



The SSCC Martyrs of the Paris Commune

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1. The context



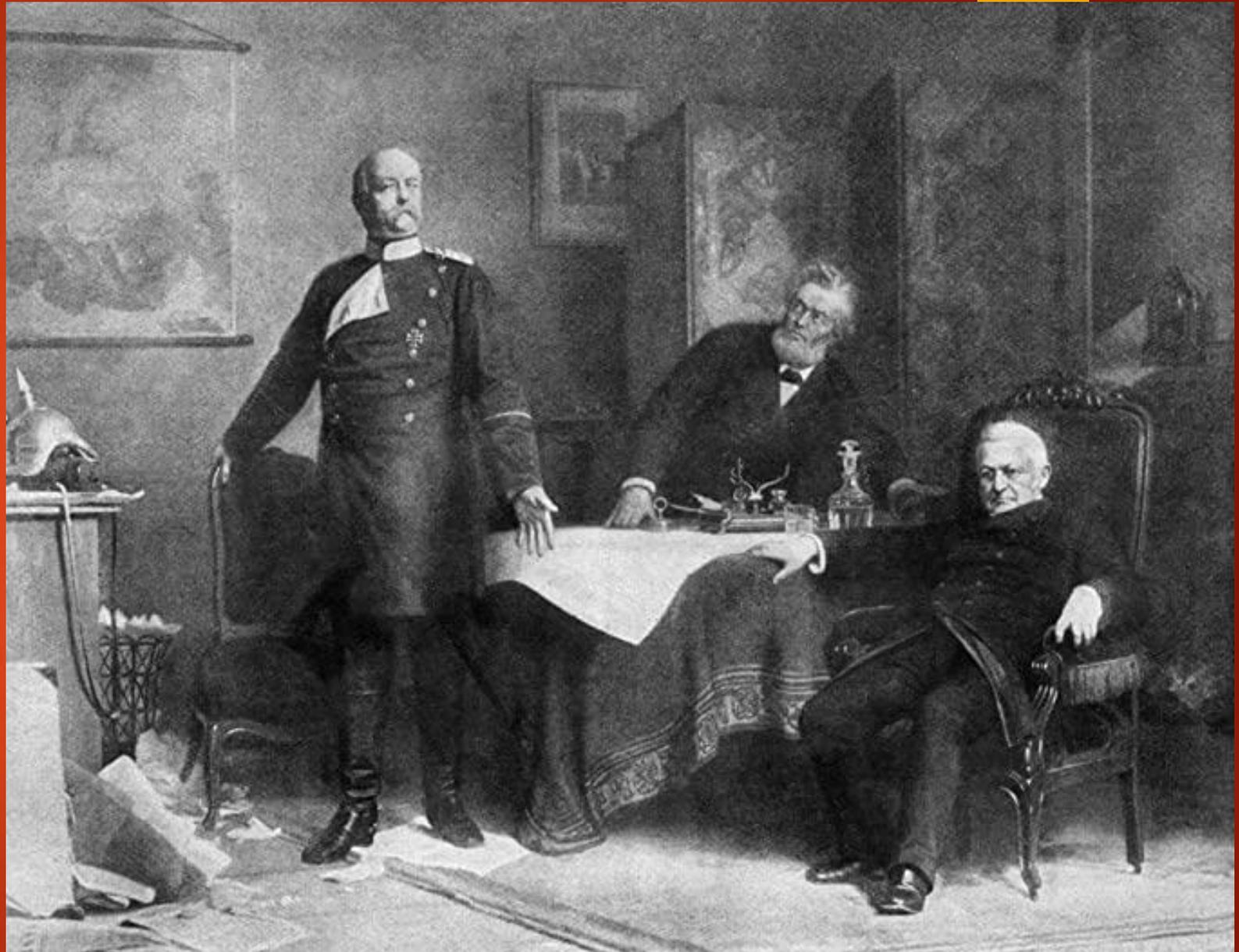
General Reille gives William I the letter of surrender from Napoleon III

In July 1870 Prussia invaded France. Napoleon III was taken prisoner by the enemy and on 4 September the Third Republic was proclaimed.

Paris was under siege by the Prussian troops, and its population suffered from lack of food and political uncertainty.

