

The Story of Titus Brandsma



INTRODUCTION

Each of us must walk our personal way of the cross, sooner or later. For most of his life, the gentle and saintly Dutch Carmelite priest, Father Titus Brandsma, was a distinguished scholar and writer. The arrival of the Nazis in Holland made him a champion of freedom, justice, and faith, but his life would become a path of cruel suffering.

The life, suffering, and death of Titus Brandsma are mirrored in the lives of millions of victims of oppression and injustice, both yesterday and today. He gives us a powerful example of modern Christian witness. Even in the midst of the horrors of the concentration camp at Dachau, Titus Brandsma found not despair, but peace. His story is important today to all who seek to follow Christ.

The life of Titus Brandsma might well be summed up

in his own words: "The person who wants to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come in conflict with it."

Through A Dark Tunnel

BY BONIFACE HANLEY, O. F. M.

" ANNO, do you know what?" "What, Father?" "You are a very bright boy!" The speaker was a Dutch Franciscan friar; the bright young man, a student at the Franciscan minor seminary in Megen, The Netherlands. "You are too bright to be a Franciscan," the priest continued. "There are many bright Franciscans, Father." "I am talking about you, Anno. You should be a Jesuit . . . not a Franciscan." "Yes, Father." This conversation took place just before the turn of the twentieth century. And, as happens in every century, the young man took none of his elder's advice. He joined neither the Franciscans nor the Jesuits; he became a Carmelite priest. His name was Anno Sjoerd Brandsma. He was born in Friesland, a province in the northwest corner of Holland, on February 23, 1881.



Titus is seen here on the extreme left.

Anno's ancestors scooped their land from the sea, first with bare hands and later with primitive tools and other devices. Living with their faces to the sea and their feet on fertile farmland wrested from the waters, the Frisians were-and are- an enterprising and quietly determined people, a distinct and colorful minority in densely populated Holland. Physically strong, they revere decency of life and foster all the qualities that have made the Dutch famous cleanliness, order, intelligence and discipline. Anno's father, Titus, a sober and creative man, deeply loved his people and his Roman Catholic faith. He promoted and developed the Frisian cooperative dairy system and immersed himself in local politics. He and his wife, Tjitsje Postma, had six children, four girls and two boys, whom they reared in an atmosphere of piety, hard work and joy on the large



Located near the North Sea in a remote corner of Holland called Friesland, the farm house was the pride of the Brandsma family.

farm they called Oegeklooster. The family attended daily Mass. Contrary to the custom of the times, Titus and Tjitsje received Communion frequently during the week. Titus loved music and frequently gathered his brood around the family piano for sing-a-longs and dancing lessons. An accomplished folk-dancer, farmer Brandsma enlivened many of his family's happiest hours as he taught his children the steps of intricate polkas and mazurkas.

MEGEN

Anno desired to become a priest from the time he was a young boy. At the age of eleven, he asked his father's permission to enter the Franciscan minor seminary in Megen to begin preparatory studies for the priesthood. Although Frisian in spirit, he was frail and not blessed with the strong constitution typical of his people. He was a willing worker but could never handle the heavy farm work Frisian children customarily performed. Titus and Tjitsje, although concerned about his health, gave him permission to try the seminary, and Anno left home in the fall of 1892.

During his six years at Megen, Anno, well endowed with Frisian common sense and stability and possessed of keen intelligence, succeeded very well in his studies. His winsome personality made



him a favorite with professors and students. His classmates called him "de Punt," a nickname meaning "Shorty." In his third year at the seminary, he developed a severe intestinal disorder and lost a considerable amount of weight. The friars ordered a special diet for him, featuring cream, eggs, butter and other foods that enabled him to regain his lost weight. He soon recovered his health and returned with renewed energies to his studies. His superiors, however, not satisfied that he was strong enough for the rigors of Dutch Franciscan life, suggested that he seek a gentler form of life. The rejection hurt, but Anno accepted it with grace and resiliency.

THE CARMELITE

In September 1898, Anno presented himself at the Carmelite monastery in Boxmeer, Holland, as a candidate for the order and was cheerfully accepted. On his reception into the order's novitiate, he observed the custom of changing his name to indicate the beginning of his new life. His choice was Titus..

Carmelites trace their origin to Holy Land pilgrims and ex-crusaders who, in the spirit of the Old Testament prophet Elias, adopted an eremetical form of life on and around Mt. Carmel about the middle of the 12th century. Their primitive rule was approved by

Pope Honorius III in 1226. Twenty-one years later, St. Simon Stock, to whom Mary revealed the Scapular, became general superior of the order and the strong leader of its establishment and spread in England and Europe.

Despite internal divisions and vagaries of religious and political revolutions, the Carmelites contributed significantly to the ministry of the Church in Europe until the 18th century when the order fell afoul of the Austrian emperor's anti-papal policies and the atheism unleashed by French Revolutionaries. By 1830, there were only two Carmelite monasteries in western Europe: one in Austria with three members and the other in Boxmeer with three members.

