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# René Goupil

VICTIM OF THE IROQUOIS

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# RENÉ GOUPIL

VICTIM OF THE IROQUOIS

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RENÉ Goupil, the Jesuit novice whose Beatification is now being urged before the Sacred Congregation of Rites, was a worthy companion of the heroic missionaries who shed their blood for Christ in Canada in the seventeenth century. Apart from the fact that he was a native of Anjou, in France, and that he was born about the year 1607, the documents which we possess tell us very little about his early years. We are indebted to Father Isaac Jogues,<sup>1</sup> his fellow prisoner among the Iroquois, and himself a martyr, for the few details which have come down to us concerning this servant of God.

Goupil was evidently the child of pious parents, for when he was old enough to appreciate the value of his soul and to weigh his own spiritual responsibility, he aspired to give himself entirely to God in the religious life, and he turned to the Society of Jesus as the goal of his desires. "In the bloom of his youth," writes Father Jogues, "he urgently requested to be received into our novitiate at Paris."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See No. 6 of this series.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit. vol. XXVIII, p. 117.

While there he gave great edification by his strict observance of the rules and regulations which are imposed on all those who would become followers of St. Ignatius. While his fervor was constant, his physical strength was not equal to the strain put upon it. The young novice was forced to abandon the hope of persevering in the Jesuit Order or of consecrating himself to the life of study which the Order called for. However, he did not murmur at this upsetting of his plans; God was evidently satisfied with his good will and He would find him other ways of carrying out His eternal designs in his regard. Suffice it to say that the short time the young man spent in the novitiate had an influence on the rest of his career.

René Goupil returned to secular life and applied himself to the study of surgery. **His zeal and self-sacrifice** Yet, while hard at work at this branch of human science, the fire of zeal and self-sacrifice burned in his generous soul; the desire to serve God more intimately had undergone no change. He regretted that the priestly career had been closed to him; however, if it were not the wish of the Great Master to accept him for His service at the altar, Goupil did not despair of serving Him in a humbler sphere.

Since the year 1626 the Jesuits had been actively at work in the New World. Invited by the Recollects to share their labors among the native tribes, the sons of St. Ignatius had founded missions among the Montagnais on the St. Lawrence, and had begun a similar work among the thirty thousand Hurons

living on Georgian Bay. After three years of untiring energy and zeal, they were banished to France when the English seized Quebec in 1629, but they returned as soon as the colony was ceded back, in 1632, by the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye. They were again in the arduous field and more numerous than ever. Fresh contingents arrived every summer to open new centers of evangelical activity and to spread the influence of Christianity among thousands of poor pagans who had never heard of the true God or of His salutary redemption. Their labors were beginning to bear fruit; they were gathering in a rich harvest of souls; thousands of converts to the faith were the reward of those heroic men who had abandoned home and country to labor for Christ and suffer for His name. Those labors and sufferings were known and appreciated in the mother country through the publication of the *Relations*, a series of remarkable documents begun in 1635 and continued until 1673, and about which, owing to their influence on the career of Goupil, a few remarks here should not be out of place.

Every summer the missionaries sent in from the various parts of the mission-field detailed reports of their labors, notes on the tribes they lived with, their customs, their superstitions, the record of individual conversions, even the virtues practised by the neophytes. The superior at Quebec, in his turn, made a summary of these reports, sometimes using the missionaries' own words, at other times changing them to

**The missions  
of New France**

**The Jesuit  
Relations**

give harmony to the style, and when this task was completed he sent the manuscript to France. For forty years a little volume, bound in vellum, appeared in Paris yearly; it was read by thousands; it kept the missions well in the public eye and rendered other valuable services to the new French colony beyond the sea. A recent writer claims even that the *Relations* saved the colony to the motherland. "The avarice of the fur-traders was bearing its natural fruit," he writes, "and the untiring efforts of Champlain, a devoted, zealous patriot, had been unavailing to counteract it. The colony sorely needed the self-sacrificing Jesuits, but for whom it would have undoubtedly been cast off by the mother country as a worthless burden. To them Canada, indeed, owed its life; for when the king grew weary of spending treasure on this unprofitable colony, the stirring appeals of the *Relations* moved both king and people to sustain it until the time arrived when New France was valued as a barrier against New England."<sup>1</sup>

