

A Litany to My Cousin

Ma petite cousine

Kateri Tekakwitha



Norm Léveillé

Cher M. l'abbé Prigent,

Je vous remercie sincèrement de
m'avoir donné permission de
citer de vos oeuvres de Katou
pour ce petit ouvrage

"A Tribute to my Cause"

Aussi merci bien de tout ce
que vous faites pour la
cause de la Malheureuse Katou

Merci bien
Kehi Olorun
Baba,

Amatis en Jesus et Katou

Mon Frère
5/19/02

**Kaia'tanó:ron
Kateri Tekakwitha**

1656-1680



A Litany to My Cousin

Ma petite cousine

Kateri Tekakwitha

Gah-deh-lee Deh-gah-quee-tah

Norm Léveillé



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First and foremost, I wish to thank my cousin, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha who inspires and helps me and my family in our daily lives.

I wish also to thank my family, especially Annette for being with me throughout our life together and supporting all my work.

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The Jesuit Fathers of the seventeenth century who helped form and guide Tekakwitha along her path to sanctity.

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I wish to thank very warmly my colleague Ron Rounds who so diligently reviewed my manuscript.

There are other members of my family, all those who live in our little area of the sacred earth, who also need special thanks.

Thank you. Merci bien. Kchi Oliwni.

Que Dieu nous bénisse!

May God bless us all

Amanta Gizitôgwak pagialôbena

That it would be the Creator of all things bless Us

(Blessings in French, English and Algonquin/Abenaki)

(Bénédictions en français, en anglais, et en algonkin/abénaki)

May our sister Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha watch over and protect us.

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FIRST DISCOVERY

On an afternoon in December 1999, as I was browsing through a bookstore, I spotted a holy card with an American Indian girl's image. I was immediately drawn to it, for, you see, I had also discovered several years earlier that I was a descendant of an Algonquin lady named Mite8ameg8k8e, who was to marry a Frenchman by the name of Pierre Couc, in 1657 Trois-Rivières, New France, and they would become my 8th great-grandparents.

I quietly moved towards the holy card rack to get a closer look at this Indian Maiden. The name on the card was Kateri Tekakwitha. She was attired in traditional Native American long dress made of deerskin with a long blouse and blue blanket covering her shoulders. She was standing before a cross and was in a state of prayer.

Kateri, lover of the Cross of Jesus, pray for us.

I had never seen a holy card like this before - a First Nation saint? My heart skipped a beat as I reverently took the card in my hand and began to read the prayer on the backside ...



"Oh God, who among the many marvels of Your Grace in the New World, did cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and of the St. Lawrence, the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant, we beseech You, the favor we beg through her intercession -- that this Young Lover of Jesus and of His Cross may soon be counted among her Saints by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and faith. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

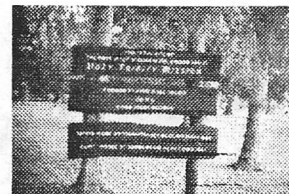
I asked the people who were with me if they had heard of this holy person. My sister said that she remembered the "dear nuns" relating Kateri's story during a religion class in the parochial school. I did not remember ever having heard of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha before this day.

Kateri, lily of purity, pray for us.

That day of discovery and one other event at Caughnawaga (Fonda, NY), to be related later, were to be the beginning of a spiritual renewal and adventure which will last all my life. I scoured the bookstore's library until I found a short biography of Kateri. That book was the first of many in my research into the life of this Mohawk-Algonquin maiden. As I learned about this Indian Maiden, I decided to visit the three places that were part of her life and story. Along with my wife, my sister and her husband, I planned a pilgrimage, in July of 2000, to these three sites - two in the state of New York, Auriesville and Fonda - and one in Québec, at St. Francis-Xavier Mission in Kahnawaké on the Mohawk Reservation. I will relate to the reader the events of her life and my reactions at these three places where Tekakwitha lived, prayed and is buried.

OSSERNENON

I learned about her birth in 1656 in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, on the banks of the Mohawk River (present day Auriesville), where ten years earlier the French Jesuit, Father Isaac Jogues established the Holy Trinity Mission; then Father Jogues, René Goupil and Jean Lalande gave their lives as martyrs for their faith in this village.



This young Indian's father was the Mohawk chief of the Turtle Clan, who four years earlier had been the leader of a raid on the town of Trois-Rivières and the Algonquin village of Sachem Charles Pachirini, in Québec, New France.

"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 Iroquois in 1656 in a Mohawk village called Gahnaougé. 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." *Catherine Tekakwitha*, Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J., Her Spiritual Advisor, Translated by William Lonc, S.J., 2002, p. 1, Permission granted, Email 4/20/02.

This raiding party had abducted French and Algonquin children as well as Algonquin women, one of whom was probably named Kahontake. This Kahontake - also referred to as Kahenta - was to become the wife of the chief and mother to Tekakwitha, first written by historians as Tegahouita. Little else is known about this early life, other than in 1660, smallpox devastated the village of Ossernenon, causing the death of most of the villagers, among them the Chief, his wife and baby son. The little four year old Mohawk-Algonquin girl was left with a damaged eyesight and pockmarks on her face. She was immediately adopted by her uncle and aunt - the brother of her father who would inherit the title and duty of Chief of the Turtle Clan.

When I first set foot in Auriesville, I immediately saw, in my mind's eye, my cousin, Tekakwitha, as a four year old Mohawk-Algonquin girl roaming among the longhouses of her Turtle Clan. I felt her presence there. I saw her working alongside her mother. I saw "my little cousin" taking care of her baby brother as her mother Kahontake toiled in the woods and in the fields. The view of the Mohawk valley and its river, from the hillside, allowed me to see, in the twentieth century what this little Mohawk girl saw in the seventeenth century. She must have wondered and cringed as the adults used that hillside as the gauntlet for their enemies.

Kateri, consoler of the Heart of Jesus, pray for us.

Even at this young age, Tekakwitha must have felt compassion for these tortured souls. The Holy Spirit had already dwelt in her, even at this tender age. God wanted her for Himself. She was destined by the Creator to be one of His saints and a model of holiness for her people.

Kateri, example to your people in all virtues, pray for us.

