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# Isaac Jogues

FIRST APOSTLE OF THE IROQUOIS

1607-1646



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# ISAAC JOGUES

FIRST APOSTLE OF THE IROQUOIS

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**T**HIS heroic missionary who shed his blood for Christ in New France, near the middle of the seventeenth century, and who has left an illustrious name in our annals, was the son of a pious couple, Lawrence Jogues and Françoise de Saint-Mesmin. He was born at Orleans, in France, on January 10, 1607. While he was still young his father died, leaving him exclusively in the care of his "honored mother" (as he was pleased to call her in his letters),

**His birth and early years** who had the privilege of directing in the paths of virtue the early footsteps of this great servant of God. In 1617 the boy began his studies in the Jesuit college which had been recently founded in his native city, and had reached the class of rhetoric when he heard the call of God; at the age of seventeen he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus, in Paris, October 24, 1624.

A desire for active service on foreign missions had already begun to reveal itself in the generous soul of the young novice. The arduous field of Ethiopia appealed to him at first and he asked to be sent thither; but prudent counsel turned these holy aspirations in another direction. His spiritual

director told him that work among the natives of New France would amply gratify his ambition for trials and suffering; the savage Iroquois and Hurons would be worthy objects of his apostolic zeal. The novice bent his head in acquiescence; henceforward the missions beyond the Atlantic became for him the longed-for goal. Meanwhile, as several years of preparation would necessarily intervene before the young religious could exercise his ministry, he set actively to work to acquire those virtues which would prepare him for his future apostolate.

At the end of his term of probation in 1626, Isaac Jogues was sent to the college of his Order at La Fleche where he spent three years in the fascinating study of philosophy. In 1629 we find him occupying a professor's chair in Rouen, whither he had gone to begin the term of teaching which usually forms part of a Jesuit's career. Shortly after his arrival there he had the consolation of meeting Father John de Brébeuf, <sup>1</sup> Charles Lalemant and Ennemond Masse, three of his Jesuit brethren who had been driven back to France when the English seized Quebec, and who had gone to Rouen to await the outcome of Champlain's negotiations to regain the colony. The presence of those three pioneers of the Can-

**His vocation  
is confirmed**

adian missions in the college of Rouen and the young professor's daily contact with them, especially with Father de Brébeuf who had spent several years among the savage Hurons, undoubtedly strengthened his

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

vocation and inspired him to be their generous rival in the coming years. In 1632 he returned to the college of Clermont, in Paris, to study theology and prepare for the priesthood. He was ordained early in 1636 and started for Canada in the summer of the same year.

After a wearying voyage of eight weeks the young missionary stepped ashore at Quebec, determined to give the best years of his manhood—he was only twenty-nine—to the service of God and souls. His first duty on landing was to inform his mother in Old France of his safe arrival in the New. "I do not know," he wrote her, "what it is to enter Heaven, but I do know that it would be hard to feel in this world a joy more intense or more overpowering than I felt when I set foot in this new world."

Father Jogues did not tarry long at Quebec. He had been named for the missions on the Lower St. Lawrence, but the call for more laborers in the Huron country changed the decision of his superiors in his regard. He was chosen to go to Huronia, and he set out immediately for Three Rivers to join the flotilla of canoes which was soon to start for Georgian Bay.

**He starts for Georgian Bay** At that little fort, recently built at the mouth of the St. Maurice, he had his first glimpse of what missionary life meant when he beheld the arrival from Huronia of a brother Jesuit, Father Anthony Daniel, bare-footed, broken with fatigue, his cassock in tatters, his breviary hanging from his neck by a cord. But the sight of the intrepid Daniel, haggard and wayworn, did not chill the ardor of the young priest; rather it spurred him

on to similar sacrifices. He bravely stepped into a Huron canoe, waved farewell to his friends on shore, and started westward on his long journey.

