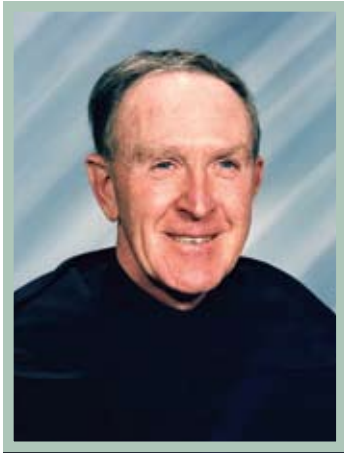


CARMELITE MISSIONS



Father John Malley, O.Carm.
Director of Carmelite Missions

Celebration of the Joyous Feast Easter April 12

As you receive this Mission newsletter, the season of Lent will be coming to a close. We will soon be celebrating the joyous feast of Easter on April 12. May the Risen Lord Jesus bring much hope and peace into your heart, and may this Spring be a time of new life and vibrant faith for you and for all your family and friends.

During the past few years, there has been much on television and in our papers about tragedies in Indonesia: a tsunami, earthquakes, and massive forest fires causing serious breathing problems for the elderly and for the very young because of the smoke and pollution.

Indonesia, surprisingly, is the fourth most populated country in the world, after China, India, and the United States. Indonesia has over 230 million people! Ninety percent of the people are Muslims; only three percent are Catholic. Yet it is the country where our Carmelite Family – priests, sisters, and lay members – is growing at the fastest rate throughout the world.

Like in the United States and Canada, Indonesia has been afflicted by a very serious financial crisis that has weakened the country's economy and especially brought many tragedies to the poor families from whom our seminarians and young sisters come. I would ask you to remember in your prayers and generosity two programs of formation: first, our young men studying to be priests on the islands of Java and Flores, and secondly, the houses and communities that train and educate our young sisters.

Recently, I received a letter from Father Heribertus, the Indonesian Provincial, asking for help: "We have heard about the suffering of the

Letter continued on back



Orphanage directed by Sisters in Maubara



Carmelite novices in Flores, Indonesia



Welcoming dance by the children in Fatuhada



Saint of the Month 🌸 Feast Day, April 1st

Blessed Nuno Alvares Pereira

idea of remaining celibate, but obediently followed his father's wishes to marry. He and his wife, Lady Eleanora de Alvim, lived happily together and had three children.

Military Career

During this period, Portugal and the Spanish kingdoms were struggling to free themselves from domination by the Moors from North Africa. The military orders were an important element in that conflict, and kept themselves in a high state of readiness to fight when their moment arrived. The Master of the Order of Aviz was John, a half-brother of the King, and an intensely patriotic soldier.

King Ferdinand died in 1383, leaving a daughter, but no sons to follow him. The daughter was married to King John of Castile. So it was possible that Portugal could pass to the Queen of Castile, and that might mean that a distinct culture would be submerged into a much larger Spanish kingdom. Nuno opposed his own brothers and many others when he declared that John of Aviz should be the next king. A large number of Portuguese notables agreed, and threw their support to the Grand Master. But John of Castile and his Spaniards would not be easy to defeat.

Despite the proud boasts of chivalry, and the violent nature of medieval warfare, Nuno remained almost child-like in his devotion to the Church and his great love for Mary. His patriotic devotion to his homeland centered on

keeping it safe and pure, not rich and dominant. Even in the 14th century, Nuno seemed so idealistic that he was almost other-worldly. But those ideals came directly from his heart, and they were real indeed. His soldiers on the battlefield came to appreciate that he was willing to risk everything for a greater good.

John of Aviz named Nuno his commander in chief, even though he was only 23 years old. As Constable of the Armies of Portugal, he was free to act boldly and swiftly, without any second-guessing by less committed captains. But the Castillian forces were formidable and well led, so Nuno would need every bit of his own skill and moral force. Even during the rigors of a military campaign, Nuno prayed faithfully and followed a strict moral regimen. His banner depicted the Crucifixion, with a sacred image of Our Lady, flanked by the knightly patrons of St. George and St. James. He encouraged his soldiers to focus on the nobility of their cause, and to avoid all temptations of moral laxity and brutality.

