

2017.10.22

CANONIZATION ANNIVERSARY OF KATERI & 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
OF DEACON RON BOYER'S ORDINATION

My dear sisters and brothers,

Sego skenagoaga!

We live in a fragmented world. We have alternative facts and fake news. Are we post-truth? Are we moving into a “post human” stage of history and are we writing a new human narrative? The meaning of our human nature has always been strongly influenced by its reference to religion. One sure example is that we descend from the same parents and this make us one humanity, one family, and we are made in the image and likeness of God. Until now we have found our security in our faith. Our Catholic faith has determined what we are to believe and how we are to behave. What has been lacking is the full expression of why we believe. In 1963, 250,000 joined Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Mall in Washington. Remember we had not Internet and no social media. What is surprising is that they did not come because of an invitation from Martin Luther King, they came because they believed what King believed, and they came for themselves. They came for themselves. They knew why they believed.

It may also be striking that the Dalai Lama in *The Book Of Joy* shares a record of one week's dialogue with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and he says: :

Religion is not sufficient. Religion has been very important in human history. And perhaps for another thousand years it will continue to bring benefit to humanity. ... So now we have to think seriously. Just to pray or rely on religious faith is not sufficient. It will remain a source of inspiration, but in terms of seven billion human beings, it's not sufficient. No matter how excellent, no religion can be universal. So we have to find another way to promote these values. I think the only way really is as we have said, through education. Education is universal. We must teach people, especially our youth, the source of happiness and satisfaction. We must teach them that the ultimate source of happiness is within themselves. Not machine. Not technology. Not power. We are not talking about heaven or hell or Buddhahood or salvation, these are too far away. We are part of this important process to help spread the message that love, kindness, and affection

are the source of joy and happiness. Our basic human nature is good, is positive, so that can give us a basis for courage and self-confidence.

Today we are celebrating the fifth anniversary of the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha and she as a young woman tried to rely what and how the Blackrobes presented as the Catholic faith, and when she asked to be baptized they said she was not ready. Kateri persisted because she knew why she believed, she believed in the Cross of Jesus Christ, she was finally baptized but it was why she believed, she knew why Jesus believed in the Cross, and she came to the Church for herself.

Today's first reading from Isaiah is about Cyrus, a non-Jew, who was Persian. Today he would be an Iranian. Iran is in the news because the President of the United States wants to dissolve the American-Iranian agreement about the development of material that could lead to the creation of nuclear weapons. President Trump could learn a great deal in listening to a Ted Talk by Dr. Neil MacGregor who explains the history or histories of the Cyrus Cylinder. The cylinder predates the Hebrew account in the book of Isaiah and in the Book of Daniel.

Cyrus conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. He gave them their freedom. He also set up a model of how you run a great multinational, multi-faith, multicultural society. In 1979 the Iran-Iraq war when Iran won the Iranians remember their great past, their great past when they fought Iraq and won. It becomes critical to find a symbol that will pull together all Iranians, Muslims and non-Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews living in Iran, people who are devout, not devout. And the obvious emblem is Cyrus.

Cyrus means through the cylinder that he is the defender of the homeland, the champion of Iranian identity and of the Iranian peoples, tolerant of all faiths. The content of the Cylinder is one of the great declarations of human aspiration. What story of the Middle East, what story of the world, do you want to see reflecting what is expressed in this cylinder? The most powerful and the wisest voice of all of may well be the voice of this mute thing, the Cyrus cylinder. It is definitely food for thought. It is from the accounts that we have the expression "the writing is on the wall" which means things will work out in the plan originally of the god Marduk and now of Jehovah.

Today, on the fifth anniversary of the Canonization of Kateri Tekakwita ... her voice is mute in her tomb here is the Church but she remains a powerful symbol of

why we believe. In thinking of Kateri we are here not at her invitation but we are here for ourselves because when we know why we believe in the Cross of Jesus we will come for ourselves. Nobody will have to invite us ... we will come for ourselves.

