

Inside this Sunday



Allen Iverson cuts an album

"Man enough to pull a gun, be man enough to squeeze it." —from a song titled "40 Bars"

The 76ers superstar makes a move into hip-hop. What makes him so sure that he'll succeed where Kobe Bryant failed? Arts and Entertainment, 11.



Is the water safe in the city's schools?

Columnist Tom Ferrick Jr. says EPA tests indicate that 1 in 5 water taps in Philadelphia public schools have unsafe levels of lead.

City & Region, B1

Just sign on the virtual line

A federal law legalizing "electronic signatures" takes effect today. *Sunday Business*

All revved up for 2001

A look at the new cars and trucks. *Al Haas, G1; and Parade*

Eagles vs. Falcons

Bill Lyon on the Eagles' hard-hitting defense, Jerry Brewer on Hugh Douglas, and Ron Reid on the key matchups in tonight's game. *Sports*

For a detailed index of the *Sunday Inquirer*, see Page A2.

Weather: Comfortable with lots of sun today. High 74. Low 58. Mostly sunny and pleasant again tomorrow. High 78. Full report on B9.

To Our Readers

A special issue of today's *Inquirer Magazine* celebrating the extraordinary life of Mother Katharine Drexel includes an advertisement expressing views that differ from the teachings of the Catholic Church. The magazine already was being distributed by the time this was discovered. The *Inquirer* apologizes to anyone offended by the placement of the advertisement.

A day for St. Katharine



Outside St. Peter's in Rome, a sea of gray chairs awaits throngs. St. Katharine's portrait on the facade was to be unveiled today.

From Rome to Phila., much rejoicing

By David O'Reilly
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

ROME — Her giant banner has hung since midweek from the face of St. Peter's Basilica.

A canopied, outdoor altar stands on the steps of the spiritual center for her canonization Mass.

A sea of gray chairs fills the center of St. Peter's Square.

And thousands of her friends and admirers are here in the Eternal City, scarcely able to believe "the day" is at hand.

Forty-five years after Philadelphia's Mother Katharine Drexel died at 96, Pope John Paul II will formally declare her a saint of the Roman Catholic Church early today during a canonization Mass scheduled for 10 a.m. in Rome, 4

a.m. Philadelphia time.

She joins St. Elizabeth Seton, St. Frances X. Cabrini, and St. John Neumann, a Philadelphia bishop who was canonized in 1977, to become the fourth American saint of the Catholic Church. Philadelphia is now the only Catholic diocese in the United States that can boast two saints.

"Can you believe it?" Sister Beatrice J. Jeffries, vice president of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, cried out when greeting

some of the members of the order as they arrived at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport. It has been 37 years since the late Cardinal John Krol, former archbishop of Philadelphia, first proposed Mother Drexel as a candidate. See **SAINT** on A22

Inside

■ **Inquirer Magazine:** A special issue on Mother Katharine Drexel's life, mission, and the miracles attributed to her.

■ **Faith/Life:** Saints and religions differ. **D7**

■ **Community Voices:** They saw her, they met her, and they'll never forget. **D5**



Pilgrims and priests gather around Pope John Paul II for a portrait in Rome. Today's canonization of St. Katharine continues the Pope's practice of declaring unprecedented numbers of saints.

Mideast clashes leave 12 dead

Among the slain was a 12-year-old Palestinian boy. Israeli leaders said they have negotiated a cease-fire.

By Barbara Demick and Nomi Morris
INQUIRER STAFF WRITERS

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Proclaiming the start of a religious war, thousands of Palestinians clashed with Israeli forces in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip yesterday.

The third day of unrest left 12 Palestinians dead and threatened U.S. efforts to broker a peace deal in coming weeks.

The most horrifying scene of the day was of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy shot to death as he crouched screaming in panic behind a concrete barrier, trying to avoid a hail of gunfire in Gaza. As television cameras rolled, the boy died in his father's arms. An ambulance driver who tried to rescue the boy was killed as well.

Declaring that enough was enough, Israel's top military commander, Shaul Mofaz, yesterday announced that he and the Palestinian security chiefs had agreed to a cease-fire.

"The only solution ... is to convince the Palestinian people to leave the streets immediately, go back to their homes, and leave the dispute for negotiations and for a dialogue," said Danny Yatom, a top adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in an interview with Israeli radio.

From the town of Jenin in the northern edge of the West Bank to Jerusalem's Mount of Olives and the dusty refugee camp of Khan Yunis at the end of the Gaza Strip, similar scenes were replayed over and over yesterday.

Palestinian youths hurled rocks, some twirling slingshots for a longer aim. Others stuffed gasoline-soaked rags into bottles and threw

See **MIDEAST** on A12

■ Palestinian American teenagers hurl rocks, dodge bullets. **A11.**

In N. Ireland, the boom after the bombs

A cease-fire and peace pact have brought investments, jobs and tourists to a land once avoided as dangerous.

By Andrea Gerlin
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — A new kind of uprising is sweeping Northern Ireland.

For three decades, this beleaguered province was known as a place of violent destruction, frequently rocked by car bombs, mortar attacks, shootings, stabbings and beatings. The toll was reflected in Northern Ireland's economy: Unemployment was over 16 percent, and foreign businesses and tourists stayed away.

Today, cranes and scaffolding are sprouting in the capital as hotels, office towers, apartments and cultural facilities are built or refurbished.



Along the River Lagan in Belfast, the Waterfront Hall is notable for a north side that is virtually all glass — an unthinkable concept a decade ago.

The province's unemployment rate is below 7 percent, house prices soared 25 percent last year, and foreigners have invested \$3.6 billion since 1993. Spurred in part by a vibrant Europe-

an economy, foreign investment and tourists, Belfast is beginning to realize its long-awaited "peace dividend."

It is a renewal that, many here See **BELFAST** on A18

Bush-Gore debate may be one for the ages

By Dick Polman
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

On Tuesday night in Boston, Al Gore and George W. Bush will face each other on the same stage for the first time. The major parties' presidential candidates will duel for the allegiance of a deadlocked electorate and will do so armed only with their wits and competitive instincts.

There will be no fawning crowds, no spin doctors at the elbow, no Oprah or Regis to keep things warm and fuzzy. This is naked political warfare for the highest stakes, with each

candidate hoping to strike the perfect chord or score the killer sound bite.

It is the closeness of the race, analysts say, that makes the Bush-Gore debates the most important of any presidential campaign in the last two decades.

Many viewers will be partisans seeking reinforcement for choices already made. But the outcome of this election may hinge on the sentiments of a few million undecided voters in the big swing states of Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania and, perhaps, Florida.

Those voters are still seeking answers to fundamental questions:

Can Al Gore be trusted to talk straight?

Does George W. Bush have the brains for the job?

Charles Cook, a nonpartisan Washington analyst, framed the 90-minute debate this way: See **DEBATE** on A23

■ How Bush and Gore differ on prescription drug plans. **D1.**
■ The candidates have a chance to define the race. **D7.**

A system haunted by child murder suspect

At 11, Miriam White was charged in a woman's killing. Experts examine her troubled past for clues to her future.

First of Two Parts.

By David Zucchino
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

After a quarrel with a relative on Aug. 20 last year, Miriam White took a black-handled steak knife from a red Coca-Cola cup in the kitchen of her South Philadelphia rowhouse.

Concealing the knife beneath a coat, she ran down 22d Street in the rain. When she reached narrow, tree-shaded Beechwood Street, Miriam spotted Rosemarie Knight, a 55-year-old hairdresser who stood on the steps to her home holding the leash of her dog, Oddie.

Miriam White did not know Rosemarie Knight. She approached her without speaking. Just as Knight murmured "Let's go home" to her dog, Miriam plunged the knife into her chest.

As Knight lay bleeding to death on the afternoon of her 27th wedding anniversary, Miriam ran and ran through rainy South Philadelphia, jabbing at the air with the bloodied knife.

Eight days later, on suicide watch in an isolation cell in the medical wing of the Philadelphia Detention

Center, Miriam White turned 12 years old.

Today, more than a year after the killing, Miriam is a child among adults — the youngest female ever held in the Detention Center and the youngest in Philadelphia ever charged with murder.

Sometime soon, Miriam's future will be determined in a courtroom full of adults. After months of argument by prosecutors who want her tried as an adult and public defend-

ers who want her tried as a juvenile, a judge must decide her future.

The case does not hinge on guilt or innocence, for even the defense acknowledges her crime. The question is what society should do about Miriam: Lock her up or try to rehabilitate her? Is she an irredeemable sociopath or a child worth trying to save?

Miriam's crime has crushed her foster mother, Michelle White Stevens, who adopted Miriam just three months before the killing. It has devastated Knight's husband, Jerome Knight, who depended on his wife's income as well as her love. And it has precipitated a courtroom showdown among experts

See **MIRIAM** on A20



PIER PAOLO CITO / Associated Press

A carpenter at St. Peter's Basilica fixes the tapestry of Blessed Katharine Drexel that was to be displayed at the canonization ceremony today.

From Rome to Phila., a day of joy

SAINT from A1
date for sainthood, and 35 years since the Vatican accepted her case for review.

Around Rome yesterday, pilgrims from Philadelphia and across the United States were touring this city's great basilicas and churches, gazing at the marble and bronze and mosaic and painted images of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John and St. Francis of Assisi, and marveling that the same nun who had walked the halls of the pilgrims' schools and convents was just hours away from joining the canon of Catholic saints.

"I came for the canonization because I taught in her school, St. Leo's, in Leonville, La.," said Ruby Letterlough, now retired, of Greensboro, N.C., who was visiting the fifth-century Basilica of St. Maria Maggiore. "I met her, oh, so long ago I don't remember," Letterlough said. "It was her last tour of her schools down in Louisiana and Alabama and Mississippi and Georgia. She was very old."