One additional help to Nuno's forces came from a small number of very steady archers from England, armed with their deadly longbow. John of Aviz was married to Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The English soldiers were a sort of "family" contribution to the war effort. In time, this Anglo-Portuguese friendship would grow into a very long-standing alliance.

Although not widely known outside of Portugal, Nuno is one of his country's most beloved figures. Just mention his title, "The Holy Constable," and most Portuguese will swell with patriotic pride. The Holy See has indicated that the canonization of this Carmelite brother, and a "George Washington" for Portugal, will soon be declared.

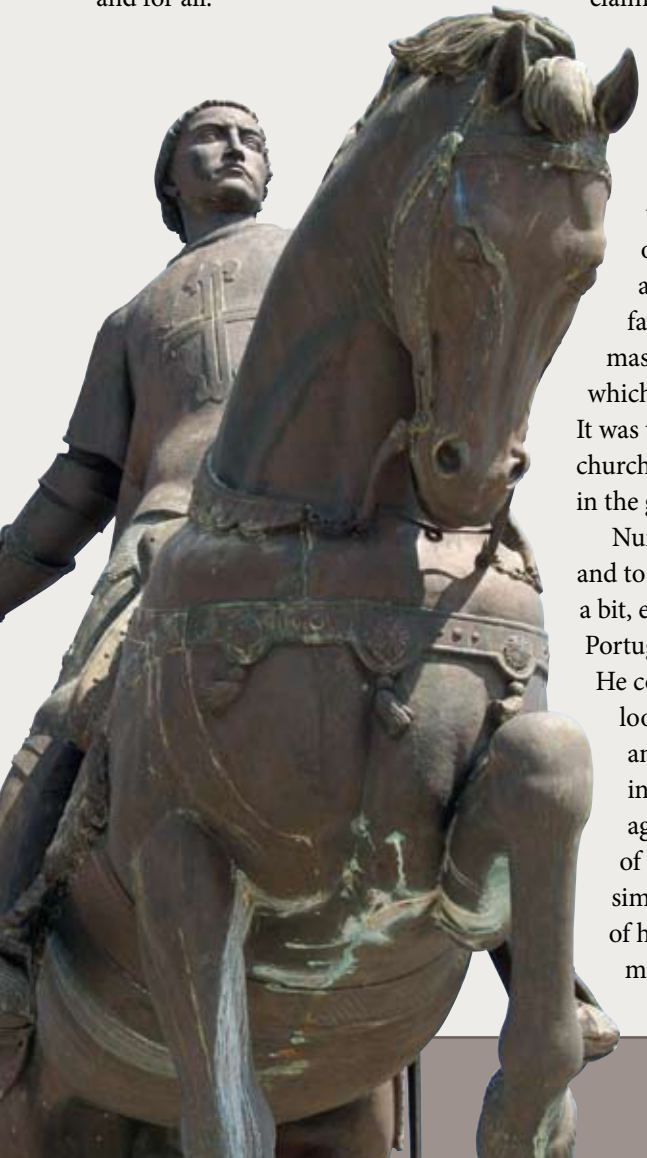
His Life

Nuno was born near Lisbon in 1360. His father was Don Alvaro Goncalves Pereira, a Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, and grand prior of their house at Crato. The Knights were one of the great military orders of the crusading period, and maintained priories all over Europe. So from his earliest years, Nuno was nourished on stories of fortitude and sacrifice, eager to pay any price to defend the weak, and to safeguard the Church or Kingdom. He loved the quiet life of prayer and reflection, but it simply never occurred to him that he would be anything but a brave and holy knight.

So filled with the romantic stories of the Round Table and the Holy Grail, he was sent to the court of King Ferdinand I at the age of 13. It was the ordinary first step to a successful military career. He had toyed with the



In the first significant battle of his war, Nuno led a force of 1700 soldiers against 5000 Castillians, and beat them at Atoleiros. It was April of 1384. Exactly a year later, the nobles proclaimed the Master of Aviz as King John I of Portugal. Nuno understood that the Castillians had to challenge this action quickly and strongly, or abandon their claim forever. On August 14, 1385, Nuno met and defeated a powerful force of 30,000 at Aljubarrota. Although he had only 8000 men of his own, Nuno inspired each one to heroic sacrifice and patriotism. The victory was stunning! In October, he crossed into Castillian territory and won again at Valverde. There were countless small skirmishes to follow, but Nuno had essentially decided the issue once and for all.



