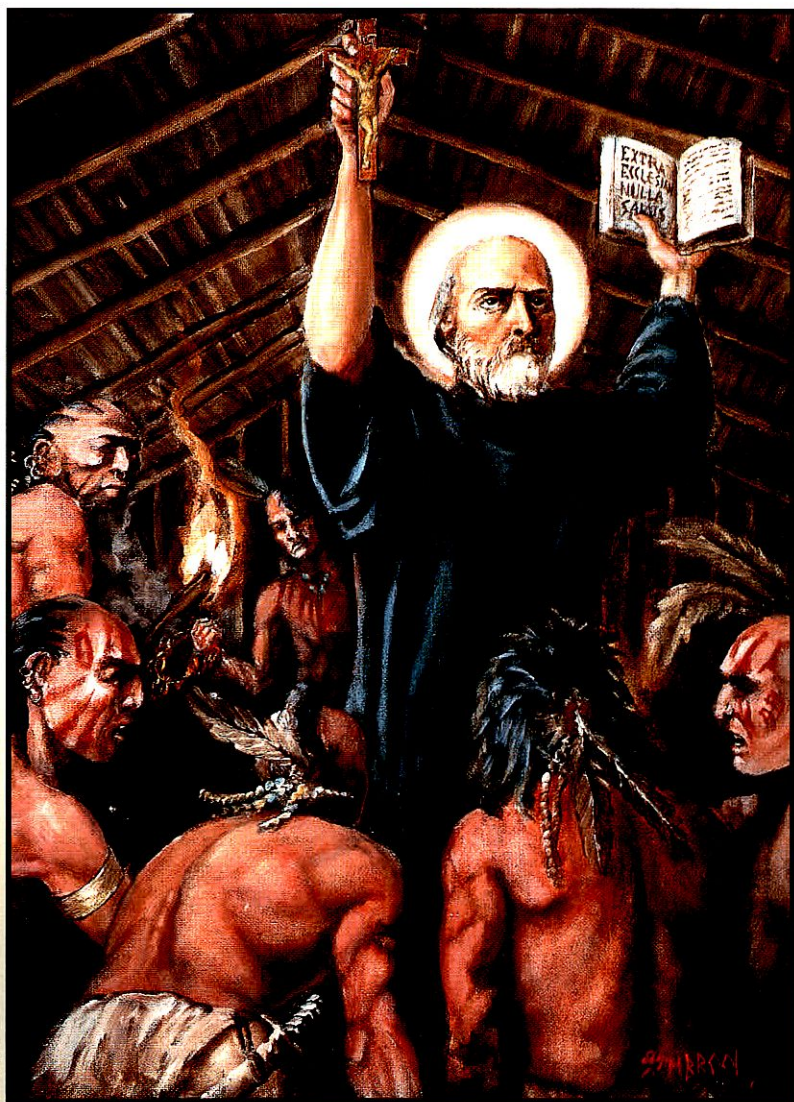


FROM THE HOUSE TOPS

A Quarterly Magazine Spreading The Faith Across The Country



SAINT JOHN DE BREBEUF
Blackrobe of the Hurons



Saint Benedict Center

The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

To Our Readers:

From The Housetops is a Catholic magazine dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary while promoting her cause in the present conflict with the powers of darkness.

The purpose of *From The Housetops* as the name implies, is to proclaim to all, the **authentic doctrines** in faith and morals of the **One True Church** in a clear and uncompromising manner in the face of ever increasing dissent and confusion among clergy, religious, and laity.

Our Divine Saviour commanded that the teachings of His religion were not to be a private and personal matter, kept in the hidden recesses of one's hearts. He said, "That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye from the housetops." (Matthew 10:27)

The Catholic Faith is rich with the truth and wisdom which alone gives the real peace and happiness everyone seeks. It contains priceless traditions handed down by the Apostles, martyrs and saints—all carefully guarded by the Popes to be our inheritance. It need only be taught as Our Lord commanded, to bear fruit.

From The Housetops presents the inspirational lives of the saints, along with meditations, instructions, and articles on Church History. It is the desire of the editors, that a strong love and zeal for the traditions of the Faith be stirred up among the American laity, thereby fostering a militant Catholicism, worthy of a country which has been dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

With these goals in mind, *From The Housetops* is published quarterly from Saint Benedict Center by the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a religious congregation of two communities: one of Brothers and one of Sisters. Members live according to vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and are loyal to Pope John Paul II in the preservation of the Catholic Faith.

Will you join us in attaining our goals by your prayers and by sharing your copy of *From The Housetops* with your friends?

The Editors

FROM THE HOUSETOPS

“And that which you hear in the ear,
preach ye from the housetops.”

