



Philippine Duchesne, Tekakwitha and Others



Blessed Philippine, as she will be solemnly declared May 12, volunteered to labor among Indians when she was seventy-three years old.

When fifty she came to our land longing to work for them. She was devoted to them and they in turn were devoted to her. Indeed her face and manner would compel devotion. Just look at the image of it and try to forget it.

Arriving in America when she was already fifty years old, Venerable Mother Duchesne, as she has been styled the past nine years, had spent twenty-three years teaching, housekeeping, farming and, of course, praying day and night in and about St. Louis, aiding by her charity the missionary priests whom ultimately she was to assist in the missions. She died in 1852. The Cause for her beatification and canonization was introduced in 1909.

Very naturally one, who knows about her fondness for Indians, associates her Cause with that of Tekakwitha. The Indian Maiden once had a glimpse of nuns in Montreal, among them, very likely, Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys, and she was so much impressed by them that she and two companions actually thought of forming a community to live on Heron Island in the St. Lawrence between her village and Montreal.

No doubt the Blessed Duchesne impressed her Indians, young and old, in the same way. May Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys soon be Blessed also! She died A.D. 1700. Her Cause was introduced in 1878. She became Venerable in 1910.

Now that raises an interesting question, several questions, all well worth answering. Why is it, generally, that a Cause for the beatification and canonization of a Servant of God takes so long? Why, very often, do so many years elapse before a Cause is instituted at all? Why, in many instances, are Causes instituted promptly, but then, as in the case of Mother Seton or of Venerable John Nepomucene Neumann, seem to go so slowly that one wonders if they will ever come to a conclusion? These are only some of the questions that may be asked in regard to Causes for the beatification and canonization of God's special Servants.

The process for the beatification and canonization of a Servant of God is like a trial in court, and no court was ever more deliberate and painstaking than the Congregation of Rites, none, we might add, more conscientious, since there is question of examining testimony about the life, virtues, reputation for holiness and miracles attributed to one who may ultimately be recommended for the veneration of the faithful.

To collect, prepare and submit the evi-

dence may take years and those concerned are liable to meet many obstacles, even delays due to illness and death. Thus while preparing for the first process in the Cause of Tekakwitha, two of the principals suffered at intervals very serious illness. Then soon after the Cause was submitted to Rome, Cardinal Sincero, who was sponsoring it, died; the one who superintended the examination of the documents, head of the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites, departed this life suddenly, and soon after Cardinal Sincero's successor, Cardinal Cerreti, died.

So, too, in Mother Seton's case, that zealous pioneer of religious communities in this country had written so many volumes of letters and conferences that it took years to scrutinize them to see that they contained nothing against faith and morals. Fortunately not only have her writings been pronounced to be in accordance with all the Church requires, but other steps have been taken leading up to the formal introduction of her Cause 26 February—a decisive step forward.

Quite often a reason for what may seem overlong delay is the inactivity of those who are interested in a Cause. Many think that little or nothing further is needed once a Cause has been taken up by the Congregation of Rites. Naturally this Congregation needs and wishes to be impressed by the popular belief in the holiness of the Servant of God in question, and it rests with the patrons of a Cause to make this Servant known and to develop a proper private cultus or veneration.

Such a cultus or veneration, if it existed prior to the time of Urban VIII, about 1625, may be sufficient, as in the case of Albertus Magnus, for beatification and canonization. Even since then it is considered a weighty proof of holiness: *Vox populi vox Dei*. Naturally it moves all concerned to be active in a Cause, especially since there are so many

Causes pending in various stages. The last list published in 1831 has close to 600 and the number has increased greatly since then.

Usually a Cause should be instituted within thirty years after the death of the person in question, or reasons must be given for presenting it after that. It was over two hundred years before a petition was sent by the Hierarchy of the United States, in 1884, to the Holy Father, Leo XIII, for the Introduction of the Cause of the Jesuit Martyrs of North America. At that time very few people in this country had any estimate of all that had to be done before His Holiness could grant such a petition and all that still had to be done before they were canonized in 1930.

