

St. Kateri Tekakwitha



1656-1680

Feast Day:

July 14

Tekakwitha was a Native American who was born in what is now New York State. Her father was chief of the Mohawks. Tekakwitha was orphaned at age 4 when her parents died of smallpox. Tekakwitha survived smallpox, but she was left with scars on her face and her eyesight was damaged. Her aunt and uncle adopted her. As the new chief of the Mohawks, her uncle decided on a young Mohawk for Tekakwitha to marry when she was older.

Their village was visited by Jesuit (Catholic) priests in 1667. Tekakwitha's uncle did not want her to go near the priests. But Tekakwitha listened to the priests and believed all they taught about Jesus.

When Tekakwitha was a teenager, the time came for her to marry. But Tekakwitha refused and said she was converting to Christianity. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676. She took the name Kateri, after St. Catherine of Sienna. Kateri's neighbors scorned her Faith; they accused her of sorcery and even threatened to kill her. She was treated poorly until she was able to escape to a Christian settlement near Quebec, Canada.

Kateri decided she would never marry and dedicated her life to God. She taught little children their prayers and cared for elderly and sick people. She went to Mass every day. She died at the age of 24 after a serious illness. Witnesses said that within minutes after her death, the scars on her face disappeared and her face was glowing. St. Kateri, the "Lilly of the Mohawks," was the first Native American to be canonized.

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