

PETER OF THE MOTHER OF GOD (d. 1643)
Servant of God, martyr (D)

The first report on his martyrdom (1647) calls Peter of the Mother of God «a good religious, ever industrious, prudent and ingenious» (*Relatio*, p. 162). From another source we know that Peter, accepted into the Order as a lay brother in 1626, was «an example of religious virtues, an outstanding champion of regular observance, a friend of prayer and of mortification» (Philip, *Decor Carmeli*, 142).

In the Puritan persecution of 1642 Peter was captured among others and, because he was a religious, was immediately condemned to death. His health was so shaken by this judgment that the harshness of the prison brought on violent fevers and forced him to remain for a short time on a pallet that was obtained for him by the charity of some good persons. On March 25, 1643, on receiving the announcement of his coming execution, he exclaimed: «What a joyful message! Behold the servant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word!» And he began to repeat the Hail Mary, forcing himself to leave his pallet and encouraging himself with these words: «A person should not go to heaven from a bed, but from a cross, like Jesus. My Savior did not go there from a bed, but from a cross» (*Relatio*, p. 161). He could not walk by himself, but had to be dragged to the scaffold erected in the center of Dublin. Once there, he knelt, kissed the ground, the scaffold, the stairway and the rope that was to take away his life, and continued to invoke Jesus and Our Lady.

To the Protestant minister who urged him to abjure his faith and to cease invoking Mary, who, according to the minister, certainly could not hear him, Peter replied in a loud voice: «I profess the Catholic faith which the holy Roman Church teaches. I was brought up in it from my childhood, and I am ready to die for it. I do not believe what you say, namely, that Our Lady does not hear me. Leave me, and let me die in peace!» And he began to pray his *Hail Marys* once more. Then, because the minister insisted with Brother Peter and tried to prove to him that the invocation of the saints was against Scripture, Peter cut him short: «I don't understand what you are saying, but I do know that you are asserting a heresy. In fact, I believe in the communion of saints... I do not want to debate. But since you dare to speak sacrilegiously about the Mother of God, whose Annunciation we celebrate today, I want to ask if you have ever read the canticle of the Virgin, the *Magnificat*.» And, at the affirmative reply of the Protestant minister, who added, «And with that?» Peter continued, «Haven't you read that the Holy Spirit, through her mouth, has said that all people will call her blessed? Why, then, do you contradict Scripture and do not bless the Virgin?... Go away, and let me die in peace » And he intoned the *Magnificat* in a loud voice (*Relatio*, pp. 161-2). Then, standing up with difficulty, but with a serene countenance, he was made to mount the steps and was hanged as he proclaimed that he accepted the torture in expiation of his sins and for the Catholic faith.

The Order immediately took steps to obtain the recognition of the martyrdom of Peter, as well as that of his Brothers in religion, Angelus of the Conception and Thomas Aquinas of St. Teresa /pp. 35, 331/. The acts of the general chapter of 1647 insist that his

beatification be obtained; but the politico-religious conditions of Ireland prevented the realization of this desire. The cause was then included in that of the Irish martyrs (1541-1713), and as such introduced in Rome on Feb. 13, 1915 (AAS, VII /1915/, pp. 125-28).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Ioannes a Matre Dei, *Relatio martyrtt prium religiosorum nostrorum Hybernorum* (about 1647), ed. in *Analecta O.C.D.*, VII (1932), pp. 152-162 (cited above: Relatio); Philippus a Trinitate, *Decor Carmeli*, III, Lyon 1665, pp. 141-142; Paulus a S. Ubaldo (1559-1670), *Brevis relatio adventus et -progressus nostrorum religiosorum in regno Hibemiae* in *Archivvm Hibernicum*, XXV (1962), pp. 136-163 (cf. p. 157, where he is called «Peter of St. Thomas»). Eusebius ab Omnibus Sanctis, *Enchiridion chrsm. Carm. Disc*, Rome 1737, pp. 214-217; *Positio super causae introd.: Dublinen., Beatific. seu decl. martyrii Servorum Dei Dermoti O'Hurley... et sociorum*, Rome 1914, 2 voll.; Francesco dell' Immac. Concez., *Verso la gloria*, Milan 1938 pp. 127-175.

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