St. Katharine, as she is now known, was one of three daughters of a wealthy investment banker, Francis A. Drexel. Upon his death in 1885, the three young women inherited \$14 million, but Katharine rejected the life of a socialite. In 1891 she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Bensalem, Bucks County, and devoted her life and fortune to bringing the Catholic sacraments and educational opportunities to African Americans and American Indians.

During her lifetime, she built an estimated 300 schools and missions, most of them in the South and Southwest, and earned a reputation for exceptional holiness. Since Mother Drexel's death in 1955, the Catholic Church has ascribed two miraculous cures of deafness to prayers of intercession to Katharine Drexel, paving the way for today's canonization.

"We got to know about Katharine Drexel when our grandson had a

VICKI VALERIO / Inquirer Staff Photographer
A portrait of one of the new saints hangs covered on the basilica facade behind a statue of St. Peter.

Shuttle will run to saint's shrine

SEPTA will offer shuttle bus service this week to the Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel in Bensalem from the Cornwell Heights station of the R7 Trenton rail line.

The service, running from 9:40 a.m. to 4 p.m., begins today and lasts through Friday. Cost is \$1.60 or a SEPTA token, 50 cents for those transferring from train to shuttle, and free to holders of a TransPass or TrailPass.

brain tumor," said Peggy Koller of Roxborough. She and her husband, Bill, were also visiting St. Maria Maggiore yesterday. The Kollers prayed at Mother Drexel's shrine and tomb at the Bensalem motherhouse for the life of their 12-year-old grandson, David Stokes.

"She still needed a second miracle" to be declared a saint, Peggy Koller said. "We hoped it would be David." The boy died in 1990, but they remained devoted to Mother Drexel nonetheless. "She was such a good person," Peggy Koller said. "I still pray to her."

One unlikely pilgrim attending today's canonization Mass is Lucas Wegman of Newcastle, Maine. Late this summer he happened to sail his boat into Bar Harbor, where he attended Sunday Mass at a local parish. As the priest described the life and works of Katharine Drexel, whose family used to vacation in Maine, and spoke of her canonization, Wegman was inspired. "I thought: 'What a marvelous way to see Rome!'"

An estimated 1,500 people from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia have traveled to Rome for today's ceremony, including Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua, archbishop of Philadelphia; the archbishops of New Orleans, Oklahoma City and Denver; 10 bishops; dozens of clergymen; and about 100 Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Today's ceremony is the talk of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Special prayers and observances to mark the canonization will be held at churches throughout the region.

At the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Bensalem, there will be daylong tours and other special activities.

Also marking the occasion are churches in the Diocese of Camden, including St. Bartholomew in Cam-



VICKI VALERIO / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Teresa Beach of Roxborough tours St. Peter's Basilica. Michelangelo's "Pieta" is in the background. "It's a day I'll never forget," she said.

den, which for many years had a school staffed by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

"It's a special day," Robert Gutherman, 40, of Bucks County, said Friday from Rome.

When he was 14 and a member of St. Charles Borromeo parish in Bensalem, a throbbing pain began in his right ear and would not stop. Doctors at St. Christopher's Hospital operated, only to discover that an infection had dissolved two of the three ossicle bones of his inner ear; there was nothing they could do, they said.

But when the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, for whom Robert's older brothers worked after school, heard about his ailment, they immediately included him in their prayers to the woman they remembered as "Mother Katharine." Two weeks later, after Robert kept insisting that he could now hear, doctors at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital examined him and discovered that the two bones had inexplicably grown back.

"Do I still think it's a miracle? Absolutely!" Gutherman — now married with two young daughters

— declared in an interview on the rooftop terrace of his hotel, within walking distance of the Vatican.

Gutherman's story explains the presence in Rome today of 8-year-old Amy Wall of Holland, Bucks County.

She was born in 1992 with near-total nerve deafness, but after watching a public television special in 1994 about Gutherman's healing, Amy's mother, Constance, urged her family to pray to Mother Drexel for "communication" with Amy, who was then about 17 months old. Amy's brother Jack, then 7, insist-

ed that they pray for a cure instead, and so they did. Within weeks, a teacher at Amy's school for the deaf noticed that she was responding to ordinary sounds, and a medical examination revealed that her hearing was completely restored.

The miracle, the canonization and the media attention are "hard for her to grasp," Amy's father, John Wall, said before a brief morning press conference Friday.

Nevertheless, she will be among the handful of worshippers, including Gutherman, who will receive Holy Communion directly from Pope John Paul II today.

The Vatican initially wanted Amy to sit apart from her family at the front of the estimated 10,000 worshippers seated before the special altar on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica. (Two other nuns — Sister Maria Josefa from Spain and Sister Josephine Bakhita of Sudan — as well as 120 martyrs killed in China, will also be canonized today.) But sitting by herself for more than two hours — in a ceremony that includes almost no English — seemed too much to ask of an 8-year-old, her mother, Constance Wall, told Vatican officials. So Amy will sit with her mother.

The Vatican has not yet announced whether it will name St. Katharine a patron saint of any ailment or cause, and no announcement is expected today. But Gutherman (whose younger daughter happens to be named Mary Katharine) has a suggestion: "She saw people for who they were: She saw Christ in everyone, including blacks and Native Americans," he said. "So instead of making her patron saint of hearing, why not patron saint of listening?"



VICKI VALERIO / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Msgr. Francis Beach (right) escorts his mother, Teresa (in wheelchair), as a fellow Philadelphian, the Rev. Thomas Smith (center), flanked by his mother, Ceal, and father, Tom, captures the moment at St. Peter's Basilica.

David O'Reilly's e-mail address is doreilly@phillynews.com

On the Internet



A multimedia presentation celebrating the extraordinary life of Mother Katherine Drexel can be found on the Inquirer's web site. Just point your browser to:

<http://inquirer.philly.com/specials/2000/drexel/main.htm>

A 12-year-old girl sent to sisters' care

It was the summer of 1945 when my father and I embarked on a 275-mile journey through country roads by car to Rock Castle, Va. At 12, I was bound for a Catholic boarding school for girls, St. Francis de Sales High School, which was owned and operated by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. My parents, both teachers, had prepared me for this separation and the idea of living away from them. Yet I was not prepared for my first encounter with the order founded by Mother Katharine Drexel.

I was young, African American and Protestant, growing up in a very rural and very neighborly Southern town, Biscoe, N.C., where blacks and whites left their doors unlocked. Except for the few shop owners in town, I had virtually no other interaction with whites, particularly white Catholics.

My mother's sister thought it would be a good idea for me to attend a Catholic Mass before going off to school, so we traveled 50 miles to Greensboro. In church, I was mesmerized and stunned by the costume worn by a nun. I was stunned by her wimple and her race; she was white. I asked my aunt if I would be taught by sisters that looked like that. "No," she said. But I misunderstood her. She was referring to the habit; I was referring to the race.

It was late and dark when my father drove up to the entrance of St. Francis de Sales. In the evening shadows, the stone edifice loomed like Edgar Allan Poe's House of Usher. Invisible dogs howled in the night. I was frightened. My father rang the bell. The door opened. We walked in. To my surprise, there were five women, white women, and they were dressed in a different habit than I had witnessed at my first Mass. They were Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

As my father talked to the sisters, my anxiety quickly dissipated because I instinctively felt that my father was secure in his decision to leave me with them. If my father could trust these women with my life, then I knew that I was somewhere safe and protected — protected in the segregated South. I was surprised that they had worried about me, a little black girl, whom they had been expecting much earlier in the day. Soon, I was fast asleep in my dorm room.

I converted to Catholicism at 14. I graduated from St. Francis de Sales at 16. I graduated from North Carolina College at Durham with a bachelor's in music and history at 20. I also married at 20. I lived in Europe. In Philadelphia, I worked as a teacher, school counselor, caseworker and social worker. I earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania. I raised three children. I retired as director of the Family Service Center at Willow Grove Naval Air Station. I have held my first grandchild in my arms.

And through it all — my heartaches, my joys and my fears — my teachers, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, have been some of the dearest of friends in my life.

Margo Wilson Wright
Elkins Park

Community Voices

Memories of St. Katharine Drexel

A special gift for a serviceman

I was born in Wayne, Delaware County, and attended St. Catherine of Siena parish and school. About the fourth grade I began serving Mass as an altar boy. During recess, the boys would pick up sticks and papers around the convent yard, and soon I started to mow the grass and weed around the grotto and flower beds. Not long after, I began helping Sister Stephanie in the kitchen in different ways.

In my junior year, the pastor died. After the funeral Mass, I was asked to help out in the convent, where some visiting sisters were staying. While there, this nun came in to say hello. She introduced herself as Mother Katharine Drexel, Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, caring for the colored and Indians. Before she left, she gave me a holy card with her Torresdale address on it. During the conversation, I got the feeling she had grown up with the pastor because of all the nice things she had to say about him.

Later, I would send her small donations, and always a thank-you note came back. About 1940, with my very small donation, I told her I would be going in the service. Shortly after that, her next letter came to me in Fort Bragg. Again she sent many prayers and thanks. Included this time was a crucifix. She said people would always know who I was. I turned the crucifix over and saw that she had scratched my name on it. That was our last correspondence.

Ten years ago, when we moved, all those letters and cards got lost. But to this day I have her crucifix in my wallet. I have been twice blessed by Mother Katharine Drexel.

Frank Antonini
Devon

Protections from a segregated society

As a Northerner, I escaped many of the degradations that the Jim Crow system in the South daily inflicted on African Americans. Still, as an African American traveling into Jim Crow territory, being from the North didn't protect me from the humiliations that segregation laws had outlined for America's black population, especially regarding the issue of transportation.

In the 1940s, I lived in New York City, but I had family members who lived in Virginia. I remember traveling by train to Richmond with my aunt, who could pass for white — as many African Americans who were the children of the slave generation could easily do. In the South, blacks were required to wait in the "Colored Waiting Room" and were relegated to using the inadequate and usually deplorable restroom facilities. I urged my aunt to wait in the "Whites Only" area, but she refused.

