

## House of Magee

Servant of God Emil Kapaun & St. Kateri Tekakwitha



### Fr. Ernest Paul Magee

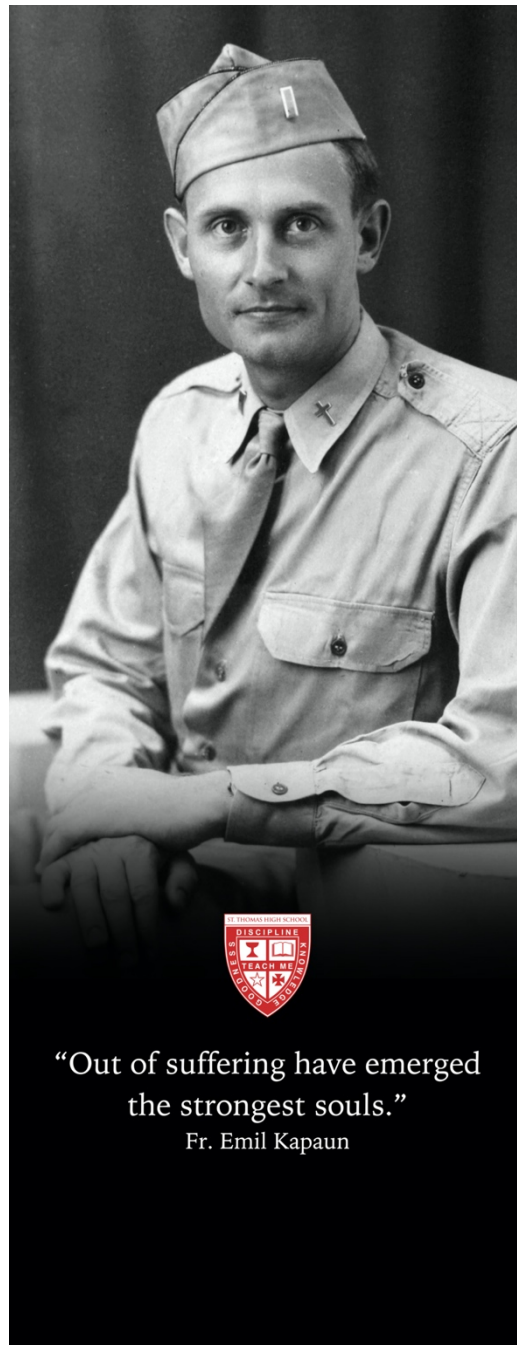


- General biography:
  - Born in Houston, TX on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1908.
  - Nicknames were “E.P.” and “Jim”.
  - Graduate of STH Class of 1927 along with Father Carl Allnoch.
    - They were referred to as the “dynamic duo”.
    - He played football with Allnoch and remembered fondly two victories over much larger public schools San Jacinto High School and Port Arthur High School.
  - He was ordained to priesthood in Houston, December 21, 1935.
    - He was ordained with fellow STH graduate Father Carl Allnoch (also future principal of STH).
  - Served as teacher, coach, and principal at STH for 27 years.

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- Principal from 1948-1955.
  - First alumnus principal in school's history.
- Interesting stories/information:
  - Phlegmatic, even-keeled, calm but stern and serious demeanor, and rarely lost his temper.
    - Exception is when he heard reports of hazing among the students.
      - He called together the student body and in no uncertain terms and gestures made it clear that such behavior was unacceptable.
      - Some students were actually on the verge of tears.
  - Legendary disciplinarian:
    - It was said of him, "He was the 'discipline' in the Basilian motto of 'Teach me Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge'."
    - He caught some boys shooting dice and gambling on campus.
      - He brought them into his office and had them shoot dice against the wall to determine how many days their punishment would last.
    - He was a chain smoker and would wait patiently smoking his cigarette as a student would explain the excuses for some misbehavior and then dismiss the student with consequence delivered via a few precise, striking words.
    - One morning a group of seniors ran a white pair of under-wear up the flag pole and dared the juniors to take it down.
      - Most of the student body gathered outside the school around the flag pole.
      - Father Magee came out and ordered everyone back to their classes, telling the seniors to go first.
      - A 240 lb football tackle said back "Make us."
      - Father walked right over to him and slapped him to which the student replied, "I'm sorry, Father. We'll go in."
  - Athletics:
    - Principal when STH experienced its "School of Champions" era in which the school won state championships in nearly every varsity sport for a decade or more.
  - End of Life:
    - He loved to pray bridge but at the end of his life his mind grew dim and he was no longer able to play but he offered this suffering up by reflecting that God had allowed him to lose this great pleasure of his life in order that he may better depend on Him.

