



Catherine Tegakwitha, First Iroquois Virgin Cholenec

CHAPTER X—THE GREAT VOW

It was the Feast of the Annunciation, the twenty-fifth of March, 1679, at eight o'clock in the morning that, a moment after Jesus Christ gave Himself to her in Communion, Catherine Tegakwitha wholly gave herself to Him, and renouncing marriage forever, promised Him perpetual virginity, and with a heart aglow with love she implored Him to be her only Spouse, and to accept her as His bride. She prayed Our Lady, for whom she had a tender devotion, to present her to her Divine Son; then, wishing to make a double consecration in one single act, she offered herself entirely to Mary at the same time that she dedicated herself to Jesus Christ, earnestly begging her to be her mother and to accept her as her daughter.

It was in this manner that the great act took place, by which no doubt much joy was caused in heaven, and Catherine's greatest desire was achieved. After her heroic sacrifice had been made, she no longer seemed of this world; her conversation was of heaven alone, her soul already tasted of its sweetness, while she mortified her body by her new austerities, which, joined to her intense striving to be constantly united to God, finally exhausted her forces, so that she fell

dangerously ill the same summer and narrowly escaped death. She retained a great pain in her stomach, accompanied by frequent vomitings, and a low fever, which, gradually undermining her, reduced her to a state of languor from which she was unable to rouse herself.

It took a courage such as hers to retain, in spite of her infirmities, all the fervor of a devotion which never slackened until she died. On the contrary, her spirit seemed to take new strength at the expense of her body, and she sought new means by which to sanctify herself in the little time she had left to live. The just are admirable in their ways, the more they realize their end is near, the more rapidly they advance in perfection. They are holy misers, who are never content with what they have given to God, but always wish to give Him more, so as to receive more from Him in return, and thus to amass greater riches for eternity. Our chaste maiden without doubt stored up a large number during the two years and a half she lived at the Sault, not only by the remarkable things she accomplished there and of which we have made note here, but even more by the constant practise of Christian virtues, which, I may say, she possessed in

such an eminent degree that it would be difficult to judge which one shone forth most.

CHAPTER XI—CATHERINE AND THE QUEEN OF VIRTUES

Although I have already given some beautiful examples of her virtues, before speaking of her death, I wish to say a little more concerning that one which is most admirable in the Saints, and which is the only virtue conducive to real sanctity.

Charity is not only the queen of virtues, enriching all others, but it is also the source of sanctity, the shortest and safest road to holiness and perfection, since it is only necessary to love God with one's whole heart to attain that end, according to Saint Paul, whereas without this virtue, however holy and perfect one appears before man, one is nothing before God. Keeping this in mind, it is not difficult to believe that Catherine became perfect in so short a time, considering the ardor of her love for God. She loved Him so much that her only joy was to think of Him and to offer Him all her thoughts, words, and actions. She particularly liked to be alone, and if she made friends with the two women we have mentioned above, it was merely because they led her to God; for as one gladly hears a conversation about something one loves, Catherine found extraordinary happiness in hearing about God. Such pleasure did she derive from this that it was sufficient only to begin a pious discourse in her presence, to make her leave whatever she was doing immediately, collect her thoughts, and listen to it with all the attention of which she was capable, without ever tiring.

The last year of her life, when she was obliged to keep almost entirely to her cabin on account of her infirmity, a certain person undertook to see her every day so as to converse with her of God, and explain to her our mysteries. In gratitude, she obtained for this person many graces after her death, even appearing to her several times. She

prophesied things to her, and led her to the highest perfection with such grace and heavenly consolation that this person would be contemplating five and six hours at a time.

Nor did her love for God stop at simple affection; she always sought every possible means to give Him proof of it. It was sufficient for her to hear of some mortification of the saints to imitate them immediately, no matter how trying it was to the flesh; she mortified herself by the use of fire, the wearing of irons, and by other means, as we shall see a little later, when we speak of her austerities and her love for the cross.

