



Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha in paradise



"MOVED TO TEARS..."

By Louis Cyr, S.J.

Sunday, July 9, 1989

Dear Jean-Paul,¹

All this evening tears keep coming to my eyes, for I have been thinking constantly of Fr. Martial Caron, who died earlier today.

Many are the memories that come to my mind, even of the little time—barely two years—that I was privileged to spend with him at Kahnawake from 1959-61! He was there since his arrival in 1954 from his native province out West. As for me, I used to go there Thursday, during most of my philosophy studies with a few scholastics, classmates of mine, to help teach catechism at school and prepare the children's liturgies. During his seven years at Kahnawake, besides the usual pastoral ministry (and the not so usual one peculiar to this Mission!), on top of being Jesuit community superior (1955-60), both of which tasks he assumed with characteristic selfless dedication, Fr. Caron had taken charge of the Mission choir, this already famous cohort of voices which Frs. Hauser, Bernier, Lalonde (Réal), Lévesque and Bruyère (among others) had conducted before him. It's precisely to Fr. Caron's monumental work on the music sung in liturgical worship by the Mohawk choir that I would like to render homage.

Many of us are aware of the custom, going back to the very beginning of our Indian Missions (in the 17th century), of setting to music expressions translated from the penny catechism as well as of having sung in the native language all excerpts of the liturgical celebrations entrusted to the choir. To be sure, the history of the constitution and of the implementation of the repertoires thus sung in Iroquois has yet to be written. At all events, little by little the Latin plainchant texts were translated and coupled syllable by syllable to the individual notes of the music. The French and Latin hymns integrated into the liturgy were treated in the same way. (Apparently no ritual music of Iroquois origin—it can be legitimately assumed, for lack of evidence, that such music did exist—was deemed worthy at the time to be retained for the liturgy, according

¹ Fr. Jean-Paul Labelle, Edit. "Nouvelles" and "Jésuites Canadiens"