

After all these catastrophic things had happened, Jesus Christ would appear before the assembled people of all the world and of all time. And he would pass judgment on them in accord with the kind of life they had led during their years on earth. Those who had led a good life would be taken to heaven. Those who had led a wicked life would be sentenced to hell.

God could cause all this to happen, and in just the way St. Matthew's Gospel describes it, by an act of his will, by a gesture of his hand. He could do it by allowing the natural forces lying hidden in the earth to run wild, such as gigantic earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes, and cyclones, shaking loose the fires and explosives, that from the beginning were imprisoned, and destroying all they touched.

Or he could allow man to do the destroying himself. It would be ironic if man, who was given the power of joining hands with God in creating that which would never die through the gift of procreation, would one day use this same power of mind and body to destroy entirely that which he made and the earth where his children lived. Man could conceivably accomplish this act of total destruction by unleashing the full frenzy of the hydrogen or the cobalt bomb. Perhaps God will allow this to happen as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Man, the co-creator, will become the final destroyer of himself and of his world.

And so, the answer to the opening question: Is the planet earth someday coming to an end? Yes. As to when and how, God reserves that secret to himself. Ω

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Kateri Tekakwitha,

A NEW STAR FOR THE NEW WORLD



Mary-Eunice

THE word "Amerind" was a word suggested in 1899 by an American lexicographer as a word to be used when talking about the race of man that lived in the New World before the arrival of the Europeans. This name is used from time to time in scientific and lay literature. Well, it is generally known that the Amerinds have long been neglected in this great country. Yet, we all know the Indians are the rightful native residents. It seems to be only now that the people are awakening to the many injustices of the Indian. In the last several years we have heard more of their great leaders and people, such as Sequoya, born in 1770 in a small Cherokee village, who, as a child, spent hours listening to the sounds of the animals and drawing pictures. Eventually, this Amerind was responsible for developing an alphabet so that his people could converse through reading and writing. It was because

of his findings that an entire Amerind nation became literate. On the North Carolina and Tennessee border a mountain was named after him, in Oklahoma an entire county, in the halls of our nation's Capitol a statue of Sequoya stands, and in California the giant redwood, highest and greatest tree in the Western Hemisphere, bears his name. There was Samoset, a Pemaquid chief, who made his presence felt when the pilgrims arrived at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on December 21, 1620. Samoset surprised them by speaking English. The chief had learned English when he was kidnapped and taken to England in 1605, and, because he had been treated kindly by the English, he was friendly with the pilgrims. Every schoolchild knows the story of the daughter of the leader Powhatan, named Pocahontas, and how she saved the life of Captain John Smith. There was also Hiawatha,

the legendary founder of the Iroquois and, according to tradition, a great reformer and statesman.

Yet, of all these known people, world-wide attention is now being given to a simple maiden destined to become known not only to her race but throughout the world. She was not, in the worldly sense, beautiful, because her face was scarred with pockmarks from an early illness and her eyes were weak, which caused her to squint in the daylight. She only found comfort in the dark of the long house or the shaded forest. Her name was Kateri Tekakwitha, and her life was an example of love and devotion for the Creator. She gave up all for him, including the love of her relatives and friends. A controversy over her would continue not only then but in this day and age as well. Indeed, Tekakwitha became known as an apostle of prayer, purity, and patience.

Kateri was born in 1656 at Ossernenon, now Auriesville, New York, of an Algonquin-Christian mother; her father was a Mohawk pagan chief. When she was four an epidemic of smallpox came upon the village, causing the deaths of her parents and brother. The disease left Tekakwitha's face scarred, her vision almost destroyed. It was at this time that Anastasia, a friend of her mother, cared for the child until her uncle, chief of the Mohawks, claimed her as his daughter. The maiden was brought up as a princess, but even a princess had many duties to perform—such as working in the cornfield, sewing, mending, and cooking. Tekakwitha did so willingly. It is felt that the name, Tekakwitha, was given to her

because she was constantly, due to her poor eyesight, stumbling over objects. It meant, "putting things in order." Later she was to put her soul in order.

