

Daughters of Charity Martyrs of Arras

*Excerpts from "The Blessed Sisters of Charity of Arras"
by Lucien Misermont, C.M.*



The House of Charity at Arras

- ❖ The House of Charity at Arras enjoyed the honor of being one of the foundations of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Humble in its beginning, it was not long before it began to flourish and so continued until the time of the French Revolution.



In better times...

- ❖ “At the outbreak of the Revolution in the year 1789, the dispensary, visits to the poor in their homes, and the free school for girls were in a prosperous condition. Benefactors were numerous and generous and the people were in perfect sympathy with the Sisters who devoted themselves to their good works without a fear for the future.”



Outbreak of the Revolution

- ❖ The House of Charity was occupied by seven Sisters. The Revolution would soon test each one's fidelity to Jesus and to the Church. As Lucien Misermont, C.M. puts it, the fate of the seven Sisters is "a most impressive example of the gratuitous distribution of divine gifts."



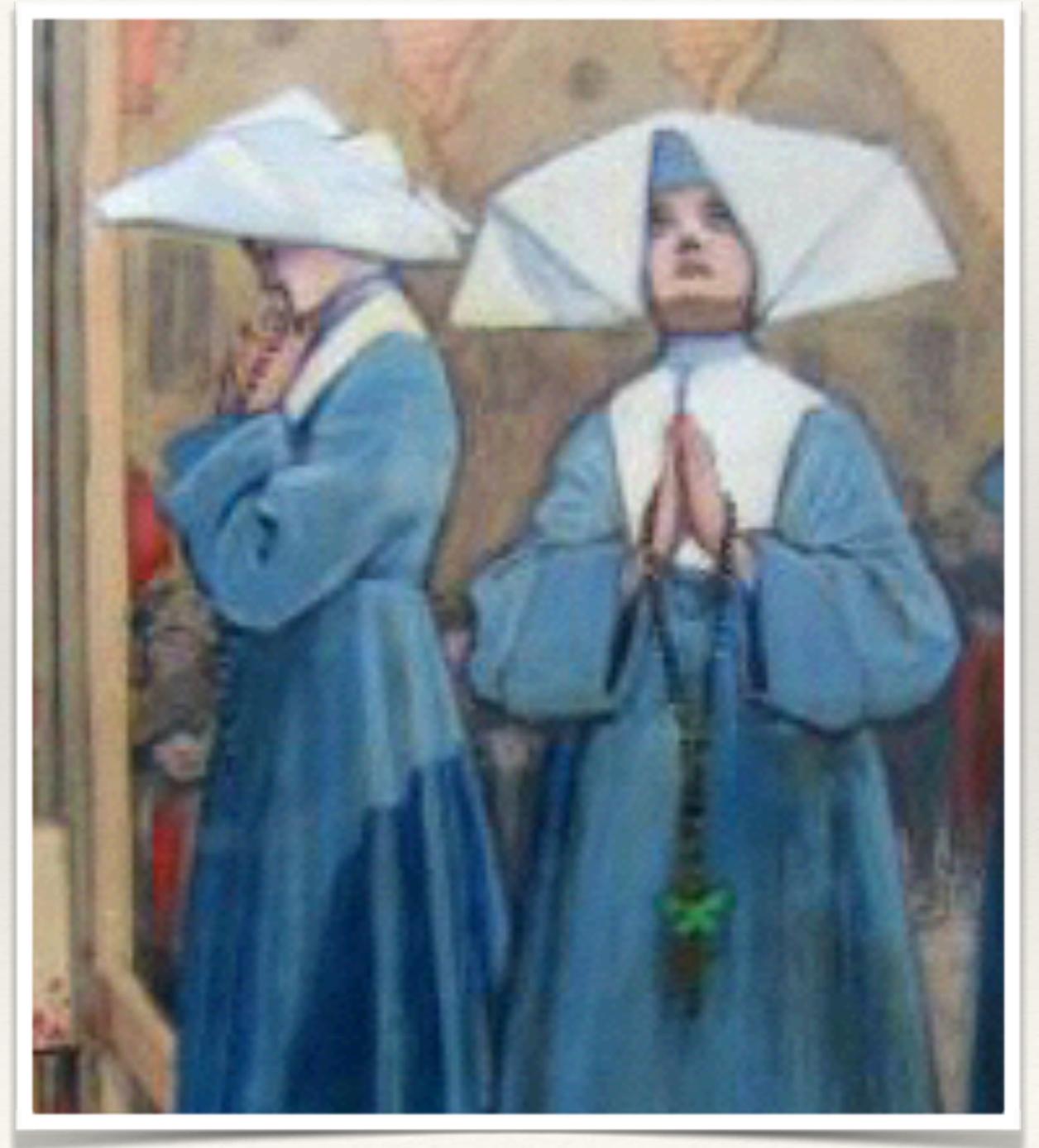
Different gifts...

