



Black History Month

St. Josephine Bakhita

For many years, Josephine Bakhita was a slave but her spirit was always free and eventually that spirit prevailed. Born in the Darfur region of southern Sudan, Josephine was kidnapped at the age of 7, sold into slavery and given the name Bakhita, which means fortunate. She was resold several times, finally in 1883 to Callisto Legnani, Italian consul in Khartoum, Sudan. Two years later, he took Josephine to Italy and gave her to his friend Augusto Michieli. Bakhita became babysitter to Mimmina Michieli, whom she accompanied to Venice's Institute of the Catechumens, run by the Canossian Sisters. Josephine felt drawn to the Catholic Church. She was baptized and confirmed in 1890, taking the name Josephine. When the Michielis returned from Africa and wanted to take Mimmina and Josephine back with them, the future saint refused to go. During the ensuing court case, the Canossian Sisters and the patriarch of Venice intervened on Josephine's behalf. The judge concluded that since slavery was illegal in Italy, she had actually been free since 1885. Josephine entered the Institute of St. Magdalene of Canossa in 1893 and made her profession three years later. The first steps toward her beatification began in 1959. She was beatified in 1992 and canonized eight years later.

Watch the short story on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwbOZGfJYQ4>

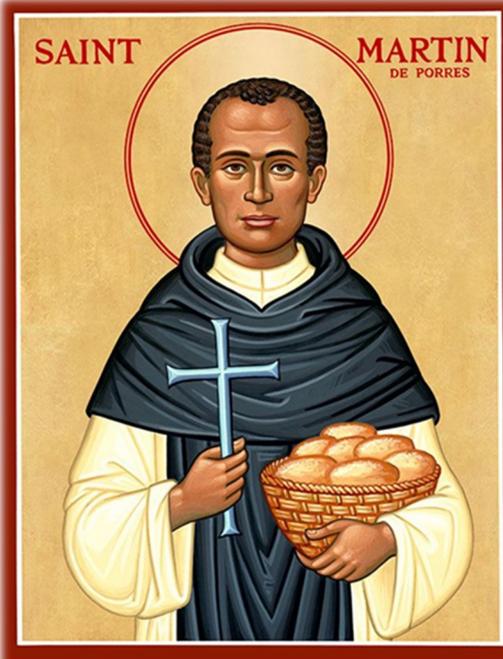


Black History Month

St. Katharine Drexel

Once declared the second American born saint, and although she was not of African descent, St. Katharine Drexel, the foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, dedicated her life to the defense and promotion of Native and African Americans. Her story is unique given her background of power and privilege and wealth. Her family was part of the social and economic elite of America. Her father, Francis Anthony Drexel, shared ownership of an international banking empire, Drexel Burnham Lambert. Katharine's concern for the "Colored people" paralleled her concern for the Indians. Katharine purchased a sixteen-hundred-acre tract on the James River near Richmond, Virginia, where she established St. Emma's Industrial and Agricultural Institute for young black men. On a piece of the land adjoining it, she had a school for black girls built, and named it St. Francis de Sales. Katharine's crowning achievement was the Building of Xavier University in New Orleans, the first U.S. Catholic institution of higher education for African-Americans. The constant demand for Mother Katharine finally caught up with her. In 1935, she suffered a heart attack and after that rarely left the Motherhouse in Philadelphia. Coupled with a life of contemplation, she continued to fight for civil rights, funding some of the NAACP's investigations of the exploitation of black workers, and organizing letter-writing campaigns to President Franklin Roosevelt.

Watch the short story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv6lbFeMUI>



Black History Month

St. Martin de Porres

On May 16, 1962, Pope John XXIII made Martin de Porres the first black American saint. Born on December 9, 1579, in Lima, Peru, de Porres was the illegitimate son of Don Juan de Porres of Burgos a Spanish nobleman, and Ana Velasquez, a young freed Negro slave girl. From early childhood Martin showed great piety, a deep love for all God's Creatures and a passionate devotion to Our Lady. At the age of 11 he took a job as a servant in the Dominican priory and performed the work with such devotion that he was called "the saint of the broom". Martin was placed in charge of the Dominican's infirmary where he became known for his tender care of the sick and for his spectacular cures. In recognition of his fame and his deep devotion, his superiors dropped the stipulation that "no black person may be received to the holy habit or profession of our order" and Martin was vested in the full habit and took the solemn vows as a Dominican brother. He established an orphanage and a children's hospital for the poor children of the slums. He set up a shelter for the stray cats and dogs and nursed them back to health. Many miraculous cures, including the raising of the dead, were attributed to Brother Martin. Today throughout South America, Central America and the islands of the Caribbean, people tell of the miraculous powers of St. Martin de Porres.

Watch the short story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sowGAJQAYho>



Black History Month

St. Monica

St. Monica, an African laywoman is a saint with whom most black women can readily and easily identify, because Monica epitomized the present-day black women.

St. Monica was born in Teggaste in northern Africa in about 331. She was a devout Christian and an obedient disciple of St. Ambrose. Through her patience, gentleness and prayers, she converted her pagan husband. To her son, St. Augustine of Hippo, whom she loved dearly, she gave thorough religious training during his boyhood, only to know the disappointment of seeing him later scorn all religion and live a life of disrepute. Before her death, Monica had the great joy of knowing that Augustine had returned to God and was using all his energies to build Christ's Church, and that her youngest daughter had become a nun. St. Monica's feast day is August 27th.

Watch the short story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27cL6dj6GOE>