

DECREE MONTREAL OR ALBANY IN AMERICA

In the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God
Catherine Tekakwitha

INDIAN VIRGIN

On the question: Whether authorization for the Introduction of this Cause should be signed in this instance and for the effect intended.

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How comprehensible are His judgements and how unsearchable His ways? (Romans xi, 33); as the Apostle (Paul) cries out in admiration of the hidden outpouring of God's mercies especially in the calling of the gentiles. This calling to the faith and justification is really a free gift of God as the same Apostle declares: *Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans iii, 24): for there is no respect of persons with God (Romans ii, 11); and there is for no distinction between Jew and Greek (x, 12); as Christ died for all (Corinthians v, 15): He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy ii, 4);* He giving to all the means necessary for salvation, so that one who does not accept the truth is inexcusable. Whosoever whether poor, in need or despised believeth in Him shall not be confounded (Romans ix, 33): nay, God lifts him up from, the earth and exalts him *that He may place him with the princes of his people.*

To such glory Our Lord seems to have raised CATHERINE TEKAKWITHA, an Indian Virgin of North America, of the tribe *Agniers* as the French called them, *Mohawks* as named by the English. This flower of holiness divine Wisdom brought forth from those regions which not long before had drained the blood of the Saints Isaac Jogues and his Companion Martyrs of the Society of Jesus and preserved and cultivated this immaculate lily unsullied among those very Iroquois peoples who had been the executioners of these Martyr Saints.

Born in the village Ossernenon, now Auriesville, today in the diocese of Albany, about the year 1656, her father was a pagan, but her mother a Christian Algonquin origin. When four years old, losing both parents and her only brother, she was taken into the family of her uncle, a bitter hater of the Christian religion, and brought up in Indian ways.

Already moved by an instinctive and perhaps unconscious love of virginity, when she strongly resisted attempts to have her marry, she suffered much in consequence.

In the year 1667 three Jesuit missionaries spent three days at her uncle's house and Catherine took care of them. Three years later a permanent mission was established there and soon after in 1675, our virgin was admitted among the catechumens by Father James de Lamberville, S.J.; the

year following, on the Feast of Easter, in view of her extraordinary virtues and exceptional preparation she was laved in the Sacrament of baptism by the same Father de Lamberville.

To escape persecutions and dangers which threatened even her faith, leaving her uncle's home secretly, she fled to the mission of St. Francis Xavier of the Sault, now known as Caughnawaga, situated in Canadian territory, covering the space of a long journey to the village in which only Christians and catechumens dwelt, presided over by the missionary Father both in spiritual and temporal matters, after the manner of the celebrated Paraguay Reductions.

In the mission CATHERINE made wonderful progress in Christian perfection, devoting herself wholly to prayer and mortification of the flesh in which she would have gone to excess unless she had been restrained by her spiritual director. In view of her spiritual disposition, the missionary Fathers, contrary to the usual rule they had prudently made, admitted her into the pious society of the Holy Family, into which only the more fervent Christians were received. Nay, more, at the request of the Servant of God, they granted that she should vow perpetual virginity, March 25, 1679, the first, so far as known, among Indians of that region.

Becoming thus the fragrance of Christ, she attracted by her example many like herself to the mission village where they led a Christian life more fervently.

Afflicted by many infirmities which she bore very patiently, after receiving the Holy Viaticum, brought to her with solemnity, and anointing with Holy Oil, pronouncing sweetly the words, *Jesus, I love Thee*, she flew to her heavenly Spouse whom she had loved, sought, and always had made her tomb near the Iroquois village of the Caughnawaga Missions, now in the diocese of St. John of Quebec, administered by Fathers of the Society of Jesus, a place for pilgrimages which even now after nearly three centuries continue.

Outstanding are the testimonials to this renown since the plea of the Baltimore Plenary Council of 1881 and the Postulatory Letters since of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops of the United States and Canada, and of the very many Indians with their chieftains, which express the ancient desire of Americans.

To satisfy this desire the Bishop of Albany in America by his authority as Ordinary instituted the process concerning the renown for holiness in the year 1931-32 in due time reported to Rome. As this Cause had to be classed as one of old, by virtue of the *Motuproprio*, February of 1930, issued by Pius XI, of happy memory, the task of examining the historical documents submitted, of requiring others, of sifting them critically, so that what might be gathered and adjudged by them be known, fell to the Historical Section, subsidiary to this Sacred Congregation. On this task they laboured remarkably well. Since, therefore, it has been proved that the documents are authentic, entirely credible, the renown for holiness of the Servant of God is convincingly proved.

Wherefore, at the request of Fr. Charles Miccinelli, S.J., rightly appointed as Postulator of this Cause, the undersigned Cardinal, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Deponent of this Cause, proposed for discussion this question: Should the authorization for the Introduction of the Cause, in this instance and for the purpose in question be approved? The eminent Fathers, after the address of the aforesaid Cardinal, with the vote of the official Prelates, and the absence of objection vocal or written by the Promoter of the Faith, having in mind the Postulatory Letters, and weighing everything carefully decided to go on record: *Affirmatively, or that the Authorization for the Introduction of the Cause should be approved if it pleases His Holiness.*

After the Cardinal Prefect reported to our Most Holy Lord Pope Pius XII on the date below, His Holiness, considering the decision of the Sacred Congregation, deigned to sign with his own hand the authorization for the Introduction of the Servant of God, CATHERINE TEKAWITHA.

Rome, 19 May, 1939

Charles Card. Salotti, S.R.C., Prefect.
Alphonsus Carinci, S.R.C., Secretary.