

KATERI'S APPARITIONS

(Continued.)



BEFORE sundown on the very day of Kateri's burial, Father Chauchetière, who already thought of her as a saint, made his way to the little cemetery. At her grave, as he stood alone, head bowed in prayer, despite the chilly spring air, his heart grew warm within him. Perhaps he told her that he had done his best to convince his Superior to bury her in the church; he would see later on what he could do about it. On Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday he returned to pray at her grave and very soon Kateri showed him how much she appreciated, not only these little visits, but also his constant kindness to her during the three years she had spent at the Mission.

Father Cholence, who relates this manifestation of gratitude, after a slew of arguments presented for the benefit of skeptics who would barely admit the possibility of such a favor for a white man and much less so for an Indian girl, indignantly asks if the hand of God is shortened and if He is not the Master of His favors and able to dispense them to whom He pleases.

On Easter Monday, six days after Kateri's death, as Father Chauchetière was beginning his daily meditation at the accustomed early hour of four o'clock in the morning, she appeared to him as a rising sun in the effulgence of glory in his unheated room. She stood before him, majestic in bearing, her face radiant, and her eyes uplifted towards heaven as if she were in ecstasy. At the same time he heard the following words, "*Adhuc veni in dies.*" This vision lasted two full hours. The priest examined it at leisure and, to his great joy, understood it was her way of showing her appreciation for the services he had rendered to her.

The apparition did not speak to the priest, but he very clearly perceived prophetic signs to each side of Kateri: for instance, to her left, an overturned church, and to her right, an Indian tied to a stake, who was being burnt alive. The first portent was realized three years later, on August 20, 1683 at midnight.

A terrible storm accompanied by thunder and lightning fell upon the village, taking the sixty-foot-long church by one of its corners and so violently that it was overturned and demolished. The sacred vessels were undamaged with the exception of five crosses which were broken. The statue of the Blessed Virgin, on its pedestal of eleven feet, was simply thrown down.

Since Kateri's death, Fathers Frémin and Cholenec had been replaced by Fathers Vincent Bigot and James Bruyas, the new superior; Father Claude Chauchetière was still at the mission. That night two of the Fathers slept in the loft of the church; the superior, in the little Jesuit residence. Awakened by the high winds, Father Bruyas ran out to ring the bell in order to advise the people of the danger. No sooner had he grasped the cord than he felt it torn from his hands and himself carried from the spot where he was. Fortunately for him, for the beams on falling broke the girders, and left a big hole where he had been. As all this had taken place in the twinkling of an eye, he did not have time to be afraid. Thankful that he had not been hurt, he reverently kissed the relics he was wearing around his neck.

Aroused suddenly from their sleep, Fathers Chauchetière and Bigot went spinning into the air with the rafters, which boxed in one of them, protecting him from harm, but let the other fall beneath the ruins. Somewhat hurt, the latter arose and was soon himself again.

Before it was possible to pull the three priests out of the debris, Father Chauchetière had time to reflect on the apparition which had foretold the destruction of the little church. It had not entered into his mind that he would be in it.

Considering themselves favored to have escaped uninjured from the windflaw, the three missionaries gave thanks to Kateri.

"As for me," said one, "I offered a Mass this morning in honor of the Blessed Trinity to thank God for the graces He had bestowed upon Kateri during her life."

"And I," continued the second one, "I came this morning to her tomb to commend myself specially to her."