

Men of Saint Michael

“Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another”

Proverbs 27:17.



Newsletter



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The Catholic Church in the United States

The Catholic Church in the United States is part of the worldwide Catholic Church in communion with the Pope in Rome. With 70.4 million members, it is the largest religious group in the United States, comprising 22% of the population as of 2017. The United States has the fourth largest Catholic population in the world after Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines, the largest Catholic minority population, and the largest English-speaking Catholic population. The central leadership body of the Catholic Church in the United States is the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The history of the Catholic Church in what is now the United States has its background in the European colonization of the Americas. The first Catholics were Spanish missionaries who came with Christopher Columbus to the New World on his second voyage in 1493. In the 16th and 17th centuries, they established missions in what are now Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, Puerto Rico, Texas, and later in California. French colonization in the early 18th century saw missions established in Louisiana, St. Louis, New Orleans, Biloxi, Mobile, the Alabamas, Natchez, Yazoo, Natchitoches, Arkansas, Illinois, and Michigan. St. Augustine, Florida, founded in 1565, has the oldest continuous parish in the US. In 1789 the Archdiocese of Baltimore was the first diocese established in the newly formed United States. John Carroll, whose brother Daniel was one of five men to sign both the Articles of Confederation (1778) and the United States Constitution (1787), became the first American bishop. John McCloskey became the first American cardinal in 1875.

The number of Catholics grew from the early 19th century through immigration and the acquisition of the predominantly Catholic former possessions of France, Spain, and Mexico, followed in the mid-19th century by a rapid influx of Irish, German, Italian and Polish immigrants from Europe, making the Catholic Church the largest Christian denomination in the United States. This increase was met by widespread anti-Catholicism in the United States, prejudice and hostility, often resulting in riots and the burning of churches, convents, and seminaries.^[8] The Know Nothings, an anti-Catholic nativist movement, was founded in the mid-19th century in an attempt to restrict Catholic immigration, and was later followed by the Order of United American Mechanics, the Ku Klux Klan, the American Protective Association, and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics.

The integration of Catholics into American society was marked by the election of John F. Kennedy as President in 1960. Since then, the percentage of Americans who are Catholic has fallen slowly from about 25% to 22%,^[9] with increases in Hispanics, especially Mexican Americans, who have balanced losses of self-identifying Catholics among other ethnic groups. As of 2017 Catholics serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives

(Paul Ryan), Majority Leader of the Senate (Mitch McConnell), Chief Justice (John Roberts), Justices of the Supreme Court (six out of 9, including Roberts and Justice Neil Gorsuch who was raised Catholic albeit worships with the Anglican Episcopal Church), and a plurality of Senators, Representatives, and Governors. Owing to their size, more Catholics hold college degrees than do members of any other faith community in the United States.¹

Early Catholic Activities

The very first hospital in the New World was founded in 1580 in Mexico and dedicated to St. Martin de Porres, the patron of hospitality to the afflicted and distressed. A Catholic made the first settlement in New England, and a Catholic conducted the first religious services there. The first converts in New England were to the Catholic Faith. The first governor of New York was a Catholic. The initial act of the first legislative assembly in New York was the “Charter of Liberty” granting freedom of worship to all the citizens. Catholic priests conducted the first religious services in Virginia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, Arizona, Kansas and Missouri. The first record of Mass being celebrated in the present limits of the United States is in 1526, in a chapel situated on a spot that seventy-five years later was destined to become the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown.

The First Diocese Established in North America

The first diocese established in North America was not Mexico City or Quebec but Greenland. Viking Leif Erikson, son of Erik the Red, brought along Catholic missionaries when he sailed to Greenland from Norway in the year 1000. His father, exiled from Norway, had established a colony there in 986 at Brattahlid. Leif was raised in Greenland. When he came of age he harbored a yearning to visit his father’s homeland, so, with Erik’s permission, he set sail eastward with a company of other Norsemen. They were very hospitably received by the great Viking warrior, King Olaf. Olaf, although still a very young man, had retired his battle-axe and settled down to a more peaceful life. He was now a Christian, having been baptized two years before in England. Olaf instructed Leif in the Catholic religion, and the Faith found fertile soil in his heart. After his baptism, Leif felt compelled to return to Greenland with the good news of the gospel. King Olaf had missionaries accompany him for that purpose. Although the son of Erik could not convert his father, his mother did accept the Faith with great fervor. She pressured her husband into financing the construction of a church, Thjóðhildur’s Church, at Brattahlid. This was the first Christian church built on the North American continent, the population of Greenland being then about 3000. A century later, in 1124, Pope Honorius II consecrated a bishop for Greenland, establishing it as a diocese. The episcopal residence was situated at Gardar (present-day Igaliku) close to Brattahlid (today’s Qassiarsuk).

