



Beatification
Peter-Adrian Toulorge, O.Praem.
Coutances 29 April 2012

Apostolic Letter
Homilies, Words of Thanks



Apostolic Letter

We,
fulfilling the wish of our brother
Stanislas Lalanne,
Bishop of Coutances,
as well as many other Brothers in the Episcopate,
and many of the faithful,
after consultation with the Congregation
for the Causes of Saints,
we authorize,
under our apostolic authority,
that the Venerable Servant of God
Peter-Adrian Toulorge, priest and martyr,
member of the Order of Prémontré,
who for having administered the divine sacraments
for the People of God with a fearless courage
and for having refused to betray his pastoral ministry
suffered death,
be now called Blessed
and that his feast day be celebrated each year
on the 13th of October,
the date of his birth into heaven.
In Name of the father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's,
April 24 in the year of the Lord 2012,
the eighth of Our pontificate.

Benedictus PP XVI



Benedict XVI

**Regina Caeli
Sunday 29 April 2012**

At the end of the Regina Caeli:

...

Today in Coutances, France, the priest Peter-Adrian Toulorge of the Order of Prémontré has been beatified. He lived in the second half of the 18th century. We give thanks to God for this illustrious man, “martyr for the truth”.

...

Dear French-speaking pilgrims,

I exhort you today to pray for vocations, in the Church and in the family. We must rediscover the vital importance of the ministerial priesthood and of the consecrated life. Dear young people, do not hesitate! Listen to the call of God!

I participate spiritually in the joy of all the faithful of the Diocese of Coutances and Avranches gathered for the beatification of Father Peter-Adrian Toulorge, called “the martyr for the truth”. May the Virgin Mary, model of the listening heart, intercede so that there may be a blossoming of “yes”!
A blessed Sunday!



**Angelo Card. Amato, S.D.B.
Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints**

**Homily: Beatification of the Norbertine Martyr
Peter-Adrian Toulorge (1757-1793)
Coutances 29 April 2012**

1. A martyr is a resplendent sign of the holiness of one who is faithful. Witness *usque ad sanguinem* (unto blood) is an gift of great value for the Church and for society; a help in avoiding the confrontation between good and evil: “By their eloquent and attractive example of a life completely transfigured by the splendour of moral truth, the martyrs and, in general, all the Church’s Saints, light up every period of history by reawakening its moral sense. By witnessing fully to the good [...] they make the words of the Prophet echo ever afresh: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” (Is 5,20).” (VS 93).

This is the meaning again made present for us by the martyr Peter-Adrian Toulorge, Norbertine canon guillotined during the French Revolution. A year ago at Dax, Sister Marguerite Rutan, Daughter of Charity, was beatified. She too was killed in the course of this tragic Revolution which cast seeds of sorrow and ruin everywhere.

In the autumn of 1793 the “Terror” began, the most cruel phase of the Revolution. Priests and religious faithful to Rome were persecuted, imprisoned, submitted to summary processes and executed. On October 12, 1793, the Norbertine Peter-Adrian Toulorge, 36 years old, entered his prison cell with a serene face. Interrogated about the outcome of his process, he responded that all had gone well. One might think that he had been acquitted.

But one learned that, on the contrary, he had been condemned to death. A Benedictine nun who had been arrested at the same time as he, Sister Saint Paul, fell into tears but the future martyr comforted her: his death would be an example for all the faithful. Having once renounced the world by religious profession, he must not fear to leave it for he possessed a guaranteed passage to heaven. The attitude of the words of Father Toulorge reveal his great power of soul, a precious gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. Peter-Adrian Toulorge was born of a humble peasant family at Muneville-le-Bingard in Normandy on May 4, 1757. The last of three children, he was baptized the same day he was born. He was ordained a priest in 1782 and that same year was appointed vicar of Doville, a parish connected to the Norbertine abbey of Blanchelande. A few years later he entered the community of this abbey and, after his novitiate, professed his vows.

In 1790 the National Assembly decreed the suppression of the religious orders and the confiscation of their goods. Refusing to conform himself to the ideology of the Revolution, Father Toulorge began to live in hiding, celebrating the sacraments in secret places and continually moving from place to place.

He was arrested in September 1793. He had on his person prayers for the Mass in honor of the Holy Spirit and for the Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin copied out by hand. He also had with him in a white sack a white tunic and other objects for worship.

Having undergone three interrogations in September and October 1793, he was finally condemned to death. On October 13, 1793 the blessed martyr invited his companions in detention to recite the Divine Office with him: Lauds, Vespers. Coming to Compline, he interrupted the choir at the next to last strophe of the hymn, adding that it would be completed in heaven. Witnesses tell us that he was guillotined between 4:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Sunday, October 13, 1793 at Coutances. Father Toulorge was clothed in a long green coat buttoned up to the collar. He asked that his hair be gathered up over his head to facilitate his decapitation.

3. In one of the three letters that he wrote on the eve of his martyrdom, he said: "Someone just came to read my sentence of death. Tomorrow, at two o'clock, I will depart this earth to go to heaven to enjoy the presence of God and of my Church. Alas! How can it be that such a sinner that I am, I have the happiness of being crowned a martyr? I confess to my God that I am most unworthy of such a favor; but what can I say? This is the fortune of those who have the joy of having remained faithful to the catholic, apostolic and Roman Faith."

