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# Seasoning the Seasons™

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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

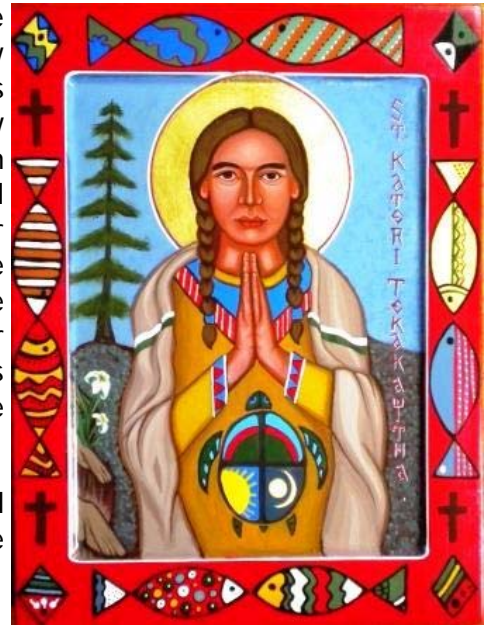
## Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha is the first Native American woman to be canonized a saint. Kateri was born in 1656 in a village near present-day Auriesville in upstate New York. Her mother was an Algonquin who was raised Christian, and her father was a Mohawk chief. Kateri was only four years old when there was a smallpox epidemic in her village. Both her parents and her brother died of this disease. Kateri also contracted smallpox, but survived. However, the effects of the disease left her scarred and half blind. Her blindness is reflected in the name "Tekakwitha" which can be translated (depending on the source of the translation) as "she who puts in order" or "one who walks groping for her way" or "she who bumps into things." After the death of her parents and brother, Kateri was taken in by her uncle, who was a chief of the Turtle clan.

When Kateri was ten years old, her village was burned down and those members of her tribe that survived moved to the other side of the river, near what is now Fonda, New York.

It was expected that Kateri would get married. Even though she was scarred and half blinded from smallpox, she would have been a desirable marriage partner as she was the adopted daughter of the chief of the Turtle clan. But Kateri did not want to get married. She wanted to dedicate her life to God. As a teenager, she was influenced by Jesuit missionaries, and wanted to become Christian. She was baptized at the age of twenty on Easter Sunday. Her baptismal name, "Kateri", is "Catherine" in her dialect. Because she was a Christian, she was considered an outcast. Others made fun of her, treated her badly, and even threatened her. Kateri eventually escaped and went to live with Christians in Canada. Here Kateri helped the aged and those who were ill, and helped children learn their prayers. She went to Mass daily, prayed the rosary, and had a great devotion to the Eucharist and to the cross. In 1679 Kateri made a vow of perpetual virginity.

The following year, on April 17, 1680, Kateri died of illness. Prior to her death, Kateri promised she would continue her prayers and intercession from heaven. Her dying words spoke of her love for Jesus. Those who witnessed her death said that almost immediately all the scarring cause by smallpox miraculously vanished from Kateri's face.



Saint Kateri Tekakwitha  
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Kateri Tekakwitha is buried in Kahnawake, Quebec, Canada. You can travel there and visit her tomb. 300 years after her death, on June 22 1980, Pope John Paul II beatified Kateri. Pope Benedict XVI canonized her on October 21, 2012. Her feast day is July 14 in the United States and April 17 in Canada. Saint Kateri Tekakwitha is known as "The Lily of the Mohawks." A lily is a sign of purity. Kateri loved to garden, and is a patron saint of the environment and ecology.



**Oldest known image of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, painted in 1682-1693 by Father ChauchetiÈre.**