

Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, (Formerly San Juan Pueblo) On June 24th 2008

Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk woman who lived in the 1600s in NY and Canada, is awaiting canonization by the Catholic Church to become the first Native American Saint.

Giovanna Paponetti, a Taos artist, and adjunct professor of art at UNM/Taos has been commissioned and honored by the St. John the Baptist Church to complete 21 paintings on her life story. So far 16 oil paintings on panels have been installed in a beautiful wooden altar screen carved by Daniel Tafoya of Penasco.

A mass was celebrated at St. John the Baptist Church at Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, formerly San Juan Pueblo, on Tuesday, June 24th at 10:00 A.M. Archbishop Michael Sheehan blessed the altar screen at this time. He commented that he had never seen the church so packed on a Feast day. A blessing of the water at the river was held earlier in the morning. This coincided with Ohkay Owingeh's annual feast day.

Representatives from the Kahnawake Reservation in Canada were welcomed during the Mass. Included was Deacon Ronald Boyer who has been appointed by Rome as Canadian Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Kateri. He is the first Native American and Deacon to hold this position. In order for Kateri to be declared a Saint, an instantaneous miracle must occur. People can report any suspected miracles to him for possible investigation by the Pope. Other guests from Canada included, Cathy Rice, Connie Meloche, Elizabeth Meloche and Arnold Boyer. Most of the above are models in Giovanna's paintings.

Numerous miracles have been attributed to Kateri. The first miracle occurred when the scars on her face that she had received from a small pox epidemic at age 4, disappeared 15 minutes following her death.

In August 2005, Father Terrance Brennan, six women from Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara and Jemez pueblos, and Taos artist Giovanna Paponetti visited the Kahnawake reservation in Canada to meet with representatives to get permission to photograph some of their tribal members for Giovanna's paintings. Kateri is buried at the St. Francis Xavier Church on the reservation. There are 8,000 tribal members at Kahnawake. During this time they also made a pilgrimage to Auriesville, NY to visit the site where Kateri was born. Giovanna returned to Canada a second time to further her research.

The final installation of additional paintings is expected later this year.

Giovanna is working on a book to be published by Clear Light Publishers in Santa Fe, NM. For further information please contact Giovanna Paponetti at (575) 758-9040 or giovanna@newmex.com.

Dedication of Kateri Tekakwitha Altar Screen at St. John the Baptist Church at Ohkay Owingeh pueblo, (Formerly San Juan Pueblo) On June 24th

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Altar piece honors Kateri Tekakwitha

Akwesasne Indian Time July 10, 2008
By Giovanna Paponetti

The life Story of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was commissioned by the St. John the Baptist Church at Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, formerly San Juan Pueblo, in northern New Mexico. There will be a total of 21 oil paintings of various sizes in the altar screen. Fifteen paintings are completed to date and installed in a beautiful altar screen carved by Daniel Tafoya of Penasco, NM. In August of 2005, Father Terrance Brennan, six women from Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara and Jemez pueblos, and Paponetti visited the Kahnawake reservation in Canada to meet with representatives to get permission to photograph some of their tribal members for Paponetti's paintings. During this time they also made a pilgrimage to Auriesville, NY to visit the site where Tekakwitha was born as well as a shrine in Fonda, NY. Paponetti returned a second time to further her research and photography. One of her models is Deacon Ronald J.



Boyer, who has been appointed by the Pope as Vice-Postulator for the cause of Kateri.

A book is forthcoming to be published by Clear Light Publishers. For information please contact Giovanna Paponetti at giovanna@newmex.com or giovannapaponetti@gmail.com

TAOS PUEBLO BEFORE THE SPANISH 1300 A. D.

Some people believe the Pueblo people are descendants of the Anasazi who lived in the American Southwest in very ancient times. Taos Pueblo consists of two multistoried Pueblos on the North and South sides of the Rio Pueblo de Taos. This panel depicts the people at work and at play. They are dressed in buckskin which was softly tanned deer hide, or gamuza (dress designed by Tony Whitecrow). The married women wore hard-sole moccasins with leggings of clay-whitened buckskin. The men wore shorter moccasins and buckskin breechcloths and leggings. Shown here is the turkey that in some Native American folklore is supposed to have taught humans how to raise corn and fight off evil spirits. They not only used the feathers for ceremonial dress purposes and blankets, but also used bones as different tools.

The natives were self-sufficient. They tanned their hides, wove baskets from the native red willow, and made pottery. These pots are representative of clay pots dug at Pot Creek some twelve miles from Taos Pueblo, dated to the 1200s. The vessels are examples of corrugated, black-on-white and micaceous clay Taos pots. The dominant theme of the pottery designs was a prayer for rain and good crops. Rain meant a harvest of corn, and corn was the staff of life. The child having her hair brushed with a tied bundle of ponderosa is playing with a potshard. The women wore their hair in a chongo. The men wore their hair in braids behind the ears. The braids were worn in front and rested on the chest. The cotton sashes were probably traded for with another tribe, as the Taos people couldn't raise cotton in the high elevation (over 7,000'). The dog that is portrayed is typical of those there were seen by the Spanish when they arrived.

“The Indians were better equipped to supervise the Spaniards and give them a way of life superior to what the Spaniards had in Castille.” So wrote Bartoleme de las Casas of the Native American Indians somewhere around 1550. He believed that in comparison with the civilization of the Europeans, that the Indians were far more advanced. What Las Casas saw in the Native Americans was a self-fulfilled people who were concerned with preserving the inherent harmony of the universal constituents of all life. Their relationship with nature and the universe was one of intimacy and mutual courtesy.

Reference: The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, M. Fox; Taos Pueblo, John Bodine; Taos Pueblo, Parsons

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