



**St. Kateri Tekakwitha**

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1656–1680 • Modern-day United States of America

Four-year-old Tekakwitha sweated with fever. She was sick with smallpox, and upon her recovery, she discovered that her father, the chief of the Mohawks, and her Christian Algonquin mother had died of the same disease.

The smallpox had left Tekakwitha's face scarred and damaged her eyes, and when her uncle and aunt adopted her, they did not understand the quiet, shy girl. She would go deep into the woods to pray the Rosary, which her mother had taught her, even though her father had forbidden her baptism. Young Tekakwitha wished she could be baptized Catholic with her whole heart.

When Tekakwitha turned thirteen, her uncle tried to arrange her marriage, but the young Mohawk girl refused. At first, her uncle let Tekakwitha have her way, but when she turned seventeen and still refused to marry, he began to get angry.

At around the same time, Jesuit missionary priests arrived to preach to the Mohawk tribe. Tekakwitha went to the Jesuit fathers, asking to be baptized. At her baptism, she took the name Kateri, after St. Catherine of Siena.

Kateri Tekakwitha's people scorned and persecuted her because she was Christian. It became so dangerous and unbearable that Kateri escaped, with the help of other Native American Christians, to the Christian Native American village of Sault St. Louis in Canada. There, Kateri lived a life of deep prayer and intense sacrifice.

Kateri Tekakwitha desired to be Jesus' bride, and she consecrated herself to Him. She loved Jesus so much that when she prayed to Him, her face became radiantly beautiful, as if she were speaking to Jesus face-to-face. All the priests and other Native American Christians were inspired by her holiness. She died of illness at the young age of twenty-four. After her death, the smallpox scars on her face disappeared, and she became known as the "Lily of the Mohawks."

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, help me to love Jesus with my whole heart!