

(L.A. Mission Office 01/01 Mission Moderators: Please duplicate this lesson plan for your fellow teachers.)

Lesson Plan: A Saint for Our Times
ST. KATHARINE DREXEL

Goal: To introduce students to a saint who was a missionary here in our own country, a pioneer in the struggle to recognize the dignity and civil rights of African Americans and Native Americans

Materials Needed: this lesson plan and accompanying story and U.S. map

Objectives:

- (*) To become familiar with a recently canonized saint of the United States
 - (*) To recognize the qualities of a person who is willing to give more than her surplus
 - (*) To illustrate how one person can make a difference in the lives of thousands of others
 - (*) To help children respond appropriately to the question: Who is a missionary?
 - (*) To see the life of a saint in the context of United States history
 - To observe specific places on the U.S. map where Katharine founded missions: Santa Fe, New Orleans, Virginia
 - To learn the meaning of the term "straw buyer"
- (*) younger children

Procedure:

- Prepare the students to listen to the account of the life of St. Katharine Drexel.
- Tell, read, or have read the story of St. Katharine Drexel.
- Use the follow-up questions below (add or substitute your own if you wish).
- Prayer: *God, please help us to see how much you love every person in the world. Teach us to follow the example of St. Katharine Drexel and reach out to people who are different from ourselves.*
- Present a follow-up activity of your own or use the suggestions below.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

Older Students:

1. How was Katharine influenced by her mother and father?
2. What is a "straw buyer"? Why did Katharine need one?
3. Who suggested to Katharine that she become a missionary.?
4. What example does Katharine Drexel give to all of us?

Younger Students:

1. What are some things in which Katharine was interested?
2. Who suggested to Katharine that she become a missionary?
3. Why do you think Katharine Drexel is a saint?
4. How can we imitate Katharine Drexel?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Older Students

1. Develop a time line that includes all of the following: Birth, death and canonization of Katharine, papal reign of Leo XIII, beginning and abolishment of slavery in the U.S., modern Civil Rights movement, years of inaugurations of U.S. Presidents during Katharine's lifetime, Indian wars, any other significant event during these years.
2. Make a report on any other famous black Catholic: e.g., Pierre Toussaint, Martin de Porres, Thea Bowman.
3. Discuss with a group how the Native-American and African-American cultures contribute to the richness of the Catholic Church.

Younger Students

1. Tell the story of Katharine Drexel to your family tonight.
2. Write a prayer to Katharine. Ask her to help you to be a good missionary for Jesus.

L.A. Mission Office 01/01 Teachers: Please duplicate this Lesson Plan and accompanying story for your fellow teachers. It is very important that our children gain a sense of mission, of the missionary nature of our church. One of the primary ways that this happens is through you. We continue to try, in these *Saints* Lesson Plans, to show how others have been missionaries for Jesus. (Where necessary please re-word for younger students.)

ST. KATHARINE DREXEL

Our saint for today is St. Katharine Drexel, a recently canonized saint of the Church. She was declared a saint by Pope John Paul II in Rome on October 1, 2000 and is only the second native born American to be named a saint. (The first was St. Elizabeth Ann Seton-both women.)

Family History Katharine was born in 1858 in Philadelphia; her parents were very wealthy. She had two sisters. Her mother died when she was only one month old; her father re-married. Her new mother, Emma, was a tremendous example of Christian outreach to the poor. Every week she gathered the poor at the gate of their home and fulfilled their requests for clothing, shoes, food, and rent. When Katharine's father died (1885), he left his three daughters a huge fortune. According to his wishes ten percent of his estate went immediately to charity.

Katharine's Interests From her teen years, Katharine had always had a special interest in the plight of American Indians. Although she lived during an era of Catholic immigration to the United States, her concern extended to those outside the church, to those all but excluded from American society-i.e., American Indians and African Americans. Although slavery was abolished in 1865, African Americans were still subjected to racial discrimination and prejudice. During a trip to the Western United States, she met the Sioux chief, visited the Dakotas and saw the inhuman living conditions and needs of Native Americans. She began a life work of sponsoring churches and schools in Indian Territory, a work that expanded to include the much larger field of similar institutions for blacks.

Katharine's Personal Life Katharine seriously considered becoming a nun, giving up her fortune for a life of vowed poverty. She was not encouraged by her spiritual advisor, Bishop O'Connor of Omaha. He believed that if she entered the convent she would have to give up her growing role as the prime financial backer for the Catholic Indian missions. Katharine had an audience with Pope Leo XIII and requested the Pope to send European missionaries to the Indian Territory. The Pope replied, "Why not ... become a missionary yourself?" Then she realized that it was not enough to share her wealth. God was asking her to give everything. Finally Bishop O'Connor consented to her becoming a nun but suggested she found her own congregation which would work exclusively among Native Americans and African Americans.

Katharine's Foundations In 1891 Katharine's "Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored" came into being. She became known as Mother Katharine Drexel and opened St. Catherine's School in Santa Fe, her congregation's first school for Indian children, in 1894. That same year she purchased an estate in Rock Castle, Virginia, where she built St. Francis de Sales School, a boarding school for black girls. She founded many other schools and missions in the South, the West, and the urban slums of the East. Very often, due to extreme prejudice, property for these schools had to be purchased through a third party (known as a "Straw Buyer"). Mother Drexel's greatest educational achievement was founding Xavier University in New Orleans, the first university for African-Americans in the United States. By the time Katharine died on March 3, 1955 at the age of 96, she was personally responsible for establishing 145 Catholic missions and 12 schools for Indians and 50 schools for black students. Her life spanned the era of slavery and the Indian wars to the dawn of the modern civil rights movement. Katharine's charities outstripped her large fortune, especially after the introduction of the federal income tax. In 1924 Congress passed a bill providing that any person who had given at least 90 percent of their income to charity for the preceding 10 years would be exempt from federal taxes. The bill was widely understood to include no one but Katharine Drexel.

The Witness Value of Katharine's Life Shortly after meeting Pope Leo XIII Katharine dedicated herself to a missionary life within the United States. Katharine used all of her wealth selflessly. She is a symbol of the church's concern for black and native Americans. In our time, when materialism and racism are two of our greatest concerns, we can look to the witness of St. Katharine Drexel. Katharine was not canonized for her philanthropy, but for her holiness. The very things that we as a society have struggled with most — attachment to money, and racism — Katharine took direct, and radical stands against.