

✠ *St. Kateri Tekakwitha* ✠

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is the first Native American to be recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church. St. Kateri is lovingly known as “The Lily of the Mohawks.”

She was born in 1656, in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, west of present-day Auriesville, New York. Her mother was an Algonquin, who was captured by the Mohawks and who took a Mohawk chief for her husband. She was given the Mohawk name of Tekakwitha.

She contracted smallpox as a four-year-old child which scarred her skin. The scars were a source of humiliation in her youth. She was commonly seen wearing a blanket to hide her face. Worse, her entire family died during the outbreak. Tekakwitha was subsequently raised by her uncle, who was the chief of a Mohawk clan.

She was known as a skilled worker, who was diligent and patient. However, she refused to marry. When her adoptive parents proposed a suitor to her, she refused to entertain the proposal. They punished her by giving her more work to do, but she did not give in. Instead, she remained quiet and diligent. Eventually they were forced to relent and accept that she had no interest in marriage.

At age 19, Tekakwitha converted to Catholicism, taking a vow of chastity and pledging to marry only Jesus Christ. Her name, Kateri, is the Mohawk form of Catherine, which she took from St. Catherine of Siena when she was baptized. Her decision was very unpopular with her adoptive parents and their neighbors. Some of her neighbors started rumors of sorcery. To avoid persecution, she left her village and moved for the remaining five years of her life to the Jesuit mission village of Kahnawake, south of Montreal in New France, now Canada. She often prayed for the conversion of her fellow Mohawks.

Kateri was very devout and was known for her steadfast devotion, diligence, and self-denial. She was also very sickly. Her practices of self-mortification and denial may not have helped her health. Sadly, just five years after her conversion to Catholicism, she became ill and passed away at age 24, on April 17, 1680. Her last words were reported to be “Jesus, Mary, I love you.”

Witnesses said that within minutes of her passing, her face, severely scarred since her childhood, became perfectly smooth, radiant and beautiful. Since then, there have been many reported appearances and miraculous intercessions by St. Kateri. Many Catholics in the United States and Canada advanced the cause for her canonization for decades, especially after the foundation of the Tekakwitha Conference in 1939. She was declared “venerable” by Pope Pius XII in 1943, and beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 21, 2012. She is the patroness of ecology and the environment, people in exile and Native Americans. The Aurora Lights Kateri Circle at St. Anthony and Our Lady of the Snow Kateri Circle in the Valley are a part of the Tekakwitha Conference; a group of people with a special devotion and reverence for St. Kateri. Her feast day is July 14th, the **Memorial of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin.**

Prayer in Four Directions

Call to Prayer: In the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen*

Reading: Ephesians 2: 19-22

(You are invited to face in each of the 4 directions as you pray)

Great Spirit,

Come to us with the power of the North.

Make us courageous to walk the sacred path with Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

Give us strength and endurance to do all that we are called to do during our life, especially in times of trials and adversity.

Spirit of Light,

Come to us out of the East, the place of new beginnings and promise.

With the power of the Rising Sun announcing a new day, you give us hope.

Let there be joy in our words just as you gave the spiritual gift of new life to Saint Kateri through the waters of baptism.

Great Spirit,

Send us the warmth and soothing winds of your healing medicines from the South.

You are the gentle rain that brings forth the seed of life.

Enable us to hear prophetic voices around us

as Saint Kateri Tekakwitha shared God's love, compassion and healing power among her people.

Spirit of Life,

We face you in the direction of the West.

Help us to be bearers of your Word.

May we be voices of life and hope to all peoples, nations, races and beliefs, as exemplified in the life of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

Amen

Together: Pray the Lord's Prayer

(If the environment permits, form a circle and join hands)

Share a sign of Christ's Peace

Thanks to the Tekakwitha Conference (<https://tekconf.org/>)