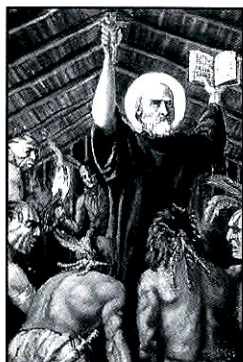
MATTHEW 10:27

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The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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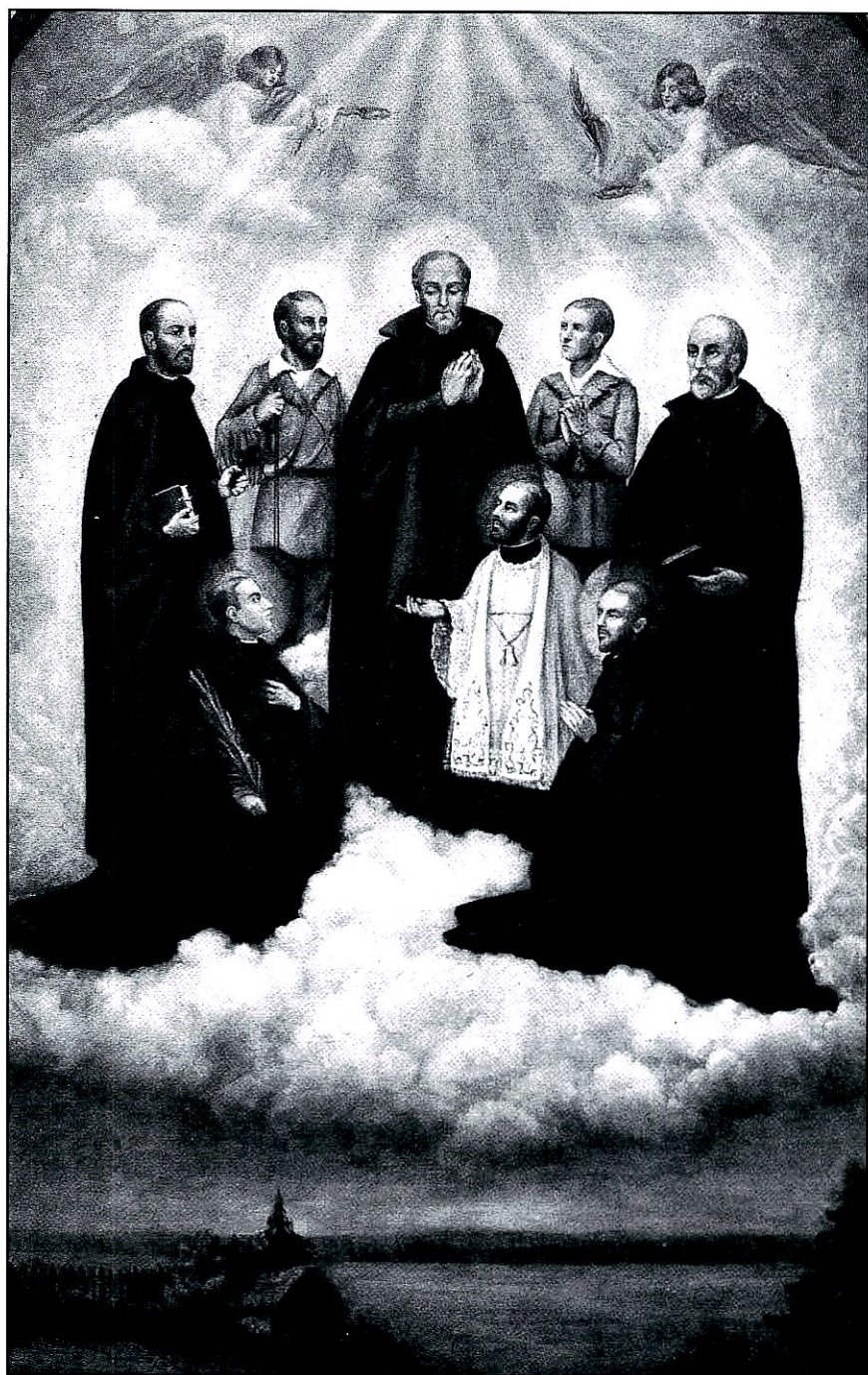
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BLACKROBE

of the Hurons

Brother Matthew, MICM

OUR Redemption from sin and Hell through the sufferings and death of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the greatest mystery of God's boundless love. That the fruits of this love might reach mankind, Christ commanded His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them adding, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.* (Mark 16:16)

Since apostolic times, the Church has raised up innumerable missionaries to carry on this most exalted labor. Consumed with love of God and their fellow men, the charity of Christ urged them ever onward in their life of sacrifice for the salvation of souls. Many of them, in perfect imitation of Christ and His Apostles, are martyrs, those heroic souls who "have fought for the truth even to bodily death, that the true religion might be known and false religions confuted." (St. Augustine, *City of God*)

When members of the Society of Jesus evangelized the American Indians they did it with all the fervor of the ancient apostolic spirit. Saint John de Brebeuf and his companions journeyed from Renaissance France to the frontiers of North America that they might preach and baptize, in toils and sufferings, to gain souls for Christ. So pleased was God with the self-sacrificing zeal of these Jesuit apostles that He bestowed upon Father Brebeuf and seven of his fellow missionaries the glorious crown of martyrdom.

The Jesuits Come to North America

The Society of Jesus was founded by Saint Ignatius Loyola during the turbulent times following the Protestant Revolt. By the dawning of the seventeenth century the Jesuits had gained renown as ardent defenders and missionaries of the Catholic Faith.

The Order was still at the peak of its power, prestige and holiness when a new mission field began to unfold. France, eldest daughter of the Church, was beginning to colonize North America, and the vast untamed regions of New France were inhabited by pagan natives. Through the assistance of the devout Catholic explorer Samuel de Champlain, the Franciscan Recollets arrived at Quebec in 1615, and labored heroically for over ten years. Hampered by a scarcity of missionaries and antagonistic Huguenots who controlled the settlement, their efforts produced few conversions. In 1624, therefore, the Franciscans petitioned the Jesuits for help and the Society accepted with eagerness.

It was in June, 1625, that the first of Saint Ignatius' men arrived in New France. Of the three priests on the mission, the youngest, 32-year-old Father John de Brebeuf, was destined to become the impetus, the strength and the inspiration which would give vitality to this new Jesuit venture. Brebeuf, a giant of a man in stature and in holiness, had been born and raised on a farm in Condé in eastern Normandy. Of the little known about his family it seems unquestionably to have bred many a valorous soldier. The most illustrious of the Brebeufs, trained in the Ignatian army, could surpass in bravery all of his ancestors. His being selected for the North American mission came just three years after his ordination to the priesthood.

With fearlessness and untiring zeal Brebeuf launched the apostolate of compassion for the lost sheep of the tribes of North America. Superstition, sorcery, promiscuity, war and cannibalism were deeply rooted in centuries-old

tribal tradition. It was clear to Brebeuf, as it had been to the Recollets before him, that such evils could only be eradicated with persistent effort, prayer and, above all, the grace of God. For four years he labored, virtually alone, among the Algonquins and the Montagnais Indians along the Saint Lawrence River and the Hurons, 900 miles westward on the Great Lakes.

The Huron Mission

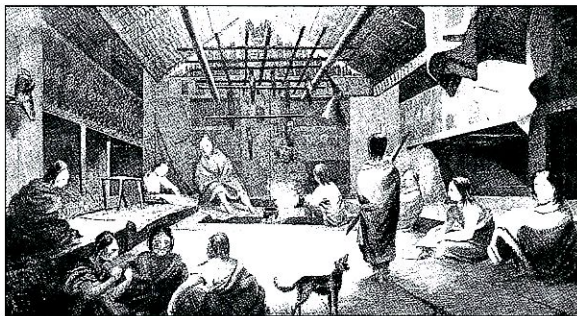
Father Brebeuf spent nearly three years with the Hurons who lived in permanent well-fortified settlements in the regions north of Lake Ontario. The Hurons, named by the French expression "hure," meaning a "disheveled head of hair," called themselves the Wyandot nation. Greatly impressed were the Indians with the size and strength of the bearded "blackrobe." Unable to pronounce his name they dubbed him "Echon" which means "the-man-who-can-carry-the-load." As he became more fluent in the Huron language, the saintly missionary was able to speak at their councils, promising them eternal happiness after death if they gave up their superstitious beliefs and immoral practices and were baptized.