At this point, I need to clarify, for the reader, a phrase that I have used : "my little cousin - ma petite cousine - my distant cousin". My passion for genealogy continually leads me to research every detail of my ancestors - all of whom have roots in Québec and New France. I discovered about four years ago that I had two Native American ancestors: one a Mik'maq; the other an Algonquin. This Algonquin ancestor, named Mite8ameg8k8e, was most likely related to Kahontake. Both of these Algonquin women were citizens in the same Weskarini tribe of Sachem Charles Pachirini. The Algonquins originally came from the Ontario region, around Michillimakinac, (Maginaw City, Michigan). The Algonquins were pushed north by other tribes, the group splitting into two - one going north towards the Rapid Lake area, north of Ottawa; the other heading towards the island, now called Montréal. This Weskarini tribe, headed by Sachem Pachirini, became Catholics, being baptized between 1643 and 1650 by the Jesuits in Montréal. The tribe continued their journey and erected their wigwams near the fort at Trois-Rivières. This provided both a religious and military stronghold for the Christian Algonquins. As I related earlier, Kahontake was abducted by the Iroquois Mohawks and brought to Ossernenon as the wife of the Chief and subsequently the mother of a young Mohawk-Algonquin girl named Tekakwitha. Mitie8ameg8k8e was to marry Pierre Couc, a French soldier-farmer, after her first husband, an Algonquin named Assababich, was killed, and her two children were abducted, in this same raid of 1652. Through twelve generations of ancestors, Pierre and Marie, Christian name given to Mite8ameg8k8e at her baptism, became my eighth great-grandparents, upon their marriage in 1657 in Trois-Rivières. Thus, I can call Tekakwitha "ma petite cousine - my distant cousin". I feel her presence and her help in my life. My story is a Litany to My Cousin. The "8" in Algonquin can stand for a "w" before a vowel or "ou" after a consonant.

***Kateri, leader of many Indians to the true faith
through your love for Mary, pray for us.***

In addition to Tekakwitha's presence at Ossernenon - Auriesville, the martyrdom of René Goupil, Jean Lalande and Isaac Jogues was a reality to be experienced and remembered. One knew that these holy Jesuits had bravely given up their lives for Christ. The presence of each of these martyrs is felt within the imaginary castle walls of the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, as well as in the Ravine, the Cathedral of Pines where Isaac Jogues buried the martyred body of René Goupil, and where his bones, scattered by Mohawk boys and dogs, lay buried somewhere amidst this wooded cathedral.

Kateri, flower of fortitude for the persecuted, pray for us.

Following the Stations of the Cross, I could not help meditating on what life must have been for this Indian child. She did all the things that a Native American did, yet she was different because God had destined her to be a mystic and a holy person throughout her short life in the wilderness.

The Mass on July 14 in honor of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was celebrated by the present Vice-Postulator for Kateri's Cause in the United States, Father John Paret, S.J. His homily about Kateri reinforced my knowledge of her life devoted to Jesus and His Mother Mary.

CAUGHNAWAGA

The village was eventually moved across the Mohawk River to a new site called Caughnawaga. Tekakwitha received her name from her uncle and aunts. Because of her weakened eyes, she had trouble seeing in front of her, especially in the sunshine. She was named "Tekakwitha" - she who moves things before her, she who walks slowly groping for things". There is no mention of her name prior to this time.

For the next seventeen years, Tekakwitha lived as a Mohawk young girl would have lived, except that she did not wish to participate in the activities that were intended to attract the young braves, with a view of becoming wife to one of them. Frequently, she was tricked into meetings with a young brave with the intention of her aunts that she become favored by this brave. A Mohawk girl was expected to marry in order to provide for her family in their old age. She was frequently shunned by the other young people because she was different. She did not want to be part of the gauntlet whenever the braves brought captives into the village. An inner Spirit was guiding her soul towards holiness.

Kateri, full of patience in suffering, pray for us.

On several occasions, she saw the Black Robes come into her village of Caughnawaga. There seemed to be an aura of goodness surrounding these holy men. However, Tekakwitha was forbidden by her uncle to listen to or speak with them. He believed that the Black Robes were responsible for bringing disease and bad omens to his village. One day, in 1667, the Chief was forced to invite the Black Robes into his longhouse. The Jesuit missionaries, Fathers Frémin, Bruyas and Pierron, spent three days as guests in her uncle's lodge. It was Tekakwitha's duty to minister to them: prepare meals and see to their needs, as hostess in her uncle's longhouse. She felt the holiness of these men. She desperately wanted to know about their God and His Son. She vaguely remembered her mother speaking about this Christian God. Her mother might have taught her also about Jesus and Mary - Jesus and Wari. One of her mother's friends, Anastasie, frequently told Tekakwitha that her mother had embraced Christianity and had most likely taught her daughter some of the prayers to Jesus and Mary. Because her uncle and her aunts, who were vehemently opposed to Christianity, had forbidden her to speak to the Black Robes, Tekakwitha could not reveal to them her burning desire to learn about Jesus and Mary and to become a Christian like her mother had been. She did, however, hear their prayers and their talk about this Christian God, about Jesus and His mother Mary.

It was not until Father Jacques de Lamberville, in 1674, who accidentally came into her uncle's longhouse seeking information that Tekakwitha had enough strength to ask him if she could learn about his Christian God. She explained to this Jesuit priest that her mother was a Christian, that her mother's friend and adopted older sister Anastasie had spoken to her about Jesus and Mary, and that she wanted to learn more. However, it had to be carried out secretly for fear of her uncle and aunts' wrath. Father de Lamberville soon discovered that his pupil had an inherent holiness that only the Holy Spirit could have placed in this soul. There are saints who were destined to be saints by God sending His Holy Spirit to imbue these souls with



holiness from the moment that these persons were placed on earth. Tekakwitha was one of these chosen by our Creator to become a saint.

Kateri, steadfast in all prayer, pray for us.

Tekakwitha was one of these souls selected by the Holy Spirit to serve God without reservation. As a result of this revelation to Father de Lamberville, the Jesuit priest allowed Tekakwitha to be baptized after a shorter instructional time than was the custom at that time. In those days the Fathers preparing people for baptism had them 'on trial' for a year and a half to two years. It was so difficult for an Indian convert to live up to the Faith surrounded by people whose ideas were different, that they made the prospective convert live the new Faith for that long, to be sure he or she really meant it. But in Kateri's case, it became evident to Father de Lamberville that this young lady not only truly understood all that was involved, but was determined to live her new Faith as well as possible, no matter what the difficulty.

