

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha



Canonization
October 21, 2012

Saint Kateri October



Tekakwitha 21, 2012

The Tekakwitha Conference is very pleased to share with you this special Commemorative Issue of the Canonization of our Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

May it serve as one of your highlights of 2012. This memorable event in St. Peter's Square on October 21, 2012 brought many of our faithful members and friends to Rome, Italy. On that beautiful Sunday morning, over two thousand followers of Saint Kateri witnessed in person Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI declare our patroness, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha among the Saints of the Universal Church. What a moment for all who cheered, clapped with tear-filled eyes and joy-filled hearts during the canonization ceremony of seven blessed. A journey of hope that took many years of perseverance in prayer and fasting had become a reality 'in our lifetime'.

As we continue to rejoice, we at the Tekakwitha Conference National Headquarters wish to express our sincerest gratitude to you our friends, your families and our generous benefactors who support this indigenous catholic organization through prayer and monetary donations.

May your 2012 Christmas gift be one of awe and inspiration for the Messiah has come to bless you with the joys and wonders of His great love. In 2013, our prayer and wish for each of you is to experience God's continued loving presence in your daily life.

Meanwhile, enjoy this special issue of the Canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha and Mass of Thanksgiving.

Blessed Christmas and a Holy New Year to all,
The Tekakwitha Conference Staff

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

By: Sister Kateri Mitchell

On a beautiful sunny day in 1656 in a place now called Auriesville, New York, a little baby girl was born to a Mohawk chief and a Catholic Algonquin mother. The Mohawk father called his baby, Sunshine.

In 1660, a smallpox epidemic swept through the Mohawk village and claimed the lives of Sunshine's parents and little brother. Orphaned at age four, Sunshine was adopted by her uncle and aunt. The smallpox affected her eyesight and left her face severely scarred. From that time, the little girl was given the name Tekakwitha, which means one who puts things in order or in place because she had difficulty seeing even for a very short distance before her. To this day she is known by the name Tekakwitha. Besides being left with poor vision she was very frail physically.

Her village was infested with the smallpox infection so the Mohawks had to relocate on the north side of the Mohawk River to a place, Caughnawaga, today known as Fonda, New York. It was in this village at the age of 20, Tekakwitha asked for baptism from a Jesuit priest known as Blackrobes. At baptism, she was given the name Catherine, Kateri in the Mohawk language.

Despite the rejection, ridicule and abusive behavior toward her, Tekakwitha pursued her dream. She wanted to know more about the God of the Blackrobes. The Blackrobes recognized her to be unique, prayerful, courageous and strong. To protect and encourage her faithfulness to mass and prayer, the priests helped her to leave her people and make a long, tiresome journey north to a place now called Kahnawake where she would be free and safe to practice her faith.

It was in this place that Kateri Tekakwitha was able to deepen her prayer life, attend



mass and serve and visit her people. She practiced many devotions and penances which led to her declining health and finally on Wednesday of Holy Week, she spoke her last words, 'Jesus I love you'. On April 17, 1680, at the age of 24, Kateri Tekakwitha returned to her Creator. Shortly after dying, it disfigured face became clear and she was beautiful.

There are many accounts that after her death there were countless miracles performed through her intercession. Many of the sick were cured and many prayers were answered. The formal process for canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha began in 1932. In 1943, Pope Pius XII declared her Venerable. On June 21, 1980 Pope John Paul II beatified Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha and raised her among other blessed.

In 2006, a young boy, Jacob Finkbonner suffered a life threatening flesh-eating bacterium. There were many prayers through the intercession of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha prayed

among the Kateri Circle members on the Lummi Reservation and also throughout the continent among the Kateri Circle members and members of the Tekakwitha Conference. A first class relic of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was also placed on little Jake's body while he was still in Seattle Children's Hospital. A long process of investigation took over a number of years. Finally, on December 17, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI approved a first class miracle attributed to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. On February 18, 2012, our Holy Father announced the date of canonization for seven (7) blessed and among the names was Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.



