

Catherine Tekakwitha

Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J.

Her Spiritual Advisor

Dedicated to World Youth Day

Toronto, Canada, 2002



Translated by
William Lonc, S.J.

Catherine Tekakwitha: Her Life

Translation of an unpublished document entitled

Vie de Catherine Tegakouïta

Ascribed to

Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J.

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Translator's Preface

Catherine Tekakwitha's story is surely one of the highlights of the early Jesuit mission efforts in New France in the late 1600's. The story told in this booklet is a translation of a xerographic photocopy of a typewritten transcript of a document -- presumably of Fr. Cholenec's original handwritten manuscript. Fr. Cholenec was not only an eyewitness of the events in her life. More significantly, he was her Spiritual Director.

Our working document is found in the Vanier Library, Loyola Campus of Concordia University in Montreal. It consists of single-sided xerographic photocopies, of a typewritten version. The original document is presumed to be the manuscript in the Hôtel-Dieu Archives in Quebec (1696). Further research on the history of the document was outside the scope of this translation.

In general, the translation is meant to follow the French rather closely, but with an ear to producing an easily readable story in English. In particular, we note that the 17th Century word *sauvage* is based on the Latin word *silva*, denoting *forest*. In current English, we have words such as sylvan, Sylvester, Sylvia, sylvaculture, Pennsylvania, and so on.

Hence, the word primarily meant something like forest-dweller and did not primarily carry the modern strongly pejorative "spin" associated with *savage*, although there appear to have been contexts in which the word did have a pejorative sense¹. Taking all of these considerations into account, we translate it by *native* or *people*. It could be significant that the word *Indien* does not appear in the French document.

There is sometimes a discrepancy between dates in this version and in some of the published material on Catherine, particularly in Book Three. Finally, the spelling is variable in the French text -- some of it probably due to the typist -- but we retain it "as is" in the translation. Resolution of these discrepancies is beyond the scope of the translation. Finally, all dates are in the context of the Gregorian, rather than Julian, calendar.

Acknowledgement: Many thanks to the Jesuits of Halifax for continued support, and to Mr. Steve Catlin for a close reading of the penultimate version.

¹ See our p. 42, where *sauvagesse* -- which we translated by *child of the forest* -- is probably being used in a somewhat pejorative sense.

Catherine Tekakwitha

[The document begins here]

"Catherine Tekakwitha, so renowned today in New France for the extraordinary marvels that God has bestowed and continues to bestow through her intercession, was born an Iroquois¹ in 1656 in a Mohawk village called Gahnaouagé. Her mother, an Algonquin, had been baptized and educated among the French in Trois-Rivières. She was seized there by the Iroquois with whom we were at war at that time, and taken as a slave to their homeland. She lived there and after a little while was married to a native of the place, and had two children: a son, and a daughter, Catherine.

It is told how this virtuous woman -- as in other times that holy man Tobias² -- kept her faith and love for God while in captivity, that she prayed every day, right to her last breath, but she had neither the opportunity nor the consolation to pass on her good thoughts to her two children. If she had the joy of bringing them into the world, she had the sorrow of having to leave the world without being able to baptize them, this being her only desire."

Book One

"Small pox was sweeping through the Iroquois country making many victims, and Catherine's mother was caught up in this wide-spread disaster, leaving her children still at a tender age and incapable of taking care of themselves. She prayed to Him who was their Creator to now be their Father and take them under His divine protection. We will see later that God heard her just prayer with regards to Catherine. Her brother fell ill within a short time and died. Catherine had also contracted the disease, but the Lord, having selected her to one day be His bride and to display in her the marvels of His grace, rescued her from this danger. The only after-effect was an overall weakness in her body, and especially in the eyes, so that she was not able to stand bright sunlight. For the rest of her life, she had to cover her eyes with her shawl whenever she went outdoors -- as she is depicted in images of her -- whereas the other native women wear their shawls around their neck.

We do not know the fate of Catherine's father. We only know that she became an orphan at the age of four and was under the supervision of an uncle, the most prominent Elder in

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the village, and some aunts who had much care for her in the hope of some day reaping great benefits. They took no trouble to have her educated.

The little girl had a noticeable natural beauty, very gentle, and as she advanced in years, she manifestly advanced in wisdom, all of her inclinations leading to doing good. God wanted her for Himself, and early in her life inspired her love for work and solitude, and one can say that in these two things was the source of the innocent life she lived among the Iroquois. She never appeared in public except when working, always busy in her cabin, which was contrary to the custom among the young Iroquois girls who loved to visit each other and as a group spend days in gossip.

Something very admirable in her was her natural abhorrence of anything that offended purity. This reaction led her to stay away from all kinds of groups and gatherings, where she never appeared, and to despise self-adornment in the manner of the native girls. However, she did let herself be adorned on one occasion at the insistence of her aunts, but only to obey them and to please them. Eventually she saw in this behavior one of the most serious sins of her life, and she

always saw it as an object of shame and confusion, expiating it with tears and penance.

It is this same horror of impurity along with a love she felt interiorly for chastity without yet knowing its value, that made her constantly refuse marriage when she had come of age. Her aunts attempted to force her to marry, but she eluded their plans two or three times in a marvelous manner. The aunts went so far as to constrain her by force and by threats, and even by illicit means. Catherine always resisted with great resolution and a particular grace from the Lord, Who no doubt was watching over the purity of His future spouse. She successfully escaped all the traps that were set for her.

This firmness, which the aunts took for folly and obstinacy and was virtually impossible and without precedent among the Iroquois, cost her much. From that time, she had much to suffer in the cabin, where she was no longer viewed as the child of the home but as a low-grade slave whom people treated harshly at every encounter. But, this girl behaved with such patience and sweetness in the midst of these insults and ill treatment, and she held her aunts in such esteem in all other matters, that she soon won back their affection.

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They no longer spoke to her of marriage and left her to live in peace without embarrassing her any further. It is thus that God turned this little persecution into good for His faithful servant, whom He will inspire by that trial to receive the greatest of His graces -- Holy Baptism. This was the only thing missing from being a complete girl and was to give the final perfection to the many good natural qualities that flourished in her.

Fr. Jacques de Lamberville had already been living in the Iroquois village of Ganaouagé³ for some time when Catherine listened to his religious instructions and felt a great desire to become a Christian. But her timidity, or rather her natural modesty, was so great that even though she wanted to speak to the priest and reveal what was in her heart, she could not decide to leave the cabin to look for him. God thereupon provided a means by which she could attain her wish which she thought to be impossible.

It was autumn of 1676 and all the women were busy harvesting. Catherine, as we have already remarked, could not stand the bright outdoors because of her weakened eyes, and so her aunts allowed her in that season to take care of the

cabin and all the domestic chores while they went to work in the fields. Thus, she spent entire days quite alone. It was at this time that the missionary, while making the ordinary rounds of the cabins and having gone by her cabin assuming that no one was in, felt he should retrace his steps and go in. He did this and there found the young girl who displayed an extraordinary joy at the visit, a visit for which she had earnestly wished.

The priest, for his part, was very edified to see in her such a modest behavior, but was even more impressed after having chatted and found out from her directly the good dispositions in which she lived. He was charmed by such virtue in this young native girl. He understood clearly that the Holy Spirit had opened the eyes of her soul to see the truth of our religion and had touched her heart to embrace it. He thereupon resolved and promised from this first meeting to provide her with the grace that she so ardently desired -- Baptism. After spending the winter instructing her thoroughly and disposing her to receive this Sacrament, they prayed together all day -- at the expense of house chores -- for this grace. The aunts were

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expected to display opposition -- but they had already had themselves baptized earlier!

Fr. de Lamberville, who foresaw the great benefits that his young church would draw from the baptism of such an outstanding girl, wanted to confer it with solemnity and decided to have it done on Easter. This was a grand day, and in the presence of all the Christians whom he had gathered to make the celebration more memorable, he baptized her and gave her the name Catherine, a name already consecrated by the purity of so many holy virgins and to which one could say that she added a luster of her own.

Everybody taking part was charmed by the modesty and devotion she maintained during the ceremony. They all witnessed the joy of this baptism, and considered themselves to be fortunate at having, in their small village, a person so perfect and so well admired by all. And, not only did they hope that her piety would bring honor to the religion that she had just embraced, but even more, that she would inspire many others to follow her example. In a short time it was evident that no mistake had been made in hoping for the desired outcome. Catherine fulfilled the hope and even

surpassed it by the fervor she manifested after her baptism, and led to the belief that the Holy Spirit had filled a soul with grace, disposed to receive it because of her moral -- even angelic -- innocence.

All the beautiful dispositions she had for virtue, and that she had hidden from view in her cabin, now shone with such brilliance that she was obliged to go outside and be present with the Neophytes at communal pious services. Also, as we shall soon see, she was drawn to the more perfect life. She surpassed all the others, and in less than a few months had become a model of humility, devotion, gentleness, charity, and other Christian virtues to her compatriots. This was such that even though at the outset there was already a great esteem for her, in a short while she would be held in admiration for a virtue that one could say was so young but at the same time so solid.

Catherine remained in that Iroquois village for a year and a half after her baptism, maintaining the same fervor and each day making fresh progress in virtue. Fr. Lamberville was filled with admiration, but he wisely decided that an environment so ungrateful and sinful as that of these particular Iroquois was

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thereby incapable of protecting this growing flower, that it could spoil her and therefore did not deserve to have her. For this reason, he believed it would be better to transplant her to a more favorable environment where she could put down firm roots and be beyond the danger of corruption.

The mission of St. François Xavier du Sault had started several years earlier among the French at La Prairie de la Magdeleine across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, and it was less than a year later that the mission was transplanted to the lower end of the Saint Louis Rapids, from which it takes its name. The peace which we have enjoyed with the Iroquois has attracted a number of them to this place because of the peace and tranquillity one can find there, and they soon had themselves baptized due to the example of some Huron families who were already living there. These fervent Christians lived a life so edifying that even in the opinion of the French who saw it, this mission was a vibrant image of the Primitive Church.

The Iroquois who came here from the homeland to visit their relatives were so edified that they were like so many panegyrists when they returned home recounting the marvels

they had seen at the Sault, so that the Iroquois talked about nothing else. This motivated a large number, especially the Mohawks, to come and share this happiness of their compatriots at the Sault. It is in this mission that Fr. Lamberville thought God wanted our Catherine to be. In fact, she had been thinking about it for some time, and when the priest spoke to her about it, they found themselves in agreement and it was now just a matter of finding an occasion to make it happen.

Divine Providence soon provided the occasion. Catherine had an adopted older sister who had already made the move to the Sault with her husband several years earlier. The wish this older sister had to see her younger sister share in this happiness led her to persuade her husband, along with several others, go to look for relatives and to bring Catherine. This man informed Catherine of the plan when he arrived and she was so filled with joy that it is difficult to describe it. Her aunts were willing to see her go, but there was everything to fear from her uncle who was a powerful man in the village and who had loudly declared his opposition to these transigrations that depopulated his homeland but populated

ours. Fortunately for Catherine, Heaven intervened in the matter. The uncle was away negotiating a treaty with the English at Fort Orange, which prompted them to take advantage of the situation and leave immediately.

The emigrants had hardly left when the uncle arrived and asked for the whereabouts of his niece. He was told that she had left for the Sault. He thereupon loaded his gun with three bullets to shoot -- he said -- the person who had taken away the young girl. He set out in pursuit, and since he was skilled in tracking, he was able to catch up with them. The travelers saw him coming and not knowing his intentions, they hid Catherine in the woods and sat down, as if they were eating.

He arrived and brusquely asked for his niece. They answered that they had seen her back in the village but knew nothing more. The old man, no doubt God permitting it, turned back without making any further search for her. Once he was out of sight, the travelers resumed their trek to the Sault mission where Catherine arrived in the autumn of 1677 with a treasure of merits for herself and a beautiful example for us, for the glory of God and the great good, not only of this house but also for the entire French colony of which she is now the

powerful protector against all her enemies, visible and invisible.

Book Two

God, who chose Catherine Tekakwitha from all eternity to make His graces shine in her, had thus not allowed her to remain long in that hostile environment that did not deserve to have her, and so He sent her to us at the Sault to strengthen our mission here in its beginnings and to edify it by the example of her angelic life.

Fr. Frémin, one of the great missionaries of Canada, had the care of the mission at that time. Fr. Chauchetière and I were there with him. Catherine was introduced to me in a letter from Fr. Jacques de Lamberville which, among other things, had these words: Tekakwitha is going to live at the Sault and I ask you to take her under your wing. She is a treasure from us to you, as you will soon see. Look after her well, and have her profit to God's glory and the salvation of a soul that is very dear to Him. With this recommendation, the priest wished me to take care of this new arrival because I was already in charge of religious instructions that were needed by

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the natives, either for their baptism, or the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

When Catherine arrived at the Sault, she went to live with her brother-in-law who had brought her to our land. The mistress of the cabin was an elderly Christian named Anastasie, the first of the Iroquois to be baptized by our Fathers and she was at that time one of the pillars of the mission, the most fervent member of the Holy Family Confraternity, and the only one in the village who knew best how to give religious instruction.

She had known Catherine as a child and her mother back in the land of the Iroquois, and she now helped her much at the Sault to advance in virtue. Along with being considered as a mother, she was also Catherine's principal religious instructor, and it is in terms of these two people that we will often speak from now on.

On the basis of all that has been said in Book One above, it may be concluded that Catherine lived in the Iroquois homeland as if she were in a strange country and that it was less than a homeland for her -- even though that is where she was born -- because it was hurting her, she who was born only

for the good. In fact, it was the Sault that was to be her homeland. And, if God wanted such a virtuous girl in this mission, then one could also say that God owed Catherine a mission as holy as this one was. For a number of years, people of her nation had been leaving the Iroquois territory to live their Christian faith here at the Sault, where they lived with all the piety of a nascent church.

In fact, the mission at that time was in a state of high fervor, people spoke only of God, they thought only of how to serve Him. They did not satisfy themselves with a simple observance of God's Commandments; they even went so far as to practice the Evangelical Counsels: Poverty, chastity, and obedience. Everybody behaved for the good, the youngest and the oldest vying with each other, and almost every cabin was a school of virtue and holiness.

So many beautiful things appeared before Catherine's eyes at the outset that she lived happily with the new converts, the relatives, and compatriots. She noticed the change in their morals; she admired a life-style so Christian and so strongly opposed to the kind of life that they had led not so long before back home. She compared what she found here with what she

had seen back there, and reflecting seriously on their good fortune as well as her own, it is unbelievable how great was her joy to find herself, after having fled from another Egypt⁴, and more fortunately still, transplanted to this "promised land" and there to have found at last what she had been seeking for a long time, even without knowing clearly what it was.

She spoke to us only with enthusiasm and abandon, as if her heart were full. She had a very active mind, and her character was such that, as far as we could tell, she had an insatiable desire to know the good, and a corresponding ardor to match to put into practice what she had just learned. This soul, so well disposed, caught fire immediately and putting everything to the task, began to do what she saw others doing. But, she did it so well and with such progress that within a few weeks she stood out from among all the girls and women of the mission and soon attracted the respect and admiration of everybody. This is how Catherine Tekakwitha, after having been protected in innocence for more than twenty years among the bad and the sinners back home, here at the Sault, in a short time, became a saint among the Just and Faithful.

It is no doubt a surprising thing to see not only how much this young woman advanced in piety during about two and a half years at the Sault, but also it is even more astonishing that she had been such even when she arrived. Of her, one could say truthfully that she was not a novice when it came to practicing virtue. She was a master right from the beginning and she needed no other teacher except the Holy Spirit, so quickly did she advance, with giant steps, to perfection.

