

THOUGHTS ON ST. KATERI:

It was in our Novitiate Time of Formation in 1996 that we became connected with Kateri Tekakwitha, who was 'Blessed' at that time. We started a Novena to her to ask **this Saint's intercession and direction on where and how we could serve God's people in** this Archdiocese following our First Vows. It was our first personal meeting with St. Kateri, so to speak. That Novena became almost a perpetual one for the Community.

Three years later, in 1999 our Community received a request from Archbishop MacNeil to work in Hobbema – now Maskwacis. It was indeed a surprise to our Community, because our Novena was not specified to First Nations ministry at all. Least, we realized that we were praying to the First Nation saint! We are absolutely grateful to Kateri.

The simplicity, the complete trust in God, the spirit of forgiveness and the love of the Holy Eucharist are mutual to both St. Kateri and St. Faustina, the spiritual mother of our Congregation of Sisters of Merciful Jesus. These virtues radiated brightly in the life of St. Kateri, and we find ourselves readily linked with her.

Simplicity exudes the true beauty of a person, especially of a woman. Our First Nations women have this gift of simplicity. They may not necessarily aware of it, but their inner and external beauty emanate from this virtue. Simplicity is so attractive and very characteristic of a saint.

Despite of many difficulties, oppositions, persecutions that Kateri encountered in her spiritual journey, she never wavered in her newfound faith. She stood strong in the truth. She had a complete trust in God, in her *Manito*. She believed that all would be well for her, and so she persevered and reached her ultimate goal. Indeed, where will we go without faith and trust in God?

Many of our First Nations women can readily relate to **Kateri's journey of faith**. They encounter these same challenges, difficulties at home, at workplace, in many different gatherings, and in almost daily basis. Many of them have grown achieving **Kateri's**

steadfast and humble firmness, to remain in the truth of their faith. And many of them are rising positively in affirming their belief and practice of faith.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a special devotion in our parish. Men and women come and spend time with our Blessed Lord every Thursday evening. It is this devotion that draws our women to quiet and intimate moments with Jesus, which is so important in the busy-ness of our world. Kateri found this solitude in the woods, while her contemporary sisters - in Adoration.

Like St. Kateri, the love and devotion to our Blessed mother is seemingly natural and personal among our people, in particular, our women.

One beautiful teaching of St. Kateri was the beatitude of forgiveness. She rose above the afflictions she received from those around her, even from her loved ones. She bore no grievance against them. St. Kateri embraced her crosses with gratitude.

Saint Kateri is undoubtedly, the patron saint of our First Nations people, especially of women, but even more so, a sister to all of us. I believe our saint is urging our First Nations people and all of us - to AIM HIGH with JESUS, and RISE above all our afflictions and difficulties in life, and to aspire no less than Heaven.

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