

VISIONS OF PURGATORY - PDF VERSION FOR WEB

INDEX

SAINT (OR PERSON) NAME	DATES LIVED	PAGES	SEQUENCE #	APPROX. START PAGE
Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa	1904-1955	1	3 of 89	8
Benedictine Abbey of Latrobe	1904-1955	1	4 of 89	9
Blessed Anna Schaffer	1882-1925	1	5 of 89	10
Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich	1774-1824	1	6 of 89	11
Blessed Agnes of Jesus of Langeac	1602-1634	1	7 of 89	12
Blessed Anna Maria Taigi	1769-1837	1	8 of 89	13
Blessed Crescentia Hoss	1682-1744	1	9 of 89	14
Blessed Catheirne Mattei of Racconigi	1486-1547	1	10 of 89	15
Blessed Christina von Stommeln	1242-1312	1	11 of 89	16
Blessed Emilia Bicchieri	1238-1314	1	12 of 89	17
Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora	1774-1825	1	13 of 89	18
Blessed Francis of Fabriano	1251-1322	1	14 of 89	19
Blessed Henry Suso	1295-1366	1	15 of 89	20
Brother John Rigaud	?	1	16 of 89	21
Blessed Maria Eugenia de Smet	1825-1871	1	17 of 89	22
Blessed Rose Gattorno	1831-1900	1	18 of 89	23
Cornelia Lampognana	?	1	19 of 89	24
Catherine of Cortona	?	1	20 of 89	25
Caesar of Heisterbach	1180-1240	3	21 of 89	26
Denis the Carthusian	1402-1471	3	24 of 89	29
St. Margaret Mary Alacoque	1647-1690	3	25 of 89	30
Dominic of Jesus Mary	1630 d.	1	27 of 89	32
Padre Francesco Gonzaga	?	1	28 of 89	33
Frances of the Most Holy Sacrament	1561-1629	1	29 of 89	34
Lucia Mangano	1896-1946	1	30 of 89	35
Redemptoristines of Malines	1871-	1	31 of 89	36
St. Alfonse de Liguori	1696-1787	1	32 of 89	37
St. Anthony of Padua	1195-1231	1	33 of 89	38
Sr. Anna Felix Menghini	1859-	1	34 of 89	39
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	1090-1153	1	35 of 89	40
St. Brigid of Sweden	1303-1373	1	36 of 89	41
St. Bede the Venerable	672-735	1	37 of 89	42
Servant of God Edvige Carboni	1880-1952	1	38 of 89	43
St. Catherine of Genoa	1448-1510	4	39 of 89	44
St. Catherine de' Ricci	1523-1590	1	43 of 89	48
St. Catherine of Siena	1347-1380	1	44 of 89	49
St. Elizabeth of Portugal	1271-1336	1	45 of 89	50

St. Frances of Rome	1384-1440	1	46 of 89	51
St. Gemma Galgani	1878-1903	1	47 of 89	52
St. Gregory the Great	540-604	1	48 of 89	53
St. Gertrude of Helfta	1256-1302	2	49 of 89	54
Sr. Josefa Menendez	1890-1923	2	51 of 89	56
St. John Marie Vianney	1786-1859	1	53 of 89	58
St. Louis Bertrand	1526-1581	1	54 of 89	59
St. Louis Grignion de Montfort	1673-1716	1	55 of 89	60
St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi	1566-1607	3	59 of 89	64
Sr. Maria Serafina of the Sacred Heart	1843-1871	1	62 of 89	67
Sr. Mary Theresa of Jesus, Clarissa Nun	1878-1948	2	63 of 89	68
St. Nicholas of Tolentino	1245-1305	2	65 of 89	70
St. Odilo of Cluny	962-1048	1	67 of 89	72
St. Paul of the Cross	1694-1775	1	68 of 89	73
St. Peter Damian	1007-1072	2	69 of 89	74
St. Perpetua, Martyr	202 d.	1	71 of 89	76
St. Pio of Pietrelcina	1887-1968	4	72 of 89	77
St. Rabano Mauro	780-856	1	76 of 89	81
St. Stanislaus Kostka	1550-1568	1	77 of 89	82
St. Stanislaus of Krakow	1030-1079	1	78 of 89	83
St. Simon Stock	1265 d.	1	79 of 89	84
St. Thomas Aquinas	1221-1274	1	80 of 89	85
St. Teresa of Avila	1515-1582	2	81 of 89	86
St. Vincent Ferrer	1350-1419	1	83 of 89	88
St. Veronica Giuliani	1660-1727	2	84 of 89	89
Teresa Neumann	1898-1962	1	86 of 89	91
Venerable Gaspar de Oliden	1740 d.	1	87 of 89	92
Ven. Mary of Blessed Amedeo	1610-1670	1	88 of 89	93
Ven. Ursula Benincasa	1547-1618	1	89 of 89	94

Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa

1904 - 1955

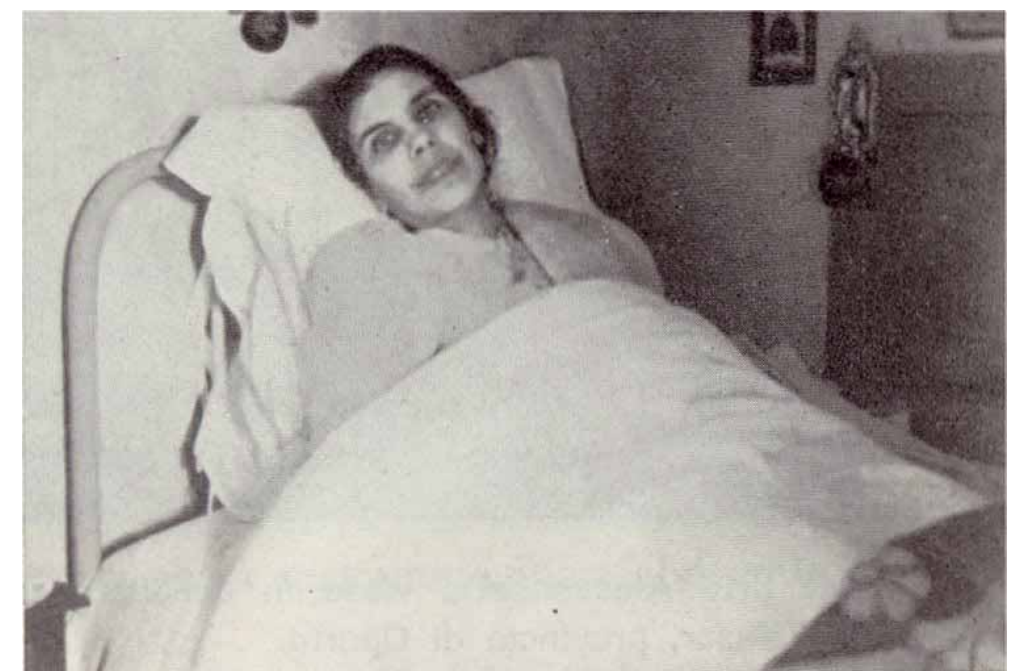
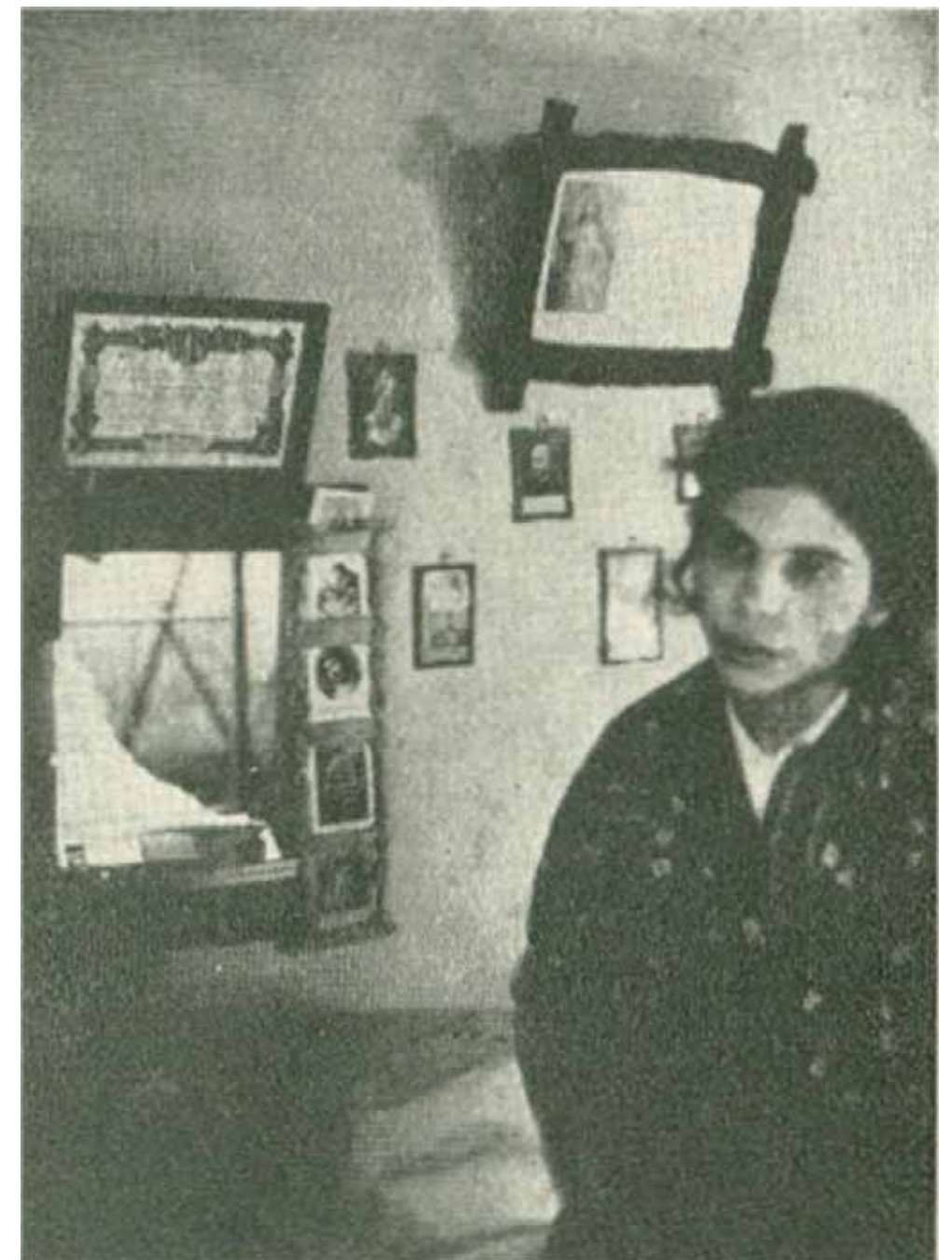
PURGATORY

The great Portuguese mystic had numerous experiences of Purgatory, as she narrated in her *Diary*, from which we point out a few episodes. On November 6, 1943 she reported the words that Jesus had said to her: “What enchantment, what richness is your heart, my beautiful dove. The ermine does not get stained; it remains always whiter and purer. Do you feel, my daughter, that your spirit is dead? It was I who allowed this: it is dead for the world, but lives more and better for Heaven. The affliction of the fire of Purgatory that you feel is the truth, it is the reality. I am purifying you, so that after your death you must not have to stay there: you will come directly to me. Thus wishes my Blessed Mother in order that you know what our dear souls suffer there: make it known to the world. Suffer everything, offer everything for them. But do not fear, my love, my enchantment: you are sustained by me and by my Blessed Mother: you do not fall, you do not waver”.

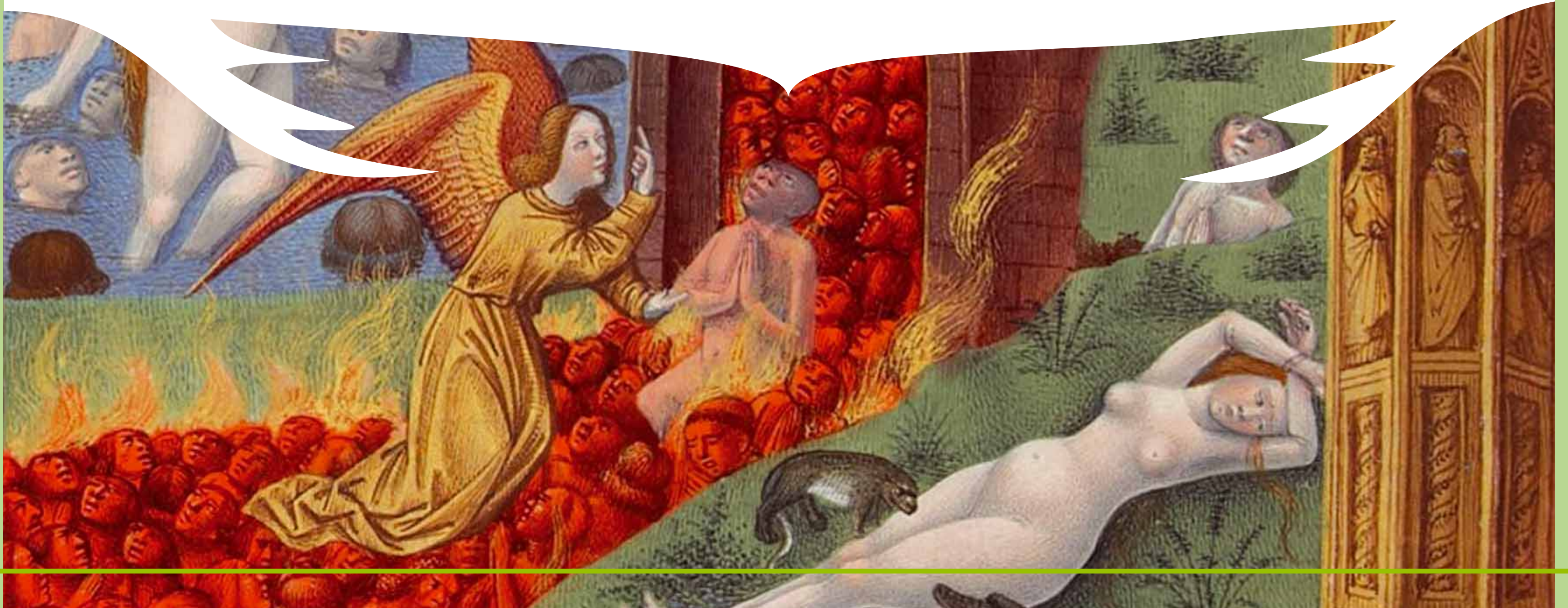
On August 2, 1945, Alexandrina reported: “I spent the night in great suffering ... my suffering increased in knowing that one of my assistants at Foce (the hospital where she was kept for 40 days in observation for her state of fasting), one among the most strict, died an unexpected death. I neither can nor want to judge her; my God I don't even think of it! But I am very concerned for

her life style. I do not doubt her salvation: it came immediately to my mind the day on which she passed away: it was a Friday, this is one of the days when my dear Jesus promised to keep hell closed. I do not doubt. I have confidence. But notwithstanding that I live with this trust, I don't feel any joy in it: it is as if a black veil had come to envelop everything related to this. Few moments go by before she comes back to my mind, and I immediately pray for her. I feel that she needs many, many prayers and that she must be very deep in Purgatory”.

One day of April 1946, Alexandrina received from an Angel the Eucharist and Jesus told her: “I was given to you by your Guardian Angel. I am the life of which you live: I could not omit to give myself to you. What wonders! Look, do you see the Angels ascending? They are going up in groups, some intoning hymns, others leading the souls who exited from Purgatory, and all saved thanks to you. What a beautiful entrance! What a feast in Heaven! I saw the groups that brought the souls as if each Angel was carrying another one beside him, with the difference that this one did not have wings. What splendor, what luminous light! How beautiful it was! Jesus added: ‘It is worthwhile to suffer, my victim and my spouse; it is worth to suffer like this and suffer everything for such a virtuous mission and such great wonders. Courage!



Go in peace, live in peace, and fear nothing? ‘Thank you, my Jesus. Extend on me Your compassion; give me Your love; do not permit that I deceive myself and do not allow that I offend You.’ ”



Benedictine Abbey of Latrobe

1904 - 1955

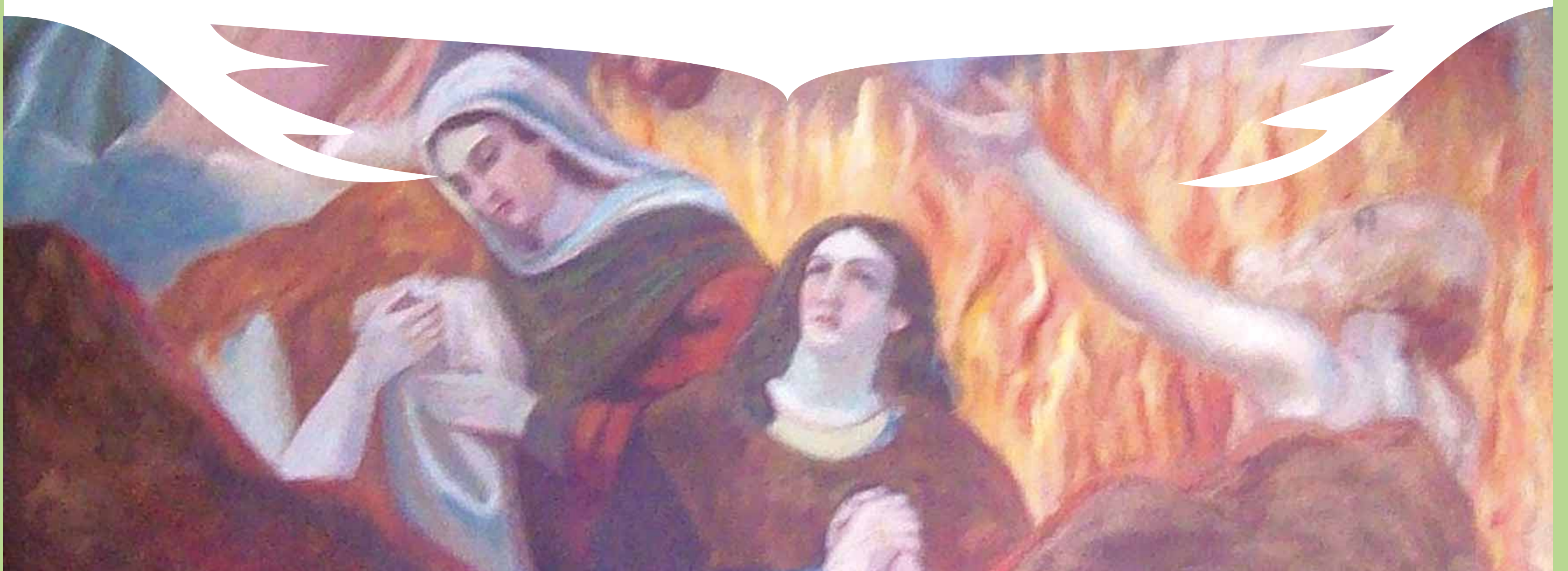
PURGATORY

In 1859, at the Benedictine Abbey of Latrobe in the United States of America, various unexplainable things occurred, which caught the attention of the public opinion. To calm the controversy, Abbot Wimmer released the following signed declaration: "In our Abbey of St. Vincent near Latrobe, on September 18, 1859, a novice noticed the appearance of a religious who presented himself from that day until November 19, regularly from eleven in the morning until noon, or from midnight until two in the morning. On the 19th of that month, the ghost having been questioned by the novice in the presence of another religious of that community, answered that for seventy-seven years he was suffering for not having fulfilled the obligation of the celebration of seven Masses; he had already appeared in different periods to seven other Benedictines of that Monastery without them ever being able to understand him, and if the novice had not come now to assist him, he would not have had the possibility to appear anymore if not after eleven years. He requested, therefore,



that the seven Masses be celebrated, that the novice undertake spiritual exercises and maintain perfect silence for the span of seven days, and for thirty days he must recite three times a day the *Miserere* psalm with bare feet and open arms. The requests of the deceased were fulfilled from November 20 to December 25, and the ghost ceased to appear after the celebration of the last Mass. During all this time he presented himself with

greater frequency energizing the novice with very moving words to pray for the souls of Purgatory, saying that these miserable ones suffer horribly and that they are most grateful to those who contribute to hastening their salvation. He then added that of the five priests who died at the Abbey, until now, none of them had already risen to Heaven, and that all were suffering in Purgatory".



Blessed Anna Schäffer

1882 - 1925

PURGATORY

The Blessed Anna Schäffer, a German mystic who lived at the end of the XIX Century, had many apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory; among them is this one that she recounts in her *Diary*: “On July 22, 1918 I had this dream in regard to the poor souls. I seemed to go to visit a very sick woman; she told me that from her room I had to cross another six of them and then stay for a long time in the seventh one. A strong anguish gripped me and I thought: ‘Certainly these are poor souls.’ Nevertheless, without hesitation I opened the door and shouted: ‘May my Jesus have mercy on all of you!’” “On October 21, 1918 I dreamt of a twelve year old boy who had died a short time earlier; although very young, he too was in Purgatory. He told me that he was suffering thirst very much and he asked me to pray for him, because he was terribly hot.”

And again: “On January 12, 1919 I dreamt that a girl, between fourteen and sixteen years old, came into my room. When she took my hand to greet me, I felt it completely icy and therefore I asked her: ‘Are you this cold because you are a spirit?’ and she answered me: ‘Yes, and it is for this that I have come to you, to tell you: Pray for me; no one does it since a long time ago, because they all think I am by now in the beatific vision of God, whereas instead I am still suffering in Purgatory.’ Then I asked her where she was from and she answered that she was from Oberdolling. Therefore I suggested to her to return to her relatives: ‘Perhaps they too may resume praying for you.’

“That poor girl went to her relatives, as I had told her, but after an hour she knocked on my door again and said to me crying: ‘My relatives have not prayed for me’ and continued: ‘When I died I had as a powerful advocate the Most Holy Virgin, but also the patron saint whose name I bore and another woman Saint came to my assistance.’ She told me also the names of her patronesses, but once awakened, I could not remember them anymore. I answered: ‘Stay calm: I will pray fervently for you’, and she added: ‘My patroness had already foretold me all this: thanks to her, as a matter of fact, I know ahead of time the consolations that I will receive.’”

Again another apparition: “On the first of March 1919 I dreamt three times of Purgatory and each time among those souls I recognized some acquaintances.

“On Saturday, November 29, 1919 I dreamt of being in Purgatory and I saw souls suffering in unspeakable manners. It is not really possible to describe all the suffering of these poor souls! I saw among them also some people I knew, dead already for several years, who suffered very much.”

Finally, in a vision of July 25, 1920: “I dreamt of a woman whom I had known and who was dead already for many years: she was still in Purgatory and she appeared to be suffering in an unspeakable manner. Seeing her like this, I said to her: ‘Although I have suffered very much up to now, my pain is nothing in comparison to yours: it is like fresh dew!’ That woman begged me very much: ‘Pray for me.’”



Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

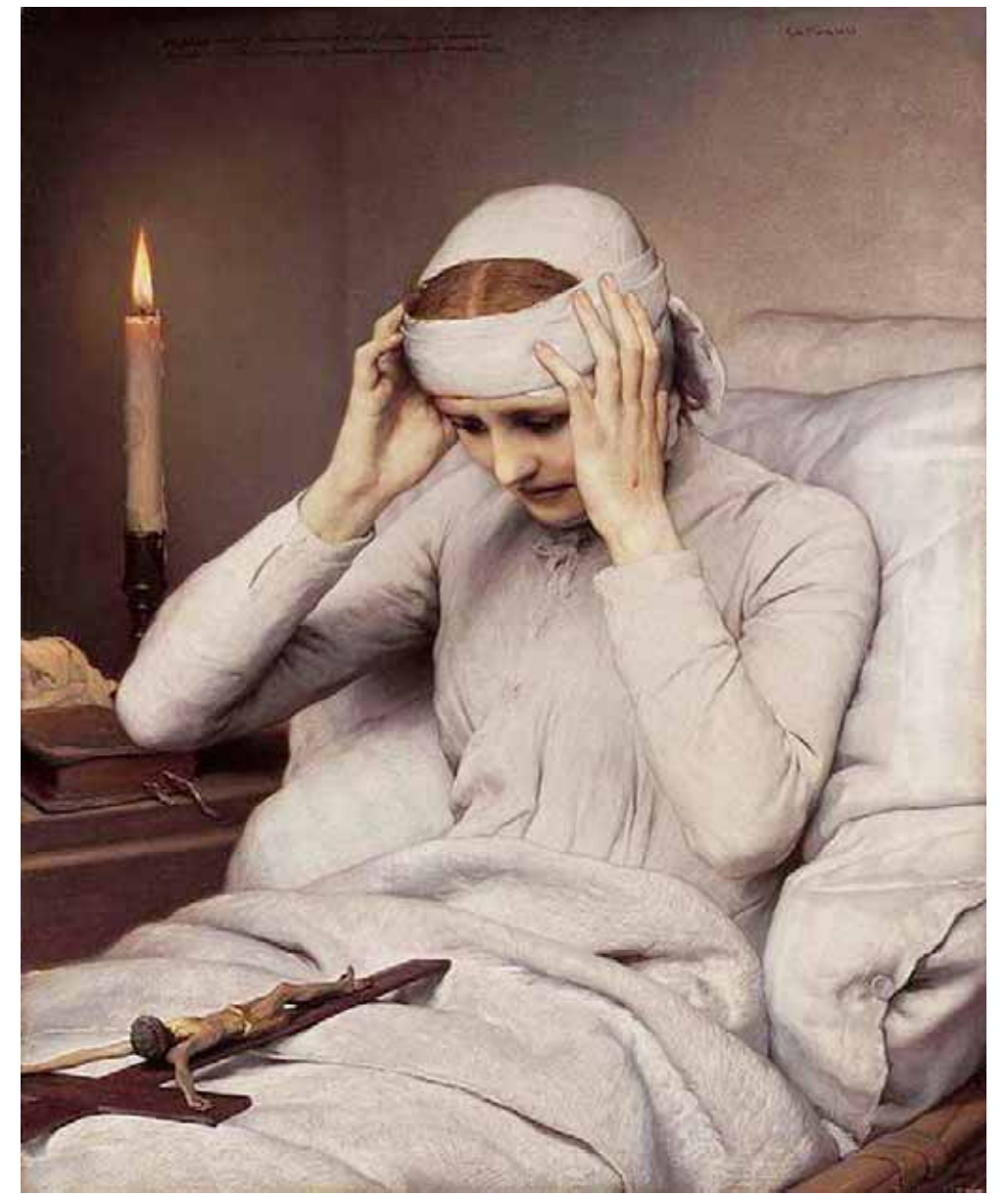
1774 - 1824

PURGATORY

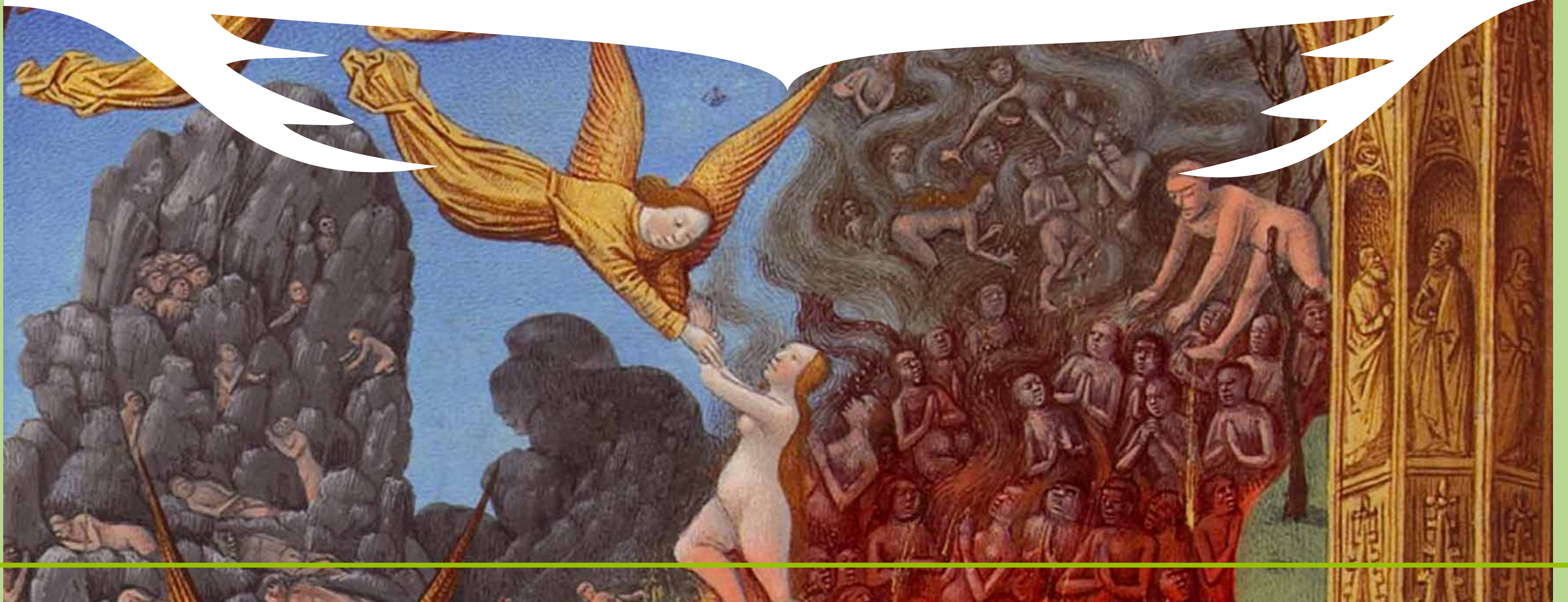
The Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich had various mystic experiences in regard to Purgatory, as she herself recounts. The first one occurred on September 24, 1820: "I had received a heavy task in the 'house of the wedding,' I could not finish it; I had to struggle to clean much garbage using a hard broom. Then my mother appeared and helped me. Later my mother led me to many places where the souls were staying; I was also brought on top of a mountain on which a luminous spirit shining like copper, tied to a chain, tried to approach me. He was there for a long time, no one remembered him nor helped him; he spoke very little, only a few words, nevertheless I came to know his entire story. He had been, in his time, the King of England and led the war against France; he employed atrocious methods and had a very wicked behavior. It seemed to me that his mother was responsible for the origin of his behavior. He destroyed all the images of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and one time while passing in front of a statue of the Holy Virgin he wanted to destroy even that one, but he experienced a profound emotion and did not wish to do it any longer. After this experience, he repented bitterly and would have willingly confessed, but he died from a very strong fever; he found mercy and did not die damned. Thus he could be helped, but he had been completely forgotten. He told me that he could be helped particularly with the celebration of the Holy Mass, so that he would be able to obtain his longed for liberation before the designated time. The place where he

stayed did not seem to be the normal Purgatory, but perhaps an adjacent location. I saw him persecuted and mauled by dogs in the manner in which he had persecuted people; he was chained in many spots and lived in an area covered by enflamed grass. He told me that only the slightest hope of his liberation from that place would have been for him a great consolation. I encountered him three times."

The second time occurred on September 27, 1820: "Last night I prayed a lot for the poor souls and I saw many wonderful things and the unfathomable mercy of God. I saw again the sorrowful English king and I prayed also for him. It was made clear to me how good and evil can be passed on from ancestors to children and how their action, and their will, can be the cause of salvation or damnation. I saw assistance to the souls coming from the richness of the Church and from her members. Many priests were suffering; they were the ones who in life had always aspired to a little place in Paradise only because they distributed Communion and celebrated Masses. Now I saw them in indescribable repentance for their missed works of love and assistance towards the poor souls. At this time they were aspiring, silently, with an unquenchable desire to be able to help and labor. All their indolence is turned into pain of the soul, their calmness into impatience, their inaction into a barrier; all these punishments are the consequence of evil. In Purgatory I saw also and especially the condition of children who had been killed before and



right after birth, however it is something that I would not know how to represent, even if I could reveal it, and therefore I leave it out."



Blessed Agnes of Jesus of Langeac

1602 - 1634

PURGATORY

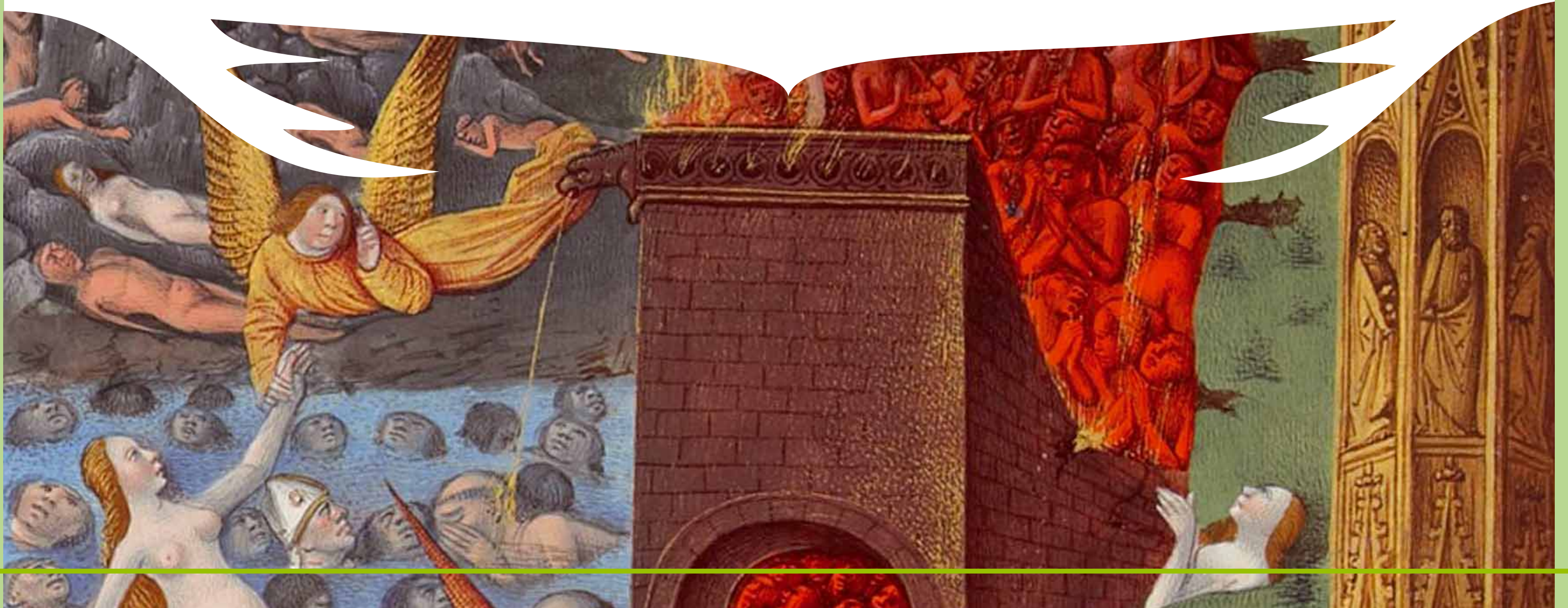
As the Dominican Blessed Agnes of Jesus was praying in the choir, a religious unknown to her appeared, observing her with a sad countenance. Blessed Agnes heard a voice saying:

“She who is present is the sister of Altavilla”. She was a nun of Puy who died ten years earlier. During the apparition, the deceased did not utter any more words, but made known that she needed some supplications. Blessed Agnes then began fervently to pray for her. For three weeks, the deceased nun appeared to her especially after Communion and common prayer and made known of being in pain. The Blessed recounted all that occurred to her confessor, who believed proper to make known the events to the nuns of St. Catherine of Puy, where the religious had lived. Blessed Agnes however convinced him not to reveal those apparitions to anyone to avoid the risk of being ridiculed as visionaries. Notwithstanding the supplications, the penances and the prayers offered for the deceased nun, every time she appeared as if nothing had benefited her. Therefore the Blessed began to doubt that she truly dealt with a soul of Purgatory, but her guardian angel confirmed to her that the soul was real and that she suffered so much for having been lukewarm in the service to God.

There is another episode in the life of the Blessed, which involves a religious of Langeac, called Sister Serafica. Her confessor ordered Agnes to beseech

God, so that He would let her know the state of that soul. During prayer the Blessed asked God to accept her as a victim in place of the deceased nun. At that moment, she felt an inner warmth enveloping her entire body, from which she understood that the deceased was in Purgatory. One day, in fact, she recognized Sister Serafica among many souls who were suffering in the flames, and heard her voice asking for help. The deceased appeared to her again another time to ask for her blessing. After eight days, the Blessed started to pray for that soul right after receiving Communion, in order that she would be freed from purgatory. She heard a voice telling her: “Continue, continue to pray, since the time of the liberation of Serafica has not arrived yet.” However two days later, as the Blessed was participating at Mass, she saw Sister Serafica ascending to Heaven, at the moment of the elevation of the chalice.

The Blessed, inspired by the Virgin Mary, prayed and suffered for the young cleric Jean Jacques Olier, to whom she revealed that he was called to found the first seminaries in France. During the last three years of her life, she had to endure many slanders which caused her to be removed from the position of prioress. She suffered everything in silence in favor of the future Congregation of the Priests of St. Sulpice, founded by Olier. She maintained daily contact with her guardian angel. She died October 19, 1634. Her body is preserved at the monastery of Langeac.



Blessed Anna Maria Taigi

1769-1837

PURGATORY

The Blessed Anna Maria Taigi was born in Siena on May 29, 1769 and was baptized on the following day. Due to the financial setbacks of her parents, at the age of six she moved to Rome, where she was entrusted to the care of the Religious Teachers Filippini in order to receive a good education. To help her needy parents, she did the most humble jobs.

She was given as bride to Domenico Taigi, a rough and violent man. She suffered much during the 49 years of marriage, in which she had seven children, three of whom died prematurely. Yet she was able to endure all the difficulties with patient love.

Since a young child she devoted herself to prayer and penance, trying to live constantly in the grace of God. She was very devout to the Most Holy Trinity, the Most Holy Sacrament and the Passion of Christ. She entered the Third Order of Trinitarians on December 26, 1808. Many were the charisms with which she was gifted. For 47 years she saw in front of her a luminous sun that showed her the state of souls and the events of the world.

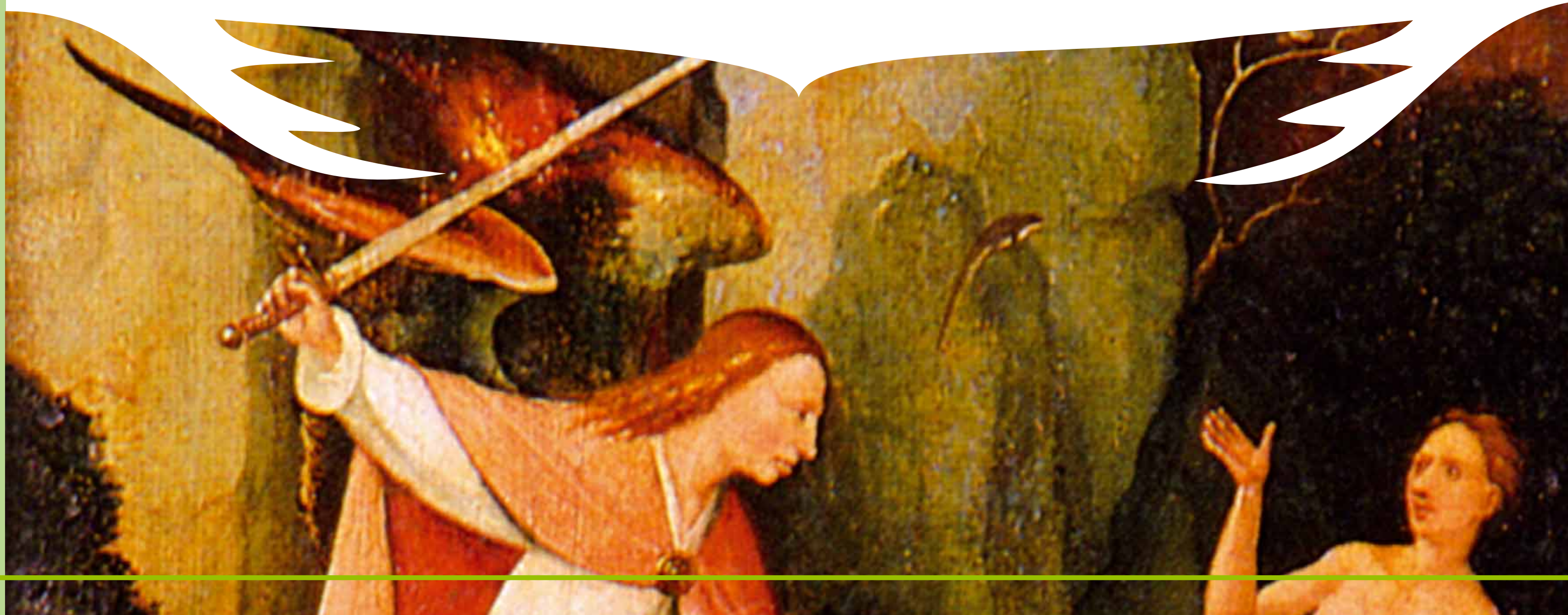
In this way she understood the fate of the deceased, and also the duration and the reason for their suffering in Purgatory. One day she saw a deceased priest, who had saved himself, because in life he had endured an annoying beggar who was constantly asking him for alms! From this act of patience other occasions came for him to practice this virtue.

She saw also another priest, who in life was esteemed very much for his

sermons and his zeal, but on the contrary to what people believed, he was lying in Purgatory, having to expiate many punishments. The reason was because he had sought his own glory instead of the glory of God. The Blessed also noticed in Purgatory a woman friend, who in life had experienced some heavenly insights, but she was not reserved and revealed them to others.

The Blessed had also the vision of monks who were in Purgatory: one had died in a state of sanctity, but he had given too much importance to his own judgment, the other one, a sought-after spiritual director, had allowed himself to be distracted by many things instead of concentrating in his priestly service.

Blessed Taigi came to know also the fate of a count she had met, dead for only two days, who notwithstanding his disorderly and sinful life was saved, because he had forgiven one of his enemies. However he had to suffer the punishments of Purgatory for the same number of years that he had spent in worldly pleasure. A layman esteemed for his virtues or for what they were believed to be, was condemned to a painful Purgatory because he had always adulated influential and powerful people. The Blessed also foretold the day of death of Leo XII, as in fact it occurred on February 10, 1829. Some years later, she saw the soul of the deceased Pope like a ruby that was not yet completely purified by the flames.



Blessed Crescentia Hóss

1682 - 1744

PURGATORY

Blessed Crescentia Hóss was born on October 20, 1682 at Kaufbeuren in Bavaria, the last of eight children that Matthias, a poor weaver, had with Lucia Hörmann. She had heavenly visions since childhood. When she could not go to church she hid in a corner of her house to converse with God and her guardian Angel who appeared to her once in a while, and gave her advice on how to assist the poor. At 14, her guardian Angel told her that one day she would wear the Franciscan habit. There was in her city a monastery of Franciscan nuns, where she had permission to retreat in prayer. One day, praying in front of a Crucifix she heard the words: "Here shall be your dwelling". In 1703 she was welcomed among the nuns and gave herself to a life of penance and union with God. The devil tried to block her and harass her in a thousand ways. She also endured the hostility of some nuns who did not believe her to be saintly. The Blessed had a profound devotion to the Archangel Raphael and many times had anticipated that he himself would lead her to the judgment of God. A little before her death, Father Pamer, her confessor who assisted her asked: "Mother, will Saint Raphael arrive soon?" She answered: "He is already here". Those were her last words. She died on Easter night, April 6, 1744. Her body, as it had already done during her illness,

effused a sweet fragrance and maintained flexibility. Leo XIII beatified her on July 27, 1900.

Her devotion to the Souls of Purgatory was very strong. It is told that on October 19, 1716 the Jesuit Father Ignatius Vagener, who had interviewed and directed the Blessed for two years, died in Regensburg. The news of his death reached the Franciscan Monastery of Kaufbeuren on October 21. Yet, on the day of the Jesuit's death, Crescentia, when going to the choir at the sound of the Angelus, saw a white ghost in front of her. She was used to similar visions, since the Souls of Purgatory appeared to her in that form. For this reason, she immediately started to pray for that soul, even if she didn't understand who he was. The apparition repeated on October 21; but that time Crescentia recognized that it was the soul of her spiritual director. He told her that he needed her prayers to reach the vision of God, which had been delayed to him, because in life he didn't desire it enough. All this caused great torments to that soul. The Blessed prayed for him and offered to God many supplications. On October 23, after having participated in the memorial Mass for the deceased, she saw his transfigured soul thanking her for the prayers offered, and announcing that he was in Heaven.



Blessed Catherine Mattei of Racconigi

1486 - 1547

PURGATORY

She was born in Racconigi, Piedmont in 1486. She was a weaver of ribbons, when she heard the call of the Lord. It seems that she frequented a community of Servites, where she learned to know the truths of the faith and to love God. In 1509 she began to frequent a small Dominican convent and she placed herself under the spiritual direction of a renowned preacher: Father Domenico Onesti of Bra. Soon suspicions and slanders started to develop around her. Given her intense life of prayer, some speak about supernatural occurrences happening to her and exaggerate or change those phenomena, while others judge her a fanatic, provoking alarm among the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1512 she was forced to appear at the Episcopal Tribunal of Turin to be questioned about the occurrences. At the Tribunal, Catherine recounted her life and the mystic episodes and the judges acquitted her of the accusations.

In 1514 she was received in the Dominican Order as a Tertiary, in Racconigi. Due to her continuous mystic experiences, she was forced to leave the town and to withdraw to Caramagna Piemonte. She had a special relationship with the souls of Purgatory. One evening while Catherine was in bed stricken by a high fever she was thinking about the souls in Purgatory, when suddenly she was enraptured in ecstasy and was led to Purgatory.

She saw the flames of Purgatory and the souls who were suffering the most

atrocious pains. All of a sudden she heard a voice that said "Catherine, in order that from now on you may take more to heart the poor souls, I will now make you feel on your head their pains for an instant." As soon as she finished hearing those words she saw coming towards her a spark of fire that struck her left cheek.

Some fellow sisters present saw this spark and immediately the face of Catherine swelled and remained like that even after she regained her senses. The Blessed confessed that all the pains she suffered up to then, although they had been numerous they were nothing compared to the pain caused by that spark.

From that day she took even more to heart the destiny of the souls of Purgatory and offered prayers and penances in supplication for them.

Another time a Carthusian Monk appeared to Catherine, who in 1409 had set himself against Gregory XII during the Council of Pisa, but who before dying had reconciled himself with the Pope and the Church and had made penance. It was revealed to the Blessed that he had been condemned by God to expiate a very harsh Purgatory, from which he was liberated thanks to the prayers, penances and sacrifices offered for him by Catherine.

One day to the Blessed appeared Jesus from Whose wounded side was flowing a large stream of blood of which half was descending to the earth on the sinners and half was descending on the souls of Purgatory. Catherine understood



that she had to offer half of her voluntary offerings of prayers and penances for the conversion of sinners and half in supplication for the souls of Purgatory.