Catherine was not satisfied with an ordinary life. Impelled by her insatiable desire for the good and her extraordinary fervor to undertake and to put it in practice, she first embraced the more perfect, and took as her principle -- or rather as her maxim -- to seek in all things what was most agreeable to God, to hold nothing back from Him, and in general to give Him whatever depended on her, with no consideration for creatures and without any self serving. Such a holy rule had as its foundation the lofty idea she had of the Divine majesty and the great understanding she had, and retained all her life, of the great grace that God had given her by having chosen her among all the others whom He had left

in the shadows, to enable her to see the light in the Gospel and to bring her on that happy day to the Sault.

With such fine principles and motives so powerful and efficacious to guide her, the first thing this virtuous native person did was to attach herself to a holy place, making the church a kind of favorite and habitual refuge, being sure to find Him to whom she had already consecrated her heart and all her affections, and here to converse with Him far from any noise and without distraction from the side of creatures.

For this reason, she came to the church every morning around 4 AM, even in the harshest winter. She attended the first Mass at dawn and then the one for the natives at sun-rise. She came back several times during the day, interrupting her work to satisfy her devotion. Then, she came in the evening after work, staying well into the night. Thus, she was the first to be in the church in the morning and the last one out in the evening. On Sundays and feast days, one could say that she was in the church all day long, because she left it only to take a meal.

The fervor with which she went to the church was even more noticeable in her prayers. With marvelous diligence, she

learned those prayers that are said in common. The language was of little consequence; ordinarily, she prayed with her eyes and heart, the eyes always bathed in tears and the heart giving rise to ardent sighs. At those times she seemed immobile and totally pre-occupied interiorly. By this effort to become united with God in her prayers, she achieved, with no other master than the Holy Spirit, such a sublime gift of prayer accompanied by so many spiritual delights from heaven, that she often spent several hours this way in communication with her God, and it is from that source that she derived these grand virtues of which we will speak towards the end of this second Book.

Her devotion was so much more admirable because she did not engage in those useless devotions that ordinarily serve self-love. Nor was Catherine among those devotees who are in church when they should be about their house-work. In attaching herself to God, she attached herself to work as a very proper way of remaining united with Him and to maintain throughout the whole day the good thoughts she had received that morning at the foot of the altar. That is why she allied herself strongly with the good Anastasie of whom we have

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already spoken, and that she made it a rule to avoid all other companionship and to go only with Anastasie, whether to the woods or to the fields.

They would therefore go, the two together, and since they had the same desire of finding God, they not only offered their work to Him, but accompanied it in pious conversation. Anastasie spoke to Catherine only about God and the ways to please Him and advance in His service in life, the morals befitting a good Christian, the fervor of the Saints, the hate they had for sin, and the rigorous penances they carried out in expiation for those sins they had committed.

It is thus that Catherine sanctified her work by these spiritual conversations, and such holy conversations, joined to that thirst she had for the things of God, resulted in her having new desires to give herself to Him and to put into practice all that she had just heard. She did this in such a way that, whether in church or in the woods or in the field, she found God everywhere, and not to lose a minute by being away from Him, she was seen coming and going with a rosary always in her hand, which made Anastasie say that Catherine never lost sight of God, and that she walked continually in His presence.

When rain or excessive cold prevented her from going to work, she spent almost all her time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and sometimes to do odds and ends at her mat, far from going to visit or look for other girls to play and recreate together, as do those of her age in similar situations.

The weeks so well utilized were truly full weeks, that is to say, in the sense of Scripture, filled with virtue and merit. Then, Catherine completed them by a precise review during which she examined everything she had done and then to remove these faults in Confession, which she made every Saturday evening. She did this in an extraordinary manner, a manner which could only have come from the Holy Spirit who personally guided her and who had initially inspired the love for suffering and disdain for her body, as we shall see later on.

To prepare for Confession, she began with the last part, by which I mean the penance, going into the woods to flog her shoulders with large branches, and then went to the church and spent a long time crying over her sins. She confessed them in the same way -- interjecting her words with sighs and tears and considering herself to be the greatest sinner in the world, although her innocence was angelic, so much did she wish to

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keep it. Her horror of sin and fear of displeasing God made her love solitude so much, and to avoid companions and not only because of the desire to have herself united with Him and not to distract herself among people.

This is how Catherine lived from the time she arrived at the Sault autumn up to Christmas, and by this kind of life, so fervent and so exemplary, she merited to receive at that time a grace -- the Eucharist -- that is bestowed on those who come from the Iroquois only after several years [18] and many trials, to give them some better appreciation of it and oblige them to make themselves worthy of it by an irreproachable life. This normal procedure, however, was not for Catherine -- she was already too well disposed and wished with too much ardor to receive Our Lord inside her to be deprived of so great a favor any longer. She was promised this favor some time before the feast day, so that she could be instructed in this Mystery.

She received this good news with all imaginable joy, and prepared herself for the event with a doubling of devotion consonant with the high esteem she had of it, and it must be said that it was at this first Communion that she renewed all her fervor. The "material" was too well prepared and asked

only for the proximity of this Divine Fire to receive its warmth. She thereupon approached, or rather, threw herself into this furnace of Sacred Love that burns over our altars, and she came out of it so engulfed in this Divine Fire that only Our Lord knows what transpired between Him and His dear spouse in this visit by Him in her. All that we can say is that from that day on, she seemed to be another person, so much did she become filled with God and His love.

All of this seems very surprising in a young native girl but it will be even more surprising when I add that after having the happiness of Communicating rather often, she always did so with the same dispositions and the same fervor as at the first time, and I have no doubt that it was with the same caresses and the same profusion of graces on the part of Our Lord who only asks to be sacramentally shared in love and places no limits on His graces when His love meets with hearts well-disposed to receive it and to profit by them, as did Catherine.

Her manner of receiving Communion was known to all in the village. In the general Communions during Mass, the more fervent in the congregation vied to sit next to Catherine in the

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church, sure that merely her exterior composure, so devout and so ardent at that time would warm them as well and serve as an excellent preparation to approach the Holy Table following her example.

After Christmas, it was hunting season, and she went along with her sister and brother-in-law. This was an adopted sister only, who had lived in the same cabin with Catherine back in Mohawk territory. It was neither a desire for a break from routine nor for a good time that took Catherine out on the hunt, as was the case for most of the other women, but only to please this good sister and her husband. No doubt God wanted her to sanctify herself in the woods as she had done in the village, and show the other people, by the beautiful example she gave, that one could practice virtue equally well in both settings. In fact, she continued her usual acts of piety that she practiced in the village, and replaced those that could not be practiced in the woods by others that her devotion suggested.

She regulated her time on the hunt like that of a Religious. Every morning she was at prayer before day-break and she finished with prayers said in common according to the laudable custom of our people to pray together morning and

evening. And, while she was preparing for these prayers while the others were still sleeping, she also prolonged her prayers far into the night after everyone else had gone to bed.

After morning prayers, while the men were eating and preparing to go hunting for the entire day, Catherine would go aside and again pray at about the time that the people back in the mission would be attending Mass. For this purpose, she had built a little oratory that consisted only of a cross she had made in a tree on the bank of a stream. There she spiritually joined with those people back in the village, uniting her intention with that of the priest, and asking her Guardian Angel to go there and be present in her place and then report back on the results.

When she saw that the men had left for the hunt, she returned to the cabin and was busy all day long, like the other women, in chopping wood, going to look for the meat that had been killed, or to store things in the cabin, during which she always invited others to sing some devotional canticle or to recount some story of a saint or stories they had heard in church in the public exhortations given on Sundays and feast-days.

To initiate this edifying activity, she was often the first to broach these pious subjects, for two reasons: one, to forestall bad discussion and frivolous conversations that did nothing but distract the mind; the second, to keep herself always in her fervor and union with God, who was as present to her in the woods as at the foot of the altar back in the village. It is also for this reason that her main occupation -- and the one she liked most -- was to fetch wood for the cabin because she could be then alone and could continue with her devotion, conversing intimately with her Divine Spouse.

She practiced her humility by working for others and making herself like a servant in the cabin. She satisfied her desire for suffering by forcing her body to do long and painful work, and she found in this activity another way -- more spiritual and more hidden -- of mortification by starving her body in the midst of plenty, by quietly leaving the cabin and going to the wood-house before the sagamité⁵ was ready, and not returning until evening. Even then, she ate only a very little, and then she spent a part of the night in prayer in spite of great fatigue and her natural frailty. If at times in the morning she was prevailed upon to eat before beginning work, she

would secretly mix ashes with the sagamité to make it bitter and remove any taste in which she might find pleasure. She practiced this mortification as often as she could, even back in the village, and in such a way that she could do it without being seen by anyone.

While on the hunt, she was not so taken up with work in the woods or in the cabin as to forget her oratory. Rather, she made it a point to go there from time to time to give her soul its own food while she made her body starve, and she would go there in the evening to say her prayers for the next morning, and several times a week she finished the prayer with a rough discipline⁶ from branches that she applied to herself. She had not yet learned about the proper instruments for this kind of mortification, having at the outset undertaken corporal penances in secret and under the direction of the Holy Spirit only.

Although this life of our Catherine in the woods had nothing in itself except laudable and great merit for her, she was however not happy being there, and one could see in her demeanor that she was not in her preferred place. The church, the Blessed Sacrament, the Masses, the greetings, the

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exhortations and other similar events of piety, from which she had already derived much nourishment in the short time that she had been at the Sault, all this -- I say -- all these things were a constant charm that attracted her back towards the village where her heart and all her affections were focused. So much so that although her body was here in the woods, her soul was entirely at the Sault with the other people, and the time in the forest -- so pleasant for those of her sex because they had nothing else to think about except having a good time, removed as they were from all the drudgery of household chores -- for her became oppressive and distasteful.

An event that befell her while she was still on the hunt there in the woods ended by giving her a total aversion for these outings. This event, along with the other motives that we have just recounted, led her to make a resolution to never go back once she was back in the village. In the event, a man in Catherine's band had been chasing a moose all day long and returned to the cabin quite late and quite tired. So much so that upon entering the cabin he dropped down into the first free place on the floor and went to sleep without eating or drinking. His wife, getting up next morning, was surprised not

to find him by her side, but even more surprised when she looked about in the cabin and saw that he was sleeping close to Catherine's mat.

Since the natives are very suspicious and appearances are next to being the real thing, she imagined that her husband had sinned with this young girl whom she did not yet know well enough to know who she was. And, since in this kind of situation one naturally uses everything to bolster one's perception in something of so much personal interest, this woman bolstered her suspicions by recalling Catherine's comings and goings to her oratory to pray and perform her usual penances, as we have already described.

The man also, unwittingly, added to his wife's suspicion by recounting how he had made a canoe for this return trip, and that some woman from the band had helped him to drag it out of the woods, and this was, he cheerfully announced, none other than Catherine who came to help, because he knew her to be charitable enough to do that. Thus, the wife, on the basis of such strong evidence, no longer had any doubts about the situation and went so far as to believe that there had been for some time a clandestine liaison between the two. But, since

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Catherine was otherwise known as very virtuous and wise, the woman was discreet enough not to say anything about this at the time and waited to speak about it only to the priest in charge of the mission, to whom she narrated everything once they had returned from the hunt.

It is usually God's way of dealing with his Elect to put their virtue to the test by such events as this one to purge them of their least faults by the fire of tribulation, by permitting that she should be denigrated by the suspicions and even by the most atrocious calumny. *Gold is thus purified in the furnace.* He even permitted that in this case the missionary was not at first on Catherine's side, and if from one side the horror the young girl had for impurity and the innocence of her life of which he was aware made him think that perhaps she was not culpable, from another side the account given by a woman he knew to be one of the wisest and virtuous in the mission persuaded him that the situation this woman was describing was not perhaps all that innocent. To clarify this delicate matter, the priest sent for Catherine because he had such a high regard for her and was so fair-minded that he resolved

not to let the matter become public, and would have her tell her side of the story and to take her word for it.

He therefore spoke with her and told her what had been said about her and asked what happened. Catherine resorted herself to simply denying the fact without showing any emotion because she did not feel the slightest guilt. This great tranquility of soul in a matter that was known to be quite sensitive to her, justified her completely in the mind of the missionary, already tending to judge in her favor. He was not sympathetic, however, towards the woman and some others who -- I don't know how -- came to know about the matter.

God finished by adding to her crown the merit of a faithful servant, because after leaving her relatives, homeland, and all the advantages that she could have found in a good marriage, after -- I say -- sacrificing all this to Our Lord, there was nothing left but to sacrifice her honor and reputation which she did generously in this situation, joyful in seeing herself being held in contempt and be known as a great sinner. For this reason, far from trying to find out who had started such an evil story, she let the matter drop completely, as if it

pertained to someone else, and the only vengeance she took was to pray to God for the instigator.

From His side, God amply rewarded such trust and such heroic resignation after Catherine's death by the same means that had been the cause, because the marvels that she -- in death -- began to work prompted those who had made such unjust judgements to reflect on themselves, and like the two disciples of Emmaus⁷ in Our Lord's company who did not recognize Him because He disguised himself from their eyes, were no sooner clarified in the breaking of bread, than they were the first to announce the marvels of the Resurrection and condemn their own incredulity. In the same way, those in the woods and the village who did not know of Catherine's virtue and were too ready to believe the calumny about her, after her death -- faced as they were by all the marvels that they heard about -- were the first to publish her virtues, recalling to mind her modesty, gentleness, charity, patience, devotion, and the beautiful example she had given them, and remained steadfastly devoted to her from then on.

As for the woman who had started this whole chain of events, she spent three years weeping over the incident, being

unable to console herself, imagining that Our Lord would never pardon her for having done such a wrong against such a holy girl. The missionary had to use the utmost authority he had over her mind to help her recover from her error as well as from the pain and sorrow she had experienced.

Catherine returned to the village and thought of nothing else but to repair the spiritual losses she had incurred while on the hunt. She resumed frequenting the church with the usual fervor and zeal. She rejoined the same instructrice to profit from the re-telling of the pious exhortations that had been given during her absence.

We were approaching Easter. Those who were out hunting not too far away from the village, came -- as was their good custom -- to celebrate this great day. It was the first time Catherine, to the great good of her soul, had celebrated this day with us. She was present for all the services of Holy Week, she admired all these holy ceremonies, and she conceived a new esteem for the faith for which she felt such tenderness and heavenly consolation that she wept many a tear, especially on Good Friday when she heard the preaching about the Passion⁸ of Jesus Christ. She was very taken by the

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Divine Savior's sufferings, she thanked Him a thousand times, adored and kissed the cross with all the feelings of the most tender understanding and most ardent charity.

She bound herself to Him on that day, resolving to carry the mortifications of Jesus Christ on her virginal body for the rest of her days, as if she had done nothing of the kind up until now. On Easter she received Communion for the second time and she did this with the same dispositions, the same fervor, and the same benefits as at Christmas. And, to add to her spiritual goods and graces, she received a second grace from the missionary on this same feast-day -- membership in the Holy Family Confraternity -- a favor which he rarely accorded to anyone and thus indicated the esteem that he had for her virtue.

Mgr. de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, a prelate filled with zeal for his flock, had already established the devotion to the Holy Family in his Episcopal city as a very apt means of sanctifying it. The devotion in fact produced great good among the families and still does so every day with edification to the entire country. It spread from Quebec to other parishes with the same results. The French passed it along to the

natives so that in the mission currently at the Sault, having its origins in La Prairie de la Magdeleine, those of our Fathers who administered it judged it to be appropriate to establish it there as being capable of taking hold and increasing the fervor of this young church.

It was decided, however, that only a few persons among the more fervent men and women would be allowed to join to make it more esteemed and to obligate those men and women to be distinguished by so great a grace, to match it by the sanctity of their lives. In this, there was no lack of success because the native people, once they have offered themselves to God, are capable of everything that pertains to devotion and are naturally generous. This small number of chosen souls undertook their new role with a piety so exemplary -- and for some -- even so austere, that the rest of the village regarded them with a kind of veneration. To say "saint" and "Holy Family member" was to say the same thing, such that even this name has remained ever since as a distinctive mark of the mission.

