



My Dear Parishioners,

Praised be Jesus Christ! Last Sunday, as we re-entered Ordinary Time and the wearing of the green, I shared the story of Fr. Augustus Tolten, the first African-American priest in the United States. His is an American

Story with all its drama; his too is a Christian Story; his is a heart-wrenching and saving tale which can teach us a lot in our own day.

This week, as we not only wear the green but enter the green-phase of the re-opening, I share another American Story. A saint whose courage confronted the scourge of racism. Her name is familiar to us all but her strength remains unfamiliar. I share this story of Philly's own St. Katherine Drexel to inspire courage in us for the injustice of our times.

For more info, visit Brooke Gregory's Article on epicpew.com

Peace,

Fr. Rogers

Katharine Drexel was born to a wealthy Philadelphia couple in 1858. Under the influence of her stepmother, Emma Bouvier, she learned that great wealth comes with great responsibility to help the less fortunate. Twice a week the Drexel family opened their home to distribute clothing, food, and rent assistance to all who needed it. They even quietly visited those too proud or ashamed to ask for help publicly. When Emma died Katharine's spiritual life began to deepen. She read a book called A Century of Dishonor, which detailed the agonizing plight of Native Americans on the Western frontier and their mistreatment by the American government. She was horrified by what she read, and her horror was only confirmed by an 1884 tour of the West where she met the Sioux chief Red Cloud and witnessed the appalling conditions native peoples were forced to live in.

Three years later, during an audience with Pope Leo XIII, Katharine told the Holy Father of the need for missionaries and ministers to relieve the sufferings of both Native Americans and African Americans. He suggested she become a missionary herself. By 1889, she was firm in her discernment to become a nun and to give the remainder of her life to Native Americans and people of color. Katharine founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Over the course of her life, she used her share of her family's fortune to found 145 missions, 50 schools for African Americans, and 12 schools for Native Americans. In doing this work, she risked her own safety. Note the following:

1. **People literally tried to blow her up and burn her schools down.** In Bensalem, PA, while the Motherhouse was under construction, Katherine received threats and a stick of dynamite was found at the construction site of the Motherhouse. A few years later, one of her first schools in VA was destroyed by arson. Mother Katharine wasn't intimidated.
2. **When they couldn't stop her with dynamite, they tried the law.** Many Southerners were not particularly fond of Katharine. Officials in Macon, Georgia tried to keep the sisters from teaching at one of her schools, and were not shy about the reason: they simply didn't want white women teaching and mingling with black students. St. Katharine fought the law, won, and the school is still operating today.
3. Perhaps St. Katharine Drexel's most well-known achievement was the opening of **Xavier University in New Orleans**, the only historically black college in the US with a Catholic affiliation. When it became public knowledge that St. Katharine had purchased the building to open a black college, vandals sneaked in and smashed every single one of its windows. St. Katharine promptly shrugged this off, and Xavier still stands today.
4. In 1933, the **KKK in Beaumont, Texas**, threatened with violence one of the parishes founded by St. Katherine.