

# Story of Kateri Tekakwitha

## Part 1

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was born to a Christian Algonquin and to a Mohawk warrior in the Mohawk Valley in 1656. Her Mohawk name was *Tekakwitha*, which means "she puts things in order." Her name suited her well because she always put God first in her life. When she was only a child, smallpox swept through the Mohawk Valley, killing her parents and brother and leaving her physically scarred and frail the rest of her life. She even lost some of her eyesight to the disease.

## Part 2

As a child, Kateri learned the value of hard work from her people. In spite of her physical difficulties, she did her share of the work necessary to help her family and her people. When she was only 12 years old, the Jesuit missionaries, called "black robes," came to teach about Jesus and his cross. What the "black robes" taught made sense to her. It answered many of her questions and went straight to her heart. During her entire childhood, she listened and learned and waited for the right time to ask for Baptism.

## Part 3

We cannot know how long Kateri dreamed of asking for Baptism, knowing that it would displease her uncle, but she finally felt that she had to do what God was asking her to do. She put God first

in her life, and on Easter of 1676, she was baptized with the name Kateri, which means Catherine. Because she became a Christian, people began to make fun of her and call her a "Christian dog." Despite this very difficult time, she remained faithful to God. Her family wanted her to marry, as was the custom among her people for a woman of her age, but she was so filled with love for God that she couldn't think about getting married. She often spent time alone in the forest praying the rosary before a cross of sticks that she made. Her great dream was to live for God alone, but her family could not understand this.

## Part 4

Realizing that things were not going to get better, Kateri decided to leave home without telling anyone. The Jesuits helped her escape, and she traveled for days until she arrived at a Mohawk village in what is now Quebec, where other Christian Indians lived. At age 23, she made a vow of perpetual virginity, a commitment that was unheard of among Indians. She often performed penance for her own sins and for those of her people. Gradually, her health grew worse, and she was confined to her sick bed. She was not afraid to die; she referred to death as "going home to God." On April 17, 1680, at age 24, Kateri Tekakwitha died. In her short life, she had left the entire Church a great example of faith.