



Catherine Tegakwitha, First Iroquois Virgin Cholenec

CHAPTER III

As for Sundays and feastsdays, it may be said, Catherine spent them entirely in church, since she scarcely ever left it those days except to take refreshment.

This fervor which filled her in church, shone forth even more in her prayers; she learned with marvelous diligence those which were said in common. She prayed very little with her lips, but a great deal with her eyes and her heart; her eyes were always filled with tears while she sighed deeply from her heart. She appeared immobile and closed up within herself. Through this eagerness to unite herself to God in her prayers, she attained, without any other teacher than the Holy Ghost, a sublime gift of prayer, together with such heavenly sweetness, that she often passed several hours at a time in these intimate communications with her God. From this source she drew the great virtues of which we shall speak at the end of the second part.

Her devotion was all the more admirable since it was not one of those idle devotions, where usually there is only self-love, nor was Catherine one of those obstinate devotees, who are in church when they should be at home. In attaching herself to God she attached herself to work, as to a very proper

means of being united with Him, and also in order to preserve during the entire day the good inspirations she had received in the morning at the foot of the altar. For this reason she formed a great friendship with the good Anastasia, of whom we have spoken; she made it a rule to avoid all other company and to go with her alone, whether to the woods or to the fields.

They went together, therefore, and since they had only one purpose, namely, to seek God, they not only offered Him their work, but they also held pious conversations while performing their tasks, Anastasia speaking to Catherine only of God, of the means of pleasing Him and advancing in His service, of the life and habits of the good Christians, of the fervor of the Saints, of their hatred for sin, and of the harsh penances they performed for the atonement of those they had committed.

Thus Catherine sanctified her work by spiritual conferences. So holy a conversation, together with her zeal for the things of God, had the result that she always came away with new desires to give herself entirely to Him and to put into practice what she had just heard. She found God everywhere, whether she was in church, in the

woods or in the fields. In order not to live a moment that was not spent for Him, she might be observed coming and going with a rosary in her hand, which led her instructress to say that Catherine never lost sight, but that she ever walked in His presence. If rain or extreme cold prevented her from working, she passed almost all her time before the Blessed Sacrament, or she made small objects of mat work, but she did not spend her time visiting other girls in order to play or seek amusement, as those of her age are apt to do on similar occasions.

Weeks so well utilized were indeed weeks filled, that is to say, in the sense of the Holy Scriptures, with virtue and merit. Catherine nevertheless ended each week with a severe discussion in which she gave account to herself of all that had happened, then she had her sins taken away in the sacrament of Penance, for she went to confession every Saturday evening; but she did so in an extraordinary manner, that could have been inspired by the Holy Ghost alone, Who Himself guided her, and Who first had given her a love of suffering and a hatred of her body, as we shall see later.

In order to prepare herself for these confessions, she began with the last part, I mean the penance. She would go into the woods and tear her shoulders open with large osiers. From there she went to the church and passed a long time weeping for her sins. She confessed them, interrupting her words with sighs and sobs, believing herself to be the greatest sinner alive, although she was of angelic innocence. Not only the desire to be always united with Him and not to be distracted by the people made her love solitude so much and flee society, but also her desire to preserve herself in innocence, her horror of sin, and the fear of displeasing God.

Thus lived Catherine from the autumn she arrived at the Sault until Christmas, and because she led such a fervent and exemplary life, she merited at this time a grace not

granted to those who came from the Iroquois until several years later, and then only after having passed through many trials, so as to give them a high idea of it, and to oblige them to render themselves worthy by an irreproachable life. This rule did not hold for Catherine; she was too well disposed and desired with too great an eagerness to receive Our Lord, to be deprived of this great grace, so they promised her some time before the feast that she might receive Him on Christmas, after she had been instructed in the mystery.

She received the good news with all imaginable joy, and prepared herself for the great event with an increase of devotion suitable to the exalted idea she had of it; it must be admitted, however, that it was at this first Communion that all her fervor was renewed. The ground was so well prepared that only the approach of this divine fire was necessary, to receive all its warmth. She approached or rather surrendered herself to this furnace of sacred love that burns on our altars, and she came out of it so glowing with this divine fire that only Our Lord knew what passed between Himself and His dear spouse during that first Communion. All that we can say is that from that day on she appeared different to us, because she remained so full of God and her love.