The experience gained while advancing their Cause was fruitful when preparing the Cause of Tekakwitha. It took twenty years to have their Cause ready for the Congregation of Rites; less than ten for this step in the Cause of Tekakwitha. It next took twenty years to have their Cause formally introduced; only seven for the Cause of Tekakwitha.

It is true that prior to the days of Pius XI, besides the first, the diocesan, or Informative Process, another, the Apostolic Process, was required, and that lengthened considerably the time spent before the Martyrs were canonized. Thanks to Pius XI, Servants of God who died so long back that there can be no eye-witnesses of their time, need now only one Process, the historical inquiry into the documents and other testimony about their virtues and reputation for holiness.

Like his predecessor, Pius XII is intensely interested in evidences of holiness in the Church in North America. The Cause for the beatification and canonization of Tekakwitha has advanced rapidly, and from now on the Causes of Venerable John Neumann and Mother Seton will proceed as rapidly.

(To be continued.)

What will happen when Tekakwitha will have been raised to the honor of our altars may be foreseen by what is already happening in many of the Missions among her own people. Here, for instance, is a picture of a gathering of Indian women every afternoon during a novena made in preparation for April 17, the anniversary of Tekakwitha's death. After prayer to Our Mother of Sorrows, they hear a part of Kateri's Life, sing her hymn and pray for her canonization.

Seldom has the Congregation of Rites, when recommending to the Holy Father the Introduction of a Cause for his sanction, mentioned another whose Cause was already introduced. The Introduction of Mother Seton's Cause has thus been announced: "Elizabeth, the second flower of North America after Kateri Tekakwitha, was born, etc." The aboriginal Kateri and the native Elizabeth are linked together. One Cause helps another.



"Dear Father: I saved this dollar while I was in the hospital, for your Cause of Catherine Tekakwitha. Mother told me all about her. I am four years old and made my First Holy Communion in the hospital. Thanks to Tekakwitha, I am better.—C. V. S."

"I am enclosing herewith a P. O. order for three dollars from three different sources, two from non-Catholics. Please remember their intentions. If the Lord sees fit to grant a special temporal favor soon a generous offering is pledged." —Lansing, Mich.

"I made a promise to Kateri Tekakwitha that I would give to her Cause ten per cent. of the money if I got it last week—so last Sunday I was handed \$45.00."

—Paterson, N. J.

"Check for \$3.00 for the Cause, which I promised for the happy conclusion of a financial matter, also for having me protected from some 'bunko artists' on the same day as the financial matter was settled."

—Pastor, Los Angeles, Cal.

"My brother-in-law had money owing for work he did for over two years and could not collect. As he needed it badly and has a large family, I asked 'Little Kateri' to help him to collect and thanks to her it was all paid to him."

—Glenfield, Pa.

"Recently, I was very much upset over a position. I was not happy or contented with my job. After praying to Tekakwitha and several other Saints, I obtained a new position with which I am very much satisfied."

—Algiers, La.

"I am enclosing an offering to be used for the Cause of Catherine Tekakwitha. She was instrumental in getting our Community five thousand dollars, left by a very worthy priest. I was afraid there might be trouble on account of relatives, so I placed the matter in her hands. There was no difficulty whatever, for which we are all most grateful to her."

—Rochester, N. Y.

". . . For finding a lost diamond earring in a remarkable way."

—Lafayette, La.

"I asked your prayers for a sister-in-law who was in an insane asylum. She has completely recovered and is home about two or three months."

—Sunset, La.

"I prayed to Catherine Tekakwitha for two years, but I finally received the favor of a sale of some property which came just when I needed it most."

—M. C. H.

"Shirley May had already been anointed by the priest, and the doctors had no hope for her, when I received the medal and prayers of the Blessed Katherine. I feel confident that her intercession had much to do with the recovery of Shirley May."

—New Orleans, La.

"An Indian hurt one of his hands, caught cold in the wound, his hand and arm became swollen much, and blood-poison began. During five nights he could not sleep from pain and we decided to send him to the hospital in dog train, sixty miles away and I promised Kateri that I should tell you if this man would recover and not have to go to the hospital. The next morning that man received Communion; the pain ceased and he began to get better, so we had not to send him to the hospital and he recovered quickly."

—Bloodvein, Man., Canada.

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