

**THE SHRINE  
OF THE  
HOLY HOUSE**

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# THE HOLY HOUSE OF NAZARETH AND VENERABLE KATERI TEKAKWITHA

By Mary-Eunice of Mary Productions



Kateri Tekakwitha in the American Chapel of our Basilica

Saint John Neumann and Saint Elizabeth Seton are two of the religious among many that helped to spread the faith in the United States. If you visit the famous St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, you will note one of the large entrance door has a bronze sculpture of Kateri Tekakwitha. It is hoped that this Mohawk Indian maiden will soon take another step toward sainthood.

Now if you also visit the House of Nazareth, Loreto, Italy, you will see in the American Chapel a stained-glass window of the Chapel of the Assumption... commissioned by the Universal Congregation of the Holy House... One of the pictures is that of Venerable Tekakwitha who was born in Ossernenon (now Auriesville, N.Y.) in 1656.

The Archbishop Aurelio Sabattani, Pontifical Delegate to the Holy House

of Loreto said: «*all the people of the world belong to the Shrine of the Holy House. In this house, the virgin Mary lived with Jesus and Joseph in the most perfect love the world has ever known. It is a tower of light where all the families may take refuge and be comforted.*»

Kateri Tekakwitha also had a great love for the Holy House of Nazareth. Yet we wonder how that is possible since she was away from civilization as we know it... being born in the Mohawk Valley...

Perhaps this bit of information will explain it. Kateri's mother was a Christian... but her father was a pagan. When she was four years of age a terrible disease spread throughout the valley... Her mother, father and brother died of it. She was left with a scarred face and very weak eyes that brought her much pain throughout



her entire life. A friend of her mother's by the name of Anastasia told her about the Christian God. Another time some Jesuit Missionaries came to their village and she served them. She listened as they talked about the Christian God. When she was older she went to St. Peter's Mission to find out more about Him. What she heard made her desire to become a Christian. She was baptised on Easter Sunday in 1680 in what is now known as Fonda, N. Y. She was given the name of Kateri which meant purity.

Her family did not like that she had turned from their ways and threatened to kill her... so with the help of two Indian guides she was able to make her way to Canada... to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier. She received her First Holy Communion on Christmas Day and from that day on lived a life of prayer and sacrifice. She also took a vow of virginity which was unheard of by many at that time... especially among her people». She was a good example to many Indians. She helped the elderly and the sick and taught the children of the village. She never shirked penance knowing that it was this that would bring her closer to God.

Yet how did she know about Loreto? Well, next to the Holy Sepulchre and St. Peter's in Rome... there is not in Christendom a more famous place than that of the Holy House of Nazareth. It was venerated by the Christians even in the lifetime of the apostles... and St. Helen enclosed it in a temple which received the name of Mary. Many known and unknown saints have made pilgrimage to it. When the missionaries came to the Americas... Our Lady was truly their

Patron... so many shrines... churches... missions... were named in honor of Our Lady of Loreto. Naturally the story of the Holy House was told and retold... and especially to the native Americans.

Mother Mary of the Incarnation, foundress of the Ursuline Convent in Quebec in 1639... taught all Canadian girls of all ranks to love Jesus and Mary and St. Joseph.

Montreal became known as Mary's City... When the Iroquois ravaged the frontiers of the French settlement... Montreal organized the *Militia of the Holy Family*... *Jesus... Mary and Joseph*. Mission grew and the Jesuits established missions of the Immaculate Conception... and finally a church was built in exact imitation of the Santa Casa at Loreto, Italy.

It became a holy place to the Indians. The Hurons grew in holiness. Then Fr. Peter Mary Joseph Chaumonot in 1674... not far from Quebec built another sanctuary of Mary exactly like the Holy House.

When Kateri was safe in new France (Canada) it is mentioned by her that she met some Religious Sisters... and she too longed to live the life of a Sister... even to have Indian Sisters at the mission. However, the Priest discouraged her at that time and instead she was allowed to join a very zealous group called the Holy Family Association.

When she had received First Holy Communion on Christmas Day... they said she spent hours before the little crib... She knew Mary was her spiritual Mother... She was always first to come to church... and last to leave it. That was a holy place to her... If she had ever been taken to the actual home of Our Lady in Lore-



to... surely she would have died of happiness.

She did many severe penances... and her health declined, finally she had to keep to her cabin.. and finally to her bed. Tekakwitha was dying and all her friends knew it. It was Holy Week... in 1680 (in Caughnawaga, Canada)... She was given the Last Rites... but before her death she gave a message to her best friend, Marie Therese Tegaiguenta, which was meant for others also. It was this: *«I am about to die... always remember what we have done together since we knew each other. If you change I will accuse you before the tribunal of God. Take courage, despise the discourse of those who have no faith, listen only to the priests. If you cannot serve God here... Go to the loreta mission. Never give up mortification. I will love you in heaven. I will pray for you. I will assist you»*. Shortly after she went to eternity. Those near her at that time were surprised to see scars on her face go away... and there was a beautiful smile on her lips. Even in her last moments she had mentioned the name of the Loreta Mission... She felt that much



Mary-Eunice as Ven. Kateri Tekakwitha

holiness was there perhaps because it was named in honor of the Holy House, in Loreto, Italy.

It was on January 3rd, 1943, that the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII had her declared Venerable and her story traveled quickly... and though she never did visit the Holy House at Loreto... surely her heart was there!

*For information on her cause:*

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