

At St. Joseph's Church, yesterday morning, Rev. Father Alerding delivered a discourse upon the early religious history of Indiana. He took no special text, but prefaced his remarks with the quotation, "Go forth into the world and preach the gospel unto all nations." He referred to the enthusiastic admiration one feels when he reads of the men who have done great things for the nations of the old world. But this country, he said, also had a heroic history, dating back only a few hundred years, but that history is full of sentiment, full of the noblest acts and of noblest resolves. "We have neglected the glorious history of this country of ours in this period of success," he continued. "It is almost a blank in the minds of the Catholic people. We do not know the names of those who have gone before. We have forgotten the names of those holy men, and as history tells us, of holy women too, who went where there was no civilization, nothing but paganism, nothing but a trackless wilderness. Not to know the names of these men and women is an unpardonable offense of ours.

"We read upon the pages of this young history," the reverend Father said, "that on Indiana, of which we boast so much, of which we are so proud, that the first white man who set his foot upon the soil was one of those much-revered and much-maligned men—a Jesuit. He did not come to drive his stakes into the ground for possession, nor to search for wealth, but to live with the children of the soil. We know that this man labored daily in the midst of the Indians. He became like unto one of these wild Indians, and had left the civilized country behind him. He did not enjoy the sympathies of his kind, and that a man should live in that way was an example of great self-sacrifice. History has been too ungrateful to record the facts, and we degenerate children of noble forefathers are too degenerate to remember them.

"In 1734 we find our missionaries suffering untold horrors. They had no home, they had no friends, yet they never complained, never once saying it is too much; never once turning their backs upon their labors. They were firmly resolved to carry the behests of their Master and preach the gospel."

Father Alerding then dwelt upon the life of Father Petit, whose work was among the Indians of northern Indiana, and who died in the midst of his labors. He was so beloved by the Indians that they would not allow his body to be buried until they were persuaded to do so by a priest.

"The question has been recently raised," continued the preacher, "about canonizing some of these holy men, for example, Father Petit and our first Bishop Brute. This missionary bishop had no home, but visited his children north and south, east and west, of this great State of Indiana. Our minds can hardly conceive the great things that were accomplished by these men. "The Catholic men and Catholic women in the early history of Indiana were all of noble extraction. None were of low birth. They were noble men and noble ladies from the old countries who had enjoyed the very excellence of civilization and politeness of society. You may easily understand the arduous task that no mean mind or mean person could ever attempt to accomplish. It required the noblest soul and the best ability to go into such work. Let us then be glad that God has given us such a brilliant history; that He gave such a spirit to the fathers and founders of our churches, and that He may take possession of us, their children. Let us hope we may grow more and more faithful and loyal to our church and to Him."