



THE HEART OF THE HALL

The student publication for the Office of Mission and Ministry



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Editor's Note

Belatedly, welcome back to the Hall! After being away for so long—it feels like ages since we were all sent home from campus last Spring—it is truly a gift to be back together in community, even if still partially virtual.

"The Heart of the Hall" took the opportunity to expand our online platform by building up our website and social media pages. Still, we are thankful to have been able to publish this edition and share it with you in print once again.

These past few months have been for many of us at Seton Hall among the most difficult times of our lives. We have experienced loneliness and isolation in quarantine; fear and uncertainty in the face of this ongoing pandemic; anger and sadness at social injustices; tension and conflict over a polarized political sphere. Christ suffers with all who have lost loved ones to any of these conflicts.

Never have we been more aware how much is wrong in the world in which we live. Nevertheless, Christians remember that these ailments are nothing new, in the grand scheme. Sin and all its effects are as old as humanity.

Recognizing this truth by no means implies that we should give up the fight; rather, it draws our line of sight up and outward, to a point where we can see—and thus better work toward—the light at the end of the tunnel.

It is this outlook that our writers manifest this edition, offering concrete insights and inspiration for fellow SHU students, to cope with hard times and reach that vantage point.

First, Jessica gives us a biography of our beloved Seton Hall's namesake, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. Through Saint Elizabeth's journey from Italian immigrant to American saint, she teaches us that we too can persevere in navigating new and difficult terrain with faith to guide us.

Next, Bridgette reflects on a disordered modern attitude—the pressure placed on women to meet false external beauty standards. She reminds us that when society's definitions do not match God's, we always find truth in His definitions.

Thomas relates his personal devotion with the Old Testament Song of Songs. His narrative encourages us likewise to turn to God's word for strength and solace, when we need a spiritual retreat.

Then Matthew observes and critiques the nihilism that pervades our nation today. He thoughtfully refutes this philosophy's logic and calls for a renewal of our natural inclination to hope.

Finally, Ellen conducts an interview with Jessica Brinker, Seton Hall's new Varsity Catholic missionary. Jessica talks about her path to FOCUS and Campus Ministry's exciting new activities, adjusted to this extraordinary semester.

We hope you enjoy this Fall issue and take heart in its message of hope in the Lord. To borrow a line from Matt's article (find the rest on page 10!) "hope is [...] a desire for an arduous good possible to be attained."

Hope for Christians is more than wishful thinking: through God's grace, we have not only the wish but

the EXPECTATION that dark times will not prevail. This is the hope that empowers the mission of Seton Hall, the hope that will carry us through.

Be well and God Bless.

BY EMMA NEWGARDEN
Editor-in-Chief Of Content

"The Heart of the Hall" would like to thank Theodore Sigalas for photographing this edition's cover picture!

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Seeing the Saints Among Us

BY JESSICA KELLY



It was senior year of high school and everyone, including myself, was deciding where they should go to college. As usual, I went to my grandfather for advice. I had a few options and I was unsure where I should commit.

He encouraged me to research each of the colleges I had been accepted into carefully, including the principles, histories, values, and missions that each of them supported and was founded upon. One university after another, I diligently searched as my grandpa had advised.

When it came to Seton Hall University, I remember finding loads of information about its Catholic mission, extra-curricular opportunities, and the education

program of which I would soon be a part.

What struck me, however, was the information I found regarding why this school had its name, and who it was named after: Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. Her legacy of servitude, faith, and feminist accomplishments should be learned and recognized by the entire Seton Hall University community: Saint Elizabeth is an inspiration and role model to us all.

When students, faculty, and alumni think of Seton Hall University, many ideas and happy memories may come to mind. Some examples might include basketball games at The Rock (one of my personal favorites), classes we fell in love with, friends we made, and spring days on the green.

Many fail to recognize, however, the legendary woman our great university is named after. Elizabeth Ann Seton was born to an Episcopalian family on August 28th, 1774, in New York City. By the age of nineteen, she was living in Italy and was married to her husband, William Magee Seton.

Together they had five children: William Seton II, Richard, Catherine, Anna Maria, and Rebecca Mary. During her time in Italy, Seton discovered Catholicism and converted to this new faith. After her husband William passed away, Elizabeth returned to New York and brought her faith back to her native country.

Despite being a widow, Saint Elizabeth bravely raised her children on her own and brought them back to America where she was determined to spread her faith. Even though Elizabeth had lost the support of her parents after converting and was a single mother, she was still determined to do her best for God.

Seton's aim was to inform others of God's power and redeeming love. She went on to be a part of several Catholic service organizations, which would inform others about her faith as well as aid those in need. Seton founded the Sisters of Charity in America, which has several branches

throughout the nation.

According to the organization Seton Shrine, this was “the first community for religious women established in the United States.” This group sponsored hospitals and health care, as well as provided educational opportunities for those in need.

Beyond this, Seton also started St. Joseph’s academy and Free School which was dedicated to, “planting the seeds of Catholic education in the United States.” Saint Elizabeth also helped to establish religious centers throughout North America, where individuals continue to work and help those in poverty today.