As the rays of truth's light began to penetrate the pagan darkness, it became apparent that Father Brebeuf's main enemies would be the "medicine men," sorcerers, who perpetuated Satan's reign among the Indians. The pagan high priests were masters at reviving ancient loyalties to their divinities. The sun, the moon, the stars, and many other inanimate objects of worship were frequently honored, appeased, or supplicated at wild feasts and orgies. Dreams were communica-

tions from the deities which had to be obeyed and thus determined almost every aspect of their lives. Despite the well entrenched opposition, Father Brebeuf was greatly encouraged by the many Hurons who listened to him attentively and some of whom asked for explanations of his teachings.

Towards the end of the third year with them, however, his hopes for the future were suddenly dashed. He received word that French and English animosities had flared up in New France. Quebec was on the verge of falling to the English and he was ordered to abandon the Huron mission and return to the settlement immediately.

Quebec's militia was far too small and ill-equipped to withstand an attack. With safe passage back to France promised to everyone in the colony, Champlain surrendered to the English. Brebeuf and the other religious were forced to board English ships and sail the great Atlantic home to France. The zealous young missionary, though heartbroken, had the great consolation of knowing that by his labors the seed of the Faith had been planted and he was certain that in due season it would bring forth fruit a hundredfold. Father Brebeuf took up residence at the College of Rouen and pronounced his final vows at this time. He added to these solemn vows the oblation to Our Lord of everything he possessed, including life itself, if it so pleased God to accept it. His return to France did much to stir interest in the Indian missions. He could think or speak of little else be-



The "long house" of the Iroquois Indians accommodated multiple families at one time in its smokey interior.

sides the evangelization of the North American tribes and the dire need for more missionaries.

Return to the Mission

By the spring of 1632, an agreement had been reached allowing France to reoccupy Quebec. A year later Father John de Brebeuf left France for the last time to commence again his apostolic labors among the Indians.

Seven Jesuits were assigned to the missions in New France. One of the ablest proved to be Father Anthony Daniel from Dieppe. Daniel had studied law before entering the Society in 1621. The 32-year-old Jesuit possessed the inherent qualities of faith, zeal, and humility, so essential for the formation of a good apostle — and a future martyr.

Father Daniel was delighted to be among those chosen to accompany Father Brebeuf to the Huron mission. The thirty days of grueling travel by canoe and on foot to the Huron homeland was a test of stamina for anyone. Daniel had been well instructed on the importance of gaining the Indians' respect on the journey. Anyone hoping to be accepted by them, Brebeuf had learned,

was expected to canoe and shoulder heavy burdens as well as any Indian brave.

The village of Ihonataria became home base of their operations. A crude long-house was erected for their use as both dwelling and chapel. These Huron cabins were nothing more than poles lashed together, curving up to twenty feet high and covered with bark. There were usually no dividing walls inside, just an open apartment from thirty to sixty feet long and up to thirty feet wide.

Father Brebeuf wasted no time resuming his interrupted labors. Father Daniel watched closely as the veteran missionary would assemble all who were interested in listening to his sermons. In that seemingly incomprehensible, guttural dialect, which he himself had just begun to learn, he heard Father Brebeuf preach the simple truths of the catechism — the immortality of the soul, the eternal joys of Heaven, and the eternal sufferings of Hell.

To teach the Hurons the way of salvation was one thing. To get them to accept it was something else entirely. For two years, aside from the consolation of baptizing some of the Indian children and the dying, the missionaries had to be content with refuting bizarre superstitions and explaining the necessity of the true religion and its morality. Says Brebeuf, speaking of the mature Hurons, "They know the beauty of the truth, they approve of it, but they don't embrace it." Pagan vices, no doubt, made it extremely difficult for converts to withstand the temptations to apostasy. Baptism, therefore, was wisely withheld from healthy adults unless the candidate proved to be truly steadfast in the Faith and worthy of that

holy Sacrament. Until strength could be secured through numbers, the conversion process would proceed slowly.

Father Daniel made considerable progress in learning the Huron language and before long had produced a Huron translation of the Our Father which many of the Indian children learned to recite. In 1636, Father Daniel returned to Quebec with six Huron boys and established the first school for the instruction of Huron children in New France.

Father Brebeuf remained in Huronia tirelessly laboring as both priest and infirmarian for the inhabitants of Ihonataria and its neighboring villages. In the midst of his rigorous schedule, the saint somehow found time to record his experiences. It was a requirement for Jesuit missionaries to write detailed reports about the people they evangelized and the significant events of their missions. These accounts, known as the "Jesuit Relations," were often published for European readers to stimulate interest in the Jesuit foreign missions.

Father Brebeuf's writings, far from being merely historical documents, were packed with edifying meditations and practical advice for future missionaries to the Hurons. He concludes his relation of July, 1636, with these thoughts:

"Jesus Christ is our true greatness; it is He alone and His Cross that should be sought in following after these people. For if you strive for anything else, you will find nothing but bodily and spiritual affliction. But having found Jesus Christ in His Cross, you have found the roses in the thorns, sweetness in bitterness, all in nothing."

It was becoming more evident to

Echon, at this time, that a very great cross and perhaps an unequalled obstacle to converting the Hurons would be their fierce enemies, the Iroquois. Iroquois warriors had been making well-planned forays on unsuspecting villages, particularly in southern Huronia; but the entire Huron nation, including Ihonataria and other northern settlements, was in a state of alert and fear.

Neither native nor missionary was safe in Huron country. But in spite of such prevailing danger, Father Brebeuf had resolved to remain with these Indians, cost what it may, to bring them to the knowledge of the Truth.