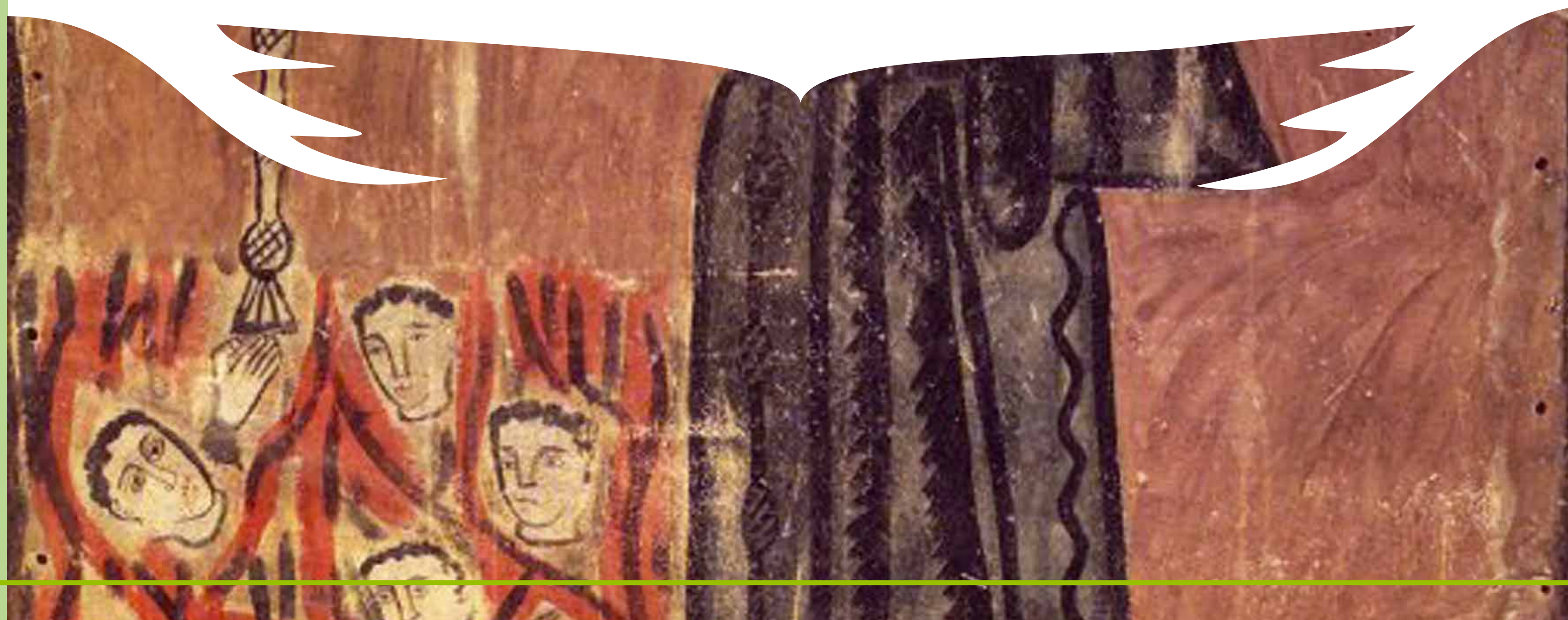
Blessed Christina von Stommeln

1 2 4 2 - 1 3 1 2

PURGATORY

The Blessed Christina was born at Stommeln in 1242. At the age of thirteen she entered the Beguine community of Cologne. A great mystic, she had ecstasies and apparitions and in 1269 she received the stigmata, which became visible during certain times of the year. On December 20, 1267 she met Peter of Dacia (+ 1289), a Swedish Dominican friar, student at Cologne, and pupil of Saint Albert the Great, who became her biographer. She had to face numerous attacks of the devil, so much that she was on the verge of suicide. The exterior signs of her mystical experience led her Beguine companions to consider Blessed Christina insane and to send her away. In the year of the death of Peter of Dacia the attacks of the devil ceased and Christina lived in peace until 1312, always wearing the Beguine habit. In 1342 her relics were transferred to Nideggen and since 1568 they lie in the church of Jülich. Her veneration was approved by Saint Pius X, on August 22, 1908. Her memory is celebrated on November 6.

The Carthusian Father Laurentius Surius who died at Cologne in 1578, in his work *De Probatis sanctorum Historiis* published at Cologne in the years 1570-1575, narrates among other things in regard to the Blessed Christina von Stommeln: "When, after her death, the soul of Christina appeared in front of the eternal Judge, He suggested to her to choose whether she wanted to enter immediately into the eternal Glory which she had certainly deserved, or if instead she wanted to return to earth one more time and continue for additional years her life of penance in support of poor souls. What did the Saint do? Without any hesitation she chose the second proposal and immediately the Lord had her come back to life again amid the great astonishment of those who were standing sorrowful around her body and already were thinking about her funeral. Yet the Blessed not only continued in her life of penance as before, but increased even more her already extraordinary penances so much as to almost reach the limit of the incredible."



Blessed Emilia Bicchieri

1238 - 1314

PURGATORY

Emilia Bicchieri was born in Vercelli in 1238 in a noble and rich family. Ever since she was a little girl, she loved to retreat into her room to pray. Left an orphan, without her mother, she became the pupil of her father. Attracted by the word and the example of the preaching monks, she soon decided to enter into a convent, but found the firm opposition of her parent. Only in 1255 did her father give his consent, and he – by his own expense, had a Dominican monastery built in the periphery of Vercelli which was named after Saint Margaret. Here Emilia went into retreat with other young ladies to live under the Rule of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. In 1266 the monastery was incorporated into the Dominican Order and the religious women became Tertiary Regulars.

From 1273 she became elected prioress of the monastery, guiding the community to a great union with God. Her motto was: “Do everything for God alone.”

She was very devoted to the Eucharist and to the Virgin, and she sought to infuse these devotions to her fellow sisters, too. She prayed and did penitence without withholding any sacrifices and burdens in order to help the others. With her authentic evangelical testimony, she was able to draw souls into the love of God. Enamored by the Passion of Christ she did not cease to urge everyone to meditate on it and to take it as an example for spiritual growth

and as a font of grace. The characteristics of her spirituality are based upon two elements: the filial gratitude towards God for his benefits, and the rightness of intention which preserves behaviors from ulterior motives that are not conformed to the Divine Will and entrusts them to Him. She died in Vercelli on the 3rd of May 1314. In 1537 her remains were transferred to the monastery of Saint Margaret, then, in 1811 moved to the Cathedral of Vercelli. Clement XIV approved her worship as Blessed on the 19th of July 1769.

During the period of her time as superior, in the monastery of Saint Margaret there was a rule in force which prohibited drinking from one meal to another without the permission of the prioress, and that was conceded very rarely. All that had the purpose of suffering in union with Jesus for the thirst which he suffered on Calvary. A nun, by the name of Cecilia Avogadro, one day turned to Emilia to ask her permission to drink, but did not obtain her consent, and so then – regardless of the thirst, she accepted the sacrifice as the will of God. The religious, after a few weeks since her death, totally luminous with glory, appeared to the Blessed, thanking her for having invited her to that mortification, on the merit of which her period of Purgatory was lessened. If she had not done that penitence, the time of her purification would have been much longer because of her attachment to her relatives.



Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora

1774 - 1825

PURGATORY

The Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora was born in Rome in 1774 to a wealthy family. In January of 1796 she married Cristoforo Mora, who was thriving in his career as a lawyer. Unfortunately the marriage would be a source of suffering for Elizabeth, because her husband would betray her and increasingly neglect the family, reducing them to destitution. The birth of the daughters Marianna in 1799 and Maria Lucina in 1801 did not improve the situation. She was forced to sustain all the burden of the family, from work, to education of the children, to care for the house. She also devoted much time to prayer, to help the poor and to assist the sick. She supported many families in difficulty and her home became a point of reference for many people who turned to her for material and spiritual needs. She became a Tertiary of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity. Elizabeth died on February 5, 1825. From her diary we cite a text related to the liberation of a soul of Purgatory:

“On the day of November 14, after Holy Communion, hearing the death knell of the bells at the Church of the Trinitarian Fathers of San Carlo in Quattro Fontane, where I was staying, not knowing what was the reason for this mournful sound, my spirit then entered into profound meditation, when it was revealed to me that they were ringing

those bells to pray for the souls of the Trinitarian Fathers who were in Purgatory.

It was revealed to me that during the celebration of the sung Mass the mentioned Fathers would be liberated from Purgatory. This news consoled my spirit very much, when by an invisible hand I was transported to a certain place that I am unable to explain, where I had the good opportunity to see these fortunate souls, who very anxiously awaited the blissful moment of being able to unite themselves to that Immense Good, whom they fervently longed to possess.

The mentioned Fathers were about three or five in number. I could not see well how many there were, because of the multitude of other souls belonging to this sacred Trinitarian Order, who humbly begged to leave soon from those pains. Their concerns stirred in me a great desire to free them from those pains. I begged the Lord warmly, in order that He would be willing to console all the mentioned souls.

The Lord graciously accepted to grant my poor prayers, and made me understand that if I participated in the Mass for their supplication, these souls that belonged to the mentioned Order would also be liberated along with the Trinitarian Fathers.

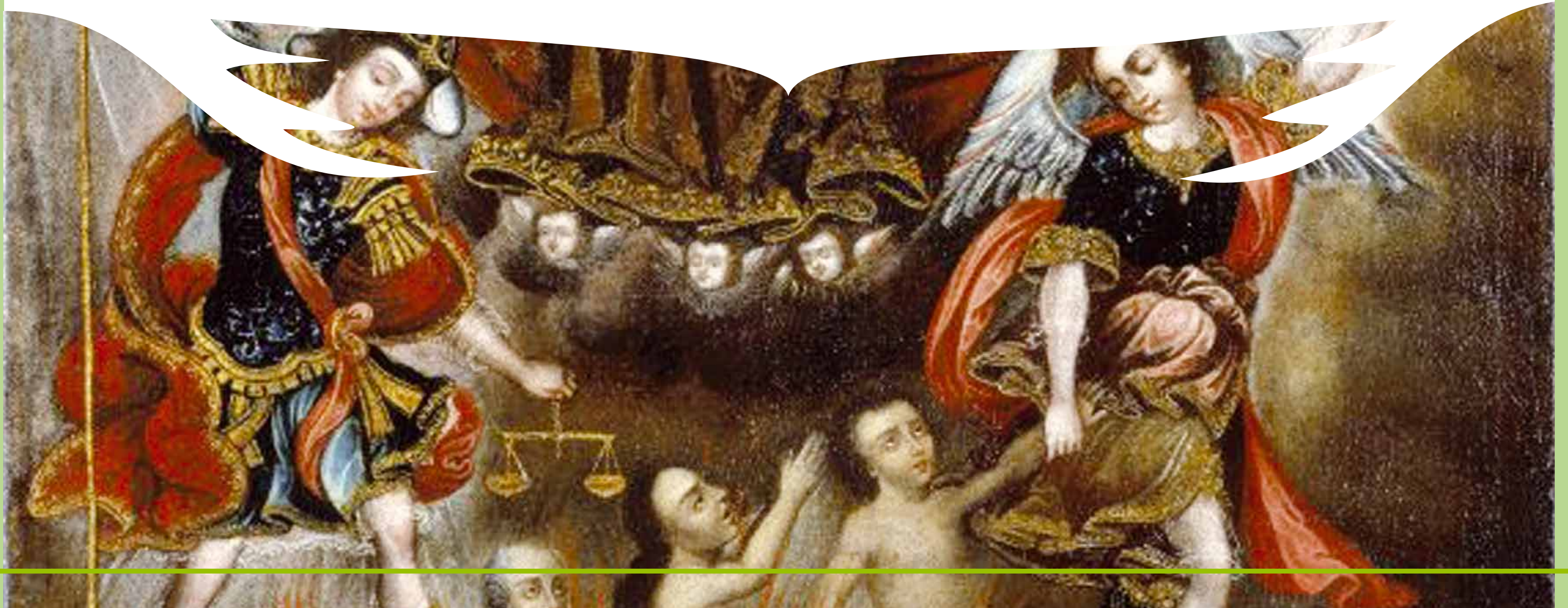
At the *Introit* all these souls changed their appearance, from pale and colorless, from distressed and sorrowful, at once



they became healthy and lively, all absorbed in God, they were anxiously awaiting the blissful moment of being able to possess Him.

At the singing of the *Dies illa* they all placed themselves in order, at the *Oremus* a certain disposition was given them, and they became clear as amber, they were purified through the merits of Jesus Christ.

At the *Sanctus* a bright light appeared, that made them ever more beautiful. At the *Elevation* they were led to Heaven by the hands of the Angels. In the recitation of the *Benedictus qui venit* they were received by the eternal God and numbered among the blessed saints of Heaven.”



Blessed Francis of Fabriano

1251-1322

PURGATORY

The Blessed Francis Venimbeni was born in 1251 in Fabriano (Ancona) from Compagno Venimbeni, a physician, and Margaret di Federico. His mother had uttered a vow for him, perhaps prior to his birth, and when the boy was able to accompany her she went to fulfill it in Assisi on the tomb of the Saint. On this occasion, she met “Brother Angelo”, one of the authors recorded in the *Legend of the Three Companions*, who approached the boy and looking into his eyes said: “This one shall be one of ours.” Venimbeni, who recounts the episode, acknowledged that from that time on his mother repeated to him that “he too had to be of the Order of the Blessed Francis and not remain in the world.” Indeed, after completing his studies in philosophy, at the age of 16, he entered in the Franciscan Order. He attended the novitiate in Fabriano and from there he went to Assisi to receive the indulgence of the Porziuncola, with the desire to meet Brother Leo, the most well known of the companions of Saint Francis, one of the signers of the letter introducing the *Legend of the Three Companions*. Venimbeni confirmed that “I saw him and I read what he wrote about the life and the sayings of Saint Francis.” The Franciscan scholars recognize the importance of these words that certify what

was done by Brother Leo, memorialist more than biographer of Saint Francis. The Blessed was elected twice, in 1316 and 1318-21, as superior of the new friary built by the Franciscans in Fabriano. With the funds received from his paternal inheritance he built a library where he collected a large quantity of manuscripts and for this he became the first founder of the libraries within the Order of Friars Minor. The Blessed mentioned the arrival of Saint Francis to Fabriano in an indirect manner: “In 1260, when I was a novice, died Brother Raniero, a parish priest of Civita, to whom Saint Francis confessed several times, when he was a parish priest, foretelling him that he would become one of our monks. He was indeed a Holy man and a true Friar Minor.”

Venimbeni lived entirely at the service of the poor, the marginalized and the sick. He himself took care of the needy who knocked at the friary. His charity reached out also to the spiritual necessities of the brothers. He spent many hours in the confessional or preaching. He was dressed in a rough tunic, scourged himself with rigorous penances, and slept little to devote as much time as possible to prayer. His favorite subjects for meditation were the mysteries of the Passion of Christ.



He nurtured a profound devotion in regard to the Souls of Purgatory to whom he dedicated his good works and the Masses he celebrated. He died, as he had foretold on April 22, 1322, at the age of 61. His veneration was recognized by Pius VI on April 1, 1775.

It is told that one day while he was celebrating the Mass for the Souls of Purgatory, as he was often doing, at the end he recited the prescribed prayers, according to the old liturgy of the Mass for the deceased, and he heard in the almost empty church numerous voices, which were responding joyfully: “Amen!” They were the voices of the souls for whom he was celebrating the Mass.



Blessed Henry Suso

1295 ca. - 1366

PURGATORY

The Blessed Henry Suso was convinced that the punishments of Purgatory could be expiated already on this earth. He wrote: “In this manner man is put more to the test by God to be glorified more in that way, he enumerates among the different kinds of sufferings also this; some sufferings are sent from God to man with the intention of sparing him even greater pains as it happens to those people to whom God allows to expiate their Purgatory down here, with illnesses, poverty or something else, so that they escape the consequent punishments in Purgatory...” In Chapter V of his *Horologium Sapientiae* that has as a subtitle: “How useful it is to the Servant of God to have much to suffer in this life” “Tribulation is so beneficial, that there is almost no one who would like to avoid its charitable influence, whether he be a beginner, an advanced person or a perfect one. Tribulation takes away the rust of sin; it increases virtues and carries with it an abundance of grace. What could be more useful to us than this treasure? It erases sins, reduces Purgatory, sends away temptations, extinguishes passion, renews the spirit, and fortifies hope.”

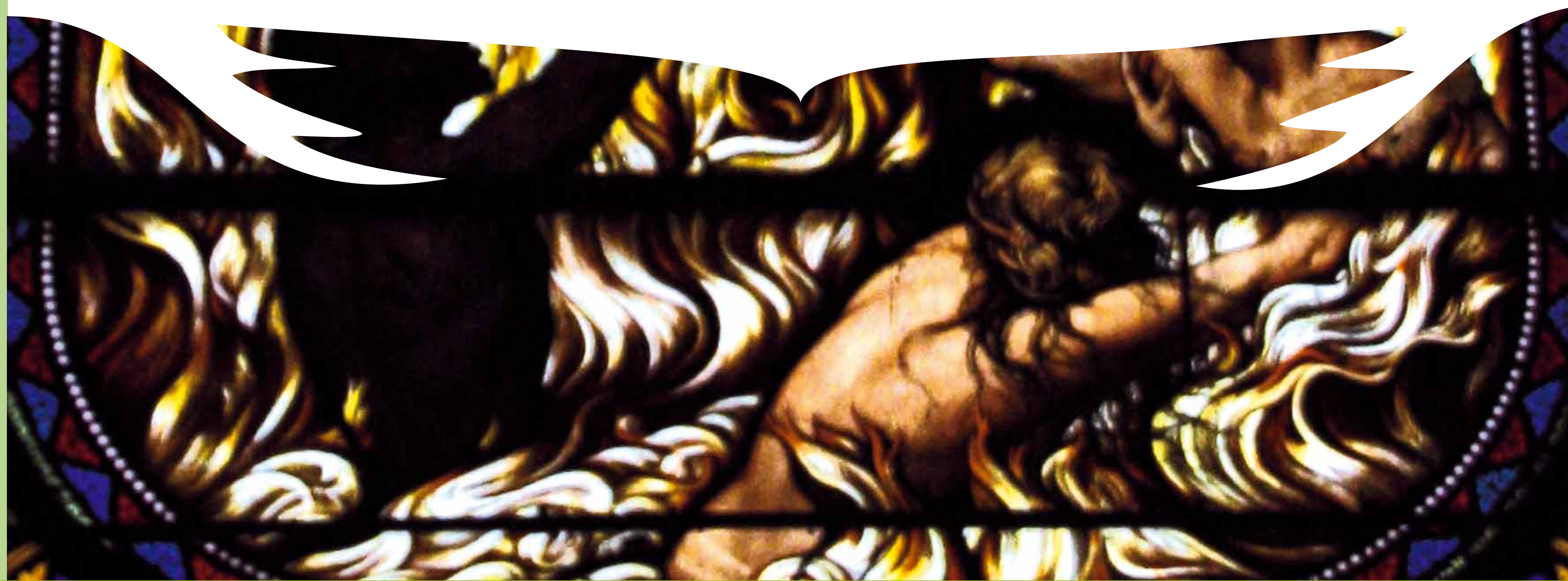
In *Horologium Sapientiae*, the Blessed expressed his conviction in the value of meditating the mysteries of

the Passion of Christ. “The Creator of nature does not allow disorder in nature. But divine Justice does not even leave unpunished any fault and anything evil. He rectifies appropriately what is distorted either in this life or in the other life. What do you think should be the chastisement of a sinner guilty of many misdeeds, who has not even repaired the thousandth part of his debt and thus should remain in the torments of Purgatory until he has paid his debt up to the last cent? Oh how infinitely long would his wait be! What uninterrupted and painful torment, incomparable torment! A harsher penance than any earthly torture! Now you will see how one can easily and quickly satisfy such a large debt. This can be done by the one who is able to draw from the immense treasure of the Passion of the innocent Lamb. This treasure, which is the most precious one due to the greatness of His love, the dignity of His Person and the intensity of His pain, is sufficient, more than sufficient!”

The Blessed was born in Constance, on the lake bearing the same name, in a year between 1293 and 1303. At thirteen years of age he entered among the Dominicans. He was eighteen years old when his conversion occurred. Some of his fellow friars insinuated in him the doubt



that he would not be able to persevere, but the Blessed succeeded in continuing along the path undertaken, notwithstanding the isolation in which he was placed. He deepened little by little his conception of Wisdom, that he identified with the Person of Christ and loved in you the Word Incarnate, to which his soul joined in a mystical marriage. On January 21 he had the first mystical grace: during a vision his soul contemplated the *incomparable beauty* and the *light of eternal delights* of Eternal Wisdom. He died at Ulm in 1366.

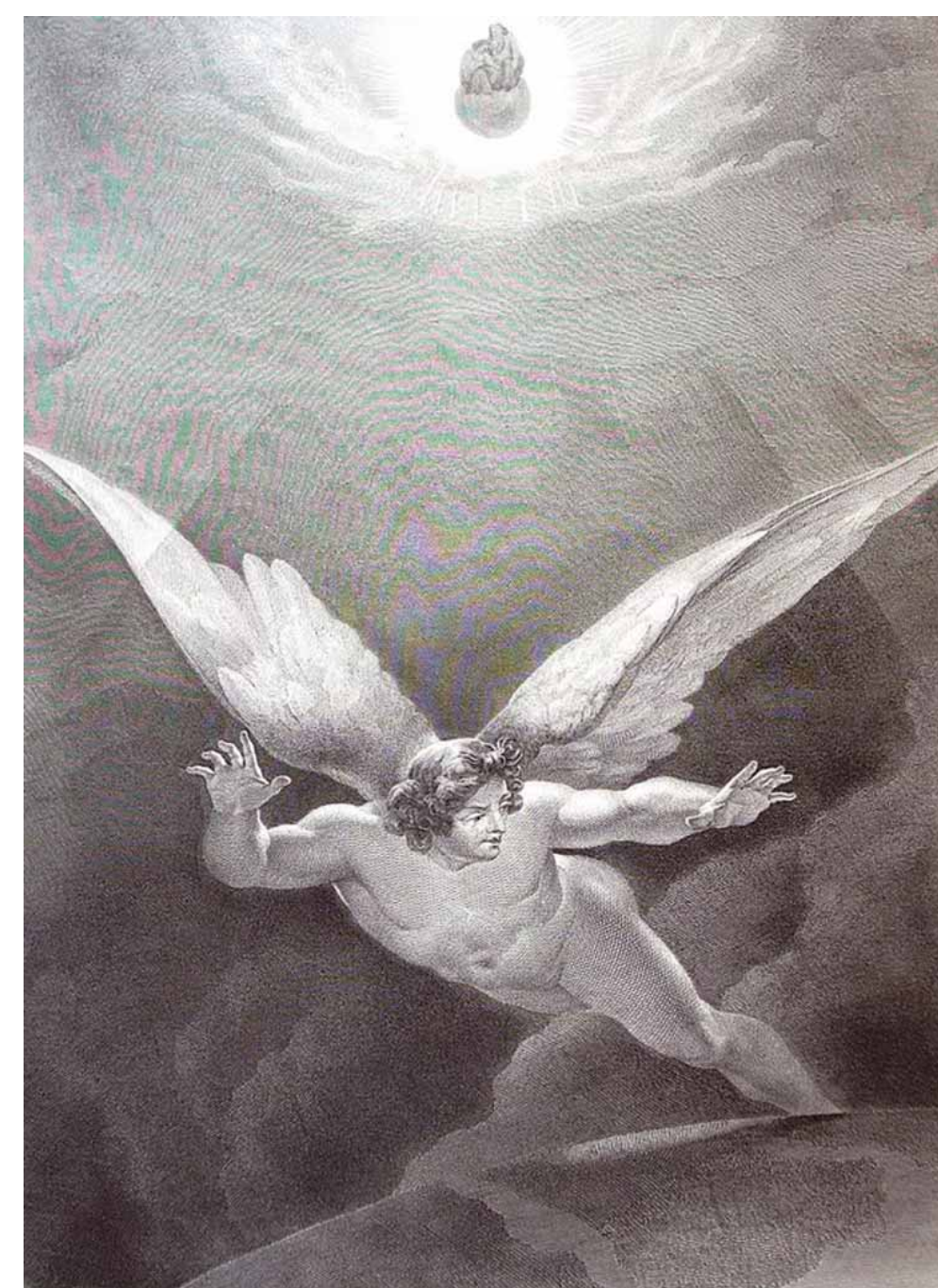


Brother John Rigaud

PURGATORY

The Franciscan Brother John Rigaud in his book entitled “Compendium Theologiae pauperis” (*Compendium of common Theology*), to the question: “Utrum indulgentiae defunctis valeant” (*If indulgences are valid for the deceased*), confirmed his thesis that the Pope could apply the indulgences even to the deceased, with this example: “I will then report here exactly what in regard to this was told to me inside the Porziuncola, near Assisi, in that spot where blessed Francis founded the Order of Friars Minor, and there piously passed from this life. Now we need to know that for this same place blessed Francis obtained from the Supreme Pontiff a plenary indulgence of all the sins for those who had gone there on the first day of August. I went there in the year of our Lord 1301. And it was there that a very intelligent and devout friar told me that in that same year two men from Milan had come to the Porziuncola, and that to one of them recently a son had died,

whom he loved ardently. While they were returning to their hometown, the one to whom a son had died, abruptly requested his companion to be so kind as to donate to him the reward of the Indulgence for the soul of his son, who, in his belief, must have been still suffering amid the flames of Purgatory. And that man with great generosity offered it to him, with the intention that it would be applied in supplication for the soul of the Deceased. And so during the same night, the dead son appeared clearly to his father, who was already awake; and then after giving him heartfelt thanks for the Indulgence obtained for his soul, he assured him that in virtue of it he was liberated immediately from the pains of Purgatory, and transported into the kingdom of the elect, up in Heaven. After one year, the above-mentioned men of Milan came again to the Indulgence of the Porziuncola, and with accuracy they explained to the above-mentioned Friar all that had occurred.”



Blessed Maria Eugenia de Smet

1825-1871

PURGATORY

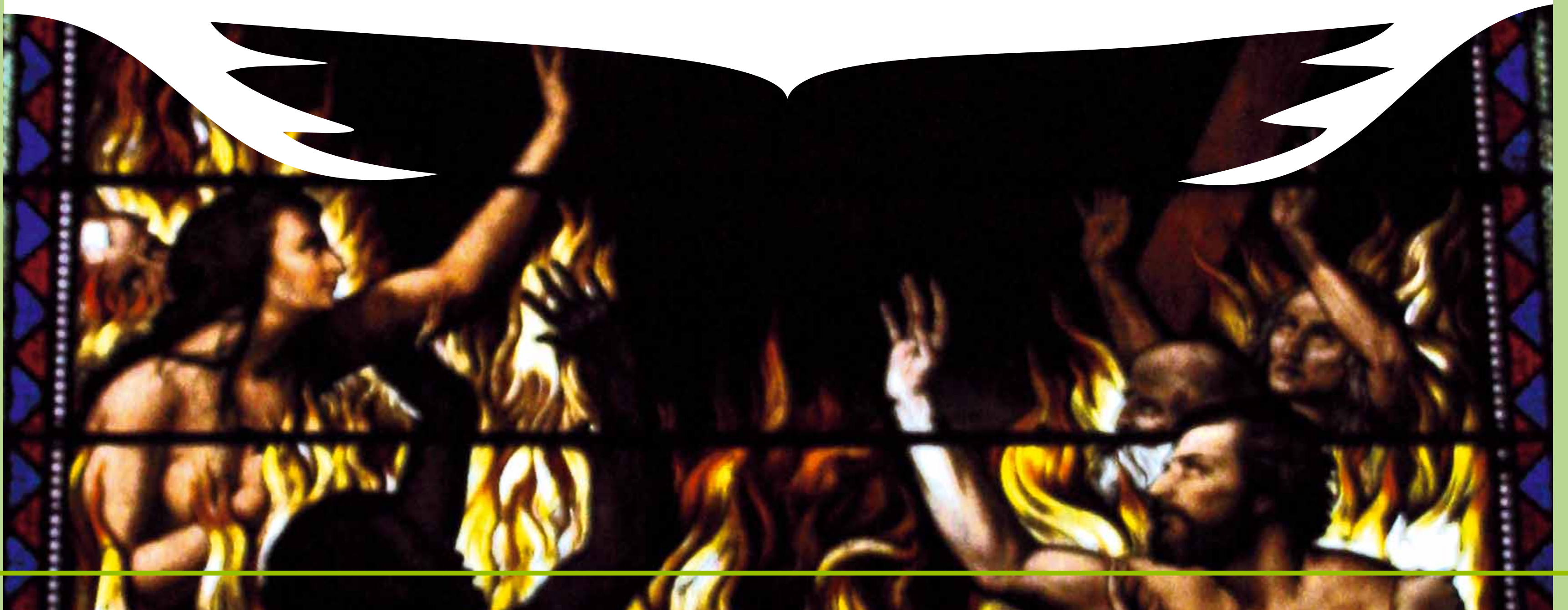
Maria Eugenia Josephine Smet was born in 1825 at Lille in France. She studied with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and at the age of 17 she desired to enter into their convent. But she remained with her family, devoting herself to ministry in the parish. She became a supporter of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In November of 1853 she professed the private vow of chastity and decided to promote an association of faithful dedicated to praying for the souls of Purgatory. She obtained many memberships, but the difficulties encountered convinced her to found a religious Congregation, with that same purpose. To begin her work she asked the advice of many people, among them were Pius IX and Saint John Marie Vianney. In the beginning of 1856 a priest entrusted to her five religious women who shared the vow to intercede for the souls of Purgatory. Thus she founded the Sisters Helpers of the Holy Souls. She desired to devote herself also to people still alive who needed assistance and said: "We must become for others the Providence of God."

Her vision for the liberation of souls in purification became always more clear: "Let us redouble our prayers to liberate the poor souls! I would like to empty Purgatory!" And again: "There are in the Church some Congregations aiming to relieve the most varied needs of the people, shouldn't there be also a congregation which is primarily devoted to helping the

deceased? Eighty thousand people die each day and who offers himself for these poor souls?"

On November 1, 1853 during the Eucharistic benediction Maria Eugenia prayed to Jesus to enlighten her on the choices she should make: "If it is You, my Lord and my God, Who inspires me with these concerns for the souls make sure that at the exit of the church a friend would speak to me about Purgatory!" Then as she was going down the steps at the exit of the church a woman she knew said to her: "During the benediction I had the idea to commit myself to offer, together with you, this month of November for the poor souls!" Still not satisfied of this proof, she asked advice to Saint John Marie Vianney, who several times had told her that her project: "Was a labor of love originating from the heart of Jesus and that her work has been desired by God for some time." One day the Holy parish priest of Ars wrote to her: "It is God who has inspired you to work by practicing the works of mercy for the liberation of the poor souls of Purgatory, in this way you fulfill completely the spirit of Jesus Christ by helping at the same time his suffering people on earth and relieving the pains of the ones who are in Purgatory."

Maria Eugenia offered all her prayers and her sufferings for the souls of Purgatory, faithful to the motto entrusted to all her fellow sisters: "Pray, suffer, work for the souls of Purgatory."



Blessed Rose Gattorno

1831 - 1900

PURGATORY

Blessed Rosa Gattorno was born into a family of ship owners from Genoa, Italy. She was one of six children; one of her brothers was Federico Gattorno, Head of State of the Garibaldi Corps and Deputy of the Kingdom of Italy. On November 5, 1852 she married Gerolamo Custo who died after five years and left her with three children, one who was born deaf and mute.

In 1866 she got permission from Pope Pius IX to start a religious institute dedicated to the assistance of the sick and needy. After founding the Daughters of Saint Anne, she changed her name to Anna Rosa Gattorno.

Pope John Paul II beatified her on April 9, 2000. Her piety was not limited to those suffering in this life; it extended also to the souls of purgatory in need of help, being mindful that living members of the mystical body of Christ must sincerely participate in the suffering of everyone. Therefore besides copious suffering for the deceased of her institution, she desired to make offerings for all the deceased; she was in fact heard many times exclaiming: "Oh if I could gather enough assurance that in our Church a Mass would be dedicated every single day for the souls of Purgatory, how I would be so happy!" She managed just that and she established the necessary funds for a Mass every day and every Sunday; furthermore she reserved charities for the general chapel that had a Mass every day for the souls suffering in purgatory.

On the day of the commemoration of the dead, many priests were invited to the church in Rome to celebrate Masses for the suffering. With her maternal finesse came some benefits, giving money to the

most poor so they could celebrate Masses where they wanted. It was of no surprise because God rewards such requests by sometimes revealing some of the souls after they had already passed to another world. In her writings the Mother herself narrates many apparitions of the deceased. Sister Anna Geromina Mazza tells us a fact that she herself witnessed.

An elderly Canon gave the Daughters of Saint Anne a house in Pistoia, Italy. However, he lived on the main floor of the house until he died. Given his advanced age and illness, he had at his service an old woman with whom he did not always get along since once in a while the house rang with fights and loud voices so much so that the Mother Superior came down from their floor to make peace in the apartment. Three months after the death of the Canon, Mother Gattorno had a chance to go to Pistoia and stay at the house for three days.

On the last day of her stay, she was seen in the chapel engrossed before an image of the Sacred Heart, kneeling as she was used to doing and leaning on a chair. The Superior, who needed to talk to Mother Gattorno, called her with politeness but she did not answer; she called again repeatedly but in vain; then she went away to complain about it to the secretary. After some time Mother went into her room and called out to herself but she seemed strangely occupied; Mother Gattorno let the nun sit next to her, then she took her by the hand, she led her into the chapel and she had her kneel near the first pew. They were there in silence for a good while; Mother Gattorno then asked the nun: "Geromina, do you hear that



voice?" "Yes I do Mother". "Whose voice is that? Do you recognize it?" "Mother, it is the voice of the Canon Biagini".

The nun had in fact recognized the voice having heard it many times during the fights of the floor below; the bedroom of the priest was right below the chapel. "Do not be afraid, Geromina", added Mother Gattorno taking her by the hand; she led her in the bedroom; she made her sit and stay there in the silence. Then she continued: "Geromina, you have heard the voice of the Canon Biagini; he is saved but if he knew or saw the grave pains that one suffers in purgatory and how one must satisfy them by celebrating Masses for the torment of his spirit you would not ever stop praying for him in all your life."

She also said that the Canon was saved because of the good deeds of the institute and by the intercession of Saint Anne. "Go celebrate Masses – concluded the Founder – recite the rosary and pray, pray a lot for this soul".

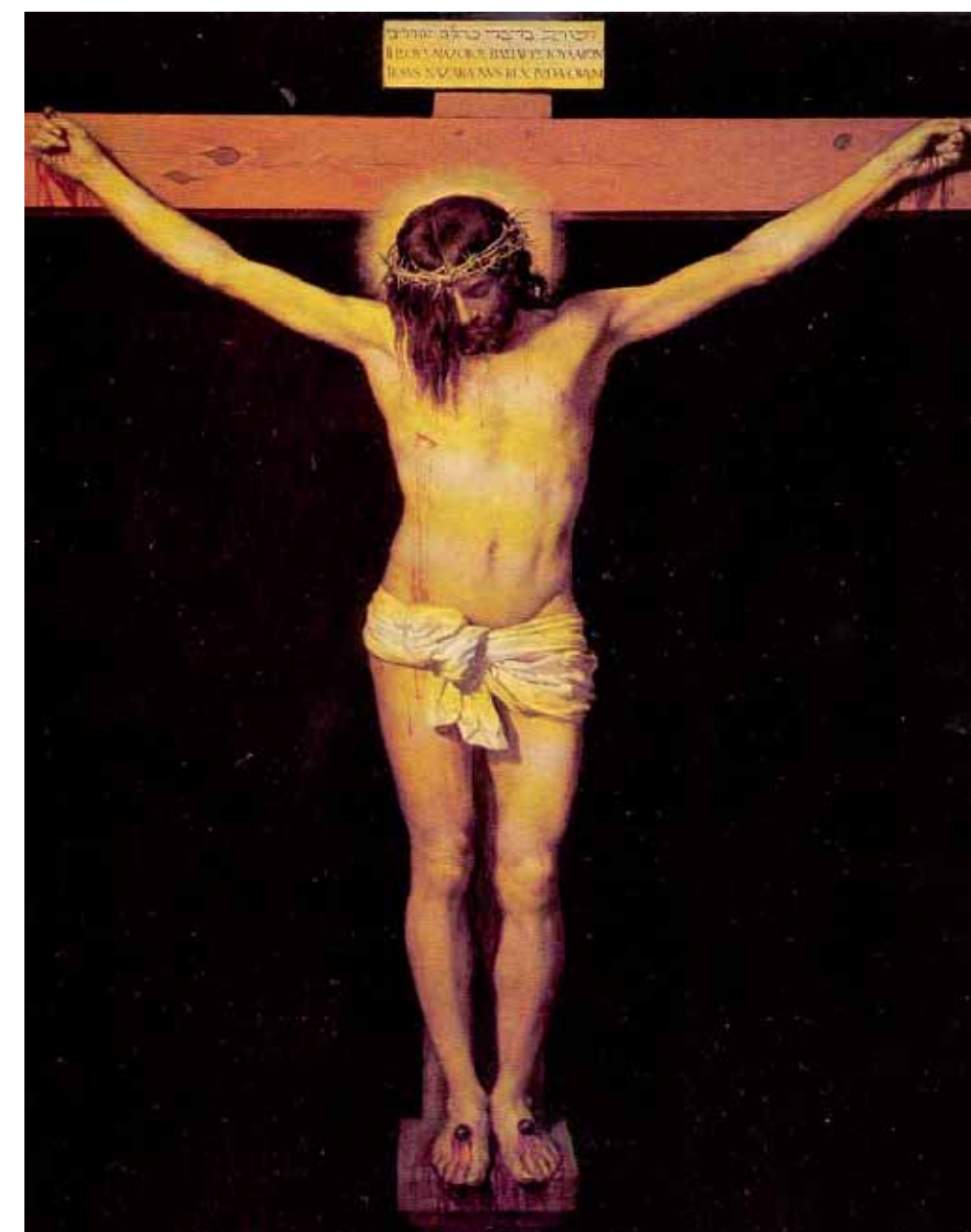


Cornelia Lampognana

PURGATORY

Cornelia Lampognana was a woman living in Milan who, at first as wife and later as widow, dedicated herself to a life of prayer. She was a friend of a religious woman of the Third Order of St. Dominic. One day, when talking about eternity, they promised each other that if God desired it, the first one to die would appear to the other one. After five years following that promise, Cornelia died and within three days presented herself to her companion, while she was in her cell kneeling at the foot of the crucifix. Amazed by the apparition, the religious said: “O Cornelia, my Cornelia, how happy I am to see you again! So where are you now? Certainly you will be in the bosom of God, whom you served in this life with much zeal and love!” ‘Alas! Not yet – the soul responded –. You see how different the judgments of God are from the ones of men! I am in a place of suffering and will have to stay there still for sometime in expiation of the sins of my life, that could have been more faithful and more ardent.’ Then taking her friend by her hand, she added: ‘Come with me, and I will show you wondrous things.’ As they walked, they arrived to a wide field filled with beautiful vines, on whose leaves were imprinted some characters. ‘Read’, said Cornelia to her friend. The religious stopped to see more closely and surprisingly found her own defects and daily imperfections marked on those

leaves. She therefore asked what that meant. ‘Nothing strange, my sister – answered Cornelia – didn't you perhaps read many times those words said by our Lord at the last supper: *I am the vine and you are the branches?* Each of our actions, good or bad, is a leaf of this mystical vine; to enter heaven it is necessary that the bad leaves are destroyed and consumed by fire: but, be consoled, my sister, since looking much closer, you will see that little remains for you to destroy, you having faithfully persevered in your virginal promises, and served with zeal your good teacher. It is true that your shortcomings are still numerous, but not as many as mine since I lived on earth very different situations, and I want to convince you’. And walking again, they found themselves in a place filled with vines which were intertwining from all sides, in a way that the leaves were covering the ground. The religious rushed to see what was on those leaves, but Cornelia stopped her and said: ‘My divine Savior does not allow you to know right now the offenses that I did to Him, and wants to save me from much shame. Read only what you will find written on the leaves that you see close to you’. Therefore looking attentively at the nearest leaves, she discovered all the shortcomings committed by the deceased at church: irreverence, distractions, and the needless conversations. ‘O my Jesus



– screamed the religious – what must one do to remedy so many shortcomings? How come that after your so frequent Confessions and Communions, after the indulgences earned by you, there remains so much for you to expiate?’ ‘What you say is right, o sister, but know that for my tepidity and for the habit that I developed, I did not obtain all the fruit that I should have from my Communions and Confessions, and regarding the indulgences, having earned very few of them, three or four at the most, due to my usual distractions and lack of fervor, it is necessary that I now undertake the penance that I did not do when it would have been much easier.’”

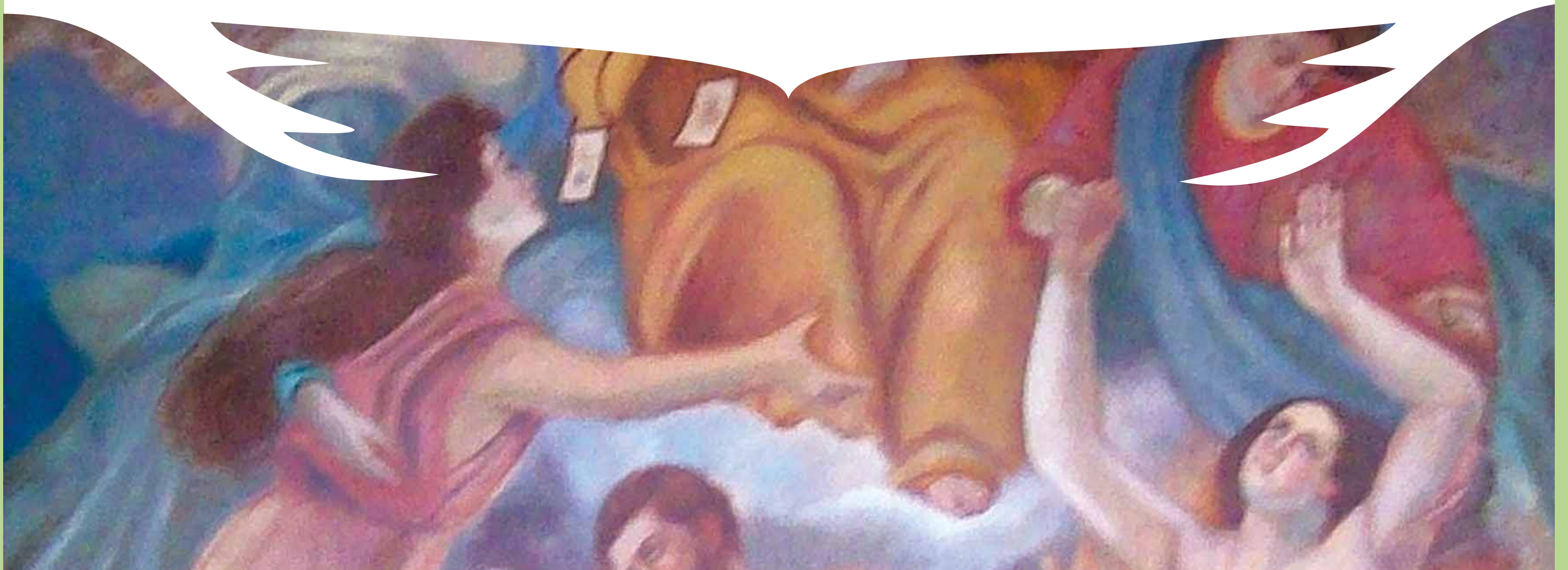


Catherine of Cortona

PURGATORY

Catherine of Cortona belonged to a noble family. Since childhood she distinguished herself for her piety and her love of God. At the age of eight years, she became an orphan after her father's death. One day he appeared to her completely surrounded by the flames of Purgatory and said: "My daughter, I will be in this fire for as long as you won't have done penance for me." From that day and notwithstanding her young age, Catherine devoted herself to harsh penances to free her parent from the torments. The Lord welcomed the efforts and good intentions of the little girl and one day her father appeared anew, this time however shining in glory and he said to her: "God has accepted your acts of love, and your prayers, my daughter; I will rejoice in glory. Continue all your life to sacrifice yourself as a victim for the salvation of the suffering souls, it is the divine will."

Catherine remained faithful to her mission for her whole life and devoted herself with enthusiasm to offer supplications for the souls of Purgatory. Some of her companions tried to dissuade her from practicing too many penances, but she answered: "When one has seen, like me, what Purgatory and Hell are, one will never do enough to rescue the souls from one place and preserve them from the other one. Therefore, I must not be spared, because I offered myself in sacrifice for them."



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 1

1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

Caesar of Heisterbach was prior of the Cistercian Abbey of Heisterbach, today Siebengebirge near Oberdollendorf in Germany. He entered the Abbey in 1199 and died there around 1240. He wrote primarily works of hagiography, among those the most important is *Dialogus magnus visionum et miraculorum* (*Great dialogue of visions and miracles*), a collection of stories in the form of a dialogue between a monk and a novice.

“A distinguished young man became a monk in a Cistercian Order. He had an uncle Bishop who loved him immensely. When the Bishop found out that his nephew had become a monk, he went to the monastery and tried to convince him to return to the world, however in vain. Following the year of probation, he took the religious vows of the Order. Soon, he progressed, step by step, becoming a priest. Nevertheless advised by the devil, through whose fault the first humans were driven out from the earthly Paradise, he forgot his vows, his priestly ministry, and worse yet he forgot God his Creator and left the Order. But since he was ashamed to return to his family, Caesar joined a group of bandits. And then reached a state of degradation to surpass that of all his companions. Then it occurred that during a siege of a fortress he was mortally wounded by a shooting from the fortress. His companions brought him to a nearby village and allowed that some people took care of him. But since there wasn't any more hope for recovery, he was exhorted to

confess in order to escape at least in that way, eternal death. But he answered: ‘For what could a confession help me since I have done so much evil and so many crimes?’ It was answered him ‘The mercy of God is greater than your crimes.’ At last he obeyed their requests and said: ‘Send me a priest.’ The priest arrived and went close to the wounded man. Then God Who can transform a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, enkindled in his heart such a remorse and repentance, that the wounded man not only confessed once, but he wanted to repeat his confession crying in such a way, that he could not talk anymore due to hiccups. Finally he succeeded to recover himself and said: ‘Lord my sins are more numerous than the sand of the sea. I was a Cistercian monk, and I was ordained a priest. I left the order dragged by my passions. And it wasn't enough for me to be a renegade. I joined a group of bandits that I surpassed all in cruelty, whereas they just stole some things, I killed and spared no one. Whereas they had human feelings and spared someone at times, I, in the hardness of my heart, spared no one. I attacked women and youth and destroyed many things with fire.’ The poor dying man recounted many more things about his life as a bandit, which almost exceed human capability. The priest frightened from hearing such crimes and beside himself, gave this senseless answer: ‘Your sins are too excessive, for you to still receive forgiveness!’ ”



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 2

1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

The story by Caesar of Heisterbach, reported in the *Dialogus magnus visionum et miraculorum* (*Great dialogue of visions and miracles*), continues: “But the man answered: ‘Sir, I know the Scriptures. I often heard read that evil is not comparable to the mercy of God, because God had said through the prophet Ezekiel: Each time that a sinner repents of his sins, he is saved and also: I do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he converts and lives!

“And therefore I beg you because of God’s mercy to give me the proper penance.’ And the priest answered: ‘I don’t know which penance to give you, because you are by now a lost man.’ But the one who had been once a monk answered: ‘Sir, I am not worthy to receive a penance from you and therefore I will give myself a penance. Then I choose two thousand years in purgatory, so that after these two thousand years I can obtain the grace before God!’ As he was between two extremes – the fear of hell and the hope of eternal life – he went back to beg the priest: ‘Since you have denied me absolution, I ask you at least not to deprive me of the consolation of the holy Viaticum of the Holy Supper!’