Servant of God Father Emil Kapaun



“Out of suffering have emerged  
the strongest souls.”  
Fr. Emil Kapaun

Summary of Life:

He was born in 1916 in Kansas and attended an all-boys high school before hearing the call to become a priest. After the outbreak of WWII, Fr. Kapaun began working as a part-time chaplain for the troops at a military airfield in Herington, Kansas. He also was involved in the Pacific Theater of WWII in Burma from April 1945 to May 1946, covering over 2,000 miles by jeep as he ministered to soldiers. His troops loved him; he was a man's man: rugged, friendly, funny, and knowledgeable about sports. His experiences working with American soldiers caused him to fall in

love with the military and so he signed up to become a full time military chaplain, joining the First Calvary Division. Soon he shipped off to Japan with the beginning of the Korean War and participated in the first amphibious landing in the Korean War on July 18, 1950. At the side of the GIs he served, Father Kapaun was plunged into warfare and weeks of close combat and brutal fighting caused some of the troops to go insane. Conditions were nasty: low morale, scorching temperatures, torrential rain, swarms of mosquitoes, exhaustion, lack of shelter, scarcity of food and water, and vicious combat were among the hardships Fr. Kapaun faced. Father Kapaun threw himself into it, carrying litters, burying stinking enemy bodies, celebrating Mass on stretchers or near the front lines with shelling 150 yards away, and convincing troops to attend to religious duties. Time after time, he crawled out onto the battlefield under enemy fire to rescue wounded soldiers. This earned him his share of narrow escapes: his helmet was blown off; his pipe stem was shattered by a sniper's gunfire. With his Mass gear in the pockets of his field jacket, he hopped from foxhole to foxhole, saying a quick prayer with whomever he found inside. He constantly ministered to the dead and dying while performing baptisms, hearing confessions, and offering Holy Communion. He often celebrated Mass from an improvised altar set up on the front hood of a jeep. He constantly would lose his Mass kit, jeep, and trailer to enemy fire. He often said how he was thoroughly convinced that the prayers of many others were what had saved him so many times. He was captured and taken prisoner by Chinese soldiers during the Battle of Unsan near Unsan, North Korea, on November 2, 1950.

After being captured by Chinese forces, he was able to persuade some prisoners, who had ignored orders from officers, to help carry the wounded. The guards took the soldiers' boots, heavy clothing, and water purification tablets, put them on a starvation diet, and shot or abandoned those who straggled in the freezing weather. At the camps, he dug latrines, mediated disputes, gave away his own food, and raised morale among the prisoners. He was noted among his fellow POWs as one who would smuggle coffee and tea (and a pot to heat them in) from the guards. He also led fellow prisoners in acts of defiance and smuggled dysentery drugs to the doctor. Despite the fact that it had been forbidden by the Communists, he constantly led prayers. Once, he spent all day chipping steps into the ice so men carrying water wouldn't fall. He undertook the repulsive task of picking lice from those too weak to do it themselves. He slipped away to clean the toilets when everyone else stood around arguing who should do it. He traded his watch for a blanket and made it into bandages. He volunteered to dig graves in the frozen ground, while others tried to avoid it. On Easter Sunday, 1951, Father Kapaun openly flouted the camp rules and held an Easter service. It was impossible to celebrate Mass (because he didn't have his Mass kit), but he told the story of the Passion and led the men in the Stations and Rosary. Weakened as the months passed, he managed to lead Easter sunrise service on Sunday, March 25, 1951. He was so weak that the prison guards took him to a place they called the "hospital", which was really a place where he was left alone without any help and left to die of malnutrition and pneumonia on May 23, 1951. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart, and POW Medal. Then on April 11th, 2013, he was posthumously awarded the highest medal awarded by the U.S. government, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

### Outline of Life:

- Born on April 20th, 1916 in Pilsen, Kansas and died as a POW in Korea on May 23rd, 1951.