All this will seem very surprising in a young Indian, but it will seem even more so when I add that, having afterwards had the happiness of receiving Holy Communion frequently, she always did so with the same disposition and fervor she had the first time, and undoubtedly she received the same love and manifold graces from Our Lord, Who seeks only to visit us in this sacrament of love, and Who puts no limits to His grace, when He comes in contact with hearts disposed to receive and profit by them, as was the case with Catherine. This fact, moreover, was so well known in the village that at the time of general Communion the most

devout women hastened to place themselves near her in church, claiming that the mere sight of her exterior was so devotional and ardent at those times that her example inspired them and served as an excellent preparation for approaching the holy table in a proper manner. After Christmas it was time to go on the hunt; Catherine also went with her sister and her brother-in-law. This was a sister by adoption only, who had been in the same lodge with her at Agniers. It was neither the wish to divert herself nor the desire for feasting that made Catherine take part in the hunt, for which reason most of the women go, but only to satisfy this good sister and her husband. God doubtlessly wished that she should sanctify herself in the woods as she had done in the village, to prove to all the savages, by the beautiful example that she gave, that virtue may be practised equally in both these places. She continued the exercises of piety that she had practised in the village, making up for those she could not do there by others that her devotion suggested to her; her time was regulated as that of a religious.

She prayed before dawn and finished her day with the common prayers according to the praiseworthy custom of our Indians, who say them together morning and evening, and although she said the former while the others were still asleep, she prolonged the latter until late into the night, while the others slept. After the morning prayers, while the men ate and made preparations for the all-day hunt, Catherine retired to solitude to pray again, approximately at the time that the Indians heard Mass at the mission. For this purpose she had erected a small shrine on the bank of a stream. It consisted of a cross she made from a tree. There she joined in spirit the people of the village, uniting her intentions to those of the priests and prayed to her Guardian Angel to be present there in her place and to bring her the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice.

When she thought the men had departed for the hunt, she returned to the cabin and occupied herself there all day long in the manner of the other women, gathering wood, fetching the meat of the animals that had been killed, or making necklaces in the cabin. During this latter occupation she always invited the others to sing some devotional hymns, or to recount incidents of the lives of the saints and narrations she had heard in church during the sermons on Sundays and feastdays. In order to encourage them, she often was the first to begin these discourses.

She had two purposes in this; first, to avoid bad conversation and frivolous talk, which only distract the spirit; secondly, to preserve constantly her fervor and union with God, which was as strong in the forest as if she had been at the foot of the altar in the village. It was for this reason that her principal occupation and the one she took the most pleasure in was to gather wood for the cabin, for being alone she could satisfy her devotion, talking intimately with her Divine Spouse; and her humility, in working for the others, by acting as the servant of the cabin, and her desire for suffering, by tiring her body with continued toil of a painful nature.

She found another means of penance by a more spiritual and secret exercise. She would fast while there was an abundance of good meat, for she would cleverly leave the cabin to gather wood before the sagamite was ready and would not return until evening. Even then she ate very little and afterwards spent part of the night in prayer in spite of her extreme fatigue and her natural weakness. If in the morning they made her take nourishment before going to work, she would secretly mix ashes with the sagamite to take away any pleasure she might have in eating it, and to leave her nothing but gall and bitterness instead. She also practised these mortifications in the village whenever she was able to do so without being observed by anyone.

She never became so attached to work, either in the woods or in the cabin, that she forgot her shrine. On the contrary, she took care to return there from time to time so as to satisfy the hunger of her soul while she made her body fast. She went there morning and evening and several times during the week; she ended her devotions by harsh chastisement which she administered to herself with rods, for she neither possessed suitable instruments nor did she know of their use, having, moreover, undertaken this kind of penance in secret, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost alone.