A decade later, the Boxmeer community, freed from the political oppression that had been suffocating it, attracted new members and stirred with new life. By the 1850s, the community had twenty-four members and began sending men on mission to pioneer the foundation of new monasteries in The Netherlands, England, the United States, Poland, France and Austria. Carmelites from Boxmeer eventually opened missions in Brazil and Indonesia.

Anno joined the Carmelites as this wave of renewal was cresting. The Boxmeer community consisted of thirty-nine friars who spent their days in prayer, silence and solitude. Fasting, austerity, contemplation and study were the ingredients of the Carmelite way. Anno-living in a simple cell, sleeping on a straw mattress, bent over books at his desk, kneeling in quiet prayer, chanting the midnight Office in chapel, eating the simplest foods, recreating quietly with his confreres-knew he had found his niche. "I am very happy now," he wrote home.

THE WRITER

During his novitiate, Titus began a lifelong study of the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, the most astute and articulate analyst of the Carmelite spirit who later was proclaimed the first woman Doctor of the Church.

In his spare time, he translated several of her works and published them in 1901 under the title, *Selected Writings from the Works of St. Teresa*. The effort represented the first of his many contributions to the literature of mysticism. He discovered that he had a facile pen and an ability to translate the most scholarly concepts into clear, concise language. These translations marked the beginning of a long and successful literary career.

Titus also initiated several literary projects with his fellow students during his novitiate and subsequent years of study. He encouraged them to produce articles on various religious topics and acted as their literary agent in selling their work to Dutch magazines and newspapers. He developed an in-house magazine for the Carmelites which he eventually published for all Dutch Catholics. These early writings revealed his characteristically Carmelite attraction to mysticism and his typically Frisian interest in Christian responsibility for social justice.

At times his austere life-style, coupled with the added exertions of translating and writing, took a heavy toll of Titus' fragile constitution. He experienced recurrent attacks of intestinal difficulties and general weakness. His superior, a gentle and sensible Dutchman, often grounded him, relieving him of the obligation to assist at midnight Office and other monastic duties. The friars, anxious that Titus stay in their

community, assisted him in every possible manner.

His courage did not flag. On one occasion he wrote to his grandmother, who was also probably ill at the time: "Keep up your courage and continue to be happy. Then everything will right itself Do believe this."

In October, 1899, his Carmelite superiors allowed their happy, if frail, Titus to profess his first vows in the order and approved the continuation of his studies for the priesthood.

PRIESTLY STUDIES

Bright and articulate, Titus had little difficulty in mastering the required studies in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest June 17, 1905, celebrated his first solemn Mass in Friesland and, after a short vacation with parents and relatives, reported to the Carmelite monastery in Oss for his final year of theology.

His superiors intended to send Titus to Rome for doctoral studies. During final examinations at Oss, however, he ran afoul of a testy examining professor who resented his liberal thinking, picked him to shreds in oral questioning, and effectively squelched for the time being any hope for studies in the Eternal City. Titus, while accepting this setback with some degree of resignation, was jolted again when his superiors assigned him, a respected scholar and successful writer, to sacristan and bookkeeping duties at Boxmeer. Always resilient, the new priest graciously and cheerfully accepted the assignment.

The appointment to Rome for doctoral studies came a year later, after his superiors judged they could override the objections of the professor who had previously flunked him.

THE DOCTOR

Titus' calmness, gentleness and quiet good humor won him the affection and admiration of the international group of students at the Carmelite College of St. Albert in Rome. Illness plagued him again, however, preventing him from passing final examinations the first time around. He made it in the second try and was awarded a doctorate in philosophy by the Pontifical Gregorian University October 25, 1909.

PROFESSOR BRANDSMA

Titus, a doctor of philosophy, returned to The Netherlands to assume a teaching post at Oss.

Carmelite renewal had peaked during the early 1900s but, by the time of his return from Rome, vocations to his and other orders had dropped sharply. He nevertheless labored to establish the best training system possible for the small number of seminarians. Superiors of the order, responding to the urgings of Titus and other scholars, determined to provide the most competent faculties and the finest seminary programs. During some terms, Titus taught only two or three students, always with well-prepared and thoroughly researched lectures and classes. His subject matter

dealt with the relationship between philosophy and theology.

Titus combined writing and other activities with his teaching career. He founded Carmelrozen, a journal of Carmelite spirituality, which he edited and for which he encouraged his students to write. In 1916, he organized a team of scholars to do more translations of the voluminous works of St. Teresa of Avila. He was appointed editor of the local daily newspaper in 1919 and collaborated on a Frisian translation of the famous spiritual guide, the Imitation of Christ. Ever the practical businessman, he negotiated government and business loans for a new library in Oss and engaged in numerous civic and religious projects.