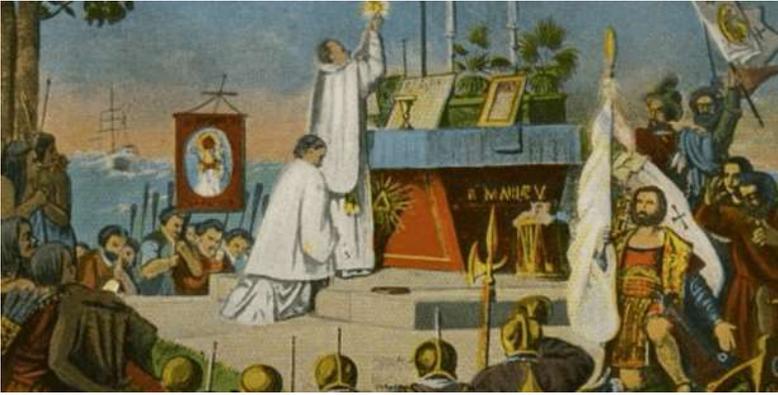
King Olaf, by his support of the missionaries, converted practically all of Norway to the Catholic religion. He became a saint and a martyr. It was the zeal he displayed against idolatry, with the destruction of pagan temples, that earned Olaf a martyr’s crown in the year 1030.

Interesting aside: In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson, with the unanimous approval of Congress, declared October 9 Leif Erikson Day, thereby recognizing the fact behind the legend of the Erikson saga.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_in_the_United_States.

² <http://catholicism.org/what-was-the-first-diocese-established-in-north-america.html>

The first Thanksgiving in America was a Catholic Mass



Did you know that the first “thanksgiving” meal in the United States was *not* celebrated by the Pilgrims in Plymouth, but by Spanish settlers, in what became Florida? And that first “Thanksgiving” was Eucharistic!

Historian Dr. Michael Gannon narrates the events that took place on September 8, 1565.

“When the first Spanish settlers landed in what is now St. Augustine on September 8, 1565, to build

a settlement, their first act was to hold a religious service to thank God for the safe arrival of the Spanish fleet... After the Mass, Father Francisco Lopez, the Chaplin of the Spanish ships and the first pastor of St. Augustine, stipulated that the natives from the Timucua tribe be fed along with the Spanish settlers, including Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles, the leader of the expedition. It was the very first Thanksgiving and the first Thanksgiving meal in the United States.”

The Spaniards, with food that they brought with them on the ship, prepared the communal meal. According to records, the meal would have consisted of salted pork, garbanzo beans, ship’s bread and red wine.

This account of the first “thanksgiving” reflects what was found in Father Francisco’s memoirs. In it we read, “the feast day [was] observed . . . after Mass, ‘the Adelantado [Menendez] had the Indians fed and dined himself.’”

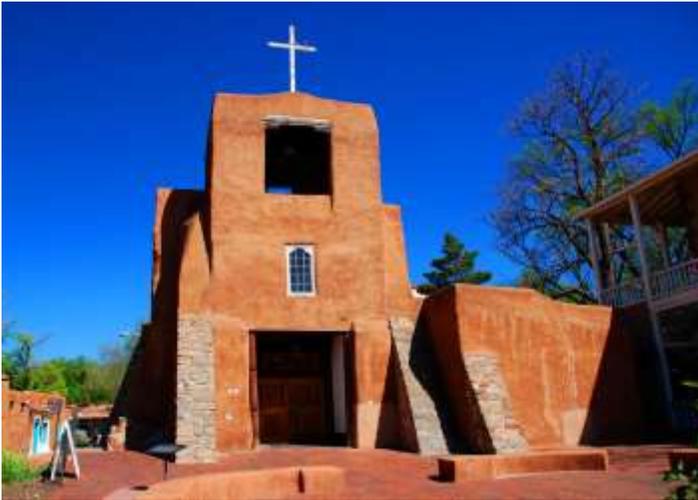
The feast celebrated by the Spaniards was that of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s birthday, a day in the Church calendar that follows nine months after the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on December 8 (which just happens to be the patronal feast of the United States of America).