“The disconcerted and senseless priest answered: ‘I did not have the courage to give you a penance, how can I now bring you the Body of the Lord?’ Since the priest did not want to grant him any of the two Sacraments, the unfortunate

dying man made him yet another request: ‘I want to write on a sheet how things are going for me; afterwards you will have to take it to the bishop, who is my relative. I hope that he will pray for me!’ And finally, the priest promised to fulfill this request.

“The ex-monk died repented and went to Purgatory. The priest went to the bishop and delivered him the letter from the deceased. As soon as the bishop had read it he cried bitter tears and said: ‘Never have I loved a man so tenderly. I suffered when he entered the convent. I suffered when he became unfaithful. Now I suffer for his death! I have loved him as living. I must love him also as dead. Since he died repented and hence we must help him, I cannot deny him the prayers of my diocese!’ He then wrote to abbots, priors of monasteries, prelates, deans and pastors and to all those who were involved in the care of souls asking them to pray for the deceased. He wrote also to the monasteries of women; he begged those near him personally and the other ones in writing, to be willing to have special prayers, ordered by him throughout the year, for the peace of the soul of the deceased. The bishop, not satisfied with just this, celebrated the Holy Mass daily, offering alms and prayers for the liberation of that soul from Purgatory. And when due to sickness or other reasons he could not celebrate in person, he had another priest do it in his name!”



Caesar of Heisterbach

Part 3

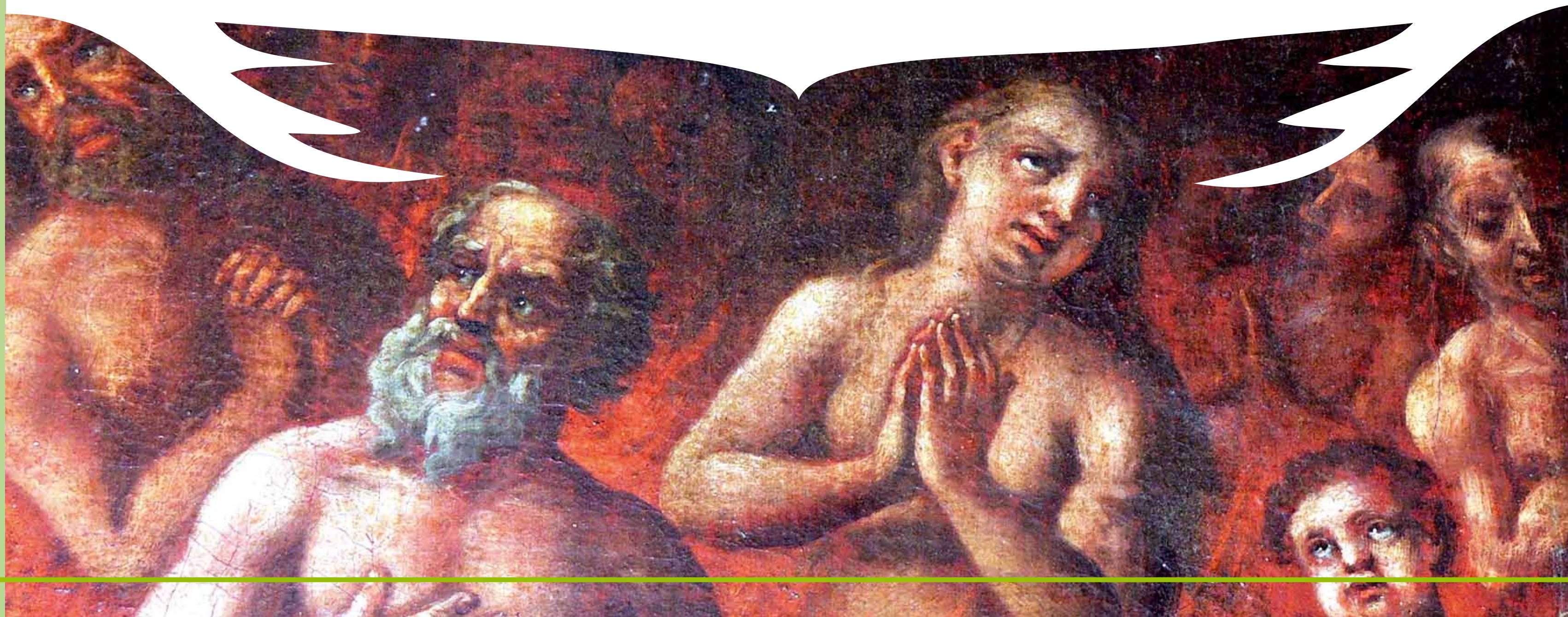
1180 ca-1240 ca

PURGATORY

This is the conclusion of the story narrated by Caesar of Heisterbach on the fate of the soul of the nephew of a Bishop: “One year later the deceased appeared to the Bishop after the Holy Mass. He was pale, consumed, thin and dressed in dark. From his expression and his clothing one could understand his status. When the Bishop asked him how things were going for him and where he came from, the deceased answered: ‘I am suffering and I come from the place of punishment, but be thanked for your prayers and for your love, because thanks to your prayers and alms and spiritual benefits that were offered for me in your entire diocese, this year took away from me one thousand years of Purgatory and if you will devote such prayers and offerings and sacrifices for another year in supplication of my soul like you did for this year, I will be completely free.’ Hearing this the Bishop was filled with joy, thanked God and sent other letters as he had done the previous

year sharing the vision he experienced with all in parishes and monasteries and asking that all be willing to continue for another year in the prayers and supplications for the soul of the poor deceased. And he himself continued his prayer and alms and Holy Masses even with more diligence and trust than before.

“The second year having passed, after the Bishop celebrated his special Mass for the deceased nephew, he appeared to him again, but this time clothed in white as snow and with a serene and joyful face, and said: ‘Everything went as I desired.’ And he said again to the Bishop: ‘May the Omnipotent God reward your love, Most Reverend Father, because thanks to your zeal I have been removed from the punishments and now I enter in the joy of my Lord. Thus these two years of prayers had counted for two thousand years of punishment in Purgatory!’ From that moment on the Bishop did not see him anymore.”



Denis the Carthusian

Part 1

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

Denis was born into the well known Van Leewen family at Rijkel near Saint-Trond (Belgium) in either 1402 or 1403. He completed his studies in the nearby cities of Saint-Trond and Zwolle. Still a youth, he felt early on a strong attraction for the monastic life and thus asked to enter first the Carthusian Monastery of Zelem and then the one of Roermond, but he was rejected because he wasn't yet twenty years old.

Therefore he decided to go to Cologne to perfect his studies in theology and philosophy, his name is registered in the archives of the university as 'master of art' in 1424. Having returned to the Low Countries he could finally enter the Betlehem Mariae Carthusian Monastery in Roermond (Holland), where he found the ideal environment for his desire to grow in holiness. He dedicated himself full-time to the apostolate of writing: he wrote 42 volumes and just the "Commentary to the Bible", his most important work, begun in 1434 and completed in 1457, takes up 14 volumes.

His renown of erudition and holiness, went beyond the walls of the Carthusian Monastery and when Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa arrived in the Low Countries as an Ambassador, he wanted Denis to join him as a traveling companion and adviser. He spent the last years of his life in silence and prayer and died March 12, 1471 following a long illness.

Denis had numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory.

One day he recounted to a friar that the souls in purgatory had appeared to him hundreds of times. Denis wrote a work, in which he devoted a chapter entirely on the need to pray and to offer supplications for the Souls in Purgatory. He wanted to summon the consciences of the faithful on the reality that perhaps among the ones who still suffered in Purgatory there were parents, relatives, friends, benefactors, besides many other innumerable souls that no one remembers anymore, because they are thought as being in Heaven long ago and that receive only the general supplications of the Church. Denis tried to call attention to the need for offering supplications in favor of those souls who are abandoned and forgotten by people and who need assistance.

In another chapter Denis collected some prayers in supplication of the souls in Purgatory and above all he wanted to focus on those who had died suddenly and were unprepared for the judgment of God. For these souls Denis offered the Mass, but also all the merits of Christ, of the Mother of God, of the Angels, of the Saints, and the good works. God revealed to him that he should not forget, that in Purgatory, the justice of God requests satisfaction up to the last cent and that there were a great many souls in Purgatory who suffered excruciating pains for years; because their relatives had considered them by now to be in Heaven for some time.

In two other works Denis described the pains of Purgatory, following the



visions of an English monk, the revelations of Saint Brigid, and also the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales. He maintained that the sufferings of Purgatory were much more intense than any torment on Earth.



Denis the Carthusian

Part 2

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

After the death of his father, Denis the Carthusian wanted to know so much where his soul was destined, that he omitted to pray for him. One day Denis heard a voice telling him: "Why do you allow yourself to be so controlled by your curiosity and you absolutely want to know where the soul of your father is? Instead of losing yourself in these thoughts, it would be better that you were praying for him so that he would be freed from the punishments of Purgatory." Struck by this episode, Denis began to pray with great zeal for his father. After some time the Carthusian had from God the confirmation that his parent had been freed from punishments and enjoyed the vision of God.

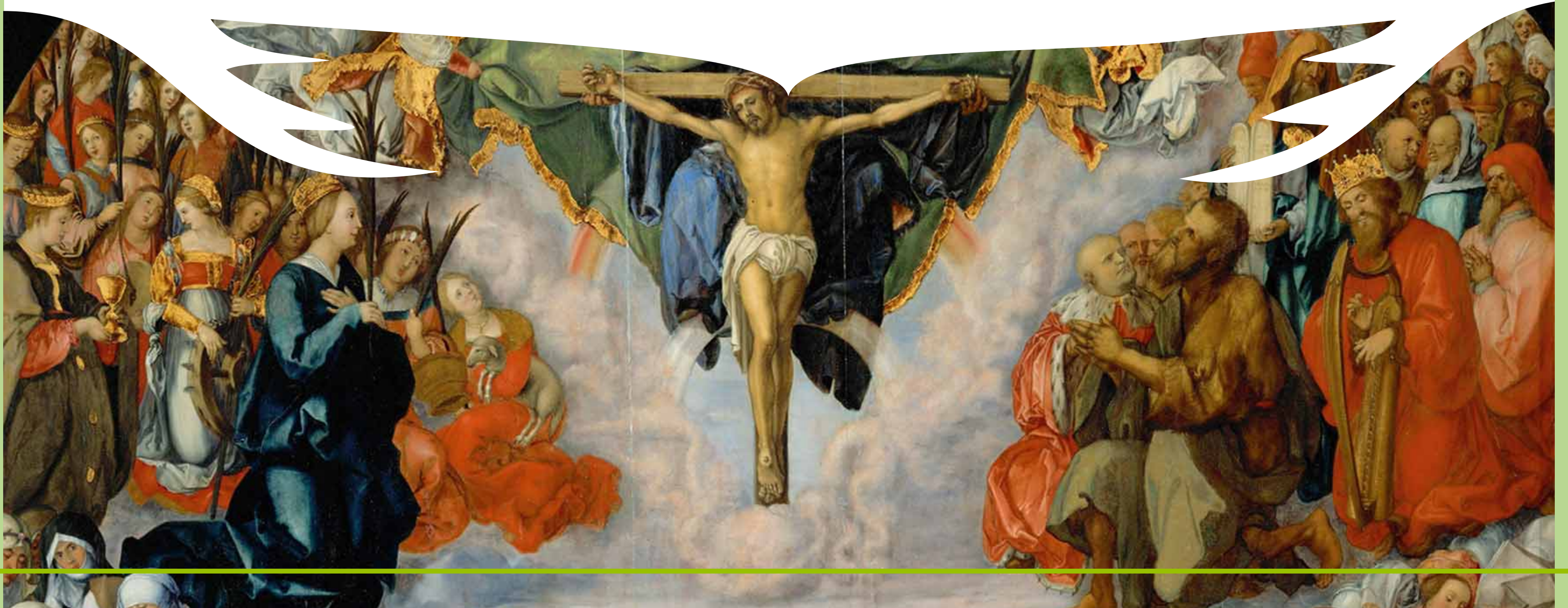
Another time Denis was assisting a dying novice, who for years had promised God to recite the whole psalter twice a day; but then he had often neglected his commitment and at the end he forgot it entirely. At the hour of death the novice remembered the promise, but not having fulfilled his duty, was overtaken by anguish. To console the youth, Denis promised the dying novice to fulfill himself the promise. But as a result of too many obligations, Denis forgot to recite the psalter for the novice. One day the deceased appeared to the Carthusian and reproached him, reminding him of the promise made: "If you had to suffer one thousandth of the punishments that I now must suffer in Purgatory, you would not say even one word to excuse

yourself, even if it were valid. Instead you would fulfill immediately the commitment that you undertook in front of God for me."

Another episode struck Denis: John van Loewen, provost of Saint Victor in Xanten died December 23, 1438 and according to his wish was buried in the Carthusian Church of Roermond. He had been a very important man and had accumulated many benefits and profits. He never misused the vast income, instead he appropriated them for good works, like the construction of a new monastery at Roermond, and a College of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Cologne. At his death, he was condemned to a long and extremely painful punishment in Purgatory. On the first anniversary of his death there was a celebration of the solemn office of the deceased with a Mass in the Church of the Carthusians of Roermond. During the chant of the Lauds, at the "Benedictus" Denis saw fiery flames coming out of the tomb of John van Loewen. The Carthusian pointed out the tomb to a young friar to understand if he too saw the flames, but he saw nothing. Denis was struck by the vision and asked himself its meaning: will the deceased be in Purgatory or in Hell? On the second anniversary of the death of the provost, the same thing repeated itself, but this time the flames were somewhat diminished. During the third anniversary it was revealed to Denis that the liberation of the deceased from Purgatory was by now close.



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Denis the Carthusian

Part 3

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

Denis the Carthusian had numerous mystic experiences, in which he saw the fate of the Souls of Purgatory. There was a pious woman called Gertrude who offered every day all her good works in favor of the Souls of Purgatory. Having reached the end of her life, as she was about to die, the devil tempted her trying to get her to despair suggesting these thoughts: “Why have you been so stupid and ignorant, to deprive yourself during your life of all your merits in order to offer them to others? Wait a little longer, until you will have reached eternity, and then you will see what will happen to you when you will not be able to present any merit to the Eternal Judge! You will be damned, but I will laugh about it and I will be deriding you and mocking you and insulting you for all eternity! Why did you donate all your merits with so much frivolity? You did it only for arrogance and this was to make you blind! But it will cost you very dearly!”

In this way the devil tormented the poor woman, who due to these insinuations was completely upset and anguished. The Lord came to her assistance and told her: “Why have you been so distressed, my dearest daughter? Know that the love and mercy that you had for the poor souls, was so pleasing to me that in exchange I forgive you and all the punishments that you would have had to suffer in Purgatory: and also your reward in Heaven will receive the hundredfold according to my promise, to recompense

one hundred times those who are generous in the love for their neighbor. Know moreover that all the souls you freed from Purgatory will soon meet you to accompany you into the Kingdom of Heaven!” Immediately, every fear and anguish departed from the soul of the woman and she died in the peace of God.

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Dominic of Jesus Mary

† 1630

PURGATORY

Father Dominic of Jesus Mary was born in Calatayud, Spain, on May 16, 1559. In 1574 he entered the friary of the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance in his city and professed there on December 8, 1578. In 1589 he joined the Teresian Reform, in which he made his religious profession in Pastrana on November 22, 1590. He was called to Rome by the Venerable Father Peter of the Mother of God (1604) and joined the Italian Congregation of the Discalced Carmelites where he was entrusted with various responsibilities.

He promoted the religious observance and founded friaries in Rome, Palermo, Genoa, Florence and in the territories of the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II. He devoted himself without pause to the good of the Church and the souls. He gave a prominent contribution to the founding of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He was also adviser of princes, cardinals and various Popes from Clement VIII to Urban VIII.

When he was transferred to the friary of Rome, in his cell, as it was customary at the time, he found an authentic skull for meditating on death. One night, from this skull, he heard a voice shouting: *In memoria hominum non sum* (no one remembers me). These words echoed several times and were heard in the

entire dormitory of the friary. Father Dominic was astonished and doubtful, thinking that it was a deception of the devil. He immersed himself in prayer to understand what he had to do. Then he took some blessed water and began to sprinkle the skull, from which came other words: “Water, water, mercy, mercy”. The Carmelite then asked him who he was and what kind of mercy he wanted. The deceased answered telling him that he was a German man who had come to Rome to visit the holy places. He died a long time ago and his body was resting in the cemetery, while his soul was in Purgatory. He had no longer anyone who would offer him supplications, nor anyone who would remember him. Therefore he asked to pray to Jesus on his behalf. Father Dominic promised it and began to pray fervently, doing also penances. After a few days the deceased appeared to him in his cell and thanked him for having been liberated from Purgatory. Father Dominic was very concerned for the fate of the Souls of Purgatory and had promoted the Heroic Act of Charity for their benefit. It consisted in a voluntary offering, that the faithful to God does of all his acceptable works: reparation of offences, damages or similar things, in life, and all the supplications that he may receive after death, for the



benefit of the Souls in Purgatory. This Act was approved by Gregory XV, when, with his Bull *Pastoris Aeterni*, he approved the Consortium of the Brethren, founded by Father Dominic, in which, among the other pious exercises in favor of the deceased, there was one in regard to the offering and consecrating for their supplication the acceptable part of their own works.



Padre Francesco Gonzaga

PURGATORY

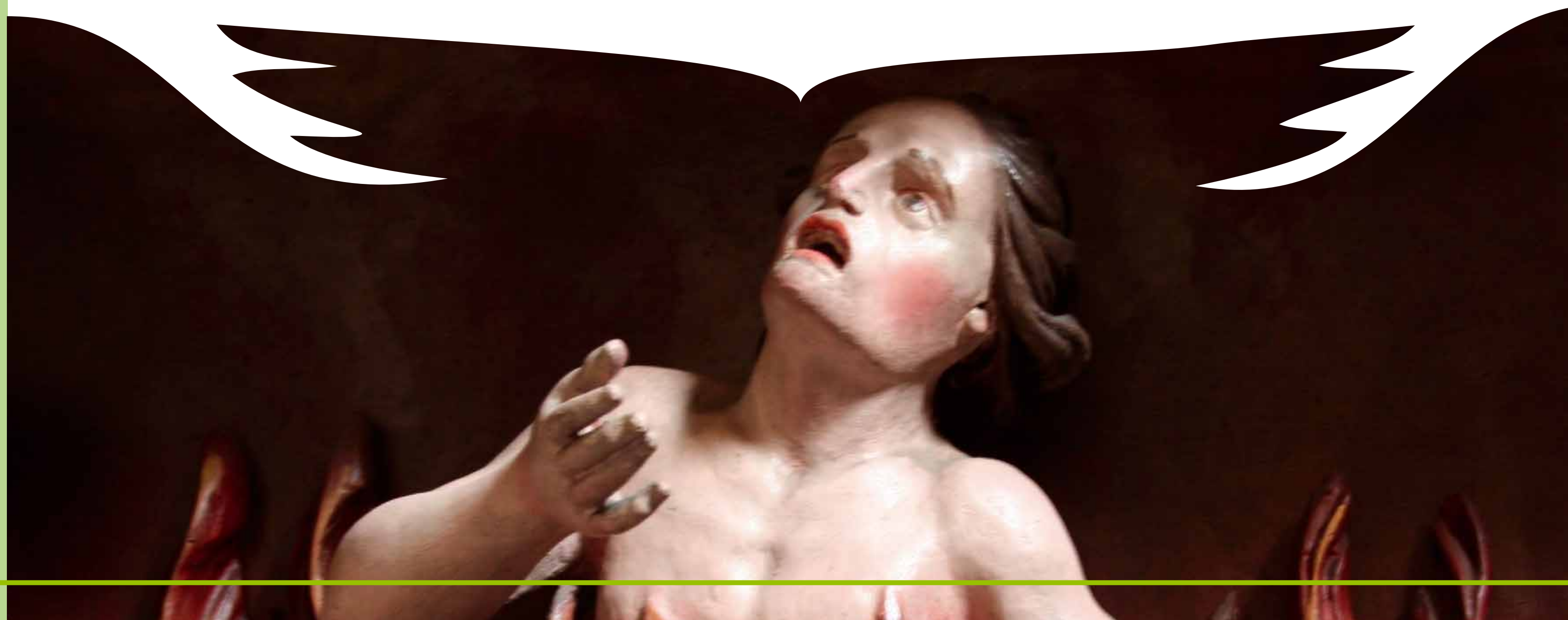
Father Francesco Gonzaga, Franciscan and Bishop of Mantua, recounts a story regarding the Souls of Purgatory in his book on the origin of the Franciscan Order.

“Brother Giovanni de Via became sick and died in a convent of the Canary Islands. His nurse, who was called Brother Ascensio and who lived in austerity, was one day praying in supplication for that soul, when suddenly he saw appearing before him a religious of his Order, surrounded by luminous rays, which illuminated the entire cell with a unique brightness. The friar caught by surprise did not recognize who that soul was and didn't even ask him his name. The apparitions repeated themselves again and on the third time, having taken courage, he asked him, in the name of God, who he was and why did he come. ‘I am – then answered the deceased – the soul of Brother Giovanni de Via, and I

come to thank you sincerely for the prayers that you raise up to God for my benefit and to announce to you that, thanks to the divine mercy, I am in a place of salvation, among the predestined to glory; may these rays which go out of my body be proof to you. Nevertheless since I was not yet judged worthy to contemplate my God face to face, because during my life I guiltily forgot to recite several Offices for the deceased, as I was required by the rule, I implore you in the name of the friendship that you always offered me, actually in the name of the love that you nourish for Jesus, to make sure that these Offices are recited in my place with the greatest promptness, in order that I would enjoy the sight of my Lord soon? Brother Ascensio ran to recount the vision to the Father Guardian, who ordered that the Offices be recited immediately. After that was completed, the soul of Brother



Giovanni reappeared, surrounded by a light more brilliant than the previous time, and informed Brother Ascensio that he had ascended to Heaven.”



Frances of the Most Holy Sacrament

1561 - 1629

PURGATORY

Frances of the Most Holy Sacrament was a barefoot Carmelite from Pamplona (Spain) that had numerous experiences with the Souls of Purgatory. Every day she recited the Rosary, she disciplined herself and fasted having only bread and water offering it all for the suffering of the deceased. She recommended doing charity and celebrating Masses for the liberation of Souls that still needed to purify themselves.

There were numerous deceased that showed themselves to her seeking help, as told by one of her biographers: "They used to come sometimes from the doorstep of her cell and there they waited until morning to come out and recommend themselves to be in her prayers. Others entered and if they found her asleep (knowing that she needed to rest) did not wake her. But then, when she was awakening, she would see them around her little bed, and she would complain that they did not call out to her. To this they responded: 'Because we know how much rest helps you, we did not want to interrupt your sleep. We waited for a good while because we feel relief from our pain when we are in your presence.' If they entered and found her awake, in order to lift any suspicion that they were illusions of the devil, they would say to her: 'God

will save you, servant of God and bride of Christ. Jesus is with you always.' Then afterwards they wore a beautiful cross adorned and blessed with relics that she held in great veneration. If by chance she was reciting the Rosary, they would take her by the hand and reverently kiss it as if it were a dear instrument of their relief and liberation. When she was physically ill or her soul was disturbed, with loving visits they would cheer her up and console her. When by divine disposition they knew that the demons were jealous and angry, since she could take Souls directly from their hands, they plotted ways to undermine the demons and they set themselves out to govern or rule; they warned her so she could be on guard and take precautions with prayers and arm herself with great patience.

"Above all the most admirable was the way in which they showed themselves to her, in order to move her to piety and compassion for their pain. They appeared before her with the same torments with which they had done wrong and with which they were tormented. Now bishops presented themselves with miters on their heads, pastoral sticks in hand and wearing vestments, completely surrounded and composed in flames, often they would say to her: 'We suffer these torments



because we searched for dignity with unruly concern, and then we did not follow through on the great obligations which were put upon us.' Now priests appeared to her with their clerical emblems up in flames, with their stoles under the guise of red-hot chains, with their hands filled with horrible ulcers, confessing to suffering pains for having irreverently managed the divine Body of Christ, and for not having administered conveniently the Holy Sacraments. A religious let Frances see him surrounded by precious tools, jewelry cases, chairs, paintings all transformed into fire: because in life, in contrast to the face of her most rigorous poverty, he adorned his room of such rich decorations."



Lucia Mangano

1896 - 1946

PURGATORY

Lucia Mangano had several experiences with the souls in Purgatory, some of which she revealed to her confessor. In 1931, Lucia had a vision of Purgatory for the first time. In her own words: “An angel led me to a place full of fire. I was so terrified that I thought I was in hell; instead it was Purgatory. There in the midst of the flames I recognized a friend, deceased for a short time. He told me how much he was suffering and he asked me for prayers. As he shared with me an intense desire to see God, he sighed and he yearned with that desire.”

This is an account of an incident which she experienced on the 1st of November in 1934: “this morning I had a premonition to pray for the soul of a Pastor who had just died a year ago. From a spiritual revelation I experienced a sense of the beatific vision consoling that poor soul; at the same time, my common sense made me feel his soul’s sufferings. I suffered thus for that entire day. In my natural instincts I experienced a vivid desire for God – it seemed as if fire would engulf and burn my entire body. That evening – and with the grace of the beatific vision – I came to know that this soul had been released from Purgatory. At that moment all my natural sufferings had ceased.”

On the 2nd of November in 1934, Lucia shared a similar experience. “Tonight I thought that the natural

instincts of my soul would share the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory to fervently seek God. This fervent wish and desire felt as if a great fire would consume me and inflict great suffering upon me. At around 3 o’clock these feelings ceased and I felt as if a spear had pierced my heart to the point of death; had not that fire or desire not been extinguished I would have been unable to rise that morning. While all my natural instincts were in these painful situations, my spiritual instincts, centered on God, sent a gift to console those blessed souls. It was then that I understood that when a soul is finally received by God, it is so much more capable of freeing other souls in Purgatory.”

On the 15th of December in 1935, Lucia approached her confessor about the deceased Pastor and explained to him: “It is necessary to pray for the Pastor because I hope that during this Christmas novena, Jesus will take him to heaven.” The priest assured her that he would celebrate Mass for his repose on the following Tuesday, but Lucia insisted: “No, celebrate the Mass tomorrow since by then he may not need it. On the first day of the Christmas novena, in fact, Lucia knew that at the Angelus the deceased Pastor was released from Purgatory together with two religious of the Passionist Order.



Redemptoristines of Malines

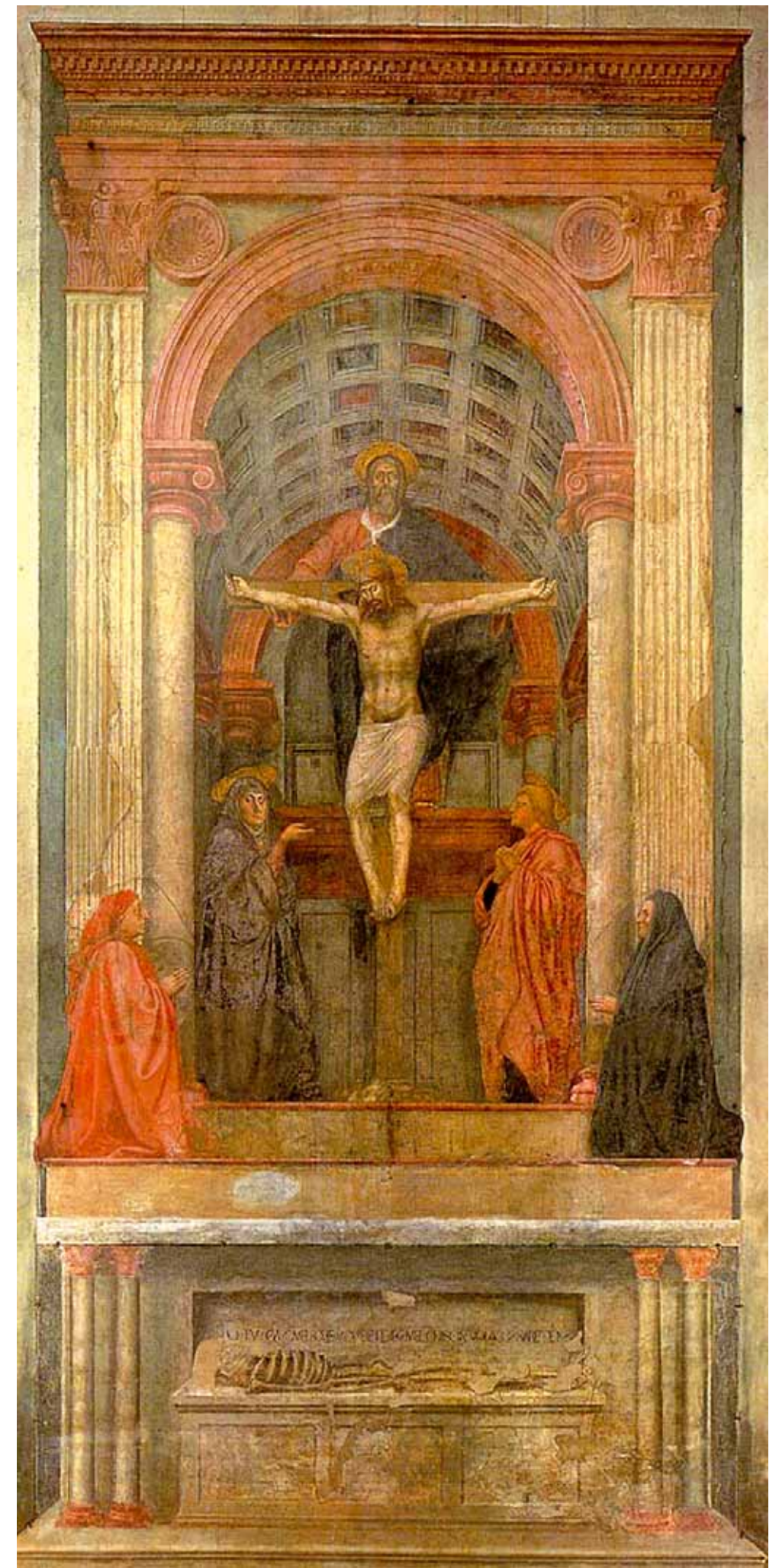
1871

PURGATORY

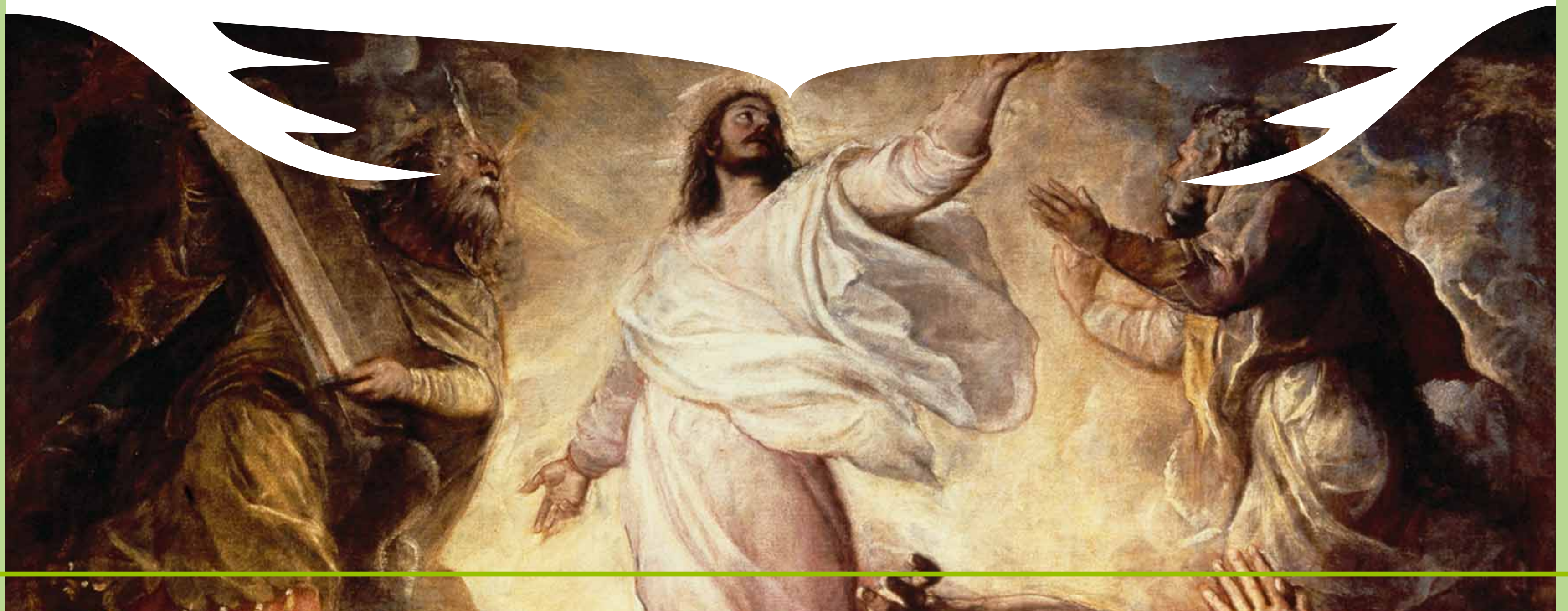
From September until December 1871, a vision of the Poor Souls in Purgatory appeared in the Belgian Convent of the Redemptoristines.

The deceased father of one of the Sisters, Sister Maria Serafina, appeared to her for three consecutive months requesting her prayers. During the first month, he appeared to her completely surrounded in flames and exclaiming: “Pity, my daughter, have pity on your father! Look at me in this pit of fire! It feels as if we have been suffering here for several centuries! Oh! If only you would realize and understand what Purgatory really is, you would do everything in your power to help the poor souls that are imprisoned here”. At times he would cry out from the flames that surrounded him: ‘I thirst, I thirst!’ From the fourteenth of October, the deceased, although still in much pain, seemed not to be encircled by any flames. He thought at the time that he had passed to a place less severe than Purgatory. It was during this time that he revealed to his daughter that the theologians do not exaggerate when they teach that the suffering of the martyrs was much less severe than what the souls in Purgatory experience. On the vigil of All Saints day and with the advice of her confessor, Sister Maria Serafina asked her father

what description or explanation would be fitting for a sermon on the feast of All Souls. Her deceased father replied: ‘Dear God! no one really understands or believes that the fires of Purgatory are the same as those of Hell; if every mortal soul would visit that place only once, no venial sin would ever be committed, knowing how severe its punishment!’. On the thirtieth of November, the good Sister heard her father cry out: ‘It seems an eternity that I am here; my greatest pain is a longing for God that devours me with an unquenchable desire to be with Him. Each time I seem to get closer to Him, I feel myself cast even further into this abyss simply because my punishment has not been satisfied’. Perhaps his punishment was coming to an end since on the fifth of December he appeared resplendent, but with a melancholy look. From the fifth to the twelfth of December, his appearances ceased; but from the twelfth to the fifteenth he appeared in a more dazzling light. Finally, during midnight Mass, as the chalice was elevated, he appeared for the last time, surrounded in light and in a state of blessedness. He addressed his daughter: ‘The time of my expiation has finally been completed and I am here to thank you and the community for all your prayers and sacrifices offered for my soul.



I will pray for all of you in heaven and for you, my dearest daughter, I will pray that you have the grace of complete submission to Divine Providence and the grace to enter Heaven without undergoing any of the pains of Purgatory!”



Saint Alfonso de Liguori

1696 - 1787

PURGATORY

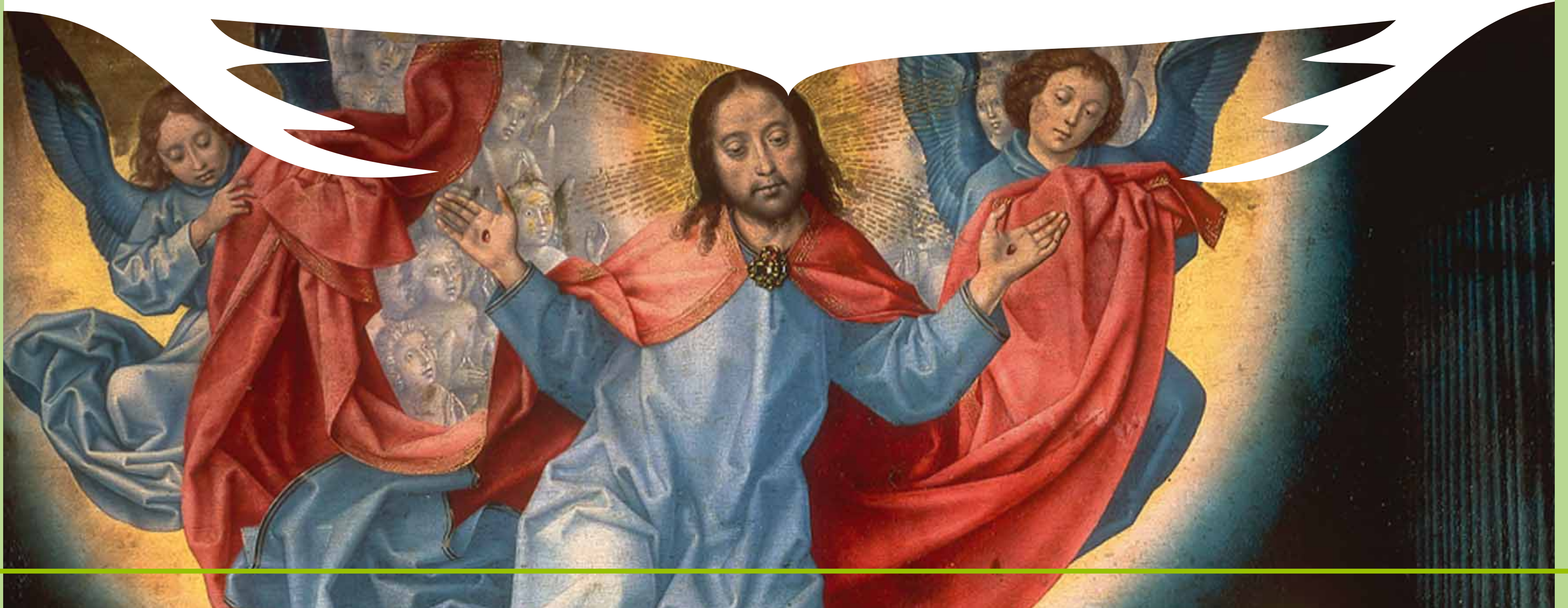
In the life of Saint Alfonso an incident is mentioned which occurred in the life of an Augustinian nun, Sister Catherine, who had a great devotion to the souls in Purgatory. In the city where the nun lived there was a woman, Maria, who had a reputation for immoral living. When this woman died, everyone was convinced that she was damned and the few who did attend her funeral did so more out of respect for her family than to pray for her. So convinced was Sr. Catherine herself that Maria was in hell, she never considered praying for her soul. After some four years, Sr. Catherine had a vision: a soul appeared to her from Purgatory and she implored: *“Sr. Catherine, we are so grateful to you for being so devoted to praying for the dead, please do not be remiss in remembering me.* And the Sister retorted: *‘And who might you be?’ And the soul answered: I am the unfortunate Maria – long deceased, abandoned and forgotten by everyone!* *‘What are you saying?! – Sr. Catherine exclaimed – you have been saved then?’*

Maria answered: *I was saved by the intercession of the Madonna. I realized at the time that I was about to die, alone and helpless – so I prayed to her and simply said: ‘O my Queen, you who are the refuge of sinners and all those who are abandoned – look at my condition in which I am so completely abandoned and grant me your assistance!’ The holy Virgin heard my prayer and came*



to my aid by obtaining the grace of a perfect contrition – saving me even as I lay dying on my death bed. But this Blessed Mother did not stop there. When I finally found myself before the Divine Judge, she had obtained from her Divine Son, the grace to reduce the time to be spent in Purgatory. But because divine justice can not be in conflict with its due – I was made to suffer more intensely for a shorter period of time to cancel my debt. At this moment, I need some Masses celebrated for me. ‘I promised not to cease praying for you to God and the Blessed Virgin!’”

Sr. Catherine had the Masses celebrated as she had requested and in a few days, Maria’s soul was freed and ascended into Heaven.



Saint Anthony of Padua

1195 ca - 1231

PURGATORY

Saint Anthony gives an account of an afflicted man who, at the peak of his sufferings, asked God to be liberated from his pains. Then an Angel appeared to him, and who said to him: “The Lord sends me to give you the choice between a year of sufferings on the earth, or one single day in Purgatory.”

The sick man did not have any doubts and replied: “One single day in Purgatory, at least my sufferings will cease.” Immediately, the sick man died and was led to Purgatory as desired. The Angel went to him to console him, but as soon as the man saw him he raged against him: “Angel-Seducer, you deceived me; you assured me that I would remain only one day in Purgatory and now it is already twenty years I am abandoned to the most atrocious torments.”

The Angel, then, replied: “Undeceive yourself; only a few minutes have elapsed from your passing away, and your cadaver is not yet cold on your deathbed.” The man retorted: “Then obtain that I return to earth in order to suffer there for one year, all that will be pleasing to God!”

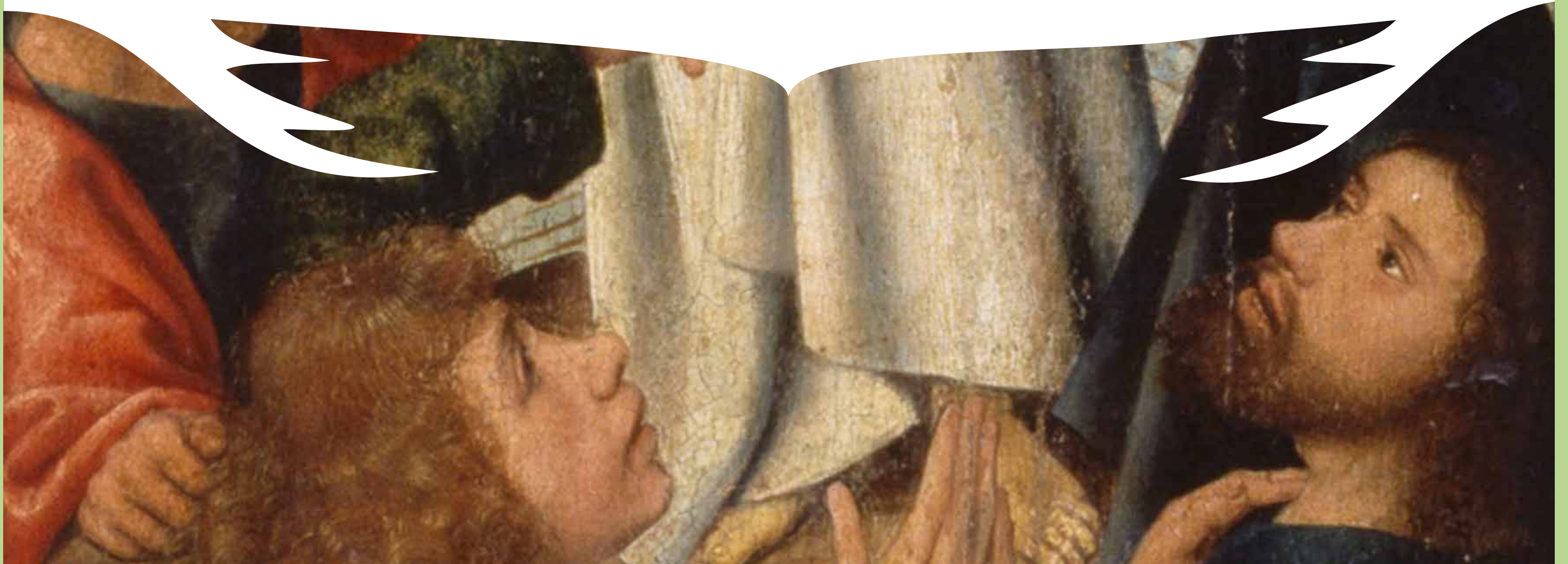
The Lord approved his request and he returned to life for one year. He continually repeated: “Patience during torment is the golden key to Paradise. Let us therefore profit by offering up our sufferings.”

Saint Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195 to a gentleman and knight of King Alfonso. In 1210 he entered the Augustinian Monastery of Saint Vincent de Fora. In 1212 he transferred himself to the convent of the Holy Cross in Coimbra.

In 1220 he was ordained a priest. The following year, upon receiving the news of the five Franciscan brothers who were murdered in Morocco, he was left very upset. He decided to enter among the Franciscans and asked to depart on a mission. As soon as he arrived in Africa, however, he became ill and was constrained to reenter in Portugal. On his return voyage during the route at sea, he found himself in the middle of a tempest and the ship upon which he was embarked, in order to avoid capsizing went ashore in Sicily. Antonio, at that point, directed himself to Assisi to participate at the general Capitol, where he met Saint Francis. Brother Graziano, minister of the province of Romagna, brought Antonio with him, so that he could celebrate the Mass with the brothers at the hermitage of Montepaolo.

In that retreat, he lived the Franciscan Rule in a radical way. In 1222 on the occasion of a priestly ordination celebrated at Forlì, he gave a sermon out of obedience, which shocked the listeners. From that day, he initiated his activity of being a preacher, of theology and a minister of the Order. He preached in all of Northern Italy and Southern France.

In 1224 he became an instructor of theology in the schools of Bologna and of Montpellier. In 1226, affected by illness, he retired to Padua, in the convent of Saint Mary, Mother of the Lord, dedicating himself to the drafting of sermons. He died on the 13th of June 1231.



Sister Anna Felix Menghini

1859

PURGATORY

In Foligno (Perugia) there is a monastery commonly known “of the countesses”, dedicated to Saint Anne and Saint Anthony. Here dwelled for several centuries a community of sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, founded around 1395 by Angelina of Marsciano, widow of Giovanni, count of Civitella del Tronto. In this monastery, Sister Teresa Margherita Gesta died of an apoplectic stroke on November 4, 1859, at the age of 62, after 34 years of religious life. During her saintly existence she had taken up in the monastery various responsibilities among which the one of Abbess, distinguishing herself for a spirit of poverty and for a scrupulous observance of the Rule. On November 16, twelve days after her death, to show how much she suffered in Purgatory, she appeared to her fellow sister Anna Felix Menghini. The latter one, between 9:30 and 10 of that morning went as usual to the guest house and as she was putting it in order, she heard some wailing and then distinctly a voice saying: “Oh God how much I suffer!” From the sound of the voice she understood that it was Sister Teresa Margherita, thus Sister Anna Felix asked her for what reason was she wailing. The fellow sister responded: “For poverty.”

Sister Anna Felix was left surprised and perturbed by the answer, knowing through direct experience, how exemplar Sister Teresa Margherita was in her poverty.

Then that blessed soul specified that the sins against poverty were to be attributed not directly to herself, but to the permissiveness and condescendence that she had

towards her fellow sisters regarding poverty.

