

*Saint Katharine's CIRCLE*Quarterly Newsletter **Volume I, #2** May 2014

**Sr. Patricia Suchalski, SBS President presents  
2014 Saint Katharine Drexel National Justice  
Award to**

**Franciscan Volunteer Ministry Coordinators**  
Katie Sullivan, National Coordinator and  
Matthew Johnson, Assistant National  
Coordinator.

It is the tradition of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to present their annual **National Justice Award** as part of the celebration of the Feast Day of their foundress, St. Katharine Drexel.

This year, after the Mass in celebration of her feast day at their motherhouse in Bensalem, the sisters varied the tradition by presenting the award to a lay organization – the New York-based **Franciscan Volunteer Ministry**, sponsored by the Order of Friars Minor, Holy Name Province. Locally, four young volunteers serve one or two years living and working at St. Francis Inn, a popular soup kitchen in the Kensington section of Philadelphia.

“The purpose of the lay volunteers is to grow in faith, love and hope by serving the poor and marginalized and working for social justice in Franciscan ministries,” said Sister Patricia Suchalski, president of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, in her presentation remarks. “The volunteers live in Gospel-based communities as witnesses to their faith through prayer and a simple lifestyle. Their gifts and talents are exchanged with the people of God with a loving Franciscan spirit.” Volunteers come from 66 Colleges and Universities and from the four directions of the United States. Their motto of **Love...Lived in Service** continues to influence the Alums wherever they are today. There is a National Network of Alums whose Values are: Intentional Community, Expressed Prayer and Direct Ministry.

## *Congratulations!*

*We hope that every parish, school and group receiving Saint Katharine's CIRCLE is beginning to feel more connected throughout the country, learning how we are a continuation of St. Katharine's mission in many ways through our uniqueness and in our similarities.*

**“Sharing Our Best ~ Inspiring Us All”**  
**.... News around the country**



**We asked you to share with us your celebration of the Feast of St Katharine Drexel. Here are the responses that you sent to us.**

“March 3<sup>rd</sup> is St Katharine Drexel’s Feast Day and also the 88<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sister Sandra Smithson, SSSF. Sister Sandra is convinced that Mother Katharine came to Nashville just to start a school for her. She was 6 years old and in the first class at St. Vincent. She then went on to Immaculate Heart High School and Xavier University, all initiatives of St Katharine. Sister Sandra considers herself a second class relic because she sat on Mother Katharine’s lap when she came to Nashville. After serving many years in Costa Rico, Sister Sandra returned to Nashville and began Project Reflect, an effort to provide a nurturing, educational environment for the underserved minorities of Nashville. Her goal is to mirror the loving, nurturing education she received from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. When the SBS came to Nashville, there were 3 Black Catholic families. The numbers continue to grow in each parish and have exceeded even Mother Katharine’s expectations. Sister Sandra continues to extol the gift Mother Katharine has been to her family and the church of Nashville. We celebrate St. Katharine and Sister Sandra this March 3.”

~ *Sister Marianne Poole, SBS*

**From: Martell, California- news from the Music Director and parish contact person**

“I am the Music Director at St Katharine Drexel Church in Martell, CA. I was so happy to receive St. Katharine’s CIRCLE from our Pastor, Father Larry Beck and find the hymn for St. Katharine there. With a little adaptation, we will sing it on Sunday, March 2 at our morning Mass. We hope to have a video made so we can send it to you.” ~ *Kim LaSavio*

“In addition to singing the hymn at Sunday’s Mass, St. Katharine Drexel Parish sang it at the Monday Mass in honor of St. Katharine’s Feast Day. At the conclusion of Mass there was a special personal blessing with a relic of St. Katharine Drexel followed by a lovely breakfast.”

<http://stkatharinedrexel.com> ~ *Connie Wright* contact for SKD in Martell, CA.

**From: Wolfeboro/Alton, NH**

“St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Wolfeboro, NH promoted and made her Novena available to the parish, and celebrated a Mass in memory of St. Katharine Drexel’s Feast Day Monday, March 3. We hope to incorporate the hymn in future celebrations. We also are blessed to be able to display two relics of St. Katharine Drexel near her statue in our church.” ~ *Martha Horton*

**From: Cape Coral, Florida**

“St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Cape Coral Florida celebrated St. Katharine’s Feast Day on Sunday, March 2 with an afternoon SKD Festival. Plenty of local entertainment, horse rides, games and lots of great food prepared and served by parishioners.” ~ *sent to us by a friend*



**Thank you for sending in your Feast Day Celebration news and if anyone wishes to send in parish, school or any group’s news for us to share with the CIRCLE, please contact Martha Horton at: [mhortonnewslink@yahoo.com](mailto:mhortonnewslink@yahoo.com) or call (603) 545-8323.**

## SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL CHURCH MECHANICSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

As the first church in the world named in honor of Saint Katharine Drexel, we take special pride in celebrating her feast day. We began with the Novena (February 22 - March 2) using the prayers and reflections in the Novena pamphlet prepared by the Mission Center and National Shrine. The pamphlet was distributed to parishioners and is also on the parish web site.



