

“ My Name Is ‘ Christian ’ ! ”

(Fourth Day)

TEKAKWITHA first saw the French Blackrobes in the early autumn of 1667, and then, only for a few days. She was eleven years old. Three Jesuit Fathers were the guests of her pagan uncle (quite against his will), and she was ordered to serve them. This brief meeting seems to have predisposed her to the Faith.

In 1674, Father de Lamberville, who permanently resided at the Iroquois Mission of St. Peter's (today Funda, N.Y.), gave public instructions to a few Mohawks courageous enough to ignore the general antagonism to the Catholic Church prevalent among their fellow-pagans. Tekakwitha apparently was present at these sermons, but through fear of her uncle or through shyness, or perhaps through both, never confided to the Jesuit her desire for Baptism.

One autumn day in 1675, Father de Lamberville passed in front of her lodge, and, moved by some sudden impulsion, entered it. No one should have been there, for the Iroquois harvested their corn at that time of the year. Much to his surprise, the missionary found Tekakwitha, obliged to remain at home because of a sore foot. The Iroquois maiden seized the opportunity. She opened up her heart to Father Jacques and told him how eagerly she desired to receive Baptism. He invited her to come regularly to the chapel to pray.

Soon Father de Lamberville, edified by her profound piety, decided to receive her into the Church though he generally tried an adult two or three years before conferring Baptism. A careful investigation as to her life and character convinced him that Tekakwitha was indeed a worthy candidate.

All that winter, she took instructions much in the same manner as any modern convert coming back to the Faith of his ancestors. Her prayers, Kateri rapidly learned, for fear of seeing her Baptism delayed.

On Easter Sunday (April 5, 1676) in the Mission church of St. Peter, the priest questioned her :

“ Do you wish to be baptized ? ”

“ I do, ” she answered and forthwith she was solemnly christened and given the name of Kateri in the presence of all the faithful.

But during the next two years she was known only by the name of “ Christian ”. Her other names were forgotten. It was the most injurious taunt the devil could imagine.

PONDER AWHILE . . .

What does my Baptism mean to me ? Does it mean as much to me as it did to Kateri ?... Have I ever taken the time off to read attentively the detailed ceremonies of Solemn Baptism ?... (Now turn to page eight and read the Prayer for the Beatification of Kateri.)

“ I Send You a Treasure... ”

(Fifth Day)

OGERATARIHEN (Hot Ashes), the well known Catholic Oneida, accompanied by a Huron and by one of Kateri's cousins from Mission Saint-François-Xavier as he was himself, paid a visit to St. Peter's Mission in the early autumn of 1677. (Hot Ashes was the chief who used to have the village drunks dumped into a pigsty until they had completely recuperated.)

The elders were the first Indians to receive the newcomers, but soon a crowd gathered. Hot Ashes spoke to his countrymen and invited them to enter into the one true Fold. His audience, whose curiosity for religion was soon satisfied, began to dwindle away. Kateri Tekakwitha however, stayed until the end.

The priest often had advised her to flee to Mission Saint-François-Xavier on the banks of the St. Lawrence where she could practice her religion in peace. In the past, this suggestion had frightened her. Today her uncle, whose wrath she feared, was away with the Dutch of Fort Orange and she felt quite calm at the prospect of leaving him. The Jesuit broached the subject to Hot Ashes who replied : “ There will be room in the canoe for her, since I intend to go to the Oneidas and preach the faith among the Iroquois nations. ”

And so began the long two-hundred mile trek through the red and gold wildwood. Her uncle warned that she had escaped, loaded his gun with three bullets and followed the little group of three. Once he met Kateri's cousin... but passed by, not knowing that the strange Indian was one of those he sought...

When Kateri learned of this adventure, she interpreted it as a sign of heavenly approbation. “ Her journey was a continual prayer and the joy which she felt in approaching Montreal cannot be put into words. ”

Fathers Fremin and Cholenec were the first to read the note their friend Father de Lamberville had entrusted to Tekakwitha for them : “ I send you a treasure ; guard it well ! ” Ignoring the contents of the letter but realizing that she had no longer anything to fear from her uncle, Kateri Tekakwitha gave herself entirely into the hands of God. He would guard His treasure.



PONDER AWHILE . . .

Kateri ran away from sin, from temptations against purity and against her faith. And I ?... (Now turn to page eight and read the Prayer for the Beatification of Kateri.)

⌘ “ Kateri ” says : “ Thank you ! ” to the clients who sent in a donation for the future bronze statue of Tekakwitha. ⌘