



Statue of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Santa Fe, NM

“I am no longer  
my own.  
I have given myself  
entirely to  
Jesus Christ.”

~ Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

## St. Kateri Tekakwitha: Patronness of Loss of Parents, Ecology, and the Environment

Kateri Tekakwitha, also called “Lily of the Mohawks” is known as the Catholic patroness of loss of parents, ecology, and environment. She was born in 1656 in what is now upstate New York. She was the daughter of a non-Christian Mohawk chief of the Turtle clan, and her mother was a Christian Algonquin. After her birth, her people named her Tekakwitha, which means, “She puts all things in order” or “The One Who Walks Groping for Her Way.”

At the age of four, a smallpox epidemic ravaged her village leaving her orphaned, disfigured, and visually impaired. Tekakwitha was raised by two aunts and an uncle, who was also a Mohawk chief who opposed Christianity because he believed the European settlers who subscribed to the religion had brought the smallpox virus and other deadly diseases into their village.

In 1667, Jesuit missionaries came to the village where Tekakwitha lived. The natives christened them “black robes” because that is what they wore at all times. She believed that these visitors brought the village the message of the one true God.

When Kateri was eighteen years old, she began instructions in the Catholic faith in secret. Her uncle finally relented and gave his consent for her to become a Christian, provided that she did not try to leave the village. She was scorned by the villagers for joining the Catholic Church and was threatened because of her beliefs.

As a young woman, she had strong and deep convictions. She dared to challenge some tribal values in order to pursue her goal. In 1676 she was baptized and given the name Kateri (Catherine).

# BACKGROUND

After her baptism, she escaped to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, a settlement of Christian Indians in Canada. Here she was known for her gentleness, kindness, and good wit.

On Christmas Day 1677, Kateri made her first holy communion and on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1679, she made a vow of celibacy and offered herself to Mother Mary to accept her as a daughter. During her time in Canada, Kateri taught prayers to children and worked with the elderly and sick.

She died on April 17th, 1680, shortly before her 24th birthday. Her last words were, "Jesos Konoronkwa." "Jesus, I Love You." Shortly after her death, in the presence of two Jesuits, the scars on her face suddenly disappeared and her face shone with radiant loveliness.

Kateri yearned for a strong and healthy relationship with the Creator (ne son kwa iat te son), God of the Christian Black robes. From an early age, as a member of the Mohawk Turtle clan, she lived a spirituality of her sacred animal.

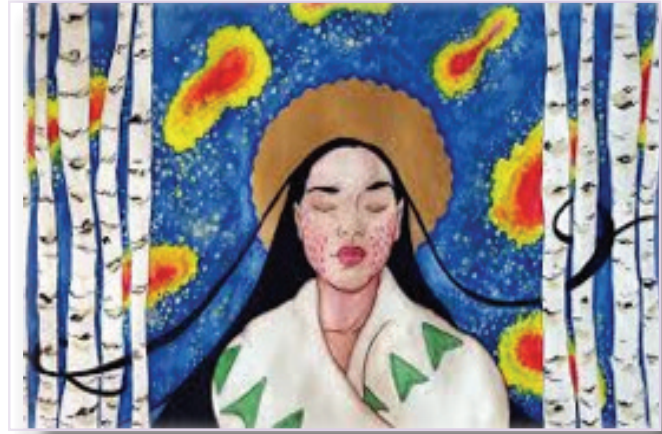
Just as a turtle moves straight ahead and is not deterred by obstacles along the way, she overcame countless stumbling blocks so that she could know God. Like her sacred animal spirit, the turtle, Kateri was close to Mother Earth. The rhythmic heartbeat of the land, where new life comes forth, sustained her as she sought to walk in harmony with nature, with creation, and with the Creator. Like the turtle that gently and deliberately moves with the land and enjoys learning from the whole of creation, Kateri lived and walked in harmony with nature and the Creator.

Kateri Tekakwitha was a person of strength, dignity, and hope. She walked the sacred circle of wholeness and desired fullness of life with the Creator God. As a faithful follower of Christ, Kateri showed much determination and conviction in her journey to deepen her relationship with God. The drumbeat of her life became much clearer and in harmony with her desire and hope that Jesus be the center of her life.

Today, many Native American Catholics see St. Kateri Tekakwitha as a role model, one who continues to be in close relationship with her people and one who challenges people of all walks of life to live in harmony with one another and the environment. On October 21, 2012, Pope Benedict canonized Kateri as the first Native American woman to be honored with sainthood. Her feast day falls on April 17 (Canada) and July 14 (United States).

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(Source: "Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha," *The People: Reflections of Native Peoples on the Catholic Experience in North America*. National Catholic Education Association, Washington DC: 1992.)



## Litany to Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Lord, have mercy on us. T  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the World have mercy on us.  
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.  
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Kateri, lily of purity, pray for us.  
Kateri, consoler of the heart of Jesus, pray for us.  
Kateri, bright light for all Indians, pray for us.  
Kateri, courage of the afflicted, pray for us.  
Kateri, lover of the cross of Jesus, pray for us.  
Kateri, flower of fortitude for the persecuted, pray for us.  
Kateri, unshakable in temptations, pray for us.  
Kateri, full of patience in suffering, pray for us.  
Kateri, leader of many Indians to the true faith through your love for Mary, pray for us.

Kateri, who loved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.  
Kateri, lover of penance, pray for us.  
Kateri, who traveled many miles to learn the faith, pray for us.  
Kateri, steadfast in all prayer, pray for us.  
Kateri, who loved to pray the rosary for all people, pray for us.  
Kateri, example to your people in all virtues, pray for us.  
Kateri, humble servant to the sick, pray for us.  
Kateri, who by your love of humility, gave joy to the angels, pray for us.  
Kateri, your holy death gave strength to all Indians to love Jesus and Mary, pray for us.  
Kateri, whose scarred face in life became beautiful after death, pray for us.  
Amen.

Source: Catholic Information Network (CIN) <http://www.cin.org/saints/katerilit.html>

