

KATERI AT ST. ANNE'S

DURING THE FEW WEEKS of June, I spent in Biddeford, Me, earning my keep by helping out at St. Joseph's Parish, I was absent one weekend. Just before I left for Maine, Fathers Gérard Tremblay, C.S.S.R., and Philippe Blais, C.S.S.R., from the Basilica of St. Anne de Beaupré came to the Kateri Center, and invited me to attend the unveiling of a new statue of Kateri in Indiana limestone, the work of Sculptor Emile Brunet, at the Shrine, on June 26. In 1956, the same artist had prepared the beautiful bronze and granite monument of Kateri, in front of Tekakwitha School in Caughnawaga. The new statue would be placed in a niche on the left side of the Basilica, next to Blessed Marguerite d'Youville.

In the Redemptorist parish of Saint-Alphonse-d'Youville in Montreal, the Fathers had already erected a statue in honor of Kateri, which can be seen high up on the left side of the steeple as one drives by on the Metropolitan Boulevard towards the west. They also had placed a fine-wrought mosaic of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha between those of Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys and Saint Isaac Jogues above the high altar in the Basilica of St. Anne de Beaupré. To show my appreciation to the Redemptorist Fathers, I decided to attend.

On Saturday evening, June 25, I got off the bus at the Quebec terminal, where the temperature was 91° Fahrenheit. Although Fr. Gérard Tremblay had assured me that a room would be ready for me at the Shrine, I passed the night at the Jesuit Residence of Notre-Dame, 14 rue Dauphine, at hardly a quarter of a mile from the Château Frontenac. Visitors should visit the famous Sodality Chapel of the Jesuit residence, for there they can revere the skull of St. Jean de Brébeuf. Strange to say there are two authentic heads of the martyr. After the death of Father Casot, the last Jesuit of the Old Society in 1880, the skull of the great saint was given to the Augustinian Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy. After the French Jesuits returned to Quebec in 1849, the precious relic was divided: the Sisters got a half and the Fathers the other. In each case the missing half of the skull was restored in brown wax. You can now venerate these capital relics of the greatest of the eight Martyrs either at the Hôtel-Dieu or at 14, rue Dauphine.

Sunday morning, June 26, dawned bright and clear. I took the 9:00 A.M. bus for St. Anne's, which sped through Giffard, Beauport, and Courville. Then it followed the corniche through Boischatel, Ange-Gardien, Château Richer, where my forebear, straight from Limoges, France, in the 1680's, had settled down, and then it deposited us at Beaupré. Gleaming in the sunshine, the Basilica with its two lofty spires looked more inspiring to me than I had ever before seen it.

"The Basilica looked more inspiring to me than ever before..."



Photo Anne Scheurman

Father Tremblay welcomed me to the residence of the Redemptorists. He informed me that Fr. Joseph S. McBride, S.J., Vice-Postulator for Kateri in the United States, and Fr. Michael K. Jacobs, our Iroquois Jesuit, had already arrived. So, too, had Dr. and Mrs. Solomon Cook from Hogsburg, N.Y., Mrs. Ann Scheurman and her sister Helen from Pittsford, N.Y., and Mr. and Mrs. Chet Adams from Detroit, all staunch friends of Kateri Tekakwitha.

Fr. Léon Lajoie, S.J., pastor of the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, led a good contingent of Indians to the Shrine. Their presence was most appropriate, for it was at this mission that Tekakwitha achieved heroic sanctity towards the end of the seventeenth century. In full regalia, the Iroquois choir, and the Iroquois Knights of Columbus and Daughters of Isabella with their families had flocked to St. Anne's. Thanks to Fr. Michael K. Jacobs' initiative, more than 75 of the faithful of the Mission of St. Francis Regis took part in the great day specially dedicated to Kateri.

In all, Indians from 13 to 15 different reservations from New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and New York State, several hundred of them, thronged the grounds of the Shrine. For three centuries, each year at the end of June, Christian Indians have spontaneously assembled there. For many Indian tribes "to go to St. Anne's," meant "to become Christians," such was their affection for Our Lord's Grandmother!

The Eucharistic Concelebration began at 11:15 A.M. Mrs. Esther K. Phillips, President of the Indian Choir, was on tenterhooks, for the music, the conductor and the organist were nowhere in sight. She need not have

worried as they arrived in the nick of time. The celebrant was the Reverend Michael K. Jacobs, having as concelebrants the Very Reverend Lucien Gagné, Provincial of the Redemptorists, the Reverends Gérard Tremblay, Philippe Blais, Léon Lajoie, Joseph S. McBride and the Vice-Postulator for Canada.

