

## BLESSED KATERI in Washington D.C.



Basilica of the Immaculate Conception  
in Washington D.C.

*Dear Friends,*

**N**ovember 16, 1992 is now one of the great historical dates of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C. It was on that day, in the evening, that the beautiful Statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, carved out of pure white Vermont marble, was Blessed and dedicated.

At Mass preceding the ceremony, concelebrated by over two hundred members of the hierarchy, Peg Bova, Mohawk, Fred and Florence Reed, Laguna, and Burton and Eleanor Pretty On Top, Crow, carried the gifts to the altar. After Mass a procession went to the Hall of the American Saints where Cardinal James Hickey, Archbishop of Washington and Chairman of the Board of the Basilica, explained the great impor-

tance of the event and thanked the members of the Board of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions - Cardinal John O'Connor, President, Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua and Archbishop William Keeler, for the gift of the Statue to the Basilica. He then invited Cardinal O'Connor to offer the meaningful prayers of the Church's blessing of Images and of the Saints.

Before the prayers, Cardinal O'Connor expressed the deep gratitude of the Church for the gifts of the Native Americans, and said "we are humble because of your many gifts to us." Participating in the Blessing was a choir of Mohawk singers from Kahnawake, Quebec, Canada, where Kateri is buried. The choir, along with Father Jacques Bruyere, S.J., Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Kateri in Canada, sang several hymns - one a hymn to Kateri Tekakwitha, in the Mohawk language. The important moment arrived and Cardinal O'Connor asked me to assist him in the unveiling of the Statue. I consider that invitation an honor as Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions - and I am grateful to Cardinal O'Connor.

Then His Eminence blessed the sweet grass that burned over charcoal and Mohawk ladies, Pat Wyland, Julie Daniels, Emily Garrow and Anna Dyer, went through the group of bishops and people brushing the cleansing smoke upon them. At the same time Peg Bova, the lector for the Mass before, read Scripture again as part of the ceremony of

blessing. Mary George, Mohawk, went to the lecturn and prayed while Art Bova, Mohawk, also prayed in the four directions with the traditional Indian pipe. The entire blessing ceremony was very impressive and kept the rapt attention of the huge gathering. After again thanking the Native peoples for their many contributions to the Church, especially giving Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, and for their many gifts to us all, Cardinal O'Connor invited the bishops to join him in the final blessing of the beautiful Statue.

So Blessed Kateri now has a very prominent place in the largest Catholic Church in the United States and thousands of people who visit the Basilica annually will be aware of her. It was evident that those who came by chartered bus from St. Regis Reservation and Syracuse, New York and many Indians from around the country, were deeply moved and were pleased.

Sincerely in Our Lord,

**Monseigneur Paul Lenz**  
Executive Director  
of the Catholic Indian Missions  
Washington, D.C.



The singers at Kahnawake in front of the new statue.

PHOTO: Anne Scheurman