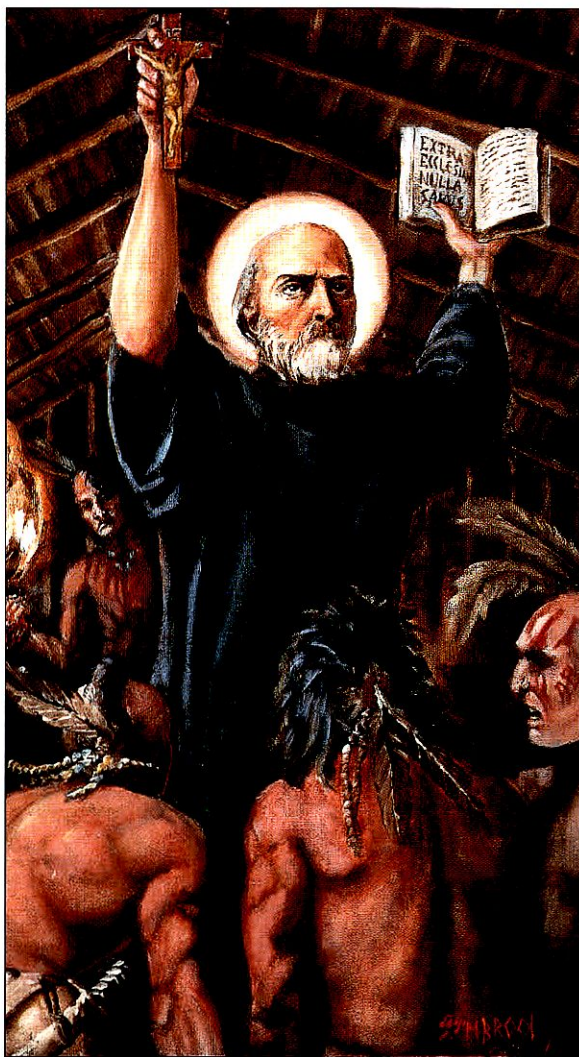
Reinforcements Arrive

Within two years after his return to the Hurons Father Brebeuf had five zealous priests laboring with him. Among those selected by the Jesuit superiors for this assignment were two priests chosen also by God to be martyrs, Fathers Charles Garnier and Isaac Jogues.

Charles Garnier came to Huronia in August, 1636. The Parisian-born Jesuit was 30 years old at the time and had just been ordained the previous year. Although

physically rather frail, Garnier was to survive 14 years of exhausting mission efforts among the Hurons and the neighboring Petun tribe.

Isaac Jogues, a native of Orleans, was 29 when he arrived at the Huron mission in September, 1636, a month



Saint John de Brebeuf was known to the Hurons as "Echon," "the-man-who-can-carry-the-load."

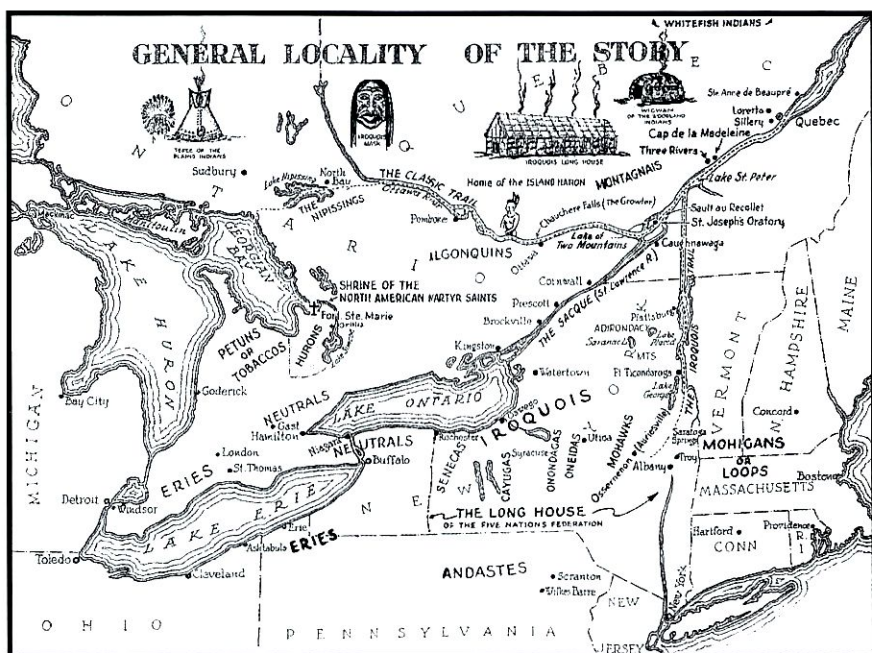
after Garnier. Jogues had entered the Jesuit novitiate at 17 and had become a professor of literature before being selected for the missions in New France. His ordination preceded his departure for the New World by only two months. Father Jogues was to become an intrepid pioneer who would one day teach the Gospel to tribes near Lake Superior and would also become the first apostle to the Iroquois.

Garnier and Jogues were just getting acclimated to their surroundings in Huronia when the influenza flared up into epidemic proportions. A few weeks after his arrival, Father Jogues fell very ill with the sickness and soon, one by one, all the French, except Father Brebeuf, were stricken. Brebeuf nursed his patients without the benefits of medicines. Though some of them, including Father Jogues, were at death's door, all gradually began to re-

cover after several weeks of confinement in their cabin. That none of the French perished was clearly a miracle.

What the Fathers regarded as a blessing was interpreted otherwise by the Indians. The witch-doctors were spreading evil reports that the Blackrobes, in secret rites, had cursed their people and had caused the pestilence so that the French could kill all the Hurons and take their lands. The Fathers weathered the storm of suspicion by showing the greatest possible compassion in caring for the ailing savages.

Their unflagging charity, heroic self-sacrifice in the best interests of their Indian neighbors, especially in their sickness, did not go entirely unobserved. At a council of the chiefs preparing for the annual trading trip to Three Rivers, a respected brave, Tsiouendaentaha, expressed his admi-



ration for all the Blackrobes had done for them and, to the great delight of Father Brebeuf, he asked for Holy Baptism. The first adult, not about to die, had requested what the Jesuits wanted to see all the Indians receive, the saving waters of Baptism.

Having proved his knowledge of the fundamental truths of the Faith, Tsiouendaentaha was received into the Church on Trinity Sunday, 1637, taking the name Peter. Two months later at Ossossane, Chief Chihwatanwha, while suffering what was thought to have been the last stages of the dreaded influenza, was baptized Joseph. Quite unexpectedly he soon recovered, asked for instructions and became an exemplary Catholic with his wife and children. Through his influence, other families of the village were brought into the Church the following year. Father Brebeuf had anticipated for a long time the first fruits of the Huron mission and at last they had been harvested.

New Dangers

The vast majority of the Hurons remained under the influence of the sorcerers. The Devil's priests jealously guarded their claims to spiritual supremacy and continued to incite as much malevolence against the Blackrobes as possible.

The early autumn of 1637 provided the anti-Blackrobe vanguard with perfect fuel for the much desired animosity. The influenza again began to rage throughout the tribe. The Jesuits, subject to outright contempt and hostility, prepared for the worst. Father Brebeuf and his companions regarded martyrdom a singular favor from the providential hand of God. They could

not grieve for themselves but they lamented the barbarians who through their own malice were closing the door to the Gospel, to grace, to eternal life. A novena of Masses was started in honor of Saint Joseph for the protection of the mission.

The Fathers, knowing that any display of fear on their part would be taken as a sign of guilt, went about their duties in the village as if no serious dangers existed. When the novena to Saint Joseph was completed a week later, a tranquillity pervaded Huronia which even the natives could not help but notice. The Blackrobes marveled at God's protection and the powerful intercession of their faithful guardian, Saint Joseph.