Catherine, still quite young and after only 7 or 8 months at the Sault, was admitted into [28] this small group, the others

having been admitted only because of mature age and after several years of testing. But, as we have already noted, Catherine's virtue put her above the rules that were there for the good of the village. Far from being an occasion of envy in this matter, the choice was generally approved. Those already in the Holy Family in particular expressed their joy, regarding Catherine as a person capable of supporting all by herself this holy association by her good example.

She was the only one who thought she was unworthy, so much was her low opinion of herself. And, the more she considered herself to be unworthy, the more she felt obliged to work towards perfection to avoid jeopardizing the fervor of the Holy Family to which, of course, she gave a new luster by her own fervor. What is certain is that the memory alone of her virtue has been able to sustain for a long time after her death, and even to this day, the virtue of several people.

It is thus that she advanced for all to see, and using everything for spiritual profit, she derived means and motives from all things around her to grow in grace and sanctity and to bond herself more and more with Our Lord.

She had already attained -- in the opinion of a person very knowledgeable who knew her at that time -- the "unitive way".⁹ In fact, she tasted all the delights of this blessed state. Without having to first pass through the other "ways", and by a special dispensation from the Holy Spirit, she entered -- contrary to normal procedure -- in the first two "ways" by the third to derive thereby more merit and in a more excellent manner, because in her most intimate conversations with God, she was filled with new lights,¹⁰ and lights that were ardent and all fire. At the same time as they clarified her understanding to let her see the beauty of the Christian virtues in relation to Jesus Christ -- whom she had constantly before her eyes -- they also gave her the will to put them into practice and to conform, as much as it was possible for her, to the Model, so perfect and at the same time so lovable.

In the context of these lights, she was going into her past life to look for new reasons to love Him but hate herself, looking on her least faults committed back home among the Iroquois as so many crimes and rebuffs to the Divine Majesty for which she should punish her flesh -- that was so innocent - but which she took to be so culpable. Also, it is there that we

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have the main reasons for such an austere life as she led at the Sault and that burning love she had for mortification and suffering. Her instructrice Anastasie added not a little from her side by often speaking about the torments of Hell and the horrible penances that the saints had practiced to avoid these torments, and those penances that the Christian Iroquois should make for having so offended God by the disorders in their homeland.

She was also inspired by an accident that, according to what we heard of it, could have taken her from us. One day when she was chopping down a tree, it fell sooner than expected. It is true that because of the care she took that she escaped being struck by the trunk, but one of the branches tripped her and hit her on the head so hard that she fell to the ground unconscious. At first people thought she was dead but she recovered a short time later, saying these words: "O Jesus, I thank you for having saved me from danger," and for her the lesson was that she had been spared so that she could continue doing penance for her sins. This is what she said to her dear companion who had such an influence on her life, and of

whom we must now speak as someone who was a part of the story we are recounting.

It was in the spring of 1678 that God gave Catherine a companion who did much for her spiritual advancement of which we seen several significant examples that affected her. This woman was the only one who truly had Catherine's confidence and to whom she confided her most secret thoughts after their first meeting. It is true that Catherine had not wished to associate with anyone except the worthy Anastasie whose authority -- because Catherine looked on her as a mother -- and the frequent exhortations in her role as instructrice had helped her much to set out on the good path she was now following. But, Anastasie was much older and could not keep pace with the fervor of her "daughter" who had already surpassed her and was doing things the "mother" could not do.

Catherine needed someone who was of about her age with the same intention of giving herself totally to God and was at a spiritual level which enabled her to endure the same austere life that Catherine had adopted. God therefore had her find, in the person of a young woman of the Oneida nation, who had

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been baptized earlier in her homeland by Fr. Bruyas, currently Rector at the College of Quebec and Superior General of our missions in Canada, after he had held the same post for the mission among the Iroquois in particular and then had administered this mission at the Sault, which he maintained for a period of 11 years in a state of fervor launched by his predecessor, Fr. Frémin.

This woman,¹¹ whose name we do not cite because she is still living, had become very neglectful after her baptism, and among the disorders of her nation she was Christian in name only. Even after she came to live at La Prairie with her family, she was hardly any better at the outset, but having gone hunting with her husband -- not yet a Christian -- she fortunately had an occasion for conversion in an event which I now want to recount briefly for the benefit of the reader and to indicate the means that God used to convert this native woman who was to contribute so much to Catherine's sanctification.

She had left in autumn with her husband and a little child, her sister's son, to go hunting on the *Sta8as*¹² [Ottawa] River. On the way, they met several other Iroquois whom they decided to join, now forming a group of 11 persons: 4 men, 4

women, and 3 children. Troubles began for her when the snow fell very late that year, making it impossible to hunt, so that after having exhausted their provisions and the moose meat that her husband had killed, they were soon reduced to starvation.

At first, they ate several small pelts they had brought with them to make foot-wear, then they ate the foot-wear on their feet, and then had to eat grass and the bark of trees like wild animals. To add to all this, the husband of the woman in our story fell ill. At this time, two of the men, a Mohawk and a Seneca, went to look for some game, expecting to return after 10 days. The Mohawk returned as expected, but alone. He assured the others that his hunting companion had died from exposure. It was suspected, however that he had killed his companion and then lived off his flesh during this time, especially because he appeared quite well but had not killed any game.

Since there was no longer any hope in hunting, some of the others tried to persuade the Christian woman to abandon her husband to death because he could go no further and to save herself and her nephew along with the others. She,

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however, would not consent to this and stoutly maintained her resolution which led to her being abandoned along with her husband and nephew. The ailing husband died two days later, regretting that he would die without being baptized.

After burying him, the woman set out, carrying her nephew on her shoulders, and after several days she caught up with her colleagues who were on the march trying to reach the lower end of the river and French settlements. But, they were so weak and feeble and so exhausted that after twenty days of walking they finally came to the end of their resources. It was then that, seeing that everybody was in danger, the others took a strange resolution in their despair: to kill one of the group to enable the others to live.

They looked at the Senecan hunter's widow and her two children and asked the woman in our story if they could kill the two children, and asked what Christian law had to say about that, because she was the only baptized person in the band. She did not dare to answer the question because she did not understand enough to decide on a matter of such importance and she feared contributing to a homicide. But she hesitated even more so because she saw correctly that after her

response, and once they had eaten the woman and the two children -- as they did in fact -- they would kill her also.

It is then that her eyes were opened to the danger to her body and she began to see the deplorable state of her soul that was infinitely more deplorable than was her body. She felt a great repugnance for the disorders of her past life, and the error she had made in coming on this hunt without having made her Confession. She asked pardon of God with all her heart and promised that if He rescued her from this danger and enabled her to return safe to her village, not only would she make her Confession immediately, but would amend her life and do penance.

God, wanting to use this woman to become Catherine's companion, heard her prayer. After incredible suffering and fatigue, of the twelve that had set out only five returned to La Prairie towards the middle of winter, among them this woman and her little nephew. In truth, she kept part of her promise, because she did make her Confession, but she resisted for some time to change her ways and to do penance as she had promised.

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All this took place towards the end of 1675 and the beginning of 1676. In the autumn of that same year the mission was transferred from La Prairie de la Madeleine to the foot of Sault Saint-Louis. Catherine arrived here in 1677, and the following spring, i.e. of 1678, she met this person in a way I am now going to describe.

At the time, the first chapel at the Sault was under construction. One day Catherine walked over to the site to have a look, and her future companion was also there taking a look. But God had His own designs in this unforeseen meeting for His own glory and for the good of these two souls. They introduced themselves on the river bank and began their first conversation. Catherine asked her where the women would be sitting in this church. The other answered by pointing out a place she thought where the women would be. Catherine then said that in truth this wooden chapel is not what God is asking of us but rather for our souls to become and remain temples. And, in truth, I am not worthy to be in this physical temple, I who have so often chased God out of my soul and rather, I deserve to be chased out with the dogs.

These expressions of such a profound humility accompanied by tears and words full of sincerity, so touched the one who heard it that she hesitated; the words were truly for her the words of life, grace, and salvation. The woman, impelled by remorse in her conscience, had shortly before decided at last to perform the main part of the promise that she had made to God earlier in the woods. And, since she was naturally one of these exuberant people who always go overboard either for good or for ill, and since she was healthy and at the prime of her age, around 28 or 30, she thought about doing something extraordinary.

In this frame of mind, she took Catherine's words as coming from on high and believed that God had sent this holy girl -- of whom so much good was being said -- to lead her to change her life, a thing she wanted to undertake. She therefore answered Catherine in the same enthusiastic manner, such that their hearts as well as their plans were completely identical. They easily bonded in this first meeting, and in a short time they arrived at the point of sharing their most secret thoughts.

To be more comfortable, they went to sit at the foot of a cross that was on the bank of the great river, and after having

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told each other their life story, they resolved to do penance together. Since I was the spiritual director for each of them, they proposed this course of action and asked for my permission, which I gladly gave, not seeing how anything but good could come from it to each one.

In fact, from that time on, one could say that they were one heart and one soul in two bodies. They were inseparable right up to Catherine's death. The name of her companion remained as a memorial to her, and although Catherine did not abandon the relationship with Anastasie nor stopped going to her from time to time, she nevertheless had bonded totally and permanently with the other who had more fire and was more capable of keeping pace with Catherine in her physically demanding devotions.

They were always seen together, going into the woods or forest or anywhere else alone to avoid meeting and going with the other girls and women; as much to avoid getting involved in their little problems or events in the village as to avoid being distracted from their devotions. They spoke only of God and the things that led to God. Their conversations were like spiritual conferences in which they revealed their life, their

desires, and their least troubles to encourage each other to hold fast in any occasions that came their way to suffer something for Our Lord. They sometimes arranged suffering for themselves deliberately by going several times a week deep into the woods to whip their shoulders with branches, as Catherine had been doing for some time on her own.

It is in this way that God strengthened Catherine Tekakwitha from day to day and prepared her for the serious and painful combat that she was to undergo that summer in the matter to which she was most sensitive, but from which -- with the graces from Our Lord -- she emerged victorious. Since this is one of the most beautiful events in her life, I presume that no one will be offended if I bring the event to light.

Her adopted sister, mistress of her "fire"¹³ and because of her age, tried to be mistress also of Catherine. She looked on Catherine through the eyes of this world and -- more intent on being useful rather than thinking about Catherine's welfare -- decided to have Catherine married. Catherine was so esteemed in the entire village for her wisdom and piety that there was no young man at the Sault who would not consider himself very

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fortunate to find someone as good as she. Thus this woman, who would do the choosing according to custom, would not fail to find a future brother-in-law among the warriors, who would then bring provisions to the cabin. Since all the spoils of hunting go to the wives, she would thus have done a good turn for her family if she succeeded in this project.

She was not unaware of the great resistance from Catherine's side, whom she knew to have a great aversion to marriage. She was not even unaware of the great persecutions that this generous girl had endured back in her homeland on the same subject and the determination with which she had overcome them. However, this did not deter her from thinking she would win by the sheer force of reason which she had prepared, and resolved not to deceive Catherine, but to overcome her either by reason or appeal to emotion.

One day, therefore, putting on a show of great affection and gentleness, she proceeded to say the following things, that the reader will hardly believe if he or she knows that the natives are very intelligent and have good common sense, and that they are naturally eloquent when their interest is at stake, as is the case with everyone.

"You must admit, my dear sister, that you have serious obligations to Our Lord as well as to me for having rescued you from our miserable homeland and have you come to the Sault where you could seek your salvation with such tranquillity of mind and nothing to disrupt your devotions. If you are happy to see yourself here, I am no less so to have you near me, and you enhance it by your wise behavior that brings you the esteem and admiration of the entire village. There remains only one thing still to do and which will make me perfectly happy, and that is to wish the best for you by a good and solid marriage.

"It is what all the girls here do; you are now old enough to do the same, and you need it, as do the others, both to avoid occasion of sin and to supply the necessities of life. Your brother-in-law and I have not been looking after you just for the amusement of it up to this time. But you know that you are already old enough and that we must support a large family. If by mischance we could no longer support you, where would you go for help? Believe me, sister, imagine yourself afflicted with the sufferings both for soul and body that follow on poverty, and think seriously about protecting yourself against

them while you still can so easily, and with such advantage to yourself and to your family that wishes it."

Catherine was much surprised by these totally unexpected words from her sister. Nevertheless, since she was very polite and had much respect for her sister, she suppressed the hurt she was feeling. She thanked the sister for her good advice and added that the matter was of such great importance that she wanted to think about it quietly. This response was reasonable and the sister did not question it. Far from being angry, our courageous girl evaded the attack and immediately came to me to gently complain about her sister and told me the whole story.

I said to her, "Catherine, you are your own master, the matter depends entirely on you, but think about it because it is a serious." "Ah, Father", she responded immediately and without hesitation, "I don't know what to do, I dislike men, I have the utmost aversion to marriage, the thing is impossible". To sound her out and test her further, I presented her with reasons as strong as the ones given by her sister, but she assured me with great firmness that she did not fear poverty, that her work would provide her with enough to eat, and that

she would always find some rags with which to cover herself. I then sent her away, repeating that she think about these things seriously.

Catherine did not actually tell me everything concerning this event. It is certain however that she had already made up her mind, because although it could be said that she was perfect in her present state of life, she was not happy, her overriding desire to always look for what was most excellent in our religion and what could make her more agreeable to Our Lord, told her in the depth of her heart that that there was something more than just the ordinary life of the Sault.

She also learned, I know not how, that there were other extraordinary things that were being hidden from her. She complained discreetly about the missionaries in her conversations with her companion to the effect that they were not telling her everything. Moreover, she had some knowledge of the Evangelical Counsels and she had examples of it in the Hospitaler Sisters in Montreal, such that after considering everything, the two of them decided on their own to never marry and to consecrate to God: the one, her virginity, and the other her perpetual widowhood, and they considered this as a

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big secret and resolved to never divulge it except in grave circumstances.

Catherine could not escape the incessant pressure from her sister, who decided that the matter had been settled. The older sister thought that the younger had taken enough time to make up her mind and angrily demanded an answer. And so, that is why this chaste girl, wishing to silence her sister once and for all and be spared further torments with solicitations that she did not like, declared to the sister that she had renounced marriage and to please let her live in peace. As for the future, she had been accustomed to hardships for a long time, that she would work a little if she did not have enough to eat, so that she would not be a burden to her sister nor to the village.

"What, my sister", quite upset by these words, "where did you get such a strange resolution, have you thought out what you have just said? Have you ever heard tell of an example of this among Iroquois girls? From where does such a novel fancy come and do you not see that you are going to expose yourself to ridicule from the men and to Satan's temptations? Can you be the first to do something that no other girl among

us has been able to do? My dear sister, stop these thoughts, do not trust your own strength and go along the normal route with the other girls."

To all of this Catherine responded without emotion that she did not fear men's ridicule as long as she does nothing wrong, and she hoped that God would give her the necessary strength to overcome temptations from the devil with which she was being threatened, and moreover, since the resolution had already been taken, she begged once more that no more be said to her on this topic.

It is true that the sister no longer dared to say anything more about this, but she complained to Anastasie, this elderly Christian who was the mistress of the cabin and who was like a mother to the two sisters. The sister knew how to present her reasons to Anastasie so well that the "mother" came on her side. Actually, Catherine's intention appeared even more strange because there was no precedent for the plan to remain a virgin[40] and therefore very difficult for that reason.

It is certain that some members of her sex and age had tried to imitate her in this life-style after her death, but encountered difficulties that they admitted they had not the

strength to overcome, such was the opposition between this kind of life and the ordinary life of the native. The only thing they could do, if widowed at a relatively young age, was to renounce any second marriage and thus to be able, in some small way, to share in Catherine's crown.