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- Feast Day: Not yet set (probably the day he died).
- Notable Information:
  - Grew up on a farm three miles southwest of Pilsen, Kansas on rural 260th Street of Marion County.
  - His parents, Enos and Elizabeth (Hajek) Kapaun, were Czech immigrants.
  - When he was 14, Emil's parents sent him to finish two years of high school at Conception Abbey in Missouri.
  - This was on the recommendation of the Kapaun's pastor, who, knowing that Emil was already thinking of becoming a priest, thought this all-male, Catholic high school run by the Benedictines would encourage a vocation.
  - Emil was funny and popular, remembered as being "... one of the most normal men."
  - But while he joked with friends about Conception becoming a co-ed school and endured jibes from the school newspaper's gossip column at his being seen "strolling around the campus with four young maidens," he was thinking of his vocation.
  - He also graduated from Conception Abbey seminary college (College of New Engleberg; Conception Seminary College) in Conception, Missouri, in June 1936
  - In college, he was nicknamed "The Brain," tutored others in Greek and Latin, and gave briefings on philosophy in his room before tests.
  - Despite his resolution to "'try to get low grades'" because he didn't "'want to be a leader,'" he graduated at the top of his Greek and Logic classes.
  - Next, after barely working out the expenses, Emil traveled to Kenrick Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.
  - In only four years, he was ordained a priest.
  - He was ordained on June 9th, 1940 at what is now Newman University in Wichita, Kansas and sent back to Pilsen as an assistant to Fr. John Sklenar.
  - Just being with his superior offered the new priest many opportunities for sacrifice, as Fr. Sklenar could be irritable and unreasonable.
  - After the outbreak of WWII, Fr. Kapaun began working as a part-time chaplain for the troops at a military airfield in Herington, Kansas.
  - It was his first experience working with American soldiers, and he loved it.
  - To add to his responsibilities, Father Kapaun was made pastor of St. John Nepomucene church in Pilsen upon (now) Monsignor Sklenar's retirement in 1943.
  - The situation was far from ideal, however. As Father Kapaun wrote to his bishop, "'There are people here, relatives and friends, who are superior to me (in age, in school, etc.) Some find it difficult to look up to me as their spiritual superior. They do not say anything, but from the way they act and the way they perform their spiritual obligations, I know they find me a great moral obstacle.... Some of these people feel that I still... hold against them things they did in former years. I could tell them a hundred times that all is forgotten - yet they will not be assured but will hold back and be afraid. That is the human element and it creates a serious moral obstacle....'"

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- Kapaun entered the U.S. Army Chaplain School at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts in August 1944, and after graduating in October joined the chaplaincy at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.
- He and one other chaplain ministered to approximately 19,000 service men and women.
- He was sent to India and served in the Pacific Theater of WWII in Burma from April 1945 to May 1946.
- He ministered to U.S. soldiers and local missions covering a 2,000 mile territory by jeep.
- He was promoted to captain in January 1946.
- He was released from active duty in July 1946 and under the G.I. Bill, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Education at the Catholic University of America in February 1948.
- In September 1948, he returned to active duty in the U.S. Army and resumed his chaplaincy at Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas.
- In December 1949, Kapaun left his parents and Pilsen for the last time, bound for Japan.
- In January 1950, he was stationed near Mount Fuji, Japan and became a chaplain in the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.
- On July 15, 1950, the 1st Cavalry Division and Kapaun embarked and left Tokyo Bay sailing for Korea, less than a month after North Korea had invaded South Korea.
- The 1st Cavalry Division made the first amphibious landing in the Korean War on July 18, 1950. In late August, Kapaun was assigned to duty as chaplain of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment.
- He soon participated in the fighting on the Pusan perimeter in South Korea.
- From there, since mid September, Kapaun and the division were constantly on the move northward. On October 9, the division crossed the 38th parallel into North Korea and advanced within 50 miles of the Chinese border.
- At the side of the GIs he served, Father Kapaun was plunged into warfare and weeks of close combat and brutal fighting caused some of the troops to go insane.
- Conditions were nasty: under-trained soldiers with low morals, scorching temperatures, torrential rain, swarms of mosquitoes, exhaustion, lack of shelter, scarcity of food and water, and vicious combat were among the hardships Fr. Kapaun faced.
- Even in the middle of it all, he managed to write home cheerfully on paper he'd ransacked from an abandoned Korean home.
- Sometimes he downplayed the danger that he was in, but once he confessed to a friend, "This fighting is nerve-racking.... It seems [unreal]. I don't know if I will live through the day or night. We are close to heaven, but really we are more like in hell."
- Father Kapaun threw himself into it, carrying litters, burying stinking enemy bodies, celebrating Mass on stretchers or near the front lines with shelling 150 yards away, and convincing troops to attend to religious duties.

