



FR. JACQUES (DIEGO) LEFEBVRE, O.F.M.

KATERI IN THE AMAZONIAN JUNGLE

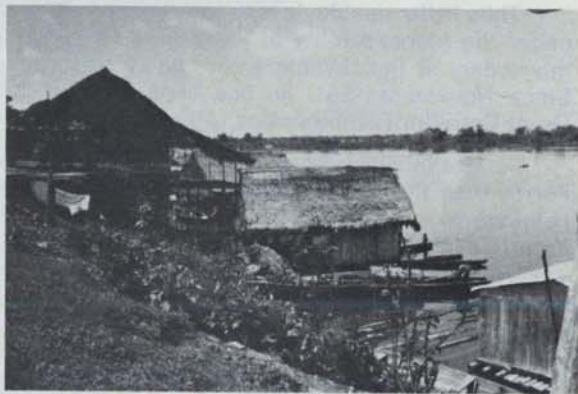
by Lilianne Lefebvre

SINCE JANUARY 16, 1982, Kateri Tekakwitha has become the protectress of the little village of Yacapana in the Peruvian jungle of the Amazon. Her statue is honored on the altar of a school serving as a church.

This little pueblo is one of the sixty-two villages which were under the responsibility of Franciscan Father Jacques Lefebvre, then missionary at Tamchiyacu, where he dwelt for nine months and a half. Since November 1981, he has been working at Tingo Maria in the Great Cordillera of the Andes.

As the inhabitants of Yacapana were unaware that St. Martin de Porres was the patron of the entire area, in June, they asked Father Lefebvre to suggest the name of a patron saint for their little village. Kateri Tekakwitha's immediately came to his mind for three reasons: she was an Indian like them, she had lived in the diocese where he was born, she had just been beatified at Rome. The suggestion was enthusiastically accepted. So he wrote to his parents at Longueuil, P.Q., asking if it were possible to procure a statue of Kateri and to send it on as well as plenty of information to help in preparing the enthronement ceremony.

Like a miracle, on the same day two ladies, complete strangers until then, Mmes. Marguerite Pelland and Fernande Milot, declared they had obtained many favors through Kateri, that they greatly relied on her and wanted to do something by way of acknowledgement. They had a splendid, twenty-seven-inch high statue made, which I, as Fr. Jacques' mother, took to South America early last January. Thus after being wrapped up in a brand-new sleeping bag reserved for further use by Father, Kateri travelled for the first time in a suitcase. The plane flew from Montreal to Lima, capital of Peru, where Fr. Lefebvre was waiting for the beloved traveller, carrying the much longed for image, then on with it to Iquitos, capital of the jungle of the Amazon. From there, by boat on the Amazon, for there are no roads, under a pouring rain, we went to Tamchiyacu to spend the night. The next day, with the Pastor of the place, Fr. Clement Larose, C.S.V., we made it at last to Yacapana, with Fr. Lefebvre (Padre Diego) our leader, who was beaming with joy. All along the way, a few passengers who wanted to attend the gala event boarded our



▲ At the foot of the ramp, Fr. Jacques Lefebvre, O.F.M., is about to board the plane for Iquitos. The statue of Blessed Kateri rides in the baggage compartment.

◆ Iquitos, capital of the Peruvian jungle.

➤ One of the streets of Iquitos.

boat. Every time that I see the Amazon, I am awed by its magnificence. At this time of year, the river was in full spate. In certain places, it was nearly as high as the shore, with the banks habitually measuring twenty feet in height. The current was so violent that it carried whole trees and pieces of land from the embankment and escarpments, even a sand bank, all of which continually change the riverbed. On the edge of the river one can see immense trees called Capinori, Lopuna, and others, which are uprooted and will soon be victims of the current. Their foliage is unrivalled in beauty and one has the impression they don't want to die. At the sight of this splendor, one cannot help but believe in God.

At our destination, the moderator of the village of Yacapana, Jorge Cabrera Mori, comes down to welcome us at the riverside, and we must then walk nearly a half a mile with the suitcase and its precious contents before arriving at the school-chapel. To receive "Kateri" the Indians had erected a niche, simple but very lovely. It was lined with woven banana leaves, and decorated with beautiful wild jungle flowers called "Citullis," all of which was supported by bamboo stalks. One of them had four holes punched in it for candles. It was first-rate! A simple table covered with a bedspread served as the altar for Frs. Clement Larose and Diego Lefebvre, who proceeded with the enthronement before a rather large group, made up of all the inhabitants of the village; a dog decided to join them as an extra guest.