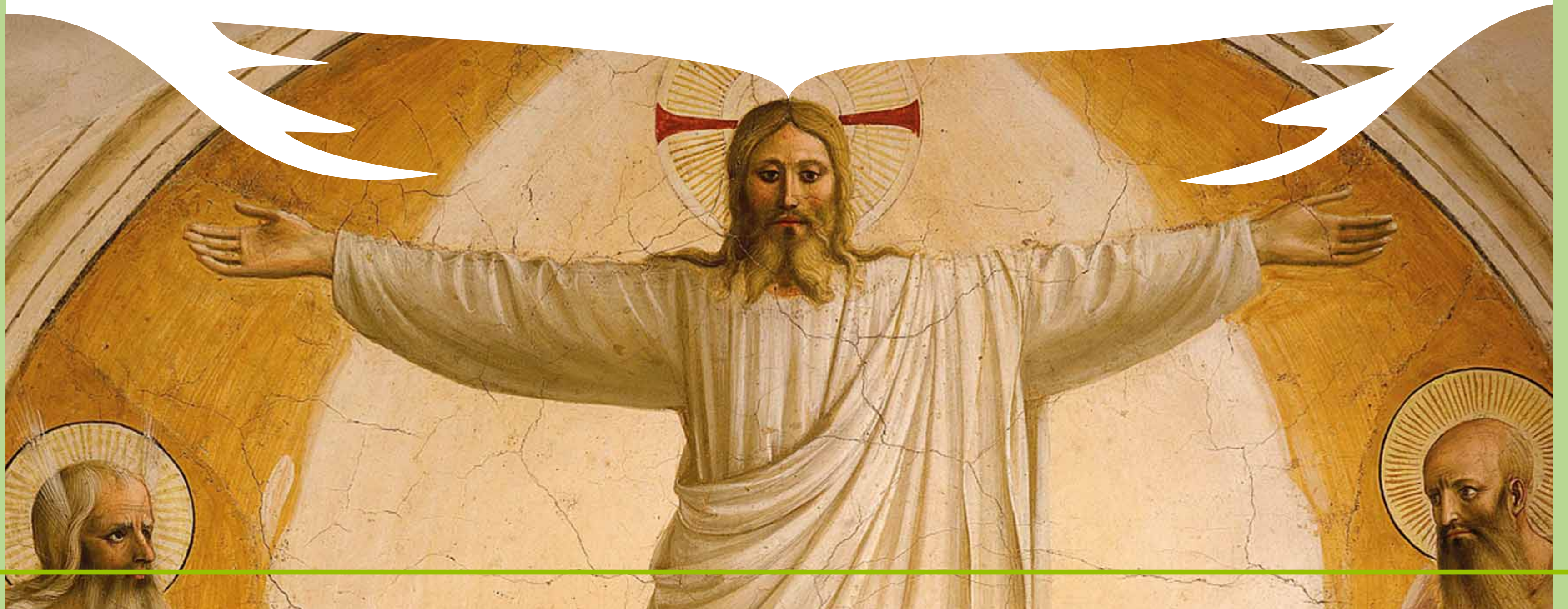
Meanwhile the room became filled with a dense fog; Sister Anna Felix saw turning towards the door a shadow, who before departing exclaimed: “This is a mercy; I am not returning here anymore and as a sign of this...” at that instant a light knock on the door was heard.

When the fog disappeared, the sister, frightened, exited the room shouting. Her fellow sisters ran to her, and still trembling, she recounted the occurrence to them.

All of them became curious, went to the indicated place and on the doorframe, which is presently preserved in a wooden storage box in the first cloister to the right of the monastery, they saw burn marks that reproduced the shape of a skeletal right hand.

Seeing this sign the sisters believed all that Sister Anna Felix had narrated and made supplications for the soul of the deceased with penances and incessant prayers. The results were soon observed. On the evening of Friday, November 18, the same Sister Anna Felix, as she was about to fall asleep, heard her name called three times.

Then she saw a very luminous globe rising slowly high from the floor of the room. She heard distinctly the words: “On the day of the Passion I died; and on the day of the Passion I go to the glory. Be strong in suffering and take courage. Farewell, farewell.”



Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

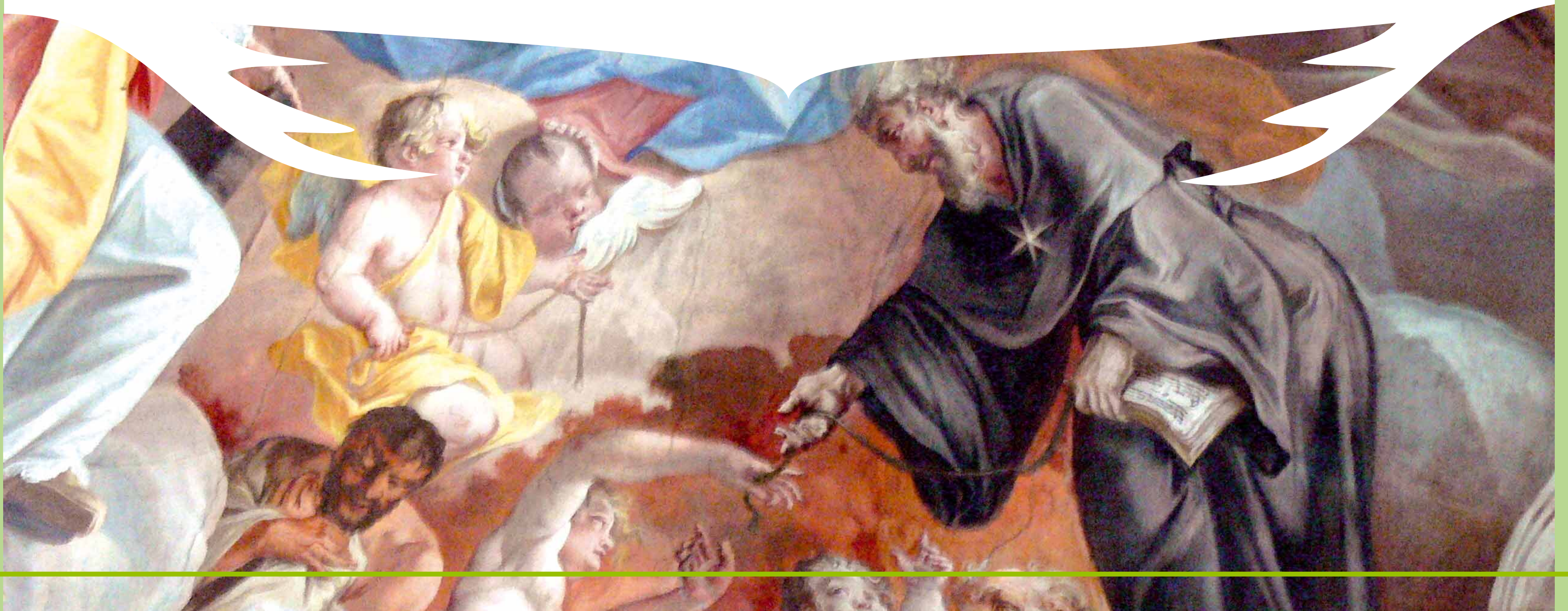
1090-1153

PURGATORY

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was born at Dijon in 1090. As a child he entered the school of the Canons of Châtillon, one of the most important in Burgundy, where he studied Latin writers and the Church Fathers. After the death of his mother, to whom he was very attached, in 1107, he had a crisis which made him feel distant from that world of “women, knights, arms, and lovers” which was typical of his family, instead he had a strong desire to seek and find God in the peace and quiet of the monastery. At twenty-two he entered the Cistercian monastery founded by Robert of Solesmes at Cîteaux. Bernard imitated the idea that had inspired Saint Robert of Molesme, Alberic and Stephen. The three monks left Molesme in 1098 to go to a solitary place 20 kilometers from Dijon, a place called *Cistercium*, to follow a more simple and rigorous lifestyle, regaining the spirit and the letter of the ancient Benedictine Rule. At twenty-five he was sent to found a new monastery at Clairvaux, from which will derive the Italian name Chiaravalle. Bernard was austere but was able to attract dozens of youth who wanted to follow him on the road to evangelical perfection. Soon the Cistercians spread throughout Europe. He was put in charge of delicate and challenging missions for the good of the Church. He crossed Europe to endorse the legitimate Pope Innocent II against the antipope. In 1145 one of his disciples was elected Pontiff taking the name Eugene III, who would put Bernard in charge to preach the second crusade. He wrote several works

and treaties including “De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae”, “De gratia et libero arbitrio”, “De diligendo Deo”. The tradition of ending the day of prayer with the *Salve Regina* derives from one of his own insights. His devotion was centered on the Infant Jesus and the Virgin Mary. His witness was an example for a host of monks. At Bernard's death in 1153, the Cistercian Order counted already 300 monasteries. Alexander III proclaimed him Saint in 1174 and Pius VIII declared him Doctor of the Church in 1830.

Regarding the Souls of Purgatory, Saint Bernard recounted an episode that occurred in a monastery. As they were celebrating the funeral of a monk, an elderly friar heard a group of demons sneer satisfied: *“Finally! Even in this place we were able to find a soul which will belong to us!”* The following night the deceased appeared to the monk and led him to see a precipice filled with smoke and flames: “See, the deceased told him, here is the place where the demons furious towards me have the permission from God to hurl me continuously and retrieve me from the abyss without leaving me one moment of respite.” At daybreak, the elderly monk went to Saint Bernard to tell him of the vision he experienced. The Saint confessed of having had himself a similar vision and called all the monks to a chapter. He reported to all the news of the deceased monk and entrusted him to their prayers and supplications.”



Saint Brigid of Sweden

1303 - 1373

PURGATORY

Brigid was born in June of 1303 in the castle of Finsta near Uppsala in Sweden. Her father was “lagman”, which is judge and governor of the Uppland region, and her mother Ingeborga was a noble.

At fourteen years of age, according to the customs of that period, her father gave her in marriage to Ulf Gudmarrson, the son of the governor of the Vastergotland. Brigid would have wanted to enter a convent, but she conformed to the will of her parents.

In 1335, the King of Sweden Magnus II married Bianca of Dampierre, and Brigid who was the sovereign’s cousin was called to the court.

She had great influence on the young sovereigns, and as long as she was listened to, Sweden had many good laws and the inhumane and unjust customs of the day were abolished.

In the solitude of Alvastra, she founded a new religious community called the Order of the Most Holy Savior, composed of dual monasteries, that is men and women religious, rigorously divided and the only point of encounter was in the church for common prayer. All were placed under the guidance of one single abbess, representative of the Virgin Mary. Arrived in Rome for the Holy Year 1350, she remained forever in the eternal city. She expended herself very much for the

return of the Pope to Rome. In 1367 it seemed that her prayers had come true, Pope Urban V returned from Avignon, but his sojourn in Rome was brief, because in 1370 he departed again for France, regardless of the fact that Brigid had foretold him of his imminent death if he did that; in fact, as soon as he reached Avignon, on the 24th of September 1370, he died.

At the center of the spirituality of Saint Brigid we find the mysteries of the Passion of Christ and of the glories and the dolours (sorrows) of Mary. Brigid knew to gather and emphasize the centrality of Mary in the history of salvation, next to Christ and united to Christ, according to the saving plan of God. She died on the 23rd of July 1373. Boniface IX canonized her in 1391. John Paul II on the 1st of October 1999 proclaimed her Co-Patroness of Europe.

In her revelations it is told that one day she had a vision of Purgatory. She heard the voice of an Angel who, consoling the souls, was repeating these words: “Blessed is he that, living still upon the earth, gives aid to the souls in Purgatory with their prayers and good deeds, because the justice of God demands that without the help of the living, these would necessarily need to be purified in fire.” At the same moment, from the profundity of the abyss he heard a group of voices that said: “O Christ, most just judge, in the



name of your infinite mercy, do not look upon our errors that are without number, but rather to the infinite merits of your most precious Passion, and beyond, we beg of you, in the heart of the clergy sentiments of true charity, where for their prayers, mortifications, almsgiving and indulgences applicable to our suffrage, we are aided in our most extreme necessities.” And he heard yet other voices with added: “Thanks be given to those who bring us relief in our wretchedness; your power is infinite, O Lord, render a hundredfold to our benefactors, who conduct us sooner into the sojourn of your divine light.”



Saint Bede the Venerable

672/673 ca.-735

PURGATORY

In his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Saint Bede refers to numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory, like the one had by Saint Fursey, the Irish monk who died in about 650 in Péronne in France. During his sojourn in the monastery founded by him in Cnobresborough, the Saint became ill and had a vision. He saw underneath him four fires: that of Falsehood, Covetousness, Discord, and Injustice. Some demons were arguing with the Angels over the souls of the dead. Three angels defended the holy monk from the fires and from the demons, but before he was well protected, a devil succeeded in burning him on one shoulder and his jaw. When the vision was over, Saint Fursey came back to his body, and was left with a terror of the fire he experienced.

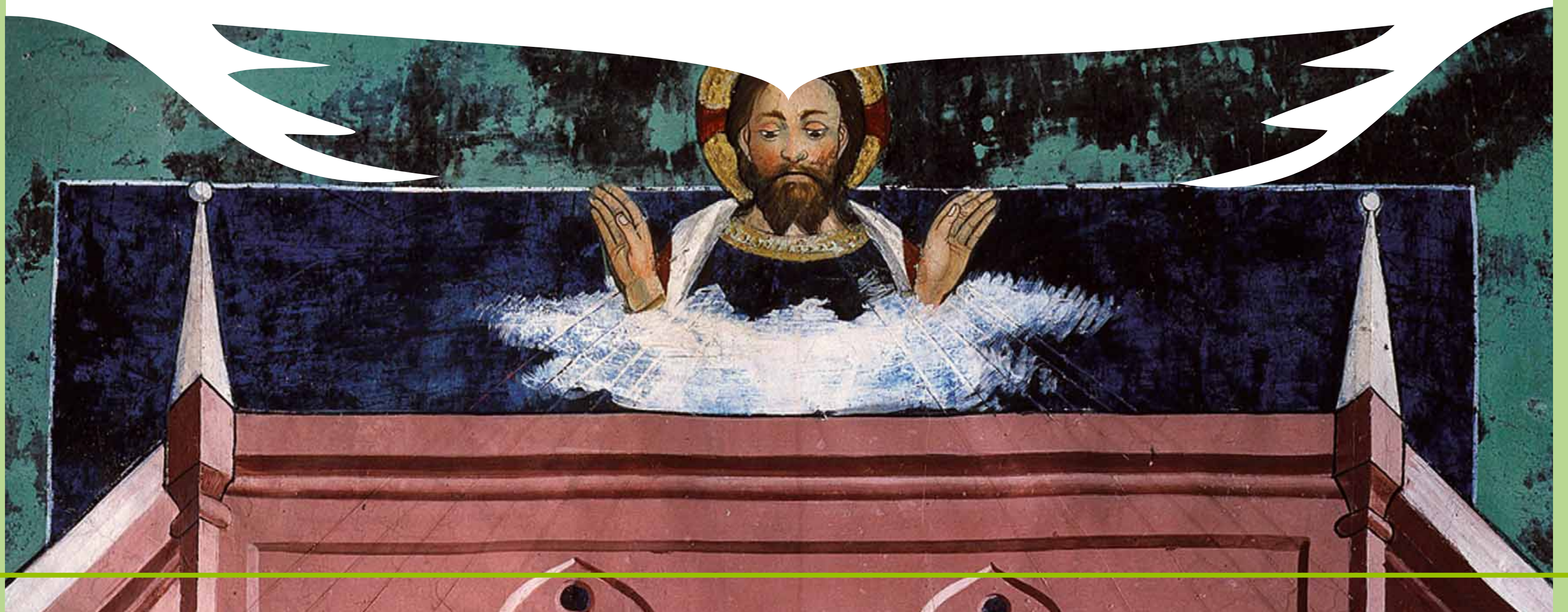
Another episode narrated by Saint Bede is that which has as the protagonist Drythelm, a worldly man, father of a family, who lived in Cunningham near Scotland. He was sick and died, but at sunrise he returned to life and all those who were keeping vigil to his corpse fled, except for his wife. Drythelm decided to give one third of his wealth to his wife, one third to his children, and one third to the poor, and then he withdrew to the monastery of Mailros. He recounted like this that which happened to him: a figure, dressed in white, accompanied him to a

very wide valley surrounded on the left by frightening flames and on the right by torments of hail and snow. The forceful winds made the souls which were there pass continually from one side to the other. He believed himself to be in Hell, but his guide told him no. Walking, he encountered more, always in dark places, where he would see only the luminous figure. He arrived in a place where he saw balls of fires come out of and fall into a water well, and souls that rose and fell in the flames with great torment. Drythelm caught sight of demons that were inflicting pain on five souls, among whom he recognized a religious, a man, and a woman. The demons wanted to seize him, but the luminous figure saved him and led him towards a place always more luminous.

He entered into a prairie where there were souls dressed in white who were talking amongst themselves. He thought then that he had arrived in Heaven, but the guide told him no. Then proceeding, he reached a light even more bright and where an intense perfume surrounded him. The luminous figure then said to him: "Do you know what all we have seen?" "The horrendous valley full of ardent flames and of glacial cold is the place where the souls of criminals are examined and punished, that they have repented only on the point of



death and they left their bodies in these conditions; however, at least they did confess and have done penitence, so that on Judgment Day they will reach the Kingdom of the Heavens. Of great help to them are the prayers of the living, almsgiving, fasting, and above all, the celebration of Mass, to be liberated even before the Day of Judgment."



Servant of God Edvige Carboni

1880 - 1952

PURGATORY

Many are the episodes in which the Souls of Purgatory manifested themselves to Edvige Carboni. One day in 1950 there appeared to the Servant of God a young woman and she said to her: "I lie dead at this point. I am in Purgatory, but I will have to stay there a while, because Jesus does not want that women do what men do; He desires that the women stay home, as in times past, to fulfill their duties as mothers and wives." The young woman was precipitated into a ravine during a climb up to the summit of a mountain in the company of a guide. Another episode narrated in her *Diary*: "While I was praying in front of the Crucifix, all of a sudden a person presented himself to her all in flames. I felt the horror of those flames burning with violence on the garments of the person who appeared to me. He wept much. From those flames I heard a voice: 'I am N. N.; the Lord has permitted me to come to you so that I might find a bit of relief for the pains which I suffer in Purgatory. I ask you, for the sake of charity, to apply on my behalf all of your orations, sufferings, humiliations and failings, and this you will do for two years, if he who guides your conscience will give you the permission. The mercy of God is infinite, but equally infinite is His justice; in the glory of Heaven one cannot enter, if one has not

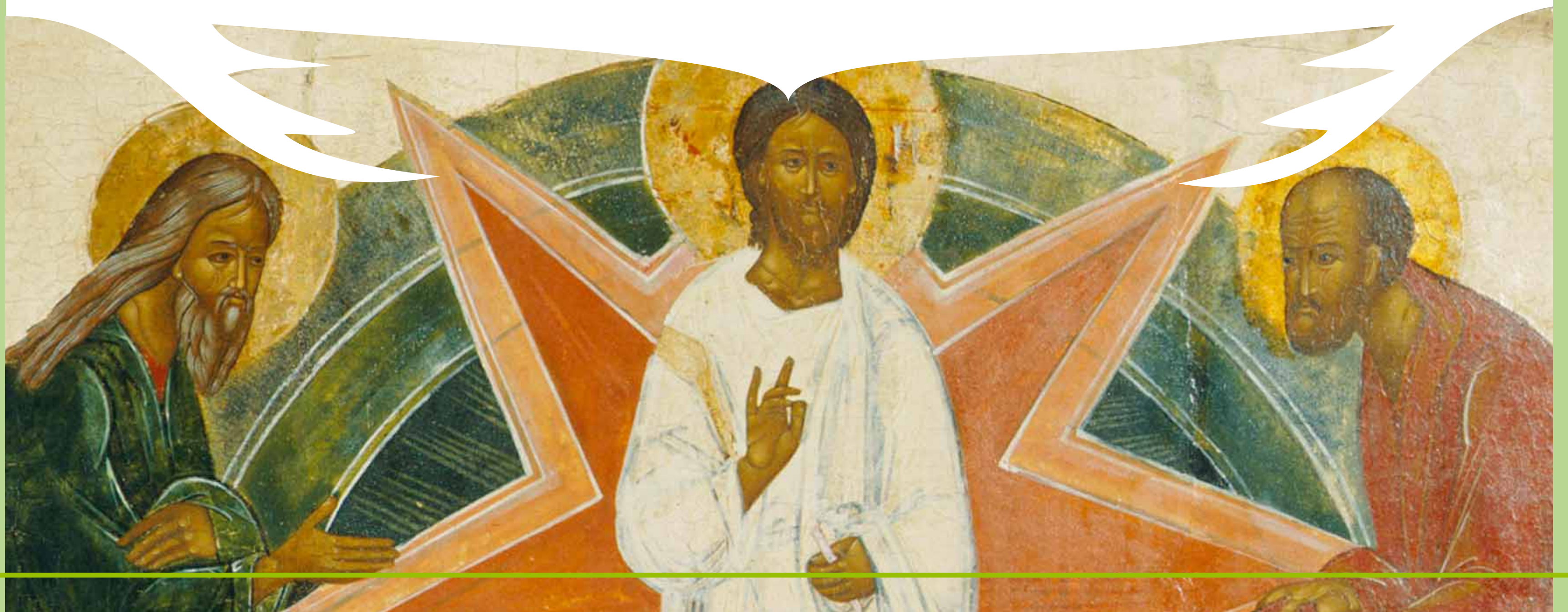
paid to the last penny the debt contracted with the Divine justice. Purgatory for me is weighty because I waited until the last instant to accept the voice of God which called me to penitence."

Always in the Diary another episode is referenced: "October 1943. Another person presented himself to her. I did not recognize him; he was dressed as an official. 'I died in war - he said to me - I would like Holy Masses: you will have them celebrated for me by Monsignor Vitali; you and Paola (the sister) will make Holy Communions for me.' After having done the Communions and celebrated the Masses he presented himself to me all resplendent and said to me: 'I go to Paradise where I will pray for you, especially for Monsignor Vitali. I am Russian and my name is Paul Vischin. My mother had educated me in the holy religion, then growing up I let myself be dragged into conduct not good. At the point of death, I repented and remembered the beautiful words that, as a child, my mother said to me. Good Jesus has pardoned me.'"

While Edvige found herself in Pozzomaggiore in Sardinia, an acquaintance asked to borrow money from her. Time passed, and one day Edvige and the woman were in church. The Servant of God approached her and asked:



"Would you be able to repay me the loan?" The other replied to her "May you get struck by lightning!" After this instance, years passed and Edvige asked the Lord for news about that woman. The reply was: "She is in Purgatory and she has another eight years." She was left with much displeasure and offered suffrages on behalf of that soul as her little sister, Paolina, did also, applying to her the benefits of the Jubilee. The Lord then said to her, "Tomorrow the woman will be in Heaven."



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 1

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

Saint Catherine was born in Genoa in 1448 and was gifted by God with the great grace of mysticism. From her personal experience of purification originated the famous *Treatise on Purgatory*. We quote the text:

“**1.** This holy soul still in the flesh, found herself placed in Purgatory by the fiery Divine Love, which burned her all over and purified what in her was to be purified, in order that, when passing from this life, she might be presented before God, her sweet Love, by means of this loving fire she understood in her soul the state of the souls of the faithful who dwell in Purgatory, to cleanse every rust and stain of sin, which in this life they had not yet purified. And thus as she, placed in this loving Purgatory of the Divine fire, was united to the Divine Love, and satisfied with everything that He performed in her, in this way she understood the state of the souls who are in Purgatory. And she said:

2. The souls who are in Purgatory (as I seem to understand) cannot have any other choice than be in that place; and this is by the plan of God, Who did this justly.

They cannot anymore turn inward towards themselves, nor say: I committed these sins for which I deserve to stay here. Neither can they say: I wish I did not commit them, because I would now go to Paradise. Nor can they say: That one will leave here sooner than me; or: I will

leave here sooner than he. They cannot have any memory of themselves, nor of others likewise, whether of good or evil, because it would cause in them greater pain than ordinarily. But they have so much satisfaction in being in the will of God, and that He should do all that pleases Him, as it pleases Him that they cannot think of themselves with greater suffering. And they only see the working of the Divine Goodness, which offers much mercy to human beings to lead them to Himself, so that in regard to the suffering or well-being that may occur to them, they can see nothing; because if they could see, they would not be in pure charity. They also cannot see that they are in those pains for their sins, and they cannot remember that sight; since that would be an active imperfection, which cannot occur in that place, where one cannot actually sin there. The cause for the Purgatory that they themselves endure, they see only once in the passing from this life: and then they do not see it anymore; because otherwise it would pertain to themselves.

3. Therefore being a soul in charity, and not being able to deviate anymore from it by any actual fault, they no longer will nor desire except with the pure will of pure charity; and being in that purifying fire, they are in the Divine plan. Which is perfect charity; and they cannot depart from that, since they are deprived of the ability to sin, likewise they are deprived of the ability to actually merit.”



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 2

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“4. I do not think that contentment can be found to compare with that of a soul in Purgatory, except that of the Saints of Paradise. And this contentment increases every day, through God’s influence in these souls, which increases because its impediment is consumed. The rust of sin is the impediment; and fire consumes the rust: and thus the soul exposes itself ever more to the Divine influence. Therefore since something that is covered cannot respond to the reflection of the sun, not due to a defect of the sun, which shines continuously, but for the resistance of the cover, then if the covering will be consumed, the thing will be exposed to the sun. And the more it will respond to the reflection, the more the covering will be increasingly consumed. Thus the rust (that is sin) is the cover of the souls; and in Purgatory it is consumed in the fire; and the more it is consumed, the more it responds to God, the true sun. But contentment grows as much as the rust diminishes, and the soul then is exposed to the Divine rays. And in this way as one increases the other diminishes, until the time is finished. However pain is not diminished, but the pain remains only for the established time. And as expected from the will of those souls,

they can never say that those pains are punishments: so satisfied they are with the plan of God, with which their will is united in pure charity.

5. Nevertheless they suffer such an extreme pain, that there is no tongue that can explain it, nor intellect that can understand even a smallest spark of it, if God were not to show it through a special grace. That spark God showed to this soul through grace; but I cannot express it with my tongue. And this sight that the Lord showed me, has never left my mind. I shall tell you what I will be able to; and those to whom the Lord will decide to open the intellect, will understand.

6. The root of all sufferings is sin, either original or actual. God created the soul pure, simple, and spotless from every stain of sin, with a certain beatific instinct towards Himself; but the inherited original sin draws away the soul from this instinct. Then when actual sin is added, it separates the soul even further; and the more it strays away, the more malevolent it becomes; since God corresponds less. And because all the good that can exist is through the participation of God. To the irrational creatures, He responds as He wills and as He has ordained, and He never fails them; but



to the rational soul He responds to the extent in which He finds it purified from the impediment of sin. Therefore, when a soul is approaching the original pure and spotless state of its creation, its beatific instinct becomes exposed, and thus it increases, with such force, and with such vehemence of fire of charity (drawing the soul to its ultimate purpose) that it appears an unbearable thing to be hindered, and the more it sees, the more extreme is its pain.”



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 3

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“7. And because the souls, who are in Purgatory, are without the guilt of sin, thus they do not have any impediment between God and them, except their pain, which has held them back so that their instinct could not reach its perfection. In this way they see with clarity how serious the slightest impediment is, and how their instinct is hindered for the necessity of justice, therefore a blazing fire develops in them, similar to the one of Hell, except for the guilt, which is the one that makes malignant the will of the damned in Hell, to whom God does not respond with His goodness. And thus they remain in that despairing ill will against the will of God.

8. Thus it seems clearly that the perverse will against the will of God is the one that causes guilt and, when the ill will perseveres, the guilt persists. And, since those of Hell passed from this life with ill will, their guilt is not forgiven; neither can it be forgiven; because they cannot change their will anymore; since with that will they passed from this life. In that passage the soul is stabilized in good or in evil, as it finds itself with its deliberate will; since it is written: *Ubi te invenero (Where I find you)*, that is at the hour of death, with which will, either to sin or dissatisfied and repentant of sin, *ibi te iudicabo (there I will judge you)*. For this judgment there is afterwards no remission, since, after death, the liberty

of the free will is no more adaptable, but it remains fixed in the state it is found at the moment of death. Those of Hell, for being found at the moment of death with the will to sin, bear the guilt and the pain with them forever. However, not as much as they deserve, but the one they have is still without end. But those of Purgatory have only the pain, since their guilt was erased at the moment of death, having been found disturbed and repentant of their sins. And thus their pain is finite, and keeps decreasing, as the time passes, as it was said. Oh misery beyond every other misery! And ever more because it is not considered by the human blindness.

9. The pain of the damned is indeed not infinite in quantity, because the sweet goodness of God spreads the ray of His mercy also in Hell. Because the person who died in mortal sin, deserves infinite punishment, and an infinite time for this punishment. But the mercy of God has made infinite only the time of the punishment, and the pain finite in quantity: although justly He could have given him a much greater punishment that He had not given him. Oh how dangerous is the sin committed with malice! Because a person repents of it with difficulty; and without repentance, there always remains the guilt; which perseveres as long as the person remains in the will of the sin committed, or to be committed.”



Saint Catherine of Genoa

Part 4

1448 - 1510

PURGATORY

The famous *Treatise on Purgatory* of Saint Catherine of Genoa continues:

“10. But the souls of Purgatory conform their will in everything to the will of God. And thus God responds to them with His Goodness, and they remain satisfied, as for their will, and purified from original and actual sin as for their guilt. Those souls remain as purified as when God created them. And for having passed from this life repented for all the sins committed and having confessed them, with the will not to commit them anymore, God immediately forgives their fault, and only the rust of sin remains with them, from which they then purify themselves through pain in the fire. And in this way, purified from every fault and united to God in will, they see God clearly according to the degree that He makes Himself known; and they see also how important is the enjoyment of God, and that the souls have been created for this end. Moreover they find such a uniting conformity with their God, which pulls strongly to Him (because of the natural instinct of the soul towards God), that there cannot be given reasons, figures or

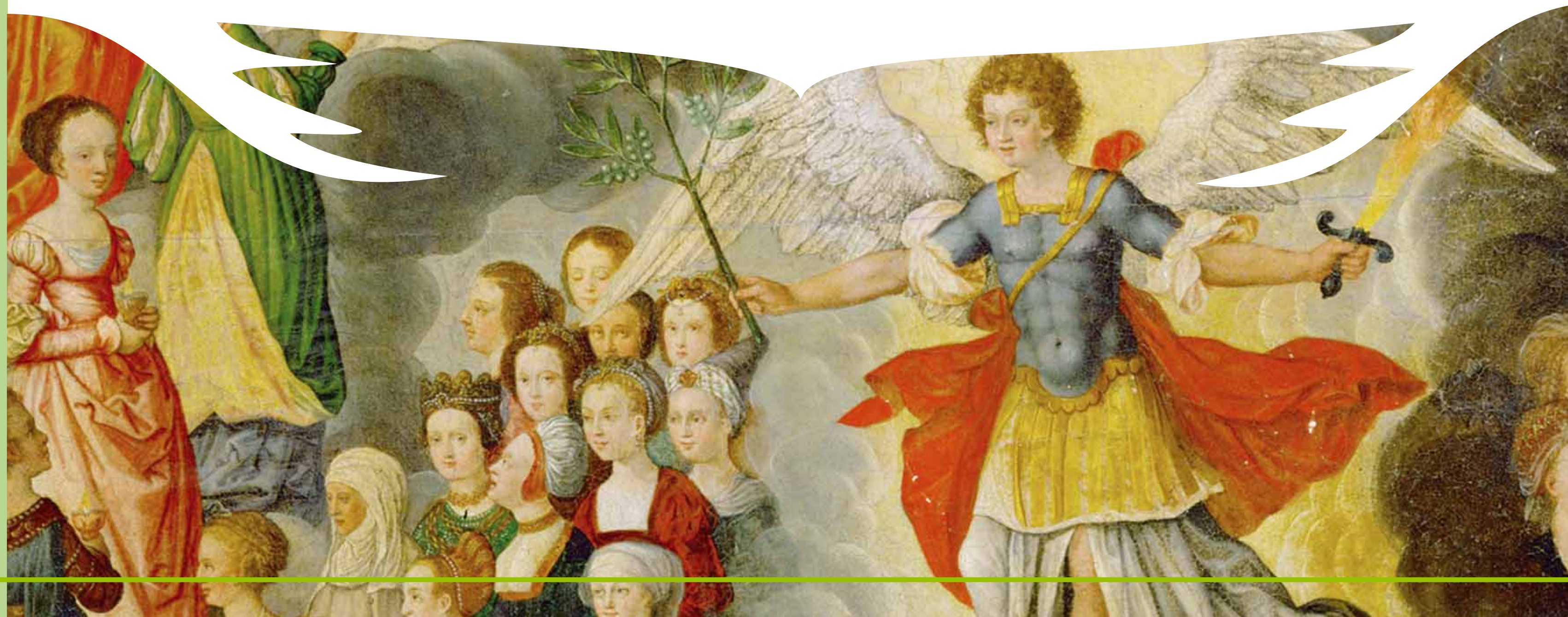
examples sufficient to clarify this thing, in the way that the mind actually feels it and understands it by inner feeling. Nevertheless I will mention one that comes to my mind.

11. If, in the whole world, there were only one loaf of bread, which had to alleviate the hunger of all the human creatures, and that only by seeing it, the creatures were to be satisfied; since a human creature has by nature, when healthy, the instinct of eating, if he would not eat, and he could neither become sick nor die, that hunger would keep increasing; because the instinct of eating never leaves him. And the person knowing then, that only the said bread can satisfy him, and, by not having it, he could not alleviate his hunger, and therefore he would remain in unbearable pain. And the more he would draw near that loaf of bread and not being able to see it, the more his natural craving would increase; his instinct would focus him entirely on this bread, where all his happiness would be found. And if he were certain of never seeing that bread, at that moment he would have achieved Hell, like the damned souls, who are



deprived of all hope of ever seeing their bread that is God, the true Savior. But the souls of Purgatory have hope of seeing this bread, and satisfying themselves completely in it. Therefore they suffer hunger and are in pain, only until they will be satisfying themselves of that bread, Jesus Christ, true God, and Savior, and our Love.”

Saint Catherine was born in Genoa in 1448 and was gifted by God of great mystic graces. At the age of sixteen she was given in marriage to Giuliano Adorno, belonging to an important Ghibelline family. She led a frivolous and worldly life but after an encounter with her sister, a nun, she decided to change her lifestyle. Around herself she gathered a small group of spiritual children. She died on September 15, 1510.



Saint Catherine de' Ricci

1523 - 1590

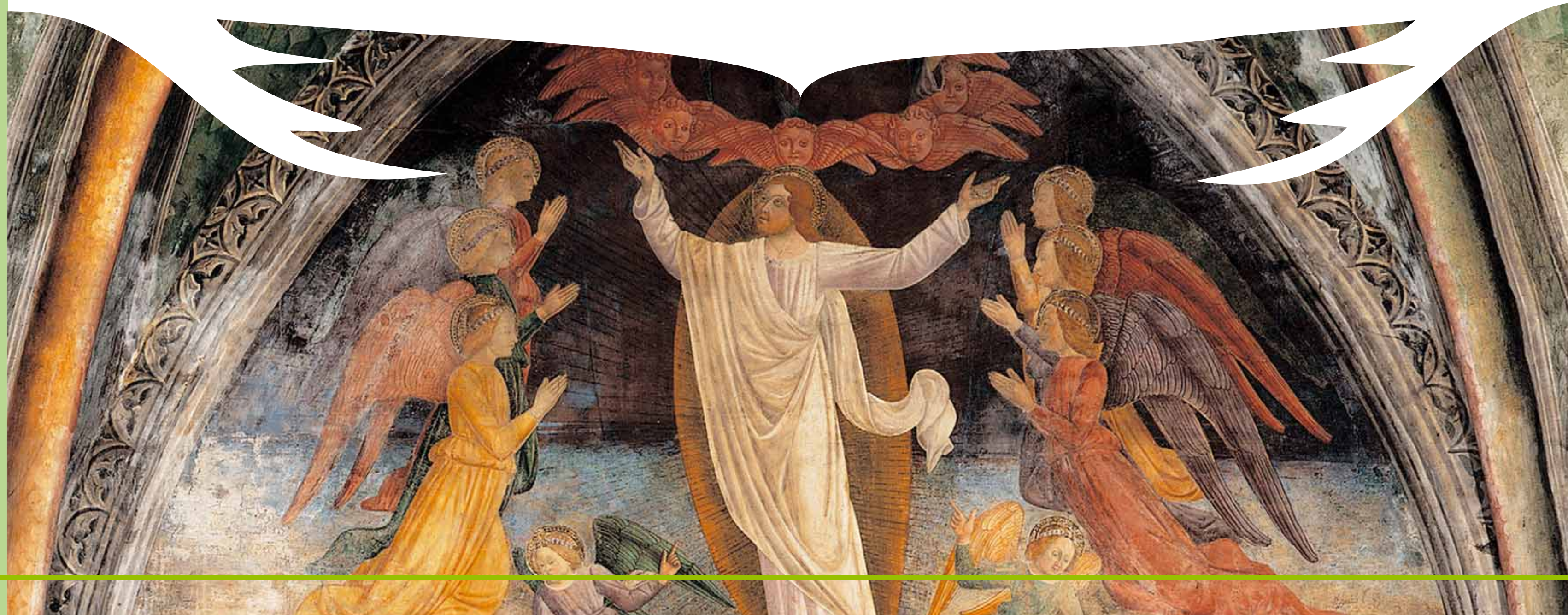
PURGATORY

Saint Catherine de' Ricci had the gift of knowing the state of the deceased and she made various trips, in spirit, to the afterlife. The fame of her ecstasies reached even outside the monastery in Prato where she lived, and many faithful came to her to ask for news of their deceased relatives.

Numerous were those who turned to the Saint in order to know these things about their beloved departed. To each one she responded not to satisfy the thirst of their curiosity, but to promote suffrage. To Brother Timothy, out of obedience, she gave a list of the names of people whom she saw ascend into Heaven. But her zeal was not limited to that, because she offered herself to the Lord to take upon herself the sufferings that Phillip Salviati, great benefactor of the monastery of Saint Vincent Ferrer in Prato, was supposed to endure in Purgatory. Here is how the event is narrated: "She obtained from her spouse Jesus, to be able to do Purgatory for his soul, for which she endured forty continuous days of such intense pain for the rest of her life; and her flesh was all covered by blisters, she could not be touched

because she was scorching hot, in her cell room it seemed that there were flames for the great heat felt in there, when she drank it seemed that her mouth and tongue were frying like a pan on the fire. The doctors were stupefied by this illness, not seemingly possible to them this sort of infirmity, so that in the end, compelled by obedience, she confessed that she was doing Purgatory for a great benefactor."

Saint Catherine de' Ricci was born in Florence on the 25th of April 1523. At five years old she was left a motherless orphan and became entrusted to the care of her aunt, the Abbess of the Benedictine Monastery of Monticelli. On the 18th of May 1535, she entered the Dominican Monastery of Saint Vincent Ferrer in Prato. After various mystical experiences and visions, the first Thursday of February of 1542 began in her the ecstasies of the passion. From noon on Thursday to four in the afternoon on Friday, she relived – every week – for twelve years, all of the events of the Passion of Christ. On the 14th of April 1542 she received the stigmata. She died on the 2nd of February 1590.



Saint Catherine of Siena

1347 - 1380

PURGATORY

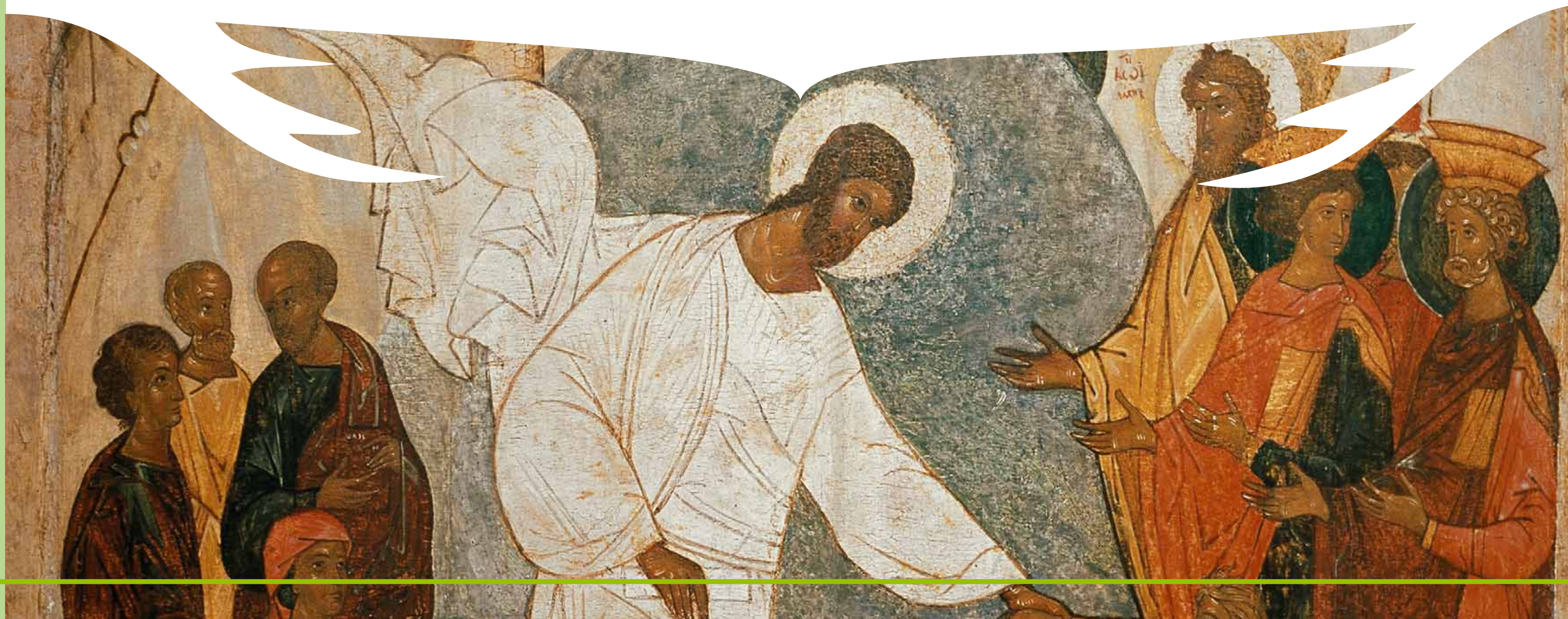
Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church and co-patron of Italy, refers to the description of Purgatory given to her by Jesus: “And if you turn to Purgatory, you will find my sweet and priceless Providence toward those little wretched souls that foolishly wasted time, and being now separated from the body, they do not have any more time to be able to merit. For them I have provided, by way of you, of you who are still in the mortal life and have time for them and, by means of almsgiving and the divine office that you have said by my ministers, together with fasting and orations done in a state of grace, you are able to shorten for them the time of penalty, trusting in my mercy. O sweet Providence!”

“Do not have disgust for sickness. Think of how great the divine grace is that, in times of sickness, places restraint to many vices that would have been committed having health. In addition, sickness atones and purges sins committed: they merit infinite penalties and God, because of His mercy, punishes them with finite penalties.

When a soul ponders that he has offended his Creator, the Total and Eternal Good, he believes it a great grace on the part of God that He would punish him in this life, and not having decided to punish him in the next, where penalties are infinite.

If we consider our sins and our defects, and how much we have offended God, who is infinite good, for which we should undergo an infinite penalty not only for the great faults but moreover for a small one, we would convince ourselves that truly we are worthy of a thousand infernos. And yet He, with mercy, punishes us in this finite time, in which, bearing with patience, is lessened and is merited.”

“It does not occur this way for the penalties that the soul sustains in the other life. For this, if one finds himself in the pains of Purgatory, he can lessen, but he does not merit. We endure, then, with good will this small penalty. Small, in truth, one could say, this and every other, for the brevity of time. Since, in this life, the struggle is as great as much as the time. And how much is our time? It is as much as the tip of a needle. Every struggle is small, because the life of man is nothing much, very little. In fact, the struggle of the past I do not have, being that it is in the past. That which is still to come, I do not have, because I am not sure of having the time, since I have to die, but I do not know when. There is, therefore, only this point of the present left to endure.”



Saint Elizabeth of Portugal

1271-1336

PURGATORY

The Roman Martyrology remembers Saint Elizabeth of Portugal in this way: “Saint Elizabeth, who, as Queen of Portugal, was exemplar in her work of reconciliation between kings and in charity towards the poor; after becoming widow of King Denis, embraced the rule of the nuns of the Third Order of Saint Clare in the coenobium of Estremoz in Portugal, founded by herself, in which later she returned to the Lord, while she was intent in having her son reconcile with her son-in-law.”

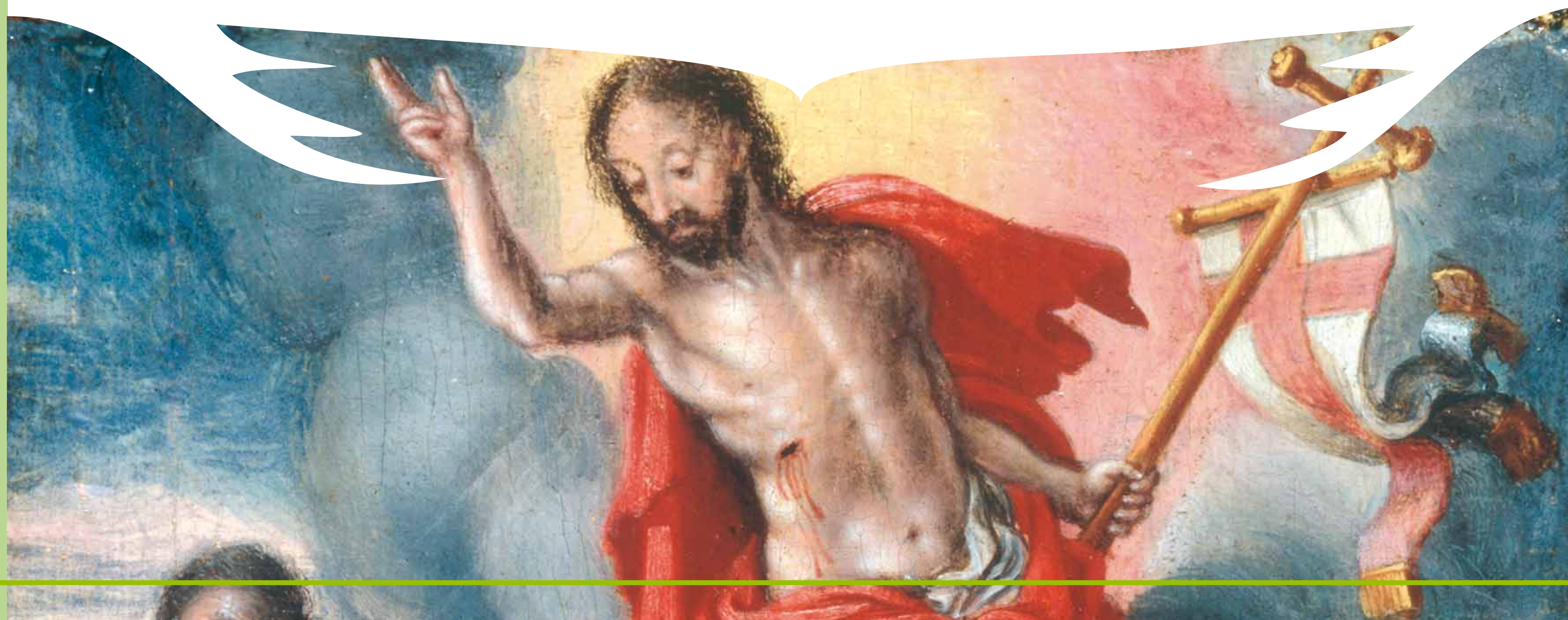
She was born in Zaragoza, Aragon (Spain), in 1271, a daughter of King Peter III. When just 12 years old she was given in marriage to Denis, King of Portugal, from whom she had two children. It was a marriage characterized by the infidelities of her husband, but Elizabeth was able to offer a true Christian witness. She carried out a work of peace in her family and, as adviser to her husband, succeeded in calming the disagreements between Aragon and Portugal. But not only that: Elizabeth also took much care for the children brought into the world by her husband with other women. And the unfaithful husband Denis recognized the moral superiority of Elizabeth, so much that when their son Alphonse rebelled against him, it was the authority of the Saint which averted an armed fight between

father and son. Later this intervention led to the accusation that Elizabeth was siding with their son Alphonse against Denis, and therefore she was confined in the town of Alenquer, north of Lisbon. But soon her husband called her back, because he wanted her close to him. Elizabeth returned and resumed her place beside the king until when her husband was struck by an illness. At the death of her husband in 1325, she donated all her belongings to the poor and to monasteries and became a Third Order Franciscan. She went on a pilgrimage by foot to the Shrine of Campostela, where she left her crown and entered among the Poor Clares of Coimbra. That monastery becomes her dwelling, but one time she had to leave it because there was again need of her: she had to reconcile her son Alphonse IV with King Ferdinand of Castile who was her son-in-law (the husband of Constance). She died in 1336 in Estremoz, Portugal.

