

WORLD & NATION

Second miracle credited to Philadelphia native

By Lou Baldwin
Catholic News Service

BENSALEM, Pa. — John Paul II's Jan. 27 decree on Blessed Katharine Drexel "means our holy and selfless Philadelphian will soon be declared a saint of the Roman Catholic Church," said Philadelphia Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua.

He spoke at a press conference Jan. 27 at the Bensalem motherhouse of the order Blessed Katharine founded, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The cardinal was joined by, among others, officials of the order and the little girl whose cure of deafness was the second miracle needed for canonization of the U.S. heiress, who left her wealthy upbringing for a religious life dedicated to the poor and marginalized.

The Vatican did not say when the canonization would be, but officials familiar with her cause said she probably would be canonized Oct. 1. The pope also recognized healings attributed to Pope John XXIII and of German-born Redemptorist Father Francis Xavier Seelos, who served in the United States.

When Blessed Katharine is canonized, Cardinal Bevilacqua noted, Philadelphia will be able to claim two American saints, her and St. John Neumann. The three other American saints are St. Frances Cabrini, St. Elizabeth Bayley Seton and St. Rose Philippine Duchesne.

"This is the day the Lord has made, and we are glad," said Blessed Sacrament Sister Beatrice Jeffries, vice president of the congregation Katharine Drexel founded in 1891 to minister to Native Americans and African-Americans.

"It is a day of rejoicing for the church of Philadelphia, a day of rejoicing for our people," she added.

At the time of the announcement the

congregation's president, Sister Monica Loughlin, was attending scheduled meetings at Xavier University in New Orleans, La., one of the institutions founded by Blessed Katharine. It is the only historically black U.S. Catholic college.

"We are rejoicing," she said in a telephone interview with *The Catholic Standard & Times*, Philadelphia's archdiocesan newspaper.

She said it was especially gratifying to be at Xavier to see the reaction of people there to the news. "This was one of her main outreaches," Sister Loughlin added.

In a statement issued Jan. 28 in Washington, the president of the U.S. bishops' conference, Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston Houston, said that "God has blessed the United States with many people who have worked with those in need" and for the church to single out one as being worthy of sainthood is an honor.

He added that the U.S. church also shares the hopes of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament that "this step toward canonization will advance efforts to eradicate racism, a goal of Blessed Katharine Drexel's life's work."

Katharine Drexel, who was born in Philadelphia in 1858 and died in Bensalem in 1955, was noted for her sanctity throughout her long life. Her cause for



Catholic Standard and Times/CNS
African-American and Native American children are depicted with Mother Katharine Drexel in a painting. Pope John Paul II, recognizing a second miracle attributed to the American nun, cleared the way Jan. 27 for her canonization. She will become the second U.S.-born saint.

canonization was formally opened in 1962; she was declared "venerable" in 1987.

In 1988, after the cure of a Bensalem teen, Robert Gutherman, who had a life-threatening ear infection, was accepted as a miracle attributed to Katharine's intercession, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

The second miracle recognized by the Vatican, which is the last step needed before sainthood, involved Amanda "Amy"

Wall, who was born deaf. When she was 17 months old, in March 1994, her hearing was restored.

Amy, now 7, was at the press conference with her parents, Constance and John Wall, and her brother, Jack, 14, and sister, Jeanette, 11.

Also present were Gutherman, Blessed Katharine's first miracle recipient, and Dr. Matthew Bucko of Norristown, Pa., who presented the case's medical aspects before the Rome medical board.

Bishop: Chaplaincy remains a barrier

PATERSON, N.J. (CNS) — The House leadership's recent decision to choose a Protestant minister over a Catholic priest for the post of House chaplain leads Catholics to wonder "whether there ever will be a Catholic priest chosen for this significant position," a New Jersey bishop said.

Bishop Frank J. Rodimer of Paterson made the comment in a Jan. 21 letter to House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas.

In it, he thanked Armey for having sent him a copy of his "respectful, and, I am sure, honest" explanation of his decision to select a Protestant minister as House chaplain rather than the Catholic priest who topped a bipartisan selection committee's list of the three most qualified candidates.

The letter explained Armey's reasons for choosing the Rev. Charles Wright, a Presbyterian minister, over Father Timothy O'Brien, a Milwaukee archdiocesan priest and Marquette University political science professor, for the \$132,000-a-year job.

"The reasons for your preference of the Protestant minister over the Catholic priest, not based on their denominations, but on their qualifications, are cogent," Bishop Rodimer wrote in his Jan. 21 letter to Armey.

"The fact, however," he continued, "that there never has been a priest chosen for this chaplaincy in spite of the large number of Roman Catholics in the United States and their contribution to our great nation can't help but make us wonder whether

there ever will be a Catholic priest chosen for this significant position."

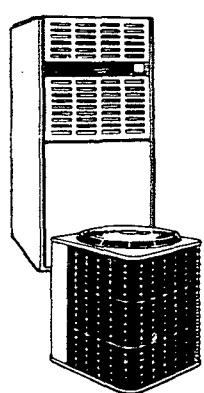
The House has had a chaplain since 1789 and the post has always been filled by a Protestant.

"We continue to experience this exclusion on the local level as well," Bishop Rodimer said, adding that "it is almost taken for granted a Catholic priest or deacon will not be engaged to serve as chaplain of government institutions."

"The pastoral and counseling experience of Catholic priests is just as extensive as that of clergy of other faiths," the bishop wrote.

Bishop Rodimer also said he was happy that that barriers continue to be broken through, "but one of the last barriers to be removed is that which exclude Catholic clergy from positions which are supposed to be, or should be, open to members of all denominations."

In response to the letters, memos and reports on the issue that were generated in December and January, when Congress was not in session, Armey and House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., have both denied the charges of anti-Catholic bias, saying that they picked the best-qualified person from the list of candidates.



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