

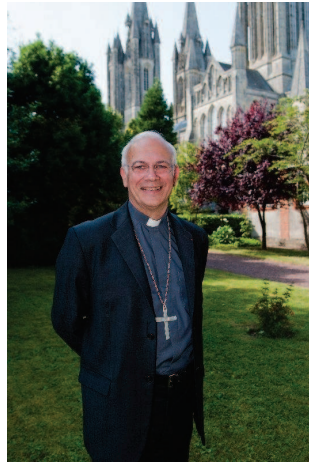


Gabriel M. Wolf

Peter-Adrian Toulorge  
„Martyr of the Truth“  
(1757-1793)

A Premonstratensian with Backbone

## Preface of Bishop Stanislas Lalanne Coutances-Avranches



Peter-Adrian Toulorge, Martyr of the Truth

Who is this man Peter-Adrian Toulorge, born in Normandy, in a village between land and sea? The sea, the forest and Coutances, which frame this area, seem far distant from Muneville-le-Bingard, his place of birth. Born in the year 1757, a small land holder, he was molded by the gentle rhythm of the seasons of the year and brought up in deeply Christian surroundings. Everything revolves around the sea with his exile, around the forest with his return, first hidden and then discovered, around the episcopal city, the place of his martyrdom. These mark him forever, even in eternity - the Blessed of the Manche.

The work of Father Gabriel Wolf, the zealous postulator of the cause, clears away a certain ignorance of Peter-Adrian. Certainly the priest, the wayfarer of God, the martyr of the truth, who had confidence “in the day that dawns”, as he sang at Compline on the day before his martyrdom, is well known, honored and loved by those who always accompanied him and brought him forward by word of mouth from generation to generation. Incidentally, the name “Toulorge” is very frequently found in the Manche.

It is desirable that his veneration spread throughout the whole world so that our present age may discover in him a modest and humble figure that speaks for itself and points out a way that is full of trust, peace and truth.

This work embraces the following aspects: the places connected to his life, his message, the stages of the beatification process and several liturgical elements to assist and accompany prayer and veneration on the day of his memorial. Peter-Adrian Toulorge, the Blessed, that also means discovering places especially in the Manche, but also on Jersey and in Beauport and it means following his footsteps. In the great history of the faith this is a form of veneration that is important to support, an exemplary way of a martyr, a way of truth that is important to convey.

One who venerates the Premonstratensian Peter-Adrian readily recalls his similarity with the monks in Algerian Tibhirine. Nothing is the same in the biographies - neither the period nor the circumstances, neither the age nor the motivation. But what is common is the public interest in the whole event, in these men, who trusting in their conviction somewhat hesitantly, but who in the end very resolutely went to their death totally trusting Christ their savior.

And therefore I thank Gabriel Wolf, but also Jean-Baptiste Lechat, in a two-fold way as postulators and biographers of Peter-Adrian. By reading this booklet let us discover the new blessed, a witness to the faith, who comes forth from the great family of men and women who have marked our Church in the course of the centuries and even today continue to build it up.

### Preface of Abbot Joël Houque, O. Praem., Mondaye



Did Peter-Adrian Toulorge know the Abbey of Mondaye?  
Probably by name, for his monastery of Blanchelande belonged to the same circary (in Normandy before the Revolution there were 9 abbeys: Blanche-

lande and La Lucerne in Manche, Falaise and Mondaye in Calvados, Cerisy-Belle Etoile and Silly en Gouffern in Orne, Isle-Dieu in Eure and Bellozane in Seine-Maritime). Still Peter-Adrian probably never traveled so far into the north of the province. When he gave over his life as a martyr of the truth the abbey of Normandy had perished in the storm of the Revolution. Perhaps he died in the assumption of the final destruction of his Order? Now today more than 200 years after his sublime sacrifice, the Premonstratensians of an abbey founded in the 13th century, the confreres of St-Martin in Mondaye near the episcopal city of Bayeux in Calvados, are preparing to receive other confreres of the same Order from all continents, in order to solemnly celebrate his beatification.

Just as Blanchelande, Mondaye was also suppressed in the Revolution. Since the monastery was newly built in the 18th century, it fortunately did not serve as a quarry and survived this troubled time without greater damage. It was different with the community: it was scattered, the last confrere died before 1850. Thanks to the tenacity of one of the diocesan priests of Normandy four Premonstratensians of the Belgian Abbey of Grimbergen settled here in 1859. In spite of exile and various difficulties the community is very much alive here and in four priories: at present it numbers 50 confreres - that is more than double the number in 1789. Can we see in this small wonder a special intervention of the Premonstratensian martyr Peter-Adrian Toulorge?

We are happy to recall our own Father Adrian Toulorge: he was born in Muneville-le-Bingard in 1882, was related to Peter-Adrian Toulorge and entered Mondaye in 1901. Because of the Combes Laws he had to flee with the community to the Belgian Bois-Seigneur-Isaac. After completing outstanding studies in Rome with a Doctorate in Theology, he was appointed novice master. Unfortunately he died in 1916 at 34 of Tuberculosis which he contracted in Italy. Since Adrian had so edified his confreres and died in the aura of sanctity, the community at their return from exile in 1924 brought his deathbed along as a relic. He himself lies in the cemetery in Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, a pilgrimage place, in which the community of Mondaye lived for more than 20 years.

In 2004 when rumors increased that the beatification process of Peter-Adrian Toulorge would soon be finished I entrusted the first novice whom I was permitted to vest as administrator of the community to the protection of Peter-Adrian Toulorge. As a priest since 2010 he now has the joy to be able to celebrate liturgically the memorial of his blessed patron.

On our community day in November 2011 we made a pilgrimage to the places where the blessed martyr lived: to Blanchelande and Denville. In our



white habit the Blessed Peter-Adrian will certainly have recognized us as his bothers!

May his example and his prayers help us so that we also may be true witnesses of our profession in the Premonstratensian Order just as he, whom we honor as martyr of the truth, was more than 200 years ago.

Preface of Pastor Roland Hélaine,  
Parish of St-Jean-Eudes Saint-Sauveur-Lendelin



The beatification of Peter-Adrian Toulorge fills with joy the faithful of Muneville-le-Bingard, his home parish, and everyone who since 1993 has worked to make known the merits of “Père Toulorge”. And today the entire parish of St-Jean-Eudes in Saint-Sauveur-Lendelin, to which Muneville belongs, is honored.

But this beatification has a genuine meaning for us only if it opens us to the future. The Church presents him to us for veneration because he is an example of how to remain true to Jesus Christ. We live our faith in different circumstances. The conditions are not so radical as those in which Peter-Adrian lived. However, it is not always easy in our times either and we must live our life so that the world of today can recognize the message of the Gospel.

Christians of his home parish:  
Will this beatification renew our faith and our Christian life?  
That is the question that is placed before us today.

## Foreward

“Each of us should strive to live his priesthood  
in such a way as to be convincing.  
In such a manner that young people might say  
this is a true calling, one can live in this way,  
in this way one can do essential things for the world.  
I think that none of us would have become a priest  
if we had not met convincing priests  
who were on fire with the love of Christ.”

*(Benedict XVI on June 10, 2010  
at the prayer vigil on St. Peter's Square  
for the closing of the International Year for Priests)*

The diocesan priest Peter-Adrian (Pierre-Adrien) Toulorge, while assistant priest at Doville, found in his pastor, Jacques-François Le Canut, a committed religious who, in the troubled times of the French Revolution, set an example for him of a successful union between ministry and membership in a monastic community, and so Peter-Adrian entered the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande in 1787. This canon, inspired by the ideal of St. Norbert, soon had to undergo severe trials: the dissolution of his abbey and persecutions as a Catholic priest. When it came to a question of telling the truth or lying to save his life while on trial before the revolutionary tribunal, he died by the guillotine as a 36 year old “Martyr of the Truth” on October 13, 1793.

In this booklet we would like to present the life and witness of this “Premonstratensian with Backbone”, who was beatified on April 29, 2012 in the Cathedral of Coutances by Cardinal Angelo Amato on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI.

Our thanks is due to Abbot General Emeritus, Marcel van de Ven, O. Praem. (+ 2000) who took up the Cause with his Definitory, to Postulator General Emeritus, Donatian De Clerck, O. Praem., as the driving force of the beatification process, to Bernard Ardura, O. Praem. for all his support and the composition of the excellent *Positio*, to the Relator, Daniel Ols, O. P. (Congregation for the Causes of Saints), to the Vice-Postulator, Jean-Baptiste Lechat, and to President Marc Beuve (Association of the Friends of Peter-Adrian Toulorge), to the Diocesan Bishops of Coutances, Jacques Fihey and Stanislas Lalanne, to the pastors of Muneville-le-Bingard, André Gâté, Louis Onfroy and Roland Hélaine, as well as the two young confreres from Windberg and Mondaye, who bear the religious name Peter-Adrian.

A sincere “May God reward you” to all who turn trustingly to the Servant of God on a daily basis and tell us about their answered prayers; to those who three times a year keep his memory alive in liturgical ceremonies and pilgrimages; to those who make a financial contribution or have helped with the renovation of the mountain chapel of Doville; finally to all who are committed to and are involved in the preparation of the beatification and together with the Diocese of Coutances-Avranches and the Premonstratensians gratefully and joyfully await this great day.

Many have contributed to the composition of this booklet. To them also a debt of thanks is due: first of all to Bernard Ardura, O. Praem. for his 40 page publication (in French) from the year 1993 and to the Abbey of St-Joseph of Clairval, which by means of its “Spiritual Newsletter” from July 11, 2009 ([www.clairval.com](http://www.clairval.com)) has provided for a wide spread devotion; to the Vice-postulator Jean-Baptiste Lechat for his great involvement and for so much good advice; to the translators Annie-Claire Gaboreau, Bernard Pauthier (Mondaye) and Ted Antry, O. Praem. (Daylesford) and to the authors of personal testimony.

Peter-Adrian Toulorge lived with committed priests and he himself became a shining beacon to the fact that it is worthwhile, even in difficult times, to assume the following of Jesus Christ and remain faithful to it. May he be a good spokesman for the Premonstratensian Order, the Diocese of Coutances-Avranches and all those who venerate him, so that each one can live, work and witness to his faith with backbone in his own place.

Rome, December 25, 2011  
the 890th Anniversary of St. Norbert’s Profession in Prémontré

Pater Gabriel M. Wolf, O. Praem.  
Postulator General



## His Life

Autumn 1793. The French Revolution had entered its most violent phase, the Reign of Terror (*la Terreur*). Priests who had remained faithful to Rome were hunted down and tried. On the evening of October 12, 1793 the 36 year old Premonstratensian, Peter-Adrian Toulorge, was radiant as he returned from court to his cell which he shared with other imprisoned priests and lay people. *"So, what's happening?" - "Good news! The case was decided in my favor!"* Everyone thought he had been acquitted. But soon he revealed the truth: He had been sentenced to death. The overall joy turned to pain. Sister Saint-Paul, a Benedictine nun, who was arrested at the same time as he, broke into tears. The future martyr sternly corrected her: *"Sister, the tears you are shedding are unworthy of you and me! What would people say if they find out that after we renounced the world we had great difficulty in leaving it? If we are reluctant to die, we are giving a bad example. Let us teach them by our steadfastness what they must do. Let us show them that faith is victorious over torment and clear for ourselves a path to heaven."*

Who was this courageous witness to Christ and his Church?

Peter-Adrian (Pierre-Adrien) Toulorge was born in the French Muneville-le-Bingard (Diocese of Coutances-Avranches/Normandy) on May 4, 1757 and was baptized on the same day in the parish church and given the name Peter, the patron of the parish. He was the third child of Julien and Julienne Toulorge who owned a small farm.



Only four days after his birth his mother died and was interred in the church. Four years after this tragic loss Julien Toulorge married the widow Marie Duprey who also came from Muneville. Peter-Adrian grew up in a milieu that was deeply Christian, and so the family Toulorge took an active part in parish life. As almost all the residents of the little village they made their Easter duty and tended to prayer at home. In such surroundings vocations were able to grow; sources reveal that eleven priests came from Muneville during the lifetime of the soon to be beatified Premonstratensian.

Early on the devout Peter-Adrian received instructions in Latin from one of the assistant parish priests, attended a school for his general studies and then for philosophy. In 1778 he was admitted to the priest seminary of Coutances, where after his theological studies he was ordained to the diaconate on May 8, 1781 in the cathedral of "Notre-Dame de Coutances". A superior with firm beliefs molded the seminarians: The Blessed François Le-franc who not only preached sincerity but set an example of it - even to the point of giving up his life on September 2, 1792 in Paris, because he refused to take the constitutional oath to the state.

Shortly before his priestly ordination Peter-Adrian lost his father on March 31, 1782: a heavy blow! Deprived of parental care, the candidate for ordination now placed his entire trust in God. The surrender of his life with "*adsum*" before the bishop he would seal on the scaffold eleven years later with the cry of Jesus "*in manus tuas (into your hands, O God)*".

In January 1783 the newly ordained 25 year old priest was appointed the curate at Denville. There he experienced the tremendous zeal of his 44 year old Premonstratensian pastor, Jacques-François Le Canut, on behalf of the 618 faithful of the parish. The majority of these people lived in poverty since the American War of Independence had completely destroyed the shipping trade. In his sermons that have been preserved the young vicar praised the merciful goodness of God, but at the same time stressed his justice in regard to the hardened sinner. Once he spoke in truly prophetic fashion: "*In what a happy situation the children of God find themselves! He does test them, but only out of love. Yes, dear brothers, you can feel the tender care of the consoling Spirit; you are immediately filled by an immeasurable joy which you cannot express in word.*"

In his time at Denville he was frequently, together with his pastor, as a guest in the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande (founded in the 12th cent.). Inspired by the ideal of St. Norbert, Peter-Adrian entered the abbey in 1787. He wanted to dedicate himself both to the priestly ministry in the countryside as well as participate in the life of the community in order to find spiritual support there. Since Blanchelande did not have a novitiate,

the young confrere was sent to the Premonstratensian monastery of Beaufort (Diocese of Tréguier). In June 1788 he returned to his abbey to make his profession and helped out the young canons in the surrounding parishes. We know of two baptisms he performed in Dовille where he formerly served as curate.



