

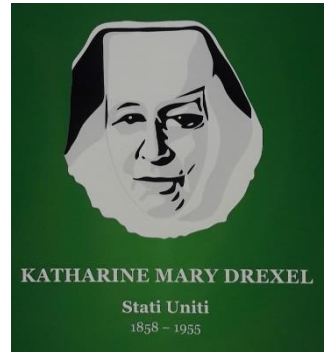


Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

‘Learn From Me’

Reflecting on the Lives of Saints  
and Blesseds of Catechesis



*“Holy Spirit, I wish to be feather so that your breath may carry me wherever you will.”*

*“Ours is the Spirit of the Eucharist – The total gift of self”.*

## St Katharine Drexel: Memorial: 3<sup>rd</sup> March

### Opening Prayer

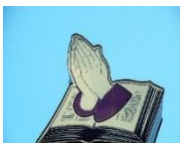
Ever Loving God,  
you called St. Katharine Drexel to teach the message of the Gospel and to bring the life of the Eucharist to the Black and Native American peoples.

By her prayers and example,  
enable us to work for justice among the poor and oppressed.  
Draw us all into the Eucharistic community of Your Church,  
that we may be one in You.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

*(Collect, Memorial)*



### Scripture Reflection

Matthew 20:17-28

Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, and on the way he took the Twelve to one side and said to them, ‘Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will rise again. Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came with her sons to make a request of him,

and bowed low; and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom.' 'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus answered. 'Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can.' 'Very well,' he said 'you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father.'

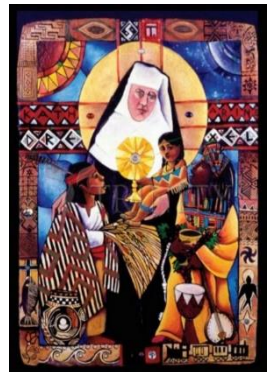
When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

- Is there a word or phrase that stands out or remains with you after reading these passages?

## **Biography**

### **Formative Years**

- Born: 26 November 1858 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- Daughter and heiress of the extremely wealthy railroad entrepreneurs, bankers and philanthropists Francis Anthony and Emma (Bouvier) Drexel.
- She was taught from an early age to use her wealth for the benefit of others; her parents even opened their home to the poor several days each week. Emma believed God gave wealth to the family to aid others and regularly involved her daughters in distributing food, medicine, clothing and rent money to the poor.
- Both parents died in 1885, leaving Katharine and her sisters to share the vast inheritance. Katharine began donating thousands of dollars to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions for the building and staffing of schools for Native American children.
- Katharine's older sister Elizabeth founded a Pennsylvania trade school for orphans; her younger sister founded a liberal arts and vocational school for poor blacks in Virginia.



### **Personal Turmoil**

- From a young age Katharine wanted most to become a contemplative nun. Her spiritual director, Bishop James O'Connor, thought she should remain a single woman serving the world.
- Interested in the condition of Native Americans, during an audience in 1887, Katharine asked Pope Leo XIII to send more missionaries to Wyoming for her

friend, Bishop James O'Connor. The pope replied, "Why don't you become a missionary?"

- Entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy.

### **Foundation of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament**

- In 1891, at the age of 33, she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, an order dedicated to mission work among Indians and black people. (A survey of the situation in the United States at this time described "250,000 Indians neglected, if not practically abandoned, and over nine million of negroes still struggling through the aftermath of slavery"). The order combined prayer and social action.
- Advised by Mother Frances Cabrini on getting the Order's rule approved in Rome. She received the approval in 1913.
- Katharine travelled extensively. By 1942 she had a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, 40 mission centres, 23 rural schools, 50 Indian missions, and Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, the first United States university for blacks. Segregationists harassed her work. At the time of her death in 1955, there were more than 500 Sisters teaching in 63 schools throughout the United States.
- Following a heart attack in 1935, she spent her last twenty years in prayer and meditation, getting her heart's desire of a life of contemplation.
- Died: 3 March 1955 of natural causes at the mother-house of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania, (no longer there). interred at the National Shrine of Saint Katharine Drexel in Bensalem, the Shrine closed to the general public on 30 December 2017, relics moved to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the summer of 2018 and open for public veneration in September 2018.
- Venerated: 26 January 1987 by Pope John Paul II
- Beatified: 20 November 1988 by Pope John Paul II
- Canonized: 1 October 2000 at Rome, Italy by Pope John Paul II

### **Significance for Catechists**

For reflection: What does the life of St Katharine say to us as catechists? What can we learn from her?