Therefore, on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1676, Tekakwitha was baptized and thus became a member of the Catholic Church, at St. Peter's Mission near the village of Caughnawaga. She was given the name of Kateri - Gahdehlee - Iroquois for Catherine.



As a result of her commitment to this Christian God, the Creator, Tekakwitha became the object of scorn and persecution by the other people in her village. Children laughed at her, threw stones at her and ridiculed her whenever she strayed from her uncle's longhouse. She became the subject of increased contempt from the people of her village. She was not only "the Algonquin", but now she was also "the Christian".

When Tekakwitha reached the age when maidens needed to find a brave in matrimony, her family found a young Mohawk for her. However, she announced that she was not giving herself to any man. She persisted in her decision despite the wrath of her family.

Kateri, keeper of your virginity in persecutions, pray for us.

She was accused of being lazy because she would not work on Sundays, the day devoted entirely in prayer to her God. She was taunted by the elders for having renounced the life of a young Mohawk maiden. She was even threatened by a young brave with a tomahawk who was about to strike her; she knelt peacefully in front of his attack, ready to die for her Jesus. The young brave was taken aback by her bravery and quietly withdrew without harming God's lovely and holy creature.

Kateri, courage of the afflicted, pray for us.

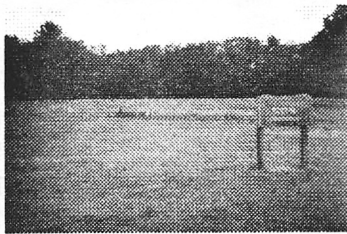
SECOND DISCOVERY

As I walked the grounds of St. Peter's Mission, I kept thinking about my discovery, about my cousin Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, about my request that she watch over my daughter's family as they were going through a tough period of divorce. The chapel is a quiet place with many paintings and artifacts pertaining to our Kateri. The hillside with its Stations of the Cross is an invitation to follow the passion of Jesus and to contemplate its mysteries as Tekakwitha did three hundred and fifty years ago. Then I saw the following statue: and the second event in my life happened. As I was praying to Kateri in front of this statue, I renewed my prayerful request that she watch over my daughter's family: herself and her two children. I became enraptured in meditative prayer. I felt myself going back to the time and place of Tekakwitha. She was speaking to me; she asked me to spend the rest of my life in spreading knowledge of and devotion to her. I promised her that her request would be my guide for the rest of my life here on earth. After moments of suspended time and space, I became aware of my presence before this statue. As I lowered my eyes in a final prayer, I noticed a feather near my feet - one that was not there before Tekakwitha spoke to me. I took this as a sign of her promise to and request of me. From that moment on, I knew and felt that my cousin Kateri Tekakwitha would always occupy an important part of my life and of those around me.



I spent some time at the excavated site of Caughnawaga Castle of old. I could see my cousin Kateri going about working and praying within the castle walls. I could feel her presence here. I followed her path to the spring where she and other women of her tribe went to fetch water.

I am not usually a patient person when trying to accomplish a project. For me, I need to do now. I have been asking Blessed Kateri for many favors: for others, for my family, for myself. At times, I was impatient in this regard. My cousin taught me patience. After returning from the Kateri Spring at Caughnawaga Castle, I locked all my belongings in the trunk of my car, including my car keys and my wife's handbag with her keys for safekeeping. As soon as I closed the lid, I realized that everything was locked up tight. We needed to walk to the Mission to call for

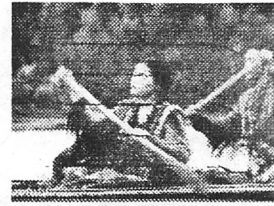


roadside help. Three hours later, we were back on the road. I spent that waiting time walking the village site of my cousin: meditating and praying to her to give me patience in waiting for an answer to my requests. Thank you, cousin. You taught me a lesson and a virtue that was one of your strengths: You waited patiently for the Creator to hear your prayer to become a Christian.

It became evident that Tekakwitha's life in Caughnawaga was one of continuous persecution and ridicule. Her family continued their opposition to her new religion. Kateri practiced her religion without hesitation in the face of almost unbearable opposition and scorn.

Kateri, unshakeable in temptations, pray for us.

Her mentor and adopted older sister Anastasie had left, several years earlier, to go to the Christian village in New France. Word was sent to Tekakwitha that she was welcome there. With the help of two Christian Indians, she managed to escape her uncle's village and his pursuit of her to walk and paddle a canoe two hundred miles to the Catholic Mission at LaPrairie in New France.



Kateri, who traveled many miles to learn the faith, pray for us.

ST. FRANCIS-XAVIER MISSION at LAPRAIRIE

I never visited this mission as it no longer exists. I did, however, see what Kateri's life was like in this environment, through the words of Jesuit Father Pierre Cholenec, a contemporary of Tekakwitha. I will rely on his words to tell us who and what "Catherine Tekakwitha" was.

Tekakwitha's deeply religious life did not really begin until she finally settled into this Mission at La Prairie de la Magdelaine. Father Jacques de Lamberville sent a letter along with Kateri to his Jesuit brothers, Fathers Jacques Frémin, Claude Chauchetière and Pierre Cholenec at the Sault. He wrote, as reported by Father Cholenec:

"...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." Catherine Tekakwitha, Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J., Her Spiritual Advisor, Translated by William Lonc, S.J., 2002, p. 6.

With this recommendation, Father de Lamberville wished Father Cholenec to take care of this new arrival because he was already in charge of religious instructions at the Mission. Father Cholenec was to become her spiritual mentor and confessor.

*Kateri, leader of many Indians to the true faith
through your love of Mary, pray for us*

Kateri was reunited with Anastasie, her mother's friend and adopted older sister, who became her mentor in the ways and prayers of this Christian village. Their spiritual conversation helped Kateri to sanctify her work. Her devotion to Jesus and Mary became the model of religious demeanor in her new community. Catherine grew in spirituality under her confessor, Father Cholenec. He wrote of her:

"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 (at the four AM mass)...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...considering herself the greatest sinner in the world,...Her horror of sin and fear of displeasing God made her love solitude so much,..." Ibid., pp. 10-11

Many of the first Christians at the Sault practiced extraordinary acts of penance: wearing metal belts on their body, jumping into icy water, walking barefoot or rolling in the snow, mixing ashes with their sagamité, putting hot coals between their toes. Father Cholenec had to dissuade them from carrying out such practices.

