

In Rome, Pope John Paul II addresses the Indians of Canada and the United States, at a Special Audience, on June 24, 1980, a few days after Kateri Tekakwitha's Beatification.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

It is a joy for me to meet today with all of you, representatives of the North American Indians of Canada and the United States. I greet you in the peace of Christ, and through you I wish to extend my greetings to all whom you represent, to all the Indian people of your continent. When you return home, please tell your families and friends that the Pope loves them, and that he invokes upon them joy and strength in the Holy Spirit.

You have made this long journey to Rome to participate in a special moment in the history of your people. You have come to rejoice in the beatification of Kateri Tekakwitha. It is a time to pause and to give thanks to God for the unique culture and rich human tradition which you have inherited, and for the greatest gift anyone can receive, the gift of faith. Indeed, Blessed Kateri stands before us as a symbol of the best of the heritage that is yours as North American Indians.

But today is also a day of great happiness for the Church throughout the world. All of us are inspired by the example of this young woman of faith who died three centuries ago this year. We are all edified by her complete trust in the providence of God, and we are encouraged by her joyful fidelity to the Creator, to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a true sense the whole Church, together with you, declares in the words of Saint Paul: "Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever". (Eph. 3:20-21).

The Church has declared to the world that Kateri Tekakwitha is blessed, that she has lived a life on earth of exemplary holiness and that she is now a member in heaven of the Communion of Saints who continually intercede with the merciful Father on our behalf.

Her beatification should remind us that we are all called to a life of holiness, for in Baptism God has chosen each one of us "to be holy and spotless and to live through love in his presence" (Eph 1:4). Holiness of life--union with Christ through prayer and works of charity -- is not something reserved to a select few among the members of the Church. It is the vocation of everyone.

My brothers and sisters may you be inspired and encouraged by the life of Blessed Kateri. Look to her for an example of fidelity: see in her a model of purity and love: turn to her in prayer for assistance. May God bless all the North American Indians of Canada and the United States.

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