Charity have done over the years," says Monsignor Robert T. Ritchie, Rector of Saint Patrick's, America's most prominent Catholic church.

The shrine features antique and newly commissioned statuary and stonework with custom metalwork and lighting. The work of religious architecture firm DCAK-MSA, the shrine preserves the past and celebrates the new. The 19th-century altar was designed by the Cathedral's original architect, James Renwick Jr. and anchors the statuary and high relief panels of Sister Margaret 'Peggie' Beaudette, S.C. Sister Peggie was a devoted teacher and renowned sculptor whose artwork for the Shrine was her last commission before her death on March 12, 2017.

The Shrine is the beneficiary of community support under the leadership of Sister Jane Iannucelli, President of the Sisters of Charity of New York. An ardent admirer of the sculptor, Sr. Jane said, "The Shrine, featuring the great work of Sister Peggie, pays tribute in our bicentennial year to the mission and charisma of our congregation. Since the arrival of the Sisters in 1817, under the guidance of Saints Vincent de Paul, Louise deMarillac and Elizabeth Ann Seton, we continue to work with and for all in need, especially those living in poverty."

Sister Margaret 'Peggie' Beaudette (1928-2017) at work on her final art commission for the new Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Photograph by Kim Haughton.



The Sisters of Charity have been a presence in New York since 1817, when founder Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, who had established one of the first free Catholic elementary schools in Emmitsburg, Maryland, sent the first three Sisters to her hometown. These women took on the job of establishing Catholic orphanages and schools in a city overrun with abandoned, orphaned or neglected children. Thus began some of the earliest social service institutions and health care facilities in New York City.

1861. Departure of the 69th Regiment to the Civil War. St Patrick's Old Cathedral on Mott and (at left) St Patrick's School on Prince Street, New York's first parochial school.

In 1846, the Sisters of Charity of New York incorporated as a new congregation of women religious to serve a desperate local population that was growing with each passing month.

The assimilation of Irish Catholic migrants was a turbulent process in New York before, during and after the

Famine. Between 1845 and 1855, the peak Famine years, the city's population grew from 371,000 to 630,000. The Sisters of Charity of New York, with the leadership of Archbishop John J. Hughes, were the driving force that enabled the Irish newcomers to build lives in America.

To become a sanctuary city,



New York needed a social service infrastructure, which was built through the strength, the courage and the unwavering commitment of the Sisters. Spurred by the needs of the Famine Irish, the Sisters, who included Sisters Elizabeth Boyle and Angela Hughes, the sibling of the Archbishop, established schools, orphanages and hospitals. They developed a social service “safety net” before welfare or public assistance existed.

Transforming New York into a safe haven was a monumental task. The city then was concentrated in Lower



Manhattan. Five Points, near City Hall, overflowed with impoverished Irish and exploded with crime. Thousands of abandoned and orphaned children prowled the streets. Violent Irish gangs – the Forty Thieves, the B’boys, the Roach Guards, and the Chichesters – wreaked havoc.

By 1850 the city’s Catholics were so numerous that Pope Pius IX made New York

Top left, St Patrick Old Cathedral on Mott Street was built in 1815. The Cathedral was fully restored in 2015. Left, Painting of Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, S.C., (1774-1821). Above, In 1869 Sister Mary Irene Fitzgibbon opened the New York foundling for abandoned children on East Twelfth Street. Photograph by social reformer Jacob Riis (1849-1914).



an archdiocese and John J. Hughes its first archbishop. Over the course of a remarkable career that included establishing Fordham University, Hughes, a minimally educated 20-year old Irish immigrant, became the most famous Catholic in America. Hughes died in 1864, before his vision for a cathedral to serve as a spiritual home and haven was realized. His sister, Angela, who helped run orphanages and schools, and founded Saint Vincent's Hospital, died two years later. Elected Mother Superior in 1858, Mother Angela oversaw the construction of the motherhouse, today the College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale.

The efforts of the Sisters empowered generations of

Irish immigrants to survive and thrive in a nation dedicated to tolerance. The mission later expanded to serve the needs of Italian, Hispanic, Asian and many thousands from other lands. These women behind the story continue serving those immigrants and minorities determined to get ahead in America.

Vocations for religious orders grew through two World Wars and peaked in the late 1950s. But major changes following the Second Vatican Council in 1962 placed greater emphasis on lay participation.

Though New Yorkers had long honored the Sisters, the ultimate tribute was bestowed on September 14, 1975. On that day, Pope Paul VI pre-

In 1847, before there was public education for women in New York, the Sisters founded the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent. In 1859, the Academy and the Motherhouse moved to Riverdale, New York. In 1911, the Academy's charter was amended to change its name to the College of Mount Saint Vincent. For more than a century, the College has grown, become coeducational and led innovations in higher education. Photo/Elena Miranda for SCNY.

sided over the canonization of Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton. The first native-born U.S. Saint remains a symbol of the inspiration behind the Sisters' work.

