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Abbas Generalis

Christmas Letter 2011

Dear Prelates, dear Confreres and Sisters,

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BEATIFICATION

Meanwhile it is known to everyone that Pope Benedict XVI on April 2, 2011 opened the way to beatification for our confrere Peter-Adrian Toulorge from the Abbey of Blanchelande. In the coming year Cardinal Angelo Amato, on Sunday April 29, 2012, will beatify our French confrere in Coutances, where Father Peter-Adrian was publicly executed by the guillotine on October 13, 1793. For this reason there will be a great celebration of Faith in the Cathedral of Coutances, at which certainly many confreres and sisters, as well as diocesan clergy will take part together. We Premonstratensians are very happy and grateful to the Holy Father for this great honor and distinction. However we also thank all those, both in the Order and in the Diocese of Coutances, who have worked on this cause for many years. In particular we mention here our present Procurator, Father Bernard Ardura, Rome/Frigolet, and our current Postulator, Father Gabriel Wolf, Rome/Windberg. The order of events for the beatification is documented in the protocol of the Definitory meeting and the Premonstratensian Day on Monday, April 30, 2012 is especially emphasized. The beatification of this "Martyr for the Truth" should be for all of us a new incentive not to wane in our efforts toward conversion and perfection and to model our lives in an authentic and credible way, to serve the truth in love and to avoid every form of the opposite of this, half-heartedness and mere apparent holiness. After all the difficult scandals and trials that we too have had to regret and to shoulder in our Order it is this purity and clarity, this total preparedness to sacrifice in the service of people by Father Peter-Adrian, that is precisely a shining example and attractive model. Cardinal Angelo Amato recently in Feldkirchen described "martyrdom as the greatest act of love of God". Here a confrere gave everything and handed himself over; this he had already promised at his profession: "*Trado offerens meipsum*". Since, after burial in a mass grave site, there are no relics of our new blessed, we have only his final letters that he wrote on "the evening before my martyrdom". He knew that he was totally in God's hands, completely "in manus tuas".

*"To let myself go and fall into your heart
To trust and place my life in You
To look toward Jesus and direct myself to Him
To go into the darkness and work things out with You
That is what I want my God and my all"*

In this meditative text Anton Rotzetter¹ describes this letting go, this deepest handing over, this overwhelming love of God. May the new Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge be a great advocate and mediator for all the confreres and sisters in our Order, that we may be infected by his pastoral love for people, that we strive courageously for truth and personal veracity, that we be ready to let go, if necessary, in order to receive one day the hundredfold.

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CHRISTMAS

We are approaching Christmas, the feast of Incarnation. Our Order came into being on this feast day, December 25, 1121. Therefore there are still ten years until the great 900th anniversary of our existence. In a number of places in the Order thought is already being given to celebrating this jubilee and how to do so. From this feast of the Incarnation we receive anew each year the task to do as God did, simply become man, to live humanly and fraternally, to work as brothers and sisters. What does it actually mean concretely to become man for us men, for us as Premonstratensians? With St. Norbert, who signed his profession formula, so to speak, at the crèche, it is simply to look at this divine child, so that this divine birth may take place in us, in our heart, that we grown more and more into his love, that we incorporate ourselves into him, as we fulfill it really-symbolically in daily communion. As we receive and accept him we are changed into him. This becoming like him, this comparing ourselves to him, the only true man, is the mystery of the Incarnation. And so I beseech for all our communities a growth and ripening in being and becoming human, an increase in fraternity and passion for people, a sacrificing for our holy service in the community and outside of it.

From my whole heart I wish all confreres and sisters a happy, blessed and inspiring Christmas, the experience of warmth and fulfillment, something of the shepherds' mood at setting out. They went on their way at night in order to meet the Lord in the child. I wish you some of their humility and spontaneity, to kneel down before this wonder and to adore it – *"verbum caro factum est"*:

*"Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to people of good will" (Lk 2: 14).*

¹ From: Anton Rotzetter, *Gott, der mich atmen last*. 2002.