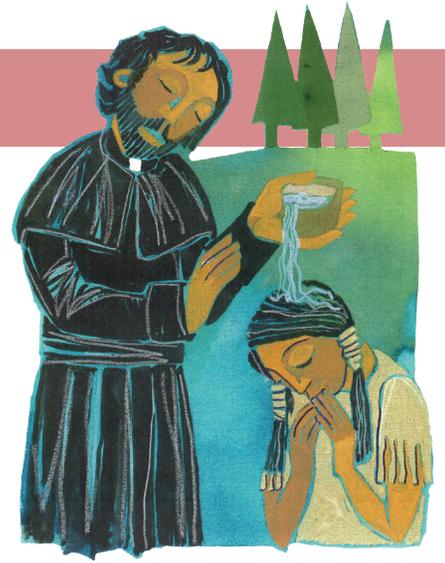


The Maiden Who Finally Found a Home

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha's life is known through a combination of journals written by Jesuit missionaries and stories told and retold by admirers. She blended the Native American ways of her people with the Christian teaching of the Blackrobes (Jesuits). Kateri Tekakwitha was a young woman of strength, faith, and courage. She overcame much adversity to belong to the Christian family.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Who makes you feel safe and "at home"? Why? Where is your true home? Why?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

A long time ago, there lived a young girl named Tekakwitha. Tekakwitha was born in North America about a hundred years before Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were born. She belonged to the Mohawk tribe. Her father was the chief.

Tekakwitha's mother belonged to a tribe that was at war with the Mohawks. When she was a young woman, she was captured. Tekakwitha's mother was so beautiful that the Mohawk chief decided he would marry her. Life was not easy for Tekakwitha's mother. She was a Christian and the Mohawks did not like Christians. Her happiest day was when Tekakwitha was born.

Tekakwitha was a beautiful child. She had shining black hair, sparkling brown eyes, and dark olive skin. She was also beautiful on the inside. She was kind and good. She would help anyone who needed help. She liked to run and play with the other children. She liked to plant and gather the crops with her mother. She loved to listen to her mother sing lullabies to her baby brother. But Tekakwitha's favorite time of day was evening. After the sun went down, her mother would tuck her in her blankets and tell her stories about Jesus.

When Tekakwitha was four years old her whole life changed. A terrible sickness called smallpox began to attack the people in her village. Every day more and more people died. Before very long, Tekakwitha's whole family became sick. Within a few days her father and mother and her baby brother all died. Tekakwitha was sick for a long, long time, but the smallpox did not kill her. Instead she was scarred for the rest of her life. Her beautiful olive-skinned face was covered with deep pox marks. Her sparkling brown eyes could no longer see clearly.

It was a very sad time for Tekakwitha. Her uncle, who was the new chief, took her into his family. Tekakwitha worked very hard for her aunt and uncle. She gathered firewood and cooked. Tekakwitha spent most of her time alone. She could no longer see well enough to play with the rest of the children. She liked to remember the stories her mother told her. "Someday," she thought, "I would like the holy water to be poured on me. I would like to be a Christian just like my mother."



When Tekakwitha was a teenager, a Blackrobe (that is what the tribe called priests) came into the village. When Tekakwitha had a chance, she asked him to baptize her. “First,” said the good priest, “you must ask your uncle if it is all right.”

Tekakwitha was afraid. She knew that her uncle did not like Christians. She prayed and prayed that she would be brave enough to ask her uncle’s permission. She prayed and prayed that he would say yes.

The next day she asked her uncle if she could become a Christian. “If you have the water poured, Tekakwitha, life will not be easy for you,” he said, “but I will not stop you.”