Kateri, lover of penance, pray for us.

In Autumn of 1677, the mission was transferred from LaPrairie to Sault Saint-Louis. There she met a person, probably Marie Thérèse TekaiaKantha. They became spiritually united to each other. The two were inseparable, both in work and in prayer.

"...their hearts as well as their plans were completely identical...they went to sit at the foot of a cross that was on the bank of the great river, and after having told each other their life story, they resolved to do penance together. Since I was the spiritual director for each, they proposed this course of action and asked for my permission, which I gladly gave...one could say that they were one heart and one soul in two bodies." Ibid., pp. 22-23

The normal procedure for receiving the Eucharist consisted of several years of preparation. However, by the kind of spiritual life that Kateri led, so fervent and so exemplary, she merited to receive Holy Communion sooner than normal. At Christmas 1677, a few months after her arrival, she was allowed to receive the Eucharist.

Kateri, who loved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.

"She was present for all the services of Holy Week, ...she wept many a tear, especially on Good Friday when she heard the preaching about the Passion of Jesus Christ...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...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". Ibid., p. 17

Kateri, who by your love of humility, gave joy to the angels, pray for us.

For the next three years, Catherine continued to pray intensively and to carry out extraordinary acts of penance. She was finally advised by her confessor to tone down the excessive penances. Catherine cared for the sick and the aged, bringing them comfort both spiritual and material.

Kateri, humble servant to the sick, pray for us.

After a visit to a convent in Montréal, she asked her confessor if she and a few of her friends could start a community of nuns. She was judged by her spiritual director as being too new a Christian for such an undertaking.

Catherine and Thérèse, one heart and one soul in two bodies,

"...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 big secret and resolved never to indulge it except in grave circumstances." Ibid., pp. 25-26

This decision caused a temporary rift between Catherine and Anastasie, who thought that her younger sister had decided too hastily in renouncing marriage. Anastasie complained to Father Cholenec about this decision. After her discussion with her confessor and reflection upon the situation, Anastasie finally realized that, because of her deep faith and admiration for Catherine, that she would support her "younger sister" and that Catherine had chosen the better part.

"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 forever, 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 ... at the same time that she devoted herself to Jesus Christ, she also consecrated herself to Mary, asking her resolutely to be her mother and she her daughter." Ibid., pp. 35-36

Kateri, who loved to pray the rosary for all people, pray for us.

Father Cholenec testified about Kateri's holiness in these words:

"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." Ibid., p. 8

Kateri, bright light of all Indians, pray for us.

HER REMARKABLE DEATH

Kateri Tekakwitha was always frail. During her childhood, her eyes were weakened by smallpox, her body was abused through extraordinary penances, and about a year before her death, there was a grave malady, a low-grade fever accompanied by severe stomach pains and frequent vomiting. Even during the last month of her life, she was sleeping on a bed of pine-needles which ruined what little health she had left.

"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...

On Tuesday morning (of Holy Week), we saw that she was failing noticeably, so we gave her Holy Viaticum which she received with angelic love and devotion like a true spouse of Our Lord...

On Wednesday morning, she was given Extreme Unction, 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...

Finally, in less than half an hour after her agony began, she expired as peacefully as if she had entered a deep sleep." Ibid., pp. 45-46

Kateri Tekakwitha died at the age of twenty-three, on Wednesday in Holy Week, April 17, 1680, around three in the afternoon. A miraculous event took place just fifteen minutes after her death. Her face marked by smallpox became so beautiful and so fair that Father Cholenec let out a yell and called others to see what had happened. It could have been at that moment that Kateri entered heaven and that she had a preview of the glory of her body risen with Christ.

Kateri, whose scarred face in life became beautiful after death, pray for us.

Kateri appeared to many of her people after her death, always carrying a Cross and being bathed in a bright and shining light. There were many miracles that were attributed to Tekakwitha in the ensuing years following her death. In January of 1681, a sick man, Claude Caron, near death, was cured upon receiving on his body the crucifix held by Kateri on her deathbed. In the same month, a woman put Kateri's crucifix on her neck and she was instantly cured, in the presence of her children. She did not want to relinquish the crucifix, so the priest gave her powder from Kateri's tomb. Her husband was also cured with this powder. In April 1682, the eldest son of Kateri's friend Anastasie was cured both physically and morally through her intervention. There were many cures during those two years at the Sault Mission through the miraculous intervention of one of their own.

*Kateri, your holy death gave strength to all Indians
to love Jesus and Mary, pray for us.*

"So many miraculous cures made Catherine's name so renowned that this summer (1682) 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." Ibid., p. 59



Father Pierre Cholenec, through his manuscript Vie de Catherine Tekakwitha, has given us a contemporary look at Tekakwitha in the seventeenth century. However, there was another contemporary Jesuit, Father Chauchetière who painted a portrait of Kateri after she appeared to him, several times, a few years later. The written word of Father Cholenec and the portrait by Father Chauchetière combine to show us who and what Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was.

ST. FRANCIS-XAVIER MISSION at KAHNAWAKÉ

On one of my visits to Kateri's shrines, I met the present Vice-Postulator for Kateri's Cause in Canada, Father Jacques Bruyère. He best described the St. Francis-Xavier Church and Shrine in Kahnawaké, Québec in this manner:

"Kateri never knew this church, though her presence is strongly felt here. Kateri never prayed in this church, but she listens to the requests deposited by all kinds of people praying at her tomb.

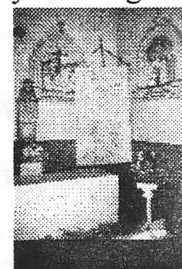
After fleeing from Fonda, Kateri arrived at LaPrairie in 1676. She did not live there for long, however, as the mission soon moved upstream to Côte Sainte-Catherine, where she quickly became a fervent church-goer. She believed that her God was there in a special way, and she would take refuge in the little chapel to renew her physical and spiritual strength. While praying, Kateri would be transformed to such a degree that her people liked to come and watch her pray with such ardor, with such rapture... In the presence of her Lord, her heart was burning.



