



Blessed Katherine Drexel 1858 - 1955

St. Elizabeth Convent, Cornwell Heights, Pennsylvania, Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, is the spiritual center and memorial to one of our nation's most remarkable women, Katherine Drexel. She was an American, a Catholic and mother of a spiritual family. God endowed her generously with beauty, intelligence, wealth and drive. Her generous heart impelled her to share every talent and gift she possessed.

Katherine loved America. "I love my country with all my heart, the people, the habits, the cities, everything!" Her love focused on the nation's poorest: the Indians and the Blacks. Seventy years before Americans heard of civil rights or Native-American movements, Katherine consecrated her life to the service of these people. She founded a religious institute, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, whose vowed purpose was to do the same. She was the greatest personal benefactor of the Home Missions of the Catholic Church in the United States. She gave to this cause not only the wealth she inherited from her internationally known family, but she gave herself adorned by prayer and sacrifices, with virtues found only in those whose memory has been perpetuated in the calendars and on the altars of the Catholic Church as saints.

The life story of Katherine Drexel spans a long period of time and covers eventful and far reaching developments in the history of the United States. She was born in 1858 into the Drexel family, members of Philadelphia high society. She was a child of power, privilege and wealth. The Drexel family empire included partnerships with J.P. Morgan in New York and the House of Morgan in London. Katherine had the world at her feet, but she had other ideas. She entered the convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh in 1889. By the time of her death in 1955, at the age of 97, she had engaged in an activity phenomenal in its extent and breathtaking in its inspiration. She made a distinctive contribution to American history, but she went about it noiselessly, avoiding fanfare, and shrinking from fame. She saw a cause to be supported, a way of life to be established in the highways as well as ghetto byways of America. The cause was God's; the way of life was America's. She served them both. In every age, God summons generous hearts to serve his poor. The needs vary with the times, but the call always remains the same: "Come, follow me." Katherine was beatified by Pope John Paul II on November 20, 1988.