- ❖ “Upon four among them... God bestowed the crown of martyrdom, the most precious of all graces. From two others... this grace was withheld, as they were destined in the designs of Providence to restore the various works of the House of Charity after the dark days of the Revolution.”



Two Sisters...

- ❖ “Devotedly attached to their holy vocation, [Sisters Rose Micheau and Jeanne Fabre— two of the younger Sisters] ... realizing their own weakness... feared to expose themselves to prisons and the guillotine... they were anxious to continue their merciful ministrations among the poor, but dared not risk a brutal arrest, nor venture a summons before the revolutionary tribunals.”



Into exile

- ❖ “Their prudent Superioress, [Sister Marie Madeleine Fontaine, one of the four who would soon be martyred], sympathizing fully with her faithful yet timorous daughters, so arranged matters that Sisters Micheau and Fabre escaped to the Belgian frontier the night before the imprisonment of their companions.” (They rejoined the Company of the Daughters of Charity when it was reestablished after the Revolution).



Not all were martyred... two went on

- ❖ The book goes on... “Had the early Christians perished in the persecution of a Nero and a Domitian, how could the Church have repaired her ruins and continued her mission throughout the world? Martyrs were needed to attest the strength of grace and to scatter in the midst of the world the seeds of Christians, but other valiant souls were no less necessary to labor for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. To this class Sisters Rose Micheau and Jeanne Fabre undoubtedly belong.”