When the time came to record the ceremony on cassette, Fr. Jacques Lefebvre addressed himself at first in French to Bishop Bernard Hubert, of the Diocese of St. John of Quebec, and then to Fr. Béchar, Vice-Postulator of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, to greet them and describe the place where the festivities were taking place.

Moderator Jorge Cabrena Mori and his wife, Jonita Llerena Siàs, as well as the godfather chosen for the circumstance, Rodolfo Moreno and his wife, the godmother, Antonia Marin Pinché, occupied the places of honor. In this country, the custom is that a godfather and a godmother take part in the important events of daily life. The moderator unveiled the statue, accompanied by the godfather and the godmother. After Fr. Lefebvre read Bishop Hubert's letter, in French and then in Spanish, the statue was blessed and the Holy Sacrifice offered during which one and all, the children as well as the adults, sang the praises of the Lord in the languages they knew, that is to say Quechua and Spanish. The Epistle was read by the moderator, Jorge Cabrena Mori; Fr. Clement Larose, who was celebrating, read the Gospel; in his homily Fr. Lefebvre gave an interesting resumé of Kateri's life.

The ceremony took place in an atmosphere of joy and recol-



In Iquitos at 6:30 a.m., Fr. Jacques Lefebvre notifies Lima that he and his mother have safely arrived in the jungle.

lection. With a song in their hearts, all partook of a tasty dinner of roast bananas with yucca, manioc and rice, at the Moderator's home on stilts.

We had to leave quite soon, for travelling on the Amazon after sundown is very dangerous, and the trip back to Iquitos takes two hours and a half. We regretfully quit Yacapana after casting a last glance at Kateri, who had so well preserved us during the entire journey and who henceforth would be the protectress of this village.



Kateri's friends reach Tamshiyacu on the Amazon.



One of the better streets of Tamshiyacu, where Fr. Jacques Lefebvre labored as a missionary for nine months and a half.



Then they land at Yacapana at 10 a.m.



Children of Yacapana decorate the altar with banana blossoms.



The interior of the school where Blessed Kateri was enthroned as protectress of Yacapana on January 16, 1982.



Fr. Clement Lrose, C.S.V., and Fr. Jacques Lefebvre, O.F.M., offer the Holy Sacrifice.



To honor Blessed Kateri, the altar was embellished with woven banana leaves and with banana and bamboo flowers.



Fr. Jacques Lefebvre and Fr. Clement Lrose officiate at the blessing and enthronement of Blessed Kateri's statue, with the village moderator and his wife as well as the godfather and godmother chosen for Kateri according to Indian custom.



Fr. Jacques Lefebvre and his mother, Mrs. Lilianne Lefebvre, with a bamboo candlestick holder, lit up in honor of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.



After the ceremony of the blessing of Kateri's statue, the faithful gather together in front of the school which serves as church.



Following the enthronement of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha as protectress of Yacapana, some of the villagers accompany Fr. Clement Larose, C.S.V., Fr. Jacques Lefebvre, O.F.M., and his mother to the boat.

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

My mother, Mrs. C.F., I'm sure you know her, put me up to this, as I am not very good at expressing my emotions. I would like to keep you up to date on my little boy, T.K. Maybe my mother has already told you that he had an operation in September because he had a hearing problem, infections, earaches. They took a lot of X-rays. I can't write the medical terminology for it, but they found that there was a cavity in the bone in his ear, and that the membrane covering the brain had somehow been trapped in it, so they operated. Then they found he had a fractured skull and the membrane was caught in there and healed over. We don't know if he had hurt himself when he was a baby, but the Doctors think it could be why he had meningitis, and could get it again if they hadn't operated. I stayed at the hospital all the while he was there, and prayed to Kateri, I had Kateri's medal on his bed. I'm pretty sure she pulled him through again, so I'm sending ten dollars for Kateri's cause in thanksgiving for the wonderful help she has performed again. He has to have a check up again in February, but everything is fine now. Kateri has helped us many times, I'm sure she will again.
(St. Regis, P.Q.)

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

Enclosed is a check for twenty-five dollars to Blessed Kateri for favor received. Also for a new petition. A good friend became pregnant and was undecided what to do, she wanted to have an abortion. I saw the prayer in the Kateri magazine one night about adopting a child in the mother's womb spiritually. I said the prayer a few times and yesterday, October 15, she saw her doctor and with his help decided so far not to have the abortion. Thank God and Blessed Kateri for her decision. I will continue to pray with your help that everything will be O.K. to the end.
(Montreal, P.Q.)

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

In thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart and Blessed Kateri! My son could not find work for a long time and I asked Blessed Kateri to obtain from the Sacred Heart a steady job. Thanks to her he has been working steadily. Enclosed is twenty dollars I had promised.
(Lachine, P.Q.)

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