Writing then to his brother, he added: “Rejoice, tomorrow you will have a protector in heaven. Rejoice that God has found me worthy to suffer, not only imprisonment, but even death for our Lord Jesus Christ; this is the greatest grace that he could have accorded me. Turn your eyes toward heaven, live as an honest man, and above all as a good Christian, raise your children in the holy, catholic, apostolic and Roman religion.”

4. Here we find the imperishable meaning of a martyr put to death more than two centuries ago. His martyrdom invites us to live with coherence and fidelity our communion with Jesus and this despite the wounds and sufferings of every sort that modern society inflicts upon the Gospel by erroneous ideologies about the conception of human life, avortement, marriage and euthanasia.

From the blessed martyr Toulorge we learn to resist with grace and through prayer this culture of death by confronting with strength and perseverance the necessary sacrifices needed to remain faithful to Christ, the way, the truth and the life. As Saint Gregory the Great said, the Christian can even “love the difficulties of this world in view of eternal reward” (*Moralia in Job*, VII, 21, 24; PL 75, 778).

In imitation of Christ, the Good Shepherd (Jn 10, 11-18), the Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge gave his life for the faithful by defending them from the wolves. His intercession can help us also to be good Christians, strong and victorious in the defense of our Faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



**Thomas Handgrätinger, O.Praem.
Abbot General**

**Words of thanks at the end of the Beatification
Coutances April 29, 2012**

Your Eminence, dear Bishop Lalanne,
dear Bishops and Abbots, dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the end of this solemn beatification of our confrere Peter-Adrian Toulorge it is for me and for all the Order of Prémontré a great joy and honor to express our gratitude, in the first place to our all-powerful and merciful God. “This is the day the Lord has made, a day of happiness and joy!” (Ps 118, 24) God called Peter-Adrian into life, to the priesthood and to the consecrated life; God inspired in him a love for the truth and the strength and the courage to witness to it. God made of our Blessed who bore the name of Peter a sign of authenticity of the one “rock” of witness of his faithfulness to the faith and to his Church.

Your eminence, it is with vivid recognition that we thank you for your presence among us and for having presided in the name of Pope Benedict XVI at this solemn celebration and for having addressed to us a message rich in encouragement for the new evangelization. In thanking you in the name of the Order but also in the name of all the priests, religious men and women and faithful present, we are conscious that this day is a great grace but also a challenge because it is not only a matter of now admiring and venerating this new Blessed but more of imitating and following his example in the truth and authenticity of our vocation. The Blessed Peter-Adrian grew up in a period of persecution and the hardness of the circumstances brought him to maturity. Faithful to the very terms of his Norbertine religious profession, he experienced a conversion that made of a hesitant man

a confessor for the faith and made of a fugitive and intrepid witness not only of the truth but of the One who is the Truth. The Norbertine formula of profession contains, in effect, a commitment to conversion throughout all our life (*conversion morum*), to be available to actions of grace, and to work, tending to that perfection of love which is another name for holiness. The saints and the blessed are not born so, but they have welcomed grace and cooperated with the action of God. Often trapped in the turbulence of politics and the troubles of society, they carry on a sincere, authentic and consistent life without false compromise. They teach us that the spiritual life is a school and an endurance race, according to the word of St. Paul. Our Blessed Peter-Adrian won “an imperishable crown” (I Cor 9, 25). His beatification is for us an encouragement to run “in order to win”.

In this hour of grace, we desire, dear Bishop, to address to you the expression of our deepest gratitude and, through you, to all the diocese of Coutances and Avranches who welcome us in this magnificent cathedral to celebrate our new blessed. Thank you for your contribution to the success of this Cause. Thank you for the beautiful cooperation of the persons and the different groups who have prepared the organization of this say and assured its success.

The Blessed Peter-Adrian was a priest of the diocese of Coutances and a canon regular of the Norbertine abbey of Blanchelande. He experienced the complete gift of his person both in his religious profession and priestly ministry. This gift culminated in his martyrdom wherein he made the sacrifice of his life through fidelity to God and his church. His witness of priestly and religious life is an insistent invitation which he addresses to every one of us, an invitation to live our own proper and personal vocation to grow in the love of truth and to renew without ceasing our zeal in service to all those committed to our care.

In our new Blessed Peter-Adrian, it is God who blesses us.

Blessed Peter-Adrian,
pray for us.



**Stanislas Lalanne
Bishop of Coutances and Avranches**

**Thanks at the end of the Beatification
Coutances April 29, 2012**

Your Eminence, dear Bishops,
dear Abbot General, dear Father-Abbots, dear friends,

I fully agree with what Abbot General Thomas Handgrätinger just expressed with strength and warmth. The Diocese of Coutances and Avranches shares the joy of the Norbertine Order in adding a new blessed in the person of Peter-Adrian Toulorge.

Now every October 13 we shall commemorate this witness of Christ for the gift of his life. Peter-Adrian Toulorge suffered with and for Christ. He is now glorified with him. His example will stimulate and encourage us along the paths of the Gospel.

Your Eminence, the Church which is in Coutances and Avranches profoundly rejoices in your presence. You are here on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI whom the bishops of the province of Normandy, with a delegation of more than one hundred priests, had the joy of greeting Wednesday, April 18, at St. Peter's Square. We were, indeed, on pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul to strengthen our commitment to Christ whom we must follow in order to grow in holiness.

The celebration over which you just presided is a call to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love. To quote the very words of Vatican II the 50th anniversary of whose opening we will soon celebrate, "Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity." (LG 41).

