



The Lily of the Mohawks

Vol. XXV—No. 1

MAY, 1961

A VENERABLE AMERICAN*

On the great bronze doors of St. Patrick's Cathedral is a striking sculpture of a lovely young American girl. If that startles you, let me hasten to add that I mean "lovely" in a quite other sense than that foisted on the national imagination by the glamor photography of the model agencies and the advertising media. Rheingold and Powers would not have touched her, for smallpox had left her badly pockmarked from childhood. But nonetheless this was a lovely girl.

Her name—she was a full-blooded Mohawk Indian—is Kateri Tekakwitha. And just what is Kateri doing on those bronze panels looking across Fifth Avenue at Rockefeller Center?

Only this morning—and it was this that sent me with a real sense of joy to the typewriter—I read in a brief notice from Rome that the second of the two miracles required for her Beatification is now being considered. She has already been declared "Venerable": the Holy See has officially proclaimed "*it has been proved that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, Love of God and neighbor, the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, and the subordinate virtues, of the Venerable Servant of God, Catharine Tekakwitha, were heroic.*" (The key word there is *heroic*: the Church means it literally).

This encourages our hope for her ultimate Canonization, and we ought all of us—if the thought gives you the same thrill it does me—pray that it will soon, under God's

Providence, take place. For if and when she becomes Saint Kateri, we will know we have representing us in heaven the most American saint we could possibly have.

Holiness the Hard Way

Some saints, in God's Providence, get a good deal in the way of "breaks," as far as good Catholic family and surroundings go; others don't. This Indian girl very definitely belongs in the latter class. She got no breaks at all, living in the midst of a pagan tribe. Yet she developed such pure holiness that she was called the "Lily of the Mohawks."

Kateri (the Indian form of the name Catharine, which she took at Baptism) was born in 1656 in Ossernenon, which is now Auriesville, N.Y., on the Mohawk River some thirty-five miles west of Albany. It was in this village only a few years before her birth that martyrdom had come to three of the eight Jesuit missionaries who have been canonized as the North American Martyrs. There can be no question that Kateri's holiness was the first fruit of the blood shed by St. Rene Goupil in 1642, and by St. Jean de Lalande and St. Isaac Jogues in 1646. She grew up, then, among the very savages who had ripped off Jogues' fingernails, bitten off several of his fingers and sawed off his left thumb at the root with a shell . . . this, long before they decided to tomahawk him.

The Strong Grace of God

Through what means did the love of the true God come to her? It is hard to say.

* By Fr. Charles G. McManus, S.J., in THE FOUNDER, Mt. Manresa, Staten Island, March '61.

Her mother was a Christian Algonquin taken captive by the Mohawks, but she died in a smallpox epidemic when Kateri was around four years old. The same epidemic also carried off her father and brother, and she was raised by an uncle extremely hostile to the Christian faith.

When she was about eight, she was paired with a boy of her age, to grow acquainted with him with a view to future marriage. Yet somewhere in these early years she conceived a desire of virginity (mind you, she was not yet a Christian) that no one could shake. Where could this have come from but the strong grace of Christ received in a clear and generous heart? How else could she have preserved her perfect purity, and her perfect reverence for purity, living as she did in one of the "long houses" in which four or five families would be crowded together? We know something of the evil effect of such conditions today in our affluent society which thrusts undesired newcomers into rat-ridden, single-bedroom tenements in ugly neighborhoods. It takes heroism to come uncontaminated out of such surroundings.

In 1667 peace was established between Indians and French, and three years later a mission station was established in her village. We may surmise that at this time she learned the first rudiments of the Catholic faith. At any rate, in 1674 the priest in charge of the mission, Fr. de Lamberville, became aware that in Kateri he had stumbled on a soul with an extraordinary insight in the things of God. He baptized her, ahead of the other natives he was instructing, on Easter Day, 1676. "That day," he said later, "was the most beautiful of my missionary life," indicating that in some way the closeness of God to this girl and the shining power of grace had been made evident to him.

Kateri was now twenty years of age. She had four years to live.

