

Kateri was abused and shunned by her own people.

*Holy Family  
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# Maid of the Mohawks

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**A**URIESVILLE, New York, where crimsoned sand once sank beneath moccasined feet, has become a sacred spot in the United States. Not only has the blood of the martyrs Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and John Lalande made it so, but also because in 1656 a baby girl came to bless the household of a young Indian couple. The girl was Kateri Tekakwitha.

Four years after the birth of this child an epidemic of smallpox broke out through the Indian village, robbing little Kateri of her parents and baby brother. God spared Kateri, but the ravages of the disease weakened her poor, little body. Her clear, dark eyes no longer could discern distinctly the little birds in the air, and her smooth baby skin became scarred.

After the death of her parents, Kateri was taken to live with her aunts and uncle, who had become Chief of the Turtle clan, at the new village of Gandaouage, a few miles away on the bank of the Mohawk River. Here Kateri lived for a few years doing various tasks for her keep with her new family. Though her eyesight had become poor, she was able to carry water from the river to her uncle's lodging and sew together pieces of animal skin that they used for their clothing. Kateri, who was much tidier than the other women of the tribe, always kept her uncle's lodge clean and in order.

In the fall of 1666, Kateri witnessed her first war. Her people had left their village to take abode in the stronger palisaded village of the Bear clan. But DeTracy, Viceroy of

Canada, tired of the Mohawks' dallying with peace treaties, with twelve hundred men marched into the Bear village after burning the Turtle and Wolf villages. The Indians fled into the woods and watched their homes burn to the ground. That winter our little Maid of the Mohawks knew what it feels like to be cold and hungry.

In the spring of 1667, three Blackrobes came to the Mohawks' new village, not yet completed, with Mohawk deputies who had gone to Quebec to conclude peace. Fathers Fremin, Bruyas and Pierron spent three days in Kateri's uncle's lodge before going to visit the Bear and Wolf clan. From these Blackrobes Kateri obtained her first knowledge of Christianity. Though only eleven she was able to distinguish between these men of God and the braves of her tribe. Though it was her first contact with a Blackrobe, it was not her first knowledge of them. She had heard about them and how her people had cruelly tortured some of them. It hurt her to know her people were so cruel to such good, gentle men who had come to them only to help them live better lives.

At this new village, Kateri exercised the same tasks as she did at the previous one. But now that she was growing older her aunts and uncle started to think of a young brave for her. When this was brought to Kateri's attention, she shrank from it. She did not want to marry. All she wanted was to learn more of the Blackrobe's God. The Bear clan had allowed the Blackrobes to stay in their villages, but Kateri's uncle wanted nothing to do with them. This hurt Kateri. Eventually the Bear and Wolf clans had Chapels erected in their villages; shortly after, Kateri's clan got together and erected one in theirs. Fr. Jacques de Lamber-ville was sent to her village, and at her own request he baptized her on Easter morning, 1675.

After Kateri's reception into the Church, her pagan aunts abused her and spread malicious lies about her. The



children of her village stoned her. Nevertheless, the little Maid of the Mohawks remained faithful to her religion.

In 1677, Kateri fled to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier in Canada with a few Christians from that village known as Caughnawaga. Here, she lived with a saintly woman of her own tribe, named Anastasia Tegonhatsihonga. For the remaining three years of her life, the Maid of the Mohawks led an exemplary life of sanctity. Her mortifications were austere. According to Fr. Claude Chauchetière she made an agreement with her friend to chastise each other. They would go into a cabin in the cemetery and with willow shoots thrash each other. This they did for a year until Kateri's friend, realizing Kateri was not well, related it to her confessor.

On Easter morning, five years after her baptism, Kateri was given Extreme Unction. That afternoon she went to join the God she loved to much.

Upon death, Kateri's disfigured face became as beautiful as her soul. People immediately began devotion to her. Today, many pilgrims visit her grave at Caughnawaga, where a monument to her was erected by the Rev. Clarence Walworth, in 1884. Our little Maid of the Mohawks was declared venerable, the first step toward sainthood, in 1943.

The year 1956 marked the 300th anniversary of this little Indian Maiden's birth and the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, whose followers made Kateri a child of God.

Let us turn to this Indian Maiden who, though abused and shunned by her own people, still remained faithful to her religion and to her God. Let us ask her to intercede for our friends who have wandered from their faith; let us ask her to intercede for our friends who have wandered from the path of purity, honesty and fidelity; let us ask her to intercede for us, and if it be God's will, our prayers will not only be heard, but granted.

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