On October 21, 2012, thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square to witness the words by Pope Benedict XVI that one of our own, Kateri Tekakwitha, member of the Mohawk/Algonquin Nations and Turtle Clan was proclaimed to the world as one of the new Saints in our Holy Mother Church.

May we always keep prayers of praise and thanksgiving in our hearts and lips because we finally have a Saint we can call our own. Kateri Tekakwitha, first Indigenous Saint of North America.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

DAY 1

Arriving into the Fiumicino Airport in Rome and Hotel Check-In



Tour of the Vatican Museum





Reception in the Vatican Museum gardens welcoming the Pilgrims to Rome



DAY 2

Day 2 was the official Canonization Pilgrimage to Assisi. The Pilgrims visited Saint Clara Basilica and attended mass at Saint Francis Basilica. The day ended with dinner at Carfagna Restaurant within sight of Saint Francis Basilica.



DAY 3

Day 3 was the Canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha and 6 others. Nearly 80,000 people were gathered in Saint Peter's Square to celebrate the Canonization. After the Canonization there was a reception to celebrate.

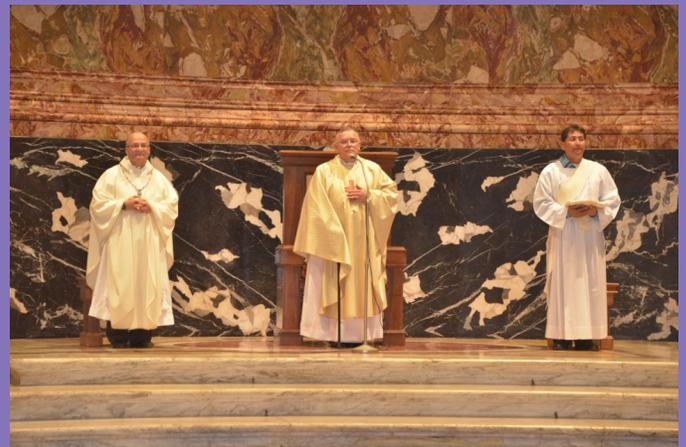


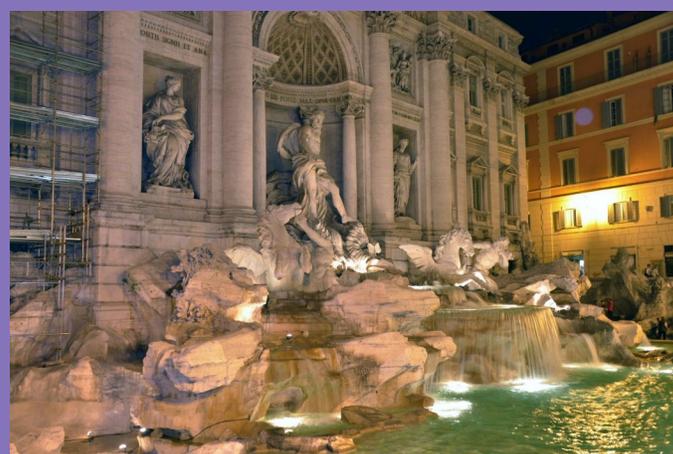




DAY 4

Day 4 was the Mass of Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims gathered to celebrate their new Saint in the beautiful halls of Saint Peter's Basilica. Afterwards there was a dinner at Piazza Navona AFresco and a walking tour of Rome.







HOMILY BY BISHOP HOWARD J. HUBBARD

ON THE OCCASION OF THE CANONIZATION OF KATERI TEKAKWITHA

Monday, October 22, 2012

St. Peter's, Rome

We have come a long way to be in this place today and to celebrate this Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha. From the wilderness of 17th century North America to the 21st century in ancient Rome; from the banks of the Mohawk River in upstate New York and the banks of the St. Lawrence River in Southern Canada to the banks of the Tiber here in the Eternal City; from the written accounts of the French Jesuit missionaries and the oral histories of the Native American people to the pomp and splendor of yesterday's solemn ceremony in St. Peter's Square.

