



## St. Kateri Tekakwitha *Lily of the Mohawks*

*First Native American  
recognized by the Church  
as a Saint*

**Kateri** was born in 1656 to a Christian Algonquian mother and a Mohawk chief. Four years later smallpox swept the village, killing father, mother and little brother. Now an orphan with pox-marked skin and very poor eyesight, Kateri was adopted by an uncle and his wife. When she was ten, Canadian Indians and their French allies invaded the Mohawk village and destroyed it. Survivors moved across the river and rebuilt their homes.

Although her family pressured her to marry, Kateri wanted to dedicate herself to God. Her uncle, because of the destruction of their village, bitterly opposed Christianity. At age 18 Kateri secretly began instructions. Her uncle finally gave in to her being baptized, but others in the village ridiculed her.

About two years later, with the help of Christian Indian friends, she escaped to the mission of St. Francis Xavier, a Christian Indian village in Canada. On Christmas Day, 1677, Kateri received her first communion. In 1679 she made a vow of virginity. During her time in Canada, she taught children their prayers and visited the sick and elderly. She was known for her gentle sweetness and kindness.

Serious illness caused Kateri great suffering. She died before her 24th birthday on April 17, 1680. Those present said her skin cleared up moments later. Kateri promised her friends that in heaven she would continue to love and pray for them.

In 2006 five-year-old Jake Finkbonner cut his lip when he fell while playing. Strep A bacteria Necrotizing Fasciitis rapidly set in. Within a couple of days Jake was in the hospital fighting for his life as the bacteria chewed up his face, neck and chest. The doctors did surgery to remove damaged skin. They told the parents, "You need to pray. Get the family here, we are fighting for his life." A priest and family friend urged them to pray to Bl. Kateri." Many people joined them in praying to Kateri. A relic of Bl. Kateri was placed on Jake's pillow. That same day his vital signs showed unaccountable improvement. Jake is now a teenager who enjoys sports. His face (like Kateri's did) retains scars.

After investigation and testimony given by parishioners, family and the doctors, Jake's healing was accepted by the Vatican as a miracle. On Oct. 21, 2012 Pope Benedict XVI canonized St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks. She is the first Native American to be recognized as a Saint by the Catholic Church.