The oldest Catholic Church in the United States

The San Miguel Mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico was founded in 1610, ten years before the *Mayflower* landed at Plymouth Rock. The San Miguel Chapel is a Spanish colonial mission whose original adobe walls are still standing. Mass is still celebrated there every Sunday.

Few people question whether or not the San Miguel Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is the oldest Church in the United States, but many do question just how old it is. It is no easy task to sift historical fact from traditional belief. The earliest documentation we have of the existence of San Miguel Chapel is from 1628, so we know it was built sometime before then. Oral history holds that San Miguel Chapel was built around 1610, and it has been rebuilt and restored several times over the past 400 years. The original church, the “Hermita de San Miguel,” was built on the site of an ancient kiva of the Analco Indians. It is believed that it was constructed by Tlaxcalan (Tascal’-en) Indians, who came to New Mexico from old Mexico in 1598 with a Spanish contingent led by Don Juan Onate. In its early years, the church served a small group of Tlaxcalan Indians, laborers, and Spanish soldiers who lived in this area on the south side of the Santa Fe River.

The church was partially destroyed in 1640 at the hands of Luis de Rojas, a provincial governor who feuded with church authorities. It was reconstructed but was severely damaged again during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Twelve years after the Pueblo Revolt drove them out, the Spanish returned to Santa Fe, led by the Governor General Don Diego de Vargas, who ordered the repair and restoration of San Miguel Chapel. By the end of 1710, the work was completed and a new roof was in place. In 1798, the mayor of Santa Fe helped fund major repairs and the construction of the beautiful altar screen in the front of the church. An elaborate three-tiered bell tower was erected around 1848, followed by the installation of the 780-pound San Jose Bell in the bell tower around 1856.



In 1859 Archbishop Jean Baptist Lamy purchased the Chapel and adjacent land for the De LaSalle Christian Brothers, who developed a school on the adjacent site. Repairs were initiated again in 1862 by the Christian Brothers. A wooden floor was added, as well as the Communion rail and a large door at the entrance. In 1872 a strong storm struck Santa Fe and brought down the bell tower and, along with it, the San Jose Bell, which is now on display inside the Chapel. By 1887 the Chapel was in serious need of repair, but with no funds available, the Christian Brothers came to a painful decision to demolish the structure. When the local community learned of its plight, many people came

to the rescue. At this time, the first of two stone buttresses were built on the front of the building to shore up the adobe walls, and the interior and exterior walls were plastered. A tar and gravel roof replaced the old mud roof, and a new, smaller bell tower was added. Two years later, two additional buttresses were added on the north wall.

In 1955, a major restoration was carried out under the direction of Ms. E. Boyd, a Santa Fe painter and Spanish Colonial art expert. The original dirt floor and sanctuary steps were uncovered and can be seen today just beyond the Communion rail. During this investigation, many human remains and pieces of pottery were found buried under the church floor which made for a fascinating educational experience.

For more information go to: <http://sanmiguelchapel.org/>

First Mass in the New World

The first Mass in the New World, for which a record exists took place during the second voyage of Columbus, on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1494, at a temporary shelter that would serve as a church at La Isabela, 30 miles west of what is now Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. Five priests accompanied the expedition: Benedictine Father Buil, Jeronymite Father Ramone Pane, and three Franciscan missionary priests. Fr. Buil celebrated the Mass. The settlers built a church on the site, the foundation of which has been excavated (another church building is now at La Isabela). The original settlement was abandoned by 1498 and its settlers moved to the newly established Santo Domingo on the south side of the island.

There is some solid but as yet inconclusive evidence that in that same year of 1498 the first Mass may have been celebrated on the North American continent (apart from the Norse settlements). The second voyage of John Cabot is believed to have reached a harbor in Newfoundland and included a group of reformed Augustinian friars led Fr. Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis, who established a religious community there, building a church (which they may have named San Giovanni a Carbonara, after a church in Naples) and, of course, offering Mass. The site was at the present-day town of Carbonear on Newfoundland.³

The Spanish Came First



*On Easter Sunday in 1512,
Ponce de Leon saw Florida*

It was a myth that led to the discovery of Florida. In the folklore of Europe, there was a story of a magic spring that existed somewhere in the world. It was called the "Fountain of Youth." According to the legend, anyone who would drink from that spring would be cured of any sickness and would regain his youth.