When it was time to go South to Virginia for the beginning of the school year at Rock Castle — or "The Castle," as St. Francis de Sales was affectionately called — Northern students would meet one another as we boarded in Boston, New York, Trenton and Philadelphia. It was in Washington, the nation's capital and the beginning of the Jim Crow South, where black Northerners felt the sting of American racism. Americans of color were required by law to change their seats and ride in train cars



At Xavier University in New Orleans, Mother Katharine Drexel plays with some of the children visiting the campus during the 1920s.

designated for colored riders. The experience was degrading.

Traveling North was a different experience. I remember boarding a train car specifically for the girls of St. Francis and the boys who were attending St. Emma's. It was great fun riding back with friends and bidding them happy farewells until next September.

As I child, I did not realize the significance of riding in our own private train car; as an adult, it all came into focus.

What I realized was that the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were protecting us, their children, from the vile practice of separatism that forced us to ride in inferior train cars. It was later that I was aware that Sister Madeline Sophie, who was principal of Rock Castle during my academic tenure, would meet with Southern train officials to arrange for our private car. The sisters also hired buses to take us from Richmond's train station to Rock Castle.

We were required to travel back and forth to school in our uniforms. Our uniform — a maroon jumper, beige blouse and maroon beanie — also protected us. It was a visual sign that we were associated with Katharine Drexel's order. As long as I was wearing my uniform, I remember, in fact, having the "privilege" of using the "Whites Only" waiting room in Richmond.

I was proud to wear that uniform. I am proud to be an African American. And I thank God that I was educated by the outstanding, excellent women of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Christians should only be so Christian.

Joyce Harley
Philadelphia

A family is inspired by devotion and faith

My late mother, Jane Powderly Herman, was one of the 12 children of Francis and Harriet Kearney Powderly. Her oldest sister, Mary, was a member of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She was known as Sister Mary Antoine.

Sister Antoine taught at schools in Philadelphia, such as St. Peter Clavier's, and schools in Cleveland, Lake Charles, La., and Xavier University in New Orleans.

Our family often visited the motherhouse in Bensalem when Sister Antoine was there. We met Mother Katharine and the sisters, who were always very caring, hospitable and interesting, talking to us about our school and telling us about their work with poor black and Native American students. We saw Mother Katharine last when she was in bed. Sister Antoine took us to see her and say a prayer for her.

We looked forward to visiting our aunt at parishes like St. Peter Clavier's, where we would play in her classroom and then go to the kitchen to visit with the sisters and have hot cocoa and cookies.

Sister Antoine retired at the motherhouse and died of Lou Gehrig's disease. We saw the loving, wonderful medical care given to her by the sisters before she went home to God.

Mother Katharine Drexel's canonization has been a long time coming for a saint of such unselfish devotion and faith. She was far ahead of her time. She used her wealth and talent to inspire other women to join with her in making the lives of so many people successful by setting high standards of scholastic achievement.

Mary F. Weiland
Hatfield

From her writings a special bond grew

Mother Katharine Drexel wrote thousands of letters and received tens of thousands of replies, requests and so forth. It was through that mountain of correspondence that she became, for me, this incredible woman whose life is now officially proclaimed for emulation.

It was around 1959-1960. I was part of a crew at the Archdiocesan Seminary in Philadelphia that had been trained in the techniques of microfilming. A couple of us were asked if we would spend a summer or two on a special project: We were to record on microfilm all of Mother Katharine's extant correspondence. The papers were being stored in an archives at the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Bensalem. We would need to live during the week in an old farmhouse on the grounds.

We set up shop in a room under the chapel, just off from the area where Mother Katharine's sarcophagus was located. The job started off routinely enough but as we got into these letters, letters in Mother Katharine's own hand, letters over signatures we knew from the pages of American civil and ecclesiastical history, we began to spend more time reading than working, fascinated by this wealth of information passing through our hands. Gradually, Mother Katharine took on a special significance for us.

In those days, the sisters maintained a good-sized farm at the rear of the property. (Interstate 95 has since claimed that portion of the land.) At the end of the day and after supper, my co-worker and I would walk down to the farm, through the corn rows, and discuss all of the fascinating tidbits we had gleaned from that day's readings.

Because we came to read practically every document before filming it, the project extended much beyond what had originally been anticipated. We had some sense that there was a special significance to what we were doing but only afterwards were we told what it was: Our recording of Mother Katharine's correspondence would be used in preparing a definitive biography on her — an essential first step in the canonization process.

Over the years, Mother Katharine Drexel has stayed with me, been a part of me. I have at times prayed for her intercession for some special reason, not looking for her to be a miracle worker, just someone who had become a friend in a rather unusual way and who might understand and be supportive of me. She continues to be that "remarkable woman" I first stumbled upon some 40 years ago.

Joseph J. McOscar
Greenwich, N.J.

A friendly greeting for local swimmers

I was a young boy at St. Francis Vocational School for Boys, which is about a mile from Mother Katharine Drexel's place, and during my four years there, 1942 to 1946, I got to see Mother Katharine at her house.

Several of us boys would walk to her place to go swimming on Saturdays, and Mother Katharine would meet us out back on the porch with her smile and a wave. Some boys said she said something, but if she did, I did not hear her. Then when we finished swimming, we would walk back home. She would smile and wave good-bye.

James McDonnell
West Chester

Sisters responded to founder's care

Mother Katharine Drexel was already quite elderly when, in the 1940s, our father, Dr. John F. McFadden of Andalusia accepted responsibility for her medical care. He made frequent house calls to the convent to see her and always credited the nuns with keeping her alive for so long.

We were young children at this time but we all remember our father telling us, after Mother Katharine's death, that he had "killed a saint." This wry comment expressed his dismay at the death of his patient, never what a physician wants to have happen. But even more, it expressed what he and all of us who had any contact with Mother believed even then: She was a saint.

If Dr. McFadden was good to Mother Katharine and the nuns, they were also very good to his family. They sent fully prepared turkeys at Thanksgiving; they gave the doll dishes that Mother Katharine had played with as a child to the doctor's little daughter. And one day, Dr. McFadden took this child with him to visit Mother Katharine. Afterward, the wonderful nun who cared for Mother gave the little girl a beautiful white statue of the Blessed Mother tied with a lovely blue ribbon, from Mother Katharine.

And why did Mother Katharine live so long? When the McFadden children asked this question, their mother told them that every day Mother Katharine lived, money from her family's trust went to help the disadvantaged children she had founded her order to help. So, in simple child's logic, this was obviously why she kept living. It was another clear proof of her sanctity.

John F. McFadden Jr.
Charles A. McFadden
Sally Ann McFadden Burd
Willingsboro

Niece inherits her aunt's vocation

Early in the 1920s my aunt, Anna Carrigan, applied to enter the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Unfortunately, she died before she could fulfill her desire. Mother Katharine wrote a beautiful and consoling letter to my mother, Gertrude, Anna's sister. This letter was treasured in my family as long as I can remember, even to my mother's death. In 1943, I decided to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph.

My mother, in the pride of Irish Catholic mothers, took me to Bensalem to meet Mother. She received us very graciously. She gave me her blessing and told my mother, "She has Anna's vocation." My mother was thrilled and always remembered the visit. I wish she were alive to see this great day and know she had known a saint.

Marjorie Sweeney
Pottsville

Feeling of humility to have known a saint

I was born and raised in Cornwells Heights, directly across from the motherhouse. There were many occasions to observe Mother Katharine and her order.

The nuns could come over to our flower garden to collect bouquets whenever they desired. My wife and I had our First Communion breakfast in their dining hall. Msgr. John L. Nugent was our pastor and their chaplain in later years.

I worked on the grounds for about two years. Mother Katharine used to come to my future father-in-law's store (Wiley's Meats in Andalusia), sit on a stool and await her turn to order. There was nothing about her manner to suggest future sainthood. Mother Katharine was just a sweet person.

I get a deep feeling of humility to realize that someone who was so close, someone seen on a regular basis, someone to whom I talked to, is now a saint in heaven. Who knows? A coworker, a neighbor or someone we socialize with could be a future saint.

Jim McCloskey
Indianapolis, Ind.

A gift from God who helped a family

During the early 1900s, when Katharine Drexel established the Holy Providence Boarding School in Bensalem, my aunt and two uncles were among the many children she embraced, loved, nourished and educated.

My aunt often shared with me her vivid memories of walking hand-in-hand with Mother Drexel on the beautiful grounds of the motherhouse. She also told me of Mother Katharine's incredible devotion, her generosity and genuine compassion for the poor and underprivileged.

Upon completing grade school, my aunt and two uncles were taken to Rock Castle, Va. There, Mother Drexel had established St. Emma's School for young black men and St. Francis de Sales school for black girls. Years later, Mother Drexel sent my two uncles to Xavier University in New Orleans — the first U.S. Catholic institution of higher learning for blacks, which Mother Katharine also founded.

Even after Mother Katharine's death in 1955, my aunt remained devoted to this extraordinary woman, whom we wholeheartedly believe was sent to our family as a gift from God. When Mother Katharine was beatified in 1988, my aunt flew to Rome for the special ceremony. She was even interviewed on television at that time as one of the children raised and educated by Mother Katharine and her sisters.

On this day, the canonization of Katharine Drexel as a saint, I honor her, and also would like to pay tribute to my Aunt Myrtle Giles, who, because of her love and devotion, served as an honor guard at the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament until her death in 1992. Since that time, I have been continuing my aunt's work by serving as an honor guard at the shrine.

Marilyn Burks
Philadelphia

All but one sibling held by future saint

My parents, Grace and William McCaffrey, who lived in the Mayfair section of Philadelphia, had five children. First there were four boys (Bill, Joe, myself and Tom). Then there was finally a girl, Grace.

