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**ST. JOHN OF COLOGNE
AND THE MARTYRS OF GORCUM**

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of the relics lent enormous popularity to the veneration of the martyrs all over Europe. It was decided on the advice of the Bishops of Belgium to restrain any efforts at public worship until approval had been received from the Holy See.

The process of Beatification was begun in 1628 at Gorcum, Haarlem, Utrecht and Amsterdam. The Belgian Bishops urged the Roman authorities to hasten the process on account of the growing popular veneration. This appeal was further supported by King Leopold, and the Electors of Bavaria, Treves, and the Province of Brabant. Pope Clement granted the decree of Beatification in 1675.

On January 16th, 1865, Pope Plus IX ordered the institution of the Process for Canonization. The words of his decree speak for themselves: "Born of the blood of Jesus Christ and nourished with the blood of martyrs, the Catholic Church will be exposed to bloody persecutions until the end of the world. It is not without a marvelous design of divine Providence that the cause of these illustrious victims of the Calvinist heresy of the sixteenth century is taken up and completed in these days when heretics and false brothers are recommencing a war, an implacable war, against Jesus against His Holy Church, and against this Holy Apostolic See."

Two years after this decree the final triumph of canonization was solemnly conferred by the same Holy Father in Saint Peter's at Rome, with all the solemn ceremony of the Church and in the presence of a vast gathering of the Cardinals and Bishops of the Church from all over the world, who had assembled to commemorate the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul.

Netherlands, and who spontaneously observed the vigil of the 9th of July as a fast day. The devotion spread and had at least the tacit approbation of ecclesiastical authorities.

One of the most notable of the miracles which gave testimony to the sanctity of these servants of God took place on the sacred soil of their burial ground. The sign of God, already referred to, concerned a little plant which sprang up in the ground bearing three or four white flowers. When these flowers first appeared is not certain but they were known even to the Calvinists, who called them the flowers of Ruggen, which was the name of the Augustinian convent. The plant and its flowers were also declared to be of unknown species by horticulturists and botanists of the time. Naturally these flowers also became part of the popular devotion. But the miracle of their first growth was surpassed by a further miracle of the multiplying of the blossoms. Pious pilgrims took away some of these plants with them as a souvenir, and more than one instance was recorded where, when left in a case or box, it was later discovered that the blossoms had increased to the number of nineteen, one for each of the martyrs. This miracle is fully attested in the "Acta sanctorum."

When, after forty years, peace was again restored to the Netherlands, the Catholics of Belgium who had been during these years most assiduous in promoting the cause of the martyrs, pressed for public veneration of the relics. The trenches were opened up in 1615 and the precious remains removed to Brussels. The Archbishop of Malines then ordered an examination and gave formal deed of authentication. The greater part of them was handed over to the Franciscans in Brussels, but other portions were sent to other cities in Belgium and Holland. This translation

SAINT JOHN OF COLOGNE

AND THE MARTYRS OF GORCUM

Down its seven centuries of consecrated service to the Mystic Body of Jesus Christ the Dominican Order has been privileged to add many names to the great scroll Martyrs for the faith. But, while its Blessed's number over two hundred, its canonized martyrs are only two, namely, Saint Peter of Verona, the renowned Inquisitor General, who died in 1252, and Saint John of Cologne, who with eighteen others shed his blood for the faith in Holland.

In 1572, though of the same family and of the same spirit, the lives of these two martyrs are very different, Saint Peter was in the forefront of a long battle against the Manicheans in Italy, and as head of the Inquisition was a noted figure in the Church of his time. Saint John's life was cast in humbler circumstances. It was spent in the obscurity of a little country parish in Holland. Had not the call of heroic defense of the faith come to him, he would in all likelihood have remained an unknown parish priest, whose holiness and labor would have been known to God alone.

For that reason Saint John's claim to our attention and veneration cannot be separated from that of his companions whom he so fearlessly joined, when without dishonor to himself or offense against the faith, he might have kept clear of impending danger. Once joined with them in battle, his combat for the faith was theirs. What they all suffered, he endured also. The story of his life may be said to have begun and ended with his sufferings and death.

The Martyrs of Gorcum were victims of Calvinist hatred of the Catholic Church. They died because they were priests and religious, and, more especially because they refused to deny the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in Most Blessed Eucharist, as well as the Primacy of the Pope as divinely appointed head of the Church.

THE SPANISH NETHERLANDS

The Low Countries at this time were governed by Spain, under what was known as the Burgundian era, and were known as the Spanish Netherlands, composing the so-called "Seventeen Provinces." On the abdication of Charles V, government was assumed by Philip II his son, at a period of the country's greatest prosperity. That prosperity might be measured, for instance, by the valuable trade which kept up daily sailings for over 600 ships in and out of the port of Antwerp. This material wealth led to excessive luxury on the part of the rich nobility, and a corruption of morals, encouraged only too well by the humanist philosophy of the time. Moral decadence in turn opened wide the gates to Protestant liberalism, which invaded Holland from two directions, namely, from Germany in the form of Lutheranism; and from France in the form of Calvinism. The Calvinists became in time by far the most powerful of all the Protestant sects, and established the storm center of the radical movements which followed King Philip's ascent to his father's throne.