The trip to Georgian Bay was the first great trial of a Huron missionary, a sort of initiation in the physical hardships of his future life. In Father Jogues' case, however, the journey was remarkable not so much for the trials he had to endure as for the rapidity with which it was accomplished. "I quitted Three Rivers on August 24," he wrote to his mother, "and such haste did we make that, instead of twenty-five or thirty days which the trip usually takes, only nineteen were required to reach the spot where five of our Fathers were stationed."

His brethren at Ihonatiria<sup>1</sup> gave him a joyous welcome; unhappily their joy was soon turned into the gravest anxiety. The *Relation* of 1637 informs us that Father Jogues arrived in good health, but a week had hardly elapsed when he was seized with

**His serious  
illness**

a dangerous fever which threatened to cut short his missionary career.

The crushing poverty of the place, with its lack of medical aid and physical comforts, helped to aggravate his condition until his life hung by a thread. "If a bed of feathers often seems hard to a sick person," wrote one of his brethren to the superior in Quebec, "I beg Your Reverence to imagine how one could rest easily upon a bed which was nothing but a mat of rushes spread over some bark,

<sup>1</sup> Father Jones places Ihonatiria in the immediate neighborhood of Todd's Point, lot 6, concession xx, xxi, Tiny township, Simcoe county, Ont., Canada. (For his proofs, cf. *Old Huronia*, pp. 28-31).

and, at most, a blanket or a piece of skin to cover it." The illness of Father Jogues at last developed such alarming symptoms that blood-letting, the panacea for many ills in those times, was resorted to, the patient himself acting as his own surgeon. A change for the better ensued, the fever gradually left him, his strength returned, his health continued slowly to improve. Before the winter set in he had begun to apply himself to the study of the language without which his presence in Huronia would have been useless. He accompanied Charles Garnier,<sup>1</sup> the future martyr of the Petuns, on his rounds through the neighboring villages, baptizing little children in danger of death, and imparting religious instruction to the sick and dying.

These first essays in the ministry among the Hurons gave the young missionary much consolation and helped to excite his zeal for future conquests. However, neither he nor his fellow Jesuits were without apprehensions, and in their letters to France they did not exaggerate the difficulties and dangers of their situation. They were living

**Missionary  
difficulties**

and laboring in the midst of superstitious savages who, while willing to receive the attentions of the Black-robos, dreaded their preternatural power, and attributed to their influence the evils which had begun to visit the nation. Father Jogues had been hardly a year among the Hurons when a pestilence broke out which carried off hundreds of the tribe. The

<sup>1</sup> See No. 4 of this series.

savages blamed the missionaries for these disasters and in their terror resolved to do away with them. Fearing that the unhappy wretches might carry out their murderous design, and feeling it to be his duty to acquaint his brethren in Quebec of the danger they were incurring, Father de Brébeuf wrote a farewell letter in which he and his fellow-missionaries revealed a complete resignation to whatever fate God had in store for them. This interesting document, which has been preserved for us in the *Relation* of 1638, was signed by all the Fathers at Ossossane,<sup>1</sup> Brebeuf adding in a postscript, "I have left at the residence of St. Joseph (Ihonatiria) Father Peter Pijart and Father Isaac Jogues who are animated by the same sentiments."

Ihonatiria had been the scene of Jogues' labors during the first two years of his sojourn in Huronia.

### Cast out by the Petuns

It was there he studied the intricacies of the Huron tongue, there he accustomed himself to the discomforts of life among the savages. When that residence was transferred to Teanaostaye,<sup>2</sup> in 1638, Father Jogues was sent thither, and in November of the following year he started with Father Garnier to visit the Petuns, or Tobacco tribe, the first mission-

1 Known as La Rochelle by the French fur traders, and by the missionaries as the residence of the Immaculate Conception. The four successive sites of Ossossané all lay in the neighborhood of Varwood Point on Notawasaga Bay, Simcoe County, Ont. (Cf. Jones' *Old Huronia*, p. 27, and colored sketch, p. 22a.)