The churches that she visited - at Fonda, LaPrairie and Côte Sainte-Catherine - have all disappeared. The one dedicated to St. Francis-Xavier in Kahnawake goes back to 1720 only. The cornerstone of the present church built on the same site was laid on May 19, 1845. All the statues and the religious gifts offered by the nobility of France, who showed such true missionary spirit, were re-installed in the new church. The monstrance before which Kateri must have prayed and contemplated, is conserved here - she had such a deep devotion to the Blessed Eucharist.

After her death in 1680, her remains were stored away in the church of Côte Sainte-Catherine. When the Mission finally settled down in Kahnawake opposite Lachine in 1720, her bones were also brought here. White-haired pilgrims may remember having seen them in a sealed glass box which would be taken out of the rectory vault every morning with great veneration.

It is only on November 1st 1972 that Bishop G.-M. Coderre presided at the translation of the precious relics into a marble tomb in the right transept of the church.



Without any doubt Kateri is rejoicing with us on this anniversary and contemplating all the baptisms, first communions, novenas, pilgrimages, weddings, funerals and masses which have been celebrated here these 150 years. She promised that she would take care of her own people and of the whole country after her death. Since she was declared the second patron of this church on April 17, 1983, she must be doing so much more than ever.

Happy Anniversary to the St. Francis-Xavier church and to the Shrine of Blessed Kateri!
 Let us thank God for all His gifts!" (Jacques Bruyère, S.J., Katerigram - The 150th Anniversary of the St. Francis-Xavier Church in Kahnawake, Qc. Canada, KATERI, Issue No. 185, Autumn 1995, p. 3.)

I left a photo of my two grand-children touching her marble tomb, resubmitting my request to Kateri to watch over her little cousins during this critical time in their lives. As I knelt there, once again I felt her presence, I heard her speaking to my soul asking me to pursue her cause, so that the First Nation people would have a saint of their own.

Being in the presence of my cousin's bones in this mission church reinforced my commitment to her to let the world know who she was. I promised her that I would speak to one and all about her life, a soul in the wilderness enraptured by her Creator. I vowed on her tomb that I would use my talents as a web designer to create a web site, with an interactive Guestbook, so that people around the world could visit and contribute, thereby learning and teaching about this wonderful Native American soon-to-be

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

www.kateritekakwitha.org/kateri

KATERI TEKAKWITHA: A MODEL FOR YOUTH

I would like to end A Litany to My Cousin with the following proposal that Kateri be the model of our youth, written by Michel Fortin, M. Afri.

- Young: in a world where the young are discredited, abused and pushed aside because of their lack of experience.
- Woman: in a world where the young girls and women are discriminated against and do not have equal rights.
- Amerindian: in a world where minorities are not respected.
- Algonquin: in an Iroquois world, insults were hurled at her "Hey, the Algonquin!", the mark of racial prejudice.
- Christian: in a pagan world, she battled continuously for her faith against all sorts of mockery and abuse. She had to go into exile to survive.
- Orphan: Her parents died of smallpox. She was adopted by her uncle, an avowed anti-christian.
- Handicapped: because of smallpox, she was nearly blind. Her name came from this handicap: "she walks by feeling her way around".
- Refugee: not being able to live freely in her pagan village in the USA, she fled to live in LaPrairie, Québec, Canada.
- Canadian: for the Church here (in Canada), she is proposed as a model.
- Lay person: she wanted to become a nun within the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, but God wanted her in her own environment. She led a life of simplicity.
- Missionary: she was always looking to "convert" her own people.
- Teacher: she taught catechism to the children.
- Courageous: she performed all daily work (especially those that were repulsed by others) and found there her sanctity by imitating Jesus.
- Great praying person: she spent hours in Jesus' presence in the chapel or in the woods.
- Generous: she visited the sick and took care of the little ones. She was very devoted to this task.

-Pure: in a world where all the young maidens took a husband, she vowed her virginity to God.

-Gentle: she never reacted to insult or to mockery. At the beginning, she was called "Hey! you, the Algonquin". Then, it was "Hey, you, the Christian". She prayed for peace.

-Devoted: she had a very special devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. She always carried a rosary in hand.

-Lover: she wanted to be the spouse of Jesus and His Cross. This love, marked with the Cross, symbol of universal salvation, the door to open all sorts of sacrifices in order to imitate her Divine Spouse.

Permission granted by Father Jacques Bruyère, in a letter dated April 2002, to translate this article appearing in KATERI, No. 168, Lys des Agniers, Printemps, 2002, p. 6, written by Michel Fortin, M.Afr.

AMEN

O Jesus, who gave Kateri to the Indians as an example of purity, teach all men to love purity, and to console your immaculate Mother Mary through the lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, and your Holy Cross. Amen.

The Litany, used throughout this story, is a copy of a prayer received at mass at St. Peter's Mission Church, in Fonda, NY, on July 14, 2000.

Thereupon, I submit "A Litany to My Cousin" to you, the reader, with the hope and prayer that you too will be watched over and blessed by our soon-to-be

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

Written as a prayerful tribute to my cousin
Kateri Tekakwitha
by
Norm Léveillé
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- (3) Kateri Tekakwitha -Mystic of the Wilderness, Margaret R. Bunson, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1992.
- (4) Vignettes on the Life of Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks, Sarah Hassenplug, 1991.
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- (9) The Original Caughnawaga Indians, Henri Béchard, S.J., 1975.
- (10) Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha - The Lily of the Mohawks, Father Lavasik, S.V.D., Catholic Book Publishing Co.
- (11) Blessed Kateri of the Mohawks, Mary Fabyan Windeatt & Gedge Harmon, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989.
- (12) PRDH - Programme de recherche en démographie historique, Université de Montréal, Various certificates: Recensement (census) actes 97429, 97459 & 98402; Baptême (baptism) acte 17658; Individu (individual) 4992.
- (13) Web site at www.veillee.net/ancestry/mariem.htm - A Tribute to Marie Mite8ameg8k8e, my eighth great-grandmother.