Ultimately, great good was derived from the ordeal. Dying Hurons, who may not have otherwise asked for Baptism, received the Sacrament and its eternal benefits. The Indians not taken by the influenza, surrounded by death, were less preoccupied with temporal concerns and more open to the message of salvation preached by the Blackrobes. When the epidemic had subsided, a few of the Hurons at Ossossane asked for instructions in the Faith and the number of adult baptisms began to increase.

A Growing Apostolate

This unexpected turn of events at Ossossane encouraged Father Brebeuf to extend missions to other Huron settlements. He had often petitioned to be relieved of the responsibility of being superior, preferring the life of a simple missionary, and now, with the pioneer days of the mission drawing to a close, he humbly urged that a more qualified leader be sent to take com-

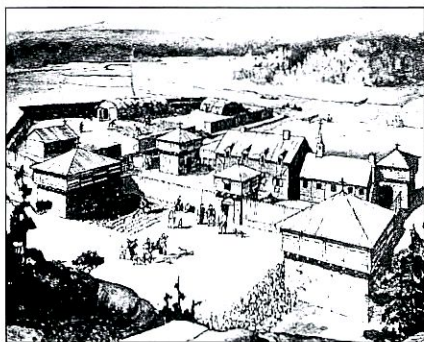
mand. Brebeuf was therefore quite pleased when Father Jerome Lalemant was appointed to succeed him as superior in August, 1638.

Lalemant was the uncle of a future martyr, Gabriel Lalemant, who would join the Jesuits in New France ten years later. The new superior was a zealous missionary and an able administrator. While he depended much on the invaluable advice of the veteran Brebeuf, Lalemant introduced a few innovations.

The Jesuits had always had laymen to help them with the manual labor in their missions, but under Lalemant's direction a new force of devoted volunteers emerged, called *donnes*, or oblates. Bound by promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but not by the religious vows of the Society, the *donnes* became a tremendous asset, for in addition to offering their talents as domestic laborers they became auxiliary catechists and missionaries. Lalemant also introduced the idea of building a French station apart from all Huron villages which could serve as the mission's headquarters. This first exclusively French outpost in Huronia was called Mission Sainte Marie.

Hardships Increase

War with the Iroquois and disease were taking their toll on the Huron people. A census taken by the Jesuits revealed that the 32 Huron villages were then inhabited by nearly 20,000 Indians, a drastic decline from the estimated population of over 30,000 just four years earlier. In September, 1639, another epidemic tore through the suffering Huron nation. This time it was the dreadful smallpox. Within weeks the contagious disease spread to almost every Huron village, leaving hundreds



Fort Ste. Marie as it looked at the time of Saint John de Brebeuf

dead in its wake. The Fathers were consequently suspected, threatened, even expelled from every village they visited.

Father Brebeuf and all the Jesuits in New France sensed that the hardships borne by them thus far were but a foretaste of still greater sufferings to come. "We have sometimes wondered," writes Lalemant, "whether we could hope for the conversion of this country without the shedding of blood." For in the words of the ancient maxim, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." Indeed, the years of the Huron mission, filled as they were with extraordinary sacrifices, could be likened to steps along the Way of the Cross, leading the Jesuit missionaries up the mount of Calvary, where a chosen few among them would shed their blood in imitation of Christ, the King of Martyrs.

Era of Martyrdom Begins

By 1642, the Huron Mission was practically reduced to destitution. The Fathers were in need of medicines, clothing, vestments, and altar necessities. Even food was scarce, due to lack of rain and a poor harvest. Father Isaac

Jogues was chosen to lead an expedition of five Frenchmen and eighteen Hurons to Quebec to obtain the necessary supplies. The journey was especially perilous because of the increasing number of Iroquois war parties recently encountered along the Saint Lawrence River. The little convoy departed in June and, in spite of the hazards, safely arrived at Quebec a month later.

It was early August when the heavily packed canoes were finally ready to be navigated back to Sainte Marie. The returning party was comprised of about thirty-five Hurons, as well as Father Jogues, several French workmen, and a *donne* named Rene Goupil. Goupil was only a year younger than Father Jogues, 34 at this time, and originally from Anjou. He had been received into the Jesuit novitiate in his youth, but was forced to leave the Order because of illness. Upon recovering his health, Goupil offered his services as a *donne* and had been serving the mission in Quebec for the last two years. His assistance was now desired in Huronia, for he was a good nurse and a skillful surgeon.

On the second day of the return trip, they were ambushed and overpowered by twice as many Mohawks. Two of the Hurons were killed in the skirmish and the rest of the company captured.

For eighteen days, in agonizing procession, Father Jogues and his companions were hastened along the route to the land of the Mohawks. They were allowed little rest and no food. The merciless captors spared nothing in venting their rage upon their unfortunate victims. As they approached the heart of Iroquois country, from village

to village the tortures were renewed.

Invariably they were welcomed by being made to "run the gauntlet." Sometimes an entire village, armed with clubs, thorn-studded rods, and fire-brands formed two parallel lines up the slope of a hill. One by one the captives were forced to run between the columns of hacking savages who delighted in pounding and burning their victims nearly to death.

On a torture platform, the frenzied Iroquois continued their blood lust, slashing with their knives, beating with knotted clubs, and tearing fingers with their teeth. One might well ask how anyone could endure such punishment. In the case of the martyrs the answer is always the same. It is Christ suffering again within them, the grace of the present moment sustaining them.

The Huron braves were tortured and killed but the French, it was decided by the Iroquois chiefs, were spared to be used as hostages. Father Jogues and Rene Goupil were held at one of the largest Mohawk settlements, Ossernenon (Auriesville, New York). It was nothing short of a miracle that they recovered from their wounds, but in a few weeks, though scarred and maimed, they were once more on their feet and somewhat stronger.

Shortly after being captured Jogues joyfully received and blessed the *donne's* perpetual vows as a religious. The hardships of their captivity ignited rather than dampened Rene Goupil's fervor. He seemed quite oblivious, at times, to the dangers which still surrounded them. Without giving a second thought to the possible consequences of the action, one day he made the Sign of the Cross over a Mohawk infant. The child's grandfa-



The holiness of Blessed Kateri, known as the "Lily of the Mohawks," was one of the results of the untiring efforts of the Jesuit martyrs.

ther, a superstitious old warrior, saw this and, enraged, threatened the Frenchman.

Soon after this, as the two prisoners were returning to the village from the forest where they had been praying, they were accosted by two Mohawk braves. Father Jogues, ordered to walk ahead by himself, took but a few steps when he turned and saw one brave grab Goupil and the other swing his tomahawk with a mighty crash into Rene's head. The young Jesuit staggered a step and calling out, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" fell to the ground.