However, he was not permitted to live for a long time as a Premonstratensian in Blanchelande, for political events took a revolutionary change. In January 1789 King Louis XVI convened the States General (the kingdom's national assembly) in Versailles. By February 13, 1790 they had agreed on the suppression of all monastic and canonical orders and on February 26 to make an inventory of the monastic properties. The expropriation of church property for the relief of the financial needs of the State was the economic preliminary decision of a much farther reaching problem: the position of the Church in and for the State. The "Civil Constitution of the Clergy" from July 12, 1790 cut church life right to the quick in that it took over the Church's independence and made the clergy public servants. The oath to the Civil Constitution that was required of all ecclesiastical officials was almost unanimously refused by the delegates of the higher clergy in the National Assembly, while a third of the lower clergy took the oath. By a decree of November 29, 1791 the priests who refused the oath were declared suspect and were subject to legal sanctions. It came down to centrally organized campaigns against clerics who remained faithful to Rome. Consequently in September 1792 alone 200 priests were murdered in Paris prisons. As a result 30,000 - 40,000 clerics emigrated. With the increasing radicalization of the French Revolution a systematic dechristianization began,



the consequences of which were manifold and radical. Its primary victim was the French clergy itself: It lost not only its temporal assets but also 15 - 20% of its membership through resignation, emigration, deportation and execution.

The Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande was also struck by the fate of suppression and expropriation. The abbey consisted of ten canons and one oblate. Five of them lived outside as pastors in parishes. In April 1790 the city council of Saint-Sauveur sent a team of representatives to Blanchelande. They were to draw up a detailed inventory of all the possessions of the abbey with a view to putting them up for sale. This took two months. On June 10, 1790 at seven o'clock in the morning each of the five canons living in the abbey was individually asked whether he "*wanted to take advantage of the provisions of the law and leave the monastery*". Prior Jean-Baptiste-Vincent Morgan responded with "Yes", while Peter-Adrian together with Subprior François-Nicolas de Quen and Claude-Charles-François Aubin Marchand (both 47 years old) confirmed that they wanted to continue to live in community. They were informed that they must move to Savigny to a "concentration monastery" where all religious would be herded together ex officio in the framework of the Department. In view of this less than encouraging outlook the three canons preferred to live separately and be active ministerially.

From October 1790 the now 33 year old Peter-Adrian found shelter for more than a year at the neighboring farm of the Le Sens family in La Cour. Out of fear he celebrated Mass publicly only on occasion in the surrounding parishes. At the beginning of 1791 we find his signature "Toulorge, priest" (and no longer as formerly "canon regular of the Abbey of Blanchelande") only three times in archival documents: for a wedding and two funerals.

When Peter-Adrian Toulorge heard about the law of August 26, 1792, that all priests, who perform an office publicly and had not taken the oath of allegiance to the civil government, were condemned to deportation he believed that this pertained to him and he decided - as 562 other priests of the Diocese of Coutances - to emigrate to the English Isle of Jersey. He applied for travel documents. At the passport control on September 12 no one noticed his mistake.

Only on Jersey where, for five weeks, he led the meagre life of an impoverished émigré, did he learn that he had not been affected by the banishment law and could have remained in France without being bothered. Peter-Adrian thought about his country and the lack of faithful priests there and decided to return as soon as possible, in the hope that his absence had not been noticed.

He went ashore secretly in Portbail and immediately went underground. From his cousin Jean-Nicolas Toulorge, who was pastor of St-Martin-du-Mesnil, he learned of the law of October 23, 1792, which imposed the death penalty on the exiles who returned to France as well as the state requirement that these have to leave the country within two weeks. Should Peter-Adrian return to Jersey? He decided to remain in France.



From November 1792 until September 1793 the young religious lived underground and moved from one village to another in disguise in order to celebrate the Eucharist and confer the sacraments in the homes of private persons. Moreover, he celebrated with makeshift vestments, which were confiscated at his arrest, and liturgical texts copied by hand - for instance the votive formulas to the Holy Spirit and to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In a calendar that contained the distances of the French and European cities from Paris, the zealous priest jotted down sermon outlines and Mass intentions (without noting the donor's name). By means of needle pricks he marked which Masses that were said. Thanks to his caution he was able to continue his activity in the neighborhood of Blanchelande and Do-ville inspite of all the disruptive maneuvers of the local commissioners and revolutionary organizations. Anyone who recognized someone who refused to take the oath was expected to denounce him; there was even a reward for turning him in.

On the evening of September 2, 1793 a woman who was passing by saw a “filthy, soaking wet and exhausted” tramp emerge from a thicket. Out of pity she invited him to her home. When the poor vagabond gained confidence he made himself known: He was Peter-Adrian Toulorge from the Abbey of Blanchelande. Thereupon the hostess revealed that she was Sister Saint-Paul, a Benedictine nun, driven from her convent by the Revolution. The following day she took the priest - dressed as a woman for his protection - to Neufmesnil, to a friend by the name Marotte Fosse. She thought he would be safer there. But as some workers saw the strange woman passing by they noticed his men’s stockings and shoes. They thought of the promised reward and followed the two suspicious women at a distance to the Mill of Hameau Roulland; after that they informed the Revolutionary Council.

Peter-Adrian was resting in the barn when three members of the National Guard pounded on the door of the house: *“In the name of the law, open up!”* The priest was quiet as a mouse. One of the men went to get Marotte Fosse, who had gone to work; they forced her to open the door. The house was searched from basement to attic. The priest had hidden under a pile of dried flax bundles; the guards stabbed with their bayonets at the pile of flax. Nothing! Having achieved nothing they wanted to leave when one of them went back to the barn again and discovered Peter-Adrian as he was leaving his hiding place. The Premonstratensian, who had with him his white habit, liturgical vestments and books, a chalice and portable altar, was arrested on the spot.



Two days later those arrested were brought before the Directory of the District of Carentan. In order not to be condemned to death for “returning from emigration” Peter-Adrian kept silent about having left France. In the hope of leading him into a contradiction, the commissioner Léonor Félix Le Canut asked him: *“Have you neither now nor ever at all been on Jersey or another foreign territory?”* - *“No.”* - *“But one of those who refused the oath, whom we recently questioned, told us he had seen you on Jersey”* (Le Canut made this up). - *“I have never left French territory, and if anyone said that I have, then he was mistaken or he is out of his mind.”* When finally the vestments and liturgical objects were shown to the accused, he admitted that they were his.

Peter-Adrian Toulorge had denied that he had been on Jersey to save his life. But the words of Jesus, *“Let your yes be yes, your no be no”* (Mt 5:37), echoed in his heart. What should he have done? Under pressure of danger to his life to speak the truth or further deny his emigration, in order to get off free? Hard inner struggles tortured the 36 year old priest.

After some hesitation, moved by the Holy Spirit, on Sunday, September 8, 1793, the Feast of the Birth of Mary, inspite of danger to his life, he decided to tell the whole truth - in the knowledge that he was ultimately being persecuted as a Catholic priest. In the early morning when he was to leave Carentan to be brought back to Coutances, he explained for the protocol that he had indeed left France because he mistakenly felt he was subject to the law of August 26 and later returned home. The Premonstratensian arrived in the capital of the Departement of Manche at the worst possible moment: for just at that moment Representative Jean-Baptiste Le Carpentier, the delegate of the *Convention* (the Parliament of the Republic) was staying there. He was sent with the task of “taking whatever measure needed to wipe out every trace of royalty and superstition”. Le Carpentier became known as the “Executioner of La Manche”; in a few days 140 people were arrested.

On September 22, 1793 Peter-Adrian appeared before the Administrative Commission of Coutances, which had to decide whether or not he was to be considered a “returned exile”. In spite of his physical exhaustion, he was questioned in detail; he admitted to his brief stay on Jersey. The judges, who feared Le Carpentier, even though they wanted to spare the priest’s life, declared that “the defendant should be considered an émigré”; as proof of this, however, they only cited the travel documents issued in his name. His testimony was not included in the records in order to give him a chance to exonerate himself. After that the priest was handed over to the Criminal Court to receive a sentence.

The presiding judge of this court, Gilbert-François Loisel, was not a fanatical exponent of the Terror (*Terreur*). Before the session he attempted once again to save the defendant, by recommending that he withdraw his confession regarding his stay in Jersey and instead to state some other whereabouts in France. The Court would be satisfied and Toulorge could avoid the guillotine. The judges were even ready to respond to the questions on behalf of the priest so that he need not burden his conscience; he merely had to remain silent. Canon Peter-Adrian, however, preferred to die rather than not tell the whole truth, even before a Revolutionary Court.



*The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* from the year 2005 replies to the question, “What is one’s duty in regard to the truth?”:

“Everyone is called to sincerity and truth in his actions and speech. Everyone has the duty to seek the truth, to adhere to it and to order his whole life in accord with its demands. In Jesus Christ the whole of God’s truth has been made manifest: *He is the truth*. Whoever follows him lives in the Spirit of truth and guards himself against deviousness, falsehood and hypocrisy.” (Nr. 521).

Love of the truth led Peter-Adrian to his heroic decision.

In the written verdict of the Criminal Court for October 12, 1793 we read: *"Toulorge, after being questioned whether he could verify that he had not left the Territory of the French Republic, said he could not verify it, and even added that he left the French sovereign territory and went to the English Isle of Jersey."*

An embarrassed silence followed the reading of the verdict of death. Then Peter-Adrian was heard to speak the following: *"Deo gratias (Thanks be to God)! God's will be done and not mine! Farewell, Gentlemen, until eternity, if you prove yourselves worthy of it!"* His face radiated an inner peace and deep joy. Many women who met him on his way back to prison thought he was acquitted.

In the evening the convicted man ate with a good appetite, went to confession and wrote three impressive letters while all the other inmates slept.

To a friend:

*"I send you the best and most favorable news. For my death sentence was scarcely announced, when I responded following in the footsteps of St. Cyprian: Deo gratias (Thanks be to God)! For tomorrow at two o'clock I shall leave this earth and enter heaven to enjoy the presence of God and my Church. Ah! How can it happen to me, a sinner, to be crowned a martyr? I confess to my God that I am most unworthy of such a benefit. But what should I say? This is the fate of those who have remained faithful in the Catholic, apostolic and Roman faith which by the grace of God I follow to the utmost.*

*O Mother of Christians who alone has the right to present children to heaven, what a joy it is for me, in this time of great tempest, to have remained in your holy house! Since, however, the hour of my death draws near, my time is over, my eternity approaches."*

To his brother:

*"Rejoice because tomorrow you will have an advocate in heaven, if God - as I hope - will sustain me, as he has done till now. And rejoice again, because God has deemed me worthy, not only to endure this prison, but death itself for our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest favor that he could grant me. I have asked him to confer on you the same crown. It is not fitting to remain in this state of affairs. Therefore direct your eyes to heaven, live uprightly and above all be a good Christian. Bring your children up in the holy, Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion. Always consider it the greatest honor to have had a brother in your family who merited to shed his blood for Christ. Do not grieve about my fate. Rejoice and say with me: Blessed be God!"*



*Indeed I wish for you on your last day a holy life and paradise; I wish this also for my sister, my nephew and my niece and my entire family. Now, however, in perfect friendship I remain always your brother. I embrace you all."*

Finally he announced his approaching martyrdom to one other person and added: *"So unmistakable a sign of the goodness of God I have not deserved."*

The condemned man then slept the sleep of the just. The next day, Sunday, October 13, he awoke joyful and calm. He asked some of his fellow prisoners to cut his hair and shave his beard; after that he said the breviary with his confreres and stopped only at Compline (night prayer). The last verses which he spoke ran: *"When, o Lord, will your day break, which knows no setting?"* Then he closed his book and cried out: *"My dear friends, let us stop here, for I will soon gratefully finish this hymn in heaven. ... My dear brothers, I will not forget you; I pray that God will protect you. I pray for all my benefactors, friends and even enemies."* His fellow-prisoners knelt down and asked for his blessing; as he blessed them his face gleamed with heavenly peace.

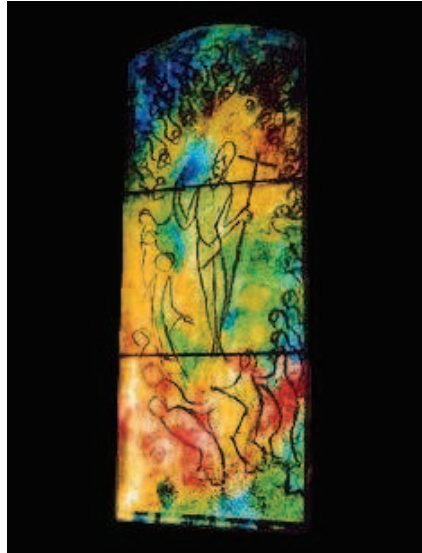
According to an eyewitness the guillotine was set up before the house of the mayor of Coutances on the Place La Croûte. The crowd was silent from emotion as it watched this young priest who perfectly calm went to his death. Before the execution Peter-Adrian said: *"My God, into your hands I place my life! I ask you to restore and protect your holy Church. Forgive my enemies."*

After the execution, the executioner grabbed the bleeding head by the hair and showed it to the crowd. It was four-thirty. A cart transported the body to the cemetery of St-Pierre where he, together with three other priest-martyrs from Coutances, was covered with lime to hasten decay and then buried in a common grave.

The others were the curates

Laurent Leboeuf (39 years old)  
and François Lemoigne (32 years old), who were killed on October 24,

as well as Gabriel Aumont (38 years old),  
vicar of the Cathedral of Avranches, who died by the Guillotine  
on June 18, 1794.



Sister Saint-Paul and the other prisoners, who were charged with having hidden Peter-Adrian Toulorge, were set free. The Martyr had held his protective hand over them from above.

