

Kateri Was a Member

Father Joseph-Marie Chaumonot, S. J., tells us the story, in his autobiography, of the foundation of the Holy Family Association. Three units of the original Confraternity still exist today: one at the Basilica of Quebec, and the two others at the Mission of St. Francis Xavier in Caughnawaga and at the Mission of St. Francis Regis near Cornwall, Ontario.

In 1663, Bishop de Laval and the Superiors sent this Jesuit "to assist the inhabitants of Montreal, who were in dire need of provisions". The Reverend Gabriel Souart and Dominique Galénier, Sulpicians, welcomed him at their residence. "We spent at least four months together", wrote the Jesuit, "always in such perfect harmony, that they could have been mistaken for members of the Society of Jesus, and I, for a member of the Society of St. Sulpice. On holy days and Sundays, we officiated each in turn and preached."

Thus this great apostle of the Indians (he was present in 1680 at the Mission of St. Francis Xavier when Kateri died) became acquainted with the French colonists at Montreal; at the same time he was ready to help any Indian who passed through the town.

Father Jerome Lalemant, S. J., Superior of the Jesuits of New France, had instructed Father Chaumonot, before his departure from Quebec, to do duty for him with Madame Louis Daillebout, widow of the Governor of Canada. The Jesuit struck up an acquaintance with this "virtuous and intelligent lady, blessed with qualities of leaderships". He discovered that she thought of reforming Christian families on the model of the Holy Family by means of a society or confraternity.



As for Father Chaumonot, for fourteen years he had felt inspired by a continual yearning to give Our Lady a host of spiritual and adopted children "to comfort her for the suffering she had endured through the loss of her Son Jesus."

One day, during meditation, as he communed with himself concerning this subject, he heard within his heart an "intellectual message" in the mystical sense of the term, assuring him of the satisfaction his desires procured the Blessed Virgin.

Soon after, he found in a book devotional exercises to the Holy Family in honor of the thirty years that Jesus, Mary and Joseph spent together. The following Sunday, with Curé Souart's permission, Father Chaumonot preached on this devotion which was well received by the faithful.

This was not yet the Holy Family Association. It was soon to be realized with the assistance of the Pastor, of Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys, of Mother Judith de Brésoles, Superior at the Hotel Dieu, and of Madame Daillebout. They were more and more preoccupied with the thought of establishing a Confraternity of the Holy Family, whose aim would be the sanctification of all Christian families. It was decided to propose to the men the imitation of St. Joseph, to the women that of Mary, and to the children that of the Child Jesus. Father Souart, at the time Father Chaumonot's Spiritual Director, gave his blessing to the project. Moreover the authorization of the Bishop, the Venerable François de Laval, was needed, and if possible, indulgences from the Holy Father were to be obtained.

Father Chaumonot then suggested to his friends that they make a novena for the success of this undertaking. It was to be a novena to St. Ignatius Loyola. All agreed and on the feast of the founder of the Jesuits, July 31, 1663, each one promised to offer nine communions in thanksgiving. The founders of the Association also decided that all new members would recite nine times *Glory be to the Father*, etc., immediately after their reception, to thank God for this favor.

"Furthermore", wrote the Jesuit, "the Saint did not fail to make a success of the affair which we had recommended to him." At first, obstacles reared up. Such is the case in any good work