

Happy New Year with Kateri!

By ALBERT BURNS, S.J.



As the clocks of the world strike midnight on December 31st, despite war in Korea, despite that dizzy toy, the atom bomb,

now in the hands of the little child called man, from his heart will spring the seasonal wish: "Happy New Year!"

It will, indeed, be a Happy New Year, if it is lived out in a truly Christian spirit. A Christian year, however, is made up of Christian weeks and Christian weeks of Christian days.

Thus it was in Kateri's time. Long before she was born, the missionaries had already coined for the days of the week an Iroquois terminology rich with a truly Christian spirit.

NIIOHNE and ENTA

When Kateri spoke of Sunday, she had the choice of two names for it. The first, NIIOHNE, is derived from the French "Dieu" (God). The manuscripts of the missionaries among the Five Nations, give "Diio" or "Dio". Since

the Mohawks have no letter "D" in their alphabet, the letter "N" was substituted in lieu thereof and "Diio" became "Niio". The suffix "ne" means "On-the-day-of". NIIOHNE therefore signifies: "On-the-day-of-God", or "The Lord's Day".

The expression ENTA, also in use to designate Sunday, may be literally translated as "the Great Day, the Feast Day". The attention of the neophytes of yore was centered on the one important day of the week for a Christian: Sunday. Both NIIOHNE and ENTA recall the obligation of assistance at Sunday Mass and, in general of keeping holy the Lord's Day.

AWENTENTAHONKE

Here again we find the black-robes spotlighting Sunday. Today as in 1680, the year of Tekakwitha's death, for an Iroquois, AWENTENTAHONKE is our Monday and it is rendered into English by "When-the-Feast-is-finished". It comes from "Enta" (Feast) and "Wententas" (to finish). When the Lily of the Mohawks murmured AWENTENTAHONKE it recalled to her mind all the graces received on the Lord's Day!

RATIRONHIAKEHRONONKE

Catholic liturgy consecrates Tuesday to the Holy Angels. RATIRONHIAKEHRONONKE still recalls this devotion to the Caughnawagas. If we break up the word into its constituents, we find the plural form "Rati" (they); "karonhiake" (in-heaven); "ronon" (inhabitants); "ke" (the-day-of). Hence, "The-day-of-the-heavenly-dwellers."

SOSEHNE

Good St. Joseph! Venerable Kateri as a member of the Holy Family Association, which still exists in Caughnawaga, loved and revered him. The Foster-Father of the Christ Child was not forgotten by the other Christian Iroquois. Wednesday, instead of being consecrated to some German god, was placed under the protection of "Sose". SOSEHNE signifies "On-the-day-of-St-Joseph."

OKARISTIANE

Kateri's great love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is too well known to be developed here. Let it suffice to say that she heard at least two masses every morning and visited Our Savior hidden in the tabernacle five times daily. The Iroquois of Caughnawaga, whether they have remained faithful to the Faith that was hers or have been lured away from it by the world, the flesh or other false prophets, call Thursday OKARISTIAHNE (On - the - day - of - the - Eucharist).

RONWAIATANENTAKTONNE

When Fr. de Lamberville spoke to Kateri about Friday, he called it RONWAIATANENTAKTONNE. Its English equivalent is: "On-the-day-they-attached-Him", understood "to-the-Cross." The etymological analysis gives: "Ronwa" (they-Him); "oiata" (the-body or -person); "aieranentakton" (attached), and "ne" (on-the-day-of). Anyone reading even a very short biography of Kateri Tekakwitha (See: Sketch of the Life of Tekakwitha in the Form of a Novena by Henri Bécharde, S.J.), will be impressed by the penitential spirit of this holy maiden, the spirit of Jesus and of Jesus crucified!

WARIHNE and ENTAKTA

Two words for Saturday. As AWENTENTAHONKE (When-the-Feast-is-finished) in the christianized Iroquois language, was an invitation to thanksgiving for the gift of the Lord's Day, so is Saturday an invitation to prepare for it: ENTAKTA (The - Eve - of - the - Feast or Next-to-the-Feast).

But Saturday is a day very dear to all lovers of Our Blessed Mother. On Saturdays, Kateri did penance in honor of her, said her rosary with singular devotion and, before going to confession, had one of her friends give her the discipline. WARIHNE beautifully ends the Catholic Iroquois week: it is Mary's Day!

☞ Don't forget a daily prayer for the prompt Beatification of the Lily of the Mohawks. ☞