It was the twenty-ninth day of September, 1642, the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, when this first of the Jesuit martyrs in North America went to his eternal reward. Truly, he died a martyr for the Cross of Christ, for it was precisely because he was so eager to display the sacred sign of our Redemption that his life was taken.

Father Jogues Escapes

For thirteen months Father Jogues remained in Iroquois custody. Cautiously he carried on apostolic labors and managed, under God's protection, to baptize 70 dying Mohawks and numerous Huron captives dragged in from the ongoing raids.

An Iroquois deputation suddenly approached Fort Richelieu at Three Rivers on August 15, 1643. A Mohawk representative proposed peace talks and delivered a letter from Father Jogues. It was dated June 30 and had been written in French, Latin and Huron to conceal its contents from the Iroquois and their allies. Father Brebeuf translated the dispatch which revealed the Mohawks' treachery. Just as the French had suspected, they were not seeking

peace but spying to determine the strength of the garrison at Three Rivers. They were still on the war path and had 700 warriors, 300 of them armed with muskets, preparing to gain complete control of the Saint Lawrence River. Their goal was to capture and kill all important Huron warriors and to make the Huron nation subject to the Iroquois.

When the proud Iroquois suffered several humiliating defeats from the French, Father Jogues was in imminent danger of being tortured and killed to avenge the Iroquois blood shed at the hands of his countrymen. The Dutch at Rensselaerswyck, and New Amsterdam (New York City) were extremely kind to the French priest and, risking Mohawk reprisals, helped him escape. Through their efforts the refugee obtained safe passage back to Europe. He reached France on Christmas Day, 1643.

It wasn't long before all France was talking about the missionary priest, a prisoner of savages. Such publicity, however, was too much for the genuine humility of the holy apostle. He longed to be back among the Indians. Consequently, after only a three-month stay in his own country, he was allowed to embark for New France once more. "I go, but I shall never come back again," were his words on the eve of his departure. In June, 1644, he stepped ashore at Quebec, to the overwhelming astonishment and joy of his fellow Jesuits.

Distress in New France

Father Brebeuf was among those who greeted Isaac Jogues. Three years had elapsed since he had broken his collarbone and had been relieved of his duties among the Hurons. He was

given charge of the Christian Indian settlement at Sillery, near Quebec, and had rendered invaluable service as an adviser to Governor Charles de Montmagny. All the while, however, this pioneer of the Huron mission was anticipating the day when he could labor again among the Wyandot people. The opportunity came that summer when fewer Iroquois incursions along the route to Huronia made it more feasible to attempt a relief expedition to Mission Sainte Marie. Father Brebeuf immediately volunteered for the mission. The Jesuit superior in New France, Father Vimont, readily gave the necessary permission. He too had benefited from Brebeuf's experienced advice and collaboration but he was certain that his place was with his beloved Hurons.

Father Brebeuf's relief party, laden with the provisions needed the last two years, made it safely to Mission Sainte Marie in early September, after 30 days of travel and no sign of Iroquois. Everyone at the mission was elated to see the veteran Jesuit. With him was a 31-year-old member of the Society, Father Noel Chabanel, who had arrived in New France the preceding year.

The transformation of the mission during Father Brebeuf's absence had been phenomenal. The industrious and hard working *donnes* and volunteers had erected a well-fortified enclosure with five sturdy buildings including a beautiful chapel, priests' residence, a lodge for the workers, and a spacious visitor's house for the Christian Hurons. Just beyond the stockade fence was a large Huron-style long-house used as a hospital for the Indians.

Mission Sainte Marie stood as a lone bastion of the Faith and civiliza-

tion that the Jesuits hoped would be embraced by the Hurons and neighboring tribes. It had emerged out of the same self-sacrificing motives that had inspired the founding of Quebec and, just recently, Montreal. It was the Faith that mattered most in the minds of the French pioneers, both priests and devout laity.

Despite the advantages of the mission, the most important work was still being accomplished in the villages. The majority of the Hurons were still pagan and many of them regarded the French as intruders. With the number of Christian converts steadily increasing, however, respect for the Europeans, especially the religious, was maintained. In some villages there were more Christians than heathens. If granted a period of peace, it was reasonable to believe, the whole Huron nation would eventually accept the true Faith.

But it is reserved only for the secret and adorable judgments of God to know why the war-torn Hurons were denied this desired tranquillity. The Iroquois' bloody campaign against the Hurons continued. Particularly persistent was the western-most tribe, the Seneca Iroquois, which attacked Huron convoys and hunting parties and even boldly plundered camps in Huron country. The intrepid Jesuits, 14 in all, remained at their stations, exhorting and teaching the Indians regardless of the impending dangers. Father Brebeuf was assigned to reside at Sainte Marie and to attend to the spiritual needs of five of the neighboring settlements.

Martyrdom of Isaac Jogues and John de Lalande

Father Brebeuf had brought hopeful news that some of the Iroquois were

willing to talk peace. Through the influence of Quebec's governor, Charles de Montmagny, peace negotiations had been opened with representatives of the Mohawk tribe in July, 1644. Montmagny had obtained the release of Iroquois prisoners of war captured in Huron and Algonquin raids near Three Rivers. The Christian Hurons, trying to live according to the maxims of the Gospel, needed little convincing that this was the best policy. Ultimately, it was hoped that such good will would open the way for effective peace negotiations with all five of the Iroquois tribes.

To ratify an agreement made the previous summer at Three Rivers, Father Isaac Jogues, in May of 1646, journeyed as ambassador to the Mohawks, to the place of his former captivity. Those who had once made his life miserable received him cordially. The deputation remained six days, holding council and exchanging gifts to confirm the existing agreements with the French. Shortly before leaving, however, Father Jogues was informed by Mohawk messengers that an Iroquois war party from the west was advancing toward Three Rivers. He was advised to leave without delay lest he be overtaken on the way. As a token of his intention to return, he left his vestments and religious articles in their keeping. The emissaries reached Quebec safely, their mission of diplomacy successfully completed.

In September that same year, it was decided that the Hurons themselves should send a peace delegation to the Mohawks. Father Jogues was overjoyed when asked to accompany the Huron contingent. This time, however, he would go as an ambassador for

Christ and establish, with God's help, the first mission among the Iroquois.

In spite of a presentiment of dangers which clouded his hopeful venture, the zealous priest, accompanied by a young *donne*, John de Lalande, and several Hurons set out the last week of the month. Except for one, the Hurons abandoned the perilous journey into Iroquois territory.

They had nearly reached Ossernenon, in mid-October, when Mohawk warriors, on their way to attack the French, captured Father Jogues' little company of three. They were stripped of clothing, brutally beaten with fists and clubs and hurried along the trail to the Iroquois village.