From the introduction of Kateri's cause in 1884 to the Italian Pope Pius XII declaring her venerable in 1943, to her beautification by the Polish Pope Blessed John Paul II in 1980 to her canonization by our present German pontiff Pope Benedict XVI.

The fact that this obscure Indian maiden who lived such a relatively short, and by the world's standards, a rather ordinary and uneventful life, is now presented to the universal Church as a model of holiness and ministry is truly extraordinary.

There are many to whom we owe gratitude today: the Canadian and American Bishops who have promoted and supported her cause over the past 128 years, the Bureau of Black and Indian Missions, especially Msgr. Paul Lenz and Father Wayne Paysse, the Kateri Tekakwitha Conference headed by Sr. Kateri Mitchell, the Jesuits and Franciscans who have sponsored the Shrines in Auriesville and Fonda, and the priests who have maintained her tomb at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Kahnawake Canada, the many men, women and children who over the years have kept her story alive and prayed so fervently for her canonization, the Congregation for the Causes for the Saints, in a special way Father Molineri, S. J. who has been such a persistent postulator of her cause and to Jake Finkbonner and his family of Ferndale in the State of Washington, who in 2005 on his 6th birthday, injured his mouth while playing basketball that then developed into a flesh eating bacteria which was destined to take his life until a family friend, Father Tim Sauer, when called to administer the last rites, convinced Jake's devout family, whose father is Lummi Indian, to pray with friends, neighbors, community members and even strangers, for Kateri's intercession which led to Jake's healing - the bona fide miracle which was needed for Kateri's canonization.

Of course, most importantly, we should be grateful to Kateri herself whose courageous life of deep faith, selfless love and humble service has inspired millions over the years and who is the first Native North American Saint whose canonization, hopefully, will help to heal our First Nation's people who have been victims of such oppression, abuse and exploitation.

The outline of Kateri's life is simple yet profound, and known to most present today. She was born in Ossernenon, a Native American village on the banks of the Mohawk River which is now in the State of New York and known as Auriesville. Her father was a Mohawk chief and her mother a Catholic Alogonquin. At the age of 4 her village was ravaged by a smallpox epidemic taking the lives of her parents and brother and leaving Kateri terribly weakened, her face scarred permanently and her eyesight severely impaired. She was adopted by her 2 aunts and her uncle, also a Mohawk chief.

After their village was burned down by French forces, the family moved to a new village called Caughnawaga 5 miles away on the North side of the Mohawk, which is now known as Fonda.

Although not baptized as an infant, Kateri had fond memories of the stories of Christian faith related by her mother, which remained impressed upon her indelibly.

When Tekakwitha was 18 years old the Jesuit missionary, Father James deLamberville, came to Caughnawaga to establish a chapel. Kateri learned more about the Christian faith and on Easter Sunday at the age of 20 she was baptized and given the name Kateri which is the Mohawk for Catherine.

Unfortunately, the so-called “black robes” with their strange religion and association with the European fur traders were looked upon with suspicion by many of the villagers and Kateri soon was ostracized because of her embrace of Christianity. Due to increasing hostility by her fellow villagers, Kateri left Caughnawaga and fled 200 miles north on a two month journey through the woods, mountains, rivers, lakes and, streams of the Adirondacks to the Catholic mission of St. Francis Xavier at Sault Ste. Louis near Montreal in Canada. There, Kateri received her first holy communion on Christmas Day 1677. Two years later on the Feast of the Annunciation she made a vow of perpetual virginity, as far as we know, the First Native American ever to do so.

Then, at the tender age of 24 she died on Wednesday of Holy Week 1680 – her body simply worn out by the long term effects of the smallpox disease as well as by the harsh penance she took upon herself. For example, she exposed herself to the pain of cold and to the burn of hot coals as well as pierced her skin with thorns to imitate the suffering of Christ. Her last words were, “Jesus I love you”.