The legend first circulated through Europe in the twelfth century when a letter attributed to one Prester John (Priest John, probably John of Montecorvino) made mention of it. For centuries the legend lingered on, kept alive more by the desire of men than by any factual probability. Then somehow after the discovery of the New World, the myth of the Fountain of Youth began to be clothed in new rumors.

Indians are supposed to have told of this magic spring, and even given its location as a place called "Bimini," north of the West Indies. That these rumors reached Spain is certain, because they are mentioned in a book published in 1511. That book even contained a map that showed Bimini as an island.

One man who heard the rumors and was intrigued by them was a Spanish conquistador, Juan Ponce de Leon, a veteran soldier. Ponce de Leon had first come to the New World in the second expedition of Columbus. For a time, he served as governor of what is now Haiti. In 1508 he led that conquered Puerto Rico and for a time was governor of that island, until he was removed by Diego Columbus, son of Christopher and successor to his father. Finding himself "rich and unemployed," Ponce de Leon outfitted two caravels and went in search of the fabulous Bimini. After sailing around for six months, he finally made landfall (March 27, 1512) on what he believed was an island. Since he had first sighted the land on Easter Sunday, which the Spanish call Pascua Florida (Flowery Easter), he named his supposed island Florida.

Ponce de Leon was not equipped to colonize so he returned to his base and then proceeded to Spain where he sought and gained permission to colonize his new discovery. The king granted him permission; he equipped three ships in Seville and returned to Puerto Rico. Some fighting against the Carib Indians delayed his plans and it was not until 1521 that he sailed from Puerto Rico with his three ships to begin his colony. According to an historian of the times, "he took mares and calves and pigs and sheep and goats and all kinds of animals, domestic and useful in the service of men."

³ (<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2014/05/13/americas-first-mass/>)

Ponce de Leon sailed around the peninsula, almost to Tampa Bay. He made his landing somewhere in the vicinity of the present Fort Myers. But the first attempt to colonize Florida was not successful. The Indians were hostile and put up stiff resistance. In one battle, many of his soldiers were killed and Ponce de Leon was wounded in the thigh with an arrow. He ordered a retreat and died in Cuba of his wound. He had not found the mythical Fountain of Youth, and he died thinking Florida was an island; but he is the first Spaniard of record to set foot on what is now United States mainland.⁴

The brief account of the expedition by Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* suggests that some days elapsed between their landing and the attack, during which time the priests accompanying the expedition tried to preach to the natives and come to terms with them, but to no avail. If the priests were indeed onshore for a few days, as Oviedo suggests, before being driven away, they may well have offered Mass there, at Charlotte Harbor, which would have been the first Mass offered on what would become the continental U.S. But if they did so, it was not noted in the spotty records that remain of the expedition.⁵

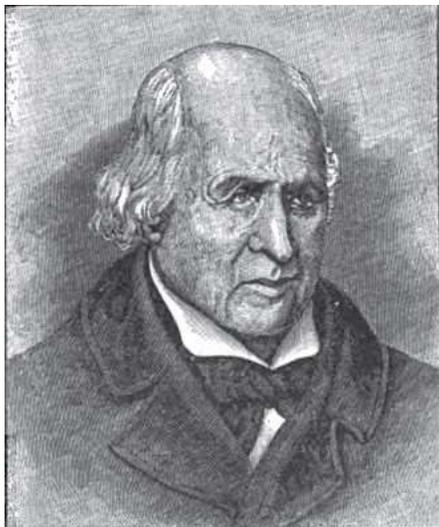
1790 - First Catholic Bible Printed in America



Matthew Carey (1760-1839) was a journalist in Ireland who attacked the English government for persecution of Irish Catholics. After being apprehended and serving a one-month jail sentence, he fled England and arrived in America in 1784. Five years later, he announced plans to publish a Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims Version English Bible, if he could secure 400 pre-paid subscribers. He secured 471, and on December 1, 1790 delivered it to his subscribers. As there was very little demand for Roman Catholic scriptures in colonial America, it is unlikely that more than about 500 copies of the Matthew Carey Bible were ever printed, making it quite rare today. It is the first non-King James version English Bible printed in America.