The most authentic evidence of her ardent love for God, however, was that, urged by a strong desire to please Him, she consecrated her virginity to Him and renounced marriage, so as to have no other Spouse but Himself; this was an unheard of thing among her people, and all the more to be admired in Catherine since those of her sex, being supported by what a husband brings home from the hunt, all aspire to marriage, and consider that they have attained the greatest happiness possible in this life, when they have met with a good hunter. God, Who never allows His creatures to surpass Him in love, gave Himself to her with such profusion that it was necessary to see this in order to believe it.

It has been told of several Saints, that at times their hearts were so inflamed with divine love, that in spite of the efforts they took to hide this sacred fire, which consumed them from within, they were unable to prevent the escape of some of its sparks. Such was Catherine's love; this young girl, although only an untutored Indian, was so filled with the spirit of God, and tasted such sweetness in this possession, that her entire exterior gave testimony of it, her eyes, her gestures, her words, were filled with divine love at such moments. If one were with her, it did not take long to be touched by it, and to become warmed with this heavenly fire.

CHAPTER XII—THE EUCHARIST AND THE CROSS

This love of Catherine for her God was the source of her great love for the Holy Eucharist and the cross, which are indeed the two means by which the Saviour of the world proved His love for mankind most, and in which men owe Him that reciprocity, which Catherine gave in a marvelous manner. It would be difficult to increase the faith, love and tenderness she felt for the Holy Eucharist; from the time that she had any knowledge of this great Sacrament, she remained devoted to it, and delighted in it until her death. We have seen her assiduity in doing her duty for God, her long prayers at the church, her fervor in her communions, the many tears with which she poured forth her love at the foot of the altar, the entire days she would spend there, even during the coldest weather in Canada.

Often, seeing her whole body frozen, I was impelled to make her leave the church and enjoy the warmth of the fire with us; but a moment later she would escape me, saying with a smile that she was not cold, to return to the place where she had left her heart. What have the French to say regarding this, who pass our churches a hundred times a day, without the thought ever occurring to them to enter even once to greet Our Lord on His altars, and who are so bored in church because the Mass they are obliged to hear appears a little long to them?

If Catherine had a great love for her beloved Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, she had no less devotion to Our Saviour on the Cross. In order always to bear this image in mind, she wore around her neck a small crucifix I had given her, frequently kissing it with feelings of gratitude for so marked a benefit as that of our redemption and with tender compassion for the sufferings of Jesus. She went even further, and wished to share His pains. Together with all the Saints she car-

ried her cross after Him, and the Divine Master, Who guided her, having inspired her with a holy hatred of herself, so recommended by Jesus Christ and so necessary to salvation, she treated her body with such harshness at the Sault, that it would be difficult anywhere else to find such innocence joined with such austere penance. She tortured her body in all the ways she could invent, by toil, by loss of sleep, by fasting, by cold, by fire, by irons, by pointed girdles, and by harsh disciplines with which she tore her shoulders open several times a week. When in winter she went to the woods with her sister and the other women, she always remained behind, to take off her shoes and walk barefoot in the snow and ice, putting her shoes on again before she could be discovered, because she had great humility, preferring to abstain from mortification, no matter how much she longed for it, rather than appear to mortify herself.

Once she asked Anastasia, her mistress, what she considered the severest penance one could do in order to offer the most pleasing sacrifice to Our Lord and to prove one's love for Him. "My child," replied the other, "I know of nothing on earth more terrible than fire." "Neither do I," answered Catherine. She said no more about it then, but in the evening, when everyone had gone to bed, she spent a long time burning her legs with a brand in the same manner that slaves are burned among the Iroquois, wishing in this way to declare herself the slave of her Saviour, to whom she then presented herself at the door of the church in the darkness of the night bearing her beautiful marks of the cross. Another time both she and her companion decided that when they were alone they would place a burning coal between the toes, a spot supposed to be the most sensitive to the pain of fire. Catherine later admitted to this companion that she had done it, and remained for a long time in this position. The other was astounded since, healthy as

she was, she had fainted at the thought of suffering the pain of the coal for half a "Hail, Mary" alone, and she did not think that Catherine could have done what she did without some sort of miracle. The marvel was still greater, however, when the following morning there was no mark of the burn on her foot.