Just like Elizabeth, it is up to us to tell others about God and our own faith, spreading His word and His promise to save us if we believe in Him. Seton worked hard for God, spread love to those around her, and did her best to share the Gospel.

Regardless of her hardships and struggles, Saint Elizabeth was a strong and independent woman who worked hard for what she believed in. Although she may not have known it at the time, she has become an icon for strength, bravery, and even feminism.

Even though she lost the support of her family and had lost her husband, she did not change her ways or lose her faith. It would have been easy for Seton to pretend that she was still an Episcopalian in order to take part in her family’s wealth, but she stood by her beliefs instead. Seton persevered, proving that women can do anything, including spreading God’s word and supporting her family on her own.

In 1975, Pope Paul VI canonized Seton, making her the first American-born woman to be named a saint. Her nephew, Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley, a Bishop of Newark, was the founder of Seton Hall and named the school after his aunt to honor her work and memory. Her faith was an inspiration to both himself and others, so much so that our entire university was named after her.

Although Saint Elizabeth passed

many years ago, her legacy lives on and should be remembered. Her characteristics of bravery, strength, feminism, and faith should inspire us and be carried on today.

Those fighting for modern gender equality should admire and look up to Seton, who could be considered a part of the movement before it even began. For instance, she raised her children on her own, moving them from her home in Italy to America.

Additionally, Seton was disowned by her parents upon converting to a new faith, but this did not stop her from holding on to what she believed in and pursuing her goal to spread God’s word and His love to those in need. Saint Elizabeth could have easily given up, accepted her parents’ money at the cost of her own beliefs, and lived an easy life in which she knew herself and her children would be cared for financially.

Instead, Seton proved that even as a woman, she could do anything she wanted to with her own life. Too often women are viewed as inferior or incapable of doing things on their own, but Seton proved that this is simply not true.

As a woman, she established organizations that continue to help people today, provided educational opportunities for those who needed it, and worked on developing hospitals in America. We should be honored to attend a university named after someone so loving, faithful, and brave.

Elizabeth Ann Seton should be a role model to every single student, staff member, and administrator at Seton Hall University. Her missions of educating, spreading God’s word, and helping those less fortunate should be carried on by each of us.

These acts of kindness and faith can be seen throughout our campus, and each of us should do our best to be a part of these missions. Some concrete examples of Seton Hall’s mission can be seen in organizations such as the Division of Volunteer Efforts (DOVE), the Office of Mission and Ministry, and even our “The

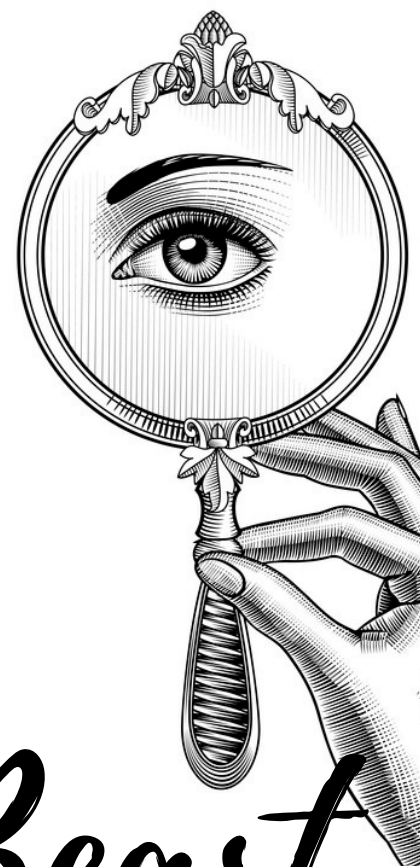
Heart of the Hall” publication.

In today’s world, we have many more opportunities, resources, and technologies than ever before to share God’s promise to save those who believe in Him, and to help those in need. We can use our social media platforms to let others know of a God who loves and cares for us, as demonstrated by our “The Heart of the Hall” Instagram and Facebook pages.

Pirates can volunteer to help educate others who may be at a disadvantage, just as Elizabeth Seton would have done. Whatever you decide to do for God, it is important to do your best and show others how amazing His love can be.

Saint Elizabeth would have loved to see how much our University is doing to help others, as well as how much we do to spread God’s word. We must continue to work on this and expand our ministry to further her legacy.

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BEAUTY IS THE *Beast*

BY BRIDGETTE FAVALE

"I can't finish this ice cream," voiced my friend as she pushed aside the vanilla dessert that came with our lunches on Fridays. Every person in middle school could come to a collective agreement that Friday was the best day in the week because the cafeteria served pizza and ice cream.

"Summer is coming in a few months and I need to start preparing my summer body," continued my friend to our table of six girls who all began to question how these weekly desserts would affect our stomachs during a sunny day on the beach. This is the earliest memory I can recall that introduced me to the struggles of beauty that every female feels at least once in her lifetime.

The sad truth is that nearly every woman in the country has experienced an obstacle with her self-image. A concept that I find even more unsettling is that most, if not all, of the girls I have met throughout life have looked into the mirror

and chosen not to call themselves beautiful. Imperfection is magnified in the eyes of a woman whose vision is directed towards flaws in herself that should not be considered as measures of her beauty. Yet, these aspects of her own body are among the many areas criticized by such a woman's readiness to find fault.