Although Catherine's life in the woods was most praiseworthy, and even of great merit to herself, nevertheless she was not happy there, and it was easily seen by her bearing that she was not in her own element. The church, the Blessed Sacrament, the Masses, the Benedictions, the sermons, and other similar devotions in which she had taken so much pleasure in the short time she had been at the Sault, held a powerful charm, constantly drawing her towards the village, and claiming her heart and all its affections, so that if her body was in the forest, her spirit was at the Sault. Thus the sojourn in the woods, which generally is so agreeable to those of her sex because they think only of having a pleasant time, and amusing themselves, being far away from all household cares, soon began to be a burden to her, for which she felt a great aversion.

A trying accident that took place while she was there, completed her dislike. This accident, combined with the other motives that have been mentioned, made her take the resolution never to return there, once she got back to the mission. A man from Catherine's band, having chased an elk for an entire day, returned very late and very tired to the cabin, so that when he entered he threw himself down on the first place he could find, and went to sleep without taking food or drink. His wife was surprised the

next morning when she awoke, not to find him near her; she was ever more so, when, looking around the cabin, she perceived him asleep near Catherine's bed.

As the Indians then were very suspicious and as appearances were against them, she imagined that her husband had sinned with this young girl, whom she did not know very well as yet. As in this kind of affair, where one is so directly concerned, one takes advantage of everything to sustain one's judgment, this woman confirmed hers by calling to mind Catherine's comings and goings, when, as has been said, she went to the shrine to pray and do her ordinary penances. So it happened that this Indian himself unconsciously increased the suspicions of his wife, when speaking the same day of a canoe he had for the return journey, which was drawing near, he added that some woman of the band should help him to pull it out of the woods; he stated quite simply that Catherine would come, because he knew that she would be kind enough to perform this act. After weighing these appearances in her mind, this woman no longer had any doubt as to the fact; she even went so far as to believe that it was a long established relation between these two. As she was a virtuous and wise woman, however, she had the discretion not to show her suspicions and to speak of it to no one except the priest in charge of the mission, to whom she told everything after her return from the hunt.

It is God's way with His elect to put their virtue to the test by similar happenings, and to render it perfect in the fire of tribulation, allowing it to be blackened by slander and even by hideous calumnies. "*Tanquam aurum in fornace.*" (Like gold in the furnace.) In this case He even allowed the missionary not to take Catherine's part in the beginning. If on one hand the horror of impurity of this chaste girl and the innocence of her life, which he did not ignore, made him judge that perhaps she was not guilty, on the other

hand, the report of a woman, whom he knew to be one of the best and most virtuous of the mission, persuaded him that the one of whom she spoke might not be quite innocent. In order to enlighten himself in this delicate matter, he decided to have Catherine herself come to him; he had such a good opinion of her, and was so sure of her sincerity, that he decided not to make the matter known, but to listen to what she had to say, and to take her word for it. He spoke to her, therefore, disclosing what was said of her and asked her what was the truth of the matter. Catherine contented herself by merely denying the fact, without showing any emotion about it, because she knew herself to be absolutely innocent. This great tranquillity of soul in a matter which would naturally be so sensitive to her, justified her perfectly in the mind of the missionary, who had already decided in her favor. This was not the case, however, with the Indian woman, her accuser, and with some others who knew of the affair, I know not how. God allowed it to be thus in order to augment the crown and the merit of His faithful servant, because after she had left her relatives, her country, and all the advantages she might have found in good marriage, after having sacrificed all this to Our Lord,

it only remained for her to sacrifice her honor and reputation, which she generously gave up for Him on this occasion. She was glad to see herself held in contempt, and to pass as a great sinner, and for this reason, far from hastening to discover who had spoken ill of her, she allowed the matter to die away as though it had concerned someone else, and all the vengeance she took was

to pray to God for them.

