

About Catherine

Catherine Kasper was born on May 26, 1820 in Dernbach, Germany, the eighth child of a peasant farmer and his wife. The domestic conditions in which she grew up gave her empathy for the plight of the poor, especially rural poor. Through these experiences, she felt inspired by God to help them. This awakened in her the decision to devote herself entirely to the service of the people around her.

Like-minded people joined her, and between 1845 and 1848 she founded the "religious association" that nursed the sick and cared for children. They also met regularly for prayer. The desire to live together as a community resulted in the construction of the first little house.

Bishop Peter Josef Blum accompanied the young community. On August 15, 1851, Catherine and four companions received the religious habit in the parish church of Wirges and made their first vows. Catherine, who was to lead the community, was given the name "Mary." This was the birth of the Congregation of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

Catherine Kasper was concerned with helping the whole person. Therefore, she was not satisfied with meeting only their worldly needs. She recognized the spiritual and social needs of the people of her time and tried to respond to the needs.

Catherine Kasper died on February 2, 1898.

She was beatified in Rome on April 16, 1978 by Pope Paul VI. Her feast day is February 1.



Blessed Catherine Kasper and the Canonization Process

May 26, 1820

Catherine was born in Dernbach, Germany

August 15, 1851

Catherine and four companions took first religious vows

August 1868

The first 8 Poor Handmaids arrived in the United States

June 1, 1870

Vatican endorsed and confirmed the PHJC Congregation

May 21, 1890

Congregation's Constitution was approved by Pope Leo XIII

February 2, 1898

Catherine died

April 16, 1978

Catherine was beatified by Pope Paul VI

March 6, 2018

Healing miracle recognized

The Congregation

Since 1851, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Congregation quickly grew and expanded its ministries and activities to other countries and regions. On June 1, 1870, the Vatican "endorsed and confirmed" the congregation, and Catherine became Superior General of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. On May 21, 1890, the congregation received the final approval of its Constitutions by Pope Leo XIII.

Upon Catherine's death, 1,725 Sisters belonged to the congregation. They ministered in Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, England and the Czech Republic, formerly known as Bohemia.

Currently there are 550 professed Sisters worldwide in Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, England, India, Mexico, Brazil, Kenya and Nigeria. There are currently novices and postulants in India, Nigeria, Kenya, Brazil, and Mexico.

The work that the Sisters do includes pastoral care, healthcare, education, and care of the elderly, children, disabled, and refugees. Ultimately, wherever the need is greatest the Poor Handmaids serve, with emphasis on women, adolescents and children.

Even though the number of Sisters in the congregation has diminished in recent decades, the spirit that inspired Catherine Kasper continues to inspire and guide the Sisters. Today, Sisters follow in the footsteps of Catherine by taking care of the sick, the needy, and the children.

The young women joining the congregation today continue to do what a young girl started in the little village of Dernbach, Germany a long time ago.