But these remarkable documents produced other beneficial results as well. Besides exciting the zeal of future apostles, many of whom got their first notions of sacrifice from them, they aroused the enthusiasm and prompted the generosity of pious and wealthy Catholics in France, and were the occasion of endowing Canada with institutions which, after nearly three centuries, are still doing God's work. It was the reading of the *Relations* that urged Madame de la Peltrie to consecrate her personal service and her

<sup>1</sup> *The Jesuit Missions*, by Thomas Guthrie Marquis ("Chronicle of Canada" series). Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1916, (p. 14).

fortune to the establishment of the Ursulines at Quebec; the Duchess d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, and Mademoiselle Jeanne Mance, impressed by the perusal of the little volumes, gave their noblest efforts to help the sick and unfortunate in New France; the hospitals of Hotel Dieu in Quebec and Montreal are monuments still flourishing that bear testimony to the influence the *Relations* had on those two heroines of charity. Another institution which traced its origin to the same source was the Algonquin mission established at Sillery, in 1637, through the generosity of Noël Brulart, Chevalier de Sillery.<sup>1</sup>

1 The Jesuits performed a great service to mankind in publishing their annals, which are, for historian, geographer, and ethnologist, among our first and best authorities. Many of the *Relations* were written in Indian camps, amid a chaos of distractions. Insects innumerable tormented the journalists, they were immersed in scenes of squalor and degradation, overcome by fatigue and lack of proper sustenance, often suffering from wounds and disease, maltreated in a hundred ways by hosts who, at times, might more properly be called jailers; and not seldom had savage superstition risen to such a height that to be seen making a memorandum was certain to arouse the ferocious enmity of the band. It is not surprising that the composition of these journals of the Jesuits is sometimes crude; the wonder is, that they could be written at all. Nearly always the style is simple and direct. Never does the narrator descend to self-glorification, or dwell unnecessarily upon the details of his own continual martyrdom; he never complains of his lot; but sets forth his experience in phrases the most matter-of-fact. His meaning is seldom obscure. We gain from his pages a vivid picture of life in the primeval forest, as he lived it; we seem to see him upon his long canoe journeys, squatted amidst his dusky fellows, working his passage at the paddles, and carrying cargoes upon the portage trail; we see him the butt and scorn of the savage camp, sometimes deserted in the heart of the wilderness, and obliged to wait for another flotilla, or to make his way alone as best he can. Arrived at last, at his journey's end, we often find him vainly seeking for shelter in the squalid huts of the natives, with every man's hand against him, but his own heart open to them all. We find him, even when at last domiciled in some far-away village, working against hope to save the unbaptized from eternal damnation; we seem to see the rising storm of opposition, invoked by native medicine-men—who to his seventeenth century imagination seem devils indeed—and at last the bursting climax of super-

Owing to his environment in Paris and his constant contact with his former spiritual masters, it is hard to believe that these human documents did not also fall under the eyes of the young surgeon, or that the perusal of them did not speak to his soul and make him feel that there was work waiting for him on the other side of the Atlantic. There was a field in which, if he could not work directly in the apostolate for souls as he wished, he could at least help those who did. Such noble aspirations were not allowed to lie dormant; the young man set about realizing his plans; and acting under the advice of the Jesuits,

**He arrives in** with whom he remained intimately  
**New France** united, he decided to give himself  
 to the missions of Canada. "When  
 his health improved," writes Father Jogues, "he journeyed to New France in order to serve the Society there, since he had not the blessing of giving himself to it in Old France."<sup>1</sup>

stitious frenzy which sweeps him and his before it. Not only do these devoted missionaries—never in any field has been witnessed greater personal heroism than theirs—live and breathe before us in the *Relations*; but we have in them our first competent account of the Red Indian, at a time when relatively uncontaminated by contact with Europeans. We seem, in the *Relations*, to know this crafty savage, to measure him intellectually as well as physically, his inmost thoughts as well as open speech. The Fathers did not understand him, from an ethnological point of view, as well as he is to-day understood; their minds were tintured with the scientific fallacies of their time. But, with what is known to-day, the photographic reports in the *Relations* help the student to an accurate picture of the untamed aborigine, and much that mystified the Fathers is now by aid of their careful journals, easily susceptible of explanation. Few periods of history are so well illuminated as the French régime in North America. This we owe in large measure to the existence of the Jesuit *Relations*.—REUBEN GOLD THWAITES: *Introduction to the Cleveland edition of the Relations, 1898*, (p. 39-41).

1 *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit. vol. xxviii, p. 117.



René Goupil reached Canada about the year 1640, and from the moment of his arrival gave himself up to the service of the missionaries. "Although he was fully master of his own actions," writes Jogues, "he submitted himself with great humility to the superior of the missions who employed him for two whole years in the lowliest offices of the house." There were several others who aided the Jesuits in a similar way. The Canadian missions had in their employ a certain number of lay helpers, known as *donnés*, or oblates, who served without wage and looked to God for their reward, the Fathers on their side guaranteeing to provide for their needs till the end of their days.

This was the class to which René Goupil was admitted when he arrived in Canada. The taste of the life he had led during his few months of novitiate in Paris, and the principles he imbibed there, had given him the desire to do all he could for God in this humble sphere. There was scope enough for him in Quebec to exercise his skill as a surgeon; the college with its teachers and students, the flourishing Algonquin mission at Sillery, the seminary at Notre Dame des Anges, were more than enough

**His active life** to keep him employed. But his busy  
**in Quebec** life in these institutions did not  
prevent him from being useful elsewhere. Father Jogues informs us that the Hotel Dieu, then at the beginning of its long career of usefulness, profited by his professional skill. He was assiduous in serving the sick and the wounded there; like so many saints before him in the history of the

Church, the young man saw Our Lord in His suffering members and treated them with all the patience and charity which he would have shown to the Master Himself.

Goupil had now been two years in Canada and was witnessing the French colony growing in numbers and in prestige. The Jesuits were very successful in their missions on the St. Lawrence, but they were much concerned about their brethren among the Hurons on far-off Georgian Bay, no word having reached them from that quarter for two summers. Watchful Iroquois, were prowling along the Ottawa, making communication with that distant field almost impossible. The fears expressed at Quebec that the missionaries were in dire straits and were lacking the necessities of life, had indeed a solid foundation. "Their clothes were falling to pieces," writes Bancroft; "they had no wine for the chalice but the juice of the wild grape, and scarce bread enough for consecration."<sup>1</sup> In fact, so critical had the situation become among the Huron missionaries that in the spring of 1642 it was decided, notwithstanding the perils of the route, to attempt the journey down to Quebec and bring back supplies as quickly as possible. Twenty-five stalwart Hurons started from Fort Ste Marie<sup>2</sup> on June 13, in four large bark canoes, accompanied by Father Jogues and Father Charles Raymbault, the latter returning to Quebec to die. By clever manœuvring they succeeded in running the

<sup>1</sup> *History of the United States*, vol. II, p. 788.

<sup>2</sup> The foundations of this venerable pile may still be seen at Old Fort, on the Grand Trunk Railway, three miles from Midland, Ont.

Iroquois blockade on the Ottawa, and after thirty-five days' paddling they reached Three Rivers. A few days later they were in Quebec, gathering in supplies for their return journey.