God, on His part, however, amply rewarded so heroic an abandon and resignation after Catherine's death, on the very spot where she had suffered, for the marvels she began to cause made those who had formed such an unjust opinion of her examine themselves. Even as the two disciples going to Emmaus in the company of Our Lord did not recognize who He was because He had disguised Himself and who, as soon as they were enlightened, when He broke the



TEKAKWITHA

From water color by Margaret M. Nealis, R.S.H.J.

bread, were quick to make known the miracle of the Resurrection and to condemn their incredulity; so likewise it was with those from whom Catherine had hidden her virtue in the woods and in the village, and who later too readily calumniated her, when they were touched by all the marvels they heard after her death, they were the first to publish her virtues, calling to mind her modesty, sweetness, charity, patience, devotion and the

beautiful example she had given them, and they remained very devoted to her from that time on. As for the woman who had been the cause of the entire affair, she spent three entire years in mourning this mistake, not being able to find consolation, and imagining that Our Lord would never forgive her for having wronged so saintly a girl. It was necessary that the missionary use all the authority he had with her spirit in order to retrieve it from its error as well as from the pain and sorrow she felt over it.

Catherine, having returned to the village, only thought of recovering the graces she had missed while in the woods. She recommenced her visits to the church with her ordinary fervor and eagerness and joined her instructress again that she might profit by her pious exhortations during their work. Easter was drawing near and those who were not far from the village, on the hunt, returned to the mission according to their custom, to celebrate the great day. It was the first time Catherine celebrated it with us for the great good of her soul; she assisted at all the services of Holy Week, and admired all these solemn ceremonies, receiving from them a new esteem for religion. She was so touched by sweetness and consolation that she shed many tears, especially on Good Friday during the sermon on the Passion of Our Lord. Her heart melted at the thought of the suffering of the Divine Saviour; she thanked Him a thousand times for it, she adored and kissed His cross with feelings of the most tender gratefulness and the most ardent love. She attached herself to the cross that day with Him, taking the resolution to repeat on her virginal body the mortifications of Jesus Christ for the rest of her days, as if she had done nothing up until then. On Easter Sunday she received Holy Communion for the second time, and did so with the same disposition and ardor and spir-

itual fruits she had on the feast of Christmas, and to complete these benefits and spiritual graces, she received a second grace from the missionary on that day which he accorded very rarely, and which proved the esteem he had for her virtue.

Monsignor de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, a prelate full of zeal for his flock, had already established the devotion of the Holy Family in his episcopal city as a very suitable means to sanctify it. It produced a great deal of good in effect among the families, and still does constantly, to the edification of the entire country. From Quebec this devotion spread to other parishes with the same results, from the French it came to the Indians, so that the father in charge of the mission which is now at the Sault and which had its beginning at the Prairie of Madeleine, deemed it proper to establish the Confraternity of the Holy Family there, as a good means of maintaining and increasing the fervor of that new church. It was decided, however, only to admit a few of the more fervent people of both sexes, so as to give a higher idea of it and to oblige the members who were honored by such a great grace to respond by the holiness of their lives. In this they failed not to succeed, because the Indians, once they have given themselves to God, are capable of the greatest and the most whole-hearted devotion. The small number of chosen souls upheld its new character by an exemplary piety, some were even so austere that the rest of the village looked upon them with a sort of veneration, and to call a person a saint or a member of the Holy Family was to say one and the same thing, so that they kept this name afterwards as a special sign in the mission. Catherine, who was still very young, and had only been at the Sault approximately for seven or eight months, was admitted to this small number.

(To be continued.)

KATERIANA

His Eminence Carlo Cardinal Salotti has been named Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Since he has been the Cardinal presenting the Cause of Tekakwitha. He has held many high offices in the Church, and became Cardinal, December 16, 1935. He was born in Italy 68 years ago.

During the eleven years which, as a young priest, he served as a professor in the Pontifical Roman Seminary, he began to develop his activity in the Sacred Congregation of Rites, as advocate of causes for canonization. Later he was named Vice-Promoter, and then Promoter General of the Faith in the Congregation.

The picture of Tekakwitha in this number is a copy of a water-color by Mother Neal's, a religious of the Society of the Sacred Heart, in the convent at the Sault not far from Montreal. Of the numerous pictures of the Indian Maiden it is the favorite.