Anastasie, in her wisdom, weighed all the reasons and feared that her "daughter" Catherine had taken the decision too lightly and too hastily and that she would probably regret this later. That is why, for her part, she did everything she could to turn Catherine away from that decision, but she gained no more than did the sister. And, since Anastasie pressed Catherine a bit too much on this matter, Catherine told her in a firm voice -- contrary to her usual manner -- that if she thought so highly of marriage then she should marry, but for her, Catherine, they would do her a big favor by not talking about this any more and that she would have nothing to do with any man in this world.

Thus they broke off and both came to see me immediately, Anastasie to complain about Catherine, and Catherine to complain about Anastasie. The younger one arrived first and told me about the pain that her "mother" was

causing her, and about the "sister" who was forcing her to marry and that she could not bring herself to obey them. To remove this pain and try to come to a final solution, I suggested that she take another three days to think it over, and during her extraordinary prayers to commend the matter to Our Lord, and that I would join her in this, and whatever God inspired her to do after these three days, that she abide by that decision absolutely, and that she remember always that she alone is the master of herself and that she depended on nobody else to make this decision.

She agreed to this suggestion, but the Holy Spirit moved her so strongly interiorly to declare herself, that she needed only a few minutes of deliberation on the decision that she had already taken some time ago. I was surprised to see her return, moments after she had left, to tell me -- with a fiery demeanor -- that she could no longer take all this wrangling, that she would tell me clearly that she had renounced marriage and to have no other spouse but Jesus Christ, and that she considered herself fortunate to live in poverty and misery for her Love.

I must say sincerely that I wanted to say nothing to Catherine that would encourage her to take on a life-style so

unheard of among the natives, and had strong reasons for and against, so that I rather preferred that God act directly with His creature, having no doubts that the matter would succeed if it were indeed His will. But it was so apparent from these last words that God was already speaking through Catherine's lips and that it was He who had inspired such a heroic endeavor, that I finally took her side. I praised her resolution, encouraged her to carry it out with the same courage with which she had undertaken it, assuring her that I would support her against anybody and that neither I nor any of the other missionaries at the Sault would ever abandon her nor leave her wanting for anything.

I can assure the reader here that after these few words I relieved Catherine's soul of a strange purgatory and that I left her in a kind of paradise. From that moment, she really entered into the Lord's joy and began to experience in the depth of her soul a peace, a calm, a satisfaction so great that even her exterior changed noticeably. And, what is quite remarkable is that these effects lasted until the last breath of her life, that nothing ever after altered; a clear indication that it was God's Spirit who possessed her. She thanked me with a great show

of affection, then she left -- like the happiest person in the world -- and I remained quite pleased at such a heroic plan and full of admiration for her who had the courage to undertake it, and with extraordinary joy to see that the Divine Goodness prepared such a beautiful model of holiness in the world for our mission, and such a powerful advocate in Heaven in the person of this first Iroquois Virgin.

She had no sooner left me than Anastasie came in her turn to see me, complaining that Catherine did not want to hear any more about marriage, although she was of age to do so. I replied frostily that I was quite astounded that she should torment Catherine over an intention that was so laudable, and that an elderly Christian like herself had not opened her own eyes to see the beauty and the merit in such a holy resolution, that far from harboring ill thoughts of her, she ought -- if she had the faith -- to esteem her infinitely more, and to consider herself fortunate that God did her the honor of choosing a young girl from her cabin to raise the banner of virginity among the people and to let them know about this state of life that was so sublime that it lifts people from the mud and the world to make them like angels in heaven.

One could not have expected a quicker change. At my words, Anastasie seemed to come out of a profound sleep. She blamed herself for her conduct and began to think about the way she should have thought about her "daughter". Moreover, since she did have a deep faith, she admired Catherine, praised and encouraged her. She looked on Catherine as already a saint, she was the first to support her in this new way of life she had chosen as the better part¹⁴. She also inspired the same attitude in Catherine's "sister" and the two of them looked on her with more than respect -- a kind of veneration -- leaving her in peace and entirely at liberty to make of the future everything she wished.

It is thus that Our Lord changed all that persecution into His Own glory and the good of His servant, making it known that He alone was the author of a resolution that seemed so strange that it was novel and without precedent in a native girl.

Catherine, therefore, freed from all doubts and now in full command to do whatever she judged appropriate without interference from anybody, thought of nothing but to thank Our Lord for so many graces He had given her, and to respond

in all the ways that she could on the basis of her understanding and a reciprocal love.

Her companion, to whom she did not fail to recount everything, supported and encouraged her, trying to profit always from all the good thoughts that Catherine shared with her and from the beautiful example that she continually had before eyes. "Hey now", she would often say to herself, "if a girl so innocent can do such and such a thing, what should a sinner like myself not do?" In this way, if Catherine's fervor enkindled the fire of Divine Love in her companion's heart, the companion's courage to follow supported Catherine's fervor.

With such favorable assistance, Catherine continued with all the pious exercises of which we have already spoken. She added to them by frequent reception of the sacraments which, for her, were a continual source of graces and celestial benediction because of the holy dispositions which she brought to them. She resumed, even though weak, to punish her body by continual work, by prayers, by fasting, and by all kinds of austerities that she could practice in secret, with no

other witness except her companion who was doing no less at the same time.

Having spent all summer like this, she was invited to winter once more in the woods, but she would not hear of it. She protested that she would never go back there. We saw earlier that she made this resolution on the basis of the trouble she endured during the previous winter, being far from the church and the Blessed Sacrament and deprived of all the spiritual aids she had in the village. I wanted to take her there myself so that she could regain some of her health on the hunt where she would have the good food she needed but could not find in the villages, that she ran the risk of inactivity and the winter was long.

At these words she laughed and a moment later took on such a devout air that was normal for her whenever she came to communicate her spiritual view. She gave me that beautiful response, worthy of Catherine Tekakwitha: "Ah, Father, it's true that the body enjoys the woods, but the soul is bored there and dies of hunger, whereas in the village if the body suffers a little from not being as well fed, the soul finds its entire satisfaction being closer to Our Lord. Thus I abandon this

miserable body to hunger and everything that can result from this so that my soul is happy and has its normal nourishment."

There she remained in the village for the whole winter and she obtained what she was seeking with such avidity, I mean the cross for her body and all the heavenly sweets for her spirit. She received these generously as was her custom, and Our Lord, Who had promised to nourish those who were hungry and thirsted for justice, accorded her this grace with equal profusion.

The Sault mission, as we have already mentioned in passing, was at that time in a great state of fervor under the direction of its holy missionary. It was a young church endowed with extraordinary graces and one could see a kind of holiness there that was worthy of the Early Church. The Iroquois had accepted the Faith enthusiastically. The braves and generous neophytes developed such vivid emotions of shame and sorrow for their past sins that even though these sins had been effaced by Baptism, they nevertheless performed rigorous penance for them.

Some of them drew blood from their body several times a week by rough and prolonged disciplines. Others chopped

wood and carried their loads of wood all day long wearing metal belts¹⁵ on their body. Joseph Tog8ir8i, Captain of the Sault, and famous in all the land for his bravery under the name Chief Mohawk, wore such a belt every Friday and on the eve of Feast days. Paul Shonoguenhad, our elderly *dogique*¹⁶ and first Christian of the Sault did the same. Another, called Etienne, had such a strong devotion that he engendered devotion in those who were simply watching him pray.

Such were the men. The women, who always go too far, did all this and then more. Some of them roll in the snow, as I saw one young woman do for three nights in a row in the coldest weather I have seen in Canada. Another, in similar weather but also in a snow-fall so heavy that one could not see two [46] steps ahead and would not have the strength to remain upright, not only managed to stay up but, bared right down to her waist, exposed herself to all the rigor of the season on the bank of the great river and said her Rosary while maintaining this strange posture.

It should be mentioned that the Hail Mary in the native language is twice as long as in our language.¹⁷

Some even went further. They broke the ice with an axe and jumped in up to their neck in the coves and rivers at the height of winter, and had the courage to recite several decades of the Rosary during this frightful suffering, and then came out of the water like people not from the earth, with a shirt of ice over their body. One of them did this for three consecutive nights in the woods and then when she returned to the cabin, did not dry herself at the fire for fear of exposing traces of her other mortifications. Her humility being no less than her fervor, she spent the night in this icy shirt. On the third night she developed such a fever that she thought she would die.

Etienne's wife, Anne, who did not take second place to her husband in virtue, was not satisfied with jumping into an icy river herself, but took along her little girl, Marie, only three years old and then pulled the child out half-dead. When I scolded her for this action, I asked her why she went to such an extreme. She naively and simply answered that she foresaw that when her daughter grew up she would fall into sin, and therefore out of this apprehension, she wanted the daughter to do penance in advance.

Actually, I was the spiritual director for most of these people, but all of these things took place in the woods where these Christian women believed that anything and everything was permitted. The one who jumped into the icy waters for three nights straight did not usually go on the hunt, but she went this time because I would not permit her to do whatever she liked in the village, having said to herself that in the woods at least, she was master of her own body. She personally told me this when they brought her back more dead than alive. Thus, the only thing we could do in our meetings was to forbid them from returning to these excesses. However, it could be said that good intentions and inadequate understanding in these new Christians made their actions somewhat excusable.

I admit that these kinds of activities are not always sure indications of holiness and much vanity and self-love can slip in. However, we have reason to believe that there was holiness in those of whom I have been speaking because the other facets of their lives corresponded perfectly. They lived in great innocence, in great union, and much charity, especially with regard to the poor and sick.

Not being satisfied only with working for their own salvation, they were zealous for the salvation of their compatriots from the Iroquois homeland who came to the Sault to visit or to settle here. They are also seen instructing these new people every day and well into the night so that the new-comers could not go from one extreme to the other in one step. It was only natural that some bad "yeast"¹⁸ among the new-comers showed up in this land. The least disorder caused by the bad yeast here threw the whole village into consternation.

To avert these problems, the men and women of the Holy Family made the rounds of the cabins during the entire night, willingly dedicating their own time to prevent any offense to God. These fervent natives even extended their zeal outside the village, across the river and right into Montreal. During this time, a large number of natives came down the Ottawa River to trade in Montreal, just as our own people had the custom of going there also to profit from the general trading. The chief Mohawk and another Elder from the Sault with him, more zealous still for God's interests rather than their own, did something worthy of perpetual memory.

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Everybody in Canada knows that the trading period is the time for drunkenness and debauchery. These two brave men therefore, banking on their zeal and all the influence they had among the natives, each night gathered the girls and women into a separate camp and spent the entire night there to prevent any women from leaving and any men from entering.

These two, also having with them the worthy Etienne of whom we spoke earlier, went as far as Mohawk country and preached the Gospel to the Mohawk villages. During the month that they were there, they went to give religious instruction every day in the cabins and spent the better part of the nights, without rest, in counseling those who came to them with difficulties. They did this during the height of the drinking, making our faith triumph in the middle of this Babylon, with head held high, and with no fear of the obvious danger to which they were exposing themselves of having their head smashed in by the drunkards.

This zeal was not in vain because God blessed their work and they reaped a rich harvest. Our priests who lived in those villages were so edified, so consoled, and even so well helped in their ministry that they wrote us letters of praise for these

three men, requesting the missionaries at the Sault to send them similar help from time to time, a help that was as welcome.

Such were the first Christians at the Sault mission, and in spite of the use of guns in the war that followed later, and the hellish traffic in alcoholic drink that ruined all our work, and caused so many changes, we still have, thanks be to God, good results in a large number of natives who over so many years maintained themselves in innocence and fervor. So many grand and fine actions merited, no doubt, to be known and praised by everybody, but those men and women who did them and who had no less humility than of fervor, knew so well how to keep these activities secret that only the missionaries on the scene knew about them.

However, virtue, no matter the kind, reveals itself, but several people in the village were ignorant of its source. Catherine was of this number, and she -- who had a quick and penetrating mind -- judged accurately that in addition to the piety that was so astonishing at the Sault, there was something being hidden in these excellent Christians that was either their source or support. Finally, she uncovered a part of the puzzle

and guessed the other, so that, to keep her satisfied, I had to give her a discipline and a little iron-chain belt which she has used ever since to satisfy her extreme thirst for suffering.

If I had let her do as she wished in this matter, she would have surpassed all the others, but her strength was not up to her courage, it was necessary to moderate her courage to avoid exhausting her strength. In fact, in spite of all my precautions, she managed to escape my control on several occasions, as happened this winter on the very feast of the Purification when, to imitate in some manner the holy ceremonies of the Church in the procession held on this day and to give Our Lady some sign of the love she had for her, she made a complete trip around her field which is fairly large and said the rosary several times, in snow going right up to her waist.

But what made our Catherine to be happier than others and put her a step above all the natives at the Sault, as well as of all the other natives who embraced the faith in northern New France, was this grand and glorious taste for virginity. She was the first of this new world who, by a particular inspiration from the Holy Spirit, had consecrated her virginity to Our Lord and by her pure choice and ardent desire to please

God had embraced this life-style so perfect in itself and so sublime that the Son of God Himself could not describe better the renown and merit of it except by comparing it with the angels in heaven. *They were like the angels of heaven*, and the status of the angels in heaven to the virgins on earth, *The Kingdom of heaven is similar to the ten Virgins*.

Among the Fathers of the Church who discussed -- with holy energy -- to find out which one of Our Lady's virtues was the most pleasing to God and made her worthy to be His Mother, there are those who correctly think that it is her virginity, and for having been the first among all pure creations who, by an express vow, raised the divine banner of virginity in the world. By this act alone, I say, Mary surpassed all the graces, all the perfections, and all the holiness of all the other saints combined. I even say that in proportion to such a heroic act as was made by this young native virgin in imitation of the Queen of Virgins, also made the greatest glory before God, and considering only this act, we should not be surprised if she has merited so many graces during her life and worked so many great miracles after her death.

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God had prepared her for this even back home among the Iroquois, preserving her for more than 20 years in a state of angelic purity in soul and body in the midst of corruption. She prepared for this herself by renouncing marriage, which was going against the custom of the other girls, and by undergoing persecutions that were brought against her for this odd behavior. She made this resolution almost on arrival at the Sault, keeping it secret until the persecutions she had suffered back home resumed here at the Sault and she saw herself obliged to make the resolution known.

After this declaration, Catherine would have liked to complete her plans without further friction, but she had such a desire to belong to Our Lord and to make as soon as possible the entire sacrifice of her person by an irrevocable compact, and the plan was so novel and seemed to be so incompatible with the life-style of the natives that I decided to avoid precipitating the situation prematurely to give her whatever time she needed to think clearly about such a serious matter. I therefore tested her for a while longer, and after having examined her conduct closely, and the great progress that she made in all kinds of virtues and especially with how much

profusion God had communicated Himself to His servant, it seemed to me that Catherine's plan could only come from Him. Hence, I finally gave her permission to proceed with her plan.

It is difficult to describe the joy with which she received my decision and the fervor she brought to this great objective. When the day came, the day so hoped for, the happiest and most beautiful in her life, she made a final effort to offer her sacrifice to the Lord with all the piety, all the devotion, all the ardor of which she was capable.

It was the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1679 at eight in the morning that Catherine Tekakwitha, a moment after Jesus Christ gave Himself to her in Communion, gave herself totally to Him, and by renouncing marriage for ever, she promised Him perpetual virginity. Then, with a heart all afire with His love, she asked Him to be her only Spouse and to take her as His spouse in return. She prayed to Our Lady for whom she had a tender affection to present her His Divine Son. Then, wishing to make a double sacrifice in this one action, at the same time that she devoted herself to Jesus

Christ, she also consecrated herself to Mary, asking her absolutely to be her mother and she her daughter.

