



The Canonization of
Saint Kateri
Tekakwitha

Every Sunday we confess our belief in “the communion of saints” - that is to say, in our friendship with the friends of God. Canonization confers the Church’s official recognition on the saints’ friendship with Christ and encourages us to seek their friendship as well.

On Sunday, October 21st, with the warm Roman sun in a clear blue sky, Pope Benedict canonized seven new saints in St. Peter’s Square. Among the vast throng of pilgrims was our group of eleven from Baker Diocese, most of us from Warm Springs. We came for Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. On the way we stopped off at her shrine in upper New York state, and took away a memorable impression of the world in which she spent her 24 years. Baptized at age 20, she rapidly advanced to a level of holiness that amazed her contemporaries. Within minutes of her death onlookers witnessed a remarkable change in her countenance. Gone were the pockmarks that had scarred her face since the smallpox of her fourth year; in their place, a serene and smiling face more beautiful than it had ever been in life. All night long people passed by just to admire her face; they could not turn their eyes away.

We too can marvel at the beautiful Gospel simplicity of our new American saint. And she leaves us

much to imitate as well: a determined effort to learn the faith and better understand it; devotion to the Rosary and Eucharistic adoration; patience with uncomprehending neighbors; courage in the face of mockery; and close friendship with others who walk the way with Jesus. “I will love you in heaven, I will pray for you, I will aid you,” St. Kateri said before she died. Now that she is canonized, we would do well to take her at her word.

The trip to the canonizations was my second to Rome in little over a month. In mid-September I spent nearly two weeks at a “school” put on by the Vatican for bishops named during the past year. Eighty of us from different parts of the world listened as Cardinals explained the new responsibilities that came our way with ordination. At table we were fed good Italian pasta, but even better fare was the fraternity that binds us together as bishops and makes the “Church universal” real and personal in a way I had not known before.

These trips and others to far places have been enriching, but recent visits to Klamath Falls and Heppner have reminded me that travel around the diocese is even more rewarding. Weekend visits are set for Nyssa, Klamath Falls, Pendleton, and Hermiston before Christmas, which I look forward to spending at the Cathedral in Baker City.