The new monarch experienced increasing difficulties of government from the outset of his reign. His father, Charles, belonged by birth to Ghent, and had some sympathies with the people over whom he reigned. Philip, the other hand, was simply a Spaniard. He did not speak

came he announced to the Catholics, who were still hoping to hear of their release, that they had all been slaughtered and that he had seen their martyrs' crowns. News from Brielle later confirmed his statement and proved that his vision had coincided with the time of their death.

Mathias Thoran was also the first to receive a miraculous cure through the intercession of the martyrs. He had long suffered from a dangerous hernia, from which he discovered he was completely freed after earnest prayer to those who had already appeared to him in vision. From that time, as the process of beatification bore testimony, the martyrs' power of intercession became especially evident in the cure of that malady. The reason given is that some of them suffered from the same trouble. Veneration of the martyrs spread very rapidly and other miracles were multiplied. Estius, the principal historian of these events, writes of thirty-two sworn testimonies of cures obtained through their intercession. One such miracle was worked in his own favor. He suffered from an incurable disease, from which he was instantly cured on making a vow to go on a pilgrimage to the place, of their martyrdom.

It is obvious from the earliest chronicles, that the place of martyrdom in the ancient convent of the Augustinians was venerated from the time of the martyrs' death. For a while, fear of the Gueux forbade any public demonstration, but the Catholics marked the spot and held it sacred in their hearts. Witnesses at the first processes for beatification told of the respect paid to it. No one was allowed to play games near it or to walk over it. Veneration seems to have assumed some public form quite early, notwithstanding the danger from the heretics. Pilgrimages were made to it at first by the Catholics of Gorcum, many of whom had sought refuge in nearby parts of the

The chronicle preserves an account of what was the most shameful of all these atrocities In telling how the soldiers compelled a young Franciscan novice who had apostasized at the last moment to fire a blunderbuss into the dead body of his one time superior.(1)

A citizen of Brielle who was a good Catholic sought to give honorable burial to the martyrs' remains, and paid a large sum of money to the magistrates of the town for that purpose. His kindly action came too late. La Marek. once his foul deeds had been completed, was nervous of results. He wanted the whole thing forgotten as soon as possible. He gave orders for two deep trenches to be dug. and into them were thrown pell-mell what was left of the martyrs' earthly remains, with nothing to mark their last resting place. So they remained awaiting the time when Almighty God Himself vouchsafed a sign to show the sacredness of that soil.

MIRACLES AND CANONIZATION

On the night and at the hour when the terrible tragedy was being enacted outside Brielle, a pious catholic of Gorcum, named Mathias Thoran was favored with a vision of the glory of the new martyrs for the faith. It was this good man's custom to rise each night to pray that God might preserve the faith In Gorcum. Whilst so engaged in the early morning hours of July 9th, the nineteen saints "appeared to him clothed in white robes and wearing crowns of gold on their heads. When day

(1) Note: there were three who failed to persevere until the end. The first was a young Franciscan novice who later repented, was converted again to the faith and died a good death. The second was a professed religious of the same order whose denial of the faith saved his life but for a short few days. He was rearrested for a crime and executed not as a martyr but as a criminal. The third unhappy man to renounce his faith was the other priest who with Saint Andrew Wouters was first arrested at Dortrecht, and joined the company at Brielle.

the language of the people. He knew nothing, and cared less about their laws and customs. In 1559 he finally quitted the Netherlands altogether, and decided to govern from far-off Spain, with a governor or regent of the Netherlands to represent him at least in name.

One of the most contentious problems of government concerned the Spanish Inquisition, partly religious, but chiefly political, which Charles V had already established in the Netherlands to preserve that part of Europe from the inroads of heresy. It had not succeeded in its purpose. Philip increased its powers and efficiency. But by then Protestantism was strongly, if secretly, entrenched, and was rapidly spreading under the guise of a nationalist movement to throw off foreign domination. As has happened frequently in history, the just and laudable aspirations of a people were availed of to conceal the real intentions of the crafty leaders who had gained popular support. In this case Spain represented all that was catholic and, for that reason, it was a simple matter to confuse Catholicism and Spanish injustice.

The revolt in the Netherlands was not at the outset, a popular movement. It was inspired and planned principally by the nobility who hoped for a larger share in the government of the country. With the accession 'of King Philip, and were, therefore, the more bitterly disappointed when, instead of increasing it, he made his own power more absolute. They had little left but their titles and their wealth. The discontent of the nobles gradually found organized expression under the capable, if cunning and unscrupulous leadership of the Prince of Orange, William of Nassau, nicknamed "The Silent." This man was capable of siding with Catholic or Calvinist , as suited his lust for power, and his sworn purpose of destroying the power of Spain. Opposition at first assumed the form of violent and

oft-repeated protests against the Inquisition and the armed occupation of the Netherlands, both of which stood in the way of action, not only against Spain, but against the Catholic Church. Phillip at length agreed to withdraw the armies, but refused to mitigate the work of the Inquisition. With the army removed, the way was open to revolution.