Till today believers testify that God had shown them favors through the intercession of Peter-Adrian. Those who honor him are found far beyond the borders of France, even in Cameroon, Central Africa, India and Australia.

In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* the Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote:  
“Martyrdom is an outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church. Fidelity to God’s holy law, witnessed to by death, is a solemn proclamation and missionary commitment *usque ad sanguinem* (to the point of shedding blood), so that the splendor of moral truth may be undimmed in the behavior and thinking of individuals and society. ... If martyrdom forms the high point of Christian witness to moral truth, and one to which only comparatively few can be called, it gives nevertheless a consistent witness that all Christians should daily be ready to give.” (Nr. 93).

Peter-Adrian Toulorge is called a “Martyr of the Truth” in the language of the people. Through his intercession may he obtain for us the grace to be able, throughout our entire lives, to bear witness for Christ, who is himself the truth.

### Outline of Peter-Adrian's Life

Nov. 9, 1747	-	Linverville: Marriage of Julien Toulorge and Julienne Hamel
May 4, 1757	-	Muneville-le-Bingard: Birth of Peter-Adrian Toulorge, on the same day baptism by the curate Le Royer
May 8, 1757	4 days	Muneville-le-Bingard: Death of Julienne Toulorge, his mother, burial on the following day in the church nave  Scholastic education in Muneville und Coutances
1777	20 years	Philosophical education in Coutances
1778-1782	21-25 y.	Theological education in the priest seminary of Coutances
June 12, 1778	21 years	Coutances: Reception of tonsure and minor orders
Sept. 23, 1780	23 years	Coutances: Ordination to subdiaconate
May 8, 1781	24 years	Coutances: Ordination to diaconate
Mar. 31, 1782	24 years	Muneville-le-Bingard: Death of Julien Toulorge, his father
June 1782	25 years	Ordination to priest
Dec. 1782	25 years	Doville: Arrival as curate (Diocesan priest)
Jan. 30, 1783	25 years	First signature as curate
1787	30 years	Reception into the Abbey of Blanchelande
From June 1787	30 years	One year novitiate in the Abbey of Beauport
June 10, 1788	31 years	Blanchelande: Return from Beauport
Mid 1788	31 years	Profession to the Abbey of Blanchelande

Oct. 11, 1790	33 years	Blanchelande: Departure as one of the last canons
Oct. 1790 until Aug. 1792	33-35 y.	Residence with the Le Sens family in Neufmesnil Celebration of Mass in the church of Neufmesnil
Dec. 11, 1790	33 years	Blanchelande: Sale of the furnishings of Blanchelande
Sept. 12, 1792	35 years	St-Germain-sur-Ay: Passport control at the ferry crossing to Jersey
About Sept. 20, 1792	35 years	Portbail: Return from Jersey  Three week stay with his cousin Pastor Jean-Nicolas Toulorge
From Nov. 1792	35 years	Ministry service in secret in the area of Blanchelande, Neufmesnil, Denville
Sept. 3, 1793	36 years	Arrest in Neufmesnil (Hameau Roulland), Imprisonment in Carentan
Sept. 4/ Sept. 5, 1793	36 years	Carentan: Judicial investigation, questioning
Sept. 8, 1793	36 years	Coutances: Brought to Coutances, court trial
Oct. 12, 1793	36 years	Coutances: Sentenced to death
Oct. 13, 1793	36 years	Coutances: Execution by the guillotine, burial in the cemetery of St-Pierre, 1804 reburial of the corpse at the enlargement of the cemetery into a mass grave
Oct. 14, 1793	-	Coutances: Transfer of his fellow prisoners to La Haye-du-Puits (Bretel)
Dec. 25, 1793	-	Coutances: Discharge of the last defendants, Cessation of the proceedings.

## Places Connected with his Life

### **Muneville-le-Bingard, La Quièze: House of his birth**

The house in which Peter-Adrian Toulorge was born, and which lies 4.4 km northwest of Muneville-le-Bingard in the hamlet of La Quièze, is now preserved only in ruins. On September 27, 1868 Bishop Jean-Pierre Bravard blessed a memorial plaque at the house of his birth in the hamlet of La Quièze:

*IN HAC DOMO NATUS EST DIE IV MAII ANNO DOMINI 1757  
PETRUS-ADRIANUS TOULORGE, PRESBYTER, QUI VERITATIS ET FIDEI CATHOLICAE MARTYR  
OCCUBUIT ANNO 1793 MENSIS OCTOBRIIS DIE XIII*

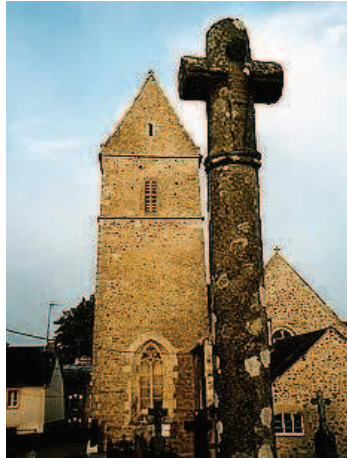
*(In this house on May 4, 1757  
the priest Peter-Adrian Toulorge was born;  
he died as a martyr of the Truth and the Catholic Faith  
on October 13, 1793).*

Since we have no first class relics (*ex ossibus*) of Peter-Adrian Toulorge, the family home, the house of his birth is an even more important place of memory, for it is here that his childhood becomes “tangible”.



### **Muneville-le-Bingard: Parish Church of “St-Pierre et St-Paul”**

The romanesque church where Peter-Adrian Toulorge was baptized in Muneville-le-Bingard exhibits an interesting building history: You can still clearly recognize the basic structure of the 13th century in the barrel-vault over the altar area, the exterior walls of the nave and the west portal.



The visitor enters the church through a front entrance with a granite arch from the 16th century and immediately encounters on the left a roman-  
esque baptismal font that is protected as an historical monument. It was at  
this font, on May 4, 1757, that Peter-Adrian was received into the commu-  
nity of the Church.



A small glass window portrays the Servant of God before the Tribunal of  
Coutances. It was made for the 100th anniversary celebration in 1893 by  
Duhamel-Marette of Evreux and blessed by the diocesan bishop, Abel-  
Anastase Germain. An angel extends to Peter-Adrian, who is surrounded by  
heavenly light, the palm branch and crown as signs of his approaching mar-  
tyrdom. Beneath this representation stands the final verse of the complete  
hymn which the servant of God would sing to the end in heaven.





On September 27, 1868, amidst the great participation of political representatives and people, Bishop Jean-Pierre Bravard blessed a black marble relief in the choir of the church. In the center of which can be seen the young religious defending himself before the Tribunal. He points to heaven from which an angel once again brings him the symbols of his approaching martyrdom. On the left the executioners already wait to bring Peter-Adrian to the scaffold. In the background of the relief are seen the Abbey of Blanchelande and a guillotine.



The inscription with an added citation from the Old Testament Book of Maccabees (2 M 6:21.22.24) runs:

*PETRUS ADRIANUS TOULORGE, IN HAC PAROCHIA NATUS, PRESBYTER ORDINIS PRAEMONSTRATENSIS,  
FIDEI CATHOLICAE CONFESSOR EGREGIUS, VERITATI SIMUL ET RELIGIONI TESTIMONIUM INDECLINABILE  
CAPITIS OBTRUNCATIONE COMPLEVIT CONSTANTIIIS  
ANNO DMI 1793 MENSIS OCTOBR. DIE 13.*

*(Peter-Adrian Toulorge, born in this parish, priest of the  
Premonstratensian Order, eminent confessor of the Catholic Faith,  
unshakeably completed his witness of the truth and the faith  
by his beheading in Coutances on October 13  
in the year of the Lord 1793)*

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary celebration of his martyrdom in 1993 the “Association of the Friends of Peter-Adrian Toulorge” installed in the right aisle a permanent exhibit with numerous plaques containing information as well as a book in which to write expressions of thanks and intentions. For the 250th birthday of this great son of the community in 2007 an attractive film about the life, message and veneration of the soon to be beatified Premonstratensian was installed. This film has been well received by individual pilgrims as well as by groups.



#### **Coutances: Cathedral of “Notre-Dame”**

A gothic highlight in Normandy is certainly the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Coutances which is situated on an elevation and visible from afar. It was here that Peter-Adrian Toulorge between 1778-1782 received both minor and major orders of ordination; it is here that he will be beatified. With its 75m high towers and massive cross-tower the cathedral dominates the silhouette of the city. The romanesque cathedral which was damaged by fire was rebuilt around 1218; the façade and the north side chapels were erected after 1250; the south side chapels in the 14th century. During the Wars of Religion the cathedral suffered much damage.



### **Doville, Mont Escalclif: Former Parish Church of “St-Martin”**

Peter-Adrian Toulorge received his first pastoral experience in the romanesque parish church of St-Martin at Doville on “Mont Escalclif”. As curate he preached and conferred the sacraments there for five years. The chapel, which is situated on the lovely scenic mountain ridge overlooking the sea, was renovated by the Doville municipality and the Premonstratensian Order with a view toward the beatification.



### **Blanchelande: Former Abbey of “St-Nicolas”**

Already in 1161 Bishop Richard de Bohon (Coutances) installed the first Premonstratensians in Blanchelande; quickly the place achieved importance beyond its local region. The canons took on numerous parishes in the surrounding area. The romanesque stone church was dedicated in 1186. Unfortunately the revolutionaries destroyed a large part of the buildings including the abbey church in which Peter-Adrian Toulorge made his profession in 1788. Today Blanchelande is privately owned and cannot be viewed.



### Coutances: Cemetery of “St-Pierre”

After his death by the guillotine, along with other martyrs, Peter-Adrian was buried in a common grave in a cemetery which today is not accessible. A memorial plaque recalls the sacrifice of his/their life.

*HIC SEPULTUS EST  
PETRUS ADRIANUS TOULORGE  
NATUS IN PAROCHIA MUNEVILLE-LE-BINGARD  
PRESBYTER EX ORD. PREMONSTR.  
QUI ANNOS 37 NATUS FIDEI CATHOLICAE SIMUL ET VERITATIS MARTYR,  
CONSTANTIS CAPITIS PLEXUS FORTITER OCCUBUIT ANNO 1793 MENSIS OCTOBR. DIE XIII.*

*(Here lies Peter-Adrian Toulorge,  
born in the parish of Muneville-le-Bingard,  
priest of the Premonstratensian Order, who in the 37th year of his life  
was beheaded as a martyr of the Catholic Faith and the truth  
in Coutances, on October 13, 1793  
and died courageously)*



### Prayer for Beatification

*O Lord, our God, you granted to your servant Peter-Adrian Toulorge the grace of fidelity to his beliefs, to the Church, the Pope, his Order and his homeland, in the midst of trials. Rather than preserving his life and prolonging his freedom through lies, he chose out of love for the truth to give himself up, in order to win that life which knows no end and to partake in your glory. You showered him so much with your love, that he was able to forgive his executioner before he gave his life back into your hands. Grant, Lord, that your servant may be glorified, and grant me through his intercession the grace ..., which I confidently ask of you. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

## Veneration until the Present Time

### Living Memory

The death of Peter-Adrian Toulorge made a great impression on the population of Coutances and the surrounding area. The pastors of Muneville-le-Bingard in particular made an effort to keep his memory alive through liturgical celebrations such as the annual 40 hours devotion since 1858 or the 100th anniversary of his death in 1893. On quite a few days as many as 260 men and 340 women of the entire population of 854 received communion. The sermons of the Eucharistic Triduum, especially at the solemn vespers, were used to keep Peter-Adrian's memory alive.



The veneration of the people is very much alive even to the present day. It is obvious particularly during pilgrimages and prayer days in Muneville-le-Bingard (his birthplace) and Doville (celebration of Mass followed by a picnic and walking around through the low bushes of the woodland where Peter-Adrian Toulorge was taken prisoner by the revolutionary troops).



A pilgrim reports: "As many as 75 faithful gather in the old church on the mountain of Doville where Peter-Adrian performed his ministry as curate from 1782-1787. The Holy Mass is celebrated with a blend of seriousness,



fervor and joy. After a common reception and picnic, a procession forms in the afternoon and proceeds over the mountain ridge, through thorny narrow passes to places through which the 'Underground Soldier of the Good God' wandered in secret. They go as far as the mill of Hameau Roulland, where on September 3, 1793 he was arrested. All of these places are not far from the Abbey of Blanchelande."



Every 2nd Sunday in October about 250 admirers of Peter-Adrian commemorate the anniversary of his death in Muneville-le-Bingard. This is celebrated in the church with a memorial Mass, which the parish choir organizes under the direction of Mireille Lemarchand and Christian Girard and concludes at Montsurvent with a lunch for about 170 guests, some words of greeting and a tombola.

The following are a few excerpts from sermons:

- Father Bernard Ardura, O. Praem.: Peter-Adrian - an extremely relevant priest who at the beginning of the third millennium shows us how an ordinary man can come to sanctity. He understood that God called him to a radical love.
- Father Donatien De Clerck, O. Praem.: The saints, the martyrs are the backbone of the human family. If the world remained habitable throughout the centuries, then it is only thanks to the saints who have not given in to injustice and untruth but in spite of everything have loved God and their neighbor.
- Father Gabriel Wolf, O. Praem.: Peter-Adrian - a man through whom the sun shines. In life it depends on how transparent we are for God. As one can see it in the magnificent glass window: Peter-Adrian was a man completely filled with the Spirit of God, especially as he stood before the court.
- Abbot General Thomas Handgrättinger, O. Praem.: To be daily like Peter-Adrian to speak and live his "*adsum*".



Pastor Louis Onfroy, until 2008 was also responsible for Muneville:

“I preach Peter-Adrian to the children and youth as a witness of the faith, as a martyr of the truth. People ask questions about him, his life, his struggle for the truth and the faith. ,He had no fear’, said a confirmation candidate. For me he is a witness for today in a world full of falsehood, egotism and individualism. Young people need witnesses from the present and the past.

A small sign of the friendly acceptance by the Christians of Saint-Sauveur (Center of the parish) is the decision to name a large hall after him - a name belongs to the family! His presence is felt in the life and pastoral work with the people.”

