

Devotees Press Sainthood for Indian Maid

By John Dash

Three hundred years ago, an unprepossessing Indian woman died, and this year hundreds of people in the U.S. and Canada will observe that death as her entrance into eternal life.

The woman was Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohican, who was born in the U.S. near Auriesville, and who died at Laprairie, along the St. Lawrence in Canada. She has been called "The Lily of the Mohawks," by her devotees.

And in this anniversary year, her followers are pressing for her beatification and canonization, the Church's declarations that she is indeed among the saints.

Kateri has already been declared venerable, worthy of the adulation of her followers, by Pope Pius XII in 1943.

According to Joanne Hartman, the Rochester recording artist and liturgical singer, the Kateri cause is especially significant in the light of her being a woman and a member of a minority group.

That note also was sounded by Father Joseph McBride, the U.S. vice-postulator for the cause, in a recent letter to Bishop Matthew H. Clark. "Highlighting 1980 will further indicate that we want this honor for the saintly



Indian Maiden, as a member of a minority race, thereby manifesting practical support of the United States' bishops letter on racism," he wrote.

Father McBride, a Jesuit, maintains the offices for the Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha League at Auriesville.

Ms. Hartman is one of a number of friends of Kateri's cause in the diocese. She and Pat Dunning, a teacher at St. Pius Tenth School, collaborated last year on songs praising the Mohawk maiden. The songs are available on both 45 and 33 1/3 rpm records, Ms. Hartman said.

According to Father McBride, another diocesan, Mrs. Anne Scheuerman of Pittsford lent her "expert selling abilities" to the production of the records.

According to literature sent

out by Father McBride's office, Kateri's cause is formally only a little less than 100 years old. In 1884, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore petitioned Rome to start the process for her beatification. At that point documents were amassed and sent to the Vatican. In June 1938 the historical section of the Congregation of Rites declared that the documents were complete, genuine and trustworthy, that they established Kateri's renown for holiness and provided a solid basis for judgment that her virtues were heroic.

The relator for her cause in Rome, Father Antonelli OFM, has stated that Kateri is "a North American Indian . . . the first of that great and sorely tried human family to be presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites as a candidate for the honors of the altar."

But what has occurred in the past 27 years?

Father McBride said that the usual order of things is to present Rome with documentation on miracles attributed to her intervention. Rome requires two genuine miracles, he said, and discovering those miracles is one of the duties of the Tekakwitha league.

He also said however that there is ferment in the Vatican for a "new approach to the whole business of sainthood," and that it has been suggested Rome waive the miracles requirement in the Kateri case.

Father McBride pointed to an article penned by fellow Jesuit Father Paul Molinari, the president of the Union of Postulators General, which states, "Briefly, we do not believe that it is necessary or advantageous to demand a special divine sign apart from the reputation for holiness of a servant of God."

"If one wishes to persist in demanding such a special sign, we maintain that it is unnecessary to claim that such a sign be a miracle in the strict sense."

"A truly extraordinary reputation for holiness should also be sufficient proof of the divine intervention for the beatification or canonization of a servant of God whose martyrdom or heroic virtue has already been proven."

For the time being, however, the Tekakwitha league is begging people to say, one Our Father and/or one Hail Mary each day until the miracles are obtained for Kateri's beatification.

Briefly, Kateri's life is as follows:

• She was born in Ossernenon (Auriesville) in 1656 to Kahenta, an Algonquin captive, and Kenhoronkwa, a Mohawk Chief.

• In 1660 her face was pockmarked and her eyes damaged in a smallpox

epidemic which ravaged her home, killing her parents and her younger brother. She was then taken in by two aunts and an uncle. The remaining tribesmen at this time moved about a mile away from the infested site.

• In 1666, the French invaded the new village, forcing the people to flee 14 miles to the west to Tionnontoguen. After the invasion, the Mohawks built a new village called Caughnawaga, a place where Kateri was to remain until she was 21.

• During this time, the maiden was introduced to Christianity by the French missionaries. And also during this time, she was under almost constant pressure to get married.

• She began catechetical instructions in 1675 under the direction of Father James de Lamberville. She was baptized on Easter the following year with the name of Catherine. Almost at once her Christian practices were the object of derision within her household and coupled with her refusal to get married, caused her to

become an outcast. She fled the situation in 1667, in the company of three lay catechists, and with her uncle in angry pursuit.

• In the fall of 1677 she settled in Laprairie, Canada, where, on Christmas Day, she received her First Holy Communion.

• In 1679, on the Feast of the Annunciation, she consecrated her virginity to God.

• In 1680 she died a natural death.

All in the Family

By Sarah Child

Don't Ask What's for Breakfast

The Wheaties people would have us believe that only those who consume their flakes are champion breakfasters.



I take exception to that. At our house we are all champions (or rugged individualists) when it comes to the first meal of the day and about the only time anybody gets down the orange box with the athlete on it is when they are in need of a bedtime snack.

As this is being written on a chilly February morning I am well fortified with tuna salad, my second favorite breakfast, my first choice being cold, left over hamburgers from the night before. With pickle relish, of course. Skip the onion before 9 a.m. thank you.

Our children share a taste for adventurous breakfasts.

The oldest left the house at 7:15 having breakfasted on toast and peanut butter; her brother on cottage cheese and applesauce and the youngest went conventional with oatmeal.

She had not been quite so conventional the day before. I had gone back upstairs to collect the laundry and returned to the kitchen to have my nose assailed by a pungent odor.

"What's the funny smell?" I asked in alarm looking to see if I had burned the coffee again.

"Garlic bread" she said looking expectantly into the toaster oven where a piece of stale Italian bread was bubbling nicely with garlic and butter.

"How much garlic powder did you use?" I asked. She showed me.

I shrieked. "That's more than I use for a whole loaf of bread." She shrugged and responding to the "ding" of the oven pulled out her second piece and munched happily, promising to brush two more times before going to school, a move that wasn't going to help a whole lot.

We come by our penchant for distinctive breakfasts honestly. My grandfather, born outside of Rome, in a little town in the hills where it is customary to have coffee with hot milk and rolls for their prima colazione came to this country and settled in a yankee community. So he ate pancakes — with spaghetti on top — for breakfast, a habit that would have made his Roman ancestors roll over in their graves. On the other hand maybe they would have understood. After all they were the ones to originate the phrase *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

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