

without any other master than the Holy Spirit. Pope Pius XI, who confirmed this statement, concerning Tekakwitha, said: "Her life is a miracle in itself." On January 3, 1943, by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, His Holiness Pope Pius XII, of blessed memory, proclaimed heroic the virtues of this humble Iroquois maiden.

Kateri's mother was an Algonquin convert to Christianity. A prisoner of war, at first, she then became the wife of one of the most feared of the Mohawk warriors. This pious woman keenly desired to see her little girl baptized, but the missionaries who, during this time of war ventured into the Indian territories, were scarce enough. At the age of four, because of a terrible small-pox epidemic in the village, Kateri became an orphan and her sole protection was our Lord.

She was then received into the home of a paternal uncle, who hoped that he and his family would profit well from the girl, by giving her hand in marriage to some capable Iroquois hunter. Kateri grew, gentle and wise, skilful in the household arts. By nature tractable, she avoided noisy gatherings and the immoral and corrupt life led by the members of her tribe. Attracted, one could say instinctively, to the virtue of Virgins, she recoiled from all impurity; she also constantly refused every demand in marriage, and so exposed herself to the anger and reproaches of her adopted parents.

At the autumn of 1676, with the coming of a permanent Mission to her village, she made her first contact with the missionaries, despite the opposition of her uncle, an irreducible foe of the Christians. She providentially met the Jesuit, Father Jacques de Lamberville, who, "on his side was most edified by her modesty and reserve. He was even more so when he had spoken with her and had learned what a virtuous life she led. He was delighted to discover so many virtues in a young Indian. He recognized clearly that the Holy Spirit had enlightened the eyes of her soul to see and had touched her heart to embrace the truth of our religion." (Doc. X, p. 254.)* So wrote Father Pierre Cholenec, S. J., who knew quite well Kateri and Father de Lamberville.

* Doc., in this article, refers to *The Posilio of the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the Introduction of the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization and on the Virtues of the Servant of God Katharine Tekakwitha*. Fordham University Press, New York, 1940.

