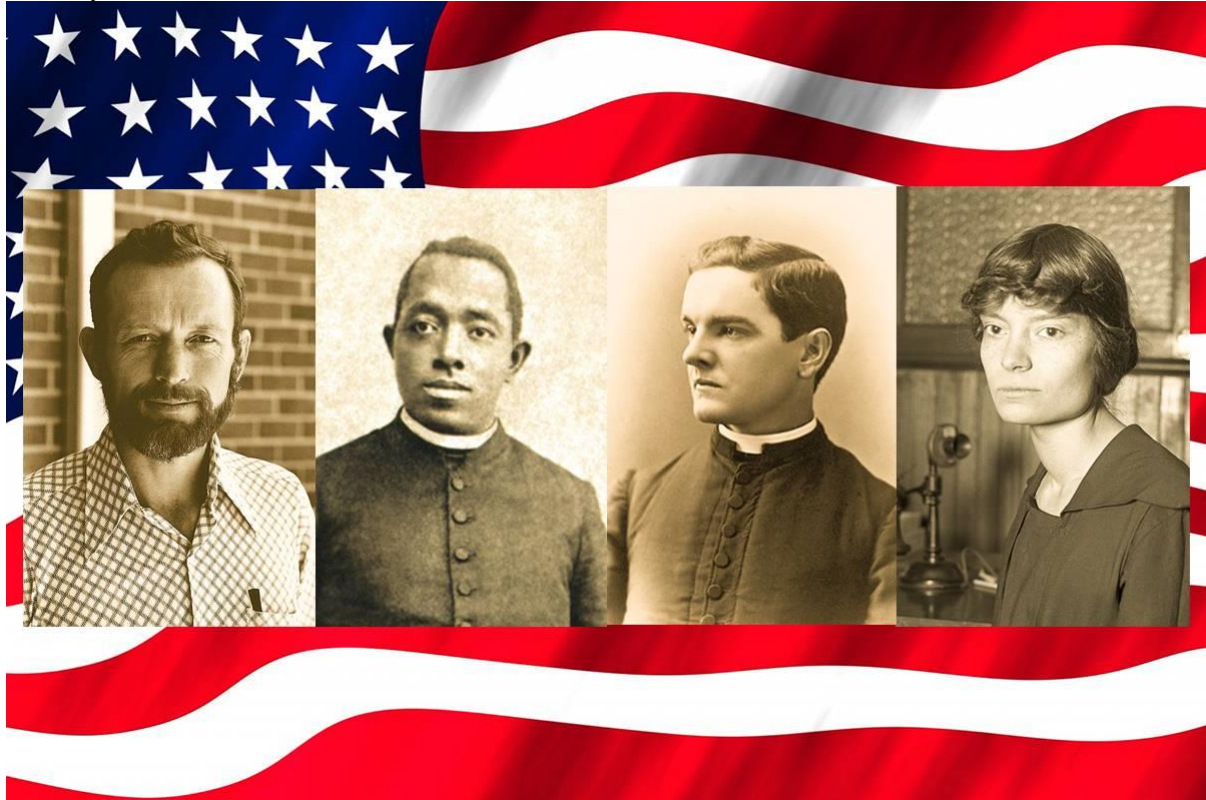


## 4 Soon-to-be saints who were born in the USA

*Meet these home-grown holy men and women, who should give hope and inspiration to us all*

Philip Kosloski

January 5, 2017



Living in the United States, it is easy to get the false impression that saints only come from Europe, especially if someone attends daily Mass — the liturgy celebrates the lives of numerous holy men and women who lived in a place and time very much removed from our own surroundings.

This experience is very different from Catholics who live in Europe, who literally walk by churches every day that house the relics of a saint (or multiple saints), who lived in their neighborhood and walked the same streets. There may even be a relative of the saint in the town who can trace their lineage to that holy woman or man.

Then again, the Catholic Church in the United States is relatively young; she has only been present in the New World for around 400 years and compared to the 2,000-year history of Catholics in Europe, it shouldn't be surprising that the Church has only recognized 13 canonized saints from this land. Out of that number, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Katharine Drexel and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha remain the only saints born in United States territory.

However, that number is expected to rise in the coming years with a total of 46 causes in the United States well underway at various stages on the road to sainthood. This is good news, as we need many more strong Catholic witnesses, who can show us that it is possible to become a saint, even in the United States.