### Association of Friends

The “Association of the Friends of Peter-Adrian Toulorge” (*L'association des amis du Père Toulorge*) that was established in 1994 today includes more than 120 members, of whom 44 are from Muneville and 74 from the parish of St-Jean-Eudes. Together they organize the memorial for his birthday in *May*, his arrest in *July* (Pilgrimage to Mount Doville) and his death in *October*. The association places great value in devotion as well as sociability.



The exhibit that was arranged for the 200th anniversary celebration in 1993, well attended and guided on request, has been expanded since October 14, 2007 by an interactive seven minute film about the living witness and the present veneration of the Servant of God. The Premonstratensian Order also owes a great debt of thanks to the “Association of Friends” for its fidelity, good ideas, all its commitment - in brief, for its engaged witness as a community of baptized and confirmed Christians under the patronage of Father Toulorge!



For visits to the memorial places as well as for the liturgies in Muneville and on Mount Doville, please direct your inquiries to

Marc Beuve, President of the Association of Friends:

[marc.beuve@wanadoo.fr](mailto:marc.beuve@wanadoo.fr)

or Roland Hélaine, Pastor of Saint-Sauveur-Lendelin:

[roland.helaine@orange.fr](mailto:roland.helaine@orange.fr)



## Prayers Answered

Since the opening of the beatification process numerous letters have reached the Postulator and Vice-Postulator from various countries with reports of answered prayers, which were attributed to the intercession of Peter-Adrian at the throne of God: thus admirers are giving thanks for the successful completion of school or for receiving a work position, for help in marriage problems, with the Christian education of children/grandchildren and after accidents as well as operations. The faithful entrust the work in the parish and their loved ones to the intercession of Peter-Adrian.

Here is a selection of answered prayers of the last 15 years:

F.B. from M.-C. (F) thanks Peter-Adrian Toulorge, that their daughter found a job position. - G.L. from C. (F), who is married for 19 years and has seven children, prayed to the Lord for four weeks that he would help her, through the intercession of Peter-Adrian, to be able to better endure her relationship problems; she found inner peace. - L.L. from B. (F) thanks Peter-Adrian, Sister Emily Podoska and Bl. Bronislava for the successful passing of public examinations. - F.B. from M.-C. (F) asks Peter-Adrian Toulorge and St. Rita for the conversion of her 39 year old daughter; two years later she wrote, that the daughter found her way back to the sacramental life and both of her grandchildren are taking part in catechism instructions. - J.V. from Belgium thanks God and all the saints for successfully surviving an operation. - Vice-postulator J.-B.L. from L.G. (F) thanks Peter-Adrian, who has twice (1998 und 2003) watched over him in an automobile accident; the cars were demolished but not a hair on his head was out of place. - L.O. from St.S.L. (F) entrusts his preaching of the Gospel to the intercession of Peter-Adrian, who lived in total dedication to the truth; he is thinking of the children and youth, workers and those in retirement, the ill, young couples who are preparing for marriage, all those who bear responsibility in the cities and villages for the common welfare. - C. from (F), who knows well the area around Blanchelande, thanks Father Toulorge for his courage and his Christian loyalty as well as for the protection of his family; he prays for the beatification of the Servant of God. - (?) from (F) receives grace after calling on Peter-Adrian and entrusts to him the care of his family, especially his repeatedly seriously ill son. - Two young people, J. and J. from L. (F), say "Thank you" to Peter-Adrian Toulorge, - and the young E. wishes that she may better come to learn the life of Jesus in the footsteps of Toulorge. - P.L. from (F) requests, that his little family remain protected and his sons may always experience love in their lives. - M.F. und J.L. from (F) entrust to Peter-Adrian their children and grandchildren, - and E.O. from (F) entrusts to him her husband, her mother, her brothers, her nephews and nieces. - J.H. from A. (F) thanks God for all the prayers answered through the intercession of Peter-Adrian, - D.M.M. from B. (Congo) gives

thanks for his health, protection and success in study, for his wife, his children and protection in temptations, - M.L. from L.F. (F) after constant prayer affirms improvement in the health situation of her mother: after a stroke and epilepsy it was possible to take her off medicine. - M.R. from C.F. (F) found work for their son through the intercession of Peter-Adrian. - L.D.-B. from L. (F) felt the nearness of the Servant of God during serious problems. - F.O. from Y. (Cameroon) gives thanks for great strength in a difficult time: He was able to break from a sect to which he belonged for ten years; in addition a fire destroyed his house in which his two month old child was at the time.

We also received letters written in prison that bear impressive testimony, such as that from S.O. from T. (Cameroon), member of a prayer group and the prison choir who received new strength, - or from M.-C. from K.-Z. (Central Africa), who can now think more positively in a hopeless situation. - The prison pastor S.T. often speaks of Peter-Adrian. - G.J. a priest from C. (India) is thankful for a favor and would like to spread the veneration of the Servant of God, - M.C. S.-E. from C.I. (Australia) serve their parish church more intensely after reading his biography, - und Frater A.B. from K. (D) became more interiorly calm after prayer. - M.E. from P.L. (Mauritius) is happy that her son found work, - C.G. from N. (FL), that the family remained protected from illness and accident, - and E.D.A. from C. (F), that it was not necessary to appear before the tribunal in his homeland of Portugal, for the conflict was able to be settled out of court through the intercession of Peter-Adrian. - R.P. from G. (ME/USA) wrote us, that she attained help healthwise (Gastroparesis) and found inner peace.

*In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII it is hereby declared that no supernatural character is to be attached to the events described as long as no judgment has been given by the highest ecclesiastical authority.*



### Baptismal Patron

Inspired by the “Spiritual Newsletter” from Clairval Abbey Sophie and Sébastien Schuh of Verdun (F) decided to name their third child Peter-Adrian. A good exemplary idea! The father writes us:



*Hello,*

*My name is Sebastian, I am the father of a family and have three children, two daughters and a son, who was born over two years ago on January 15, 2010. At the request of the Beuve Family I would like to tell you why my wife Sophie and I decided to give our son the name Peter-Adrian.*

*Every month we receive the “Spiritual Newsletter” of the Abbey of St-Joseph of Clairval, which always presents the life of a saint. In February 2009 it was Peter-Adrian Toulorge’s turn. I find many saints fascinating even today. But why this man more than others? The biography of Father Toulorge specially appealed to me, just by the fact that he lived during the French Revolution, a very difficult era for the Church in France. That he was the victim of an error before his departure to Jersey, then decided to return to France in order to support his brothers and finally paid for this with his life. A simple and courageous life at the same time! A little like the present conditions of Christians in the Orient and North Africa. I find it terrible that he was denounced, for it is a betrayal of a man who gave his time and his love to his neighbor. I try to imagine how difficult it must have been - even his time in prison. Then his courage impressed me, to remain faithful before his judges “to his faith, the church, the pope and his order”; in my eyes a very noble bearing. I think that it has served to make the witness of his life more well-known and imitated. If the personality of Peter-Adrian touches me very much, it is above all his fidelity to the truth which is always a great price! In an era of newly sur-*

*facing philosophies he opted for the truth at the risk of being disapproved of and paid with his life. He remained true to his faith and the values that he held for proper and right. Is it any different in France today? We are also more or less victims of a conformism that is on all sides of us; it is not easy to be a Christian today.*

*At that time I decided to call on the intercession of Peter-Adrian for my family and myself. It was not even six months later and my prayer was answered. I asked for a change in my career situation. As a family we were happy and grateful as I received a new position in another department in July 2010. Not that I wasn't happy with the last position, still I remain strongly connected to my native Moselle area. However, I am someone who likes changes and something new. And if the family becomes larger, it is necessary to take care of their necessities...*

*As to our son's given name, we - my wife and I - had decided on John Baptist. But then I soon remembered that I had promised God that I would call him Peter-Adrian, if the Lord answered my prayer through the intercession of Peter-Adrian. Now I wanted to keep my promise...*

*Now today I hope in all the freedom that I leave to my son, that he one day has the courage to realize in his life what he has recognized as just and good before God and his neighbor, and that he remain true to the faith that we passed on to him.*



*For the moment we are impatiently waiting for Father Toulorge to be raised to the honor of the altar. We know that every Christian should have the name of a saint for his patron, and so we are hoping that Peter-Adrian will soon be beatified. We believe it will happen. We are full of expectation and the Good God has already shown us a grace at the baptism, for our son was baptized on February 21, the memorial of St. Peter Damian, a saint who was also very closely bound to the truth...*

*Praised be the Lord!*



### Gregorian Music

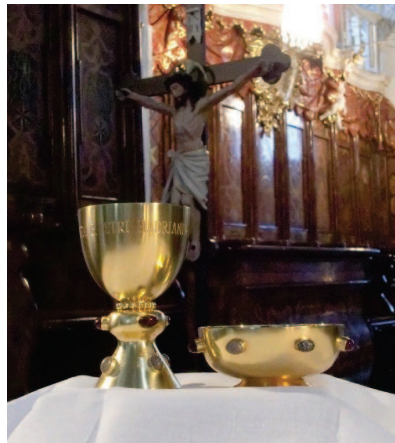
Guillaume Antoine, who was ordained to the priesthood in Coutances in 2011 and one who holds Peter-Adrian in honor, is arranging with his choral schola to perform a Mass to honor the new Blessed. We look forward to this!

### Peter-Adrian-Chalice

Toward the end of 2011 the Postulator commissioned a gold chalice from the Goldsmith Kölbl in Pocking near Passau (D) with the inscription

*IN HONOREM BEATI PETRI HADRIANI TOULORGE + MARTYRIS VERITATIS*  
*(To the honor of Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge, Martyr of the Truth)*

On the knob are three red jaspers; set in the base are four stones from Muneville-le-Bingard, Denville, Blanchelande and Coutances. Our thanks to the donor!





### Stage Play

Further evidence of veneration is the as yet unpublished stage play written in March 1999 by Patrick Deverre, the father of Cyrille Deverre, O. Praem. (Mondaye). It is entitled "*Frère Pierre-Adrien - Martyr de la Vérité (Martyr of the Truth)*" and describes in five acts the dramatic development of the compilation of the inventory of Blanchelande Abbey, the conversations before his arrest and in prison, the internal struggles of the young religious. The manuscript consists of 146 pages, an abridged version as a recitative is in 14 pages.

The final scene of the 5th act - a monologue in prison - fictitiously sheds light on the interior mood of the man condemned to death, while he is writing his farewell letters. To what extent Peter-Adrian, thanks to the grace of God, calmly awaited the guillotine, as his letters testify, or was still interiorly churned up and while he wrote was guided by a heavenly hand so to speak, as the author of the drama assumes, remains hidden to us. Here is a slightly shortened excerpt from the closing scene, about one of the three farewell letters along with the original handwriting of the martyr:



*"My friend, I send you the best and most favorable news. For my death sentence was scarcely announced ..."*

Lord, just as I returned to prison after the trial, my companions asked me how it was. And I answered what I just wrote down: "Good news, my friends. The trial ended in my favor!" Everyone was happy because they did not understand. So I added: "I was condemned to death." Then they wept, especially Sister Saint-Paul. And I was greatly troubled to see them crying. ... Now they are gone, my companions. They are sleeping next door. And I am alone. Help me, Lord, help me to endure the loneliness during this night and to finish these letters.

*“For my death sentence was scarcely announced, when I responded following in the footsteps of St. Cyprian: Thanks be to God! For tomorrow at two o’clock I shall leave his earth and enter heaven to enjoy the presence of God and my Church.”*

My God! Provided that I hold out! She was right, Sister Saint-Paul, to react to my arrogance, this arrogance of being so sure of being able to hold out! ... I am alone, the others are sleeping. It is almost like with your disciples on the Mount of Olives; they also slept. But wait! I don’t have the right to speak thus. Once again this arrogance.

*“How can it happen to me, a sinner, to be crowned a martyr? I confess to my God that I am most unworthy of such a benefit. But what should I say?”*

What have I just written: a grace? Am I so sure, Lord? Now, since I feel that I am completely alone, in this prison, where it is so dark. The sunrise is still so far away and I cannot sleep. Now, since I am completely alone I am gripped by doubt. I am cold; it is already autumn. Or is it the doubt? Will I hold out tomorrow, Lord? ... Still, the sister told me that my arrogance leads me to do everything in order to find death. No! I didn’t say it for that reason. I have done everything in order to help the truth to come through. Lord, in the name of truth I wanted to clarify the error before my judges. ... Forgive me, Lord, I am speaking confusedly or I am dreaming.

*“This is the fate of those who have remained faithful in the Catholic, apostolic and Roman faith which by the grace of God I follow to the utmost.”*

This solidarity of which I wrote will be the central theme of my passing over. Lord, even if I am weak tomorrow, if I will no longer sign what I now attest to in the letter. ... Everyone went to sleep after dinner. They wept, prayed and ate with me. Then they left me. I said to them: “Go calmly to sleep.” They went to sleep. Lord, now I regret that I let them go. ... It is autumn and I am cold. The quiet oppresses me. The sister was right, when she refused to listen to this silence, as if it would be like the silence of her convent. Tonight is actually dead quiet ... I must take my pen and get hold of myself.

*“What is now my consolation is that God gives me a very great joy and peace and what strengthens me is the hope that I will soon possess my God.”*

Have I written *joy, peace*? But who is writing here, Lord? It is no longer your servant! I am no longer capable of writing such things! That must be *you* in me. I am only the holder of the pen. The words flow out, but they are not mine. Forgive me, Lord, for this contradiction. How could I dare affirm that I am happy or peaceful? No, my Lord, I am neither the one nor the other. I

am alone. Oh, how I understand your prayer on Good Friday better now. I need this night, so that my eyes may be opened for the real torment. ... I should pray, but I cannot. I must write. After the letter to my friend Paulin, it is now my brother's turn. I can not forget my brother, before I depart. I must write to him, so that he knows, that he bears witness, so that one day he can tell his children what happened to his brother Peter-Adrian...



