

# St. Kateri tells us to look to God as she does

Just a few days ago, more than 200 pilgrims from Washington witnessed the canonization of seven new saints by Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square. Among the new saints is Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–1680), whose intercession for a little boy named Jake Finkbonner was heard by God, who cured Jake of a devastating disease known as necrotizing fasciitis.

Jake was there, along with his mom Elsa and dad Don, his two little sisters, his grandparents, many aunts, uncles, cousins, friends — and 80,000 excited Catholics from around the world.

I, too, was privileged to be there along with Archbishop Brunett, and as I looked across that vast throng of people, each of whom had a connection to one of the new saints, I couldn't help but think how small each of us looked against the dramatic backdrop of St. Peter's Basilica. Each of us was just one in a crowd too large to comprehend or count.

Some might have felt insignificant in the setting of a grand liturgy filled with the pageantry and prayer of centuries of Catholic tradition. And yet not one person there was insignificant in the eyes of God. Not one person went unnoticed by him.

The psalmist David once felt small as he pondered the universe and the grandeur of God:

*O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!*

*You have set your majesty above the heavens!*

*Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have drawn a defense against your foes, to silence enemy and avenger.*

*When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place —*

*What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them?*

*Yet you have made them little less than a god, crowned them with glory and honor.*

*You have given them rule over the works of your hands, put all things at their feet:*

*All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field,*

*The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.*

*O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is*



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*your name through all the earth!* (Psalm 8)

Gazing at the heavens, pondering the vastness of his own world, David realized that the great, awesome, all-knowing and all-creative God knew him.

Jesus taught that each of us is the concern of his Heavenly Father: "Are not five sparrows

sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows" (Lk 12:6–7).

Pilgrims from Washington and from around the world were reminded this past Sunday that it is not only God who notices and loves each of us, small as we are, insignificant as we might feel against the vastness of the heavens or in a sea of humanity: For all those with him in heaven, the saints and angels, know and love each of us as well. They pray for us and bring our needs to God's throne.

## How personal his love

Six years ago the family and friends of Jake Finkbonner — including friends who had never met him and knew only his name — asked Blessed Kateri to intercede for him before God, that he would be cured of a death-dealing disease. Her relic was brought to his hospital bedside. She did indeed intercede for Jake, and God cured him.

As I watched the Finkbonner family walk up the gradual slope of oddly angled, uneven, ancient granite stairs in front of St. Peter's that lead to the spot where Pope Benedict would give them holy Communion, I couldn't help but think how small they looked against such a great spectacle.

But even more, I couldn't help but think how awesome God is and how personal his love. He heard the pleas of

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St. Kateri and the prayers of a desperate mother and father and thousands of others, and he embraced a little boy he loves in Washington.

In the days leading up to the canonizations, we pilgrims discussed the inescapable evidence that the communion of saints is real. All those who have believed in Christ — and that includes us — are united in a bond so close and so extraordinary that we are never alone.

## Look to God

We are never insignificant. We never go unnoticed or unloved. There is always a throng praying for us. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Just as we pray for one another, the saints and angels in heaven pray for us.

As Malia, Miranda, Elsa, Jake and Don Finkbonner made their way up the steps to Pope Benedict, little Malia was about to receive her first holy Communion from him. When Malia knelt down in the oversized kneeler in front of him, the Pope had to lean forward to see her.

She told her parents later that she looked him "straight in the eye" as he gave her the body of the Lord, which will be the source of her deepest communion with the Lord and with the Church for the rest of her life.

As I write these words, I also can't help but think that through Jake and his family, St. Kateri has shown us both the depth of her faith in God and her friendship and care for us. As we observe the Year of Faith, she tells us to look to God as she does, to trust in him, to pray to him, to let him be our all — and to care for one another, especially the small, the sick, the suffering.

The humble "Lily of the Mohawks" is a saint we Washingtonians should never forget. I have a feeling she's not going to forget us.