

"Kaitanoron Kateri Tekakwitha"

*Tribute to Fr Henri Béchard, S.J.
who died on March 19, 1991*

On November 26, Fr Béchard's posthumous book, "Kaiatanoron Kateri Tekakwitha", was officially launched, at Bellarmine House in Montreal. Bishop Hubert was present, as well as Mrs Andrée de Groot, whose paintings and drawings illustrate the book. This publication is a compendium of all that Fr Béchard knew about Kateri, with new findings and additions - the work of his lifetime.

Mrs Madeleine Huet, secretary of Fr Béchard during eight years, who became an expert on Kateri's life herself and helped to finish the book, was the one most qualified to introduce the book and its author to the assembly. Following is a part of her presentation.



Mrs Andrée de Groot
and her painting.

Dear friends of Kateri and Fr Béchard,

I thank Fr Bruyère most sincerely for allowing me to say a few words. This honors me and touches me deeply.

I had the pleasure of collaborating in the making of this book. I worked with Fr Béchard at it for three years. Three hours before his death, I was still discussing it with him...

What a full life Fr Béchard spent on this planet! *What a relentless worker he was and how much zeal he showed when it came to make Kateri better known and loved, and to be at the service of the Native people.*

The treasure that you will soon hold in your hands, he caressed it, contemplated it, cuddled it. It was his last off-spring, the "thing" which had become the most important for him at the close dawn of his life - at harvest time. His first duties accomplished - duties he never neglected - he gave all his time and energy to this task. All is in this book: the richness of a documentation accumulated during all his career, the depth of his meditation, his ardor at the service of this Mohawk virgin, the ultimate message that he wished to convey to us.

Once he confided to me: "Since a long time, Fr Paul Molinari - the Postulator General in Rome for all Causes of Saints in the Society of Jesus - since a long time had asked me to do this work on the life of Kateri, i.e. a life document with references to the sources, presenting Kateri in her familial social, cultural and historical milieu. Today MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, Fr Béchard: your work is being flown to the Eternal City.

To work with Fr Béchard was at the same time demanding and passionating. "20 times put it back on the loom repeatedly, polish it and



The Vice-Postulator at the
launching of the book.

perfect it relentlessly." Sometimes he would say: "I'm always astonished by the abundance of documents that we have on the life of Kateri", and he always discovered new ones, on Kateri, on her contemporaries and on her era.

So on March 19, 1990, Fr Béchard suddenly took off for heaven, and wham! left us his work, his treasure, not quite finished, in our hands if not to say on our back... oh! the resumption of the work was long and painful. The departure of the Vice-Postulator had left a big empty space in the basement on Rachel St. and the nomination of Fr. Bruyère was slow in coming. In brief, the writing was shelved and we wandered a whole year searching for the Ariadne's clew of Fr Béchard's meanders.

When, all of a sudden, a northern light appeared above the last abode of Fr Béchard. Facing the four winds of St-Jerome heights, lodged in an inspiring suite, the famous Jesuit historian, Fr Lucien Campeau, who welcomed us as a father, helped me tremendously to finish honorably the text of Fr Béchard, supporting me and bringing to the work the super-professional touch which it deserved. I thank him with all my heart and I'd like you to thank him with me.



This is how at the time of the great move of the Kateri Center to Kahnawake on June 26th, I could hand back the completed work of Fr Béchard to Fr Bruyère. There stops my contribution. For the rest of the work, hats off to the Vice-Postulator.

Madeleine Huet
(Trad. J.B.)



Albert Lazare,
Madeleine Huet,
Mgr Bernard Hubert,
Jacques Bruyère,
Pierre Hébert,
Mrs Andrée de Groot.