A Child's Prayer to Kateri

Kateri, loving child of God and Lily of the Mohawks,
 I thank God for the many graces He gave you.
 Help me to be more like you in my love for God and for people.

Give me a great love for the Holy Eucharist and the Mother of Jesus.
 Make me ready to make sacrifices for Jesus that I may save my soul
 and be happy with you in heaven.

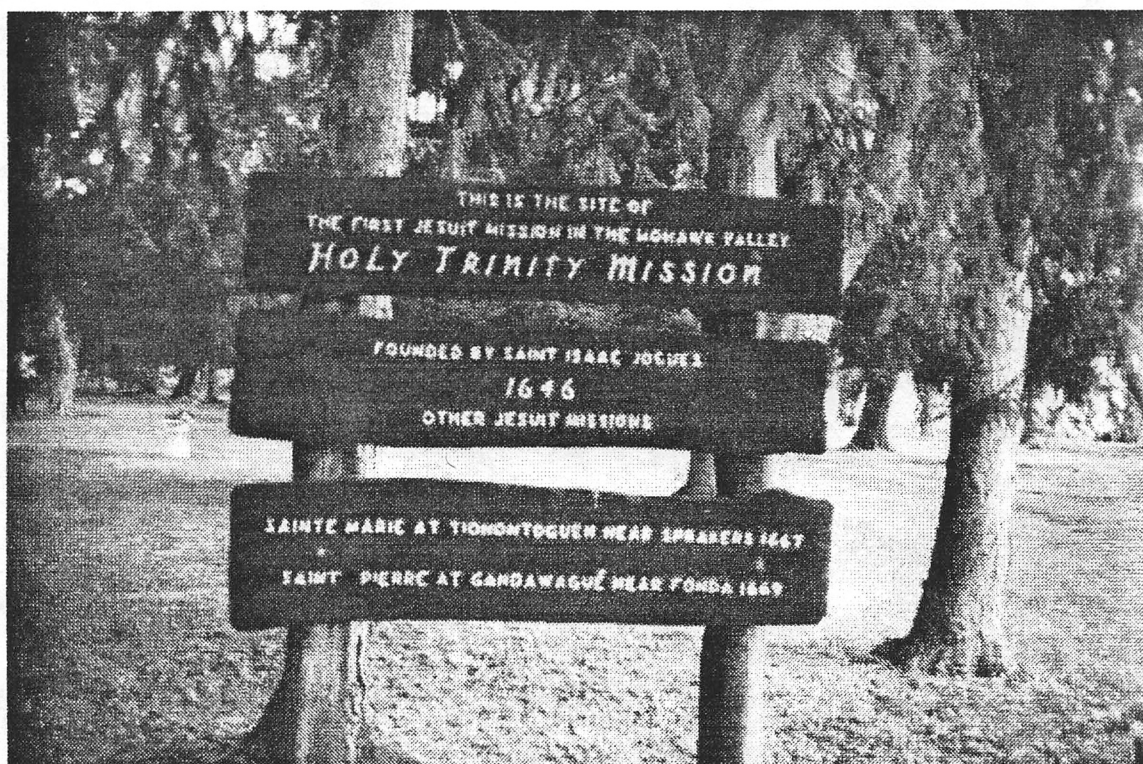
Kateri, I love you. Always be my friend.

APPENDIX

**Kateri Tekakwitha**

Que Dieu nous bénisse!
May God bless us!

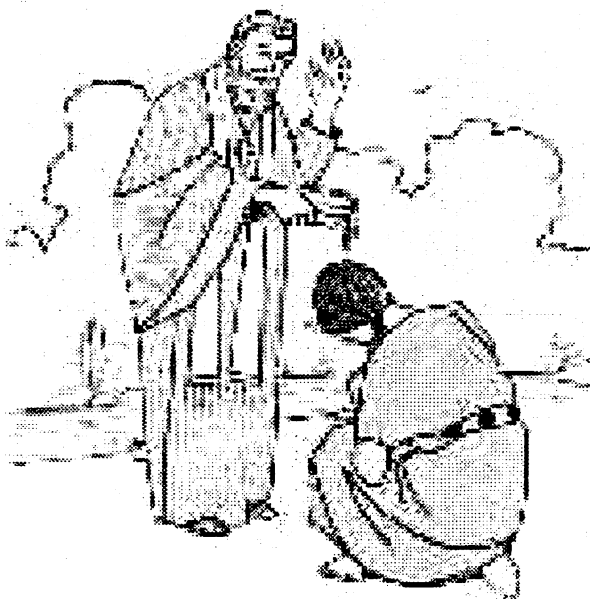
Mozmozik Odiozon Kinikini Volcanda Kottliwi Kwahliwi Tapsiwi.
May the Great Spirit and The Great Creator Bless Us and Smile upon Us.