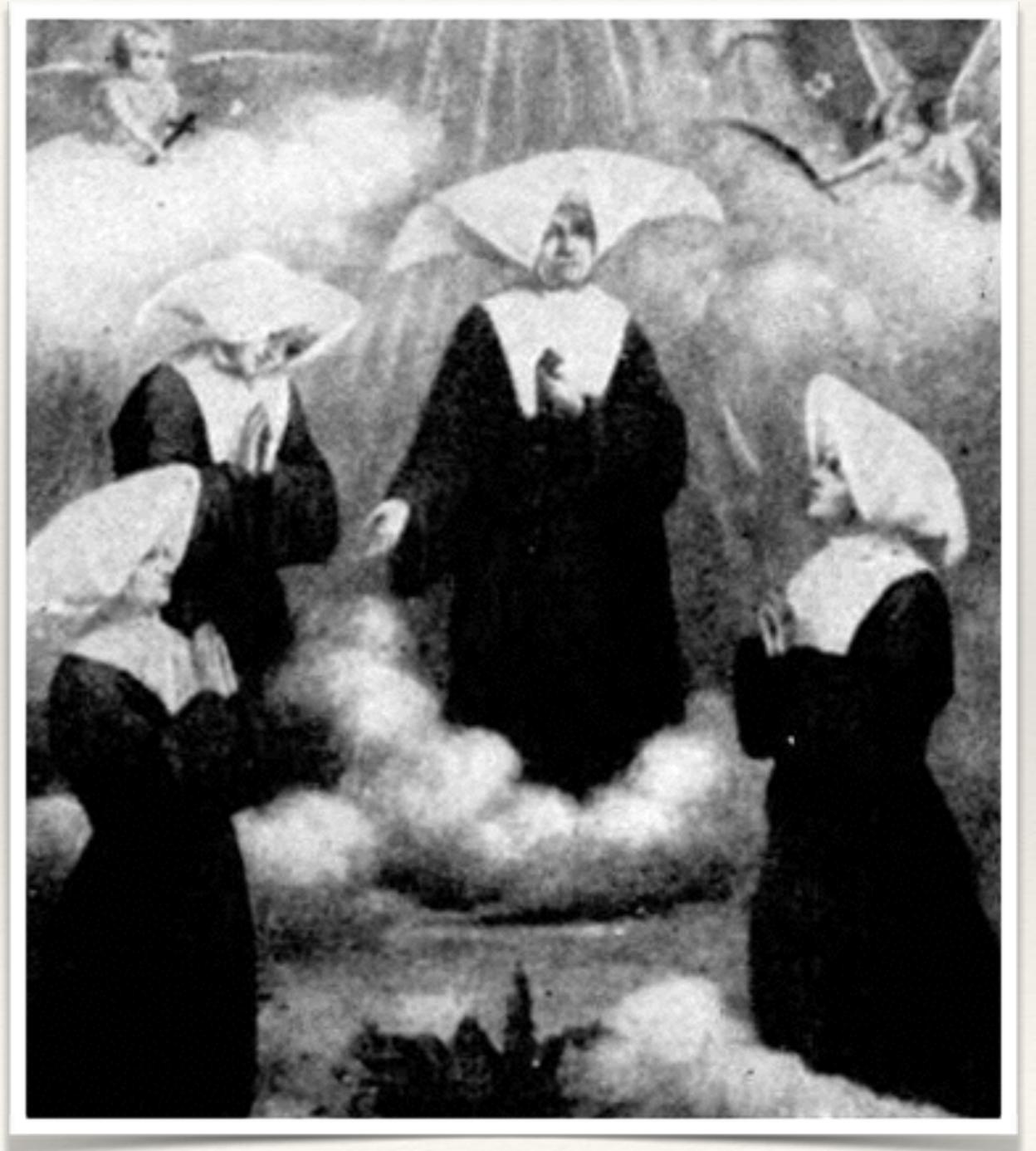
One was lost to history

- ❖ “The last of the little community of Arras, the youngest of the group, Françoise Coutocheaux, furnishes a sad example ‘of looking back after putting her hand to the plough’... Had it been her privilege to live in happier days, in a period of peace and tranquility, she might have continued her labors among the poor and children, but with the ever present prospect of expulsion, prisons, and even a violent death, she yielded to discouragement, and in July 1792, returned to her family. Of her after years nothing is known.”



Source

- ❖ For the full story, see the book “The Blessed Sisters of Charity of Arras” by Lucien Misermont, C.M., translated from the French by A Sister of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD, St. Joseph’s College, 1926. Available online at the [Depaul University Library Digital Collections](#).
- ❖ With images from the [St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive](#)



The four martyrs

Martyred 26 June 1794 in Cambrai, Nord (France), all vowed members, Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul

- ❖ MARIE-MADELEINE FONTAINE, DC, born: 22 April 1723 in Etrepagny, Eure (France)
- ❖ MARIE-FRANÇOISE LANEL, DC, born: 24 August 1745 in Eu, Seine-Maritime (France)
- ❖ THÉRÈSE-MADELEINE FANTOU, DC, born: 29 July 1747 in Miniac-Morvan, Ille-et-Vilaine (France)
- ❖ JEANNE GÉRARD, DC, born: 23 October 1752 in Cumieres, Marne (France)





LES BIENHEUREUSES
MADELEINE FONTAINE
MARIE LANEL
THERESE FANTOU
JEANNE GERARD
FILLES DE LA CHARITE D'ARRAS
GUILLOTINEES A CAMBRAI
LE 26 JUILLET 1794