Though relatively small in numbers the Calvinists excelled in organization through well-trained leaders or preachers. They stirred up a popular feeling against the Spanish King and all he represented. Their propaganda brought the nobles, Catholic as well as Protestant, together in a common cause. An alliance was formed which had for its main purpose the suppression of the Spanish Inquisition, and which became known as "The Nobles' Agreement." A delegation of these nobles, numbering several hundred suddenly: appeared before the King's Regent, Margaret of Parma. The good lady was at first somewhat terrified at their appearance, until reassured by one of the members of her Council, who said of them, rather disparagingly: "Ce ne sont que des Gueux"- "They are only beggars." The name stuck, but these so-called "Gueux" were to play a very important part in the history of the Netherlands, and were to be responsible for the murder of the future Martyrs of Gorcum.

THE MARCH OF THE GUEUX

In the beginning, the "Beggars," composed of Catholic and Protestant nobles, appeared to be a kind of nationalist movement determined to withstand intolerance. But the Calvinists held all the cards and shaped the rebellion's association to suit themselves. Very soon it stood revealed in its true colors of fanatic hatred against the Catholic Church. Once sure of themselves, the preachers roused the worst elements amongst the people. In August, 1566, the revolt broke loose, and no doubt was left as to its real

one. In all cases it was death by strangulation. The haste with which the victims were sent to their deaths was responsible in some cases for a still more protracted agony at the end. The ropes were so badly tied that they slipped and caught in mouth or chin, or else did not tighten when they were thrown from the ladders. But by the early hours of that Tuesday morning, July 9th, 1572, all the sixteen had already entered into the glorious reward of their victorious struggle for the faith of Jesus Christ.

The place in the barn occupied by each of the holy martyrs has been carefully recorded. Saints Nicholas Pieck, Godfrey of Mervel and Cornelius Wyk were hanged from the shorter of the two beams. Saints Jerome of Wiert, Theodore van der Eem, Nicolaus Janssen, Willehad of Denmark, Anthony of Hoornaer, Francis de Roye, Peter of Assche, Leonard Vechel, John Lenartz, John of Cologne, Adrien Janssen and Andrew Wouters from the long beam. Saints James Lacops and Godfrey van Dunyen, there being no place left on the transverse beams, were hanged from the two ladders used for the execution. of the others.

After so long account of brutality and cruelty, we would expect to be spared further horrors. Savagery ought to have ceased at least from sheer satiety. History records further abominations committed against the dead bodies of which only the barest outline can be given. Once cut down from the rafters, the soldiers hacked their bodies to pieces, and then formed a procession back to Brielle with the severed remains of the martyrs on their pikes or adorning their helmets. The place of execution became a show place which attracted the morbid curiosity of the rabble that had howled for their deaths. Once again the soldiers charged money for admission to the scene of their butchery. Later they offered some of the viscera and fats of the bodies for sale to some of the quacks of the town pretending that they were a remedy for certain diseases.

two transverse beams. As he mounted, he addressed his companions: "I show you the ladder to heaven. Follow me like valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ that having battled together, no one of us may miss the eternal triumph which waits us above." As his body dropped and he was left slowly strangling to death, a Calvinist preacher moved forward and began once again to call on him with insulting voice to deny the faith. This final and horrible procedure was repeated as each of the martyrs went to his death. In the case of Saint Jerome of Wiert, who mounted the ladder invoking the aid of the Mother of God and of the saints, especially Saint Peter, the preacher could not wait until he fell from the rafter, but cried out to him: "Do not call on the Mother of God nor on the saints, call on God only." The saint to show his rightful indignation at such an insult to the Blessed Virgin, as well as his supreme contempt of so abominable a piece of proselytizing, managed to get his leg through the rungs of the ladder, and kicked him so violently that he fell back on the floor. The soldiers silenced him by thrusting their spears into his mouth. Thus he and all that followed went bravely to their deaths. Saint John of Cologne, when his turn came, showed no signs of fear, strong in the grace when inspired him in his work, in his self-surrender to the death of a martyr; this was the moment for which his soul yearned, and which was met with the same daring which characterized his life.

The last to die was Saint Gregory van Duynen. Because of his age and feebleness it would seem that the executioners, merciless as they were, hesitated in inflicting so barbarous a death. Fearing for the second time that he was to miss the martyr's crown, already won by his companions, he cried out in a loud voice: "I see the heavens opened, I am longing to be reunited with my companions... The soldiers hesitated no longer.

The last agony of some of the martyrs was a prolonged

character. Bands of desperados, well organized, and led by the preachers, began their reign of terror throughout the country.

Faced with the ruin of their Churches, and with the exclusion of their priests, the Catholic leaders realized how mistaken was their alliance with the Calvinist elements. Discovery came too late. In their concern over their diabolically directed destruction, they once more sided with the government of King Phillip and appealed to him to restore order. He could have saved the situation had he but listened to the advice of the catholic party and of his own Counselors on the spot, and even of the Pope, who exhorted him to clemency. Instead he sent the Duke of Alba at the head of a large army, with orders to punish with the utmost severity, not merely those elements who were responsible, but the entire population of the rebellious Netherlands.