The Most Reverend Anastasius Forget, Bishop of Saint John of Quebec, is encouraging Sunday afternoon pilgrimages from the parishes of his diocese to the site of the tomb of Tekakwitha and to the church in Caughnawaga where her relics are now kept.

A Life of Kateri in Spanish will soon be published at El Paso, New Mexico. The Rev. J. B. Carbajal, S.J., is promoting knowledge and interest there in the Lily of the Mohawks. A Life in Spanish was published in Mexico not long after her death, but in the troubled condition of that country it cannot now be traced.

From El Paso comes report in Spanish of six temporal favors and of a special spiritual one.

November opens with the Feast of All Saints. They are countless in number "of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," most of them by far unrecorded, but those on record still too many for any comptometer.

The Roman Martyrology alone tells of well-nigh 40,000 canonized, *i.e.*, with their innumerable "Companions," recommended by the Church for public veneration. To count those memorialized in the sixty-six quarto volumes of the Bollandists would be a gigantic task, and there are seven or eight volumes to come: this without the vast number of Saints in the East on whom Bollandist Peeters is working.

All this about the Saints in heaven, not speaking of those still on earth. St. Paul addressed all the faithful as Saints. We have countless apostles, confessors, virgins and, witness Mexico, Spain, Germany, a legion of ready candidates for martyrdom. As St. John said of the doings of Christ, "The world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written," were all that is holy in His faithful ones to be recorded.

Divine Providence sees to it that the life and virtues of certain chosen ones should be written by men and women themselves saintly, and so it is with our Tekakwitha. Already the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites has pronounced that the records of the holiness of this Indian Maiden are genuine, trustworthy and proof of her holiness.

"Of every tribe." Tekakwitha is only one of the host of holy Servants of God who illustrate the action of grace irrespective of mis-called pure racism or nationality which today is deluding many peoples with its "witchery of nonsense."

TEKAKWITHA "MOVETH ALL BEFORE HER"

A twelve-year-old eighth grade pupil tells of a cure of a bone infection that had lasted for six years. Some Sisters bade him pray for Kateri's intercession. It is touching to read his well-written letter.

A pastor thanks Kateri for helping him organize his people in St. Mary's County, Md., and get them to combine with the people in St. Charles and obtain from the Federal Government \$168,000 for 165 miles of power line in the two counties.

A Sister in Chicago, teaching music with few pupils, hangs Kateri's picture in her classroom, and soon is hardly able to handle the number alone.

Another in South Hibbing, Minn., promises to make "The Lily" better known if her school won out in a spelling contest; it did.

A mother is grateful for hearing from a daughter after a long interval during which the mother's letters were returned; also for the restoration to health of another daughter who supports her and a child.

"My child had a ruptured appendix and peritonitis had set in. The doctor said it was too late to operate. I pleaded with him and he decided to operate. Throughout the

operation she wore the relic of Tekakwitha, through whom the life of my child was spared."

Court cases figure in the favors reported recently. A blank promissory note had been stolen and filled out for \$2,000. The jury decided against the forger.

A religious superior tells of a case that seemed hopeless decided favorably. Another such case causing much bitterness was similarly decided for a contestant.

Success of operations is frequently reported, even when little hope was expressed by the surgeons. Here comes one of relief from a six months' mastoid.

No one knows better than the surgeon operating in desperate cases the need of a power above his own skill to assist him; his skill is something to pray for.

"At the beginning of Summer, I entered upon some sales work for which I was given a certain quota to reach in order to participate in a bonus. I promised a contribution of five dollars to be distributed in the name of Catherine Tekakwitha if I would be successful. She has responded nobly to my prayers in this and another favor for which I am adding an extra dollar in thanksgiving."
—Pittsburgh, Pa.

When making up a list of Christmas gifts, do not forget the image in wood of Tekakwitha, with her name and Lily of the Mohawks in raised letters. The features and drapery are clean cut, the frame is Gothic, the arch is pointed and pierced. In it is an admixture of wood from an oak-tree growing at her birthplace in 1656 when she was born. It is her most attractive souvenir, 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 inches, 40 cents each postpaid; three for \$1.00.

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