As they reached the settlement, a wild mob of screaming Mohawks descended upon them. Some enraged with hatred inflicted whatever torments they could on the prisoners while others tried to protect them. Badly battered and torn, Father Jogues and his companions were shoved into a cabin by sympathetic Mohawks.

There he discovered the reasons for the renewed hostility. The treaties with the French had divided the Mohawks into bitter factions for and against peace. Shortly after Father Jogues' departure in June, a contagious

disease had claimed numerous victims in their villages. In addition to this, a blight had destroyed almost their entire harvest. Those in opposition to the French alleged that all the disasters were caused by the Blackrobe who in revenge had cursed the Iroquois. There was no alternative but to sacrifice him to their gods.

On October 18, 1646, the day following their capture, Father Jogues remained with John de Lalande as a hostage in protected custody awaiting the decision of a major council deciding



During his first captivity by the Iroquois, Saint Isaac Jogues had several of his fingers chewed and chopped off, but undaunted in his evangelical zeal he returned to them and was eventually martyred.

their fate. That evening a brave from the clan most antagonistic to the priest suddenly entered and invited Jogues to a meal at another lodge. The fearless missionary suspected treachery but to refuse an invitation was a grievous offense. Renewing his total oblation of self to God, he courageously followed his guide through the camp.

As he lifted the door flap and stooped to enter the lodge, an assailant within raised his hatchet. An Iroquois who had accompanied Father Jogues tried to ward off the assault, but a fierce blow sliced the protector's arm and struck the head of the saintly priest, dropping him to the ground. In an instant, the martyrdom of Father Isaac Jogues had been completed. The murderers immediately cut off his head and stuck it on one of the palisade posts of the village. His venerable body was then thrown into the Mohawk River.

From the exultant cries of the warriors John de Lalande suspected what had happened. The young *donne* prayed for the strength to suffer whatever God willed him to endure. He longed to search for the blessed martyr's body before it was completely mutilated or lost. When the evening's clamor had subsided and all in his lodge were asleep, John silently made his way out the door to find his beloved Father Isaac. But his first step from the cabin was his last toward eternity. An awaiting savage split his head with a mighty stroke of his tomahawk. His head was cut off and placed on the palisade next to Father Jogues' and his body was also thrown into the river.

News of the martyrdoms did not reach Father Brebeuf until later that winter. While the Fathers received the

reports with sorrow, they also had reason to be thankful, for they now had two more advocates praying for them in Heaven.

Martyrdom of Anthony Daniel

The precarious treaties with the Mohawks and other Iroquois tribes broke down completely. Following the lead of the fierce Senecas in the regions bordering the southern-most Huron territory, all the Iroquois united in an intensified war of conquest. It was just a matter of time before the Huron homeland, village by village, would fall prey to the terrible onslaught.

Far to the south at Teanaustaye, the first of the attacks came in July of 1648. Father Anthony Daniel had manned this dangerous outpost mission for seven years. After his early morning Mass on July 4, clad in white alb and red stole, he began to preach to his converts about the happiness of eternal life. Suddenly, shouts interrupted his discourse, "The Iroquois!"

Within moments, 600 Seneca warriors descended upon the village for the assault. Father Daniel dashed from the chapel into the thick of the battle. He shouted words of general absolution toward all the Faithful and hurried through the settlement baptizing, absolving and encouraging everyone who could to escape. But to their pleas for him to come with them he answered, "No, I shall die here to save you; we shall see one another again in Heaven!"

The invaders quickly broke through the defense of the courageous but disastrously outnumbered Huron braves. With deepest grief, Father Daniel beheld the brutal conquerors whirl through the now burning village

slaughtering everyone before them. To give the fleeing Hurons time to escape, the fearless priest took hold of a crucifix and, holding it high in the air, walked boldly toward the pursuing Iroquois. The savages halted, stupefied. Was this an apparition they saw? The momentary pause was abruptly ended with shouts, "The Blackrobe! The Blackrobe sorcerer!" Then musket fire and arrows pierced the venerable martyr's body sending him to the eternal reward he so ardently desired. Having set fire to the chapel they threw the desecrated body into the raging inferno.

Those who had escaped Teanaustaye made their way to Sainte Marie and revealed the frightful details of the raid. The Fathers mourned and prayed for the hundreds slain and captured. Father Anthony Daniel, they were sure, was interceding for them in Heaven, strengthening them, preparing them for what was to come.

Father Brebeuf, the Saint

A diary of John de Brebeuf's spiritual life which was discovered by his superior, Father Ragueneau, after his death, provides a self-portrait of his sanctity. In it he relates his numerous mystical experiences, visions of Our Lord and Our Lady, which increased as the time of his own martyrdom drew near. Jesus Christ glorified and, more often, in the midst of His Passion appeared to him and inflamed his heart with the fervent desire to suffer torments like his Master. He was also frequently favored with visits from Our Blessed Lady who inflamed anew his willingness to suffer for her Son but who also inspired deepest sentiments of peaceful conformity to God's holy will.

The mystic in Brebeuf was but the fruit of his profound interior union with God. His sanctity had been nurtured by the continual mortification of self-love for the love of God, by seeking in all things to serve and please God alone. It was Saint Ignatius' formula for holiness carried out to perfection. Having devoted twenty-two years to the conversion of the Indians, Father Brebeuf still felt his exertion had been minimal, his crosses somewhat moderated because of his unworthiness. In this we see to what extent he had also inherited the founder's humility and the charity of Christ manifested in apostolic zeal. Using the words of Saint Paul, he could truly say to the Indians, *I have sought not the things that are yours, but you. I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls.* (II Cor. 12:14)

After pouring the saving waters of Baptism on a dying Indian child, Brebeuf was heard to say, "For this one single occasion I would travel all the way from France; I would cross the great ocean to win one little soul for Our Lord!"

Such faith and zeal is incomprehensible to the many liberals in the Church today who, in line with their view of things, ask, "Wouldn't it have been easier to let the unbaptized American natives trust in their natural virtues and ignorance for salvation?" The very thought of this was repugnant to the Catholicism of the seventeenth century and especially to the Jesuits. As heralds of the "Light of the World" their great battle was with the evil of the darkness of ignorance, which in the case of infidels is never bliss. Unlike some of today's theologians who have resurrected the heresy of Pelagius by equating ignorance with the Faith,

making it a fourth theological virtue, the Jesuits safeguarded and promoted the traditional Church teaching affirmed at the Council of Trent — the true Faith and the Sacraments, beginning with Baptism, are necessary for salvation. Father Brebeuf and each of his companions firmly professed these truths and were willing to die for them.

