

Leader's Guide for
WOMEN WHO INSPIRE
The Gift of Katharine Drexel

ORIENTATION

The Gift of Katharine Drexel is an authentic representation of the life of Katharine Drexel, who was canonized a saint in 2000. The scenes reflect actual photos of her; and Katharine's words are taken directly from her diaries and letters.

The film tells her story through a narrator, Jane Wyatt, and is interspersed with vignettes of the major events of Katharine's life.

Like facets of a jewel, each scene illumines the dynamic character of Katharine. She had a warm, loving family life; knew with great conviction that she had a call from God; drew vital energy for her religious life directly from the Eucharist; was ever responsive to the needs of others and possessed a strong business sense.

Above all, Mother Drexel had a singleness of purpose—a focus outside her own life. This focus is revealed in some of her reflections toward the end of her life as she recalls her own mother's death-bed with, "...don't let the poor have cold feet."

The Gift of Katharine Drexel has broad applications for several themes:

- service to the poor: Native American and Black minorities
- affirmation of vocations as sisters, priests and brothers
- education as a means to improve the quality of life
- the role of faith in enabling a person to have a fulfilled, purposeful life
- the contribution of women to the Church and to society
- the example of family as a model for life

This film not only tells the story of Mother Katharine but also illumines the tradition of faith and Church that was her driving force: "...I have felt the conviction of God's call to me... 'sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come follow Me.'" (words of Katharine Drexel)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

*“Come. You have my Father’s blessing...as often as you did it to one of my least...you did it for me”
(Matthew 25:34-40).*

“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” (an ancient wise saying)

Katharine Drexel possessed both faith and common sense. And, although she was born into one of the richest banking families in Philadelphia, she dared to take literally those words of Christ to sell all that she had and give to the poor. That took faith! Her common sense told her that the poor needed more than things to improve the quality of their lives. She, therefore, used her funds to establish institutions which would offer them choices. People could be educated for employment in the larger American society if they wished or they could return to work among their own people.

In Katharine’s day the name given to the work she performed was apostolic activity. Today, it would be called social justice. The name wasn’t important to her. She knew that in the final meeting with her Lord, she could say, “Yes, I did clothe the naked, give food to the hungry...” and in doing so, she was fulfilling the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor.

Katharine started her activities with those around her. She was able to adapt herself to respond to those needs. It is that adaptability that inspires present-day Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (the order she founded) to respond to today’s needs. These responses include not only those activities started by Katharine but also such works as home visitation, teaching Native American tribal law and culture, and exploring the common ground between Christian and native religions. Her Sisters believe just as strongly as Katharine did that only deep faith can enable us to carry out the work to which God calls us. We, too, must draw vital energy for our lives from a strong life of faith and devotion. And that is where the example of Katharine Drexel can inspire and encourage us to give our lives to God in any situation.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Theme: Social Concern

Before screening

(Provide paper and pencil for participants to write their responses to the following questions.)

1. Take a moment and think of a person you consider to be great.
2. In a word or phrase, what makes that person great?

3. It has been said that “no one crosses the paths of our lives without leaving some mark” (Francois Mauriac). The great person you described has left his or her mark on you, their community, perhaps the world. In a sentence, what mark would you like to leave on the path of life?
4. Optional. Ask each person to share their responses in groups of three.
5. Say, “We are about to see a film concerning someone with whom you may or may not be familiar, but whom many people in the United States consider great. That person is a woman and her name is Katharine Drexel.”

Show film

After screening

6. Recall a scene from the film. Tell about it briefly. What feeling did that scene call forth from you?
7. Which affected you more: the accomplishments of Katharine or the kind of person that she was? Tell about that in a word or phrase.
8. Katharine remembered the words of her mother throughout her life: “...don’t let the poor have cold feet.” What saying do you recall that has had an impact on your life? Tell about that in a few words.
9. Mother Katharine didn’t know the terms “social justice” or “social concern” in her day. She only recalled Jesus’ words, “...sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come follow me,” and knew they were God’s will for her. As you read those words, how do they affect you? Do you 1) feel uncomfortable? 2) feel challenged? 3) don’t feel called to respond? Tell about that in one or two sentences.
10. Optional. Invite people to share one or all of the above reflections (numbers 5 through 9) in groups of six.
11. As a closing activity, write a letter to yourself and mail it. Tell how this film affected you and one thing you will do differently beginning tomorrow.

