

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.



Denis was born into the well known Van Leewen family at Rijekel near Saint-Trond (Belgium) in either 1402 or 1403. He completed his studies in the nearby cities of Saint-Trond and Zwolle. He died in 1471.