On 28 January, 1871, France signed an armistice with Prussia that imposed very serious economic sanctions.

In Paris a citizen movement began to grow that was against the government whose head was Thiers. They reproached him for having submitted to Prussia and wanted a new model of administration and society.

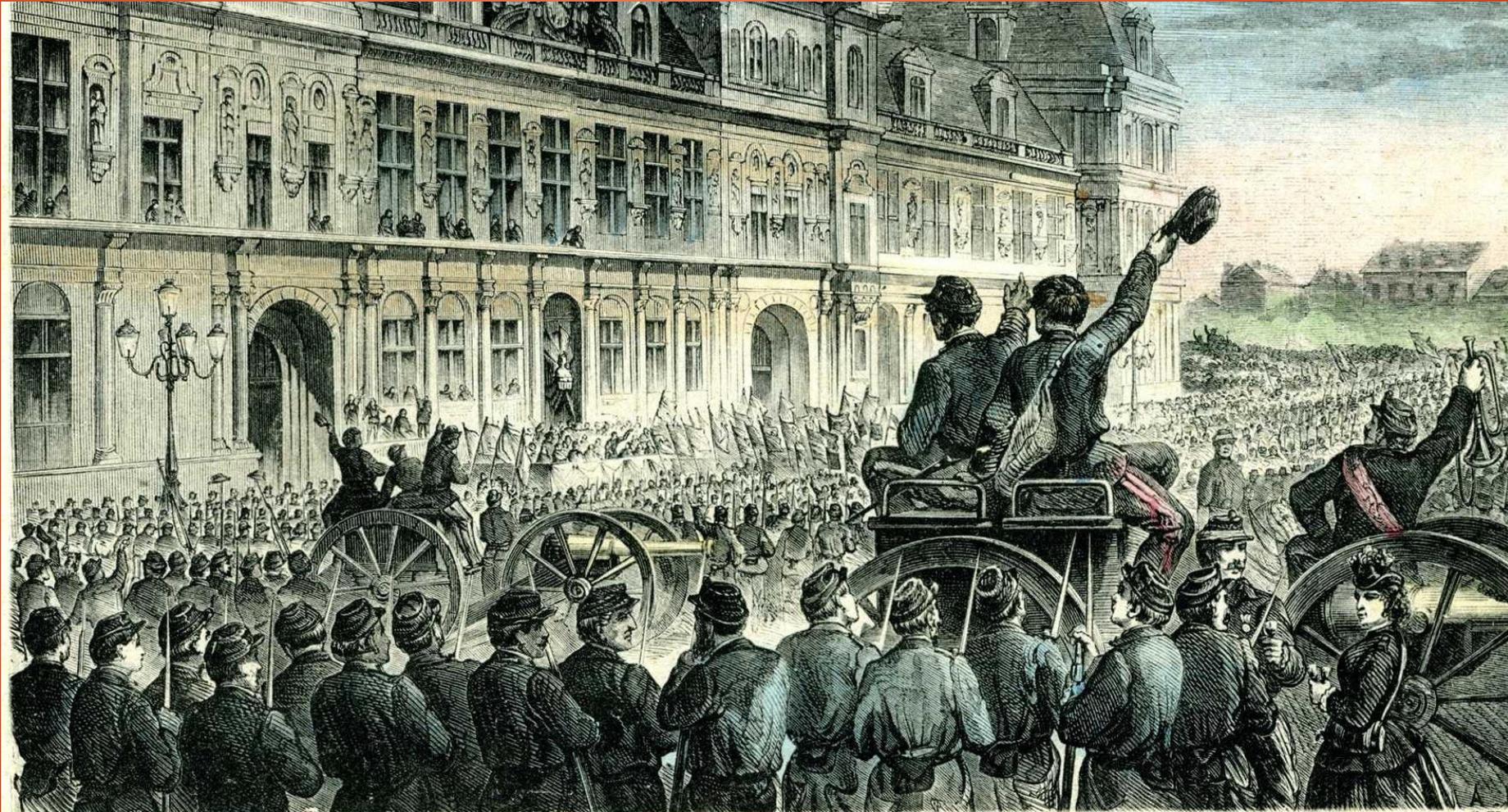


The signing of the armistice, from left: Otto von Bismarck, Jules Favre, Adolphe Thiers



On 18 March, 1871, citizens of Paris, supported by the National Guard, began an insurrection that took control of the city.