Tekakwitha becomes a Catholic

Anastasia, being Christian, for a long while took the place of her mother, telling her stories of the Christian God. When the Mohawks signed a treaty with the French which allowed the Jesuit missionaries, called blackrobes by the Indians, to come on their land, Tekakwitha, being a princess, served them in the long house and listened to their stories of faith. The girl felt that she had to know more about the God of the white man, but, about this time, her relatives desired her to marry, because a young brave in the family would make work much easier for all of them. Kateri continually refused, wishing to seek out the spiritual gift of doing all for the Great Spirit. They tried arranging a courtship romance for her that would lead to marriage. When this became clear to the princess, she refused to go along with their plans. This did not please them, and they felt that they had lost face. Indeed, they were disgusted with her ideas and felt it wrong for a young girl not to marry. It was with great sorrow that Tekakwitha said good-by to the one friend that did understand, Anastasia, who decided that it would be safer to go to the land of the "praying Indian" in Canada. This was a community for the Amerinds who had the same Christian religious ideals.

The young princess decided that she must seek out the blackrobe,

Father de Lamberville, at St. Peter's Mission Church not too far from the village called Castle of Caughnawaga (now known as Fonda, New York). The priest warned her that to be a Christian was difficult; she would have to carry her cross, particularly among her own people who did not understand the ways of the Christian.

Tekakwitha studied and prepared to receive our Lord. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676, and given the name of Kateri. She suffered so much at the hands of her own people that Father de Lamberville, to save her life, helped her escape to Sault St. Louis, Canada, near Montreal. At dawn one November morning, the young girl slipped away with an Oneida chief and a small group going to the land of the "praying Indian."

It took many travel days in the canoe before they arrived, but there was a joyful reunion with Anastasia and other Christians. Kateri handed Father Peter Cholonec, the missionary priest, the letter that she was instructed to give him by Father de Lamberville. It read: "Will you kindly undertake to direct Kateri Tekakwitha who is going to live at the Sault? You will soon know what a treasure we have sent you."

Amerind seeking sanctity

Kateri was grateful, since now she could worship God without fear of persecution. She planned to devote her entire life to Ra-Wen-Ni-Io (God)—so the youthful Amerind attended Mass everyday, did penance, and her piety grew. The villagers noticed Tekakwitha's good example of caring for the elderly, the sick, and teaching the children.



The priest warned her that to be a Christian was difficult; she would have to carry her cross . . .

Her devotion to God was so great that her own people practically worshipped the ground she walked upon. After her death they would call Kateri the lily of the Mohawks.

Her life in the Mohawk Valley had been difficult, and present austerities were too much for the Indian maiden. She knew that death would come soon, since she suffered with headache and illness of the stomach. It was during Holy Week, April 17, 1680, at the age of 24, that she called her people to her bedside and told them to remain faithful to the sacraments, so that she might remember them in heaven. Her last words were: "My Jesus, I love you." Within moments of her death, her confessor, Father Peter Cholonec, testified that Kateri's face was transfigured and all traces of pockmarks had vanished.

Her contemporary, Father Cholonec, S.J., in 1696 wrote the following: "It was Easter, 1678, when Kateri, who was still very young and had only been at the Sault for approximately seven or eight months, was admitted to the small number of people of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, a number of chosen souls. A neo-

phyte, she was admitted to this elite group that accepted others of advanced age only after several years of probation.

"But, as we have already pointed out, her virtue placed her above the rule for the ordinary people of the village, and they, moreover, far from being jealous, generally approved of her election. The members of the Holy Family Confraternity, especially, showed their joy, looking upon Kateri as capable of sustaining this saintly society by her good example. She was the only one who considered herself unworthy, such humble ideas did she have of herself, but the more she thought of her unworthiness the more she thought it a duty to work for perfection, so as not to lower the fervor of the confraternity to which she gave a new renown by her membership. What is certain is that the memory of her alone was sufficient to inspire for a long time, and continues to inspire, the fervor of many others."

