



Contact: Patrice Bell-Mercadel (504) 520-5452
or Diana Hernandez (504) 520-5120

Xavier Foundress St. Katharine Drexel Remains to Reside in Cathedral Basilica

(New Orleans LA) – The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has announced that the sacred remains of Saint Katharine Drexel, foundress of [Xavier University of Louisiana](http://www.xavier.edu), will be transferred from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Motherhouse and Shrine in Bensalem, Pa., to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia this summer. The new location for St. Katharine’s tomb will open to the public in September 2018 following the completion of the newly constructed Cathedral tomb.

In addition to the relocation, the Archdiocese also announced several new programs to promote the life, work, and witness of Saint Katharine Drexel. These programs include school-based lesson plans, an online and television documentary, a newly-launched website hosted by the Cathedral Basilica (www.cathedralphila.org), new social media sites, and a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap on Sunday, Nov. 18, 2018. The construction and communications program are generously underwritten by a grant from the Connelly Foundation.

“The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament have once again given the faithful of the Archdiocese a tremendous gift,” said Reverend Dennis Gill, Rector and Pastor of the Cathedral Basilica. “With the new opportunity to honor Saint Katharine at the Cathedral, even more people will be exposed to her extraordinary life and example. It is our fervent hope that others will be inspired and continue her important work among Native Americans and African Americans.”

“Saint Katharine’s message is as relevant today as it was 125 years ago,” said Sister Donna Breslin, President of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. “She is a contemporary saint and we continue to pray to her for an end to racism and other deeply rooted injustices.”

“The Connelly Foundation’s support for this project comes from reverence and respect for a truly outstanding Philadelphian, who gave totally of herself to help others,” said Josephine C. Mandeville, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Connelly Foundation. “Her life and her mission are inspiring. The Connelly Foundation is grateful for the opportunity to assist in creating a permanent resting place for this very special Philadelphia saint.”

Saint Katharine Drexel was canonized on October 1, 2000. She is the second American-born person ever to be canonized. Born into tremendous wealth as part of the Drexel family, she gave up her life of privilege to found the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1891. She dedicated her life to serve the needs of African Americans and Native Americans, and inspired so many women, who joined the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, to follow her example. Today, the Sisters continue to serve in elementary and secondary schools, as well as at Xavier, the only historically Black, Catholic university in the United

States. They are also involved in a variety of other services including pastoral and spiritual ministries, social services, counseling, religious education, and health care, primarily but not exclusively among Black and Native American peoples.

In May 2016 the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament announced their decision to sell the Motherhouse property where the current shrine is housed, along with other property in Virginia. At that time the Sisters asked the Archdiocese to consider creating a sacred space for Saint Katharine's remains. Earlier this year, the Archdiocese agreed to create a new space for her tomb at the Cathedral Basilica. This new tomb will be immediately adjacent to the Drexel altar donated by the Drexel family decades ago.

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About the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul

Open since 1864 and located at the east side of Logan Square on 18th Street and the Benjamin Franklin parkway, the cathedral is the mother church of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

About the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, founded in 1891 by Saint Katharine Drexel, is a congregation dedicated to the interracial apostolate in the United States, Haiti, and Jamaica. Today, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament serve in elementary and secondary schools, as well as at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. They are also involved in a variety of other services including pastoral and spiritual ministries, social services, counseling, religious education, and health care, primarily but not exclusively among Black and Native American peoples. The Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament is in Bensalem, Pa.

About the Connelly Foundation

The Connelly Foundation was founded in 1955 by John and Josephine Connelly. John Connelly achieved remarkable business success as president of Connelly Containers and later Crown Cork and Seal, both manufacturing companies based in Philadelphia. He and his wife, Josephine, strongly motivated by their Catholic faith and their love for the Philadelphia region, dedicated their good fortune to helping others. Over the past 63 years the Connelly Foundation has donated more than \$400 million to nonprofit organizations in the Philadelphia area focusing on education, human services, and the arts. The Connelly Foundation has always placed a particular emphasis on Catholic education, with nearly 10,000 Philadelphia-area students having attended Catholic high schools through the foundation's Neumann Scholars and Josephine C. Connelly scholarships.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier was recently ranked as the nation's #2 HBCU (Historically Black College and University) by [College Consensus](#), a unique college ratings website that aggregates publisher rankings and student reviews, in its newly released publication, [Best HBCUs for 2018](#). Xavier was also among the four colleges selected by Beyonce and her [BeyGood Foundation](#) as the recipient of a Homecoming Scholars Scholarship Award announced after her much lauded performance at Coachella.

That's just the latest in national accolades Xavier has received as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of "Best Colleges" by the *U.S. News Media Group*. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under "Great Schools, Great Prices."

At Xavier *eXcellence awaits yoU*. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYZC8>. To book interviews about our recent accomplishments and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact Diana Hernandez at (504) 520-5120 or dhernan1@xula.edu.

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