

regret at her loss and consolation at the happiness which they all believed she is enjoying in heaven.

Despite these encouraging conversions, the Dutch at Fort Orange were a thorn in the missionary's side.

"It is beyond belief," he noted, "how much the neighborhood of the Dutch injured the Faith—both on account of the brandy that they sell to our Indians, which is to the latter an unending source of debauchery, and because they try to give them a bad impression of our religion. It is true that for some time the Dutch have been more guarded in this matter, because they have found out by experience that the firmness and ability of our Christians took from their opponents all hope of being able to shake them."

One of these Christians wore an image of the Blessed Virgin, that she might never lose sight of her in whom, next to Jesus Christ, she placed all her hope. They did everything they could to make her discontinue this holy practice. Many Indian women wore their rosaries around their necks—a public profession of their religion. The Dutch tried by every means to turn them from this practice :

"Is it not worshipping idols," they asked, "to render to a created being the honor that is due to God alone? And are you not unfortunate having fallen into the hands of people, who, instead of reclaiming you from idolatry, engage you in it anew? In what passage of Scripture did they see

that God orders us to pray to Him over some little pieces of wood, such as you wear...? These things are works of the human mind, and not laws of the Lord!"

One of the pious Christians answered without hesitation: "You certainly show either that you have very little sense or that you believe us to be very little enlightened in our Faith. Do you imagine that we honor the Blessed Virgin as the Mistress of our lives? You are wrong. We know too well the worship that we owe to God, to bestow it on a creature. We are not ignorant that it is He alone who has made all things; therefore it is He alone whom we ought to honor as our sovereign Lord."

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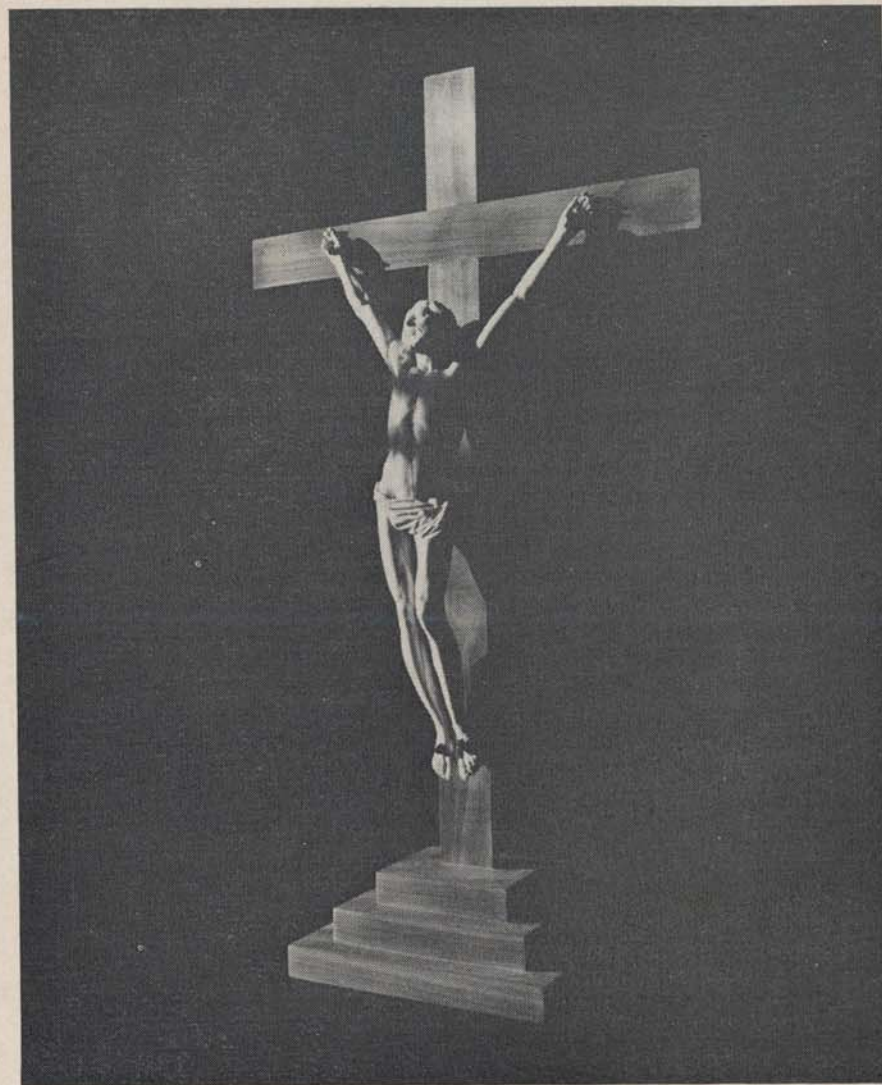


Photo: Bob Acciario

In the mission vault, this exquisitely carved seventeenth century ivory crucifix lay dismembered with a foot broken off and some of its fingers chipped. It was recently restored. For even the best of us, too often Christ is laid away, shattered in the utmost recesses of our minds. Lent is the time to put on Christ anew.