2 This village, known as St. Joseph II, was situated on the Flanagan farm, west half of lot 7, concession iv, Medonte township, Simcoe County, Ont. The half-fused stand of a brass candle-stick or crucifix was found there some years ago. (Cf. Jones' *Old Huronia*, p. 19, and fig. 1, plate p. 21.)



ary expedition made beyond the Blue Hills. Unhappily, superstitious and ill-disposed Hurons had preceded them and had sown distrust in the minds of the Petuns. When the two Jesuits arrived they were received as dangerous sorcerers and treated as such. The savages refused to listen to them and finally drove them from their country.

In September, 1641, a native ceremony, known as the "feast of the dead," brought together various nations bordering on Huronia. Among the delegates were a number of Sauteux, a tribe dwelling along the river which links the great lakes Huron and Superior. No Blackrobes had as yet gone so far

**Welcomed by  
the Sauteux**

west, and a pressing invitation to them to make the journey was gladly accepted. Father Jogues, accompanied by Father Charles Raymbault, set out in a bark canoe; after seventeen days' paddling they reached the village situated on or near the present site of Sault Ste Marie, Ont. The two missionaries were given a generous welcome by those pagans, and they would gladly have remained with them had not their services been needed nearer home. Other members of their Order took up the work of evangelization among this branch of the Algonquins in after years, but history records the fact that Jogues and Raymbault were the first whitemen who set eyes on Lake Superior; or, as the historian Bancroft puts it, "Thus did the religious zeal of the French bear the cross to the banks of the St. Mary and the confines of Lake Superior, and look wistfully towards the homes of the Sioux in the valley of the Missis-

sippi, five years before the New England Eliot had addressed the tribe of Indians within six miles of Boston harbor."

Fort Ste Marie,<sup>1</sup> the building planned by Father Jerome Lalemant as a central residence for the Huron missionaries on the river Wye, was then nearing completion. The main edifice was opened in the autumn of 1639, but various additions were made in the following three years to provide a home for the French in the service of the mission as well as a rendezvous for the Huron neophytes who were invited to come and renew their piety within its walls. During those three years Father Jogues was in charge. It was his privilege to welcome not merely the Indians whom he and Father DuPeron had converted in the neighboring villages, but also those who came from the villages in the interior. In this important office he had the consolation of witnessing the results of the work of his fellow-missionaries.

However, while the Jesuits were gathering in the fruits of their ministry the situation was far from encouraging from a temporal point of view.

**Sent down to Quebec** Owing to the hostility of the Iroquois who had blocked the Ottawa route, no communication had been held with the French colony for a couple of years and the missionaries were reduced to the direst need. As the necessaries of life were wanting and as something had to be done to relieve the situation, it was de-

<sup>1</sup> This venerable spot is well known. The foundations may still be seen at Old Fort on the Grand Trunk Railway, three miles from Midland, Ont

cided in the spring of 1642 to attempt to reach Quebec. A flotilla, under the leadership of Father Jogues, quitted Huronia and was successful in running the Iroquois blockade. The missionary laid before the authorities the desperate plight of the men on Georgian Bay, and his canoes were soon on their way back laden with supplies. Father Jogues hoped to be as lucky on the home journey as he was on the downward trip, but he had not calculated with his crafty enemies. He had reached a spot thirty-one miles above Three Rivers when the flotilla was waylaid by a band of ferocious Iroquois who were

awaiting its return. Several Hurons were killed outright in the skirmish; the rest, with the Jesuit and two young Frenchman, René Goupil and Guillaume Couture, were seized, beaten with clubs, tightly bound with thongs, flung into canoes and then taken up the Richelieu River over Lake Champlain and Lake George, to the village of Ossernenon<sup>1</sup> in the Mohawk country, where Father Jogues and his companions had to submit to other tortures.

