

# The Lily of the Mohawks

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## THE CASE FOR VENERABLE KATERI TEKAKWITHA FIRST LADY OF OSSERNENON-AURIESVILLE, NEW YORK

### American Altarstone

These notes have been prepared for the consolation of Kateri's many patient, tried-and-true devotees everywhere; for the information of visitors to Martyrs Shrine at the site of her birthplace, and to bring her story up to date.

The story of Auriesville is the story of three men and a maid. The men, — Isaac Jogues, priest; René Goupil, Brother; and John LaLande, missionary layman, died there for the Faith in 1642 and 1646. Five of their confreres, all priests, died in the Huron territory in Canada shortly thereafter,

and together the eight heroes have been canonized the Jesuit Martyrs of North America, in 1930.

Pope Pius XII, on November 24, 1946 in a live broadcast to America on the three hundredth anniversary of the three martyrdoms at Auriesville called the present Shrine *'Nature's own reliquary, — the verdant hill that slopes up from the quiet, easy-flowing river of the Mohawks'*.

If it is a reliquary of the Martyrs (Goupil's body was buried somewhere in the ravine, — the other two bodies were thrown into the Mohawk, their heads impaled on the north-east palisades) — it is also the cradle-board of the Mohawk-Algonquin maiden who was born there in 1656, ten years after Ossernenon's brave three had gone to their glory.

### First Citizen

She is Auriesville's *First Lady*, and her qualifications for the honors of the altar have been under the scrutiny of the Congregation of Rites at Rome for a long, a too long time, her clients impatiently insist. The late Father Lord, S.J. described her *'lady too long in-waiting'*. Pope Pius XI said *'It is her life that is the miracle'*.

The Servant of God Kateri Tekakwitha was born at Auriesville, Mission of the Trinity (or Martyrs) New York State, 1656, baptized at St. Peter Mission, Fonda nearby, 1676, died at Caughnawaga, Canada, Mission of St. Francis Xavier, 1680, admired by all for her holy life, and the answers to prayer, apparently miraculous, attributed to her intercession.

Soon after Kateri's death, two of her directors, Father Cholonec and Chauchetiere,



FR. WILLIAM R. MESSNER, S.J.  
Director, Martyrs Shrine

of the Society of Jesus, wrote her Life,—Cholonec in three different forms. From that time on, Lives and Eulogies of her have continued to appear. The tradition of remarkable favors attributed to her, beginning with the report of many attested by the distinguished Sulpician Missionary Father Remy, has also continued, and it seems even to grow more widespread with the years.

In the private congregation on new business in the Third Plenary Council, Baltimore, 1884, a petition was adopted to request the Holy See to introduce the Cause for her beatification. It was coupled with that of the Jesuit Martyrs, Isaac Jogues, John de Brebeuf and Companions. Because she was born where St. Isaac died, instructed and baptized near there, Fonda, by a Jesuit missionary, and directed later at Caughnawaga, Canada by the successors of the Martyrs, she has always been regarded as the most precious fruit of their blood.

#### On Her Own

As soon as it became clear that the Martyrs would be beatified (in 1925) preparation of Kateri's Cause was separated from theirs because causes for martyrs and non-martyrs are handled differently. Monsgr. Breslin of North American College in Rome was designated Postulator, and he appointed Father John Wynne, S.J. Vice Postulator here in the states. At present the Roman Postulator is Fr. Charles Miccinelli, S.J., and the Vice Postulators for the United States and Canada are Fr. Thomas J. Coffey, S.J., and Fr. Henri' Bechard, S.J.

Fortunately, with the usual research, the precious documents commemorating the holiness of Kateri and evidence of her intercession became available. The more important ones are autographs of the writers.

After the usual task of transcribing, photostating and translating these documents, one hundred *articles* to prove her case were submitted in Latin, English, French and Italian to the twenty-three Cardinals of the Congregation, and their twenty-eight consultants and aides, also for the members of the tribunals appointed to conduct the Processes, for witnesses, for the hierarchy of this country and Canada, and primarily for the Most Rev. Bishop of Albany at that time, the recently deceased Edmund F. Gibbons,—to satisfy him that there was just reason to begin this Cause.

The Cause was instituted May 22, 1931. As for several reasons, Most Rev. George Gauthier, Bishop of Montreal, could not conduct it in the See of Kateri's death, he cordially authorized Albany to do so, since she lived twenty years and was baptized in the area which is now that Diocese.

Testimony was taken from twenty witnesses in 1931-2. The report of the findings, signed and sealed, was carried to Rome by Monsignor Pace, Rector of the Catholic University.

#### Roman Approval

Rome acted quickly, approving a further examination to show there was no premature devotion, or cultus, in the case, and Bishop Gibbons, in July 1932 visited the grave of Tekakwitha, Caughnawaga, Canada, with great ceremony. The Indians gave great evidence of their joy over the likelihood of the beatification of one whom they style on their great tombstone 'Fairest flower that ever bloomed among the true men' and of whose holiness they have preserved a strong and unbroken tradition. They have insisted on preserving her remains and taking them from one site to another as they changed their dwelling places, and yet retaining their veneration for her first resting place. They made the Bishop a chief of their people.

The task of scrutinizing the documents offered consumed six years, and finally in June 1938, the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites declared that they are complete, genuine and trustworthy, that they established Kateri's reputation for holiness and a solid basis for final judgment that her virtues were heroic.