Thanks to Peter-Adrian, we are also invited to highlight other figures of the faith who have put their mark on our region: holy, blessed, ordinary witnesses through whom the Gospel has come down to us and whose memory must be transmitted from generation to generation.

Let me, tonight, thank all the elected officials and representatives of State agencies and local authorities in our *département*. Your presence in this cathedral is truly the sign of the quality and cordiality of our relations, of the bonds of trust forged over many years by myself and by my predecessor, Bishop Jacques Fihey, who gives us great joy by his presence. A special thanks to the General Council of the Manche and to the municipality of Coutances for their precious collaboration and effectiveness in organizing various events linked to the celebration of the beatification.

A warm thanks to all the volunteers of the cathedral parish and many other places of the diocese, to the members of diocesan services, to the Association of the Friends of Peter-Adrian Toulorge who, for several months, have prepared this privileged time in the life of our church. Thanks to all those men and women who prepared this celebration in the cathedral and who insured that it be beautiful, festive and prayerful.

I turn now to the confreres of the Abbey of Mondaye to express to them my deepest gratitude. Not only have you contributed to organize this event but you also made it possible that the figure and the journey of Peter-Adrian Toulorge might become familiar to us.

Thanks to my brother bishops and especially to our Archbishop Jean-Charles Descubes, and Bishop Luigi Ventura, Apostolic Nuncio. Thanks to you, the abbots and priors. Your presence honors us but, more than that, it widens the horizon of our diocese to the universal Church as brothers of the Order of Prémontré are present today at Coutances, and who come from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, India and U.S.

I am glad that you, young people, are so numerous in this cathedral. May you accept cheerfully the example of Blessed Peter-Adrian and so give your life for Christ and for others.

For all this, we thank the Lord.



**Thomas Handgrätinger, O.Praem.
Abbot General**

**Homily of the first Mass of Thanksgiving
Muneville-le-Bingard April 30, 2012
“Norbertine Day”**

Your Excellency, Bishop Lalanne,
Reverend Abbots, dear confreres, esteemed Notables, Authorities,
Dear Association of Friends of Father Toulorge,
Dear parish community,

After the solemn beatification of our beloved Peter-Adrian Toulorge in the Coutances Cathedral, with the participation of so many of the faithful of the entire diocesan Church and so many Norbertine brothers, we are gathered here in the parish of Muneville-le-Bingard to celebrate in this place where everything began, in this church where the Blessed was baptized. Peter-Adrian was baptized in the name of the God-Trinity. He was welcomed into this community; and here he received the white robe of God's children which he kept immaculate until the baptism of blood of his execution. Here he was anointed with the holy chrism and was incorporated into the holy people, into the holy priesthood that he served all his life as priest and religious. Here God called him by name, a name which is now written in the Book of Eternal Life. Here he was clothed in Christ for whom he was found worthy to die. We have nothing of the Blessed, no relics, no material remains, nothing that we can touch or feel. But the baptistery of this parish is a place that remains for our memory. Here the water of salvation was poured over him. Later he shed his own blood as a sign of his unwavering faith. According to the custom of his time, he was brought newborn to the

church to be baptized on the same day as his birth. It was May 4, 1757. Here the baptismal candle was lit from the paschal candle representing the risen Christ so that Christ's light might shine one day in the life of this child so that he might bring light and guidance to others.

Today we can celebrate, full of joy and gratitude, because Peter-Adrian never allowed this light to be extinguished. Even the guillotine could not extinguish it and now it shines stronger and purer for us "all who live in the house", for us who are gathered here in celebration. It is strange to consider that Peter-Adrian emigrated from his country; that on his return he worked in secret; that he had to hide and then wait for his final execution in prison. And we can presume he had to go through a night of terror, doubt and uncertainty, where there was darkness in his cell and in his soul. But this light, ignited during his baptism and then again in his first Holy Communion, this light of faith, by which he was guided in his preaching and pastoral ministry, this light that was lit again in the darkest hours of the prison cell, was a new radiance in his heart and it filled him with unspeakable hope and joy so that he could still write on the night before his martyrdom: "Tomorrow, at two o'clock, I leave this earth for heaven to rejoice in the presence of God and my church!"

With the cry "*In manus tuas (into your hands)*", passed on from Jesus on the cross, he went to the scaffold. Peter-Adrian was at first certainly inclined to evade or cheat time and somehow get away with perjury. But then he struggled toward the truth in a process of introspection and examination of conscience, to come face to face with the truth, and to bear witness to the truth of the one who is Truth for whom he had devoted his life to his final act of profession. Did he not completely surrender to God during the prostration, first for his ordination and then for his profession? Now, he could, by the grace and power of God, fearlessly perform this act of total and irrevocable submission of himself into the hands of God. When his head fell, he fell into the hands of God. "Today is the grand return to the Father's house, because I will be happy and full of enthusiasm," said Hermann Langer, one of the four martyrs of Lubeck in 1943 before his execution. We can only bow in wonder and awe before such a witness of faith. "Martyrs are encouragers of faith. They call us to leave our comfort and lack of commitment for a strong and unwavering following of Jesus receiving from him strength, sincerity and endurance." The martyrs baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, as we all are, were able by God's help to profess with blood the commitment that their parents and godparents made for

them on the day of their baptism. “The blood of martyrs, their tangible and eloquent testimony, touches the human heart and makes it fruitful,” said Pope Benedict XVI on November 30, 2011, “and it allows for the sprouting of new life and for the acceptance of the life of the risen Christ, and for bringing the hope of resurrection to the world! “ I imagine that the Association of Friends of Father Toulorge (*Association des amis du Père Toulorge*) is now particularly filled with pride and joy. It is also their day and by their merit that we are here today to celebrate the new Blessed.

