50¢

IMMACULATA

JUNE-JULY 1972

ed up with applications of butter helping the healing. She noticed too, as did other people, that with all her close detailed work she did not need eye glasses. It seemed her eyes were made even keener by her work.

Doing such a large piece required many and special kinds of beads. She found certain color beads difficult to get. Once she took a bus to New York City. Only she knew the exact type of bead needed. I wonder what the clerks must have thought when she asked for several thousand beads. As soon as she secured them, off she went on the bus back to Petoskey, Michigan.

Beads are expensive, especially those used for this type of huge art work. Mary went on the STRIKE IT RICH PROGRAM. Many people asked for money, but not Mary. Her request was simply . . . "beads." Through this special program she received barrels of beads of every type and size. You can see some of these barrels if you visit her.

There was much rejoicing when THE LAST SUPPER was finished. Neighbors, relatives and strangers came from miles to see it. What a special day that was! The family speaks of it with special fondness.

Mary enjoys telling the story of her masterpiece, which she does most dramatically, saying it should be on exhibit because it is Indian culture. "Several art galleries in New York City want to put it on exhibit, but it will not go unless I'm allowed to go with it." She knows that if it is not properly handled it might be damaged.

Once she was offered over a million dollars for it. She thought it over carefully, also how her skin condition changed and her eyes became better.

"No, I can't part with it! It is part of me!" Is there any artist that doesn't feel the same way? After they have spent time, energy and love on a piece of art it is part of them . . . part of their very life. Mary could use the money. But her wants are simple, which is the way she prefers to live. Her hope is that maybe someday an art gallery of renown will ask to have it on the premises and allow her family to be with it! To all of us it seems appropriate since this is the special "era" of the American Indian. The De Guvara family invites all those in the area, including tourists to visit and see this amazing work of art, an Indian masterpiece, the beaded LAST SUPPER.

Their address: 1212 Curtis Ave., East Bayview, Petoskey, Mich.

Kateri: Lily

COWBOY-AND-INDIAN movies and TV programs generally depict the cowboys as the "good guys" and the Indians as the "bad guys" to be vanquished. And so we rarely stop to think that this portrayal is fictional and that in reality there have been countless Indians who were—and are—very fine people.

One of the most illustrious of our American Indians was not an outstanding Chief nor a brave warrior but, rather, a little Indian maiden, Tekakwitha, a member of the Mohawk tribe living in upper New York state.

Tekakwitha was born in 1656 at Ossernenon near Auriesville, New York where St. Isaac Jogues and Companions were martyred. Her father, a pagan, was one of the Chiefs of the Mohawks. Her mother, a Christian, was a member of the Algonquin tribe. Shortly after the birth of her brother, Tekakwitha's family died, victims of a smallpox epidemic. Though the little girl, not quite four years old, recovered her health remained frail and her face was terribly pock-marked. Tekakwitha was then raised by her uncle, Iowerano, who was also a pagan Chief strongly opposed to the missionaries and to Christianity.

When Tekakwitha was eighteen missionaries again came to her village and the surrounding area. Since everything was open in an Indian village, the priests had to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass and to pray publicly. Would-be converts assembled around them in prayer. At dawn the young Indian princess hurried to attend Mass and to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She came back during the day to hear instructions and then went back in the evening for prayers and Benediction.

On Easter Sunday, 1676, Tekakwith was baptized at the village church in Fonda, New York and was given the name of Kateri, the Iroquois name for Catherine. However, since the Chief and many of her relatives were not Christians and since they resented the time that she spent in prayer, her refusal to work on Sundays, and her absence from their pagan celebrations, Kateri was persecuted by some of her own people. She further angered them by refusing to marry. In fact, she was the first of her people to make a vow of virginity, this on the feast of the Annunciation, 1679.

After enduring continued cruelties and hardships, Kateri finally managed to escape to La Prairie, Canada. It was a long and difficult journey and her health, constantly beset with eye trouble, headaches, fever and a stomach ailment, worsened rapidly. She died in 1680, a very holy, peaceful death in the presence of a missionary and two faithful friends. Immediately, her appearance changed from a suffering, pock-marked countenance to a radiant, petal-smooth, beautiful face—an extraordinary fact recorded in the annals of the missionary as witnessed by himself, those present, and those who attended her wake.