In our fragmented world why we believe has been lost. We look at the Cross as if there is no one on the Cross. We don't see that it is Jesus, the Son of God, who has been scourged, whipped, nailed to the Cross and had his side pierced. Why did Jesus believe in the Cross? He believed in the Cross because he wanted to do the will of his Father, and the will of the Father was to forgive the sins of humanity, and as Pope Francis has reminded us forgiveness can never be conditional. Why did Jesus believe? Why because he knew that love needed to be unconditional to allow forgiveness to be unconditional. The lesson is vivid in the picture of the man kneeling at the feet of the tied poor and washing their feet is the Son of God. Kateri was a Mohawk and could have remained forever the Lily of the Mohawks but there was much more in store for her, she would be Saint Kateri, the Lily of the Mohawks, for all of humanity. We are here for ourselves to rethink the meaning of the Cross of Jesus. The Cross was interpreted for many centuries as a moment when our personal sins crucified Jesus, when we would spend our lives trying to make up for our sins but there are other meanings to the Cross. The Cross is above all the moment when God in Jesus liberates us and in our liberation we are to liberate people from those structures that have created the pain and suffering of so many. The Cross of Kateri and our Cross liberates native and non-natives and give us all the freedom to speak up and defend the rights of our native people to have those who are responsible for the missing and dead native women be brought to trial so that justice prevails, when the 92 recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are addressed and implemented, when every native woman and man can stand with their head held high with pride that they are native, when the Cross is a real symbol of the suffering of our native people in residential schools and who still live under the paternalism and colonialism of the Indian Act.

This is why Kateri believed in the Cross, liberation, and when natives and non-natives know why we believe in the Cross as liberation, we will participate in the liberation of all people and people will come for themselves and all of us will come for ourselves because we all need to be free, to be liberated, from what is holding us back for understanding why we believe in the Cross and why we come for ourselves.

In today's second reading from Paul to the Thessalonians Paul is joined by two companions Silvanus and Timothy wishing grace and peace to the community at Thessalonica calling to mind their work of faith and labor of love, seeing the endurance of their hope, knowing how they were chosen. They and we are chosen for the Gospel that did not come in word alone but in power and the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

The choice reminds us that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. In the Gospel the choice made to add to the ministries of the community comes from the needs of the community. The appointment of deacons comes from the needs of the community and the renewal of the Permanent Diaconate meets the needs of today's Church today and today we are celebrating the 30TH anniversary of Ron Boyer's ordination to the Permanent Diaconate, a service, a ministry to the community. However, this does not mean that Ron is in charge and everything lands on his shoulders to be resolved. I know why Ron believes and why he accepted the call of the community to serve as a Deacon, do you? Why Kateri believes is why Ron believes and why he was the Vice-postulator of her cause for canonization, why he was involved at the Kateri Centre, why he helps with the Kateri Magazine and attends the Kateri conferences, but that's not everything. Why Ron believes and is proud of being Ojibwa and marrying a wonderful Mohawk woman, Sheila, and bringing up a family in Kahnawake but that's not why Ron believes, why Ron believes is because he believes in the Cross of Jesus and why he believes is because the Cross leads all of us to why there is a Cross and that is because there is the Resurrection. Congratulations Ron on a most worthwhile thirty years as a Deacon and of a friendship that I treasure.

Why would anyone believe in the Cross of Jesus? It is our faith in the Resurrection that we see the radical vision of Jesus and we can experience it in Jesus' radical love, the radical love of Jesus who is hidden in God but which shines through us when we go to the peripheries and bring people to the center of the Church to experience Jesus unconditional love and forgiveness.

Jesus' love resides in his Sacred Heart and there is no other way for Jesus to express his radical love than through our human hearts. God's love comes to us through human hearts and love becomes radical when we accept the challenges to bring social justice where there are injustices, when we uphold human right when they are being trampled upon, and when we work and pray to create a world where we can live in peace and love. The more human our hearts, the kinder we are, the more open our minds, the more gentle we are in a world where there is too much violence, then our hearts will tell everyone why we believe in the Cross of Jesus

and why we believe in His resurrection. It is the Resurrection that allows Jesus to be hidden in God and allows his spirit to stir our hearts and urge us to create the Reign of God, a Reign of justice, mercy, love and peace.

Maybe we have found what Gord Downey sang about when a young native Chanie Wenjack tried to find his way home ... the Secret Path ... the secret path that Kateri found in the Cross ... it was Jesus' secret path. Thank you Kateri for bringing us to the Cross of Jesus. Now we know why we believe and why we must have a radical vision of radical love and be witnesses to the unconditional and radical love of Jesus.

No:wa goa Kateri.

Father John Walsh