

KATERI TEKAKWITHA AND MARIANNE COPE

TWO NEW AMERICAN SAINTS

These women were moved by the love of God to love others. We are called to honor and imitate them—and become saints ourselves. *by Carol Ann Morrow*

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One is called the mother of outcasts. The other *was* an outcast. One was disfigured and disabled by the plague of smallpox. The other ministered to those disfigured and disabled by the plague of Hansen's disease (formerly known as leprosy). Both are recognized by the Catholic Church around the world as saints (October 21, 2012).

Who are they? Why are they saints? Why do we need them as saints in this country and this century? How are we called to honor and imitate them—and become saints ourselves?

KATERI TEKAKWITHA (1656-1680)

Kateri Tekakwitha's life is a short story, one that takes place in upstate New York and Canada.

The history of Native Americans is colored by myth and misunderstanding, sometimes romanticized and sometimes brutalized. To honor Kateri Tekakwitha as a saint, it's best to place her in context and to appreciate the cultures and traditions she straddled.

Tekakwitha's Algonquin mother was baptized Catholic but was captured by the Mohawk Turtle clan, who were unfamiliar with the Catholic faith. Tekakwitha's father was a respected Mohawk chief. When she was four, smallpox caused the death of many in her village, including her parents and brother. The disease weakened her health, especially her eyesight, and scarred her face. Her uncle Iowerano adopted her.

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