Saint Elizabeth had a daughter named Constance, who died suddenly, a short time after marrying the king of Castile. Elizabeth was made aware of the tragedy when she was going to Santarem together with her husband. During the journey, a hermit started running behind the royal entourage and began shouting that he wanted to speak with the queen. Upon being received in her presence, he



told her how her daughter Constance appeared to him several times and had confided to him that she was condemned to staying a long time in Purgatory. She would be liberated within a year, if every day a Mass would be said in her supplication. Elizabeth, in agreement with her husband, did what was requested. After one year Constance dressed in white and surrounded by glory appeared to Elizabeth to announce that thanks to the Masses celebrated, she was ascending to Heaven.



Saint Frances of Rome

1384 - 1440

PURGATORY

Saint Frances of Rome was led by the Archangel Raphael into purgatory and he showed her around. For the saint this was the “Kingdom of Pain”, divided into two large regions: the top region contains the souls suffering the pain of injury, meaning they could not see God and they suffered for minor sins. For these souls purgatory consists of an infinite nostalgia for God and His beatified vision. In the middle region of purgatory are the souls that suffer from faults too grave for which to make amends. This region is divided into three zones. The first is like a bog of frozen water; the second is like a pool of pitch that flows full of boiling oil; the third is like a pool of boiling foam that seems like liquefied silver and gold. Thirty-six angels have received from God the task of dipping the souls into these three pools. They do this with much respect and compassion for those souls. Lastly, the third region, which is the lowest, and the closest to hell, is full of a fire that penetrates the bones and the medulla, fire that is different from the fire of hell only because of its purifying and sanctifying power.

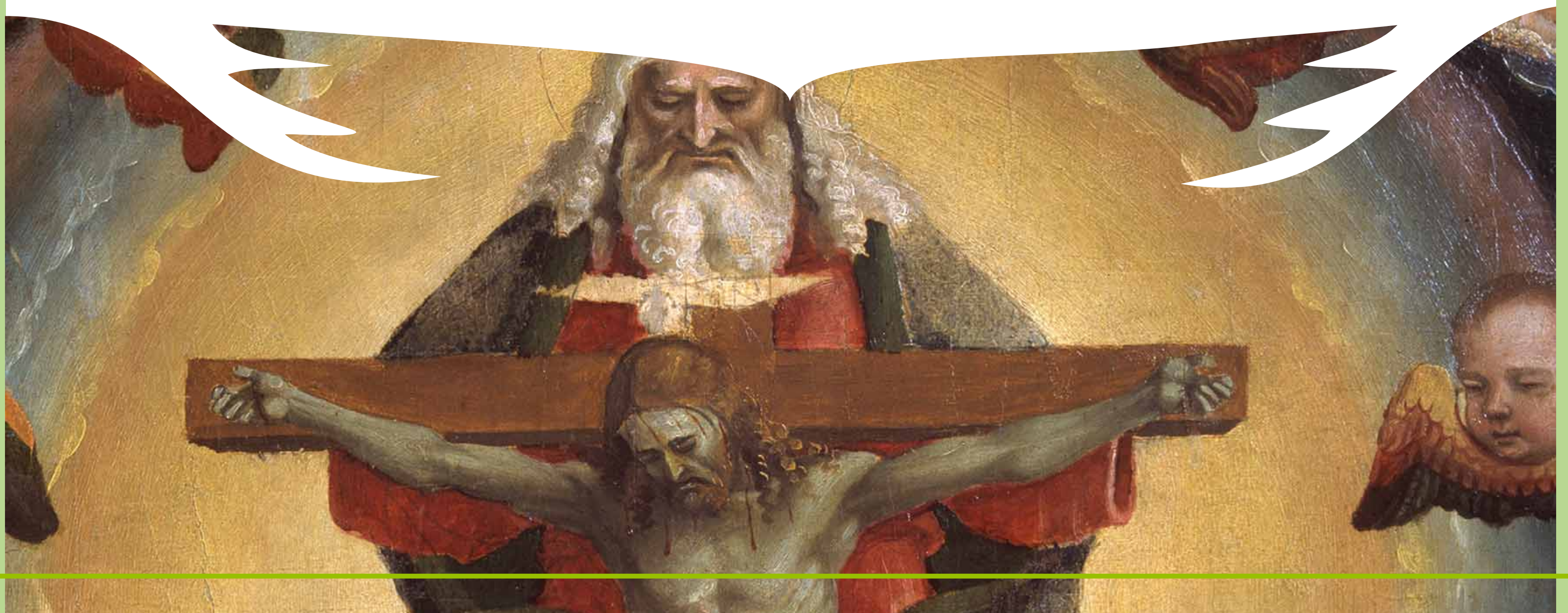
Also in this region there are three different zones. In the first there is a bit less suffering for there are the laymen,

Christians who live in the world and suffer punishment for grave fault for which they have not yet made amends; the second is where the pain is so grave that it is destined to the clerics that were not yet ordained priests, and therefore also the religious and the lay brothers; finally the third zone, the most painful is destined for the priests and bishops. Those that received the biggest graces during life and did not live their life in correlation to those graces making them worthy of suffering major pain just like the torment of hell except for a different duration. Also the type of pain is not the same for everyone, but it changes according to the number and the gravity of the faults committed and not made up for and according to the level of dignity of each person, the same goes for the duration and intensity of the pain.

Saint Frances however added that God received prayers and acts of contrition and penitence for the suffering of souls, except in the case in which there were particular motives for which those good deeds and prayers could not be applied to those souls, as for example, if one never had respect for the Mass or had failed to follow it or listen to it during the holy days. Saint Frances confirmed that prayer and good deeds offered by



the faithful in suffering for a certain soul in purgatory would go right away in favor of that soul but not only for the soul but also for all the others in virtue of the common existence. In the case in which a soul is already in glory, the merit of the prayers and good deeds will go in favor of other souls that are still suffering in purgatory.



Saint Gemma Galgani

1878 - 1903

PURGATORY

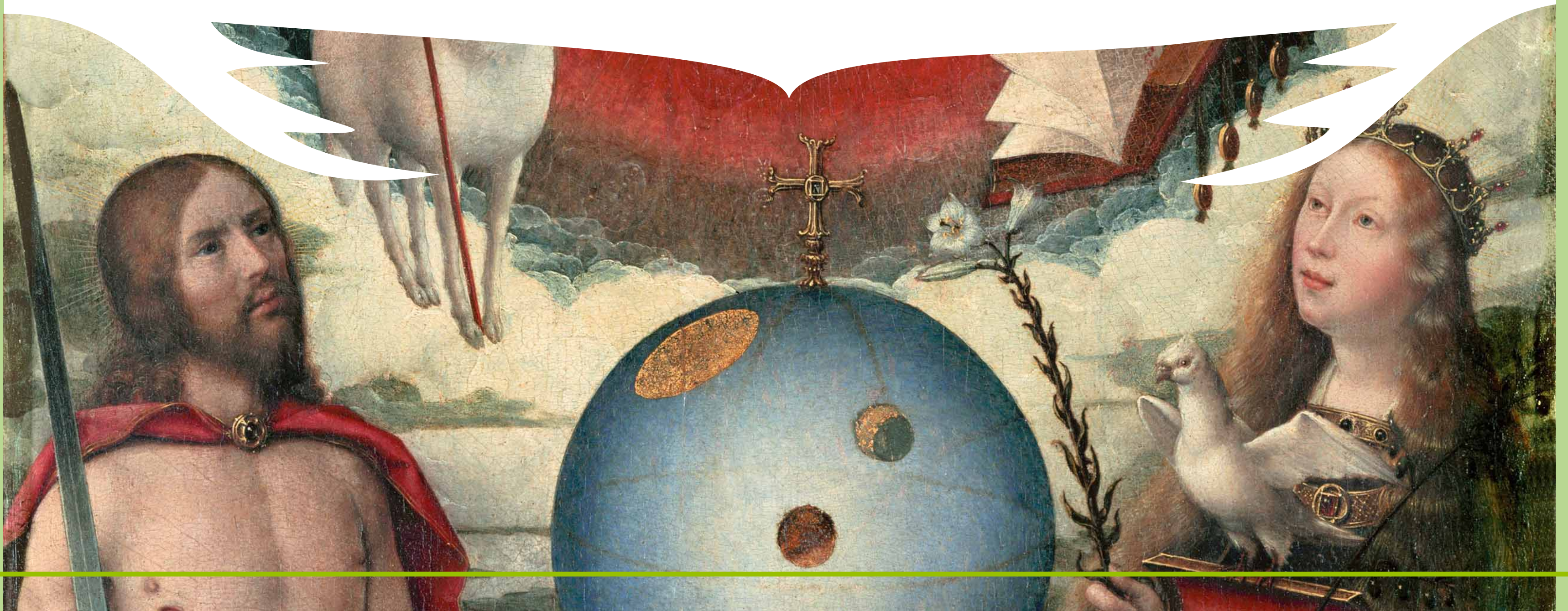
Saint Gemma was born on March 12, 1878 in the area of Borgonuovo (Commune of Capannori, Italy). Early on she had mystical experiences that led her to reach perfection. She offered her life up for the conversion of sinners and to this intention she added also the liberation of Souls in Purgatory. She was often heard saying: "Yes, suffer. Suffer for sinners and in particular for the poor souls in Purgatory". She also wrote in her Diary: "My guardian angel told me that tonight Jesus would let me suffer a little more and therefore at nine o'clock for two hours, precisely for a poor soul in Purgatory".

One day she found out during an ecstasy that in the convent of the Passionists in Corneto a nun named Sister Maria Teresa of the Infant Jesus was very ill. Gemma asked her spiritual director, Father Germano of Saint Stanislaw, if it was true that this nun was about to die. After receiving confirmation, the Saint began to pray to Jesus to concede atonement for her sins on her death bed until death takes her directly to heaven. Gemma was granted her prayer, in part. In effect, the nun from Corneto suffered a lot and died after only a few months. Finding out the news of her death, Gemma tried to involve her relatives to pray for the deceased. One day Sister Maria Teresa appeared to the Saint asking for prayers because she was suffering a lot in Purgatory. From that day, Gemma dedicated herself to offer sufferings for the deceased and so she prayed: "Lord,

take Sister Maria Teresa to Heaven soon; she is in fact a soul dear to Thee, let me suffer for her. I truly want to free her from the pains of purgatory."

For two weeks the saint had to undergo atrocious suffering in atonement for the pains that would have touched Sister Maria Teresa, but the Lord granted it as she herself tells: "Around 12:30 it seemed as if the Mother of God came to tell me that the moment was very near. After a while it seemed that also Maria Teresa, dressed as a Passionist, accompanied by her Guardian Angel and Jesus, passed in front of me. How different she was from that day in which I saw her for the first time! She got close to me smiling and she said: now I am truly happy and I am going to enjoy myself for ever with my Savior, and she turned and thanked me. She faced me again and waved to me with her hand and then she went up towards Heaven with her Guardian Angel and Jesus; she was in the middle of them both!"

Saint Gemma had numerous mystical experiences; among them she was seen more than once by various witnesses, crying tears of blood for the pain that she felt because of the sins of men. The phenomenon happened in particular when she prayed for priests. In her *Autobiography*, Gemma tells of her pains that she felt while receiving from Jesus the crown of thorns that they put on his head. The phenomena would happen between Thursdays and Fridays in the presence of many witnesses.



Saint Gregory the Great

540 - 604

PURGATORY

Saint Gregory the Great also described in his *Dialogues* some apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory. The most important apparition, narrated in the Book IV of the *Dialogues*, is the one of the monk Justus who died in the monastery of Rome, where Gregory was superior, before being elected Pope. Gregory was made aware that the monk Justus had sinned against the vow of poverty, because he had kept for himself three gold coins given to him by a benefactor, without the permission of the superior. Thus Gregory decided to punish him to instill in him repentance and to be an example for the entire community. Justus thus incurred excommunication and once dead, Gregory ordered that he be buried outside the conventual cemetery.

Gregory recounted the episode like this: “After 30 days had passed since the death of the monk Justus I experienced a feeling of compassion towards the poor deceased fellow friar; I contemplated with much sorrow his pains in Purgatory and thought of a way to liberate him from them. Thus I called Pretiosus, the prior of our monastery, and filled with sorrow I said to him: ‘It has been a long time now that the deceased fellow friar is tormented in Purgatory; we must offer him a work of charity, for what is possible for us to liberate him from his pains. Therefore go, and offer for him the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for 30 consecutive days, so that there may never be a day when the Holy Mass would not be celebrated for him.’ Pretiosus did as he had been commanded. Now while we were involved in other things and had not counted the days, one time at night the

monk Justus appeared in a vision to his biological brother Copiosus. When Copiosus saw him he asked: ‘What is it brother, how are you? (how are things going with you)?’ That man answered: ‘So far things have gone very badly for me, but now, I am well; because today I was received in the Communion of Saints in Heaven.’ Promptly Brother Copiosus recounted the occurrence to his fellow friars in the monastery. Then they counted carefully the days and behold it was precisely the thirtieth day on which the Holy Mass for him was celebrated. While Copiosus did not know anything about it and the fellow friars did not know anything about the vision of Copiosus, he was made aware of what the fellow friars had done and they were told of what he had seen.”

From the story of the vision of the monk Justus liberated from Purgatory after Saint Gregory the Great asked to celebrate in his supplication 30 consecutive Masses, originated the pious practice of the “Gregorian Masses”. In Book IV of the *Dialogues*, besides the account of the monk Justus, Gregory also tells about a deceased man who had appeared to a priest and had asked him for help: “The priest made penance for a week with much weeping for the benefit of the deceased and celebrated for him the Holy Sacrifice and then did not find him anymore in the place where he had seen him earlier for many days.”

In chapter 39 of the book of *Dialogues*, where Saint Gregory proves with scriptural arguments the existence of a Purgatory after death, he affirms: “It must be known



that, there in Purgatory no one can obtain even the remission of the smallest venial sins, if here on earth he did not first merit it with good works! No one receives, if he did not give first!”

The Blessed Peter Faber was convinced that if Saint Gregory had not spoken about Purgatory with such eloquence, the devotion towards those souls would not have developed. For this each time that the Blessed encouraged the devotion to the Souls of Purgatory, he invited the faithful also to pray to Saint Gregory.



Saint Gertrude of Helfta

Part 1

1256 - 1302

PURGATORY

Saint Gertrude of Helfta, known as the Great, was born in Eisleben (Thuringia) in 1256. At the age of five she entered the monastery of the Cistercian nuns of Helfta (Saxony). At the age of 25, on January 27, 1281, she had her first mystic experience. She put into writing all that was occurring in her soul. In 1284 she received the invisible stigmata. At the age of 45, shortly before dying, she had also the transverberation of her heart. She had a tender devotion for the humanity of Christ. Gertrude already understood the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She died in 1302.

Her mystic experiences were numerous, among them the one of a soul of Purgatory. One day Gertrude was praying for a person who died a short time earlier and saw his soul like a toad that was burning on the inside for the sins he committed. It seemed that he had an internal pain and an enormous weight was forcing him to remain bent down to the ground, without being able to get up again.

Gertrude understood that he appeared under the shape of a toad because during his religious life he had neglected to think about divine matters. She also realized that the pain that was tormenting him internally was due to the work that he had done without the permission of his superior and of which he had hidden the earning. In this way he expiated his disobedience. Then Gertrude recited the Psalms in supplication for that soul and asked Jesus whether he had benefited from it: "Certainly, the souls in

Purgatory are lifted up by such supplications, but also brief prayers that are said with fervor are of even greater benefit for them."

During the last moments of her life before dying, Gertrude had to suffer a terrible temptation from the devil. Satan reproached her for having performed sacrifices and good works to benefit just the souls of Purgatory, accusing her of having much neglected herself by having abandoned the way of perfection. He instilled in her the doubt of having wasted time in unnecessary and useless things and of having been irresponsible in not applying the merits of her sufferings for the salvation of her soul. The devil said to her: "Who do you think you are and who made you offer the daily prayers and your sacrifices for the souls that you do not even know? You will immediately repent bitterly of your mistake and I will have enjoyment of this. You shall see that you will truly pay for this mistake."

Gertrude remained very troubled and began to doubt of having mistaken everything in life, due to the pains that she would have to face after the judgment. But the Lord appeared and said to her: "My daughter, why do you trouble yourself? You must know that your charity towards others has been very dear to me and for this now I free you from all the sufferings to which you were destined. Since I promised a great recompense to those who offer themselves for the salvation of their brothers and sisters, I will multiply your joy one hundred times in Heaven.



All the souls that you have saved will come to meet you shortly to lead you to Paradise."



Saint Gertrude of Helfta

Part 2

1256-1302

PURGATORY

In a vision Saint Gertrude of Helfta had the revelation of the state in which the soul of a fellow sister was found, as she narrated in the fifth volume of "The Messenger of divine mercy": "One month later the sister of the first one died. After Gertrude had prayed for her a long time, she saw that soul soon after her passing in a place filled with light, like a little maid, who dressed in red clothing is presented to the Spouse. There also appeared beside her the Lord in the figure of a refined young man. He revived with His five wounds the five senses of her soul with wonderful sweetness and consoled her with His gentleness and humbleness. Then Gertrude said to the Lord: 'You oh God of every consolation are so benevolent towards this soul. What does it mean that her sad look betrays an inner pain?' The Lord answered: 'Due to my presence she cannot yet enjoy the fullness of joy, because I only give her the joy of my humanity. Because in such a way I have recompensed just that love and devotion which she has shown for my Passion, on her deathbed. But later when she will be completely purified from the negligence of earthly life, I will fill her completely of joy with the presence of my beatifying divinity.' Then Gertrude continued: 'Were not all her earthly weaknesses expiated by her piety at her death, since in a place of Sacred Scripture it is said that man will be judged as he will be found at the end of his life?' Then the Lord gave this answer: 'When the strengths leave a person who is dying, then also his life is already at the end, he cannot do anything more with his

strengths, but only with his will. The one to whom through my gratuitous goodness, I continue to give good will and pious aspiration, goes still a step forward; he cannot nevertheless repair all the debt of the previous omissions in such a measure and so perfectly, as when the person is still healthy and capable of improving his life.'

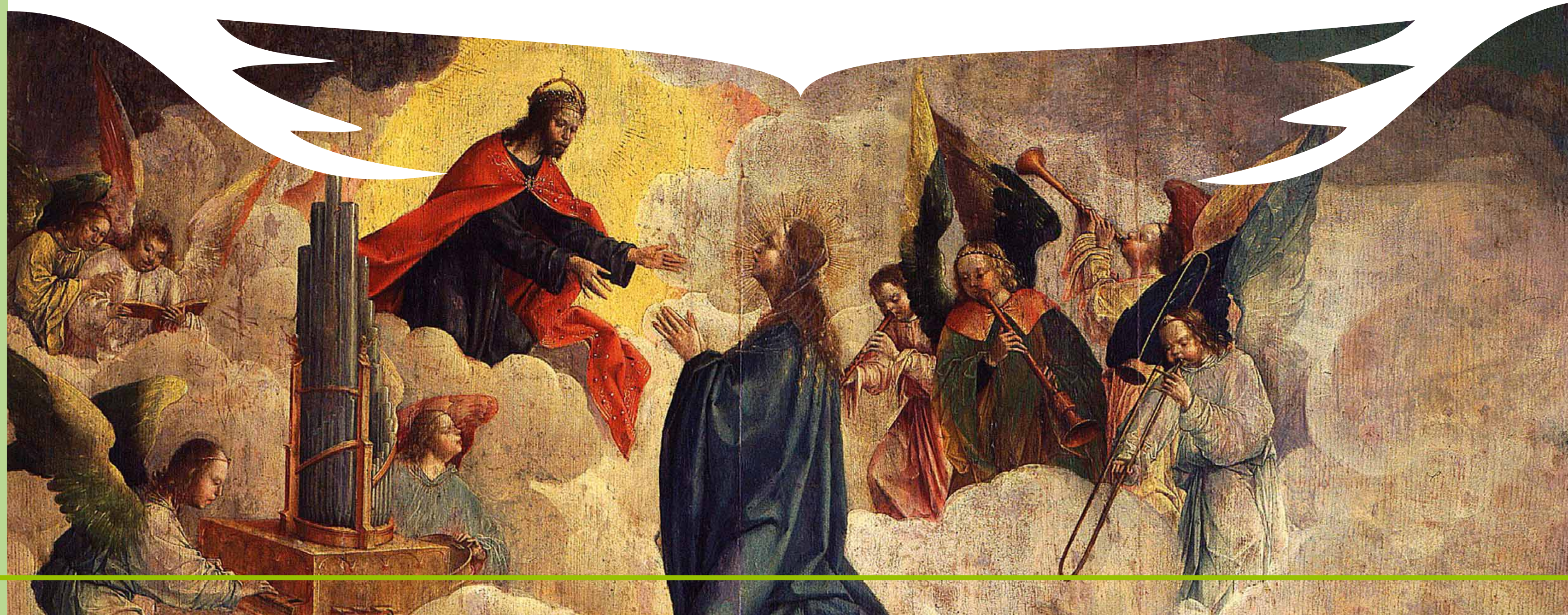
Then Gertrude continued: 'But, oh my Lord, could not your most sweet mercy liberate this soul, to whom since her childhood You have given a heart so rich and benevolent towards everyone, from the impediment of her negligence?' The Lord responded: 'I will reward abundantly the sweetness of her heart and her good will, nevertheless, my Justice demands that she be first purified of every stain. My spouse is in agreement with my justice, because after the purification she will be completely consoled by the glory of my divinity.'

Having the soul of the deceased joyfully approved these words of the Lord, He immediately returned to Heaven, while she remained at the place where she was and stretching towards the sky with all her strengths, she tried to ascend. By having remained alone that soul was purified from her youthful carelessness, for which she entertained herself too much sometimes with other people and through the difficult ascent she was purified from the laziness in which she had at times indulged due to her weariness.

One day while Saint Gertrude was praying for this deceased novice during the Holy Mass, at the elevation of the Most Holy Host she prayed in this way: 'Lord,



Holy Father, I offer You this Most Holy Host for her on behalf of all those who are in Heaven, on earth and in Purgatory!' And behold that soul appeared lifted up a bit higher, and innumerable people, who were on their knees in front of her, were elevating the Most Holy Host high with both hands. She had much relief and benefit from it and said: 'Now I truly experience how certain is what Sacred Scripture says, namely that in man there is nothing good, be it even the smallest thing, that would not be repaid, and no fault that would not be expiated before or after death; thus for this reason, since I willingly received Holy Communion, now I receive much relief from the Holy Sacrament of the altar offered for me. And since I have always loved all people, now I benefit from the prayer said for me. Therefore, for all this, I anticipate an eternal recompense in Heaven!' At these words it appeared that she was lifted up even higher, carried by the prayer of the Church; when arriving to the place established for her, she knew that the Lord in the fullness of His mercy would have met her with the crown of glory and welcomed her in eternal glory."



Sister Josefa Menendez

Part 1

1890 - 1923

PURGATORY

Sister Josefa Menendez was born in Madrid on February 4, 1890 to a profoundly Christian family. At the age of twenty she decided to enter among the religious of the Sacred Heart, but due to economic problems she had to remain with her family. On February 5, 1920 she entered the novitiate of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Poitiers, France. In 1922 she professed her religious vows. Sister Josefa received a message from Jesus to transmit to all people.

From her *Diary* on the dates of July 27-31, 1921 we find narrated an episode regarding the Souls of Purgatory: "Mary Most Holy says to Josefa: 'You may suffer to save one of my dear daughters... Jesus wanted her for Himself, but she did not respond to the Divine call, she will be dying tomorrow; what consolation for my maternal heart if she will not fall into Hell!'

Josefa prayed all night and the next day she was terrorized by infernal noises. Shocked and frightened, she took refuge near the statue of Our Lady.

Suddenly everything became calm, Our Lady smiling placed her hand on the head of Josefa:

- She has already accounted for her life, poor little one, what a battle she had to endure! When the devil saw that her soul was fleeing him, he tried to take away her peace and how he made her suffer! He was furious against you, because you were helping me to pull her away from him. She died much repented and her end was serene; now she is in Purgatory.

The following night Josefa was awoken by some wailing and heard a voice - 'I am the soul who Our Lady has asked you to save, for years I suffer horribly, have compassion for me!'

- 'You have been in Purgatory only one day and two nights - replied Josefa - what devotion to Our Lady did you cherish to obtain her protection?'

- 'From the time that I have abandoned myself to sin my only devotion has been to recite every Saturday one Hail Holy Queen.'

Three days later that soul ascends to Heaven thanks to the supplications of Josefa and before ascending she goes to thank her benefactress."

And also on April 10, 1922 Sister Josefa reported: "I am in Purgatory since one year and three months. Without your small acts I would still have to stay there for many years! A person of the world has less responsibility than a religious one. How many graces this one receives and what responsibility if she does not benefit from them! How many religious souls are little aware of how their faults are expiated here! The tongue horribly tormented expiates the absence of silence... the parched throat expiates the faults against charity... and the distress of this prison, the repugnance to obeying... and here it is necessary to expiate the smallest lack of mortification!... Restraining the glances to not give in to curiosity can take much effort, but here... what torment the eyes suffer prevented from seeing God!"



Sister Josefa Menendez

Part 2

1890 - 1923

PURGATORY

The life of Sister Josefa Menendez was entirely devoted to God. She received from Jesus a message to make known to all people. In her Diary she noted on April 13, 1923 that a soul of Purgatory had asked her a few weeks earlier for some supplications to be liberated from punishment. Appearing again to Josefa, the soul told her: "I come in the name of the One who is the Eternal Beatitude, the Only object of our love, to encourage you to continue in the suffering, the path that His goodness traces for your good and the one of many other souls. One day you will contemplate the wonders of the love that He reserves not in time but in eternity, to the souls more loved by Him. Then you shall comprehend the fruits of suffering and will taste such a happiness that the soul could not sustain down here. Courage! You will soon find peace again, the redemptive work is not realized except through suffering, but suffering purifies and strengthens the soul enriching it of merits in the eyes of God."

Many souls were going to Sister Josefa to ask her to intercede on their behalf to be liberated as soon as possible. Some dialogues with the souls were recounted: "I am here due to the infinite goodness of God, because an excessive pride had brought me to the brink of hell. I kept many people under my feet: now I would throw myself to the feet of the last of the poor! Have compassion for me, do some acts of humility to repair my pride. In this way you would be able to liberate me from this abyss."

Another soul confessed to her:

"I spent seven years in mortal sin –

another one confessed – and I was sick for three years. I always refused to go to confession. I had prepared hell for me and I would have fallen there if your sufferings of today did not obtain for me the strength to come back to grace. I am now in Purgatory and I beg you, since you were able to save me: liberate me from this very gloomy prison!" And again she received the secret of another soul: "I am in Purgatory due to my infidelity, not having wanted to respond to the call of God. For twelve years I have resisted the vocation and I have lived in a great danger of getting lost, because I had embraced sin to stifle the remorse. Thanks to the divine goodness who has graciously accepted to make use of your sufferings, I had the courage to return to God... and now do me the favor to liberate me from here!" A soul who was about to leave Purgatory to ascend to Heaven told her: "Offer for us the Blood of Jesus. What would become of us if there was no one to lift us up?" An inquiry was done of every name revealed by the souls and it was concluded that indeed the date and place of death coincided with what Sister Josefa said.

Sister Josefa had never visited Purgatory, but many souls appeared to her to ask for prayers or to thank her, because thanks to her sufferings, they had escaped hell.

These souls revealed to Sister Josefa the reason for their stay in Purgatory.

In her diary in the month of April 1922 Josefa noted some dialogues she had with the souls of Purgatory: "I have been



in Purgatory a little less than an hour and a half to expiate some lack of trust in God. It is true that I have always loved Him greatly but with some fear."

– "I am in Purgatory because I failed to treat the souls that Jesus entrusted to me with the care that they deserved..."

– "My Purgatory will be long because I have not accepted the will of God, nor made with sufficient submission the sacrifice of my life during my illness."

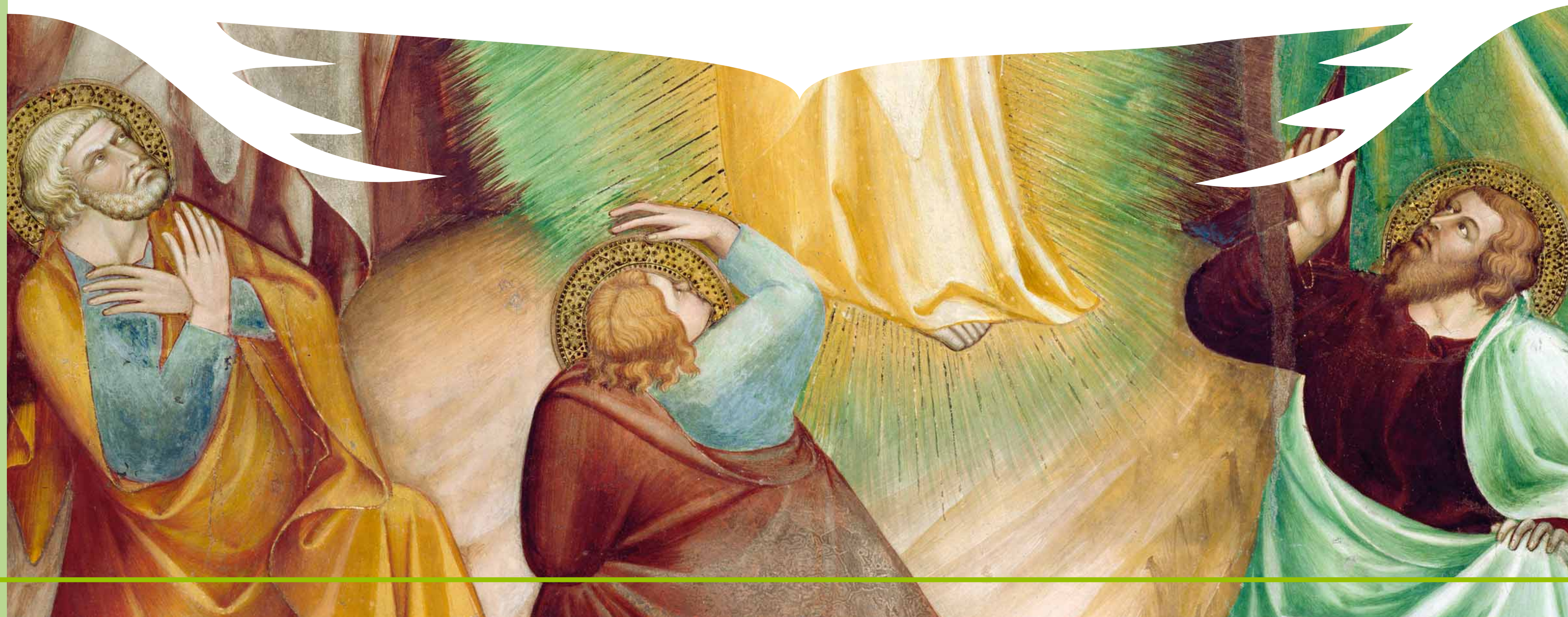
– "I am here due to the infinite goodness of God, an excessive pride had brought me to the brink of hell, I kept many people under me, now I would throw myself to the feet of the poorest among the poor."

– "I had a vocation and I lost it through a bad book..."

– "My youth was filled with vanity..."

– "I must expiate a poorly repressed passion..."

– "I thought of myself as powerful and was controlled by ambition..."



Saint John Marie Vianney

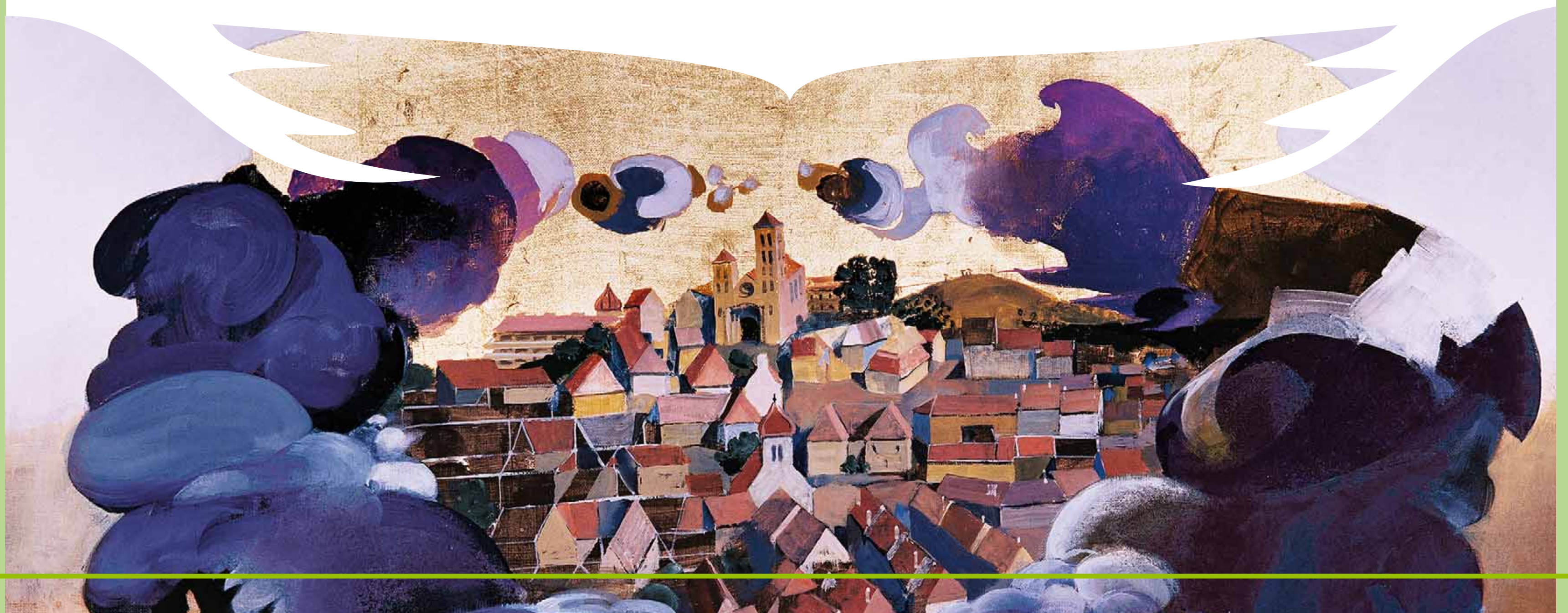
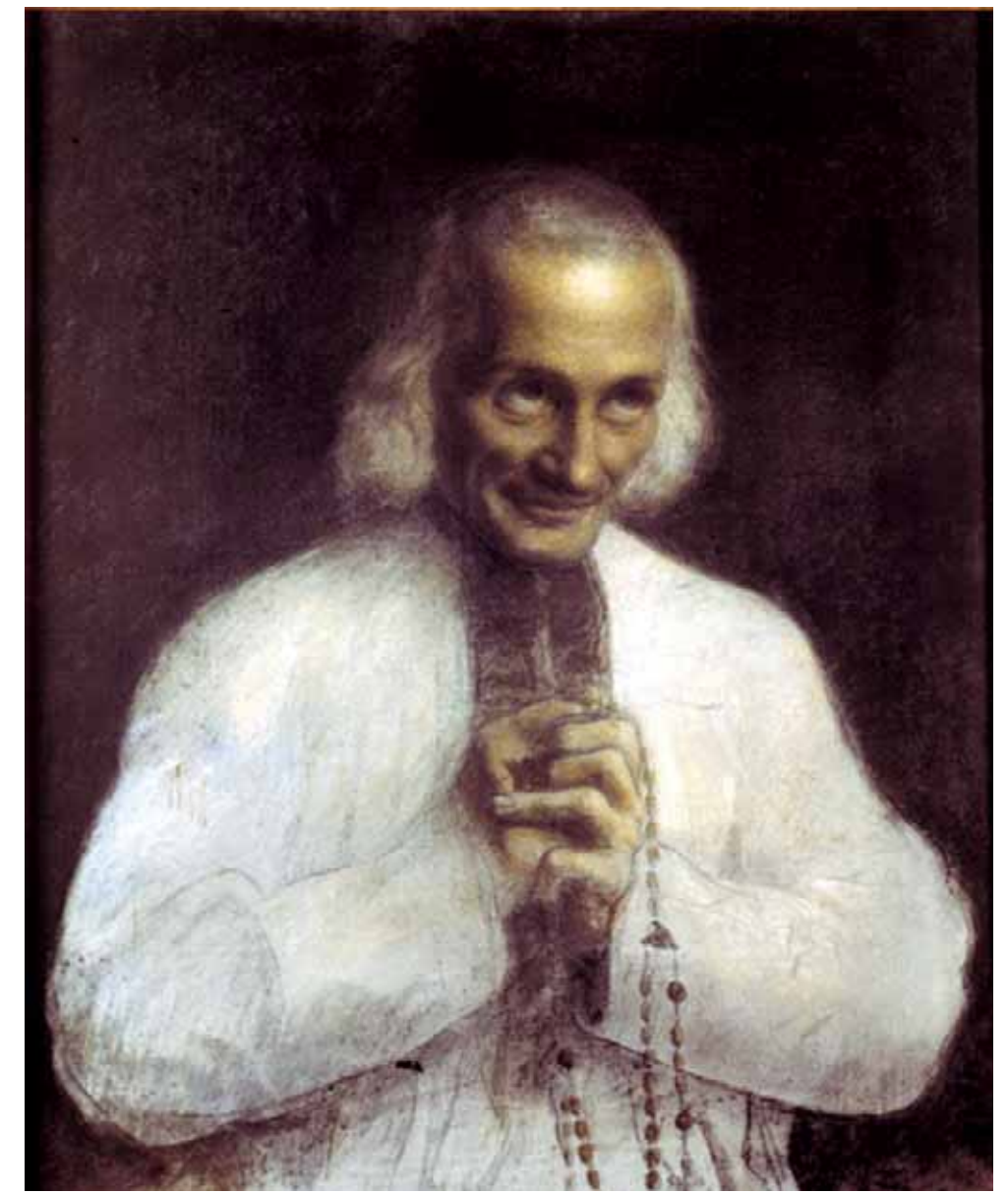
1786 - 1859

PURGATORY

Saint John Marie Vianney often instructed his parishioners with examples drawn from the life of the Saints or with edifying stories. One day he told this anecdote: “My children, a good priest had the misfortune of losing a friend whom he loved fondly, therefore he prayed a great deal for the repose of his soul. One day, God made it known to him that his friend was in Purgatory and was suffering terribly. This holy priest thought that nothing better could be done than offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his deceased loved one. At the moment of Consecration, he took the Host between his fingers and said: ‘Holy and eternal Father, let us have an exchange. You are keeping the soul of my friend that is in Purgatory and I am keeping the body of Your Son that is in my hands. Therefore, good and merciful Father, please liberate my friend and I shall offer You Your Son with all the merits of His Death and Passion.’ The offer was granted by God and at the

moment of the Elevation of the Host, the priest saw the soul of his friend rise up to Heaven. Saint John Marie Vianney added that ‘when we want to liberate from Purgatory a soul that is dear to us, let us do the same. We offer to God, through the Holy Sacrifice, His beloved Son with all the merits of His Death and His Passion; He will not be able to refuse us anything.’ ”

Saint John Marie Vianney, well known as the Curate of Ars, was born in Dardilly in 1786. From a peasant family and deprived of primary education, he succeeded in August 1815 to be ordained a priest. He devoted himself incessantly to evangelization, through the example of his goodness and charity. He spent his days devoted to celebrate Mass and to confess, without sparing himself. He died in 1859. Pope Pius XI would proclaim him Saint in 1925. He would be presented as model and patron of parish priests.



Saint Louis Bertrand

1526 - 1581

PURGATORY

Saint Louis Bertrand was born in Valencia (Spain) on the 1st of January 1526. At nineteen years of age he entered the Dominicans in Valencia and in 1547 he was ordained a priest. At 23 years of age he was nominated Master of the Novices. He kept that assignment for ten years, then, given that he ardently desired to announce the Gospel, he departed as a missionary for the new world. In 1562 he reached America and he stopped in Colombia. He did not back out of the hard apostolic work and he walked through the immense regions of the Equator, New Granada, the Caribbean islands, converting and baptizing many indigenous people. From the pulpit he denounced even the abuses of power of the Spanish Conquistadors: one of them wanted to make an attempt on the life of the Saint, but as the shot was fired the shotgun transformed into a Crucifix. During his evangelizing life he used an infallible method: in front of the refusals, the difficulties, the misunderstandings, he began to pray and flagellate himself with discipline, and everything would smoothly work itself out. The devil sought to thwart the work of Saint Louis, intimidating him with visions, with beatings and terrible noises, without achieving anything. He generated against him persecutions on the part of the Indians and of the Spaniards and tried to weaken his moral integrity with temptations and calumnies.

Having returned to Spain, in 1549, he took up again his duty as Master of Novices, and then was elected Prior in Valencia. In 1574 the Dominican Capital of the province of Aragon nominated Saint Louis to be the General Orator (Preacher). He was also the spiritual advisor of Saint Teresa of Avila, whom he encouraged to pursue her role in the Reformation. Having become gravely ill, in the midst of his sufferings, he continually repeated: "Lord, burn here, cut here, do not forgive here, so that you will forgive me forevermore in eternity!" Despite the feverish fire which devoured him, he wanted to die enrobed in the woolen habit of the Dominican Order. He died on the 9th of October 1581. Pope Clement X on the 12th of April 1671 proclaimed him a Saint. Alexander VIII declared him Patron of Colombia.

Saint Louis had a great devotion for the Souls in Purgatory. After his priestly ordination, his father, who had died eight years earlier, appeared to him and asked him for his help. One day, after many Masses offered to God on his behalf, the Saint saw him resplendent and liberated from the pains of Purgatory.

Saint Louis is also the first priest known by name, who was served by the concession of Pope Julius III for Valencia to celebrate three Masses on the day of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. It is said that Saint Louis felt a true suffering when he could not



celebrate the Mass, to which he had a very great devotion, whereas he was particularly content at Christmas because he could celebrate three times.

It is reported that one night, after the prayer of Matins in chorus, he saw a deceased fellow brother of his order, all surrounded by flames, who threw himself at his feet to beg his pardon for an offensive expression aimed at him years ago. The deceased asked him to celebrate one Mass for him, so that he would be immediately liberated from the pains of Purgatory. The Saint celebrated the Mass on his behalf the following morning and during the night, he saw the deceased, surrounded by glory, enter into Paradise.



Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort

1673 - 1716

PURGATORY

Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort, in his famous “Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary”, dealt with the theme of Purgatory in regard to the intercession of the Virgin: “Others perhaps would say: ‘If I surrender to the most Holy Virgin all the value of my actions so that she may apply it to whom she wills, perhaps I will have to suffer for a long time in Purgatory.’ This objection, that comes from the love of oneself and from the ignorance in regard to the generosity of God and of His Holy Mother, is self-destructive. Is it ever possible, indeed, that a fervent and generous soul, more attentive to the interests of God than to his own; who gives to God all that he has, without holding back, to the point of not being able to give Him anything more, *non plus ultra*; who desires only the glory and the reign of Jesus Christ by means of His Holy Mother and he sacrifices himself completely to attain it; is it ever possible, I say, that such a noble and generous person would be more punished in the other world for having been, down here, more generous and selfless than others? On the contrary. With this person – we shall see it further on –, Our Lord and His Mother will be very generous in this world and in the other one, in the order of nature, grace and glory.”

And again, the Saint writes with regard to the seventh motive for which it is worthwhile to entrust and give ourselves entirely to the Virgin Mary: “Also the great goods which will come to our neighbor may persuade us to embrace this form of devotion. With it, indeed, the charity towards our neighbor is practiced in an outstanding manner, since we offer him, through the hands of Mary, all that we hold most dear that is the satisfactory and impetratory (entreat) value of all our good works, not excluding the smallest good thought and the smallest light suffering. It is accepted that all the reparations that are acquired and will be acquired until death, may be utilized according to the will of the Holy Virgin, either for the conversion of sinners or for the liberation of the souls of Purgatory. Is not this to love perfectly our neighbor? Is not this to be among the number of the true disciples of Jesus Christ, who are recognized by their charity? Is not this the way to convert sinners, without the danger of vanity, and to liberate the souls of Purgatory accomplishing nothing else than the duty of our own state?”

“To understand all the superiority of this motive we would need to understand the great value of the conversion of a sinner or the liberation of a soul of



Purgatory. It is an infinite good – that surpasses the creation of heaven and earth – since it confers to a soul the possession of God. Even if over an entire lifetime, only one soul would be liberated from Purgatory through such a devotion or a single sinner would be converted, would this not be enough to move every truly charitable person to embrace it? Moreover we must note that our good works, passing through the hands of Mary, receive an increase of purity and thus of merit and satisfactory and impetratory (entreat) value.”



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 1

1647 - 1690

PURGATORY

Saint Margaret Mary Aloque was born in Versosvres, in the Diocese of Autun, France in 1647. In 1671 she entered the Visitation Convent in Paray-le-Monial, where she was the Novice Mistress. Saint Margaret Mary was a great mystic and her life was undoubtedly tied to the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who appeared to her on many occasions. The first apparition occurred on December 27, 1673, on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist. Jesus invited the saint "completely dressed in divine presence"; to take the seat that Saint John had occupied during the Last Supper and said: "My divine heart is so passionate for the love of mankind that I could no longer contain the flames of my ardent love, they had to pour out. I have chosen you to carry out this great plan, as long as everything is done by me." During the apparition, Jesus promised her: "My heart will swell and spread love with abundance to those that honor me". In addition: "The precious treasures that I reveal to you contain the sanctifying grace required to pull mankind from the abyss of perdition".