Elections were quickly organised in which the extreme left won. On 28 March, 1871, the Paris Commune was proclaimed.



107 - Paris sous la Commune 1871 — Proclamation de la Commune sur la Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, 18



The head of the government, Thiers, fled to Versailles with the troops that remained loyal to him, along with the police, employees of the public administration and many inhabitants of the city.

In its brief life of 72 days, the Commune implemented social measures guided by the ideas of more participation, more freedom and more equality.

It was also characterised by strong anti-clerical sentiments, because the clergy was considered a counter-revolutionary element.

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

N° 59.

LIBERTÉ — ÉGALITÉ — FRATERNITÉ

N° 59.

COMMUNE DE PARIS

LA COMMUNE DE PARIS,

Considérant que le premier des principes de la République française est la liberté;

Considérant que la liberté de conscience est la première des libertés;

Considérant que le budget des cultes est contraire au principe, puisqu'il impose les citoyens contre leur propre foi;

Considérant, en fait, que le clergé a été le complice des crimes de la monarchie contre la liberté,

DÉCRÈTE :

Art. 1^{er}. L'Église est séparée de l'État.

Art. 2. Le budget des cultes est supprimé.

Art. 3. Les biens dits de mainmorte, appartenant aux congrégations religieuses, meubles et immeubles, sont déclarés propriétés nationales.

Art. 4. Une enquête sera faite immédiatement sur ces biens, pour en constater la nature et les mettre à la disposition de la Nation.

LA COMMUNE DE PARIS.

Paris, le 3 avril 1871.

30195



From 2 April, the troops of the Thiers government besieged Paris.

On May 21, 1871, the same troops entered Paris, which was defended by the National Guard. It was the start of the "Bloody Week".

On 28 May, government troops conquered the city.
It was the end of the Paris Commune.





During Bloody Week, the Commune members applied the "Hostages Decree", promulgated on 5 April. It established that:

- suspected counter-revolutionaries, including the clergy, must be imprisoned.
- for each community member executed by Versailles, three hostages would be shot in retaliation.

On 23 May, the members of the Commune shot 4 civilians.

On May 24, 6 people were shot:

Mons. Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, the president of the appeal committee, a priest and 3 Jesuits. (View image).

