

## A TRAIL OF LIGHT



**D**ESPITE KATERI'S APPARITIONS to Fr. Chauchetière, to good Anastasia Tegonhatsiongo and to her friend Mary Theresa, her memory, like that of the four Indians whose martyrdom she had predicted, could have floundered in the deep of time, all the more so since the Black-robles then thought it inappropriate to spread her devotion far and wide.

Still, already during the summer of 1680, the colonists, informed about her by the two Frenchmen from Laprairie who had seen her laid out on the morning after her death, as well as her own people began to visit her tomb. They came from all sides to honor her and to commend themselves to her care. Many thus obtained extraordinary spiritual graces.

As the months followed one on the other, Fr. Chauchetière felt more and more inspired to make known the virtues of the Iroquois Maiden. But he did not dare do so. Some ill-natured gossip he had heard during the life of the Lily of the Mohawks made him feel he might be deceiving himself. At times, deep in his heart, he disapproved of the honors that were being rendered to her; at other times he himself went to her grave and, convinced of the eminent holiness of this girl he had so well known, rendered homage to her as much and even more than the others.

In January 1681, nine months after the death of Kateri Tekakwitha, the religious was still hesitant. Towards the end of the month, he was called to assist Claude Caron, who was at death's door. The sick man lived about three miles from the Mission at La Fourche, one of the districts of La Prairie de la Madeleine, which was Fr. Chauchetière's responsibility. Shortly before, a surgeon from Montreal, most probably Anthony Barrois, had examined Caron and promised to bring him medication, but without much hope of curing him. He had such a poor opinion of his patient's condition that he repeatedly assured his relatives the end was at hand.

This sick call to visit the dying man pleased Fr. Chauchetière: he would at last have the long-awaited opportunity of finding out what the truth was about Kateri; he hoped to discover that she was as powerful in heaven as she was reputed to be. Taking his stole, he also brought with him the Blessed Sacrament and the crucifix that the Mohawk maiden has been holding in her hands at the time of her death. Before leaving, he went to the cemetery and, kneeling at Kateri's grave, he besought the good Master to dissipate his doubts. Then and there a great joy welled up within him: the sick man would be cured, he was sure!

On arriving at Caron's home, the Jesuit found him in the last extremity. "If tonight is as bad as last night," he told the priest, "I don't expect to see tomorrow morning!" A third relapse resulting from lung trouble nearly prevented him from making his confession. Fr. Chauchetière at once gave him Holy Communion, inviting him to put his trust in God, and let him understand that he might be healed. He advised him to recite the **Our Father** and the **Hail Mary** once, and the **Glory be to the Father** three times and proposed that he have three Masses of thanksgiving offered to the Lord for the graces He had granted to Kateri. Encouraged by Fr. Chauchetière's words, and at his suggestion, he consented to consecrate himself to the young Indian maiden and to go to her grave to thank her when he got well. On that, the missionary lent him Kateri's crucifix and departed after telling him he would soon come back.

Despite his promise, Fr. Chauchetière was unable to visit Claude Caron for three or four days. When he managed to go, to his immense satisfaction, he found in perfect health the man he had left in the throes of death. Caron lost no time in telling the priest the story of his cure.

Immediately after the Jesuit left, his family wanted to take him from the bed in order to readjust it. He fell outstretched on the floor. It was thought that he was dying, and all that his relatives were able to do was to pick him up and place him back on the bed so that at least he would die more easily. The contrary happened. He immediately fell asleep, and during his sleep he felt as if a great stone were removed from his chest. On awaking two hours later he found himself cured, he was also hungry and requested a good meal which he ate with appetite. He went back to bed and all night long he slept as a healthy child. The next day, the surgeon was back with his medicaments and was quite astonished to find his patient sitting near the hearth eating, drinking, and in fine trim. On saying goodbye, he admitted that he had never seen a patient so near death recover his health.