Today, the Sisters are a public force for change, engaging in activism on behalf of the disenfranchised worldwide. The Sisters of Charity of New York, along with twelve other orders, comprise the Federation of Sisters of Charity in the Vincentian-Setonian Tradition, representing approximately 4,000 vowed members and 700 lay associates and affiliates throughout North America. These congregations continue to follow the path of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Vincent de Paul

and St. Louise de Marillac.

The Sisters remain committed to the practice of God's work through varied ministries for all those in need, especially the poor.

The new Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue – a New York City landmark and treasure visited by as many as 5 million people annually – will now honor the Founder as well as the 200 years of service by those religious women who have followed her call. The new Shrine is a permanent testimony to the role of religious women through the ages and the impact that these women have had on the needs of all especially the poor.

On January 8, 2017 – the Feast of the Epiphany – the Sisters celebrated 200 years of presence in New York at a special Evening Prayer service at Mount Saint Vincent. Sister Carol Barnes, SC, former president (1987 to 1995) leads the church procession. Photo/Elena Miranda for SCNY.



*Join us in Celebrating 200 Years
of Service. Support Saint Patrick's
Cathedral's New Shrine.*

Just as 19th century immigrants gave lovingly of the little they had to build St. Patrick's Cathedral, constructing the Cathedral's new Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton depends on the generous gifts of those who honor the Sisters' 200 years of mission and dedication.

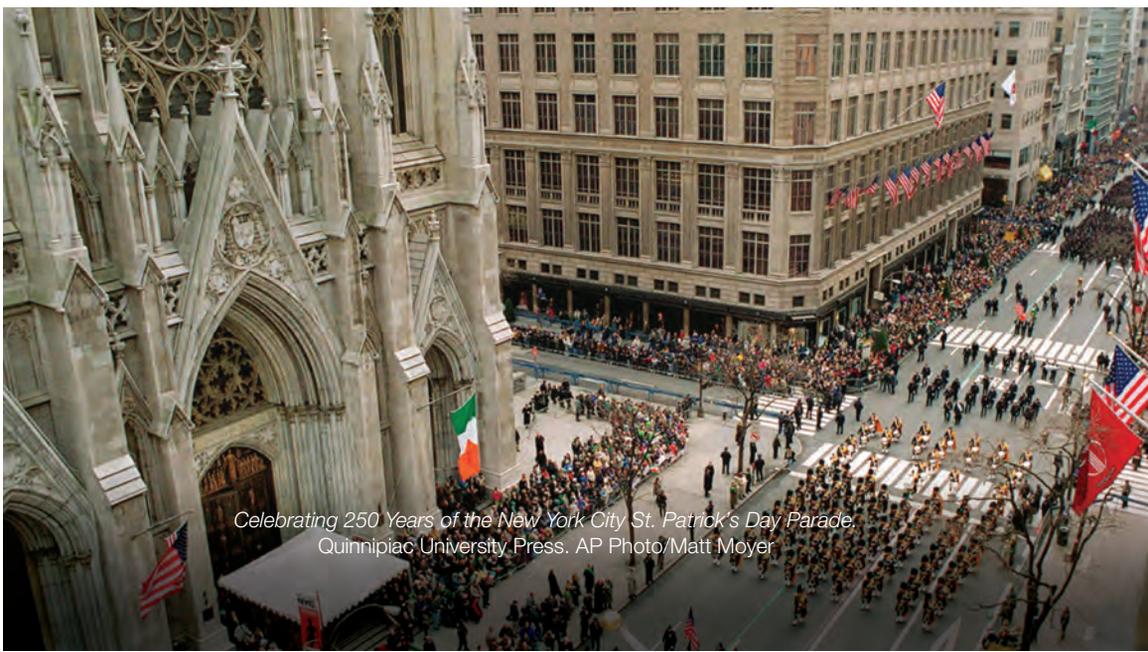
The Sisters of Charity of New York warmly invite you to share in a unique opportunity to honor or memorialize individuals or families within Saint Patrick's Cathedral, America's most renowned Catholic Church.

Your gift will commemorate the 200th anniversary and secure a permanent place for those you name at the New Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton within the Cathedral. For more details visit our website or contact us below.



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF NEW YORK

6301 Riverdale Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471-1093
718-549-9200 • amgardiner@scny.org
www.scny.org



Celebrating 250 Years of the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade.
Quinnipiac University Press. AP Photo/Matt Moyer