The Flowering

What a four years they were! Fr. de Lamberville drew up a plan of life to guide

her in living for Christ as a lay Catholic, and she followed it with fidelity. This caused redoubled opposition from her pagan relatives and townsfolk. She had to endure continual nagging in her home, ridicule, threats of physical harm and even of death. Finally, on the advice of Fr. de Lamberville, she fled north to a village of Christian Indians on the St. Lawrence established by the Jesuit missionaries as a refuge for converts. This was in the fall of 1677. On Christmas day of that year she received her First Communion, and what this sacramental union with Christ meant to her, already so close to Him through grace and suffering and prayer, we will not easily exaggerate (this was, surely, a saint already made or in the making!) . . . and we might well pray to her that it will mean something of the same to ourselves and our young ones. Three years were left to her on earth. She spent two of these living the ordinary life and doing the daily work of the village, but with such clear union with God in prayer and penance that priests and townspeople already thought of her with affection and reverence as "the saint." She helped those in trouble (Teresa Tegaiguenta, a victor over alcoholism, was her best friend); she formed a little group whom she taught to find closer union with Christ by prayer and penance; she sealed her own dedication to Him by a vow of perpetual virginity.

In the last year of her life she was stricken with an ailment that left her burning with fever and wracked by violent pain. Yet she kept up her daily round of work and prayer, her penances and her night watches. Finally, as her strength ebbed away, she was confined to bed. On Tuesday of Holy Week, 1680, in her twenty-fourth year, she began to sink, and received Viaticum; but when Fr. Cholonec spoke of anointing her, Kateri, apparently knowing the day and hour of her death, told him, "There is no hurry; the time has not come yet."

To her friend, Teresa, she said: "*I am leaving you, Teresa, I am going to die. Keep up your courage. Don't mind the fibres of*

those who have no faith. Listen to the Fathers. Never give up your penances. I will love you in heaven. I will pray for you. I will help you."

The End

The Last Anointing was given her on Wednesday morning, April 17, and when some members of her own special little group in our Lady's Sodality were worried because they wanted to be with her, yet had to go into the forest to gather wood, she told Fr. Cholonec, "Let them go; they will be back in time." And they were. Until three o'clock her condition did not change. Around that time her friends began to arrive, and when they were all present in the lodge, the end came, very quietly. Fr. Cholonec has recorded the scene very movingly

"I saw this marvel with my own eyes. As soon as the last one of her companions was present, she entered into her gentle agony. Speech left her while she was pronouncing the words, 'Jesus, Mary.' More than that. Her face had been disfigured ever since she was four years old, and her infirmities and

penances had made it worse. Yet around quarter after three such a beautiful change came about that I cried out in astonishment. I had the Indians call the Father who was decorating the Repository for Holy Thursday. Everybody came on the run. To me it seemed that at that precise moment she must have entered Heaven, reflecting on her chaste body a small ray of the glory of which her soul had taken possession."

Here was a soul most extraordinarily dear to God, and if we believe at all in the Communion of Saints, to think of her as an intercessor with God ought to give us joy . . . even us, who are men, but mindful, maybe, of how many men in how many centuries have been saved by holy women.

I cannot pretend that this is anywhere near a fitting tribute to this Servant of God; I can only hope that nonetheless it will give you some inkling of what I suggested at the beginning: this pockmarked Kateri, uncontaminated and heroically pure amid the open corruption of her Mohawk village, this was a lovely girl.

Thanksgivings

"Venerable Kateri helped me to have a perfect baby. In my second month of pregnancy I contacted the German measles which is quite dangerous to the unborn child. I prayed to Kateri, and when our little girl was born we named her Mary Catharine."

— Yonkers, N. Y.

"With the help of Kateri I have become the proud mother of my second child. Doctors had told me I would never be able to have children, but three years ago a friend loaned me her Tekakwitha medal and told me to make a novena. I did, and am very happy to say my prayers were answered."

— Church Point, La.

"Through Kateri's intercession I was able to find a long looked for apartment. Enclosed is a donation, and thanks again to little Kateri for her wonderful help."

— Brighton, Mass.

"For quite a long time I had the prayer to Catharine Tekakwitha. I prayed to her for my mother, who also had devotion to her. She had not been to the Sacraments, to my knowledge, for about 30 years. When I appealed to the Lily of the Mohawks my prayers were answered. She made her Confession and received Holy Communion before she died." — Dearborn, Mich.

"I have been praying to the Lily of the Mohawks for several favors — one was for my daughter who entered the Dominican Order, for her to know and understand if God really wanted her for the religious life. This is her third year, and she is very happy. Another was for the sale of some property in which we were almost desperate. In three months it was sold. God must love Tekakwitha to give her the grace to help others."