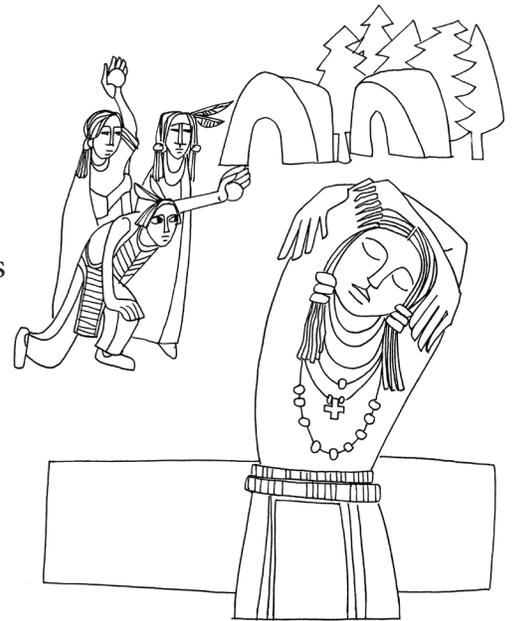
Tekakwitha was so happy! She had loved Jesus for a very long time. Now she would be able to call herself one of his followers. She could not wait— but that is just what she had to do. A whole year passed as Tekakwitha got ready for her baptism. Tekakwitha prayed and listened to the teachings of the Blackrobes.

Finally, the day came. On Easter morning, April 18, 1676, Tekakwitha became a Christian. Tekakwitha took another name when she was baptized. Her Christian name was Kateri. Now she had two names, Kateri Tekakwitha.

Kateri’s uncle had been right. Life became very difficult for her. No one would talk to her. When she walked to church on Sunday, people threw stones at her. After many months of such treatment, the priests became afraid for Kateri’s safety. They told Kateri about a village on the other side of the river. The people in this village were of many different tribes, but they were all Catholics. Kateri wanted with all her heart to go to this village.

Kateri knew that her uncle would never let her leave. She would have to sneak out of the village. Finally, the priests decided on a plan to help her escape.

In the middle of the night, when everything was ready, Kateri crept out of her hut. Two friends were waiting to help her escape. They had to be very careful as they went through the forest. Finally, they



came to the river. In a short time they were on the other side.

For the first time in many years, Kateri felt safe. She was so happy to be with people who welcomed her and loved her. She was happy to have other people to pray with her. She was so happy to find a place where she could not only honor her tribe but also her faith. Kateri felt she really belonged.

God called Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri Tekakwitha listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Kateri but also in her. Kateri Tekakwitha let the Spirit move her and great things happened. Kateri found the courage to face her fears, to live her life as a follower of Jesus, to find a place where she could belong.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Why was it so hard for Kateri to be baptized?
3. Have you ever wanted something as much as Kateri wanted to belong to the Christian family? What happened?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answers are on page 8.) Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: Belonging to a faith community gives us support and strength.

If, as we've already discussed, it is risky to talk about God, then it is even more scary to do what God wants us to do. But the Spirit makes sure we are never alone. Belonging to God and to the Church means we *have* a home and *are* a home for others, just like Kateri. There is challenge in following Jesus' Spirit, but there is safety and assurance as well.

