

Denis the Carthusian

Part 3

1402 - 1471

PURGATORY

Denis the Carthusian had numerous mystic experiences, in which he saw the fate of the Souls of Purgatory. There was a pious woman called Gertrude who offered every day all her good works in favor of the Souls of Purgatory. Having reached the end of her life, as she was about to die, the devil tempted her trying to get her to despair suggesting these thoughts: “Why have you been so stupid and ignorant, to deprive yourself during your life of all your merits in order to offer them to others? Wait a little longer, until you will have reached eternity, and then you will see what will happen to you when you will not be able to present any merit to the Eternal Judge! You will be damned, but I will laugh about it and I will be deriding you and mocking you and insulting you for all eternity! Why did you donate all your merits with so much frivolity? You did it only for arrogance and this was to make you blind! But it will cost you very dearly!”

In this way the devil tormented the poor woman, who due to these insinuations was completely upset and anguished. The Lord came to her assistance and told her: “Why have you been so distressed, my dearest daughter? Know that the love and mercy that you had for the poor souls, was so pleasing to me that in exchange I forgive you and all the punishments that you would have had to suffer in Purgatory: and also your reward in Heaven will receive the hundredfold according to my promise, to recompense

one hundred times those who are generous in the love for their neighbor. Know moreover that all the souls you freed from Purgatory will soon meet you to accompany you into the Kingdom of Heaven!” Immediately, every fear and anguish departed from the soul of the woman and she died in the peace of God.

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. 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 to 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. He died March 12, 1471.