Shortly before his departure from Huronia, while kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, alone in the chapel at Ste Marie, he begged God to grant him

<sup>1</sup> Ossernenon, on the south bank of the Mohawk river, about forty miles from Albany, N. Y. This village, afterwards known among the Iroquois as Kendaougue, or Caughnawaga, was the birthplace of Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks. (See No. 9 of this series). A Jesuit mission was established there in 1667 and lasted for seventeen years. The exact site of this famous village has been identified with that of Auriesville, Montgomery Co., N. Y., where a shrine has been erected in recent years to recall the memories of Father Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and Jean de la Lande, slain by the Iroquois in the middle of the seventeenth century.

the favor to suffer for His glory. He heard an interior voice telling him that his prayer would be heard, and counselling him to be strong and patient. The answer to his prayer came in the first days of his captivity. The barbarous Iroquois showered blows

**He is cruelly  
tortured**

on him with sticks and iron rods, plucked out his beard, tore off his finger-nails and then with their teeth crushed the bleeding finger-tips; a squaw sawed off the thumb of his left hand; the little Indian children applied to his flesh burning coals and red hot irons. The Huron prisoners fared worse. They were hurried from village to village, notably Andagaron and Tionnontoguen, in each of which they were tortured anew and forced to mount platforms where in their pitiable state they were exposed to the ridicule and insolence of those barbarians. The poor missionary was spared this sorrowful journey, but he had meanwhile, notwithstanding his bleeding wounds and his intense pain, to submit to the cruel ordeal of suspension between two posts by cords tightly wound around his wrists. Goupil and Couture had also their share in these various tortures which happily, in Goupil's case, were soon to end. Three

**Death of his  
companion**

blows from a tomahawk, September 29, six weeks after his capture, gave the saintly young man the reward he so heroically purchased.<sup>1</sup> This tragedy deeply impressed Father Jogues and led him to expect a similar fate in the near future. He had, in fact,

<sup>1</sup> See No. 7 of this series.

been warned that his end would soon come, and he would probable have been slain had not some Dutch traders from Fort Orange (now Albany) intervened when they heard of his captivity and sufferings.

The sympathetic fur-traders succeeded in saving the missionary's life but they did not secure his release from captivity. Already he had been formally adopted as a slave by one of the Mohawk clans and he had to undertake the most degrading menial labors, carrying burdens on his back over rough trails from village to village, following and serving his masters on the hunt and during their fishing expeditions, meanwhile bending under their blows when his efforts did not win their approval. While

**A slave among  
the Mohawks**

at home in Ossernenon he was allowed to wander freely through the village, but the eyes of his masters were continually watching him. He had been warned that his life was in danger if he passed beyond the limits of the village, and yet he escaped frequently to the neighboring forest to kneel before a cross he had carved in a large birch tree and there pour out his soul in prayer to God, "Whom he alone in those vast wilds adored." Perhaps the greatest torture the heroic sufferer had to endure was the desolation of spirit and mental anguish with which he was frequently overwhelmed, These trials he bore with unconquerable patience, but God oftentimes rewarded him by flooding his soul with sweetness and light. In these moments of ecstasy his physical suffering lost its poignancy, and he offered

himself to his Heavenly Comforter to suffer even more for the glory of His name.

Weeks and months passed away in this rigid captivity. Father Jogues had been given up for dead; the news that he was still alive relieved the anxiety of his friends in France and Canada and urged them to take measures to free him from his unhappy lot. The Dutch in Fort Orange were also moved to sympathy and sought occasions for him to escape, but much to their surprise the holy man's

**His zeal during** zeal would not permit him to run  
**captivity** away from a field of labor where  
there was still something to do for

souls of the Christian Hurons who had been taken with him. He looked upon his slavery as a special disposition of Providence in their regard. Writing to his superior in France, in the summer of 1643, he asked, who would, in the event of his release from captivity, remain to console and absolve his fellow captives? who would keep the Hurons attentive to their duties? who would teach the new prisoners, fortify them in their tortures and baptize them before they went to the stake? who would look after the dying children of the Mohawks and instruct the adults? In a letter which he sent to the governor at Quebec thirteen months after his capture, he wrote, "I have taken a resolution, which grows stronger every day, to stay here as long as it pleases our Lord, and not to seek my freedom, even though the occasion present itself. I do not wish to deprive the French, Huron and Algonquin prisoners of the help

which they get from my ministry. I have given baptism to many who have since gone to heaven."

