



PORTSMOUTH ABBEY

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Dear Oblates and Friends of Portsmouth,

Whenever one enters the Abbey Church, one passes through a pair of massive, copper-covered doors with Latin words inscribed on them. A pity that they are in an unintelligible language, since they are a perfect summary of our status in the Church and our relationship to God as our Father. The word **church** has a twofold meaning. It refers to the building in which we worship God, a physical space in which we can in a special way *localize*, as it were, the presence of God who is everywhere; it is a temple specially set aside to praise God, a place consecrated in his honor. **Church** can also refer to the body of faithful Christians of which Jesus is the head, in what is known theologically as the *mystical body of Christ*. Both of these connotations are signified in the words sculpted on the doors, rendered in modern English in the Monsignor. Knox translation:

You are no longer exiles, then, or aliens; the Saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to the household of God: apostles and prophets are the foundation on which you are built, and the chief cornerstone of it is Jesus Christ Himself. In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple, dedicated to the Lord. In Him you too are being built in with the rest, so that God may find in you a dwelling-place for His Spirit.

The presence of God and a dwelling place for Him: these are the ways that God visits man, his creature. Of old, a particular instance of an intervention of God for an important revelation was the time when He informed Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son who would form a new nation, a people set apart to become His Chosen People. Three mysterious strangers (angels or messengers, the meaning of the Greek word, angel) who are obviously important persons appear to Abraham who accords them an elaborate welcome. We read in pagan literature that in the guise of a stranger, a god may be concealed, and so it is with these strangers. The etymology of the word stranger is in Latin, *hospes*, guest, which stems from the word *hostis* or foe. A stranger can be either one. For the

Jews this meeting marked the historic occasion when God became associated with the descendants of Abraham, whose treatment of the three angels or messengers of God reflects the honor due to Jehovah. For Christians it is a way of foreshadowing the triune character of God, which *could only be revealed in due time by the incarnate Jesus, who in the fullness of time would manifest this mystery to his holy ones (those set apart and specially chosen), to witness the hope of His glory through His holy Word.*

An example of hospitality in the New Testament is the familiar incident of the reception of Jesus in the house of his friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary, when his presence is accorded a good and a better mode of recognition, highlighting the character of the two sisters: the elder busy in preparing what was necessary, the other hearkening to the words of the Master, with Jesus gently indicating which of the two is preferable. One listened while the other served, both treatments necessary but the priority indicated by the Word Himself. Through his teaching Jesus can give us more than we can ever hope to repay through service, a timely lesson that must continually be restated. We should ask ourselves how often we are aware of the presence of Jesus in our daily lives and whether we are listening attentively to the Word he is speaking to us.

Jesus is present in a wide variety of forms just as truly as when he walked in human flesh during the brief period of his life and ministry. In every human being we encounter Jesus: He is identified as our neighbor in the familiar tale of the Good Samaritan. Whenever we become aware of someone in need and whom we can aid, Jesus is especially present as an opportunity to show our love of God through that person. The **corporal works of mercy** provide us with ready examples of how we can show the honor due God in His incarnate Son: the sick the poor, the naked, the hungry, the prisoner, the suffering and anyone in need of the help that we are able to give. For in them, we are united as *fellow citizens of God's household, as part of the structure of the new, indestructible Temple which is Jesus Christ.* In this way we are acknowledging one of the most basic of Jesus' teachings: the brotherhood of mankind and our unity in Him.