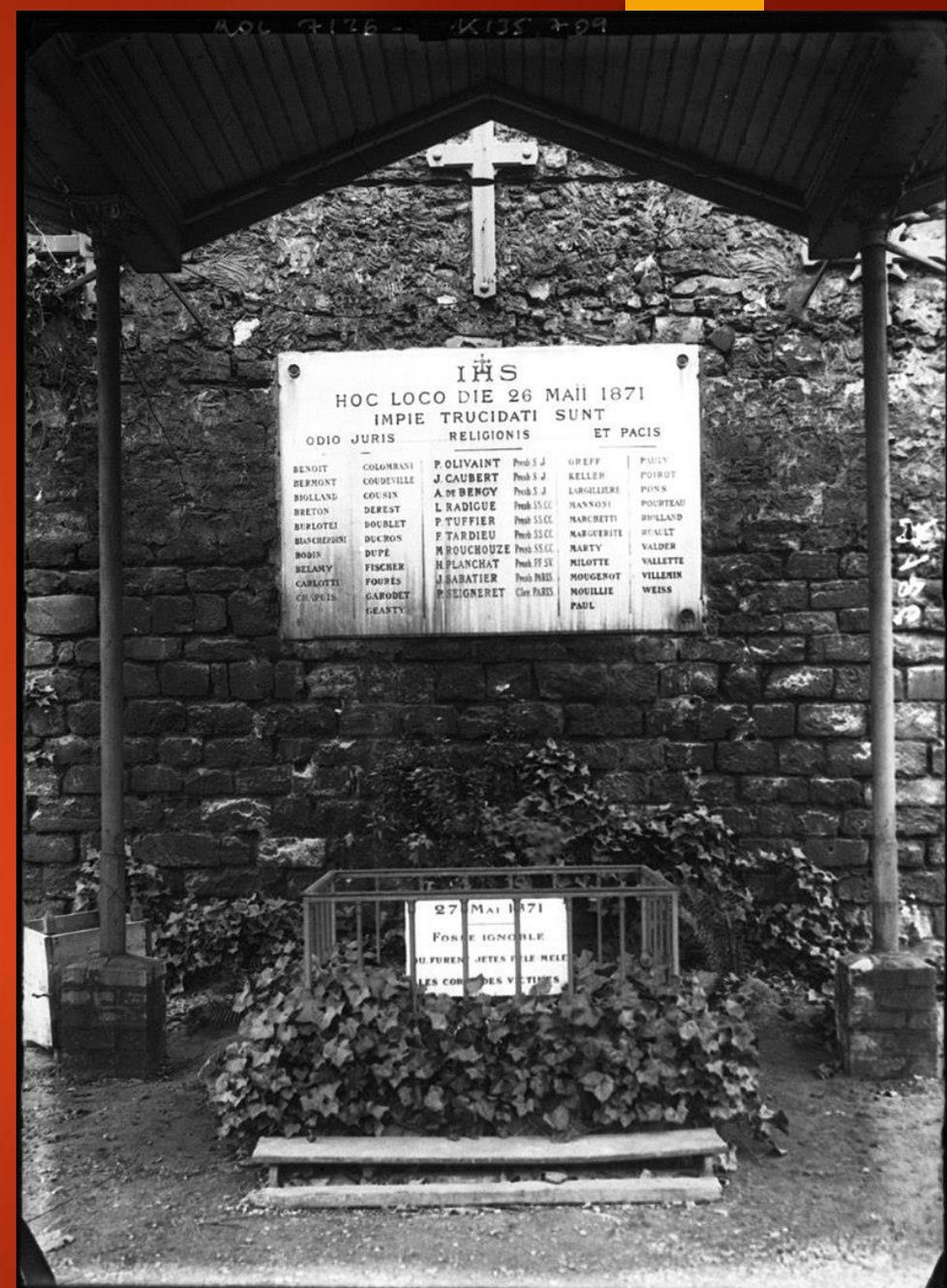




On 25 May,
5 Dominicans and
8 civilians were killed.
(View image)

On 26 May, 50 people were killed. The episode was known as the "Haxo Street Massacre": 36 national guards, 10 religious, 4 secret police agents.

Of the 10 religious shot, four were SS.CC. brothers: Ladislav, Policarp, Frézal and Marcellin.





The “Bloody Week” is unanimously considered the biggest massacre in Europe between 1792 (French Revolution) and 1917 (Russian Revolution).

LA COMMUNE.

LA COMMUNE.



LXXXI. — PARIS, 14 MAI 1871.

Some 500 soldiers belonging to the government of Versailles were killed.

The number of Commune members and national guardsmen killed in combat or shot in reprisal after the conquest of the city is highly debated: according to the most recent historians it ranges between 7,500 and 20,000 people.

LA COMMUNE.

LA COMMUNE.



LXXXI. — PARIS, 14 MAI 1871.

The harsh reprisals of the Versailles government lasted until 1874: almost 40,000 Commune members were arrested, some of whom ended up imprisoned, deported, sentenced to forced labor. A number were also executed.



2. Brothers and sisters in and around Paris

At that time, there were three communities of brothers in and around Paris: Picpus, Issy-les-Moulineaux and Versailles. The sisters were in Picpus.





La Roquette prison

On 12 April, ten days after the start of the siege by government troops against Paris, 13 brothers (among them Ladislav, Policarpe, Frézal and Marcellin) were arrested in Picpus. They were taken first to the Conciergerie prison, then to Mazas and finally to La Roquette.

On 5 May, in Picpus, another 11 brothers, 74 sisters and 10 novices were arrested. The sisters were released on 24 May.

On 7 May, in Issy, 5 brothers were arrested. They were released on 18 May.

Most of the brothers would be released during the “Bloody Week”.



The Saint-Lazare prison where the SSCC sisters were imprisoned.