The Duke entered Brussels on August 23rd, 1567, having quelled the rebellion. The nobles for the most part had fled. Two eminent and Catholic members of the nobility, namely, the Counts of Egmont and De Homes, who had always been friendly to Spain, stayed in the city and were arrested. The Count of Egmont had more than once been entertained in the Spanish Court, having gone there as ambassador for the nobles. Obedient to instructions and to show off his own power, Alba put both to death. This action cut sharply across the privileges of their knight-hood, which demanded for them the right to be tried by members of their own order. So deeply did this offend popular feeling that Margaret of Parma resigned the regency. Phillip appointed the Duke of Alba in her stead. With plenary powers the Duke instituted a campaign of merciless repression through a military court, which, because of its many death sentences became known

popularly as the "Blood Tribunal." The imposition of heavy taxes, often twenty and even one hundred per cent, by way of reprisal showed finally how relentless was his determination to enslave and impoverish the entire population. These repressive measures succeeded in driving the Catholics once again into whole-hearted support of the forces of rebellion which, though they knew to be under Calvinist control, represented the only hope of salvation from Spanish tyranny.

Following this first defeat of his forces, the Prince of Orange sought refuge in France, where in a court largely Huguenot in character, he was made welcome, and soon won ardent support for his campaign against Spain and the Catholic Church. With the help of France, and of England as well, he reorganized the Gueux, no longer from the ranks of the nobles of the Netherlands, but by appeal to the blood-lust and greed of the lowest elements in society. The newly organized army was in two sections, called respectively "Les Gueux de Terre," ("The Land Beggars"), and "Les Gueux de Mer" ("The Water Beggars"). With the former he set out through the French frontier to invade the Netherlands. They were met with the fierce opposition of the Duke of Alba's armies and repulsed at every point. The Duke was completely satisfied with his campaign. He regarded himself as a Spanish national hero, and proceeded to erect a statue to himself at Antwerp. He had reckoned without the "Water Beggars; who now enter into the story of the Martyrs of Gorcum.

THE SIEGE OF GORCUM

The attack on the Netherlands by sea was under the command of the notorious William de la Marek, Lord Of Lumey. A fleet of forty ships was fitted out In England,

La Marek only a copy of the Prince of Orange's letter, not the original, and by signing himself with the self-conferred title of Lord Brant.

THE GAINING OF THE CROWN

La Marek received the letters from Gorcum on Monday afternoon. He hesitated for a while as to what action he would take. It is said that late on that Monday night he again read the letters, especially the one from Brant, his underling. His rage increased when realized that he had been served up with merely a copy of the Prince's letter. By midnight he had taken his decision. He would show his independence. No one would snatch the victims or his hate from him. The public execution which he had originally planned to celebrate his triumph over the Church was now no longer possible. Murder must be done more secretly. He knew of just the place in an already sacked and desecrated convent of the Augustinians a short distance outside the town of Brielle. He remembered seeing there an old barn still more or less intact, inside which two beams supporting the roof would serve admirably instead of the public gallows.

About 1 o'clock on the morning of the 9th of July he gave orders to have the prisoners bound in pairs by their arms. Under heavy guard they were marched out of town. On their way to the place of execution which they now knew to be certain, they again confessed to one another, and comforted one another with the thought of the glory that awaited them in but a little while in reward for their constancy. Arrived at the bam they were prepared for the gibbet by being deprived of even the scanty clothing that remained to them. Then the Martyrs' roll-call began.

The first called was the Guardian of the Franciscans. He came forward, and with the rope around his neck bravely mounted the ladder leading to the shorter of the

left all night in their dark and foul pit: Next day two long interrogations took place under a pretense of giving them a fair trial. When these were completed some Calvinist preachers were introduced, and in the presence of the Count of Lumey started a series of theological discussions with the hope of shaking their faith. The points at issue centered on the two great dogmas of the Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist and the Primacy of the Pope as Head of the Church. The martyrs firmly and gladly renewed their profession of Catholic faith. The death penalty was solemnly passed upon them.

But in the midst of the final proceedings danger once again arose of the victims being snatched from the sacrilegious hands of the Count and his Calvinist hordes. The efforts by the Catholics of Gorcum to save the lives of the martyrs had at last borne fruit. Pressed by the weight of public opinion, the magistrates of that town finally brought their appeal to the Prince of Orange. Not knowing that the prisoners had been transferred to Brielle, the leader of the revolt sent a communication to all concerned with them and their treatment in Gorcum. In his letter he ordered that all further molestation of the captives was to cease, and they were to be immediately set free. Brant now acted the part of advocate. He probably resented La Marek's high-handed action in transferring the victims to Brielle, and of course there was always the hope of currying favor with the Prince of Orange. He forthwith sent a copy of the Prince's letter to Count Lumey, with a further communication from the magistrates of Gorcum, and a covering letter of his own. The letter from the magistrates reminded 'La Marek of the good standing of the priests and religious as citizens of Gorcum, as well as the pledge given by his subordinate officer at the time of their surrender. Brant in his own covering letter assumed a very imperious tone, made worse by sending

and manned mostly by pirates and robbers, whom De la Marek had gathered together from various sources. This fleet set out in the Spring of 1572 to attack the northern provinces of the Netherlands, whilst the land armies engaged the more southerly portion. Adverse winds drove them onto the Island of Voorne at the mouth of the River Meuse. They decided to launch their attack from there instead of going North. It was in this way that the road was opened to the siege of Gorcum, higher up the Meuse.

