



*Fr. Arthur Deveau, O.F.M. Cap.,
and the new statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.*

RESTIGOUCHE MICMACS PAY HIGH HONOR TO BLESSED KATERI TEKAKWITHA

SINCE the beatification of the Lily of the Mohawks in 1980, Mr. Alphonse Metallic wanted to see a statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha in his parish church of St. Anne of Restigouche. On several occasions, this pious Micmac, champion of Indian rights, had talked about this with his pastor, Fr. Arthur Deveau, O.F.M., Cap. Last summer the venerable patriarch died without having realized his dream.

His obsequies took on the aspect of an elaborate public funeral. The church was packed, even the choir loft; outside in driving rain, umbrella in hand, a good number of people unable to



enter because of the crowd, gave proof by their presence of the esteem in which they held him. The collection reached twelve hundred dollars, a sum never before attained at a funeral in the history of St. Anne's.

The pastor immediately thought of the conversations he had had with Mr. Metallic about a statue of Blessed Kateri. He asked the advice of the Metallic family about his idea of a statue of the Beata to be erected in memory of Alphonse Metallic with the money of the collection. Besides, many Mass stipends had been offered for the repose of the soul of the much loved departed one.

During the autumn and winter, every Sunday, Fr. Deveau introduced his parishioners to the heroic life of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. After a novena in her honor, followed each evening by holy Mass, on Sunday, February 22, the Restigouche Micmacs paid high honor to Blessed Kateri. The faithful carefully made ready for the occasion: the mixed choir of the church had practised its singing to perfection, the parish committee offered a spotless church for the great day and finally, the best cooks of Restigouche had prepared a tasty meal for all.

Before the ten o'clock liturgy, presided by Bishop Bertrand Blanchet of Gaspé, Fr. Arthur Deveau, O.F.M. Cap., and Chief Jerry Wysote of Restigouche unveiled a beautiful white oak statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. It is 48 inches high, the work of well-known Sculptor Jacques Bourgault of Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, Quebec. Mr. William Gray of Restigouche prepared a solid base of small stones and a beautiful wigwam for the framework.

Before the unveiling, Fr. Henri Béchar, S.J., Vice-Postulator for the Cause of canonization of Blessed Kateri, preached on the three great loves of the Indian virgin: Mary, the Eucharist, and the Cross. After having explained the signification of a blessing, Bishop Blanchet solemnly blessed the monument. The choir members in their blue robes sang in Micmac and in English with their beautiful voices, so common among Indians, under the direction of Sr. Simone Bernard, F.M.A.

Immediately afterwards, Chief Wysote offered Mr. William Gray a beautiful testimonial plaque, gift of the Metallic family as a token of appreciation for his embellishment of the Kateri monument. He then offered another plaque to be placed near the statue. On it one reads the date of the dedication and the fact that this statue of Kateri was offered by the family, the relatives, and the friends of Mr. Alphonse Metallic as well as by the parish community of St. Anne's.

The homily dealt with the Gospel of the day (Mt. 5,38-48) and the Bishop insisted on the Christian values which each one must give to his life following the example of Blessed Kateri. At the end of the Eucharist, the faithful venerated a relic of the Blessed Indian and lingered to admire the monument.

In the large parochial hall beneath the church, Fr. Deveau then treated several hundred guests to a lavish meal. The afternoon concluded with several Indian dances carefully executed by several girls and boys dressed in the traditional Micmac costumes.

This day dedicated to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha will have its repercussions. The Micmacs were the first native people to accept the Good News. Despite underhanded efforts to lead them away from the Church, for more than three centuries, they have remained faithful to Jesus, Mary, Joachim and Anne. Blessed Kateri is not unaware of this and that is why the people of Restigouche as well as all the Micmacs of the Maritime Provinces are particularly dear to her.



Sainte-Anne de Restigouche