

April 17, 2026 – Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Kateri, a Guide who Sees Things Differently

Introducing Kateri and the Meaning of the Day

Kateri Tekakwitha was born in 1656 to a Mohawk father and an Algonquin mother. She spent her youth among her people, participating in the life and governance of her clan and the spiritual rites of her community. At a young age, like many of her compatriots, she contracted smallpox, a disease brought by Europeans, which disfigured her and left her nearly blind. For this reason, as she found it difficult to tolerate bright daylight, she was nicknamed *Tekakwitha*, meaning “she who gropes her way” or “she who bumps into things,” according to translations from Kanien'kehá (Mohawk language). Many died from smallpox, including her parents and brother. When she was 10 years old, French soldiers destroyed her village. Her clan relocated to the other side of the river. Jesuit missionaries settled there shortly afterwards and founded a mission. She befriended them. Curious, she learned more about Christian spirituality, which was similar to some aspects of her own.

At the age of 20, she was baptized and practiced her faith in an exemplary manner, according to witnesses of the time: she prayed to God in the heart of the forest, as her people did, and strove to remain faithful to the love taught to her in the Gospel. When her community faced a crisis, she left her village like many of its members, and joined the Saint Francis Xavier Mission at Sault-Saint-Louis. Those around her admired her courage, tenacity, and profound spirituality. She died at age 24 after a long illness. Since 1972, she has been buried in Saint Francis Xavier Church in Kahnawake. Kateri was beatified in 1980 and officially recognized in 2012 as the first North American Indigenous saint. She is the patron saint of environment and First Peoples.



Photo : ndoduc/Wikimedia Commons

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, stained glass window in the Saint Francis Xavier Mission Church in Kahnawake

The memory of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha offers an opportunity to reflect on the relationships we have with one another, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living on the same territory, to pray together for our communities, and to open ourselves to the richness of our cultures and spiritualities. Can Kateri inspire us to build bridges between our respective cultures so that we may learn to appreciate one another more fully?



To Celebrate Kateri's Memory

Here we offer liturgical resources for use in Christian communities during Eucharistic or Word celebrations, or for any occasion when believers, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, wish to highlight their growing solidarity. These prayers can also be used in a personal setting.

The following suggestions may enrich the Eucharistic celebration of the day. These prayers may also be used at other gatherings, such as celebrations of the Word, community meetings, family prayers, etc. – in the days that follow or at any other time of the year.

Visual resources for the liturgy will be available on the website

www.missioncheznous.com

The prayer texts and the in-depth activity proposed in this sheet were written by Alain Bilodeau, Dcn., a pastoral worker in the Atikamekw community of Opitciwan, and Anita Pauline Chachai, an Atikamekw from Opitciwan.

Universal Prayer Intention

(Suggested by Alain Bilodeau, Dcn.)

Kateri, during your time on earth, your vision of life differed from that of the evangelists, who offered you another way of seeing the world. Despite this ambivalence, today you are considered a universal guide who helps us understand and love creation.

Grant us the open-mindedness to bring together different ways of thinking as you have been able to do, and thus contribute to peace among humanity.

Open our eyes and hearts. R/

Universal Prayer Intention

(Suggested by Anita Pauline Chachai)

Dear Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, my sister in heaven, I offer this prayer to you, asking you to help me love Jesus and Mother Mary as you loved them with all your heart. Intercede with your beloved Jesus for each and every one of us so that I may obtain the grace to be like you. You listened to the call of your God even though you suffered the mockery of those around you.

Teach me to bear my cross when I encounter obstacles in my life, as you have been able to do.

Thank you, my Saint Kateri, for praying for me and for all your brothers and sisters. R/

Long Prayer

(Suggested by Alain Bilodeau, Dcn.)

Kateri, it is me, another *tekakwitha* speaking to you, as I *grope my way* for perfect love. I often lose sight of the light that guides me and wander through the forests of my life. I look at the ground; my eyes do not rise to the sky. Sometimes, I seem to find a reliable reference point: a person or an activity I can count on. I get disappointed. I stumble. I fall. I search.

Help me find my way. Guide me to a river or stream that is the source of life. I will follow it, and it will show me the way to the plain where the land is more accessible and the light can reach me again. Help me lift my head up.

You are my sister. Your name and my way of life unite us. You have transformed your disability into an effective means of loving God and others. Ask Kice Manitou to give strength to all the *tekakwitha*, those who *grope their way*, so they may continue seeking and following the path of truth and Life.

Tshima ut (*Amen in Innu*) – **Amen**

In-depth Activity

If possible, this short exercise should be done outdoors with a small group that wishes to deepen the long prayer. After the prayer, one person can read the following text aloud slowly, pausing after each sentence, to guide the group in meditation or connection with nature. Afterwards, each person may share their experience with the group, if they wish.

Or you can even do the exercise as a short personal meditation or mindful presence in nature. To do so, first read the text aloud slowly to yourself, then record it on your cell phone. When the time comes, you can listen to the recording and let it guide you.

I sit outside and make myself comfortable. My feet are firmly planted on the ground. I take the time to feel its unwavering support beneath my feet. This earth welcomes and nourishes me. Then, I breathe deeply. Slowly. Calmly.

I close my eyes. I listen. I strain my ears. I don't force myself. I welcome all sounds. Silence, if there is any. I am like Kateri, blind, but still sensitive to light. Light passes through my eyelids.

I breathe. I smell the scents around me. Cooler air enters my nostrils. I feel the wind on my skin. My whole body. I feel connected to the land through my feet.

I stand up. If I can, I try to take a few steps with my eyes closed. I cautiously feel my way forward. I notice my insecurity. My fragility. I also notice my strength. It's my inner strength that keeps me going and standing. I remain attentive to my surroundings.

Then, I try to go back to where I was sitting. One step at a time. I make sure I don't fall. When I get back to my seat, I sit down. I calm down. I breathe.

Then, slowly, I bring Kateri's image to mind. I think of Kateri and what she experienced. I think of her connection to nature, which nourished her with God.

Finally, I can feel my heart. Can I feel it beating? I make room for it. I feel it opening up and expanding within me. Unfolding. With my heart and hands open and all my senses alert, I imbue my mind and heart with Kateri's motto:

"Who will teach me what pleases God the most so that I may do it?"

I listen. I feel. I welcome. I feel the silence within me. Life...

And I let come what is, what rises up. Nothing, or perhaps something. It doesn't matter; everything is fine.

So I say: Thank you. *Micta Mikwetc* (in Atikamekw).

Founded in 1993, the charity **Mission Chez Nous** seeks to promote Christian solidarity with Indigenous peoples. The organization raises awareness among the general public about Indigenous realities and fosters closer ties between cultures, by countering prejudice and encouraging dialogue. The charity offers material and moral support to Indigenous communities living in the territory now known as Quebec.

www.missioncheznous.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/missioncheznous

X: x.com/MissionChezNous

Visual to share on your networks

This visual is also available in JPG format in the Resources section of Mission chez nous's website.



Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, stained glass window in the Saint Francis Xavier Mission Church in Kahnawake
Photo: ndoduc/Wikimedia Commons

April 17, 2026
Memorial of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Kateri, it is me, another *tekakwitha** speaking to you, as I *grope my way* for perfect love. I often lose sight of the light that guides me and wander through the forests of my life. I look at the ground; my eyes do not rise to the sky. Sometimes, I seem to find a reliable reference point: a person or an activity I can count on. I get disappointed. I stumble. I fall. I search.

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* Meaning "she who gropes her way" (in Mohawk).

Text: Alain Bilodeau, Dcn.