Finally, in a last effort of love and gratitude for Jesus immolated on our altars and on the cross, and prompted by an intense desire to give all for all, after preparing herself by new devotions, she made, in Holy Communion, a perpetual offering of her soul to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and of her body to Jesus Crucified, taking Him again for her only Spouse, and devoting herself wholly to Him as bride. She chose a great feast of Our Lady for this act, so as to make her offering to the Son through the hands of His Divine Mother, and also in order to take her once more for her own. I may say that after she made these two great sacrifices of her soul and body, her soul lived only for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and her body lived only so as to die with Him on the Cross, in the midst of sorrow and suffering. I say die on the cross since she truly died on it, having shortened her days by an act worthy of eternal commemoration, although it is rather to be admired than imitated, and with the narration of which I wish to end this matter.

About two or three months before her death, this generous girl, desiring to attach herself even more to the cross of her Saviour and to testify, by some heroic act, the eagerness she had to participate in His sufferings, in spite of her continual infirmities, and as if she had done nothing until then, decided, in imitation of the Venerable Louis of Gonzaga, of whom I had spoken to her by chance, to gather a large bundle of big, pointed thorns, which she brought home with her and hid in the lodge. At night, when everyone was asleep, she strewed these

thorns upon her mat and then went to sleep on it, having only her blanket over her body. She had the strength not only to roll herself all night long upon the thorns, but to do this for the three following nights also, the pain being unimaginable, as she afterwards confessed to me. It left her so worn out and emaciated that her face resembled that of a dead person.

Not knowing the real cause of this, we attributed the change in her to her ordinary infirmities, which appeared to us to increase visibly every day. Her companion, however, suspected some secret cause of this change, and was so shrewd that Catherine confessed the truth to her, adding that she thought to continue doing this until her death. "Yes," answered her companion, "but do you know that you offend God by undertaking this sort of excess without the permission of your confessor?" This was enough for Catherine. The shadow of the sin was capable of making her disclose this rare act, which, without this apprehension, she would have kept secret her whole life. She sought me immediately and approached me with these words: "Oh! Father, I have sinned." Then she told me the whole affair, and although in my heart I admired her, I pretended to be displeased and reprimanded her for her imprudence, and in order to prevent her from renewing it, I commanded her to throw these thorns into the fire, which she did with great submission.

She possessed this virtue in an eminent degree, always ready to do or to omit, equally content to be on either side, without being attached to her own will, an infallible proof of the spirit of God which governed her. It was, moreover, not without reason that the fear of sin made Catherine confess an action so much to her merit, for she had indeed an extreme horror, not only of sin, but also of the shadow of sin, and had, in regard to this, a surprising delicacy of conscience. This was particularly evident in her confessions, which were always accompanied by sobs and tears,

and an exact discussion of the smallest faults. She also considered herself the greatest sinner of the village, and had such an humble opinion of herself that she could not bear anyone to say the least word in her praise, but immediately fled, or, if she was unable to retire, she would hide in her blanket in order to conceal her blushing face. It even pained her when I spoke to her of the glory that awaited her in heaven, for she was unable to imagine how a wicked creature, such as she conceived herself to be, had any right to think of this heritage of the just and the Saints. On the contrary, she admired all the others, praising and approving where it was deserved, and excusing the rest with great charity.

Although the Indians are by nature much inclined to gossip about one another, it has been observed that Catherine never spoke a word against anyone. This Indian maiden was uncivilized in name only, for she was by nature gentle, honest, affectionate, and even gay of spirit, kind, and always ready to lend a helping hand. Her patience in the midst of her continual suffering at the Sault appeared heroic to us; she bore it with a constancy and evenness of disposition that delighted us—always gay, always contented—without ever manifesting impatience or the least sign of annoyance or sadness except the one time that her sister urged her marriage with such insistence.