As a young female who has experienced pressure to look beautiful, the realization that twenty million American women suffer from abnormal eating habits scares me, but does not surprise me.

Furthermore, a woman's psychological health is often affected just as much as her physical body during these efforts to create perfection. Depression and anxiety are common symptoms of the

negative body image adopted by a high percentage of women in the U.S. without the confidence that their bodies are, or ever will be, beautiful.

The beauty industry, ranging from cosmetic and retail companies, has grown with the insecurities of its female demographic. Women contribute a substantial amount of money to makeup and clothing brands with the intent of becoming more perfect versions of themselves.

Per month, the average woman spends around three hundred dollars on products for her appearance. At almost four thousand dollars per year, a woman's spending habits on beauty purchases could pay for the standard tuition for four years of college.

Surgical treatment has also become a

BEAUTY

Our Author Asks:

What is your personal definition of beauty?

normalized method of achieving beauty in the twenty-first century. Through plastic surgery procedures, women give thousands to medical facilities that will reconstruct parts of their bodies into idealized forms.

I have come to learn in faith that true beauty does not come from a change in our outward appearances, but a change in our understanding of what is beautiful. Catholicism teaches both men and women that it is not their physical beauty that should hold value, but the beauty that comes from within.

Scripture reveals the Lord's definition of beauty as the judgement of character: "the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Looking at the heart of a woman, to possess the virtues of faith and charity, far outweighs the modern urgency to follow the newest style trend or wear expensive makeup.

The practice of compassion for our neighbors and righteousness in our daily behavior should be displayed just as proudly as jewelry or clothes. No matter how comfortable we are with ourselves on the outside, we must find more comfort in the person we have created on the inside, for that is where the essence of true beauty lies.

The maintenance of our inner beauty is explained in the Bible through one of the most fundamental beliefs of the Catholic religion—the notion that life is everlasting and our souls will live forever in an afterlife with the Lord. God challenges His living creatures to ignore the attraction of earthly belongings which are tied to the planet and cannot enter with us through the gates of Heaven.

The inner self, or the soul, is preserved in resurrection as "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:4). Physical beauty, like the material goods that lose meaning after ascension, is a temporary state of perfection.

With time and aging, the beauty

associated with youthfulness disappears in every human being. The blessing of internal beauty is that in old age, and even after death, it is a beauty that will never fade away.

In the same ways that we attend to our appearances with regular consistency, booking monthly salon appointments and shopping at every nearby mall, we must constantly care for our inner selves.

Our souls can be nourished through simple practices—seeking the Lord's guidance in prayer and exercising virtue in our daily life. The teachings of our faith can prepare us for such a lifestyle of virtue, filling our hearts with a beauty that is seen in the ways we treat ourselves, others, and the world we were given as a gift from God.

Although our inner beauty is the place where we should focus our attention, it would be a mistake to assume that caring for our physical beauty is a sin. A healthy balance between our inner and outer selves is possible if we remember that all individuals are made in the image and likeness of our Creator.

Women who are quick to scrutinize themselves and their bodies forget that we cannot be flawed in the hands of the Lord. Instead of looking in the mirror and choosing not to call ourselves beautiful, we can look in the mirror and remember the words of God when he reveals, "You are altogether beautiful, my darling; in you there is no flaw" (Song of Solomon 4:7).

On the day that "summer body" was introduced to me in the school lunchroom, I had no idea that it would become a regular term in my vocabulary all year round. The years of learning that came from this elementary experience to the college days I am living in now have taught me to change my perspective on beauty through religion.

With God, we can learn to love ourselves from both the outside and the inside. While every woman goes through a period when her understanding of beauty is flawed, it is important for her to know that **she** is **not**.

SONGS OF DEVOTION

BY THOMAS PIRO



I remember learning about the Song of Songs in high school while watching a video in my morality class, but I never had much of an interest in it. Fast forward a few years, and I am a new seminarian attending my first silent retreat in Newton, NJ.

Being bored and anxious (remember this is my first time being silent for three days!), I picked up the Bible and opened it to a random page. Lo and behold, I opened up to the Song of Songs. I started to read it and found it a bit odd; it was filled with poetic and romantic verses between two lovers. I wasn't sure if I was reading Scripture or a dialogue between Romeo and Juliet!

This past spring semester threw many curve balls: online classes, quarantining, social distancing, and hanging out with friends via facetime. In a way, spending all this time away from other people reminded me of being on

a retreat. During a retreat, one sets apart a special period of time to reflect and reunite oneself to God. It is a time to sit in silence, give thanks to God, find some relaxation, and practice devotions.

Devotions are expressions of love and fidelity to a particular person or practice. Many of us know of a few: the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, or a particular saint. One devotion that many people practice is *Lectio Divina*. Literally meaning "divine reading," *Lectio Divina* requires one to read the Scriptures slowly and prayerfully.