Martyrdom of John de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant

By the winter of 1649, the number of priests laboring among the Hurons had increased to eighteen. Father Brebeuf was assigned a new assistant, Father Gabriel Lalemant who had arrived in January. Lalemant was a nephew of Jerome Lalemant, the former superior of the Huron mission. Throughout his nineteen years as a Jesuit, he wanted more than any other assignment to work in the wilds of New France, particularly among the Hurons. Despite his slight stature and apparent frailty, his capacity for apostolic activity seemed limitless. Brebeuf soon learned that Lalemant desired and

prayed for martyrdom just as intensely as he did.

When the rigors of the frigid Great Lakes winter began to pass, many Huron men left their villages to hunt and trade or to scout for Iroquois invaders. The Huron settlements, with mostly women, children and the elderly in them, were extremely vulnerable if the Iroquois could get close enough to strike as they had at Teanaustaye. By mid-March numerous Seneca war parties, about 1000 Iroquois warriors, had slipped into northern Huron territory unnoticed.

Father Brebeuf and Father Lalemant continued their rounds to the villages near Sainte Marie administering the Sacraments, instructing catechumens, and trying to convert obstinate pagans. On Monday, March 15, they performed their usual priestly duties at the mission of Saint Louis, only three miles east of Sainte Marie, and retired there for the night. The next morning, in dawn's silence, they celebrated their Masses little realizing that they had offered for the last time the Holy Sacrifice. They were still at

prayer when three breathless braves from the next village, Saint Ignace, raced into the mission screaming the dreaded news, "The Iroquois are at your door!"

The two priests helped the horrified women and children evacuate but insisted on remaining with the nearly one hundred defenders. With piercing war cries hundreds of



The savage martyrdom of Saints John de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant by the Iroquois Indians.

painted Iroquois poured out from the concealing forest, recklessly charging the Huron stronghold. While the Hurons tenaciously held their own, the Blackrobes absolved or baptized those fallen in the battle. The Iroquois hacked their way through the palisades at the rear of the camp and soon had the warriors of Saint Louis encircled and disarmed. They took as prisoners some sixty Hurons and the two Jesuit Fathers but killed the wounded and those too old or sick to flee. Bearing the weight of the victors' spoils, the sad line of captives was forced along the trail to Saint Ignace, now occupied by Iroquois.

The prisoners were only too familiar with what awaited them. Brebeuf was singled out as the great friend of the Hurons and chief of the Blackrobe sorcerers. A former Huron catechumen, who had betrayed both his people and his Faith by defecting to the Senecas, taunted *Echon* by promising him the happiness of being baptized many times.

The long-awaited moment had arrived for Father Brebeuf and he was grateful to God for it. He prayed for all who would be tortured and killed with him and for the conversion of his tormentors whose ignorance and cruelty he pitied rather than resented.

Like ravenous wolves, the Iroquois made each of their prey run through the "welcome" gauntlet, the two columns of thrashing, pounding savages lined up at the entrance to the village. The wounded and aching victims were then prodded with merciless blows into the cabin of torture. Father Brebeuf had hoped that this very cabin would one day be a Huron church. Here, instead, was to be offered his



This outdoor shrine marks one corner of the palisades of Ossernenon, the great Indian fortress, where Saints Isaac Jogues, Rene Goupil, and John de Laland were martyred by Iroquois.

own sacrifice to God.

He was among the first to be seized and led to one of the torture posts in the middle of the long-house. Dropping to his knees he kissed the wooden column as if it were the Cross of Christ. In an instant he was jerked erect and standing at the stake had his wrists tied to it. With Father Lalemant and the Huron prisoners looking on, waiting their turn, Father Brebeuf spoke words of encouragement while he could. "My sons, my brothers, let us lift up our eyes to Heaven in our afflictions. Let us remember that God is the Witness of our sufferings, that very soon He will be our Exceedingly Great Reward. Let us die in our Faith. Let us hope from Him the fulfillment of His

promises to us. Bear up with courage under the few remaining torments. The sufferings will end with our lives. The grandeur which follows them will never end."

No portion of the saint's body was spared the gnawing, slicing, and burning fury of the fiendish cannibals. Sustained by the grace of God throughout the ordeal, Brebeuf either remained insensible and silent, totally absorbed in prayer, or encouraged his companions with resonating shouts, "*Jesus, taiteur!*" — "Jesus, have mercy on us!" Enraged by his defiant courage, his executioners strung together six glowing-hot hatchet heads and dropped the sizzling necklace over his head onto his shoulders. But the flames of divine love burning in his heart were of greater intensity than anything that could singe his blistered body. Each new torment elicited neither cries nor pleas only the vibrant prayer, "*Jesus, taiteur!*"

The apostate Huron surpassed all the hateful derision heaped upon the Blackrobe thus far by administering a mock baptism. With bitter sarcasm, the Huron renegade addressed his helpless victim; "*Echon*, you see plainly that we treat you as a friend. You have often told us that we must be baptized in order to have eternal happiness in Heaven." Then cauldrons of boiling water, one after another, were poured over the priest's head and the blasphemous parody concluded with the words, "We baptize you so that you may be happy in Heaven. You know that you cannot be saved by your God without a proper baptism."

The dying missionary responded to this cruelty with words of kindness, pardon, and admonitions to believe and

be baptized because the flames that destroy the body end but the torments of Hell are eternal. The Iroquois gazed in awe, spellbound that anyone could endure so much without showing signs of pain. The torturers continued their sadistic work throughout the day but could do nothing to extinguish this invincible spirit. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, March 16, 1649, when the pure soul of Father John de Brebeuf left his mortal body to go to God.

The spirit of John de Brebeuf inflamed Father Gabriel Lalemant with a courage that his torturers never expected from one so frail. He, too, had to undergo the excruciating pains of the unholy baptism, the sharp knives, and the burning torches. No cry escaped his lips but the plaintive prayer, "*Jesus, taiteur!*" The superstitious captors, wishing to offer their victim to Areskouï, their sun god, left Lalemant a mass of wounds that night and finished the diabolic ritual the next morning. After fifteen hours of horrible suffering, the extraordinary little priest passed from this life to receive his exceedingly great reward.

Last Days of the Huron Mission

Survivors of the massacres at Saint Louis and Saint Ignace hastened to Sainte Marie and reported the woeful tales. The garrison, forty armed Frenchmen and half as many Hurons, prepared for an Iroquois attack, watching and waiting for two days. Prayers and Masses were offered to Saint Joseph for the mission's protection. On the great Saint's feastday, March 19, the Christian Huron chief, Stephen Annaotaha, who had been captured