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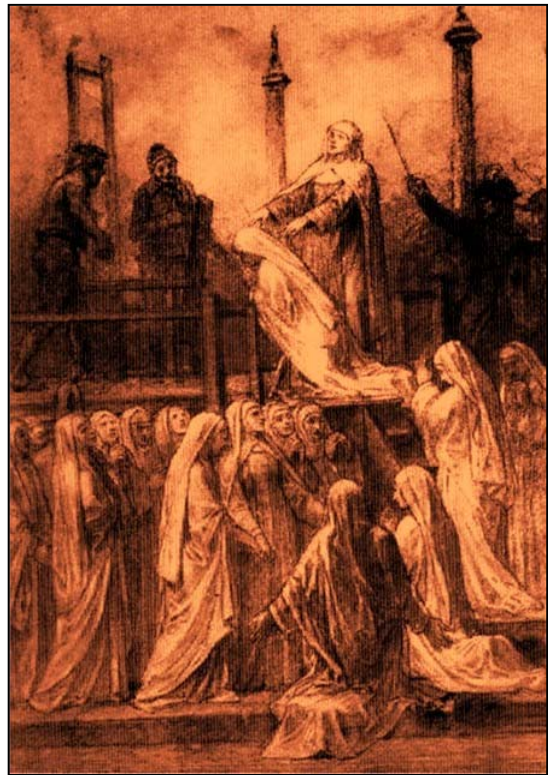
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THE SIXTEEN DISCALCED CARMELITE MARTYRS OF COMPIÈGNE: BLAMELESS VICTIMS OF A REVOLUTION GONE AWRY ✦ 17 JULY 1794

There was something eerie in the air as the tumbrils passed through the streets that led to Place du Trône Renversé. It was, in fact, too eerie that the normally noisy and violent crowd was “in a respectful silence such as has never been accorded throughout the Revolution.” No rotten fruit was pelted and no clamorous insult was raised on the condemned women and men. That evening one only heard the ethereal chanting of sixteen Discalced Carmelite nuns on their way to death.

These women could hardly be recognized as nuns. They did not wear their veils and their wimples had been cut away, thus exposing their necks. Nonetheless, they were wrapped in their white mantle.

At around eight in the evening, after a ride of two hours, the tumbrils finally arrived at the place of execution. A horrid stench of rotting flesh from the common graves in nearby Picpus and of putrifying blood beneath the scaffold greeted them. The crowd remained reverently silent. The Carmelites have finally come face to face with the dreaded guillotine. Led by their courageous prioress, Mo. Thérèse of St. Augustine, they sang the Christian hymn of praise: “You are God: we praise you; You are the Lord: we acclaim you; You are the eternal Father: all creation worships you.... The glorious company of apostles praises



THE SIXTEEN CARMELITE MARTYRS OF
COMPIÈGNE

you. The noble fellowship of prophets praises you. The white-robed army of martyrs praises you...”

* * *

Many historians agree that the twentieth century traces its foundations to the events that shook France from 1789 to, strictly speaking, 1795. The French Revolution took place amid an *ancien regime* in social disarray. Historian Edward Tannenbaum capsulized: “Many people knew that something was wrong. There was an economic crisis aggravated by population pressure; the aristocratic resurgence exasperated sections of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry; enlightened political ideas were raising constitutional issues, and enlightened despotism was not working very well.”¹

With the rising of the masses, an era of radical ideas unconceived beforehand was ushered - equality of all before the law; freedoms of speech, religion and opinion; resistance to oppression; rights to property, security and liberty. A new epoch practically began with this “mother of revolutions.”

Two institutions gravely affected by it were the monarchy and the Church. With the Church and State so intimately linked together in the old order, with a privileged clergy being used and misused to defend the status quo, and with a wealthy hierarchy scandalizing the impoverished populace with its wantonness and loose morals, the Church was truly bound to be shattered by the revolution's impact.