On September 26, 1715, Father Cholonec wrote a long Latin letter to the Very Reverend Father Michael-Angelo Tamburini, general of the Society of Jesus. In this document, he methodically set forth the virtues of the lily of the Mohawks as if he had been the postulator of her cause of canonization.

Father Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, S.J., in 1744 in his *History and Description of New France*, told his readers that this young Mohawk woman was then "...universally considered as the protectress of Canada and as the 'new star of the New World.'"

In the last century, the Second

and Third Councils of Baltimore, Maryland, solicited the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha along with that of the Jesuit martyrs. Bishops Antoine and Dominique Racine, both born at Lorette, Quebec, also begged Leo XIII to canonize the same holy fellowship. About 28 Amerind tribes requested the same favor for this child of the forest. The 20th century continued to campaign in favor of the canonization. In 1943 Pope Pius XII declared Kateri Tekakwitha "Venerable."

Popularity grows

Stories about this maiden have been published in many places in the world. An Austrian biography, *Das Mädchen der Mohawks*, received wide acclaim. A Protestant writer called attention to her in the United States, and, because of it, her story reached far-off Samoa. Most recently, Reverend Francis Xavier Weiser, S.J., of Boston College, wrote *Kateri Tekakwitha*. Reverend Henri Bechard, S.J., vice-postulator of her cause in Canada, publishes a quarterly magazine, *Kateri*, that has thousands of subscribers. Every week he receives dozens of letters from people interested in this Indian maiden. *Kateri* may be obtained from the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, Caughnawaga, Quebec, Canada, where her remains lie in a special crypt.

Reverend Joseph S. McBride, S.J., vice-postulator of her cause in the United States, publishes *Lily of the Mohawks* and lectures throughout the country. He has traveled to countless schools, societies, and shrines telling the story of Kateri and is partly responsible for a peti-

tion signed by eight bishops in the state of New York, requesting the beatification of Venerable Tekakwitha in 1976. This honor would coincide with the 200th anniversary of the founding of our country and the 300th anniversary of Kateri's Baptism — the birth of the American nation and the spiritual birth of an Amerind-Christian. In reference to this, Father McBride received a copy of a letter that read, "His Holiness is pleased that the bishops would wish to express their judgment concerning the possible beatification of this daughter of North American soil. The petition has been referred to the sacred congregation for the cause of saints for study. Signed, J. Cardinal Villot."



The author is well-known for her dramatic monologue presentations, including one on Kateri Tekakwitha. She and her husband, Joe, conduct "Mary Productions" at Belford, New Jersey.

Fr. Bechard

Not too long ago, Father Bechard told, in *Kateri*, of an elderly Huron Indian who wrote and complained that the whites had so neglected the Indian that they were doing very little about the cause of Kateri. She pointed out that in North and South America there are about 30 million Indians. This race has never been honored with a single, pure-blooded, canonized saint, although many candidates are worthy of the altars. (The only full-blooded, Mohawk Indian, Jesuit priest in the world, Father Michael Jacobs, S.J., is a descendant of Kateri's family.)

Father McBride, an adopted chief of the St. Regis Mohawks, Hogsburg, New York, says: "Why not all join in one great effort to spread the knowledge of this child of God? If you are interested, write: 6969 Strickler Road, Clarence Center, New York, for a copy of the *Lily of the Mohawks* and information about some rare favors obtained by invoking her aid. I am sure that those who venerate the lily of the Mohawks have friends and acquaintances who would consider it a blessing to know of this native-born apostle of prayer."

Father Bechard, Father Jacobs, Father McBride, and all their assistants hope those interested in the Tekakwitha cause pray that this native-born soul can take her rightful place on the altar. The Indians call her, "fairest flower that ever bloomed among red men." She has been hailed as the "glory of the Indian race." It is hoped that, in this day and age of stress and racial problems, she will also be known as the glory of the universal Church.

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