### **The Cause “online”**

In times of global networking the Postulatio also followed this new way of propagating information. Since 2007 the admirers of Peter-Adrian Toulorge can find under [www.postulatio.info](http://www.postulatio.info) much multilingual Information in word and picture. Until the end of october 2011 the internet page noted more than 500,000 visits.



The “Association of the Friends of Father Toulorge” publishes regularly the current dates for the memorial Masses and pilgrimages on the homepage of the Diocese of Coutances-Avranches as well as the home parish of the soon to be Blessed, in St-Jean-Eudes (Saint-Sauveur-Lendelin):

[www.coutances.catholique.fr](http://www.coutances.catholique.fr)  
[paroisse.sje.free.fr](http://paroisse.sje.free.fr)

Since 2009 admirers can be registered on “Facebook”, although the operating authority Paissy Virely installed the page without approval of the authorities in Rome, Coutances and Muneville-le-Bingard. At the present time there are 76 “Friends” registered there, among whom 18 Premonstratensians and 48 French people. The information cited there comes from the internet page of the Postulatio.

## Message for Today

What can Peter-Adrian Toulorge tell us for our Christian life in the 21st century? Here are some incentives for thought. With reference to the glass window made in 2005 which is found in the cloister of the Generalate of the Premonstratensian Canons in Rome and which is depicted on the title page, Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, said in his sermon on April 13, 2010:

“The blessing of these eight magnificent glass windows is an invitation to recall your holy founder and some of his spiritual sons and daughters in order to make their rich legacy fruitful for today. The Saints are the beaming face of the Church; the Premonstratensian Saints are your Order’s crown of glory. Their presence in the General Curia is a concrete and constant call to the holiness of everyone in prayer and the active apostolate. The artistic beauty helps to praise the spark of the divine presence in every person and especially in the saints.”

## Message for “Laity”

Peter-Adrian with his hand raised for the oath

The artist Andreas Armin d’Orfey portrays the “Martyr of the Truth” with his hand raised for the oath; the young religious speaks before the tribunal, stands by his life’s history and speaks the whole truth. He raises his finger to heaven, to God, who has given him during the trial the grace of complete conversion. As such Peter-Adrian stands before us as a man of persistent fidelity and brave confession.



Questions for reflection:

How do we recognize our Christian convictions in light of the present crisis of faith and values, in times of pluralism and relativism? By clear options in

concrete questions, perhaps in partnership, marriage and family, at the work place or in the structuring of free time, to mention only a few examples. To make no false compromises is not only the ethical duty of politicians, finance and economic bosses, but the duty of all Christians. Does the grace of Baptism and Confirmation shine through even in our everyday life, the sense that is incorporated into life by God, the determination for what is true and good? Do we pray like Peter-Adrian for the grace of conversion? Do we commit ourselves with loyalty and bravery and backbone to values and initiatives that are important to us (from our faith), so that the basic melody of Christian singles, families and communities is marked by confidence?

Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his 2009 Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*:  
“Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility.” (Nr. 5).

### Message for Religious

Peter-Adrian in the white habit as a witness of the resurrection  
In the glass window we see the witness of Faith in the white habit of the Premonstratensians, even if we do not know, whether at his execution he wore the habit of the Order, which he carried along in his rucksack during the times of persecution. The *Vita A* of St. Norbert (composed before 1161) already explains the choice of the color: “*However, as we read one thing is certain, that angels in white garments appeared as witnesses of the resurrection.*” The Easter white fits well with the basic concerns of the itinerant preacher and founder of the Order, Norbert of Xanten, and is therefore in the glass window also an eloquent sign in view of the guillotine. It recalls the promises of his profession, especially the self-dedication to the church of his profession, to which Peter-Adrian always remained faithful. Even after his return from Jersey he lived concealed in the shadow of his abbey of Blanchelande.



Questions for reflection:

How do we recognize religious today, by habit and veil? What does it mean to belong to a specific community, to be/to remain connected to it with all

its strengths and weaknesses? Do they feel at home in their abbey/their convent? Do they live the Augustinian ideal of friendship? Are religious themselves convinced of the framework of their life? Do they still talk to young people today about a possible call to religious life, as formerly Jacques-François Le Canut spoke to his 25 year old curate? Do they live out limitation and relinquishment as an indication of what is coming? Do they have the courage, in times of secularism, to protect the “holy”, be it in the faith as in questions of people’s consciences? Do they live from the strength of their common prayer? Finally, does something shine through (especially with Premonstratensians) of the white of the resurrection, of the hope, joy and calmness, which the faith can give - even in times of possible crisis of meaning and dryness, perhaps advancing old age and greater burdens of work?

Pope Benedict XVI interprets the task of the religious orders in *Caritas in Veritate*:

“Each person finds his good by adherence to God’s plan for him, in order to realize it fully. ... Charity in truth becomes the face of Christ; and in Christ it becomes a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan.” (Nr. 1).

### Message for Priests

Peter-Adrian with the Bible in the midst of the people

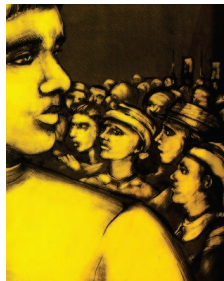
The Servant of God stands in the midst of the people with the Bible in his hand. Both aspects are indispensable for the life of priests. When men of God are sent by the bishop through ordination to a task they do not stand alone, but are always with or among people. “The joy and hope, sorrow and anxiety of people today, especially of the poor and oppressed, are also the joy and hope, sorrow and anxiety of the disciples of Christ.” (*Gaudium et Spes* 1). With such an understood life companionship that which is the basis of preaching can always break through again: the Word of God which moves, encourages and strengthens.



From the strength of his faith Peter-Adrian Toulorge throughout his life was faithful to the ordination promises he made in the Cathedral of Coutances 1781/1782. Even in times of persecution he had his breviary, missal (in selected parts) and his portable altar with him in his rucksack, after the model of St. Norbert. The Word of God gave him courage, backbone to be a pattern and a witness to the faith before the tribunal that condemned him - as a priest - to death.

Questions for reflection:

What would we find “in the rucksack” of priests today? For a modern ministry actually both a breviary and a laptop/cell phone. Then as today clerics announce, like our martyr Peter-Adrian: “*Christus - A and Ω (Alpha and Omega)*”; they speak and live daily the “*adsum*” that they pronounced at their ordination. Do they hold up the positive in life? Can they explain signs, symbols, and events in such a way that the people of today are encouraged to believe? It is not always easy to build up a community if one has the impression that many are looking away or have other interests (cf. the direction of glances of the crowd in the window). Hence it is all the more important today to build up the community against the trend of isolation and individualism - especially in ever constantly developing ministry units and in view of an aging clergy.



Pope Benedict XVI reminds (Priests) in *Caritas in Veritate*:

“Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. ... In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both *Agápe* and *Lógos*: Charity and Truth, Love and Word.” (Nr. 3).



## Personal Testimonies

### **Abbot General Thomas Handgräter, O. Praem., Rome**

(Born 1943, Entered the Abbey of Windberg 1963, Profession 1965, Ordination to Priesthood 1969, Prior de regimine Windberg 1976, Abbot 1994, Abbot General 2003)



Father Peter-Adrian Toulorge - soon to be a new Blessed of the Order

For some time now I have made it my practice to walk up and down and meditate in the morning in the cloister of our generalate in Rome like a peripatetic. For some time eight glass windows have been hanging in the arches of the arcades of the cloister. These were elaborately created by an artist from Munich. I would like to mention only one of them here in particular. It is the window of the Premonstratensian from the Abbey of Blanchelande in Normandy, who on Sunday, October 13, 1793 was publicly executed on the scaffold in Coutances. At present the Order is intensively and actively pushing forward the beatification of this French confrere who in the turmoil of the Revolution at first fled but then returned to the neighborhood of his abbey where he actively ministered to people in secret. Finally he was discovered, arrested and sentenced to death. The court, which knew nothing certain about the flight of this priest, for which the death penalty was certainly imposed, would have accepted it, had he remained silent to this question. Now it lay with the accused himself; he had life and death in his own hands. Peter-Adrian decided in favor of the truth and thus for death as well. He had mistakenly fled, but it was the truth. A juridical subterfuge and a not so fanatical judge provided him with a loophole, his faith, however, and his conscience did not. It came "to the oath". After a night filled with concern he surrendered himself to the inevitable: He had fled. That was the truth. The death sentence was declared. On another day

- after a much more restful night, in which he wrote three farewell letters - he was publicly executed. It was no triumph for the regime. It was a victory for the truth. His body was buried in a common grave together with others. There are no relics; there is only his word, his word of love, of consolation and of the truth.

*"You loved ones! This evening it is now to the point that I may die. I am happy, I can't tell you how happy. God is so good, that he has allowed me to work as a priest for a few years!"* These lines come from our own time, from the Catholic priest Johannes Prasser, one of the four martyrs of Lübeck. He wrote them in view of his death on November 10, 1943 at the age of 32. These lines could have come from Father Peter-Adrian. It is the same attitude, the same joy, the same bright confidence for this final testimonial and for the handing over of his life for Christ to be perfect, which for us ordinary Christians is hardly comprehensible. Peter-Adrian wrote: *"I send you the best and most favorable news. For my death sentence was scarcely announced, when I responded following in the footsteps of St. Cyprian: Thanks be to God! For tomorrow at two o'clock I shall leave this earth and enter heaven to enjoy the presence of God and my Church."*

With the words *"My God, into your hands I commend my life. I ask for the restoration and protection of your holy Church. Forgive my enemies"* he climbed the scaffold.

These words

*"in manus tuas (into your hands)"*,

which were also placed in the mouth of Jesus, I had chosen 17 years ago as my abbatial motto. These words of Jesus on the cross give evidence of his last offering and surrender to the will of the Father; even here in this dramatic hour in the life of Father Toulorge it again takes on an existential depth and a deep congruity with the event on Golgotha. Peter-Adrian had decided in favor of death, but chose life. He sees his step completely embedded in the offering of the Lord on the cross, which leads to the resurrection three days later. So Christ moves very clearly into the center of his life; his offering, his love for those who are his own, his suffering and death, his resurrection become for him the way and the springboard into life in God that is never lost.

And so this witness of faith by Peter-Adrian touches me because it points beyond the struggle of life, because it shows that power does not have the last word, because it heralds the victory of truth over every form of lying, half-truth, false and dubious compromises, but also forms of repression, threats and suppression. He who said of himself *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (Jn 14:6) can show us that truth is the way to life, that truth

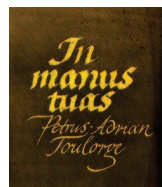
is in the position to liberate, liberate from all the distortions and manipulations, self-deceptions and falsifications, by which we deceive ourselves and others and pull the wool over people's eyes. Peter-Adrian Toulorge is a "Martyr of the Truth", where people thought they could create a new era without God, where people in the name of revolution wanted to rip out of people's hearts their belief in the true and good. With his courage to speak the truth and to give honor to the truth, even in little things, in a matter insignificant in itself - his residence outside the country - he is an example for us. He is an example where we and I often tend to fiddle our way through and deny ourselves and the matters of the faith, to remove ourselves from responsibility, in brief, simply to appear better and present a better image than we truthfully really are. Father Peter-Adrian in the end remained faithful to himself, to his very self, to his belief, to his vows, to his priestly task. Thus his habit becomes a witness of his faith, his bible a confession of his faith, his death a proof of his faith.

From Søren Kierkegaard we have an item from his diary: *"The only expression for the fact that there is something absolute, is to become its martyr or to be a martyr for it."* Peter-Adrian Toulorge stands for the absoluteness of the truth, of which we know that Christ himself is. The Jewish philosopher and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel expressed it this way: *"We can only live the truth if we also possess the strength to die for it ... A martyr is a witness for the holy, in spite of the evil, he is a witness for the transcendence and the transcendent orientation of man."*

Peter-Adrian Toulorge had the strength and the courage for this. With his "adsum" at his priestly ordination and his "yes" at his profession to the Abbey of Blanchelande (*"trado meipsum offerens"*) he has shown that this means a total offering and for him it also remained what he could only thankfully understand as gift and grace.

And so I entrust myself to this confrere and ask his intercession, that it may always go well for me in living out my calling sincerely, truly and authentically and in placing my life and my labor in the Order and my work in the Church more and more into his hands -

*"in manus tuas".*



**Procurator General Bernard Ardura, O. Praem., Rome**  
(Born 1948, Ordination to Priesthood 1972, Entered  
the Abbey of Frigolet 1973, Profession 1975,  
Procurator General 2009,  
President of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences 2009)



Peter-Adrian Toulorge, Martyr and Companion

Thinking about the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution was the occasion for me to come to know Peter-Adrian Toulorge.

In the Fall of 1989 the *Centre d'Études et de Recherches Prémontrées (CERP)* gathered for its annual meeting in the former Abbey of Sainte-Odile near Strasbourg. Not having any idea for a presentation, I found in the library of the General Curia the book by Joseph Toussaint about Peter-Adrian Toulorge, *Chanoine régulier de Prémontré, victime de la terreur coutançaise, martyr de la vérité* (Coutances 1962). I had hardly begun to read it when I became fascinated by this young religious and summed up his life and martyrdom - without any original sources - into a lecture that was to open up to the participants a completely unknown person in the Premonstratensian Order.

The *Actes officiels du 15<sup>e</sup> Colloque du CERP*, which was published in the following year, struck the attention of André Gâté, pastor of Muneville-le-Bingard, the home parish of the future Blessed and he took the opportunity of a pilgrimage to Rome to visit with me. I became acquainted with a priest who was convinced of the reputation of the holiness of the Premonstratensian of Blanchelande, who told me among other things of the existence of the documentation process - relevant to Peter-Adrian - that was miraculously saved, thanks to the Benedictine Pierre Marc, from a fire which destroyed the Département-Archive of La Manche during the landing of the Allies on June 6, 1944.

