

Companions on the journey workshop
Living with the Saints

This workshop takes approximately 30 minutes, and offers reflections on the lives of three women:

- Saint Marguerite d'Youville, foundress of the Grey Nuns of Montreal
- Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, patroness of the environment
- Catherine Doherty, foundress of Madonna Center

Although they have not all been canonized, these women have indeed led exemplary lives and can serve as models for us.

Opening and welcome

“Prayers, the patchwork of our lives, held together by the threads of lives, love, the necessity of the pattern, binds us together as one.”

Opening Prayer (Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world.”)

“God sent each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a special song to sing, with a special act of love to bestow.” (Mark Link)

Introduction

These selfless women have been rewarded for their sacrifices, made in the interest of and for the welfare of their fellow human beings. We recognize the great dedication of these women and their service to church, community and country.

Marguerite d'Youville

She was a wife, mother, nurse, hospital administrator and foundress of the Grey Nuns of Montreal. “Marguerite revealed the Father’s love through her suffering in life and service to others.”

She was born on October 15, (her feast day) 1701, in Varennes, Quebec. Following her father’s death, the family lived in poverty. Generous relatives gave Marguerite the opportunity to study at an Ursuline convent for two years.

Marguerite married François d'Youville in 1722. He was a selfish husband, involved in illegal liquor trade. When he died, she was left with two small children and a huge debt. Overcoming her debt, Marguerite rented a house in Montreal where she and three companions, the first Grey Nuns, started a shelter for needy women.

In 1744, Marguerite took charge of the General Hospital of Montreal, which was in debt. She worked hard and saved the hospital. Fire destroyed the building but, with determination, she was able to rebuild it within four years.

Marguerite died in 1771. On December 9, 1990, she was canonized the first Canadian-born saint.

Marguerite d'Youville was an example of living hope and innovative faith. Grey Nuns built and operated hospitals across Canada.

“Saint Marguerite d'Youville, you give us an image of the world in which kindness, truth, justice and peace reign.” (Canonization, 1990)

Reflection

A moment for us to look into our own hearts: In the small world in which I live, how am I being a light of kindness, truth, justice and peace as Marguerite was in hers? As League members, have we become educated on the church's teachings on euthanasia and assisted suicide?

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was the daughter of a Mohawk warrior, born in 1656 in New York state. When she was four, her mother died of smallpox. The same disease also attacked her and deformed her face. Two aunts and an uncle adopted her.

As a teenager, she was converted and then baptized at age 20. She had to suffer for her faith, but remained faithful. Kateri went to the new Christian colony in Canada, where she lived a life dedicated to prayer and the care of the sick and aged.

Kateri died at the age of 24. Devotion to her has established Native American ministries in churches all over Canada and the United States. She was declared Blessed in 1980. Pilgrimages take place at her birthplace in Auriesville, New York. She is the first Native American to be declared Blessed.

“Blessed Kateri, God’s love flowed through you, touching with healing the powerless and broken, those whom no one else took the time to care for and love.”

Reflection

A moment for us to look into our own hearts: Help us to be there for those in need, to be a presence of happiness – a gift of God’s love, just as you were.”

Blessed Kateri is patroness of the environment. Water has become a precious commodity. We can no longer take it for granted. In many parts of the world, having enough clean drinking water is a matter of daily concern. Are the poor entitled to free water?

Read the action plan for Resolution 05.06 Developing Countries and Water (in fall issue of *The Canadian League* or on the League website). Write a letter. Obtain a copy of *Inside the Bottle: an Exposé of the Bottled Water Industry* (available from The Polaris Institute, telephone: (613) 237-3359; or e-mail: polaris@polarisinstitute.org). Read and take action.

Catherine Doherty

Catherine Doherty was born to a wealthy family in Russia in 1896. She married a baron, then fled communist Russia, losing everything. They fled to North America where she served the poor. Catherine became a pioneer in Catholic action and social justice work.

Catherine had an unusual and striking insight into the realities of life, of faith in everyone – from the rich to those in grinding poverty. She lived the gospel. Her answer was simple: we must change ourselves before we can change the world.

In 1921, Catherine and her husband moved to rural Canada, and, in 1954, she founded Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario. This community lives a spirituality that follows the Little Mandate – a simple but most direct path to Jesus, a “going to the poor” by being poor and by “doing little things exceedingly well for the love of Him.”

Catherine was a prolific author. She wrote of a silent chamber carried within us, where we can contemplate God within us. This “poustinia” or “desert of the heart” is a place to meet Christ in silence and prayer, no matter where we are. It becomes our time of personal prayer. How do we experience our “desert of the heart”?

Reflection

To live the gospel, our actions must match our words. The moral test of society is how it treats its most vulnerable members, i.e., the poor.

Whatever our life situation, we can approach our everyday life by doing “little things.” Think of how this might apply to you.

Closing Prayer

Closing music (“Companions on the Journey”)

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