

**HEROES OF THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION
ON THE PRISON-SHIPS
OF LA ROCHELLE
(2/2)**

Brother Michael Buttigieg

Brother Léon

Brother Léon (Jean Mopinot) was 20 years older than Br. Roger, his own Superior and Headmaster in the Moulins Community. He was baptized by Fr Hubert Vuyart, parish priest of St Jacques de Reims. It was in this parish of St Jacques, one remembers, that De La Salle and Nyel, helped by Madame de la Croyère, a benefactress, had opened the second school in 1679. (9) Jean Mopinot was baptized on December 12, 1724. He entered the Novitiate of St Yon on January 14, 1744, and on November 1, 1749, he signed the formula of his final consecration to God by religious vows in this same Normandy Mother House. The fame of sanctity and the memories of the holy life and death, in this house, of the Founder, John Baptist de La Salle and of Brother Irénée, Master of Novices and Assistant Superior General, were still fresh and much revered. Brother Léon was 70 years old when he was imprisoned. He, as well as others too, had hoped that because of his advanced age, the authorities would show some moderation for him. His physical appearances betrayed his age. He was treated like Brother Roger.

Therefore, out of the 51 prisoners detained in the Moulins prisons, 27 left on the "quintidi" (10) and 24 other victims left on the "octodi". On November 4, both groups of prisoners were accompanied by one brigade of 'gendarmes' to another brigade till they reached the La Rochelle harbour. (11)

The "Positio", quoting Abbé Labiche, states:

"He appears on the list of those who were to be deported, on March 31, 1794. Then we find him again at Rochefort, one month and a half later, where he is searched, on May 16. Embarked on "Les Deux Associés", his detention will be particularly short on this ship since he died, five days later, on

May 21. He is buried on the Island of Aix."

And Abbé Labiche remarks:

"I cannot better make the eulogy of Brother Léon than by saying that he was a saint. He had amongst us that reputation and he deserved it. His death, in fact, did confirm this favourable opinion. This holy man had preserved, up to a very advanced age, all the charm of youth." (12)

Brother Uldaric (13)

The village where Brother Uldaric was born, was Fraisan; in his time it formed part of Dampierre-les-Dôle, in the diocese of Besançon.

In the Baptism Records of the Dampierre Church, we read: "Jean-Baptiste, Guillaume, son of the married couple Nicholas Guillaume and Antoinette Mignot, was baptized on February 1, 1755. God-father: Jean-Baptiste Quiney. God-mother: Francoise Ymonez."

To this "Act of Christian Faith" which baby Jean-Baptiste received by Baptism, we can now add another declaration of faith which he, later on, a little before he was martyred, made of his own free will, in Nancy, on January 21, 1791: *"I, the undersigned, Jean-Baptiste Guillaume, from the parish of Dampierre, diocese of Besançon, in Franche-Comté, joined the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on October 16, 1785. I was then called Uldaric. I declare that I love my vocation and my religious Institute; that I wish to remain in it, by the grace of God, until death."* (14)

We have but little knowledge about the life and work of Brother Uldaric's eight short years of apostolic mission after the completion of his novitiate. Of these few years he spent a little more than one year in prison, during which time his apostolate was reduced to one of good example to the other of Christ's victims, his love for them and the help and services he rendered in many ways to each of his fellow prisoners,

"Because he showed a great love for and attachment to the poor boys of Nancy, wrote Abbé Guillon, (15) and on account of his dear pupils, he stayed in this town, where, in secret, he continued to teach them Christian living as well as reading and writing."

"Because, adds Brother Gustave-Marie, the more he showed humility in his profession, the more he succeeded in his teaching, the more his conduct

embittered his persecutors against him. They showed no pity or mercy. The quiet and ordinary life of Brother Uldaric had nothing that could have offended the Republicans. His activities, as well as those of his companions, should have merited the gratitude of the people. However, because the leaders of the Country at that time were atheists and wicked, and they were reigning in the name of the people and of the Republic, this good 'ignorantin' was imprisoned in 1793." (16)

He was 39 years old.

In June 1793, Brother Uldaric was sent on the prison-ship "Les Deux Associés". There he found Brothers Léon and Roger. He died on August 22nd, 1794. ●

(9) **Blain**; *Vie de M. De La Salle*, t. I, p. 169.

(10) *Positio*, p. 381-384.

(11) The Revolution changed the civil calendar. New names of the months replaced the old names; the week was changed too: it had 10 days instead of seven. Hence, 'quintidi' became the fifth day; 'octodi' the 8th day of the ten-day week.

(12) **F. Gustave-Marie**, in *Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes de Moulins*, pp.112 to 116.

(13) The spelling of this name is sometimes given as Udalric; we follow that most commonly used and as it appears in the official *Positio*.

(14) **Rigault**, *op. cit.* t. III, p.305.

(15) **F. Gustave-Marie**, *op. cit.* p. 149, 150.

(16) *ibid.*