

Marie-Joseph (Ferdinand) de Géramb

(Wikipedia, July 02, 2012, with corrections)

Ferdinand de Géramb (born Lyon, 14 January 1772; died at Rome, 15 March 1848) was a French supposed aristocrat and monk (name in religion Brother Mary Joseph). He became titular abbot and procurator-general of the Cistercian congregation of La Trappe.

Life

He was said to come of a noble and ancient family in Hungary; some historians called in question both the place and date of his birth, and also his noble descent. He took an active part in the struggles of the monarchies in Europe against the French Revolution, and rose to the rank of lieutenant-general.

In 1808 he fell into the hands of Napoleon, who imprisoned him in the fortress of Vincennes until 1814, when the allied powers entered Paris. After bidding farewell to the Tsar and Emperor of Austria, he resolved to leave the world. It was at this time that he met the Rev. Father Eugene, Abbot of Notre Dame du Port du Salut, near Laval (France), of whom he begged to be admitted as a novice in the community. He pronounced his vows in 1817.

He was sent, in 1827, to the monastery of Oelenberg (Alsace). During the Revolution of 1830 de Géramb faced a troop of insurgents that had come to pillage the monastery; though the religious had been dispersed, the abbey was spared pillage. It was at this time that Brother Mary Joseph made his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

On his return in 1833, he went to Rome, where he held the office of procurator-general of La Trappe. He soon gained the esteem of Pope Gregory XI., who, though he was not a priest, named him titular abbot with the insignia of the ring and pectoral cross, a privilege without any precedent. Even under the monk's cowl the great nobleman could occasionally be seen distributing in alms considerable sums of money which he had received from his family to defray his expenses.

Works

Abbot de Géramb was the author of many works, the principal of which are: "Letters to Eugene on the Eucharist"; "Eternity is approaching"; "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem"; "A Journey from La Trappe to Rome", besides many others of less importance and of an exclusively ascetical character. They were often reprinted and translated. His style is easy and without affectation. The customs, manners, and incidents of the journey which he describes, all are vividly given, and the topographical descriptions are accurate.

Family

In 1796, Baron de Géramb married his cousin Theresa de Adda, who died, in 1808, at Palermo. Six children had been born to him, of which number two died in their youth. On his entrance into Port-du-Salut he confided the surviving children to the care of his brother,

Léopold de Géramb, after having placed them under the protection of the Tsar and the Emperor of Austria.

References

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