

St. Francis Xavier lends helping hand to faithful by [Jessica Deer](#) - February 7, 2018

Hundreds of visitors flocked to the St. Francis Xavier mission on Tuesday to see the saint's forearm, which has been touring Jesuit parishes across Canada for the past month. (Photos by Jessica Deer, The Eastern Door)

A nearly 500-year-old severed forearm made its way to Kahnawake this week.

It belonged to Saint Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic missionary that is said to have baptized thousands of people.

Wendy Skye was one of the hundreds of people to flock to the St. Francis Xavier mission/Kateri Tekakwitha shrine on Tuesday morning to see the centuries-old religious relic.

"I have strong Catholic faith, and I felt like it's important. It's an honour for us to have this. They're not going to every parish," said Skye.

"Anything that you see, that you have faith, that will help. I know people with some serious issues or deteriorating health and they're not old – those kinds things, I feel I have hope for them and that's why I came.

The visit wrapped up a month-long tour across the country was organized to coincide with Canada's 150th anniversary by the Jesuits of Canada and Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), a Canadian university student movement dedicated to evangelization.

"Two thirds of Catholic young people who go to university will lose their faith, and we wanted to do something about that," said Angèle Regnier, founder of CCO.

"The archbishop of Ottawa, knowing our great love to St. Francis Xavier, thought that it would be great for the young people of Canada to bring the arm of St. Francis here to encourage them to have even greater missionary skills.

Several Mohawk Council of Kahnawake chiefs were in attendance for the ceremony, including grand chief Joe Norton who addressed the crowd.

"Having been in a position of leadership in this community for a very long time, the difficult side of being a leader, I've had the wonderful opportunity to see the good side of things, and today's event is one of those," he said.

"There are many things that have happened to us, but we managed to survive and continue to advance, and that's why we're able to be here this morning to welcome you to our wonderful peaceful community and to a wonderful peaceful event.

Tuesday's pit stop was among its last before it's handed (pun intended) back to its permanent resting place inside the opulent Church of the Gesu in Rome.

“You need to know that this relic is not a traveling relic. Like Kateri’s tomb, it is kept in Rome and it hardly ever is moved. We know that it has been to the United States in the 1950s, but we don’t know if it has ever been to Canada,” said Regnier.

For deacon Ronald Boyer, having Kahnawake be a part of the tour was significant.

“Why is it important? Because the mission is in his name, Saint Francis Xavier. The fact that the relic has been travelling the world, especially now in Canada, it’s an honour,” he said.

In Catholic tradition, relics are an object, notably part of the body or clothes, remaining as a memorial of a departed saint used for veneration.

“It’s not the relic itself, it’s the faith and the people. You can move a mountain when you believe in it, and that’s just the symbol of the presence of the saint. Me, I carry Kateri with wherever I’m going, and I can’t carry Francis because he’s going back to Europe,” said Boyer.

Not everyone was happy about the relic coming to Kahnawake. Several community members expressed their disappointment and criticism over Facebook leading up to the event.

No one wanted to speak to *The Eastern Door* on the record.

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