My father's sister was a Blessed Sacrament Sister and was stationed at the motherhouse with Mother Katharine Drexel in Cornwells Heights. Her name was Sister Rose of Lima.

When each of the boys was born, my parents took us to the motherhouse and Sister Rose took each infant boy to Mother Katharine's room to be held by her.

Mother Katharine died March 3, 1955, the day after my sister Grace was born. Consequently, Grace never got to be held by Mother Katharine.

Needless to say, over the years, Grace has taken a lot of good-natured abuse from her four brothers, and one of the things we have teased her about is that she was the only sibling not held by Mother Katharine. Our family has felt a special connection to Mother Katharine, and this story has provided us with smiles many times.

Paul McCaffrey
Pueblo, Colo.

[TEXT] [KERN-5] Mother Katharine Drexel with an unidentified child on the grounds of Xavier University. Margo Wilson Wright says of Mother Katharine's order, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament: "As my father talked to the sisters, my anxiety quickly dissipated because I instinctively felt that my father was secure in his decision to leave me with them. If my father could trust these women with my life, then I knew that I was somewhere safe and protected — protected in the segregated South."



The Philadelphia Inquirer

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2000

The lives of saints

*Even if you don't believe in miracles,
how can you not be in awe of the work?*

Mother Katharine Drexel becomes a saint today. No, that's not quite right. What happens today is the Catholic Church's formal canonization of this extraordinary Philadelphian.

But becoming a saint? That was the prayerful, powerful work of a lifetime.

Today's Vatican ceremony is a glorious moment for her native city, for its Catholic archdiocese and for the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the Bucks County-based order of nuns she founded.

What meaning, though, can this canonization of a Catholic saint have for the rest of the world, so much of it skeptical and secular? Does the modern world — which exalts reason, splits the atom, decodes the genome, pierces the heavens with its machines and shrinks the world a little more each day with its silicon magic — really have a need anymore of these people called saints?

Yes. Lord knows, yes.

For it's also a world that exalts the winner of *Survivor*, splits asunder in warfare, decodes life as a hunt for riches, pierces the heavens with noisy quarrels, and shrinks its conscience daily inside a cocoon of diversions.

For Catholics, of course, sainthood is at base a matter of religious faith and hinges in part on miracles — notions to make the agnostic queasy. But step back for a moment from the Catholic Church's apparatus of sainthood, the talk of intercession, relics and inexplicable healings. That tradition has rich beauty and wisdom — but, for the skeptic's sake, leave it aside for now.

In a world unsure about God, what is a saint? What is a miracle? First, saints are not perfect, without flaw or sin. No one knows that more vividly than they, or struggles harder with the knowledge.

Most of us live, however imperfectly, by some home truth, some core principle — be it family, nation, wealth or self.

A saint is someone who glimpses a transcendent truth more clearly, reaches toward it more eagerly, obeys its im-

peratives more fully. In that obedience, saints do things and risk things that seem folly to the world. Against advice, they hold tight to ideals and forsake self-interest. In their often-painful embrace of transcendent truth, they move others in ways that confound prediction. They achieve things thought impossible. And what is a miracle but the achievement of something thought impossible?

The lives of saints offer even the skeptic a gift. Ponder them and you can't help but ask yourself the most vital question: "Am I doing enough?"

Kitty Drexel of Walnut Street was one of the wealthiest young women in 19th-century America. Pretty and smart as well as rich, she had more possibilities open to her than most woman of her time.

But her transcendent truth was this: "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, so you do unto me." Gripped by that truth, she gladly spent her fortune to bring education to the forgotten children of her society (and ours), the black and Native American. Northern, Catholic and a woman — three strikes against her — she somehow planted seeds of freedom and learning across the South. Whatever healing has been done since in her name, that, friends, was Katharine Drexel's first miracle.

Is the age of saints and miracles really over? What would you call gaining civil rights for the grandchildren of slaves? Or freeing India peacefully from foreign rule? Or bringing a healing reverence for life to wounded Africa? Yes, some saints we know and can name: Drexel, King, Gandhi, Schweitzer.

Others live and work among us, whether we know it. You see, saints don't seek applause or ask that buildings be named after them. Quietly, they nurse in the ICU, teach those called unteachable, feed the homeless.

St. Katharine Drexel's great day is not only for Catholics or Philadelphians. It's for all who try to live their lives as though doing good really matters.

Inquirer Magazine

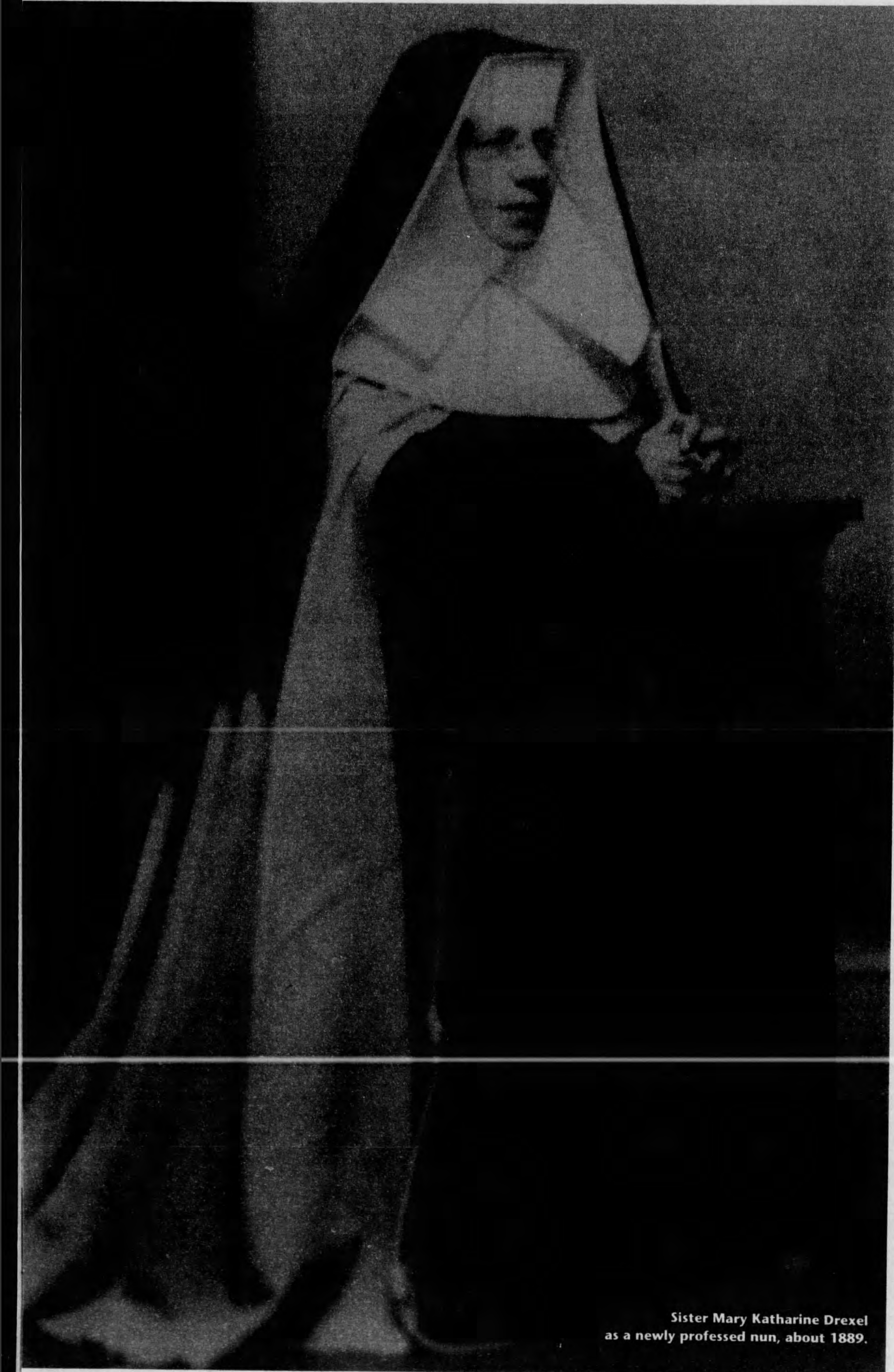
OCTOBER 1, 2000

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER



MOTHER KATHARINE DREXEL: AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE





Sister Mary Katharine Drexel as a newly professed nun, about 1889.

The saving mission of Katharine Drexel by David O'Reilly

One morning in January 1900, Mother Katharine Drexel was riding to Lynchburg, Va., when her train stopped in a little town. *Columbia* read the station sign, and through the trees she spied a gilt cross atop a small building.

"Do you think that is a Catholic church?" she asked her traveling companion. Not likely, replied Sister Mercedes, who said there were no Catholic churches between Richmond and Lynchburg.

But Mother Katharine was intrigued. Days later she dispatched some sisters of her religious order, who discovered "the only colored Catholic in Columbia" tending to the abandoned Catholic church, bringing fresh flowers to it each week. The man, Zach Kimbro, told the astonished nuns he had been praying for years that Mass would someday be said there again.

When Mother Katharine got the news, she arranged for an order of priests to say Mass once a month in Columbia, and then won permission from the Virginia bishop for her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People to start a Sunday school.

By year's end 30 adults and a number of children there had been baptized Catholic. Two years later the order opened Columbia's first school for African Americans, thanks to a check from Mother Katharine, a Philadelphia socialite-turned-philanthropist who had inherited a fortune 15 years before.

True, the Columbia story lacks the mystery of miracles attributed to Mother Katharine, or the high drama of the 1922 thunderbolt that killed a Ku Klux Klansman who threatened to

dynamite her new school for blacks. But it is typical of the woman who, long before her death in 1955, was hailed as a "living saint" for her devotion and generosity toward destitute blacks and Native Americans.