3. The martyrdom



On 26 May, the government army was 300 meters from the Roquette prison, which held more than 200 hostages, including SS.CC. members.

A colonel of the Commune, Émile Gois, arrived on his own initiative at La Roquette with a firing squad. He forced the prison director to hand over 50 detainees to be executed.

In this group there were 36 national guards, 4 members of the secret police and 10 ecclesiastics. It is probable that the names of the 4 Picpus religious were identified by a commissioner who knew them (Bocquet, 206).

- Henry Planchat (Congregation of Saint Vincent de Paul)
- Paul Seigneret (Sulpician seminarian)
- 3 Jesuits
- 1 diocesan priest
- 4 Picpus brothers out of the 10 who were still imprisoned in La Roquette.

These were Ladislas Radigue (48), Polycarpe Tuffier (64), Frézal Tardieu (56), and Marcellin Rouchouze (60).



R. P. Ladislas Radigue



R. P. Polycarpe Tuffier



R. P. Frézal Tardieu



R. P. Marcellin Rouchouze

The group went out into the street in a file, two by two. An angry mob had amassed awaiting the execution. They shouted: "Down with the calottes!" "Death to the priests! Death to snitches! Death to the cops!" and threw objects to hurt them.

They took the hostages close to the walls, in a wide courtyard still under construction on Haxo street.



The execution was carried out in an absolutely disordered way because the crowd that was armed joined with the platoon in the shooting.

An eyewitness comments: "Everybody shooting, hitting; horrible, wild scene." Some of the authorities and those present unsuccessfully opposed such savagery.



After the slaughter was over,
a war reporter wrote:

“Officers, soldiers, women,
children, marched
trampling the throbbing
bodies, from which blood
was still flowing... They
wanted to see if everyone
had really drawn their last
breath. And when they
thought they perceived a
last breath or a last
convulsion, they hit the
body with the butt or the
saber. One body had marks
of 69 blows, another of 72.”



The corpses were looted and then placed in a mass grave that was left uncovered.

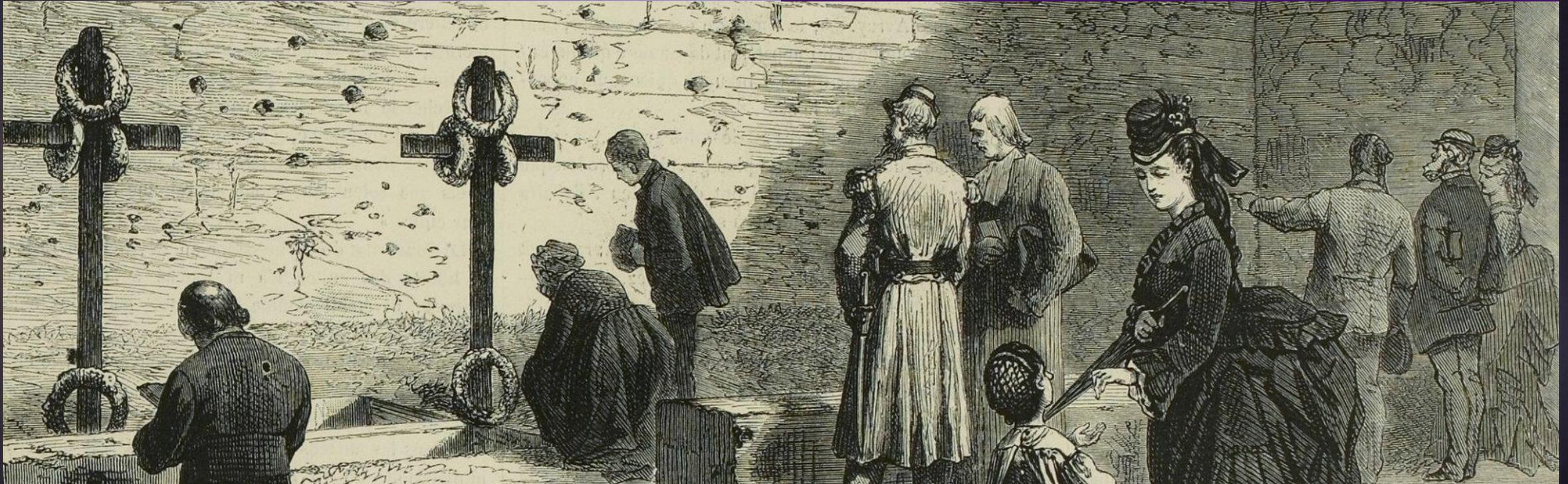


4. The bodies of the martyrs

On Sunday, 28 May, 1871, all the bodies were taken out of the pit. The bodies of the SSCC religious were taken to the municipal cemetery.