The last two months of her life she underwent extraordinary sufferings, being obliged to hold herself in the same position day and night, and not being able to move without extreme pain. Never once in that time did she even sigh in complaint, but rather considered herself happy to suffer something with Our Lord, and thought only of uniting her pains with His. She had a high idea of the Faith and all that it teaches, and a particular respect for those called by God to propagate it throughout the world, an ardent, but an entirely disinterested hope, having never served God but for Himself alone



TEKAKWITHA AS DAUGHTER OF CHIEFTAIN

and from the desire to please Him. Her modesty was charming and her whole exterior gave forth an air of virtue and piety that inspired others. Her courage was heroic; her faithfulness to the service of God, inviolable; her devotion, tender; her tears, as well as her union with God, were constant. She possessed a remarkable gift of prayer without having had any other teacher than the Holy Spirit. In one word, she possessed all the virtues in an eminent degree, as may be noticed throughout the course of her life.

CHAPTER XIII—HER PURITY

The virtue that seemed characteristically hers, however, and which increases her merit most, is purity, whether one takes that word in its evident meaning to signify an exemption from sin, or whether one considers its more usual signification and understands by

it an entire freedom from the vice of impurity. As regards the first, I do not think that she ever offended God by a mortal sin; rather I would say she had such a real horror of sin and kept such vigilance to preserve herself from it that I do not know if in the two years and a half she lived at the Sault, she committed any, even the smallest, deliberately, for she took special care to avoid the slightest faults. This is what may be termed being really holy and possessing perfect charity. What concerns the second kind of purity, I say, and shall always say, that it is a miracle of grace which cannot be understood, how Catherine passed more than twenty years in the midst of the corruption of her country and two years and a half at the Sault, virgin in body and soul, without ever, during all that time, having felt the least thing contrary to this virtue, either in body or soul; this, I say, appears unbelievable, but is nevertheless true. She had already told me so of her own accord, but wishing to assure ourselves still more concerning so marvelous a thing, I questioned her on it the evening before her death, after having given her the Viaticum, and although she had difficulty in speaking, she made an effort and answered me in a firm tone of voice, "No, no," with a gesture that showed the pain she felt in still being questioned at her death concerning a sin that she had held in horror all her life.

What can be thought after this, except to say with the prophet that God is admirable in His Saints, and that, having chosen this one of her race to be the first Iroquois virgin, He had protected her by His blessings, so to speak, from the moment she left her mother's womb. From this source resulted her tender affection for Our Lady, the Queen of Virgins, and the Mother of Purity. As soon as Catherine learned about her, she loved her ecstatically, and spoke of her with enthusiasm. She learned by heart the litanies composed in her honor, and said them every evening in private after the common prayers

of the lodge. She never went about without her beads, which she said while going to and fro. She signalized Saturdays and the other days dedicated to the Mother of Mercy by some mortification or extra act of virtue.

Catherine prepared herself with redoubled fervor for the most solemn feast days, which were for her a time of spiritual renovation, so much pleasure did she take in them, so many graces did she receive. We have also seen that she always chose them when she wished to offer some great sacrifice to Our Lord, as her vow of virginity, which she made partly to imitate the Holy Virgin, and to give her this eminent proof of her admiration and love. From the moment she took the resolution at the Sault to take Jesus Christ for her Spouse, she took Mary for her mother, throwing herself into her arms and abandoning herself entirely to her guidance with perfect filial confidence, worthy daughter of such a mother, who, we may believe, obtained from her Divine Son such a marvelous and rare gift of purity by a reciprocal love.

