

THE CECILIAN

A NEWSLETTER TO HONOR ST. CECILIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR
AND A CHRONICLE OF MICHAELA SASSE'S DISCERNMENT AS A CONSECRATED VIRGIN LIVING IN THE WORLD

ISSUE NO. 2 | MARCH 3, 2026 | FEAST DAY OF ST. KATHARINE DREXEL

I have lived in WaKeeney for just over a month. The time has flown! I continue to be reunited with many dear friends from Fort Hays, and I have also made new friends.

Recently, Sr. Serena of the Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln made a trip to WaKeeney, and we enjoyed dinner together. I gave her a tour of my new digs, and she had fun trying on glasses! She currently lives in Beloit with two other sisters, Sr. Benedicta and Sr. Megan Therese. Crossing paths with Sr. Serena was truly providential; she was in Hays for a week providing spiritual direction to the FHSU campus center students. Fr. Andy mentioned to me that sister was in town, and I simply thought, "That would be so fun to get together with her!" The following day Fr. Andy spoke to sister about the discernment group I am facilitating, and shortly after that she texted me and asked to grab a bite to eat. God hears all of our desires and answers them according to His most generous Will!



I drive to Hays (which is about a half hour away) twice a week to facilitate a women's discernment group. On Monday evenings about fourteen or so students attend, and on Thursday evenings a few others come. We are reading the book *Discerning Religious Life* (how appropriate), and it has discussion questions for each meeting. At one of the meetings, Sr. John Marie of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita joined us. She is so full of joy, and it was beautiful to listen to her vocation story. She attended FHSU and was fond of visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of course that is now a regular part of her day. When discussing overcoming fears, one of the students said, "This may sound silly, but I am afraid that I will have to wear an ugly habit." I told the student I once heard a professed sister share that she desired a beautiful habit, and it was part of the way God led her to her order. Again, God knows our desires more intimately than ourselves, and He can use all desires for good, no matter how trivial.

While praying on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes, I asked the Lord who the patron saint of the women's discernment group should be, and He promptly responded, "St. Bernadette." To my great surprise and delight, I discovered St. Bernadette is the patron saint of those ridiculed for their faith and piety. I don't know if there could be a more fitting saint for our group. I also know Bishop Vincke loves her so much! Recently, I have been reflecting on what it means to be childlike; not childlike in the sense of being naive, but becoming small so to depend on God's Providence. This is how God operates in His saints. St. Katharine Drexel, whose feast day is today, was willing to give up her large inheritance to carry out the Father's Will. Although she would have been provided for in this life, she gave up everything to serve her True Spouse. "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." Matthew 19:29

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln
- Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita



ST. KATHARINE DREXEL

Virgin

Katharine Drexel's decision to leave high society and spend her life dedicated to service of American Indians and African Americans shocked those who were not aware of her ardent desire to be involved in the missions. Katharine was born in 1858 to an extremely wealthy family in Philadelphia. Her mother died five weeks after her birth, and her father remarried two years later. The family raised Katharine and her two sisters in a very loving environment with a strong Catholic faith. Katharine's father and stepmother taught by example that wealth is meant to be shared with those most in need. Twice per week, the Drexel family distributed food, clothing, and rental assistance from their home.

While traveling with her family to the western states in 1884, Katharine was moved by the destitution and poverty of the Native Americans. Not long after this trip, her father died and left his estate and fortune to his three daughters, an amount that would be worth about \$400 million today. Katharine and her sisters began financially supporting the missions and missionaries in the United States. While on a European tour in 1887, Katharine obtained a private audience with Pope Leo XIII and asked him for missionaries to be sent to the Native Americans. Pope Leo XIII responded, "Why not, my child, yourself become a missionary?" His question convicted Katharine to give her life and inheritance to God through service to American Indians and African Americans. She rejected several marriage proposals in favor of her desire to enter religious life. Her decision astounded Philadelphia social circles and local newspapers; the Philadelphia Public Ledger carried the headline: "Miss Drexel Enters a Catholic Convent - Gives Up Seven Million."

Katharine entered the Sisters of Mercy Convent in Pittsburgh, where she received formation and professed first vows. She later established a new religious congregation called The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and was joined by thirteen other sisters. The community, dedicated to administering care to the American Indians and African Americans in the western and southwestern United States, has devotion to Eucharistic Adoration at its heart. Mother Katharine focused on the importance of joyful service and said, "If we wish to serve God and love our neighbor well, we must manifest our joy in the service we render to Him and them. Let us open wide our hearts. It is joy which invites us. Press forward and fear nothing."

At the turn of the 20th century, Mother Katharine sought to change racial attitudes in the United States, which were growing more and more hostile after the passing of Jim Crow laws. Despite numerous threats and oppression from the government, Mother Katharine continued opening schools to teach black students, including Xavier University in New Orleans. By 1942, her sisters had founded a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, with an additional 40 mission centers and 23 rural schools. Over the course of six decades, she poured \$20 million of her own fortune into building schools and churches, and paying the salaries of the teachers in rural schools for blacks and Indians. Mother Katharine died at the age of 96 in 1955 and was canonized in the year 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

REFLECTION

"It is a lesson we all need - to let alone the things that do not concern us. He has other ways for others to follow Him; all do not go by the same path. It is for each of us to learn the path by which He requires us to follow Him, and to follow Him in that path." God's path to holiness is unique to each of us. To some, the pathway is through married life, others, in the ordained life, and still others, to consecrated life and chaste single life. How is God calling you to grow in your unique pathway of holiness, particularly during the season of Lent? How can you more fully give your life to God and allow Him to write the rest of your story?

St. Katharine Drexel, pray for us.