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- Time after time, he crawled out onto the battlefield under enemy fire to rescue wounded soldiers.
- This earned him his share of narrow escapes: his helmet was blown off, his pipe stem was shattered by a sniper's gunfire, and more than once, he admitted to being "messed up with blood."
- With his Mass gear in the pockets of his field jacket, he hopped from foxhole to foxhole, saying a quick prayer with whomever he found inside.
- His troops loved him; he was a man's man: rugged, friendly, funny, and knowledgeable about sports.
- As he and his troops continued to fight and change positions with the shifting fortunes of the War, Father Kapaun wrote candidly to some friends, "I thank you for all the prayers.... My boys need them worse than I do, for some way or another I have not been hit, although we were in some tough spots with bullets whistling past our heads. A fellow's nerves take an awful strain and a fellow surely can pray when these big shells explode around the area. It is no fun."
- And, somehow, amidst it all, he was holy, too.
- One of the troops who knew him wrote later, "To all [the soldiers,]... he was simply 'Father,' and each of them, when trouble came, drew courage and hope and strength from him.... He was a priest... of great piety, but there was nothing ethereal about him, nothing soft or unctuous or holier-than-thou. He wore his piety in his heart."
- He constantly ministered to the dead and dying while performing baptisms, hearing confessions, and offering Holy Communion.
- He often celebrated Mass from an improvised altar set up on the front hood of a jeep.
- He constantly would lose his Mass kit, jeep, and trailer to enemy fire.
- He often said how he was thoroughly convinced that the prayers of many others were what had saved him so many times.
- He was captured and taken prisoner by Chinese soldiers during the Battle of Unsan near Unsan, North Korea, on November 2, 1950.
- For more than two weeks, the hundreds of captured troops marched towards Pyoktong, north of Unsan.
- Kapaun was able to persuade some prisoners, who had ignored orders from officers, to help carry the wounded.
- The guards took the soldiers' boots, heavy clothing, and water purification tablets, put them on a starvation diet, and shot or abandoned those who straggled in the freezing weather.
- Constantly mistreated and, from lack of nutrition, blind at night when they marched, the troops took to carrying those who couldn't keep up, rather than leaving them to freeze to death. Even so, dozens died.
- Father Kapaun, suffering from frostbite, would go down the lines praying the rosary, smiling, and offering encouragement.
- He and other members of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment taken prisoner were marched 87 miles (140 km) to a temporary prison camp at Sombakol near the

- permanent camp (Prison Camp 5) at Pyoktong, North Korea, where they were later held.
- At the camps, he dug latrines, mediated disputes, gave away his own food, and raised morale among the prisoners.
  - He was noted among his fellow POWs as one who would smuggle coffee and tea (and a pot to heat them in) from the guards.
  - He also led fellow prisoners in acts of defiance and smuggled dysentery drugs to the doctor, Sidney Eesensten.
  - Despite the fact that it had been forbidden by the Communists, he constantly led prayers.
  - Once, he spent all day chipping steps into the ice so men carrying water wouldn't fall.
  - He undertook the repulsive task of picking lice from those too weak to do it themselves.
  - He slipped away to clean the toilets when everyone else stood around arguing who should do it.
  - He traded his watch for a blanket and made it into bandages.
  - He volunteered to dig graves in the frozen ground, while others tried to avoid it.
  - As a fellow prisoner recalled, he took the "old bandages, foul with corruption, and sneaked them out and washed them and sneaked them back in again.... He held [the sick men] in his arms like children as delirium came upon them."
  - One prisoner remembered, "'When others were getting meaner Father Kapaun was only kinder. The longer we were in the valley, the rougher it got, and the rougher it got, the gentler Father Kapaun became.'"
  - Another recorded, "'It was his actual deeds that gave the prisoners such a tremendous impact as they watched him living by God's law. In [short,] Chaplain Kapaun practiced what he preached.'"
  - After the men were marched back to Pyoktong in January, 1951, Father Kapaun continued to be one of the leaders in the miserable group.
  - He patched up huts, beat pans out of scrap metal, and built an outdoor fireplace.
  - Every morning, he got up early in the numbing cold to heat water for everyone else and then "he'd bring in this pan full of hot water, calling cheerfully, 'Coffee, everybody,' and pour a little into every man's bowl. "And though there was no coffee in it, somehow this sip of hot water in the morning gave each man heart to rise and pick off his lice and choke down his bowl of soupy millet, and face... another day of captivity and abuse."
  - On Easter Sunday, 1951, Father Kapaun openly flouted the camp rules and held an Easter service. It was impossible to celebrate Mass (because he didn't have his Mass kit), but he told the story of the Passion and led the men in the Stations and Rosary.
  - Kapaun developed a blood clot in one of his legs besides having dysentery and pneumonia.
  - Weakened as the months passed, he managed to lead Easter sunrise service on Sunday, March 25, 1951.