She would have wished, even as St. Paul, that everybody might have acted as herself. The manner of her actions, her reputation, and a certain indefinable something, noticed by both the French and the Indians in this young virgin, who was the marvel of our woods, were the cause of several wishing to learn from her lips what was most agreeable to God in order to do it, and no matter what she did to hide herself, she could not refuse her instructions to others. Virginity, chastity and continence were the subjects of her discourses, which she spread as a balm, everywhere, with this remarkable circumstance, that speaking of this virtue, so that it might be embraced, or of the contrary vice, that it might be hated, she never mentioned either without adding some praise of Our Lady. It may be judged that at these times her tongue spoke from the depths of her heart.

(To be continued.)

Tekakwitha is becoming a favorite name for buildings, camps and groups of young people who are studying her life and taking inspiration from it. Here is a list we have made from our correspondence. It is by no means complete, but our readers will kindly help us to make it so. Perhaps the most characteristic place so named is Lake Tekakwitha, a wild-life-refuge, at Rollingstone, Minn. We hope to say more of this later.

TEKAKWITHA CLUBS, CAMPS, MISSIONS, ETC.

Camp Tekakwitha, Lake Luzerne, N. Y.
 Camp Tegakwitha, Mt. Pocono, Pa.
 Camp Tegakwitha, Jersey City, N. J.
 Camp Fire Group, South Bend, Ind.
 Tekakwitha Club, Cleveland, O.
 Tekakwitha Club, Cincinnati, O.
 Catherine Tekakwitha Club, Joliet, Ill.
 Tekakwitha Club, Saugus, Mass.
 Kateri Study Club, Bellevue, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 Tekakwitha Glee Club, New Port, Ky.
 Court Kateri Tekakwitha, Lyons, N. Y.
 Cœur d'Alene Kateris, De Smet, Idaho.
 Tekakwitha Catholic Club, Cleveland, O.
 Tekakwitha Hall, Montclair, N. J.
 Tekakwitha Hospital, Sisseton, S. Dak.
 Tekakwitha House, Washington, D. C.
 Tekakwitha Mission, Houck, Ariz.
 Tekakwitha League, Dundalk, Md.
 Tekakwitha Lodge, Nagawicka Lake, Wis.
 Tegakwitha School, Philadelphia, Miss.
 The Tekakwitha Shop, Kingston, Pa.
 Tekakwitha Friary, Fonda, N. Y.
 Tekakwitha Grotto, Cresson, Pa.
 Tekakwitha Tea Shop, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Tekakwitha Indian Mission, Petoskey, Mich.
 Tekakwitha Baseball Team, Wernersville, Pa.
 "Tekakwitha"—Coal Boat, Staten Island, N. Y.
 Tekakwitha—Mariner Ship, Yonkers, N. Y.
 Temperance Society, St. Stephen's, Wyo.
 Tekakwitha Shrine, "Kitchizagaijan," Carlton Co., Minn.
 Lake Tekakwitha, Rollingstone, Minn.
 Tekakwitha, Class Patron, Washington, D. C.
 Patron, Teacher-Students, Madras, S. India.
 Tekakwitha Groups, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Kateri Unit, Flushing, N. Y.
 Tekakwitha Girl Scouts, Santa Fe, New Mex.
 Kateri Girl Scouts, Jefferson City, Mo.
 Tekakwitha Troop No. 1, Las Vegas, New Mex.
 Tekakwitha Shrine, St. Michael's Mission, Ariz.

The folly of "Racism" suggests itself when thinking of Tekakwitha. She was reputed as savage, though her people were no worse in many respects, in cruelty, for instance, than certain civilized nations of her time and ours, if as bad. Concerned as we are about conditions the world over, it might

be well to invoke the Indian Maiden who saved her country and her people for peace and protection of the faithful everywhere, in Mexico, for example, and elsewhere.

Some day Tekakwitha will be declared patron, we devoutly hope, of many interests, of the Mohawk Valley, of Caughnawaga, where her remains are piously preserved, of boy and girl scouts. Meantime, she has her patrons who are doing all they can to further her Cause. It was quite affecting during the Christmas season to receive from some of them beautifully embellished scrolls enumerating acts of piety, Masses, beads, aspirations for the Cause of Tekakwitha and for all who are working for its happy termination.