More than 4,000 people have claimed cures and divine favors as a result of praying to her, according to an expert on the making of modern saints, and the Roman Catholic Church has deemed two of them "miraculous" cures of deafness. It is not miracles, however, but Katharine's holiness and "heroic virtue" that the Catholic Church is holding up for emulation when Pope John Paul II makes her a saint today — only the fourth American to be canonized — at a spectacular ceremony in Rome.

Yet for all Saint Katharine's saintly reputation, the precise nature of her goodness — her "heroic virtue" — still seems elusive. Was she a woman who radically transcended the racial conventions of her times with a new vision?

Or was she a rich woman of 19th-century sensibilities who dispensed charity to the "unfortunates" of society but never saw them as her equals?

More to the point: Should we try to comprehend her in modern, secular terms as a civil rights activist or champion of social justice? Or is Katharine Drexel best understood in religious terms as a prophet? A mystic? A martyr?

A saint?

Katharine Drexel is a complex figure: an intelligent, willful, commanding aristocrat who took little pleasure in the joys of this life. Earthly existence was but a

prelude to the eternal life, she believed, and her mission was to bring to poor, uneducated blacks and Native Americans the keys to heaven as she understood them: the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Is not the conversion and civilization of seven million Colored and a couple of hundred thousand Indians a great and pressing need?" she wrote in 1889, when she was considering whether to start a religious order.

Katharine rejected marriage and her place in high society to become a nun, and in 1891 founded her order of religious missionaries, whose motherhouse is in Bensalem. She lived the rest of her life in stark conditions, mending her own clothes and scrubbing convent floors, while using her great fortune to establish 245 Catholic missions, 12 schools for Native Americans and 50 schools for African Americans, including Xavier University in New Orleans.

Kenneth Woodward, religion editor at *Newsweek* and author of *Saint-making*, about whom and how the Catholic Church makes saints, takes a jaundiced view of Mother Katharine's missionary work, however. "Limited, institutional, rather cautious and religiously maternalistic" and a "form of religious colonization," he wrote in his 1990 book. "There is no evidence she did or said anything of a heroic or prophetic nature in opposition to segregation or in favor of civil rights."

But the Rev. Joseph Martino, who as a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia prepared the *positio*, or case for her beatification in 1988, views the new saint through a very different lens. "Mother Katharine was concerned with something much

more significant" than civil rights and racial segregation, he wrote: "The salvation of souls."

"She had a lofty vision of humanity that made her hope for more than just improvements in the legal status of blacks and Indians," he continued. "True human dignity . . . signified above all else coming into union with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist."

Although she dispensed an estimated \$20 million to charity during her 96 years, any attempt to understand Katharine Drexel's mission best begins not with her legendary wealth but with her precocious religiosity. At age 9 she pleaded to receive her First Communion rather than wait until the then-standard age of 12, and as a teenager she displayed a rare yearning for transcendence. "My meditation for today is on death," reads a journal entry she made at 14, by which time she was praying 45 minutes a day in addition to attending Mass daily. "Every single thing we do is making death easier or harder."

Her youthful letters, now in the motherhouse's archives, are sometimes teasing and playful. But others reveal a morbidity disturbing to modern sensibilities. While touring Italy, at age 15, for example, she paid a visit to the "blackened corpse" of a St. Catherine, thinking it was of her namesake, Catherine of Siena. She was incensed at her "stupid" guide when she discovered she was gazing instead at Catherine of Bologna.

Her adolescent journals whisper of no crushes, no yearnings for romance. "Men I abhor. I have recorded a vow before the shrine of an unmarried

HER LIFE



From top: Katharine Drexel at 7 in 1865. That same year, Katharine (left) poses with her half-sister, Louise, 2, and sister, Elizabeth, 10. Katharine Drexel as a young woman.

saint never to be aught but the purest celibate," she wrote at 14 in a fanciful essay in which she imagines a day in the life of a corsage pin. An entry at 19 speaks of the need to "mortify my flesh" for Lent — a portent of her

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DAVID O'REILLY is *The Inquirer's* religion writer.

DREXEL

continued from previous page

practice of self-flagellation in later life — and at 21 she dismissed her lavish debutante ball as “a little party.” In 1882 she ate no cake at all.

A modern psychologist might diagnose some form of depression. A bishop might see only a foreshadowing of sainthood. But a dispassionate biographer may wonder if the deaths of her beloved father and stepmother when Katharine was in her 20s might have catalyzed this youthful disdain for all things earthly and propelled her on the path to sainthood.

Her father, Francis A. Drexel, was a partner of financier J.P. Morgan and made a fortune as a Philadelphia banker. Although Hannah Langstroth Drexel died five months after giving birth to Katharine in 1858, Francis' second wife, Emma Bouvier Drexel, adored her stepdaughters and the daughter, Louise, she had with Francis. A devout Catholic with little interest in playing the socialite, Emma became known as “Lady Bountiful of Philadelphia” for her care of the poor, which included a dispensary at the family's townhouse on Rittenhouse Square at which the three girls — Elizabeth, Katharine and Louise — helped.

In 1883, when Katharine was 24, Emma died of cancer after an agonizing decline, during which Katharine nursed her. Francis Drexel took his daughters to Europe to comfort them, but Katharine's grief was profound.

“Like the little girl who wept when she found her doll was stuffed with sawdust,” she wrote in 1884, she had made a “horrible discovery” that “all, all, all (there is no exception) will pass away. . . .”

“When dear Mamma went to our true home, I felt life to be too serious a passage into eternity to wish to spend my odd minutes reading of the joys of this world,” she wrote her spiritual adviser. “I am not happy in the world. There is a void in my heart which only God can fill.”

Two years after Emma's death, her father caught a cold that turned into



Nuns teach sewing in 1910 at a mission school in Santa Fe, N.M., established by Katharine Drexel. Right: Mother Drexel's funeral at the motherhouse in 1955.



pleurisy. He died on Feb. 12, 1885.

Much has been made of the fact that Francis Drexel left 27-year-old Katharine and her two sisters \$14 million in trusts generating for each \$400,000 in income annually (the equivalent of more than \$7 million a year now) and that Katharine gave away most of her legacy.

But Katharine's path was not forged so much by money as by loss. Her father's death so soon after her stepmother's “shattered” Katharine, according to a 1966 biography. Weak, tired and jaundiced, she was taken by her sisters to the health spas of Europe. Her health improved, but her outlook was still bleak. A breathtaking Alpine view merely reminded her that “man [is] an atom in the great creation. . . . I felt as if standing at the Day of Judgment. How have you passed your life?”

Her answer to that essential question would begin, quite literally, with a knock on the door.

Sometime in the year of her father's death, she and her sisters were sitting at home when a servant announced “two gentlemen, priests, to see the Misses Drexel.”

The Misses Drexel were already earning a reputation for extraordinary

philanthropy to Catholic charities, and it was Katharine who descended the stairs to meet with Bishop Martin Marty, vicar for Northern Minnesota, and the Rev. Joseph Stephan, director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

The two were seeking financial support to restore Indian reservation missions that the federal government had unilaterally given to Protestant missionaries.

And so, at a time of despair, Katharine's mission to the outcast awoke. She and her sisters began to contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars to Catholic Indian missions, and when Pope Leo XIII asked her in 1887, “Why not, my child, yourself be-

come a missionary?” she could not rid herself of the idea.

Katharine Drexel's decision to “enter religion” seems to have transformed her paralyzing alienation into a worthy purpose that she pursued with vitality. In February 1891, after 16 months as a novice with the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, she founded her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, vowing “to be the mother and servant of the Indian and Negro races . . . and not to undertake any work which would lead to [their] neglect or abandonment.”

Her vows of poverty and chastity accorded perfectly with the earthly re-



A member of Mother Katharine's order supervises students at St. Bartholomew's School, Camden, about 1945. The school closed a few years ago.

nunciation she had begun so long before, and her vast fortune would allow her to point African Americans and Indians to heaven via the sacraments of her Catholic faith.

And while she wrote and spoke in such antiquated terms as “the Indian and Colored Harvest” and of “civilizing these poor pagans,” there are glimpses of a modern sensibility lurking beneath that black wool serge veil. In response to the many appeals that came to her for donations to build or rebuild churches in the segregated South, for example, she stipulated along with her checks that there be no roped-off pew for African Americans at the back of the church but a whole section, parallel to the white section and running front to back.

In 1902 on a tour of her order's missions in the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, she was aghast to discover her schools populated by white children masquerading as part-Indian to claim land.

She wrote to her community in

Bensalem to convey her dismay, and also spoke of her desire to “bring the full-bloods — what is left of them — somehow to the church, to educate them so they may not be cheated out of their land . . . so that they may be fit to intermarry with good Catholic whites, and not the worst white element.

“Thus they may be saved unto generation and generation, soul and body, mingled as Normans and Saxons [of medieval England] were, so that future generations may not be able to discern differences of nationality, but that mingled into one Nation, all may serve God on earth and praise him eternally in heaven.”

Two years later she was shocked when Nashville, Tenn., replaced high school education for African Americans with an industrial school.

“If among our Colored People we find individuals gifted with capabilities,” she wrote, it is only proper to “concede to the Negro this privilege of higher education.” Working in secret through agents, she paid \$25,000

for a stately house in a white neighborhood as the site for a new high school for African Americans and refused to back down in the face of howling outrage from the city's white leadership.

Mother Katharine never overtly flouted the South's Jim Crow laws. Instead, “she taught her charges to obey all authority as coming from God, including civil laws,” one of her sisters told the archdiocesan board investigating her for beatification in the 1980s.

Does the modern label *integrationist* elude Mother Katharine, who insisted on parallel seating for African Americans in the Southern churches she established — and who did not initially allow black women into her congregation for fear of eroding membership in the two “colored” orders? Perhaps. Yet consider the irony: Her white nuns, many of them from Ireland, in Alabama and Mississippi were dismissed as “the nigger sisters.”

Perhaps her work for poor minorities was best understood and appreciated by the people of that time.