Tekakwitha's Story

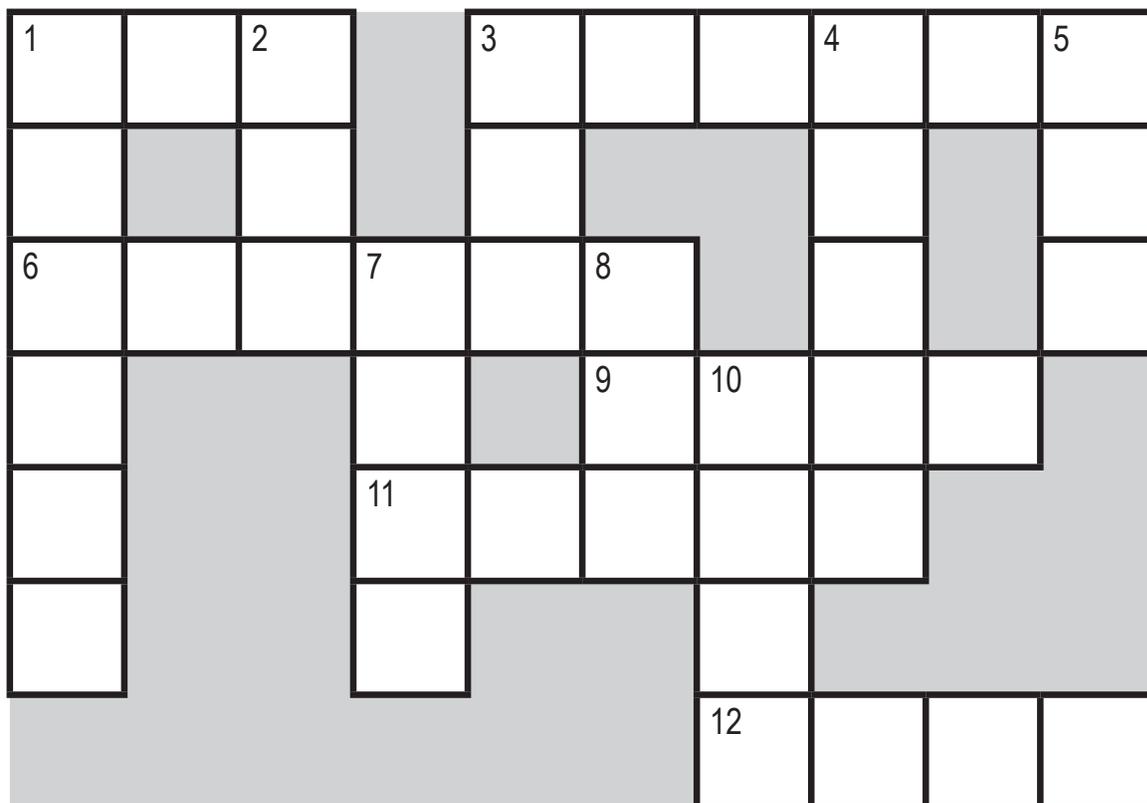
See if you can fill in the crossword puzzle below. If you need help, ask a grown-up.

ACROSS

1. When the priest asked Tekakwitha if she wanted to be baptized, she said ____.
3. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy ____.
6. Something you climb on
9. What you say at the end of a prayer
11. What we use when we baptize someone
12. Tekakwitha could not be baptized right away. She had to ____.

DOWN

1. Some people like to color the sun this color.
2. When the other children teased Tekakwitha, she felt ____.
3. Tekakwitha's illness made it difficult for her to ____.
4. Tekakwitha had to cross a _____ to get to her new home.
5. Something to play with
7. The opposite of up
8. A small animal with a long thin tail
10. What a cat says



Welcome Home!