On 8 June, 1871, they were buried in Issy and on 8 September they were transferred to Picpus, together with the Founders.

In 1903 they were transferred to Issy again.



In 1959 the bodies were examined in Picpus and were taken to the crypt of the church of Saint Gabriel (close to Picpus).



In 2010 they were transferred to the pantheon of the Founders in Picpus.



5. The four martyrs

Ladislav Radigue (1823-1871)



- For 15 years he was a socius of the Novice Master in the community of Issy-les-Moulineaux, where Damien de Veuster also passed through.
- According to a witness, he was "*the living rule of the community, a model of regularity.*"
- He was one of the initiators of the Apostolic School in Picpus.
- He wrote a commentary to the SSCC Rule of 860 pages (in 1864).
- In 1868 he was elected prior of the Mother House and remained so until the moment of his death.
- He was Vicar General with Fr. E. Rouchouze and General Councillor with Fr. S. Bousquet.

Ladislav Radigue (1823-1871)



On 3 May, 1871, while in the Mazas prison, Ladislav wrote to the Superior General, Sylvain Bousquet:

"I think of the glorious Apostle Peter in the Mamertine jail: every day I lovingly kiss a facsimile of his chains that I feel happy to possess. [...] And today, 3 May, how can I not be happy to wear a little bit of the cross whose triumph is celebrated? I am thinking of the Congregation, whose members all pray for us; I am thinking above all of you, dearly beloved Father, who suffers as much as we do because of our sufferings.

Ladislav Radigue (1823-1871)



"I am very happy to take your place here and to know that you are safe: you can comfort the family and lead it. I try to join the holy sacrifice celebrated in our chapels, the brothers and sisters adorers who replace us at the foot of the holy tabernacle".

Policarpe Tuffier (1807-1871)

- The witnesses "have felt the charm of his communicative nature. They have twice seen him skillfully restore a compromised financial situation. They have smiled with his vivacity, his sincerity, his distractions. They have been edified by his piety and his simplicity" (Bocquet , 93).

-Parish priest, chaplain to sisters and brothers, principal of a school in Cahors: "he transformed a modest school into a fully functioning school" (Bocquet, 101).

- General Treasurer, then General Councillor and Procurator.



Policarpe Tuffier (1807-1871)

On 9-10 May, 1871, while in Mazas prison, he wrote a letter to his cousin, Charles Tuffier:

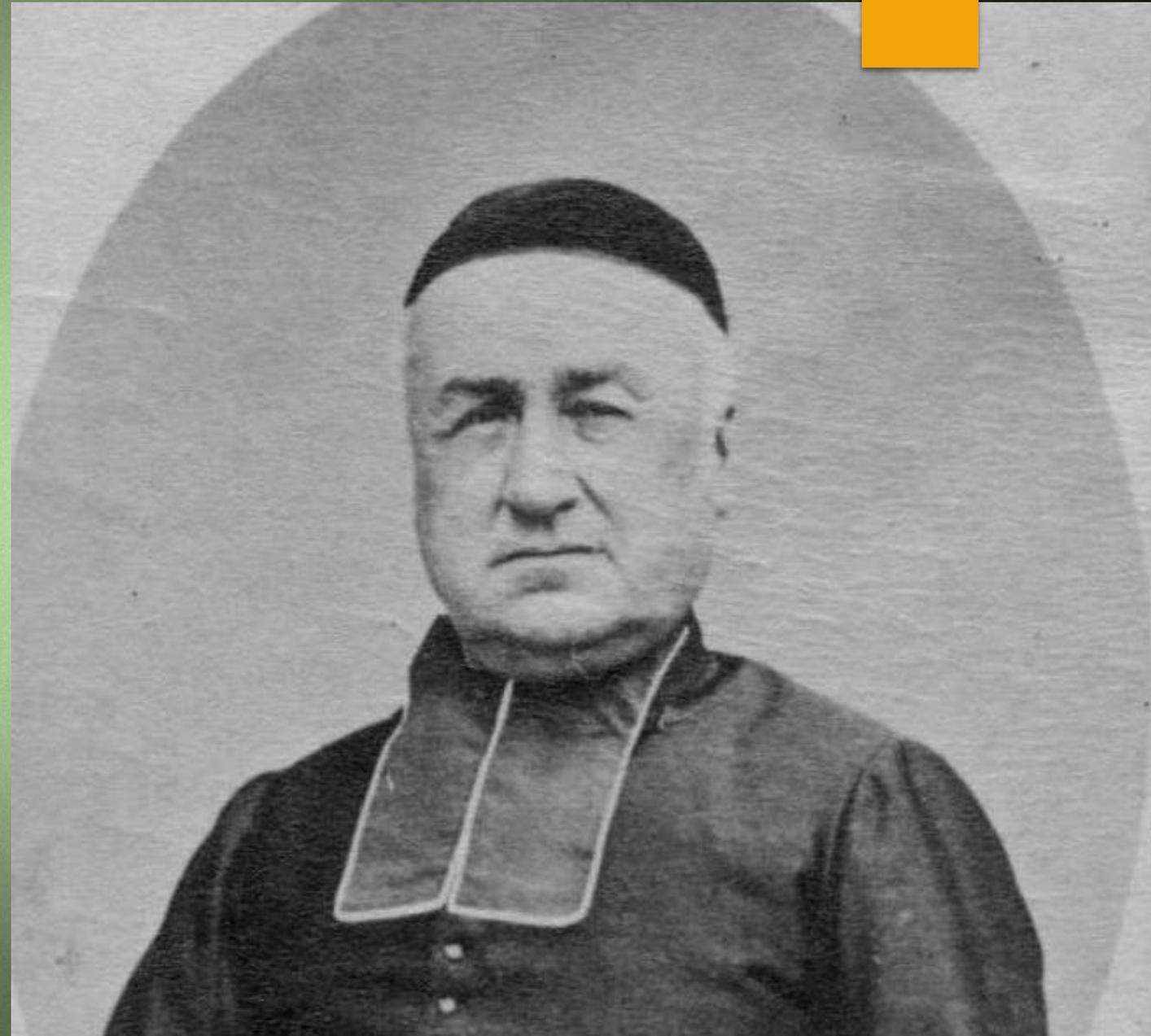
“I am not sick, but I suffer so much from this existence in a cell that I have no appetite and I give a portion of my meat to the poor. Man does not live on bread alone; my food is to do the will of my Father who is in heaven.

[...] Oh God! The people have been perverted, and they are killing us, they think they are doing the right thing! Forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. Moderate newspapers will one day explain all this well [...].



Policarpo Tuffier (1807-1871)

“When will our captivity end? But I have made the resolution not to complain anymore [...]. As you well say, Charles, the only one who can get us out of this is God, yes, sure, but whatever they do, they won't be able to wrestle God's love and blessings from us. Let us ask him, then, to come to our aid.”



Marcellin Rouchouze (1810-1871)



- Brother of Euthyme, who was Superior General, and of Ana, a SSCC religious.
- Professor of philosophy at Picpus
- Completed a record of the brothers of the Congregation with the biography of each one.
- Summarised the letters of the missionaries of Oceania and Latin America that had been preserved from the beginning.
- Councillor and General Secretary

Marcellin Rouchouze (1810-1871)



On 8 May, 1871, while in the Mazas prison, he wrote a letter to his cousin, Mrs. Magnin:

"I have been in prison for 26 days. The holy and adorable will of God be fulfilled in everything and everywhere."