In the same letter he notified Montmagny that an attack was projected on the new fort which had recently been built by the French at the mouth of the Richelieu. This warning, which had been sent secretly, made the Iroquois suspect treachery somewhere; it put Father Jogues' life in such danger again that Keift, the Dutch governor of Manhattan, gave orders to the commandant at Fort Orange to secure his freedom if possible. When this fresh effort in his behalf was made known to him, the holy Jesuit once more refused to listen; not unless it was plainly

**His escape from the Iroquois** the will of Heaven would he throw off his shackles. On this occasion, however, he spent a whole night in prayer asking God to inspire him what to do, whether or no it were His will that he should remain a slave. After mature deliberation and evidently with a clear conscience, he decided to make a strike for freedom; shortly afterwards he disappeared while the Mohawks were fishing in the Hudson. He fled to Fort Orange where he lay hidden and in constant danger of being apprehended by the savages who were furious at his flight. After six weeks of exciting adventures he succeeded in boarding a vessel which brought him down the Hudson river, accompanied by Jan Megapolensis, a Calvinist minister, who proved himself a sincere friend of the Jesuit. Six days later he reached New Amsterdam (New York) where he received a warm welcome from the governor. His arrival caused a sensation in the Dutch settlement,



the marks of his tortures, plainly visible, and his wretched poverty exciting the sympathy of all. One of the colonists fell at his feet and kissed his mangled hands, exclaiming, "Martyr of Jesus Christ!" a testimony which echoed the sentiments of the whole Calvinist community.

Father Jogues had no alternative left now but to return to France; to retrace his steps to Canada through the Mohawk country meant certain death. After a month's delay in New Amsterdam the opportunity of a voyage to Europe presented itself.

**He returns to  
Old France** A bark of fifty tons, weighed anchor in Manhattan harbor and sailed down the bay to the Atlantic, with the Jesuit on board. Clothes had been given to him by the Dutch to replace the rags of his captivity, but he suffered much hardship and penury during the voyage. Being without money to pay his passage or to procure the necessaries of life, Father Jogues had to depend on the charity of a Calvinist crew who were not as indulgent as their brethren in Manhattan. After seven weeks the coast of England was sighted, and on Christmas Day the bark ran into Falmouth harbor, in Cornwall. Even there ill-luck and misery pursued the poor missionary. While the sailors were ashore, robbers entered the vessel and snatched from him the coat and hat which had been given him by the Dutch to shield him from the wintry weather. A French brig brought him across the channel, and the day after Christmas he landed on the coast of Brittany in the direst distress, with hardly clothing enough to cover his weak and



emaciated body. He would have perished from cold and hunger had not a charitable merchant helped him to pay his way to the Jesuit college at Rennes. There Father Jogues met his brethren in religion who made him forget for the nonce all his trials and sufferings.

The *Jesuit Relations*, published in France every year and read so extensively, had made the Iroquois savages well known in that country and had given them an unenviable notoriety. When the news spread about that a missionary had arrived who had been a victim of their cruelties, Father Jogues was looked on as a confessor of the faith, and sympathy and veneration were shown him on every side. In Paris the Court of France wished to see and speak with the servant of God. When the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, saw the marks of his sufferings and when she heard from his own lips the tale of his captivity, she was moved to deep compassion, and

**Yearning for the missions** remarked that this was a case where truth was stranger than fiction. All these expressions of esteem and sympathy grieved the humble missionary, and he sought to hide what were in reality the tokens of his heroism. Meanwhile his health continued to improve; the gentle care lavished on him in his homeland gave him a new lease of life. There was one cross, however, which he had still to carry; if that were lifted his happiness would be complete. Owing to the loss of an index finger and the mutilation of the others, he was deprived of the privilege of saying Mass. This was an impediment which could be removed

by the Sovereign Pontiff and a petition was accordingly sent to Rome. Urban VIII graciously granted the holy man permission to officiate at the altar again, remarking, at the same time, that a martyr of Christ should not be prevented from drinking the Blood of Christ—*Indignum esset martyrem Christi non bibere sanguinem Christi.*

While a six months' sojourn in France had had a salutary effect on the health of Father Jogues, it had also given him new courage and spurred him on to further sacrifices. The foretaste of martyrdom which he had received among the Iroquois had inspired this athlete of the Cross with a desire to drink deeper of the bitter cup; but he knew that he could not quench this thirst in his native land. The lure of the Canadian missions had seized the intrepid missionary again; he was ready to face another voyage across the Atlantic to reach them. In the spring of 1644 he sailed from La Rochelle for the land "where the fragrance of his virtues refreshed and comforted all those who had the happiness of knowing and conversing with him."

**He comes back to Canada**

Montreal, then in the second year of its existence, was the first scene of his ministry after his return from France. Sieur Chomedey de Maisonneuve was the guiding genius of the little colony begun under the auspices of Mary at the foot of Mount Royal, and Jogues lent his aid to the founder to strengthen the souls of those brave pioneers whose communal life recalled the fervor and simplicity of the primitive Christian Church.

In 1644 Montreal was the outpost of French civilization in Canada nearest the Iroquois and was necessarily exposed to their raids; but Quebec and Three Rivers, further down the St. Lawrence, were

**Sad state of  
the colony**

also in danger. No spot in the French colony was safe from those roving savages, and Montmagny was at a loss to know how it was all going to end. The affairs of the French were at a low ebb; their military strength was well nigh exhausted; their Huron allies were demoralized; the fur trade was waning; the colonists lived in dread of the Iroquois who were constantly prowling around the settlements and along the waterways. The governor of the colony knew well that he could neither punish those daring enemies nor dictate terms of peace to them; his only fear was that they were aware of his precarious situation. On the other hand, he had learned from prisoners and others that the Iroquois were also showing signs of weakness as a result of the long struggle, and a hope arose within him that perhaps some sort of treaty might be concluded with the Confederacy. From among the prisoners whom the French still held, the governor selected a Mohawk chief whom he sent back to his country to feel the pulse of the nation and learn whether or no his fellow countrymen would be willing to bury the hatchet. This proposal, accompanied as it was by presents, was received with evident satisfaction, for the Mohawk returned shortly after with other chiefs to discuss terms of peace. Conferences were held at Three Rivers in which Father Jogues was called to

take part, his knowledge of the Iroquois tongue and the experience gained during his captivity making him a valuable interpreter as well as prudent counsellor.

**He assists at a  
peace treaty**

There was much talk but little progress during those parleys, but in the end mutual promises of peace and good will were made, and the Iroquois delegates returned to their cantons. The French, however, were not enthusiastic over the results of the deliberations; they had had such thrilling experiences of the double dealing and treachery of the Iroquois that they did not put much confidence in their profession of future peace. Still it would have been impolitic to reveal these suspicions, and, two years later, the governor suggested the sending of an embassy from Quebec to show how satisfied he was at the happy outcome of the negociations. A French embassy would flatter the Iroquois and might possibly impress them.

