

Miraculous return of the statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha to Mission Dolores

In late April of this year the cemetery at Mission Dolores was vandalized with graves desecrated and the statue of the saintly Indian woman, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks, stolen. Blessed Kateri was a Mohawk Indian, who converted to Catholicism, and became known for her great personal holiness. It is only a matter of time until the Church declares her a saint. The attack on Mission Dolores seemed to be just one more of the attacks made on the California missions by those who have attempted to portray the missions as oppressive institutions that sought nothing more than to enslave the Indians. The miraculous return of the statue of Blessed Kateri suggests a different reality.

The Archives role in the return of the statue began on September 1 when Dr. Burns received a call from Corpus Christi, Texas from a Mary Ellen Gomez, who inquired as to whether there had been an apparition of our Blessed Mother dubbed "Our Lady of the Mohawks." Mrs. Gomez is deeply involved in the Marian Movement and was quite excited. Her brother, John Rodrigues, an employee of the Golden Gate Bridge District who paints the Golden Gate Bridge for a living, had discovered a very dirty cement statue, which he took to be our Blessed Mother, while he was searching for a tool he had



Mrs. Betty Bilay and the Vice-Postulator by the reinstated statue of Kateri.

dropped amidst the rocks beneath the Golden Gate Bridge.

When John Rodrigues dropped his tool from atop the Golden Gate Bridge, he felt a strong "urging" to retrieve it immediately. This was unusual, as on previous occasions he would not bother until the work was finished - if it was an important tool - as you can imagine the inconvenience and time involved in making that long and cautious descent to the base of the bridge where the tool was believed to have dropped.

Mrs. Gomez said that all they could make out was an inscription that read "Lily of the Mohawks." Dr. Burns immediately re-

cognized the appellation as being one of Blessed Kateri's, and suspected that the statue Mr. Rodrigues has found was the statue stolen from Mission Dolores. Dr. Burns contacted Mike Romo at Mission Dolores, who called Mr. Rodrigues and determined that the statue that he had found was indeed the statue that had been stolen. On Sep-

tember 23 the statue was returned to Mission Dolores. A special prayer service conducted by Monsignor John O'Connor, pastor of Mission Dolores, and Andres Rosales Galvan, an Ohlone Indian, welcomed Blessed Kateri home. Her return may seem the result of an odd series of coincidences to the non-believer, but to the believer it rightly seems miraculous. Three other notes make the story all the more unbelievable. First, Mrs. Gomez had called two other dioceses before contacting Dr. Burns. Had either diocese provided her with the information she had sought she would not have contacted San Francisco. Second, Dr. Burns was not supposed to have been at the Archives that day, but had come in to finish a project he was working on. Had he not been there, Mrs. Gomez



Dr Jeffrey Burns and Fr. J. Bruyère by the Golden Gate Bridge.

probably would have called elsewhere, and the statue sent to Corpus Christi, Texas. Third, in doing some research on the Mohawks, Monsignor O'Connor discovered that they were called "The People of the High Bridges!" All these factors suggest the return of the statue was no ordinary event. Perhaps Blessed Kateri was looking out for her people and provided the return of her statue as a special blessing. ■

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Statue of Kateri at the Mission Dolores.