

Blessed Are The Poor in Spirit



Saints are people who live the Beatitudes so completely that they bring happiness not only to themselves but to those around them as well. Here is a story about Saint Katherine Drexel, a person who did a lot to bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Katherine Drexel—or Kate, as she was known to her family—was born in Philadelphia. At that time, the city was the financial center of the United States. Kate's grandfather was the founder of a banking firm, and so the Drexels were very wealthy. For most of

the year, the family lived in a mansion in the heart of the city. In the summertime, though, they stayed at their summer home between vacation trips to many parts of the United States. Sometimes, they even traveled on their own private train. Katherine was educated by the finest private tutors, and some of the most powerful people in the nation visited her home.

But Kate's family also showed a concern for people who weren't as rich as they were. She was taught the importance of sharing and of service. On one family trip, the Drexels visited a Native American reservation in Washington state. Katherine was shocked at the poverty she saw there. A few years later, she visited the Vatican. She asked Pope Leo XIII to send people to work with those who had been treated unjustly in America—the Native Americans and African Americans. To her surprise, the Pope suggested that Katherine begin this work herself!

When her parents died, Katherine inherited a vast fortune. But she never forgot the Pope's advice. Eventually, she founded an order of women religious whose special work would be serving people who had suffered injustice. Over the course of her life she invested her inheritance of over 12 million dollars in building schools and missions. One of these schools became Xavier University in New Orleans.

As Saint Katherine Drexel's story shows, being poor in spirit doesn't mean having nothing. It means learning not to grasp on to what we have with a tight hold, but instead to share what has so generously been given to us. In that way we help to bring about the kingdom, a place where every person on Earth will have what they need to be happy and do God's work.