Father Jogues was chosen as one of the ambassadors. This new task called for courage and abnegation; it meant going back to the land of his tortures and his thirteen months' captivity. At the first intimation he received of this new mission a moment of fear and hesitation arose in the bosom of the heroic man. "Would you believe that on opening Your Reverence's letter," he wrote to Jerome Lalemant, his superior at Quebec, "my heart was, as it were, seized with dread... My poor nature quailed when it recalled the past, but our Lord in His goodness has calmed it and will continue to do so." A patriotic duty called Jogues to make this new

**Ambassador to  
the Iroquois**

sacrifice, and stifling all sentiment of fear, he set out on May 16, 1646, for the Mohawk cantons, accompanied by Jean Bourdon, one of the chief citizens of the colony. His instructions were not merely to express the governor's feelings regarding the future peace between the French and the Iroquois, but also to secure the adhesion of the cantons which had held back on the plea that they had not been invited to the conferences at Three Rivers. In this mission Father Jogues was not entirely successful. At an assembly which he convoked at Ossernenon in June, only the Mohawks and a few Onondaga delegates were present. The other Iroquois cantons were so little interested in the peace proposals of the French governor that at that moment they were hidden here and there along the Ottawa river looking for the scalps of French, Huron and Algonquin stragglers. Even the Mohawks themselves, then the most powerful unit of the Iroquois Confederacy, were divided. The Wolf and Turtle clans were willing to stand by the treaty of Three Rivers, but the Bear clan refused to be bound by barriers of any kind; they were resolved to go to war when their interests called for it. However, Father Jogues had secured the adherence of the majority—a pyrrhic victory at most—and after an absence of six weeks he was back in Three Rivers.

Although undertaken for reasons of state this second visit to "the land of his crosses" had revealed anew to the future martyr the spiritual destitution of the unfortunate Iroquois. It excited his zeal for the conversion of his former persecutors, and he prom-

ised himself an early return to them, perhaps in the autumn. So confident was he that no opposition would be offered in the colony to this project that he left in the safe-keeping of the savages a box of clothes and religious articles in order to avoid

**Returns as a  
missionary**

the annoyance and expense of double transportation. His plans fully met the wishes of his superiors who desired nothing better than that the new era of peace should be employed in spreading the Gospel among the Iroquois. The Jesuits determined to attempt the establishment of a mission in the cantons along the Mohawk river and Father Jogues was the man to attempt it. And yet, notwithstanding this decision and his own heroic abnegation, the holy man had his presentiments of danger. He wrote to a friend in France, "My heart tells me that if I have the blessing of being employed on this mission, *ibo et non redibo*, I will go but shall not return. But

**Presentiments  
of the end**

I will be happy if our Lord be willing to finish the sacrifice where He began it, and if the little blood which I have shed in that land be a pledge of what I would willingly yield from every vein in my body." In giving expression to these grave words Father Jogues was prophesying better than he knew. After his return from the embassy in the previous June a change in public sentiment in his regard had taken place among the Mohawks. A pestilence had broken out and had carried off many victims; the crop of Indian corn was destroyed by worms, and the superstitious savages laid the blame on the box which

the Blackrobe had left behind him in their care. The box, they said, concealed an evil spirit which was spreading the contagion and causing their people to die. This apparently trifling incident was used by the Bear clan to justify their irreconcilable attitude towards the French and their missionaries. Why should they join the Wolf and the Turtle clans in welcoming one who was showing himself a public malefactor?

The holy missionary, quite unconscious of these happenings, was preparing to go to live among them. Even had he known of the threatening danger it is doubtful whether the nearness of death would have alarmed him or caused him to put off the beginning of so great a work. After having said farewell to his brethren in Three Rivers, a farewell which was to be his last, he set out on September 24, 1646, with a companion, Jean de la Lande,<sup>1</sup> and a few Hurons. After that date he was seen no more by whitemen. It was learned later that he had arrived at the village of Andaragon on October 17. The wretched barbarians hardly gave him time to reach his cabin when they seized him, stripped him of his clothing and cruelly beat him. "You will die