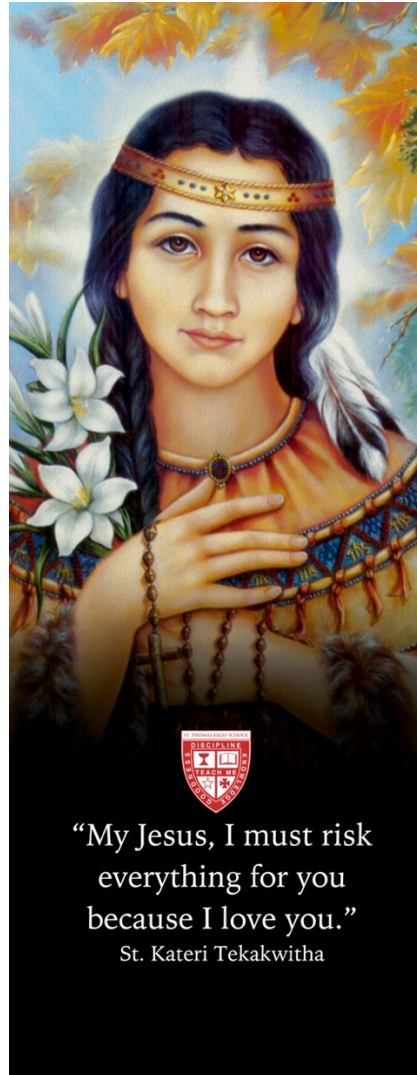


- He was so weak that the prison guards took him to a place in the Pyoktong camp they called the "hospital", which was really a place where he was left alone without any help and left to die of malnutrition and pneumonia on May 23, 1951.
- Kapaun was buried in a mass grave near the Yalu River.
- He was awarded the Bronze Star, Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart, and POW Medal.
- From the report when we award the Bronze Star on September 2nd, 1950:
  - “By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 9419, and pursuant to the authority contained in AR-600-45, the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States is awarded the following named officer: CHAPLAIN (CAPTAIN) EMIL J. KAPAUN 0558217, CHAPLAIN CORPS, UNITED STATES ARMY, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Regiment, displayed heroism in action against the enemy near Kumchung, Korea on August 2, 1950. Chaplain Kapaun received information that there was a wounded man in an exposed position on the left flank of the first battalion that could not be removed as there were no litter bearers available. Chaplain Kapaun together with another officer, immediately proceeded to the front lines where he contacted the Battalion Commander in order to obtain the approximate location of the wounded man. With total disregard for personal safety, Chaplain Kapaun and his companion went after the wounded man. The entire route to the wounded soldier was under intense enemy machine gun and small arms fire. However, Chaplain Kapaun successfully evacuated the soldier, thereby saving the soldier. This heroic action on the part of Chaplain Kapaun reflects great credit on himself and the military.”
- On April 11th, 2013, he was also posthumously awarded the highest medal awarded by the U.S. government, the Congressional Medal of Honor.
  - From the report: “The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, March 3, 1863, has awarded in the name of Congress the MEDAL OF HONOR to CHAPLAIN (CAPTAIN) EMIL J. KAPAUN UNITED STATES ARMY for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty: Chaplain Emil J. Kapaun distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy at Unsan, Korea, from November 1–2, 1950. On November 1, as Chinese Communist Forces viciously attacked friendly elements, Chaplain Kapaun calmly walked through withering enemy fire in order to provide comfort and medical aid to his comrades and rescue friendly wounded from no-man's land. Though the Americans successfully repelled the assault, they found themselves surrounded by the enemy. Facing annihilation, the able-bodied men were ordered to evacuate. However, Chaplain Kapaun, fully aware of his

certain capture, elected to stay behind with the wounded. After the enemy succeeded in breaking through the defense in the early morning hours of November 2, Chaplain Kapaun continually made rounds, as hand-to-hand combat ensued. As Chinese Communist Forces approached the American position, Chaplain Kapaun noticed an injured Chinese officer among the wounded and convinced him to negotiate the safe surrender of the American Forces. Shortly after his capture, Chaplain Kapaun with complete disregard for his personal safety and unwavering resolve, bravely pushed aside an enemy soldier preparing to execute Sergeant First Class Herbert A. Miller. Not only did Chaplain Kapaun gallantry save the life of Sergeant Miller, but also his unparalleled courage and leadership inspired all those present, including those who might have otherwise fled in panic, to remain and fight the enemy until captured. Chaplain Kapaun extraordinary heroism and selflessness, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, the 1st Cavalry Division, and the United States Army.”