One day while Margaret Mary was praying for the deceased, who were very important people of the world, it was revealed to her that one of these souls was condemned to stay at length in Purgatory. All of the prayers that would have been offered to her, and all of the Masses that were celebrated in honor of her suffering would not work to her advantage, but to the favor of the deceased of her family that were damaged

and oppressed by this person. All of this because the families that were reduced to poverty because of wrongdoings and sickly harm did not have the means to celebrate Masses in honor of their relatives. Therefore the Lord intervened in their favor.

One day the saint was praying for three deceased people for a short while. Two of them were of the religious order, the third was a layperson. Jesus appeared to Margaret Mary and asked her: "Which of these three people do you want me to release immediately from Purgatory?" The Saint responded: "Oh Lord worthy are you to choose according to your divine will and your fine tranquility which will return in glory of your honor"! Then Margaret Mary saw the Lord release the soul of the layperson, and then he revealed to the saint that the religious ones were less pious, because they had many means at their disposal in order to reach perfection and they could have more easily made amends for their sins, above all with the observance of the Law.

The saint became one of the elect souls of God, to which she offered herself as a host of sacrifice to divine justice. Jesus asked her to celebrate a feast in the honor of the Sacred Heart. The solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was bestowed upon the universal Church in 1856. Under the orders of her superiors, Margaret Mary described her mystic experiences in an autobiography. She was canonized in 1920.



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 2

1647-1690

PURGATORY

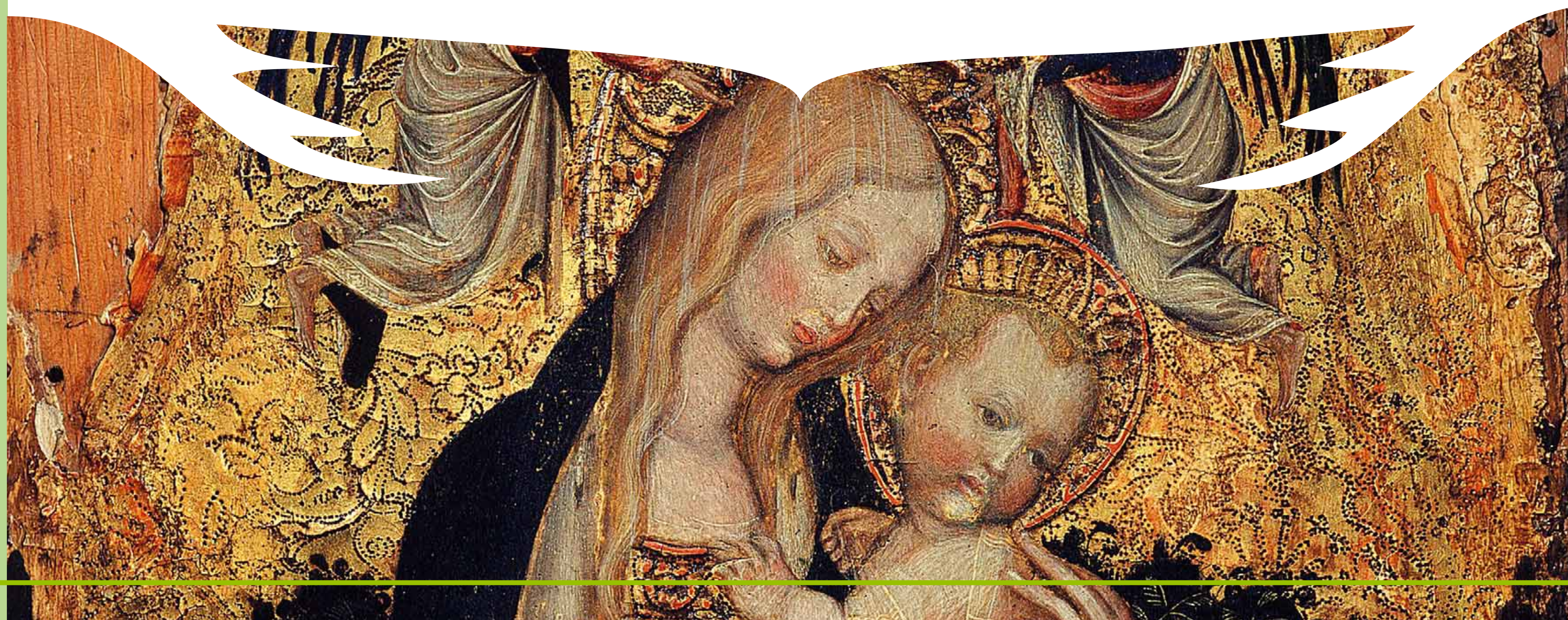
Saint Margaret Mary saw many souls in purgatory during the course of various apparitions and she came to help them in their suffering and penitence. One time a deceased fellow nun appeared to her, but to her surprise, she did not ask for prayers because God told her that she could not, since during her life she had avoided all inconveniences and had searched for a comfortable and easy existence.

Another time a fellow nun appeared to her crying and begged her to help her with her prayers so she could be freed from the pain of purgatory. The saint asked her the reason she was suffering in purgatory and she responded that it was because she had loved comfort too much. Because of this, she had not exactly observed the Law and she used to excuse herself from communal exercises. Also, she confirmed that she would have been condemned if it were not for the intervention she made to the Virgin Mary.

On another day, while Margaret Mary was in adoration before the most Holy Sacrament, a soul from purgatory appeared to her surrounded by flames of a fire that emitted such heat that the saint believed she would be burnt to ashes. Margaret Mary recognized in that soul a religious person that had directly guided her spiritually on the road to perfection. The priest, thanks to the grace of the Lord, showed himself to the saint and asked for her assistance, revealing the reasons for his pain. Often in his activities he had looked for his own praise and not for the pure love of God. In addition, he lacked

general love for his neighbor and was too affectionate towards certain people. This soul appeared for three continuous months to the saint, until finally the graces of prayer and penitence of the saint could not free him from purgatory.

Margaret Mary was so fervent with desire to help the souls of purgatory that her superiors had to intervene and mitigate her zeal; otherwise she would have risked getting herself sick. One day she promised to whip herself in order to comfort the souls of purgatory but she did it so hard that she exceeded the allowable limits. Immediately the souls appeared to her and scolded her because she was actually increasing their pain rather than diminishing it.



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

Part 3

1647-1690

PURGATORY

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque had numerous mystic visions and some of them were about souls in purgatory, as she herself recounts in her autobiography: “One time while I was before the Holy Sacrament on its feast day, I suddenly found myself in front of a person surrounded by fire, his fervor penetrating me so strongly that I seemed to be burning in that fire with him. His pious condition made it clear that he was in purgatory and I shed many tears. He said that he was a Benedictine that had received my confession and ordered me to receive Communion. In virtue of that event, God gave him permission to address me and find relief from his pain. He asked me to offer him every suffering that I could for a period of three months and I agreed to it right away, after having obtained permission from my superior. He told me that the first reason for his great suffering was because during his life he was more interested in his own reputation than the glory of God. The second reason was his lack of charity compared to his fellow brothers; and the third reason was his excessive natural affection for people with whom he had spiritual encounters, something God disliked very much. It would have been too difficult to express how much I had to suffer during those three months. He never got too far away from me and on his behalf it was as if I was burning in those flames with him and I suffered such vivid pain and wailed and cried continuously. My superior was moved with compassion so she ordered me

good penitence, above all discipline because my exterior pain and suffering had given the others relief, for goodness sake, seeing that the sanctity of love imprinted in me was just a small taste of the suffering of those poor souls in purgatory. Now I saw the Benedictine completely different from how he was at the start of those three months, because he went to enjoy himself in eternal happiness surrounded by joy and glory. He thanked me and said that he would ask for God to protect me. My sickness and suffering from those three months ended at the same time as his passing into heaven and I healed right away.



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 1*

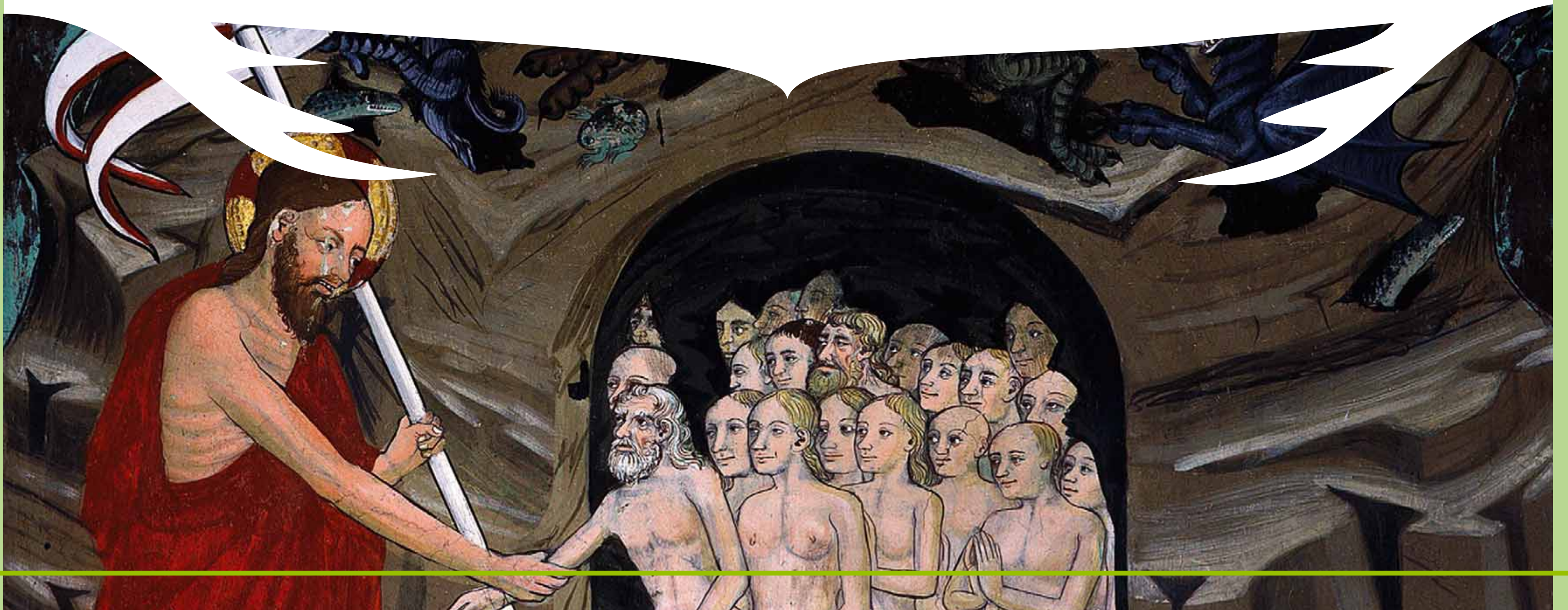
1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, in the world Catherine, was a Carmelite religious, proclaimed saint by Pope Clement IX on April 22, 1669. She had numerous visions among them also the ones of Purgatory.

From 1585 to 1590 Mary Magdalene had to suffer "The lions' den" a terrible period of trial during which she felt attacked by demons from all sides and in all manners. During this period of exhausting trial she labored very much in favor of the poor souls of Purgatory, as the Lord Himself assured her. Among the many things she saw we recall in particular the death of her brother Alamanno, which occurred on June 14, 1587. Mary Magdalene was at recreation with some fellow sisters in the garden of the Monastery. Suddenly she was enraptured in ecstasy and began to shout: *Yes, I am ready to go everywhere!* With these words whose meaning her companions could not understand, the Saint made known her disposition to follow her guardian angel on a journey through Purgatory; and immediately she started this tormenting voyage of which was later made a disconcerting and moving description: for two hours the Saint continued to go around the garden of the Monastery always in ecstasy, stopping occasionally and at the same time uttering deep sighs while contemplating the visions with attentive observation, especially the ones which her guardian angel had pointed out. We quote directly from the text compiled by the sisters who were next to her: "Entering this journey,

as soon as she started, she began to tremble vividly, shaking her hands together, worrying intensely in her face, pale and ashen she walked bent and crouched like one who has much fright. And in this way she went on for a little and then she retreated much more, because entering that place it seemed to her to become tormented too... Then she narrated - I suffered seeing them suffer so much, but it was not that I already felt the same pains because I do not believe that it were possible for a mortal creature to feel them. During her journey at times she stopped and said in a compassionate voice: *Compassion, compassion, mercy! O blood, please come down and liberate these souls! Poor little ones, you suffer so much and are so content!* After she had gone for a while, she began to pray to Jesus that he would send her for assistance, in addition to her guardian angel, who had already given her help, also Saint Catherine, since her pains were so great... and she invoked... *O, Catherine come, come to help me in asking mercy for these poor souls and please offer the Blood of my and your Spouse for them... O, poor ones, you endure much cruel pain, and are so content and cheerful. But you know the will of God and that soon you will enjoy His blessed vision...* One time the Saint shouted: *Oh! May I not have to see so close these poor tormented ones!* But she had to obey and to descend other steps of that abyss... At a certain moment she stopped, trembling in her entire body and shouted: *How can it be? Even religious priests are in this frightful place! Oh my God, how much do I see them suffer!*



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 2*

1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

“After Mary Magdalene had left the place designated for the priests in Purgatory, she arrived at the place where there are found the souls of those who have sinned more out of ignorance than malice. This place was less frightening. Here the Saint found also the soul of her deceased brother. She shouted: O my poor brother how terribly must you suffer! But be consoled! You know that these pains open for you the way of eternal beatitude! After awhile the Saint added: I see that you are not sad, because you endure the pains, which are terrible, but willingly and you are content! When you were still in this world, you did not want to listen when I admonished you and gave you advice. Now, as I see, you much desire that I listen to you. What do you want from me? He asked her for a determined number of Masses and Holy Communions. The extraordinary journey of the Saint continued. After a few steps she understood that now she was seeing much happier souls. She shouted: How frightful this place is! Oh, reason of God! Who are those who suffer here so frightfully? It was answered to her that those were the people who in life had sinned of hypocrisy – the hypocrites –, then continuing the journey she saw the souls of those who had been impatient and disobedient. Observing these souls more closely, she made unusual gestures; she bowed her head to the ground, then fixed her eyes on a point and at the same time uttered deep sighs. A little later she seemed even more disturbed; she had

reached that place of Purgatory where the liars were staying and their sufferings seemed frightening. Then she reached the place where those who had sinned due to frailty and bad habit were staying. A bit further she found the greedy and lastly those who were expiating their impurities; they had repented and had confessed their sins, but had not expiated and repaired sufficiently. At this point the Saint had the impression that her heart was constricted as in a vice. She went through this place without saying a word. But after she left this frightful place, she was heard asking: O my God, and my Lord, why did you make me see such frightful things? Perhaps so that I may have more compassion for the poor souls and in the future I must pray even more? But no, now I understand clearly: You have wanted to make me realize more Your incomparable and extraordinary purity. From the place of the impure the Saint arrived to the place of the arrogant and of the ambitious. Here dominated an impenetrable terrifying and cold darkness. It was heard that the Saint said: O, these poor little ones who on earth wanted to be elevated above the others and now must stay in such a frightful darkness! She saw also the souls of those who in life had been cold and indifferent towards God, so Good, and who had so little love for their Creator, Father and Redeemer, that maybe they had not even known what it really meant to truly love God. At the sight of these poor souls the Saint remembered a renewed commitment to



pray and a more tender and intimate love for God. Finally the Saint arrived to the place where were purified the souls who in this world had not committed serious faults, but only venial sins of every kind. After two long hours of wandering around the garden the ecstasy ceased, Mary Magdalene regained her senses, but she felt so disturbed both physically and emotionally, that it took several days before she would be able in some way to recover from the tremendous impression made to her by this vision of Purgatory. As for the price she paid for her deceased brother, she was profoundly moved that her brother had to remain in Purgatory until she would have offered to God 107 Holy Communions for him.”



Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi *Part 3*

1566 - 1607

PURGATORY

Regarding the punishments or the pains of Purgatory, we must not minimize even the smallest venial faults, as demonstrated by the two following stories, taken from the life of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. One day while she was in adoration in front of the Most Holy Sacrament, she saw the soul of another nun, ascending, rising, who, as it was revealed to her, had neglected one or another of the Communions required by the Rule and had otherwise observed diligently the rules of the Order and had led a very virtuous life. But her indolence to go to Communion had led her to Purgatory. The Saint also told of a sister of another religious order who had to expiate in Purgatory for these three faults that she had regarded of little importance: without any real necessity she had done some small domestic jobs on a day of Sunday or holiday. Moreover for a misleading sense of respect, she had neglected to report to the Prioress about some divine exhortations from God, which concerned the monastic community and its spirit; and also she had too great an affection for her relatives. For these three faults, certainly not serious, this poor sister would have had to suffer even more if the Lord had not mitigated her punishment in view of her diligent observance of the rest of the rule and in view of her great love for her fellow sisters. Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi had the habit of offering to the Eternal Father the Most Precious Blood of his Divine Son at least 50 times a day. Indeed the Lord had revealed to her one day that through this

pious exercise she would have been able to convert innumerable sinners and liberate innumerable poor souls of Purgatory, and that in the offering of the Most Precious Blood to the Eternal Father was presented a gift of inestimable value, with respect to which all the treasures of the earth were worthless. Now if already this simple mention of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ shed in His salvific Passion could have such a marvelous result, much greater will be the real offering of the renewed sacrifice of the Cross offered and consumed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. On August 24, 1590 died the mother of the Saint, Maria Buondelmonte, a noble and very devout woman. The Saint saw the soul of her deceased mother in Purgatory, but she also saw what great glory was soon prepared for her in Heaven, for all the good that she had done and her generosity towards her neighbor. After 15 days the Saint saw the soul of her mother, for whom she had much prayed, and offered and above all offered Holy Masses and Holy Communions and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. The doctrine taught and lived by Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi was the one promulgated by the Holy Council of Trent, taught by the Church and instituted for the supplications and the good that can be passed on by the living to the poor souls of Purgatory. And also for this, her work of persuasion and her example convinced many to follow her by laboring and praying for the poor souls of Purgatory.



Sister Maria Serafina of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1843 - 1871

PURGATORY

Sister Maria Serafina of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was a religious Sister from the diocese of Malines in Belgium and who, in 1870, experienced various apparitions of her father's face. These experiences were recorded in a volume entitled: "Apparitions of a Soul in Purgatory." Its editor was a priest by the name of G.M. Curicque. He noted: On October 16, the father appeared in a vision and exclaimed "O my! O my! I have been in Purgatory now for over a year and no one has shown any pity for me!" "O my poor father exclaimed the Sister, how can you say such a thing? You have only been deceased for less than a month!" And he replied to her: "O, you have no idea what eternity is like! Once a soul has been with God, it becomes obsessed with a burning desire to possess Him. I've been consigned to Purgatory for six months, but if the community would pray for me, that time would be reduced in half. The Lord has permitted me to remind you constantly until my full freedom is realized. Oh! How I regret now my opposition to your vocation! I can find relief now only by being close to you." On October 17, the Sister again saw her father, but instead of being immersed in the very fires of Purgatory, he was in a deep depression... "Look now how I find myself in this pit of fire! There are hundreds of us here." "Oh! If

Purgatory was truly understood for what it is, one would do everything to avoid it and would pray for the poor souls imprisoned there. You must strive to become a holy religious, observant of even the minutest details of your holy Rule, as Purgatory for any religious is a terrible thing!"

The Sister, in fact, saw that fiery pit and the dense clouds of black smoke which issued from it. "I shall never forget the impression that vision made upon me!" And, as her father re-appeared and fell once more into the fiery pit, he showed his dry tongue and loudly cried out: "I thirst, I thirst!"

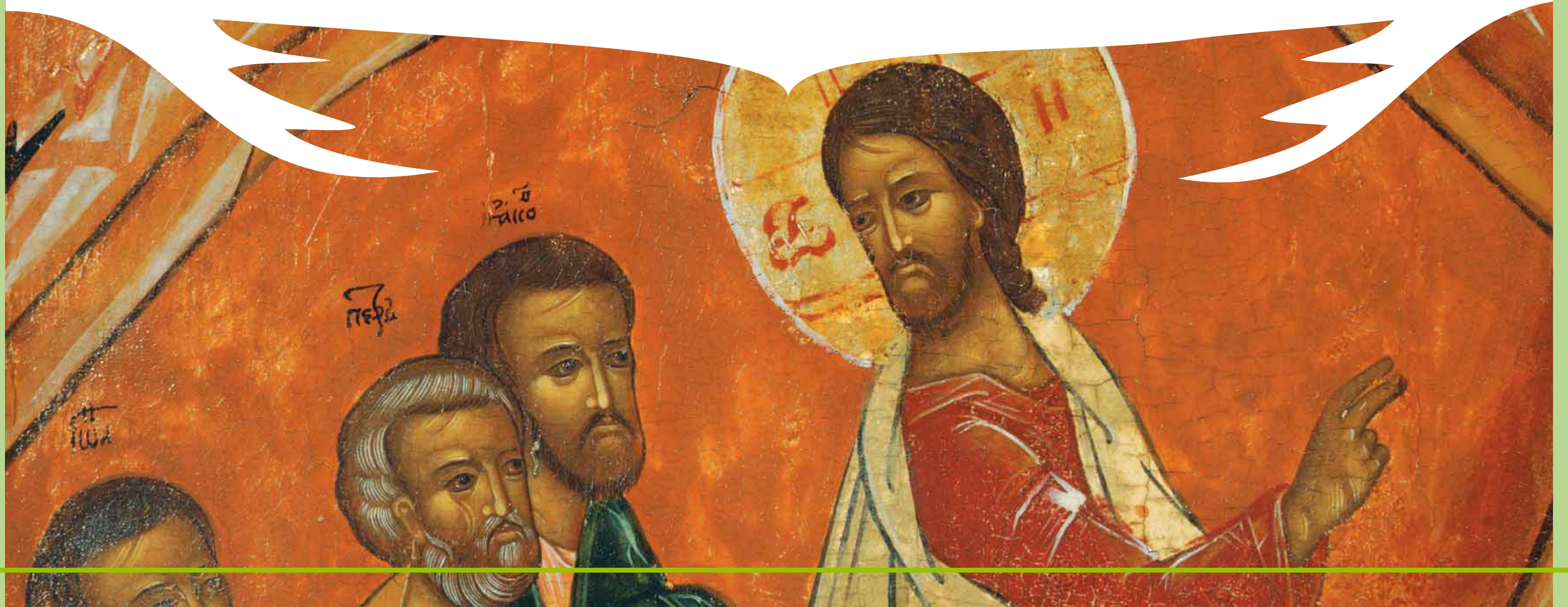
From that moment, as the good religious recounts, she saw her father regularly every evening, always in the same state of suffering and desolation. While it was true that he was no longer immersed in flames as in the initial apparitions, he was nevertheless hidden in the fiery pit and still crying out, "I thirst, I thirst... Three months in Purgatory is an eternity. Initially, I was consigned for several years and if now I have only a few months remaining, it is due to the Blessed Virgin Mary who has interceded on my behalf."

Later, the deceased touched his daughter with his finger in two different places. The first, on the right shoulder and the other on her heart; she experienced



and felt a painful burning sensation. The amazing thing is that while her skin was not burned, her clothing exhibited scorch marks.

On October 30, the deceased exclaimed: "O my! It is not understood or realized that the fires of Purgatory are similar to those of Hell. Anyone who would visit and experience Purgatory, would never commit even one venial sin – so severely is it vigorously punished!"



Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Clarissa Nun Part 1

1878 - 1948

PURGATORY

On September 2, 1918 the door bell of the sacristy rang at the Clarissa Convent of Saint Leonardo, Montefalco (Perugia), Italy. Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Mother Superior and sacristan went to the door and heard a voice say:

"I have to leave these offerings here." and the pulley wheel was turned and there were ten Italian lire.

The mother superior asked if the alms were for Triduum, prayers or Masses.

"No obligation." was the response. "If I may ask, who are you?" asked the Mother Superior. "You need not know." In the next five days and then on October 31st, November 29th, December 9th, and January 1st and 29th, 1919 the same thing happened. On March 14th at eight in the evening the door bell rang twice and the Mother Superior went to answer it and she found ten lire in the pulley wheel, but no one answered. The exterior door of the church was locked and only the nuns had the keys. The janitor was called and they did an inspection of the church. No one was found.

On April 11 another ten lire was left and you could hear the voice of the person asking for prayers for a deceased person. On May 2 around half past nine in the evening the doorbell rang. The Mother Superior and three other nuns went to the door. They found twenty lire

in the pulley wheel and two cards placed in the shape of a cross. They did not know who put them there. The church was closed. Other visits followed on May 25th, June 4th, and 21st. On July 7th around two in the afternoon, at nap time, the doorbell rang twice, but the Mother Superior did not answer thinking it was just children. A voice outside the bedroom said to her: "They rang the sacristy bell". She went to answer and heard the usual voice say: "I am leaving ten lire here for prayers." The Mother Superior then asked: "For God's sake, who is there?" "I cannot tell." was the response.

She asked the other nuns if they had called, but it was not any of them.

The episode happened again on July 18th, and this time the Mother Superior said: "Praise be to Jesus and Mary." The voice responded, "Amen." Other visits occurred in August, September and October in the same fashion. On the visit of October 3rd, the Mother Superior went out to the door at the sound of the bell, she refused the twenty lire offering and said that the confessor was not happy and wanted to know who was there because she feared it was a trick of the devil. The voice responded: "No, I am a soul from purgatory. I have been in purgatory for forty years for squandering the goods of the ecclesiastics".



Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus, Clarissa Nun Part 2

1878 - 1948

PURGATORY

“After various mysterious episodes of the door bell of the sacristy of the Covent of the Clarissa Nuns in San Leonardo, Montefalco, Perugia, Italy, a soul left money for sufferings, on October 30 in the middle of the night, the Mother Superior, Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus heard a voice outside her bedroom saying: ‘The doorbell of the sacristy rang.’ She went to answer and the Mother Superior heard: ‘I leave these alms.’ However, Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus interrupted and said, ‘By the orders of the confessor I cannot accept this. In the name of God and by the orders of the confessor, tell me who are you; are you a priest?’ ‘Yes.’ was the answer. ‘Were the goods that you squandered from this convent?’ ‘No, but I have permission to bring the alms here.’ ‘And from where do you get the money?’ ‘The judgment of God is just.’ was the answer. Then the Mother Superior said: ‘I hardly believe that you are a soul; I always tend to believe that it is some kind of joke.’ ‘Do you want a sign?’ ‘No, because I am afraid. I will call someone else, right away...’ responded Mary Theresa. ‘No, I am not allowed to show anyone else.’ added the voice.

“The displays of the soul from purgatory were numerous and the last one occurred on November 9th. Upon the Christian greeting of the Mother Superior, the voice responded: ‘May you

be eternally blessed. I thank you and the religious community: I am freed from every pain.’ ‘And have the priests said more Masses?’ ‘I thank you all.’ ‘I would like to go to purgatory where you are, I would feel secure there...’ said the Mother Superior. ‘I will ask the Most High.’ was the response. ‘Will you pray for me, for the community, for my parents, if they are in purgatory, for the confessor, for Father Luigi Bianchi, for the Pope and the Bishop and the Cardinal Ascalesi?’ ‘Yes. May God bless you all.’”

During this last visit I realized the voice was very happy. The soul had brought in total three hundred Italian lire in twenty eight visits and they went towards thirty-eight Masses.

The ecclesiastic authorities began a canonization process based on these events. The original facts are preserved in the curia of the Archbishop of Spoleto. These facts “result in proof of sufficient historical certainty that a soul from purgatory came to the convent of the Franciscans of San Leonardo in Montefalco.” Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus (1878-1948), the only one to hear the words of this soul, died during her canonization process. On February 18, 1942, with the permission of the archbishop, the religious woman offered herself up to God for the priests, for peace, for people’s disorders, and the blasphemers.



One of the banknotes left by the soul of the deceased priest.



Saint Nicholas of Tolentino

Part 1

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PURGATORY

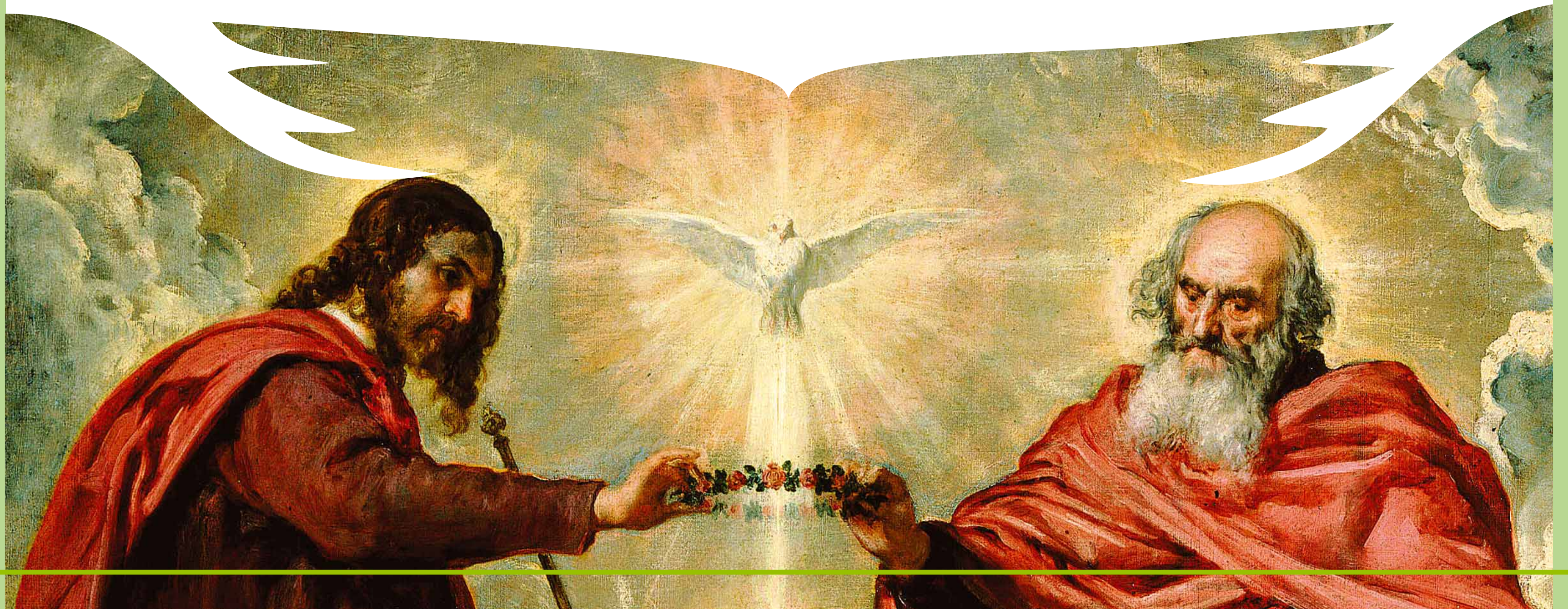
Saint Nicholas of Tolentino is famous for his great devotion to the Souls of Purgatory, arisen thanks also to the mystical experiences that he had between 1270 and 1275 in the hermitage of Valmanente (Pesaro). Boniface IX in his two Bulls: *Splendor Paternae Gloriam* of January 1, 1390 and *Licet quis de cuius* of March 1, 1400, and Leo XIII in his Brief of June 10, 1884, in which he established canonically *The Pious Union under the Patronage of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in assistance to the poor souls of Purgatory*, characterize Saint Nicholas as Patron of the Poor Souls.

In the *Life of Saint Nicholas* written by Pietro Da Monterubbiano we find narrated certain episodes which have as protagonists some deceased souls: “One time, when he was entrusted with the weekly calendar for the conventual Mass, during the night immediately preceding the Sunday he fell asleep briefly in his modest bed and suddenly a soul with a loud voice calls him shouting: ‘Brother Nicholas – the soul tells him – man of God: turn to me! (Ps 24:16).’ Nicholas turns towards the soul, trying in every way to recognize him, but after looking at him he could not understand who that soul was when alive, then Nicholas perturbed asked him to make himself known.

This time the soul answered: ‘I am the soul of Brother Pellegrino of Osimo, whom you knew when alive: at that time I was your servant, now I am tormented in this blaze. Upon receiving my contrition, God did not destine me to eternal punishment, which I deserved due to my weakness, but to purgatorial punishment, in virtue of

His mercy. Now I humbly beg you to be so kind to celebrate a Mass for the Dead, in order that I may be finally removed from these flames.’ Nicholas answered: ‘May my Savior be gracious to you, oh brother, by Whose Blood you have been redeemed; I am only entrusted with the conventual Mass, which must be celebrated solemnly, and because it is not right to modify my responsibility – let alone on the day of Sunday which is upcoming – I cannot recite the Mass for the Dead.’ To this the soul replied to him: ‘Come, o venerable father, come and see for yourself whether it is truly worthy of you to refuse without mercy the request coming from such a miserable multitude.’ Leading him to another part of the hermitage, the soul then showed him the small plain that is near Pesaro, on which in fact there was a multitude of people, of both genders, of various ages and conditions and also belonging to a variety of religious orders. ‘Have mercy, o father, have mercy on such a miserable multitude, that awaits for your beneficial assistance; actually if you will be willing to celebrate Mass for us, the majority of these people will be removed from these extremely atrocious torments.’ ”

A large number of faithful went to visit him at the friary in order to go to confession to him, leaving reconciled again with God and relieved from their inner torments. The miracles attributed to his intercession are very numerous. He died on September 10, 1305. He was canonized in 1446.



Saint Nicholas of Tolentino

Part 2

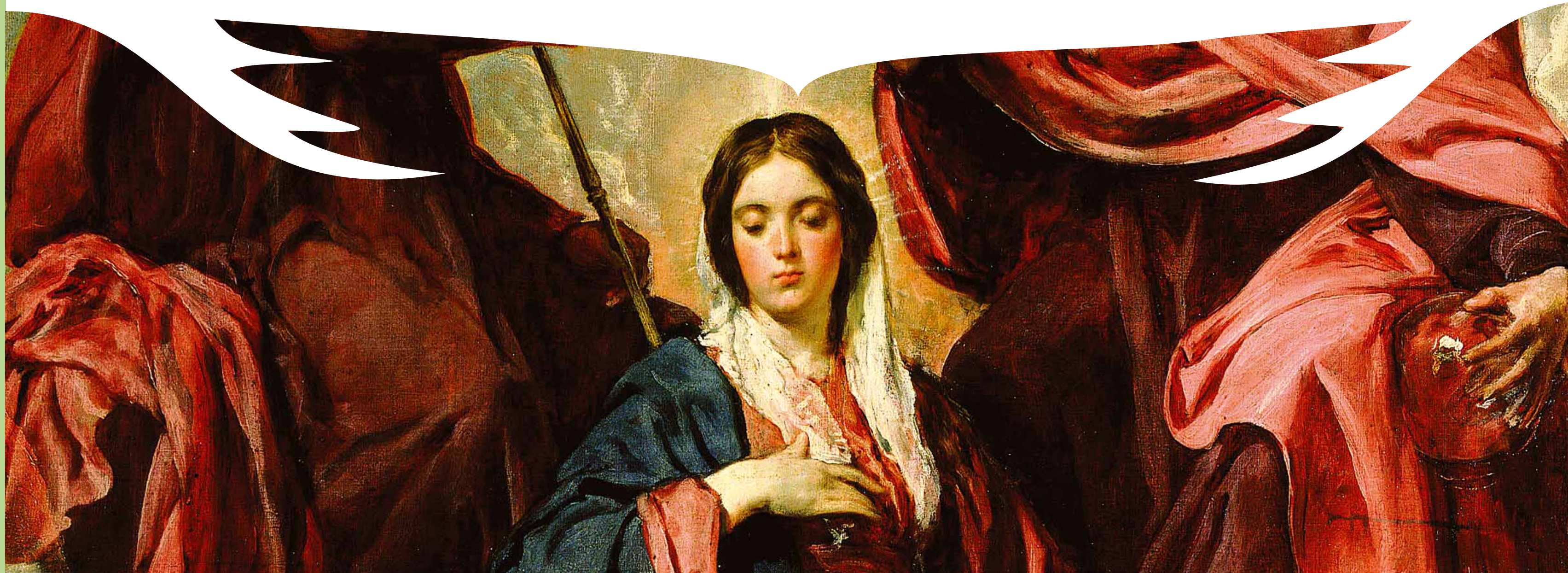
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PURGATORY

The story of the vision of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino regarding the souls of Purgatory continues: “Therefore, upon awakening, the holy man moved by a great compassion for these people immediately began to beseech the Savior of all people on their behalf with much shedding of tears. The next morning, while prostrated in front of the prior with absolute reverence, avoiding every sign of presumption, Nicholas told him about the vision not revealing everything but only some details and begging the prior to grant him the permission to celebrate the Mass for the Dead during that week. The prior, immediately granting his permission for those prayers, managed to substitute him with another friar in his previous task. Therefore Nicholas, celebrating the Mass for the Dead for the whole week, day and night cried tears of love for that multitude that had been shown to him. And then, after the week went by, the same Brother Pellegrino appeared to Nicholas again and thanked him for the mercy he had requested and told him of having been removed from the extremely atrocious punishments together with a large portion of the previously mentioned multitude, through the mercy of God, through the Masses celebrated and through his tearful prayers. And he said that in this way he reached with joy the glory of God. ‘You have liberated us – he said – from what was tormenting us, you scattered and confused those who hated us.’”

In Purgatory the souls began to know since his youth the man whose holiness of life in his old age is seen venerated in the

world: already the ship of his merits sails the sea of Purgatory. Nicholas not only emptied Purgatory with his merits, but he seemed to empty also Hell with the prayers of his compassion. In fact one time, while he was in a friary in the city of Recanati, a sorrowful messenger presented himself to Nicholas arriving from the house of his brother, and as soon as he was in the presence of the holy man, prostrate hugging his knees, crying and shouting in a loud voice he said: “Where were your prayers and your virtues, o most holy Nicholas? Here at your hands is asked an account of the soul and the body of your brother, in fact he was killed in an unexpected ambush by criminals in the castle of Monte Apponi, as if your holiness who loved his body and his soul had not existed.” Upon hearing these things the holy man could not restrain his tears, saying: “O poor man, there is a possibility that you are damned!” After sending back the messenger, Nicholas subjected himself to a harsher abstinence, praying with tears day and night for fifteen days, in order that the Savior Jesus Christ would be willing to show him whether the soul of his brother had been damned or saved. While he was in the church lighting a lamp at the altar, in honor of the Body of the Lord, he heard then a voice shouting and saying: “My brother, my brother, I thank God and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who after regarding your prayers and your tearful supplications with the eye of His compassion freed me, although I was damned.”



Saint Odilo of Cluny

962 - 1048

PURGATORY

Saint Odilo, fifth abbot of the Abbot of Cluny, was very influential in society during his lifetime; he belonged to the nobility of Auvergne, France. Because of his devotion and family ties, his parents decided to consecrate him to the service of the Lord in the seminary of St. Julien of Brioude, where later he became a specialist in canon law. Saint Mayeul drew him to the monastery of Cluny around 990 and then from May 993 he chose him to be the coadjutor to the abbot, after he received Holy Orders, in 994 he was confirmed by canonical election. Odilo became the only abbot of Cluny on May 11th and when Mayeul died he took over for him until his own death. Above all, Odilo had to face difficulties stemming from religious men of certain monasteries under the Abbot of Cluny and from certain gentlemen who wanted to strip the Abbot of its wealth. In December 997 he made his first of many trips to Padua and Rome, which gave him the possibility to intervene on behalf of the various monasteries of Italy. They promised Cluny the reconstruction of certain monastery buildings, with the exception of the church, which had been finalized by Saint Mayeul.

He is remembered for his great devotion to the souls of purgatory, because between 1028 and 1030 he

defined in all of his monasteries, that after the solemnity of All Saints Day the memory of all the faithfully departed be remembered with an official Mass and almsgiving. The decree of Saint Odilo required not only the celebration of a Mass and divine offering for the deceased in solemnity of all the faithfully deceased, but he insisted most upon almsgiving. He ordered the offering of food to twelve needy people, and they were to be given as much as the table of the monks would have and also charity for the celebration of the Mass. (*Statutum Odilonis de defunctis*). Feast of All Saints and All Souls.

Thanks to the influence of Cluny and some of its dependent monasteries the commemoration of all the faithfully departed spread throughout the whole Church. Pope Benedict XV, during World War I, on August 10, 1915, established that each priest could celebrate three masses for the dead (Apostolic Constitution, *Incrumentum altaris*). This privilege was already granted years ago by the Dominicans under the reign of Aragon, then Pope Benedict XIV in 1748 had extended it to all of the priests of Spain, Portugal and South America.

Saint Odilo continuously did everything within his power to help the poor. In those years, famine was



commonplace and in order to alleviate the suffering some people had no scruples and would sell liturgical objects and treasures of the church and they would go personally and beg for money. He did not want just to come to the aide of the needy of his time, but he intended also to help those that came before them who were purifying themselves in purgatory. He bonded together charity for the poor and suffering of the deceased, offering for them these gestures of brotherly love. Saint Odilo died on December 31, 1048 in Souvigny while he was visiting the monastery.



Saint Paul of the Cross

1694 - 1775

PURGATORY

Saint Paul of the Cross took to heart the fate of the Souls of Purgatory. In supplication for them, he celebrated Mass every time he could and recited the Rosary. His biographers recount that at night a procession of souls of Purgatory went to the Saint to ask him for prayers and supplications. This is how he himself reports it: "At that time I used to say prayers desperately and endure very lengthy penances because I felt such great compassion. One time I took a bundle of chains and I scourged myself so much that I fainted and for many days I was unable to move. I began to wonder whether there could be some deception, because I did much penance without the order of obedience, sustained by the compassion towards those poor souls. Having this doubt, Our Lady Most Holy appeared to me, calling me the first time, a second time and a third time. I simply did not respond, remembering that one time a confessor had told me not to respond in such circumstances; however I prostrated myself with my face on the ground with complete reverence, and my Guardian Angel lifted me up from the ground and I heard him telling me: 'In order that you may know the obligation you have to pray for those poor souls, come with us.' And thus they lead me to Purgatory. Our Lady Most Holy opened Purgatory for me and I saw it. Oh! What punishments, daughter, oh! What punishments! I would almost say that in some way the punishments were worse

than those of the damned, being the souls far from God, Whom they loved so much."

Another time Saint Paul had the vision of a deceased priest, as he narrates himself: "I knew a priest friend, a good man, but I warned him openly more than once. When hearing my words he seemed to be remorseful, but later he went back as before. When one night I heard knocking at my door, I said 'Go away!', believing that it was the devil coming to disturb me. A little later, I heard knocking anew. 'Go away!', I said again. After a little while he returned to knock for a third time. At that time not knowing who it was, I said 'I command you on behalf of God that you tell me who you are and what you want?' And then I heard him saying to me: 'I am the soul of that certain priest: I died this night at 6 and I was condemned to Purgatory due to the faults that you warned me about. Oh! What Punishments! I feel like I have been in Purgatory for thousands of years!' I then looked at the clock that I had for an alarm and saw that it was 6:15, whence I said to him: 'It's a quarter of an hour since you have expired and they seem thousands of years to you?' And the soul of that priest replied: 'Yes, they seem like thousands of years to me!' And I promised to entrust him to God with prayers. The vision having disappeared, I could not restrain myself: I began a penance, with fervor; but afterwards I did not feel consoled



at all, neither had I any understanding that the soul was liberated. I restarted the penance and prayed to the Lord with very deeply felt expressions."



Saint Peter Damian

Part 1

1007-1072

PURGATORY

The great Doctor of the Church, Cardinal and writer Saint Peter Damian was born at Ravenna in 1007. He distinguished himself for the help he offered to the Souls of Purgatory. His biographer John of Lodi recounts that the little orphan Peter Damian had found by chance a coin, and instead of keeping it he gave it to a priest, so that he would celebrate a Mass for his deceased parents.

When he was elected superior of the hermitage of Fonte Avellana, he established that the monks, at the hour of prayer of the breviary, had to recite also a type of office for the deceased. He involved all his community in offering supplications for the souls of Purgatory and in the various monasteries he founded, the remembrance of the deceased friars was foremost. He had numerous Masses celebrated; he devoted himself to several penitential exercises and good works. From a letter of Peter Damian to the Abbey of Pomposa, near Ravenna, we know that he tried to join in the prayer society of that monastery. At Montecassino he wanted to particularly commit himself to offering supplications for the souls of the deceased monks like it was done at the other monasteries.

He wrote the booklet "On various and fantastic stories and apparitions" for his friend Abbot Desiderio, who was the superior of the Monastery of Montecassino since 1058. In this work Peter Damian recounted various experiences of the souls in Purgatory. In Chapter V he shared that Severinus, Bishop of Cologne, had been

favored by God with the gift of miracles and even after his death, had appeared to one of his canons completely encircled by flames.

When this canon asked him why he – whose memory was so vivid on earth and his name was honored and blessed in all the churches – had to suffer such terrible punishments in that place of purification, the Bishop who had appeared to him answered: "I don't suffer this punishment for no other reason than because when I was at the Court of the Emperor, as Court Counselor, I did not recite the hours of the divine office at the times established by the Church (canonical hours). Being extremely busy myself and overburdened with work, I had acquired the habit of reciting the entire office of the day in the morning, one part after the other, to allow myself then to devote completely to my work and my commitments. It is due to this transgression of the ecclesiastical norms that I must now suffer tremendously and atone. But you, please, go and tell it to the other priests of the church and the other pious people how much I suffer, and plead with them to assist me with prayers and alms and with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Then I shall be liberated certainly and soon from these punishments!" Saint Peter Damian commented the story like this: "All of this must inspire in us a great fear, seeing that such a holy man, only for a behavior and a sin which seem so small to us, had to suffer such a terrible Purgatory!"



Saint Peter Damian

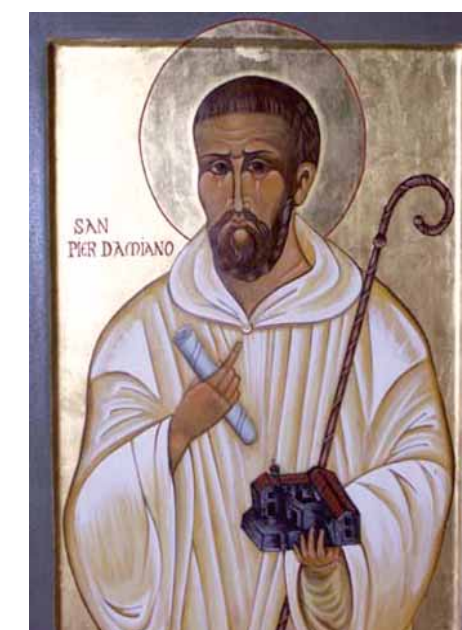
Part 2

1007-1072

PURGATORY

In one story Saint Peter Damian narrates that on the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary each year thousands of souls were liberated from Purgatory. As proof of this he reported what happened in Rome in those years: “At that time on the night preceding the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady it was still customary for the faithful to visit various churches walking in procession and carrying lit torches in their hands, during one of these nocturnal processions going up to Santa Maria in Araceli on the Capitoline a lady suddenly saw before her in the church her deceased godmother who died one year before. To assure herself whether it was truly her or if it was simply an illusion the lady decided to wait at the door of the church for the person who had appeared to her. Indeed after awhile this person also exited the door. Completely disturbed the lady approached her and after taking her aside, asked whether she was her godmother Marozia. Yes! Answered the deceased, *it’s really me*. Therefore the lady replied: “But how is it possible since you are by now dead for several months, how can you be now again among the living?” The deceased responded: *Until now I have been immersed in a terrible fire as chastisement, because as a youth I was very vain. But today the Blessed Queen of the world has descended to us and has rescued me and many others out of the flames of Purgatory, on the occasion of her Feast that is celebrated by the Church. The Blessed Mother repeats every year this miracle of*

mercy ... In thanksgiving for this grace we visit on this night her shrines. Although only I have appeared just to you, know nevertheless that we are here in a great number. To prove that all I tell you is the truth, know that one year from now, that is the next solemnity of Our Lady’s Assumption, you will die. If after this day what I told you will not be realized, you will be able to think that it was all an illusion and a deception! Saint Peter Damian declared that from that instant the lady prepared herself to die well with prayers, mortifications and penances, and indeed on the vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary a serious illness afflicted her and she died on the following day.”