Thus transpired this grand action which caused, no doubt, great joy in all Paradise and put her at the summit of all her desires. It is also true that since this heroic sacrifice, Catherine no longer belonged to the earth and all her conversation was in heaven, her soul relishing all the spiritual sweetness while she chastised her body with new austerities which, joined to that attitude so profound in her mind to be always united to God, finally exhausted her physical resources. She fell dangerously ill that summer and had much trouble recovering. There remained a severe pain in her stomach accompanied by frequent vomiting and a low-grade fever that sapped her strength little by little until she fell into a languishing state from which she could not recover.

It required a courage like hers to maintain all the fervor of devotion, in spite of her infirmities, which she did not ever relax right up to her last breath. In fact, her mind seemed to take on new vigor, to find new ways of sanctifying herself more and more in the little time that remained for her to live. The Just are admirable in their ways: the more they seem to be

near their end, the more they make great strides in perfection. These are the insatiable saints who are never satisfied with what they are giving to God. They always want to give more so that they can reciprocally receive more from Him, thereby amassing greater treasures for all eternity.

Our chaste virgin had, no doubt, amassed it during the two and a half years that she was at the Sault, not only by the great things she did and that we have described up to this point in our story, but more so by the continual practice of Christian virtues that, I dare say, she possessed in eminent degree, such that it is difficult to say which virtues had appeared with most splendor in her life.

Although we have already seen some beautiful examples of her virtues, we will now say something about her charity before we speak of her death, because in effect, that is to be the most esteemed virtue in saints and it is the one virtue that makes for true sainthood.

Charity is not only the queen of virtues and the one that sets the price and value of all the others, it is the principle of sanctity and even the shortest and surest way to attain it because to soon be a saint and perfect, it is only a matter of

loving God with all one's heart. In the absence of this virtue, however holy and perfect one appears to people, one is nothing in God's eyes, as St. Paul says. Having said this and when I recall the ardor of the charity she had for God, I have no difficulty in saying further that this is the reason why Catherine became so perfect in so short a time. She loved Him so much that all her joy was in thinking of Him, to converse with Him night and day, and to continually offer Him all her thoughts, words, and actions, and it is for this reason that she liked so much to be alone. She was associated in friendship with the two women we have already mentioned, but it is only because they brought her to God, as when a person readily listens to someone speaking about one's beloved.

Catherine in particular had a singular pleasure in hearing talk about God, and it was enough for somebody to initiate a pious discussion in her presence to see her immediately leave whatever she was doing, to become reflective, and apply herself with all the attention she could without ever becoming bored, so much did she love this kind of talk.

In the last year of her life, being forced to spend almost all her time in the cabin because of her infirmities, a person

came to visit her every day to speak to her about God and to explain our Mysteries. It is this same person for whom Catherine obtained additional graces after her death even so far as to appear to this person several times, disclose some things that were to happen and to lead this person to the highest perfection with such intensity that this person was transported outside herself for 5 and 6 hours at a time.

Catherine's love for God did not stop at simple affection. She constantly looked for every imaginable way to prove this to Him. It was enough for her to hear about some particular trait from the lives of the saints and she immediately had to do the same, regardless of how difficult it might appear for nature, to the point of using fire, iron, or blood, to show her love for Our Lord using their example. We will see this below when we discuss her austerities and her love for the Cross. But, the most authentic sign of her charity towards God -- having been impelled by an ardent desire to please Him -- was when she consecrated her virginity to Him and renounced marriage so that she would have no other spouse but Him.

Until now, this kind of consecration was unheard of among the natives and even more admirable in Catherine

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because those of her sex lived off the husband's hunting and therefore aspired to marry, and considered themselves very fortunate indeed if they married a good hunter. God, who never allows Himself to be surpassed in love by His creatures, communicated Himself to her with such profusion that one would have had to see it to believe it.

It is written of several saints that at times their heart was so inflamed by divine love that in spite of the efforts they made to hide this sacred flame that was consuming them in their souls, they could not prevent a spark from occasionally showing on the outside. That is what we are talking about here. This young virgin, a native though she was, ordinarily found herself so full of God and experienced such sweetness in this possession that her entire exterior shone -- her eyes, gestures, and speech were inflamed during these moments.

It was not necessary to be with her for any length of time to find oneself affected and warmed by this divine fire. From this charity that Catherine had for God came the great love she had for the Eucharist and for the Cross. These are, in effect, the two places where the Savior of the world had most shown His love for mankind, and because of which mankind should

all the more reciprocate. Catherine reciprocated in an admirable manner. It would be difficult to go much further in the faith, and the esteem, and tenderness she had for the Divine Eucharist.

From the time she became aware of this great sacrament, she had so much affection for it that it remained her delight right up to her death. We have seen the care she took in performing her duties, the long prayers in the church, her fervor at Communion, and the abundance of tears with which she emptied her heart at the foot of the altar -- entire days, even during the most severe cold of Canada.

Often I was forced, seeing her whole body frozen, to have her leave the church and warm herself at our fire, but a moment later she would escape, saying with a little smile that she was not cold, and return to where her heart had remained. What would those French people say about this kind of devotion as they pass by a church a hundred times during the day without thinking of going in at least once to visit Our Lord on the altar, and are so bored in church that the Mass seems to be excessively long whenever they are obliged to be there?

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If Catherine had so much love for the dear Jesus in the Eucharist, it was no less for the same Savior on the Cross. To have the Cross constantly before her eyes, she wore a little crucifix I had given her and she would be always kissing it with great devotion, recognizing the great benefit that is our Redemption and a tender compassion for Jesus suffering. She did more. She wanted to participate in His suffering.

She carried her cross after Him with all the other saints, and this Divine Master who led her interiorly, inspired in her that great hate of self so recommended by Jesus Christ and so necessary for salvation. She treated her body at the Sault so harshly that it would be difficult to find anywhere such great innocence along with such austere penance. She punished her body in every way she could think of, by work, by vigils, by fasts, by cold, by fire, by iron, by belts of sharp points, by the harsh whip with which she lacerated her shoulders several times a week.

When she went into the woods in winter-time with her sister and the other women, she would remain towards the rear, take off her shoes, and walked bare-foot in the snow and on the ice. She would put her shoes back on before anybody

could see what she was doing, not having less care for humility, thus preferring to abstain from mortification as much as she wanted it -- rather than to be seen mortifying herself.

One day she asked Anastasie, her mentor, what she thought was the most harsh thing with which a person could offer a more acceptable sacrifice to Our Lord to show Him one's love. Without knowing where the question was leading, Anastasie replied, "My daughter, I know of nothing more horrible than fire". "Nor I", replied Catherine. She said nothing more about it, but at night when everybody had gone to bed, she spent a long time burning her legs with a fire-brand in the same way that the Iroquois burned their slaves. She did this with the idea of being a slave to her Savior to whom she then went in the still of the night to present herself at the church door, with its beautifully adorned Cross.

On another occasion, she met with her companion and each one resolved to put a piece of burning coal between the big toe and the next one; they say that this is the most painful of torments by fire. Catherine admitted to her companion that she had already done this and endured it for a long time. The

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companion was quite astonished because robust as she was, she fainted after having attempted to sustain this pain even for half the length of a Hail Mary, and could not believe that Catherine could do what she had just done without some kind of miracle. The feat was even surpassed when, the next morning, there was no sign of burns on Catherine's foot.

Finally, by a last loving effort to show gratitude to Jesus immolated on our altars and on the Cross, and by an extreme desire to give all for all, one day -- after having prepared herself by some new devotions -- she made a perpetual donation of her soul to Jesus in the Eucharist and her body to Jesus crucified, taking Him once more as her only Spouse, and devoting herself to Him entirely as His spouse. For this event, she chose the great feast day of Our Lady to make her offering to the Son through the hands of the divine mother and to take her, in return, as her mother.

I would say that since these two major sacrifices, which she made on her own, her soul existed no longer except for Jesus in the Eucharist and her body only to die with Him on the Cross in the midst of pain and suffering. I say "die on the Cross" because she was -- in a sense -- already dead, having

shortened her days by acts worthy of eternal memory although more to be admired than imitated, and with which I wish to terminate this part of the story.

This generous girl, two or three months before her death, wishing to come closer and closer to the Cross of her Savior and show Him by some heroic act the great desire she had to participate in His suffering, in spite of her chronic illness, and as if she had not yet done anything significant, Catherine, I say, wanted to imitate Blessed Louis de Gonzaga¹⁹, of whom I had told her in a conversation, by going into the woods to gather up a large bundle of sharp pine needles that she brought back with her and hid in the cabin. That night, while everyone else was asleep, she sprinkled her mat with these needles, lay down on top of them, having only a blanket over her body, and then had the strength to roll around all night on these needles.

She did the same for the next three nights, with unimaginable pain as she admitted to me later. This event left her so weakened and exhausted that her face now had the look of death. We had attributed this change to her normal infirmities that seemed to visibly deteriorate from day to day

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without knowing the real cause. Her companion, however, suspecting that there was something hidden going on, knew how to make her divulge what was happening, and Catherine added that she had in mind to continue with this until she died.

"Yes indeed", replied her companion, "but you know very well that it is an offense to God to be doing this kind of thing without permission from your Confessor". Catherine needed nothing more said. The slightest shadow of sin was enough to make her divulge her action; without this fear, she would have kept on doing this for the rest of her life. She came to me immediately and addressed me in these words, "Ah, Father, I have sinned". She then described the whole thing. Although in my heart I admired her, I did not hesitate to show anger and to scold her for this imprudence. And, to prevent her from resuming the practice, I ordered her to go and throw the pine needles into the fire. She complied immediately with great submission, a virtue she had in an eminent degree, always ready to act or not act, equally happy with either side with no preference for her own opinion. This was an infallible indication that it was God directing her.

It goes without saying that her fear of sin triggered such a commendable reaction as mentioned above. In fact, she had not only an extreme aversion to sin, but even to the slightest appearance of it. She had a surprising delicacy of conscience. This trait appeared especially in her Confessions, which were always accompanied by sobs and tears, and with an exact analysis of her least faults. Thus, she considered herself to be the greatest sinner in the village and she held herself to be so worthless that she could not stand the least word of praise. She would flee immediately, or if she could not leave, she hid under the blanket to conceal the blush that came over her.

Also, she could hardly stand it when I spoke of the glory that was waiting for her in heaven, unable to imagine how such a bad creature -- as she believed herself to be -- had the right to claim this reward meant for the Just and the Saints. On the other hand, she had esteem for everybody else; she praised them, approved of whatever merited approval, and excused the rest with much charity. Although the native women are naturally very inclined to gossip with each other, it was noticed that from this one there was never any word coming from her lips against anyone at all.

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42 She was a "child of the forest" only in name, being naturally sweet, honest, loving, very joyful even in her disposition, doing good, and always ready to oblige. Her patience seemed to us to be heroic in the midst of her infirmities which were constant at the Sault and which she had accepted with a patience and peace of mind that charmed us. Always joyful, always happy, without ever showing any impatience or the slightest indication of regret and sadness, except for the one time when her "sister" had prevailed upon her so much to marry.

She suffered greatly the two last months of her life, forced to maintain a particular posture day and night without being able to move except with extreme pain, but at the same time never a single sigh of complaint. On the contrary, she considered herself fortunate to suffer something for Our Lord and thought only about uniting her sufferings with His.

She had a high regard for the Faith and everything it taught, and a special respect for those who were called by God to carry it to the entire world. She had a lively hope but perfectly unselfish, never serving God except for Himself alone and for the sole desire of pleasing Him. Her modesty

was fetching and all her exterior breathed an air of virtue and piety that inspired others to do the same. Her courage was heroic, her fidelity to the service of God was inviolable, her devotion tender, her tears continual, as was her union with God, and a gift for prayer very advanced without having had any other teacher except the Holy Spirit. Let us say in a word that she possessed all the virtues in an eminent degree, as could be seen throughout her entire life.

It seems that the characteristic virtue in Catherine and what raised her merit the most was her purity, whether we mean it in the wide sense of being exempt from sin, or in the ordinary sense indicating a complete absence of impurity. Our virgin was admirable in one as well as in the other. For the first, I do not believe that she ever offended God mortally.²⁰ I would go further and say that she had such a horror of sin and such a great vigilance over herself to avoid it that I do not know of any time during her two and a half years at the Sault that she committed any sin, even of little consequence. She was particularly careful to avoid the least fault, and that is what people call true sanctity and possession of true sanctity.

For the second kind of purity, I say -- and I do not hesitate to say it -- it is a miracle of grace that one cannot understand how she had spent more than twenty years of her life in the midst of the corruption in her homeland and two and a half years at the Sault, still virgin in body and soul, without having felt all this time the least thing contrary to this virtue, neither in body nor in soul. This, I say, seems incredible but is, nevertheless, the truth.

I had already heard this from herself, but wishing to assure ourselves of such a marvelous thing, I again asked her about it the evening before her death after having conferred on her the Holy Viaticum. Even though it was painful for her to speak, she made an effort to answer and in a very firm tone said, "No, No", and with a gesture indicating pain at being asked on her death-bed about a sin of which she had such a horror during life, what could one think after that except to say with the Prophet that God is to be admired in His saints, and having chosen this native girl to be the first Iroquois virgin, He had prepared her with His blessings right from her mother's womb, so to say.

From this source came the tender affection she had for Our Lady, the Queen of Virgins and the Mother of purity. No sooner had Catherine heard of her than she loved her and loved to the point of ecstasy. She spoke the same way, she had learned by heart the litanies composed in Mary's honor and she recited them every night alone after the communal prayers in the cabin. She never went anywhere without her rosary which she prayed throughout the journey. She made Saturdays and other days special to this Mother of Mercy by mortifications or by some extraordinary act of virtue. She prepared herself with re-doubled fervor for the more solemn feasts, and these great days were for her a time of spiritual renovation. To the extent that she relished them, to the same extent she received grace.

Also, we have seen above that she had always chosen them whenever she wanted to make some grand sacrifice to Our Lord, like her vow of virginity that she made partly to imitate the Holy Virgin, and to give her this shining mark of esteem and love. Finally, at the Sault, just as soon as she had taken Jesus Christ as her spouse, she took Mary as her mother. She threw herself into her arms, and abandoned herself

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entirely to her guidance with a truly daughter-like confidence. Surely a worthy daughter of such a mother whom one can piously believe to have obtained from Her Son such an excellent and rare gift of purity by reciprocal love.

With St. Paul, Catherine would have wished that the whole world would do as she was doing. Her way of doing things, her reputation, and something intangible that the French and natives noticed in this young maiden, that had made this marvel of our forests the cause for several people wishing to hear from her own lips what was the most agreeable thing to God that one could do, and no matter how much she wanted to conceal herself, she could not refuse this knowledge to others.

Virginity, chastity, continence, were the topics of these conversations and like a balm that she spread everywhere, but with this added quality: she never talked about this virtue -- either to have someone adopt it or to make the contrary vice hateful -- without always combining some praise of Our Lady.

One may assume that in these conversations the lips spoke from the abundance of the heart. Catherine's heart was already full of esteem, veneration, and tenderness for this

incomparable Mother who was her sole refuge and at the same time the model she forced herself to imitate in all things.

Now that I have talked at length about the life and virtues of this Iroquois maiden, I come now to her death where we will find no less to admire, as well as several very remarkable events that accompanied her death.

Her Remarkable Death.

Yes, Catherine died among the Iroquois at the Sault, but I will borrow some words from a wise man and would say of her what he said of the Just Man: that she had been lifted up from this world by a special providence of God in the flower of her age, in the fear that with time, this so innocent soul would eventually succumb to the corruption of her homeland. And, because she was agreeable in His eyes, He -- as it were -- hurried to remove her from that den of iniquity.

But, since she finished so gloriously in a mission -- the Sault -- that was at that time in its first fervor, I prefer to take the wise man's second thought and say with him that Catherine did not leave the earth but rather that she was ripe for heaven early. Having fulfilled her career so well, she had

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been fortunate enough to do in three years what others strive to accomplish over many years and only after having arrived at a very old age.

