

Mary-Eunice and Kateri

WHILE preparing a play on Our Lady of La Salette and Our Lady of Guadalupe for the St. Francis Xavier Theater on West 16th Street, New York City, Fr. Thomas Coffey, S.J., Pastor and Vice-Postulator at the time for the Cause of Tekakwitha, gave me the *Positio* on Kateri Tekakwitha (the Position of the Church on the Cause) and said: "Please work on a play about one of Our Lady's handmaidens."

Researching the *Positio* brought about a stage play, *Tekakwitha*, which was produced by the Catholic Daughters of America, Court Fulgens Corona, New Monmouth, N.J. The play was produced at many schools and societies.

When the late Fr. William Schlaerth, S.J., became Vice-Postulator in the United States, he supplied my husband, Joe Spagnola, and me with thousands of pieces of printed matter about the Indian maiden, which we gave out at our programs and sent through the mail to people interested in the Cause. He also put us in touch with his successor, the Rev. Joseph S. McBride, S.J.

Later I wrote a one act play, *Maid of the Mohawks* for Fr. McBride. I followed it up with a short play, *A Christmas Star*, for our friends who wished something of Tekakwitha during the holiday season.

I eventually added *Death of Kateri* to my repertoire of character sketch monologues, which I perform at shrines, schools, societies, con-

vents and civic groups. In 1962, the premier performance took place at Kateri Hall in Caughnawaga, P.Q., Canada, a few miles from the spot where the Lily of the Mohawks achieved heroic sanctity before her death in 1680. Other performances followed, especially in the New England area. *Death of Kateri* was so well received that I included it on my *Skeptic and Saints* record, produced in 1966. The cloistered Dominican Sisters in Syracuse, N.Y., offered it to the public in their publication *Center Stage* about the same time.

Continued interest in the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha resulted in my present monologue, *Kateri Tells Her Story From Heaven*. Upon an invitation of the Vice-Postulator, it was played at the Martyrs' Shrine in Auriesville, N.Y. It was then that Fr. McBride decided that we would tour with a combined program — his picture slides on Auriesville, Fonda, and Caughnawaga, and my dramatic monologue. My husband, Joe, took care of the lights, music, public relations, and emceed when it was necessary.

Because of our efforts in favor of Kateri's beatification, on April 17, 1970, Fr. Joseph McBride and I were made honorary members of the St. Regis Indians through the kindness of the Rev. Michael K. Jacobs, S.J. Father McBride was given the name Chief Rakeni Karonhiio (Father Beautiful Blue Skies) and my name was Princess Kateri Kasenniooshta (She who makes the name of Kateri Beautiful).

Our initial tour began in May of the same year, and the first showing was at the Sisters of the Resurrection, Mt. Loreto, Amsterdam, N.Y. The Rev. Thomas Egan, Director of the Auriesville Shrine joined us for the occasion. We had many other bookings, for instance at the Sisters of Charity, Hamburg, N.Y., in Buffalo, etc. Fr. Schlaerth blessed our fully packed car as we left for the Midwest. I did the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha in lieu of the homily at Mass in St. Isaac Jogues' Church, Detroit, Mich. Then we performed at several Detroit schools and at the Marytown Friars¹ of Kenosha, Wisc. We travelled to Assisi Heights, Minn., and visited with a distinguished recipient of the Kateri Award, Sr. Winifred. Then we did some showings in Wisconsin, at Duluth, which were handled by Mrs. Clementine Lenta. On we went afterwards to St. Louis, Mo., and to the Scapular Carmelite Headquarters at Westmont, Ill. Fr. Howard Rafferty, O.C.D., gave us much help and our appearances there were a highlight for us. Our last stop was in the Pennsylvania area.

On our 1971 tour, we had a return engagement at the Scapular Shrine as well as at Marytown, and at Assisi Heights. The big event though, was Father Bernard Fagan's Prayer Day at the Jesuit Mission of St. Francis at Rosebud, S.D. We continued on to two other Jesuit missions, Holy Rosary and Pine Ridge, S.D., where Fr. Ted Zuernas was our host. I had the honor of

1. Publishers of *Immaculata*, in which were featured articles about Mary-Eunice, Father Michael K. Jacobs, S.J., and the Fonda Shrine of Kateri.



Mary-Eunice as Kateri Tekakwitha

PHOTO PAUL GRAMPP, S.J.

opening the Tekakwitha Indian Congress at Milkcamp, S.D., with my monologue. Our last appearance in South Dakota was at the Mother Butler Center at Rapid City. Fr. Lawrence E. Edwards, S.J., the director, facilitated all arrangements.