Saint Perpetua Martyr

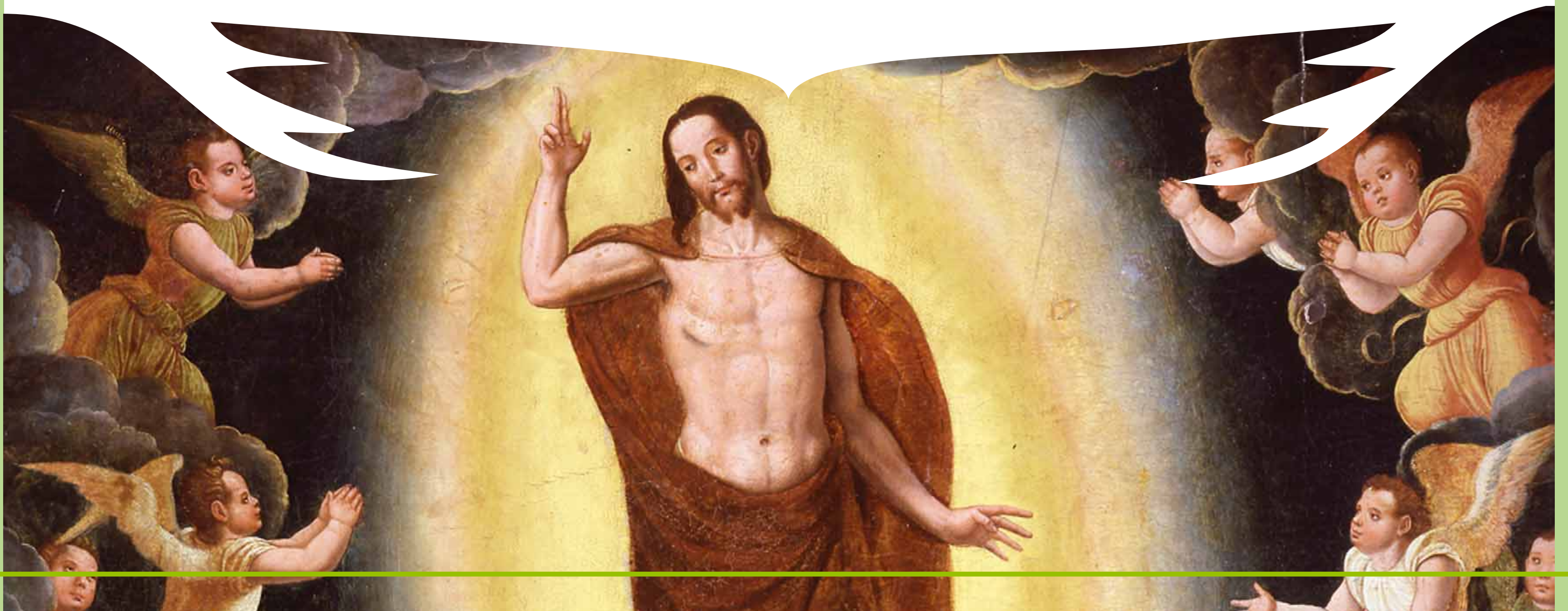
† MARCH 7, 202

PURGATORY

She suffered martyrdom at Carthage in 203, during the persecution of Septimius Severus. From this mother and martyr we come to know the belief in Purgatory of the first Christians and their value of prayer for the deceased. Perpetua, who was twenty-two years old, had been imprisoned together with Felicity, Revocatus, Saturus and Saturninus. While waiting to be killed in hatred of the faith, Perpetua narrated a story about what was happening to her in prison: “A few days after the sentence of our death penalty, while we all were praying, suddenly in the middle of the prayer I emitted a scream and called: Dinocrates. I was surprised because I had not called him before, but only in this instant, and filled with sadness I thought about his fate. I also realized that I should pray for him and immediately I began to pray and supplicate the Lord for him. During the night in a vision I saw Dinocrates exiting from a dark place where there were many desolate and thirsty people, very pale and with dirty clothes, with a wound on their faces, like Dinocrates had when he died. Dinocrates was one of my brothers, who died at seven years old ravaged by a cancer of the face, whereby his death was terrifying for everyone. I prayed for this deceased brother of mine and between me and him there was a large distance so that we could not meet. Far from the place

where Dinocrates was, there was a basin filled with water, but its edge was much higher than where Dinocrates could reach, and he tried to stretch as if trying to drink. I was sad, because that basin was filled with water, but he, due to the height of this basin, could not drink. At that moment I awoke and felt within me that my brother was suffering; however I felt that I could assist him during the days that we would remain in prison; because at the games we would have had to fight against the wild beasts; it was indeed then the birthday of the Emperor Geta. And I prayed night and day with sighs and tears so that he would be presented to me.”

On the day in which we remained tied, in prison, I then had the following vision: “I saw the place seen earlier, and this time Dinocrates with his body washed, well dressed, was enjoying himself; where his wound had been I saw a scar, and the edge of that basin was lower and now reached only to the navel of the boy, he dipped from that basin without stop. Over the edge there was also a gold cup full of water; Dinocrates drew near and began to drink from the gold cup, and this did not empty; after he drank enough of that water he started to play happily like children do. At that moment I woke up and realized that Dinocrates had been liberated from his suffering.”



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 1

1887 - 1968

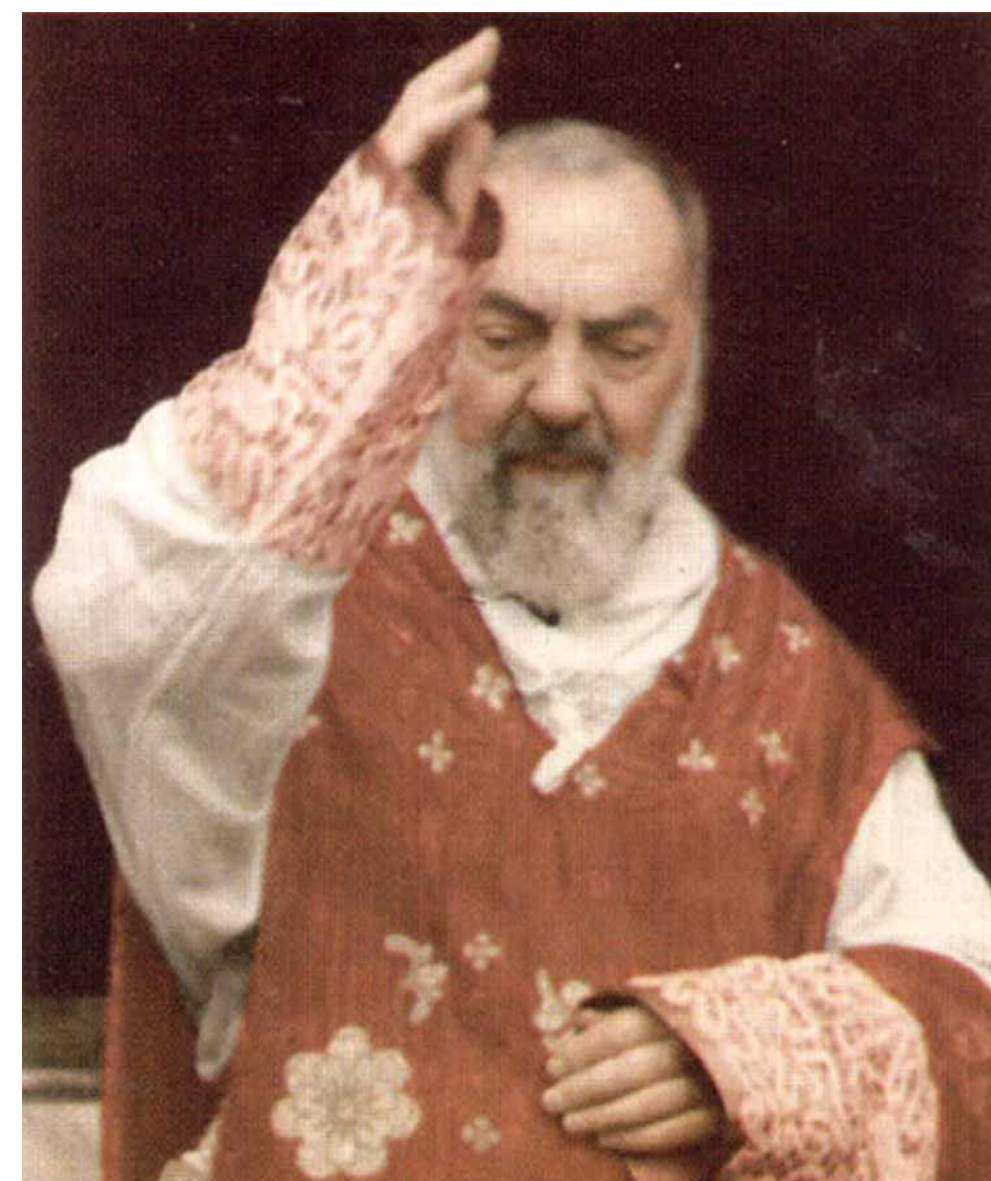
PURGATORY

The apparitions of the Souls of Purgatory to Saint Pio of Pietrelcina had begun already in childhood. He did not mention them to anyone because he thought they were things that happened to all people. During the last days of December 1902, while he was meditating on his vocation, Francesco had a vision. He described it years later to his confessor in this way: "Francesco saw beside him a majestic man of extraordinary beauty, radiant like the sun, who having taken him by the hand, encouraged Francesco with this precise invitation: 'Come with me because you ought to fight as a brave warrior.' He was led to a vast countryside, among a multitude of people divided in two groups: on one side there were people with a beautiful countenance and wearing white garments, bright as snow, on the other side there were people with a horrible appearance and wearing black vestments like dark shadows. The young man, placed between the two wings of spectators, saw approaching him a man of great height touching the clouds with his forehead and with a horrible countenance. The radiant being, whom Francesco had beside him, exhorted him to fight the monstrous being. Francesco prayed to be spared from the furor of the strange being, but the luminous one did not accept: 'Useless is every resistance of yours, with this one you ought to duel.

Take courage, enter confident in the fight, advance bravely for I will be near you; I will help you and I will not permit that he will knock you down.'

"The encounter was accepted and it turned out terribly. With the help of the luminous being who was always nearby, Francesco prevailed and won. The monstrous being, forced to flee, dragged behind him the great multitude of people of horrible appearance, in the midst of yells, curses and deafening screams. The other multitude of people of very beautiful appearance raised their voices in applause and praises to the one who had assisted poor Francesco in such a fierce fight.

"The radiant being more luminous than the sun placed on the head of victorious Francesco a crown of such extraordinary beauty, that it would be impossible to describe it. The crown was soon retrieved by the good being who declared: 'Another one more beautiful I keep in reserve for you, if you will know how to fight against the being you have fought now. He shall always return to attack...; fight bravely and do not doubt my help ... do not fear his vexations, do not fear his formidable presence. I will be close to you; I will help you always, in order that you will be able to cast him down.' "



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 2

1887 - 1968

PURGATORY

“One evening Padre Pio was resting in a room of the guest quarters on the ground floor of the convent. He was alone and he had been lying on his cot for a short time when, suddenly, there appeared to him a man wrapped in a black cloak. Padre Pio asked the man who he was and what he wanted. The man answered that he was a soul of Purgatory. ‘I am Pietro Di Mauro. I died in a fire on September 18, 1908, in this convent, used as a home for the elderly after the expropriation of ecclesiastical property. I died in the midst of the flames in my bed, overtaken during sleep, exactly in this room. I am coming from Purgatory: the Lord has allowed me to come to ask you to offer for me the Holy Mass of tomorrow morning. Thanks to this Mass I will be able to enter Heaven.’

“Padre Pio assured that he would offer the Mass for him: ‘I wanted to accompany him to the door of the convent. I became fully aware of having spoken to a deceased person only when, going out to the churchyard, the man who was beside me, suddenly disappeared. I must confess that I reentered the convent somewhat frightened. I asked permission to Padre Paolino da Casacalenda, superior of the convent, to whom my agitation did not go unnoticed, to celebrate the Holy Mass in supplication of that soul after, naturally, having explained to him all that had happened.’ ”

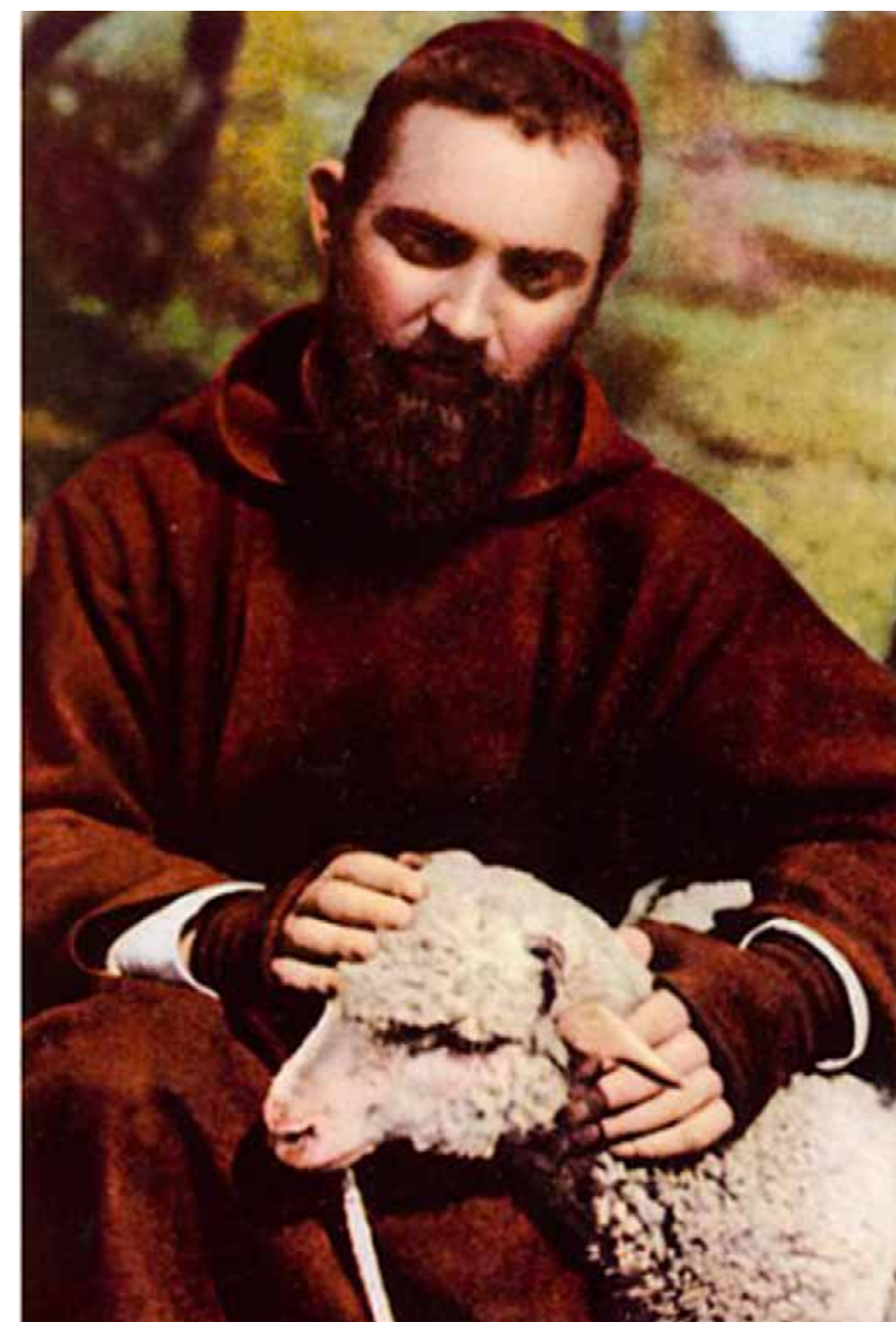
A few days later, Padre Paolino wanted to verify the information and went to the registry office of the Town of San Giovanni Rotondo to consult the

register of the dead for the year 1908. In the records listing the people deceased in the month of September, Padre Paolino found the man's first name, surname and the cause of death: “On September 18, 1908, in the fire of the home for the elderly died Pietro Di Mauro, son of the late Nicola.”

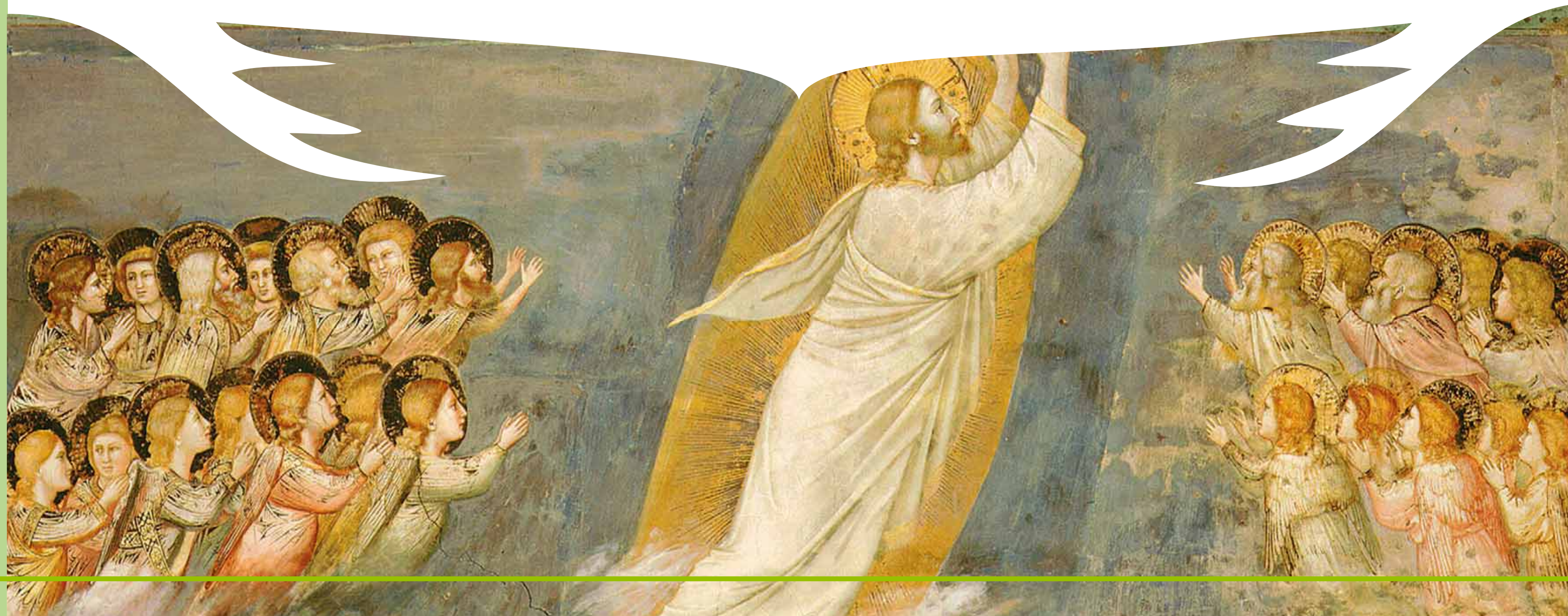
Another episode was told by Padre Pio himself to Padre Anastasio: “One evening while I was praying in the choir alone, I heard the rustling of a robe and saw a young friar puttering around the main altar, as if he were dusting the candle holders and arranging the flower vases. Convinced that it was Fra Leone organizing the altar, and since it was the time for supper, I approached the banister and said to him: ‘Fra Leone, go to eat, it is not the time to dust and set up the altar.’ But a voice that was not the one of Fra Leone answered me: ‘I am not Fra Leone.’ ‘So who are you?’ I asked.

“‘I am one of your fellow friars who did his novitiate here. For obedience I received the task to keep the main altar clean and orderly during my year of probation. Unfortunately, many times I was disrespectful to Jesus in the sacrament by passing in front of the altar without revering the Most Holy One kept in the tabernacle. For this grave omission, I am still in Purgatory. Now the Lord, in his infinite goodness, sends me to you so that you may determine how much longer I must suffer in those flames of love. Help me.’

“‘I, believing to be generous towards that suffering soul, exclaimed: You will remain here until the Mass of



tomorrow morning. That soul yelled: You are cruel! Then he screamed loudly and disappeared. That wailing created a wound in my heart that I have felt and shall feel all my life. I, who through divine delegation could have sent that soul immediately to Heaven, condemned him to remain another night in the flames of Purgatory.’ ”



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 3

1887 - 1968

PURGATORY

Padre Pio of Pietrelcina reported to his spiritual director some experiences with the Souls of Purgatory. In a letter to Padre Agostino on April 7, 1913 he wrote: “My dearest Father, Friday morning I was still in bed, when Jesus appeared to me. He was completely battered and disfigured. He showed me a large multitude of priests, among whom were various ecclesiastical dignitaries, of these some were celebrating Mass, some were vesting and some were removing their sacred vestments. The sight of Jesus in distress brought me a lot of pain, thus I wanted to ask him why he was suffering so much.

“I received no answer. However his glance led me towards those Priests; but shortly after, almost horrified and as if he were tired of looking, he withdrew his glance and when he raised it towards me, with great consternation; I observed two tears furrowing his cheeks. He distanced himself from that crowd of Priests with a profound expression of disgust on his face, screaming: ‘Butchers! And directed to me, he said’: ‘My son, do not think that my agony lasted only three hours, no; due to the souls who had been more privileged by me, I shall be in agony until the end of the world. During the time of agony, my son, we must not rest. My soul goes to search for any drop of human devotion, but alas they desert me alone under the weight of indifference.

“The ingratitude and the lethargy of my ministers render much more burdensome my agony. How they reciprocate badly to my love! What afflicts me most

is that they add contempt and unbelief to their indifference. Many times I was ready to strike them, if I were not restrained by the angels and the souls in love with me... Write to your Father and recount to him what you have seen and heard from me this morning. Tell him to show your letter to the Father Provincial ...? Jesus continued but what he said I will never be able to reveal to anyone of this world.”

There were other episodes regarding the presence of the Souls of Purgatory in the life of the Saint. A spiritual daughter of Padre Pio, Cleonice Morcaldi at the end of a confession received from the Saint this revelation: “This morning your mother flew to Heaven, I saw her while I was celebrating Mass”.

Saint Pio was born in Pietrelcina, in the province of Benevento, on May 25, 1887. On January 22, 1903, at the age of sixteen, he entered a Capuchin friary. He was ordained a priest seven years later, on August 10, 1910. In 1916 his superiors decided to transfer him to San Giovanni Rotondo, on the Gargano mountain, and here, in the friary of Santa Maria delle Grazie (Our Lady of Grace), an extraordinary adventure had begun for Padre Pio as miracle worker and apostle of the confessional. On September 20, 1918 he received the stigmata. He died on September 23, 1968, at the age of 81. He was declared venerable in 1997 and beatified in 1999. He was canonized in 2002.



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Part 4

1887 - 1968

PURGATORY

On February 13, 1913, Padre Pio wrote in a letter to his spiritual director, Padre Agostino: "... Do not fear I will make you suffer but I will also give you strength for it – Jesus repeats to me. I desire that your soul be purified and tried with daily inner torture; do not be frightened if I permit the devil to torment you, the world to disgust you, because nothing will prevail against those who mourn under the Cross for love of me and that I have persevered to protect."

Again on March 12, 1913: "... Hear, my Father, the righteous laments of our dearest Jesus: With what ingratitude is repaid my love for the people! I would have been less offended by these people if I had loved them less. My Father does not want to tolerate them anymore. I would like to cease loving them, but ... (and now Jesus paused and sighed, and then continued) but alas! My heart is made for loving! Cowardly and lazy men do not make any effort to control their temptations, on the contrary they take delight in their wickedness.

"The souls more favored by me, when put on trial, fail me, the weak ones abandon themselves to dismay and

despair, the strong ones keep slackening bit by bit. In the Churches they leave me alone at night, alone during the day. They do not care anymore about the Sacrament of the altar; they do not speak anymore of this Sacrament of love; and even those who do talk about it alas! with such indifference, with what coldness. My heart is forgotten; no one cares anymore for my love; I am always grieved.

"My House has become for many a theater of amusements: even my ministers whom I have always regarded with favor, whom I loved like the pupil of my eye; they ought to comfort my heart filled with bitterness; they ought to assist me in the redemption of souls, instead who would believe it? From them I have to receive ingratitude and rejection.

"I see, my son, many of these who ... (now he quieted, the hiccups tightened his throat, he cried in secret) who under hypocritical appearances betray me with sacrilegious Communions, trampling on the counsel and strength that I constantly give to them"



Saint Rabano Mauro

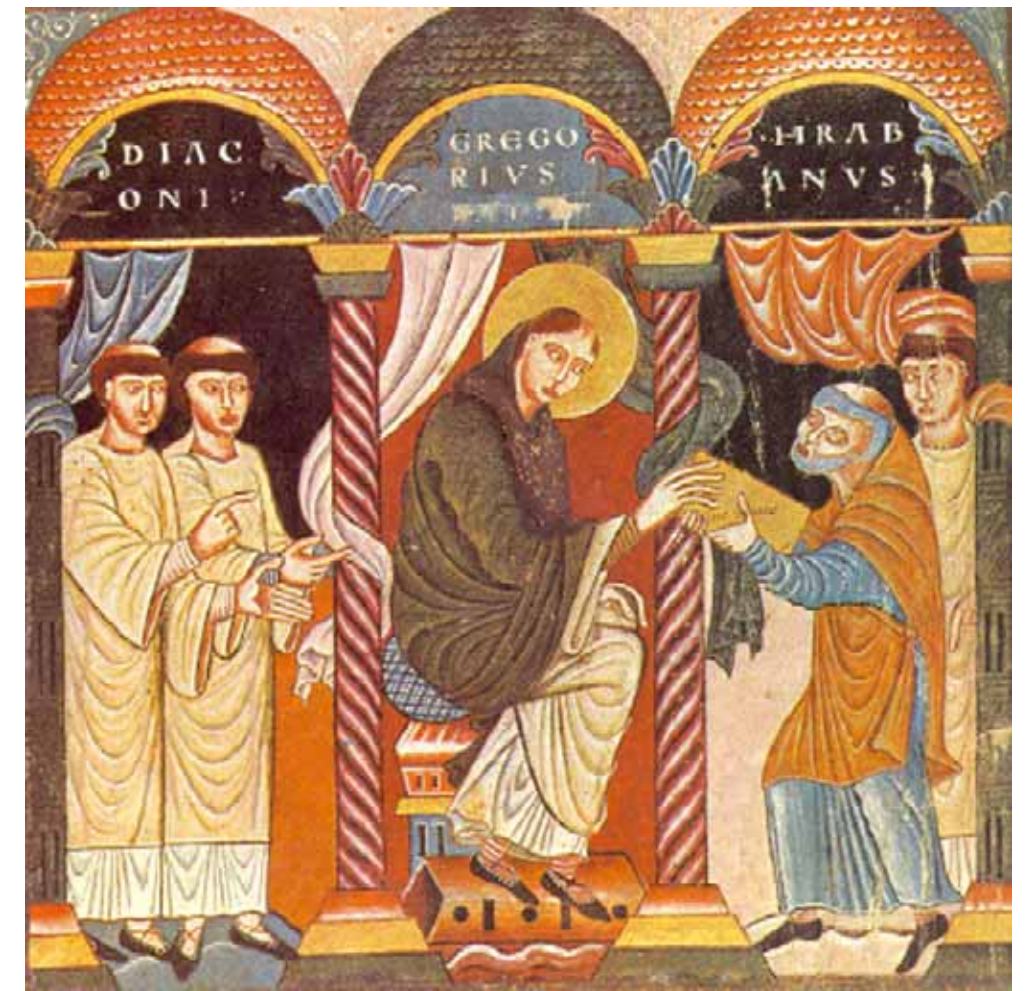
780 - 856

PURGATORY

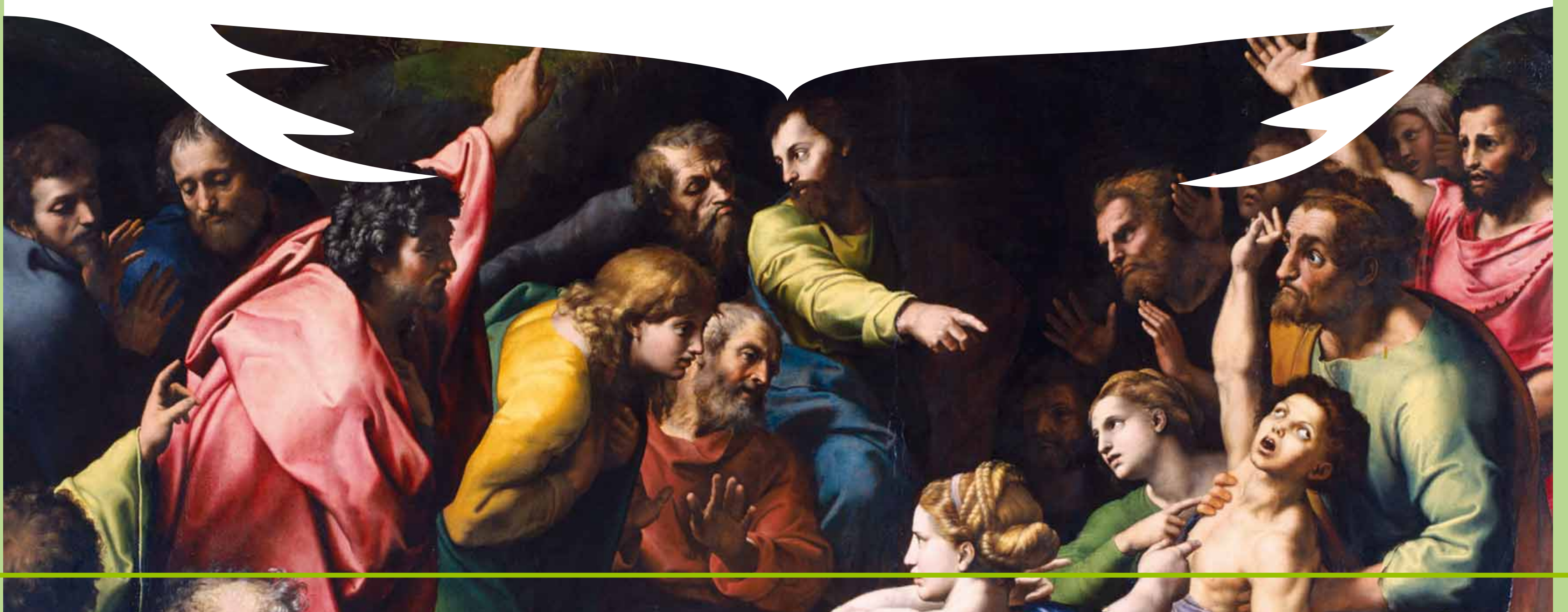
Saint Rabano was born in 780 at Magonza, Germany. He pursued his studies at the renowned Benedictine Monastery at Fulda. Later, he was sent to Tours where he succeeded Alcuin. On his return to the abbey at Fulda, he became its Abbot and initiated a great spiritual reform. In 847, he became the Archbishop of Magonza. He died in 856 while he was still its Archbishop. He was known as the “Teacher of Germany” and even during his lifetime he was considered the most erudite and learned theologian of the west. The hymn “Veni creator” is attributed to him by many.

Rabano Mauro was greatly devoted to the souls in Purgatory. According to the Constitutions to the Rule of St. Benedict, when a monk died, his portion of food was to be distributed to the poor as his suffrage in Purgatory. In 830, a plague broke out which caused the death of many monks, including the Superior. Rabano Mauro, then summoned Edelard, who was the procurator of the monastery and charged him with the distribution of the food in strict accordance to the Constitutions. But Edelard did not obey the wishes of the Abbot. One evening he stayed behind the usual time prescribed by the Rule and he observed the Abbot surrounded by monks in Chapter session.

As he approached to observe what was actually going on at that time of night, he noticed that it was not Rabano Mauro who was presiding but a deceased Abbot, together with all the monks who had perished during the plague. Two of them approached him and after disrobing him, administered the penitential discipline, crying out as they did: “Receive, wretched one, the punishment of your avarice and realize that this is nothing compared to what you will experience in the next life. You will die in three days and all of the suffrages and prayers that are due to you will be given to all those monks who were deprived because of your disgusting avarice.” At midnight, when the monks arrived to chant the Hour of Matins, they came upon the body of Edelard, bleeding and severely wounded. As they took him to the infirmary, he told them: “Notify my Superior at once, because right now I have more need of spiritual rather than physical healing. These infested and bloody wounds will never heal and they will soon accompany me to the grave.” When the Abbot finally arrived, and in the presence of his fellow monks, Edelard recounted all that had happened and in three days, after receiving the Sacraments, he died. A High Requiem Mass was at once chanted not only for the repose of his soul but also for the



other thirty monks as prescribed by the Rule. For a month after that, his portion of food was distributed to the poor. One day he appeared to Rabano Mauro in great distress and he implored him to help him in some way, crying out: “O my good Father, I am grateful for your concern as well as those of your fellow monks, but I must tell you that all your prayers and those of the living whom I deprived that were offered for me to divine justice up to this moment have not resulted in freeing me from my suffering. I implore you to double your prayers and almsgiving, so that when they are all finally freed, I too might leave this prison.” Rabano Mauro had the monks pray with a renewed fervor and, after a month’s time, he saw Edelard ascend to heaven.



Saint Stanislaus Kostka

1550 - 1568

PURGATORY

One day a soul from Purgatory completely enveloped in flames which caused him terrible suffering appeared to the Polish Jesuit, Saint Stanislaus Kostka. The Saint asked if that fire was similar to the one existing on earth. The soul responded that the fire on earth was nothing other than a soft zephyr compared to the fire of Purgatory. Stanislaus, not believing much in the words of the deceased, asked if it was possible to experience the intensity of that heat. The soul then said: "Ah! A man still alive is not able to feel even a small part of it. Nevertheless, to be convinced, extend your hand towards me and you will get an idea."

The Saint extended his hand and the soul let fall a drop of sweat. As soon as the drop touched his hand, Stanislaus started to scream from the pain and fainted. His brethren rushed to his screams and as soon as he was able to reawaken himself, they asked him the reason for such suffering. The Saint recounted to them what happened and invited them to do penance for their sins and to flee from sinful occasions to avoid that very intense suffering.

Saint Kostka lived one more year always with excruciating pains in his hand, on which a sore formed that never healed.



Saint Stanislaus of Krakow

1030 - 1079

PURGATORY

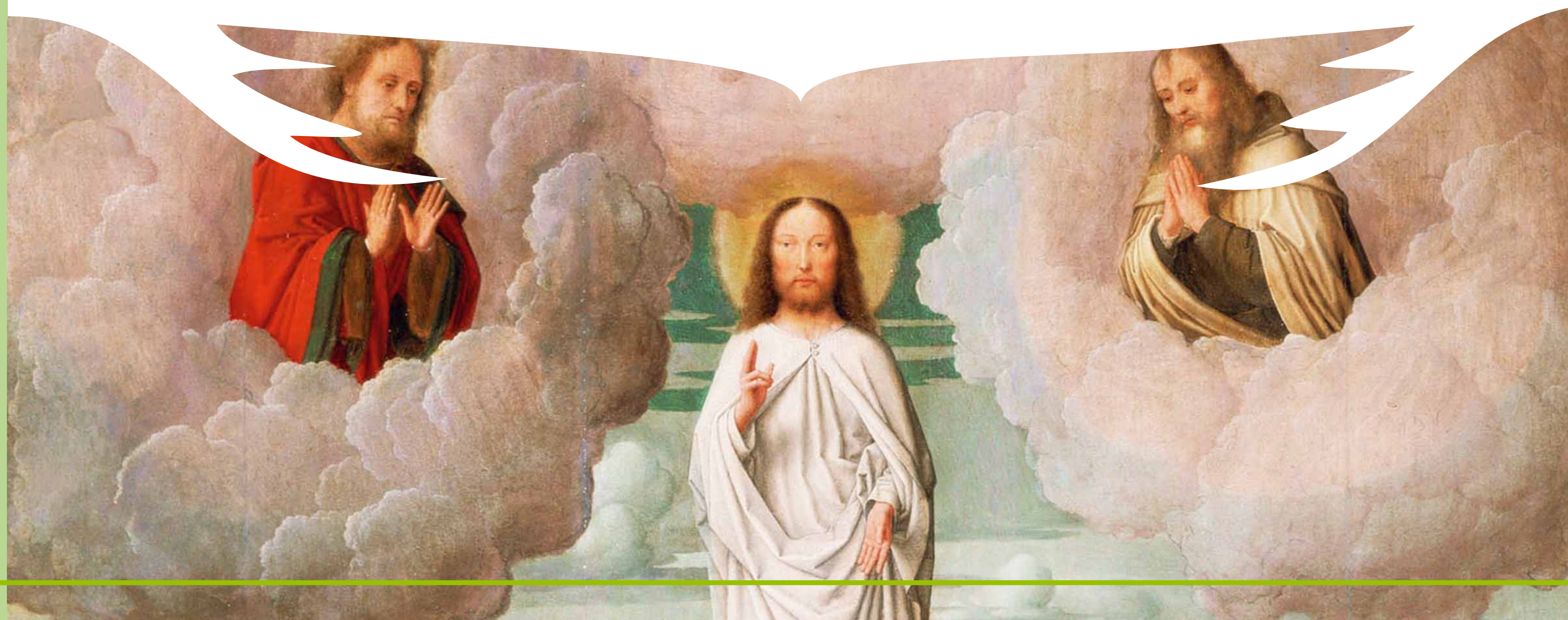
Saint Stanislaus was born at Szczepanow in Poland in 1030. After undertaking his primary studies with the Benedictines of Krakow, he finished the rest of them in Belgium, in the renowned intellectual center of Liege. Upon his return to Poland, he distinguished himself for his pastoral zeal and for the tasks he carried out with charity and wisdom. After the death of the Bishop of Krakow, Pope Alexander II named him his successor to the Episcopal See. At first Stanislaus was in accord with King Boleslaus II, later as a result of the immoral conduct of the sovereign, he excommunicated the king. In the year 1070 the king had succeeded in turning against Saint Stanislaus the heirs of a certain Peter Miles, who had died three years earlier leaving one of his lands as an inheritance to the Church. The heirs, confident in the king's support, initiated a trial against the Saint, and by corrupting and intimidating the witnesses, obtained the conviction of Stanislaus and the recovery of the inheritance. The Saint trusted in God and succeeded in having his conviction suspended, by promising to have the deceased man himself appear as witness. After three days of fasts and prayers, the Bishop went to the tomb of Peter Miles with the entire clergy, and

ordered that it be opened. Finding only bones and dust, the heirs felt sure of their victory, when the Saint ordered the corpse to rise in the name of Christ. At once those bones drew near each other, rejoined themselves, were covered by flesh, and in front of many people the dead man was revived and gave his hand to the Bishop. He arrived in front of King Boleslaus II and confirmed to be true his desire to donate the land to the Church. After Peter Miles had made his deposition, Saint Stanislaus asked him if he would have preferred to return to the tomb or to live a few more years on this earth. The deceased answered that even if he was in Purgatory, where he suffered much because of his numerous sins, he preferred to die instead of staying alive with the danger of being then damned forever. Thus he begged the Saint to pray for him, in order that he would be liberated sooner from the punishments. After his remains were brought again into the tomb, everything went back as before and the deceased man had peace.

King Boleslaus II put out an order to kill Saint Stanislaus at Krakow in the Church of Saint Michael, during the celebration of Mass. It seems that the murder in the cathedral was committed



by the king himself, since his guards had to retreat because they were hindered by a mysterious force. Saint Stanislaus died as a martyr and immediately his fame of sanctity spread throughout Poland. He was canonized by Innocent IV on August 17, 1253 in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. He was proclaimed patron of Poland and his remains were kept in the Cathedral of Krakow, which became a destination for pilgrimages.



Saint Simon Stock

† 1265 c a

PURGATORY

Saint Simon Stock lived in the XIII Century. His name became very popular for the prayer “Flos Carmeli” (a Carmelite hymn to Our Lady), attributed to him, and for the apparition he had of Our Lady, who revealed to him the importance of wearing the Scapular with these words: “This is the privilege for you and for yours: whoever will die wearing it, will be saved.”

This is how his biographers report the episode: “The Blessed Simon, although very advanced in years, consumed by austerity, quite often spent the nights in prayer. One day, filled with celestial consolation, he gathered us all together, and spoke in these terms: ‘While I poured forth my soul in the presence of the Lord, although it is nothing but dust and ash, and with complete trust I prayed to my Lady the Virgin Mary so that, as she desired that we would be called her brothers, in this way she would show herself as Mother, removing us from the temptations, and with some sign of grace she would lift us up in the face of those who persecute us, and I said to her with sighs: O flower of the Carmel..., she appeared to me with a great retinue, and holding the Habit of the Order, said: Take, most beloved son, this Scapular; this shall be the sign of your Order and of my Congregation and of the privilege that I have obtained for

you and for all the Carmelites, with which whoever shall die piously, will not suffer the eternal fire. This is a sign of salvation, safety in dangers, pledge of peace and of eternal covenant. She departed telling me that I should send it to Our Lord Innocent, Vicar of her blessed Son, so that he would put a remedy to the oppression. Brothers, while you will keep these words in your hearts, do everything to make genuine your vocation by means of good works, and never fail it. Keep vigil in thanksgiving for much mercy, pray incessantly so that the words said to me may be fulfilled, in praise of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and of the Virgin forever blessed, Mary.”

The great promise was further confirmed about eighty years later when Our Lady appeared to Jacques Duèze (future John XXII) telling him that:

“Those who have been vested with this Holy Habit will be removed from Purgatory on the first Saturday after their death.” Pope Saint Pius X, conceded to substitute, in case of necessity, the Scapular of fabric with a medal bearing the image of the Sacred Heart inscribed on one side and on the other side the one of Mary. At Lourdes during the last apparition Our Lady appeared clothed with the habit of the Carmel and also



at Fatima the apparitions concluded with the vision of Our Lady clothed with the Carmelite Habit. Sister Lucia of Fatima, later becoming a Discalced Carmelite, said that in the message of Our Lady “the Rosary and the Scapular are inseparable.”

At the end of 1940, in conversation with three Carmelites, Father Donald O’Callaghan, Father Albert Ward and Father Luis Gonzaga de Oliveira, Sister Lucia recalled that the Blessed Virgin Mary desired that the devotion to the Holy Scapular would be promoted.



Saint Thomas Aquinas

1221-1274

PURGATORY

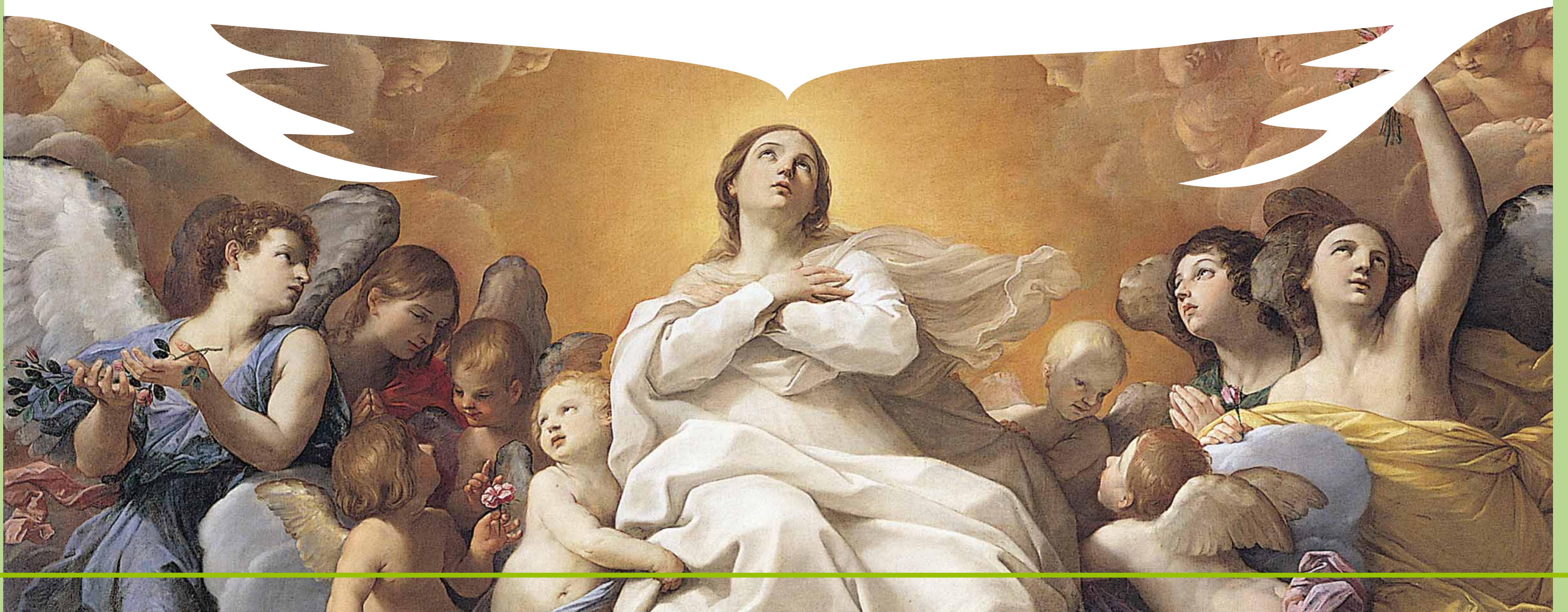
The great Doctor of the Church Saint Thomas Aquinas had a sister named Marotta, who in 1253 was the abbess in the Monastery of Santa Maria in Capua. The sister died while Saint Thomas was in Paris. Gerard Frachet in his *Brotherly life (Vitae fratrum)* recounts that the abbess appeared to her brother to ask him to celebrate some Masses to liberate her from Purgatory. Saint Thomas invited his pupils to pray for his deceased sister. Also Guglielmo Tocco narrates this event in the *Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas*.

When Saint Thomas returned to Rome, his sister appeared to him again and told him that she had been liberated from Purgatory thanks to the Masses that she had requested and now she was in Paradise. Then the Saint asked for information regarding his state and Marotta answered: "You, brother, are in a happy condition and you shall soon come to us. But to you is reserved a glory greater than ours. Just preserve what you have." Saint Thomas asked for news of two deceased brothers: Landulfo, who Marotta said was in Purgatory and Reginaldo, who she revealed to be in Paradise.

