

Richard H. King - eing aus common u's - postulator.

My Dear Friends

It may be good to mention, that Kateri's Cause was first presented at Rome along with that of the Jesuit Martyrs. To hasten the beatification and canonization of the latter, the late Father Edward Goulet, former Secretary General of the Missions for the Society of Jesus in Rome, had Kateri's name deleted from the roster of the Martyrs. Providentially this was excellent, for now, standing out alone the Cause of the Lily of the Mohawks is, so to speak spotlighted.

When the Cause reached Rome in 1938, the documents pertaining to her life and death were published in a limited edition under the title MARIANOPOLITAN. seu ALBANEN. IN AMERICA Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Catharinae Virginis Indianae. At the suggestion of Father John J. Wynne, S.J., the cause was handled from Albany with the consent of Archbishop Georges Gauthier, Administrator of the Archdiocese of Montreal. On October 13, 1961, Bishop Gerard-Marie Coderre of St. John of Quebec, which was a suffragan diocese of Montreal since 1933, requested and obtained from the Sacred Congregation of Rites that the Cause be listed under the name of St. John of Quebec instead of Montreal. The request was granted and signed by Cardinal Cicognani, former Apostolic Delegate to the U.S.A., and then Prefect of the Congregation of Rites.

After these preliminary remarks, to which I have drawn your attention, I now come to my nomination as Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Kateri Tekakwitha in Canada. In 1937, Father Antonio Poulin, S.J., Editor of the French Messenger of the Sacred Heart, was named Vice-Postulator of the Cause in Canada, and was able to reach out in this publication and make Kateri better known throughout French Canada. In 1949, when he was named Superior of Villa Manresa in Québec city, a replacement was needed as Vice-Postulator.

After two years as Minister of Scholastics (or Dean of Discipline) in Montreal, I had been assigned to the Iroquois Mission of St.

Francis Xavier in 1948. This was the mission in which Kateri died in 1680. A few months later, I launched the Kateri quarterly. The following year, during October, I received my nomination as successor to Father Poulin, signed by Father Carlo Miccinelli, S.J., Postulator General of Kateri's Cause. Bishop Edmund Gibbons of Albany and my Jesuit Provincial, Father Léon Pouliot, approved my nomination.

PILGRIMAGES AND TOURISTS

One of my first responsibilities consisted in making Kateri better known to pilgrims and tourists, who visited the mission church in droves. Although pilgrimages are on the decline, thousands of tourists pass through Caughnawaga annually. Weekends, when I am at the reservation, I still take charge of the visitors to introduce them to Kateri. Very often, during the first fifteen years, members of the choir would sing for the pilgrims. To Mrs. Esther Kane Phillips and to the choir she represents, I take the opportunity to thank her for these years of enduring practical devotion to Kateri. Each Sunday morning, our visitors are happy to hear the High Mass sung in the beautiful Iroquois language.

THE KATERI QUARTERLY

At first, the Kateri publication contained 16 pages. The format was reduced in December 1959 but twenty more pages were added. The format was enlarged in 1964, and has remained the same ever since. In 1957 the French version of Kateri was launched. Approximately one million copies of the little quarterly have carried the message of this saintly maiden throughout the world. Several years ago, Mr. Joseph O'Brien now of Pepper Pike, Ohio, first contacted the Mission of St. Francis Xavier. In the following years, he lifted me out of what I considered and still consider the tremendous welter of my debts, mostly to the printer of Kateri. I now wish to acknowledge publicly my debt to him, for without his assistance, it would have been necessary

to suspend publication. As Father McBride wrote in the Lily of the Mohawks, Fall, 1973:

"In business Joe O'Brien is rated the No. 1 Chevy Dealer in Cleveland and among League promoters he holds the same place... His support extends to Father Béchard, Vice-postulator for Canada." It certainly does.

Over the years, Kateri readers have learned about the Jesuit missions in the Mohawk Valley and throughout northern New York State as well as about the Mission of St. Francis Xavier at Laprairie and at Sault St. Louis, today Caughnawaga, P.Q., where Kateri received her First Communion and achieved union with God. Subscribers were introduced in detail to more than twenty of Kateri's contemporaries, to seven Jesuit missionaries of old, who instructed, baptized and directed Tekakwitha in the unitive way. Her spirituality and its meaning for our times was also stressed.

In 1956, lack of space at the mission obliged me to move the Center to 1673, Rachel Street East, in Montreal. Mr. Albert Lazare, one of my former Indian students continued to work for Kateri. As the mission address in Caughnawaga has been retained, every evening he collects the Kateri correspondence at the rectory of the mission and brings it to the Center the next morning. Besides Mr. Lazare, who has worked at the Center for 23 years and is the father of a family of five, Miss Flora MacDonald, a retired department head of the Toronto Dominion Bank, is in charge of the business end of the Center. Sister Lynn Binet, C.N.D., often assisted afternoons by Miss Madeleine SansCartier, takes care of the French correspondence. For several years, Mrs. Juliette Charlebois, devoted herself to Kateri's Cause, but sickness forced her to retire. The Cause now has 6650 English and 4183 French paid up subscribers. Slowly but surely the number of subscribers is growing.

TANGIBLE RESULTS

As it is impossible to weight the spiritual effects of the pilgrimages to Kateri's mission church, of the KATERI quarterly and of the campaign for signed promises of a daily prayer for Kateri's beatification, let me examine briefly with you a few tangible results.

As you know, a statue of Kateri Tekakwitha stands here at Auriesville, her birthplace. Since 1954, a bronze statue of Kateri by internationally-known Sculptor Emile Brunet, who studied art in Chicago and in Paris and who works in the latter city, was unveiled in front of Tekakwitha School in Caughnawaga. In 1972, Brunet had another statue of Kateri cast from the same mold for the Mission of St. Francis at the Rosebud Reservation (South Dakota.)

At the suggestion of Bishop André Cimichella, Auxiliary of Montreal, and Ponent for the Causes of the Founders of the Canadian Church, with the consent of Bishop Coderre of St. John of Quebec, Kateri's remains were canonically placed within a Cararra marble tomb in the right transept of the mission church at Caughnawaga. Since the Daughters of Isabella have a chapter of Indian Members in Caughnawaga, a substantial sum was donated by this organization for the tomb; but as their donation was insufficient, our faithful stand-by and signal benefactor, Mr. Joe O'Brien also added a substantial donation to completely cover the costs of the new resting place of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha.

The main objective that I have tried to reach was, of course, Kateri's Beatification, and more immediately miraculous cures obtained through her intercession. As a matter of fact, several cures were obtained during the last quarter of a century. Unfortunately, or perhaps, providentially, when medical evidence was requested, all the doctors had died and their archives were dispersed. Most of the reports of rather extraordinary cures came in long after they had been effected. Ten lepers

were cured by Our Lord, but only one, a stranger, immediately returned to give thanks.

In a nutshell, which I hope was not too large, this is the story of my twenty-five years' efforts as Vice-Postulator in Canada for the Cause of Beatification of the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha.