

The Huron Carol
Written in the Huron language by
St. Jean de Brébeuf, S.J. circa 1643; English lyrics by J.E. Middleton¹

'Twas in the moon of winter time,
When all the birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead;
Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wondering hunters heard the hymn:
Jesus, your King is born,
Jesus is born.
In excelsis gloria.

Within a lodge of broken bark
The tender babe was found,
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped his beauty round;
But as the hunter braves drew nigh
The angel song rang loud and high:
Refrain

O children of the forest free,
O sons of Manitou,
The holy child of earth and heav'n
Is born today for you,
Come, kneel before the radiant boy,
Who brings you beauty, peace, and joy:
Refrain

Jean de Brébeuf, S.J., was the founder of the Jesuit Huron mission on Georgian Bay in present-day Ontario. He first arrived in Huronia in 1626 and was martyred by the Iroquois on 16 March 1649 in the village of St. Ignace. Pope Pius XI canonized Brébeuf and his martyred companions on 29 June 1930. On 16 October 1940, Pius XII declared that Brébeuf and his martyred companions the patron Saints of Canada.² See www.Wikipedia.org for the hymn's lyrics in the Huron/Wendat language. The Wikipedia page also has links to the hymn sung by various vocalists.³



Praying Indians from François Joseph Bressani, S.J.'s 1657 map, *Novae Franciae accurata delineatio*.
The complete map can be downloaded from Library and Archives Canada, Mikan #3805607

¹ Canadian Catholic Conference, *Catholic Book of Worship* (Ottawa, Ontario: 1972), pp. 266-267. The music is a French Melody.

² *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brebeuf_jean_de_1E.html.

³ *Wikipedia.org*, accessed 23 December 2013.

The central mission to the Huron was located at Ste. Marie I in present-day Midland, Ontario. The illustrations below show the exterior of the Mission and the two chapels.



Historical Reconstruction of Ste. Marie I at
Sainte-Marie among the Hurons,
Huronias Historical Parks, east of Midland, Ontario⁴



The Jesuit Chapel at Sainte Marie I



The Church of Saint Joseph built for visiting Huron/Wendat at
Sainte Marie I

Courtesy of Ste Marie Among the Hurons – Huronia Historical Parks



François Joseph Bressani, S.J.'s⁵ illustration of the martyrdom of Jean de Brébeuf, S.J.,
and Gabriel Lalemant, S.J., from his 1657 map, *Novae Franciae accurata delineatio*.
The complete map can be downloaded from Library and Archives Canada, Mikn #3805607

⁴ Sainte-Marie among the Huron, <http://www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca/sm/en/Home/index.htm>

⁵ Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aetaentsic, a History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987 edition), 765. Trigger believes that Bressani's captivity in March 1644 allowed him to more accurately depict Iroquois' torture methods which placed captives bound facing the stake, rather than modern illustrators which place captives bound with their backs to the stake.