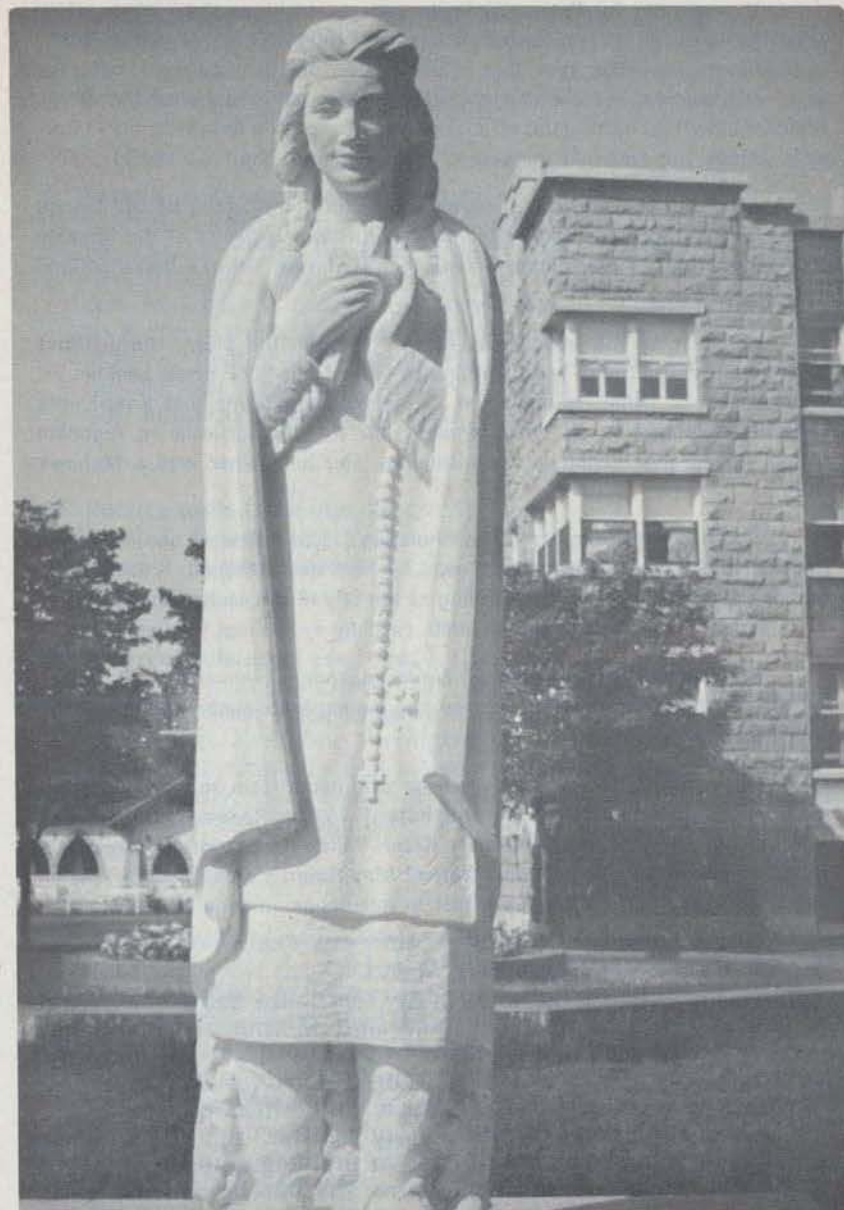
Father Michael officiated in French, but the readings were in English and in French. In his homily, he summarized the meaning of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha's life, stressing her love for God and neighbor, virtues that are as relevant today as they ever were. At the celebrant's request, Mr. Chet Adams read the petition which the Canadian Bishops had presented to the Holy Father in 1965, for Kateri's Beatification.

The unveiling and blessing of the new Kateri statue was scheduled for the early afternoon. The statue, draped in white, stood on a high pedestal at the end of the plaza facing the Basilica. At the stroke of two, the white-robed priests with long bright red or green stoles, preceded by the Indian chiefs, the Iroquois Choir, and the crossbearer with his two acolytes, entered the sanctuary, bypassed the miraculous statue of good St. Anne, went down the nave and out onto the large stone porch flooded by the hot sun.

The Very Reverend Provincial was the first to speak. He recalled the early Indians' devotion to St. Anne. Indeed the first pilgrimage to the original shrine was composed of a band of Indians escorted by Fr. Claude Dablon, S.J., onetime Superior of all the Jesuits of Canada. Formerly a missionary in Vietnam, Father Gagné drew attention to the meaning of the early Jesuits' apostolate in North America. Before the coming of these men, there were saints among the Amerinds, such as those depicted by Cardinal Daniélou in his book on the *Pagan Saints of the Old Testament*. However, through the Church that Christ established, sanctity and salvation became much easier. The Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha is proof of the strong impact of Christianity on the first inhabitants of North America, three centuries ago.

