



## A Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha School

*Joyful celebration marks opening.*

by Julie de Carufel

**A**N OVERFLOW CROWD was present Wednesday evening, April 29, to celebrate the official opening and blessing of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic School, in Orleans, Ont.

Principal Robert Laplante had an impressive lineup of dignitaries present for the opening. They included numerous CRCSB trustees, including M. Thompson, Chairman of the Board, C.B. MacDonald, Chairman of the English panel of the Board, Jerry Quesnel, vice-chairman, Art LaMarche, Kanata trustee Mrs. John Ladouceur, Hugh Connelly, and associate trustees Des Hurley, Al Scobie and Anne Stankovic.

Dr. William Crossan, Director of Education, said he was glad to see so many children present that evening and that it was important to see the child as the centre of what the whole school system is doing. "We must concentrate on the children and remember that they are the heart of education", he said.

Crossan stated that the benefits of the Catholic education system lay in the teaching of a strong value system, discipline, and a dedication to the future of the children. He stressed that the Church, the school, and parents must work in unity. Crossan finished by saying that the school board administration is there to serve the public, "We're your servants—tell us if we're not doing the job well".

The board was also represented by Mike Revells, Superintendent of English Schools; John McGuinness, Superintendent of Education and Ron Larkin, Superintendent of Planning and Construction.

There were greetings from Harry Allen, representing the city of Gloucester, (with Sallie Hunter and Richard Cantin also in the crowd), and Barry Turner, federal MP. Turner reminisced briefly about his happy early memories and wished the children at Blessed Kateri similar happy memories.

Another special guest was Ed Cross, principal of Kateri School in Kahnawaké, Quebec. Bob Laplante explained that he and Cross had gone to teachers' college together years ago, and never expected to both end up principals at Kateri School. Laplante said he hopes to twin the Orleans school with its Quebec counterpart. Later in the evening, Cross surprised Laplante by saying that his Grade 4's would be visiting Ottawa, May 12, and invited the Orleans Grade 6's to visit his school when they visit Montreal, June 18. The exchange should be a great experience for everyone involved.

Laplante said that Kateri was chosen as patroness of the school because she represented a time of great importance for the early Church in Canada and to highlight the importance of native people and the heritage they have to share with us.

After introductions and the ribbon cutting ceremony, the school was blessed by Father Corbin Eddy, representing the Archbishop; Father Michael Hurtubise, for the parish, and Father Henri Béchard, vice-postulator for Kateri Mission in Kahnawake.

Father Béchard, an expert on the early Church in Canada and the life of Kateri, spoke of the importance of Mary, the Eucharist, and Christ to Kateri. Béchard described Kateri as a very joyful, giving person—an excellent choice as the patroness for the school.



Ryan Sloza of Grade 6 reads his poem in honor of Blessed Kateri, and Mrs. Suzanne Pinel, well known guitarist, sings the praises of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.



Two school principals of schools dedicated to Kateri, Mr. Robert Laplante of Orleans, Ont., and Mr. Edward Cross of Kahnawake, Quebec, speak about the Lily of the Mohawks.



Bibles and crucifix set apart for each class



A beautiful statue of Kateri carved by Mme Filion-Hébert is offered to the school.



A time capsule will recall our period to future generations.



The guests of honor (note the lilies prepared by the school children)



Mr. Laplante and Fr. Béchard exhibit the Blessed Kateri cake.



The children's choir

A procession of school children carrying lilies (for Kateri, the Lily of the Mohawks), a Bible, and crucifixes (for the cross Kateri loved) were followed by an impressive three-foot wooden sculpture, done by Madame Yvette Filion-Hébert, showing Kateri as a young maiden. The sculpture is a gift to the school from an anonymous donor, a friend of Kateri.

Also included in the procession, was a time capsule prepared by senior students. The box, which was later on display in the lobby, contains articles that the students thought would give an idea of our lifestyle in 1987. Articles include a copy of a Consumers Distributing and Sears catalogue, Minto houseplans, report cards, class photos, computer information to show the state of computer technology, etc. It is to be opened at the 25th anniversary of the school and the contributing children contacted.

A beautiful coloured banner of Kateri was made and donated by Michael St. Jean, a parent.

The audience enjoyed a song about Kateri, composed and sung by Suzanne Pinel, well-known children's singer. The choir, finished the evening as they had begun it, with a song.

After the ceremonies, parents enjoyed the chance to socialize, eat goodies, and visit the classrooms and meet the teachers. Parents, children and guests shared the fellowship of the opening and blessing of the school, and made it a special evening.

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#### ❁ Kateri's smile upon you, Mrs. D.S.!

I am sending a check for ten dollars in thanks to Kateri. I thought I had lost some bonds belonging to my daughter, who is away from home. I was quite upset and asked Kateri's help. When I told my daughter about the bonds she said had cashed them. Needless to say I was quite relieved. I also have had trouble sleeping. I asked Kateri to help me and I have noticed an improvement. I am very grateful.

(Glen Burnie, MD)

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