After an early career as a printer, journalist and newspaper publisher, Carey became one of the most successful book publishers in the U.S.

1793 - First Catholic Priest Ordained in America



Father Stephen Theodore Badin

In Baltimore, Maryland, Father Stephen Theodore Badin becomes the first Catholic priest to be ordained in the United States. Badin was ordained by Bishop John Carroll, an early advocate of American Catholicism, and appointed to the Catholic mission in Kentucky.

In colonial America, there were few English-speaking Catholics outside of Maryland, which was established in 1634 as a haven for Roman Catholics persecuted in England. In 1735, some 100 years after the establishment of Maryland, John Carroll was born in Baltimore into a prominent Catholic family. As secondary Catholic education was forbidden by the British colonial authorities, Carroll traveled to Europe, where he was ordained in 1769. Returning to America, he was sympathetic to the Patriot cause during the Revolutionary War and in 1790 was chosen by the Vatican to become the first bishop of the American Catholic Church.

⁴ Albert J. Nevins, M.M., *Our American Catholic Heritage*, (Huntington, ID. Our Sunday Visitor) 1972, pp. 31-32)

⁵ (<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2014/05/13/americas-first-mass/>)

Carroll supported the separation between church and state and advocated an autonomous American clergy that would elect its own bishops and carry out its own training. In his early years as bishop, he endorsed the use of English in the liturgy, and on May 25, 1793, presided over the first ordination of a Catholic priest on U.S. soil. Although the American Catholic Church grew substantially under Carroll's leadership, it was the mass emigration of Catholics from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland, and the Balkans during the 19th and 20th centuries that made Catholicism a major force in U.S. religious life.⁶

Father John Augustine Tolton, the first black priest in the United States.



Father John Augustine Tolton (1854-1897) was the first black priest in the United States. Born into a black Catholic slave family, Father Tolton conquered almost insurmountable odds to become a Catholic priest.

He died an early death at 43, and this pioneer black American priest left behind a shining legacy of holy service to God, the Church and his people. *Born into Slavery* by Sister Caroline Hemesath, relates the great legacy of this first black priest, and his courage in the face of incredible prejudice within the Church and society, and will be a source of strength and hope for modern Christians who face persecution for their faith, especially black Catholics who still experience similar prejudices.

In American history, many black people have achieved, against great odds, success and made distinct contributions to our society and their fellowman. But Father Tolton faced a different source of prejudice - an opposition from within the Church, the one institution he should have been able to rely on for compassion and support. He endured many rebuffs, as a janitor spent long hours in the church chapel in prayer, and attended clandestine classes taught by friendly priests and nuns who saw in his eyes the bright spark of the love of God, devotion to the Church and a determination to serve his people. Denied theological training in America, these friends helped him to receive his priestly education, and ordination, in Rome. He later became the pastor of St. Monica's Church in Chicago and established a center at St. Monica's which was the focal point for the life of black Catholics in Chicago for 30 years. The author interviewed many people who knew Father Tolton personally, including Katharine Drexel, and presents a deeply inspiring portrait of a great American Catholic.

From Slave to Priest: The Inspirational Story of Father Augustine Tolton (1854-1897) by Sr. Caroline Hemesath can be ordered at:

<https://www.ignatius.com/From-Slave-to-Priest-P876.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/catholic-priest-ordained-in-america>

John Carroll Named First Catholic Bishop in U.S.



On November 6, 1789, Pope Pius VI appointed John Carroll bishop of Baltimore, making him the first Catholic bishop in the United States.

Carroll was born in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, in 1735. His mother came from a wealthy family and had been educated in France. At age 13, Carroll sailed for France in order to complete his own education at St. Omer's College in French Flanders. At age 18, he joined the Society of Jesus, and after a further 14 years of study in Liege, he received ordination as a priest at age 34. Pope Clement XIV's decision in 1773 to dissolve the Jesuit order, however, ended Carroll's European career.