Despite his time-consuming round of activities, Titus never neglected his Carmelite way of life, which demanded several hours of prayer and meditation each day. No wonder he wrote to a friend: "Last night I was still working until one-thirty, and this morning _ I said Mass at six-thirty since school started again at eight o'clock." No wonder also that his health broke under the strain from time to time.

His spirit was willing but his flesh was too weak to maintain the fast and demanding pace of his apostolic involvements. In the summer of 1921, he suffered a general physical collapse and, with recurrent hemorrhaging and persistent pain, hovered between life and death for long week after long week. Then, suddenly, Titus the resilient began to recover. He got back to full stride by early winter of that year.

ALWAYS TIME

Busy Titus always had time for people. The more unfortunate they were, the more time he gave them. The eccentric, the poor, the ignorant, the despised -all felt at home with him and had no hesitation about invading his privacy. His heart, overruling his fondness for organization, impelled him to drop everything and turn full attention to the plight of any distressed person who showed up, unannounced, at his doorstep. When he met anyone who was hungry, he fed him. If he had no money to give, he brought the person to his home. He provided clothing, rent, money and consolation without stint to all who came his way. Once, he whipped the blanket off his own bed to warm a poor person. He spent hours listening to the complaints of frustrated artists and outraged scholars, and struggled to right the wrongs they suffered. If his head was in the high and luminous clouds of philosophy and mysticism, his feet were planted firmly on the rocky ground of human suffering and confusion.

Kneeling in prayer by the hour; leaning over his desk while preparing his lectures; listening patiently to the words of a suffering human being; counseling a student; sitting at his typewriter, his head concealed by billows of blue smoke from the cigar clenched in his teeth: Titus Brandsma was a happy man. And he brought happiness with everything he did and to everyone he met.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The Roman Catholic University of Nijmegen, the first of its kind in the modern history of The Netherlands, was established in 1923. It symbolized the endurance and hardiness of Dutch Catholics who had suffered severe persecution during several

centuries of political and religious upheaval, and were still struggling for survival and equality in the twentieth century.

Dutch Protestants and Catholics took religion seriously. Both were quite willing to die for their beliefs, and each provided the opportunity for the other to do so at various intervals. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Protestants and Catholics had learned to live side by side as separate and distinct groups. Protestants, whose communicants included the king and queen, were in the majority, both in numbers and influence.

The new institution at Nijmegen sparked great enthusiasm among Dutch Catholics. One of them, Titus, felt deeply honored when he was invited to join the university's first faculty as a professor of philosophy and mysticism.

His position at the university widened Titus' sphere of influence. His winning personality and genuine religious spirit attracted young people.

His students gave him mixed reviews as a lecturer but highest grades as an approachable human being. He continued his writing apostolate and was eventually appointed superior of a monastery established near the university for students of the Carmelite Order.

From his quarters at Nijmegen, Titus -who spoke Italian, Frisian and English -was summoned constantly to hear confessions, give counsel and help the unfortunate. His apostolic spirit and his love for the Frisian people, who were mostly Protestant, drew him to establish a special Catholic society for Frisia. In 1926, he organized the first national pilgrimage to the site in Frisia where St. Boniface, who planted the faith in the region, was martyred in the eighth century. He continued work on various projects for his order. He also earned a reputation as a skillful lobbyist with the government on behalf of the university, and as a successful negotiator of government loans and grants for the institution.



Titus spent hours at his desk in Nijmegen

RECTOR MAGNIFICUS

Titus was elected in 1932 to a 6 year term as Rector Magnificus, president of the Catholic University Nijmegen and accepted the office with joy and his customary deference. As Rector Magnificus, he journeyed Rome on one occasion to call on Cardinal Bisleti. The Cardinal, who hard of hearing, had difficulty in apprehending just who this tiny Carmelite standing before him was why he had called on him. "You who?" His Eminence inquired. As explained patiently that he was for Magnificus of the university Nijmegen. "Ah," the Cardinal responded. "Could not the Rector magnificus himself come? Is he ' Titus tried again.

Ah, how sad," murmured the Cardinal. Titus tried once more, in the best voice he could muster this time the prelate heard and said with wonder at the unassuming "You are the Rector Magnificus Titus smiled apologetically.

It is the Rector Magnificus," the Cardinal kept repeating to no one in particular for several

moments before the interview got under way. He proved to be an excellent administrator and rector. His non-threatening personality, his uncanny ability to reconcile hardheaded university professors and administrators, and his negotiating -all combined to make him a Magnificent Rector.

The evening the university celebrated its tenth anniversary, the day Titus' term as rector expired, students, alumni and faculty members went to a local hotel for a celebration. Later that same evening, a group in high spirits left the hotel and paraded by torchlight to the Carmelite monastery. When Titus, responding to their enthusiastic demands for an immediate audience, appeared and tried to quiet the crowd, they accorded him a tumultuous ovation. The students and faculty he loved could hardly have paid him a more touching tribute.