“It took the Catholic Church 100 years here in America to show forth such a person as yourself,” the Rev. John A. Tolton of Chicago wrote her in 1891. “As I stand alone as the first Negro priest of America, so you, Katharine Drexel, stand alone as the first one to make such a sacrifice for the cause of a downtrodden race.”

In a recent interview, author Woodward said it was difficult for secular society — especially the generations who grew up during and after the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s — to comprehend Mother Katharine's public mission “because they can't grasp the nature of holiness.”

“Martin Luther King Jr. was, by Christian standards, a very flawed person, but he was also a prophet,” Woodward says. “Katharine Drexel was kind of the reverse. She had all the classic virtues, but if you go looking for a prophetess, you won't find one. You'll find a saint.” □

David O'Reilly's e-mail address is doreilly@phillynews.com

1858	Katharine Drexel is born into a wealthy, devout Philadelphia banking family.
1887	During a private audience in Rome with Pope Leo XIII, she expresses her anguish over the plight of Native Americans. The pontiff encourages her to become a missionary.
1889	Receives her religious habit and the name Sister Mary Katharine.
1891	Founds the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Bensalem and devotes the income from her trust fund to the cause of uplifting “Indians and Colored People.”
1902	Establishes St. Michael's Indian Mission School on a Navajo reservation in Arizona.
1917	Opens a teacher-training school for African Americans that later becomes Xavier University.
1922	One of the order's schools for African Americans in Texas is threatened by the Ku Klux Klan. Soon after, the local Klan headquarters is struck by lightning, fatally injuring the Klan leader.
1955	Mother Drexel dies at 96.
1964	Philadelphia Archbishop John Krol launches the campaign to have her declared a saint.
1974	Robert Gutherman, 14, of Bensalem, regains his hearing after prayers to Mother Drexel — the first of two miracles that the church attributes to her intercession.
1988	Pope John Paul II beatifies Mother Drexel, the church's highest honor short of sainthood.
1994	The second miracle: 2-year-old Amy Wall of Bucks County regains her hearing after family prayers to Mother Drexel.
2000	Oct. 1 — The Pope canonizes Mother Drexel as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church.

"A founder of an order should be animated with every virtue. . . .The responsibility of such a call almost crushes me, because I am so infinitely poor in the virtues necessary."

— MOTHER DREXEL, FEB. 24, 1889

Photography by Vicki Valerio



Sister Geraldine Mikulec teaches high school history at St. Michael's Indian Mission School in the community of St. Michael's, Ariz.

Spreading the Word by Matthew P. Blanchard

Three months ago, Sister Patricia Marshall followed her devotion to a skyscraper in midtown Manhattan. The occasion was lunch — with General Electric chairman Jack Welch.

Marshall, a petite woman of 79, heads the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament's campaign to get corporations to hire more minorities and protect the environment. Welch was a "delightful man," Sister Patricia recalls, but she had issues with GE's business practices and she was not shy about telling him so. Among her complaints: NBC Sports, a GE subsidiary, continues to

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MATTHEW P. BLANCHARD is a member of The Inquirer's suburban staff. VICKI VALERIO is an Inquirer staff photographer.



Sister Genevieve (in white) sings during vespers at the Desert House of Prayer, a hogan-style chapel on a Navajo reservation in Window Rock, Ariz. Sister Gloria Davis (left), one of six Native American in the order, prays with 92-year-old Rose Etsitty, a shut-in, at her home in Window Rock.

"There is a void in my heart which only God can fill. And can God obtain full possession of my heart whilst I live in the world? I wish that these words of the Good Master applied to my soul: 'Sell all thou hast and come, follow Me.' "

— MOTHER DREXEL, JUNE 1884

ORDER

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allow negative stereotypes of Native Americans — such as the Cleveland Indians' Chief Wahoo — to appear on national TV.

"We didn't see eye to eye on PCB pollution in the Hudson River either," she says gravely.

Marshall's crusade is one example of how the sisters, despite diminished numbers and financial resources, have carried on the work of Mother Katharine Drexel, the Philadelphia socialite who founded the order in 1891 to serve blacks and Native Americans.

When Mother Drexel died in 1955, the order had 500 nuns working at 37 missions and scores of elementary and high schools across the country. Today, the order can claim 235 mostly gray-haired nuns. Some of the schools are defunct; most of those remaining are no longer run by the order. Only one woman has joined the Sisters in the last three years, and none is preparing to take vows. Religious orders across the United States face similar troubles.

Still, the nuns have kept the founder's vision alive. They continue to educate Navajo and Pueblo children in the Southwest. They work in drug treatment centers, orphanages and other charitable agencies across the United States and in Haiti. Their approach is to start charitable undertakings and to inspire others to take them over. The order's vice president, Sister Beatrice

Jeffries, summed up the strategy: "We are just planting seeds and moving on."

In Southwest Philadelphia, Sister Elena Henderson works in a residential drug treatment center, trying to pull young mothers out of heroin, crack and alcohol addictions.

Henderson, 48, honed her drug treatment skills at the National Institutes of Health.

She's a registered nurse with a master's degree in social work. In West Virginia, she helped establish a treatment center for homeless men — at a site so remote it needed its own sewage plant.

"Mother Drexel was a woman ahead of her time," Henderson says. "It's our job to identify the needs out there today and confront them."

But that is becoming increasingly difficult as the sisters advance in years. The median age of the nuns has climbed to 73. Sister Therese Misencik explains the predicament: "I'm trying to get back out on the missions, but I keep having these . . . physical ailments."

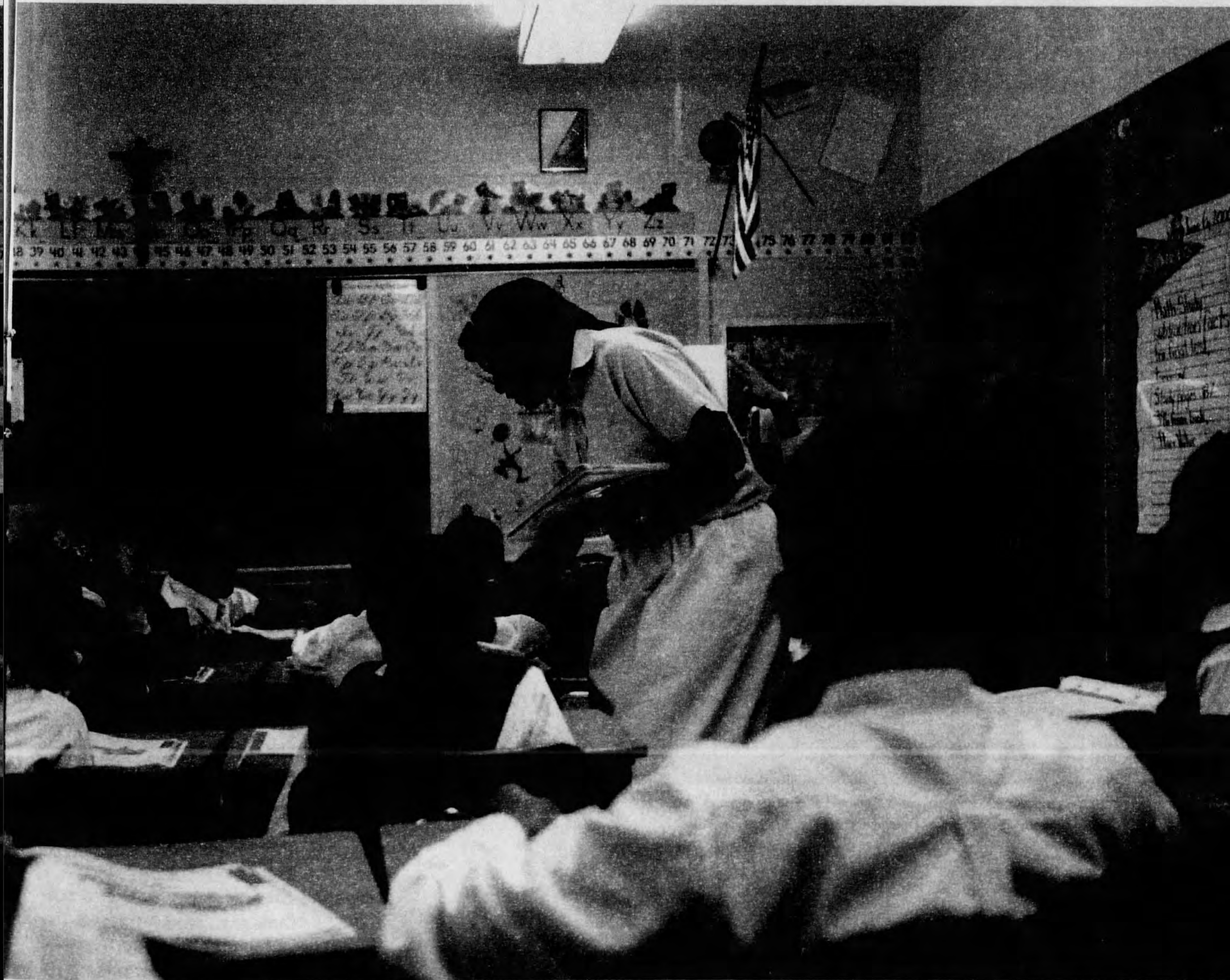
Born in Cleveland in 1929 to a Slovak family, Sister Therese is a 53-year veteran of the order's schools in Louisiana, Harlem and the New Mexican desert. Now 71, she walks with a

cane and has a "suffering" gall bladder. The silver ring she received when she made her final vows in 1955 had to be widened recently to accommodate her swollen, arthritic knuckles.

"Like everybody else, I'm getting older," she says.

The sisters have adapted Mother Drexel's vision to changing times. The order owns small amounts of stock in a number of companies — just enough to gain access to shareholders' meetings and, in Sister Marshall's words, "raise some saying." Her campaign to provoke greater moral awareness in boardrooms has led her to lobby Home Depot, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Texaco and CitiGroup, among others, to put more women and minorities in executive positions and do more to safeguard the environment.

