

Lay Martyr Sufferings Detailed At Nearby Auriesville Shrine

By REV. JOHN T. CALLAHAN
Auriesville, N. Y. — With postwar travel increasing, this hallowed Shrine of the North America Martyrs again is becoming the mecca for thousands of pilgrims some revisiting, some seeing it for the first time.

For Catholics of the Rochester area, it may be reached by a drive for about four hours, and so makes a good trip for a Sunday or holiday.

Auriesville has a message for our times and our people. Most of us recall its background and significance but faintly from our classes in American history in grammar or high school.

This spot was the actual locale of the imprisonment, torture, and enslavement of St. Isaac Jogues. Into the Mohawk River was thrown his martyred body subsequent to his beheading.

St. Rene Goupil and St. John LaLande also met their death here. Let us review the story. Here is St. Isaac Jogues' own account.

filled with Iroquois, who received us with clubs, fists and stones. "As a bald or thinly covered head is an object of aversion to them, this tempest burst in its fury on my bare head. Two of my nails had hitherto escaped: These they tore out with their teeth and their keen nails striped off the flesh to the very bones.

"When satisfied with the cruelty and muckeries which we thus received by the riverside, they led us to their village on the top of the hill. At its entrance we met the youth of the district, awaiting us in a line on each side of the road, all armed with clubs.

"Conscious that if we withdrew ourselves from the ranks of those chastised, we no less withdrew ourselves from those of the children, we cheerfully offered ourselves to our God, thus like a Father chastising us, that in us He might be well pleased."

"WITH DIFFICULTY we reached the stage erected in the center of the village. We had but just time to draw breath on this stage, when one with a huge club gave us three Frenchmen three terrible blows on the bare back; the savages now took out their knives and began to mount the stage, and cut off the fingers of many of the prisoners, and as a captive meets with cruelty proportioned to his dignity, they began with me, as my manner of acting showed me to be in authority among the French and the Hurons.

"Accordingly an old man and a woman approached the spot where I stood, and he commanded her to cut off my thumb; she at first drew back, but at last when the old wretch had three or four times repeated the order, as if by compulsion she cut off my left thumb where it joins the hand. Then taking in my other hand the amputated thumb, I offered it to Thee, my true and living God, calling to mind the sacrifices which I had for seven years constantly offered Thee in Thy church."

"THIS THEN is the Hill of Torment which greets one's eyes as you turn off the Highway to approach the Shrine. One noteworthy fact that is called to our attention in these days of Catholic Action, defined by Pope Pius XI as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy," is that of the three blessed martyrs and saints of Auriesville, two of these laymen, St. John LaLande and St. Rene Goupil.

They belonged to what the old French writers termed "Donnes," that is "men given." They were not religious of the Order to which they attached themselves, but laymen, who from motives of zeal gave themselves to the missionaries, to be employed as they saw fit. Indeed, there probably never was a set of more humble and heroic men than the lay Donnes of the early Catholic missions.

To the right of the Old Town Road on the Shrine Grounds lies the Ravine. Here is the story of why it is important. Again the words are those of St. Isaac Jogues: . . .

"WE HAD REACHED the village in prayer when at its very entrance one of the two who had met us, plucking forth his tomahawk which was concealed in his dress, dealt Rene so deadly a blow on the head that he fell lifeless, invoking the most Holy Name of Jesus as he fell . . .

"The next day I was filled with so great an anxiety to know what had become of my dear companion that I resolved to look for his body at all hazards, and commit it, if possible, to the earth. After stripping it, they had contemptuously tied a rope around the neck and dragged it through the ravine to a ravine where they flung it . . .

"I FOUND THE BODY which the dogs had begun to gnaw about the hips and sinking it in the deepest part of the torrent, I covered it with a heap of stones, intending to return the next day with a spade and bury it secretly and alone, for I was afraid they would disinter it . . .

"As I could not that day accomplish my design, I proceeded to the spot early the next morning, with a spade or hoe, to inter the body, but alas! They had carried off my brother . . .

"When, however, the snows had melted away I heard from the young men that they had seen the scattered bones of the Frenchman. Hurrying to the spot, I gathered up the half-gnawed bones, the remnants left by the dogs, the foxes and the crows, and dearest of all the skull fractured in several places; these reverently kissing, I committed to the earth that I might one day, if such were God's Will, bear them with me as a great treasure to a consecrated Christian land."

WITH SUCH FACTS to lend a

true aura and atmosphere to these hallowed grounds, one walks reverently where such love of God proved itself in death.

Here are two patrons to hand, saints of our own land, for the lay apostles of Catholic Action. Here are staunch, courageous laymen of three centuries ago working to restore all things in Christ. Here was participation in an apostolate to a heroic degree. Here was generosity that resulted in sanctity — laymen that will forever be remembered.

Secondly, our Holy Father has sounded a note that carries with it an application to our American youth. He appeals that they too, be generous in giving themselves to the cause of souls and the missions, and by inference we can carry the appeal to parents who would delay or hinder the vocations of their children. Pope Pius XII on Nov. 24, 1946 in a radio address said:

"BUT THESE MARTYRS are not the possession of New York State alone. They belong to the whole nation. They were not the only missionaries martyred for the Faith in the New World, but they are the first raised to the altar, given by the Church under God to be patrons of the land and the Divine Master, Who has

made fertile by their blood, to be an inspiration for those who have been made stronger by their death.

"Their message of missionary zeal, fired by the love of God and God's love for souls, is louder and more insistent at this hour, when war and war's aftermath have decimated so many ranks of missionaries and clogged so many sources of mission help.

"THAT MESSAGE rings across your blessed country, so providentially spared the horrors and destruction of other lands; from coast to coast, from the Gulf to the northern frontier and beyond, it is heard. Let men pause and harken to its appeal. It is the hour of America. The missions await your response.

May the youth, that American youth always so eager and ready to throw themselves wholeheartedly into every worthy and noble venture, for whom obstacles are but a challenge to their courage, may they seize the torch of faith, lighted by our Saints in the wilderness, and carry it full-flaming to the ends of the earth, until all men, altar, given by the Church under God to be patrons of the land and the Divine Master, Who has

loved them with an eternal love. Whom you, O blessed martyrs, now contemplate with ineffable joy."

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"AT LAST on the eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, we reached the first village of the Iroquois. I thank our Lord Jesus Christ that on the day when the whole Christian world salutes in the glory of His Mother's Assumption into heaven. He called us to some small share and felt a whip of His sufferings and Cross . . ."

Rev. J. Callahan

"It would have been easy for Rene Goupil and me to escape that day and flames, for often being unbound and at a distance from our guards, we might in the darkness of night have struck off from the road, and even though we should never reach our countrymen, we would at least meet a less cruel death in the woods.

"He constantly refused to do this, and I was resolved to suffer all that could befall me, rather than forsake in death Frenchmen and Christian Hurons, depriving them of the consolation which a priest can afford.

"ON THE EVE of the Assumption, then, about three o'clock, we reached a river which flows by their village. Both banks were

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