

Robert Williams

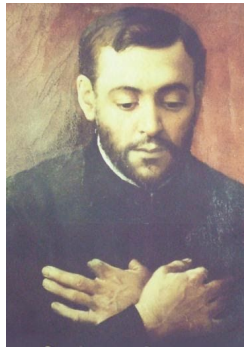
Professor Facer

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Isaac Jogues

<https://stisaac.org/index.php/life-of-st-isaac-jogues/>



Isaac Jogues was a French Jesuit missionary to North America who lived from 1607 to 1646. His story of selflessness and unconditional forgiveness is amazing.

In 1636, Jogues left his family and country to spread the message of God's love and forgiveness to those in the New World. During this time, he served, preached to, and immersed himself in the society of the Huron people who lived north of the Great Lakes. In 1642, Jogues, some Frenchmen, and some Hurons volunteered to go on a dangerous mission for desperately needed supplies through an area that had been taken by Mohawks, of the Iroquois. The Iroquois were enemies of the Hurons to the south who were armed with Dutch-provided muskets. On their return trip with the supplies, the men were taken by the Iroquois and were taken from village to village and subjected to brutal torture. This included the severing of Jogues' thumb as can be seen in the picture. Throughout this time, he urged his fellow captives to forgive the Mohawks

and pray for them. While many of the men were killed, Jogues was spared by the Mohawks. This was possibly to protect themselves from French retaliation. Their final stop was at the village of Ossernenon. Here, Jogues was made a servant to a female elder of the village. This lady grew close with Jogues and called him her nephew. Jogues learned the ways and language of the Mohawks and once was sent in place of his "aunt" for some purpose to a Dutch village. Although the people of this village would have helped him escape, he was more concerned with spreading the message of Christ to his captors. At one point, however, after sending out word of a planned Iroquois attack and knowing that he would probably be killed for it, Jogues escaped the Mohawks.

He returned to France in 1643 almost unrecognizable and held mass there. Soon after, Jogues expressed his desire to return and spread the Gospel to the Mohawk people as he had firsthand knowledge of their ways. At this point, the Hurons and Iroquois were working towards peace and were trading prisoners. Through this effort, Jogues was able to return to the Mohawks and his aunt at Ossernenon. While the elders of the tribe wanted peace, many among the younger generations were upset by this effort. One day in October 1646, some youths asked Jogues to meet and speak with them. Knowing of the danger, Jogues left the safety of his aunt's house and met with the young men. He was then killed by one of the men.

A year later, some Mohawk men were captured and one of them claimed to be Jogues' murderer. Although the Hurons and neighboring Algonquins were ready to kill this man, the Jesuits took him in. After some time in the protection of the Jesuits, this man asked to be baptized, finally taking to heart the teachings of Jogues in his village. He asked them to be given the name Isaac

Jogues. He was granted those wishes and was soon after taken and killed by the Algonquins. The Jesuits then prayed that there would now be two Isaac Jogues' in heaven.

The link is to a short bio of his life written by a church in Pennsylvania dedicated to him. It tells the story in greater detail. Isaac Jogues has become a newfound hero of mine. The fact that he unwaveringly embraced great suffering for the purpose of spreading the love and forgiveness of Christ to not only those who would listen, but also to those who tortured him is inspiring to me. He lived what I believe to be an undeniable truth: that the greatest life is one of service and sacrifice. As Christ said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Not only did Jogues give his life in service for his friends, he also gave his life for those who considered him an enemy. Isaac Jogues was a great man who lived his life for others and seemed to have followed in Christ's footsteps as best as one could.