SAINT KATERI TEKAKWITHA

“*Lily of the Mohawks*” (July 15)

Kateri Tekakwitha has the distinction of being the first native North American to be beatified. On a forest trail leading to a chapel on the other side of the lake which the Abbey of St. John’s in Minnesota overlooks, there is a statue of this young girl who has been fittingly named *patron of the environment*. Although she died in 1680 at the age of 24, her holiness was not recognized officially by the church until her beatification in 1932. Her life was not spectacular; she was not a reformer like St. Teresa of Avila, nor a warrior like John of Arc, nor an educator nor missionary as the later American saints, Elizabeth Seton, Frances Cabrini and Katherine Drexel. She did suffer for her faith, but not to the point of martyrdom. She suffered physically, having contracted smallpox in her childhood, which left her health impaired as well as bereft of her parents and only sibling. Although her mother, an Algonquin, was raised a Catholic in a French settlement, she was taken prisoner in an attack by the Iroquois and forcibly married to a Mohawk hostile to Christianity. Eventually, Tekakwitha came into contact with Jesuit missionaries and was converted, soon afterward vowing to remain chaste in defiance of Indian custom. Because her manner of life did not conform to the freer lifestyle of the tribe, she encountered distrust and insult and eventually, at the advice and with the help of the missionaries, she moved to a friendly Christian village where she devoted herself, to a heroic degree, to fasting, prayer and works of charity among her fellow Indians. Despite the brevity of her life, Kateri’s holiness made a profound impression on those who had come into contact with her, and her reputation spread among those who had previously been hostile to the work of the missionaries. Her way was like the *little way* of Therese de Lisieux; she did nothing extraordinary nor memorable, but she did live a saintly life under conditions which demanded resolution, courage and perseverance. She illustrated on a daily basis the same trait that so impressed the pagans in the Acts of the Apostles, when they observed how the Christians demonstrated their love for one another. The power of example can be the most effective way of converting others to one’s own way of thinking or living. And this is precisely what happened at Kateri’s early death. Many of the Iroquois who had formerly been inimical to Christianity now adopted the religion to which Kateri had given herself without reservation.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR JULY

- 3 SUNDAY XIV OF THE YEAR**
10 SUNDAY XV OF THE YEAR
11 Saint Benedict, Founder, Patron of Europe
14 St. Kateri Tekakwitha, “*Lily of the Mohawks*”
15 St. Bonaventure, Bishop & Doctor of the Church
17 SUNDAY XVI OF THE YEAR
22 St Mary Magdalene
23 St. Bridget of Sweden, Patron of Europe
24 SUNDAY XVII OF THE YEAR
25 St. James of Compostela, Apostle
26 SS Joachim and Anne, Parents of BVM
29 SS Martha, Mary & Lazarus
31 SUNDAY XVIII OF THE YEAR



Doors of the Abbey Church

MONASTERY NOTES

The Portsmouth Abbey **wind turbine** celebrated the tenth anniversary of its establishing the first wind turbine in the state of Rhode Island. **Dom Joseph Byron** provided the impetus for this renewable energy project to move forward, obtaining the permission and funds from monastic sources and the support of the State which was eager to pioneer such an energy-saving initiative. In ten years the turbine has generated 11,500,000 kilowatt hours of clean electric energy for the school and monastery, effectively addressing environmental issues.

A committee has been formed to plan for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the monastery by **Dom Leonard Sargent**. The celebration will span a two year period, covering the acquisition of the property in 1918 and the formal establishment of the monastery with the consent of **Pope Benedict XV** in 1919 under the sponsorship of Downside Abbey of the English Congregation of Benedictines.

R.I.P. The school and monastery mourn the loss of Dom Ambrose Wolverton who died suddenly on March 6 after spending the night in the Newport Hospital for observation. Word of his death was received during the Conentual Mass on Sunday, and burial took place in the Abbey cemetery the following Thursday with a large group of his friends, faculty and monks in attendance. As organist and choir master, his loss has been significant, but especially notable is the absence of his gentle, quiet presence and deep concern for the school and monastic life. An in-depth obituary will be published in the Summer bulletin.

The Oblate Conference, given by Dom Damian in March, on **Thomas Merton**, born in 1915, will also be included in the next Bulletin. The June conference will be on the continuing importance to Christianity, ecumenism and education of John Henry Newman. It too will be published in a future Bulletin.