

PETER THOMAS (ab. 1305-1366)
Saint, patriarch

Two qualified admirers of Peter Thomas wrote his Life almost on the morrow of his death: Philip of Mézières (d. 1405), chancellor of King Peter of Cyprus and spiritual son of the saint (ed. J. Smet, *The Life of St. Peter Thomas by Philippe de Mézières*, Rome, 1954), and the Franciscan John Carmesson, minister of the province of the Holy Land, who had delivered the funeral eulogy (ed. Daniel of the Virgin Mary, *The Life of St. Peter Thomas...*, Anvers, 1666, and in *Speculum Carmelitanum /Carmelite Mirror/, I, ib.*, 1680, pp. 165--225).

Peter Thomas was born about 1305 into a very poor family (his father, a farm head, was a serf) in southern Périgord, in «a village which is called Salimaso de Thomas, in the diocese of Sarlat» (Phil of M. ed. cit, p. 53, 2-3; see also in Badisimato de Thomas, Carmesson, ed. cit, p. 4), a locality which is not easily identifiable. It is thought to be today's Lebreil, a section of Salles-de-Belves, about forty kilometers to the southwest of Sarlat (Dordogne), a traditional center of devotion to the saint.

Upon the death of his brother, Peter Thomas, in order not to aggravate the family misery, left his parents and his younger sister while still a young man (Phil, of M., p. 54, 3). He went on to the nearby *Castrum vocatum Monpesier /fortified town called Monpesier/* (ib., p. 54, 5), that is, to the small town of Monpazier, forty-five kilometers from Bergerac. Here he attended school for about three years (Carmesson, p. 5), living on alms and teaching younger pupils. He led the same type of life at Agen «for many years, until the age of twenty» (Phil, of M., p. 54, 9-10), that is, until about 1325, and then returned to Monpazier (Carmesson, p. 6).

The prior Of the Carmelite convent of Lectoure took note of him and had him teach for a year in that school. Then the prior of Condom (Phil of M., p. 54, 18) or, more probably, that Of Bergerac (ib., p. 187, 18) brought him to his own convent and gave him the Carmelite habit. He made his profession of religious vows at Bergerac and taught there for two years. As a lector of logic at Agen, he studied philosophy there and, after another three years, was ordained a priest. He was helped in his dire poverty by the intervention of Our Lady, and went to teach logic in the Carmelite convent of Bordeaux for one year, then philosophy at the Carmelite house at Albi, and then again in Agen. After a stay of three years at Paris to further his studies, «he was made a lector at Cathurcii» (Phil. of M., p. 57, 1), that is, at Cahors, where, while preaching during a procession held to overcome a tremendous drought, he caused a «miraculous rain» to fall (ib., p. 57).

After another three years he returned to Paris in order to continue his four-years course and gain the baccalaureate in theology. On his return to his own province he was elected procurator general of his Order by the chapter of May 15, 1345, and was sent to the Roman curia, that is, to the pontifical court at Avignon. Despite the fact that physically he was not well-gifted (his Father General was ashamed to present him to the cardinals), he was noticed by his fellow-countryman, the cardinal of Périgord, Elias

Talleyrand, who had him named apostolic preacher. The cardinal also intervened to permit him, perhaps after the normal three years of his procuratorship (1345-48), to finish his studies at Paris and to be declared a master in sacred theology towards his third year (Phil. of M., p. 59, 10), rather than after the five years prescribed by the university. He returned to Avignon (1351?) and successfully resumed his office of apostolic preacher. At the death of Pope Clement VI, he accompanied the corpse to the Chaise-Dieu, preaching at all the twelve stops along the way (April, 1353).

From that time on the whole life of Peter Thomas was dedicated to the fulfillment of delicate missions entrusted to him by the Holy See, for peace among Christian princes, for the defense of the rights of the Church before the most powerful monarchs of the age, for the union of the Orthodox Byzantine--Slavs with the Roman Church, for the anti-Muslim crusade and the liberation of the Holy Land.