Two feasts in February bring reminders of Tekakwitha. The missionaries in her village made much of the Feast of the Purification and Kateri was fond of taking part in the services. It was the same for Ash Wednesday which occurs most frequently during this month. Then the Feast of Blessed Claude de la Colombière recalls that his brother, Canon of the Cathedral of Quebec, pilgrimaged to the tomb of Tekakwitha in thanksgiving for his cure from a fever for which he could find no remedy. This was in 1695, fifteen years after her death.

Some clients of Tekakwitha think that her Cause is proceeding slowly in Rome. Not at all: it is proceeding rapidly as possible. They do not seem to be aware that other Causes submitted years ago to the Congregation of Rites are still awaiting formal Introduction. A list of 590 Causes in various stages, published in 1931, contains some that were presented over fifty years ago. The Cause of Tekakwitha was begun in Albany in 1931, presented to the Congregation of Rites in June, 1932. Already the Historical Section has finished its work and decided favorably, so that now the Cause may proceed rapidly.

THE LILY OF THE MOHAWKS has never as yet appealed for funds for the expenses of the Cause of Tekakwitha. What these expenses are we shall tell in a future number. Briefly here, they are for means to make her widely known so that many may obtain favors through her intercession, and to requite the labor and various outlays by those in

Rome who are doing all they can for her Cause. One manager of a Catholic newspaper calls for contributions from the readers and they are quite generous. A college sodality contributes, as also a Bona Mors Society, and more than one of the groups named after her, page 39, also a "Parish Unit of Catholic Youth," all girls.

TEKAKWITHA "MOVETH ALL BEFORE HER"

What we record here are only a very few of those reported to us. The *Montreal Messenger of the Sacred Heart* has recently begun to report many and the *Companion of St. Francis and St. Anthony* has been doing the same for fully five years.

"Again a Protestant client of Kateri shows her appreciation." —Terre Haute, Ind.

"The knee of a steward on the S. S. Youngstown was broken and after three months he expected the leg to be amputated. Hearing of Tekakwitha, he prayed for her aid and gives thanks the leg was saved."

—New Orleans, La.

One thanksgiving is for the cure of a disease that lasted many years.

Then there are the usual temporal favors, such as disposing at a profit a home about to be foreclosed. "A very much down-and-out relation received an excellent business offer." One whom Kateri was helping to pay debts did so without difficulty and then received a forty per cent. increase in salary.

Kateri's medal has always been a factor in the cures reported. The priest Director of the Marquette League reports the cure of a child of seven suffering from pneumonia with no hope from his doctor. On applying the medal, the temperature decreased rapidly.

Tekakwitha does favor children. A child of four and one-half years was strangely afflicted and wasting away. For a month there was little or no improvement. Then the medal was applied. That afternoon a change came for the better and nine days after he was discharged from the hospital.

ADDITIONAL FAVORS

Cures	14	Spiritual Aid	1
Positions	11	Relief in Distress	7
Financial Aid	14	Sold Property	1
Not Specified	92		

PETITIONS

Cures	56	Spiritual Aid	5
Positions	25	Relief in Distress	11
Financial Aid	39	Conversions	9
Studies	7	Sell Property	4
Not Specified	116		

Life, by Wynne, 64 pages, 3 illustrations, containing in detail reports of remarkable favors.....12c. a copy

Leaflets.....5c. each; 25c. a doz.; \$1.50 a 100

Tekakwitha Novena Leaflets... 5c. each; 25c. a doz.

Medals.....Oxid. silver, 15c.; aluminum, 50c. a doz.

Pictures, colored13 x 10 in., 40c.

Pictures, colored, silk applied to her relics, 5 x 3 in., 5c.

Image of Kateri in wood admixed with oak growing where and when she was born, Auriesville, 1656... 5¼ x 3¼ in., 40c. each

(Prices include postage)

REV. JOHN J. WYNNE, S.J., V. *Postulator of Her Cause*
226 EAST FORDHAM ROAD, NEW YORK