

KATERI'S VERY WORDS

The spring of 1678 was upon the Mission of St. Francis Xavier on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River facing Montreal, then a frontier town. The morning sun sprinkled the green fields with fine gold dust and sprayed the tall elms with glistening lacquer. In the maples and ashtrees, the red squirrels cheerfully gave out their ratchet-like call. Redwinged blackbirds squawked while purple martens, winged crosses in the bright sky, plunged down towards the mighty waters in search of minuscule insects for breakfast.

The quiet of the new day was suddenly shattered by the sound of hammers as carpenters began the paneling of the first Indian chapel. A few mothers and children lolled about, watching the men at work. Kateri was among them and as she entered the unfinished church so did another young woman, Marie Therese Tegaiguanta. Although they were strangers to one another, they greeted, and spoke, and their words were in accord with the sentiments of their hearts.

Kateri asked her new acquaintance which part of the church would be reserved to them. The European custom of seating the women on one side of the church and the men on the other had been accepted by the praying Indians. Marie Therese pointed out the side of the church she thought would be theirs. Kateri's response reveals her knowledge of the stupendous indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, which St. Paul taught to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, and to us all:

"Alas, it is not in this material temple that God most loves to dwell. It is in ourselves that He wishes to take up his abode. Our hearts are the temple which is most agreeable to Him. But miserable being that I am, how many times have I forced Him to abandon this heart in which He should reign alone. Don't I deserve, to punish me for my ingratitude, to be forever excluded from this temple here rising to His glory?"

Positio, Doc. XII, pp. 362-363.

PHOTO: ARMOUR LANDRY

KATERI

Médard Bourgault

sculpsit.

