

The Jesuit North American Martyrs On Mission to the Huron-Wendat People

By Wikipedia



The Society of Jesus Soon after the voyages of discovery of the St. Lawrence River, and its tributary rivers and lakes, by Samuel de Champlain in the 1620s, the Society of Jesus, Jesuits, began to send their members, Jesuit priests and donnés, lay brothers, on the Mission to bring Christ to the peoples of New France.

The Jesuits came to serve the Huron, Wendat, or Wyandotte, peoples in what now we

know of as upstate New York, around Ossernenon, now Auriesville, NY, where three of them were martyred in 1642 and 1646, the first three U.S. Saints, and as south-central Ontario, Huronia, near Georgian Bay, around Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, at St Ignace and St Louis, now Midland, Ont., where five of them were martyred in 1648 and 1649. Those Jesuits served in what is now the United States of America and in Canada, hence their title, “the North American Martyrs.” **The eight Jesuit Martyrs’ feast day is October 19 (see Isaac Jogues, below).**

The [Martyrs' Shrine](#) in [Midland, Ontario](#), the site of their missionary work among the Huron, is the National Shrine to the Canadian Martyrs.

There is a second [National Shrine of the North American Martyrs](#) in [Auriesville, New York](#), along the Mohawk River.

The Mission to the Huron The Jesuit missionaries worked among the Hurons, farmers, fishermen and traders, who lived in villages surrounded by wooden palisades for protection. By the late 1640s, the Jesuits believed that they were making progress in their mission to the Hurons, and they claimed to have made many converts. But, within the Huron communities, the priests were not universally trusted. Many Hurons thought that they brought death and disease wherever they travelled because their arrival had coincided with epidemics after 1634 of smallpox and other infectious diseases of Europe, to which aboriginal peoples had no immunity. The diseases were likely carried by the increased number of children immigrating after 1634, with families from nations where smallpox was endemic, such as France.

The Mohawk The Iroquois, and Mohawks, who were enemies of the Hurons, considered the Jesuits legitimate targets of their raids and warfare, as the missionaries were nominally allies of the Hurons. French colonial attacks against the Iroquois also were a reason for their raids against the Hurons and Jesuits.

Isaac Jogues (1607-1646) was martyred Oct. 18, 1646 by the Mohawk at their village of Ossernenon, near present-day Auriesville, NY.

Studies In 1624, at age 17, Jogues entered the Jesuit novitiate. In 1626, he went to study philosophy at the royal college in La Fleche. The Jesuit community there had a strong missionary spirit; its teachers included missionary pioneer Jean de Brébeuf. The Superior of the Jesuit Mission kept the church and laity informed of the Mission in New France by the careful compilation of the missionaries' letters, detailing their experiences and impressions, sent back to Paris, then published over 40 years as the [Jesuit Relations](#). These writings inspired Jogues to become a missionary.

On the Mission Jogues was ordained a priest in 1636 and sent to New France. He went to join the Superior of the Jesuit Mission, Jean de Brébeuf, at their settlement on Lake Huron. In 1639, Jogues was entrusted with the building of Fort Sainte-Marie. He traveled to the Petun people, known as the Tobacco

Nation for their chief commodity crop. In 1641, Jogues went into the territory of the Chippewa to Sault Sainte-Marie. Warmly welcomed, he promised to come back to teach the people the Christian faith.

Slave of the Mohawk On August 3, 1642, while on his way by canoe to the country of the Huron, Jogues, Guillaume Couture, René Goupil, and several Huron Christians were captured by a war party of Mohawk of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Mohawk took their captives to their village of Ossernenon (now Auriesville, NY) on the Mohawk River, about forty miles west of Fort Orange (now Albany, NY). They were ritually tortured and Jogues lost two fingers on his right hand. Goupil was martyred, but Jogues survived and lived as a slave among the Mohawk for some time. He tried to teach his captors about Christianity.

Ransomed back to France Some Dutch traders of Fort Orange ransomed Jogues and sent him down the Hudson River to New Amsterdam. Jogues was the first Catholic priest to visit Manhattan Island. He sailed to France, where as a "living martyr," he was given a dispensation to say Mass with his mutilated hand. Jogues visited his mother in Orléans but was eager to return to the missions.

On the Mission to Martyrdom Within a few months, Jogues returned to New France to continue his work. In 1645, a tentative peace was forged between the Iroquois and the Huron, the Algonquin, and the French. In 1646, Jogues went back to the Mohawk, with Jean de Lalande, to act as ambassadors among the Mohawk. Some among the Mohawk regarded Jogues and the other missionaries as evil practitioners of magic. When they suffered another crisis of infectious diseases and crop failure at Ossernenon, the Mohawk blamed it on the chest of vestments and books that the Jesuits had left behind. On October 18, 1646, Jogues was attacked with a tomahawk and killed. Jean de LaLande was killed on October 19, 1646. The Mohawk threw the two missionaries' bodies into the Mohawk River.

