

Blessed Kateri Speaks:

"I am not my own; I have given myself to Jesus. He must be my only love. The state of helpless poverty that may befall me if I do not marry does not frighten me. All I need is a little food and a few pieces of clothing. With the work of my hands I shall always earn what is necessary, and what is left over I'll give to my relatives and to the poor. If I should become sick and unable to work, then I shall be like the Lord on the Cross. He will have mercy on me and help me, I am sure." What a simple, yet incredibly strong and sure, faith! May we each be blessed with such conviction, that Christ is with us and for us, always.



Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

O God, who among the many marvels of
Your grace in the New World, did
cause to blossom on the banks of the
Mohawk and of the St. Lawrence
the pure and tender Lily,
Kateri Tekakwitha,
grant we beseech You, the favor we
beg through her intercession; that this
young lover of Jesus and of His Cross
may soon be counted among her Saints
by Holy Mother Church, and that our
hearts may be enkindled with a
stronger desire to imitate her
innocence and faith. Through the
same Christ our Lord, Amen.



Secretariat for the New Evangelization
P.O. Box 9023
Rockville Centre, NY 11571
Tel: (516) 678-5800
Fax: (516) 594-0064

**Evangelization and the Lives of the
Saints**

**Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha
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P.O. Box 9023
Rockville Centre, NY 11571
Tel: (516) 678-5800 x309
Fax: (516) 594-0064



There is a piece of wisdom which says: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of saints". Nine years after two Jesuit priests, Isaac Jogues and John de Brebeuf, were murdered by Iroquois Indians, an Algonquin baby girl was born where they died. This tiny child, named Tekakwitha ("she who puts things in order") was orphaned at the age of four when her parents both died from a smallpox epidemic. Attacked by the disease herself, she somehow survived but was left partially blinded and disfigured by the pockmarks left on her face. She was adopted by her uncle, a Mohawk chief, and grew up as a traditional Indian maiden, helping her aunt with chores and communing with nature. However, because of her disfigurement and blindness, she led a more solitary life than the other Mohawk girls.

Tekakwitha remembered that her mother, who had been baptized a Christian, had taught her some prayers and told her stories about God. After her mother's death she would talk with God quietly in her heart, and so it was no wonder that when Jesuit missionaries came to her village she was attracted to their way of life and the lessons they taught. These "Black Robes", as the

Mohawks called them, were kind to her and instructed her in the faith, in spite of much opposition from her family and tribe. Something within her, however, knew and loved the One True God, and she kept up her instruction until she was finally baptized with the name Kateri (Katherine) when she was twenty years old.

After she was baptized, her persecutions grew worse. She was treated like a slave and was constantly threatened with abuse. Her family would not feed her on Sundays because she refused to work on the Lord's Day. Still, she filled her life with prayer and penance, staying on her knees for hours and making small prayer stations in the woods. She visited the sick and tried to teach whoever would listen about Christ. Although her family tried to force her to marry, she took a vow of virginity, something which no Mohawk woman had ever done. Finally, when she feared for her life, she left her village and traveled more than 200 miles to the mission of St. Francis Xavier near Montreal. There she received her first Holy Communion on Christmas Day, 1677.

It was only three years later, at the young age of 24, that Blessed Kateri's poor health finally overcame her strength, and she died during Holy Week. Her last words were to call out to Jesus. It is said that at her death her face was restored to its true beauty, with all traces of the disfigurement erased. Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha is the patroness of ecology and the environment. Below are thoughts on ways of drawing on her spirituality to help us live ours:

- While we may not be as ostracized as Kateri for our faith, we may face opposition from family or friends when we

hold fast to Christian ideals, such as our stand on abortion or right-to-life. Jesus taught that we would, indeed, be persecuted, and we should follow Kateri's example and turn to Him in humility and prayer when we are. Staying firm in our beliefs will not only increase our own faith but will give a strong witness to those around us.

- "Kateri was a child of nature. Her sainthood will raise the minds and hearts of those who love nature and work in ecology." (Bishop Stanislaus Brzana). We are all called to be good stewards of the Earth. Following in the way of Blessed Kateri means a raised awareness of how we treat the planet we live on. For example, there are now hundreds of acres in different parts of Africa which are covered with discarded computer parts from Europe and the United States. We should always recycle when we can, care for what we own so as not to create extra refuse, and generally find ways to "live green."
- One of Kateri's favorite sayings was: "Who can tell me what is most pleasing to God that I may do it?" She lived this beautiful sentiment and constantly sought the way of God. Surely we can endeavor to keep our hearts close to Christ throughout the day by asking, "What shall I do now, Lord?" in the various situations of our lives. A small whisper to Him, a turning of our thoughts, a touch of our Rosary beads (Kateri loved them), all help us keep a loving connection with our Lord and Savior.