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Rev. Henri Bechard,  
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Honoured by St. Mary's University,  
Halifax, N.S.

"A Message" from the Newly Consecrated  
Bishop of Saskatoon

Newly Appointed Director, Gravelbourg  
Diocesan Council

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# The Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha

## Protectress of Canada

In 1721, the first historian of Canada, Fr. Francis Xavier de Charlevoix, spent several months at the Jesuit residence of St. Francis Xavier (Caughnawaga, Que.), the very spot where this article in honor of the Lily of the Mohawks is being written. Doubtless, this is where he found most of the material concerning the Ven. Kateri Tekakwitha, which went into his **History and General Description of New France**. In this important work, he speaks at some length about her. "For more than sixty years," he wrote in his introduction, "she has been regarded as the Protectress of Canada..."

### Genevieve of Canada

Jean de St. Valliers, the masterful second Bishop of Quebec, did not think otherwise. During his initial visit to the Mission (St. Francis Xavier), in the company of the Marquis and Marchioness of Denonville, His Lordship eulogized Tekakwitha as the "Genevieve of Canada." A century later, the father of

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Vice-Postulator for the Cause of  
the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha*

romanticism, Chateaubriand, in his poem *Les Natchez*, exploited this vein, showing that as St. Genevieve had saved Paris from the furor of the Huns, so had Kateri Tekakwitha saved Canada from the onslaught of its enemies, both spiritual and temporal.

The Ven. Kateri Tekakwitha is one of the Servants of God who appealed the most to the hagiographers of the past three centuries. Editions of her life have appeared, appropriately enough in Iroquois, but also in Chinese, in Santali, as well as in most of the major Western Indo-European languages. And yet, what do most XXth century Canadians know about the "Protectress of Canada?"

### Dusty souvenirs

Those who majored in history at high school may remember that she was born (in 1656) at

the Iroquois village of Ossernenon, to-day Auriesville, N.Y. Her father, a pagan Mohawk chief, belonged to the Turtle Clan; her mother, an Algonquin Indian, a staunch Catholic, had been taken captive by the Iroquois during a raid made upon the French settlers at Three Rivers, Canada. When Tekakwitha was four years old an epidemic of smallpox caused the death of her parents and of her baby brother. An uncle, a rabid anti-Christian, soon adopted her. At the age of twelve, she met two Blackrobes — her first contact with our holy Faith. But she was baptized only in 1676 by Fr. James de Lamberville, S.J., when she was nearly twenty.

### Kateri in Canada

Kateri Tekakwitha soon began to suffer persecution on account of her faith and, at the suggestion of Fr. de Lamberville, fled to Mission St. Francis Xavier, situated on the banks of the St. Lawrence, opposite Montreal.

To Fr. Frémin, Superior of the Mission, the young Mohawk maiden gave a note, addressed to him by Fr. de Lamberville. After reading it, he was delighted to receive the newcomer, for these were the words contained therein: "I send you a treasure; guard it well."

While preparing her for her first Holy Communion, her new spiritual adviser marveled at her great purity of heart, her love for our Blessed Mother and for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and her spirit of penance. Truly, an extraordinary miracle of grace if one considers the corruption rampant in pagandom anywhere, whether it be Greek, Roman or Iroquois.

Kateri received Our Saviour into her heart for the first time on Christmas Day, 1677, and thereupon rose to great heights

## Our Crest

and act, they play and pray together. In the perfect family unit there is frequent approaches to the Holy Table to be fed the "Bread of Life", the unit in family prayer, where God is in the midst of them. Again what rich blessings come to such a family unit who are all serving God and His cause. What blessings come to a nation whose families are all praying together. The maple leaves are symbolizing the ten provinces, all pleasing in the sight of God, all at the feet of the Cross of Christ seeking blessings for all.

With this symbol as your official crest you have gone forward with Christ — you have worked for God and Canada — you have heeded the voice of your Shepherds from coast to coast. Your record is brilliant, there has been no obstacle too great for you to surmount and your light has shone for all to see.

May your emblem always remain a beacon to bring us closer to God day by day in the work of the League.

*Rev. J. L. Hennessey,*

Director, London Diocesan Council.





*His Eminence James Charles Cardinal McGuigan is shown in this picture with His Excellency the Most Rev. M. C. O'Neill, D.D., Archbishop of Regina, (left) and the newly consecrated Bishop of Saskatoon, His Excellency the Most Rev. Francis J. Klein, D.D., (right) following the latter's consecration.*

*To His Excellency Bishop Klein the Canadian League extends heart felt congratulations and prayerful good wishes.*

of sanctity. Two years later, with the approval of Fr. Peter Cholenec, S.J., on the Feast of the Annunciation, she made a vow of perpetual virginity in honor of Our Lady.