DISCUSSION ON RELATED THEMES

Education and the Quality of Life

Mother Katharine was convinced that education was the most effective means to improve the dignity and quality of life. Since public education for the people in need was little or non-existent, she established private (Catholic) schools and institutions.

How has education improved the quality of your life? Talk about this in at least two sentences.

Are there needs today that are not provided for in the public sector that Catholic institutions can

supplement? If so, what are some of those needs? Mention some reasons for maintaining previously established institutions.

Role of Faith

Katharine Drexel saw the spirit of the Eucharist as the total gift of self. From the Eucharist, Katharine drew the vital energy of her life. Sometimes, faith (our relationship with God) is the only thing that can sustain us.

From which devotion do you draw the energy to live your life?

The Church is asking us to look at life and develop other forms of devotion that would sustain our fast-paced contemporary lives. What might such a devotion look like? What would you use? What prayers or activities would you include?

Religious Vocations

Katharine was already channeling her gifts to the poor through the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. However, in her own words, she thought the future looked vague and uncertain. Her meeting with Pope Leo and his invitation to her to become a missionary confirmed the inner stirrings of her heart to enter a religious order.

If there are members of religious orders in the group, ask if they would share a similar moment in their own lives. (This has tremendous value; sharing what one believes in inspires others.)

Religious, by their profession of evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity and obedience), have given answer to the divine call to live for God alone and have handed over their entire lives to God's service in an act of special consecration (Vatican Council Documents: *Renewal of Religious Life*, paragraph 5).

Write to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions (2021 H St. NW, Washington, DC 20006-4207) and seek information about how you can assist them in their work or whether there is a place near you that benefits from their concern.

Family Life Influence

The film reveals the tremendous impact the example of her family had upon her life. Talk about 1) the impact of your own family on your life and 2) the possibilities of family life as lived today for the future.

What steps can we take to encourage positive marks be left on the paths of young lives as did Katharine's family?

The family is not dead; its form is changing. The "doomsayers" were not completely right. Why do you suppose family life perseveres?

Point to encouragements from Scripture and tradition, indeed from the Church today, to support the family.

Women in the Church

In a time when women were relegated to a significant although background role in the home, Katharine Drexel was in the forefront of life. She could be a model for women who are finding their way in today's world.

In what ways can women be encouraged by the example of Katharine's life?

Leader's Guide written by Eleanor Yavarone

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The Gift of Katharine Drexel on VHS (7129V) and *Women Who Inspire* on DVD (D7129).

NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut 3/4 inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

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Leader's Guide for
WOMEN WHO INSPIRE

Work of God's Hands: A Video on Mother Teresa for Children

Growing up on a small farm in Yugoslavia, Mother Teresa (1910-1997) wanted to become a missionary from an early age. At 18, she left home, became a Sister of Loretto and was sent to a convent in India where she taught in the Loretto School for almost 20 years. One day while traveling on a train, she felt God was calling her to do more for the poor of Calcutta and to live and work with the poorest in the city. With other sisters, they formed a new religious community called the Missionaries of Charity. Mother Teresa is known all over the world and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the dying and destitute. She was beatified in 2003.

Filmed on location in India, *Work of God's Hands: A Video on Mother Teresa for Children* invites us to be present with Mother Teresa as she works among the children, sick and dying. As we hear her voice and see her serving and living with the poorest of the poor, we are challenged by the gospel call to become more like Christ. This leader's guide offers questions and activities for discussion and reflection.

1. What words and images in the video remind us that "we are the work of God's hands"? Invite participants to draw a picture or symbol of themselves. Draw a heart with words, "You are precious. I love you" (or a comparable phrase) on each picture.
2. The video says "We do the work of God's hands." Look at your hands. Look at the palm, at the fingers, at the thumb and reflect on what your hands do, have done, could do. The video speaks of hands *giving and receiving, playing and praying, working and serving*. Assign groups for each of these categories and ask them to share the ways in which we do this today.
3. Share one thing you saw or heard in video. Does this seeing or hearing stir up an event or experience from your own life? Write a short paragraph on what impressed you most about Mother Teresa.
4. Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity serve the poorest of the poor throughout the world. "The poorest of the poor are the unwanted, the unloved, the uncared for, the rejected, the alcoholic, the crippled, the blind, the lame, the sick, the dying. People who have nothing and nobody, lost, homeless, lonely. Those hungry and thirsty, beggars, children, elderly, people in your own home and family." Where and who are the poorest of the poor in your life right now?
5. From magazines and newspapers, make a collage of people serving others. Ask each person to outline his or hand and on it and write what your hand can do. During the closing prayer service, call

participants by name and have them place these hands on the collage.