His first legation (Oct., 1353) regarded the normalization of relations between Venice and Genoa and between the pontifical court and that of Naples. With a letter of Innocent VI, destined for the Ligurian doge, John Valente (see Innocent VI, *Lettres secrètes et curiales*, ed. P. Gasnault-M.H. Laurent, I, 2, Paris, 1960, pp. 184-5, 192-3, 196, nn. 569, 584, 596), Peter Thomas travelled to Milan to solicit the intervention of the archbishop, Duke John Visconti, in the Venetian-Genoese quarrel (Smet, *Life*, pp. 189-92). He then proceeded to Naples, where the pope had to defend the interests of the daughters of Charles of Durazzo, nephew of Cardinal Talleyrand, before King Louis of Taranto (Phil. of M., p. 64; see Smet, pp. 192-3; and Innocent VI, *Lettres*, 1. c, pp. 191-3, n. 585).

In the following year, having been consecrated bishop of Patti and Lipari (Nov. 17, 1354), he took part, together with Bartholomew of Traù, in a pontifical mission to Serbia, whose sovereign, Stephen Dusan, had manifested desires of union (see Innocent VI, *Lettres*, ed. cit., II, Paris, 1962, pp. 206-14). After the mission had left Avignon in the second half of Jan., 1355, on its way to Venice, it renewed the appeal of the pope to Visconti at Milan, and at Pisa met the German emperor, Charles IV, with whom it was charged to treat in the name of the Holy See (ib., pp. 65, 194-5). During the crossing of the Adriatic the saint intervened to free the group from a Turkish attack and from a tempest (ib., pp. 66-7); the mission reached the Serbian court at the beginning of March, 1355. Although Peter Thomas endeavored to reconcile «many metropolitan and other churches» (p. 70, 1-2) with the Roman See, he failed in his praiseworthy attempt, one reason being the death of Dusan (Dec. 20, 1355). On the return journey to the curia (in the spring of 1356), the nuncio dealt with Louis d'Anjou, king of Hungary, at Buda. (Phil. of M., pp. 67-70; Smet, pp. 195-6).

Peter Thomas had hardly returned to Avignon when Innocent VI entrusted him (July-Aug., 1356) with a complicated legation, in the company of the Dominican William Conti, bishop of Sizeboiu. This legation aimed at resolving the Venetian-Hungarian conflict and at activating the politico-religious union proposed by the Byzantine emperor, John V Paleologus. Bearing a copious correspondence (A. L. Tautu, *Acta Innocentii PP. VI*, Rome, 1961, pp. 144-5, 151-76), the embassy reached Venice on Sept.

20, 1356, and Zagreb eight days later. Here it discussed with Louis Of Hungary the plan of leading a crusade against the sucesor of Dusan, Stephen Uros of Serbia. Peter Thomas, having returned to Venice on Nov. 10, was unable to conclude the peace between Venice and Hungary (Phil. of M., pp. 70-4; Smet, pp. 197-201).

At Constantinople (not before April, 1357), the papal legate received the submission of the emperor, to whom he gave Eucharistic communion (Phil. of M., p. 75); moreover, he obtained adherence to Catholic unity of several Greek nobles, such as John Lascaris Calofero and Demetrius Angelus of Thessalonica (A. L. Tautau, *Acta Urbani PP V*, Rome, 1964, p. 124). Perhaps he also played a part in the religious crisis of Demetrius Cydon (Smet, pp. 204-5). Among the theological debates provoked by his presence in the capital, the one that took place in the Pantocrator monastery in Oct. of 1357 is to be mentioned (J. Darrouzes, *Conférence sur la primauté a Constantinople en 1357*, in *Revue des etudes byzantines*, XIX /1961/ Melanges Raymond Janin, pp. 76-109; see T. M. Giuliani, *Dibattito sul primato del Papa svoltosi a Constantinopoli nel 1357*, in *Oikoumenikon*, 1966, quad. 112, pp. 77-92).