On November 29, 1992 the Abbot General, with the approval of the Definitory of the Order, appointed Donatien De Clerck as Postulator for the beatification and canonization processes of the Premonstratensian Order. I spoke with him about the possibility of taking up the *Causa* again. Since the first session of the Definitory in 1993 there has been a report in the Protocol about the status of the *Causae*, among which is that of Peter-Adrian. When there was a gathering in October in Coutances and Muneville-le-Bingard, to celebrate the 200th memorial of his martyrdom, the matter was agreed upon and the Premonstratensian Order took over the beatification process, that was now to be directed according to the new norms published in 1983 by Bl. Pope John Paul II. At the General Chapter in 1994 the Chapter Fathers signed a petition to the Holy Father, in which the *Causa* was entrusted to him.

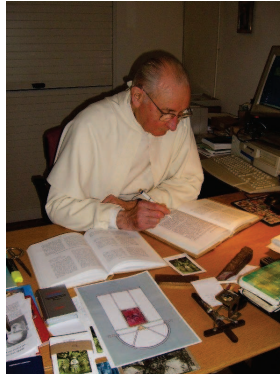
On April 29, 1994, as an appointed member of the historical commission that was set up by Msgr. Jacques Fihey, Bishop of Coutances-Avranches, I was in the fortunate position to be able to study all the records. Thanks to the generous cooperation of the diocesan archives I had in hand, together with Prof. Jean de Viguerie, all the documents to be able to substantiate the martyrdom of the Servant of God. On November 16, 1995 Msgr. Fihey set up the tribunal that held its meetings from December 1, 1995 until July 29, 1996. The process was opened in Rome on November 12, 1996 and I set about writing the *Positio* - a dossier that comprised all the proofs; I completed this work in 1999. On December 5, 2000 the historical consultors of the *Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum* unanimously handed down a positive decision on the historical quality of the *Positio/Causa* and on July 13, 2010 the theological consultors decided - again in a clearly unanimous vote - on the martyrdom of the Servant of God Peter-Adrian Toulorge.

In the course of these almost 20 years Peter-Adrian was a great model for me by his fidelity and generosity. The study of his life before the French Revolution presents us with a zealous and humble religious and the period of the persecution allows us to suspect how strongly receptive he was to the grace of God - until the sacrifice of his life in fidelity to his faith, the Roman Church and his Premonstratensian Order. He shows me that human nature can have weaknesses - he himself certainly spoke the untruth in order to save his life - but with the grace of God everything is possible even to the giving of one's life.

In our time in which we are tempted to adjust ourselves to the surrounding style of life, Peter-Adrian reminds us that the love of God in a heart dedicated to him can change our entire life and make it fruitful in that we testify to the God who is faithful and never takes back his promise. He always remains faithful. For more than 200 years after his martyrdom Peter-Adrian is close to us. If I call on him every day, I know that we have in him not only a model but also a powerful intercessor with God.

**Postulator General em. Donatien De Clerck, O. Praem.,  
Averbode**

(Born 1922, Entered the Abbey of Averbode 1941, Profession 1943,  
Ordination to Priesthood 1947, Postulator General until 2003)



Soon after my appointment as Postulator General in 1992 I prayed at the grave of Peter-Adrian Toulorge in the Cemetery of St-Pierre (Coutances). There I read on the memorial plaque:

*Here lies Peter-Adrian Toulorge,  
born in the parish of Muneville-le-Bingard,  
priest of the Premonstratensian Order, who in the 37th year of his life  
was beheaded as a martyr of the Catholic Faith and the truth  
in Coutances, on October 13, 1793 and died courageously.*

Two hundred years later - from 1979 until 1996 - André Gâté was pastor in Muneville-le-Bingard. Twice I met this "Man of God", who left an unforgettable impression on me. He fostered a deep devotion to the martyr who was born in his parish, whose memory remained alive among the people of the Cotentin.

A little retrospective:

In 1868, 75 years after the execution of Peter-Adrian Toulorge, Canon Deligand dedicated a marble relief to him in the church; it represents the young priest during his trial. In the same year the Bishop of Coutances blessed a memorial plaque at the house of his birth.

In 1893 for the 100th anniversary of his martyrdom a glass window was installed in the church; in this window Peter-Adrian is seen suffering. An additional sign of his veneration is that the day for the 40 hours devotion in Muneville takes place on October 13, the date of his death.

Already in 1928, at the opening of the diocesan process for the Martyrs of Normandy, the documents on Peter-Adrian Toulorge were regarded as the most important of the proceedings for 57 priests who were killed, 13 of whom belonged to the Diocese of Coutances.

In 1962 Joseph Toussaint published a biographie entitled *Pierre-Adrien Toulorge, chanoine régulier de Prémontré, victime de la terreur coutançaise, martyr de la vérité*.

Dom Pierre Marc, O. S. B., the greatgrandnephew of Father Toulorge, in 1922 had copied out the parts of the process relevant to Peter-Adrian; only in this way did they survive the bombardment of St-Lô, in which the Département-Archiv of La Manche went up in flames. In 1964 he wrote to Abbot General Norbert Calmels and petitioned for a possible taking up again of the *Causa beatificationis*.

For the 200th celebration of the death of Peter-Adrian Toulorge in 1993, Pastor André Gâté dedicated the right side chapel of the parish church of Muneville-le-Bingard to his memory. Since then an on-going exhibition documents his life, martyrdom and veneration. At that time the desire for his beatification among the people was very great. Jean-Baptiste Lechat, who like Pastor André Gâté admired the martyr, therefore took up contact with P. Bernard Ardura, O. Praem., Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, in Rome. The celebration on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Peter-Adrian's death brought together Bishop Jacques Fihey of Coutances and Abbot General Marcel van de Ven, who once again took up the beatification process.

The *Causa* of the "Martyr of the Truth" was very important for Pastor Gâté: He organized liturgical services in the home parish in order to recall the life-witness of Father Toulorge, founded an association of friends (*L'association des amis du Père Pierre-Adrien Toulorge*) under the direction of Marc Beuve to support the beatification process.

In 1996 André Gâté, almost blind, moved to a retirement home for priests, where he often invoked the Servant of God and entrusted himself to him at his death on November 22, 2001.

As Postulator General Emeritus I once again thank everyone here who supported us in our work, first of all our confrere Bernard Ardura in Rome. I rejoice especially with my successor P. Gabriel Wolf on the future beatification of Peter-Adrian!



## Vice-Postulator Jean-Baptiste Lechat, Coutances

(Born 1923, Diocesan Archivist 1984, Vice-Postulator 1993)



For a long time I thought that the trial of Peter-Adrian Toulorge was purely a civil trial. A law of November 1792 condemned all emigrants who returned from exile to death. Father Toulorge had emigrated to Jersey and now he was paying for his deed. The reading of the biography composed by Canon Joseph Toussaint convinced me however of the opposite: Peter-Adrian Toulorge was persecuted, arrested and condemned from religious motives.

Thus I was among those who hoped for the taking up of the *Causa* again even before the 200th celebration of his death. After the beatification of the martyrs of September 1792 in the year 1928, the Archbishop of Rouen had opened a process for a few clerics of Normandy who had been victims of the French Revolution. In the records, which concern the Diocese of Coutances, about a hundred of the 702 pages dealt with the Servant of God. Bernard Ardura, O. Praem., Consultor of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, whom I met at Mondaye on April 17, 1992, quickly made it clear to me that the dossier from Rouen in this form was unfortunately of no use. The solution would be to open a new process that was dedicated to Peter-Adrian Toulorge alone; the initiative for this had to come from the Bishop of Coutances-Avranches.

The decision was made during the 200th celebration of the death of the Servant of God. The *Ordo Candidus* showed its great interest by the presence of Abbot General Marcel van de Ven, the Abbots of Mondaye and Frigolet, the Postulator General Donatian De Clerck and Bernard Ardura who delivered a talk. Bishop Jacques Fihey of Coutances (1989-2006) was also very supportive of the *causa*, as well as his successor Stanislas Lalanne (since 2007). I recalled, as the first memory of my involvement with Peter-

Adrian, the closeness of the Order with the Martyr of Blanchelande. Gradually as I gathered the records of the future process, I provided them with headings and references of origin; I renumbered the pages and sent everything to P. Ardura who in turn drew up an outstanding *Positio* of 372 pages. I met the Postulator and his successor Gabriel Wolf (since 2003) several times in the year. The faithfulness of the Order to the *Causa* is a mark of esteem for the love of Peter-Adrian, to the canonries of Blanchelande and Beauport as well as the holiness of his life.

One is quickly impressed by the apostolic zeal of the Servant of God. In Denville he worked together with his pastor in the vineyard of the Lord: baptizing, giving catechism instructions, preaching. His talks point to an exact preparation, a clear instruction (he was a private tutor before his ordination) and a committed style. If Peter-Adrian also used sermon handbooks - as the holy Pastor of Ars did - then he made the truths of the faith his own, which he passed on to his parishioners. His choice for the canonical life suggests such a pastoral attitude. After his profession in 1788 he remained in Blanchelande and worked in the surrounding parishes. Even in hiding after his return from Jersey he continued to practice his ministry and secretly celebrated Mass; for this he carried with him his Mass vestments, chalice and altar stone. He prayed his breviary and probably recited, as he went along the way, the psalms that he had learned by heart in the novitiate in Beauport. This physically extreme situation lasted ten months: *"I slept in woods overgrown with bushes."*

#### Martyr of the Truth

That is the mysterious title that the Christian people gave to him shortly after his death. Gone are the Empire and the Restoration during which you could say nothing publicly about the revolutionary sacrifice of the clergy. You find this description in a simple almanac from 1833 which proves its origin from the people. The honorary title originates in the fact that the revolutionary tribunal of Coutances gave the accused the possibility of denying his emigration. All historians of the 19th century attest to this as well as Dom Pierre Marc, O. S. B., a monk of the Abbey of Solesmes, who has studied the records of the process with special exactness. When Peter-Adrian rejected this solution, he remained faithful to his explanation of September 4, 1793. At his arrest in Neufmesnil he had explained to the district director of Carentan that he never left France. The following night brought about the change for him. He prayed and became conscious of the fact that he had lied to save his life - but along with that he had sinned grievously. *"It is not permitted to lie, not even to avoid death and its suffering, in order to preserve one's life, one's honor or one's possessions"*, said a theologian of his time.

We want to take the opportunity here to recall the example of the Bl. Eudist François Lefranc, under whom Peter-Adrian spent his seminary time. Firmly and relentlessly he warned his students in his teaching, even before the dangers that threatened the throne and altar. On September 2, 1792 in the Carmelite monastery in Paris he refused the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and was executed together with 190 other martyrs.

Peter-Adrian decided to tell the truth. On September 5, 1792 he asked the district commissioner if he might give an explanation: he confirmed the fact that he had emigrated to Jersey. This was a confession that brought with it the death penalty and made the Servant of God a “Martyr of the Truth”.

I have lived now 15 years with Peter-Adrian. He always appeared to me as a priest who was totally absorbed in his ministry. His time as curate in Do-ville, his choice of the Premonstratensian Order, his profession, his refusal of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, his return from Jersey, his service in secret and his choice of martyrdom are a constant moving forward - toward the Lord, to whom he had dedicated his life.

The people of God, aware of his commitment, have invoked his intercession ever since his death. I am personally convinced that he watched over me in two automobile accidents; the cars were demolished but not a hair on my head was out of place.

The Abbey of St-Joseph of Clairval honored the Servant of God in one of its monthly letters (July 11, 2009), of which 40,000 copies were distributed. As a result the Postulation has received numerous letters from admirers with various requests (among them a letter from one condemned to death); in the letters the entire suffering of the world is reflected. But there are also numerous letters that thank Peter-Adrian for favors received - whether in spiritual questions or with family problems, search for work, (serious) illnesses...

For me Peter-Adrian Toulorge lives,  
I feel his presence.  
Each day I pray for everyone who calls on him.

The *fama martyrii* will soon  
spread farther through his beatification.

**President Marc Beuve, Muneville-le-Bingard**  
(Born 1952, President of the Association of the Friends of  
Peter-Adrian Toulorge 2002)



Already in earliest childhood I roamed with my father the paths of our homeland and I believe he was happy that I accompanied him when he was with friends on minor jobs. We often crossed through the hamlet of *La Quièze* and he explained to me that we were now passing the birth house of Father Toulorge. Several times I asked him: But who is Father Toulorge? He answered that he was a priest born in Muneville who died under the guillotine during the Revolution. And I left it at that.

My father was the sexton, which is why I knew many things; he liked to let me discover his church. He told of his childhood recollections... The time passed and since we never missed a service I willingly went to the adoration, to the 40 Hours Devotion. The pastor at that time, Father Boré, spoke about Peter-Adrian in his sermons. It was always around October 13. Again Father Toulorge... Who was this man who was spoken about?

My youth passed quickly and I went my way. Back in Muneville I had further good contact with our pastor, who unfortunately left us much too early. In Pastor André Gâté we were certainly gifted with a man of dialogue. Our contact was excellent. One day he asked me to come to the parish house. "Marc", he said, "I need you for an important matter that concerns the parish. I would like to have a 200th anniversary celebration organized for Father Toulorge." So once again I asked the question: Who is Peter-Adrian Toulorge? "We want to discover him together; I'll give you the documentation. Take a good look at it and then we'll get together again to discuss it." I read the documents, underlined important sentences, picked up many books and set about investigating the history of this man who died under the blade of the guillotine. I was fascinated by the short life of the man who gave up his so young life for his faith in the Holy Church. After long re-

flection and many conversations with Pastor Gâté I agreed to help him. And so I discovered the holy life of Peter-Adrian Toulorge, his great loyalty to the Church and what struck me the most was the word *Truth*.

Would I have been able to follow him on this path full of obstacles? I don't believe so... It struck me, that I heard of Father Toulorge as a small boy without having understood the meaning of his life. I found the program for his liturgical feast in October. It was well kept among my father's books and I understood that we were observing the memory of a holy man who had to suffer only because he was a priest of an order that I did not know.

