



CHRISTMAS DAY, 1667

Since her baptism in Gandaouagué on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1676, Kateri had wished to make her First Communion. During the autumn of 1677 she reached the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, "which schooled her in Christianity" according to Father Pierre Cholenec.

At the sight of her friends receiving Holy Communion, her desire to follow them to the altar railing increased from day to day. She knew, however, that the converts to the faith must wait several years before this was allowed them. The missionaries did not want their wards to think that the Eucharist was some sort of magic; they took the time and the care to teach them that under the appearances of bread and wine, Jesus Christ was truly present.

The Blackrobes soon became aware that Kateri understood this perfectly well. So they granted her the exceptional privilege of making her first Communion after only a year and a half as a Christian.

She was informed of this permission not very long before Christmas, 1677. Doubtless she received Our Lord for the first time at Midnight Mass. Custom did not vary greatly from one mission to the other.

"All the Indians . . ." wrote Father Jean Enjalran, then stationed at Missilimakinac, "profess to have a special esteem for the all-endearing mystery of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Our good Christians made some more serious preparations, for they all confessed; and those to whom permission was given to receive Communion, did so very devoutly at Midnight Mass."

At St. Francis Xavier, the previous year, on Christmas Eve, Paul Honoguengag, the *dogique* or prayer-chief had