In my capacity as Vice-Postulator for Kateri in Canada, I added a few words about her devotion to St. Anne, which grew with her enrollment in the Confraternity of the Holy Family.

Then it was that Mrs. Mary Cook of the Mission of St. Regis, and Miss Wanita Mitchell of Maniwaki unveiled the statue. There Kateri stood in beauty. Her crucifix, held in her right hand, rests on her left hand, which is uplifted towards her face; her rosary hangs from her arm to her knees. The message is clear: "Love the Lord who loved you so; love His Blessed Mother!"



Kateri at St. Anne's

It was time for Father McBride and me to bless the statue, which would henceforth proclaim to the thousands of pilgrims who devoutly gather at the Shrine year after year, that holiness is not the prerogative of one race or of one culture, but the right of all the races and culture of the world. We concluded by reciting the official prayer for Kateri's Beatification: " God, who, among the manifold marvels of Your Grace in the New World . . ."

After the prayers, the Caughnawaga Choir, conducted by Sr. Jeanne Benoit, S.S.A., accompanied by Mr. Bernadin Houle, organist at the Mission for nearly a quarter of a century, sang the "Hymn for Kateri's Beatification" in Iroquois.

As soon as the last words echoed through the plaza, Huron Chief Gros Louis and his wife Mrs. Antoinette Gros Louis took place besides Fr. Michael Jacobs while he explained to the Indian pilgrims that Kateri very specially belonged to all those present, for her mother was an Algonkin raised among the French in Trois-Rivières, and her father was a Mohawk chief.

Two excerpts from Fr. Pierre Cholenec (1696) followed, one in English relating Kateri's baptism in 1676, read by Sr Kateri Mitchell, S.S.A., of St. Regis, and the other, in French telling of the Lily of the Mohawks' apparition to Anastasia Tegonhatsihongo in 1680, read by Fr. Adrien Pouliot, S.J..

An Iroquois hymn, *Sewenniio Ne kwanekennis kwawennarakw*, "Hymn for the Glorification of Kateri Tekakwitha," sung with gusto, concluded the unveiling ceremonies.

Our congratulations to the Indians who came from so many different reservations to honor St. Anne and Kateri! To the Redemptorist Fathers, who did not overlook the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha, and who erected a statue to her glory, our heartfelt thanks! May Kateri's smile always rest on those who took part in the festivities in her honor on June 26, 1975!

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. M. P. !**

I recently had trouble with my teeth and had to have oral surgery done. I was very upset and nervous about this but I prayed very hard to Kateri to be with me and help me come through it well. I'm thankful to say I've made remarkable progress and I know my continued prayers to Kateri will help to completely heal it. Enclosed please find my check for ten dollars in thanksgiving for this and for other favors, which I know she has helped me with.
(Baltimore, Md.)

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

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. A. P. !**

Enclosed is a check for fifty dollars. I had promised Kateri I would send it if I sold a certain piece of property. I will continue to pray for Kateri's Beatification.
(Dennis Port, Mass.)

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

Enclosed find a check for ten dollars, which I promised to Kateri if my brother would find a cure for a skin condition. His skin on hands and feet kept cracking, and, consequently it made him very nervous. Through prayers to Kateri, I feel his condition is improving. Just now the skin is healed very well. He had several recurrences before, but I hope through continued prayers to Kateri it will keep on improving.

(St. Marys, Pa.)

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. L. S. !**

Enclosed are ten dollars in thanksgiving to Kateri in answer to prayers for a favorable test at the hospital.
(Piqua, Ohio)

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

I am enclosing a check for twenty-five dollars in thanksgiving to Kateri for helping me. I was quite worried about my health. I've gone through a series of X-rays and thankfully everything is O.K. Also, a new member arrived in our family. She came a little early, but Mother and Daughter are doing well. I'm grateful to Kateri for so many things ! . . .

(Montreal, P.Q.)

✿ **Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. C. B. !**

Kindly accept the enclosed offering for the Kateri Center. I've heard about Kateri quite some time ago, and decided to send this ten-dollar donation to be used as desired by this center. I am saying the daily prayer for Kateri's canonization and praying to her for the family's spiritual and temporal needs. I was in an auto accident a week ago, and although somewhat bruised, I am praying to Kateri that nothing serious develops due to this accident. I am thankful to God that both my husband and I and also the other driver escaped serious injury.

(Detroit, Mich.)

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