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

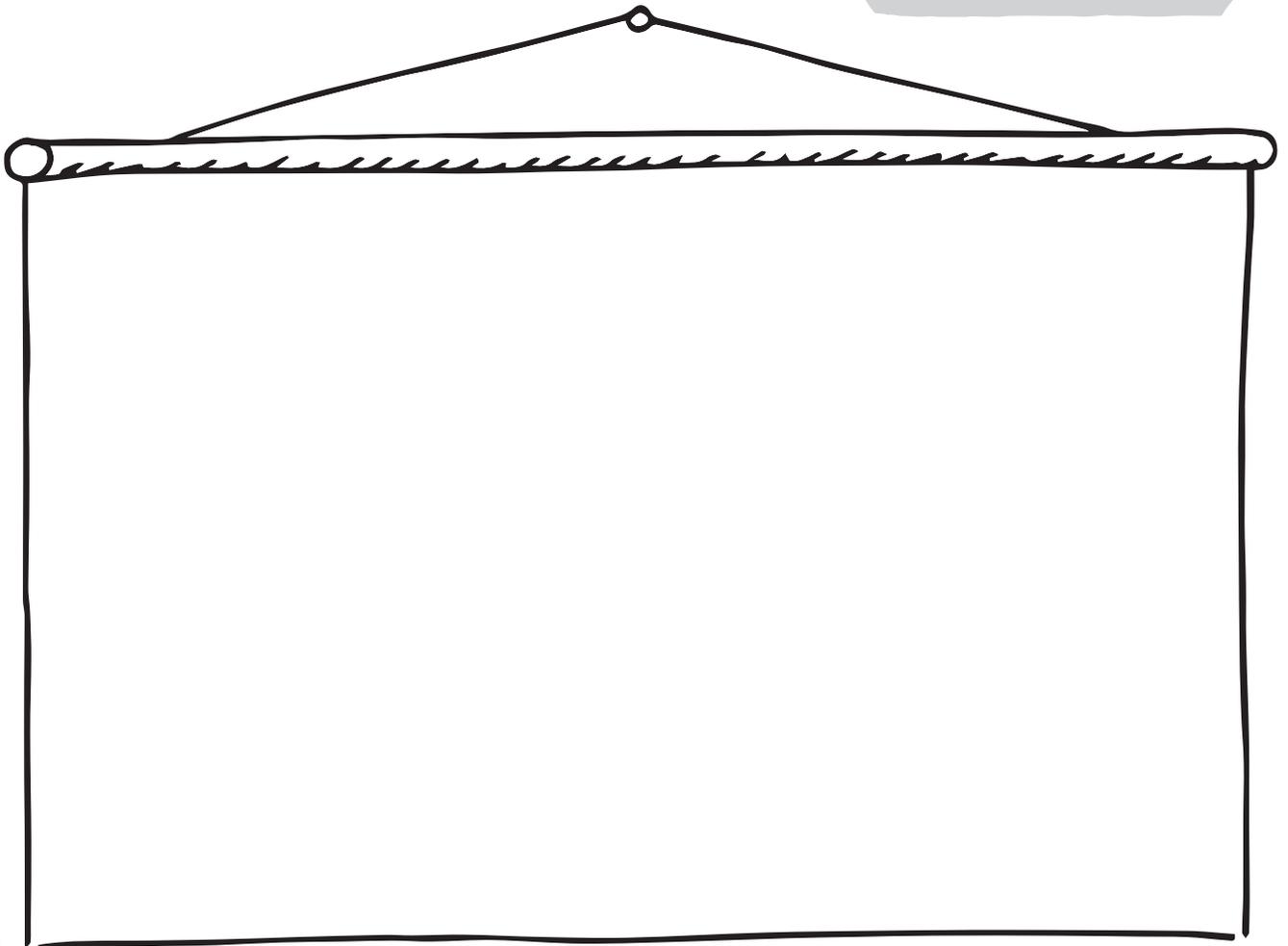
Just for you: Some churches have a “Homecoming” or “Welcome” Sunday. This is a time when parishioners who have moved away, alienated Catholics, and those still seeking a Church family are warmly invited to attend.

Pretend your church is having a “Welcome” Sunday and you are in charge of designing a banner for the front door. Consider how you would answer the questions below.