On May 20, 1939, His Holiness approved Introduction of the Cause of Kateri Tekakwitha, and the scene was set for the discussion of her virtues. At Rome, January 3, 1943, a decree approved by Pope Pius XII declared heroic the virtues of Tekakwitha. Since then several Apostolic Processes have been in session, one from 1942-45, another from 1955-56. The Position papers relating to the Cause have been translated into English and printed by Fordham University Press; two basic biographies in Italian have been published by the Roman Postulator, and several new Lives have been produced here and abroad. The search for miracles continues. The business of the judicial proc-



cases established in the cases of purported cures is simply to take testimony under oath. The judgment then rests with the Holy See.

### Outlay for the Cause

There is a natural curiosity about the expense entailed in a Cause. Tekakwitha's, for example, is an historical Cause, — that is, since there are no living witnesses of the life, virtues, renown for sanctity of one who lived close to three hundred years ago, these must be proved by documents complete, authentic and convincing.

Fortunately these exist, many of them collected and kept in the archives of St. Mary's College, Montreal; others scattered in various places, but available after diligent research, nearly all in French, others still in the *Jesuit Relations*. Expense was entailed when these were painstakingly assembled, translated into English, typed in fifty copies for use in Rome and among the members and witnesses in the Albany tribunal and later Processes.

Next the articles, or points, about 100 in number, on which witnesses were to be examined, had to be translated and printed in four languages for distribution among the Cardinals and consultors of the Congregation of Rites and for the tribunals and witnesses in this country.

Tribunal members generously devoted their time and services for the Cause, but travel and other expenses of witnesses, most of them from distant points, had to be reimbursed. Father Wynne estimated that close to eight thousand dollars was disbursed before the Cause reached Rome. But it was worth while. Members of the Congregation suggested that 'few causes have been better prepared and documented than Kateri's'.

The expenses continue apace, for promotion of the cause, distribution of leaflets, pictures, etc. Summaries of each ecclesiastical step have to be made and printed in several languages. It is a safe estimate that more than twenty thousand dollars is needed in all in the usual conduct of a Cause. It

is the business of the vice-Postulator to provide the necessary funds. It is from generous clients of Kateri that they are forthcoming. It has been our custom to suggest that once a year those who are anxiously awaiting the happy day of Kateri's glorification send an alms for the office expenses of the Tekakwitha League. This can be expedited by using the return envelope sent with this report to our headquarters at Auriesville, N. Y.

### Tekakwitha at the Shrine

Father William R. Messner, S.J. has succeeded, at the end of the 1964 season, to the directorship of Martyrs Shrine, site of the birth of Tekakwitha. It is at Auriesville that one of the principal centers of devotion to Kateri will be when she is beatified. Her statue may be enthroned then on the altar alongside the three who died there. Now there is no public veneration. The prayer for her beatification is recited daily; there are various memorials to her throughout the grounds. The *Kateri Museum* is the memorial of the many members of *Tekakwitha League* who paid the expense of furnishing and refurbishing it in honor of the late Father Wynne. There are plaques, a novel mosaic screen and other memorials to her in the new Dining Hall, and a stained glass window in the new St. Rene Goupil Chapel at the Jesuit cemetery up on the hill. Perhaps some of our readers might wish to memorialize their living or dear ones by contributing to the cost.

### Prayer for the Beatification

O God, Who among the many marvels of Thy grace in the new world, didst cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and the St. Lawrence the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant, we beseech Thee, what we ask, so that this little lover of Jesus and of His Cross may soon be raised to the honors of the altar by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and her faith, through the same Christ, our Lord.

SUBSCRIBERS TO THE "LILY" ARE ASKED TO RENEW  
SUBSCRIPTIONS AND TO OBTAIN NEW MEMBERS.  
\$1.00 PER YEAR



IROQUOIS YOUNG LADIES, MEMBERS OF THE FAMED CAUGHNAWAGA CHOIR,  
VISIT A MEMORIAL OF KATERI, AURIESVILLE'S FIRST LADY.

## WAYS TO MAKE TEKAKWITHA KNOWN AND LOVED

### MEMBERSHIP

in Tekakwitha League, including bulletin "Lily of the Mohawks," one dollar a year. Regular donations for Cause and office expenses needed and welcome.

### LEAFLETS

Sketch, picture, novena and prayer, sepia, 5c for 2; 25c doz. With silk applied to relic 10c each.  
Sketch, litho picture, novena and prayers: 5c, 50c doz. With silk applied to relic 20c each.

### STATUES

Order direct from Adrienne Bouvier, Sculptress, 39 School Street, Brookline, Mass. New 20 in. statue of Tekakwitha in cement for gardens, indoor \$15.00. Other sizes and prices.

### PICTURE

Small, litho with prayer (English, Italian, Polish, French) 5c for 2; 25c doz. Silk applied to relic 15c each.  
Large 6 by 8 in., brown leatherette frame, acetate face, 75c. Postcards in color 5c; 50c doz.

### BOOKS

*Short Life*, 32 pp. by Fr. Coffey, S.J., with picture and prayer, 20c.

*Kateri of the Mohawks*, by Cecilin Buehrle, 200 pp. paperback, 60c pp.

*Il Giglio degli Iroquesi* (Italian), by Dr. Fernando Bea, 62 pp. illustrated, \$1.50.

*Caterina Tekakwitha* (Italian), by Dr. Fernando Bea, 176 pp. illustrated in color \$3.00.

### MEDALS

Image and title, special metal 20c; sterling silver 75c.

Order direct from Kateri Center, Caughnawaga, P.Q., Canada an exquisite woodcarving, 7 in., \$15.00, and for those who want something new and chic, *Kateri* in enamel on a 4 in. square ceramic tile, mushroom color by Daniel Lareau, \$2.25 pp.

## TEKAKWITHA LEAGUE

AURIESVILLE, NEW YORK 12016

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