The clash, however, of the old and new orders produced a violent friction. Reforms were plenty, indeed, but violence also abounded, caused by years of bottled hatred or plain paranoia. Soon, freedoms highly idealized by the revolution like choice, conscience and religion were trampled

¹ Edward Tannenbaum, *European Civilization since the Middle Ages* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 306.

upon. There were too many victims in the process, many of whom were commoners exercising their democratic rights. Among them were the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne.

* * *

The twenty-one nuns of the Carmel of the Annunciation externally appeared unperturbed by the melee outside the walls of their monastery. They continued with the routine life that had been followed by their predecessors since the monastery was established in 1641. They were composed of fifteen choir nuns, three *converses* (lay sisters or sisters of the white veil), and one choir novice.² There were also two *tourières* (extern sisters) who, in the strictest sense, were laywomen and not Carmelite religious although they looked after the material and business needs of the community. Most of the sisters were between forty and fifty, three were less than thirty, and three were more than seventy.

The nuns came from every social stratum of French society and each had her unique personality. “Taken as a whole, the community does not present an exceptional milieu. Their fathers were a master purse-maker, shoemaker, turner, laborer, clerk, and an employee of the observatory. Only one is a counsellor of the king, one a noble squire. Few were blue-blooded; most were commoners. The grille sheltered, both from the psychological and social points of view, a world in a nutshell.” The lone novice of peasant stock had for her formator the grandniece of the great aristocrat Jean-Baptiste Colbert. The pretty and

² Prior to Vatican II, nuns in monasteries with papal enclosure were classified into choir nuns and lay sisters. The distinction was primarily based on literacy. *Converses* replaced the chanting of the breviary by reciting a number of vocal prayers and engaged themselves more with manual works. In Carmelite monasteries, a choir nun wore a black veil while a *converse* wore a white one. These distinctions no longer exist.

young assistant infirmarian laughed at the whims of the beloved old sister “philosopher”. The well-balanced prioress had for her assistant a nun passionately in love with the divine office.

Inevitably, the Carmelites were also affected by the revolution. Because of the escalating violence and growing uncertainty, Mo. of St. Augustine talked with Sr. Saint Francis Xavier, a *converse*, who was due to make her profession in 1789, and presented to her the dilemma menacing all religious orders. The young sister responded naively: “Ah, my dear good Mother, you can be quite in peace. So long as I have the happiness of being consecrated to my God, that is all I want. So, Mother, do not worry about me. Whatever happens, the good God will take care of all.”

The Constituent Assembly provisionally suspended the profession of vows in all monasteries on October 29, 1789. Mo. Thérèse was distressed that the decree prevented Sr. Constance, the lone novice, from making her profession. She wrote to a former postulant: “Sr. Constance remains always a novice here. Troubles have not been lacking on the side of her family: now they do not want her letters anymore or to hear her spoken of. The Lord permits this to be assured of her fidelity, and she accounts herself happy if they leave her in peace as at present. She hopes that the good God will at last touch their hearts and that they will look on her perseverance without sorrow.”

* * *

On July 12, 1790, the National Assembly implemented the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Among its articles was a provision for the suppression of the monastic orders and the “liberation” of monks and nuns who would choose to renounce their vows. On August 15, the members of the Directory of the Compiègne district came to the monastery to interrogate each nun and offer them “liberty”.

The unanimous reply of the religious was to remain and keep their vows. Some of the nuns made their declarations more vivid:

“For fifty-six years I have been a Carmelite. I desire to have the same number of years more to be consecrated to the Lord.” (Sr. of Jesus Crucified)

“I became a religious by my own will. I have made up my mind to go on wearing this habit, even if I have to purchase this joy with my own blood.” (Sr. Euphrasie)

“A good spouse desires to remain with her husband. I do not wish to abandon my spouse.” (Sr. Saint Francis Xavier)

“If I will be able to double the bonds of my attachment to God, then, with all my strength and zeal, I will do so.” (Sr. Thérèse of the Heart of Mary)

In February of the following year, the nuns were ordered to elect, in the presence of the municipal officers, a prioress and a bursar. Mo. Thérèse was unanimously re-elected; Mo. Henriette was voted bursar. The state then provided the eighteen intern nuns with decent pensions.

