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MESSENGER

OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

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ALBAN J. DACHAUER, S.J.

A GIRL CALLED KATERI

JOSEPH S. McBRIDE, S.J.

HELP COMES TO THE ARCHBISHOP

— DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCILS

LEONARD J. WALL, S.T.D.

A girl called Kateri

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH S. McBRIDE, S.J.

Father McBride, you are a man who wears two large hats. You are Regional Director of the Apostleship of Prayer for the New York, New Jersey area and you are also vice-postulator of the cause of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha in the United States. Can you tell me what your second hat involves?

We are engaged in the promotional work of spreading Kateri's story. This is very important because it reveals to people, not only in the United States but also throughout the world, the life of heroic sanctity and holiness this girl lived amidst tremendous difficulties.

When did Kateri live, Father?

She was born in 1656 in the town now known as Auriesville, N.Y. It was a Mohawk Indian village on the banks of the Mohawk River midway between what we call Fonda and Amsterdam today.

Auriesville is where the Martyrs' Shrine is, isn't it?

That's right, the Shrine of the North

American Martyrs, the scene of the martyrdom of St. Isaac Jogues and St. René Goupil. Ten years after her birth the village was destroyed by fire and the Mohawks moved across the river to a town called Caughnawagi, now Fonda, N.Y. It was in this village that Kateri was baptized.

How old was she when she was baptized?

Twenty years old. After her baptism it became increasingly difficult for her to practise her new Faith, principally because the rest of her nation remained pagan and did not understand the ways of a new Christian. So an escape was arranged for her from this village by Father de Lamberville, the missionary who baptized her.

Where did she go when she escaped?

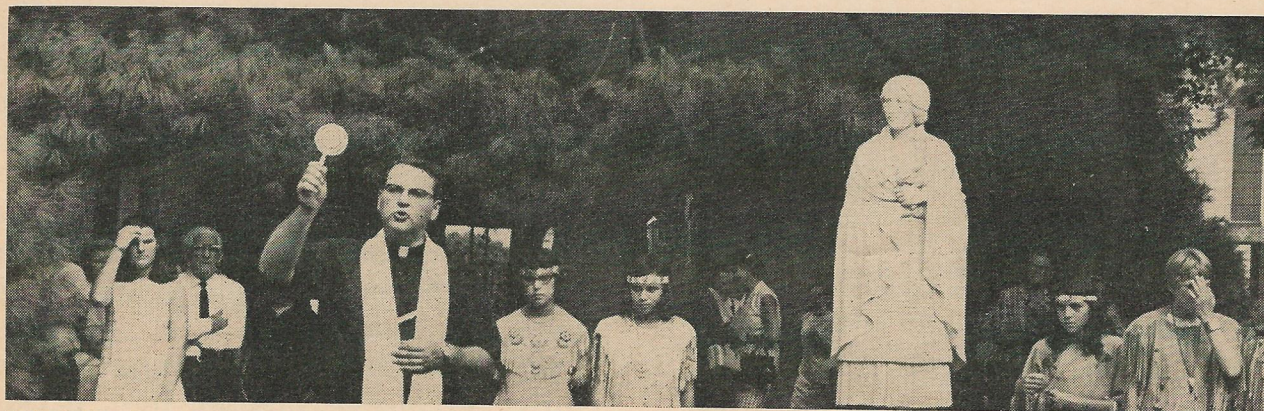
She travelled about three hundred miles north-east to Caughnawaga.

It's interesting that she had been living at Caughnawagi and escaped to Caughnawaga.

I think that is correct. They haven't been able to determine the exact spelling of the words, so the pronunciations are doubtful, too. Caughnawaga is a few miles south of Montreal. That is where Kateri died in 1680. Her remains are kept in the church on the St. Francis Xavier Reservation there. Caughnawaga was known at that time as the Castle of the Praying Indians. It was built to shelter these new Christians who could go there to live and pray unmolested.

What are some elements from Kateri's life that lead us to believe her worthy of canonization?

Her prayerfulness, certainly the life of purity she led. It is understandable that the ideas of the Jesuit missionaries, the Blackrobes who preached Christianity to the Indians, which their converts adopted, were not familiar to the Indians because of the type of life the Indians were living at that time. The tremendous thing is that against all odds, Kateri managed to live a life of purity and that she was allowed to pronounce a vow of virginity, which was remarkable in that day and age.



Father McBride, Vice-postulator of the Cause of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha, blesses the crowd at the Kateri Weekend at Auriesville, N.Y., birthplace of Kateri Tekakwitha. Girls in costume are Mohawk princesses from the St. Regis Reservation, Hogansburg, N.Y.

She was almost forced into marriage. It seems that when an Indian girl offered a boy a bowl of sagamite, it meant that she was accepting his proposal of marriage. On one occasion her aunt arranged that Kateri should do this.

Before she went to Caughnawaga?

Yes, that's right. Kateri almost went through with it before she realized what was happening.

I believe that she had great devotion to the Mass and to the Blessed Eucharist?

Yes, she was found many times in the chapel and spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. Also her devotion to the Mother of God was tremendous. She learned to say the rosary at an early age and kept to that practice very religiously.

I read myself one time that when she left Caughnawaga to go with her people on the hunt, early in the morning at the time Mass would be said back at the mission, she would go to pray in a little grotto where she had put up a crucifix. She would unite herself in prayer with the priest at the altar even though she could not be present physically.

She may have gotten that idea, you know, from stories told about St. Isaac Jogues. According to the account of his life, at the end of the day this missionary would go out into the woods and carve a cross on the bark of a tree and underneath it he would carve the name Jesus. There he would stand meditatively and would prayerfully pronounce the name of Jesus. That was all the strength he could muster.

You think Kateri knew about this?