Titus Brandsma, 51, in the robes of the Rector of the Catholic University of Nijmegen.

A MYSTIC AT NIAGARA FALLS

After the expiration of his term as rector of the university, Titus returned to the classroom and lecture hall while continuing to commit himself to other apostolic endeavors which included writing and lecturing throughout the country. In 1935, at the request of his superiors in Rome, he undertook a lecture tour to Carmelite foundations in the United States, during which he traveled in the East and Middle West.

After a visit to Niagara Falls, he wrote in his journal: "I am . . . contemplating the imposing Niagara Falls. From their high channel, I see them rushing down ceaselessly What is surprising is the marvelous and complex possibility of the watersI see God in the work of his hands and the marks of his love in every visible thing. I am seized by a supreme joy which is above all other joys."

Irish Carmelites who helped him perfect his use of English during a visit to their country before the United States tour, remembered him for his gentleness, humor and genuine goodness. They also marveled that Titus, unused to alcohol, consumed respectable amounts of potent Irish whisky without showing any of the usual effects. As the 1930s ended, Titus, despite nagging ill health, continued to mobilize every talent he possessed, every ounce of energy he could muster, to pursue his contemplative and active life.

In one of his lectures at Nijmegen, he revealed the source of his happiness and productivity. "First of all, we have to see God as the fundamental basis for our being. This basis is hidden in the inner depth of our nature. There we have to see him and to meditate on him We then not only adore him in our own being but also in everything that exists."

THE DUTCH JOURNALISTS

Shortly before Titus left for the United States, Archbishop (later Cardinal) De Jong,

ranking prelate of the Dutch hierarchy, appointed him spiritual advisor to the mostly lay staff members of the more than thirty Catholic newspapers in the country. The purpose of the appointment was to strengthen relations between the hierarchy and the working Catholic press. Titus, well qualified for the liaison assignment, had no difficulty in winning the respect and cooperation of the journalists.

OMINOUS DEVELOPMENTS

Adolph Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January, 1933. By that time, he had already set in motion the forces of patriotism, political fanaticism, racial hatred and rigid party discipline that produced the Nazi dictatorship in Germany and prepared it for expansion into Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Scandinavian countries, Poland, Belgium, The Netherlands and France.

Titus, with sadness and foreboding, observed and correctly interpreted the ominous development of Nazism. In classroom, lecture hall and the press, he warned the Dutch against Hitlerian tyranny. "The Nazi movement is a black lie," he proclaimed. "It is pagan." His critique and denunciation of the Nazi movement in Germany and its counterpart in Holland did not escape the notice of the Dutch Socialist Party. He became a man marked for eventual reprisal.

German tanks bearing the swastika and flying red war banners burst across the Dutch frontier May 10, 1940, spearheading a blitzkrieg of armor and troops that rapidly crushed all organized military resistance.

With armed forces in command and Nazi officials and collaborators in political control, the repression of freedom became the objective in Holland. Accordingly, objectors to the occupation were deemed traitorous, organized religion came under attack, and Jews were victimized again as they had already been in Germany. Catholics came under strict regulation and straitened circumstances. Authorities decreed that priests along with men and women religious could not be principals or directors of secondary schools. The salaries of priest and religious teachers were cut by 40 per cent. Catholic schools were ordered to expel Jewish students.

Titus, appointed by the bishops for the purpose, appeared before officials at The Hague to present clearly and vigorously their opposition to the crippling directives. To no avail.

THE BISHOPS SPEAK

The Dutch bishops announced January 26, 1941, that the sacraments were to be refused "to the Catholic of whom it was known that he was supporting the National-Socialist movement to a considerable extent . . . because it seriously endangers the Christian conception of life of all those who participate in it"

The bishops spoke again when the Nazis decreed a heavy-handed takeover of the Roman Catholic Workers' Union. In a letter addressed to the Dutch people in July, 1941, they said: "We have long maintained silence - that is to say, publicly about the many injustices to which we Catholics have been submitted during recent months."

The letter continued with a listing of injustices, stating in part: "We have been forbidden to hold collections . . . for our own charitable and cultural institutions"

Our Catholic broadcast . . . has been taken away from us. Our Catholic daily press has either been suspended or has been so limited in its freedom of expression that it is hardly possible any longer to speak of a Catholic Press."

The letter also noted that some institutions had to pay exorbitant taxes and that youth groups had been forced to disband. The bishops then wrote: "Now something has happened about which we may no longer be silent without betraying our spiritual Office The Catholic Workers' Union is forced into the service of the National-Socialist movement; it becomes, in fact, one of its organizations. Therefore Catholics may no longer remain members." That the bishops were forced to condemn Catholic membership in the union they had established after its transformation by the Nazis, was a bitter pill for the Church to swallow.

