



BOLDNESS UNDER PERSECUTION

the story of Blessed Pierre-René Rogue, C.M.

BL. PIERRE-RENÉ ROGUE

- Pierre-René Rogue, C.M., martyr, was the third beatified confrere of the French Revolution. The liturgical celebration of all three men has been placed jointly on September 2. But Pierre had a different date of death, and also a difference of place of death.

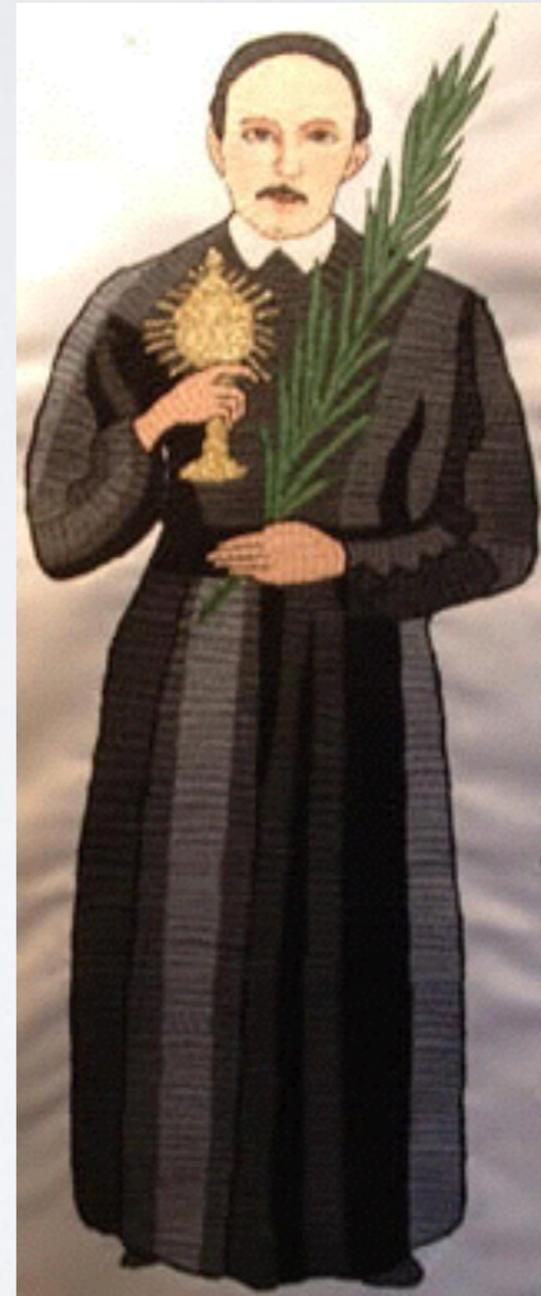


image: from the [website](#) of
La Cathédrale de Vannes

HOMETOWN

- He was a native of Vannes in Brittany, did all his priestly ministry in that town, and was guillotined there on 3 March 1796, three and a half years later than his confreres in Paris.



location of Vannes, seaside port town in France

EARLY YEARS

- Pierre was born in 1758, an only child who never knew his father (he died shortly after Pierre was born).
- After completing high school at St. Yves (still operating today as le collège Jules Simon, Vannes) he spent a year living with relatives of his mother, then entered the local diocesan seminary, which was staffed by Vincentians.

