

Saints of the Americas

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Saint Isaac Jogues

(1607-1646)

WHILE the Spanish and Portuguese brought the Faith to Central and South America, it was the French who brought it to North America. Many missionaries came to share the Faith with the native peoples of New France (Canada and the northeastern United States).

Among the most famous of these is St. Isaac Jogues. He traveled to America in 1636 and worked among the Hurons. They were then at war with the Iroquois, and St. Isaac was captured by an Indian raiding party. He was held captive for thirteen months and tortured terribly. Finally, he found a way to escape and returned to France.

In captivity, he lost some of his fingers through torture. In those days, a priest could not celebrate Mass if something was wrong with his hands. The Pope himself gave St. Isaac permission to say Mass, because he had already suffered so much for the Faith.

He returned to Canada as soon as he could. In 1646, he set out to spread the Faith among the Iroquois who had recently made a peace treaty with the Hurons. He was captured by a Mohawk raiding party and put to death on October 18, just outside of what is presently Albany, New York. On June 29, 1930, he was canonized by Pope Pius XI.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

(1774-1821)

ELIZABETH Seton was born in New York City. Her family was part of the high society of that city, and they belonged to the Episcopal Church.

When she was nineteen, Elizabeth married William Seton, a wealthy businessman. Deeply in love, they had five children. But among their hardships was William's failed business and ill health.

Before he died, they traveled to Italy in hope of finding a cure. While there, Elizabeth fell in love with the Catholic Faith. She was convinced that Jesus truly is present in the Eucharist. She believed that the Church started with the Apostles, and she had great love and devotion for our Lady.

Elizabeth converted to Catholicism in 1805 despite much opposition. She moved to Baltimore to raise her family. Just outside of the city, she opened the first free Catholic school.

By 1809 she had founded the first American congregation of religious sisters, the Sisters of Charity. They dedicated themselves to children's education and the care of orphans. Elizabeth continued to seek to follow the Lord's will, even in the face of losing many loved ones.

This first American-born Saint was canonized on September 14, 1975, by Pope Paul VI.