Jean de Brébeuf (1593-1649) was martyred March 16, 1649 by the Iroquois at St Ignace in Huronia.

Studies Brébeuf joined the Jesuits in 1617 at 24. He showed aptitude for languages. Later, in New France,

he taught Native American languages to missionaries and French traders. He was ordained a priest in 1622.

On the Mission In 1625, Brébeuf was chosen to go on Mission to New France. In 1626, he was assigned to the Huron, who spoke an Iroquoian language. Brébeuf went to the Bear Tribe at Toanché, but met with no success in trying to convert them to Catholicism. The whole colony of New France was captured by the English in 1629, on Champlain's surrender. The missionaries returned to France.

On the Mission for Life Brébeuf returned to New France in 1633, where he worked for the rest of his life. Brébeuf's lengthy conversations with Huron friends left him with a good knowledge of their culture and spirituality. He learned their language and taught it to other missionaries and colonists. Fellow Jesuits described his ease and adaptability to the Huron way of life. His efforts to develop a complete ethnographic record of the Huron have been described as 'the longest and most ambitious piece of ethnographic description in all the *Jesuit Relations*.'

Language and Converts Brébeuf tried to find parallels between the Huron religion and Christianity, to facilitate conversion of the Huron to the European religion. Brébeuf's progress as a missionary in achieving conversions was slow. In 1635, he claimed to have made 14 converts, and by 1636, only 86. To explain the low number of converts to readers in France, Brébeuf suggested this was due to the missionaries first having to master the Huron language. His commitment to this work demonstrates he understood that mutual intelligibility was vital for communicating complex and abstract religious ideas; he believed it imperative for the future of the Jesuit missions. It was so difficult a task that it consumed most of the priest's time. He translated Ledesma's Catechism from French to Huron, and had it printed, as the first printed text in that language.

Martyrdom and Death Brébeuf and Antoine Daniel, Gabriel Lalement, Charles Garnier, and Noel Charbanel were captured when an Iroquois raid took over the Huron village of Saint-Louis. Together with three Huron captives, they were ritually tortured and martyred at St. Ignace in Huronia on March 16, 1649. Other Jesuits considered the priests' martyrdom as proof that the mission was blessed by God and would be successful. Throughout the torture, Brébeuf was reported to have been more concerned for the fate of

the others and of the captive Native converts than for himself. As part of the ritual, the Iroquois drank his blood, as they wanted to absorb Brébeuf's courage in enduring the pain. The Iroquois mocked baptism by pouring boiling water over his head. The Jesuit Relations accounts of his torture emphasize his stoic nature and acceptance to suffer silently without complaining.

A contemporary newspaper account at the time of his canonization declares: "Brébeuf, the 'Ajax of the mission' stands out among them because of his giant frame, a man of noble birth, of vigorous passions tamed by religion," describing both the man and his defining drive.

Antoine Daniel (1601-1648) was martyred July 4, 1648 by the Iroquois at Teanaostaye, the chief town of the Huron, while serving at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons.

Studies In 1621, after two years' study of philosophy and one year of law, Daniel entered the Society of Jesus. He was a teacher at the Collège in Rouen 1623-27, and then sent to the College of Clermont in Paris for theology. In 1630, he was ordained a priest.

On the Mission In 1632, Fr. Daniel set sail for New France, to St. Anne's Bay, Cape Breton Island, for one year ministering to the French settled there. In 1633, Daniel joined Champlain on his way to Quebec.

Huronian In 1634, Daniel travelled to Wendake with Fr. Brébeuf. He studied the Huron Wendat language and made rapid progress. He translated the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and other prayers into Huron and put them to music. For two years, in Quebec, he had charge of a school for Indian boys, but he returned to Huronia in 1638 to relieve Father Brébeuf on mission.

Martyrdom and Death Fr. Daniel returned to Teanaostaye, the chief town of the Huron, in July 1648. The Iroquois made a sudden attack on the mission while most of the Huron men were away in Quebec trading. Fr. Daniel rallied the defenders. Before the palisades had been scaled, he hurried to the chapel where the women, children, and old men were gathered. He gave them general absolution, and immersing his handkerchief in a bowl of water, he shook it over them, baptizing the catechumens by

aspersion. In an effort to cause a diversion, Fr. Daniel, still in his vestments, took up the cross and walked towards the advancing Iroquois. Seized with amazement, the Iroquois halted for a moment, then fired on him. They flung Fr. Daniel's lifeless body into the Chapel, which they had set on fire. Many of the Huron did manage to escape during this incident.

His superior speaks of Fr. Daniel in a letter to the Superior General of the Jesuits as "a truly remarkable man, humble, obedient, united with God, of never failing patience and indomitable courage in adversity."

Gabriel Lalemant (1610-1649) was martyred March 17, 1649 by the Iroquois at Saint Ignace, Huronia.

