



On the miraculous intervention of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha and her canonization

In February 2006, six-year-old Jake Finkbonner fell and bumped his mouth playing basketball. Through a small cut necrotizing fasciitis (Strep A) invaded his bloodstream. The aggressive bacteria raced across his cheeks, eyelids, scalp and chest; Jake's body was eating itself up. For nine weeks in Seattle Children's Hospital doctors surgically removed his damaged flesh daily in a desperate attempt to save him. They also prepared Jake's family for his impending death. Father Tim Sauer, a long-time friend of the Finkbonners, who are of native-American descent, advised them to pray to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha to intercede for Jake. They did, and in the judgment of the Vatican she complied. Jake was immediately and completely healed, and doctors could give no medical explanation for so sudden and total a transformation. He is now in the 7th grade and will be in attendance in Rome on October 21, when Pope Benedict will declare Kateri Tekakwitha a saint. Jake Finkbonner's healing was the miracle that clinched her canonization.

Blessed Kateri's holy life is all the more remarkable for being so simple. She died in 1680 at the age of 24, only four years after her baptism. In that brief time her depth of soul manifested itself in a striking devotion

to the Eucharist and in the unprecedented step (for a Mohawk) of taking a vow of virginity. She so impressed the Jesuit priests who knew her well that they wrote up her biography and pressed to have her holiness more widely recognized by the Church. Now, centuries later, their hopes are about to be realized to the full.

The canonization of Blessed Kateri is a source of great joy and pride for the Church in the United States, and particularly for native-American Catholics. What kind of person must she have been that the light of her young life still shines so brightly through the obscurity of three centuries? The attention she will receive should make that question one that is more often asked. And it may lead to another: how can I follow her example of fidelity and simplicity in the circumstances of my life? If she drew God's healing power down upon little Jake Finkbonner in his hour of need, who's to say she couldn't do the same for me?

Roger Richmond has resigned as Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese to attend to pressing needs of his family in Montana. Though I have known Roger only briefly, I am grateful to him for his assistance to me and for his years of service to the diocese. I hope to have a successor to Roger in place in the next few weeks.