

## KATERI'S PENANCES

(Continued.)



ONE OF THE MISSIONARIES, Father Chauchetière, gave Francis Tsonnatoüan a collection of beautiful illustrations from the Old and New Testaments, a set of engravings on the different vices and virtues, and still another on the Mysteries of the Rosary and on other similar subjects. Francis used them well. The talks he gave, the pictures he showed to his listeners drew them to Christ. His catch was not so heavy as that of the Soviet trawlers close to Canadian or American waters; it was more modest, yet it was effective. And Francis attributed his success to Kateri. "He gained many people to God," wrote Father Chauchetière, "or rather Kateri gained them for him, for he felt indebted to her for what he had become, as compared to what he had been."

As head of the family, Francis was exceptional. He lovingly cared for his wife and children. When it was necessary, he corrected his offspring not only with good advice but also on occasion with a sound spanking, sure proof that he loved them, for not many Indians dared to chastise their children. Without waiting for the missionaries, he taught them their catechism.

Since Francis could not go very far from the village, he made himself useful in church. He quickly memorized most of the hymns the Fathers taught the faithful and often substituted for the **dogique** or official catechist of the Mission. Like Kateri, he was a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, and never missed its Sunday afternoon meetings. Later on, he was equally faithful in attending the catechism classes for adults.

He never complained of the acute pain he was so often forced to endure, no matter how long it lasted. Towards the end of his life, his one regret was that he could no longer receive Holy Communion as often as the others, for in those days the Eucharist was never taken to the longhouses. Quite simply he admitted to Father Chauchetière that this privation afflicted him, but not excessively, for he was sure that Our Lord knew how he felt and that, on the other hand, he must leave the problem of his communions to Father Cholenec. At approximately thirty-six years of age, he died during April 1695, fifteen years after Kateri, his inspiration, his ideal.

What happened to Marguerite, his wife? She also profited from Kateri's example. She accepted the death of her beloved husband with deep faith: he had taught her that beyond the frontiers of death they would be more united than ever.

This likable couple was only one of Kateri Tekakwitha's spiritual conquests. She won over to Christ most of the people of the village, the women, certainly, but courageous warriors, too, like Hot Ashes, who, later on, always wore a few relics of Kateri round his neck on going to war.

Mary Teresa, Francis and Marguerite Tsonnontoüan, Hot Ashes and all the others who loved Kateri, walked with her, or rather with Our Lord Himself on what the **Imitation** calls the "royal road of the Cross." They did not follow Him in the same manner as the best disposed among us do. They followed Him in true Iroquois style, as Kateri did.

In 1925, when Father Jerome Fajella, S.J., Postulator General for the Jesuit Causes of beatification and canonization, was consulted about Kateri Tekakwitha, he carefully examined the documents concerning her and replied that her case was full of promise. He then submitted the documentation to Monsignor Carinci, Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, which was then responsible for beatifications and canonizations. On reading the seventeenth-century testimonies, he was nonplussed by the excessive macerations of the Iroquois maiden. The Promotor of the Faith, popularly known as the "Devil's Advocate," would certainly assail this aspect of Kateri's life. Father Fajella explained that to be properly understood, these penances must not be considered without taking into account the Iroquois background against which they were practised. Later on, when the Monsignor knew more about Kateri and her mortifications, he said to Father Fajella, "She should be canonized, even, if were permissible, canonized without miracles: her life was a miracle."