Inspired by this retreat-like atmosphere last semester, I decided to pick up one of the devotions that I do on all my retreats—*Lectio Divina* with the Song of Songs. I think this kind of annual devotion could help others strengthen and renew their love for God. That's what I would like to share with you all.

Intrigued, I decided to do some research. After pulling out numerous editions of the Bible and books given to me by one of my priest friends and browsing the Monsignor Turro Library at SHU, I found one common word to describe this sacred text—"obscure." The erotic language and lack of "holiness," one may say, just doesn't make sense.

Ancient rabbis were even scandalized by this particular book. The only way to get anything out of it was to not read it literally, but rather allegorically, meaning there must be a spiritual message of some kind behind the words themselves. The Jewish interpretation views this book as the expression of God's love toward His

chosen people, Israel. The early Church eventually interpreted the two lovers, the bride and bridegroom, to be Christ and His Church.

Origen of Alexandria, a Father of the Church, is one of the few Fathers to write a commentary on the Song of Songs. He interprets this expression of love as the individual soul uniting itself to the one true God. This style of interpreting the Song is how I view the Song of Songs; each chapter is a "love letter" between me and my beloved, Jesus Christ. This practice is the reason why I read the Song of Songs at every retreat. It gives me a chance to remind myself of God's love for me and my love for him.

I wish to share with you one of my favorite passages or "letters" that inspires me each retreat. In Song of Songs 2:1-7, the beloved God is speaking to His love, me. The beloved confesses that His love sticks out amongst all that surrounds her. He describes her as "a lily among thorns." Imagine that! We are loved by God so much that we just capture His attention. He is drawn to us, He desires us. We are not just a thorn among thorns, but rather a beautiful and desirable creation—creature set apart to receive abundant graces from our beloved.

In return, the lover confesses that her beloved sticks out amongst all that surrounds him. This way of loving God is a calling given to me. Viewing these as love dialogues calls me to reflect on a few questions: Do I see God in those that I love? Do I see God in those that disagree with me? Am I aware of His presence in the good times? Am I aware of His presence in the bad times? Thoughts like these come to my mind when I read my part

of the Song. They help remind me of how I show my love for God by loving him with all my being and loving my neighbor as myself (cf. Matthew 22:37-40).

In verse 5 of this passage, the lover proclaims that she is “sick with love.” What an odd description. She associates two opposite feelings together; let’s dive deeper into this thought. What is meant by sickness? Does she mean illness? I don’t believe so; I view this sickness as being full. If I eat too much food, I usually don’t feel too well afterward. My stomach hurts, and I’m usually tired.

This sickness or fullness does the opposite, however, since this fullness is of love! What is love? One of the greatest Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, wrote that “God is love” and “love is God” (Homily 7 on First Epistle of John, 4). Being full of God is certainly an idea to reflect on. It is a reminder that I am a temple of God.

Finally, in verse 6, we read of the love exclaiming the desire to embrace her beloved. She doesn’t desire, however, the simple hug that we have in mind. She wants an intimate embrace. Some scholars and commentators suggest that this embrace refers to sexual intimacy. I know what you may be thinking; this is a weird way to think about you and God. Let’s not forget, though, that this is allegorical interpretation. We need to look deeper into what “sexual intimacy” means.

One, it is a total giving of self; surrendering to the other. Second, it is an act of unification. A husband and a wife “shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Third, it is a relationship expressed only to one unique individual.

With these three aspects of sexual intimacy, one needs to apply them to their relationship with the Divine. The first aspect reminds me of my duty to fulfill the greatest commandment, “you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). We should give God our all and love Him with

our whole being, just as He loves us with His whole being. His love for us is demonstrated in the fact that the Incorruptible humbled himself down to the corruptible, to die an unjust death for our salvation. The second reminds me of the unity between my will and God’s will. God’s will for me is that I will one day praise and live with Him in heaven. To do that, He designs a path for me on Earth to follow. If I remain on that path, as difficult as it may be sometimes, I know with full confidence that my God will not abandon me.

The third thought about sexual intimacy leads me to a personal relationship with God. This relationship develops in prayer, when it is just you and God, and you are totally yourself. There is no mask or façade. You are not afraid to pray with a smile on your face because you are giving thanks to God for helping you through a tough time. You are not afraid to pray with tears coming down your face and hitting the floor. You are not afraid to be blunt and honest with God and say, “God, I’m angry and confused about this particular situation.”