On Nov. 7 following, John V Paleologus consigned to Peter Thomas a letter for the pope in which the emperor promised to take all the measures necessary for union (Phil, of M., pp. 76-9). The nuncio fell seriously ill on Cyprus, where he had gone to obtain the support of King Hugo in favor of Byzantium. He had scarcely recovered when he set out on a devout pilgrimage to Jerusalem, without being harassed by the Moslems. Subsequently he returned to Famagusta on Cyprus, where he was graced with some ecstasies (ib., pp. 80-2). It may be that on his return journey to the curia he stopped over in his own Sicilian diocese (see *Acta Innocentii PP. VI*, ed., cit. 144-5).

Meanwhile Innocent VI was reorganizing the anti-Turkish league set up in 1350 by the Apostolic See, Cyprus, Venice and the Hospitallers of Rhodes. On May 10, 1359, he promoted Peter Thomas to the see of Coron (Peloponnesus) and named him his legate in the East, with ample jurisdiction over Morea, Constantinople, and the Venetian territories of «Romania» (ib., pp. 227-32). During the summer of that year Peter Thomas was at Venice, preparing the expedition. He accompanied it in the attack on Lansacco, and in the autumn cooperated in the defense of Smyrna. He prohibited, under pain of excommunication, the use of beards in the Latin patriarchate of Constantinople (*Acta Urbani PP. V*, l.e., p. 129). He then went on to Candia (Crete), in order to root out an «abominable heresy» (Phil. of M., p. 87, 3) that had arisen among the Latins; on that occasion a fanatic perished at the stake. At Canea he had the bones of a heretic burned.

About Christmas of 1359, on the way to Rhodes, he became ill and was still feverish when he left the island at the beginning of April, 1360, to go to Cyprus; he disembarked at Pafo or at Cerin. On Easter Sunday, 1360, at Famagusta, he crowned his friend, Peter of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem (Phil, of M., pp. 90-2; L. Macheras, *Chronique de Chypre*, French trans. E. Miller-C. Sathas, Paris, 1882, pp. 56-9). He sought with «sweet» persuasion, «after many days» (Phil of M., p. 92, 7), to recall the orthodox Cypriots to Catholic unity; but their resistance put the life of the legate in serious danger. Afterwards, however, he reputedly gained all the hierarchy and almost all the

dissident priest" to the Roman Church (ib., p. 93, 20-2). The Greek chroniclers, nevertheless, are of a different opinion (Macheras, *Chronique*, p. 57; see H. J. Magoulias, *A Study in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Church relations on the Island of Cyprus between the Years A.D. 1196 and 1360*, in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, X, /1964/, pp. 96-106).

Spurred on by an intense pastoral zeal, Peter Thomas went to visit his diocese of Coron, going by way of Rhodes. After the conquest of Adalia (Satalia) on the part of King Peter (Aug. 23-4, 1361), Peter Thomas instituted Catholic worship there, then returned to Cyprus. He organized public prayers against the plague that had broken out on the island (Phil. of M., pp. 97-100). He then entered into conflict with the friend of Demetrius Cydon, George the Philosopher (Demetrius Cydones, *Correspondance*, ed. R.J. Loenertz, Vatican City, 1956, p. 61).

After he had become the spiritual director of Philip of Mezieres, chancellor of Peter I, Peter Thomas and the latter conceived the idea of a new crusade; and on Oct. 24, 1352, the two left Pafos en route to Europe to solicit the help of the West. After a stop in Rhodes, on Dec. 5 they disembarked in Venice; on Jan. 21, 1363, they were at Milan, and on Feb. 3 at Genoa. At Avignon Peter Thomas found a new pope, Urban V (1362-70), who promoted him to the archbishopric of Crete (March 6, 1363) and proclaimed the crusade (April 11). While Peter of Jerusalem visited the other courts of Europe, the saint accepted the peace-making mission at Milan, to induce Barnabas Visconti to restore Bologna to Card. Albornoz, the representative of the pope. After extenuating maneuvers between Emilia, Lombardy and Avignon, Peter Thomas had to administer the city of Bologna (Jan. 15-Feb. 7, 1364). While there he had to escape a conspiracy; however, on his return to Bologna from a trip to Venice in relation to the revolt of Crete, he assisted at the longed-for treaty of peace (March 13; see Phil of M., pp. 102-10; Smet, pp. 213-21).