- Quotes:
  - On the front page of his journal as a boy showing his good humor: “No Trespassing. Please Keep Out If You Don't Want To Be Killed. Signed. X.Y.Z.”
  - “Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls.”
  - “Pray hard, receive the sacraments frequently, and above all give good example.”
  - "Christ's work testified to what he was; our works testify to what we are."
  - "If we fail to forgive, we reject our own faith."
  - "No sincere prayer is ever wasted."

St. Kateri Tekakwitha



Summary of Life:

She was an Algonquin–Mohawk Indian born in 1656 near present-day Auriesville, New York and on April 17th, 1680. Kateri is the Mohawk version of Catherine, the name she adopted when she was baptized. She was the daughter of a Mohawk chief and an Algonquin woman, who had been captured in a raid, then adopted and assimilated into the tribe. Kateri’s mother had been baptized Roman Catholic and educated by French missionaries before she was captured. The Mohawk suffered a severe smallpox epidemic from 1661 to 1663, causing high fatalities. When Tekakwitha was around four years old, her baby brother and both her parents died of smallpox. She survived, but was left with facial scars and impaired eyesight. She was adopted by her father's sister and her husband, a chief of the Turtle Clan. Accounts describe that Tekakwitha was a modest girl who avoided social gatherings; she covered much of her head with a blanket because of the smallpox scars. She became skilled at traditional women’s arts, which included making clothing and belts from animal skins; weaving mats, baskets and boxes from reeds and grasses; and preparing food from game, crops and gathered produce. French Jesuit missionaries arrived in the area and established a

mission that later developed as Auriesville, New York. While there, the Jesuits studied Mohawk and other native languages in order to reach the people. They spoke of Christianity in terms with which the Mohawk could identify. For instance, the Jesuits used the word for the Mohawk name for Sky World, as the word for heaven in the Lord's Prayer in Mohawk. In 1667, when Tekakwitha was 11 years old, she met the Jesuit missionaries who had come to the village. Her uncle opposed any contact with them because he did not want her to convert to Christianity. In the summer of 1669, several hundred Mohican warriors, advancing from the east, launched a dawn attack. Rousing quickly to the defense, Mohawk villagers fought off the invaders, who kept the village under siege for three days. Tekakwitha, now around 13 years old, helped priest Jean Pierron tend to the wounded, bury the dead, and carry food and water to the defending warriors on the palisades. When reinforcements arrived from other Mohawk villages, the defenders drove the Mohican warriors into retreat. The victorious Mohawk pursued the Mohican warriors, attacking them in the forest, killing over 80 and capturing several others. The victors tortured with fire and other methods the captive Mohicans—thirteen men and four women—for two afternoons in succession, planning to execute them on the third. Pierron, tending to the captives, implored the torturers to stop, but they ignored him. This event would stick in the mind of Kateri for the rest of her life.

Tekakwitha was asked to be married at age 13 but intrigued by the Christian faith she refused but it would be several more years before she would become Christian. Tekakwitha was said to have been punished by her aunts with ridicule, threats, and harsh workloads. In the presence of others, Tekakwitha told him her story and her desire to become a Christian; after this she started studying the catechism with him. Tekakwitha tried to live a holy life despite the non-Christian and often hostile environment in which she lived. The Mohawks opposed her conversion and accused her of sorcery. Tekakwitha was baptized at the age of 19, on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1676. Tekakwitha was baptized "Catherine" after St. Catherine of Siena. Tekakwitha said, "I have deliberated enough. For a long time my decision on what I will do has been made. I have consecrated myself entirely to Jesus, son of Mary, I have chosen Him for husband and He alone will take me for wife." As a Catholic, Tekakwitha practiced physical mortification in order to repent of sin and to help in the conversion of her people particularly the forgiveness of those who tortured and burned the Mohican captives including putting thorns on her sleeping mat and laying on them while praying. She also fasted or purposely spoiled the taste of her food to offer her suffering for the help and grace of others. She still endured persecution from some Mohawks who attempted to discredit her virginity and consecration to Christ by accusing her of meeting a man in the forest when she would go for long hours to pray alone. She still endured persecution from some Mohawks who attempted to discredit her virginity and consecration to Christ by accusing her of meeting a man in the forest when she would go for long hours to pray alone. Weakened all over her life from the smallpox she contracted as a child, during Holy Week of 1680 she grew poor of health. She quickly succumbed to the illness on April 17th, 1680, Holy Wednesday. It was reported by hundreds of eyewitnesses that at her funeral her scars from smallpox had vanished and her face look pristine and beautiful. Also, several eyewitnesses report her appearing to them after her death.

### Outline of Life:

- Born in 1656 in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, near present-day Auriesville, New York and on April 17th, 1680.
- Feast Day: July 14th.

