



November Holy Hero – St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

Feast Day, Nov. 18

Canonized in 1988 by Pope John Paul II.

Have you ever heard of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne? She was a French missionary that served God, not far from here, in St. Charles and St. Louis, Missouri. Rose was born in France in 1769, the daughter of very wealthy parents. As a young girl, there was nothing especially holy about Rose. She often did her best to get her own way, ordering others to do what she wanted. History was her favorite subject and she loved to hear stories of the Native Americans. She longed to one day become a missionary and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Natives in America.

Rose entered the convent at age seventeen. The convent closed when the French Revolution broke out and Rose was forced to return to her family. She did not give up her desire to belong to Jesus. When the Revolution was over, she joined the newly formed Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Mother Duchesne's dream of becoming a missionary was still alive, and finally, at age fifty, she was sent to the United States, which, at the time, was still a mission land. The Bishop sent her and the small group of Sisters to a remote village called St. Charles, Missouri. With drive, courage, and true pioneer spirit, Mother Duchesne faced many hardships on the frontier; extreme heat and cold, shortages of food and water, poor housing, and different languages to learn. Through all this, she founded the first free school for poor children west of the Mississippi River. She then founded the first Catholic Indian School in Florissant, Missouri. Mother Duchesne never lost her enthusiasm for Christ. Divine grace transformed her strong will into humility and gentleness. She overcame many obstacles to set up missions, schools, and orphanages in the New World.

Finally, at age seventy-two, her lifelong prayer of working with her beloved Native Americans was answered. A mission was founded at Sugar Creek, Kansas among the Potawatomi Indians. She was much loved among the natives and became known as Quah-kah-ka-num-ad, "Woman-who-prays-always". Her health began to decline, and Mother Duchesne spent the last ten years of her life in a tiny shack at the convent in St. Charles, where she lived a quiet, simple life in almost constant prayer. She died in 1852, at the age of eighty-three. You can visit her shrine, where she is buried on the grounds of the Academy of the Sacred Heart. The Shrine is located at 619 North 2nd Street, St. Charles, MO, and is open daily from 9am to 4pm.