

Lives of Saints

St Katherine Drexel

1858 - 1955

Feast day: 3rd March



"The patient and humble endurance of the Cross – of whatever nature it may be – is the highest work we have to do."

St Katherine Drexel

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I was born in Philadelphia in 1858. My father was an international banker but he was also a man of prayer. On the other hand, my mother was an enormously charitable woman who opened our home to the poor three days each week. So I got my money from my father, and my love for the poor from my mother.

In my youth, I received a good education and travelled widely. Above all, I took a special interest in the material and spiritual well-being of black and native Americans. I met Pope Leo XIII while on a European tour and asked him to send more missionaries to Wyoming for my friend Bishop James O'Connor. The Pope's answer was so shocking to me! He looked at me and said, "Why don't you become a missionary?" When I returned to America, I visited the Dakotas, met Red Cloud the Sioux Chief and began my systematic aid to Indian missions.

I could have got married, but I decided not to. From the age of 33 until my death in 1955, I dedicated my life and a fortune of 20 million dollars to this work. I believe it was St Joseph who brought me the grace to give the remainder of my life to the Indians and to black people.

A congregation was founded by the name of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, for Indians and the black people. We spent three and a half years training, and then opened a boarding school in Santa Fe. After that, schools and mission centres were founded for Indians in 16 States. I also worked to get Rome's approval of the rule of the Order, as well as to found the first University in the US for Blacks. I spent most of my old age in prayer and meditation.