In this campaign so much depended on the type of character who was in command, that a word about the career of Lord Lumey is not out of place. It will explain much of what followed. De la Marek was an adventurer of the worst kind, cruel, crafty, and unscrupulous. He attached himself to the Prince of Orange, who saw in him a tool for the implementing of his own political aims. Once at the top, he left no doubt as to his hatred of the Church. His leadership of the Gueux de Mer provided him with an opportunity of satisfying his lust for power as well as of giving vent to his hate of all things Catholic.

On the Island of Voorne there was a fortified port town called Brielle. Having captured the fortress, La Marek made it his headquarters and the center from which to push on towards other conquests. Important towns along the Meuse such as Zeeland, Enchus. and Dortrecht were taken without difficulty, while the Duke of Alba and his army were still celebrating what they thought was complete victory in Antwerp. Wherever these marauders of the Gueux reached, the pattern of things was the same. Churches and convents were pillaged, priests and religious driven out or killed. The Calvinist elements, already well entrenched in the captured cities, swelled the invading armies of the Gueux. The Count was thus enabled to send

His forces under chosen leaders to different towns, while he directed operations from his fortress of Brielle.

One such force set out along the Meuse under the leadership of an ex-pirate called Brant. He brought his ships along the Meuse and laid siege to Gorcum about twenty miles from Dortrecht. Gorcum was a walled town on the river banks, and like most medieval towns possessed an inner citadel, which served as a stronghold in case of invasion. Early on the morning of the 25th of June the inhabitants awoke to find their town surrounded and threatened by a fleet of thirteen ships on the river below. To most of the citizens it was a surprise attack, but not to the Calvinists. They had already received word of the intended siege and were ready. Before a proper defense could be organized from the walls they had secretly admitted Brant and his soldiers into the town. The only hope for those who resisted lay in occupying the Citadel; which it was hoped might hold out until relief arrived from the Duke of Alba, who was supposed to be on his way once again to settle Spain's account with the revolutionaries. Once the fate of the town was sealed, a large number of the citizens and the Counselors of the City sought refuge within the Citadel. Thither also went the priest and religious of Gorcum. Deceived by his promises and terrified by his imposing display of force, a large number of the Catholics deserted to his cause. This betrayal was to fill still more the martyrs' cup of sorrow during their terrible ordeal for the faith.

With the people on his side Brand made haste to besiege the Citadel. Those who had sought shelter within its walls soon realized that there was little hope of long withstanding his determined attack. After a token resistance, in order to gain honorable terms, they agreed to surrender the Citadel. Brant pledged his word to the conditions

Us before the throne of Thy mercy, now and at the hour of our death." The whole company answered Amen." By then the mood of the crowd had changed, as this final prayer had enraged them still more. From all sides, from the women and children as well as from the men, came angry shouts: "Hang them, hang them."

The tyrant La Marek was not to be hurried. He had whetted the people's lust for the martyrs' blood, but he had still further niceties of torture in store. With the mob still howling for their death, they were led to the fortress of Brielle and cast into the cellars of the building, which were never meant for human habitation. They were dark and foul smelling dungeons into which drained all the refuse of the upper stories. Ankle-deep in filth the martyrs at length found a small portion of the earthen floor which was dry. On this they huddled together with barely room to stand. Half-starved and well-nigh asphyxiated they awaited further developments. Human strength could not have long survived these manifold sufferings. Only the grace of God could maintain unbroken the spirit of His servants.

In this fortress the band of prisoners was further increased by the addition of four other priests who had already been arrested by De La Marek during his campaign. Two of these belonged to the Order of Premonstratensians, namely Saint Adrian Janssen and Saint James Lacopa, both originally from the monastery of Middelburgh, and working as parish priests in Monster near the mouth of the River Meuse. The two others were secular priests, both of Dortrecht, but only one of them persevered unto the end and gained the martyr's crown, namely Saint Andrew Wouters.

Food, just enough to keep them alive, was brought to them at 3 o'clock on that Sunday afternoon. They were

and this time it was to look really like a religious one. To give a grim touch of realism he ordered one of the young Franciscans to carry a religious banner which had been plundered from one of the Catholic churches in the town. All this sacrilegious mockery seemed to move the crowd to a kind of anti-religious delirium. The cavalry in front, forced a passage through the packed streets, and the martyrs were urged forward, and beaten with sticks by two mounted soldiers on each side. The rabble on all sides jeered and yelled and blasphemed; some threw stones and filth on them as they passed. The only reply to all this opprobrium was a sudden intonation of the "Te Deum." This singing gave a fresh inspiration to the mockery. Another gallows had been erected in the central square of the town. To this now La Marek directed his unholy procession. This time they were forced on their knees, whilst again the executioner made a pretense of getting ready. Whilst kneeling around what they thought would be the place of their final sacrifice, they were commanded to sing the "Stabat Mater." The spirit of those who sang that canticle of Our Lady's sorrows at so solemn a moment on their own was quite the opposite of what the enemies of the faith had hoped for. They responded to the command and sang with all the fervor of their hearts. When they came to the last verse they paused; for no one of them deemed himself worthy to recite the prayer. But the mob again remembered the ancient ritual which they had deserted, and shouted "Sing the Oremus." The senior of the company, Saint Godfrey van Dynen then sang this prayer of his own making. "Let us pray; We beseech Thee O Lord God, that the most glorious Virgin Thy Mother, whose holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow at the hour of Thy bitter passion and death, may intercede for

which were demanded, namely, that all would be allowed to go free and keep their possessions. The doors of the Citadel were thrown open on the day following the attack on the town, June 26th. But before any of the refugees had time to emerge, an armed rabble rushed in and made prisoners of every one within. Two who tried to resist this invasion were promptly hanged. All were stripped of their possessions. The Gueux were determined to plunder the whole town.