Scarcely a year after her death there began a series of miraculous favors, especially cures, which were attributed to her intercession. In fact, so numerous and so remarkable were these blessings, and so highly was Kateri regarded, that the missionaries quickly established the Tekakwitha League* to

*The league, still in operation, is now headquartered at 12 Central Park Plaza, Buffalo, New York 14214. Its purpose is to spread the story of Kateri by distributing holy cards and pertinent literature in parish organizations and schools; and to pray for her beatification—she was declared Venerable in a Decree issued by Pope Pius XII on January 3, 1943.

of the Mohawks

cherish her memory, to venerate her, to imitate her virtues, and to invoke her intercession.

Through the efforts of the league and various outstanding devotees of Kateri, attraction to the little Indian princess continues to grow. During the summer months special Kateri week-

By Clementine Lenta

ends of prayer are held at the Martyr's Shrine at Auriesville which also includes a shrine honoring the Lily of the Mohawks. There is also a Kateri Museum which houses pieces of Indian history pertinent to her life.

A highlight of the Kateri weekends is the dramatization of the play, *Maid of the Mohawks,* which is a presentation of Mary Productions. The play, authored by Mary Eunice Spagnola and directed by her husband, Joseph,* is authentically written from information contained in the Positio which is a collection of original documents of the historical section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the introduction of the cause for the beatification of Kateri.

During the fall to spring months the Spagnolas present *Maid of the Mohawks* and other of their original plays at various church and school functions in the vicinity of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania; and during the summer months they go "on tour"; last summer from New York to the Indian Missions in the Dakotas. (See article in April, 1970 IMMACULATA).

One of the remarkable aspects of the spread of devotion to Kateri is the widespread interest of teens and young adults. They seem to have a special affinity to her and easily identify with her. She was young as they are; her world, as theirs, was caught in local hostilities and in a seemingly endless war between tribes and against the French-Canadians; there was widespread poverty, hunger and injustice in her environment, just as in theirs; the younger Indians were often involved with problems of the Indian "establishment," stemming from the generation-gap caused by divergent ideas between their elders and themselves; and the general life of the wicked elements of both the Indian and the White settlers abounded in the same terrible evils of pride, hatred, lust, cruelty and violence, as experienced in life today.

Though Kateri's surroundings were shocking, still she rose above them and above self-interest. This is her special attraction for the young. She did not cop-out from the scene and turn to drink and drugs. She did not feel that the world-owed-her-a-living and that she was entitled to her own way and to a round of pleasure, admiration and affection.

Rather, Kateri placed her hopes and trust in God. Prayer and sacrifice became the center of her life, the weapons which she used to withstand the insults and persecutions hurled at her because of her virginity, because she would not go along with the crowd in drinking celebrations and all-night tribal dances, and because she preferred attending the sick and the aged rather than joining in the fun and the challenge of the hunts.

Kateri's devotion to Our Blessed Mother was remarkably apparent. The Rosary and the Litany were her favorite prayers and she often walked or canoed the ten miles from her village of Caughnawaga to Tionontoguen where Our Lady was venerated under the title, *Virgin Most Faithful.*

Statue of Kateri Tekakwitha at the Martyrs' Shrine, Auriesville, New York, the birthplace of Kateri.

Mary watched over her little Indian princess for Kateri was "rescued" from many dangers during life and when she died, it was a beautiful happening, in the presence of a missionary priest and amid the prayers to the Blessed Virgin offered by a few close friends.

And so, today Kateri Tekakwitha is honored as an Indian princess, a heroic convert, a true child of Mary, the Lily of the Mohawks who dared to be different. She is a young Venerable, hopefully, one day to be acclaimed the first American Indian Saint.

A portion of this article originally appeared in TWIN CIRCLE.

*For bookings write: Mary Productions Guild, Belford, NJ 07718

L171