



Catherine Tegakwitha, First Iroquois Virgin Cholenec

CHAPTER XIV—HER DEATH

If Catherine Tegakwitha had died among the Iroquois, I would have borrowed the words of the sage, and said of her what he said of the just man, namely, that she was taken from this world in the springtime of her life by a very special act of God's providence. Lest in time this innocent soul should become contaminated by the corruption of her country, He hastened, so to speak, to remove her from the iniquity that surrounded her. As she ended her life gloriously in a mission which was then very fervent, I prefer to take the second thought of the sage, and to say with him that Catherine left the earth only because she was ready for heaven, and that having achieved her goal she was happy enough to accomplish in only three years what others have difficulty in bringing about after many years and after having reached a great age.

We have observed several times that she had always been infirm, and that besides this, about a year before her death a great illness left her with a slow fever and a severe pain in her stomach, accompanied by frequent vomitings, caused no doubt by continual work, night-watches, fasting and excessive austerities. These, however, she continued without ceasing until death; as a final proof

of which I would recall the agonizing bed of thorns by which this generous girl lessened her remaining health. The fever made all this worse, finally obliging her to keep to her bed, and at the end of two months it took her from us.

Her last days were truly precious for Catherine, days of grace and holiness, since she passed them in the exercise of all those excellent virtues which she had practised so much during her lifetime, and which had never shone so brilliantly as at the time of her death; her faith, hope, charity, humility, gentleness, patience, resignation, and surprising gaiety in the midst of her suffering. The priest who was then in charge of the sick and who visited her every day, could not admire her enough. He always found her with a smiling face, which clearly showed the peace of her soul and the pleasure she found in her pains. One must not be astonished at this, for this holy girl, having suffered on the cross with her Saviour and spouse, was happy to follow His example by dying on it.

Moreover, as all the men were at the hunt, and the women who remained in the village were occupied from morning until night in the woods or in the fields, they left their

sick alone all day with a plate of sagamite and a little water within their reach. In this abandoned state Catherine passed all the time of her last illness, but that which was ordinarily a cause of pain and annoyance for the other sick was for her an occasion of new merit and even new consolation. As she knew how to profit by all things, and had for a long time accustomed herself to hold intercourse with God, she made use of this solitude to attach herself more to Him and to become more inflamed with His love.

Thus in her inmost soul she delighted in her God with an abundance of joy and spiritual satisfaction which were all the more pure because she was detached from worldly affairs. In order to draw these at the source of her delight, and moreover, being unable to forget the center of her affection, I mean the Holy Eucharist, she went to the church every day as long as she was able to move, to adore Him in private and to pass whole hours, in spite of her great weakness, in the sweet company that held such charm for her. When it became impossible for her to do this, she made her stations there in spirit, uniting to the perpetual sacrifice of our altars a continual sacrifice of her entire self to Our Saviour.

As the time of her last moments approached, her strength was constantly decreasing until the beginning of Holy Week of the year 1680, during which God wished to take her from the world, that she might go, as we have every reason to believe, to celebrate the following feastdays with the angels. Tuesday morning, seeing that she was sinking rapidly, we gave her the Holy Viaticum, which she received with angelic love and devotion, as a true spouse of Our Lord. The Divine Saviour was no sooner with her than she renewed all the offerings she had made Him, expressing deep sentiments of gratitude for the great graces she had received, especially at the Mission of the Sault.

All those of our Indians who were at the village, and who had accompanied the Blessed Sacrament to the lodge, were charmed by such edifying piety. She passed the remainder of that day and the following night in sweet and fervent communion with Our Lord, Our Lady, and her crucifix. Wednesday morning she received Extreme Unction with the same devotion with which she had received the Holy Viaticum on the preceding day. During the three hours after noon she entered into the most gentle agony conceivable. A little later she lost her power of speech while pronouncing the holy names of Jesus and Mary, but as her hearing was still very good and she was fully conscious until her last breath, it was evident that she tried to make, with her heart at least, those acts which were suggested to her during these last moments. Finally, a short half hour after her agony, she died peacefully, as if she had entered into a light sleep.