For the Eucharist today we are using a new chalice. In its base four stones were prepared and mounted. These four ordinary stones are from Muneville-le-Bingard, Blanchelande, Doville and Coutances, places where our Blessed lived: the place of his baptism and his baptism in blood, the place of his ordination and of his profession, and the place of his priestly ministry.



During the consecration of the Mass, the bread becomes the Body of Christ and the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. These stones represent the human environment and the local context where human life became a place of the Lord’s presence. On him, on Christ, Peter-Adrian staked everything; on him he built and he trusted. Now he himself is inserted as a precious jewel in the heavenly Jerusalem and he himself has now become a crystal through which the light of God shines. “The saints are the stars of God for humans” said Pope Benedict XVI on the feast of the Epiphany. Peter-Adrian Toulorge’s love for truth, his unwavering faith, his pastoral passion for the people, his well preserved faith as a priest and religious, can be an incentive for us as priests and religious to be very serious about our vocation and to give ourselves completely to our responsibility as pastors and teachers, as ministers and spiritual guides.

And here, in this baptistery, we should accompany each newly baptized member of the community with our goodwill, interest and prayer. As Christians baptized and confirmed, we can also give to children and youth a portion of faith and an example of how to treat one another, of how to defend the truth from which we live in a credible and direct way, of how to look for the good in others and in ourselves.

Czech President Vaclav Havel, recently deceased, wrote a book entitled "Try to Live in Truth." There is only one who says of himself: "I am the Truth, the Way and the Life" (Jn 14, 6). Peter-Adrian managed to live in truth and to die in Christ. Here in Muneville he was baptized into Christ's death. Now he can live in the joy of his Lord.

Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge,
pray for us.

Keep your protective hand on Muneville-le-Bingard
and on this parish!
Amen.

**Marc Beuve
Muneville-le-Bingard**

**President of the Association of the friends of Father Toulorge
(*Association des amis du Père Toulorge*)**

“Bonjour à tous” - Hello everyone!

Dear friends,

I am a president not yet “a Blessed” (*Bienheureux* in French). But do not worry: I am very happy (*très heureux*) because of this great feast that we’ve been awaiting for a long time.

Nineteen years ago very close to here the life of our Association began. Were we really conscious of what the future held for us? I really don’t think so.

In 1996 Father Donatien de Clerck, postulator, said: “With a holy Christian impatience, we await the day when the Holy Father will proclaim Blessed our martyr of Muneville.” And here we are!

On this beautiful day, we have great memories of Father André Gâté who gave us the strength to complete our engagement for the cause of beatification. With a handful of volunteers, we have brought forth proofs that the parish has had a great veneration for the Blessed.

We remained humble in our steps for advancement, perhaps too much so, but we firmly decided to complete our project.

We were 30 members in the association in 1994; today we are more than 130.

Every year, we walk to Doville “in the steps of Father Toulorge”.

We commemorate his birth and his death.

An exhibition was mounted beginning in 1993 and, a bit later, an interactive terminal was placed in the church.

We have established some friendly and sincere links with the municipality of Doville because the history of our Blessed is also there.

We have also experienced moments of doubt and incertitude. But the regular visits of the Abbot General, of the postulator of the Norbertine Order,

the tenacity of Father Lechat, vice-postulator, have been a great support. We were not alone.

In 1993 Father Gâté said: “Despite my handicap, I remain, nevertheless, a man, a happy priest, and I owe it to Father Toulorge to whom I prayed a lot.”

Yes, sick and tired, Father Gate gave much of himself to organize the bi-centenary. He succeeded in passing on to us direction so as to arrive at the beatification which he never doubted. We owe him so much.

Our work, our conviction, demands that the association become more and more known and I will work on this.

I want to very sincerely thank the Order of Prémontré, also Father Lechat and Father Couppey because I found among them strength, courage and instruction.

Thanks to the diocese for the organization of this beatification which is a first for us. This demanded considerable work.

I thank also the municipality of Doville which reserves a warm welcome to us every July. Thanks also to the municipality of Muneville for the help given in the preparation of the great and beautiful feast.

And, finally, thanks to you all of you participants.
May this day not be without a repeat.
Thank you.



A gift: some grains of sand from the Isle of Jersey
in memory of the exile of the Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge



**Stanislas Lalanne
Bishop of Coutances and Avranches**

**Homily of the second Mass of Thanksgiving
Mont of Doville May 1, 2012
“Family Day”**

During the days of his preaching, Jesus sometimes came back to Nazareth, at that time an obscure village of Galilee (the town is never mentioned in the Old Testament) where he was raised. This was the village where his family settled.

One of these returns is recounted in today’s gospel (Mt 13, 54-58).

Matthew does not specify which section of the scriptures was read by Jesus and neither does he focus on the words of his commentary, but he does highlight the reaction generated by Jesus’ preaching.

Jesus had been away from his village for many years and far away from his family but the citizens knew who he was: “the son of the carpenter, his mother Mary”. And they knew his close relatives, designated as “brothers and sisters”, who still lived in Nazareth.