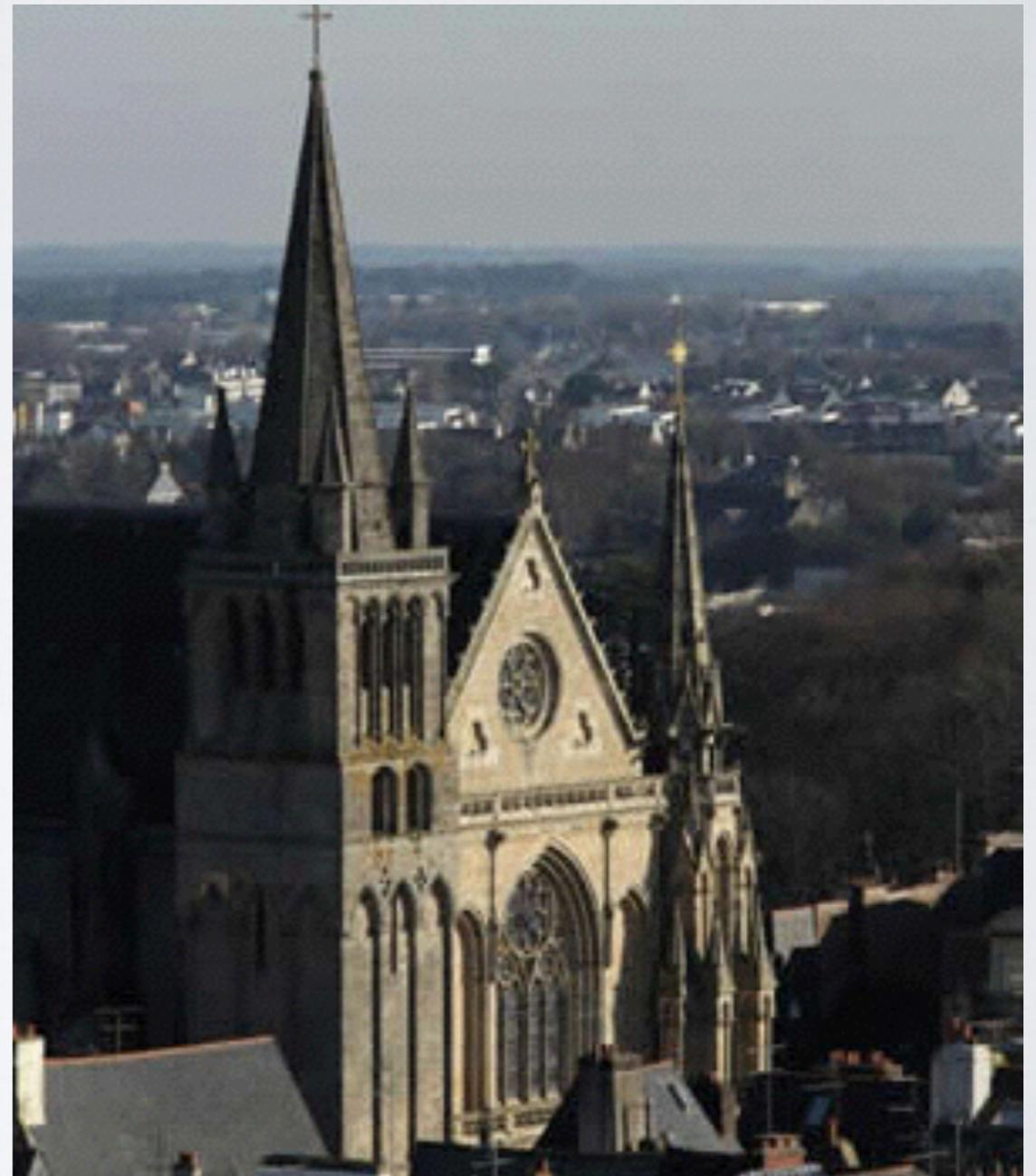


image: the Cathedral at Vannes, today

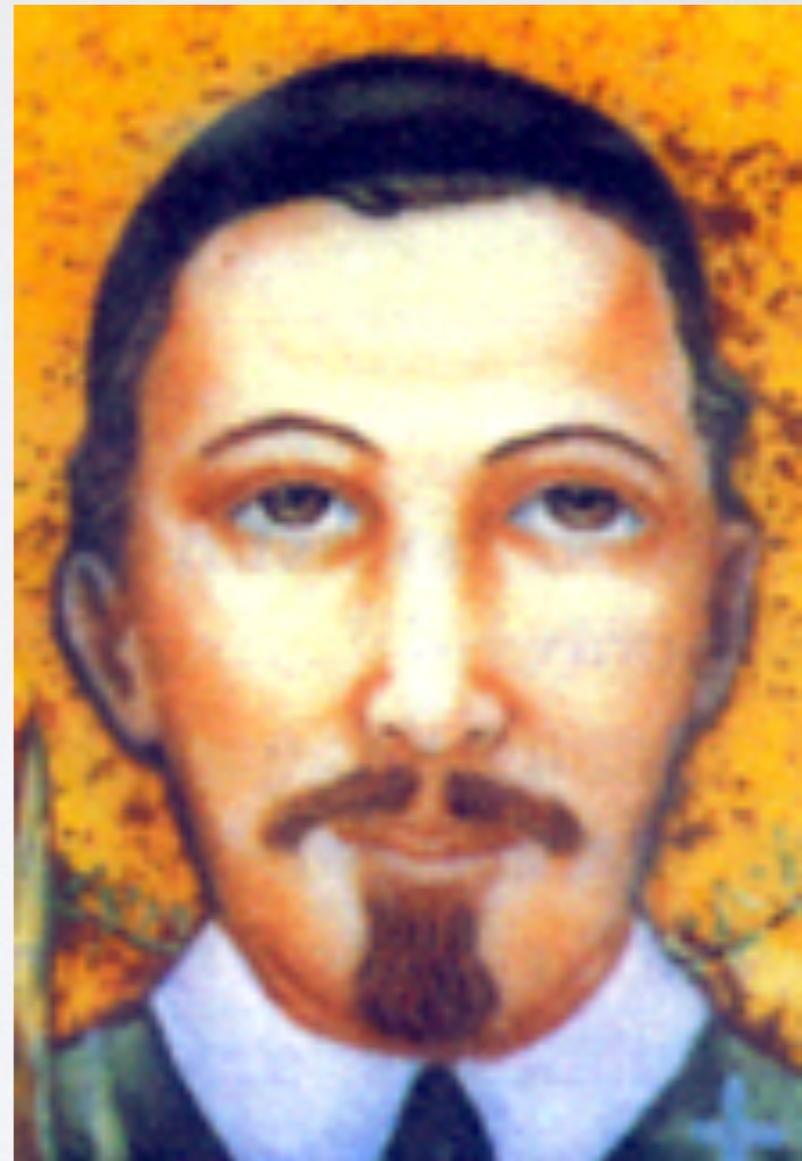
FRAGILE HEALTH

- His health was regarded as fragile. He was a small man, only four feet ten inches tall. (That was not a measure of his courage, as we will see.)
- He was ordained as a diocesan priest in 1782 and appointed chaplain to a home for old women. Four years later he joined the Congregation of the Mission, but spent only three months at the mother house (Saint-Lazare in Paris) before returning to the internal seminary in Vannes. The reason for this was, once again, the fragile state of his health.



VOCATION

- He was appointed to teach theology in the seminary, and was also involved in courses of theology for lay people, a fact which was to be important for him later. A few years later he was given the added ministry of being a curate (assistant to the parish priest).



