

LITURGY BYTES

July Saints



As we began the month of July, I noticed there are quite a few of the “popular” saints with feast days that take place this month. For the next few weeks, we shall review the lives of some of these heroes and heroines of the Church.

First, on July 14th we celebrate the feast of **St. Kateri Tekakwitha**. She was also known as the “Lily of the Mohawks.” Kateri was the first native American to be recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church. She was born in 1656 in the village of Ossernenon. She contracted smallpox as a young child and because of the scars, often wore a blanket hiding her face. Her entire family died from this disease, so she was raised by her uncle who was the chief of the Mohawk clan. Kateri was known as a skilled worker and was diligent and patient. However, she refused to marry, and eventually the family accepted that she had no interest in marrying. At the age of 19, she converted to Catholicism, taking a vow of chastity. Again, this decision was unpopular with her adoptive parents and neighbors. They started rumors about her being a witch, so she moved to a Christian community south of Montreal. She often prayed for the conversion of her fellow Mohawks. The Jesuits that served in her community reported that she fasted and even tainted food to make it less desirable. She was sickly, and five years after becoming Catholic she passed away on April 17, 1680 at the age of 24. Her name Kateri, is the Mohawk form of Catherine, which she took from St. Catherine of Siena. She was canonized a saint by Pope Benedict XVI on October 21, 2012. She is the patroness of ecology and the environment, Native Americans, and people in exile.

Our second July saint is **St. Bonaventure** (original name – Giovanni Di Fidanza). Bonaventure means “O good fortune!” His feast is July 15th. He was from the Lazio region of central Italy, born in 1221. At the age of 22, he entered the Franciscan Order. He was sent to Paris to complete his studies and eventually became a close friend of St. Thomas Aquinas. He received the degree of Doctor along with his friend Thomas Aquinas. At the age of 35 he was chosen General of his Order. He did much for his Order and composed the Life of St. Francis. He was a very learned and respected man who Pope Clement IV nominated to be an Archbishop. Bonaventure begged not to be forced to accept that role. Instead, Gregory X forced a greater role upon him as a Cardinal and Bishop of Albano. He died on July 15, 1274 and was canonized a saint on April 14, 1482.

Have a blessed, safe, healthy week ahead! ~*Michele Hall*