* * *

Another provision of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy required priests and religious to take a loyalty oath that required them “to be faithful to the nation, the law and the king; and to maintain the constitution with all their power.” What the ambiguous statement meant was that they were to give the revolutionary government the right to control and democratize the Church in complete disregard of Papal jurisdiction. Pope Pius VI issued on March 10, 1791 a condemnation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and forbade the clergy to take it. A schism was inevitable. The clergy was split between the “juring” (those who took the oath) and “non-juring” bishops and priests.

Two weeks after Easter of 1792, the guillotine was installed in Paris. Everyone

was talking about it, even in the Carmel of Compiègne, and everyone feared it. In September, around 1,400 “enemies of the Republic” were killed during the infamous September Massacre, among them were hundreds of non-juring priests.

A belief that they would all be called to martyrdom someday prevailed in the community. Between June and September of that year, Mo. Thérèse proposed that the community offer their lives to God with an act of oblation “in order that the divine peace which Christ has brought to the world may be restored to the Church and to the State.” All promised to unite themselves to it, except for Sr. of Jesus Crucified and Sr. Charlotte of the Resurrection, the two most senior nuns. Trembling and fearful that they would end more than fifty years of peaceful life in Carmel with a bloody death, both withdrew from the community. Before the day ended, however, they prostrated themselves before the prioress and tearfully asked forgiveness for their momentary weakness. All the nuns renewed the act until the very day of their death.

* * *

On August 14, 1792, the Convention ordered all French citizens receiving state pension to take the Oath of Liberté-Egalité which required them “to be faithful to the nation and to maintain liberty and equality or to die defending them.” Three days later, all religious houses were ordered vacated.

At this point in time, the Carmelites of Compiègne had been reduced to nineteen with the death of two sisters. The remaining nuns left the monastery and garbed secular clothes on September 14, 1792. They divided themselves into four groups with the prioress, sub-prioress, bursar and another nun heading each.

On September 19, with the permission of Fr. Rigaud, their ecclesiastical superior, they all took the Oath of Liberté-Egalité. Thus, all, including the *tourières*, were eligible to

receive pension from the state. Only Sr. Constance, the novice, was excluded from this right because the members of the Directory of Compiègne did not consider her a full religious.

For two years, each community strove to continue being faithful to their regular observances. “The beautiful accord which reigned among all the sisters ensured that each one never deviated from her duties. One could say that obedience was practiced with all the exactitude of the cloister.” It was difficult to find a priest to celebrate the Eucharist; nonetheless, the sisters faithfully recited the divine office at the appointed hours. Since their houses were not far apart, they managed to be in frequent contact with one another. Secretly, they sustained the members of the Confraternity of the Scapular and continued its enrollment. The extern sisters continued to buy provisions and to share these out among the different houses. The dynamism of the entire community was sustained by the daily renewal of the act of oblation and the solicitude of Mo. Thérèse.

* * *

Situations worsened when Maximilien Robespierre and his henchmen, the radical and fanatical Jacobins, came into power during the summer of 1793. The Committee of Public Safety was established to protect the republic from foreign invasions and to control prices and wages all over the country. Along with this was institutionalized the infamous Reign of Terror. It not only apprehended and punished with death those who refused to be conscripted into the army but also anyone suspected of any unpatriotic behavior - or thoughts!

Within its brief one-year and one-month existence, over 300,000 were imprisoned of whom 50,000 were executed by musketry or in the dreaded guillotine or died in prison. France was literally transformed into an abattoir for her own people. Obsession

replaced reality as the radical leaders sought to establish a utopic society.

Anti-clericalism reached its apex and, later, the revolution began to take the guise of a religion. First there was the abolition of the Gregorian calendar. Then churches were turned into “Temples of Reason”. Next, the juring clergy were ordered to marry (about 20,000 heeded). Finally, Robespierre established the Cult of the Supreme Being in an attempt to totally de-christianize France.