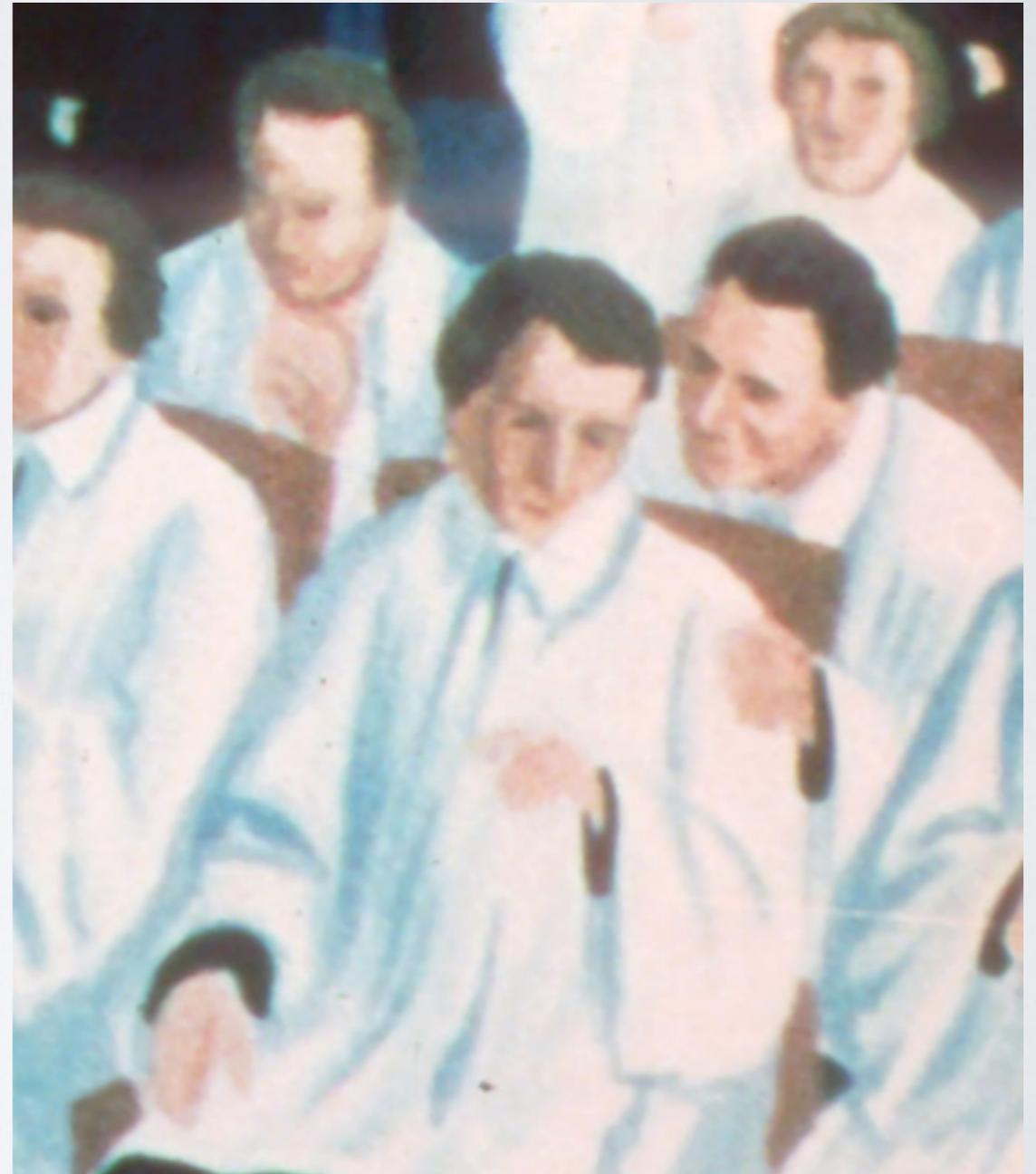
CLERICAL OATH DURING THE REVOLUTION

- During the French Revolution, there were various oaths which priests were asked to take, about loyalty to the State. These meant rejection of the Holy See and loyalty to a State-sponsored Church. Eventually, the penalty for not taking these oaths, or for working as a priest without having taken the oaths, was death. That is why Pierre-René Rogue was eventually killed.



TROUBLE BREWING

- When the troubles of the Revolution came to Vannes, the civil authorities estimated that only about six priests, out of more than four hundred, would be likely to take the oaths.