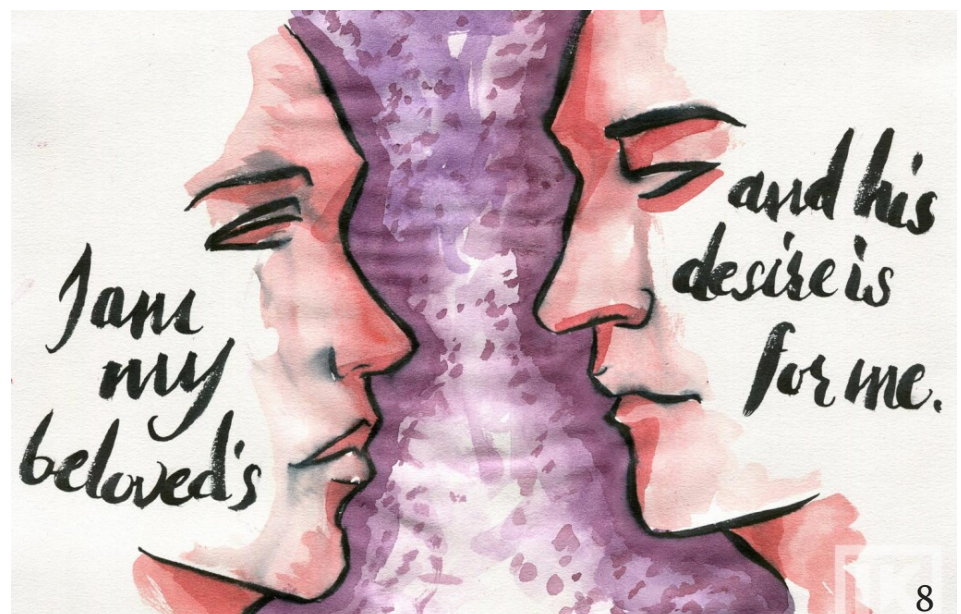
Hopefully, I gave some insight into this “obscure” book of the Old Testament. Obscure as it may be, it is chock full of reflections to help connect with God. Yet, it is a book not very well known amongst most Christians. I like to think of books like this as the hidden gems of Sacred Scripture. They only take up three or four pages of our entire Bible, but the power they possess is

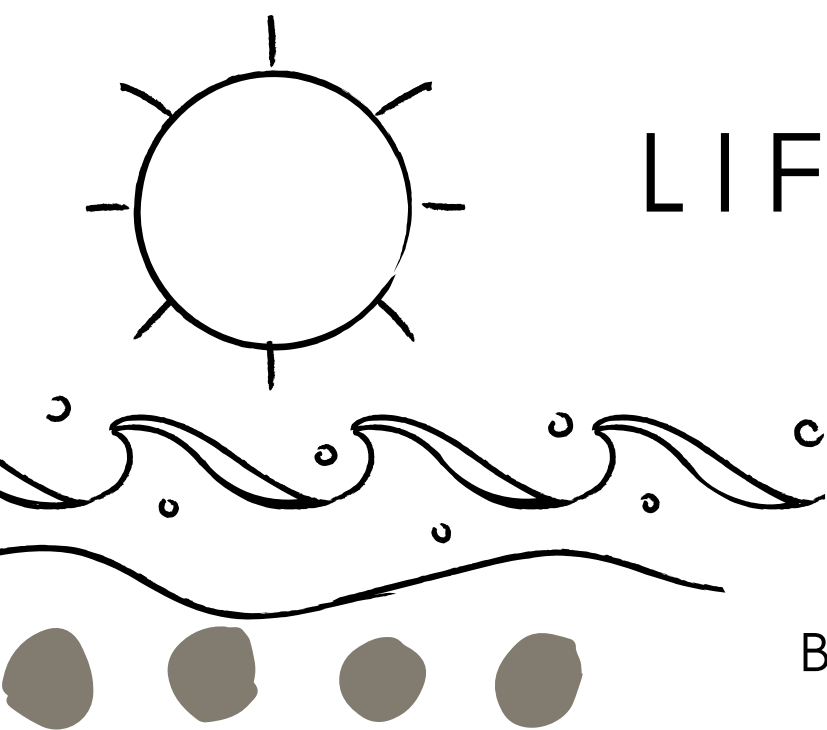
incredible. That’s something to which I would like to encourage you, my fellow Pirates. Find yourself a hidden gem in Scripture and make it your own. I encourage you to try to find time to read your gem. I read mine during retreats, but that is my personal choice. Maybe you want to dive into your personal gem during Lent to prepare for Easter, during your vacation, or whenever you think you would have the time to read and pray.

Don’t just read two chapters, close the Bible, and go out to dinner with your friends. The point of developing this devotion is to draw you into a deeper relationship with God. To dive into that relationship, you need to take the time to sit in silence and reflect on the words you read. These words are not just ordinary words you would find in any novel, but the living Word of God!

Through the Scriptures, God reveals himself to you and touches your innermost being. How could you go about finding this gem? I recommend talking to one of the priests or sisters on campus, or someone who you know has a deep and intimate relationship with God. Campus Ministry offers Bible study classes and different events throughout the year.

My friend was in a Bible study class and said it was “phenomenal.” The Chapel is also a great place to start. To begin, bring your Bible, an open heart and invoke the Holy Spirit to come upon you as you pray.





LIFEGUARD'S HOPE

BY MATTHEW FORGET

While today's presidential debates have reached a historical low in quality, the truly interesting debates of 2020 were those begun back in March over what the novel coronavirus would mean for Seton Hall. Would classes be canceled for the week? Could it even be possible that we would not return until Easter?

Of course, these questions seem absurd now, as in very short order we were all sent home, and soon after nearly every institution was shut down, from bars and bowling allies to movie theaters and even parks.