Fifteen minutes after her death the two Jesuits and a roomful of Native Americans who were present at her passing testified that the ugly scars which disfigured her face from childhood disappeared miraculously.

One may ask what the virtuous life of this 17th century Indian maiden, the so-called Lily of the Mohawks, raised in such a different social and cultural environment than our own has to offer us today. Let me suggest six contemporary lessons which might be drawn from Kateri’s life of heroic Christian virtue.

First, Kateri embraced the theology of the cross. In addition to being orphaned and permanently scarred, after her baptism she became a village outcast. Her family refused her food on Sunday because she wouldn’t work on the Sabbath and children would taunt her and throw stones at her. She was threatened with torture or death if she did not renounce her Christian faith. This led to her enforced exile in Canada.

This willingness to embrace the cross, which Kateri did so wholeheartedly, is too often missing in our age of instant gratification. We in the 21st Century have been sold and to a large extent have bought a bill of goods. This bill of goods tells us that pain and suffering, that tension, anxiety and discomfort of any sort need not exist and that life at all times and under every circumstance is meant to be pleasurable and comfortable. In other words, we have been convinced that for every pain there is an antidote, for every depression there is a mood reverser, and for every bit of discomfort there is some new magic formula that can alter our life’s situation.

However, as we all know from experience, life just isn’t like that. There is always the need for discipline and sacrifice in our lives. This is one of the great mysteries of our faith, the mystery of the cross.

Hence, we must recognize and appreciate, as Kateri did, that the cross must be an integral and essential part of the Christian life; the cross of accepting a message that is counter cultural and that, consequently, will be frequently ridiculed, scorned, and rejected; the cross of living in a church that is still in the throes of transition in our Post-Vatican II era, where age old moorings have been cut off and set adrift, and where we are experiencing the tension and stress of forging new ministerial models and approaches; the cross of giving up some ideas which once seemed unchangeable or of shedding attitudes that used to provide security; the cross of being misunderstood and misjudged, but also the cross of not seeing clearly and, thus, of misunderstanding and misjudging others; the cross of racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination and oppression; the cross of being patient and kind, even when humanly speaking we want to strike back; the cross of showing compassion toward others when precious little compassion is shown in return.

Yes, accepting these and other crosses, too numerous, too unpredictable and too personal to mention, like a job loss, the death of a loved one, a child gone wrong, an alcoholic family member or a serious illness becomes the inevitable part of our journey of discipleship. Kateri grasped and demonstrated this acceptance of the cross par excellence.

Second, Kateri witnessed the importance of other-centeredness. Despite her poor eyesight and infirmities she was constantly looking to serve others. She appreciated the gospel message that “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a grain of wheat. But if it dies it will bear much fruit.”

Kateri devoted herself tirelessly to serving others in need: catechizing the young, attending to the plight of the sick, and caring for the frail elderly and dying. Like Jesus, she was a person for others and her life serves as an antidote to the individualism of our age wherein “my needs, my wants, and my feelings” become the focus of our existence and the basis for decision making and action.

Third, Kateri offered a marvelous witness to a chaste life which is so desperately needed in a world that is sex oriented and sex saturated but not truly sexual in the fullest and finest sense of that term.

Since the so-called “sexual revolution” of the 60’s, which has led to the hook up culture in which we live, the growing numbers of couples involved in cohabitation and the rising rates of divorce, it has become truly countercultural to live a chaste life. Indeed, sexual pleasure and gratification are seen by many as essential for a meaningful and fully actualized life.

But as already stated, Kateri became the first known Native American to commit herself voluntarily to a life of virginity, which was so foreign to her culture, and she inspired others by witnessing to the fact that such a chaste life could truly be fulfilling, affirming and life giving.

As Father Thomas Rosica, the CEO of the Catholic Salt and Light Media Foundation and Television Network in Canada notes, Kateri “is a model of chastity and purity, a sure guide, teaching how to live the gift of our sexuality with delight and respect for God’s loving plan.... The more we accept chastity and make it our way of life, the more people around us will sense that the Holy Spirit dwells within us... and be able to find God through us.”