AN ULTIMATUM

The bishops' letter goaded the military governor of Holland to intensify persecution against both Jews and Catholics. Seyss-Inquart, an Austrian who had successfully engineered the annexation and incorporation of his own nation into the Third Reich, had spent the previous year trying to beguile the Dutch in the hope of turning them into willing collaborators with the Nazis. He failed to reckon upon one factor, however: the stubborn Dutch love of liberty. Hollanders snickered at his blandishments.

After release of the bishops' letter, he declared open war on the Dutch in a speech delivered in August in Amsterdam. "From this moment on," the Gauleiter declared, "it will be either you are with us or against us. The struggle will not be over until everyone accepts the way we, the Nazis, want things to be done. All of Europe will be chained and shackled before Germany gives up the fight. Nothing can prevent it."

The Nazi public relations bureau informed Dutch newspapers and journals that they had to accept advertisements and press releases emanating from official sources. Media personnel were told that "this measure which we have taken is based on the assumption that nothing may be omitted that may promote the unity of the Dutch nation."

A DANGEROUS MISSION

Shortly after issuance of this memorandum, Archbishop De Jong summoned Titus to his chancery. "We will respond to them," he said. "Our answer must be 'No!'" He commissioned Titus, in his capacity as spiritual director of Catholic journalists, to convey the hierarchy's response personally to all Catholic editors in The Netherlands. On presenting this task, the Archbishop said: "Titus, you do understand this mission is dangerous. You do not have to undertake it."

"Father Titus," the Archbishop testified later, "knew exactly what I said, and he freely and willingly accepted the duty The mission was necessary, for some of our editors disagreed with each other on what was allowed and in what cases they must disobey the new regulations because of their Catholic principles. Father Brandsma was the right man to explain our directives."

Titus stated and grounded the bishops' directives in a letter he began delivering personally in visits to editors throughout the country. He encouraged them to resist

Nazi demands while patiently explaining the various consequences of such resistance as well as of collaboration with occupation authorities. He concluded each visit with remarks along this line: "We have reached our limit. We cannot serve them. It will be our duty to refuse Nazi propaganda definitely if we wish to remain Catholic newspapers. Even if they threaten us with severe penalties, suspension or discontinuance of our newspapers, we cannot conform with their orders." As he traveled from city to city, Titus was well aware that he was being shadowed by the Gestapo. Furthermore, someone informed the police of the purpose of his mission and the contents of his message. Titus was a marked man.

THE ARREST

Titus visited fourteen editors before the Gestapo arrested him on Monday, January 19, 1942, at 6:00 p. m. at the Boxmeer monastery. Before leaving there, he knelt and received the blessing of his superior. Leaving, he proudly wore in the lapel of his black clergy suit the insignia of a Knight of the Dutch Lion which he had received from Queen Wilhelmina in August, 1939.

Police agents took him under guard to a prison at Scheveningen, a seaside port near The Hague. He was locked up in Cell 577. "Imagine my going to jail at the age of 60," he said to his arresting officer. "You should not have accepted the Archbishop's commission," was the humorless reply. Captain Hardegen, the tall, blond, always polite officer in charge of Titus' case, began his interrogation with the question: "Why have you disobeyed the regulations?" "As a Catholic, I could have done nothing differently," Titus replied.

"You are a saboteur. Your Church is trying to sabotage the orders of the occupying powers, to endanger the national peace and to prevent the national socialistic philosophy of life from reaching the Dutch population." Titus responded: "We must object to anything or any philosophy that is not in line with Catholic doctrine."

Three days later, Hardegen filed a report to Berlin in which he said: "Brandsma's activity endangers the prestige of the German Empire, the national socialistic ideas, and intends to undermine the unity of the Dutch people It seems justifiable to take Professor Brandsma into custody for a considerable time."

But that was not all the Nazis had against the priest. Hardegen later explained that he was basically "an enemy of the German mission" and that "his hostility is proved by his writing against German policy toward the Jews."

As early as 1935, Titus had joined other Dutch intellectuals in public denunciation of Nazi persecution of the Jews. *Das Jahresbericht 1942* (the Nazis' "Yearbook 1942") well summarized the occupiers' view of Titus and others like him. Under "News from Holland" it was reported that in that year two hundred and thirty-eight persons were executed. The Secret Police took action against ten thousand Dutchmen. Following this item, the book gave details about the Nazi case against the Church and, specifically, against the wicked Professor Brandsma. "Besides the publication of several episcopal letters and statements from the pulpit against socialism and against the N. S. B. (the Dutch Nazi Party), the Catholic clergy also tried to organize a big press campaign against the N. S. B., as well as against the 'Arbeitsdienst' (voluntary labor for Germany) and the N. A. F. (the Socialist Labor Union). Through the arrest of

Professor Brandsma (the leading man in this action) - this rebellion was quenched in its infancy."

