

Homily

Feast of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Kanawake, April 19th 2026

Bishop Martin Laliberté, p.m.é.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

If I could give a title to my homily today it would be *Walking with Christ, Transformed by Love*

As matter of fact, the Word of God today invites us to reflect on conversion, witness, and transformation—themes that are beautifully embodied in the life of a member of your own nation, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the “Lily of the Mohawks.”

We all know that Kateri lived a short and fragile life marked by suffering: she lost her parents to smallpox, was left scarred and partially blind, and grew up in a community that was suspicious of Christianity.

Yet, in that fragile life, God was doing something powerful. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus that we see in today’s Gospel, Kateri’s heart was quietly burning long before she fully recognized the One that was walking with her.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we can see saint Peter boldly proclaims that Jesus, crucified and raised, is the fulfillment of God’s promise.

This is not just an idea for Peter; it is a life experience and a living truth. Peter speaks as one who has been transformed by encountering the risen Christ.

Kateri lived that same truth, though in a very different setting. She had no pulpit, no public authority, no protection from ridicule or persecution. Yet

her life itself became a proclamation that God is faithful, that God is worth everything.

In a world where faith often meant rejection, Kateri chose Christ anyway. Like Peter, she trusted that God would not abandon her—not in suffering, not in loneliness, not even in death.

Her quiet perseverance became a testimony stronger than words.

In his letter to the Romans, we see today that Saint Paul urges the community in Rome saying and I quote:

“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice... do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed.”

This passage could almost serve as a summary of Kateri’s way of being a disciple of Christ.

She refused to conform to the expectations placed upon her—to abandon her faith, to marry against her conscience, to hide her devotion in order to fit in.

Instead, she allowed her mind and heart to be renewed by Christ.

For Kateri, faith was not something added to life; it was the force that *re-shaped* her life. Her prayer, her fasting, her service to the sick and elderly were not about earning holiness but about responding to love.

Paul reminds us that true worship happens not only in words but in how we live. Kateri’s entire life became an offering—quiet, costly, and beautiful.

In saint Luke’s Gospel, two disappointed disciples walk away from Jerusalem.

Their hopes are shattered. Jesus walks with them, listens to them, explains the Scriptures—but they do not recognize him until he breaks the bread.

This moment captures something essential about the spiritual life: Christ often walks with us way before we recognize him.

Kateri's journey was much like that road to Emmaus. She encountered Christ gradually—through the witness of missionaries, through the Scriptures she learned by heart, through prayer, and through the Eucharist.

Her faith did not remove suffering, but it gave her partially blind eyes the capacity to see meaning and hope within it.

When the disciples recognize Jesus, they immediately turn back toward Jerusalem. Encountering Christ always sends us *outward*—toward witnessing.

So too with Kateri. Her holiness drew others not because she argued or preached, but because people could see that Christ was alive in her.

Kateri is a saint for our Time. She speaks powerfully to us today.

She reminds us that:

- Holiness is not about strength, but surrender, to let Christ do his work in us by the power of his Holy Spirit.
- Faith can flourish even in hostile or indifferent environments which is our case today as it was for her.
- Encountering Christ leads not to escape from the world, but to transformation within it, bearing witness with the way we serve others.

In a culture that pressures us to conform, Kateri shows us the freedom of belonging completely to Christ.

In times when faith can feel fragile or lonely, she assures us that God is faithfully walking beside us—even when we do not yet recognize Him.

As Christ walked with the disciples on the road, as the Spirit emboldened Peter, as grace transformed Kateri Tekakwitha, so too the Lord walks with *us* today.

May we, like Saint Kateri, allow our hearts to be set on fire by Christ.
May we offer our lives as living sacrifices.

And may we go forth, renewed and transformed, to bear gentle and faithful witness to the risen Lord.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us. AMEN!