Three years after Carroll's return to Maryland, the need to make allies of French Catholics in Canada created an opportunity for him to join a Congressional delegation dispatched to negotiate with the Canadians. Benjamin Franklin served on the same delegation, and although the mission failed, Franklin proved an excellent ally to Carroll. In 1784, Franklin recommended to the papal nuncio in Paris that Carroll assume the position of Superior of Missions in the United States of North America, which removed American Catholics from the authority of the British Catholic hierarchy. In this role, as bishop and ultimately as the first archbishop in the United States (1808), Carroll oversaw the creation of leading Catholic institutions in the new nation, including the nation's first Catholic university (Georgetown University, founded in 1789) and cathedral (Baltimore Basilica, built in 1806).

AMERICAN SAINTS AND BLESSEDS⁷

JANUARY 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, S.C.

Founder of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. Considered founder of the Catholic School system in the US.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was the charming "belle of the ball" as a young woman in New York City, linked to all the first families. At the age of 19, she fell in love and married the wealthy, handsome William Magee Seton. The two had a very happy marriage, raising five children. Ten years after they were married, William's business and health both failed, and Elizabeth was left a poor widow with five children to raise alone. Her love for the Eucharist led her to convert to Catholicism and founded the first order of religious women in America, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, a religious community based on the Rule of St. Vincent De Paul. She was able to still raise her children, as well as live the life of a sister and found several schools. She became the co-founder of the first free Catholic School in America.

JANUARY 5

St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R.

Missionary and 4th bishop of Philadelphia. Founded the first diocesan Catholic school system in U.S.

⁷ <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/saints/american-saints-and-blesseds.cfm>

St. John Neumann learned pretty quickly what it meant to follow God's will with your whole heart and soul. He was certain that he was called to be a priest, but when the time came for ordination, the bishop fell ill and the ordination was cancelled. It was never rescheduled, because there was an over-abundance of priests in Europe. Knowing he was meant to be a priest, John traveled all the way from Bohemia to New York City to be ordained. He was one of only 36 priests, serving 200,000 Catholics: his 'parish' stretched from Lake Ontario throughout Pennsylvania. He became the founder of the first diocesan Catholic School system, going from only two schools to one hundred schools in his diocese.

JANUARY 23

St. Marianne Cope, O.S.F.

Missionary to the lepers of Molokai, Hawaii

St. Marianne Cope was a born leader. Growing up as one of the older children of a large family, she went to work in a factory right after finishing the eighth grade. She joined the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis a few years later and began a whirlwind of leadership roles: twice as the novice mistress of her congregation, and three times as the superior of St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse. This leadership, coupled with her sympathy for mankind in general, led her to volunteer to go to Hawaii to take care of the lepers. She was finally stationed in Molokai, where she brought education and happiness to the leper colony: even providing bright scarves and pretty dresses for the women. To read more about this determined and yet charming woman, check out the websites below!

MARCH 3

St. Katharine Drexel, S.B.S.

School builder and founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People

When she asked Pope Leo XIII to send more missionaries to Wyoming, he asked her, "Why don't you become a missionary?" As a young, wealthy, educated girl from Philadelphia, this was hardly the expected lifestyle for young Katharine Drexel. But raised in a devout family with a deep sympathy for the poor, Katharine gave up everything to become a missionary to the Indians and African Americans. She founded schools in thirteen states for African Americans, forty mission centers and twenty-three rural schools. She also established fifty missions for Indians in sixteen different states. She died at the age of ninety-six and was canonized in the year 2000.

MAY 10

St. Damien de Veuster of Molokai, SS.CC.

Missionary to the lepers of Molokai, Hawaii

St. Damien of Molokai was born in Belgium in 1840 to a poor farmer and his wife. At the age of 13, he quit school to help his parents on the farm; when he was nineteen, he entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Damien's older brother, Pamphile, was also a priest in this congregation, and had offered his service to the care of the lepers on the Island of Molokai. When he fell ill and couldn't go to the mission, Damien volunteered to take his place. The saint offered to stay in the leper colony permanently - he built schools, churches, hospitals and coffins. He was later joined in his work by the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse, led by St. Marianne Cope. St. Damien contracted the disease himself, but continued to serve the mission until his death in 1889.

JULY 1

Saint Junípero Serra, O.F.M.