Thus Catherine Tegakwitha died in the twenty-fourth year of her life on Wednesday, April 17, at three o'clock in the afternoon, leaving the entire village moved by her virtue and deeply impressed by her sanctity, especially as a few hours later I eulogized her at evening prayers and made known to the Indians the treasure they had possessed and lost before they came to know her. Her virginal body was buried the following day at three o'clock in the afternoon, not with sorrow, but with the public joy which was inspired in the entire village by her holy life; a joy increased by having in Catherine a powerful advocate near God, and in her precious remains, which they have always venerated, the support, the bulwark, and the guiding spirit of the mission.

These were, moreover, the sentiments pronounced by Father Fremin, when he heard of Catherine's death on his return from France, where he had gone this year concerning the affairs of the Sault, and in this certainly he said no more than what has taken

place as we shall see at the end of the last book. There now remains certain circumstances to be recounted which have made us judge that if her life was pleasing to God, her death was of no less value in His eyes.

CHAPTER XV—CIRCUMSTANCE AFTER HER DEATH

We shall take as the first circumstance the very day of her death, for it seemed as if, in taking her to Him on that day, God wished to reward her for that devotion in which she had loved and honored Him most; that is to say, on the Wednesday of Holy Week, the vigil of the two days consecrated to the two great mysteries of the Holy Eucharist and the Cross, which had been her whole joy and delight. I remember that at the beginning of her last illness, more than two months before her death, one of our Fathers asserted that God would take her from this world on that day, doubtlessly that she might celebrate in Heaven the two great feast days which had been her principal devotion on earth.

The second circumstance is to be as much admired as the first. It is a laudable custom here for two persons of the Holy Family Confraternity to take turns in watching during the night that the sick are in danger of death. There was question as to who should do this for Catherine, and on Tuesday night, which was the last of her life, I named two of the most fervent members, the youngest of whom was also the youngest of the Confraternity, for she was only in her twenty-second year. She sought me after evening prayers to ask my permission to go to the woods to do some penance in order to obtain a happy death for her with whom she was going to watch, for she loved, and was loved by, Catherine, being one of those who had associated themselves with her for some time, as we shall mention later.

This charity was surprising in an Indian maiden, who passed a full quarter of an hour

in performing penance until she bled, on behalf of her friend; but it is still more surprising that the very instant Catherine learned about it, dying on her mat though she was, and having with her only the other person who was to watch with her that night, she turned on her side, begging her to seek the girl and make her come immediately. The woman obeyed, and found the other on the way from the woods to her lodge, where she was going in order to tighten the instrument of her mortification. "Catherine wants you," she told her, "and I came to seek you."

They both entered Catherine's lodge, and the latter whispered to the youngest to let the other woman rest first because she wished to speak to her in private. The other woman had in fact already fallen asleep, and Catherine bade the young Indian, who had displayed such charity for her, approach. She encouraged and exhorted her to persevere in the service of God, assuring her that she was very pleasing to Our Lord, and promised her that she would pray for her when she was in heaven. When this woman, who had no less humility than fervor, replied that Catherine did not know her well, and that she was a miserable sinner, Catherine took her by the arm, and, pressing it, said: "I know what I am saying, my sister; I also know where you come from and what you have done; go, take courage; be assured that you are pleasing in the sight of God, and that I shall help you when I am with Him." This the woman came to tell me the following day, with new veneration for Catherine and new courage to follow her example, as she is still doing at the Sault.

A third circumstance, was some knowledge concerning the day and even the hour of her death, that could have come only from heaven. After giving her the Holy Viaticum on Tuesday morning, we hastened to give her Extreme Unction. She told us that there was no hurry and that the time had not yet come for it. At her word we de-

ferred the administration of the sacrament until Wednesday morning. We had reason to believe that she would die before noon on that day, but she knew that this was not so. Her beloved companion and some other women of the Holy Family Confraternity, who, for approximately a year, formed a small devotional society with Catherine, which is still called by the name of her sisters, greatly desired to be present when she died. But as they were obliged to seek wood for the following feastdays, they were doubtful and did not know whether to go or to remain. They thought the best solution was to ask Catherine herself, not doubting that she had sufficient power with heaven to have her death deferred in their behalf. I spoke to her for them, and she answered that they might go to the woods, and would return in time for her death.

At her word they went, nor did she fail them. Until three o'clock in the afternoon she remained in the same condition. After their return, she waited until they had entered the lodge, and I saw this marvel with my own eyes; the last one had no sooner arrived than she entered into her agony with them all kneeling around her. Thus they had the consolation of witnessing her death, as they desired and she had promised them.