The Kingdom of Portugal

Portuguese liberty was not challenged again for the next two centuries. The date of Aljubarrota, 1385, still marks the beginning of independence for the energetic kingdom. John I went on to become a great king, and the Aviz dynasty was the most vigorous in the nation's history.

One of John's sons was Prince Henry, known to history as the Navigator, who began the systematic exploration of the African coast, and the quest of a sea route to India and the Far East. Another son, Afonso, married Nuno's daughter Beatrice, and their children were ancestors of the dynasty of Braganza, Portugal's last kings.

After his brilliant military exploits, Nuno was showered with favors and acclaim from all sides. The King showed his gratitude in countless ways, and was somewhat taken aback by his Constable's hesitation to accept anything at all. Although he was overwhelmed with wealth, Nuno used much of it to build many churches, all dedicated to Our Lady. His favorite was the stunning gothic masterpiece, the Carmo of Lisbon, which he entrusted to the Carmelites. It was the largest and most imposing church in the city, until it was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1755.

Nuno's dedication to simple living, and to his prayer life, did not change a bit, even after he had become one of Portugal's most beloved celebrities. He continued his military career, but looked for chances to attend Mass and the sacraments. His wife died in 1388, and he refused to marry again, even though it was expected of an important figure. He lived simply, and gave away the majority of his wealth to the poor, including many of his veteran soldiers.

Nuno - A Brother in Carmel

In 1422, Nuno followed his heart and asked to enter the community of Carmo as a simple working brother. He took his vows a year later, and was called Brother Nuno of Saint Mary. As a Carmelite, he volunteered to do the humblest tasks for his brothers. Distinguished people continued to visit him in the monastery, so Nuno asked about being transferred to a remote place for peace and quiet. But Edward, the crown prince, intervened and maintained that such a famous hero was a national treasure, and had to remain close to the people to some degree at least. Nuno also asked to beg food to feed his community, but that was refused too. The Holy Constable had to maintain a certain standard, after all!

Nuno died in 1431, the same year as another holy patriot, Joan of Arc. According to one story, he was reading St. John's Gospel at the time, and died just as he reached the phrase "Behold your Mother." His funeral was as solemn as the royal family could make it, and he was buried in the beautiful Carmo church that he had built. Years later, the wife of Christopher Columbus was laid to rest in the same church. The ruins of the Carmo remain today, still an elegant testimony to those killed there when the 1755 earthquake collapsed the roof during Mass on the feast of All Saints.

More recently, the people of Portugal built the church of Santa Engracia as a national pantheon and memorial to their greatest heroes. The six major tombs include such luminaries as Prince Henry and Vasco da Gama. But Nuno is the oldest of them all, and perhaps the most beloved. The "Holy Constable" remains a bright and vivid memory after so many centuries.



CARMELITE MISSIONS

8501 Bailey Road | Darien, IL 60561-8418

www.carmelitemissions.org



"Children helped by Carmelite Missions in Malang, Indonesia"

Joyous Feast continued...

American people because of the financial crisis among you. All of you are truly in our prayers. But as you might expect, what affects your people also has very serious effects upon us. Our people, especially the poor families from whom our young men and women come as seminarians and sisters, are really struggling. All our students need more and better food, books for their studies and library, and even help for their families. Any support that you can give us and the sisters will be deeply appreciated."

Our Mission office will continue to help the Carmelites and their families in Indonesia. I want to thank you for all that you have done to make it possible for the message of Christ's Resurrection to be preached in this predominantly Muslim country. My best wishes for a joy-filled and glorious Easter to you and to all your family and loved ones.

Love and peace,

Fr. John Malley, O. Carm.



Young women candidates in Flores, Indonesia



Children dressed up in Maubara, East Timor

Remember the Carmelite Missions when you write your will.