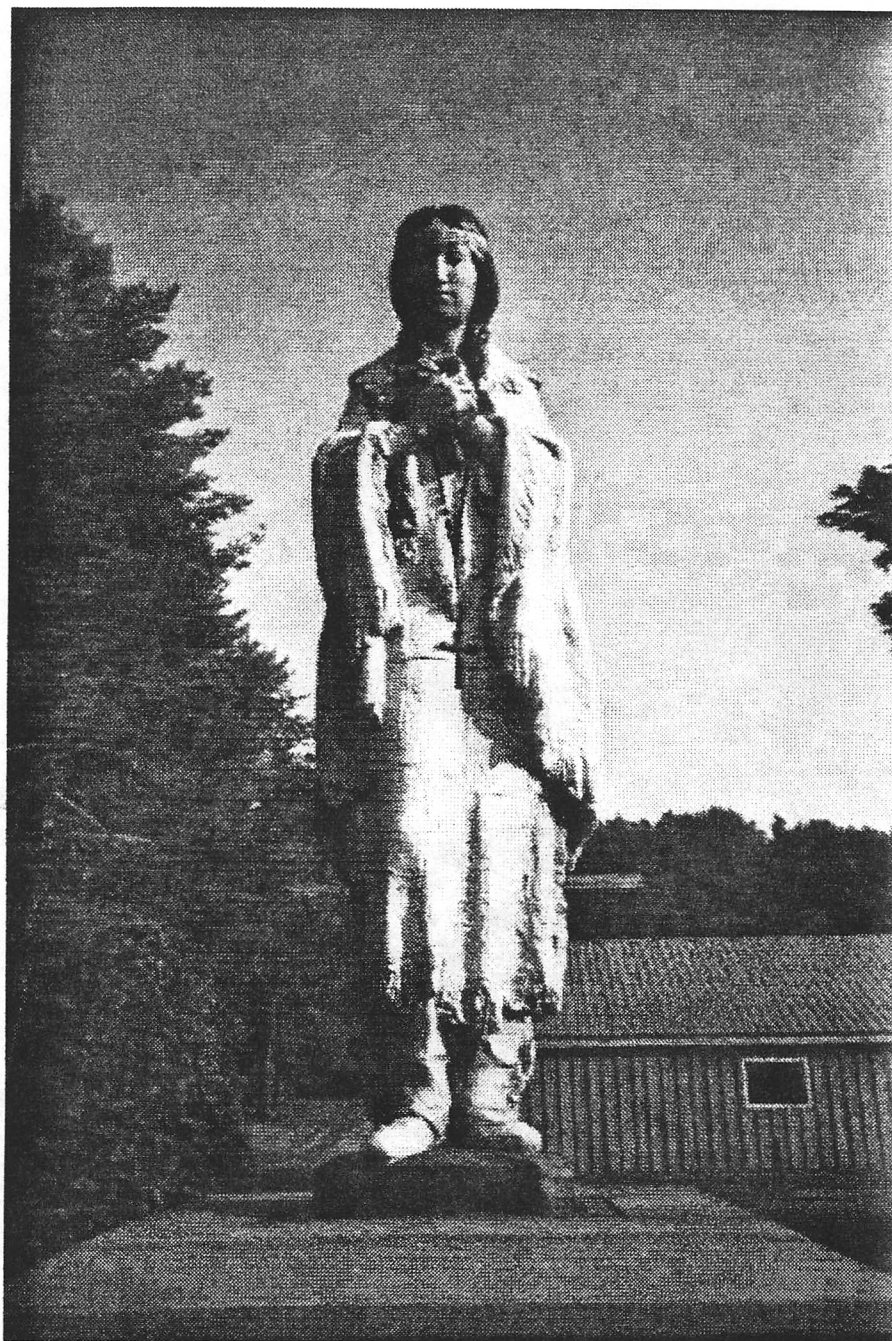
The Mohawk village of Ossernenon
 It was first evangelized by
 St. Isaac Jogues, St. René Goupil and St. Jean Lalande around 1646.
 Ossernenon was the site of the Holy Trinity Mission,
 established by St. Isaac Jogues in 1646.
 Tekakwitha was born and lived here between 1656 and 1666.
 National Martyrs Shrine
 Auriesville, New York



Model of Mohawk village of longhouses
at Caughnawaga Castle
Fonda, New York



Tekakwitha was baptized
by Father de Lamberville on
Easter Sunday, April 5, 1676
at St. Peter's Mission
Caughnawaga
(Fonda, New York)



Second Discovery

Statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

National Kateri Tekakwitha Shrine
St. Peter's Mission
Fonda, New York



Caughnawaga Castle & Spring
Excavation Site
Tekakwitha lived here between 1660 and 1676
Presently Fonda, New York

