

## "I WILL LOVE YOU IN HEAVEN"

(Continued.)



FATHER CHAUCHETIERE, who took care of the people confined to their homes, used to visit Kateri every day in her long-house. Now and then he led there the little children entrusted to him. According to Father Luke Francis Nau, "they all had regular features, the children especially were as pretty as miniatures . . ." Their silvery voices cheered up the sick girl, their friendly little faces amused her. At the same time she profited from the catechism which the good Father was teaching. Despite her great weakness, she tried to sit or stand up to see better the illustrations he had prepared depicting Bible History for the little ones.

Kateri wished he would never leave her side. The thanks she expressed to him, the entreaties she redoubled to oblige him to come back as soon as possible touched the missionary. She renewed these entreaties and thanks up to the week of her death. There was nothing maudlin in all this. Her countenance revealed the tranquility of her soul, even when she suffered most. It was a pleasure to pass the time of day with her.

She did not have very long to live. Already during February, two months before her death, Father Chauchetière revealed his thoughts on the subject to Father Choleneq, his superior during Father Frémin's absence: he did not doubt that God would call her from this world on Wednesday of Holy Week, the eve of two great feasts consecrated to the Cross and to the Eucharist, so dear to the bedridden girl. Father Choquetière, a mystic himself, had already discerned the two poles of Kateri's interior life, Jesus

in the consecrated Host and Jesus on the Cross. St. Aloysius of Gonzaga, whose life she knew and imitated, had no others.

On April 7, Passion Sunday, Father Choleneq estimated that the time had about come for Kateri Tekakwitha's departure. Day after day since the beginning of Holy Week, her health had weakened. Instead of shutting herself up in the narrow circle of her illness, Kateri, whose heart was filled with the terrible Passion of Christ, was constantly preoccupied with identifying herself with Him. Despite the unremitting pain that gnawed at her, she begged Father Choleneq to allow her to do penance, for example, to abstain from food and drink during a day. He was well aware that there had never been the slightest suggestion of "dolorism" in her, that she had never desired suffering for suffering's sake. He was not unaware either that the perfect identification with Jesus Christ she aimed at is to be obtained by the subjection of one's will to that of the Father, and so he flatly denied her request. He told her God would willingly accept her obedience instead of the sacrifice she had intended offering to Him, and he quietly added that, perhaps, pleased with her love, the good Lord would soon come to show her His. Kateri, who was in full possession of her mental powers, found herself infused with happiness.

On Holy Tuesday, Marie Therese found her friend was very low and did not want to leave her. But Kateri ended up by sending her off to her daily chores, with the promise of calling for her when she needed her. Just as Marie Therese was on the point of going, Father Choleneq arrived. He found too that Kateri looked dangerously ill, and immediately decided to bring her the Body of Our Lord later on in the morning. "They worried considerably," wrote Father Chauchetière, "about letting her die without receiving this sacrament." (Besides, Father Choleneq, "they" certainly means Father Chauchetière and the men and women of the Holy Family present in the village.) It would be an exceptional privilege, since it was not then the custom to take the Holy Eucharist to the sick at home. Instead the disabled were generally carried to the church on a bark litter. The missionaries had done their best to inspire them with the respect that is due to the Blessed Sacrament; furthermore, the Christian Indians had quickly come to the conclusion it was too great an honor for them to receive communion at home. As for Kateri, Father Choleneq was sure that, in the quality of spiritual guide, if he proposed to her to bring the good Lord to the long-house, she would consent, her heart overflowing with gratitude.

This is what took place. Mustering what was left of her strength, Kateri turned towards Marie Therese. She told her