SCHEVENINGEN

In the evening of Wednesday, January 21, 1942, Captain Hardegen advised Titus that his case would require further hearings and that he would therefore be held at Scheveningen. He told him: "Life in your cell cannot be too difficult for you since you are a monk."

The officer allowed him to have his pipe and returned his watch. The hands were not set. "I have my own time," Titus wrote, "independent of Greenwich, Amsterdam or Berlin." During his years of intense apostolic activity, he had yearned for an opportunity to spend more time in prayer. The Nazis unwittingly gave him his heart's desire.

Titus, who had learned to love silence and solitude while a Frisian farm boy, had a genius for organization which soon found expression in a daily routine that was interrupted only when guards forced him out of it for interrogation sessions.

At one session, Hardegen gave him a task: "Please advise me in writing, Professor Brandsma, why the Dutch people, particularly the Catholics, are objecting to the Dutch Nazi Party." Titus, candid and without fear, had no hesitation in spelling out why the Dutch would never accept the Nazis and why Hitler's dream of absorbing them into his empire was bound to fail.

"The Dutch," he said, "have made great sacrifices out of love for God and possess an abiding faith in God whenever they have had to prove adherence to their religion. Protestants as well as Catholics venerate many martyrs from previous centuries who are examples for them. If it is necessary, we, the Dutch people, will give our lives for our religion. The Nazi movement is regarded by the Dutch people not only as an insult to God in relation to his creatures, but a violation of the glorious traditions of the Dutch nation."

As Titus predicted, Nazi brutality succeeded in forging a bond between Protestants and Catholics in Holland, a consequence the Nazis feared and an experience which Hollanders had not had since religious wars tore their churches apart centuries earlier.

Titus never hated the German people or individual members of the Nazi Party. At the end of his statement to Hardegen, he wrote: "God bless Holland. God bless Germany. May God grant that both nations will soon be standing side by side in full peace and harmony."

Hardegen, declaring that "Brandsma feels he must protect Christianity against the National Socialists," regarded him as "very dangerous" and stated flatly: "We will not let him free before the end of the war."

Titus spent seven weeks in the uneasy silence that hung in the halls, corridors and salons of the resort turned into a prison at Scheveningen. Alone in his cell, he organized his day to the last moment. He wrote poetry, started a biography of St.



Nazi Military
Governor Arthur
Seyss-Inquart

Teresa of Avila, composed a series of meditations on the Way of the Cross for the Shrine of St. Boniface, martyr of Friesland, wrote two booklets (My Cell, Letters from Prison), read his breviary and knelt in silent prayer often during the day. He had a scheduled time for morning walks in the confines of his cell. He even smoked his pipe on schedule-until January 29, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of Catholic journalists, when guards peremptorily took away his pipe and tobacco. Imperturbable as always, he struck smoking time from his daily schedule.

"I felt at home in Scheveningen," he wrote to his Carmelite superior. "I pray, I write. The days are too short. I am very calm. I am happy and satisfied." So calm that he managed to complete .six of twelve proposed chapters of his biography of St. Teresa.

AMERSFOORT

On March 12, Titus was transported in a convoy with about one hundred other prisoners -members of the underground, military personnel and clergy-to the notorious penal depot at Amersfoort in Central Holland.

On arrival there at about 9:00 p. m., guards marshalled the prisoners in the camp courtyard and ordered them to stand in freezing rain. Titus, clad in his black clerical

suit, was a quiet figure of dignified defiance. After several hours in the rain, the prisoners were led to a dressing room, were ordered to strip and were handed prison uniforms. Then, before they could dress, they were driven, naked, out again into the freezing rain. Finally, the drenched and shivering men were herded into barracks and allowed to don the old army uniforms that were standard prison attire.

Titus, Number 58, was assigned to a work detail hacking out a shooting range in the forest surrounding Amersfoort. Prisoners, poorly equipped for the job of cutting trees, removing stumps and clearing ground,

often dropped exhausted in their tracks. Disease, dysentery and despair were prevalent throughout the camp. When the hospital became overcrowded, guards laid the sick in the camp's muddy streets where late spring rains and cold nights brought merciful death to many. Others were taken on truck rides from which they never returned.



For Titus, Cell 577 became a haven of silence and prayer.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

On April 20, Hitler's birthday, prison authorities granted amnesty to some fortunate prisoners. Titus was not among them. Through one of those released, however, he sent word to the Carmelites, telling them not to worry about him. "I will be all right," he assured them. Released prisoners spoke of his good spirits, courage and generosity. "He frequently gives up a portion of his meager rations," they reported, "to help

other starving prisoners." "Particularly touching," one recalled, "is his care and concern for the Jews."