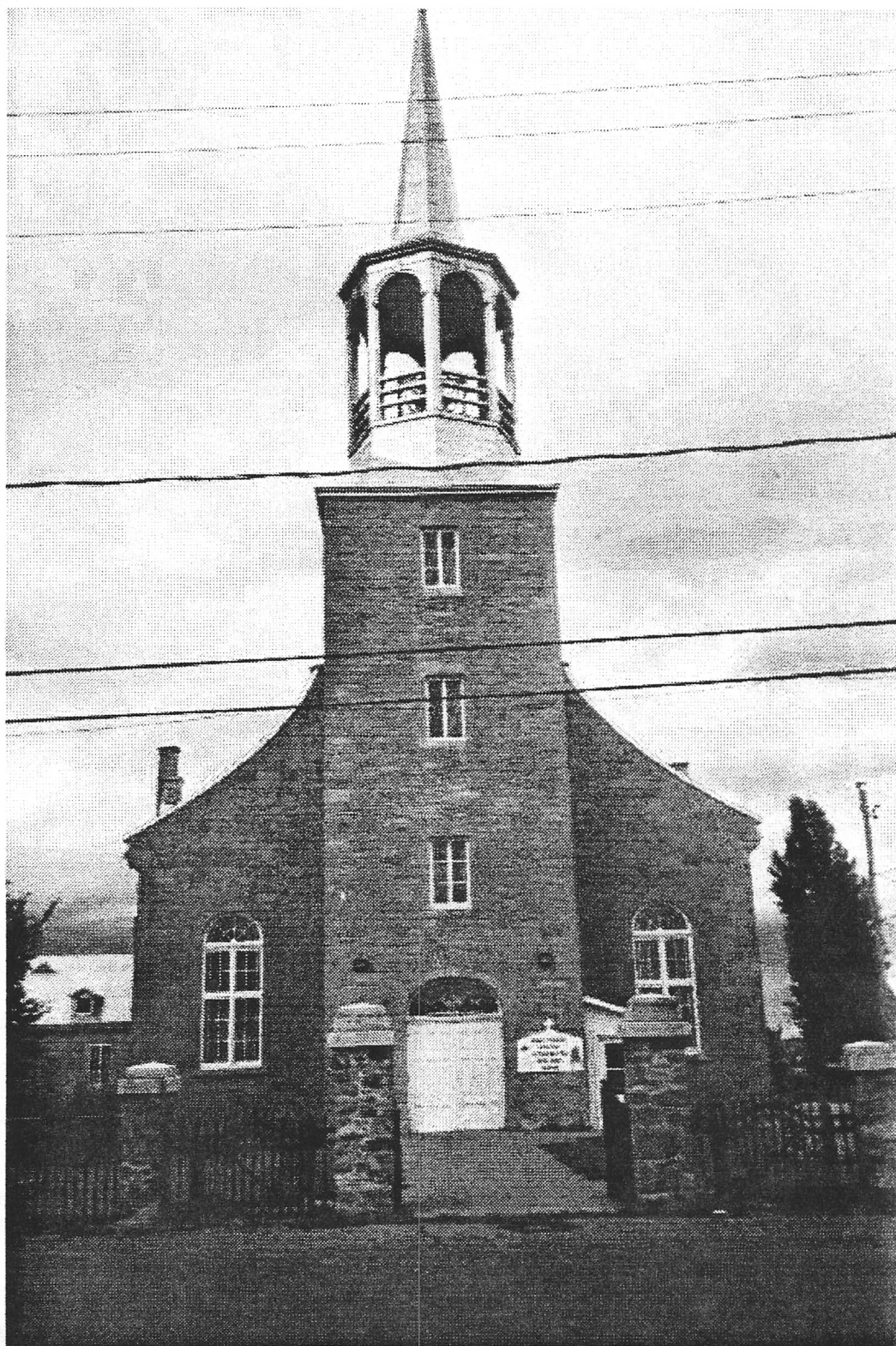


Two Christian Indians helped Kateri
to walk and paddle two hundred miles to
the St. Francis-Xavier Mission at LaPrairie



The oldest portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha is
an oil painting on canvas 41" x 37" painted by
Father Chauchetière
between 1682 and 1693.

It hangs in the sacristy of St. Francis-Xavier Church
on the Kahnawaké Reservation
on the south bank of the St. Lawrence River, near Montréal, Québec.



St. Francis-Xavier Church in Kahnawaké, Québec, Canada
The Shrine of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha



The marble tomb containing the bones of
Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha
in the right transept of
the St. Francis-Xavier Church
Kahnawaké, Canada

Kateri Tekakwitha

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1. **Catherine Tekakwitha**, Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J., Her Spiritual Advisor,
Translated by William Lonc, S.J., Sping 2002.

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

2. **Kaia'tanó:ron Kateri Tekawitha**

English Version
Henri Béchard, S.J.

Situated in its historical context with many references to manuscripts, this biography of Kateri Tekawitha is assuredly the most complete account that was ever written about the Iroquois Virgin and her entourage. In the first part, the author places in a right perspective the adventures of Kateri's mother and the infancy of Tekawitha till her conversion, her baptism and evasion to the land of the Mohawks. The second part presents the young Christian in her land of adoption, the Sault Saint-Louis. The wonders that happened right after her death make up the last part.

3. **Kateri Tekakwitha -Mystic of the Wilderness**

Margaret R. Bunson, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1992.

This book is unique. There are very few histories of Kateri and the Mohawks. This exciting work takes you inside Kateri's tribe and describes the customs and culture that shaped her life. As you travel with Kateri, you will begin to understand that she dwelt in yet another landscape, in the world of true mystics. She was a contemplative, a soul enraptured by God even in the wilds of a hostile land. (from the bookcover).

4. **Vignettes on the Life of Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks**

Sarah Hassenplug, 1991.

"Tekakwitha means she who stumbles into things. Isn't that a marvelous image of us?" asked our Native American Bishop Charles Chaput of Rapid City, SD, in a kind voice, during the closing liturgy of the 1990 National Tekakwitha Conference. Kateri Tekakwitha was of the Turtle clan, and like a little turtle who withdraws into its shell, Tekakwitha withdrew into her blanket to talk to Sonkwaiatison (The Creator).

5. Kateri Tekakwitha, America's Marvelous Maiden

Thomas J. Coffey, SJ, 1956, Rev Ed. 1994.

It has been said that a somebody is sometimes just a nobody that somehow everybody has heard about. In a sense, this is true of Tekakwitha. She certainly was a nobody - ineligible for anybody's Who's Who, except perhaps, the Angels'. And yet somehow everybody has heard of her.

6. Adventures With A Saint: Kateri Tekakwitha - Lily of The Mohawks

Maureen McCauley, 1992.

This book is priceless in that Marlene McCauley not only reflects Tekaiwitha's unique historical place within the events of evangelization, but also highlights Kateri's dynamic power as an intercessor in behalf of all in need. McCauley's little volume is a personal, touching, warm description of the kind of miracles which continue to take place in contemporary lives. For our Native people, this text describing her ongoing efforts is a reason to celebrate with great hope.

7. Kateri Tekakwitha - Joyful Lover

Sister Mary Pelagia Litkowski, O.P., 1989.

In today's society, our young people need models to whom they can relate. Kateri Tekakwitha, a Native American gift to the Church, is such a model. This biography attempts to present Kateri as one who is not only imitable but lovable. May Kateri's example as portrayed in this book, inspire not only the young, but all who read it, whatever age, to imitate her by living the Eight Beatitudes in joyful love.

8. Kateri Tekakwitha - Mohawk Maiden

Evelyn M. Brown, Igantius Press, 1958.

This is the inspiring story of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, a holy young Indian woman, who was converted to Christianity by the French missionaries. Her mother was a very devout Christian woman who, after being captured by the Iroquois, was not allowed to baptize her daughter. Her whole family died of smallpox and she was adopted by a chief who was very anti-Christian. When she was baptized and converted by the missionaries, Kateri became ostracized from the tribe. With the help of the priest, she made a daring escape and thereafter lived a life devoted to God. (from the bookcover).

9. The Original Caughnawaga Indians

Henri Béchard, S.J., 1975.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time that an impressive, well-documented list of Indians who profoundly lived their Faith and actively propagated it, many among them sealing it with their blood and terrible sufferings, is offered to the public at large." The Mission of St. Frances Xavier, Caughnawaga, P.Q., Canada, was founded in 1667. After years of research, it has been possible to bring to light the story of some twenty of the original Caughnawaga Indians, who lived in this village from its beginning to 1700. These Indians played a prominent role during the French and Indian wars, which belong to the history of the United States as well as to that of Canada.

10. Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha - The Lily of the Mohawks

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A St. Joseph Picture Book, intended for children, simply written with colorful illustrations.

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Mary Fabyan Windeatt & Gedge Harmon, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989.

A Catholic Story Coloring Book for children.

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This is a subscription online database that covers baptisms, marriages, burials and census from the Civil Acts and Registers of all the parishes existing between 1621 and 1799 in New France, now the province of Québec, Canada.

These books can be purchased at Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha League
Gift Shop - National Kateri Center
Office of the Vice Postulator
174 Shrine Road
Auriesville, N.Y. 12016
League Gift Shop