They thus knew Jesus indirectly but this knowledge was human. And that was a reason for their incredulity. That explains why they did not recognize Jesus in his real identity.

The questions that came from their lips indicate this: “Where does all this come from?” How did he come by such wisdom, he who did not study like the other rabbis? And what about the miracles accomplished at his hands?

These questions could arise as a prelude to belief or at least to their attachment to Jesus as a leader and prophet. But, on the contrary, they react by rejecting him: “They were deeply shocked because of Him.”

We are face to face with the scandal elicited by the poverty, humanity and simplicity of Jesus.

- What images of God are we carrying?
- What images of God are carried by our families, neighbors, colleagues?
- What images of God are carried by people we meet every day?

These images are often far removed from those revealed by the gospel.

Jesus is presented simply as an illustrator of a God already known. But it is by contemplating the face, life, and teaching of Jesus that the face of God is revealed.

Jesus presents himself, in effect, as a man, nothing more than a person whose humble origins we can know. Namely, he came from a poor family, he was “the son of Joseph, the carpenter” from whom he learned a trade.

For the eyes of Nazareth's inhabitants; he was an **ordinary** man; they knew him since his birth; he was not worth any particular recognition or attention.

So this knowledge from pretence became an obstacle to recognizing Jesus' divine identity. That is, in the ordinary of the life of Jesus the extraordinary face of God is revealed.

In other words, it is easy to welcome the word of God when it is taking the form of a prodigy; it is more difficult to recognize it in the weakness and fragility of a man.

Yes, Jesus is “the stumbling stone, the rock that causes one to fall”.

Jesus is a failure. The refusal on the part of the inhabitants of Nazareth and the experience of Jesus' failure is for him the occasion for a frank word: “a prophet is despised only in his own country and home”.

The rejection he experienced, as frustrating as it was, is the sign of his prophetic nature. Any prophet, from those of the bible until those God sends again today to his people, is more frequently listened to by outsiders than by his own brothers and sisters. But in the face of such incredulity, Jesus cannot help but be surprised. He is hurt and, in fact, feels helpless,

handcuffed by the lack of faith of all those who had nevertheless heard him: “And he did not do many miracles in that place, because of their lack of faith.”

Whenever there is a lack of obedient hearing of Jesus' words and a strong attachment to him, our eyes cannot gaze at the wonders he worked as the Son of God.

To us, hearers of the Gospel, this poses a serious question: are we really willing to follow Jesus in everyday life and in the ordinary appearance of his person without being shocked by it?

It is in this sense that the beatification of Peter-Adrian Toulorge is a real grace for us. It is given to us as an example; he shows us the way of holiness to which we are called.

For a few days we have begun to know better his life and journey until his martyrdom (in particular through booklets, the conference by Father Bernard Ardura, the play on Saturday night, the different homilies, and our pilgrimage to the places of his life and ministry...).

Peter-Adrian is an ordinary man and his path of holiness goes through the ordinary of his life.

That is what touches us:

- His hesitations, doubts, fears, questions, flights, lies, retractions
- The ordinary aspect of his life, he didn't have an heroic character, he did not set out to be a martyr
- He faced violent historic circumstances, he ran away, he hid, he lied and his weakness showed during his trial
- “But God, whom he was bravely seeking with all his heart, took him back. Abandoning all fear, grace finally gave courage to do the truth.
- He then preferred the one who says: ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life’, and he came to know the full price of that truth.” (Fr. Dominique-Marie).

What touches me and what renders Peter-Adrian particularly close is his path of humanity and also of sin.

Holinesses is not perfection, all in a straight line, and all along a path without fault, made of virtue and courage.

And for us today?!

We are all called to holiness in the ordinary of our lives - whatever our age, our function, our state of life.

We sometimes see holiness as a reward for effort done and as a reward for moral perfection that can be authenticated by a canonization won with difficulty.

This kind of holiness seems reserved for a few rather rare specimens of the human race whose names we bear but that couldn't concern the greater majority of people in their mediocrity, even ourselves!

A blessed, a saint is not first of all a hero, a model of virtue, a man or a woman of irreproachable morals, a sort of sacred person. He/she is first of all someone whose life reveals a reflection of God's holiness.

Therefore a Christian is not somebody that escapes from earth to go in Heaven!

- But someone watering the earth with heaven's presence
- Someone transforming the world by love,
- Someone illuminating the night by Christ's light,
- Someone building a society of justice and peace by offering his own life for the salvation of his brothers and sisters.

So then, let us thank God!

Let us bless him for this throng of men and women who show us the way, in the ordinary of our lives of light and shadow; and, particularly, thanks to those in our diocese, and first of all to Father Peter-Adrian Toulorge, martyr of the truth, whom we celebrate these days. Amen.



Gabriel Wolf, O.Praem. - Postulator General

**Homily of the third Mass of Thanksgiving
CAD Coutances 2 May 2012**

*“The heroes of the Church can be a help for our life.
They are not ‘christian stereotypes’,
but each of them was an original, irreplaceable and unique!
The Church of today has no need of part-time catholics,
but of pureblood Christians!”*

Dear brothers and sisters,

These words of Pope John Paul II in Vienna in 1998 for the beatification of our Norbertine confrere Jacob Kern apply very well to the Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge. In the difficult times at the end of the 18th century, “the pureblood Christian” sought out his way despite persecutions that he endured as a religious priest. He was a man of character, a man with a backbone. He remained faithful to his convictions and values - and for that he was condemned to death. The Vatican Nuncio to Germany, Msgr. Jean-Claude Périsset, wrote this to me on this subject: “The world today might not be as cruel as that of the French Revolution, but it is certainly not less dangerous for the Faith. Witnesses to the Faith like Blessed Peter-Adrian are import examples and indicators for us.”