Founder of the Spanish missions in California

As a young man in Spain, Blessed Junípero Serra joined the Franciscan order and began a short career as a professor, famous for his preaching. When he was thirty-five, he suddenly began to yearn for the life of a missionary in the New World. He left everything behind and boarded a ship bound for Vera Cruz, Mexico. On his way to Mexico City, an insect bite infected his leg so badly that walking pained him for the rest of his life. Among his many great accomplishments as a missionary are listed two particularly: It was he whose insistence and dedication brought about the "Regulation" protecting the Native Americans and the missions. He is also known for founding the great mission of San Juan Capistrano, in California. He founded 21 missions and taught the Native Americans many trades, from farming to crafting.

JULY 14

St. Kateri Tekakwitha

Native American and consecrated virgin

Nicknames are generally silly, entertaining names given to people by affectionate relatives or friends. It's rare to hear an enviable one. But "Lily of the Mohawks?" Now, that's an elegant nickname. This is the nickname of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. Orphaned at the age of four, she was raised by her uncle, the chief of the Mohawk village. When priests came to the village, Kateri was drawn by their teachings, and converted at the age of 19, heedless of the anger of her relatives. Because she refused to work on Sundays, she was denied meals that day. Finally, a missionary encouraged her to run away to Montreal, Canada, to practice her faith freely. She followed his advice, and lived a life of extreme prayer and penance, taking a vow of virginity. She was beatified in 1980 and canonized on October 21, 2012.

OCTOBER 3

St. Mother Théodore Guérin, S.P.

Missionary and founder of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

Théodore Guérin was born October 2nd, 1784 in Etables, France. At the age of ten, she received her First Holy Communion and announced to the parish priest that she would one day be a nun. At the age of 25, she fulfilled this statement, entering the order of the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir, whose mission it was to educate children and to care for the poor, sick and dying. While serving at the convent, Théodore was asked to lead a small band of missionary sisters to Indiana in the United States of America. When the sisters arrived, there was only a log cabin with a porch that served as a chapel. Though her health was suffering, Théodore fell to this new task with a will. By the time she died in 1856, Mother Théodore had opened schools in Illinois and throughout Indiana. The sisters were well-established and respected. Through illness, poverty and all manner of unwelcoming circumstances, she trusted in God's providence and lived as a model of belief in his mercy. She was canonized in 2006 and is known as the patron saint of Indianapolis.

OCTOBER 5

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R.

Missionary preacher

As a child, Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R. used to claim that he didn't simply want to imitate his patron saint: he wanted to be another St. Francis Xavier. He entered the seminary in Augsburg after completing a degree in Philosophy. While there, he heard about the missionary activity of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and traveled to North America, specifically to become a Redemptorist priest. For nine years, he worked as the assistant of St. John Neumann in the parish of St. Philomena in Pittsburgh. He dedicated himself to the mission of preaching, and, before long, he had attained a reputation as an excellent preacher and an insightful, attentive spiritual director. He was also known for a happy availability for anyone who might need him at any

time. He became pastor of the church of St. Mary of the Assumption in New Orleans and died there of yellow fever while nursing the sick during an epidemic.

OCTOBER 19

St. Isaac Jogues, S.J.

Jesuit priest, missionary and one of the North American martyrs

St. Isaac Jogues was born in 1607 and ordained a Jesuit priest in 1636. During the year following his ordination, Isaac saw the fulfillment of his dearest wish: to be a missionary to the Indians in New France. His first several years of missionary work among the Indians were quiet enough, but in 1641, he and a group of fellow missionaries traveled to Iroquois country. There, the missionaries were whipped, bitten, and tormented in the most barbarous ways imaginable. St. Isaac Jogues became a living martyr, watching his friends die around him and being constantly threatened by death himself. After a year of this torment, in which Isaac was able to evangelize and baptize a few of the Iroquois, a chance for escape presented itself. He boarded a Dutch ship and went back to France. This only lasted a few months, however, as his heart still longed to bring the Word of God to the Iroquois. This return mission was to be his last. Isaac foresaw this when he wrote to a fellow Jesuit, saying "My heart tells me that, if I am the one to be sent on this mission, I shall go but I shall not return. But I would be happy if our Lord wished to complete the sacrifice where he began it." He was killed with a tomahawk in 1646 and canonized a saint in 1930 by Pope Pius XI. He is the patron saint of the Americas and Canada.

NOVEMBER 13

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, M.S.C.

