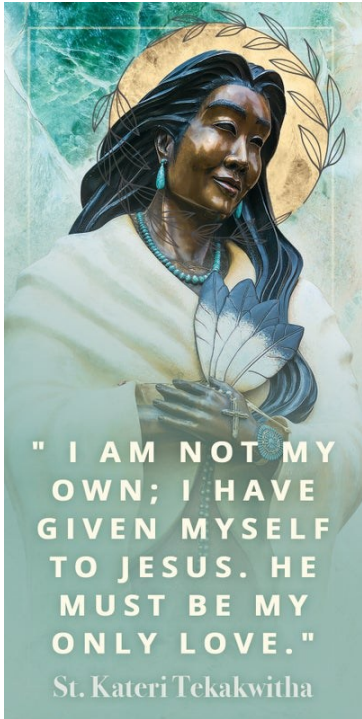


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Monday we celebrate the witness of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the “Lily of the Mohawks,” a young woman whom the world overlooked, but whom Christ called into profound intimacy. Born in 1656 in present-day New York, Kateri knew from an early age the sting of suffering—smallpox scarred her face and she was orphaned in childhood. These events made her an outcast. Yet in this brokenness, God began His work: He chooses the weakest to confound the strong. Baptized into a life of rejection and suffering, St. Kateri stands as a sign of the Church - a people walking in the desert, stripped of prestige, yet clothed in grace. She became a witness of the Gospel among the Native peoples of North America.

Kateri speaks to us a prophetic word. She did not encounter Christ in comfort or societal approval, but in persecution, exile, and silence. After her baptism at age 20, she was rejected by her tribe. Yet she never turned back. She fled to a Christian community at Kahnawake near Montreal, where she lived a hidden, Eucharistic life. Her days became liturgy - filled with prayer, fasting, and love for Christ crucified. She lived the radical power of baptism - not as a cultural rite, but as a death and rebirth. Kateri did not just believe in Jesus; she allowed herself to be configured to Him. Her frail body carried the marks of penance, but her eyes burned with joy. She died at only 24, whispering, “Jesus, I love you,” and her face, once disfigured by disease, was said to shine with beauty.

She challenges us: Are we willing to follow Christ even when it costs us everything? Are we ready to embrace the cross, not as defeat, but as entry into communion? In an age obsessed with status, self-image, and control, Kateri shows that holiness flourishes in humility, silence, and trust. Her life is a catechesis for our youth, a consolation to the rejected, and a sign for the Church - God is working even when nothing seems visible.

She was not educated in the ways of the world, yet she received wisdom from above. She had no security or status, but she possessed the radical freedom of one who belongs entirely to God. This is the vocation of the Christian: to discover our baptism, to walk with Christ through persecution, and to proclaim that life - true life - is found only in Him.

In St. Kateri, we see the beauty of the Christian journey lived concretely. Her daily prayers, acts of penance, and thirst for the Eucharist reveal a soul transformed by the encounter with the Risen Lord. She reminds us that holiness is not reserved for the learned or powerful; it is offered to the poor, the simple, the meek - those who have nothing but are open to everything.

As we walk through our own deserts - be they trials in our families, wounds from the past, or the feeling of spiritual emptiness - may St. Kateri lead us deeper into trust. Let us be encouraged: God does not need our strength, only our availability. In her canonization, the Church raised up not just a saint, but a model of mission, reminding us that evangelization begins with those who, like Kateri, live quietly and faithfully, hidden in Christ.

Let us ask her intercession this week: for our youth, for those struggling with identity and rejection, and for all who seek the face of God through suffering. She is a light for our time.

Peace,