Driven by Brant and his soldiers to the top story of the building, a day and night of terror was endured by the prisoners. At length, through the pressure of some of the citizens of the town, it was agreed to free the lay people in return for payment of large ransoms. But this favor was not extended to the priests and religious, the first nucleus of the band of future martyrs. Despoiled in part of their prey, the mob now turned their entire attention to the consecrated servants of God. They howled for vengeance on "the shaven pates," supporters of the Papacy and of Spanish despotism.

THE FIRST VICTIMS

In Gorcum. there was a convent of Franciscan Recollets. Eleven of them who took refuge in the Citadel were to die for the faith. Their Guardian was Father Nicholas Piek, of Gorcum. He was thirty eight years of age, renowned as a preacher and held in the highest esteem. He was known for his spirit of poverty and zeal for observance, which he also maintained in the convent over which he ruled, not merely by example and exhortation, but with a joyousness of heart which made burdens light. The keynote of his preaching was the joyful service of God. An ardent lover of Christ Crucified, and of mortification

he had more than once expressed his desire to die for His Divine Master, yet always protested his total unworthiness of so great a favor.

The other members of the Order were:

St. Jerome of Weert, St. Theodore van der Eem, St. Nicasius Janssen, St. Willehad of Denmark, St. Godfrey, of Mervel, St. Anthony of Weert,, St. Anthony of Hoornaer, St. Francis de Rome, St. Peter of Assche -Lay brother, St. Cornelius of Wyk - Lay brother.

From the Order of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine there was Saint John Lenartz of Oisterwick, a very old man who was chaplain to the sisters of his order in Gorcum.

Three Secular priests completed the number of fifteen who were first arrested and confined in the Citadel:-

Saint Godfrey van Duynen was a native of Gorcum and over seventy years of age. At first he was released with the other prisoners on account of his age and feebleness. However, as he was being conducted out of the town by the soldiers, a Calvinist leader asked the soldiers why he was being set free. They replied because he was just an old fool and not worth bothering about. "An old fool! replied the Calvinist, "if he has sufficient wits to be able to say Mass, he ought to have enough to be hanged." Because of this scurrilous joke about the Mass, which was hated equally with the priesthood, he was led back to the prison-back to martyrdom, which, as we shall see, for the same reason he all but missed a second time.

Saint Leonard Vechel of Bois-le-Duc, the parish priest of Gorcum, was well known for his learning as well as his holiness. In his work in the parish he had labored incessantly for souls. He was fearless in his denunciation of vice without human respect for either high or low. By his patience and humility and evident sincerity he was

gathered around the boat to celebrate this new triumph of Calvinism. The prisoners had the choice of remaining on the forward deck in view of all the crowd or of being cooped up in the fetid suffocating atmosphere deep down in the ship's hold. But neither above nor below could they escape the insults and mockery of the rabble. Here again, seeing the plight of these priests and religious, some Catholics endeavored to free them by the offer of ransoms. This generous act only gave their captors the bright idea of charging admission to come on board for closer inspection of the victims. During all that Sunday the captain, already referred to, went on shore to celebrate and left the captives to the mercy of the crew and the mob.

By night time with a full tide they were on their way again further down the river to Brielle, which they reached at dawn on Monday morning. The infamous Count de la Marek was still in bed when news was brought to him of their arrival. He had been eagerly awaiting it, and, hardly taking time to dress, he called out his cavalry, and with his most fanatical followers and a large crowd proceeded to the harbor. The plight presented by his prisoners, far from moving him to pity, became an occasion for derisive laughter and mockery for himself and his entourage. A gallows had been erected close to the river. This was to mark the first stage in the new phase of torture, as well planned by the Count for the victims. He had them bound in pairs, and preceded by the executioner, a long procession was formed towards this place of execution. Arriving at the gallows he made them march backwards three times around it, whilst the executioner made busy on the platform preparing the ropes for their hanging. But all this was only by way of masquerade, and to excite the mob the more. The procession was reformed

own Catholic people who had apostatized, and now joined with their enemies in insulting them as they passed along their way to the wayside. For example, it is told of one such, who held aloft a torch to light the way to the river for the leader of the Gueux; "Look," he said, this candle, this very candle which I carried in the procession for Corpus Christi, is used today to guide you to the fortress. It does not shine less brightly now than it did then."

Father Leonard Vechel recognized the helmsman as he came on board as one of his old parishioners. "O my friend," he cried out, "can it be you that is to steer us to our death!" The man bowed his head in shame, saying: "Alas, Father, I am no longer my own master."