Studies Lalemant was the nephew of Charles Lalemant, the first Superior of the Jesuit Missions in Canada. In 1630, Lalemant joined the Jesuits and in 1632 he took the vow to devote himself to the foreign missions. He taught at the Collège in Moulins from 1632-35. He arrived in Quebec in 1646.

Martyrdom and Death In 1648, he was sent to Wendake, the land of the Wendat, to assist Fr. Brébeuf. In 1649, he went to the mission of Saint Louis. In March, 1649 Lalemant and Brébeuf were captured there by the Iroquois and taken to the nearby mission at Saint Ignace. There in Huronia he was tortured and killed on March 17.

Lalemant's last moments are recorded as follows, "At the height of these torments, Father Gabriel Lalemant lifted his eyes to Heaven, clasping his hands from time to time and uttering sighs to God, whom he invoked to his aid." [He] "had received a hatchet blow on the left ear, which they had driven into his brain, which appeared exposed: we saw no part of his body, from the feet even to the head, which had not been broiled, and in which he had not been burned alive, even the eyes, into which those impious ones had thrust burning coals."

Charles Garnier (1606-1649) was martyred December 7, 1649 by the Iroquois at Petun, a Tobacco Nation village in Huronia.

Studies The son of a secretary to King Henri III, Garnier joined the Jesuits in 1624, ordained in 1635.

Martyrdom and Death His father initially forbade him to travel to Canada where he would face almost certain death as a missionary; but he was eventually allowed to go and he arrived in New France in 1636. He travelled immediately to the Huron Mission and spent the rest of his life as a missionary among the Hurons, never returning to Quebec. The Hurons nicknamed him "Ouracha", or "rain-giver", after his arrival was followed by a drought-ending rainfall. He was greatly influenced by fellow missionary Fr. Brébeuf, and was known as the "lamb" to Brébeuf's "lion". When Brébeuf was killed in March 1649, Garnier knew he too might soon die. On December 7, 1649, he was indeed killed by the Iroquois during an attack on the Petun village where he was living.

Noël Chabanel (1613-1649) was martyred on December 8, 1649) by a Huron at the Mission of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons.

Studies & Martyrdom Chabanel entered the Jesuit novitiate at Toulouse at the age of 17, and was a professor of rhetoric at several Jesuit colleges. He was highly esteemed for virtue and learning. In 1643, he was sent to New France, and after studying the Algonquin language for a time, was appointed to the Mission at Sainte-Marie, where he remained till his death. In his apostolic labours he was the companion of Fr. Garnier. As he felt a strong repugnance to the life and habits of the Huron, and feared that it might result in his own withdrawal from the work, he bound himself by vow never to leave the Mission. Chabanel was martyred on December 8, 1649, by what is described as a "renegade" Huron.

René Goupil (1608-1642) was martyred Sept 29, 1642 by the Mohawk at their village of Ossernenon, near present-day Auriesville, NY.

Lay Missionary and Professed Jesuit Brother Goupil became a member of the Society of Jesus shortly before his death. He was the first of the martyrs to receive the crown of martyrdom and the first canonized martyr of North America. Goupil had volunteered to serve as a lay missionary to assist the Jesuit Fathers. In 1640, he came to New France and served at the Saint-Joseph de Sillery Mission, near Quebec, where he cared for the sick and wounded in hospital.

On Mission to Martyrdom In 1642, Goupil travelled to the Huron missions with about 40 others, including several Huron chiefs and Jesuit Father Isaac Jogues. They were captured by the Iroquois, taken to Iroquois territory at *Ossernenon* and tortured. After teaching the native children the sign of the cross, Goupil was killed by several blows to the head with a tomahawk. Many of the 24 Huron accompanying Goupil were baptized converts. They too were slowly tortured in accordance with Iroquois ritual before being killed.

Jean de Lalande (1626-1646) was martyred on Oct. 19, 1646 by the Mohawk at their village of Ossernenon, near present-day Auriesville, NY.



Lay Missionary on Mission & Martyrdom Jean de Lalande arrived in New France at the age of 19 to serve with the Jesuits as a *donné*, a lay brother.

In September, 1646, Lalande was a member of a party led by Fr. Isaac Jogues as an envoy to the Mohawk lands to protect the precarious peace of the time. Mohawk attitudes towards this peace had soured during the men's journey and they were attacked by a Mohawk party en route. They were taken to the village of Ossernenon, where they were decreed to be set free by the moderate Turtle and Wolf clans. Angered by this, the more hawkish Bear clan killed Jogues on October 18. On October 19, Lalande was killed when he

attempted to recover the body of Father Jogues from the paths of the village. Lalande is the patron saint of St John LaLande Parish, Blue Springs, Missouri. This statue, depicting LaLande in buckskin was commissioned from Studio Demetz in honor of the parish's 75th Anniversary.

For More Information on the North American Martyrs go see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Canadian_Martyrs&redirect=no