Because of this we pray to God in thanks for the great blessing for all of us Norbertines who celebrate these last days of feasting the beatification at Coutances, Muneville-le-Bingard, Blanchelande and Doville, but also for all the abbeys and priories of the Order and for all Christians of the diocese of Coutances and Avranches and the Association of the Friends of Father Peter-Adrian Toulorge in France and in the entire world!

It was my sincere wish as postulator that the third Mass of Thanksgiving be celebrated here at the diocesan center where all of the documentation for the “cause” is kept and where for decades progress on the process was diligently worked on. Therefore, the farewell letter from Peter-Adrian and the “positio” are symbolically on the altar.

Our thanks are addressed to the many admirers and collaborators of the “Postulatio”

- “The Association of the Friends of Père Toulorge” with its president Marc Beuve and Father Roland Hélaïne who in fidelity to the former pastor, Father André Gate, carried on the “fama” of the blessed Peter-Adrian. Thanks for the moving exposition, the liturgical celebrations in May, July and October, for your friendship and the witness of your Faith!
- Without the great support of the Order of Prémontré and of the Diocese of Coutances and Avranches the recovery of the process for the “cause” after the bicentenary of the martyr would no doubt have not been taken up again. We thank today the bishops Jacques Fihey and Stanislas Lalanne as well as abbots general Marcel van de Ven, Hermenegild Noyens and Thomas Handgrättinger. The Order is itself as “actor” financially responsible for the process. “The White Order” (*Ordo Candidus*) has invested much despite its lack of finances.
- Without scientific work we would not be celebrating the solemnity of the beatification this Sunday. Thus we give thanks with all our heart to the Procurator General Bernard Ardura who composed the excellent “positio”, to the zealous diocesan archivists Jean-Baptiste Lechat, vice-postulator, and Georges Couppey. Their names will be connected in an unforgettable way to the “cause”. May God reward them for all their efforts! A great thanks also to those who have worked throughout the diocesan process (Msgr Bernard Jacqueline, Canon Emile Harel and Madame Liliane Quénault) and all those who worked on the preparation for the beatification feast, notably the vicar general Michel Le Blond. Because of the condition of his health my admired predecessor, the postulator general emeritus Donatien De Clerck could not be present with us today. I also send to him and to his family a cordial “May God repay you”!
- We also recall priests who have died in the Lord whose hearts also beat for the “cause”, especially Dom Pierre Marc, OSB and Canon Joseph Toussaint.

So, as we did on Saturday, I wish to also remember in this Eucharist the other priests of the diocese of Coutances and Avranches who died as martyrs like our dear Blessed Peter-Adrian. Each of them was “irreplaceable and unique”. They merit our recognition:

- Blessed François Lefranc, Eudist, Superior of the Seminary of Coutances and Vicar General. He, with 22 of his companions from Coutances, was massacred at the Carmel of Paris on September 2-3, 1792.
- Laurent Le Boeuf, vicar at Vaudrimesnil, decapitated October 24, 1793 at Coutances.
- François Lemoigne, vicar at Créances, decapitated October 24, 1793 at Coutances.
- Jean-François-Louis Pestel of LaBeslière, executed April 4, 1794 at Granville.
- Gabriel Aumont, chaplain of the cathedral at of Avranches, decapitated June 18, 1794 at Coutances.
- Blessed Scipion-Jerôme Brigeat de Lambert of the Archdiocese of Avranches and grand dean of the chapter; martyred on the ponton of Rochefort September 4, 1794.
- Jean Rivierre, shot at Mantilly in the Orne at the moment when he was beginning Mass. He died of his wounds at Teilleul March 3, 1795.
- Gilles-Julien Gosselin, preceptor at Carnet, shot near the Calvary Argouges August 14, 1795.
- Gilles-Pierre Berthelot of Argouges, shot to death near La Martelais December 4, 1795.
- René-Julien-François Prével of Biards where he died from many bayonet wounds on January 17, 1796.
- Louis-George de Gouvets, canon of Avranches and pastor of Rouffigny. He was massacred at Saint-Brice and died a few days later from his wounds on April 15, 1796.
- Jean-François Eliard, school master at Varenguebec. He disembarked with Peter-Adrian for Jersey. He was shot to death the night of May 25-26, 1796.
- Joseph-Pierre Deloget, vicar at Argouges, shot to death in the cemetery of Saint-James in 1796.
- Jean-Baptiste Deromé of Saint-Hilaire-du-Harcouët, executed at Caen September 19, 1798.

May they rest in peace -
Requiescant in pace!



**Joël Houque, O.Praem.
Abbot of St-Martin of Mondaye**

**Homily for the 4th Mass of Thanksgiving
St-Sauveur-Lendelin May 6, 2012**

Dry branches, we pick them, we throw them away and they burn. It is a pity, brothers and sisters, that we find this sentence in the Gospel today (Jn 15, 1-8). A pity for our spiritual comfort, our inner tranquility, our own human assurance. Yes, a pity, because this sentence throws us back on our freedom, and to the risks that make for its greatness. In his preaching about hell, Peter-Adrian Toulorge, while he exalts the merciful goodness of God, also affirms with great force God's inexorable justice toward the hardened sinner who does not want to benefit from God's mercy and so dies in his sin.