As the boat sailed down the river the martyrs took their last look at the town they had loved and served so well. Father Leonard wept as it slowly disappeared from sight. "My poor Gorcum," he cried out, "you sleep, you sleep, if you but knew how terrible are the evils that are to encompass you" These words were rightly looked on as prophetic. How accurately they were fulfilled may be judged from the pestilence, the famine, the desolation of civil war which devastated it some years later, not to speak of the darkness of unbelief which deprived it for over thirty years of all Catholic worship. To these many causes of sadness was added the crowning one in the knowledge that the captain of the boat, one Omal by name, was an ex-priest, who had thrown in his lot with the Calvinists.

About 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, July 7th, the boat tied up at a small fishing harbor at Dortrecht, to await a favorable tide down the river. Already idle crowds had gathered to watch its approach. Word was quickly passed around and the anti-Catholic element of the town

said to have brought many back from the error of their ways.

Saint Nicholas Poppel of Werd was assistant to Father Vechel, and equally zealous in his priestly work for souls. At the outset of the siege he had tried to rally the citizens to defend the city, he appealed to the magistrate's, and stirred up the courage of the soldiers before the town was betrayed. When no hope remained he rescued the Blessed Sacrament and brought the Sacred Hosts with him into the Citadel. On the first night of terror all there went to Confession and received Holy Communion.

Our story of martyrdom carries us now over the ten days following the onslaught on the Citadel. During that entire period these fifteen priests and religious were completely at the mercy of the ruffians who had captured the town. On a Friday, the first day after their arrest, having had nothing to eat since the day before, they were left without food until late in the evening when their captors deliberately supplied them with tempting dishes of meat, hoping that they would break the law of the Church. Refusal to do so became the first excuse for the ill-treatment which was to continue without abatement until their death. The soldiers were still convinced that these men held the secret of hidden treasure. The hope of wrenching that secret from them, as well as their determination to break their constancy in the faith explains the long drawn out and terrible punishment which they meted out to these victims of their hate.

Saint Leonard Vechel, the parish priest, was first interrogated about his wealth. He gave them what little money he still had on his person. Seeing no further hope of gain in that quarter, they turned their attention to the aged Saint Godfrey van Duynen, whom they still regarded as a fool. He seemed to convince them that he

had nothing. 'Quite possibly," they answered, "it is not to one like you, but to that old confessor of nuns that rich people would give their gifts." So saying, they turned their attention on Saint Theodore van der Eem, the Augustinian. Their rage was growing with each new disappointment. They held a pistol to his heart and threatened to shoot him unless he revealed where his wealth was hidden. He also assured them that he had nothing to give. Maddened by his calm as well as by his reply, they began to blaspheme against the Blessed Eucharist; "Well, then, give us the God which you made in the Mass. You have often preached against us; how do you feel now with this pistol to your heart?" Believing that they were there and then going to kill him, the future martyr joyfully pronounced his final confession of faith. "I believe in the real presence of my God under the Sacramental species. If you consider that sufficient reason for my death, then kill me. I am happy to die after this confession of my faith which you have required of me." He then threw himself on his knees crying out confidently "O Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Spurning him roughly aside, they next turned their attention to Saint Nicholas Poppel, the curate. With him still harsher measures were adopted. Seizing the cincture or cord from one of the Franciscan fathers, they bound one end of it around the saint's neck and looped the other over the door. By this means they pulled him up off the ground repeatedly, ceasing only in order to question him again and again as to where he had hidden his treasures. Half-choked he could only reply by gestures that he had nothing. They desisted from this brutality only when they feared their victim was about to die. He was left unconscious on the floor.

The final hope for wealth was from the Sons of "Saint Francis. They all replied to questioning the same way,

Gorcum, he was arrested. Brought before Brant and his henchmen, he was accused of treason on the plea that his frequent visits to Gorcum were for the purpose of betraying the town and the Gueux to the Spanish King. The trumped up charge provided the Calvinists with a pretense of legality for his arrest. Beneath its cloak they could gloat over the addition of another priest victim of the hatred of the Church. Thrown into the Citadel with the others, he who had risked his life for them, now willingly suffered with them.

FAREWELL TO GORCUM

The arrest and ill-treatment of this newest victim of the heretics brought about a renewal of protests from the citizens of Gorcum who had remained staunch in their faith. Ransoms were again offered for the captives' liberation, but without success. Appeal was made to the magistrates of the town, who at length took action, by reminding Brant of his pledge to spare the lives of all taken in the Citadel. Brant in his turn tried to evade responsibility by declaring that he was powerless to act without orders from his higher superiors in the army. However, this new popular movement on behalf of the prisoners was sufficient to inspire the Calvinist leaders with fear that their prey might be snatched from their hands. Word of the new developments was immediately sent to Count de la Marek at his headquarters at Brielle. He took immediate action by ordering that all the captives be sent straight away to himself for final judgment.

At 1 o'clock in the morning of July 6th, the sixteen victims were dragged half-naked and weakened by their sufferings, out of the Citadel, and thrown into a large boat that waited for them on the River Meuse. The saddest experience of that journey was the recognition of many of their

place made it impossible for him to wear the habit of the Order, so he went about his work dressed less conspicuously as a Secular priest. By these long years of labor and more especially by his final sacrifice, Saint John shines out with some of his companion martyrs as "The Splendor of Parish Priests. That work is not alien to the spirit of the Dominican Order, which must adapt its apostolate for souls to the situation at hand. Today parish work is linked with the full Dominican life. In many countries and in the Dutch Province, the tradition set by Saint John is still strong amongst his brethren.