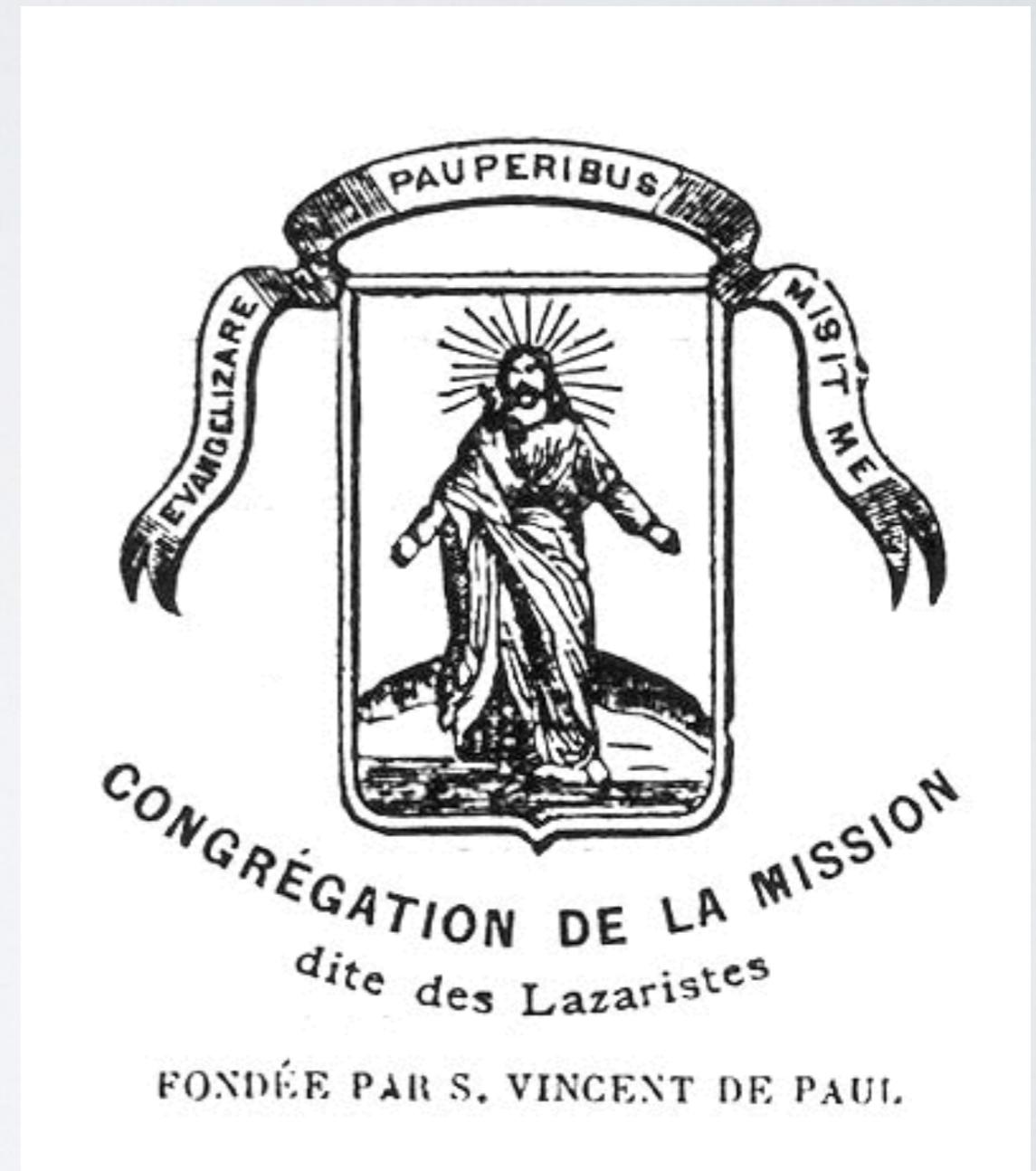
PIERRE-RENÉ TAKES COURAGEOUS ACTION

- In February 1791 some priests, including the Vincentian superior of the seminary, were summoned to a meeting with the civil authorities. At first the priests agreed to take the oath. When Pierre-René heard this he went to the superior and pointed out the damage that would be done if all the priests of the diocese heard that the superior of the seminary had agreed to take the oath. He dictated a letter for the superior to sign, stating that he had changed his mind and would not take the oath. That same day Pierre-René personally delivered it to the authorities.
- When this became known, all the other priests of the diocese who had indicated their willingness to take the oath withdrew their agreement. As a result only one priest in Vannes took the oath!



STANDING UP TO AUTHORITIES

- On 20 April 1791 the staff were expelled from the seminary and the contents of the building were put up for sale. The seminary staff challenged this decision, pointing out that because the staff had conducted courses for lay people, the seminary was exempt from the new law. Also, it was exempt for a second reason, because the building was the property of the Congregation of the Mission, which at that date had not been suppressed by law.



CLAIMING HIS DUE

- The authorities agreed to a partial financial settlement, including fixed salaries for the seminary staff. Pierre-René decided to put in a claim also for back payment as a parish curate, and was paid this as well. He then put in a claim for further payment because of income he was due from a benefice, which he had in Angers, which had been stopped; this was also paid up. These financial claims won by Pierre-René are very interesting because they are the exact opposite of what the Vincentians had been advised: to refuse any money offered by the state for priestly ministry. Pierre-René's view was that he had done the work and therefore should be paid.



