

Saint Katharine Drexel

- Feastday: March 3
- Patron Saint of: racial justice and philanthropists
- Birth: November 26, 1858
- Death: March 3, 1955
- Canonized: on October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II



"If we wish to serve God and love our neighbor well, we must manifest our joy in the service we render to him and them."



Katherine was born in Philadelphia, the second child of a prominent and wealthy banker. She received a wonderful education from private tutors and traveled throughout the United States and Europe. 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. After watching her stepmother suffer from 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 black and native Americans.

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 Indian missions they were financing. The Pope looked to Katharine and suggested she, herself, become a missionary.

Katharine decided she would give herself and her inheritance to God through service to both Native Americans and African Americans. On February 12, 1891, Katharine made her first vows as a religious and dedicated herself to working for the American Indians

and African-Americans in the Western United States. From the age of 33, she dedicated her life and her fortune to this work. 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. Katharine suffered a heart attack at 77 years old and was forced to retire. She spent the remainder of her life in quiet and intense prayer. She recorded her prayers and aspirations in small notebooks. Katharine was remembered for her love of the Eucharist and her desire for the unity of all peoples. She believed all should have access to a quality education and her selfless service, including the donation of her inheritance, helped many reach that goal.

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