Nowadays, everyone is expected to wear a mask and many social norms have been changed (perhaps irrevocably). For all the excitement that great moments of history inspire, living through such a time can be very difficult and painful.

Over the past few summers, I have worked as a lifeguard at a local community pool. Despite the pandemic, the pool was open this past summer, with new safety policies implemented. The job is fairly easy, since this was my fourth year working there, and I find I get along well with my coworkers.

As often happens, the new work season began with hellos and the existential philosophical musings of high school lifeguards. However, this year they were emblematic of a

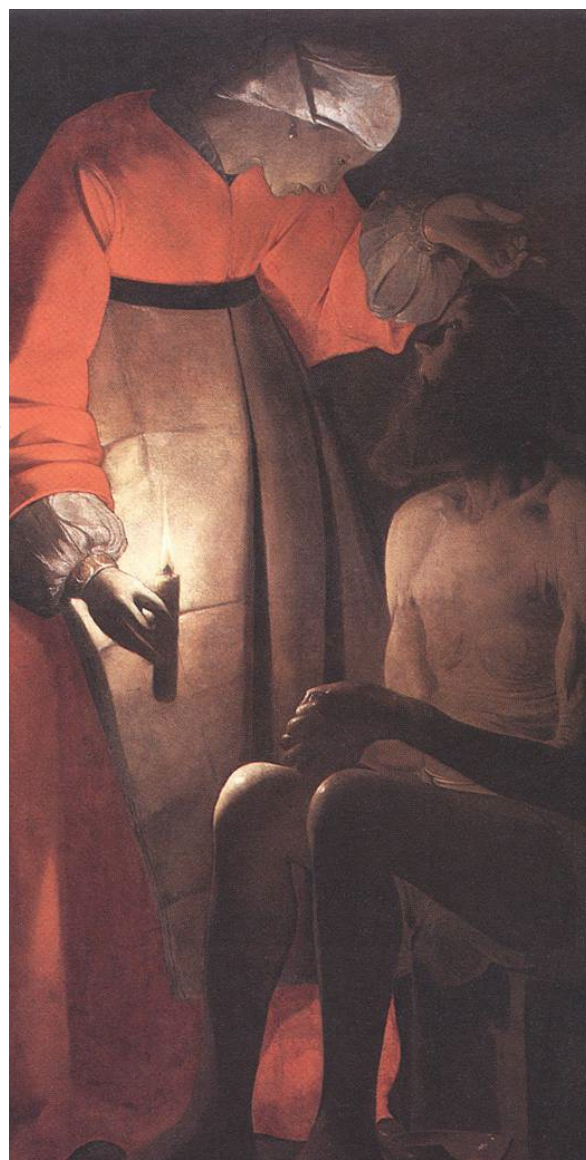
philosophy of life that appears to be common among college students: nihilism. Sadly, this philosophy has only been strengthened in these trying times.

On the very first day the pool was opened, there was a thunderstorm about an hour into my shift. The pool deck was cleared and all the employees had to gather in the office to be safely away from the water.

Initially, we casually discussed how our respective schools planned to adjust in the upcoming semester, with some complaining that tuition prices had remained the same or increased. But eventually, conversation turned to the value of life itself.

COVID had brought human mortality front and center to my coworkers' minds and it seemed that many were wrestling with this perennial truth in a serious way for the first time. While opinions on how the school year would progress differed greatly, there was a near unanimous consensus concerning the futility of life.

The conversation took a dramatic shift as one person expressed her conviction that life itself was meaningless, since we would all die and then everyone who ever knew or loved us would die. Amazingly, no one contradicted her; in fact, nearly everyone approved and commented on how they had been



thinking the same thing. Despite their charge of saving lives, these lifeguards were all but convinced that oblivion awaits and cheered with Macbeth that “life ... is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (Shakespeare, Macbeth).

As the point was made repeatedly in truly despairing words, I noticed three main groups form: those who expressed anger in their acceptance of life's futility, those who approached that proposition with an air of downtrodden comedy, and those who become terribly afraid and even begged that the conversation be turned to other things. I was struck with such grief for all of them.

The Catholic Church has always condemned nihilism as the absurd error that it is. All rejections of meaning, and therefore of all truth, are simply impossible to hold to coherently.

One coworker mentioned death and the death of all our loved ones as a reason for despair. If things are truly meaningless, there is no difference between death and life and thus an appeal to death makes no sense; yet, the mention of the death of all those who loved and knew us would seem to hold that such persons or such memories do hold value.

Even our own everyday experiences reveal to us how natural hope is, a desire for an arduous good possible to be attained. We hope to get an internship or a job, or that our team may succeed.

There is a maxim in Catholic theology that grace builds upon nature. Following this idea, we should look to a worldview that encourages and expands our natural capacity for hope, not for one that crushes it and leaves us desolate. To seek the latter is as sensible as working against our sense of sight and taste, or our rationality.

