

The Soul of Seton

By Margaret FalerSweany

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Barbara Gargiulo



Editor's Note: In the Judeo-Christian Culture the scribe and the rabbi (teacher) were held in the highest places of honor within the community. It was through them that

the story of their people was maintained and passed on to the next generation. Today with the great advances of technology to pass on information in massive quantities very quickly we take for granted the important role that our teachers and writers play in our society today. Men and women of faith who have these talents are still needed to help us make sense of all that comes at us. Each of the baptized is called to teach by the example of our lives. For the mission of Jesus Christ to advance in our culture we need men and women who have the specific skills and talents to pass on the story to our faith through teaching and writing. Barbara Gargiulo is a great example of using both of these abilities in the service of the church. The Parish Family of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is grateful for Barbara's willingness to share her gifts in teaching through the oral and written word. If you would like to get involved in the teaching or writing ministries of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, please contact Linda Bell in the Pastoral Ministries Office at 972-595-5505, Ext. 245.

Although we may not know them well, there are members of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's community who have had an impact on our lives through their participation in our parish activities. Barbara Gargiulo has found many ways to contribute her talents both within Elizabeth Ann Seton and within the Plano community.

Barbara and her husband, Jack, moved with their three sons to Plano from Chicago 27 years ago. At the time, their sons were in the 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades. Although they lived close to Seton, initially, the family didn't know it existed. They had been directed to another parish. At that time, Masses were held in the activity center and the church had not yet been built; we were not easy to identify. However, once the Gargiulo's found Seton, they settled in and became active in church activities.

Barbara's first involvement with St. Elizabeth was with the CCD program. During Mass, Father Leon Duesman (now Monsignor Duesman) used an innovative method to recruit much needed teachers. Suddenly, children were picketing up and down the aisles with signs saying, "Our class needs a teacher" and "We have a class but no teacher." Barbara says she decided this was something she might like to do, and soon Lynne Roberts found her an 8th grade class that needed a teacher. It was the start of many years teaching at the middle and high school levels.

Eventually, Barbara became involved in what she considers one of the most rewarding experiences she has had in her years of teaching and service at Seton. She was asked to become part of the RCIA Youth program—designed for people from the 7th through 12th grade who for various reasons had not been baptized, received their first communion, or been confirmed. The program was much like the adult RCIA program we currently have. She says, "The experience was tremendous because the

students were so committed. It was something they wanted and they paid attention to every word I said. At times, it scared me because I might say something that was wrong”, but they were so dedicated they kept her attention and she learned a lot.

Although she taught CCD for many years, Barbara has also been active as a Lector, now both at Sunday’s 7:00 a.m. mass and during the week. In addition, she has been active in the “Remembering Church” program and served as a member of the “RENEW” Core Team that planned for RENEW. For two years, she participated in the Planning Committee for the Seton Faith Formation Center.

One of her most important tasks over the past seven years, however, has been the writing of “The Soul of Seton.” In the process she says she has met many parishioners who have served in many capacities and all have interesting stories to tell of how they came to Seton and used their talents to make the parish vibrant and welcoming. Unfortunately, Barbara has decided to relinquish this job to focus on other priorities, including her three grandchildren.

Over the years, Barbara has also been active in education as a full-time teacher of biology, environmental science and chemistry to 7th through 10th grade students. And recently she has been teaching part-time at the college level. So, she has had an impact on our youth not only within the Faith Formation program but in the larger community. Now, she has undertaken a new teaching experience—or as she would consider it—a new learning experience. She notes that she has always thought it would be “A real kick to see someone learn to read”, though not first graders. Through the

public library’s training in their program, “Literacy for Life,” she has become involved in teaching adults who need literacy skills but, she says, the students she has been assigned are sharp people who primarily want to become comfortable with conversation. And, she helps them with reading, writing and speaking English. “These people are teaching me a lot more about [their] lives.” Barbara hasn’t traveled outside the US much so they teach her a lot about their cultures, customs, politics, etc. She says it’s a sharp learning curve she has to manage with about six students from places such as South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Columbia.

Branching out, Barbara has also been active at the community level by serving for seven years on the “Keep Plano Beautiful” Commission which focuses on beautification and litter control. In addition, in service to the Plano community, she spent three years on the Historic Landmark Commission which was identifying and preserving important old buildings and homes in Plano—particularly on the east side of the city. She learned that such designations came with a tax break but also obligations to retain the historic nature of the buildings.

Like many Souls of Seton, Barbara keeps herself very busy and sees that continuing in the future. When asked what keeps her going, she remarked that her favorite parable is the Prodigal Son “I always imagine the father running down the road to hug his returning son. It says to me that He always forgives us and runs to meet us as we come back.”