Almost all of us have been raised in the enclosure of our Holy Mother the Church. We rightly consider ourselves God's vinyard. And if we are this people that God has gathered into the church, isn't that a proof? However, what is essential is not to be so labeled and cataloged as being a part of the vinyard of the Lord's domain. Not a big deal if we are only dead wood at the foot of the vine! What is important is to remain united to the true vine, to remain in Jesus.

Remain! Eight times this verb comes back in today's Gospel. It's an important verb for St John who uses it often in expressions familiar to us: we remain in the Word, in Love, in the Light, we remain in God. Remaining, that is a static verb, of course; however we must understand it in an active sense, even a very active sense. It is not to be verified with words and talk, but by acts and truth. We do not remain in God with our arms crossed! And the first act to do is the act of faith. Just now, in his epistle, John was talking about a commandment or even more, of *the* commandment: to have faith in Jesus Christ and to love each other. A unique commandment, but

one that contains two precepts. And two precepts that we cannot dissociate, because one does not go without the other. Without faith, there cannot be charity: there certainly and hopefully can be philanthropy, fraternity, friendship, love, but not charity in the sense that this charity is a welcome and free participation, conscious even of the very love of God that is absolutely revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ himself forewarns us: without me, you can do nothing. This does not mean to deny the realities and the particular value of all we do; but all this is nothing and can lead only to nothingness if we are not established in a way that we might even sometimes not know this ourselves and that only God knows - if we are not established in the *communio* of Christ, the only one who can give to our lives its weight of eternity. Then, this faith is something alive, it's not given once and for all like a vaccine! Nevertheless, we cannot lose it, but we can make it to be lost, make it die. But we can also protect it, nourish it, grow it. This gift, this grace that God gave us, it is for our freedom that he gave it; and we can always despise a gift or refuse it. To do the trick of despising God is rarely a single act but one that occurs bit by bit by establishing it in our life, like a worm in a plant and, when we realize it, it is too late. Yes, there are some sins against faith and some very serious sins because they ruin the very foundation of the Christian life. Also, if we want to remain in Jesus Christ in deed and truth, we must always repeat this prayer:

*“Lord
Increase the faith in us.
Increase in me the faith
by granting me to live more deeply the mysteries of the liturgy,
Increase in me the faith
by granting me to participate more intensely in the sacraments,
Increase in me the faith
by giving me to follow the way of today and yesterday’s witnesses.
Increase in me the faith
by giving me the intelligence of the believer
who discerns the coming of the Kingdom
in the events of everyday life.”*

John XXIII was writing in his *Diary of a Soul*, the first treasury of my soul is faith, the holy, frank and naïve faith of my parents and my good ancestors. I will be rigorous and severe with myself so that the purity of my faith does not suffer any damage.

Of course, “good ancestors” sounds a bit retro but beyond the vocabulary it emphasizes that this faith can only be transmitted by and in the Church. And, you know, the Church, is the body of Christ. Jeanne d’Arc answered to

her judges: Christ and the Church, it seems to me, are but one. Yes, it is only in community, in the community of the Church, that Christ can keep believers to himself and attract new believers. Remaining in Christ is remaining in the Church.

The recent beatification of Peter-Adrian Toulorge reminds us to remain in the faith and to remain faithful to the catholic, apostolic and Roman faith - sometimes at the price of blood. This morning we are the Church. Let us make it so not only in speech and words but in deed and in truth so that our participation in the Eucharist will not be an illusion but a participation in the grace of Christ that is offered to us. Thus we shall bear much fruit, we shall be his disciples, we shall be worthy of all these valuable witnesses who have succeeded in this land of Normandy for more than fifteen centuries.

Let us take for ourselves and for all whom we love that which Peter-Adrian wrote to his brother on October 12, 1793, the eve of his martyrdom: "Look always to the greatest honor you have, and in your family, a brother that deserved to suffer for God. Away then with sadness about my fate; rejoice in it and say with me: Blessed be God! I wish you a holy life and heaven at the end of your days, also to my sister, to my nephew and my niece, to all my family."



**Thomas Handgrätinger, O.Praem.
Abbot General**

**Homily: The Sacrament of Confirmation 2012
in the Diocese of Ratisbon**

The Spirit of Truth

Several weeks ago in Normandy in the northwest of France where we were honoring our new Blessed, Peter-Adrian Toulorge, there was not a single place left in the small village church. The evening before he had been solemnly beatified in the cathedral of Coutances. This new Blessed, a young priest and confrere of our Order, 36 years old, was publicly guillotined in 1793 during the French Revolution because he had been courageously committed to his Faith and to the Truth. After his execution, his body was thrown into a common ditch. He did not even have a tomb. His ancient abbey is in ruins, the home of his parents is practically destroyed. But in the little church of the village, the new Blessed is being grandly celebrated; he was one of their village, one of their community who has been raised to the honor of the altars. The one thing that carries his memory and that has been preserved is the baptismal font in this little village church of Muneville-le-Bingard. It was there that on May 4, 1757 he was baptized, the very day of his birth. The date of his birth is the same as that of his baptism. His parents offered him life the very day that he was welcomed into the Church. It was there that he began his life as a man and also as a Christian. It was there that the God-Trinity called him by his name. Peter-Adrian; it was there that he received the anointing that is entrance into the “holy people, the royal priesthood” that he later served for all his life as a priest and confrere of the Order; it was there that he received the white vesture

of the child of God that remained immaculate until the baptism of blood at his execution. And there that he received the baptismal candle lit from the paschal candle, symbol of the risen Christ, so that this light might shine forth one day in this child, and might come to enlighten and give direction to others. Naturally the young Peter-Adrian was later confirmed and later ordained a priest and then finally he entered the monastery. But it was surely at the baptismal font that all of this began.