Guglielmo Tocco also related another vision experienced by Saint Thomas: "Another and more marvelous one was revealed to Master Thomas, that was not simply like a dream, instead it was physical and real. As he was praying in the church of the friary of Naples, there appeared to him his fellow friar and Master of Theology Romano of Rome (Romano Rossi Orsini, nephew of

Pope Nicholas III). Thomas told the one who appeared to him: *Welcome! When did you arrive here?* The man answered: 'I have departed from earthly life. As a result of your merits it was granted me to appear to you.' Then Saint Thomas recovered from the astonishment of that sudden apparition which had overwhelmed him and answered: *If it pleases God, then I implore you to respond to my question: how is it going with me? Are my works pleasing to God?* Romano answered: 'You are in a good position and your works are pleasing to God!' The angelic doctor then asked: *And how is it going with you?*

And the man answered: 'I am in Eternal Life, but I was for fifteen days in Purgatory, due to negligence, of which I was guilty regarding a will, that the Bishop of Paris had ordered me to draft as soon as possible; but I delayed due to negligence its' draft.' Saint Thomas still asked him: *How it is going with that matter which we have often discussed between us, that is if the mastery of knowledge which is acquired down here, remains over there in the Fatherland?* And the man answered: 'Brother Thomas, I see God, and you must not search anything else in regard to this matter!' And then Thomas: *How do you see God? Tell me whether you see Him without an interposed image or by likeness?* And he answered: 'Like we have heard, thus we see in the city of the Lord of hosts!' Immediately afterwards he disappeared. But Thomas was touched by such a marvelous and unusual apparition and content for such reassuring responses."



Saint Teresa of Ávila

Part 1

1515-1582

PURGATORY

Saint Teresa of Ávila, the great Spanish mystic and reformer of the Carmelites, had numerous visions of the Souls of Purgatory, as she recounted in her *Autobiography*. “In my Monastery of the Visitation in Ávila lived a nun, who was dead for about a day and a half and had been a creature full of the love of God and a true servant of the Lord. While a sister was reading in the choir a lesson of the Office of the Dead that was recited for the deceased nun, I was near her to recite the short verse after the lesson together with her. During the lesson I saw what seemed to me the soul of the deceased as if rising from the deep and flying towards Heaven.

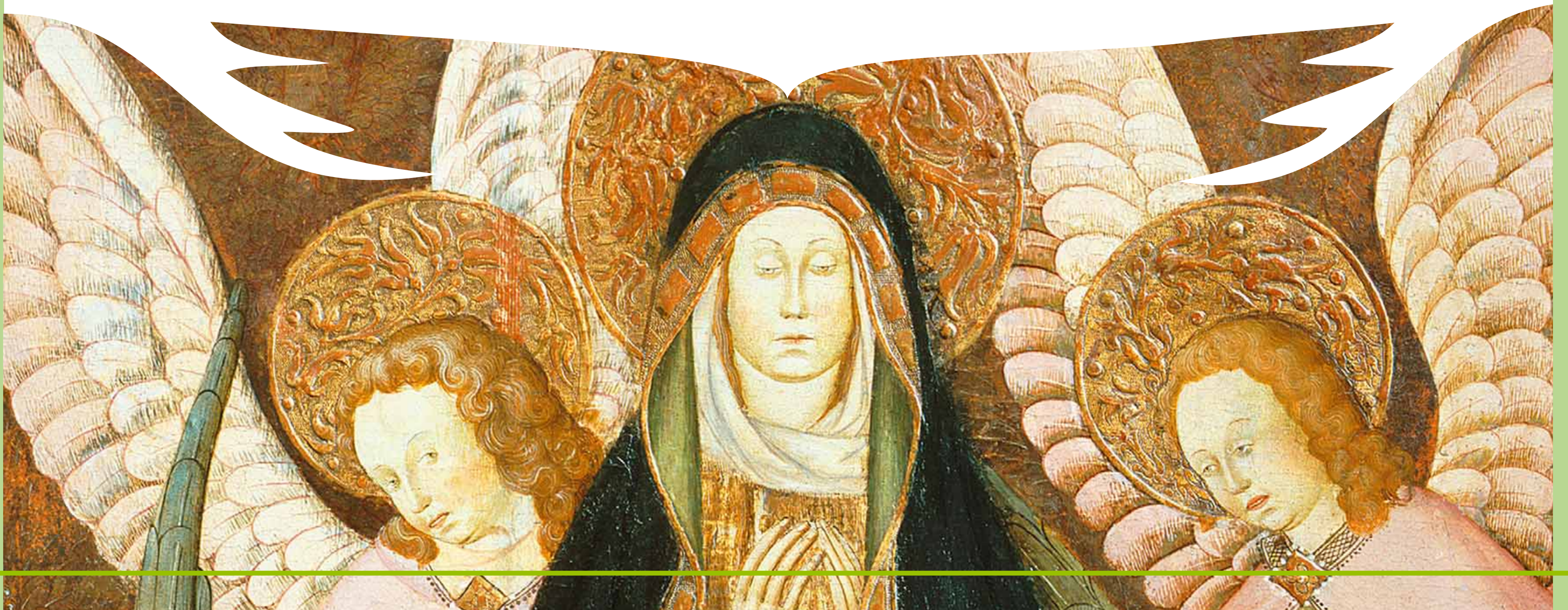
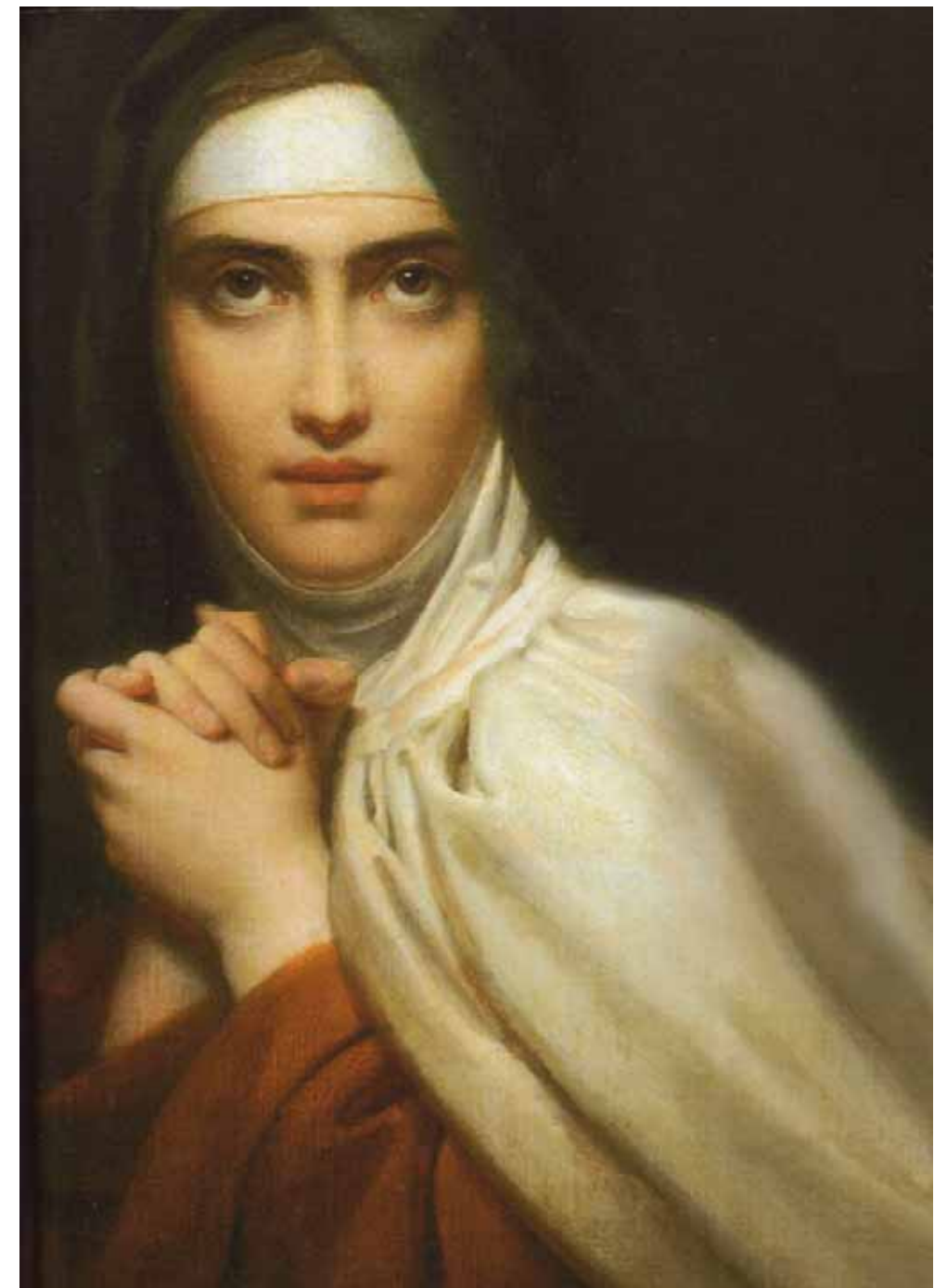
“One day I was in the church of a Jesuit college and there I experienced strong physical and spiritual pains, which still affect me often. I suffered so much that I could not even collect a thought. A brother of this college had died the previous night, and I entrusted him to God as best as I could and later participated in the Holy Mass that a Father of the Society of Jesus celebrated for him. During the Sacred Celebration I was immersed in profound meditation in which I saw the soul of the deceased man accompanied by the Lord ascending towards Heaven, completely surrounded by glory. I considered a truly extraordinary grace the fact that the Lord Himself in His infinite Majesty would lead him to Heaven.

“Another brother of our Order, Father Didaco of Saint Matthias (who had been for quite a long time confessor at the Monastery of the Visitation in

Ávila), a zealous servant of God was very ill in bed. At that time while I was assisting at the Holy Mass I fell again in profound meditation, during which I saw this priest that died and without touching Purgatory he rose directly towards Heaven. Later I learned that he died indeed at the hour when I had the vision.

“I was taken by surprise that he had not had to minimally touch Purgatory. However, it was explained to me later, that he had been a religious very faithful to his vows, for that he benefited from the Sabbatine privilege, thus he had no need of Purgatory. I don't know why I was told this but I think that in this way I was meant to understand that it is not the wearing of the habit that fulfills the religious man and that just being a religious is not enough to obtain the benefit which is promised to him by his religious condition which is a state of higher perfection.”

Saint Teresa of Jesus was born in Ávila (Spain) on March 28, 1515 from a noble and religious family. At the age of 21 she became a Carmelite of the Monastery of the Incarnation in that city. She promoted and brought to completion, through conflicts and suffering, the Reform of the Order giving birth to the Discalced Carmelites. On August 24, 1562 she founded in Ávila her first monastery, dedicated to Saint Joseph. In 1568 the Teresian Reform was extended also to the Fathers, after the encounter of the Saint with Saint John of the Cross. Teresa died in Alba de Tormes on October 15, 1582.



Saint Teresa of Ávila

Part 2

1515-1582

PURGATORY

In her *Autobiography* we find also written: “One day I was told that one of the Fathers died; he had once been our provincial, but at the time of his death he was at the head of another Province.

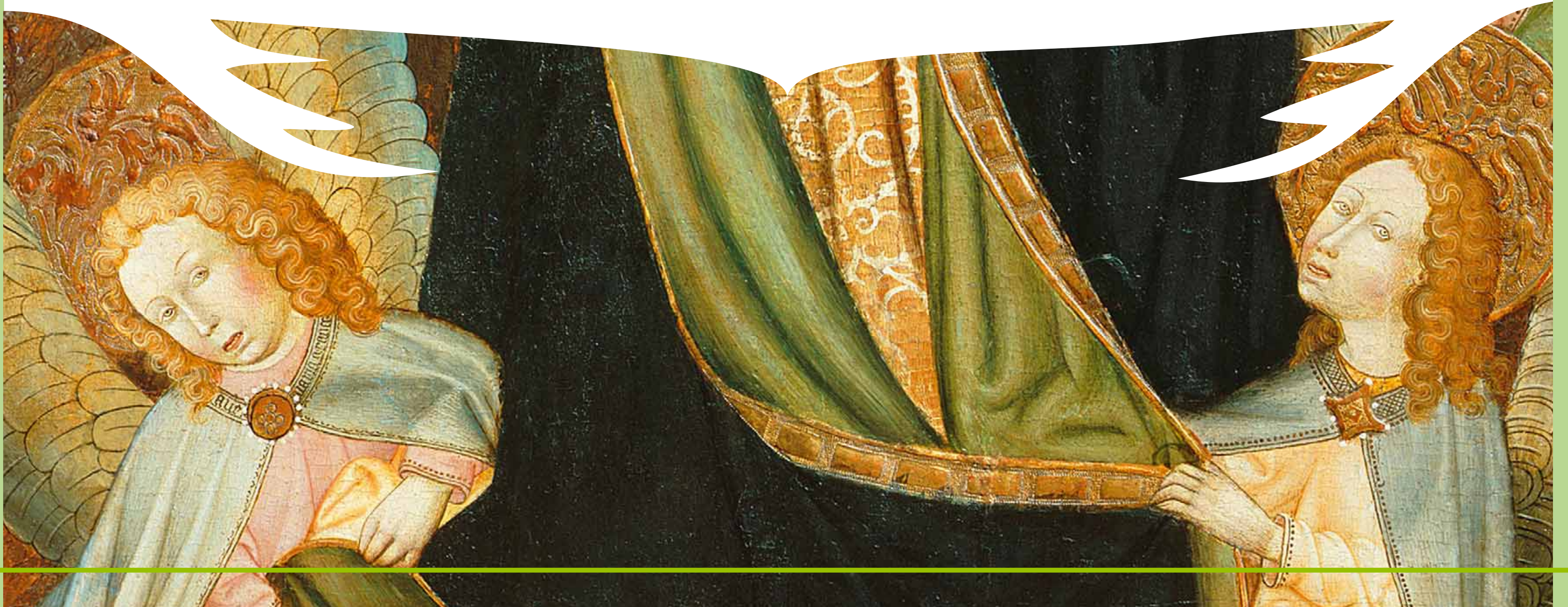
“I had earlier much correspondence with him and I felt obliged towards him for the many kind favors he had done for me and I felt it my duty to thank him. The news of his death grieved me very much; because notwithstanding he had been a very virtuous man, I was yet concerned for his eternal beatitude.

“He had been in fact Superior of the Order for twenty years and I am always fearful because I regard very risky the position of a Superior and his responsibility for the care of souls. Therefore filled with concern I went to a chapel and I offered for him all the good that I was able to do in my life; and since this seemed to me too little, I prayed the Lord to make up with His merits all that was still lacking for this soul, to be liberated from Purgatory. As I prayed to God with the greatest possible devotion and I implored the Lord, it seemed to me like the deceased was coming to my right side rising from the depths of the earth; and I saw with immense joy how he flew towards Heaven!

“When he died he was already in very advanced age, but now he seemed a man of thirty, indeed even younger and

his face was radiant. This vision soon passed, but I felt so consoled that never again the death of this priest could sadden me, although many would grieve him, because he had been much loved indeed in his life! The joy that my soul experienced was so great that I remained completely serene in regard to this death, and I could not have the slightest doubt about the reality of this vision, indeed I was certain and it was evident to me that there had not been the slightest deception or illusion. Fourteen days had passed since the death of this priest. Nevertheless I did not cease to entrust him to the Lord and I encouraged others to do the same; however I could not do it with as much zeal as if I did not have that vision; since God permits me to see such an event of a soul then later my desire to entrust him to His Majesty is to me as spontaneous as if I would want to give alms to a rich man.

“Since this monk had died in a place very far from us, then only later I learned what kind of end of life the Lord had granted him. It was so edifying that all those present were amazed at his full consciousness at the point of death, for his tears and his great humility.”



Saint Vincent Ferrer

1350 - 1419

PURGATORY

Saint Vincent Ferrer was born in Valencia, Spain on January 23, 1350. On February 3, 1367 he entered among the Dominicans of the city and began to study logic and philosophy. He studied also the Bible and Hebrew. He commented on the *Summa Teologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas and completed his advanced studies first in Lleida and then at Toulouse. In 1384 he was named prior of the friary of Valencia and a few years later began to preach. On November 22, 1399 Vincent had a vision in which he was asked to announce the Gospel to all of humanity. His preaching stirred consciences and very numerous were the conversions that he fostered. Starting from the Scriptures and giving examples from the lives of the Saints he succeeded in motivating the crowds to recognize in Christ the only hope for humanity. He traveled through Spain, France, and northern Italy in order to bring to all the good news of the Kingdom of God and to put an end to the dissent and divisions that plagued the Church. He was involved above all in the settlement of the Western Schism, at first by his attempt at mediation between Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, and then he tried to convince Benedict to renounce the papacy and due to his refusal, Vincent tried to take away from him the obedience of Spain. The opportunity came to him in 1412 when, after Martin I of Aragon died

without heirs, Vincent was among the judges in charge of the establishment of the succession to the throne (Compromise of Caspe). The throne was assigned to the candidate supported by Vincent, Ferdinand I of Aragon (the "Just"), who at the Council of Constance fought to end the schism and recognized as legitimate the election of Martin V Colonna, that put to rest every demand of Benedict XIII.

Vincent tried to convert the Cathars and Waldensians and to cease the Hundred Years War. Some faithful, called Flagellants, began to follow him. Vincent gave them some rules of life from which arose some confraternities. He died on April 5, 1419 in Vannes, Brittany, while he was in that region preaching. Callixtus III canonized him in 1458.

Vincent imposed upon himself penances and prayed diligently for the conversion of sinners, but also for the liberation of the Souls of Purgatory. The Saint had a sister named Francesca, who in life had been a bit too taken by worldly things. Nevertheless she was saved thanks to her repentance and the confession she made at the moment of death. A few days later she appeared to her brother as he was celebrating Mass, completely surrounded by flames and immersed in terrible sufferings. She told



him that she had been condemned to those punishments until the Day of Judgment, but that she could be liberated completely from them if he would celebrate the thirty Masses of Saint Gregory in supplication for her soul. Saint Vincent then did what was requested of him and began the celebration of the Gregorian Masses. On the last day his sister appeared to him surrounded by Angels as she was ascending to Heaven.



Saint Veronica Giuliani

Part 1

1660 - 1727

PURGATORY

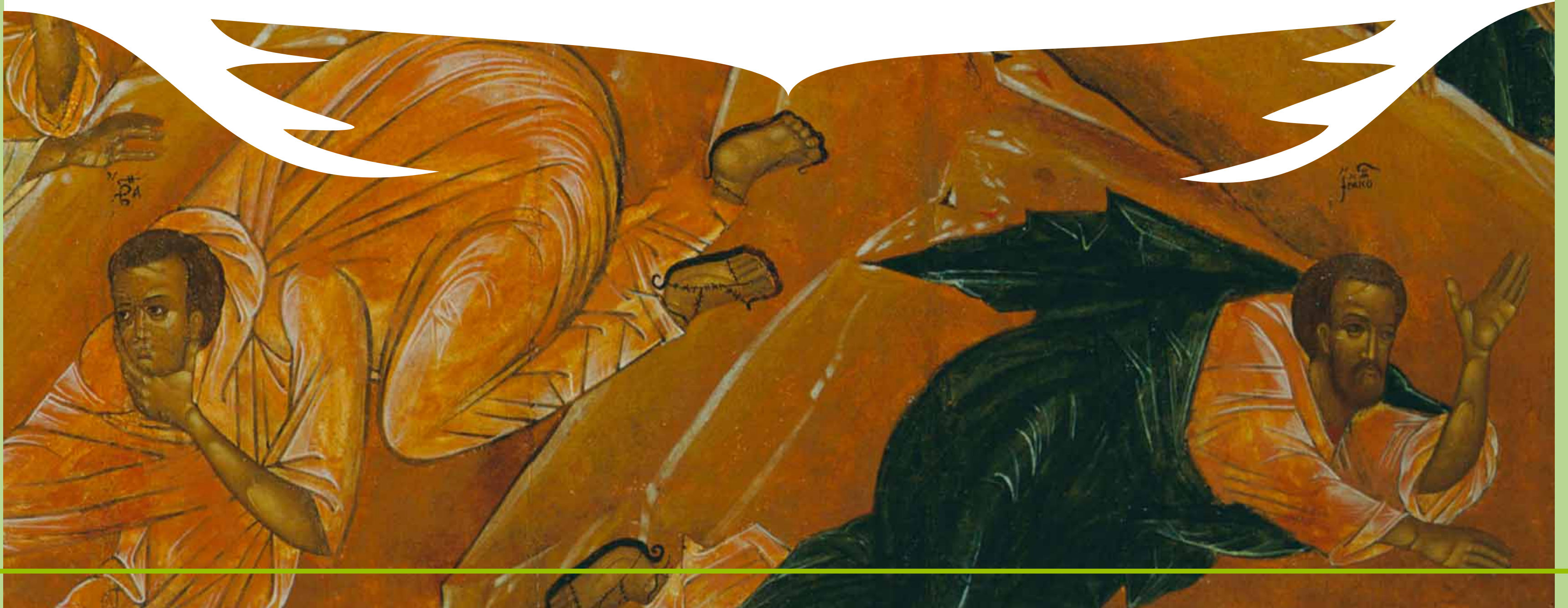
Saint Veronica Giuliani was born at Mercatello sul Maturo near Urbino in 1660. In 1677 she entered among the Capuchin Poor Clares of Città di Castello. She became abbess of the community but had to face a great number of trials for her mystic experiences. She had the stigmata and a wound on the heart that was verified by doctors at her death. She guided the community on the way of perfection and was a model for all the sisters. She had several times the vision of Purgatory and many souls were liberated through her prayer. She died on Good Friday of 1727, after thirty-three days of sickness. She was canonized in 1829. In obedience, she wrote her mystical experiences in a Diary.

Here we report two of these mystic experiences taken from her *Diary*. The first is of September 10, 1700: "A few days after the death of Fr. Vitale, one morning, after receiving Communion, suddenly I thought I saw an arm with the sleeve of a Franciscan Friar there before me and I heard a voice saying to me: *Help! Help!* Really it seemed to me the voice of Fr. Vitale when he was alive, and it immediately disappeared. I did not pay much attention; I only kept a definite concern to do some good for this soul.

"A little later, one night in a dream, I thought I saw two souls of Purgatory. One seemed to me the Sister who died a short time ago, and the other one I didn't recognize. The soul approached

me, and told me: Do you know me? I feared and trembled; but I took courage and said: *I do not know you. It seems that you are Fr. Vitale, but I don't know whether it's true.* He answered: *I am,* and took me by an arm. At that time I felt a great pain as if my arm was being cut; and I also felt so much ice cold, that it seemed unbearable. And I thought I heard him saying: *Now is my time of need;* and I recognized very well that it was Fr. Vitale. But he had a definite clear and joyful voice, not like that morning that I heard it after Communion. Immediately he squeezed my arm with his hand and said: *May the agreements be maintained.* At this point I awakened from sleep and, while opening my eyes, I saw something like a shadow departing the cell. On my arm remained a great pain; and warmth did not return until late evening. All day I was as if numb."

The other story is of August 15, 1701: "It seemed to me that the Eternal Judge gave me His blessing with that cross he was holding in His Hand; and I learned that, for the merits of His Most Holy Passion and for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, I had obtained grace from Him. He confirmed me as mediator between Him and sinners, and also mediator and helper for the poor souls of Purgatory. These were the two offices that I had to exercise for all the remainder of my life; and I had the impression that it will be short."



Saint Veronica Giuliani

Part 2

1660-1727

PURGATORY

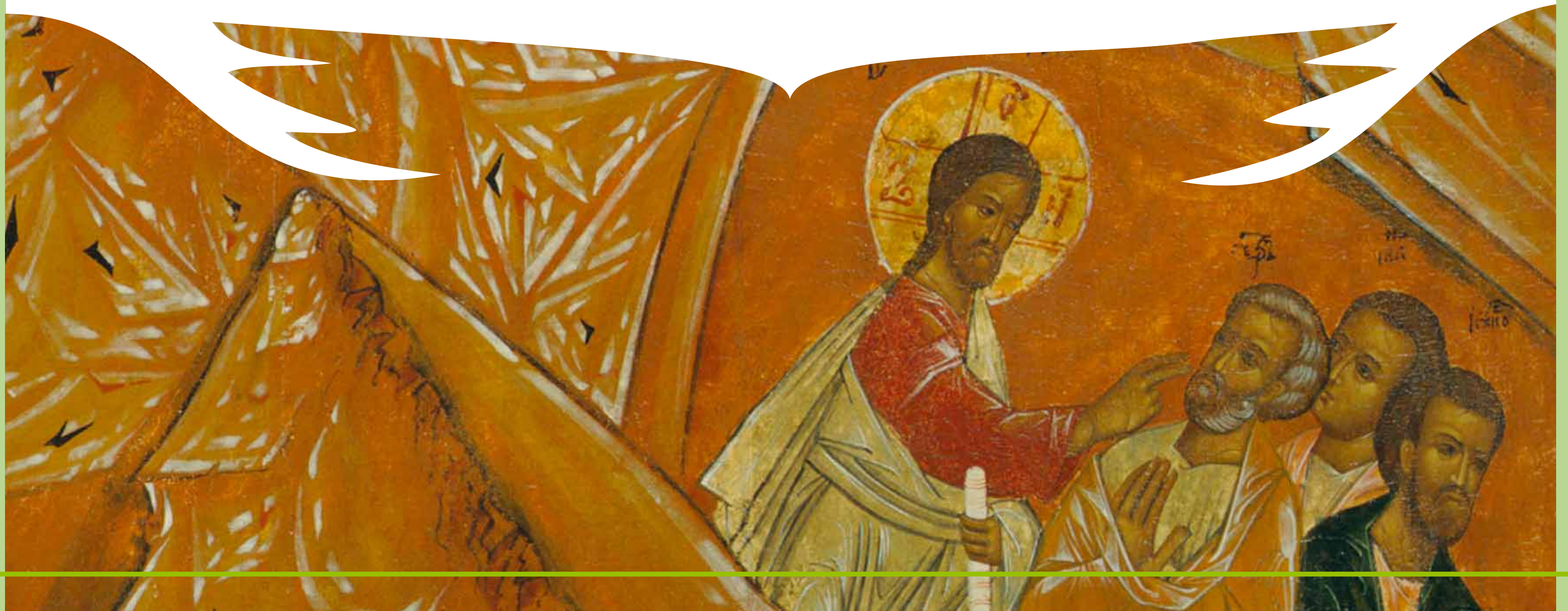
Still in her *Diary* we find this other episode: “On that said morning, after having received Communion, it seemed to me that God made me understand that the mentioned soul was in Purgatory and with great suffering. Immediately a very dark and frightful place was shown to me; I understood that the soul was there. I came back to my senses with great fear and I thought that it was Hell, not Purgatory. I helped myself with prayer as much as I could.

In another rapture that place was again shown to me and I thought to see, in the midst, something like a frightening animal. It lasted for just a short time; and then it disappeared completely. I understood that it was the same soul, shown to me in that form. I came back to my senses with such a great fear and trembling, that it lasted me for a long time. There remained in me a great compassion for the souls of Purgatory. I did not recount all I had seen; I doubted that it was something diabolic.

The next night, I had that vision for two or three times; and it seemed to me that the mentioned soul was telling me: ‘These are not diabolical things; it is true that I suffer; and, if you would perceive my suffering, you would die of pain.’ It seemed to me that the voice came out from that place; I saw something like a shadow in flames disappear there; and I

came back to my senses. For several days I had the same vision; and it was always confirmed to me that it was the same soul.

One night, among others, that place was shown to me with more clarity. It was represented to me as such a terrible and very tormenting place, that I thought it was Hell. I cannot explain it in writing; it was something that brought me great fear and fright. I thought I saw various kinds of tormenting manners; and they were tormenting many souls, all at the same time. I seemed to see, floating on air, many of them attached to something, but I didn't understand what it was. One, among the others, had more pain; and this one I thought was the mentioned soul. God made me realize that He wanted me to understand completely the torments the soul suffered and why she suffered them; that would be a grace for me because I had to amend many things; also it would serve to instruct the others; and I had to recount everything to my confessor so that he would benefit himself or the souls that he has under his direction. These things were confirmed to me at various times, in prayer along with showing me that place and the torments there. All this made me offer prayers to God with great care for all the souls of Purgatory, especially for this one, in case she still needed help.”



Teresa Neumann

1898 - 1962

PURGATORY

During her life, the famous German stigmatist and mystic Teresa Neumann (1898 - 1962) had experiences with the Souls of Purgatory.

The connections with the expiating Church were not limited only to visions of personal punishments; Teresa also saw some souls appearing who asked for help. In this way once she saw the Pastor of her childhood, Ebel, who said to her: "Pray also for me: I baptized you, I gave you First Communion. If I had punished you thinking you were inattentive, it is not my fault; I did not know yet that your behavior was caused by an extraordinary vision."

Teresa prayed much for him and soon had the joy of seeing him transfigured. In regard to this apparition, she recounted for the first time to Father Naber that during her First Communion she saw the Savior approaching her. This occurrence so disturbed her, that she behaved in such a strange manner, that she deserved the scolding of Father Ebel, who punished her in front of all the other children.

Many were the episodes in which the expiating Souls asked her to intercede for their liberation and subsequently appeared to thank her.

It often involved people who had been already dead for a long time and whom Teresa had never known. As a girl she called the souls of the deceased begging kittens. On November 2, 1928, Teresa was completely exhausted; she felt abandoned and alone. Twice a day,

morning and evening, it was permitted to her to visit Purgatory and observe the suffering souls. They appeared to her like luminous figures, but they were not yet pure. Even there she recognized many acquaintances, some of them asked her for help. On November 9, 1928 she had an ecstasy of the Passion of Good Friday and suffered pains for the liberation of a soul in Purgatory who, after being liberated spoke to her and rose to Heaven before her. On November 23, 1928 she had the usual ecstasy of the Passion of Good Friday. On that day Teresa was able to liberate from Purgatory the soul of the last Catholic Pastor of Arzberg, before Protestantism was introduced permanently. He said that he had to suffer for such a long time in Purgatory because of his tendency to drink and his carelessness in celebrating the Mass. Now however she could liberate him because he had maintained a childlike heart. The night after the Feast of Corpus Domini of 1931 her godmother Forster, who had died a short time before, appeared to her, saying that she felt completely abandoned, thus Jesus permitted her to come to Teresa, so that Teresa would remember the promise she made to pray for her and help her. Teresa noticed that in the apparition her godmother didn't have the sullen look that she had in life, but she seemed much more calm and serene, even if she was only a little luminous.



Venerable Gaspar de Oliden

† 1740

PURGATORY

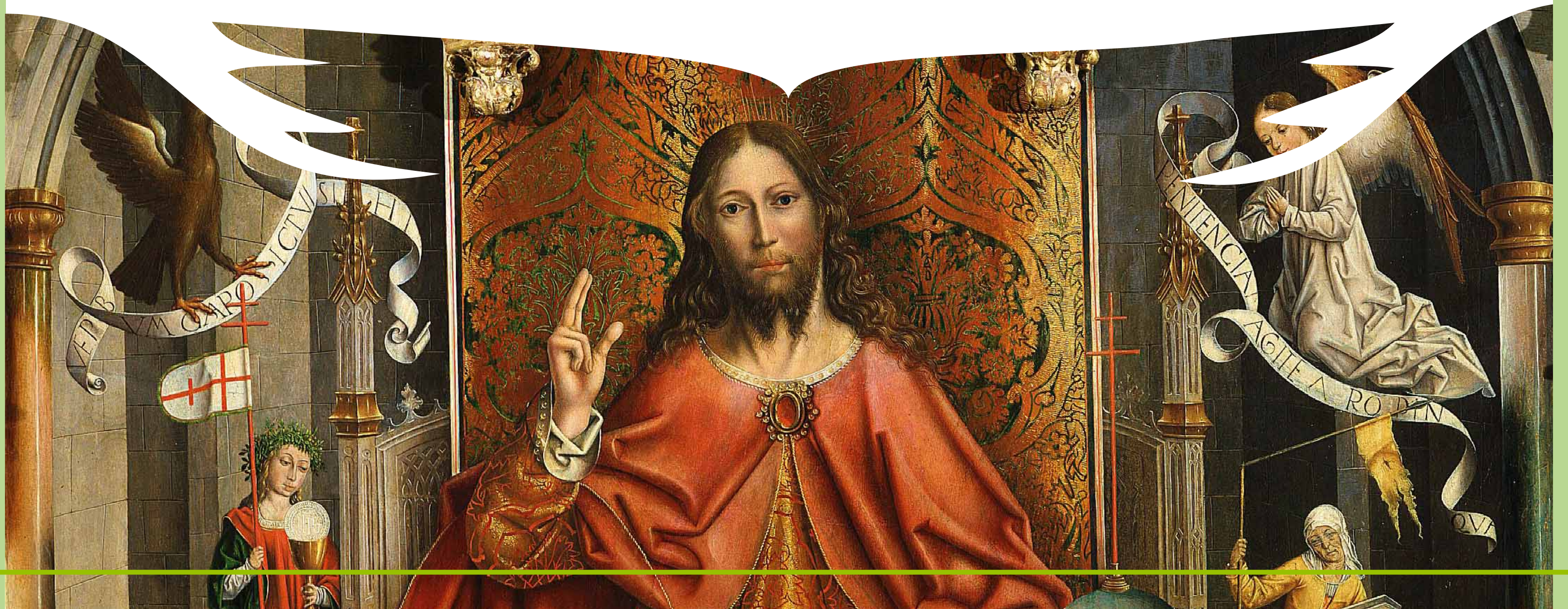
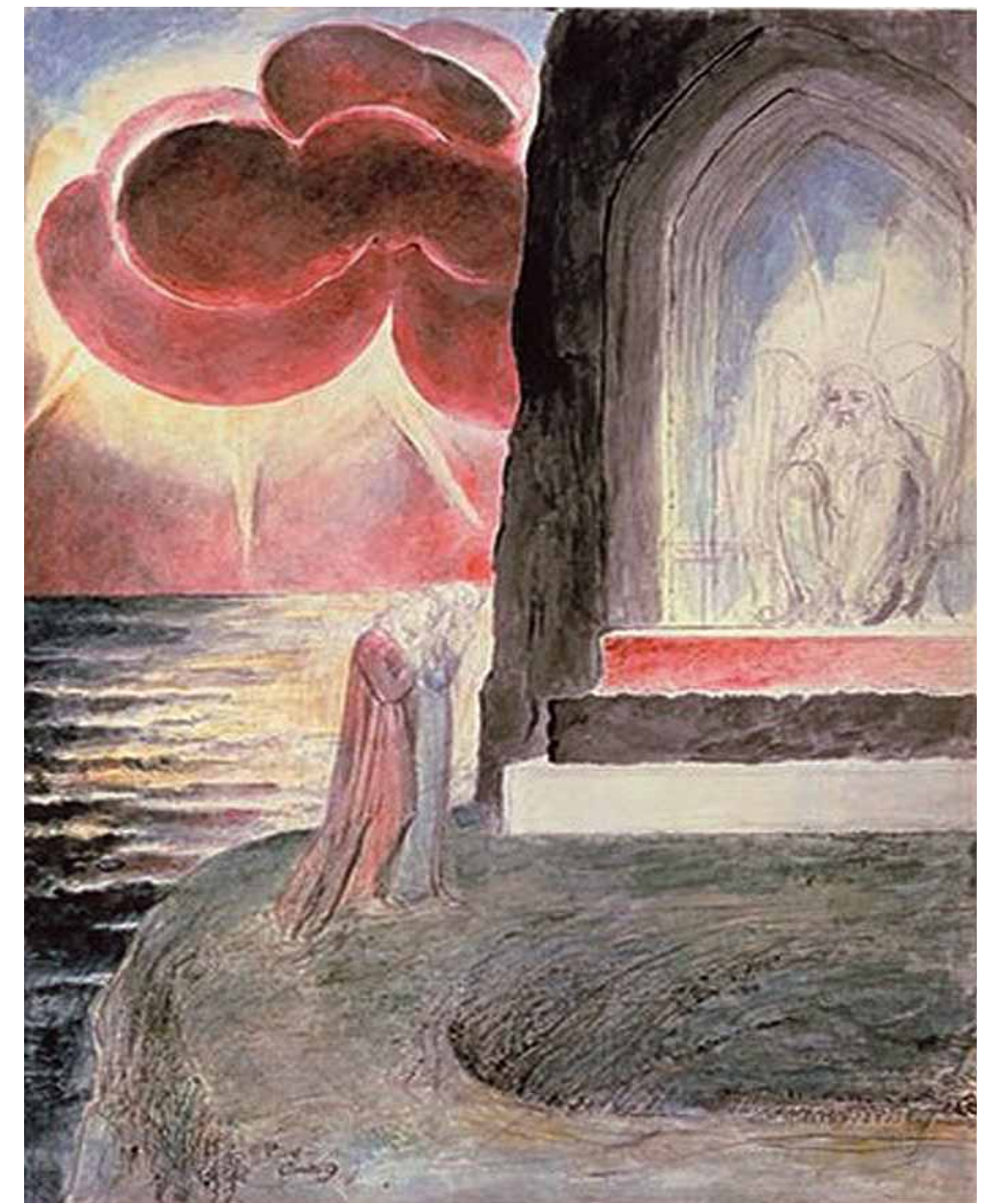
Father Gaspar de Oliden was born in Elgoibar in Basque Country. Upon entering among the Theatine religious order, he distinguished himself in erudition and virtue. On January 6, 1683 he professed his vows in Madrid. He taught at the University of Salamanca, where he also devoted himself to spiritual direction. He refused the episcopacy of Gerona that Emperor Charles VI had offered him at Barcelona. After moving to Italy, he had the opportunity to preach many times in the presence of Benedict XIII.

Above all he promoted the propagation of “the heroic act of charity” by which one commits himself to offer all the merits of his personal actions, prayers, and good works, for the benefit of the Souls of Purgatory and not only the ones he received when alive, but also the ones offered to him after death.

Through seminars and speeches, Gaspar de Oliden continuously exhorted the faithful to apply this “heroic act”. Benedict XIII often participated in these seminars and he loved to call Gaspar Oliden “The advocate of the poor souls”. On December 11, 1788 the Pope granted

many indulgences for this act, whereas Benedict XIII had already approved it explicitly, remembering the effort of Gaspar Oliden. Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII confirmed it with several decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences. A major collaborator and promoter of this “heroic act” was Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori. On January 11, 1932 the Holy See granted a plenary indulgence applicable only to the souls of Purgatory to all who, after having received the Sacraments, would visit a church and pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

Fr. Gaspar de Oliden was nominated in 1725 as the first superior of the new Theatine Monastery of Saint Cajetan in Palma de Mallorca. Here too he strived very much for the propagation of the “heroic act” of charity in favor of the poor souls, so much that Bishop Juan Fernandez Zapata of Mallorca, only after two years was able to write to Benedict XIII saying that Fr. Gaspar de Oliden had become also at Mallorca a “true Advocate of the Poor Souls”. At Mallorca, Fr. Gaspar also wrote his valuable book “Dialogue on Purgatory”. He died in 1740.



Venerable Mary of Blessed Amedeo

1610 - 1670

PURGATORY

The Venerable Mary of Blessed Amadeus was born in Biella (Italy) in 1610. In October of 1627 she donned the habit of the Capuchin Poor Clares in Turin. She had many mystical experiences that by order of her confessor were written in her “Memoirs,” of which we will report a vision of Purgatory:

“It had seemed to me that the Virgin Mary descended into Purgatory with such splendor, majesty, and sentiments of piety, that she acted as though she was intent on nothing other than the liberation of those souls, and as the administrator of the treasures of her blessed Son she lavishly dispensed them for the satisfaction of the debts of those purging souls. From Heaven it seemed to me to see the Lord quite pleased in seeing His Most Holy Mother so helpful in the liberating of those souls and by way of the Angels having them be guided into Heaven, who, upon arriving there were all present at the throne of the Most Holy Trinity and from those divine persons, with ineffable pleasure received, and looking with particular affection at the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus, it seemed to me that they said to the Father: ‘Oh, Father, these are those, for which all of us here were brought to such felicity.’ The Eternal Father looking always at them, it seemed

to me more in a certain way of intending, exalted that Most Holy Will, with great pride in His divinity. The splendor then, which the Virgin brought into Purgatory, was just as it seemed in Paradise, and from that splendor, even if they were not all liberated, they all however received great aid and comfort. Except that in one part of Purgatory, into which the Virgin did not go, and neither did her splendor penetrate there, for which they did not have a part of those splendors of Paradise which emanated from the Virgin. It was intended for many people of diverse states to be in that place, those who, by divine decree, were deprived of all those assistances, among which there were several princes and prelates, who in their governments had oppressed their peoples. Even if they had confessed them, they did not however satisfy for all those unjust oppressions all the many damages they caused to souls and to bodies. The prelates were then condemned to those pains without being able to enjoy any aid or splendor from the Virgin, and that was because they did not administrate the light of truth to their subjects, for which by their negligence many souls were lost, those who, if they had done the duty of good pastors, would have been saved. And many other sins, which



were committed while working that same assignment, of which, because they had been confessed, they were forgiven for the sins, but not the punishment, and if they were not confessed, they too would have been damned. In this place there were also many religious favored by God in this life, who for not having reciprocated the divine assistances, and for not executing true reasons, which were not given by God merely for one’s health, but also for walking towards a greater perfection and holiness. They made themselves unworthy of having, in this place of many punishments and torments, those aids of many goods, which from the whole Church are made.”



Venerable Ursula Benincasa

1547 - 1618

PURGATORY

Ursula Benincasa was born in Naples (Italy) on the 7th of August 1547. Ever since infancy she lived always devoted to prayer and surrendered to God, despite sickness and poverty. She had numerous ecstasies and visions, and given the fact that through her, the Lord healed the faithful, a crowd was always milling around her door. To flee from the clamor, in 1579 she took refuge at the fortress of St. Elmo, on the hill of Vomero, choosing the hermetic life. She had asked to be able to join the Capuchin Poor Clares of the monastery of Saint Mary of Jerusalem, founded by the Blessed Maria Lorenza Longo, but she was not welcomed. In 1582, following an ecstasy received on the 12th of March, she departed for Rome to meet Pope Gregory XIII, because she had a message to transmit to him on behalf of the divine, so that he would begin the reform of the Church.

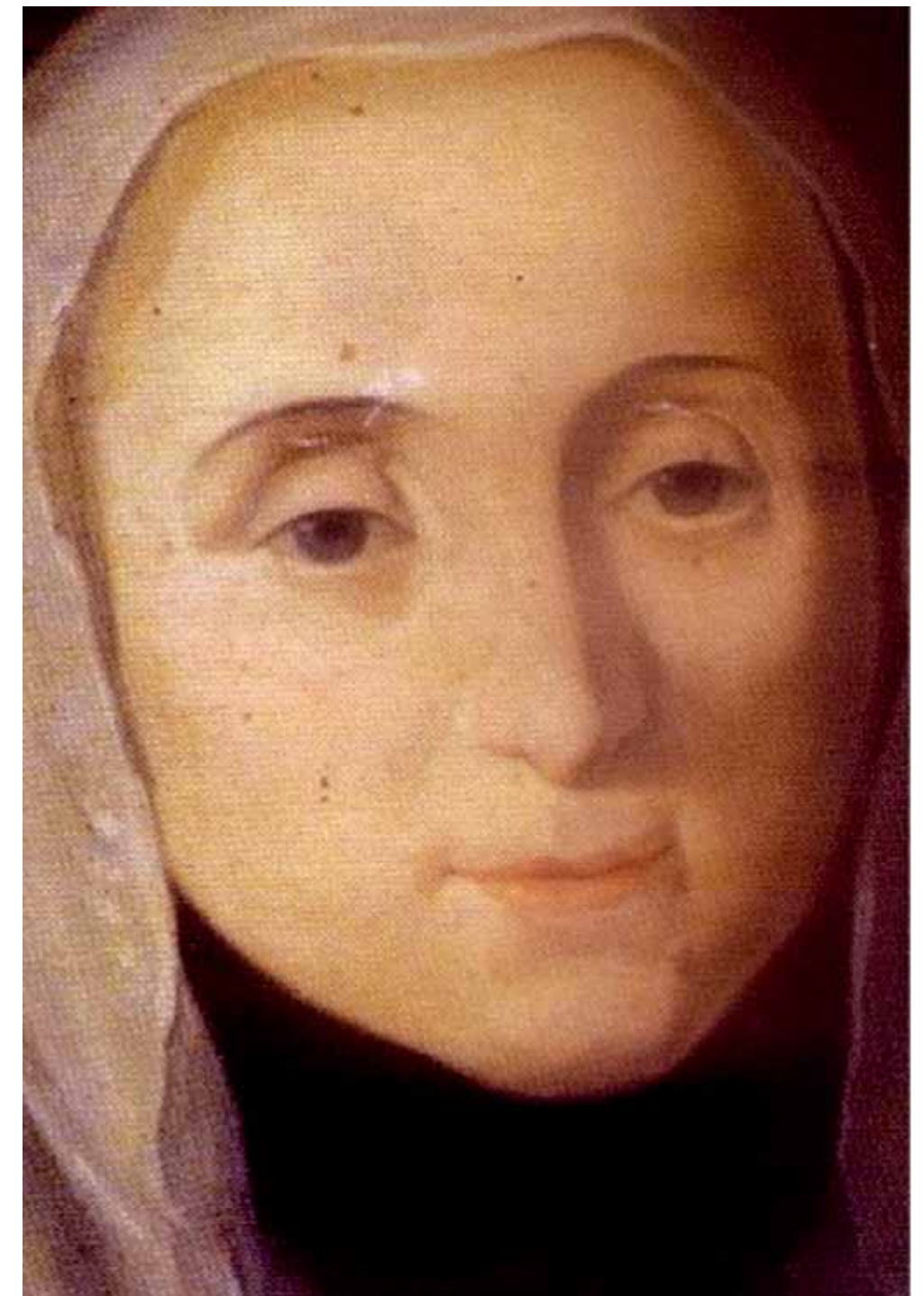
After having listened to her, the Pope had her examined by a commission of nine theologians; amongst them was Saint Philip Neri, to whom she was then also entrusted.

Ursula returned to Naples and she retired on the mount of Saint Elmo, where in 1583 she founded the Congregation of the Theatine Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, religious nuns with simple vows, to which there would also be

attached a cloistered branch, called the Hermitage, whose rules were approved after her death, by Gregory XV in 1623. In her intentions, the Hermitesses of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, cloistered contemplative nuns, needed to sustain, with the power of prayer, the apostolic work of the Oblates.

In 1587 she received as a gift from Cornelia Pignatelli, duchess of Saint Agatha, the first nucleus of construction and the surrounding terrain, so that Ursula could retire into a convent together with her sister Christina and two nieces, to whom other girls were added soon afterward. Ursula died in the concept of sanctity on the 20th of October of 1618. On the 7th of August 1793, Pius VI proclaimed the heroicness of her virtues and declared her Venerable.

Before dying, Ursula had asked that her religious would be put under the governance and spiritual direction of the Regular Theatine Clergy, but being contrary to their establishment, the Fathers refused the proposal. In 1633, however, with the authorization of Urban VIII, the Oblates and the Hermitesses officially became under the jurisdiction of the Theatines, from whom they adopted the name. She had great devotion for the Souls in Purgatory and at times took upon herself their penalties. She tells of an episode which occurred while she was



assisting her sister Christina who was dying. The Venerable was aware that her sister had a terrible fear of Purgatory. To comfort her and to liberate her from that anguish, Ursula begged God that should he wish to condemn the dying girl to the pains of Purgatory to instead let her suffer in her place. The Lord accepted her prayer and Christina soon became liberated from the torment and fear, dying serenely. Ursula, instead, was immediately taken by great pains which did not abandon her until her death.

