

Portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha (1696), by Father Claude Chauchetière

He painted a large portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha, one year after her death and to accomplish what he had been inspired for his consolation and of the others. This would be in April 1681. And to facilitate the explanation of this great painting, which he made a small book that all the actions of Kateri Tekakwitha are painted. Undoubtedly, he painted this portrait with sepia ink.¹ Because he had painted in 1685, or later with sepia ink the images from his narrative in 1685 of the narration of the Sault.

He had written that the 1681 portrait was still in the chapel in 1695. He had done a copy of the 1681 portrait with oil paints for more a lasting portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha, and is presently at the Mission of Saint Francis Xavier in Kahnawake. Thus, the earliest he had painted the copy would be 1696 and before he would leave the Mission to reside in Québec. In 1695, he wrote the life of Kateri Tekakwitha. In August 1695, he had written in a letter to his brother Jean Chauchetière that he wrote her life in three parts.² Father Pierre Cholenec completed the second and third parts when he completed writing his recount of her life in 1696. Father Pierre Rémy sent Father Cholenec a signed list of testimonials dated March 24, 1696. These were testimonials of cures attributed to Kateri Tekakwitha in his parish. Surely, Father Chauchetière had seen the recount of her life by Father Cholenec when it was completed after March 1696. Father Chauchetière would soon after leave the Mission to reside in Québec. Although we have no written account when he arrived in Québec. Father Chauchetière left the Mission at the earliest in 1696. He died at the age of sixty-four on Holy Wednesday, April 7, 1709.

Father Claude Chauchetière had painted this portrait with many symbols depicting her and her life.

The location of the chapel was depicted on the portrait. The shoreline of the river and with the painted church had accentuated the location of the Mission at the Sault until 1689.³

The chapel was pronounced by the painting of a larger church.

He has painted many red lilies on Kateri Tekakwitha's white vest and they represent her virginity and purity. Then and before the 17th century that lilies were drawn on the Our Lady's robe to symbolize Her virginity and purity.

The canoe represents her voyage to the Mission and those who came with her, and the way she had arrived at the Mission. In the canoe there are four persons, the Native from the Huron Mission of Lorette of Québec with the brother-in-law of Kateri, and both are in front and facing Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri Tekakwitha is painted in red, representing the red blanket she had at the time she came from the land of the Mohawks. The canoe there was only places for three persons as written by Father Chauchetière, but he also painted the divine Providence behind her. He was present behind her, because He had guided Kateri Tekakwitha to the Mission as was said repeatedly by Father Chauchetière.

Kateri Tekakwitha's vest is white representing her purity, would it be the vest her companion gave her before her death? She had a belt around her waist that we slightly see and noticed from the side contour of her vest.

Her hair is straight and parted as Father Chauchetière wrote of her appearance. Her eyes, eyelids, prominent right high cheek and broad face pronounces her Native features. Also, her round face seems to be a slight characteristic of Algonquin character, perhaps she had taken after

¹ Sepia ink, a reddish brown pigment prepared from the inky secretions of cuttlefish.

² Father Claude Chauchetière had written to his brother in a letter the life that he had written of Kateri Tekakwitha was in three parts. The first part had three books. The first book had twelve chapters and was her life before her baptism, the second book was her life she led at the Mission and the third book the particularities of her death. The second part had several revelations and other marvels. The third part was the bodily cures attributed to her by year from 1681 to 1695.

³ The river was the Great River or presently known as the Saint Laurent River.

her mother's Algonquin facial features. Her face is of a rosy colour. This was the appearance of her face when her face was transfigured soon after her death. Her left side of her face is shaded, perhaps to depict her covering of the face during her holy life. Her face inspires devotion.

Her moccasins are dark red to brown colour, which as mentioned in her life that she coloured skins red with the glue from sturgeons. Her left moccasin is painted different from her right, which is wider or loose, meaning she had walked with a limb on her left foot. Also, the left foot is not painted straight as the right foot. Father Cholenec had written that she was small and walked with a limb. She had received this injury before she met Father Jacques de Lamberville, and this infirmity had remained with her throughout her life. Also, she seems to have a small stature in appearance in the portrait, and from her femur relic that she was slightly more than four feet and five inches in height.

Her blanket that she wears is a dark blue, which was the blanket she wore for the days when she would receive Holy Communion.

A double chain necklace attaches the collar of her vest.

He painted the Cross in her right hand and as the other paintings of her, which was how Kateri Tekakwitha had appeared to Anastasia as said by Father Cholenec.

The shrub on her right side, would it depict the shrub that she took the thorn branches from and placed on her mat to sleep on?⁴

Father Chauchetière without any doubt painted the oil painting, because the drawings he did previously in 1685 or sometime later, the hands of those painted when enlarged on paper are of the same style as those in the portrait.⁵

After her death, she would have portraits to be painted of her by Father Claude Chauchetière. When portraits of her were placed on heads of the sick that they brought about marvellous cures.

God did not deprive from us of having a portrait of her, because portraits were of great importance after her holy death for cures and instruction.

⁴ Northern Prickly Ash shrub.

⁵ The canvas of the oil painting is slightly more than 35 inches in height and 29 inches in width. The image of Kateri Tekakwitha was painted after the background was painted on the canvas.