For the purposes of this article, we will highlight four holy men and women whose causes for canonization are very active and hope to draw to a close in the near future.

### **Servant of God Augustus Tolton**

Born in 1854 to parents who were slaves, Tolton was baptized at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Brush Creek, Missouri. His family eventually were freed from slavery and moved to Quincy, Illinois where they worked at a tobacco company. During that time Tolton met a priest who, in what was a very controversial move, allowed him to attend the nearby parochial school. Tolton soon became attracted to the priesthood and tried to apply to seminary. Every American seminary rejected his application.

With the support of his parish priest, he was eventually allowed to study at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome and was ordained a priest there in 1886. Tolton was then sent back to the United States and served as a pastor of Saint Monica's in Chicago and ministered to the African American community there. He died in 1897 and Cardinal George officially opened his cause for canonization on March 2, 2010. A commission was opened in 2011 to examine his life, which was then closed in 2014. The findings were sent to Rome and in December the Archdiocese exhumed Tolton's body as another step toward his canonization. Two miracles have already been sent to Rome to be verified and if approved, could expedite his road to recognition as a saint.

### **Servant of God Dorothy Day**

Born in 1897 in Brooklyn, New York, Day was raised in a Protestant family and grew up wanting to be active in the fight against the many social injustices of the day. Early on she fought for many issues and was even jailed for a short time. Her lifestyle is often described as "bohemian" and her loose living bore the fruit of an unwanted pregnancy that the father wanted terminated. Day gave in to the pressures and had an illegal abortion in 1919.

The experienced weighed on Day and eventually she dug deeper into her fascination with the Catholic Church. She met a Catholic sister who educated her in the Catholic faith and led to her ultimate conversion. Day's newfound faith gave her new life and focus to her social activism. She would eventually cross paths with Peter Maurin and found the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933, helping the poor and marginalized with Houses of Hospitality among other things. She died in 1980 and her cause for canonization was officially launched in 2000 and a canonical inquiry into her life began on April 19, 2016. This is the first major step in her cause for canonization.

### **Venerable Michael J. McGivney**

Born in 1852 in Waterbury, Connecticut, McGivney was the eldest of 13 children and at the age of 16 entered seminary to become a priest. His studies were interrupted when his father died and his family needed him home to help raise his siblings. McGivney resumed studies at Saint Mary's in Baltimore and was ordained a priest in 1877.

Knowing first-hand the loss of a wage earner in the family, McGivney started a fraternal organization called the Knights of Columbus to assist families and provide financial assistance in the event that a father died unexpectedly, leaving his family without a source of income. The organization has blossomed over the past 100 years and is one of the most well known Catholic societies around the world, providing life insurance to millions of its members. McGivney died in 1890 and his cause for canonization was officially launched in 1996. The inquiry into his life was closed in 2000 in 2008 was given the title "venerable." Most recently a possible miracle was sent to Rome in 2013 and is currently under investigation. If approved, a beatification would come soon after.

### **Blessed Stanley Rother**

Born in 1935 in Okarche, Oklahoma, Rother grew-up on a simple family farm, doing his chores, attending school and playing with his siblings. During high school he began to feel the call of the priesthood and after graduating, studied at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, Texas. However, the academics were difficult, especially because most of the courses were taught in Latin. Rother was then given a second chance by his bishop and sent to Mount Saint Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The switch was what he needed, leading to his ordination to the priesthood in 1963.

After serving five years as an associate pastor in Oklahoma, Rother asked permission to serve in Guatemala. He deeply loved the people and worked among them, living, eating and even working with them (he put his farm skills to work, helping them improve their methods of farming). A civil war broke out in Guatemala and after catechists began to disappear from the parish, his name was found on a death list. At first Rother went back to Oklahoma, but then returned, saying, "the shepherd cannot

run.” Within days of his return he was executed in his rectory. In 2007 his cause for canonization was officially launched and in December, Pope Francis recognized his death as martyrdom for the faith and approved his beatification. On account of this recent development, his beatification ceremony has been tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2017. He is the first recognized martyr born in the United States.

There are scores of others. Over the course of 2017, Aleteia will be helping to make these American holy men and women — our co-religionists — better known.

**Philip Kosloski**

Philip Kosloski is a husband and father of five, and staff writer at Aleteia. He also writes for [The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#) (Apostleship of Prayer), and blogs at the [National Catholic Register](#).