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Sister Donna Banfield walks among secondgraders at St. Charles Borromeo School, New York City. Students (below left) work on the school's computers. A boy stretches at lunchtime.



The Reach of Mercy

Mother Katharine Drexel established more than 60 schools and charitable institutions across the country for African Americans and Native Americans. Those still operating include:



- 1 St. Michael's Indian Mission School, on a Navajo reservation in St. Michael's Ariz. Founded in 1902, it includes the first high school for Navajos.
- 2 Xavier University in New Orleans, the nation's first Catholic university for African Americans.
- 3 A preschool on Chicago's South side.
- 4 An orphanage in Haiti.



Artia Hill, a member of a liturgical dance group, practices with other students at St. Ignatius of Loyola School in West Philadelphia. Mother Drexel founded the school.

ORDER

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The ruler-wielding classroom nun of the past is no longer a workable model, Sister Marshall says. "The old way of doing things is dying or dead. The new way of doing things we are just now feeling our way into, with faith and with hope."

At St. Catherine's Indian School on the Navajo reservation near Santa Fe, N.M., the old way died two years ago, when — short of nuns and money — the order withdrew from the school. (The order continues to run other schools and missions.)

Mother Drexel founded St. Catherine's, a K-12 boarding school in 1887, before she became a nun. In 1894, it became the order's first Indian mission.

"We can't produce nuns out of thin air," says Sister Christine Smith of the order's public relations department.

The sisters also do not have the access to money they enjoyed during the founder's lifetime. When Mother Drexel died, the trust fund that had sustained



A dancer's hat is adjusted by Sister Lynn Marie Ralph, principal and a member of the order started by Katharine Drexel.

the order was, by terms of her father's will, distributed to a list of charities that did not include the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. (Francis A. Drexel, a banker

and financier, died six years before his daughter founded the order.)

The sisters now survive on investment income, donations and the

stipends they earn as teachers in religious schools.

The motherhouse, a fortress-like convent built of heavy stone blocks and red Spanish tile in 1891, sits on a hilltop beside Interstate 95 in Bensalem and is regularly visited by busloads of pilgrims. The sisters live in modest bedrooms, share all meals, and spend hours a day in prayer.

Sister Jeffries, who entered the order when she was 17, says few young women are willing to make such a commitment today. The order may soon have to enact radical changes, she says, such as allowing women to take temporary vows, binding for one to five years.

"There may come a day when there are no Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament left in this world," she laments. "Until that day, the work will continue." □

Matthew P. Blanchard's e-mail address is mblanchard@phillynews.com

For more information on Mother Katharine Drexel, go to <http://inquirer.philly.com/specials/2000/drexel/main.htm>

Healing powers by Murray Dubin

Two youngsters, both from the same community. One deaf, the other in pain and unable to hear in one ear. When doctors said nothing could be done, the families prayed. And both children were healed.

Today, those medically unexplained healings — 20 years apart — are forever connected.

Today, Mother Katharine Drexel, a Roman Catholic nun who was born in Philadelphia in 1858, will be named a saint because of those two events. The church considers them to be miracles.

Miracle: "An extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs."

In the cold of February 1974, Robert J. Gutherman, 14, was frightened. The pain in his right ear persisted. Antibiotics had not helped his inner ear infection.

He and his nine brothers had been altar boys or worked after school in Bensalem, Bucks County, at the chapel of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the order that Mother Katharine founded in 1891. When one of the nuns called, his mother mentioned Robert's debilitating pain.

"She sent a prayer card to our house," recalls Gutherman, who is now 40, lives in Croydon and is the father of two. "She said she hoped that the prayers would make the pain go away or at least that I could tolerate it."

Every night after dinner the Guthermans said the Rosary. Following the nun's suggestion, they added a prayer to Mother Katharine Drexel.

In March Gutherman had exploratory surgery at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia.

"The doctor told my mother that the infection had eaten away two of the three bones in my right ear and that I would be deaf in that ear for the rest of my life."

That night, Gutherman says, he was awakened in the hospital by someone calling "Bobby."

"Who's calling me?" he asked.

His mother, sitting beside his bed, said it must have been a voice from the hallway. Go back to sleep, she said.

The next morning, when Mrs. Gutherman told the doctor that her son had heard a voice, "he said it must have been through my left ear."

But mother and son were not convinced. Robert was given a hearing test and could hear in his right ear.

He went back to the doctor for an examination. This is the conversation that Gutherman remembers:

Doctor: "I don't believe what I'm seeing. His body is reconstructing anatomy."

Mrs. Gutherman: "What does that mean?"

"His body is healing itself."

Then she told him about the prayers to Mother Drexel. Gutherman remembers the doctor's response:

"He said he had no explanation."

Diagnosed with moderate to severe deafness, Amy Wall, would smile and dance when she put her hands on a radio and felt the throbbing music. It was 1993 and doctors said the 1-year-old's condition was incurable.

That year her mother saw a television show about Mother Katharine Drexel and the Gutherman healing. So, said Constance Wall, "we prayed" that Amy would learn sign language. "If she could sign for her bottle, we thought we would have everything."

But Jack, Amy's 7-year-old brother, had learned about miracles at parochial school in Bensalem and urged his family to pray instead for a cure.

His mother obtained a small square of cloth from a habit worn by Mother Katharine, pressed it to Amy's ears, and the family prayed anew. Four



VICKI VALERIO



IRA D. JOFFE

Amy Wall with her mother in Bensalem earlier this year. Robert Gutherman with a portrait of the new saint.

months later, in March 1994, Amy began to hear.

This year, Amy, who hears and speaks perfectly, was asked why she had been chosen for a miracle.

"Because God loves me," she said, "and I love God."

Gutherman was asked the same question:

"I've wrestled with it for quite a while. And I've finally decided, 'Well, why not me?'"

"Miracles happen every day. The key to receiving a miracle is having the faith to recognize it. You know, I may have missed it as a 14-year-old, but my parents' faith was so strong that they recognized it." □

MURRAY DUBIN is an Inquirer staff writer.

Murray Dubin's e-mail address is mdubin@phillynews.com

Local Angle

MONICA YANT KINNEY



The Rev. Charles Brinkman

At a Navajo sheep camp in Arizona, the Rev. Charles Brinkman is helping make fry bread. The people know nothing about him except that he's a visiting priest from the East.

A woman asks Father Brinkman if he's ever heard of Katharine Drexel. He says yes. She asks if he's been to the home of her order, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Yes, again.

"Do you know the rug that's under their altar?" she asks. Father Brinkman nods, remembering the beautiful textile. "My mother wove that rug," the woman says.

The other day, dressed in a gray polo shirt and black Dockers, his clerical collar resting on the edge of a couch, Father Brinkman was still marveling at the experience. "With God," he says, "there are no coincidences."

ADrexel connection. Father Brinkman runs the Newman Center at Drexel University, home of the Catholic campus ministry and Blessed Katharine Drexel Chapel. He tells the students Katharine Drexel's life story — how a wealthy young woman related to the university's founders became a nun and spent her fortune helping the less fortunate. To get them thinking about her selflessness, he asks them: "If you won \$7 million in the lottery, what would you do with it?"

Father Brinkman, 49, grew up in South Philadelphia and served several local parishes before arriving at Drexel in the late 1980s. There, he was stunned to learn that the Newman Center's chapel had no name.

"Catholics love to name stuff," he says. "I thought that was very odd." Over ice cream one night in 1989, the priest and some students decided to name it after Katharine Drexel.

His sense of fun has served him well at Drexel. Father Brinkman made a convincing Skipper at the Newman Center's *Gilligan's Island* dance party. And his Thursday night dinners have grown from three mouths to 90. Students of all faiths share fellowship and his famous Chicken With Stale Bread.

"If you take your typical image of a priest and you think of Father Brinkman, they just don't mix," says Dan Szostek, a Drexel junior. "He just hangs out. He's one of the guys. It's a great feeling. We can go to him with our problems and we know deep down he is really concerned about us." □

MONICA YANT KINNEY covers City Hall for the Inquirer.

Direct e-mail to Inquirer.Magazine@phillynews.com

How sainthood is determined by Faye Flam

In the early years of the Roman Catholic Church, sainthood was a matter of popular acclamation.

Martyrs topped the list, or *kanon*, as models of faith and sacrifice. But soon the names of those who had suffered persecution for the faith were added, as were people who had led an exemplary life usually marked by great austerity and penance. Later came bishops, virgins, missionaries and doctors of the church.

But with no controls, the list grew disorderly. And there was the problem of making saints out of figures from pagan mythology and legends, such as was the case with St. Christopher. The church decreed that the process must be regulated, and it gave bishops the responsibility of examining the holiness of a person's life, including any alleged miracles.

If the bishop approved, the person was declared a saint and assigned a feast day — usually the anniversary of death — in that particular diocese or province. But it still was the public's devotion that put a particular candidate on the road to sainthood.

Eventually, the pontiff became involved as a way of both adding prestige to the process and controlling it. Historians agree that the first papal canonization occurred in 993 when John XV made a saint of Ulric, the bishop of Augsburg who had died 20 years earlier.

In 1171 Pope Alexander III began reserving the right of canonizing exclusively for the papacy, and Pope Gregory IX made it law in 1234. Popes Urban VIII and

Benedict XIV in the 17th and 18th centuries, respectively, spelled out the procedures that were ultimately codified in the Code of Canon Law in 1917.

But in 1983 Pope John Paul II, who has canonized more than 300 saints — more than all his 20th-century predecessors combined — changed the procedure. Gone was the Promoter of Faith — the devil's advocate — whose job was to challenge the evidence supporting a candidate's canonization.

