



MARTYRS' SHRINE MESSAGE

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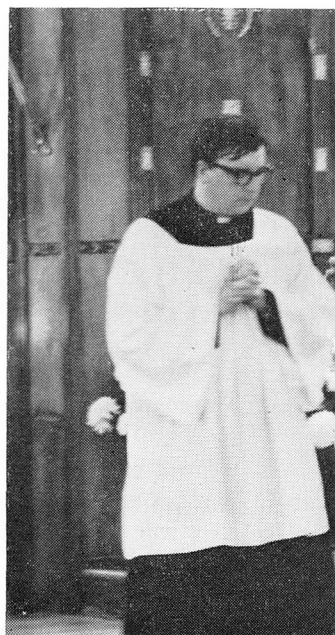
**50th
ANNIVERSARY**

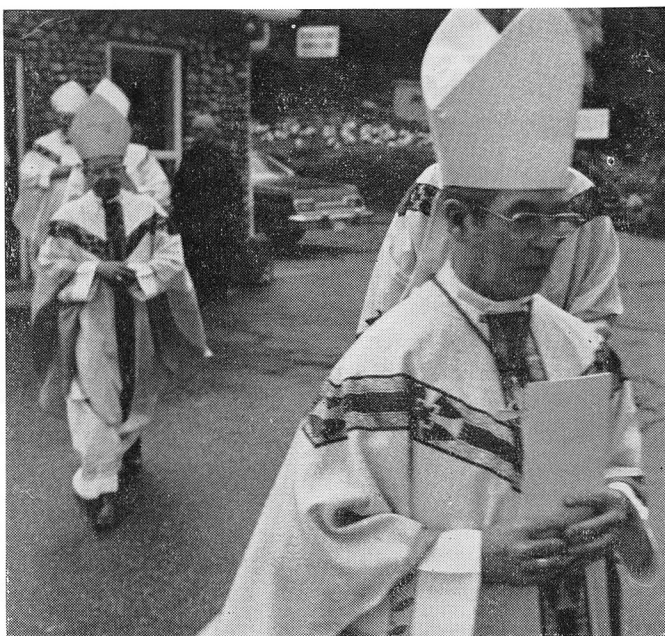


**Homily given at the National Shrine of the
Canadian Martyrs, Midland, 26 June 1976 by His
Eminence, Maurice Cardinal Roy, Archbishop of
Quebec and Primate of Canada**

The contrasts in the life of the Church:

None can come to this place, blessed by the graces of the Cross and the Resurrection, without a profound feeling in his being, when faced with the contrasts that the history of salvation sometimes provides us. Where else has not the Church had to retreat, to return with a new wave of faith. She has time on her side, and time is in the hand of God, Who shapes the events in a mysterious pattern of grace and mercy, and grace as well as mercy are full of surprises. This, each pastor knows well—Christians do not need to learn it.







KATERI TEKAKWITHA

While we at the Martyrs' Shrine were celebrating our 50th Anniversary of the present Shrine Church and the 350th Anniversary of the arrival of St. Jean de Brébeuf in Huronia, we were reminded of another anniversary—that of the baptism of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha, a young Mohawk maiden. The reminder of this Anniversary came to us in the person of Father Michael Jacobs, S.J., the first and only Mohawk priest. Fr. Jacobs resides and works at St. Regis Mission, near Cornwall, Ontario, and was present at the Shrine for our Anniversary Mass.

Kateri Tekakwitha, born in April of 1656, was baptized a Christian on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1676 by Father James de Lamberville, S.J. Kateri was born and brought up in the village of Ossernenon, near present-day Auriesville, N.Y. about 40 miles west of Albany. This was the same village where St. Isaac Jogues and St. Jean de la Lande lost their lives for the faith in October of 1646. Kateri's father was a Mohawk Indian Chief, Kenhoronkwa of the Turtle tribe.

Kahenta was her mother's name, Kahenta was an Algonquin and Christian who had been captured by the Mohawks and married to a chieftain. In 1660, an epidemic of smallpox caused the death of Kateri's parents and younger brother, Otsikehta. Kateri, who was only four years old at the time, was entrusted to the care of an uncle, Onsigongo, and two aunts. The smallpox left Kateri with a pockmarked face and very weak eyesight.

In September of 1666, the French sent a force of soldiers under the leadership of General de Tracy to subdue the Mohawks at Ossernenon. After the battle, the Mohawks fled to a hill west of Fonda, N.Y., where they built their new village called Caughnawaga. The Jesuit Missionaries, who had been preaching among the Mohawks for about 10 years, came to the new site. Although only ten years of age, Kateri was delegated to wait on the Black Robes. In a few years about 80 of the 400+ inhabitants of the village had become Christian.

When Kateri first expressed her desire to become a Christian in 1676 the Jesuit Missionaries told her of the difficulties that her conversion would bring. Undaunted by this, Kateri's answer was a profession of faith and trust in God—she was prepared to suffer everything to become a Christian. Suffer she did.

Kateri's life was a model of virtue and union with God, but many in the village saw this as a reproach to their own way of living and she was even threatened with death because of her piety, modesty and purity. She left her native village and went to the village of St. Francis Xavier at Caughnawaga, near Montreal, Quebec. This was in the autumn of 1677 and she was 21 years of age. At this Christian village, Kateri devoted herself to a life of prayer and acts of God. On Christmas Day, 1677, she received her first Holy Communion. Two years later, on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, she made a private vow of perpetual virginity.

On April 17, 1680, during Holy Week, Kateri died at the age of 24. Her heroic virtue led Pope Pius XII to declare her Venerable in 1943 and her cause for beatification is still underway. Her relics are kept at St. Francis Xavier Mission, near Montreal. Of Kateri, Pope Pius XII said: "Her life itself is a miracle."

Prayer for the Beatification of Kateri Tekakwitha

O God, Who, among the manifold marvels of Thy Grace in the New World, didst cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and of the St. Lawrence, the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant, we beseech Thee, the favor we beg through her intercession—that this Little Lover of Jesus and of His Cross may soon be raised to the honors of the altar by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and faith. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.