Saint John's biographers speak highly of his zeal in the parish of Hoornaer. They tell how he became a perfect example of the Good Shepherd, especially in going after the sheep that was lost. No danger daunted him. He thought nothing of himself except as an instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of souls, so dearly purchased by the blood of Christ. No cost to himself was too great when even one soul called for his help.

Daring is part of the virtue of fortitude, and is one of St. John's most characteristic virtues. Once news of the arrest of the religious and priests of Gorcum reached the parish priest of Hoornaer, his ardent spirit of charity urged him to come to their aid, whatever the consequences. He was not rash, he took all precautions possible. He went in and out of Gorcum in the disguise of a layman. In the parish of Gorcum he secretly administered the sacraments to those deprived of the spiritual consolations of their own priests. He managed to get into the Citadel itself, and bring the poor victims the Bread of Life. It is not easy to imagine what consolation his visits there must have meant to these poor sufferers for Christ. But his constant goings and comings were noticed, and a watch was set on his movements. One day, when called upon to baptize a newly born baby in

their rule forbade them to have any wealth of their own. Their persecutors decided that torture of the younger members might bring results. One of them, a novice, overcome by suffering let slip something about Father Guardian being the only one who had charge of the community goods. They first laid hands on Saint Jerome of Wiert, thinking that he was the superior. Saint Nicholas Piek immediately stepped forward, and boldly took up the challenge by protesting that he was the person they were looking for. This courageous action made the bullies all the bolder, since they hated any evidence of courage from their enemies. They proceeded to hang him from the door with his own Franciscan cord as they had already done with Father Poppel. To their repeated demands about the hiding place of the conventual wealth he replied that they had already seized any valuables they possessed when they took the sacred vessels which he had brought into the Citadel for safe keeping. That did not save him. They continued to haul him up and down by the neck until the cord broke and he fell senseless on the floor. Even then they proceeded to kick him brutally, and completed their torture by pushing burning brands into his mouth, ears and nostrils.

Tired out by their efforts, and because of the lateness of the hour on that Friday night, they finally left the prisoners in peace. Those who were able, immediately went to the succor of Father Nicholas, and were surprised to discover that he was still breathing. On finally regaining consciousness his first words expressed disappointment that he had not gained the martyr's crown. "I had hoped that my good Master would have received me, but His holy will be done."

Next morning the soldiers returned with knives and hatchets with the intention of hacking the Saint's body

to bits because they also had been certain that he was dead. They were all the more furious at seeing him alive. "He refuses to die, this bald pate, his soul is stuck in his belly, but we know how to drive it out." They continued to kick him as he writhed in agony on the floor. But by now they decided to keep him alive for further torture with his companions.

These assaults continued unremittingly for ten days. All were subjected to various forms and degrees of suffering. Relays of soldiers continued their sacrilegious persecution, so that the holy martyrs were never left alone. These inhuman monsters vied with one another in inventing new forms of punishment, and even brought in sightseers to witness their prowess and originality, as well as to gloat over the misery of these servants of God.

It is probable that the martyrs would have been put to death during these terrible days, were it not for fear of consequences. There was still a strong public opinion amongst the notables of the town, which resented the action of the Gueux, and which might hate repercussions afterwards on those found guilty. Neither Brant nor his men could ignore the fact that they had broken their word given at the surrender of the Citadel. There was also the Prince of Orange to be reckoned with, as head of the rebellion. His influence was used later, with good effect, though too late to save their lives.

SAINT JOHN ENTERS THE LISTS

A few miles from Gorcum there was a village called Hoornaer. It was, perhaps, too insignificant to attract the eyes of the marauders. The spiritual needs of its people were looked after by a German Dominican, known as

Father John of Cologne. There is but little known of him prior to the capture of Gorcum. He entered the Order of Preachers at the Convent of Holy Cross at Cologne, probably also his native city. This convent had had a long history of learning and of saintliness. The minds of its young Dominican students were formed, not merely by the teaching of its professors, but by the traditions which still pervaded its hallowed cloisters from past alumni such as Saint Albert the Great, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Blessed Ambrose of Siena, Blessed Henry Suzo, John Tauler. In such surroundings was molded the generous heart of Father John of Cologne. But his lot was not to be cast among the brilliant theologians or writers. Providence designed him for the simple role of missionary work outside his own Province. As the hand of persecution grew ever heavier in the Netherlands, the need of priests to carry on the work in the parishes became ever more serious. Father John was impressed by the accounts reaching Cologne, not far from the border, of the sufferings of his brethren in the priesthood, and of the perilous condition of their people bereft of their shepherds. He was filled with ardent desire to fulfill the command of his Divine Master, and go as a lamb amongst the wolves. Knowing as he did the mounting hatred of the Calvinists for everything Catholic, but especially the priesthood, he was well aware of the risk he was taking to his own life. But God Who called him even in those early days to the privilege of future martyrdom, inspired him with a courage which would eventually lead him into the Citadel of suffering in Gorcum.

He obtained permission from his Provincial to go to Holland, and was assigned as parish priest to the little town of Hoornaer. He labored there indefatigably for twenty years. The circumstances of the time and of the