- Notable Information:
  - St. Kateri Tekakwitha was an Algonquin–Mohawk Indian.
  - Her name Tekawitha means "She who bumps into things".
  - Kateri is the Mohawk version of Catherine, the name she adopted when she was baptized.
  - She was the daughter of Kenneronkwa, a Mohawk chief, and Tagaskouita, an Algonquin woman, who had been captured in a raid, then adopted and assimilated into the tribe.
  - Tagaskouita had been baptized Roman Catholic and educated by French missionaries in Trois-Rivières, east of Montreal.
  - Mohawk warriors captured her and took her to their homeland.
  - Tekakwitha was one of two children; she also had a brother.
  - Tekakwitha's original village was highly diverse, as the Mohawk were absorbing many captured natives of other tribes, particularly their competitors the Huron, to replace people who died from European diseases or warfare.
  - While from different backgrounds, such captives were adopted into the tribe to become full members and were expected to fully assimilate as Mohawk.
  - The Mohawk suffered a severe smallpox epidemic from 1661 to 1663, causing high fatalities.
  - When Tekakwitha was around four years old, her baby brother and both her parents died of smallpox.
  - She survived, but was left with facial scars and impaired eyesight.
  - She was adopted by her father's sister and her husband, a chief of the Turtle Clan.
  - Accounts describe that Tekakwitha was a modest girl who avoided social gatherings; she covered much of her head with a blanket because of the smallpox scars.
  - She became skilled at traditional women's arts, which included making clothing and belts from animal skins; weaving mats, baskets and boxes from reeds and grasses; and preparing food from game, crops and gathered produce.
  - She also took part in the women's seasonal planting and intermittent weeding.
  - The Mohawk were allied with the Dutch while the Huron, the Mohawk's rivals, were allied with the French.
  - Trying to make inroads in Iroquois territory, the French attacked the Mohawk in present-day central New York in 1666.
  - After driving the people from their homes, the French burned the three Mohawk villages on the south side of the river, destroying the longhouses, wigwams, and the women's corn and squash fields.
  - Tekakwitha, around ten years old, fled with her new family into the forest.
  - Around this time, French Jesuit missionaries arrived in the area and established a mission that later developed as Auriesville, New York.
  - While there, the Jesuits studied Mohawk and other native languages in order to reach the people.
  - They spoke of Christianity in terms with which the Mohawk could identify.
  - For instance, the Jesuits used the word Karonhià:ke, the Mohawk name for Sky World, as the word for heaven in the Lord's Prayer in Mohawk and as one expert

- explains, “This was not just a linguistic shortcut, but a conceptual bridge from one cosmology to another.”
- In 1667, when Tekakwitha was 11 years old, she met the Jesuit missionaries Jacques Frémin, Jacques Bruyas, and Jean Pierron, who had come to the village.
  - Her uncle opposed any contact with them because he did not want her to convert to Christianity; one of his older daughters had already left Caughnawaga to go to Kahnawake, the Catholic mission village across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal.
  - In the summer of 1669, several hundred Mohican warriors, advancing from the east, launched a dawn attack on Caughnawaga.
  - Rousing quickly to the defense, Mohawk villagers fought off the invaders, who kept Caughnawaga under siege for three days.
  - Tekakwitha, now around 13 years old, helped priest Jean Pierron tend to the wounded, bury the dead, and carry food and water to the defending warriors on the palisades.
  - When reinforcements arrived from other Mohawk villages, the defenders drove the Mohican warriors into retreat.
  - The victorious Mohawk pursued the Mohican warriors, attacking them in the forest, killing over 80 and capturing several others. Returning to Caughnawaga amid widespread celebration, the victors tortured with fire and other methods the captive Mohicans—thirteen men and four women—for two afternoons in succession, planning to execute them on the third.
  - Pierron, tending to the captives, implored the torturers to stop, but they ignored him.
  - Pierron instructed the captives in Catholic doctrine as best he could and baptized them before they died under torture.
  - Later that year, the Iroquois Feast of the Dead, held every ten years, was convened at Caughnawaga.
  - Some Oneida people came, along with Onondaga led by their famous chief Garakontié.
  - The remains of Tekakwitha's parents, along with the many others who had died in the previous decade, were to be carefully exhumed, so that their souls could be released to wander to the spirit land to the west.
  - Father Pierron attacked the beliefs and logic of the Feast of the Dead.
  - The assembled Iroquois, upset over his remarks, ordered him to be silent.
  - But Pierron continued, telling the Iroquois to give up their "superstitious" rites. Under Garakontié's protection, Pierron finished his speech.
  - He demanded that, to secure continued friendship with the French, the Iroquois give up their Feast of the Dead, their faith in dreams as a guide to action, and the worship of their war god.
  - At length, the assembled Iroquois relented. Exchanging gifts with priest Pierron, they promised to give up the customs he had denounced.
  - Garakontié later converted to Christianity.

