

Canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, October 21, 2012, Rome



CNS/Paul Haring

Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Mohawk Nation) carries a relic of St. Kateri Tekakwitha during the canonization of Saint Kateri in St. Peter's Square, October 21, 2012.

As a representative of the Las Casas Board of Directors I (Marilyn Winter, OP, Adrian) had the privilege and rare opportunity to participate in the canonization ceremony for St. Kateri Tekakwitha, known as "Lily of the Mohawks". A delegation of over seven hundred formed the official pilgrimage and were joined by smaller groups arranged by individual dioceses across the country and many hundreds more from Canada.

We were welcomed on Friday night at a wonderful reception in the Vatican garden area hosted by the United States Embassy and Ambassador Diaz. It was gratifying to see how the government welcomed our group and honored the two women from the States who were being canonized (Sister Marianne Cope was the other woman).

The experience of the canonization of Kateri was like no other. Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA, Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference, and I arrived in the pitch dark of a Roman morning, October 21, 2012. We joined thousands of others already gathering in the square and outside the colonnade. We went directly to the entrance of the Holy Office where we were swallowed in a sea of others; cardinals, bishops, priests, our Native American choir members, all waiting for the entrance to open. Sister Toni Harris, OP (Sinsinawa & Dominican International Co-Promoter for Justice and Peace, lives in Rome) was already there, having accompanied the first taxi of our participants. Toni was an invaluable assistant in getting us to places and guiding us through the security system of Swiss Guards, police and internal security people. As former president of the Las Casas Board, she knew what this event meant to all of us and gave hours of her time and energy to make it a memorable occasion for us.

Finally the gate opened and we were directed around the rear of St. Peter's to a side entrance, across the length of the basilica and out the front door to the steps to find our place and go through a final practice. Our small choir with flute and drum accompaniment sang three songs in the Mohawk language before the ceremony began. During the ceremony Sister Kateri Mitchell, executive director of the Tekakwitha Conference and also Las Casas board member, presented the relic of St. Kateri (encased in a large glass frame with two brass medallions depicting Kateri with the date on one and the turtle {her clan} along with images of corn, squash and beans {the three sisters} on the other). I walked with her carrying a candle (my participation, a happy fault of lack of communication, put me in at the last minute) to place on the relic table. One of the women read an intercession in Mohawk during the Mass. It was an historic and moving ceremony as we celebrated the decades of waiting and praying for this moment.

The following day, Monday, we returned to St. Peter's and celebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving. The choir did a wonderful job leading us in joyful singing and chanting. Marcus Briggs-Cloud, our cantor and director composed a song especially for the occasion. Vince Redhouse and three of his students played the native flute and Marcus the drum. People presented personal gifts as well as the official gifts of a beaded cross, handmade stole and handmade plate and cup from the Tekakwitha Conference. Archbishop Chaput was the presider. Thanks to all the Dominicans who joined us in spirit and prayer on October 21st!

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

Submitted by Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian)

Las Casas: Dominicans in Ministry with Native Americans, Inc. Board

www.domlife.org/lascasas

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

October 21, 2012

"Lily of the Mohawks"

Algonquin/Mohawk

Born: 1656, Ossernenon, NY

Died: April 17, 1680

Venerable: January 3, 1943

Beatified: June 22, 1980

Feast day: July 14

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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha - Pray for us!