This visit of Father Jogues to Quebec proved the turning point in the career of René Goupil. The young man met the missionary, and heard from his own

**A new career  
opens up**

lips the conditions of life on Georgian Bay, the crushing poverty of the Jesuits there, and above all the need there was of medical aid among the Hurons. Jogues spoke out of the fullness of his own experience; he had been brought to death's door in 1636 when he was forced to act as his own surgeon. Besides, the frequent recurrence of contagious diseases which were thinning out the savage population, made the presence of one who could treat the Hurons professionally an absolute necessity. The young man was won over. He was aware that his departure would deprive Sillery and Quebec of his precious services, but other and higher considerations prevailed. The greater good for the greater number was a motive that appealed to him; it would be easier to replace him at Quebec than it would be to get a volunteer for Georgian Bay. He offered himself for service on the Huron mission if the superior were willing to let him go.

Jogues petitioned Father Vimont to allow the young surgeon to accompany him to Huronia, and greatly to the satisfaction of both the permission was granted. "I cannot express the joy he felt," writes Jogues, "when the superior told him to pre-

pare for the journey." The missionary did not conceal from Goupil the perils he might encounter. He impressed upon him that the Iroquois were at war with the French and were lurking along the Ottawa route, ready to seize both French and Huron whom they met on the way. These apprehensions had no effect on the mind of the heroic young man; his decision had been made and it was irrevocable. Meanwhile the flotilla was preparing to start; supplies had been laid in the canoes: clothing, church ornaments, house utensils, books, and—touching detail!—several bundles of letters and messages for the missionaries in Huronia from their friends and relatives in Old France.

The first halt was made at Three Rivers. Although only ninety miles from Quebec, this post was the extreme westerly limit of French civilization in the year 1642. It had been founded eight years before by Sieur Laviolette and the fur-traders, its favorable site at the mouth of the St. Maurice making it a fitting meeting-place for the numerous Indian tribes who assembled there to barter their furs. Jogues and Goupil reached the trading-post on July 31, in time to celebrate with their brethren, Buteux and Poncet, the feast of the founder of their Order. The following day the twenty-two Hurons held a council, as was their custom in critical circumstances, during which they encouraged one another to face the common enemies bravely should they chance to meet them. There were still pagans in the Huron party, but the greater number were fervent

neophytes who did not fail to pray God for a safe return to their country. The tone of their speeches revealed a complete submission to the will of Divine Providence, although they hoped that as they had made the downward journey safely the Iroquois would let them go back in peace.

Early on August 2, they set out. During that first day nothing happened that would presage an interrupted journey. They had paddled thirty-one miles and had camped for the night on the shore opposite an island in Lake St. Peter. Early next morning human tracks were discerned freshly imprinted on the sand, and a

**Captured by  
the Iroquois**

moment of hesitation and doubt intervened. However, whether these traces of human passage were made by friend or enemy, they were few in number, and the travellers decided to proceed. But there again the craftiness of the foe was in evidence. A mile or two further west the flotilla fell into an ambush of seventy Iroquois who had been hiding in the long reeds and wild grass that lined the borders of the lake. The enemy quietly waited until the canoes were within firing distance when they rose from their crouching position, uttered terrifying war-whoops, and fired on the unsuspecting Hurons. A couple of the latter were wounded, and the Iroquois bullets pierced the canoes. When these frail vessels began to leak the occupants turned their prows shoreward and leaped out. Some disappeared quickly in the forest; others, less agile, were surrounded by the enemy. Among the latter were Father Jogues, René Goupil and Guillaume Couture.