We have noted several times that she was always rather frail. Besides this, about a year before her death, there remained a grave malady, a low-grade fever with great stomach pains accompanied by frequent vomiting. These were caused no doubt by relentless work and her vigils, fasts, and excessive austerities of which she never dispensed herself right up to the time of her death. We could recall the last of all -- I mean that bed of pine-needles -- so painful, and by which this generous girl had ruined what little health she still had. The fever began to deteriorate and forced her to take to her bed and then took her from us at the end of only two months.

For Catherine, these last days were truly precious days -- days of grace and holiness, because she spent them in living all those excellent virtues that she had performed so well during her life and which never appeared with more splendor than at the time of her death: her faith, her hope, her charity, humility, gentleness, patience, resignation, and a surprising joyfulness in the midst of her suffering. The priest who had

care of the sick at that time, and who visited her every day, could not admire her enough. He always found her with a smile on her face that reflected her soul's tranquillity and the consolation she felt in her pain. We should not be surprised. This saintly girl, having lived on the Cross with her Savior and Spouse, had the joy of also dying on the Cross according to His example.

Let us add that at the time all the men were out hunting and the women who stayed behind in the village were busy from morning to night either in the woods or in the field, leaving their sick alone all day long, with only a plate of sagamité and some water at their bedside. It is in this solitude that Catherine spent the time in her final illness. What would ordinarily be time of pain and gloom for someone sick, for her became an occasion for new merits and even a new consolation.

Since she knew how to derive spiritual profit from everything and since for a long time she had been accustomed to converse with God, she used this solitude to converse to Him even more and to enjoy His love more and more. In this way she found and relished God inside her with a fullness and

joy and spiritual delights which became more pure as she became more empty of everything else, to draw them from the Source Itself. Moreover, not being otherwise able to stay away from the center of all her affections -- I mean the Holy Eucharist -- she went every day to the church as long as she could still move, there to adore in her own way and spend entire hours, in spite of her grave illness, in surroundings so sweet that held such a charm for her.

When she could no longer come to the church, she then made the Stations of the Cross mentally, uniting herself to the perpetual sacrifices at our altars in a continual sacrifice of herself to our Savior. The hour for her final consummation was approaching and her strength was continually diminishing right up to the beginning of Holy Week of that year 1680, during which God wanted to finally take her out of this world and have her come, as we have every reason to believe, to celebrate the imminent feast days with the Angels.

On Tuesday morning of Holy Week, we saw that she was failing noticeably, so we gave her Holy Viaticum which she received with an angelic love and devotion like a true spouse of Our Lord. The Divine Savior did nothing more for her

except to have her renew all the offerings she had made to Him, manifesting with great feeling of gratitude for the great graces that she had received, especially at the Sault mission. All the native people who were in the village and who accompanied the Blessed Sacrament to the cabin were touched by such an edifying piety. She spent the rest of the day and that night in sweet and fervent conversations with Our Lord, Our Lady, and her crucifix.

On Wednesday morning, she was given Extreme Unction²¹, which she received with the same devotion as for Holy Viaticum on the previous day. Around three o'clock in the afternoon she entered into her agony, the most peaceful in the world. Some time later she lost the power of speech after having spoken the holy names of Jesus and Mary. Since she had full use of hearing and was fully conscious right up to her last breath, it was seen that she was forcing herself to at least make, from memory, those prayerful acts that were suggested to her in these final moments.

Finally, in less than half an hour after her agony began, she expired as peacefully as if she had entered a deep sleep.

Catherine Tekakwitha

Thus did Catherine Tekakwitha die in the twenty-third year of her life on Wednesday of Holy Week, April 17, around three in the afternoon, leaving the whole village engulfed in the aura of her virtues. Everyone considered her to be a saint, especially when a few hours later I delivered the eulogy during the evening prayers and impressed on the people the treasure that they had possessed and which they had just lost without yet having realized it.

Her virginal body was buried the next day around three in the afternoon, not with mourning, but with public joy that such a saintly life inspired the entire village. The joy, moreover, of now having, in the person of Catherine Tekakwitha, a powerful advocate with God, and that in their midst they still had part of her in this precious bodily sanctuary they were now looking at, and who had been, and would forever be -- as we hope -- the support, the path, and like a titular angel for this mission.

These were also the first things that Fr. Frémin said upon returning from France where he had been looking after the Sault's business, when he learned of Catherine's death, and in

this certainly he said only what had already come to be as we will see towards the end of our last Book.

It remains for us to report on several incidents that made us think that if her life was so acceptable to God, then her death was no less precious in His eyes.

The first incident is associated with the very day of her death. It would seem that God had wished to reward Catherine by the path she had loved the most, the most glorious, when He took her to Himself on Wednesday of Holy Week, that is, on the eve of the two days of Holy Week consecrated to two great Mysteries: the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and the Cross on Good Friday, both of which had constituted all her joy and consolation during life.

I certainly still recall that at the beginning of her final illness more than two months before her death, one of our priests assured us that for the reasons mentioned above, God would take her on that very day, Wednesday of Holy Week, and that he had no doubt that she went to heaven to celebrate the following two great feasts which had been her main devotions on earth.

The second incident is no less admirable than the first. It is the praiseworthy custom here for two members of the Holy Family to take turns remaining all night with those sick persons who are in danger of death, and this was done for Catherine. The night of Tuesday-Wednesday, which was the last of her life, I assigned the two most fervent members, the youngest of the two being also the youngest member of the Holy Family, she being only 21 or 22. She came looking for me after evening prayers, asking for permission to go into the woods to do some penance to obtain a good death for the one for whom she was keeping a vigil, whom she loved and was loved in return, being one of those recently associated with Catherine, as we shall explain later.

Such charity was surprising in this young native; she spent a quarter of an hour for her good friend doing penance to the point of drawing blood. It is even more astonishing that at the very moment Catherine heard about this, dying as she was on her mat, having near her only one of the two who were to invigilate that night, turned on her side and begged insistently that the other one be brought to her. The woman obeyed and went to fetch the other who was just coming out of the woods

and going to her cabin to put away the instrument of mortification. "Catherine", she said to her companion, "is asking for you and I came as she wished".

Both entered Catherine's cabin and the dying girl told the younger of the two to let the other take her rest now because she wanted to say something in private. Then, when the older one was asleep, Catherine beckoned to the younger who had demonstrated such charity on her behalf, encouraging and exhorting the younger to persevere in God's service, assuring her that she was very pleasing to Our Lord and promising her prayers once she was in heaven.

When this younger girl, having as much humility as fervor, replied that they hardly knew each other, and that she was only a miserable sinner, Catherine took her hand and pressed it saying, "Sister, I know very well what I am saying, I also know the place in the woods from where you have just come. Go, take courage, and be sure that you are pleasing in God's eyes and I will help you in His presence". This is what this woman told me the next day with a renewed veneration for the dying Catherine, and new courage to follow her example, as she is still doing at the Sault.

The third event pertains to knowledge that could only have come from heaven regarding the day of her death and even the hour of her death. After we gave her Holy Viaticum on Tuesday morning and were hastily preparing to administer Extreme Unction, she assured us that there was no need to hurry because the time had not yet come. On the basis of her words, we deferred the rite until Wednesday morning.

It was the same regarding the hour of death. We had reason to believe that she would die on Wednesday before noon. Her dear companion and several other women of the Holy Family who, since a year ago, had formed a little devotional group with Catherine that is still called by the name "Kateri's Sisters", had a strong desire to see her at the moment of death. However, they also had to fetch wood for the approaching feast and that chore could not wait. In this quandary of whether to go or stay, the best solution they could think of was to ask Catherine herself, having no doubt that Catherine had enough influence in heaven to defer the time of her death in their favor.

I therefore spoke to Catherine on their behalf, and she responded that the women should go to fetch wood and that

they would return in good time to be present at her death. They went and Catherine kept her word. She remained in the same condition right up to three in the afternoon when the women returned, and she waited until the last one had entered the cabin. The marvel that I saw with my own eyes was that the last one had hardly entered and all were now around her on their knees, when she went into her agony, and thus they all had the consolation of seeing her die as they had wished and as she had promised.

It is also told of her that some time before her last illness, when some other women had dug a grave in the cemetery to bury a little nephew, and the conversation having come around to this universal fate where everyone would have a place, they laughingly asked Catherine where her place would be. "It is there", she said, pointing to a particular spot with her finger. After her death, Fr. Chauchetière did all he could to persuade me to bury her in the church. However, to avoid such a singular departure from custom, I had a grave dug in the cemetery and it turned out to be in the very spot that she had pointed out, although I did not find this out until many years later.

The fourth event is a fourth marvel of which I was an eye-witness along with the priest mentioned just above and our people. Catherine, from the age of four when she had small-pox, was left with her face marked by the disease, and which her infirmities and mortifications had further disfigured. But this face, so disfigured and so swarthy in life, suddenly changed about fifteen minutes after her death, and in an instant became so beautiful and so fair that just as soon as I saw it (I was praying by her side) I let out a yell, I was so astonished, and I sent for the priest who was working at the repository for the Holy Thursday service. At the news of this prodigy, he came running along with some people who were with him. We then had the time to contemplate this marvel right up to the time of her burial.

I frankly admit that my first thought at the time was that Catherine could well have entered heaven at that moment and that she had -- as a "preview" -- already received in her virginal body a small indication of the glory of which her soul had taken possession in Heaven. Two Frenchmen from La Prairie de la Magdeleine came to the Sault on Thursday to be present at the service. They were passing by Catherine's cabin

where, seeing a woman lying on her mat and with such a beautiful and radiant face, they said to each other, "Look at this young woman sleeping so peacefully" and kept going. But, learning the next minute that it was a dead body, and that of Catherine, they returned to the cabin and went down on their knees to recommend themselves to her prayers. After having satisfied their devotion for having seen such a wonderful scene, they wished to show their veneration for the dead girl by constructing then and there a coffin to hold such cherished remains.

The final event associated with the death is the prodigious effect that it had on the mission. There was piety and fervor at the Sault, not to be denied after what has been already said. Catherine herself had drawn her piety and fervor from the beautiful examples of virtue she saw before her eyes on the mission. But if the mission, when she first arrived, was a powerful aid to her sanctification, I can assure you that at the end of her life and even more at her death, she in turn sanctified the mission.

Devotion became widespread. People spoke only about penance, about renunciation, about leaving all to give oneself

entirely to God in imitation of Catherine. People came from all sides to tell me about their beautiful and holy resolutions. It was the same for the results. A woman spent the entire night of Good Friday rolling around on pine needles just as Catherine had done. Another did the same later for 4 or 5 nights. Several drew blood on their shoulders from the use of rough disciplines.

Some married couples began living apart in continence. Widows renounced remarriage. Other young women promised to do the same if their husbands died before they did. They later carried out this holy resolution and persevered in it in spite of their young years and their need, quite compelling it seems, to provide for themselves and their children by a second marriage if they were being sought by suitably advantageous partner.

Such are the great results produced at the Sault mission by the life and death of our Catherine and continue to be produced every day by the memory that we keep dear and by the care that the missionaries take to keep this generous virgin's virtues before the eyes of the people, especially on the

anniversary of her death, observed here with exceptional devotion.

Book Three

Having spoken up until now about the life and death of Catherine, we are going to consider several apparitions associated with her and the extraordinary favors that several persons have obtained from Heaven, and obtain every day in Canada by her intercession.

Regarding the first of these points, I admit that I had difficulty in deciding to speak about them because there are many people in the world who profess to believe nothing, especially in these particular matters. No sooner do they hear talk about apparitions than they take the opposite position and dismiss all apparitions as so many illusions and fantasies. Yes, it is true that sometimes it is found that such events are more a matter of imagination rather than actuality. And, they presume that their adversarial view is much more likely still if the apparition concerns a poor native woman, as if the hand of God were shortened in such circumstances and that the Master of Grace should not be allowed to give to whom He wishes.

But, those apparitions that pertain to our discussion are so great and so well documented that I do not see how one can reasonably hold them as doubtful. Since the incredulous will always remain incredulous, God will be no less glorified in His servant in any event, and good people will find there new motives to love and bless Him, seeing how He is so generous in rewarding services rendered Him, even to rewarding poor natives.

On the sixth day after Catherine's death -- Easter Monday -- a virtuous person²² worthy of credence was at prayer at four in the morning when Catherine appeared to her surrounded in glory with a bearing full of majesty, shining face, looking up into heaven as in an ecstasy. This marvelous vision was accompanied by three events which make it even more admirable. In the first place, the vision lasted two full hours during which this person had the opportunity to look at it closely, which he did with a joy and pleasure that one cannot express. Catherine, by this singular favor, wanted to acknowledge the great service she had received during her life. Moreover, this same apparition was accompanied by several prophecies in the form of as many images seen on

either side of Catherine in her ecstasy. Some prophecies have already been fulfilled, others not yet. For example, on her right side there was an image of a church upside down, and nearby to the left, a native person attached to a post and being burned alive.

These two things happened in the month of April in the years 1680 and 1683. On the night of August 20, a fierce storm, with so much lightning and thunder that it could only be caused by the evil spirit, came and took the 60-foot long church at the Sault piece by piece, taking it, I say, by a corner with such violence that contrary to all laws of chance, overturned it to the opposite corner and reduced it to pieces. Two of our priests who were asleep in the church were lifted up with the pieces. Another one, who ran from the house to ring the bell had the rope ripped from his hands and was lifted into the air with the others. All three then found themselves on the ground under the debris from which it required great effort to free them. It was expected that their bodies would be all broken by such violence, but actually they got off with only a few light injuries. They attributed this happy outcome to Catherine's prayers.

When the three were together, they discussed the event. "For me", said one of them, "I said today's Mass in honor of Catherine". "And I", said another one, "I was at her tomb recommending myself to her in a particular matter." "And I", added the third, "have had the thought for about a year that some misfortune was going to befall the mission. Since that time and again today, I have been praying to Catherine every day at her tomb to spare us that misfortune. And during all this time I have not ceased to petition Fr. Superior of the mission to transfer Catherine's remains into our church, without really knowing why I was asking for that." That is the up-turned church in the apparition.

As for the native who was seen in this vision being tied to a post and burned alive, this was confirmed several years later. A native from our mission was burned at Onnontagué as were two women the following two years, and we have no doubt whatsoever that Catherine, who predicted this to us so far ahead, had obtained for these people the invincible constancy they exhibited during their torments. We will speak of this at the end of this third book as a marvelous result of the power she has in heaven.

Finally, the third element of this rather remarkable apparition was that the following year, July 1, 1681, and then April 21, 1682, the same person²³ had the same vision and in the same kind of situation, with only this difference, that in the first apparition Catherine looked like a rising Sun saying these words, "Until now I come daily". In the two following apparitions she looked like the Sun at noon, and said, "Look and do according to the example", God giving to understand by this that He wished images to be painted of Catherine. This directive was resisted for some time, but once some images of her were painted, they contributed marvelously to make her known because when they were placed on the head of a sick person, miraculous cures resulted.

Two days after the first of these three apparitions, and eight days after her death, Catherine appeared to the good Anastasie, in this way: This fervent Christian, after everybody else in the cabin went to sleep, continued to pray that evening. Overcome by sleep, she lay down on her mat to rest. She had hardly begun to close her eyes when she was awakened by a voice that called to her in these words, "Mother, get up". She recognized Catherine's voice and immediately, and far from

feeling any fear, she sat up and turned in the direction of the voice. She saw Catherine standing there surrounded by a brilliant light, half of her body hidden up to the waist by this light, and the other half -- according to this woman -- was as bright as a Sun.