The idea of the 200th anniversary celebration was superb. Still, how should we go about it? I think Father Toulorge guided us well. How often did I call on him that he might help us with the preparation of this great feast? On top of everything the way was now opened for a possible beatification. Six months of work, research and the setting up of an exhibition... As a team we wanted to set a beautiful feast in motion - and it was a splendid day! I was never so moved as on that October 3, 1993 when so many priests and religious in procession entered the church that was much too small under a banner with the inscription *Honneur au Père Toulorge*. I was, I must say, proud - not only about this day, but that I understood more deeply the life of our fellow citizen, priest, Premonstratensian, who could be seen in the glass window and the half-relief in the choir of the church: Peter-Adrian, I now know your life and the sorrow of your death.

We owe this day to the pastor of that time, André Gâté: He had this superb idea, he expended much time and his health so that Muneville, his parish, might have a "Blessed" some day. He was a model for me, he had done well to let me work for this cause.

We couldn't stop on this journey that was well begun. In order to make the life of Peter-Adrian further known, we founded in February 1994 a circle of friends - *L'association des amis du Père Toulorge* - with Pastor Gâté as president. We had the idea to meet in Denville for prayer as well - in the place where Peter-Adrian was curate. This "Pilgrimage on the trail of Father Toulorge" each year becomes more popular. The Circle of Friends has set up an exhibit and a film (*borne interactive*) in the church of Muneville. Many pilgrims currently discover "our martyr".

Even today I want to come to understand *his truth* more deeply. I am fond of telling my children, my family, my friends, who support me in my endeavor, about this holy man. Once I said to Bishop Emeritus Jacques Fihey,

that I value very much the fact that I came to know the life of Peter-Adrian in my catechism instruction. We learned humility along with it.

How many of the faithful, even we, are waiting very impatiently for the day of beatification! I will certainly experience this long awaited day with deep emotion and great enthusiasm!

**P. Petrus-Adrian Lerchenmüller, O. Praem., Windberg**

(Born 1977, Entered the Abbey of Windberg 2000,  
Profession 2002, Ordination to Priesthood 2006)



Every time the concept of the *Truth* comes up in John's Gospel, the question occurs to me about what truth actually is for me personally. Often we fall short of the claim of acting according to the truth. Peter-Adrian Toulorge, my name patron, died a martyr's death at the end of his life and very soon was popularly called a "Martyr of the Truth". Truth was important for him. Peter-Adrian preferred rather to die than not to speak the whole truth. I don't know if I would let my head be chopped off today for the truth, but my patron always reminds me that truth is something that is worthwhile striving for. For me the courage and the commitment for the truth was the reason for choosing the name of this deceased confrere and martyr and thereby making him the spiritual companion of my life in the Order.

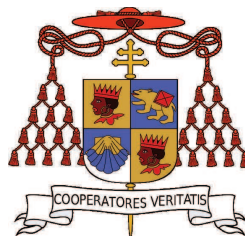
I believe that without truth life can not be successful. My patron hit on something from which our society today is suffering considerably. He came upon indifference. Is it not so now and then today? There is no true or

false, no good or bad anymore. Here each person can think, believe and do whatever he personally holds for right. But with this indifference we also lose the ethical basis for a common life. And without common truths, without a common belief which establishes unity, a peaceful life together will not be possible for long.

Directly under this indifference to which we so comfortably adjusted ourselves we are also suffering. Daily we feel it more. We have taken it so far that we are frequently always prepared to understand and forgive everything. But interiorly we basically know precisely that it should not be done. We long to be able once again to clearly distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, wise and foolish. The truth is really obstinate!

But in our search for clear answers we have a helper: Christ, the Son of God, who through the Holy Spirit became a real man. Our faith in the Son of God shows us the criteria for being able to distinguish between true and false, between deception and reality. Peter-Adrian Toulorge certainly had this Christ in view, he trusted Christ and finally placed all that he had, his life, in him.

Pope Benedict XVI, since his call to be Archbishop of Munich-Freising, has had the motto *"cooperatores veritatis - Co-workers of the Truth"* (3 John 1:8).



Our pope wants to be a co-worker of the truth, as Peter-Adrian Toulorge was, as Peter-Adrian Lerchenmüller tries to be in a very modest degree, just as all of us should try a little bit to be "Co-workers of the Truth". This feeling, somehow to be a very little "Co-worker of the Truth", is worthwhile. And that is meant - with all the highs and lows - not only exclusively for popes and canons, but for all of us.

In this sense I trust further in God's help and the intercession of Peter-Adrian so that I too can walk the path of my patron courageously, uprightly and consistently!



**P. Pierre-Adrien Jochaux du Plessix, O. Praem., Mondaye**

(Born 1977, Entered the Abbey of Mondaye 2004, Profession 2006,  
Ordination to Priesthood 2010)



What is the meaning of the martyrdom of Peter-Adrian Toulorge for me? What does he say to me through his history? What can I learn in his school that leads to God? I needed some time to better comprehend the force of this witness. The following are my reflective thoughts.

From the few facts about the life of Peter-Adrian Toulorge that have been handed down to us we can pull together some traces of his personality. No doubt he was a man of faith. Certainly he entered the Abbey of Blanchelande - already a priest - for spiritual reasons. He wanted to lead religious life completely as a Premonstratensian, for he was, as he wrote to a friend on the evening before his death, "extremely bound" to the Catholic faith "thanks to the grace of God". His desire to want to continue to live that community life in 1790 or his reaction to the tears of Sister Saint-Paul after the verdict was announced attest to this. As a man of faith and conviction he refused to sign the oath of allegiance. He was an honest man (he had carefully organized his Mass intentions), perhaps he was somewhat rigorous (if we think of his sermons on hell - understandable in a gloomy Revolution time); he was noble and had a burning zeal for his mission (he did not remain idle in Jersey but was ready to go underground in order to serve the faithful). Moreover he had a great love for the truth. So many good Christian virtues distinguished him but at the end of his life these were subjected to a harsh test. For me that is the decisive point. Everything collapsed around him and within him; his weak virtues, acquired through patience, threatened to blow away like dried leaves through the powerful storm of the Revolution.

"Whoever wants to be my disciple should deny himself,  
Take up his cross and follow me."

(Mt 16:24).

Peter-Adrian gave himself to Blanchelande, yet he was able to live there only less than two years. The Revolution was really the basis of his yearning for a fraternal community life. He dreamed no doubt of an ideal religious life. Yet he was confronted with a prior who at the suppression rejected the vow of poverty, in that he robbed his abbey of its goods. So Peter-Adrian fled to Jersey in order to escape the wave of terror that flowed over the Church at the September massacre. It is the irony of fate that precisely this brief stay of several weeks and not his priestly office that was the official reason for his condemnation to death. He wanted to preach against winds and storms to stand by his brothers. Still as so often happens it is quite different in the end. Like the other persecuted priests he was dependent on the charity of those who took him in. Gradually he sank into poverty and lost everything. One night deep in a ditch, shivering from the cold, "filthy dirty, soaking wet and exhausted" (as it says in the case files), he asked for help - without giving any thought about the person who was drawing near. He was simply unable to do more. Fortunately it was a former woman religious, Sister Saint-Paul Beuve, who came along the way and took pity on him. The end of the journey was near. Peter-Adrian was discovered because of the strange garments he wore, women's clothing, and he was later arrested. It sounds ridiculous: should he have denied with a blush what was obvious, that he had worn them? He stood on the brink of a precipice. After this external exposure he now lost everything interiorly as well. He was debilitated, full of fear and shame that he had lied. He would like to been considered an upright man, honest before his judges. He was not successful. He could not do it. He denied, lied, retracted. He stated something and then withdrew it. He lost everything, even his feeling of self-esteem.

On the edge of this deep abyss Peter-Adrian, mindful of his pitifulness, became conscious that he no longer belonged to himself. Whereas in his heart the word of Christ was alive: "Apart from me you can accomplish nothing" (Jn 15:5); then finally grace could come and develop in abundance. He lived the mystery that was experienced by St. Paul and countless other saints: "My grace is sufficient for you; for it shows its strength in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9). He no longer fought depending on himself, but laid down his weapons. He no longer belonged to himself but placed his life in the hands of God. On the scaffold he repeated the words of Jesus on the cross: "My God, into your hands I place my life ... Forgive my enemies."

Then he felt working in him the power of the Holy Spirit, who came to help him. After many falls he was at last able to lift himself up and honestly face the truth. On October 12 he had no more fear and as the death sentence was announced he cried out: "*Deo gratias!*". Completely surrendered into the hands of God, he entered the Kingdom of Heaven. "Blessed are the

poor before God, for to them belongs the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 5:3). From a human viewpoint his final hours can appear strange and at the same time shocking. He had only 24 hours to live and he became the support of his fellow prisoners. He invited them, as well as the recipients of his three letters, to rejoice and join with him in thanksgiving. He experienced joy and deep peace. The first words that he wrote to his brother were: *“Rejoice! What comforts me very much is the fact that God is giving me joy and great peace.”* Like Christian de Chergé, the Trappist martyr of Tibhirine (+ 1996), he waited full of excitement and filled with hope, almost eager to meet him to whom he had given over his life. *“What gives me strength is the fact that I will soon be united with my God.”* The joy that filled him did not come from a morbid euphoria. He knew that if he is at peace that everything is coming through the grace of God. He belonged entirely to him. Death was only a transition. Between this world and paradise there was continuity for him. During Compline, at the last verse, which reads “When, O Lord, will your day dawn which knows no end?” he said: *“My dear friends, let us stop here, for I will soon gratefully finish this hymn in heaven.”*

What a beautiful and deep lesson of Christian life! In emulating Christ Peter-Adrian Toulorge invites us, conscious of our poverty, to abandon ourselves at the end completely into the hands of God. It is good to commit our whole heart to this way in order - as he did - to be able to develop all of our talents and virtues. For the goal of Christian life consists not in a type of moral voluntarism, an aftertaste of a power control of the will, but rather in the complete dispossession of ourselves so that Christ might dwell in us. For “what is sown is weak, what is raised is strong” (1 Cor 15:43). Thus we can confess with St. Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:19f.). We can acknowledge with St. Therese of Lisieux that “all is grace”, all is gift. We must only be receptive of the strength of the Holy Spirit. Thus we experience with all the saints, the peace, the freedom and the joy of the children of God.



## Beatification

One of the best synopses of the nature of saints was given to us by Bl. Pope John Paul II at the beatification of James Kern in 1998 in Vienna: *“The saints are able to be a help for our life. They were not ‚photocopied Christians‘ but each was an original, irreplaceable and unique! The Church of today does not need part-time Catholics but full-blooded Christians!”*

How was/is one beatified/canonized?

In the first centuries the veneration of a martyr or confessor was permitted by a bishop/synod by means of the elevation and later the transfer of the mortal remains. Later, beginning with the canonization of Ulrich of Augsburg in 993, the right of the pope to reserve this to himself developed more and more. Today we differentiate *beatifications*, as approval for local veneration (since Pope Benedict XVI, again celebrated at the place) and *canonizations* as recognition by the entire Church of a model life approved by the pope. A long investigation precedes both: If the faithful particularly highly esteem a dead person, an informative process is opened in the diocese in question at which the life and writings of the candidate are investigated in regard to certain criteria - such as faith, hope, love of God and neighbor. In the case of martyrs it is a question of the martyrdom itself and its motives, i.e. whether someone was killed *in odium fidei* (from hatred of the faith) and whether this was accepted out of love of God. In Rome an historical-critical study is prepared from the documentation. This passes through several committees (historians, theologians, cardinals) before the pope comes to a decision. The search for the historical truth of each individual life can often last many years/decades...

In addition to this historical process (apart from beatifications of martyrs as with Peter-Adrian) a so-called “miracle process” must be carried out. Here it is a matter of the investigation of an inexplicable, continuous, spontaneous healing of a serious illness such as cancer which God has granted after an appeal to the candidate in question. Here internationally famous specialists discuss the healing in question - again, first on a local level, later in Rome. For a possible canonization of Father Toulorge we would have to carry out such a miracle process.

What do beatification/canonization mean?

The Blesseds and the Saints, thanks to the grace of God, through their lives and work bring to light individual aspects of the Gospel. They have lived out the Christian values in such a way that the people of today can adapt themselves to them. People like to call upon these models in the faith for their intercession with God and light votive candles.

We read in *Lumen Gentium* 50 from Vatican Council II:

“When we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the City that is to come and at the same time we are shown a most safe path by which among the vicissitudes of this world, in keeping with the state in life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, perfect holiness. In the lives of those who, sharing in our humanity, are however more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ, God vividly manifests His presence and His face to men. He speaks to us in them, and gives us a sign of His Kingdom. ...

Nor is it by the title of example only that we cherish the memory of those in heaven, but still more in order that the union of the whole Church may be strengthened in the Spirit by the practice of fraternal charity. For just as Christian communion among wayfarers brings us closer to Christ, so our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ, from Whom as from its Fountain and Head issues every grace and the very life of the people of God.”

How did the beatification process of Peter-Adrian proceed?

The beatification process was initiated in 1928 together with that for 56 other priests from Normandy (13 from Coutances). Archbishop André du Bois de La Villerabel from Rouen named Gabriel Mallet, the Procurator General of the Eudists, as Postulator for the Causa. The sources on the life and martyrdom of Peter-Adrian were the most detailed.

Like many other processes our Causa in 1928-1930 also fell into oblivion due to the political situation; there was fear of an armed conflict on a world wide scale. On May 27, 1964 Pierre Marc, O. S. B. proposed to Abbot General Norbert Calmels, O. Praem. that the process be taken up again. Nevertheless only the memory of the many martyrs of the French Revolution in the anniversary year 1989 and the 200th anniversary of the death of the Servant of God in 1993 moved Abbot General Marcel van de Ven, O. Praem. - in view of the veneration of the faithful of that region - to take up the Causa again. Already in 1994 the *Nihil obstat* was received from Rome; in 1995 the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints authorized the separation of the Causa Toulorge from that of the “Martyrs of Normandy”. This was necessary, for the American bombardment of Normandy in 1944 had almost completely destroyed all archives, especially the depository in St-Lô, which held all the original documents of the victims of the Revolution from Coutances. We owe it to a stroke of good fortune that only the documents pertaining to Peter-Adrian have survived. Pierre-Adrien Marc had copied out in exact detail all the original documents of the Causa Toulorge from 1924.