In March 1794, Sr. Marie of the Incarnation went to Paris to settle a serious family problem. Her stay was prolonged until June. Mo. Thérèse was also obliged to go to the capital on June 13 to bid farewell to her old and widowed mother who was to return to Franche-Comté, the cradle of her family. During that sojourn, the two nuns were by chance in the streets when tumbrils carrying those to be guillotined passed before them. Sr. Marie tried to get Mo. Thérèse to avoid the sight. The prioress, however, refused to move: “My good sister, allow me the sad consolation of seeing how martyrs go to their death.” Sr. Marie later wrote that two of the condemned fixed a deep gaze on them as if to say, “Soon, you will follow us.”

On the evening of June 21, Mo. Thérèse promptly returned by stagecoach to Compiègne. She was met by some of the nuns who informed her that members of the Committee for Revolutionay Surveillance had searched all their four abodes that very morning and seized all their papers. The search continued the following day. A portrait of the guillotined king, a copy of his will, letters from their deported non-juring confessor and scapulars of the Sacred Heart were found and branded “seditious”. They also took the food prepared for the nuns, depriving them of nourishment that day.

* * *

As previously mentioned, nineteen of the Carmelites of Compiègne were still alive by the middle of 1792. During the time of

the arrest, Sr. Marie of the Incarnation was still in Paris. Since March 1794, Sr. Thérèse of Jesus and Sr. Stanislas of Providence were in Rosières. Thus only sixteen were arrested. Through the biography written by Sr. Marie, we were not only able to know much about the arrest and execution of her community (in this entire chapter, unless noted otherwise, her accounts are enclosed in quotations) but also about their lives.

Mo. Thérèse of St. Augustine (Marie Madeleine Claudine Lidoine; b. September 22, 1752 in Paris), a woman “so loved by God,” was serving her second term as prioress when the Revolution struck. Her correspondences reveal a woman of great human and supernatural qualities.

Mo. St. Louis (Marie Anne Françoise Brideau; b. December 7, 1751 in Belfort), the sub-prioress, was given to silence and gentleness. She celebrated the divine office with admirable remembrance and exactitude.

Mo. Henriette of Jesus (Marie Françoise de Croissy; b. June 18, 1745 in Paris), the novice mistress, was the predecessor of Mo. Thérèse. She “made herself esteemed for the qualitties of her heart, her tender piety, zeal, the happy combination of every religious virtue.”

Sr. Charlotte of the Resurrection (Anne Marie Madeleine Thouret; b. September 16, 1715 in Mouy, Oise), the eldest member of the community, possessed a lively temperament. Fond of frequenting balls in her youth, she entered Carmel “after a tragic event.” She served as infirmarian to the point of developing a spinal column deformation that she endured until death.

Sr. of Jesus Crucified (Marie Anne Piedcourt; b. December 9, 1715 in Paris) was younger than Sr. Charlotte by a few months but was senior to her by profession. She occupied the office of sacristan for many years. Speaking about their persecutors, she said: “How can we be angry with them when they open the gates of heaven for us?”

Sr. Thérèse of the Heart of Mary (Marie Hanisset; b. January 18, 1742 in Reims), first sister of the turn and third bursar, was endowed with wisdom, prudence and discernment.

Sr. Thérèse of St. Ignatius (Marie Gabrielle Trezel; b. April 4, 1743 in Compiègne), the “hidden treasure” of the community, was undoubtedly a mystic. Asked why she never brought a book for meditation, she replied: “The good God has found me so ignorant that none but He would be able to instruct me.”

Sr. Julie Louise of Jesus (Rose Cretien de Neuville; b. December 30, 1741 in Evreux) entered Carmel as a widow. She dreaded the guillotine but she chose to stay with her sisters.

