

*March Holy Hero*  
*Katharine Drexel-Feast Day March 3*

Katharine Drexel was born Nov. 26, 1858 in Philadelphia, PA. Her mother died when she was only a few weeks old. After a couple of years, her father remarried a very good and kind woman, Emma Bouvier, who loved Katharine and her sister, Elizabeth, as her own.

Kate's family was very rich, but they taught their daughters to be like Jesus and to love and share with everyone, especially the poor and needy. People knew the Drexel Family was generous. They came to their house asking for food and clothing, and were never turned away.

Their father took them on many trips as they were growing up, visiting many places in Europe, as well as the U.S. Through these travels, Katharine saw the many hardships of Native and African Americans in her own country. She saw the need for good schools, as well as the basic needs of food and shelter. During a trip to Rome, she asked Pope Leo to send missionaries to help the Indians, and the Pope asked her, "Why don't you become a missionary yourself?"

When Katharine's father died, her and her sisters were left millions of dollars. She wanted to use her fortune to help those in need. Therefore, she began to buy land and have schools built, but had trouble finding priests and sisters to teach in them. It was then that she decided to become a missionary herself, and to serve the Native and African Americans. She joined the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburg, and later started a new group of sisters called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Katharine was very happy even though she gave up the money for herself, fancy clothes, and nice things. She was a bride of Jesus!

The sisters visited many villages, churches, and schools of the Native and African Americans, bringing the love of Jesus to them, and looked for ways to help them in their many needs. They did much difficult traveling in hot and remote places. They learned the languages and customs of the tribes. Even the hard things seemed easier for the sisters, because they did it with love and joy.

Sister Katharine knew that many African Americans came from poor families and did not have good schools to attend. She opened many Catholic schools in the Deep South, as well as Xavier University in New Orleans. She believed that one of the best ways to help the poor was to educate their children. That way, they were able to get better jobs to earn the money they needed.

Sister Katharine retired after two heart attacks. Instead of traveling, she spent her last 20 years praying for the needy people of God, especially the Native and African Americans she loved so much. She died at age 96 on March 3, 1955. At the time of her death, she had 500 Sisters teaching in 63 schools throughout the country. On Oct. 1, 2000, Pope John Paul II named her a saint. Katharine Drexel was the second U.S. born saint.