— Saginaw, Mich.

"Please accept this small offering for Kateri's Cause. I am deeply grateful to her, and firmly believe that I have been cured through her intercession. I was suffering from seizures and taking a great deal of medications which did not seem to help too much, for more than ten years. One day, after a bad spell, I was given a relic and prayer to Kateri and told to say it. I did and also read her life, which gave me great confidence. The very next day I knew I had received an answer to my prayer and a new friend. This was in 1957. During the year, I was gradually released from medications, which I had been told would be necessary the rest of my life. Now, on this 3rd of February 1961, I will have completed two years free of medications and seizures too."

— San Francisco, Calif.

"The eye operation was a complete success and my wife feels well and is most thankful to Kateri Tekakwitha, and to you in sending the relic. Since receiving the relic, we both have daily offered our prayers for the success of the operation, and after the operation our prayers of thanks for the marvelous and successful full recovery. She as well as myself are so happy and thankful as we know that all this was possible only through the powerful intercession of Kateri and also your remembrance in your Masses and prayers. The doctor said it was one of his most successful operations and the quickest and shortest complete recovery. The enclosed offering is only a small way in expressing our thanks. We will continue to pray daily for her Cause, and send future offerings." — St. Petersburg, Fla.

ADDITIONAL FAVORS

Cures	12	Safe Delivery ...	2
Apartments	2	Safe Trips	3
Employment	5	Sale of Property ..	2
Financial Aid ...	2	Successful	
Relief in		Operation	3
Distress	21	Not Specified ...	145

PETITIONS

Cures	152	Safe Trip	4
Apartments	4	Sale of Property ..	7
Conversions	8	Spiritual &	
Employment	31	Temporal	12
Exams	2	Successful	
Financial		Business	3
Aid	32	Successful	
Relief in		Operation	11
Distress	39	Vocations	1
Safe Delivery ...	6	World Peace	6
Not Specified ...	98		

Obituary

Most Rev. Thomas J. McDonnell, Wheeling, W. Va.
 Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. M. Byrne, San Francisco, Calif.
 Rt. Rev. Msgr. John F. Glavin, Rensselaer, N. Y.
 Rev. Edward F. Garesche, S.J., New York, N. Y.
 Rev. Calegero Graziano, Marcus Hook, Pa.
 Rev. C. Justin Hanley, S.J., Buffalo, N. Y.
 Rev. Joseph S. Hogan, S.J., Philadelphia, Pa.
 Rev. John J. Hooper, S.J., Jersey City, N. J.
 Rev. John M. Jacobs, S.J., New York, N. Y.
 Rev. R. Jerome Mullin, S.J., Albuquerque, N. M.
 Rev. William A. Riordan, S.J., New York, N. Y.
 Sister St. Maude, Amsterdam, N. Y.
 Mother Mary Alice, New York, N. Y.
 Mrs. V. M. vda de Enriquez, San Antonio, Texas
 Miss Sarah MacCarthy, Chicago, Ill.
 Mrs. Anna M. Mathers, Morgantown, W. Va.
 Mr. Herbert Milligan, Whitestone, L. I., N. Y.
 Mr. M. G. Waschko, Hazleton, Pa.

TO MAKE TEKAKWITHA KNOWN AND LOVED

MEMBERSHIP

in Tekakwitha League, including quarterly "Lily of the Mohawks", one dollar yearly.

LEAFLETS

Sketch, picture, Novena and prayers, 5c for 2; 25c doz. With silk applied to relic 10c.

Sketch, lithograph picture, Novena and prayers, 5c; 50c doz. With silk applied to relic: 20c.

PICTURE

Small, lithograph with prayer, 5c for 2; 25c doz.; silk applied to relic; 15c ea.

Large, 6 by 8 in., brown leatherette frame, acetate face, 75c.

SHORT LIFE

32 pp. by Fr. Coffey, S. J. with picture and prayer. 15c.

MEDAL

Image and title, special metal 20c; silver 60c; gold; inquire prices.

Reduction on quantity.

TEKAKWITHA LEAGUE

30 WEST 16TH STREET, NEW YORK 11, N. Y.

REV. THOMAS J. COFFEY, S.J., V. Postulator for Her Canonization