It is also recounted that some time before her last illness, she was digging a grave in the cemetery together with some other women, in order to bury one of her small nephews. The conversation having turned to this final resting ground wherein each should have a place, they laughingly asked Catherine where hers was. "There it is," she said, pointing to a certain spot. After her death Father Chauchetière did all he could to persuade me to have her buried in the church, but to avoid such an unusual thing, I had a grave made in the cemetery in the exact place she had designated, though I did not know of her prediction until several years later.

The fourth circumstance is a marvel of which I was likewise an eye-witness, together with the aforesaid father and our Indians. Due to the smallpox, Catherine's face had been disfigured since the age of four, and her infirmities and mortifications had contributed to disfigure her even more, but this face, so marked and swarthy, suddenly changed about a quarter of an hour after her death, and became in a moment so beautiful and so white that I observed it immediately (for I was praying beside her) and cried out, so great was my astonishment. I had them call the Father who was working at the repository for Holy Thursday. He came, as did the Indians, on hearing of this wonder, which we were able to contemplate until her burial. I admit openly that the first thought that came to me was that Catherine at that moment might have entered into heaven, reflecting in her chaste body a small ray of the glory of which her soul had taken possession.

Two French inhabitants of the Prairie of Madeleine came to the Sault on Thursday morning to assist at the service. They passed Catherine's lodge, and seeing her laid out upon her mat with such a beautiful and shining countenance, said to one another: "There is a young woman who sleeps peacefully." Learning a moment later that it was Catherine, they retraced their steps to the lodge and knelt at her feet to recommend themselves to her prayers. Having satisfied their devotion, they wished to show the veneration they had for her by making a coffin at once for the interment of such a precious body.

The last circumstance of her death is the remarkable effect she had on the mission. That there were piety and fervor at the Sault cannot be denied after all we have already said. Catherine herself had drawn hers from the beautiful examples of virtue she had before her eyes, but if, at the beginning, the mission was a great aid in her sanctifica-

tion, I can say that towards the end of her life and particularly at her death she served reciprocally in sanctifying the mission.

Devotion became general, the Indians all spoke of penances, self-denial, of renouncing all in order to give all to God in imitation of Catherine; from everywhere the people came to inform me of these beautiful and holy resolutions, and, what is more, they succeeded in them. A woman passed the night of Good Friday rolling on thorns, even as Catherine had done; a little later another did this for four or five consecutive nights; several made their shoulders bleed by very harsh disciplines, married people separated so as to live in continency, widows renounced a second marriage. Others, younger ones, promised they would renounce a second marriage, if their husbands were the first to die, which holy resolutions in time they carried out and persevered in, in spite of their youth and other very strong reasons, which would seem to oblige them to provide for themselves and their children by a second marriage into which they could have entered, being sought after by very desirable men.

Those were the great results effected by Catherine's life and death at the mission of the Sault; her memory is carefully preserved there by the care of the missionaries, who often recall her virtues to the minds of the Indians. The day of her death especially is spent with extraordinary devotion.

CHAPTER XVI—AFTER DEATH

Having spoken until now of Catherine's life and death, we shall consider some apparitions that concern her, the extraordinary favors that several people obtained from heaven and receive daily in Canada through her intercession.

With regard to the former, I admit that I have had difficulty in deciding whether to speak of it, for there are only too many people in the world who set themselves up to believe nothing, especially in matters of this

kind. They no sooner hear apparitions mentioned, than they protest against them and pretend these revelations are so many illusions and hallucinations, because in truth there have been some that were found to have existed in the imagination rather than in reality, and they would prefer to believe this concerning a poor Indian, as if the hand of God has been shortened, and He were not the Giver of all graces and could not give them to whomsoever He pleased.

The apparitions I am referring to here are so important and clear in detail that I do not see how they could be reasonably called in question. Though the incredulous will always remain so, God will be no less glorified in His servant, and virtuous people will find in these marvels new motives to love and bless Him, on seeing how liberal He is in rewarding the services rendered to Him, even by the poor Indians.