She carried a Cross in her hand even more brilliant than everything else, and there was so much light coming from it that I doubt if one could see anything more beautiful in this world. "I saw her distinctly", she continued; "in my sitting position and she said these words which I heard distinctly: "Mother, look at this cross. Oh how beautiful it is! It was my only happiness throughout my life and I counsel you to also make it your own." After these few words, she disappeared, leaving her "mother" filled with joy and her mind so filled with this vision that even after many years, her memory of it is as vivid as at the first time. It seems that Catherine was showing gratitude for the great help she had received from Anastasie.

Catherine had wished -- by this beautiful and ravishing cross and by the words she added -- to prepare Anastasie to generously carry the cross that God was preparing for her,

because since that time she has lost three children killed in the war, of whom the eldest was captain of the village. These were disasters she accepted with heroic resignation, so much had she been strengthened interiorly by this apparition of her dear "daughter". Catherine appeared once more to her mentor one day when Anastasie was alone in the cabin. Catherine sat down next to her on the mat and reminded her of something blameworthy that she had done. After giving her some advice about behavior, she left.

The great love that Catherine had for the cross and the way she appeared to her "mother" Anastasie gave rise to the idea of painting the cross in her hand as a composition that suited her person best. But, God had spoken even more clearly about the holiness and merits of His spouse Catherine by authentic witness. I mean to say, by the prodigious graces -- so great in number -- that He had already accorded and continues to accord through her intercession to all kinds of people and of whom it is now time to speak as one of the most beautiful episodes in her story and gives a new luster to all the rest.

I have already mentioned in the Preface that even though at the Sault we now had such a rich treasure in Catherine, we

kept quiet about it within the village, judging it prudent not to precipitate anything sensational and to wait until heaven had indicated what to do. It was not long before a popular movement arose that could not have come from anywhere except heaven. Several months after Catherine's death, her tomb was frequently visited, both by the natives and by the French. Both groups came to honor her and recommend themselves to her prayers. Several even received interior graces for the good of their soul. It is thus that people came to know her and that she began to be known -- by healing souls -- which are the essential things.

To move on to healing the body, nine months passed before anything happened. During this time, one of our priests felt strongly moved interiorly to publish Catherine's virtues widely and to eventually bring them to light, but he held back because he had heard something ill about her life, although it was pure calumny as we have already seen. Hence, he feared to himself fall into illusion and lead others to fall in after him, so much so that in his soul he disapproved of the honors that were being shown to this illustrious person in her tomb. Earlier, he had been so impressed by her virtues that he had

personally gone to her tomb and rendered her honor more than anyone else.

In this situation, with the priest so undecided and experiencing great interior struggles regarding Catherine -- between the desire to act and the fear to act -- in January of 1681, one year after Catherine's death, while pastor at the Sault, he was asked to come and help Claude Caron, resident of La Prairie de la Magdeleine, who was dying. The priest felt great joy in the depth of his heart for this event, believing that this was the occasion for which he had been looking for a long time to clarify the story about our Iroquois maiden and to prove beyond doubt that she was indeed so powerful in heaven that word of it was beginning to spread. He thereupon went to the sick person, but not until he had stopped at Catherine's tomb and prayed on both knees, begging our Lord to remove his doubts by this occasion.

During his prayer he felt an increase in his joy along with firm confidence that Catherine could well cure this sick person. It is true that he found the sick person reduced to a dangerous condition by a violent chest condition following a third attack, such that the sick person could hardly make his

Confession. The priest administered the Blessed Sacrament, exhorted him to take courage and have confidence in God and that he would recover. At that point, he revealed the idea he had of appealing to the good Catherine. The sick man readily agreed, and then and there promised that if she cured him, he would go to her tomb at the Sault to thank her. The priest gave him the crucifix that Catherine had in her hands at her burial, and then left, promising to return the next morning.

A moment later, the sick man was being lifted out of his bed so that it could be remade, but he fell full length on the ground like someone who was about to die, and the only thing that could be done was to lift him by his arms and feet and quickly put him back in bed to at least die more comfortably. The unexpected happened, because he was no sooner in bed than he fell into a sleep during which he felt as if a large stone had dropped from his chest. When he woke up, he found himself cured and no longer in any danger. He even ate with an appetite and slept peacefully that night.

A doctor from Montreal had come to see him shortly before the priest had first arrived and then had left to obtain some medicines, more to placate the sick person than from any

hope that it would be of any use. The doctor came the next morning with his medicine, and upon going into the house, he was quite astonished to see the man near the fire perfectly cured, eating and drinking and having no trace from his illness except much weakness from which he recovered by food and rest. When the doctor was leaving, he declared that he had never seen anyone escape death from such an illness. The priest did not return until 3 or 4 days later and had the joy of seeing someone in perfect health whom he had earlier left so ill. The patient told the priest everything that had happened and some time later came to fulfill his vow at Catherine's tomb and to express his thank for her favor.

This is the first physical cure worked by Catherine that I wished to describe here entirely for her glory and to indicate in what manner it has pleased God to make known the merit and power of His servant. The cured person lived at The Forks, one of the neighborhoods in La Prairie de la Magdeleine.

Here is a second cure that occurred in the same village of La Prairie, and it was all the more astonishing because it involved a series of graces that it would have been difficult to believe if the whole village had not seen it.

1681: It is in the same month of January, 1681, some time after the first cure described above, that François Roaner's wife, 60 years old, became seriously ill and was soon reduced to a critical condition. She received the Last Sacraments from the hands of the same priest as in the first event, who then gave her the same crucifix that had served at the first cure, and encouraged her to recommend herself to Catherine with confidence in her merits. She put Catherine's crucifix on her neck. No sooner had she done this than she was suddenly cured, and in the presence of her children at that. Rightly thinking that she owed her cure to the crucifix, she was very unwilling to let it go, and remained unwilling to do this until the priest, to reassure her, gave her some powder from the tomb which she placed on her neck in place of the crucifix. Some time later, she felt perfectly cured and so removed the powder. At that instant she again fell ill, and with such violence that she would have died if the powder that had cured her had not been immediately put back on her neck.

It is this miraculous powder that has worked so many prodigies since then, and did not fail on this first occasion. But, that is not the marvel. The good woman, because of her

personal experience, always carried this powder on her person, with gratitude to Catherine who had now cured her twice, and perhaps feared a third relapse if she stopped carrying it. However, she could not avoid removing the powder a year later to help her husband François Roaner. He was almost of the same age as she, and was stricken in January 1682 by a violent kidney ailment accompanied by rheumatism. His wife, seeing him in this condition, removed the powder from her own neck and placed it on her husband's neck -- he was cured within an hour. But, the malady then shifted to the wife who began to shout loudly that her husband was trying to kill her.

Again, it was a matter of taking the powder from the husband that had just cured him in an instant to again put it on his wife. She no sooner applied the powder when she was cured for the third time. The two of them are still healthy, a long time after the event. Certainly, all of this is so marvelous and seems to be so incredible that the account of it could pass for a fable and a fiction-story for entertainment, if things had not transpired, as I have already said, in full view of all the people in La Prairie de la Magdeleine.

1682: Two months later, Catherine's power began to be felt at the Sault by one of our natives. The man had just received the Last Sacrament and his death was expected within the hour when this same priest decided, without saying anything to the other two, to have the sick person take some of the same powder from Catherine's tomb -- it brought him back from the brink of death. When the priest saw the man out of danger he told us what he had done. We did not agree with what he had done, not because we were uncomfortable that Catherine was beginning to cure natives as well as French, but we would have preferred that the cure had been worked on another native person, not this one. In our opinion, it would have been better if God had taken this one while he was still in an excellent disposition and so ready for the "last trip". That is why I said to the priest, "Why not make this effort for another person?" whose name I gave. She was a young woman, totally immobile at that time. Since the age of eight, she had been afflicted by this malady every spring without any remedy that could bring her the slightest relief.

March. The priest went to visit this woman in her cabin and the strange condition in which he found her filled him with

compassion. He gave her Catherine's crucifix to place on her neck and to begin a Novena in her honor. This was the first Novena made to Catherine which had the desired effect. On the ninth day, she was perfectly cured and has not had any relapses for the past 13 or 14 years. The priest, seeing her cured, reminded her of the promises she had made to Catherine to cease gambling -- she was quite addicted to it -- and she responded so well that she has not gambled ever since. The man who was cured ahead of her spent five years combating a vice to which he was prone and which he had promised Catherine to overcome. It has been noted that Catherine usually cured the souls also of those whose body she cured, when they needed both cures, even though they may not have asked for both.

April. This woman had no sooner been cured when her husband, eldest son of the worthy Anastasie, suddenly came down with the same malady his wife had until then. It was during the following month of April when Catherine did him the favor of also curing him after he had gone to her for help. But, she did not stop there. After having saved him from the illness which perhaps could have put him on the road to

salvation if he had died from it, Catherine still wanted to save him from despair which would have sent him to Hell: A few days after his cure, this man received some reprimand from his mother, stormed out of the cabin -- he was volatile by nature -- and headed for the road to the river, intending to jump in. Fortunately for him, he had to go by Catherine's grave and when he was in front of it, his feet stopped in their tracks and remained immobile. Thus, he could not leave the place until he came to his senses and asked pardon of God for his sin. He immediately went to Confession and, to Catherine's glory, described what had happened.

1682. (N.B. In the Cholenec-Lebrun manuscript another miracle is described here, not found in the Cholenec manuscript. See Appendix A).

So many miraculous cures made Catherine's name so renowned that this summer there have been requests for Masses and Novenas in her honor. The cures became so numerous that they were no longer recorded. There was practically not a month, and even a week, that went by without some cure -- and some of them were quite remarkable -- occurring somewhere in the French community. But, the

significant thing is that before showing up in the towns, Catherine had confined her favors to the country-side and the poor. She had even wished to favor the Sault first -- where her body lies -- and then Laprairie and La Chine, the two nearest French settlements on the river, the first on the south shore and the second on the north.

This power emanated from her tomb, having begun by communicating and spreading into the neighborhood. Mr. Cuillerier, presently living in the city of Montreal and who at that time lived in La Chine, had gone to Laprairie on business and had heard talk of Catherine and the marvels that she was working. He became the first to bring the devotion to his home where a short time later, he cured one of his children by invoking this virtuous native woman. His wife, who was suffering unusual pains in child-birth, and not being able to deliver the child, recommended herself to Catherine, promising to visit her tomb in thanksgiving if she gave the grace for a successful delivery.

Her husband did the same, neither knowing what the other was doing, and immediately the woman went into a peaceful sleep during which she gave birth painlessly. She awoke only

when she heard the crying of the child she had just brought into the world. "I must", she said to her husband, "make a pilgrimage to Catherine's tomb." "And I also", the husband answered, and then they knew what they had done individually. Some time later, they came to thank her who had answered their prayers.

That is how Catherine came to be known in La Chine. Since that time she has performed numerous and such astonishing cures that the people have begun to call her The Good Catherine (This is how the good people have always called her). However, Fr. Remy, Sulpician and former pastor at La Chine, could not refrain from condemning things so novel and that seemed to him so suspect in a poor native woman. When he began to suffer from deafness and sciatica, however, and was cured both times by Catherine whom he had decided to invoke as a last resort according to the example of his parishioners, he was subsequently the first to spread her fame far and wide.

We at the Sault had the pleasure of seeing him come twice last year to celebrate Mass here to thank God for the graces given to Catherine, and to thank Catherine herself for

the graces that he and his parishioners had been receiving from her for several years. He once told us that he no longer had any maladies in his parish because the powder from Catherine's tomb produced a prompt and sure remedy for all kinds of ailments. He even allowed his parishioners to come here for the two following years in 1694 and 1695 and have a sung High Mass with blessed bread and Communion to honor their mutual benefactrice.

They did not stop there. This year, 1696, on Tuesday of Holy Week, April 17 -- the day of Catherine's death -- the priest also came along with them, with the same devotion. Mademoiselle de Rané, wife of the commander at Fort Remy, personally gave and presented the blessed bread to thank Catherine for having cured Mr. Rané some time before of a serious bile ailment of which he thought he was going to die within a few hours, and from which he was cured after he and his wife promised Catherine this pilgrimage with blessed bread. They came to fulfill their promise on this day with their pastor and all the parishioners.

At the end of our story, we will see a formal attestation by Fr. Remy, and this should render much glory to Catherine

because it comes from such a worthy person and of such well-known virtue in Canada, and so highly respected by the leading persons in the country.

1683. In my notes I find some marvels worked by Catherine during my absence from the Sault. Fr. Maurin of our Society was cured in November of 1683 of a paralysis during the Novena he made to Catherine. He was one of the priests in the Guyana Province and had returned from those islands a paralytic in his whole body. He heard of our native girl, recommended himself to her, and made a vow to God to return to the Islands if it pleased Him to cure him by Catherine's intercession. He was cured and returned to the islands and worked there with great zeal for the salvation of souls. It is from there that he wrote us about this marvel asking us to thank her at the Sault on his behalf.

1684 at St. Francis and Pointe aux Trembles (in the margin).

In January of 1684, a three-year old infant was choking on a shell but was saved just as soon as its mother prayed to Catherine. Another cure was of a very ill child, on whose head an image of Catherine that she had managed to find was placed. The image made the rounds of the district but was not

recovered. A third woman, who laughed at those who were advising her to approach Catherine for one of her ill children and began to rail against everything that was being said to her about the glory of this native girl, was immediately punished, seeing her son deteriorating right before her eyes. But, she came to recognize her fault and invoked her whom she had just been ridiculing; her child was cured. I will not mention a number of similar events at Montreal, Pointe aux Trembles, Boucherville, La Prairie, St. Lambert, and again La Prairie de la Magdeleine and other places all the following years to come to those that are more noteworthy and are more recent.

1693. I begin with Fr. Bruyas, our Superior General. In the winter of 1693, while he still had the care of the Sault mission, he was stricken by paralysis of his right arm to the extent that he could not use it. He was immediately taken to Montreal to find a remedy for his malady. When leaving, he had a Novena begun to Catherine by all those who knew her and who are still known as the Catherine Band. It was a Thursday morning, and the priest had such a lively confidence in Catherine's merits and a presentiment so strong of a cure that after arriving in Montreal, he could not bring himself to submit to medical

remedies, so sure was he that Catherine would cure him. He said it again on Thursday evening, the eighth day of the Novena, even though there had been no change in his arm. Actually, Catherine had too much concern for his health, he who was presently administering the Sault in which she was very interested, to not cure him, as she in fact did. On Friday, the last day of the Novena, the priest got up at 4 AM and found his arm so well restored that he went to celebrate Mass, something he had not been able to do for eight days, to thank Our Lord and Catherine.

(NB The Cholenec-Lebrun manuscript at this point talks about a miracle that is not found in the manuscript we²⁴ are transcribing. See Appendix B)

1695. We now come to 1695. It is a beautiful year for Catherine and one when it seems that God wished her to triumph in New France by the unusual marvels she worked in the two largest settlements in the country -- I mean the cities of Quebec and Montreal -- and for the most illustrious of persons.

I can begin in no better way than with Mr. de Champigny, our Intendant. He had been already affected for more than two

years by a bad rheumatism that became so severe that he lost his voice; these are his wife's very words in the letter with which she honored us at the Sault to ask for a Novena to Catherine. We were too worried about his health, as was the rest of Canada, not to do our utmost. The Novena was thereupon made by the Catherine's Sisters who fortunately were all in the village. The Intendant, in Quebec, was cured of the rheumatism during the Novena. I have no doubt that Catherine wished to make known the great debt that all our missions have in general, and the Sault in particular, to Mr. and Madame de Champigny for the signal charities they have bestowed on us and continue to do so every day.

Everybody in Canada knows of the devotion that Mrs. de Champigny has for Catherine and with what zeal she made Catherine known and honored and was the first to have this put into print. Then, not satisfied with making copies only for Canada, she also sent some to France to the most important people at Court. It is thus that God wished to avail Himself of this illustrious person's piety to make a poor native woman known in the world's highest court. God gave His benediction because we have learned from Paris that this year Catherine

had suddenly cured a person who was suffering. That is all we know for the moment.