Sr. Marie Henriette of Providence (Marie Annette Pelras; b. June 16, 1760 in Cajarc, Lot), the assistant infirmarian, first entered the Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction of Nevers but left it for the more secluded Carmelite life. Youngest among the choir nuns, she possessed a most exquisite beauty.

Sr. Euphrasie of the Immaculate Conception (Marie Claude Cyprienne Brard; b. May 12, 1736 in Bourth, Eure), the “philosopher” and “*joie de vivre* of the recreation,” admitted that she was filled for some time with resentment against her prioress. She worked very hard on herself that in the end she was able to overcome her negative disposition.

Along with these ten choir nuns were three lay sisters. Sr. Marie of the Holy Spirit (Angélique Roussel; b. August 3, 1742 at Fresne-Mazancourt, Somme) was afflicted by atrocious pains throughout her body, which she heroically bore up until her death. Sr. St. Martha (Marie Dufour; b. October 2, 1741 at Bannes, Sarthe) edified her companions with her virtues. Sr. St. Francis Xavier (Elisabeth Juliette Vérolot; b. January 13, 1764 at Lignièrès, Aube) was frank, lively, and full of goodness.

The youngest member of the community was Sr. Constance (Marie Geneviève Meunier; b. May 28, 1765 at Saint Denis, Seine). Circumstances forced her to remain as a novice for seven years. Her parents wanted her to return home and even sent the police for this purpose. Sr. Constance told them: “Gentlemen, I thank my parents if, out of love, they fear the danger that may befall me. Yet nothing except death can separate me from my mothers and sisters.”

The two *tourières* were blood sisters. Anne Catherine Soiron (b. February 2, 1742 in Compiègne) tearfully begged the prioress not to let her and her sister be separated from the community during those crucial hours. Thérèse Soiron (b. January 23, 1748 in Compiègne) possessed such a rare beauty and charming personality that the Princess de Lamballe wanted her to be attached to her court. She responded: “Madame, even if your Highness would offer me the crown of France, I would prefer to remain in this house, where the good God placed me and where I found the means of salvation which I would not find in the house of your Highness.”

* * *

On June 23, the sixteen nuns were forcibly reunited in the *Maison de Reclusion*, a former monastery of the Visitation Nuns. In the room next to theirs were imprisoned a group of English Benedictine Nuns from Cambrai. The following day, the Carmelites retracted before the town mayor the Oath of *Liberté-Égalité* they had made. Thus, they were signing their own death warrant. Meanwhile, their captors waited for instructions from the Committee for Public Safety in Paris.

The three-week imprisonment was very harsh. The food was hardly palatable and the sick were not given any special diet. A few straws on the bare floor served as their beds. The two communities of nuns were forbidden to communicate with each other yet, somehow, the abbess of the

Benedictines, Mo. Mary Blyde, was able to converse with the Carmelites on two occasions. Fresh clothings were denied the nuns, yet they were forbidden to wash their soiled clothes. After many solicitations, they were finally granted a particular day to do their washing - but they never even had the chance to finish their laundry.

At 10:00 a.m. of July 12, members of the Revolutionary Committee of Compiègne came with orders from Paris to transfer the Carmelites to the dreaded Conciergerie at the capital. Mo. Thérèse protested the untimely order. Their civilian clothes had just been put to soak. She requested permission to seek fresh clothing for her sisters to bring along. This was straightforwardly refused. Therefore, the nuns had to go to Paris wearing part of what was once their religious habit, the only dry clothings that were available.

After finishing their meager repast, the sixteen bade *adieu* to their Benedictine companions. With hands bound behind their back, they were herded into two carts for the long journey to Paris. Along with them was arrested a citizen named Mulot de la Ménardière, accused as an accomplice of the nuns. A great number of women, many of whom the nuns helped in many ways, sneered at them: "They do well to destroy them. They are useless mouths. Bravo! Bravo!" Mo. Thérèse meanwhile calmed Catherine Soiron who was outraged by the way they were maltreated.