On his return to the curia, about the middle of May, 1364, he was elected Latin patriarch of Constantinople and papal legate for the crusade, in succession to the deceased Card. Talleyrand. (The documents were deferred until the 5th and 10th of July; see Smet, p.

118, n. 32). It seems he was still at Avignon, and on the point of departure for Crete, when, on June 2, Urban V wrote to the doge of Genoa, Gabriel Adorno (Smet, p. 221, n. 25). Other sources, however, record the presence of the saint as a co-founder, on the same day, at the solemn act of official inauguration of the theological faculty at the University of Bologna (F. Ehrle, *Gli statuti della facolta teologica di Bologna del 1364*, in *Biblioteca de «L'Archginnasio»*, 2.a ser., Bologna, 1925, p. CXLII). At any rate, he was back at Bologna, after having definitely left Avignon in the second half of July, in order to confer the degree of master in sacred theology on his fellow-Carmelite, Bernard Aiguani (Smet, p. 119, n. 34).

Peter Thomas then travelled to Venice, where he nervously awaited the arrival of King Peter. The latter finally returned on Nov. 11, but with his hands practically empty. The

departure of the crusade was further delayed, not only by the winter season, but also by the war that broke out between Cyprus and Genoa. On Jan. 28, 1365, Peter of Jerusalem and on Feb. 20 the pope chose Peter Thomas as a negotiator of peace between the two rival states. «Almost stoned» upon his arrival at Genoa (Phil of M., p. 123, 5-6), the legate succeeded in reconciling the Ligurian republic with the sovereign of Cyprus (treaty of April 18, 1365; see Smet, pp. 222-4).

On June 27 the ships of the crusade sailed from Venice, and Peter Thomas strengthened the spirits of those who were leaving. In July the fleet had reached Rhodes, where, during the final preparations for the expedition, the legate worked intensely for the spiritual good of all. On Oct. he blessed all the militia Christi, which on the 9th following had already reached the port of Alexandria of Egypt. On the next day, by his words and by the inspiration of the relic of the Cross that he held in his hand at the moment of assault, the legate played a decisive role in the taking of the city (Phil of M., pp. 128-33; G. de Machaut, *La prise d'Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie, Geneva, 1877). The victory could have been «a great and memorable work» (Petrarch, *Senilia*, VIII, 8) had not the Latin army, through fear of a probable Turkish counter-attack and against the opinion of the legate and a few others, shamefully abandoned Alexandria, after reducing it to a heap of ashes, and returned to Cyprus (Oct. 16). Peter Thomas wrote a pathetic letter to Pope Urban V and to the emperor, Charles IV, about this event (Phil, of M., pp. 135-40).

In Famagusta Peter Thomas prohibited all commerce with the sultan; he was preparing to embark and return to the curia, when he caught cold during the Christmas feasts of 1365. His condition worsened on Dec. 28; and on Jan. 6, 1366, «reduced to skin and bones» (Phil Of M., p. 151, 15), he piously ended his earthly life «at about the second hour of the night» (ib. 154, 8), after having distributed all his belongings. He died in the Carmelite convent of Famagusta.

His remains seemed surrounded with light to the women who waked them. The funeral was a veritable triumph; even the dissident Greeks and others who would willingly have «drunk his blood» (ib. p. 156, 3-4) while he was alive participated devoutly. The funeral eulogy was delivered by Carmesson, who several times felt himself mysteriously urged to call the deceased a saint (ib., 157, 8). The body remained exposed for six days, and was visited by a great number of people; cures and other miracles were verified before and after the burial (Smet, pp. 163-84).