Guards strictly prohibited any priest or minister to give spiritual counsel and viciously punished violators. Jailers beat transgressors to death or left them maimed for life. Titus quietly and coolly defied the ruling. On days preceding Good Friday, he gathered groups of prisoners and led them through meditations on Christ's passion and the Stations of the Cross. Prisoners came to him every morning and night to ask for his blessing. He surreptitiously and silently made the Sign of the Cross on their hands with his thumb. He managed to hear confessions and even visit the sick and dying in the hospital.

Titus urged prisoners who could hardly bring themselves to forgive their brutal captors, "Pray for them." "Yes, Father," they replied, "but that is so difficult." "You don't have to pray for them all day long," he counseled gently.

EASTER

Nazi authorities celebrated Easter Sunday by sentencing to death seventy-six members of the Dutch underground. Other prisoners had to stand silently facing the condemned for over two hours. Titus prayed for them and signaled this to them whenever he could by folding his hands and pointing heavenward.

In late April, the Gestapo ordered Titus from Amersfoort to Scheveningen for further interrogation. To all questions, he repeated his original statement, that he acted out of principle and that, if he were again in the same circumstances, he would do exactly the same thing. At the end of the questioning, Captain Hardegen informed him: "We have decided that you will be transferred to Dachau. You will stay there until the end of the war."

TO DACHAU

En route to Dachau, Titus spent some time at a prison in Kleve, Germany, where he received relatively good treatment. He managed to assist at Mass and receive the Eucharist but was not permitted to offer the Holy Sacrifice.

Father Ludwig Deimel, the Catholic chaplain at Kleve, sought every opportunity to visit Titus. At his urging, Titus, whose health was deteriorating rapidly with the complication of uremic poisoning affecting his memory, appealed for parole. He asked to be allowed to spend his prison term at a Carmelite monastery in Germany. His petition, unfortunately, was presented at the time Czechoslovakians assassinated Nazi Gauleiter Heydrich. Hardegen, who processed the petition, advised Dutchmen who visited his office to support the request that security demanded Titus' continued imprisonment. "We are still on the battlefield, strong and unconquered," he lectured the Dutchmen, "and we intend to remain." The officer ended the interview when he thrust his right arm into the air and shouted, "Heil, Hitler!"

THE EUCHARIST

"In Dachau, I will meet friends, and God the Lord is everywhere," Titus wrote just

before he left Kleve. "I could be in Dachau for a very long time. It doesn't have such a very good name that you really long for it."

On the journey from Kleve to Dachau, the prisoners stopped briefly at a gigantic gymnasium in Nuremberg called The Turnhalle. A prisoner described the place as "a vast reservoir of tears."

Dachau, one of Germany's oldest concentration camps, held over one hundred and ten thousand prisoners from the time of its founding in the early thirties. Eighty thousand prisoners died there.

From the very moment Titus entered the camp, his calmness and gentleness infuriated his captors. They beat him mercilessly with fists, clubs and boards. They kicked, punched and gouged him, drawing blood and oftentimes leaving him nearly unconscious in the mud.

The camp had a Catholic chapel where priests celebrated Mass every day. Prisoners were not allowed to attend, but intrepid inmates somehow were able to get and smuggle Sacred Hosts out to other prisoners.

One time, Titus received the Host in a tobacco pouch. Shortly after he got the pouch a guard, who judged that he had not mopped the kitchen floor properly, clubbed him to the ground and in an insane frenzy kicked him mercilessly. During the beating, Titus kept one arm clenched tightly to his body. Finally, he managed to crawl away from the enraged assailant and dragged himself to his bunk. A fellow Carmelite prisoner, Brother Tjihuis, came to comfort him. "Thank you, Brother," Titus said, "but don't have pity on me. I had Jesus with me in the Eucharist."

CLERGYMEN'S BARRACKS

Three barracks in Dachau were reserved for about sixteen hundred clergymen. "You will be in hell," a Dachau veteran told Titus when he was assigned to one of the barracks. "There," the prisoner added, "men die like rats." Of two thousand Polish priests imprisoned there, eight hundred and fifty died before the war's end.

The prisoners' day began at 4:00 a. m., from which time on guards chased them, exacted extra hours of labor, cut their miserable rations, harassed, hounded, beat and bludgeoned them. Work began at 5:30 a. m. and continued until 7:00 p. m., with a lunch break.

Titus, already suffering from untreated uremic poisoning, contracted a severe foot infection. The open sandals which prisoners wore caused his feet to blister and eventually suppurate. At the end of the work day, fellow prisoners often carried him to the barracks. Father Urbanski, a Polish prisoner, who more than once carried him, remembered: "So eventempered and approachable was he, so cheerful in the midst of disaster which was threatening us from all sides, that he deeply touched our hearts." Another prisoner recalled, "He radiated with cheerful courage."

Titus continuously exhorted his fellow prisoners: "Do not yield to hatred. Be patient. We are here in a dark tunnel but we have to go on. At the end, the eternal light is shining for us."