Yes. It was through the tremendous example of the missionaries, the great sacrifices these men were making, the inspiration of the type of life they lived that she received the gift of Faith.

Kateri is now "Venerable." This means that her cause has been introduced. What are the next steps?

That is the most difficult step towards canonization. It means that all the testimony, the evidence from research, has been gathered and submitted to

Rome. The evidence in Kateri's case, amounting in size to a large metropolitan telephone book, was examined and approved and in 1943 the Holy Father, Pius XII, pronounced her venerable. Now we are working for her beatification. This requires two first class miracles.

Two first class miracles?

That's right. One has already been accepted and duly processed by Rome, and we are praying very, very earnestly for the second.

What was the nature of the first miracle?

It was a cancer cure.

A recent cure?

No, it goes back, I suppose, about twenty years, certainly to long before I was thought of as vice-postulator.

So it was a case of someone cured of cancer in an incurable state?

That's right. It has to be of course.

And your work at present is to encourage people to pray for Kateri's beatification?

Yes, it is really a prayer crusade. Right at the moment it is a matter of prayer. We know that when the blind man cried out, "Lord, that I may see," our Lord worked a miracle. The deaf man, the crippled, the lepers, they all prayed, and miracles followed their prayers. The more we can get to pray for this tremendous miracle that is needed, to pray that Almighty God in His own good time will see fit to grant it, the surer I am that it will happen.

And in the meantime a great many benefits come from people just praying.

I'm glad you mentioned that. There is a distinction between a favor granted and a miracle worked through the intercession of the Venerable Kateri. Every day an average of ten letters come into my office and they mention the faith the writers have had in Kateri for years and the favors they have received. She's a great one for help in financial difficulties and for selling houses and pieces of property.

If I could put in a personal note —

Prayer

O God, who, among the many marvels of thy grace in the New World, didst cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and the St. Lawrence the pure and tender lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant, we beseech thee, what we ask: (here mention your petition) so that this little lover of Jesus and His cross may soon be raised to the honors of the altar by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and her faith, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

when I was in high school I was trying to decide what my vocation in life would be. I had a copy of the prayer to Kateri, I don't know where I got it, and all one year I said that prayer as part of my night prayers. That summer, while I was staying with a relative in a small town, there was a brush fire a few miles away. The local Mountie commandeered all the young fellows around the town to fight the fire. Out there was an Indian reservation with an old abandoned mission church, and the Indians had removed the statues from it for fear that the church would burn down. It was on the occasion of fighting that bush fire that the resolution came to me to become a Jesuit priest. At the time I thought it an answer to my daily prayer to Kateri.

Wonderful. Many more such answers to prayer can be found in our publication, *Lily of the Mohawks*.

That's put out at your office in Buffalo?

Yes, twice a year. It should come out oftener.

Is there a vice-postulator in Canada?

Yes. Father Henri Bechard. He has a publication called *Kateri*. It comes out more frequently, I think.

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A GIRL CALLED KATERI

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Is Father Bechard stationed at Caughnawaga?

No, at Montreal, but he may be reached at the address at Caughnawaga. I don't think we ought to overlook, either, the work of my two good friends, Mary Eunice and Joe Spagnola. Last year we travelled over five thousand miles. Mary Eunice is an actress who belonged to Blackfriars and has worked in off-Broadway productions. Now she is performing monologues. She has written quite a few of them, not only with religious themes but also patriotic and secular. In our travels she will perform several pertaining to the life of Kateri. We always conclude with the most beautiful

one — Mary Eunice in Indian costume is Kateri telling her story from heaven. It is most beautiful and very touching.

Is Mary Eunice Indian herself?

No, she isn't, but everybody takes her to be when she is dressed up and presents this monologue and, as I say, people have been most generous. We like to put this show on for grammar school children and of course adult groups, parish societies — anywhere for anybody who would like to learn more about Kateri. I don't know whether you would like to note this also. Both Mary Eunice and I were

made honorary members of the Mohawk nation a year ago on April 17.

I believe you are now Chief Blue Skies. Is that right, Father?

That's right. Chief *Rakeni Karonhiio*.

How do you spell that?

Rakeni more or less means "chief." *R-a-k-e-n-i*. The *k* is like *g*, *ragen*i. *K-a-r-o-h-i-i-o*. The reason I was given that name is, in the words of the only Mohawk Jesuit priest, Father Mike Jacobs, who lives at the St. Regis Reservation at Hogansburg, "You are a preacher, you are one who through your words leads people to lift their eyes up to heaven. The heavens for the Indians were the blue skies and one who preached lifted the eyes of the people to the blue skies."

Well, Father Chief Blue Skies, we trust that the many people who will learn about Kateri through the Messenger will pray to her every day for the cause of her beatification as well as all the other favors that will come through her intercession.

For anyone who wants more information, the best pamphlet is *Kateri Tekakwitha* by Father Thomas J. Coffey, S.J. It is available from our office.

Do you have any travels on behalf of Kateri coming up?

Yes. Last year through Bishop Broderick of Albany we had a National Prayer Day for the cause. This year it will be at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation on June 20. On the way out and back we have a number of engagements. One at the Catholic Shrine in Upper Michigan, where they are having a statue sculpted and we are having a prayer day, and one at the Carmelite Fathers at Aylesford in Illinois are probably the highlights.

Will there be any special events at the Auriesville Shrine during the summer?

Indian Sunday will again be the Sunday before Labor Day. That's when the Indians from Caughnawaga will be there, especially the choir which is most beautiful to listen to. They sing parts of the Mass in their Mohawk dialect. Then Father Jacobs from St. Regis generally brings along a group of his youngsters, and they perform Indian dances. That is very interesting to see, a beautiful reflection of their culture.



ing more about the Venerable Kateri or in subscribing to publications on her should write to:

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or

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