On Wednesday, April 17, 1680, God called Kateri Tekakwitha to Himself in circumstances, to say the least, remarkable. She foresaw the hour of her death and the place where she would be buried, had her friends called in on time to assist as she received Extreme Unction, pronounced with deep love the sacred names of Iesos and Wari, and calmly went to meet her Maker.

"... Kateri's face," wrote Fr. Cholenec, "had been disfigured since the age of four and her infirmities and mortification had contributed to disfigure her even more, but this face, so marked and swarthy, suddenly changed about a quarter of an hour after death, and became in a moment so beautiful and so white that I observed it immediately (for I was praying beside her) and cried out so great was my astonishment..."

#### **Why the delay?**

This outline of the life of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha

should be sufficient to provoke a very pertinent question: Why the delay? Why has the Lily of the Mohawks not yet been elevated to the honors of the altar?

The answer is simple enough if we refer to God, the First Cause of all things. St. Paul gives it to us in his Epistle to the Romans (xii, 33): "How deep is the mine of God's wisdom, of his knowledge; how inscrutable are his judgments, how undiscoverable his ways!" Let us humbly bow in adoration before the omniscience and the omnipotence of Our Father in

*(Please turn to page 6)*



## The Venerable

(From page 3)

Heaven, confident, meanwhile, in the promise that "everything helps to secure the good of those who love God... (Id. viii, 28)"

If, however, we turn to the intermediaries which Divine Providence generally uses in the execution of Its plans, many of them must be examined before coming to a solution anywhere near complete.

In his **Introductory Remarks to Positio on the Introduction of the Cause of the Servant of God, Katherine Tekakwitha** <sup>(1)</sup>, the Rev. F. Antonelli, O.F.M., Relator General, studies four of them, which may be thus summarized:

1° The location of Mission St. Francis Xavier, which at the time of the death of Tekakwitha was a little less than twelve years old <sup>(2)</sup>, and which did not have at that time a permanent site, so that within forty years after her death, it moved successively into three new localities.

2° The elementary stages in which the ecclesiastical organization of Canada then labored and its continuance in this state until 1836.

3° The political conditions, which were anything but peaceful, as well as the turbulent events that prepared and finally led to Canada's passing from the French to the English.

4° The suppression of the Jesuits and the subsequent abandonment of Mission St. Francis Xavier in 1783. (It was only in 1842 that the Society of Jesus re-entered Canada and in 1903 that the Mission was returned to its care.)

One can readily understand that the Jesuit missionaries who had known Kateri, were unable to bring about regular canonical processes while eyewitnesses were still available. And, naturally, after the Restoration of the Society, the Cause of the Canadian Martyrs took precedence over all others.

(1) Fordham University Press, N.Y., 1940  
(2) "Thirty years old" in this edition of *The Positio* — an obvious error.

### Lack of interest

Finally, I must add with deep regret, the lack of interest in Canada concerning the "Genevieve of New France", which was most detrimental to her Cause. On the other hand, as early as 1884, at the request of the faithful, the Archbishops and Bishops of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, petitioned the Holy See to institute the process for the beatification of Tekakwitha. Twenty-one years ago, the Ordinary or Informative Process in the Cause of the "Protectress of Canada", was arranged and resulted in the appointment of the Diocesan Tribunal at Albany, N.Y.

As late as 1937, but four years before His Holiness Pope Pius XII approved the decree declaring heroic the virtues of the Ven. Tekakwitha, was Canadian interest revived in the Lily of the Mohawks, when the Rev. Antonio Poulin, S.J., received his official nomination as Canadian Vice-Postulator. As editor of the French Sacred Heart Messenger, he succeeded in making many of his subscribers Kateri-minded.

When, in 1949, Fr. Poulin was named Rector of the Manresa Retreat House at Quebec, it was my privilege to be appointed Canadian Vice-Postulator for the Ven. Kateri Tekakwitha. I have done and am doing my best to place her in the hearts of all the English-speaking Catholics of Canada.

### Her tricentennial

1956 will be the tricentennial of the birth of Tekakwitha. What more appropriate time could be found for her beatification?

To obtain this great favor, two first-class miracles are necessary. (Ordinarily three would be required, but His Holiness Pius XII, who is deeply interested in the Cause, has most graciously consented to beatify her if at least two were procured.)

How shall we obtain these miracles?

In 1949, the Rev. Charles Miccinelli, S.J., then Postulator General for the Ven. Tekakwitha, answered this highly important question:

"The Venerable's clients," he wrote from Rome, "must 1) multiply their prayers and 2) organize... a holy offensive to obtain the desired beatification. From this beatification would result great joy and edification not only for Canada and the United States and for all the Indians, but for the entire world..."

Could any organization here in Canada do this more effectively, could any group of Catholic women place our lovely Kateri more quickly in the homes, schools and hospitals of this land than the C.W.L. of Canada?

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