* * *

The caravan arrived at the Conciergerie between three to four in the afternoon of the following day. With their hands still tied behind them, the sisters went down one by one and stood waiting in the prison courtyard. However, the octogenarian Sr. Charlotte, deprived of her crutch and with no one to assist her, could not descend from the cart. An impatient soldier jumped aboard and callously threw her upon the paving stones where she laid motionless. Fearing he had killed her, the soldier lifted

up the old nun whose face was covered with blood. "Believe me, " she told him, "I am not angry with you. On the contrary, I thank you for not having killed me for if I have died in your hands, I would have been deprived of the joy and glory of martyrdom."

While waiting for their trial, the nuns occupied themselves with prayers and works of charity. They sought the sick among the imprisoned and attended to them even until late in the night. During daylight, they continued to celebrate the divine office faithfully. The other prisoners woke in the middle of the night hearing the nuns chanting Matins. Sr. Julie Louise celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16) by composing a canticle to the tune of the Marsellaise. Mo. Thérèse continually supported the sisters with her exemplary courage, calmness and her maternal attentiveness to the needs of their distressed bodies.

* * *

At around 9:00 a.m. of July 17, the day after the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the sixteen were brought to the Courtroom of Liberty where the Revolutionary Tribunal performed its functions. They were led before the three judges and the notorious Antoine Fouquier-Tinville, the Terror's implacable public prosecutor. He read the Act of Accusation:

"With regard the ex-Carmelite religious Lidoine, Thouret, Brard, Dufour and the others, they kept up, although separated by their abodes, anti-revolutionary meetings and cabal among themselves and wish others whom they brought together and, by taking up again their spirit of sisterhood, conspired against the Republic. A voluminous correspondence found in their possession proves that they did not cease to plot against the Revolution. A portrait of Capet (Louis XVI), his will, the hearts, which are the rallying signs

of the Vendean rebels,³ fanatical puerility, accompanied by the letter of an *émigré* priest dated 1793, proved that they were in correspondence with the external enemies of France.”

Such are the marks of the Confederacy formed among themselves. They lived under obedience to a superior and, as for their principles and vows, their letters and writings bear witness to them... They are more than a band, an assembly of rebels, with criminal hope of seeing the French people returned to the chains of tyrants and to the slavery of bloodthirsty priests who are impostors as well...

Sr. Marie Henriette did not fail to ignore the phrase “fanatical puerility”. She asked Fouquier-Tinville to explain:

“What I mean is your attachment to your childish beliefs, your stupid religious practices.”

“My dear Mother and sisters, “ said the nun, “let us rejoice in the Lord for this. We are going to die for the cause of our holy religion, our faith, our reliance in the holy Roman Catholic Church.”

Mo. Thérèse addressed the judges: “The letters that we have received are from the chaplain of our house condemned by your law to be deported. These letters contain nothing more than spiritual advises. At most, if these correspondences be a crime, this should be considered as mine, not of the community as our Rule forbids the sisters from making any correspondence, even with their nearest relations, without the permission of their superior. If therefore you must have a victim, here she is: it is I alone whom you must strike. My sisters are innocent.”

³In the Vendean region, a counter-revolution movement arose because of discord among the populace with the policies of the Parisian government. The majority of the fighters were anti-conscriptionists with unquestioned loyalty to the Church. They used the symbol of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a rallying emblem.

“They are your accomplices!” was the blunt reply of the presiding judge. In the end, the sixteen were convicted as enemies of the people. A sentence was given: death by guillotine.

The nuns received their penalty with serenity and joy. However, Thérèse Soiron fainted. Tension, fatigue, and lack of sleep and nourishment finally broke her down. The prioress quickly asked a constable for a glass of water for the *tourière*. When she regained consciousness, Thérèse asked pardon for her weakness and assured them she was ready to be faithful to the end.