During this period, we displayed a picture of Mother Katharine in the sanctuary. It is the image displayed in Saint Peter's at her beatification ceremony. A relic of Mother Katharine was also on display during this period.

This year the Mass on March 3rd was opened by Reverend William Forrey, pastor of Saint Patrick Church in nearby Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It was in Carlisle that Mother Katharine established the only site where both African-Americans and Native Americans were served by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Saint Katharine Hall (built by Mother Katharine) serves today as the parish rectory. The parish also used the Mass to welcome a young man into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Women's Council of the parish always hosts a Valentine's Dinner and Dance. This year that event raised \$500.00 for support of the orphanage in Ferrier, Haiti.

***Three cheers for Mechanicsburg! What an honor and privilege to be the first church named after St. Katharine Drexel – in the world!***

## Saint Katharine Drexel

### The Early Years of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

The early years of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were exciting. The young community learned how to be women religious, teachers and “mothers and servants of the Negro and Indian races.” Mother Katharine worked on the Constitution (Holy Rule) of the new Congregation. The Sisters practiced their teaching skills at Holy Providence, the boarding school on the Motherhouse grounds.



The Sisters were eager to go out to the missions but Archbishop Ryan cautioned them to wait until they were professed

and ready. Finally, in 1894, the first pioneers were sent out to St. Catherine’s Indian School, Santa Fe, NM! Mother Katharine had funded this school in 1887, prior to her entrance into religious life. Then, in 1899, Mother Mary Mercedes and The Sisters opened St. Francis de Sales School, Rock Castle, VA.



More young women entered and progressed through the postulate and novitiate, becoming Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. All came to work and to pray, to devote their lives in service to the neglected members of our country. What joy they had preparing children and adults for Baptism and first Holy Communion!

The new century saw new opportunities - in St. Michaels, AZ (1902), Nashville, TN (1905), Carlisle, PA (1906), Philadelphia, PA (1908 and 1909)., and Winnebago, NB (1909). 1912 saw the Sisters in St. Monica’s, Chicago, St. Mark’s, New York (the first Catholic school for Blacks in NYC), and Columbus, OH. Next came Atlanta, GA, then Boston, MA, St. Louise, MO and Cincinnati, OH. 1915 saw the Sisters go to Macon, GA, Germantown, PA and to St. Francis Xavier, New Orleans, LA, where they opened what is now called Xavier University of Louisiana. The following year, 1916, saw the opening of Holy Ghost School, also in New Orleans, LA.

Mother Katharine knew the great thirst of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for souls. She also had a great drive to bring souls to Him. She and the Sisters worked and prayed that all those they served would be drawn into the loving arms of the Lord.

Dr. Stephanie Morris, Archivist

*“May our desire be to bring Him hearts – temples for His Divinity and many of them, for the hearts of these Indians and Colored are His by right, having been purchased by every drop of His blood.” SKD*

# DREXEL T NEUMANN ACADEMY

In 2005, St. Katharine Drexel School was scheduled to close because of financial difficulties and declining enrollment. Saint Katharine Drexel was the last Catholic school in the city of Chester, Pennsylvania. Upon hearing of this news, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Neumann University, the

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and St. Katharine Drexel Parish partnered and proposed options for providing education in a safe environment to the children of Chester. Collaboration and discussion brought forth the idea of creating Drexel Neumann Academy (DNA) an independent, Catholic school with a Franciscan spirit. In September of 2006, DNA opened their doors to the community.

DNA offers students a safe environment to learn and a challenging curriculum, which will prepare them not only for their academic future, but also for life. DNA is giving the children of Chester the opportunity to be models of peacemaking in a violent environment and the educational foundation for a bright and successful future.

The students of Drexel Neumann Academy paid tribute to Saint Katharine Drexel and Saint John Neumann by writing and performing a play for the whole student body, administration and faculty to enjoy. The opening scene took place in the living room of the Drexel family home at 1503 Walnut Street in the city of Philadelphia in the year 1878. In the scene Katharine is 18 years old and with her sisters, Elizabeth and Louise along with their stepmother are preparing baskets of food for the needy. Through various further depictions and narration our students traveled through the life of Saint Katharine and her ties to Saint John Neumann to learn of their generous and kind acts to the world. The play closed with narration giving praise to Saint Katharine Drexel and Saint John Neumann for their many accomplishments but mostly their dedication to Catholic Education.



The students at Drexel Neumann Academy are taught to recognize and embrace similar values. We salute the Sisters of Blessed Sacrament and thank you for all you do to support the continuation of Catholic Education.

*Our Mission: Empowered by the witness and lives of St. Katharine Drexel and St. John Neumann, we are committed to providing a Catholic elementary school education in a multicultural environment to the children of Chester. Franciscan spirituality and diversified instruction will promote an environment, which recognizes the giftedness of each child.*

[Contact information for Drexel Neumann Academy is: <http://www.drexelneumannacademy.net>  
1901 Potter Street, Chester, PA 19013 (610) 872-7358 Sr. Maggie Gannon, OSF President]