A little later we went on the St. Louis region, and then to the Indian River Shrine at Indian River, Mich., upon the invitation of Fr. Thomas Dominiak, which Mr. Chet Adams, a recipient of the Kateri Tekakwitha Award, had contrived. The occasion was well worthwhile — the unveiling of a lovely statue of Tekakwitha.

As time went by, we had the opportunity of visiting many places with Fr. McBride, especially in New York and New Jersey, New England, and the Niagara area. We also presented *Kateri* at the Catholic Daughters of America's Convention in 1972. Many other bookings resulted, since one of the projects of

the Junior Catholic Daughters is the promoting of the Cause of Kateri Tekakwitha.

With our own work, we have covered over 50,000 miles presenting our program, "Lives of Saints," in which we always included the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha.

In 1973, we were invited by Archbishop Thomas Donellan to speak at a Rosary Rally in Atlanta, Ga. Last May, since Joe and myself are Fr. McBride's assistants, we were asked to represent him at the Campfire Girls' Prayer Day, at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D.C.

May I add that numerous appearances on TV or radio in which I played the role of Kateri have helped to make her known throughout the United States. Articles, too, in *Jesuit Magazine*, in the *Twin City Circle* weekly, the *Immaculata Magazine* and the *Queen*, a publication of the Montfort Fathers.

I hope that Kateri can be presented more to the west and south, thus acquainting people with this wonderful Mohawk girl.

For further information, write to *Mary Productions*, 58 Lenison Avenue, Belford, N.J. 07718.

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Miss M. O'H. !**

Enclosed is a fifteen-dollar check I promised to Kateri for two favors I received. One for my income tax (1973). The Internal Revenue people found a mistake in it. I was called in for an audit. I promised Kateri ten dollars if I didn't have to pay much more money. I didn't — just a couple of dollars. Then in July, my mother and I took a trip up to Canada. We had to turn around and come home as there were no vacancies. Mother drove for eight hours straight. Coming home from Canada, she took the wrong turn, and we landed in Franconia. It was getting later, it was dark. We started to worry as we had no place to stay. My mother was tired from driving. I don't drive. So I began to pray to Kateri. I promised five dollars if she would help us find a place to stay for the night. In Franconia I saw several motels. We stopped the car to inquire. No luck. No vacancies. Then I happened to look right across the street. There I saw another motel. We went to inquire. There was a place. It was the first time we took a room without looking at it. It turned out to be the most beautiful room you ever saw. We were the first people to use the room. I said, "Thank you Kateri!" So Mother and I had a wonderful night's sleep. I thank Kateri over and over. I say a rosary for her every night.

(West Roxbury, Mass.)

(When acknowledging favors to Kateri, be sure to indicate details.)

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Sr. M. J. C. !**

At long last I have news of little Dominique R., for whom we have been praying to Kateri. Presumably she was the victim of cerebral palsy. Now the doctors are not sure that she was afflicted with that condition. We, who have been praying to Kateri for a cure, consider this a minor miracle. Last weekend Mrs. R. called me to tell me that Dominique had been released from the St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, Philadelphia, where she had followed a series of courses. By this time, Monday, Dominique has returned to a normal family life in Granada, Nicaragua.

Dominique is now six years old. Two years ago, a friend of Mrs. R. suggested that Dominique live with her family and go to the hospital each day. Whereas two years ago Dominique was, compared to other children, practically immobile, she can now walk, talk, eat and drink as a normal little girl. She visited me during the summer and I could not believe the change.

However she must return to the hospital in six months for a check-up, and possibly for another operation on her left eye. She has had two operations so far but she still has no vision in her left eye.

Please continue to pray for a definite cure. Mrs. R. is not concerned about her returning to family life as the family are very devoted. She is worried about her attending school with those who do not understand.

Mrs. R. and her family, my own family, and the Sisters here have been praying to Kateri. Our little saint has not let us down. Could you possibly let me have a few Kateri seals. I have used my last. Enclosed are five dollars.

(Water Mill, N.Y.)

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. H. J. !**

I am sending ten dollars in return for a great favor received from Kateri on August 8, 1974. After five years of suffering great pain in his legs and being told by many doctors that nothing could be done for him, my husband was admitted to the Montreal Neurological Hospital for tests. I prayed that Kateri would help and that Dr. B. would find the cause as soon as possible. Within three days, his doctor said the problem was caused by a disc pressing on the nerve and he was operated on the next day. His surgery was successful and we are very grateful to Kateri and Dr. B.

(Bombay, N.Y.)

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