In his very last letter home, Titus, broken in body, full of infection, bruised, and with hardly a sound spot within or without, wrote: "With me, everything is fine. You have to get used to new situations. With God's help, this is working out all right. Don't worry

too much about me. In Christ. Your Anno."

Titus, although he knew his days were numbered, refused to enter Dachau's hospital. He knew that in that hellish place inhumanity plumbed new depths. Doctors used prisoners for medical experimentation. Many human guinea pigs suffered frightfully before dying indescribable deaths. The few survivors were ruined for life. Finally, Titus had no choice. He entered the hospital in the early part of the third week of July. He too became a subject for medical experimentation. In the afternoon of Sunday, July 26, 1942, the doctor in charge of his case ordered him injected with a deadly drug. Within ten minutes, Father Titus Brandsma, who brought happiness wherever he went on this earth - even to Dachau - was dead.

Arthur Seyss-Inquart (above), an Austrian, born and raised a Catholic, practiced his religion faithfully and devotedly throughout his youth. An idealist and patriot, he believed Adolph Hitler could restore dignity to the Austrian people after their empire was dismembered following World War 1. After the German takeover of Austria in 1938, he joined the Nazi Party and devoted his considerable energies to strengthening the bonds of union between Germany and Austria. Among the serious casualties of his Nazi involvement was the practice of his Catholic Faith. Seyss-Inquart's path intersected with Titus Brandsma's (below, in his prison uniform) after Hitler appointed him Military Governor of The Netherlands. The two probably never met personally, but Seyss-Inquart blunted Father Brandsma's every effort to restrain Nazi oppression. It was Seyss-Inquart who ignored all last moment appeals to release Titus from Dachau in June, 1942. The pictures on this page are prison identification photographs. Ironically, it was the destiny of both men to exchange their proud uniforms - the priest his Carmelite habit and the Nazi his military regalia - for prison garb. Brandsma remained faithful to his calling and religion until his cruel death in 1942. Seyss-Inquart, while awaiting trial at Nuremberg, reflected upon the strange twists and turns his life had taken. He determined to return to the faith of his fathers and requested a Franciscan prison chaplain to hear his confession. He received the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist before he was hanged as a war criminal in 1946.

One is tempted to speculate that Prisoner No. 58, Titus Brandsma, might have been instrumental, through his prayers, in obtaining the grace of final penitence and spiritual peace for his fellow Catholic, Arthur Seyss-Inquart.

THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS OF FR. TITUS Brandsma

Soon after the war, people who had known Fr. Titus remembered his great holiness. They began to petition his brother Carmelites and the Bishops of Holland, requesting that a process of beatification be inaugurated. People who worked with him or whom he served saw him as a model of Christian life.

A beginning was made in Holland in 1955, when testimony about the life and holiness

of Fr. Titus was gathered by Diocesan authorities. This long and meticulous process extended into 1965, when a first summary of testimony was published in Rome. It was further refined in 1968.

Two years later, in 1970, the Holy See requested a special examination by a board of three consultant theologians. They were asked to make a judgement concerning the martyrdom of Fr. Titus. After reviewing the documents and the circumstances of his death in Dachau, they concluded unanimously that Fr. Titus had died a martyr's death. Later, the Promoter of the Faith (the "Devil's Advocate") challenged this conclusion. On May 25, 1971, a new board was convened. Two examiners agreed with the Promoter of the Faith, while four others voted in favor of the opinion that Fr. Titus had died a martyr. A three-fourths majority vote was needed, so the cause was now delayed.

These new objections had to be answered and were addressed in the following months. Finally, on December 10, 1973, the Cause for the Beatification of Fr. Titus Brandsma as a Martyr was officially introduced in Rome. In the summer of 1975, a further supplementary process was conducted in Holland at the request of the Holy See. A new summary of the Cause, including this latest testimony on the question of the martyrdom of Fr. Titus, was then submitted to the Holy See.

The next step in the process would be a plenary session of the Congregation for the Promotion of the Saints. Here the final study of the Cause and the decision concerning the beatification of Fr. Titus would be made. It is known that Pope John Paul II, who wrote a letter supporting the Cause of Fr. Titus while Archbishop of Krakow, has urged that this Cause be expedited quickly.

The fortieth anniversary of the death of Fr. Titus Brandsma was remembered in Rome on October 24, 1982. Cardinal Bernard Alfrink of Holland spoke of Fr. Titus as a "victim of Nazi terror and a martyr of anti-Christian ideology". Unfortunately, thousands in the world today share his martyrdom. Nazi officials feared Titus Brandsma and made him a victim of their very refined torture: jail, hunger, gradual physical breakdown, and finally elimination of the victim by lethal injection. Titus Brandsma had courageously lived the ideals of the Gospel of Christ; he was destroyed by those who "shared a hatred of Christianity".

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