The sixth day after Catherine's death, that is to say, the Monday after Easter, a person of virtue and worthy of belief was praying at four o'clock in the morning, when Catherine appeared to him surrounded by glory, with majestic bearing and shining face lifted toward heaven as if in ecstasy. This marvelous vision was accompanied by three circumstances that made it seem more remarkable. In the first place, the vision lasted for two whole hours, during which this person could contemplate her at leisure and did so with a joy and pleasure difficult to express, Catherine wishing by so marked a favor to acknowledge the great service she had received from him during her lifetime. Moreover this same apparition was accompanied by several prophecies, and by as many symbols which might be seen on both sides of Catherine in her ecstasy. Some of these prophecies have already been fulfilled, while others have not yet come to pass. For instance, on her right a church was seen turned over on its side, while on the left there was an Indian tied to a stake and badly

burned. These events occurred in the month of April, 1680, and in 1683.

The night of the twentieth of August, there was a terrific storm with such lightning and thunder that it could only have been caused by the evil spirit; it hurled the church of the Sault sixty feet, breaking it into pieces; took it, I say, with such violence at one corner that, though it may seem improbable, it was turned over on the opposite angle and shattered.

Two of the Fathers, who were in the church, were lifted into the air with the pieces. Another, who had come from the house to ring the bell, felt the cord pulled out of his hand and was lifted as the others. All three found themselves on the ground under the débris, whence they were extracted with much difficulty. They thought their bodies would be severely injured by such a violent shock, but they merely had some slight wounds. This they attributed to Catherine's prayers, and when all three of them met, one said: "As for me, I said the Holy Mass in honor of Catherine this morning." "And I," said another, "went to her grave this morning to recommend myself to her in a very special manner." "For over a year," added the third, "I have had an insistent idea that some accident would happen to the mission, so during all that time and even today I went to pray to Catherine at her grave to deliver us from it. Also I have not ceased to importune the Superior of the mission to have her bones translated to our church, without knowing why I did so."

This is sufficient for the destroyed church; as for the Indian burning at the stake who was seen in the apparition, this came to pass a few years later when an Indian of this mission was burned at Onnontague, as were also two women in the two following years. We do not doubt that Catherine, who had prophesied this a long time before, obtained for these Indians the invincible courage that they displayed during their torture. We

shall treat this at the end of this book as a marvelous effect of the power she had in heaven.

In the following year, 1681, on the first of September, and in 1682, on the twenty-first of April, this same person had a similar vision under the same circumstances, with this one difference, that in the first apparition he had seen Catherine as a rising sun, and had heard these words: "*Adbuc Vini (Sic) in Dies*," whereas in the two following he saw her as a sun in mid-heaven with these words: "*Inspice Et Fac Secundum Exemplar*" (look and do according to the model), God thus making it known that He wished pictures to be painted of Catherine. For a long time we had refrained from doing so, but when they were painted later on they contributed a great deal toward making Catherine known, for, being placed on the heads of the sick, they brought about marvelous cures.

(To be continued.)

One day of March is memorable in the life of Tekakwitha. On the Feast of the Annunciation she made the vow of virginity, first of her race, as far as is known, to do so. The scene was described by Father Cholenec in the February LILY OF THE MOHAWKS. All the exhortations of the missionaries were feeble in comparison with the effect of this example among her people.

As a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, she loved March 19, St. Joseph's Day, always a favorite feast in Canada, and she had a special devotion to the Sorrows of Our Lady commemorated this year on March 31.

The *Messenger du Sacre-Cœur* of Montreal announces the Life of Tekakwitha by Miss Guilberte C. Bouvier, of Brookline, Mass. It is in French, copiously illustrated by pictures taken for the Tekakwitha film made by her sister, Jeanne. It is fifty cents a copy.

As the most recent chapter in the Life of Tekakwitha in this number tells how the day of her death, April 17, became memorable among her people, so it is a pleasure to record that it is still in grateful memory. The birthday of the Servants of God is the day of death, of entrance into undying life.

When reading of Tekawitha's extreme austerities one must recall the cruelties in which her people indulged when they were torturing captives. She would never assist at these, though Indian women revelled in witnessing and even in inflicting them. She would, however, endure torture in a spirit of penance.

When first in 1925 the Promoter of the Faith, then Monsignor Mariani, read about Tekakwitha's penances he considered them excessive and altogether indiscreet, even detrimental to her reputation for prudence, but when he learned how her people delighted in torturing others, he changed his mind about Catherine.

Everyone is eager to have Tekakwitha declared Blessed, so very eager that there is a disposition to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See. Contrary to a report that this would happen in Spring, the fact is her Cause is proceeding with unusual rapidity, but not that fast.