6. Mother Teresa and her sisters call themselves contemplatives in the heart of the world. Seeking and seeing God's face everywhere and in everyone, they live their love in action, work and service. Write and share a time when you were able to do this.
7. The work of Mother Teresa and our work, too, is done by

Hands of Care

"I can love only one person at a time. Feed one person at a time. Just one, one, one." Name someone for whom you have showed care. What did you do? What is your experience of believing in yourself again through someone serving you?

Hands of Kindness

"Yesterday is gone Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today." What does it mean to serve in the present moment? What images do you recall of small things done with great love? Write a litany of people who make something beautiful for God in simple actions of loving kindness. Ask participants to reflect on these words:

"It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving."

Share how you try to live this gospel message.

Hands of Peace

"All works of love are works of peace." Reflect on being peacemakers:

In Families: List family members. Name a need each one has. How could you answer that need? Star who needs you most right now.

In School: Write the initials of people in school who need you. What could you offer each of them?

In the World: Name the needs of people or groups in your world. Star one group you could begin to help.

Among Friends: Think of the young men and women who offer you their friendship. Write the ways you could become a better friend.

"People are not surprised by work we do, but are surprised we are happy to do it." How do people experience you in the way you serve?

Hands of Prayer

"The beginning of prayer is silence." What does this mean for you? Reflect on ways Mother Teresa and the sisters "pray the work" by doing it *with, for, to* Jesus. Read Matthew 25:31-40. Relate this to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Mother Teresa speaks of being "hungry for love, naked of human dignity and respect, homeless, rejected, unwanted." Where do you see

Christ in the “distressing disguise of the poor?” When are you one of the poorest of the poor?

Hands of Love

“Love begins at home. If we do not love those we see 24 hours a day, how can we love the people we see only once.” Recall the story of the loving mother and her child. Home for the child was Bari Jabo—her mother was home. Where is home for you? Who loves you? Whom do you love? Draw a picture of the place and people who represent home for you. What story in you does this one invoke? Share it. Who in your family needs your help right now? What are some actions you could do for that person?

8. “How do you change a world? You begin with yourself. You change the way you see, hear and love. You change your heart.” We can do this by deepening our awareness of God’s tender love for us. Draw a heart and write this prayer inside: “Jesus in my heart, I believe in your tender love for me. I love you.” Repeat this over and over again. Whisper it into your cupped hands and feel this prayer going through your whole body. Fold your heart prayer and carry it with you.
9. “I am the truth to be told. I am life to be lived. I am the joy to be shared. I am the bread to be eaten. I am the love to be loved. I am the light to be lit. I am the peace to be given.” Add your own “I am...”
10. PRAYER SERVICE

(Materials needed: candle, cloth, Bible, greens, collage, drawn hands)

Greeting

(Sign of the Cross) We are the work of God’s hands. We do the work of God’s hands. Jesus, fill us with your love and open our eyes to see you in the people we meet every day, in our family, our friends, our world. In serving them, we serve you.

Word of God

We kindle the flame of our Jesus candle. In this light, may we know, hear and speak the word of God. A reading from Matthew 25:31-40. In the silence of your hearts, think about these words: “Whenever you did this for one of the least important, you did it for me.”

Presentation

(Call participants by name to place their hands on the serving collage. Make the Sign of the Cross in the hand of each person saying: _____ (Name) _____, do the work of God’s hands.)

Blessing

We give our hands to you, Loving God. We are called to be Jesus, to be his hands in our world today. Please hold your hands open, palm facing upward, and receive God’s blessing as you say these words after me:

“Lord Jesus, teach me to be a caring person, to be aware of the needs of others. Help me to be your hands in our world today.”

Go forth to love and serve Jesus in others.

Let us bow our heads for God's blessing: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

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