Fourth, Kateri is the patron of ecology and the environment. In accord with her Native American heritage she taught us how to respect the created world, to protect it and to care for it.

Certainly this is a needed lesson for our day as we continue to exploit the universe by industrial pollution, strip mining and harmful carbon dioxide emissions from coal, oil and natural gas which contribute to the growing challenge of global warming and climate change.

Our present Holy Father Pope Benedict has written extensively on this devastating reality and in so doing has become known as the Green Pope.

For example, in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Benedict stated that the degradation of the environment is a pressing moral problem that threatens human life itself. He notes that the “church’s commitment to environmental protection flows from a religious duty to protect earth, water and air as a gift of God’s creation meant for everyone, and above all to save humankind from the danger of self destruction.”

Thus, we must learn to blend green theology with practices like waste recycling, the use of biodegradable and organically grown food products, renewable energy supplies as well as taking responsibility for protecting our ecosystems and watersheds, improving air quality and responding to the needs of those most victimized by climate change: the poorest and most vulnerable members of our human family.

Let us, then, urgently and incessantly seek Kateri’s intercession so that we will make environmental awareness, sustainability and justice part and parcel of our sacred responsibility to care for God’s creation and to pass it on to future generations better than when we inherited it.

Fifth, Kateri is an enduring role model for the New Evangelization – given the fact that she was an instrument in her own lifetime of the first evangelization.

With the secularism, moral relativism, scientism and new atheism of our age, all the industrialized countries of our globe have experienced a dramatic decline in mass attendance, sacramental participation and adherence to church teachings. The num-

bers of Catholics who have stopped practicing their faith and the growing number of unchurched throughout the world is astronomical. Further, there is a growth of those whom sociologists now label as “the spirituals”: those who seek transcendence and meaning in their lives, but feel no need to identify with any organized religion.

Thus, Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have called for a New Evangelization – one marked not by the restoration of a past age but by bold new steps to proclaim afresh the joyful and liberating message of the Gospel.

Today we are confronted with a need for a rapidly renewed proclamation of the Good News for those already baptized but who have long since not experienced a real relationship with Jesus Christ. It must be a relationship based not on externals or mere conformity to a ritualistic tradition but upon a genuine love for Jesus Christ and the Father he revealed and the Spirit he promised. It must be a relationship which permeates all that we do, not only through our formal worship but through our own family, social, work and community interactions.

Our laity, especially, must appreciate and put into practice their baptismal and confirmation call to holiness and ministry and, then, find the courage and strength to share with others, family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers and even strangers, the joy, hope, peace, serenity and consolation of our Catholic Christian faith and how this faith gives meaning, purpose and direction to our lives.

At great personal cost, then, we must emulate by word and example Kateri’s evangelizing spirit in our day.

Sixth, and finally, Kateri was a woman of deep prayer and devotion. She spent hours of her day kneeling, before the Blessed Sacrament often in a cold chapel. She loved reciting the rosary and always carried it around her neck. Her favorite devotion was to fashion crosses out of sticks and place them throughout the woods. These crosses served as spiritual markers which reminded her to stop and spend a moment in prayer.

We also must learn to be people whose lives are permeated by prayer. It has been said that the crisis of our age is a crisis of spirituality. We have lost a sense of the transcendent. We have lost the art of contemplation. We have failed in our efforts to integrate liturgy and work, prayer and service, faith and action into our everyday lives.

To be sure we have moved away from the monastic approach to spirituality which dominated the life of the church for many centuries. However, we are still struggling in our efforts to foster an authentic apostolic spirituality, one which enables us to harmonize our work with our prayer; one which enables us to be doers who contemplate; one which enables us to reflect upon the wonder of God’s creation, the beauty of the redeemer’s love and the pulsating presence of God’s spirit in our own lives and within the world, and then, to translate that reflection into words and deeds that speak to contemporary realities.