Missionary and founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Francis Xavier Cabrini was born into a family of thirteen children. Due to health reasons, her first request to join a religious community was refused, but she was finally able to take her vows in 1877. Soon after being named prioress of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, she was urged by Pope Leo XIII to become a missionary in the United States. However, the house that had been promised to her for an orphanage was unavailable when she reached New York City, and the archbishop advised her to return to Italy. Frances departed from the archbishop's residence all the more determined to stay and establish that orphanage. And she did. In 35 years, Frances Xavier Cabrini founded 6 institutions for the poor, the abandoned, the uneducated and the sick, and organized schools and adult education classes for formation in the Catholic Faith. She died of malaria in her own Columbus Hospital in Chicago in 1917. She was the first United States Citizen to be canonized, and she is known as the patron saint of immigrants.

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St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, R.S.C.J.

Missionary to Native Americans

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne was a passionate young woman with a heart for missionary work. She joined the Visitation nuns at the age of 19, but a few years later, convents were shut down during the French Revolution, and Rose was forced to return to life as a lay woman for many years. Ten years later, she was finally able to rejoin a convent, this time as a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart. In 1818, she was sent to the Louisiana Territory as a missionary, facing illness, hardship and hunger to bring Catholicism to the Native Americans. She opened the first free school for girls west of the Mississippi river, as well as the first Catholic school for Native Americans. She was known among the Pottawatomie Indians as the "Woman Who Prays Always."

Blessed Sister Miriam Teresa, S.C.

Sister of Charity of St. Elizabeth

Teresa Demjanovich was born in 1901 to a Ruthenian family who had emigrated to New Jersey. She was a smart young woman who graduated high school at the age of 15. Her intellectual gifts were matched by her charity, as she delayed entering a convent to take care of her terminally ill parents. As a novice, Teresa took the name Miriam Teresa. Before she made her final vows, she was asked by her spiritual director to write down her spirituality for use in the training of other novices. This spiritual work was posthumously published under the title of Greater Perfection. In late 1926, Teresa fell ill and made her final vows from a hospital bed. She died on May 8, 1927. On October 4, 2014, Miriam Teresa was beatified at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, NJ, the first beatification in the US.

Blessed Father Stanley Rother

Martyr, Missionary to Guatemala

An Oklahoma farm boy, Father Stanley Francis Rother was born March 27, 1935, in Okarche, Oklahoma. Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa in 1963, he served in the diocese's Guatemala mission for fourteen years. He served the native Tzutuhil tribe, who are decedents of the Mayans. In order to serve his people, Fr. Rother learned both Spanish and the Tzutuhil language. Surrounded by extreme poverty, Fr. Rother ministered to his parishioners in their homes, eating with them, visiting the sick, aiding with medical problems and helping farm. While he served in Guatemala, a civil war raged between the militarist government forces and the guerillas. During this, conflict hundreds of thousands of Catholics were killed due to the Church's insistence on helping people. Eventually, Fr. Rother was targeted. For his safety, Fr. Rother returned to Oklahoma. Determined to give his life completely to his people, he stated that "the shepherd cannot run." Returning to Santiago Atitlan, he continued to minister to his people. Within days of his return, three men entered the rectory and executed Fr. Rother. Seeking justice in the midst of a protracted civil war, Fr. Rother fought courageously for the well-being of his people.

Blessed Father Solanus Casey, O.F.M. Cap.

Capuchin Franciscan, Humble Servant

Fr Solanus Casey was born on November 25th, 1870, in Oak Grove, Wisconsin. He entered the Capuchin Franciscans in Detroit in 1897. Known as "The Doorkeeper" when he was porter at St, Bonaventure's monastery, he was always ready to open the doors of the monastery to listen to anyone who knocked. He faithfully and humbly served the people of Detroit, MI, Huntington, IN and New York by providing soup for the hungry, kind words for the troubled, and a healing touch for the sick. People would seek out Fr. Solanus asking for "special favors," which lead to numerous miraculous healings and answered prayers. Known for his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Fr. Solanus would often play his violin for Jesus in the presence of the tabernacle. Fr. Solanus was diagnosed with erysipelas and died on July 31st, 1957. His body was found incorrupt thirty years after his death. He was declared venerable by Pope John Paul II on July 11th, 1995 and was beatified on November 18th, 2017 in Detroit.
