



# 2022 History Essay Contest School 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Winner

## Kateri Tekakwitha

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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha was the first Native American to be canonized. Saint Kateri was born in 1656. Her father was a Mohawk chief and her mother was a Christian Algonquin who had been held captive by Iroquois. Her mother was forced into marriage. Kateri was born in what is now New York, back then Ossemenon. When Kateri was 5 years old she was the only family member to live through smallpox which took a toll on her own health. She had a baby brother who also died due to smallpox. When Kateri was 10 years old French settlers attacked and stole things from her Mohawk village forcing her to leave.

Kateri did not have a formal education, and it was unusual to have Christian scripture materials, so she became a living Bible. She told her Mohawk friends stories from the Bible. She was known for her chastity and her love for God. She converted to Catholicism at 19. She loved her fellow mohawks so much that she offered up her pain for them. She did this by putting thorns on her sleeping mat and prayed for them while she felt this pain. Her tribe did not like that she was Catholic and would give her things that were assigned as punishment. She did these chores with happiness and joy. Kateri's tribe tried to force her into a marriage but she refused because she believed that Jesus was her true love.

After Kateri's death many miracles had happened. One of the miracles was about an eleven year old boy that had flesh eating bacteria. "It took the Finkbonners several years to realize that the turning point had come a day after a friend of the family — a nun named after Kateri — had visited them in the hospital, prayed with them and placed a relic of the soon-to-be saint on Jake's leg" (USA Today). Another miracle that had happened was after her death all of her scars from smallpox had disappeared. "Kateri's reported last words were 'Jesus, Mary, I love you.' Prayer was on her lips at the very end". (USA Today) Six days after Kateri died she appeared at four in the morning to someone who was praying to her. The vision lasted two hours. On her right side there was an upside down church, on her left side there was a Native American burning at the stake. Kateri appeared in September of 1680 and April of 1682 to the same person. In this vision She said, "Look closely at the example." Pictures were painted of Saint Kateri and were placed on the head of an ill person and the person miraculously was cured.

She was canonized on October 21, 2012. Kateri is "the first Native American saint from the territories of the future United States and Canada. Her feast day is celebrated on July 14" (CRS). She died at the young age of 24 from poor health.

Saint Kateri was important to North American history because she was courageous and she sacrificed her comfort for her own village. She will always be an important part of North American history. I will also remember her brave thoughts and actions that she did. I will also remember all of her miracles. She changed the lives of many people. I will always look up to Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

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