

rosary of the Holy Family and divided it at intervals in each of which they gave themselves five strokes more. Towards the end of these devotions, they ceased to count the blows.

"My Jesus," Kateri would cry out, "I must suffer for Thee; I love Thee, but I have offended Thee. It is to satisfy Thy justice that I am here. Vent on me, O God, Thy anger." Then again: "I am very much afflicted by the three nails which fastened Our Lord to the cross; they are but a symbol of my sins."

A few months before her death, Fr. Peter Cholenec mentioned before her St. Aloysius Gonzaga's mortification. If mortification were good for him, she thought, they must be good for her! Straightway she plucked a large bundle of big, pointed thorns. That night, when all were asleep, she strewed them upon her mat and then lay down upon it, leaving only her blanket over her body. "She had the strength," recalls Cholenec, "not only to roll herself all night long upon the thorns, but to do this for the three following nights also, the pain being unimaginable, as she afterwards informed me."

One of her little group shrewdly suspected that Kateri was perhaps mortifying herself excessively, and told her that she would be offending God by undertaking this excess without the permission of her confessor.

"She sought me out immediately," the missionary wrote, "and approached me with these words: 'Oh! Father, I have sinned!' Then she told me the whole affair, and although in my heart I admired her, I pretended to be displeased and reprimanded her for her imprudence, and in order to prevent her from renewing it, I commanded her to throw these thorns into the fire, which she did with the greatest submission. She possessed this virtue in an eminent degree, always ready to do or to omit, equally content to be on either side, without being attached to her own will, an infallible proof of the Spirit of God which governed her."

Thus did the Lily of the Mohawks, with the same love as the Apostle of the Gentiles, "help to pay off the debt which the afflictions of Christ leave still to be paid, for the sake of his body the Church" (Col. 1-24). This is a generally unknown facet of her life. The life of an Indian girl whom a Jesuit of her times described as "gentle, honest, affectionate, and even gay of spirit, kind, and always ready to lend a helping hand . . ."

A new Kateri
statuette →

