



## KATERI

## TEKAKWITHA

**W**ORD has come from the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome recently carrying good news for the Catholics of America, word that preparatory work on the beatification of the American Indian girl, Kateri Tekakwitha, may be completed within the year.

Kateri was born in 1656 in a place made significant some ten years earlier by the martyrdom of St. Isaac Jogues, Jesuit priest beheaded by the same Mohawk tribe into which Kateri was born. Sts. Rene Goupil and John Lelande, Jesuit brothers who worked with Father Jogues, were martyred here also.

Today the Shrine to these martyrs and the Jesuit Tertianship

house in Auriesville, New York, are not far from the birthplace of the "Lily of the Mohawks." The Kateri Tekakwitha Museum and Memorial is at the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs in Auriesville.

Although her mother was a Christian Algonquin, Kateri had little early contact with the Faith, since her parents both died when she was only four years old, and she was adopted by her uncle, a pagan Mohawk. Seven years later, during a visit to her uncle's lodge by three French missionaries, Tekakwitha accepted Christianity. She was baptized at the age of 18 by the Jesuit missionary, Father Jacques de Lamberville, taking for her Christian name the Mohawk

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equivalent of Catherine.

When she first accepted Christianity, Kateri determined to lead the life of a virgin, bringing on herself the bad feeling of members of her tribe, who tried to force her into marriage. Now, having allowed herself to be baptized, she became an outcast among her own people; and she was even threatened with death unless she do homage to the pagan gods of the Indians. Life quickly became so miserable that she fled across the St. Lawrence River to the Christian Iroquois settlement of Caughna-

waga. In 1676 she asked for and received permission to take a vow of virginity. Kateri died the following year, probably exhausted from the severe penances which she imposed upon herself. Her last words were: "Jesus! Mary!"

Almost immediately, she became a symbol of sincere conversion to the other Indians at the settlement, and pilgrimages were made to her grave with many miraculous cures resulting. A local priest claimed that every sick person in his parish was cured by a mixture of water and a little earth from her grave.

**The interior of the Shrine of the North American Martyrs at Auriesville, New York, as pilgrims attend mass.**

