



* A NEW WORK OF ART

Last spring I was showing my art at a local school when I was approached about creating the new official portrait of St. Kateri. So what I wanted to do was to make the new portrait different than past portraits but also have that same holy feeling. The way I wanted to make it different was to take St. Kateri's native background and her spiritual connection and bring it together in one piece.

In the portrait I displayed certain elements that played an importance in her life. I will now describe the symbolism of those elements.

Three Sisters - Growing up as a child, Saint Kateri tended to the garden as her everyday chore. I wanted to represent that by showing the main crops that were grown by the Mohawks. These crops were known as corn, beans, and squash, which were called the "three sisters" and they are depicted top left under the turtle's neck.

Lilies - St. Kateri was also known as the "Lily of the Mohawks". She died at the age of 24. In the portrait I surrounded her with 24 lilies, each one celebrating a year of her life.

Wooden Cross - Saint Kateri was also known to make crosses out of twigs and rope and place them in the woods. So I created the cross to look the way it might have been made by her.

Small pox - At the age of 4, Saint Kateri lost her family to small pox. Along with losing her family she was also infected and her skin became scarred. So I put the hint of small pox on the side of her face to show that it was a part of her life. The disease caused her to have partial blindness. That's why if you look close, you can see her eyes are fogged out. She wore a shawl that was draped over her head that created shade for her eyes because she was sensitive to the sun.

Hair - I talked to many elders about Saint Kateri and they described her to always wear her hair down. So I created the portrait to show that she always wore it down and not in braids.

Turtle - The turtle represents Kateri's Clan. Clans are a large part of her native culture and they still are today. The turtle is also looked at as Mother Earth, and that's why a tree line is placed on top of the turtle's shell.

The Rosary - Even though I did not put her hands in the portrait holding her rosary like other portraits. I wanted to put it in her shawl to show that she always had it on her. Even with her hard times and through her travels, she always carried it with her.

Jordan Thompson, Artist – Mohawk Art & Design

