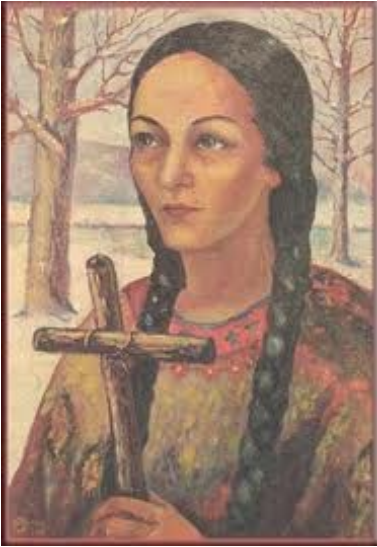


Lives of Saints

St Kateri Tekakwitha

1656 - 1680

Feastday: 14th July



“I am not my own; I have given myself to Jesus. He must be my only love.”

St Kateri Tekakwitha

I was born in 1656, in Auriesville, New York. My mother was a Christian Algonquin, taken captive by the Iroquois and given as wife to the chief of the Mohawk clan. When I was only four, I lost my parents and little brother in a smallpox epidemic that left me disfigured and half blind. I was adopted by an uncle, who succeeded my father as chief. At 19 I finally got the courage to take the step of converting. I was baptized with the name Kateri (Katerine) in 1676, by a Jesuit missionary. As a consequence, I was shunned and abused by relatives for my faith. I was treated as a slave. Because I would not work on Sunday, I received no food on that day.

My life in grace grew rapidly. I often meditated on the great dignity of being baptized. I was powerfully moved by God's love for human beings and saw the dignity of each of my people. I was always in danger, for my conversion and holy life created great opposition. On the advice of a priest, I finally escaped through 200 miles of wilderness to the Christian village of Sault-Sainte-Marie.

For three years I grew in holiness under the direction of a priest and an older Iroquois woman, giving myself totally to God in long hours of prayer, in charity and in strenuous penance. At 23 I took a vow of virginity. This was something very rare for an Indian woman, whose maintenance depended on being married. I even found a place in the woods where I could pray an hour a day. Some people accused me of meeting a man there! My dedication to virginity was instinctive: I did not know about religious life for women until I visited Montreal. Inspired by this, two friends and I wanted to start a community, but the local priest dissuaded me and I humbly accepted an “ordinary” life. I practiced extreme mortification, especially for the conversion of my nation.

S. D. C.
S O C I E T A S
D O C T R I N
C H R I S T I A N Æ

w w w . s d c . m e . u k