

## SHAWNA LEE LEDOUX

Shawna Lee, while a child in her Mother's womb, was twice condemned to die by abortion at the General Hospital in Brandon, Manitoba. Her Mother, Roxanne, a young native girl, missed the first appointment deliberately; and the night before the second appointment she took an overdose saying, "If my baby must die, I must die." My sister, who had taught Roxanne her catechism, asked my wife Berenice and myself to visit her at the hospital. While the surgeon was preparing for the abortion, Roxanne accepted Berenice's invitation to come home with us. The surgeon was furious and told Roxanne's Mother that he could have her committed to a mental hospital. Roxanne stayed with us about a month until all danger to her baby had passed.

Shawna Lee was born with her insides so mixed up that she was baptized by the non-Catholic chaplain at the hospital and rushed to Winnipeg. She survived and Roxanne insisted that her baby should be received into the Catholic Church. Berenice and I were the proud Godparents when Shawna Lee, along with a number of other babies, was officially received into the Catholic Church. I wrote to Cardinal Falliff, Archbishop of Winnipeg, stating my belief that a special child was received into the Church.

Two years ago, I was informed by the Legion of Mary, that Shawna Lee was a victim of Cystic Fibrosis and was now living in Calgary, Alberta. They were concerned that Shawna Lee had not made her first communion. I wrote to the Bishop of Calgary giving him Shawna's phone number, ( I did not have her address ) and asked him to contact her. Later, I placed Shawna (as far as I was able) under the protection of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha and Father Henri Bechard, Vice Postulator of the Kateri Center, offered a mass for her.

I had not seen Shawna Lee since her baptism until I visited her on March 25, 1988. The previous day, I had made an appointment with Roxanne to visit Shawna Lee at her home the next day at 2:00 P. M. I made an appointment to see her Pastor at 4:00 p. m. Peter Sharkey, my brother-in-law, and I

kept the appointment at 2:00 P. M. Roxanne, a beautiful mother of three children, (Shawna Lee and two younger boys) gave us this account of Shawna Lee. She was now 11 years old, she had made her first communion and had been confirmed two years ago, (thanks to the Bishop of Calgary). The Cystic Fibrosis group had paid for a visit to Disneyland for Shawna and her family last year. Shawna had been taken to the hospital the night before our visit. She had spent 159 days in the hospital during the last year. She had 24 hour care while at home with Roxanne taking an 8 hour shift. Roxanne explained that the disease was all on the inside and only 30% of her organs affected were living. Roxanne, Peter and I then visited her at the hospital.

Never have I seen such a wonderful child! She is a true sister of Blessed Kateri! She was bright, cheerful, alive and holy. I had no gift for her so I gave her my rosary. Shawna Lee said, "you say the 'Hail Mary's' on the small beads and the 'Our Father' on the large beads". I knew that Roxanne had taught her to pray. Her other toys were forgotten as she held the rosary. Her Mother, as she rubbed her back, asked "Where does it hurt?" Shawna said, "all over". I asked, "How can it hurt all over when you are so happy?" Then I followed her gaze to the crucifix on the rosary which she held in the palm of her hand, and I think I understood.

Enroute to Corpus Christi Church, the parish where Roxanne now lived, she told us that she had recently completed a special retreat at the Franciscan Monastery. The retreat Priest had advised her to continue as she was doing, one day at a time, and God would send her His Priest at the right time. Roxanne displayed the deep-seated faith of our native people. She prayed that God's will would be done, not her's, for she loved Shawna Lee so much. She said that Shawna Lee had been a great influence in reconciling her family. What a blessing a handicapped child can be!

Roxanne was accepted into the parish. Rev. Fr. Dennis McDonald, the Pastor, spoke to Roxanne alone for some time. Arrangements were made for Shawna Lee to receive the Sacrament of the Sick, and the Parish would bring her communion once a week when she was home. When Roxanne and Father

McDonald had completed their visit, I asked Roxanne, "Is this the Priest that was promised you?" She answered, "Yes."

The two boys were home from school and waiting for their Mother when we returned. Their joy and love for her was so open and clear that I then realized that we had met two special children of God - Shawna Lee and her Mother Roxanne. God works in strange ways his wonders to perform, and as Roxanne said, "The story is not over yet".

Thanks to Blessed Kateri,

Gerard O'Sullivan