The only way we can do this is if we are people of prayer. For it is only in prayer that we can touch base with the Lord. It is only in prayer that we can see ourselves as we really are and as God sees us and it is only in prayer that we can overcome the frustrating, unpleasant and at times totally incomprehensible aspects of our daily life and bring to those with whom we live and work and to those we are called to serve the love of God whom we have met and known in our own moments of prayerful reflection.

Karl Rahner, arguably the greatest Catholic theologian of the 20th century, put it this way, “there is only one road that leads to God, it is prayer. If someone tries to show you another, you are being deceived.”

The secret of all secrets, then, is that our lives must be rooted in a deep intimate personal relationship with God through our liturgical and personal prayer. To the extent that our lives are so rooted, to that extent can we be convincing without being arrogant, able to confront without being offensive, gentle and forgiving without being soft and authentic role models and witnesses without being manipulative.

I hope and pray, then, that we who rejoice today in Kateri’s canonization will celebrate it by imitating her embrace of the cross, her other centeredness, her chaste living, her love for the environment, her commitment to evangelization and her life of prayer. If we do so, we can be assured that our lives, like hers, will truly give honor and glory to God and bring hope, peace and betterment to God’s people.

May it be so!

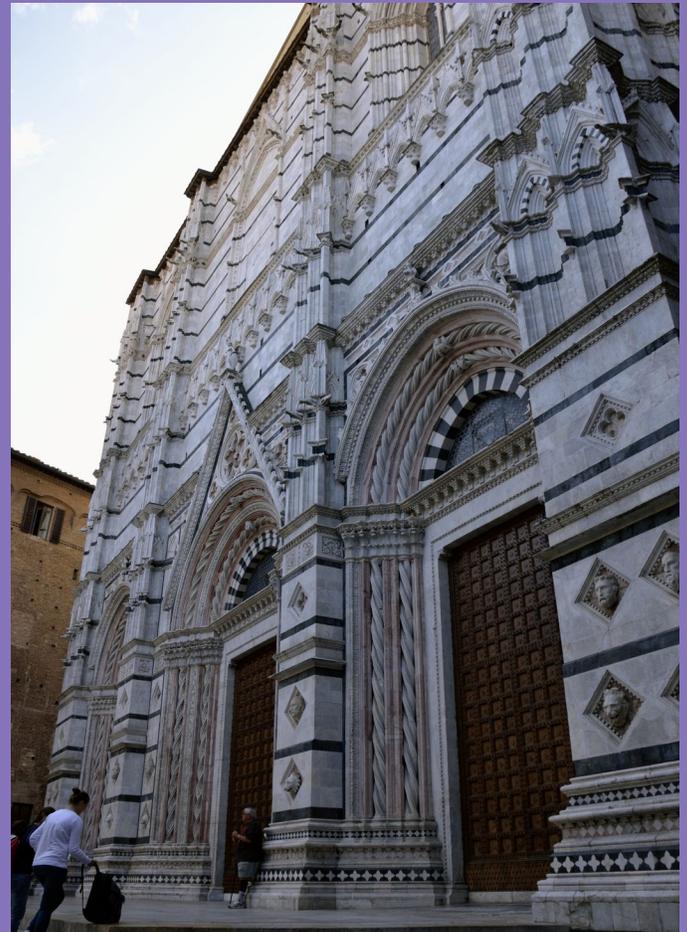
DAY 5

Day 5 was a tour and Mass at Saint Maria Degli Angeli Basilica. That night there was a Dinner at the Helio Cabala Hotel Restaurant.



EXTENDED PILGRIMAGE

For those who chose to go on the extended tour, they were treated to a tour of Florence, Siena, Padua, and Venice. They enjoyed good food, beautiful architecture, gondola rides, and a little rain.









Photos Compliments of: Anne Scheurman, Herman Ray, Tracy Hall, and Brandon Vick

Special Thanks to: The Renaissance Group

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Pray For Us!

Groups

Photos taken in Saint Peter's Square





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