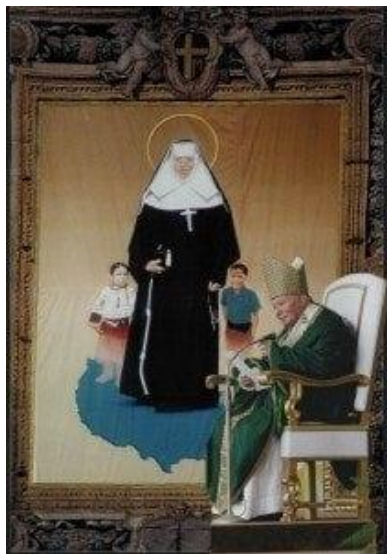
### **Closing Prayer**

"I wish to be one who conscientiously takes part in the unfolding of God's plans, and eventually have a glorious part in the final unfolding of time into the glory of God's Kingdom in heaven. If we are disciples (of Jesus) we shall be happy to spend ourselves and be spent for the salvation of souls."

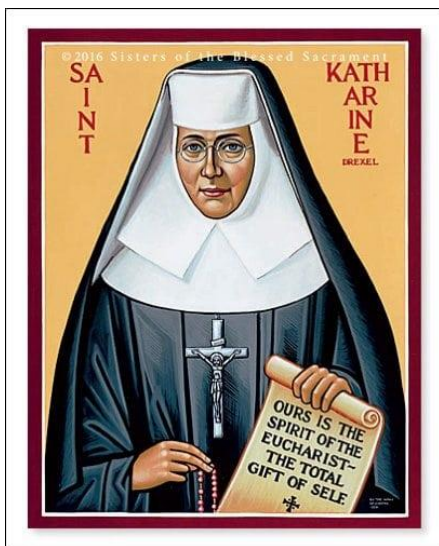
– St. Katharine Drexel

*Brief pause for reflection*

St. Katharine Drexel,  
pray for us.)



Canonisation banner, 2000



St Katharine's 'motto'

## 'Take Away' : Going Deeper

Bishop Robert Barron on St Katharine Drexel,

<https://youtu.be/rEcWMiRv0VU>

Extended biography, on Saturday, March 23, 2019, 6abc aired a documentary on the life of Saint Katharine Drexel and the translation of her tomb to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. (6ABC News Channel website) <https://youtu.be/-LOCJETLOms>

Biography (Catholic Online) <https://youtu.be/jv6IbFeMUJ>

Interactive Timeline

[http://www.katharinedrexel.org/st\\_katharine\\_drexel\\_overview/interactive-timeline/](http://www.katharinedrexel.org/st_katharine_drexel_overview/interactive-timeline/)

Information re Congregation, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

<https://www.katharinedrexel.org/>

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## Acknowledgements

Illustration of St Katharine: from 'Saints of Catechesis' exhibition, II International Catechetical Congress, September 2018, Rome.

Gospel, from Mass readings of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, as appears Universalis.

Closing prayer as appears in Novena Prayer for the feast day as appears on <https://www.katharinedrexel.org>

Icon as appears on 'Catholic Philly' <https://catholicphilly.com/?s=katharine+drexel>

Biographical notes based on information on Universalis, <https://catholicsaints.info/saint-katharine-drexel/>, 'Voices of the Saints', Bert Ghezzi, Loyola Press, 2000.

Pictures from <https://www.katharinedrexel.org>