Notwithstanding the yells and wild gesticulations of the blood-thirsty Iroquois, the dozen Hurons who had not escaped decided to sell their lives as dearly as possible. They were valiantly resisting when they perceived a new contingent of forty Iroquois hastening across the river to aid their captors. The struggle was now unequal; several Hurons who were still able fled to the woods, leaving the Frenchmen and a few faithful neophytes who heroically stood their ground and refused to abandon the missionary. While the Iroquois were pursuing the fleeing Hurons René Goupil threw himself at the feet of Father Jogues, made his confession, received absolution, and then offered himself in sacrifice to God. His virtue revealed itself at that critical moment of his life. In a sublime act of resignation he turned to his priestly companion and exclaimed, "Father, may God be

**He is cruelly  
tortured**

blessed! He has permitted this; may His holy will be done! I accept this cross; I desire it; I embrace it with all my heart!"<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the Iroquois had returned with the unhappy Hurons. They seized Goupil, tore off his finger nails, crushed his bleeding fingers between their teeth, stripped him of his clothing and showered blow after blow on him with their fists and knotty sticks. Notwithstanding the excruciating pain he was enduring, the young man showed great fortitude and presence of mind. Amid his tortures he called the attention of Father Jogues to an aged Huron whom the Iroquois were about to

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit., vol. xxviii, p. 119.

despatch with a tomahawk. He also helped the missionary to instruct a Huron captain who had not yet been baptized and who was begging to receive the sacrament.

Preparations for the departure to the Mohawk country were begun at once. When the Iroquois had bound their wretched prisoners tightly with cords they flung them into their canoes. They then started across Lake Saint Peter and halted only when they had reached the mouth of the Richelieu river. There they divided among themselves the supplies which were destined for the missions on Georgian Bay. As they opened the various parcels—"the riches of the poor Hurons and things very precious to us," exclaimed Jogues—their shouts of joy echoed throughout the surrounding forests. When the news reached Quebec, Father Vimont wrote: "All these things have fallen into the hands of the barbarians. The poor Fathers will regret the loss of their letters. The Iroquois scattered them here and there on the bank of the river, and the waters carried them away."

The mournful convoy with its score of prisoners then started up the river and over Lake Champlain and Lake George, a journey which was the occasion of new tortures for the unhappy victims. They lay tied and crouching at the bottom of the canoes without food or sleep, exposed to the excessive summer heat and writhing with the pain of their still fresh and bleeding wounds. In a letter to France shortly after this tragic capture, Vimont wrote: "Of the twenty-three taken some were massacred while others were

**Carried to the  
Mohawks**

garrotted and carried away to the country of those barbarians who will perhaps make a more bloody meal of them than hounds do of a stag. God be praised for the courage he has given to the Father [Jogues] and for the piety he has inspired in the two young Frenchmen [Goupil and Couture]! If those tigers burn them, if they roast them, if they boil them, if they eat them, they will procure for them sweeter refreshment in the house of the Great God for whose love they have exposed themselves to such perils... A number of Hurons captured are Christians. Perhaps they will convey a good impression of the faith." Father Jogues, on his side, ignoring his own sufferings, tells us later what caused him the greatest pain on that journey was to see among the prisoners some of the oldest and worthiest Christians of the Church in Huronia. Their plight drew tears from his eyes in the fear "lest the cruelties they endured might impede the progress of the faith still incipient there."

Father Jogues and René Goupil were evidently in the same canoe, for the missionary informs us that while on the road Goupil was always occupied with God. When he spoke, his words and discourses all plainly showed his entire submission to His holy will. "He accepted the death that God was sending him, offering himself in sacrifice many times, even to be reduced to ashes, and seeking only to please God in all things and everywhere." The two had been a few days on the way when the young man confided to his companion the secret of his life. "Father,"

**He takes the  
Jesuit vows**



he said, "God has always given me a great desire to consecrate myself to His service by the vows of religion in His holy Society. Up to this my sins have rendered me unworthy of this grace. Nevertheless I hope that our Lord will be pleased with the offering which I now wish to make to Him by taking in the best way I can the vows of the Society in the presence of God and before you."<sup>1</sup>

We have here another instance of the influence his few months in religion had on the life of René Goupil. Undoubtedly he had learned in the novitiate in Paris, that while one's actions done without the obligation of doing them might be more pleasing to God than corresponding actions done under obligation, if the former proceeds from a more intense love of God, he had also learned that, other things being equal, actions done under vow are more perfect than those done without it, and he was wise enough to wish to profit to the full by his present sad plight. Father Jogues sympathised with the pious desire of the holy young man, and allowed him to take the vows which admitted him into the Order. This new obligation would bind him more closely to God and give a double merit to the sufferings he was now undergoing for His sake.

