



**BLESSED DENIS OF THE NATIVITY
AND
BLESSED REDEMPTUS OF THE CROSS**

Memorial — November 29th



Martyred in Aceh in Indonesia

Denis of the Nativity

*The Blessed Denis of the Nativity, O.C.D. (also Dionysius), (12 December 1600 – 27 November 1638) was a French sailor and cartographer for the king of Portugal, who later became a Discalced Carmelite friar. He was killed in Sumatra while taking part in a diplomatic mission there on behalf of the Portuguese Empire. He was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1900.

He was born Pierre Berthelot in Honfleur, in the Calvados Department of Normandy, the second son of Pierre Berthelot, a ship's captain and master surgeon, and Fleurie (*née* Morin). His contemporaries described him as "a handsome, stocky man, blond and fair-skinned, an adventuresome and high-spirited person, with an inquisitive and active mind".

The younger Berthelot's first sea voyage was at the age of twelve, and when he was 19 years old, he embarked on a vessel called *L'Espérance*, bound for the Far East. The ship was captured by a Dutch vessel in competition for the spice trade. It was at this time that Berthelot made a religious conversion. He managed to escape and sought refuge with the Portuguese in Malacca.

In service with the Portuguese, Berthelot was knighted for bravery and earned an appointment as pilot-in-chief and cosmographer to the king of Portugal. He gained some fame as a cartographer, and his map of the archipelago of Sumatra is still preserved in the British Museum. Though a career with the Portuguese navy was available to him, he chose to join the Discalced Carmelite Order in Goa in 1635, taking the name of Denis of the Nativity.

He was ordained on 24 August 1638, and straightaway was sent by his superiors on a diplomatic mission to the Sultan of Aceh, accompanying Francisco de Sousa de Castro, an ambassador of the Viceroy in Goa. Castro had requested his presence, both for spiritual guidance for the group as well as for Father Denis' piloting skills and his knowledge of the region from his service aboard the *L'Espérance*.

Once in Aceh, all the members of the mission were seized and arrested, at the instigation of the Dutch authorities in Jakarta. The members of the mission were then tortured. Refusing to deny their faith, they were martyred one by one. Father Denis and his companion, Brother Redemptus of the Cross, were led to a desolate spot on the seashore, where Redemptus was shot with arrows, then his throat was slit. Father Denis, a crucifix in his hands, received a fatal blow to the head from a scimitar.

Of the sixty-some members of the diplomatic mission, only Castro, the ambassador, survived. He was held captive for three years, until his family paid a large ransom for his life.

Redemptus of the Cross

The Blessed Redemptus of the Cross, O.C.D. (also Redemptorus), (15 March 1598 – 27 November 1638) was a Portuguese lay brother in the Order of Discalced Carmelites. He was put to death along with other members of a group sent to Sumatra by Portuguese authorities.

He was born Tomás Rodrigues da Cunha in Paredes, Portugal on 15 March 1598. He first served as a soldier in the Portuguese army in India, where he joined the Carmelites in Goa as a lay brother in 1615, taking the name Redemptus of the Cross.

Brother Redemptus was sent by the superiors of the Order to accompany Father Denis of the Nativity as part of an ambassadorial mission from the Portuguese Empire to the Sultan of Aceh. The mission was led by Dom Francisco Sousa de Castro as ambassador.

Once in Aceh, all the members of the mission were seized and arrested, at the instigation of the Dutch authorities based in Jakarta. They were then subjected to torture, and those members of the mission who refused to deny their faith were executed one by one. The two friars were led to a desolate spot on the seashore, where Redemptus was shot with arrows, after which his throat was slit. Father Denis, a crucifix in his hands, was the last to die, his skull shattered by a blow of a scimitar.

Castro, the ambassador, was the only survivor. He was held in captivity for three years, until his family paid a large ransom for his release.

*(excerpted from: en. wikipedia.org)

Prayer

O God, Who in Thy wondrous providence, led the blessed's Denis and Redemptus through the perils of the sea to the palm of martyrdom, grant through their intercession that in the midst of earthly vicissitudes and worldly desires we may remain steadfast even unto death in the confession of Thy name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.