**Treatment by  
the savages**

tomorrow," one of them exclaimed; "but do not fear; you shall not be burned; you shall fall under our tomahawks." The humble victim, now completely at their mercy, tried to make them realize the enormity of their crime. He reminded them of the treaty of peace entered

<sup>1</sup> See No. 8 of this series.



into between the French and themselves. He came to them as a friend, to live with them, to show them the way to heaven. He feared neither torture nor death—why, then, did they seek his life? Did they not fear the vengeance of the Great Spirit? These words, however, were received with derision. The only response the treacherous Iroquois gave him was to cut bits of flesh from his arms and devour them before his eyes. In the evening of the following day, October 18, 1646, a couple of savages ac-

**Treacherously  
assassinated**

companyed him to his lodge, where a traitor armed with a tomahawk was hiding behind the door. The unhappy missionary had hardly crossed the threshold when a blow split his head open and he fell lifeless to the ground bathed in his own blood. He was decapitated and his head placed on a picket. The next day his body was thrown into the Mohawk river.

The news of the murder did not reach Quebec until June of the following year. A letter from Kieft, the Dutch governor, to Montmagny announced that Father Jogues has been assassinated shortly after his arrival in the country, the only reason given for the atrocious deed being that the missionary had concealed an evil spirit among some clothes which he had left in their custody. This spirit had spread pestilence in the country and caused their crops of corn to fail. A second letter from the same quarter gave the details of the murder which we have cited above, and added that it was the Bear clan that had put him to death.

This tragic event created a painful sensation in



the French colony and showed what little reliance could be placed in the promises of the treacherous Iroquois. The Jesuits, on their side, were deeply moved; Father Jogues was the first of their Order

**His death is  
deplored**

in Canada to be slain by the savages. But his death was looked upon as a triumph; all were convinced that this victim of savage hatred had gone to Heaven; the blood he shed for Christ had won him an eternal crown. Both missionaries and citizens looked on him as a martyr of the faith. "We have honored this death," writes Lalemant, "as that of a martyr. Although far apart without being able to confer with each other, many of us could not resolve to say Mass for his soul. But we offered the adorable Sacrifice in thanksgiving for the favor which God had bestowed on him. The lay people who knew him intimately and our religious communities had also the same sentiments; they were drawn rather to invoke him than to pray for his soul."

Father Jerome Lalemant, to whom we are indebted for the account of the glorious death of Father Jogues, discusses his case in the *Relation* of 1647 and continues in this strain: "In the opinion of many learned men (whose opinion seems reasonable) a man is really a martyr before God, first, if he gives testimony before Heaven and earth that he values the faith and the preaching of the Gospel more than his life; and, secondly, if truly conscious of the danger he incurs, he still throws himself into it for Jesus Christ, protesting that he is willing to die to make Him known. It was in this way that Father Jogues

gave up his soul to Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ. I will say more: not merely did he take the means to spread the Gospel, means which caused his death, but we may be assured also that he was killed out of hatred of the doctrines of Christ... In the Primitive

**Looked on as  
a martyr**

Church the reproach was cast against the children of Christ that they caused misfortunes everywhere, and some of them were slain on that account; likewise are we persecuted here because of our doctrines, which are none other than those of Christ. We are told we depopulate their countries. It is for these doctrines that they killed Father Jogues, and consequently we may regard him as a martyr before God."

This verdict, given in the seventeenth century, has been that of posterity. Not merely has the name of Father Jogues become a symbol in American history of heroic endurance in suffering, but he has always been looked upon as a martyr as well. The veneration with which his memory has been surrounded has culminated in the desire to see him granted the honors of Beatification. In 1884 the Fathers of the Third Council of Baltimore petitioned the Holy See to permit the introduction of his Cause and that of his companion, René Goupil, before the Roman tribunals. In August, 1916, the Decree was published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites permitting the Cause to proceed. Let us hope that we may soon be able to invoke this heroic missionary as one of the officially proclaimed martyrs of God's Church.



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