The canoes had been on the road eight days; and were still on Lake Champlain, when two hundred Iroquois were sighted. These savages were encamped on an island and were on their way to attack the French. The arrival of a score of prisoners was hailed by them

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit., vol. xxviii, p. 121.

with shouts of joy, it being considered a good omen if they had an opportunity of exercising their cruelty before going to war. The prisoners were released from the cords which bound them and were taken ashore

**New tortures  
inflicted**

where they were forced to run the gauntlet between two rows of Iroquois, who amused themselves by plucking out the hair and beard of the Frenchmen and tearing the tender parts of their bodies with their finger nails which, the *Relation* informs us, were extremely sharp. After this new ordeal René Goupil presented a pitiable sight. He was covered with blood, and he staggered under the blows which his inhuman tormentors showered upon him. But the saints have the secret of returning good for evil. One of the Iroquois fell sick and Goupil employed his surgical skill in opening a vein for him, with as much patience and charity as if he were doing the act for a friend.

On the tenth day they had reached the southern end of Lake George where the prisoners made the rest of the journey on foot and by portaging to the Mohawk cantons, thirty or forty miles away. Although weak from hunger and loss of blood, the unfortunate men were forced to carry on their backs the parcels destined for the Huron mission. Mile after mile they trudged over the Indian trail, stag-

**Among the  
Mohawks**

gering under their heavy burdens, and urged on by the blows and the insults of their captors. Finally on the thirteenth day, eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, about the twentieth hour,

"they arrived at the river which flows past the village of the Iroquois". After having crossed the river and climbed the hill they came to the village itself, Ossernenon, <sup>1</sup> fortified by double palisades and containing about six hundred inhabitants. The whole population, armed with clubs and iron rods, were on foot to welcome the visitors. Two hedges were formed along the trail, and as the prisoners passed between them they received a shower of blows from men, women and children. Goupil was horribly disfigured. When he reached the gate of the enclosure he fell to the ground, a bruised and bleeding mass of wounds. Writing of his condition, Father Jogues continues: "Having fallen under a shower of blows from clubs and iron rods with which they attacked him, and being unable to rise, he was carried half dead as it were, on to a scaffold raised in the middle of the village in so pitiable a condition that he would have inspired compassion in cruelty itself. He was all bruised with blows and in his features one distinguished nothing but the whites of his eyes. But he was so much the more beautiful in the sight of the angels, as he was disfigured and similar to Him of whom it was said, 'We have thought him as it were a leper; there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness.'<sup>1</sup> Hardly had they granted him time to breathe when they gave him three other blows on the shoulders

<sup>1</sup> The site of this ancient village has been identified with that of Auriesville, on the south bank of the Mohawk river, about forty miles from Albany, N.Y. A shrine has been erected there and dedicated to Our Lady of Martyrs, to recall the memory of Father Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and John de la Lande, who were slain by the Iroquois in the seventeenth century.

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit., vol. xxviii, p. 125.

with a heavy club. They then cut off his right thumb at the first joint. This torture caused the heroic Goupil to heave a sigh and to call on Jesus! Mary!

**Suffers further  
tortures**

Joseph! for strength to bear the pain. At night he was tied to stakes planted in the ground and while he lay on his back the Iroquois children amused themselves by throwing burning coals and cinders on his bare breast. However, during the time he was exposed to all who wished to wreak their cruelty on him, Goupil showed admirable gentleness and resignation.