After that incident, it became quite clear that the nuns needed something to eat. After all, they had not eaten anything since the break of dawn. With the permission of the prioress, Mo. St. Louis bartered a pelisse in exchange for sixteen cups of chocolate. Thus, while the executioner carried out on the other condemned prisoners the last “toilet” -- the trimming away of hair and ripping of any clothing that may impede the decapitation of their heads-- the nuns had the opportunity to dine in common before their execution.

The sentence was to be completed that same evening. The community was praying the Office for the Dead when they were summoned. The nuns bade farewell to the other prisoners, among them was a devout Catholic named Denis Blot: “How come our dear Blot is crying? Rather, you should rejoice to see us at the end of our trials. Recommend us well to the good God and the most holy Virgin that they may assist us in these final hours. We will pray for you when we are in heaven.”

* * *

Cloaked in their white mantles and with hands bound at their backs, the sixteen recollectedly boarded the tumbrils that would bring them to *Place du Trône*

*Renversé*⁴ where the guillotine awaited them. Along the way, priests disguised as sans-culottes gave them absolution. The journey was long. . . but the air was permeated by their solemn chants as if they were in choir: “Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. In your compassion, blot out my offense.... Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy....”

The guillotine had been standing for more than a month already at the Barrière du Trône. Upon arriving there, Sr. Constance suddenly accused herself before Mo. Thérèse of not having finished her divine office. Tenderly the prioress, told her: “Be strong, daughter. You will finish it in Paradise!” Twenty-four others were executed that day but we do not know any detail concerning them.

At the foot of the scaffold, the prioress asked the executioner if she might die last so that she could encourage and support her sister. She also asked for a few minutes to prepare them. This time her requests were granted. They sang once more, invoking the Holy Spirit: “Creator Spirit, come...” Afterward, they all renewed their religious vows. The ceremony completed, one unknown sister was overheard saying: “O my God! I am just too happy if this little sacrifice calms your wrath and lessens the number of victims.”

One by one, from the youngest to the oldest, the nuns were called.

“Citizeness Marie Geneviève Meunier!”

Summoned by her real name, Sr. Constance, knelt before Mo. Thérèse asking for her blessing and the permission to die. After receiving her superior's blessing, the novice kissed the red clay statuette of the Virgin and Child that Mo. Thérèse had been concealing in her hand.

Sr. Constance mounted the scaffold singing the psalm the nuns chanted daily to

⁴Before the revolution, the site was simply known as Place du Trône. In 1880, the name was changed again to Place de la Nation.

announce their coming into the house of God: “O praise the Lord, all you nations...”

Her sisters followed: “...acclaim him, all you peoples! Strong is his love for us; he is faithful for ever.”

All the sisters followed the example of the novice. They each went to their death joining the song of those waiting for their turn. While the blade of the guillotine snuffed their lives one by one, the chorus progressed into a decrescendo. As she ascended the scaffold, Sr. of Jesus Crucified was assisted by the assistants of the executioner. “My friends,” she told them, “I forgive you with all my heart, as I desire forgiveness from God.”

Finally, only one voice was left.

“Citizeness Marie Madeleine Claudine Lidoine!”

Having seen fifteen of her daughters precede her to the scaffold, Mo. Thérèse followed them to the guillotine. At the sixteenth thud, there was nothing left. . . but silence. On that day, more than one religious vocation was born and just as many conversions took place.

Ten days later, amidst cacophonous shouts and screams, an infuriated and disillusioned crowd led a man to his death on the guillotine. “Down with the tyrant!” they cried. This time, it was the turn of Maximilien Robespierre. More than a week later, an enervated Antoine Fouquier-Tinville followed the fate of his master on the instrument where he himself had sent hundreds to their death. And with the inglorious end of these two died, also, the Reign of Terror.

THE DECREE ON THE MARTYRDOM OF MARIE-MADELEINE-CLAUDINE LIDOINE (THÉRÈSE OF ST. AUGUSTINE) AND HER SIXTEEN COMPANION MARTYRS WAS PROMULGATED ON 24 JUNE 1905.

THEY WERE BEATIFIED ON 17 MAY 1906.

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