



**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
WELCOMING THE CANONIZATION OF BLESSED KATERI TEKAKWITHA**

It is with great joy that the Bishops of Canada welcome the 18 February 2012 announcement that our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, will canonize Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, elevating her to sainthood. This event will be a great honour to all of North America, but also in a particular way to its Aboriginal Peoples, of whom Kateri will be the first to receive this dignity.

Blessed Kateri, known as “the Lily of the Mohawks”, was born in 1656 in what is now New York State. Persecuted for the Catholic faith she held so tenaciously, she moved to a Christian Mohawk village in what is now Kahnawake, within the current diocese of Saint-Jean Longueuil, Quebec, where she died at the age of 24.

For this reason, she is rightly claimed by the Church both in the United States and in Canada. We in Canada therefore rejoice together with our American brothers and sisters in this joyful news. Pope Benedict recently reminded us that all saints, “through their different paths of life, show us the various ways to holiness, united by a single common denominator: to follow Christ and to conform ourselves to him, who is the ultimate goal of our human existence” (Angelus, November 1, 2011).

In particular, Kateri provides us “an example of fidelity . . . a model of purity and love” (Blessed John Paul II, “Address to the Indians of North America,” 24 June 1980). As a member of the Communion of Saints, she will hold a special place within the universal Church, being one of the “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7.9).

We therefore humbly ask: “Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!” Help us imitate your life of devotion to Our Lord, summed up in your dying words: “Jesos konoronkwa!” – “Jesus, I love you!”

+ Richard Smith
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