Two days were spent in this fashion at Ossernenon, after which the Hurons prisoners were hurried to Andagaron where their tortures were repeated, then to Tionnontoguen, finally to a fourth village the name of which is not fully identified in the *Relations*. Father Jogues and René Goupil were taken to Andagaron, but they were spared the rest of this sorrowful way of the Cross, their weakness being so great that they were unable to walk. The Huron prisoners were publicly notified that they should meet their death by fire, "news assuredly full of horror, but softened by the thought of the Divine will and the hope of a better life." The dread sentence was carried out on several of them in the various villages. They went to the stake giving examples of that savage stoicism which their training on Georgian Bay had changed into Christian courage and resignation. Jogues and Goupil were not condemned to this frightful death; their sentence had been put off for the moment, and having been brought back to Ossernenon

they were allowed a certain freedom within the limits of the village.

Meanwhile the news that white men had been seized and were held as captives among the Iroquois had reached the Dutch at Fort Orange, and had aroused their sympathy. The commandant, Arendt Van Corlaer, with two interpreters, came to Ossernenon to intercede for them and treat for their ransom. Van Corlaer offered two hundred and sixty dollars, an offer which was haughtily refused. Father Jogues remarked that the Dutch envoys spent several days in consultation, offering much but obtaining little. Not wishing to offend their allies, the wily barbarians promised that they themselves would conduct the prisoners back to the French colony.

**Attempts to ransom him** These efforts to free the missionary and his companion were frowned on by the Iroquois and made them more wary. Meanwhile the two men usually retired outside the village walls where they could be alone with God and their devotions. But even there they were not alone; spies were watching all their actions, and their fervor and the length of their prayers excited the fury of those enemies of God. René Goupil had become the special object of their hatred, and the reason of his assassination is given in detail by Father Jogues in the document quoted so often in these pages. One day a little child, three or four years old, entered Goupil's cabin while he was at prayer. With an excess of devotion and of love for the Cross, and with a simplicity which in the circumstances, Father Jogues avers, was not prudent

according to the flesh, he removed the cap from the child's head and then made a great sign of the Cross on the little one's brow and breast. The grandfather of the child, a superstitious old pagan, witnessed this scene. He had heard from the Cal-

**Threatened  
with death**

vinists of Fort Orange that the sign of the Cross was a hateful sign, and fearing some misfortune from the action of the Frenchman, he became enraged at him, and commanded a young savage who was about to leave for the war to kill him. The savage took the order to heart and sought the first opportunity to carry it out.

Unconscious of these dangers and yet wishing to give no cause for complaint, Jogues and Goupil kept aloof from the others in the village; they lived in close companionship and performed their devotions together. Six weeks after their arrival at Os-sernenon, they were walking in the neighborhood of the village reciting the rosary, when the young savages ordered them to return to their cabins at once. Father Jogues had some presentiment of what was going to happen and remarked to Goupil, "My dear Brother, let us recommend ourselves to our Lord and to His good Mother the Blessed Virgin; I think these people have some evil design."<sup>1</sup> The same Father tells us they had with much fervor offered themselves to God shortly before, beseeching Him to receive their lives and their blood and to unite them to His Life and His Blood for the salvation

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit., vol. XXVIII, p. 127.

of the Iroquois. Accordingly, they returned towards the village reciting the rosary, and had said the fourth

**He is cruelly  
slain at last**

decade when they reached the gate. They stopped to listen to what the young men were saying when one of these drew a hatchet which he had kept concealed beneath his blanket and dealt a blow with it on the head of René Goupil, felling the victim to the ground. Goupil was still conscious, for he recalled at that moment an agreement he had made with Father Jogues to invoke the Holy Name of Jesus in order to obtain the indulgence. Looking for a similar end, the Jesuit knelt to receive his blow, but the murderer remarked that he had not permission to kill him, as he was under the protection of another family. Jogues then rose to his feet, and pronounced a last absolution over the young man who was unconscious but still breathing. Two more blows of the hatchet completed the murderous deed; the soul of the heroic Goupil left his body and went to meet its Maker.

