

Love of Nature, Love of God

By Peggy Gabriel

Mary Queen Care of Creation Committee



Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680) is the first saint from what became the territories of the United States and Canada. St. Kateri, as is true of many Native Americans, modeled the stewardship of creation and lived in harmony with nature. She is said to have often gone into the woods alone to seek God's voice in nature. Many years before her canonization, Bishop Stanislaus Brzana, bishop of Ogdensburg, New York, from 1968 to 1993, said, "Kateri was a child of nature. Her sainthood will raise the minds and hearts of those who love nature and work in ecology."

Although Tekakwitha's mother was a member of the Algonquin tribe, she was captured by the Mohawk tribe, married a Mohawk chief and their children, Tekakwitha (her tribal name) and her younger brother, were members of the Mohawk tribe. Her entire family died during a smallpox outbreak when Tekakwitha was four years old and while she was spared, her face bore scars

from the disease. Although the smallpox scarring was evident throughout her life, within minutes of her death when she was only 24, her face became clear and smooth.

As a teenager, Tekakwitha took a vow of chastity and resisted the pressure from her family to marry. It is said that for this refusal to remain open to marriage, she was punished by her aunts, ridiculed, threatened and given heavy workloads.

In the spring of 1674, at age eighteen, Tekakwitha met the Jesuit priest Jacques de Lamberville, who was visiting the village and told him of her desire to convert to the Christian faith, which she had learned of from other Jesuit missionaries. After her declaration, she began to study catechism with Father Lamberville. Because of her interest in Christianity, and declaring that she would have no husband but Jesus, Tekakwitha was shunned by her tribe, leading her to live the rest of her life in the Jesuit mission village of Kahnawake on the St. Lawrence River.

Tekakwitha converted to Catholicism at the age of 19, and was given the name Kateri in honor of Saint Catherine of Sienna. She is known as the "Lily of the Mohawks" and was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 21, 2012. Saint Kateri Tekakwitha is the patroness of ecology and the environment. Her feast day is July 14.

Other patrons of the environment include:

Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

He recognized the bond between himself and the environment. In everything in nature, Saint Francis saw a reflection of God, teaching that the more we find alliance with the environment, the more we are connected to the Creator.

Saint Benedict of Nursia (480-547)

Followers of Saint Benedict stay on one piece of land for a long time, working it and improving it. Saint Benedict appreciated the beauty of the earth and its ability to reflect the beauty of heaven.

Blessed Paul VI (1897-1978)

When he was pope, Blessed Paul VI labeled environmental degradation as one of the most pressing problems facing humanity.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

Dorothy's friend Peter Maurin convinced her of the importance of living in solidarity with the rural poor, as well as the urban poor. She came to embrace environmental stewardship.

Amor a la naturaleza, amor a Dios

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Santa Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680) es la primera santa de lo que se convirtió en los territorios de los Estados Unidos y Canadá. St. Kateri, como es el caso de muchos nativos americanos, modeló la administración de la creación y vivió en armonía con la naturaleza. Se dice que a menudo iba sola al bosque para buscar la voz de Dios en la naturaleza. Muchos años antes de su canonización, el obispo Stanislaus Brzana, obispo de Ogdensburg, Nueva York, de 1968 a 1993, dijo: “Kateri era una hija de la naturaleza. Su santidad elevará las mentes y los corazones de quienes aman la naturaleza y trabajan en ecología “.

Aunque la madre de Tekakwitha era miembro de la tribu Algonquin, fue capturada por la tribu Mohawk, se casó con un jefe Mohawk y sus hijos, Tekakwitha (su nombre tribal) y su hermano menor, eran miembros de la tribu Mohawk. Toda su familia murió durante un brote de viruela cuando Tekakwitha tenía cuatro años y, aunque se salvó, su rostro tenía cicatrices de la enfermedad. Aunque las cicatrices de la viruela fueron evidentes durante toda su vida, a los pocos minutos de su muerte, cuando solo tenía 24 años, su rostro se volvió claro y terso.

Cuando era adolescente, Tekakwitha hizo un voto de castidad y resistió la presión de su familia para casarse. Se dice que por esta negativa a permanecer abierta al matrimonio, fue castigada por sus tías, ridiculizada, amenazada y sometida a grandes cargas de trabajo.

En la primavera de 1674, a los dieciocho años, Tekakwitha conoció al sacerdote jesuita Jacques de Lamberville, que estaba de visita en el pueblo y le contó su deseo de convertirse a la fe cristiana, que había aprendido de otros misioneros jesuitas. Después de su declaración, comenzó a estudiar catecismo con el padre Lamberville. Debido a su interés en el cristianismo y al declarar que no tendría más marido que Jesús, Tekakwitha fue rechazada por su tribu, lo que la llevó a vivir el resto de su vida en el pueblo misionero jesuita de Kahnawake en el río San Lorenzo.

Tekakwitha se convirtió al catolicismo a la edad de 19 años y recibió el nombre de Kateri en honor a Santa Catalina de Siena. Se la conoce como la “Lirio de los Mohawks” y fue canonizada por el Papa Benedicto XVI el 21 de octubre de 2012. Santa Kateri Tekakwitha es la patrona de la ecología y el medio ambiente. Su fiesta es el 14 de julio.

Otros patrocinadores del medio ambiente incluyen:

San Francisco de Asís (1181-1226)

Reconoció el vínculo entre él y el medio ambiente. En todo en la naturaleza, San Francisco vio un reflejo de Dios, enseñando que cuanto más encontramos alianza con el medio ambiente, más estamos conectados con el Creador.

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