During the Lent of that year (Feb. 18-April 5) Philip of Mezieres wrote his biographical work on the saint (Smet, p. 31); and he was soon followed by Carmesson. who wished to contribute to the ecclesiastical process begun at Famagusta by the bishop, Simon of Leodicea, on April 14, 1366. On May 8 the tomb was opened: the body was found «perfect and whole, and the members as flexible as before» (Carmesson, pp. 100-1). The petition for canonization was presented to the pontiff, Urban V, by Peter of Cyprus himself. At the request of Peter of Jerusalem, on May 21, 1368, papal authority forbade removal of the body from

Cyprus for ten years (Smet, p. 188). And thus the last will of the saint regarding the return of his mortal remains to Beragerac was not respected.

The conquest Of Cyprus by the Turks in 1571 and the earthquake of 1735 removed every trace of Peter Thomas on that island, and thus another desire of the saint was realized: to be a corpse «trodden on by goats and dogs» (Phil. of M., p. 148, 14). In 1905 the archeologist E. Enlart had to give up his search for the tomb of the saint among the ruins of the Carmelite church of Famagusta (*Fouilles dan les eglises de Famagouste de Chypre*, in *The Archaeological Journal*, LXII /1905/, p. 196). At Lebreil, a small chapel had been erected upon the presumed natal home of the saint, near a spring that reputedly appeared at his intercession. Pilgrims came to the chapel to pray especially to be freed of fever. It was destroyed by the French revolution. In 1895 there was talk of substituting the chapel «with a worthy sanctuary» (A. Parraud, *Vie de saint P. T.*, Avignon, 1895, p. 351, n. 1).

The four volumes of sermons and the tract *De Immaculata Conceptione B. M. V.* that tradition attributes to him were likewise lost (ib., pp. 55, 57). Among the relics dear to the saint is to be mentioned the processional cross offered to him in 1360 by the Christian refugees from Syria and used by him as the standard in the Alexandrian crusade and as a source of strength in his own last agony. He willed the cross to his friend, Philip of Mézières, who on Dec. 23, 1370, gave it to the Grand School of St. John in Venice. This processional cross became the object of intense devotion and was depicted on the city's standard as a symbol of the greatness of His Serene Highness, the doge. It is preserved in the Venetian church of St. John. The cult of Peter Thomas, confirmed by Paul V in 1609 and by Urban VIII in 1628, is celebrated only in the Order of Carmel, on Jan. 8, and in the diocese of Périgueux. In 1944 the Carmelites in Rome dedicated to Peter Thomas a lyceum and a school of philosophy adjacent to their basilica of St. Martin of the Mountains on the Oppian hill. It is a modest tribute to the glory of a humble Carmelite, master in theology, a devotee of the Immaculate Virgin, one chosen for the highest offices of pontifical diplomacy, able craftsman of the Eastern policy of the papacy and of its work in favor of Christian unity, ardent peacemaker involved in a fatal armed enterprise: a European and ecumenical figure of the XIV century !

ICONOGRAPHY. In the national Pinacoteca (picture gallery) of Bologna; a picture of L. Caracci commissioned in 1596-8 by the theological faculty of the university of that city represents our saint under the erroneous title *Martyrdom of St. Angelus* (see above, p. 39; also, BSS, I, coll. 1241-2); he is bearded and clothed in a monastic habit, crucified to a tree trunk, pierced by a Turkish poisoned arrow. The motif is inspired by the legend according to which Peter Thomas reputedly was mortally wounded during the battle for Alexandria and therefore merits the title of martyr. For the identification of the personage here represented no doubts should remain, both because of the episcopal symbols visible on the viewer's left and because of the unmistakable view of Bologna in the background to the right.