3

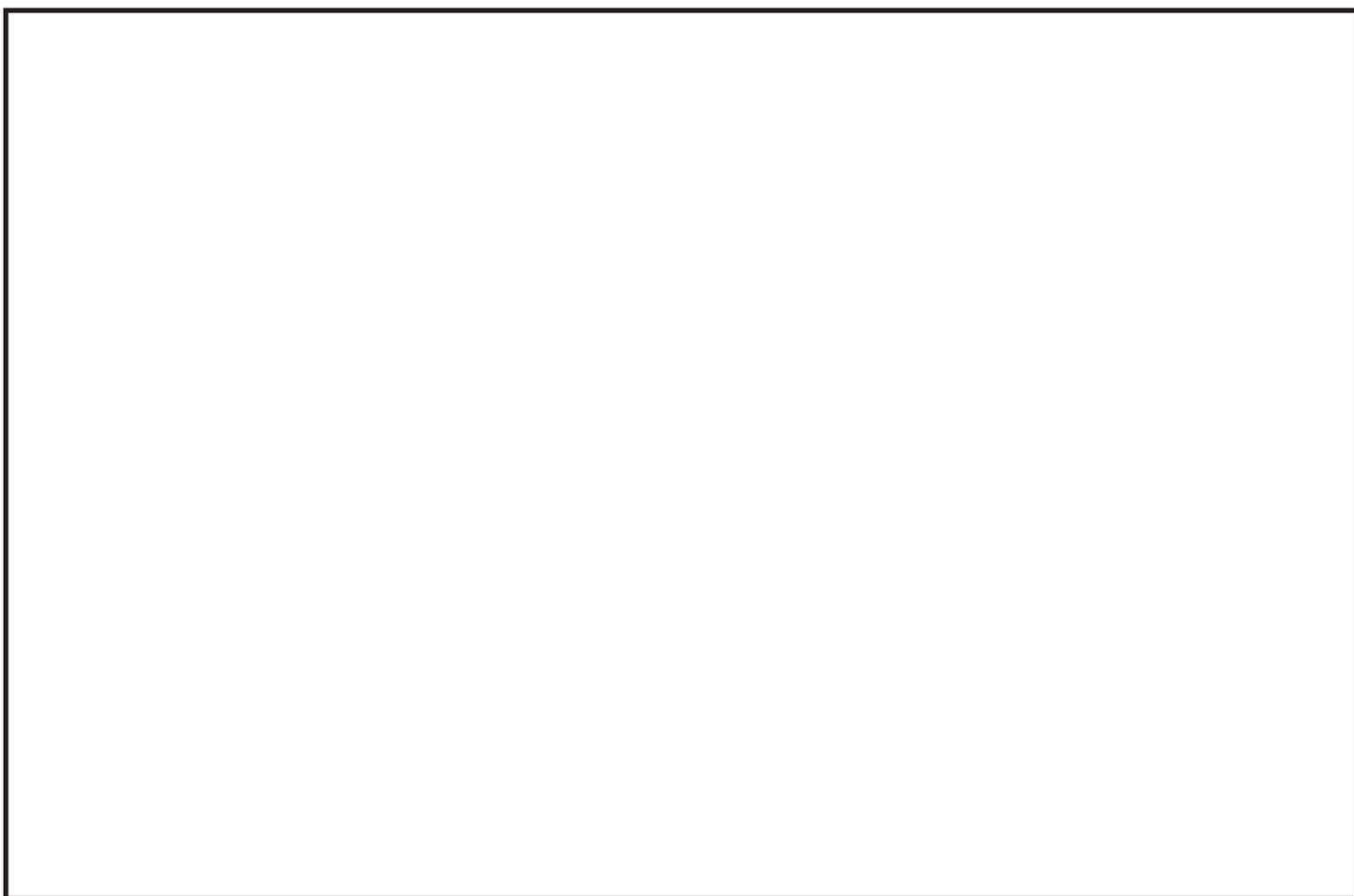
- What is especially good (unique, valuable) about your church?
- How do the people in your church make others feel welcome?
- Why is it important for us as Christians to be a welcoming community?

Once your child has completed the activity, design your banner together. Remember, a banner has only a few words on it and uses color and design to catch the eye.



Welcome Banner

On the lines below write down some words that make you feel welcome. In the square draw some pictures of how people can make you feel welcome. Circle the words and pictures you would like to put on a "Welcome" banner.



Keeping Others Safe



1

Our society tries in many ways to keep us safe. Visit a fire station, a police department or a hospital. Talk to someone who works there about how they help others and support their colleagues at the same time.

Closing Ritual

2

Native Americans teach us much about belonging. Tribal ties are unbreakable and constant, a family of unconditional love. All creation is united in importance, all life is respected. In prayer now, ask St. Kateri Tekakwitha to help you take care of our world and all life upon it.

Answer to activity on page 5

