

The Iroquois Missions (1675)

THE Iroquois consist of five different nations, and are divided among eight villages of greater importance, in each of which we have a chapel wherein the new Christians meet every day to say their prayers, and to hear the instructions given them daily by the missionaries at stated hours. Father Bruyas, who is the superior of all, has won to Jesus Christ a great many of the chief personages of Agnié, the village of the nation nearest to the Dutch. Here in a few words is the information given by him in his last letters.

Mission of Agnié.

THIS year might supply sufficiently ample material for relations, both through the number of those who have been baptized, amounting to eighty, and through the fervor of the new Christians. I refer merely to what has been done by one Assendassé, who is regarded beyond contradiction, as being one of the most notable of his nation. After I had baptized him, he desired that all his family should receive baptism, as he had done. Afterward, when sickness and death attacked his household, he endured with constancy all the reproaches addressed to him by his kindred for that act, as if he had drawn

down all these misfortunes upon himself by his baptism. Things came to such a pass that they almost afforded him the glory of being the first martyr among the Iroquois.

"One of his relatives, who could not endure that he should be a Christian, having purposely become half intoxicated, threw himself upon him; he snatched away the rosary and the crucifix that Assendassé wore suspended from his neck, and threatened to kill him if he would not renounce all those things. 'Kill me,' he said, 'I shall be happy to die for so good a cause. I feel no regret in giving my life in testimony of my faith.'

"As he is esteemed in the village, his example has attracted a very considerable number of his countrymen to the Faith. There have been but a few Sundays this winter whereon I have not baptized a child or an adult. Were I to relate all that occurs here for the furtherance of Christianity, those who would hear it would have reason to praise God, who is beginning to be glorified among these infidels.

"For my part, I attribute these conversions to the goodness of the Most Blessed Virgin, a miraculous image of whom, as Our Lady of Foy, has been sent us. I can state that, since we have possessed that precious deposit, the church of Agnié has completely changed its appearance. The older Christians have resumed their

former fervor, and the number of new ones increases daily. We displayed this precious statue, with all possible pomp, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, while the litanies were chanted in the Iroquois tongue. We uncovered it only on Saturday evening during the chanting of the same litanies; and throughout the whole of Sunday it remained exposed to the eyes of our Christians, who met three times that day for the purpose of reciting the rosary before their good Mother and protectress. The infidels tell me that since Mary's image is in their village, they fear nothing; and, in fact, they have received very evident marks of her protection."

Father Jacques de Lamberville, who has charge of the Mission of St. Pierre at Gandaouagué, the second village of the Agnié country, has had the consolation of sending to heaven many little children, who died after baptism. This Church, although the smallest of all in these Missions, is behind none of them in fervor.

The Father hopes shortly to increase it by a very considerable number of persons. The elders themselves come to prayers and exhort the young men to do the same. Finally, if brandy were banished from this quarter, we would soon see the whole of that village become Christians.

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PHOTO W. B. EDWARDS, QUEBEC

Our Lady of Foy
A copy of the original from
Dinant, Belgium