

# Message From The Pastor

**March 3, 2021**

March 3<sup>rd</sup> – St. Katharine Drexel

“Katharine Drexel is the second American-born saint to be canonized by the Catholic Church. She was born in Philadelphia on November 26, 1858, the second child of a prominent and wealthy banker, Francis Anthony Drexel and his wife, Hannah Langstroth. Her mother passed away just five weeks after Katharine was born.

The Drexels were financially and spiritually well endowed. They were devout in the practice of their faith, setting an excellent example of true Christian living for their three daughters. They not only prayed, but practiced what the Church calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Katharine grew up seeing her father pray for 30 minutes each evening. And every week, her stepmother opened their doors to house and care for the poor. The couple distributed food, clothing and provided rent assistance to those in need. The Drexels would seek out and visit women who were too afraid or too proud to approach the home in order to care for their needs in Christian charity.

After watching her stepmother suffer with terminal cancer for three straight years, Katharine also learned that no amount of money could shelter them from pain or suffering. From this moment, Katharine's life took a turn. She became imbued with a passionate love for God and neighbor, and she took an avid interest in the material and spiritual well-being of African and Native Americans.

In 1884, while her family was visiting the Western states, Katharine saw first-hand the troubling and poor situation of the Native Americans. She desperately wanted to help them. When her father passed away a year later, he donated part of his \$15.5 million estate to a few charities and then left the remainder to be equally split amongst his three daughters.

He set up his will in a way to protect his daughters from men who were only seeking their money. If his daughters should die, the money was then to go on

to his would-be grandchildren. If there were no grandchildren, the Drexel estate would be distributed to several different religious orders and charities, including the Society of Jesus, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, a Lutheran hospital and the Christian Brothers.

In 1887, while touring Europe, the Drexel sisters were given a private audience with Pope Leo XIII. They were seeking missionaries to help with the Native American missions they were financing. The Pope looked to Katharine and suggested she, herself, become a missionary. Not long thereafter, Katharine decided she would give herself and her inheritance to God through service to both Native Americans and African Americans. Katharine began her six-month postulancy at the Sisters of Mercy Convent in Pittsburgh in 1889.

On February 12, 1891, Katharine made her first vows as a religious and dedicated herself to working for the African and Native Americans in the Western United States. Taking the name Mother Katharine, she established a religious congregation called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored, whose members would work for the betterment of those they were called to serve.

From the age of 33 until her death in 1955, she dedicated her life and her fortune to this work. Also, in 1915, Katherine founded Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic University in the United States for African-Americans. By the time of her death, she had more than 500 Sisters teaching in 63 schools throughout the country and she established 50 missions for Native Americans in 16 different states.

Mother Katharine died on March 3, 1955 at the age of 96. The order continues to pursue Katharine's mission with the African-Americans and Native Americans in 21 states and in Haiti. St. Katharine was beatified on November 20, 1988 and canonized on October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Peace  
Fr. Marc