The late lamented Pope Pius XI was very much interested in the Cause of Tekakwitha and is, of course, now more interested than ever. Readers will recall his broadcast mentioning her at the close of the Eucharistic Congress in Quebec last summer. He will be ever celebrated for many remarkable deeds, for none more than declaring 31 Saints and 531 Blessed, among them three large groups of Martyrs, 32 French nuns at Orange in 1794; 79 Martyrs of Korea; 191 at Paris in September, 1792; 136 English Martyrs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Here's a Can-You-Match-It story. A Micmac Indian, Peter Augustine, and his sister of Norwood, New York, have a silver crucifix and crown, sacred heirlooms of their people. Recently their home was destroyed by fire. The Peabody Museum of Harvard University offered \$2,000 for the crown. Augustine said, "No, the crown and crucifix belong to my people. I cannot part with them. Rather I would part with my life." The Micmacs are a branch of the Algonquins to whom Tekakwitha's mother belonged. They came early under the influence of the Jesuit missionaries. They number 4,000, practically all Catholics.

Here at last is the formal announcement of Tekakwitha in the movies. Soon this picture will be ready for general distribution.

Moving picture in Kodachrome (color).

Produced by Jeanne Bouvier of Brookline.

Episodes in the life of the Iroquois Virgin.

Re-enacted by Indians of Kateri's tribe.

Commentation by Rev. John J. Wynne, S.J.

Voiced by Rev. Michael J. Ahern, S.J.

Kateri theme song played and sung by members of the Boston Symphony.

Original music by Sylvia Robinson.

Tekakwitha League will benefit.

To the Tekakwitha groups listed in the February number, add a Jewish Tekakwitha Camp near Lucerne, New York; several Sewing Circles in the neighborhood of Auriesville, her birthplace, most of them Protestant in membership; The Camp Fire Club, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

With an offering for the Cause, a good New Jersey pastor writes: "May I ask Your Reverence to be kind enough to send me two of those pretty plaques of which you sent me one some time ago, and which, at present, is ornamenting and protecting my Tekakwitha cabin out in the woods."

—Rev. Anthony Gracik, Newark, N. J.

No end of reports of cures as usual, several after operations followed by serious and sometimes distressing complications, doctors giving little or no hope.

A client of Tekakwitha enters a library to get her *Life*. There she picks up *Who's Who in America*. In this she finds the name of her god-father, who she had heard was dead. She writes to him and back comes a check for an amount she very much needed.

A nun, of Fond du Lac, is happy to report that a business matter was settled after a Mass was offered in honor of Kateri.

Usually we advise patients to pray that their doctors may know what remedies to apply. Here is one who became so desperate with sinus trouble that she quit the doctors, put on a medal of Kateri and in a few days the trouble disappeared. Still we stand for the doctor. He is a chosen instrument of Providence.

Here are thanksgivings from one who has obtained a steady position; from two who have sold a property to advantage, and from still another who needed several hundred dollars and who first obtained a loan and then an amount in a manner that seemed miraculous. "We heartily recommend Catherine to anyone in financial difficulty." So writes the one favored.

From far off India (Chittagang, Bengal) comes word of a great favor obtained after three years invocation to Tekakwitha by a former member of the Sacred Heart Parish in New York City, now doing missionary work as health visitor at a Maternity and Child Welfare Center away out there. Nothing like perseverance.

Nothing like perseverance and confidence. A relative of one who had deserted his family, roving and drinking a long while, kept praying for a year. Now he is back, sober, and working steadily. —New York.

Almost the same day came a letter from Wallkill, New York, reporting that after invoking Tekakwitha a gift of money was received from an unknown source to help a son through the seminary; and from another mother in County Roscommon, Ireland, a somewhat similar favor for her son, looking forward to the priesthood.

"I feel that I owe our dear little Catherine an awful lot for all that she has done for me during the construction of our stand-off mission, by finding funds when most needed and when there were no prospects of finding any. And so I am pleased to send my humble offering for the expense of her Cause and only wish I could make it a hundredfold."

—Cardston, Alta., Canada.

What they pray for in Nigeria, S. Africa: "To live a holy life; to die a holy death; to have the Rev. Father."

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.

(Prices include postage)

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

REV. JOHN J. WYNNE, S.J., V. *Postulator of Her Cause*
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