

THE FRIEND OF KATERI, *continued*, but at their base lay a great hunger, a restless seeking for something of which he did not know the name. Consequently he too walked "the labyrinthine ways" of which Francis Thompson writes in the greatest of his poems, the HOUND OF HEAVEN, and the same Hound of Heaven pursued him and overtook him at last in the church of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Jean Baptiste. It was near his home. Quite casually he had, so to say, dropped in.

Dimly, after the Resurrection, John the Beloved had seen the figure of Christ in the dawn, rising upon the shore-line, and cried out: "It is the Lord!" Something similar happened to Doctor Rhodebeck when without the slightest premonition he came into the veiled Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. He saw the large monstrance standing high up, on a lofty altar. He saw it and it thrilled him and shook him from within. Man of science though he was, he could not explain to himself what it was that had happened, and he was disturbed.

That was the beginning. It was the dawning of the vision that drew him out of the shadows and up the tortuous path of the mountain of purgation into the full light of Faith. With his profession on Passion Sunday, 1947, a new life began. For him Catholicism was not only a Faith; it was a Love, an all dominating love for Christ as a Person.

It was this that revolutionized him, that made him say: "God had to beat me to the ground or He would never have won me," and "He and I walked together". This inspired him furthermore to admit during a time of great tribulation, that the suffering held a joy, since it united him more closely to Our Lord. This friendship grew so intimate that he feared the slightest thing that might impair it, and when overpowered by a sense of guilt at some failing, it caused him to say: "I have hurt Him again."

Inevitably this experience gave to his life a motivation that was new and intense. Never again, so he told me, did he wish to practise medicine for remuneration. His desire was to work for the poor, and his heart went out to children, especially to those who were the victims of incurable disease. To these he was eager to give the love, the care, and a spiritual help that would fill their lives with a deeper purpose. "I could pick up every suffering thing" he said, "whether animal or human being." I have offered myself to Christ that He may work through my hands, that everyone may go from me feeling something of His healing power."

Again he wanted to go the whole way, and the way was hard. He had broken with his old world and the break left many

a wound. Struggles lay ahead. There was much to suffer. There was loneliness, insecurity, misunderstanding. There was the fear of Augustine's cry: "Too late have I loved Thee!"

Not long after Doctor Rhodebeck came into the Church someone introduced him to the story of Kateri Tekakwitha. It was a case of love at first acquaintance. The Indian girl slipped into his life and remained. He used to say that she was on the bench beside him at Mass and Holy Communion, and he loved to call attention to her image on the bronze door of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Repeatedly he urged me to write her story and was eager to help with the necessary research. The mere mention of her name could arouse his interest at any time.

It was this that brought him to Caughnawaga this past summer, into one of the happiest periods of his life. He loved every part of it, the peace and the holiness, of the Mission, the unforgettable kindness of the Fathers who made him feel himself as one of them, the friendship of the Sisters in charge of the school, and the precious, daily companionship of the Indian children. This was precious to him. He loved to have them clamor about him, and may it give them joy to know that their affection warmed the lonely places in his heart, and that he missed them after he left them. "My children" he called them, and once when I told him that he laughed more than formerly, he said: "I think it is the children."

As to Kateri, it was his continuous wish that her remains might be placed in some niche, some crypt perhaps, that would inspire people to come to pray. He felt that while many came to view her bones, too few had come to pray. He was convinced that the miracles required for her beatification would not be found wanting if those in need of them would pray.

No one suspected that his life was so near its closing when he journeyed from New York to New Orleans, shortly after leaving Caughnawaga. In spirit he had taken Kateri and the dear ones in Canada with him into the Southland, and they were with him during the last moments of his life. On Sunday morning, September 28th the hope for his recovery ran high. The heart seemed better. He had received Holy Communion and apparently the old verve had returned. In the midst of a conversation with the nurse, telling her of Caughnawaga, the children, the beloved Kateri, an instant came and all was over. Happily, life ended in a concluding avowal. "Who is your favorite saint?" the nurse had asked him, and the answer was charged with a final affirmation, revealing once again the mainspring of his inner life and its enduring Love. "My favorite Saint" he said, "is Jesus Christ."

CALENDAR TIDBITS

Mission Saint-François-Xavier

CAUGHNAWAGA, P. Q.

To the Most Reverend Bishops of Canada,
To the Very Reverend Superiors and Pastors,
To the Reverend Brother Directors,
To the Reverend Sister Superiors.

Dear Friends of Kateri,

As V.-Postulator for the Cause of Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha, I am forwarding you the enclosed poster, an invitation to pray for the prompt Beatification of the Lily of the Mohawks! Would it be asking too much to place it, well in evidence, in the vestibule of your church during all the Holy Season of Lent?

The Cause of Tekakwitha is as poor as she was here below during her life-time; it has no official funds. Hence, to meet the heavy cost of printing and mailing this poster to every Catholic parish and institution in Canada, I was obliged to seek financial assistance. I now most heartily recommend our sponsors and invite you to patronize them:

The Catholic Central Bureau, Ltd., 50 Notre Dame St. W., Montreal, Que., wholesale dealers in religious articles. Anywhere in Canada, and any time, for instance, at that parochial retreat of yours, at your request, the Catholic Central Bureau will forward, on consignment, the crucifixes, prayer books, holy pictures, rosaries, medals, etc. you desire. You will be more than satisfied with their prompt and efficient service.

The Knights of Columbus, Council 1776 of Lachine, Que., on acceding to our invitation to become one of the four Kateri sponsors, earned the gratitude of all Kateri's friends and clients. (In admitting more than 40 Indians from our Mission, the Lachine K. of C. have proved, once again, their thorough Catholic spirit!)

J.-P. Bédard, Ltée, 480, Laflour Avenue, Ville Lasalle, Que., contractor of asphalt works, crushed stone, bituminous mixtures and pulverized lime stone of farming purposes. This firm's friendly dealing with Caughnawaga over a long span of years, and the excellent record it has built up for itself, merit your whole hearted encouragement.

Willis & Co., Limited, 1220 St. Catherine St. W., Montreal, Makers of Willis Piano for more than eighty years, agents of the Hammond Organ, wish to call to the attention of the Catholic clergy of Canada, that they now are the exclusive Canadian representatives of the internationally known "Paccard" bells and of the "Mamias" ringing systems. If your church needs a small or a large bell, if it needs one or one hundred bells, Willis & Co., Limited, will give life to your steeple...

There still remains a limited quantity of Kateri posters; if you desire more copies, drop a post card to the V.-Postulator.

Asking a prayer during your mass for the speedy Beatification of the lovely Lily of the Mohawks, I remain

Devotedly yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Henri Bédard, S.J.

Rev. Henri Bédard, S.J.,
V.-Postulator for the Cause of the
Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha

February 11, 1953

PRAY TO THE VENERABLE
KATERI TEKAKWITHA