The Intendant's cure was the occasion of the cure of Fr. de la Colombière, Canon of the Quebec cathedral, quite well known for his outstanding talents and more still for his virtue. At the time, he was ill with a low fever for which all remedies had failed and a flux that even épikakuana²⁵ had not been able to stop. He then had recourse to Catherine promising to thank her at her tomb if she would cure him of these two maladies.

The fever abated that very day, and as he was preparing immediately to come here because the flux had also diminished, he was completely cured before he had gone one-third the way, and we had the joy of having him with us at the Sault for several days where he went to thank his benefactrice. He came again in the month of September last, and when he was leaving us, besides a considerable alms for the poor of the mission, he left us an attestation of his cure that is worthy of his piety and that we reserve for the end of this story.

A little after Fr. de la Colombière had come to make his first pilgrimage in the summer of 1695, Miss Foucault, from Quebec, also came here -- not to thank but to ask. She had

been suffering from terrible head aches and came to ask for a cure from Catherine, her namesake. She had a Mass celebrated at the Sault and received Communion. This done, she remained in prayer for a long time in the middle of the chapel where Catherine's body lies. During the prayer, she felt that something had been removed from her head that was momentarily quite painful but cured her illness completely.

1695. Mr. de Granville had spent all summer in Montreal that same year along with our Governor General, Count de Frontenac. He had heard good things about Catherine, which gave him the idea of taking some of the powder from her tomb back with him. This was fortunate, because while returning to Quebec in the autumn, he heard that one of his very young daughters was gravely ill. Mme. de Granville saw him coming into the house and could not refrain from saying to him, at the height of the pain: "You come, my husband, just in time to see your daughter die". "No, No", he replied immediately, "she will not die, because I carry her cure with me," meaning the powder he had brought with him. Both then went down on their knees, recommended their daughter to Catherine. They sprinkled some of the powder in water and gave it to their

little daughter; she was suddenly cured. Mr. de Granville began to shout, "Miracle, miracle" and went around the city telling about it.

Finally, around the end of this same year, Mlle. de Martigni, from near Quebec, was gravely ill, and Fr. Testu, Sulpician pastor of the region where she lived, was summoned to administer the Last Sacraments. [82] But, the person who had come back from the Sault with Mr. de la Colombiere thought only of curing her by means of our Catherine. He therefore exhorted the sick woman to have recourse to Catherine with total confidence. She complied, and this charitable pastor promised, on behalf of the sick person, to have a Mass celebrated at the Sault in honor of Catherine for a cure. The pastor immediately wrote to us asking for this Mass which we celebrated very gladly.

From Quebec let us go back up to Montreal where we will find so much reason for praising God and admiring the power of our holy native woman. The same year 1695, Mme. de Tonty, gravely ill, was cured by an application of this powder in the presence of Fr. Dollier, Grand Vicaire of our Bishop,

and superior of the Sulpicians of Montreal, Fr. Caille, Mr. de Tonty's pastor, and his whole family.

Mr. du Luth Capne, of the marine detachment and currently Commandant at Fort Frontenac, was cured from gout by a Novena that he made to her and of which he gave attestation prior to leaving this summer for that fort. Madame Potier was relieved of a stone after invoking Catherine. A poor orphan in the country side, tormented by severe hiccups and not being able to find a remedy, was sent by Frs. Dollier and De Belmot to our Fathers in Montreal to have some of that powder. She took it with water and the hiccups stopped, so that the same Fr. Dollier sent her the next day to receive Communion in our church as a thanksgiving for her cure. (N.B. See Appendix C). Three children in the same town, one being Mr. Boisseau's, another related to Du Sieur, and the third whose family name I do not know, were all cured of a fever after having taken some water from Catherine's plate. There are several other cases that are similar, in the city as well as on the island of Montreal, which I omit to avoid boring the reader with a repetition of the same things.

However, I cannot refrain from mentioning once more the cure of Mr. Boisseau himself, of whom we just spoke with regards to his son, because it appears to be extraordinary. Everybody knows that cancer is an evil that spreads to the last bit of flesh to which it attaches itself and finishes only by causing the person's death, having caused much suffering and a long and cruel martyrdom. Mr. Boisseau did not believe his cancer to be beyond Catherine's power. He recommended himself to her by a Novena which produced nothing, so he made a second one, and then a third, never giving up hope. During the third Novena, his cancer began to shrink and has continued thus so that now only a mark remains.

All these cures were for the body. Catherine also worked cures of the soul, infinitely more valuable. I find more than 30 people whom she helped to return to a good way of life, and among others, she delivered several from extreme temptations of the flesh and obtained for them the gift of chastity. It is especially in this area that she has worked marvels in souls.

We will see later how she obtained the grace of dying in a virginal state for two young girls at the Sault; at the time, they were going to be given in marriage.

I will only say a word more, and I will only say what is true: that Catherine's power extends even to animals.

(N.B. See Appendix D).

After speaking at length of so many graces that Catherine Tekakwitha had bestowed in all corners of Canada, I must not omit those that she worked for us and which she continues to do for us in this mission of the Sault, a grace that could easily be the greatest of her marvels with which one could measure all the others. This grace so singular, this marvel so considerable, is the preservation of the Sault mission, which we cannot attribute to anything else except to her prayer and her precious remains that we have here with us. After all, is it not a surprising marvel that a small group of people, such as we are at the Sault in comparison with the Five Iroquois Nations, stands out from that large number of enemies who are driven to the point of fury against our people, to kill them, and to go so far as to seize them as slaves at the very entrances to the villages?

It is true that we have lost all our brave Elders in this long war and a large number of our warriors, but for a loss of 100 of ours, they have had over 700 of their best braves killed,

either by our own natives, or by our natives and the French fighting together against them.

As many as 1,500 of these proud Iroquois had been seen coming to burn the entire La Chine settlement. They moved throughout our land, and close enough to our fields that they intended to ruin without the loss of a single warrior. Since the war started some 7 or 8 years ago, there has been almost no year in which the Iroquois have not launched an army to destroy the Sault, either in the spring during the planting season, or in the summer during harvest. Every year they come and boast that this is the Sault's last year. All these attempts, however, end up in smoke and the mission still survives. In the three years that I have been here, the only person killed during the planting and harvesting seasons was one poor old man.

During the spring thaw of 1695, one of our renegades came here from the Mohawks looking for his mother and sister and said that the Iroquois had conspired for our final destruction the following summer and that everything would be destroyed. That summer, however, our warriors had left us

to accompany a convoy to Fort Frontenac, leaving only old men and women.

All summer we did not put off moving our village to this place, everybody carrying or dragging things from the old village to the new one, without a single Iroquois appearing. They knew very well what we were doing, and it would have needed only twenty of them to destroy us in our situation. One of their armies came up as far as the old village but did not dare to come within range of the guns. Eventually, however, the enemy did attack it. In all the things they did to La Chine, they only managed to kill two men and seize three or four women.

They saw 5 or 6 canoes on the south side of the river containing more than 30 women and the more senior members of the mission and of Catherine's Band, all coming to land at the small stream where the first village and Catherine's grave had been located. Having seen these people coming, I say, the Iroquois prepared an ambush, and believing that the prey was in hand, they launched an attack during the landing and rained a shower of blows on our people.

However, without succumbing to such a furious and unexpected attack, one of the older and bravest women began to say the Litany of Our Lady in a loud voice, at which everybody headed for the open water and escaped the danger, such that no one was hurt in any way. Moreover, none of the bullets pierced the canoes even though these cruel men fired without letup at point-blank range, and several of the Iroquois even went into the water in a rage to seize the canoes. Their escape is surely an inconceivable marvel, given the circumstances, but it was enough that the marvellous incident occurred within sight of Catherine's grave. While the enemy was blinded by the sight of the grave, our poor women were inspired with confidence and presence of mind to escape from their hands.

Catherine inspired the courage of another band of women who were encountered by another part of the army arriving in this region [86] from the Mohawk territory. The enemy saw that they were spotted and wished to go back. They encountered this second band of women, relatives whom they planned to take back with them. The enemy were not successful in their plan because the women all protested that

they would rather die than deny their faith by returning to Mohawk territory, and were ready to be killed as slaves. This outcry so astonished the warriors that they decided -- not wishing to avenge themselves on the women -- to bring them to our village and make a kind of truce with our people.

Actually, after Count de Frontenac had left this summer at the head of two thousand men, as many French as native, to burn down the villages of the Onondagas and the Oneidas and cut down their corn, these people were so enraged against ours that they needed more than ever to come and avenge themselves on us during our own harvest. Nevertheless, we harvested in the most perfect security. Although all our warriors had returned from the Mohawk and English regions, the women were alone in the fields with their children from morning to night, about a mile from the village, some sleeping in the field in perfect peace, and not one of the enemy appeared.

Certainly, for our part, we looked on all this as so many marvels worked by our patron angel, our powerful patroness and patron Catherine Tekakwitha, who had thus protected her cherished Sault mission. We hope she will continue to protect

it and make it grow more and more in spite of the hate from enemies visible and invisible -- the Iroquois and the demons.

All the French of this New World have a veneration for our Catherine and speak of her everywhere with respect. They regard her as a powerful patroness, as much as the natives do, whom God has given in heaven as protection for the country against the fury of cruel people, and everywhere she is invoked as such.

Our Bishop, on the occasion of his first visit to our Sault mission, very much wished to go and pray at her tomb. He took with him the Marquis de Denonville and Madame la Marquise, and expressed his respect in two words: the Geneviève²⁶ of Canada.

Madame de Champigni had hardly been in the country a year when she came expressly to the Sault to honor our holy native woman and pray in our church at the foot of her relics. The French come from their districts to give her the same honor and to recommend themselves to her prayers. At the most recent Feast of St. Matthew, more than 20 prominent people from Montreal came to show their devotion in our

church of the Sault, either to ask Catherine for graces, or to thank her for the graces they had already received.

A larger number would come over the ice-covered river. Finally, no matter where the missionaries of the Sault go, people speak only of Catherine Tekakwitha, the marvels she works, the pilgrimages that are to be made to her tomb, the Masses and Novenas in her honor, and they always ask with much interest to hear about her life. This interest, then, has obliged me to make this last effort to satisfy the public on this matter [88], the least that I could possibly do for the glory of God and for this first Iroquois virgin.

I add that Fr. Remy has given us legal attestations, signed by him, of more than a hundred miraculous cures of which he was an eye-witness, all caused by the powder that he personally took for his own maladies. Fr. Goofroy²⁷ has also attested to several considerable miracles by Catherine in his parish of La Prairie. Finally, so many cures have been worked by Catherine since then that we have ceased to write them down."

Appendix A

"N.B. Fr. Cholenec, in the copy of his Life of Catherine that he had done by Fr. Lebrun, retained more miracles than we have in this particular document. Hence, we should acknowledge two manuscripts: Cholenec, and Cholenec-Lebrun."

"We have already seen, as a preview, two marvellous cures in this year 1682 in the month of January in the person of François Roaner and his wife. The following year, Garhio, wife of the chief Captain at the Sault, called La Cendre Chaude²⁸, went into labor in the field where she was working and was carried back to her cabin at the point of death. All the women were busy trying to help her when a French woman who was also there tried her best but without any more success than the others. Our Lord, however, wished that she would be indebted to Catherine. She was advised to recommend herself to Catherine, and the coverlet that Catherine had used and was now in the keeping of her close companion, was brought to her. The time for Mass was rung because it was morning and everybody went to pray for the patient, leaving her to be alone. The patient took the coverlet, put it on herself with great

confidence, begging Catherine to have pity on her. Saying this, she put her hand on the painful area and at that instant she was cured, so that when the women returned to the cabin after the Mass, to their astonishment and a new esteem for Catherine's power and merit, they found her free of her pain."

Appendix B

A young woman at the Sault, sister of the one who performed such severe penance for Catherine on the eve of her death, went hunting with her husband in the winter of 1694. She was pregnant when they had left for the hunt and came to term at the beginning of spring. It seems that the native women do not suffer Eve's curse,²⁹ because they give birth easily. They give birth in the fields, the woods, in the middle of work. After the birth, they go back to the field, back to the woods, back to ordinary housework. But that was not the case for the one of whom we are now speaking, because she was three days and three nights in labor without being able to deliver and in so great a pain that she was in despair. In this crisis, she remembered Catherine and immediately addressed her with strong cries of pain but only a few words, and I leave it to you to decide whether she said them from the depth of her

heart: "O Catherine, have pity on me, let me give birth as soon as possible, and if it is a girl, I promise to name her after you". In that same moment, she experienced what another French woman had experienced as described earlier in our story: she fell asleep and gave birth during her sleep, waking up at the child's crying. It was a girl. She brought her to the village to be baptized and asked me to give her the name Catherine after having recounted the whole story to me."

Appendix C

"... her cure; on a farm in the same village, the name of which I do not know, racked with a high fever and half dead after a child had been removed from her womb, and who found a cure in this same powder; in three infants"

Appendix D

"A woman from La Chine, who came to the Sault with other parishioners to honor Catherine, came looking for me after High Mass, telling me that their only cow became so distended one day for no known reason, that they thought they would lose it. Thereupon, this woman addressed herself to La Chine's usual source of help: "O good holy Catherine, have pity on me, save my poor cow". She had hardly finished

saying these few words when the animal suddenly returned to normal size before her very eyes. The cow has been healthy ever since.

Last winter, an ox fell through the ice at Montreal and it was so frozen that it had to be kept in the stable, much to the loss of its master and his family. A daughter in the house, much devoted to Catherine, decided to take some of the powder she had obtained from Catherine's tomb and put it in some water which she fed secretly to the ox, all the while saying, "Why would Catherine not save animals as well as people?" The next morning, the ox was on its feet and went back as usual to hauling, to the great astonishment of everybody. Then, seeing the marvellous thing that had happened, the young girl made known what she had done for the glory of her who had wanted to work this marvel in their favor."

"(Note by the copyist: This transcription of Fr. Cholenec's manuscript, dating more than twenty years, should not be used except privately; the orthography has generally been modernized.)" [The document ends here]

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¹ We recall that the word Iroquois at the time was used for the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Cayuga cantons.

² Biblical allusion.

³ In the land of the Iroquois, today's upper New York State.

⁴ Biblical allusion.

⁵ A kind of corn gruel.

⁶ A whip, for the shoulders.

⁷ Biblical allusion

⁸ Based on the Latin word *pati*, "to suffer, to undergo".

⁹ In the context of Asceticism.

¹⁰ Denotes a sudden understanding of a spiritual truth, etc.

¹¹ Probably Kateri's friend Marie Thérèse TekaiaKantha.

¹² The figure 8 is used in the Iroquois alphabet to denote a "w" sound.

¹³ Each family in the cabin had its own fire.

¹⁴ Biblical allusion.

¹⁵ A kind of chain-belt with fairly sharp points along it that would be in contact with one's skin.

¹⁶ A lay catechist. The word is of Japanese origin.

¹⁷ Usually, a Rosary involves saying the Hail Mary 50 times in 5 decades of 10 each along with the 3 that introduce the 5 decades.

¹⁸ Biblical allusion.

¹⁹ Now a Jesuit Saint.

²⁰ In the context of sins being either "mortal" or "venial".

²¹ Final anointing at death.

²² Probably Father Chauchetière.

²³ Probably Fr. Chauchetière.

²⁴ The identity of this person is nowhere found in this document.

²⁵ Not listed in ordinary dictionaries. Probably *ipecac*.

²⁶ Patron saint of Paris; predicted that the enemy would not take Paris; 5th century.

²⁷ Sulpician priest.

²⁸ Hot Cinder or Hot Ember.

²⁹ Biblical allusion.

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