LOCAL CONNECTIONS

- Pierre-René maintained good relations with the town's civil authorities and he was not interfered with in his parish ministry. For prudence, though, he gradually introduced a practice of celebrating Mass in private houses. The fact that he was a native of the town, as were the members of the civil administration, was a help to him. He knew them personally and had been at school with them. His superior, though, was not from Vannes and Pierre-René advised him to leave the town, and he went to Spain.



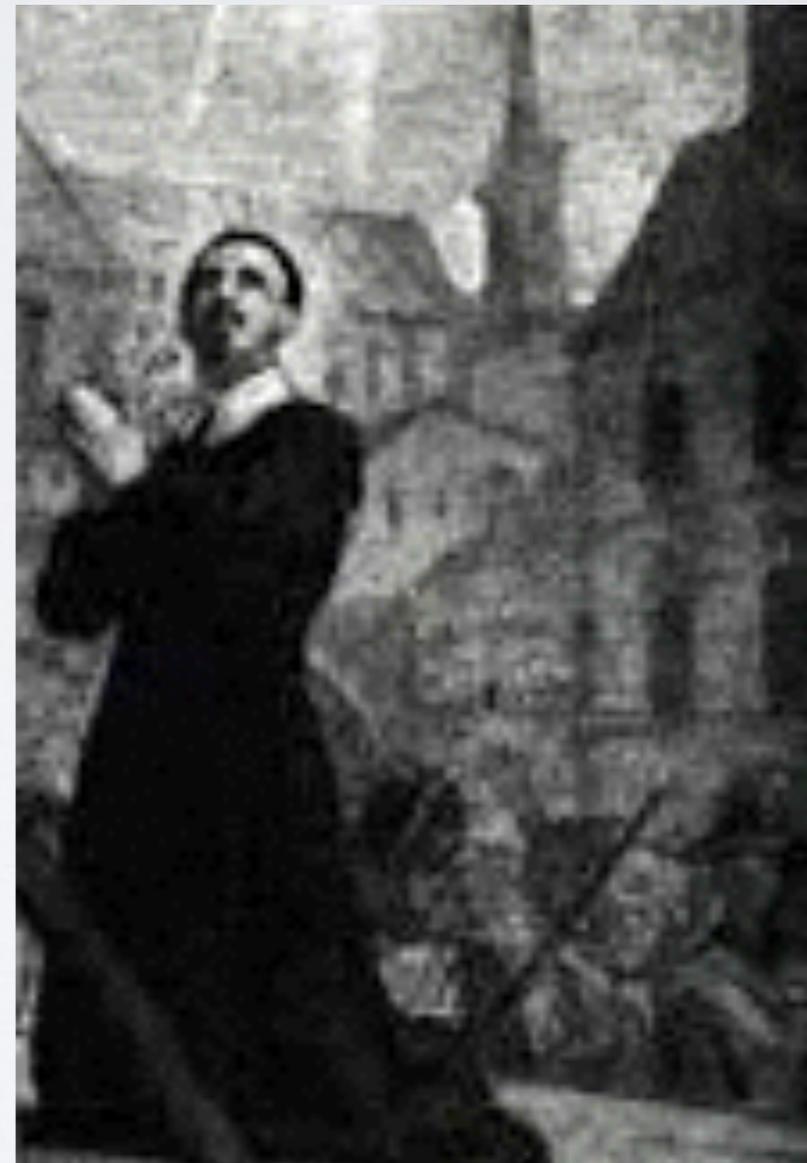
IN HIDING

- As the situation in the town began to deteriorate Pierre-René had to go into hiding, moving from one safe house to another, to lessen the risk of capture. His mother's house was constantly watched in the hope that he would visit her.