To perpetuate the memory of the establishment of the above-mentioned theological faculty, and to bring renown to the academic sessions by the public disputations that were usually held every year at Bologna on the Sunday after the Epiphany, Lucius Massari, wishing to commemorate the saint, during the same years (1596-8) painted Peter Thomas in the great hall of the Carmelites. He is seated as a universal doctor in a teacher's pulpit in the act of addressing a crowded group of learned men of diverse origins, as if to symbolize the prestige of theology. Although the profound knowledge of the saint cannot be denied, and the possibility that he may have become a Doctor of the Church—given his excellent theological preparation and despite the vortex of his diplomatic activity—cannot be excluded, it seems to us that his fame at Bologna has benefitted from his contemporary of the same name, the Invincible Doctor, that great Scotist, Peter Thomas, O.F.M. On the other hand, the deeds and honors of the Carmelite have in the past been attributed to the Franciscan.

A miniature of the *Acta Collegii Theologici* (I, f. Ir) represents Peter Thomas, together with the other founders of the Bologna faculty, prostrate at the feet of Pope Innocent VI, from whom he obtains the brief of erection of the same faculty (June 30, 1360). As president of the group of founders of the glorious institution, Peter Thomas, with his patriarchal pallium, is also found in other artistic representations.

For the representations at Salles-de-Belves and at Lebeil (picture, window, fragment of a statue) and at Paris, see Parraud, *op. cit.* pp. 349-951. During the XVII cent. a specialist of monastic portraits, Fr. Zurbaran, painted Peter Thomas standing and always bearded, in a monastic habit and with a cardinal's hat, absorbed in the reading of a codex (P. Guinard, *Zurbarán et les peintres espagnols de la vie monastique*, Paris, 1960, pp. 272-3, tav. 531). In Venice a cycle of pictures illustrates by means of valuable screens or panels—executed by noted artists of the end of the XV cent (G. Bellini, G. Mansueti, L. Bastiani, B. Diana, V. Carpaccio)—the story and the miracles of the precious relic of the cross that strengthened the saint during his agony; today this cycle is found in the Gallery of the Academy (see Pier Tormmaso, *Carmelitano*, Rome, 1965, pp. 14-7).

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For the papal documents, cf. *Lettres secrètes et curiales des papes du XIV siècle. Innocent VI (1352-1362)*, ed P. Gasnault e M.-H. Laurent, 3 fasc, Paris 1959-62; Urbain V (1362-1370), ed. P. Lecacheux (v. fasc. 4 index care of G. Mollat), ibid. 1955, col. 88; *Acta Innocenti PP. VI (1352-1362)*, *Acta Urbani PP. V (1362-1370)*, ed. A. L. Tautu (=Pont. Commissio ad redigendum Codicem Iuris Canonici Orientalis. Fontes. Ser. III, voll. X-XI) Rome 1961-64; N.P.T. Quagliarella, *Della missione Pacifica dei papi di Avignone a mezzo del grande paciere del tempo S.P.T. carmelitano (documentario avignonese-vaticano 1352-1365)*, Naples 1967.

For a general picture: F. Giunta, *Sulla politica orientale di Innocenzo VI*, in *Miscellanea in onore di Roberto Cessi*, I, Rome 1958, pp. 305-20; N. P. Zacour Talleyrand, the *Cardinal of Périgord, 1301-1364*, Philadelphia 1960; A. Pellissier, *Innocent VI le Réformateur, deuxième Pape limousin, 1352-1362*, Tulle 1961; T. M. Quagliarella, *Vita di S. Pier Tommaso carmelitano...*, Naples 1961; B. Guillemain, *La Cour pontificale d'Avignon (1309-1376) Etude d'une société*, Paris 1962; W. de Vries, *Die Papste von Avignon und der christliche Osten*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, XXX (1964), pp. 85-128; G. Mollat, *Les Papes d'Avignon (1370-1378)*, Paris 1965; A. Leotand, *A Benedictine Pope Urban V (1310-1370)* in *The Downside Review*, LXXXIII (1965), pp. 351-69.

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