

THOMAS AQUINAS OF ST, TERESA
(1612?-1642)
Servant of God, martyr, priest, (D)

It seems that Thomas was born in Dublin about 1612; in 1635 he joined the Discalced Carmelites in the same city. Ordained a priest in 1640, he immediately began a beneficent ministry which was soon limited, but not interrupted, by the Puritan persecution that broke out in 1642. In order to save a Catholic family from falling back into error, he went for a visit, although the home of this family was in a very dangerous zone: the family had already abjured its Protestantism, but was in new danger because of the insistence of the Puritans. In consequence, soon afterwards he was captured. Transferred to Drogheda, Thomas was able to celebrate Mass secretly in prison and thus prepared himself for martyrdom. In fact, after only five days and having just about finished Mass, he received the announcement of his condemnation to death, an announcement which he publicly called «a happy and awaited message» (*Relatio*, p. 155). He did wish to know the concrete cause of his condemnation and the reason for it without previous judgment. And when he learned that «for papist priests there was no need of any form of law,» he added: «Blessed be God! My Savior also was condemned to death against every law and reason. See, I shall die with Him, my friend! There is no reason for losing time» (*ib.*, p. 155).

Before leaving the prison he was able to go to confession to the guardian of the Friars Minor, who was also being held; and then, carrying a crucifix and a rosary in his hands, he was brought to the place of judgment. Along the way he recited the litany of Our Lady in a loud voice. He was interrupted by repeated invitations to abjure «the papal heresy,» but he immediately resumed his prayer. Along the way he was also able to confirm in the faith a poor Catholic woman who was also being led to punishment and was in danger of betraying her religion. With the litany of Our Lady still on his lips, Thomas reached the scaffold. Publicly, he asked once more for the reason of his condemnation and after it had been confirmed repeatedly that he had been sentenced because he was a papist, a priest and a religious, he exclaimed in a voice that could be heard by those present: «That is enough for me! Fortunately, I do not die for any other crime. I am very ready to die for the Catholic faith and for my religious profession.» He was tempted yet again to deny the faith; but when it was seen that all was in vain, the rope was put around his neck. But, the first time, it broke. He fell, still holding the crucifix and the rosary in his hands. The second time, the rope held and he died by hanging. It was June 6, 1642.

His body was buried by Catholics, and his burial place was repeatedly surrounded by a strange radiance, something that many persons experienced and confirmed, beginning with the Protestant authorities themselves. His cause was promoted immediately after his death, but had some success only at the beginning of this century. It was introduced by St. Pius X on Feb. 12, 1915, with that of the other Irish martyrs of the period from 1541-1713 (AAS, VII /1915/, pp. 125-8).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Joannes a Matre Dei, *Relatio martyrii trium religiosorum nostrorum Hybernorum* (written in 1647), ed. in *Anacleta O.C.D.*, VII (1932), pp. 152-162 (cited above: *Relatio*); Philipus a Trinitate, *Decor Carmeli*. III, Lyons 1666, 137-138 (he is called Thomas Aquinas «of Jesus»; Paulus a S. Ubaldo (1599-1670), *Brevis relatio adventus et progressus nostrorum religiosorum in regno Hiberniae*, ed. in *Archivium Hibernicum*, XXV (Dublin 1962), pp. 136-163 (cf. pp. 157-158: here too Thomas is called «of Jesus», and it is affirmed also that his execution took place on May 25, 1642); J. P. Rusche, *Carmel in Ireland*, 2 ed., London 1903, pp. 89-95; *Positio super introd. causae: Dublinen., Beatif. seu declar. martyrii Servorum Dei Dermitii O'Hurley ... et socorum*, Rome 1914, 2 voll.; Francesco dell'Immacolata Concezione, *Verso la gloria*, Milan 1938, pp. 11-81.

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Deo gratias!