"It was on the twenty-ninth of September, feast of St. Michael," wrote Father Jogues later, "when this angel of innocence and martyr of Jesus Christ gave his life for Him who had given him His. They ordered me to return to my cabin where I waited the rest of the day looking for the same fate. It was fully their purpose to kill me; but our Lord did not permit it. The next morning I went to enquire where they had thrown the blessed body, for I wished to bury it at any cost. Certain Iroquois said to me: 'You have no sense. Don't you see that they are

seeking you everywhere to kill you, and still you go out! You are looking for a body already half destroyed, which they have dragged far from here. The young men will kill you if they find you outside the

stockade.' That did not stop me;  
**Respect for** our Lord gave me courage enough  
**his relics** to wish to die in this act of charity.

With the aid of an Algonquin prisoner I found the body. After his (Goupil's) death the children had stripped him and putting a rope about his neck dragged him into a ravine which is near their village. The dogs had mangled him and I could not keep my tears back at the sight. I took the body, and with the aid of the Algonquin I put it in the water and then weighted it down with stones so that it might not be seen. It was my intention to come the next day with a mattock, when no one was looking, to dig a grave and place the remains therein. I thought the corpse had been well concealed but perhaps some of the young men had perceived me. During the night it rained, and the water in the ravine rose to an uncommon height. I borrowed a mattock from another cabin the better to conceal my design, but when I reached the spot I could not find the blessed deposit. I went into the water and sounded with my feet to see whether the torrent had not carried it away. I could find nothing."<sup>1</sup>

The kind-hearted missionary gave up the task. He learned later that the young men of the village had dragged Goupil's body from the ravine into

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit., vol. XXVIII, p. 131.



a little wood nearby where it became the food of wild animals. Only in the following spring, after he had made a fourth attempt, did he succeed in finding the skull and a few half-gnawed bones. These he buried with the intention of carrying them back to Three Rivers should he succeed in gaining his liberty.

**Considered a  
martyr**

"Before placing them in the ground," he remarks, "I kissed them very devoutly several times as the bones of a martyr of Jesus Christ. I give him this title not only because he was killed by the enemies of God and His Church and in the exercise of an ardent charity towards his neighbor by placing himself in evident peril for the love of God, but especially because he was killed on account of prayer and notably for the sign of the Holy Cross." <sup>1</sup>

Thus ended one of the most pathetic incidents in the history of the early missions of America. Within recent years the site of Ossernenon, where René Goupil met his tragic death, with the ravine into which his body was cast, has been located near the present village of Auriesville, on the banks of the Mohawk river, about forty miles from Albany. This spot, rendered sacred by so many venerable souvenirs, has been set aside as a place of pilgrimage where a shrine has been erected and dedicated to Our Lady of Martyrs. Large numbers of the faithful assemble there every summer to recall the tragic happenings of the seventeenth century and to implore the intercession of the young martyr whose blood,

<sup>1</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Clev. edit. vol. XXVIII, p. 133.

shed for the sign of the Cross, has hallowed the soil. René Goupil's gentle disposition, his zeal in the service of God, his fortitude and resignation in his suffering, crowned by his heroic death, have given a halo to

**His memory** his memory which time has not  
**still fresh** obliterated. The Third Council of

Baltimore, held in 1884, coupled his name with that of Isaac Jogues, his companion in captivity and torture, in a petition to the Holy See asking for their beatification. A Decree, issued in August, 1916, by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, shows that much progress has been made. It gives us reason to hope that in the not too distant future the Church may permit us to invoke the intercession of this young Christian hero who shed his blood for the faith in the early years of our country.



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