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## Blessed is Kateri: A woman of the Beatitudes

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A Native American woman lived and died on the North American continent a hundred years before America was born. An illiterate Mohawk, Kateri Tekakwitha couldn't read the New Testament, but it's clear that the Jesuits who welcomed her into the faith, taught her the Gospel well. She embraced all that she learned. One of her lessons would have been the Beatitudes (Matt.5:1-12), which are a crystallization of the teachings of Jesus. For two thousand years, this radical message of Jesus has had the power to console as well as to challenge us. In her life of selfless devotion to God and others, Blessed Kateri received the consolation and more than met the demands that they made of her. The life of the Lily of the Mohawks could be described as the "living Beatitudes". Let's see how Kateri responded to each of the Beatitudes, and then "hold up a mirror to ourselves" and see how we might respond with more openness and love.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Why would Jesus bless "poverty?" Is not "richness in spirit" what God is looking for? In a word, "yes," but God can only "fill hands that are empty." When we admit that we're nothing without God, which is the essence of humility, then we can receive the abundant grace of God.

Such was the humility of Kateri. She understood that everything good in her came from God. She could not claim her virtues as her own. Thus, she could receive the rich gifts of the Holy Spirit who alone brings the Kingdom of Heaven to the human heart.

Do I see myself as "rich in spirit?" Am I self-satisfied and complacent?

Do I understand in my heart, that God is the true source of any good that is in me? Do I realize that I am truly nothing without him? Do I come before Him with "empty hands?" so that I might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

P. Kenneth Tietjen o.c.s.c. (to be continued)

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## Kateri in VIETNAM

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"It was in 1973, near the end. Our team was in Cambodia on a reconnaissance mission. We weren't supposed to be there according to the rules, but it was necessary in a war that had no rules.

Intelligence had reported a buildup of North Vietnamese Regulars that had come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and our mission was to observe them and report back.

Everything was going fine until we interdicted a patrol. Confrontation was unavoidable, and although we came through without a scratch, the whole of the enemy camp was alerted due to our close proximity at the time.

They were on us in no time. There must have been a battalion of them. The first to get it was the operations sergeant. Two more than fell and then the captain.

We fought our way out with a modified pincher offensive. Half of us made it, half were dead. We couldn't carry them out. The radio was destroyed, as well as our operator, so we were completely on our own. No way to call in for a lift out.

They hounded us all night. They must have had our scent, so to speak. And of course, there were so many, that all they had to do was to spread out, which they did. They caught up with us again before daybreak. Luckily it was a small patrol, I thought. But they had a .50 caliber machine gun, one of ours captured from a previous encounter. How they moved with it so fast I'll never

know. When they opened up with that thing, all hell broke loose. At the end of the fight, only two of us were left.

For a while, a very short while, I thought the two of us would make it out. Of all the fellows on the team, I was closest to him. I really felt bad about losing everyone else, but the fact that my best buddy of my whole life was with me made me feel