

The Rector's Corner

(Rev. Deacon Norm Dupuis)



Last week, we learned something of the life and Christian witness of the Rev. Henry Budd. This week, we get acquainted with another First Nations Christian witness who displayed the fruits of Holiness and Devotion to our Blessed Lord in rich measure.

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha- popularly known as the “Lily of the Mohawks”, is someone that holds a special place of honour in the North American Church. She stands as a humble witness to the Grace of God in Christ, and to the power of prayer and humility of heart!

Blessed Kateri was born in 1656 in upstate New York. Her mother was an Algonquin Christian believer and her Father, a Mohawk Chief.

Almost from the beginning of her life, Kateri knew the reality of suffering! At age 4 both her brother and her parents died of smallpox! This dreaded disease caused her to be partially blinded and badly scarred, and these physical difficulties were to challenge her for the rest of her life. Kateri was taken in and raised by her Aunt and Uncle, but they were very much opposed to the Christian message.

When Kateri was 10 years old, Kateri and the rest of her village moved to Caughnawaga(near present day Fonda New York) and it was there that she received her first instruction in the Christian Faith from 2 Jesuit Missionaries. It wasn't until later, when Fr. Jacques de Lamberville arrived in the village, that Kateri was Baptised into the Faith! Her uncle agreed to permit her Baptism as long as she remained in the village, although he personally had deep misgivings about Kateri's decision!

Kateri's Baptism was met with great hostility by her village neighbours! She was regularly ridiculed, beaten, and shunned-all for the sake of her love for our Lord! During this time, she developed a great love for the life of prayer, and especially for the Holy Rosary. One thing that particularly angered her village neighbours, was her decision not to marry, so that she might enjoy a special and intimate spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Finally, two years after her Baptism she fled to the St. Francis Xavier mission in Kahnawake Quebec. It was here that she received her First Communion, on Christmas Day 1677, and two years later in 1679, she made a vow of Perpetual Virginity. Her time in Quebec offered her ample opportunities to deepen her faith, and devote herself to a quiet life of good works! Among her activities were the Catechizing of children and the care of the sick and elderly. Kateri was also given a great love and longing for the Holy Eucharist, and would attend at both sunrise and sunset, so that she might receive her Divine Lord!

By the Lord's Divine Providence, Kateri was not to live long upon this earth. Having contracted Tuberculosis, she died on April 17, 1680 just before her 24th birthday and was buried at the St. Xavier Mission. Even as her death approached, Blessed Kateri humbly submitted herself to the Will of God with great trust and serenity-her last words were “Jesos Konoronkwa” – “Jesus, I love you”.

Since her death, the life and witness of Kateri Tikakwitha, has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to many Christians-especially those believers among the First Nations People! But she remains a blessed example of the power of humility to all Christians who are striving to live a life that is God pleasing and full of love and compassion.

So here, in this dear “Lily of the Mohawks” all of us can find much to thank God for! Blessed Kateri reminds us that the Love of God knows no bounds, and that the way of Christ is the royal way of suffering, humility of heart, and final victory in the Kingdom of God by the mercy of the Holy and life giving Trinity.