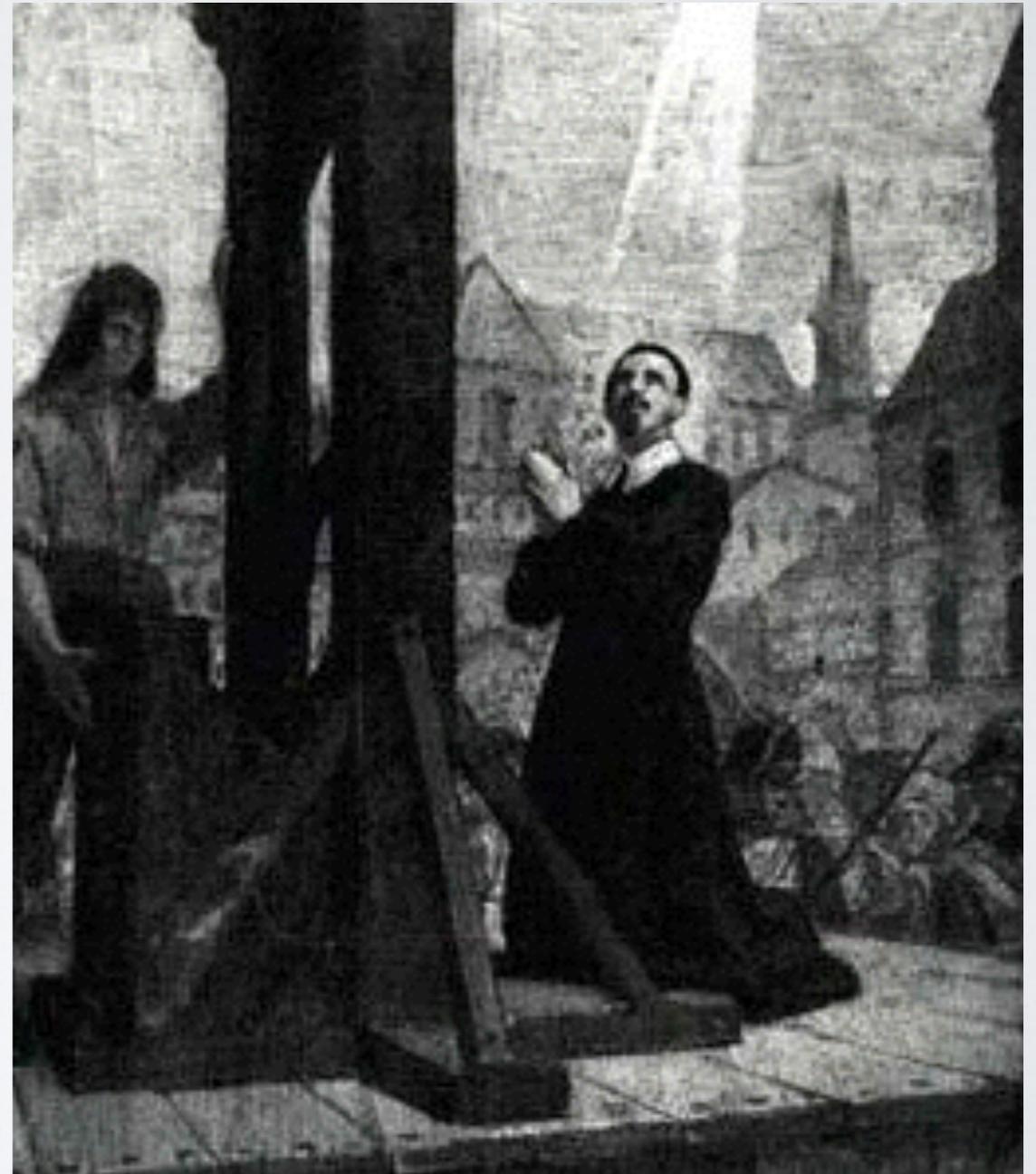
COURAGEOUS ACTS

- On Christmas Eve 1795, when Fr. Pierre-René was bringing Viaticum to a sick person, he was betrayed by a man for whom his mother had procured work and who was still receiving financial help from her. This man and another man brought Pierre-René to the authorities and handed him over. They refused to accept him, because he had not been arrested by the police; they gave him the opportunity to escape. He refused to do so, saying that that would get them into trouble with their own superiors.



MARTYRDOM

- He was tried and convicted on the charge that he had not taken the various oaths and had engaged in priestly ministry. He was found guilty, naturally enough, and was sentenced to be guillotined within twenty-four hours. This took place on 3 March 1796. His mother was apparently present.





Present day photos of Vannes (Creative Commons)



Vieux Quartier Port Vannes



Chapel dedicated to Pierre-René Rogue, Saint Peter cathedral, Vannes (Morbihan, France)
[Wikimedia Commons, by Fab5669](#)

from “Vincentian Martyrs of the French Revolution”
by Thomas Davitt CM

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