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- In 1671, Mohawk chief Ganeagowa, who had led his warriors to victory against the Mohican, returned from a long hunting trip in the north to announce he had become a Christian.
- He had come upon the Catholic Iroquois village set up by Jesuits at La Prairie, southeast of Montreal.
- There he made friendly contact with priest Jacques Frémin, who had served as a missionary in Mohawk country.
- Influenced by the Catholic faith of the Iroquois villagers and of his own wife Satékon, Ganeagowa received instruction for several months from Father Frémin, who accepted him into the Church.
- These events and experiences deeply influenced Tekakwitha.
- Tekakwitha was asked to be married at age 13 but intrigued by the Christian faith she refused but it would be several more years before she would become Christian.
- By the time Tekakwitha turned 17 around 1673, her adoptive mother (her father's sister) and aunt (uncle's sister) had become concerned over her lack of interest in marriage.
- They tried to arrange her marriage to a young Mohawk man by instructing him to sit down beside her.
- They indicated to Tekakwitha that the young man wanted to marry her.
- Accordingly, they pressured her to offer him a certain dish made with corn; Iroquois custom regarded this as a woman's sign of openness to marriage.
- Tekakwitha fled the cabin and hid from her family in a nearby field.
- Tekakwitha was said to have been punished by her aunts with ridicule, threats, and harsh workloads.
- But Tekakwitha continued to resist marriage.
- In the spring of 1674 at age eighteen, Tekakwitha met the Jesuit Father Jacques de Lamberville, who was visiting in the village.
- In the presence of others, Tekakwitha told him her story and her desire to become a Christian; after this she started studying the catechism with him.
- Tekakwitha tried to live a holy life despite the non-Christian and often hostile environment in which she lived.
- Lamberville baptized Tekakwitha at the age of 19, on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1676.
- Tekakwitha was baptized "Catherine" after St. Catherine of Siena.
- After Kateri was baptized, she remained in Caughnawauga for another 6 months.
- The Mohawks opposed her conversion and accused her of sorcery.
- Lamberville suggested that she go to the Jesuit mission of Kahnawake, located south of Montreal on the St. Lawrence River, where other native converts had gathered and she joined them in 1677.
- She lived at Kahnawake the remaining two years of her life where she lived in the longhouse with her sister and brother-in-law.
- She learned more about Christianity under her mentor Anastasia Tegenhatsiongo, who taught her about the practice of repenting for one's sins.
- When the women learned about nuns, they wanted to form their own convent and created an informal association of devout women.

- Tekakwitha said, “I have deliberated enough. For a long time my decision on what I will do has been made. I have consecrated myself entirely to Jesus, son of Mary, I have chosen Him for husband and He alone will take me for wife.”
- She was named “the virgin among the Mohawks”.
- Physical acts of mortification were common among her tribe as ways of asking favors from the spirits.
- As a Catholic, Tekakwitha practiced physical mortification in order to repent of sin and to help in the conversion of her people particularly the forgiveness of those who tortured and burned the Mohican captives including putting thorns on her sleeping mat and laying on them while praying.
- She also fasted or purposely spoiled the taste of her food to offer her suffering for the help and grace of others.
- She still endured persecution from some Mohawks who attempted to discredit her virginity and consecration to Christ by accusing her of meeting a man in the forest when she would go for long hours to pray alone.
- Weakened all over her life from the smallpox she contracted as a child, during Holy Week of 1680 she grew poor of health.
- She quickly succumbed to the illness on April 17th, 1680, Holy Wednesday.
- It was reported by hundreds of eyewitnesses that at her funeral her scars from smallpox had vanished and her face look pristine and beautiful.
- Also, several eyewitnesses report her appearing to them after her death.
- Quotes:
  - “I am not my own; I have given myself to Jesus. He must be my only love.”
  - “The poverty I am threatened with does not scare me, because so little is needed to give to the necessities of this miserable life and my labor could provide for it and I could always find some rags to cover me.”
  - “I can have no other spouse, but Jesus Christ. I have considered myself content to live in poverty and misery for His love.”
  - “My Jesus, I must risk everything with You for I love You.”
  - “Look at this cross; oh! how beautiful it is! It has been my whole happiness during my life, and I advise you also to make it yours.”