

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.