The Pope reduced the number of miracles needed for beatification — the step before sainthood — from two to one. He cut from two to one the number of miracles needed for canonization. A person designated a martyr by a commission created by the Pope, however, does not need a miracle to be beatified. A martyr need only perform one miracle to become a saint.

Ninety-nine percent of all accepted miracles involve the healing of a medical condition in a way that the church deems "inexplicable by science." Generally, sick people or their families pray to a prospective saint, often years after the person's death. If the patient appears to be cured, the case may be considered for miracle status.

But first it must pass the judgment of the Consulta Medica, — a panel of five eminent

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FAYE FLAM is an Inquirer staff writer. Additional reporting was provided by staff writer Joseph A. Gambardello.



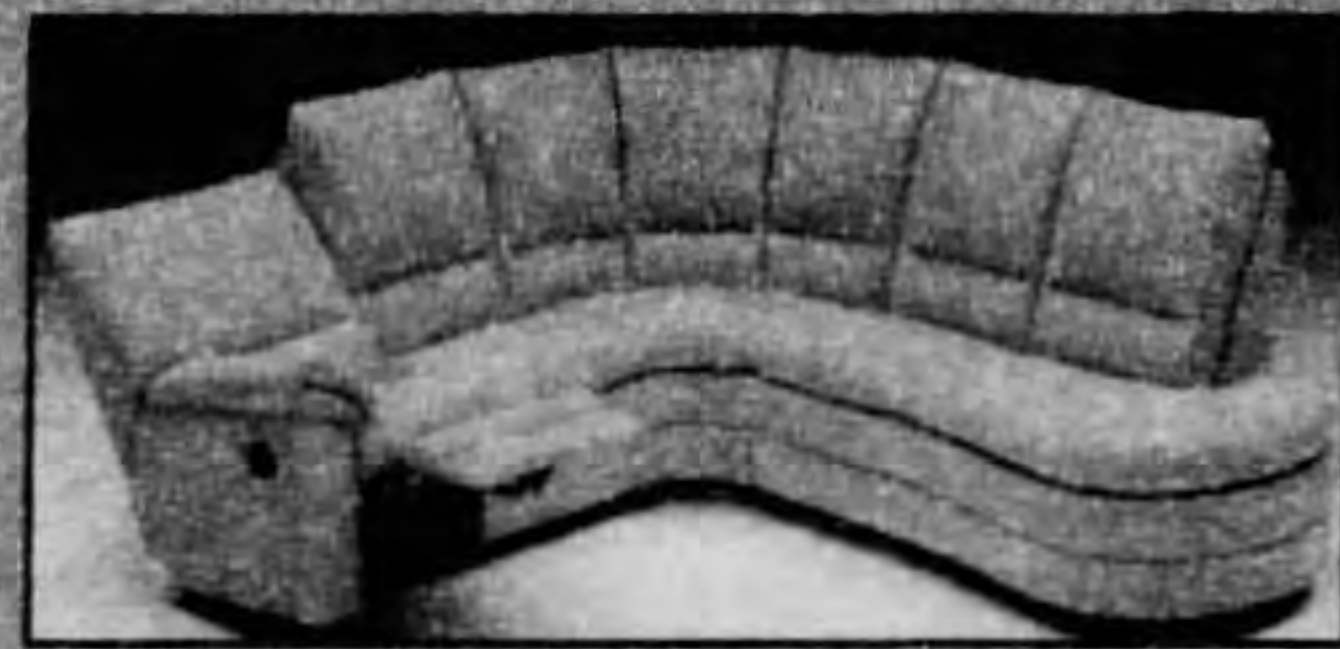
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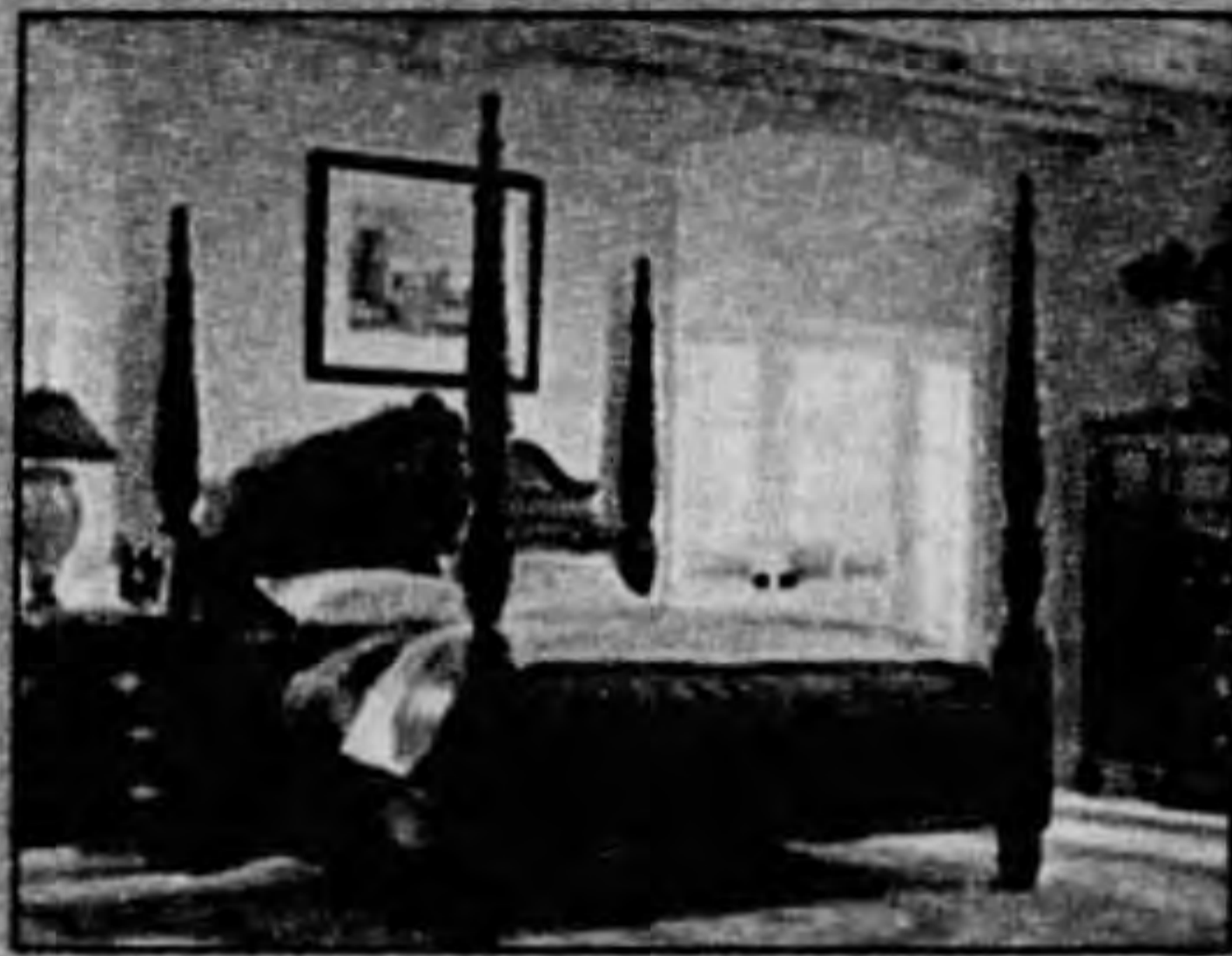


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SAINTHOOD

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physicians picked by the Vatican.

The Consulta requires not only the testimony of patients, doctors and witnesses, but often X-rays, biopsies, and other evidence.

The procedure is this: Two of the five physicians review a given case. If either one deems the case inexplicable to modern science, it goes on to be reviewed by the rest of the Consulta. A case passes if it wins a majority vote. The Consulta does not determine whether the case is miraculous — only that it can't be explained by science. Every year the Consulta reviews about 40 cases and approves about 15.

It helps a potential saint's case to have a strong following.

It helps a potential saint's case to have a strong following. It's hard to perform a miracle if no one is praying to you for a cure. And once the person develops a reputation for performing miracles, the effect can snowball.

For example, a total of 66 miracles were attributed to St. Louis of Anjou, who lived in 13th-century France. Those "cures" included recoveries from deafness, blindness, insanity, epilepsy and "contorted limbs."

In his book *Making Saints*, religion writer Kenneth Woodward suggests such a bounty of miracles is almost impossible to achieve in the modern world because science has advanced in its ability to explain things that looked like miracles to 13th-century eyes.

Pope John Paul II acknowledged this problem in 1983, stating that "the cases of physical healing are becoming more rare."

As a general rule, scientists don't view strange occurrences as miracles. Instead, things they deem inexplicable often attract further study.

At the turn of the last century, for example, scientists had no natural explanation for the strange, glowing emanations that leapt from vacuum tubes and certain kinds of crystals. But rather than celebrate the eerie phenomenon as supernatural, many scientists were drawn to puzzle over these so-called X-rays, and their work eventually uncovered a whole world of particles inside the atom. Now, X-rays and other forms of radiation are seen as perfectly natural.

Some scientists, such as astronomer Guy Consolmagno, say belief in science and miracles can coexist, as long as science isn't seen as a way to prove or disprove the validity of miracles.

"Science by its nature comes up with general principles, but it's always trickier —

maybe, impossible — to have 100 percent certainty about any specific historical incident," says Consolmagno, a Jesuit who works for the Vatican observatory.

Just as science cannot use an individual case, even a spectacular recovery, to prove the effectiveness of a new drug, so science cannot take a single case to prove or disprove a miracle.

"Of course, science ultimately cannot pass infallible judgments on miracles, because science is not perfect," he says. "Still, it can be useful; an event that has an obvious natural cause is clearly not a miracle.

"We fallible humans can never be sure we've made the right choices in picking saints," he says. "Remember, saints are declared for the benefit of the living, to serve as examples for us. Whether someone is with God or not after death obviously does not depend on what is declared — or not declared — by the church." □

Faye Flam's e-mail address is
fflam@phillynews.com

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