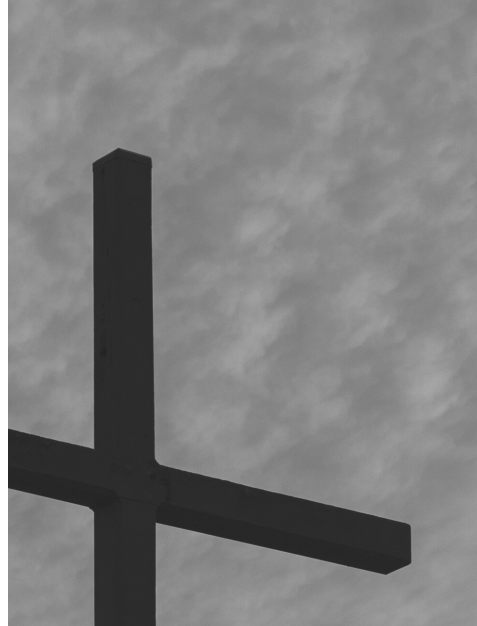
The Catholic mission offers value in its championing of the virtue of hope. It can hardly be called a competition, however, as nihilism arrives to the

fight already waving the white flag and disavowing all promises and purposes to its followers. Informed by this mission, Seton Hall can offer students her own hope, grounded in a natural tendency to hope and raised up to a supreme hope, Jesus Christ. He makes our lives worth living and gives us the strength to struggle along this wayfaring path, coronavirus and all.

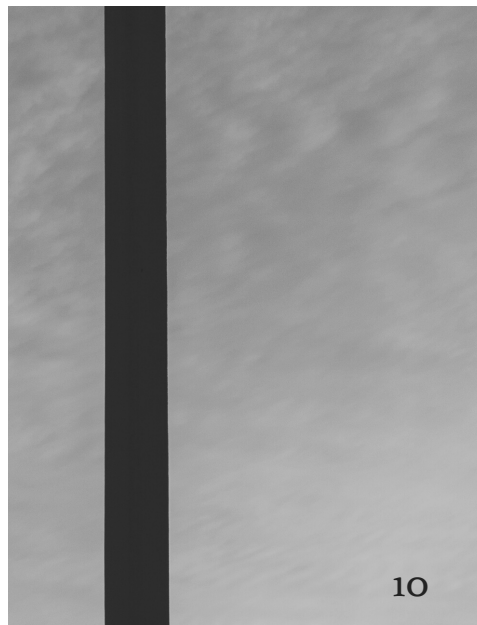
Those who are Catholic may draw hope from this high truth. Those who are not yet, please come and seek Him. He has promised that you will find the fulfillment of your desire (Matthew 7:7).

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPE?

Check out our last edition where our team member James Unciano shares a poem he wrote about finding fulfillment through Jesus titled "Jesus Is All We Need."



"He has
promised that
you will find
the
fulfillment
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INTERVIEW

WITH JESSICA BRINKER

By Ellen Mangan

Ellen (E): Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. I'm really excited to get to know you more, and hear a little bit more of your story! First, I would like to ask how you got to Seton Hall University. How did you come to be here?

Jessica (J): When I said "yes" to FOCUS, it was really a blind "yes." There are between 160 and 170 FOCUS campuses, and so when I said "yes," I could have been sent anywhere. Ideally, somewhere in the East because I was hired in the East, but I could have been sent anywhere. In May, I received my placement at Seton Hall, and it was a big surprise, but a good surprise.

E: Were you expecting anything in particular?

J: I tried not to have any expectations or any "dream schools," because I thought that if I set expectations, then I would just be setting myself up for disappointment. So, I really tried to keep an open mind and really just be open to where the Lord would best use my skill set and talents, and where He would want me the most.

E: Obviously, I am glad you are here! You talked about the "blind yes," and the process of becoming a missionary. Could you go into a little more detail about the discernment process for becoming a missionary and what that process looked like for you?

J: Yes! So, for me, I just graduated this past May. If you would have asked me at the beginning of my senior year or end of my junior year what I was

going to do, I would have told you graduate school. I wanted to be a social worker, specifically in family and marriage counseling. But going into the summer before senior year, both my parents were super on board with wanting me to discern and pray about, or even just think about, taking at least a year off to be on mission or service.

As I was praying about it and discerning where the Lord would want me, I had a few different options in mind. All of them were "safe" options, sticking close to home, and doing things I was already comfortable with.

One time in prayer, out of nowhere, FOCUS was placed on my heart. I got super pumped to apply, filled out the application, and then got cold feet as

I was about to submit. I felt grossly inadequate and not “holy enough” to be a missionary.

Who was I to lead people, especially in Bible study, and walk with people on their journey to Christ? Then a friend of mine who was already a third-year missionary called me and said “if the Lord has placed it on your heart to apply, take a leap of faith and apply.”

I did just that and I soon was invited to the recruitment weekend. Just after the recruitment weekend I felt very at peace and very confident that the Lord was calling me to two years of mission work with FOCUS. I was confident that I would get an offer, and then when I did get an offer, I said “yes” immediately.

E: When you said, “Who am I,” what immediately popped into my mind was “If not me, then who? If not now, then when?” Seton Hall is so blessed that you said “yes” and that you are here! Within FOCUS, you are Varsity Catholic missionary. Can you explain what Varsity Catholic is, please?