Much that you experience these days, dear confirmands recalls the moment of your baptism; you were called by your name, you were anointed with the sacred chrism received on your forehead with the sign of the Cross; today you will light a candle that you have decorated with care. Certainly, you will not be carried into church as on the day of your baptism. You have come on your own. Today you receive the seal of the Holy Spirit's fullness; today you will mark yourselves by your solemn "amen" your decision to live as Christians, to participate in the life of the community and to be bearers of the light of your Faith.

In today's reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles we learn something of the relationship between baptism and confirmation. Paul encounters some Christians who had received the baptism of John but who had not heard anything about the Holy Spirit. They did not even know that the Spirit existed. Paul baptizes them in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then he imposes his hands on them. It is then that the Holy Spirit comes down upon them and that they begin to speak mysterious words and to speak like the prophets (Acts 19, 6). This is happening here now. The Church is celebrating two important sacraments, baptism and confirmation, that is, the celebration of entry into the Church and that of sending for mission. In baptism we receive access to divine life; confirmation gives the power of God's spirit. Baptism gave you the foundation; today confirmation permits you to integrate all of this into your life and to spread it around you. Confirmation is much more than a private family feast, more than an ephemeral moment. In the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, "feast of the power of God". From the day of our baptism until today we become adult members of the entire Church.

For the new Blessed Peter-Adrian that which grew in him was placing himself totally in service to the Church. He was a priest and a passionate director of conscience. While he was prohibited from openly exercising his ministry, he did it in secret. One day when he was disguised as a woman in or-

der to visit some people and secretly to celebrate the office without being recognized, he was discovered and arrested. When he was condemned to death he openly declared before the tribunal: "Thanks be to God"; when his companions in the cell began to weep and lament, he said to them: "there is no reason to be sad for tomorrow I will be in the presence of God"; the night before his death he wrote touching letters to his brother that he ended with "the vigil of my martyrdom"; and finally when he mounted the scaffold, he said: "I place my life into the hands of God!"

But there was in this young confrere a particularly strong trait, his love of the truth. When he was arrested at first he lied to get himself out of the situation and to save his skin. But more and more he followed the voice of his conscience, gave place to the truth and said what he had truly done. He escaped for a short time to a foreign country. At that time capital punishment awaited the emigrés on their return. He lost his life but, insofar as he was a martyr for the truth, he gained an eternal reward. And I am sure that it was the Spirit of God that guided him, the Holy Spirit that Cardinal Maradiaga of Honduras has presented as the "heart stimulator of the faith".

Dear confirmands,
this spirit must be in you today to firm up and fortify you, to lead you to follow the voice of your conscience, to hear the voice of your heart, to govern your life not simply in "getting by" but in taking a position in an honest and correct manner for truth and justice. There is yet another thing that surprises us in the young blessed. He returned to his country in difficult circumstances in order to comfort others in the faith, to preach the message of the love of God in a time of persecution. Perhaps that's what Pope Benedict XVI had in mind when he declared to the young people of Australia: "Each youth must have the courage to promise the Holy Spirit to bring another youth to Christ in a way that each one considers the best." (Pope Benedict XVI to the International Youth Days at Sydney). And I think that this message is not limited to confirmands. Each person must have the courage to render account of the hope and faith that fills them.

This is true today for all the godparents and parents of the confirmands, it is true for the entire parish. Give good example when it is a matter of being present at the office, of being engaged in the parish, of making a defense for the faith. "You go to receive the power of the Holy Spirit who will come down upon you and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1,8).

This is what Jesus promised to his disciples and today, dear confirmands, this becomes a reality for you. It is the same Spirit by whom he allowed himself to be guided and who “will guide you to total truth” (Jn 16, 13).

It is the same Spirit, the sustainer, the stimulator, the consoler who was revealed in all that Jesus said and did. Jesus did not promise an easy life, a comfortable road. You have felt this when the temptation was great to flee from a delicate situation by a little lie, when the situation allowed you to show off or to present things in a way better than what they really were. In the Church there is also a great temptation to sweep under the carpet everything that is annoying or embarrassing in order to present a better appearance or, in other words, to prefer perception to being. “The truth will set you free”. **The spirit of truth** and of love, the spirit of sincerity and of honesty is the spirit of strength and wisdom.

On this great confirmation day let us proclaim together to the adults who are already confirmed and to our confirmands upon whom I am about now to lay my hands and that I will anoint with the holy Chrism:

*Come, Spirit of holiness,
enkindle the fire of your love in our hearts,
so that we may conduct our lives as right and just Christians,
so that we might build a missionary church,
so that all of us might live in you,*

*in the fullness of your power, in the brightness of your ways,
in the holiness of your Spirit,
for the glory of the Father.*



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