Much preparation for the study of the Causa was done by the diocesan archivists of Coutances, especially Vice-Postulator Jean-Baptiste Lechat, along with Georges Couppey. The diocesan informative process was opened on December 1, 1995 in Coutances and closed on July 29, 1996. The excellent 372 page *Positio super martyrio et fama martyrii*, drawn up by Bernard Ardura, O. Praem. on behalf of the Postulator General Donatian De Clerck, O. Praem., was unanimously given a positive evaluation in the Roman Congregation on December 5, 2000 by the six historical consultors and on July 15, 2010 at the meeting of the eight member theological commission.

After a vote of consent by the cardinals on March 1, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI authorized the Congregation to promulgate the decree regarding the martyrdom of Peter-Adrian on April 2, 2011.



*Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the "Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum",  
at the Blessing of the glass windows in the Generalate  
of the Premonstratensians  
on April 13, 2010*

## Liturgical Texts

**As of the printing of this booklet the liturgical texts in English have not yet been approved by the Congregation of Divine Worship (Rome).**

### Prayer of the Day

*Almighty and eternal God,  
who filled Blessed Peter-Adrian your priest during persecution with the  
strength of the Holy Spirit, by which he offered his life as a martyr of the  
truth of Christ, grant that by his intercession and example we may always  
have strength to cling to the Gospel counsels and to bear witness to your  
love toward our neighbor. Through Our Lord.*

### Office of Readings - Second Reading

Born May 4, 1757 in the Diocese of Coutances, he made profession of religious vows in the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande. At the time of the French Revolution he was forced into exile because he had refused to take the oath imposed on clerics. Then, returning to France, he was arrested in September 1793 because he was a Catholic priest and was declared guilty of emigrating, although the juridical tribunal could exhibit no proof of this. By the grace of God he overcame his fear and voluntarily confessed the truth. He shed his blood on October 13, 1793 and was venerated by the people as a "Martyr of the Truth".

Farewell letter of Blessed Peter-Adrian Toulorge  
(*L. Quenault, L'abbé Toulorge ou le martyr de la vérité (episode de 1793),  
Coutances 1869, p. 12-13*)

### *The grace to die for Christ*

My dear brother,  
I send you the best and most favorable news. For my death sentence was scarcely announced, when I responded following in the footsteps of St. Cyprian: Thanks be to God! For tomorrow at two o'clock I shall leave this earth and enter heaven to enjoy the presence of God and my Church. Ah! How can it happen to me, a sinner, to be crowned a martyr? I confess to my God that I am most unworthy of such a benefit. But what should I say? This is the fate of those who have remained faithful in the Catholic, apostolic and Roman faith which by the grace of God I follow to the utmost.  
O Mother of Christians who alone has the right to present children to



heaven, what a joy it is for me, in this time of great tempest, to have remained in your holy house! Since, however, the hour of my death draws near, my time is over, my eternity approaches.

My dear brother,  
rejoice because tomorrow you will have an advocate in heaven, if God - as I hope - will sustain me, as he has done till now. And rejoice again, because God has deemed me worthy, not only to endure this prison, but death itself for our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest favor that he could grant me. I have asked him to confer on you the same crown. It is not fitting to remain in this state of affairs. Therefore direct your eyes to heaven, live uprightly and above all be a good Christian. Bring your children up in the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion. Always consider it the greatest honor to have had a brother in your family who merited to shed his blood for Christ. Do not grieve about my fate. Rejoice and say with me: Blessed be God! Indeed I wish for you on your last day a holy life and paradise; I wish this also for my sister, my nephew and my niece and my entire family. Now, however, in perfect friendship I remain always your brother. I embrace you all.

Responsory

(Jn 18:38; 14:6; 8:40)

*R/. Pilate said to Jesus: What is truth? \* I am the way, the truth and the life.*

*V/. But now you seek to kill me, one who has spoken the truth to you? \* I am the way.*

### **Suggested Mass Introductions (four selections)**

*Peter-Adrian with his hand raised for the oath*

In the impassioned phase of the French Revolution all priests, who returned to France after fleeing the country because they refused to take the oath, were sentenced to death. This included the 36 year old Peter-Adrian Toulorge of the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande, who stood before a court that had no proof of his stay in Jersey. Instead of regaining his freedom by lying, he stood by what in fact happened and raised his finger to heaven, to God, who granted him the grace of complete conversion during his trial. Thus this "Martyr of the Truth" died by the guillotine in Coutances on October 13, 1793. - The Bl. Peter-Adrian stands before us as a man of persevering faithfulness and courageous confession. Let us ask God for priests and religious with backbone such as he had.

*Peter-Adrian in the white habit as witness to the resurrection*

Peter-Adrian Toulorge from the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande, who was persecuted as a priest during the French Revolution, hid for almost a year from the revolutionary troops. In his rucksack he also had his habit with him. The Easter white encouraged him to be a life-long witness to the resurrection. With the words "*In manus tuas - into your hands, O Lord*" on his lips, the 36 year old went to his death calmly and full of trust in God. He died by the guillotine on October 13, 1793 in Coutances. - May the Bl. Peter-Adrian help us also to view the world and our (order) life in the light of the Easter sun and to bring hope and confidence into the life of those who have confidence in us.

*Peter-Adrian with the Bible in the midst of the people*

Peter-Adrian Toulorge from the Premonstratensian Abbey of Blanchelande was a popular pastor who, even as a persecuted priest, was invited by families to say Mass even risking danger of death. Like St. Norbert he had with him in his rucksack his bible, breviary, missal and portable altar. He didn't live for himself, but was completely available to people, as is the task of the Church: "The joy and hope, sorrow and anxiety of people today are also the joy and hope, sorrow and anxiety of the disciples of Christ." (*Gaudium et Spes* 1). With a life accompaniment understood in this way the foundation of the proclamation can always shine through again: the Word of God that moves, encourages and fortifies. - Let us pray on this memorial of Bl. Peter-Adrian, who was executed for his witness of faith on October 13, 1793, that all bishops, priests and deacons proclaim the Word of God courageously and opportunely.

*Children's Mass: Peter-Adrian without parents*

To have to live without parents is terrible... The Bl. Peter-Adrian of the French monastery of Blanchelande lost his mother four days after his birth; his father died shortly before his priestly ordination. A heavy blow! Without parents the young Premonstratensian now placed all his trust in God - especially as he was persecuted and had to hide for a year. He felt again and again that God was with him. Even when he was killed on October 13, 1793, he was able to speak as Jesus did: "*Into your hands, O God, I place my life.*" - Let us pray today for all children who have to grow up without parents, that they may find good friends and in particular may feel God's love and closeness.

*Possible Symbols:*

*Martyr's palm*

*Rucksack with habit, bible and breviary*

*Prayer cards for mutual reflection.*

### **Suggested Petitions (two selections)**

With trust in the intercession of the Bl. Peter-Adrian we call upon God:

- We pray for all who proclaim your message: Give them the strength to bear witness to the spoken word with their life as well.
- We pray for all, whose life's plans are thwarted: Be near to them and help them to cope with their new situation.
- We pray for all Christians who are persecuted for the sake of their faith: Give them strength to persevere faithfully.
- We pray for all Premonstratensians: Let them, through their life and work, be witnesses to the resurrection of your son.

Until his death the "Martyr of the Truth" gave witness of his belief that you are the way, the truth and the life. For this we praise and extol you today and forever. Amen.

or:

The Bl. Peter-Adrian Toulorge stands before us as a confessor of the truth, who before the court stood by his convictions and what had taken place. Let us pray, as we recall his memory today, for the strength to live a Christian life.

- Lord, bless everyone who wants to fill young people with enthusiasm for you and give them the courage for resolute imitation.
- Grant to our monastery communities ever new the spirit of community and tolerance, of watchfulness and care for one another.
- Make the preachers of your message credible witnesses who are able to give the people of today strength and hope.
- Give your spirit of strength and courage to all who are persecuted for the sake of their faith or their conviction of conscience.

In living and dying the Bl. Peter-Adrian knew he was supported by you. This morning/evening we too wish to place everything in your hands and praise you through Christ our Lord. Amen.



**Peter-Adrian Toulorge Hymn in French**  
(Dominique-Marie Dauzet, O. Praem.)

Refrain: *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum,*  
*Entre tes mains, Seigneur Jésus, je remets toute ma vie.*

La peur de la mort est tombée sur moi,  
Et devant mes pas, un chemin de mensonge,  
Je suis troublé, incapable de parler,  
Le torrent des eaux me submerge.

Au plus fort de l'angoisse le Seigneur m'a dit :  
« Mon enfant bien aimé,  
Qui est mon disciple connaît la vérité,  
La vérité te rendra libre ».

Le tribunal a jugé en ma faveur  
La peine capitale : Deo gratias !  
Je vais mourir fidèle à la foi catholique  
Apostolique et romaine.

J'ai mérité de souffrir et mourir pour Dieu,  
Le Dieu de vérité.  
Tout indigne d'une telle faveur,  
Je reçois la couronne.

Demain mes amis, je quitterai cette terre,  
Pour aller au ciel devant Dieu ;  
Je suis délivré de toute misère,  
Je vais goûter au bonheur des élus.

Le bienheureux Pierre-Adrien parla ainsi :  
« Commençons ensemble à chanter ce cantique,  
Je l'achèverai en Paradis,  
Dans la liturgie des anges ».

Personne n'a un plus grand amour,  
Que de donner sa vie pour ses amis,  
Père, pardonne-leur,  
car ils ne savent pas ce qu'ils font.

Rendons gloire à Dieu notre Père,  
À Jésus-Christ son Fils unique,  
À l'Esprit de Vérité, maintenant et toujours.

**Peter-Adrian Toulorge Hymn in German**  
(*Petrus-Adrian Lerchenmüller, O. Praem.,  
sung to the melody of "Komm Schöpfer Geist"*)

Ein Zeuge, der wird heut geehrt,  
ein Zeuge, der uns Wahrheit lehrt.  
Dem Herrn vertraut er bis zum Tod,  
er half ihm in der größten Not.

O sel'ger Petrus-Adrian,  
sieh unsre Nöte heute an.  
Trag unser Leid zu Gottes Sohn,  
bitt du für uns an Gottes Thron.

Die Wahrheit ist ein hohes Gut,  
sie fordert unsren ganzen Mut.  
Lasst uns auf unsren Sel'gen schau'n,  
in Zweifel nur auf Christus baun.



*Portbail*

**Peter-Adrian Toulorge Sequence in French**  
(*Jean-Baptiste Lechat*)

Seul Dieu pouvait créer le firmament  
et tous les astres qui l'animent.  
Seul Dieu pouvait créer les océans,  
leur faune et le léviathan -  
Car rien n'est impossible à Dieu.

Seul Dieu pouvait créer la terre,  
riche des plantes qui l'embellissent  
et des animaux qui l'habitent.  
Seul Dieu pouvait créer l'homme à son image  
et la femme à l'image de l'homme -  
Car rien n'est impossible à Dieu.

Seul Dieu pouvait créer la Vierge Immaculée,  
qui donnerait le jour à l'Emmanuel.  
Seul Dieu pouvait créer les douze Apôtres  
que Jésus entrainerait à Jérusalem -  
Car rien n'est impossible à Dieu.

Seul Dieu pouvait créer le grand-prêtre,  
le roi, le procureur et les soldats,  
qui conduiraient le Christ à la mort sur une croix.  
Seul Dieu pouvait créer  
le jour éblouissant du soleil de la Résurrection -  
Car rien n'est impossible à Dieu.

Non vraiment,  
rien n'est impossible à Dieu  
sauf de mentir.



*Painting of Françoise Quiroga (1995)*



### In conclusion ...

For the spiritual “networking” of those devoted to the Servant of God and soon to be Bl. Peter-Adrian Toulorge, the Postulator General celebrates the Holy Mass **each month on the 13th** (the day of his death) for all the intentions that were commended to him. Please make known to the Postulator your prayer intentions so that he can include them in the Holy Sacrifice.

For a later canonization of Peter-Adrian Toulorge it is necessary that you also inform the Postulatio of further answered prayers from which a miracle process can be reached after precise investigation. Hence we request all those who venerate him to invoke his intercession intensely and with great confidence!

On a given occasion we call attention to the fact that for the ecclesiastical procedure the clarity of the attribution of an answered prayer is necessary. It is therefore advisable, in *one* particular intention, to invoke only *one* blessed and only that one for his intercession. It would be a shame if a miracle process had to fail because the ecclesiastical court could not clearly attribute the answered prayer to a candidate.

*Please send answered prayers to:*

*Jean-Baptiste Lechat, Evêché, B.P. 129, F-50 201 Coutances, or  
Pater Dr. Gabriel Wolf, O. Praem., Viale Giotto 27, I-00153 Roma.*

Since we have no mortal remains of Peter-Adrian we can send you on request “only” a facsimile of the farewell letter to his brother Jean-Baptiste Toulorge.

For effective work a postulator also needs money...

Should you wish to support the beatification and canonization process of Peter-Adrian Toulorge, could you make your donation to the following account with the Liga-Bank in Regensburg (Germany):

Remittances from Europe: IBAN: DE 70 75090300 0401335782  
BIC: GENODEF1M05


We are grateful for each donation - Thank you very much!





*Peter-Adrian window in Muneville-le-Bingard*

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## New Publication

For the beatification Father Bernard Ardura, O. Praem. published the following book, which we recommend to the French speaking who venerate Peter-Adrian:

*Ardura, Bernard, “La vérité vous rendra libres”.  
Le bienheureux Pierre-Adrien Toulorge - Prémontré -  
“Martyr de la Vérité” (1757-1793).  
Préface du Cardinal Paul Poupard,  
Paris 2012.*



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