J: Varsity Catholic is a branch of FOCUS, which reaches out specifically to the athletes on campus. Athletes are busy in a way that regular students would not necessarily understand. They are balancing sports practices, study halls, classes, things that, you know, not everyone can understand (not to take away from other students at all). Varsity Catholic missionaries typically have been college athletes, so we can relate to the student athletes in a better way.

But really the goal of Varsity Catholic is to incorporate mind, body, and soul, and really to help the athletes to understand that God is not just a separate entity. God can and should be brought into the center of their sport and the center of their lives, because the Lord has given them these amazing gifts and He would just love to be brought in.

Basically, we aim to help them grow and serve Him through their gifts and talents within their sport. I was a D3 athlete, and this is a D1 school, and there is just so much more pressure

on the athletes here. I respect them a lot, and I am so blessed and excited to get to work with them and walk with them on their journey.

E: This semester is obviously unusual. All students, athletes or not, are balancing school with the stress and pressure of coronavirus. Students concerned for their family's safety might struggle just to answer the question “should I come to school today?” Has there been any scripture that you have been leaning on during this time of stress that has helped you cope?

J: Yes! So primarily, the first verse that I always go back to is from the book of Psalms. Psalm 46:11 says, “be still and know that I am God.” I have a tattoo of that on my wrist, it says “be still.” I originally got that tattoo not because of quarantine or Covid-19, but back in college when I was feeling really stressed.

With school and my sport, there was all this pressure to succeed and do well and excel, and I fell back on that verse then, as I do now. I try to be still, rest in the Lord, and know that He has a plan. It helps me recall that even when the world seems to be crashing and everything is overwhelming, I can be still and know that God is God, who is going to take care of everything.

That is definitely the main one. Then in my own prayer time that I have had more recently, I read the Gospel of John, just a chapter a day. At the end of John, chapter 14, verse 27, Jesus says right before the Last Supper, “my peace I leave you, my peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give.”

And then He says, “be not afraid, take courage.” I think now especially, with everything you were saying, it is really important to remember the Lord has a plan, and He comes to bring peace; we should not be afraid.

E: That is beautiful, thank you! I love that idea of rest. I feel like a lot of times, when people think of rest, they think of relaxing and watching YouTube or Netflix. But I am sure that you can attest to the fact that when you spend that time going into The Word rather than bingeing TV, it is so much more

restful and peace giving.

So, are there any outreach events over the next couple of months where we are going to see you?

J: The general student body will see James, who is the other Varsity Catholic missionary, and me at regular Campus Ministry events. There is an event every Thursday night, but I am most excited for an event I have heard lots about; it is usually “Pack the Chapel,” but with social distancing it is called “Unpack the Chapel.”

It sounds really cool! We have adoration, and students invite other students to come and light a candle in front of the altar if they were invited into the chapel. By the end of the night, you get to see how many new people were brought into this time in adoration, which I am super pumped for!



Meet the Writers

The Heart of the Hall gathers a unique and driven group of student writers.



Emma Newgarden Editor-in-Chief Of Content

Emma Newgarden is a Junior Classical Studies major from Staten Island, NY. On campus, she is a runner on Seton Hall's cross-country team. She also writes for the International Youth Coalition blog. In her free time, Emma enjoys reading old novels and coming up with new recipes.

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Bridgette studies English as a Junior at Seton Hall University. She combines her passions for writing and the Catholic faith as an editor of "The Heart of the Hall" in which she hopes to enrich her understanding of how to create a publication for her future in an English career. Bridgette can often be found playing piano or hiking at times when she is not working on a new edition.

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Jessica Kelly is a Senior in the elementary and special education program, and double majors with English. She is very excited to begin her journey writing for "The Heart of the Hall" and expanding her faith—an important aspect of Jessica's daily life. She enjoys spending time volunteering in her church nursery and working with children of her church to help them develop their own personal beliefs.

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Ellen Mangan is a Sophomore nursing student from Damascus, MD, who hopes to be a neonatal nurse. She is in the University Honors Program, and enjoys the reading, writing, and discussion the program entails as a break from her science classes. She is involved in a FOCUS-led Bible Study and a SPO Small Group and likes attending Campus Ministry events. She is especially interested in the inherent dignity of man and how that is easily lost and forgotten.

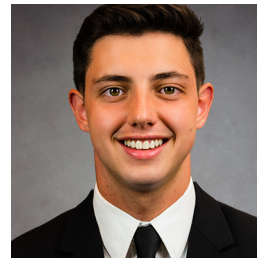
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Matthew is a Sophomore studying chemistry. He plans on pursuing a career in medicine. Matthew has a great interest in apologetics and hopes to help spread the faith with those he meets during his time at Seton Hall.

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"The Heart of the Hall" would like to thank Sarah Adam (Managing Editor) and Christina Murphy (Copy Editor) for their contribution to this edition.

Interested in joining the team? Please reach out to any of our staff.

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"The Heart of the Hall publishes articles to lead students, faculty, and alumni to recognize the value in the Catholic Mission at Seton Hall University, by drawing their hearts and minds towards Catholicism's truth and beauty."

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