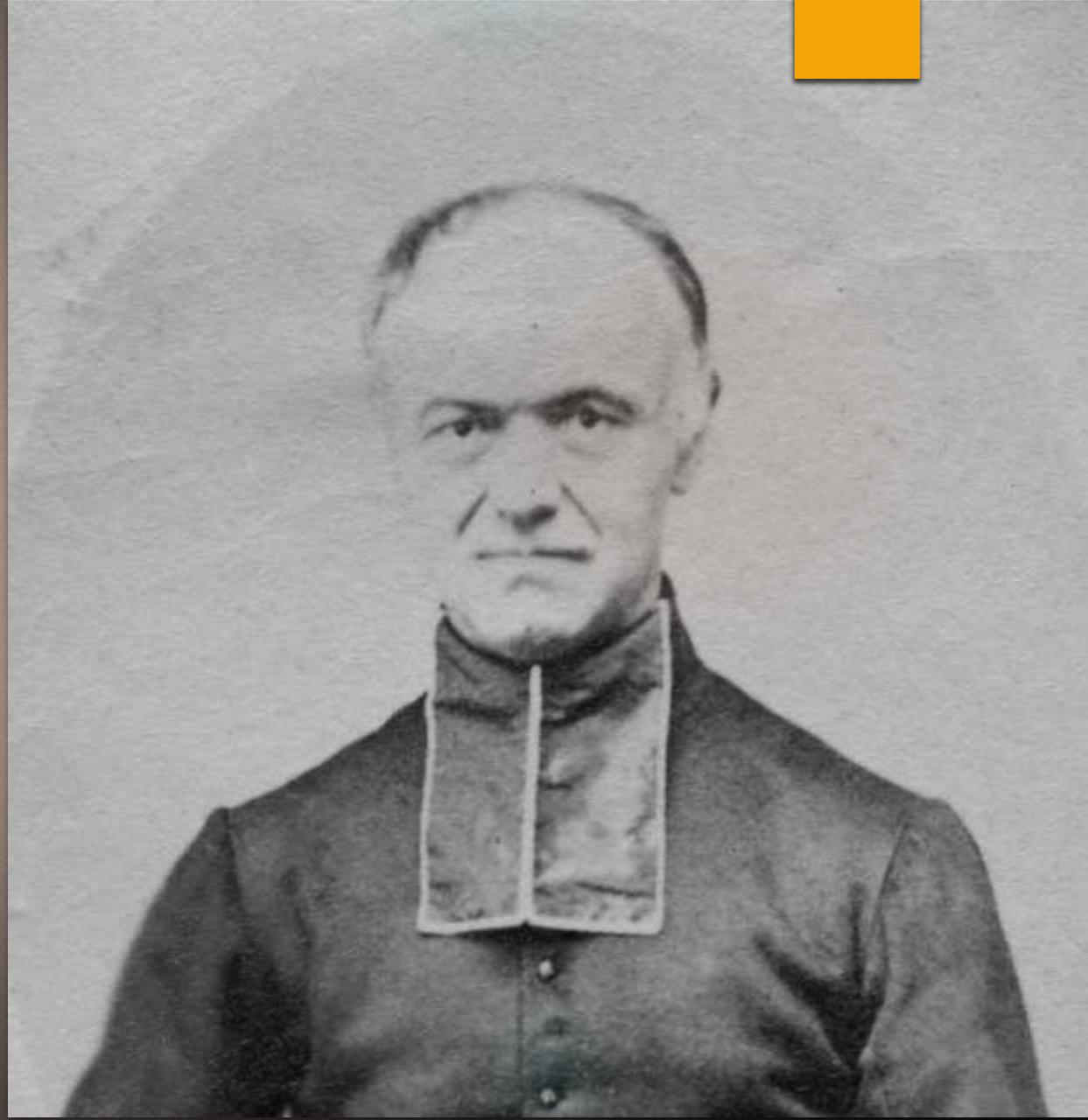
Frézal Tardieu (1810-1871)

- Superior of the novitiate community of Louvain for 13 years and then of Issy-les-Moulineaux.

-In Louvain (Belgium) he worked in the university ministry. A witness says of him:

"We have met a priest while he held the position of superior. He was a remarkable man, both for the qualities of his heart and for the qualities of his mind. With a feeling of deep veneration, we remember the name of this saintly and kind religious who leaves in Louvain the most edifying examples of piety, devotion and charity".

- Professor of Theology at Picpus
- General Councillor

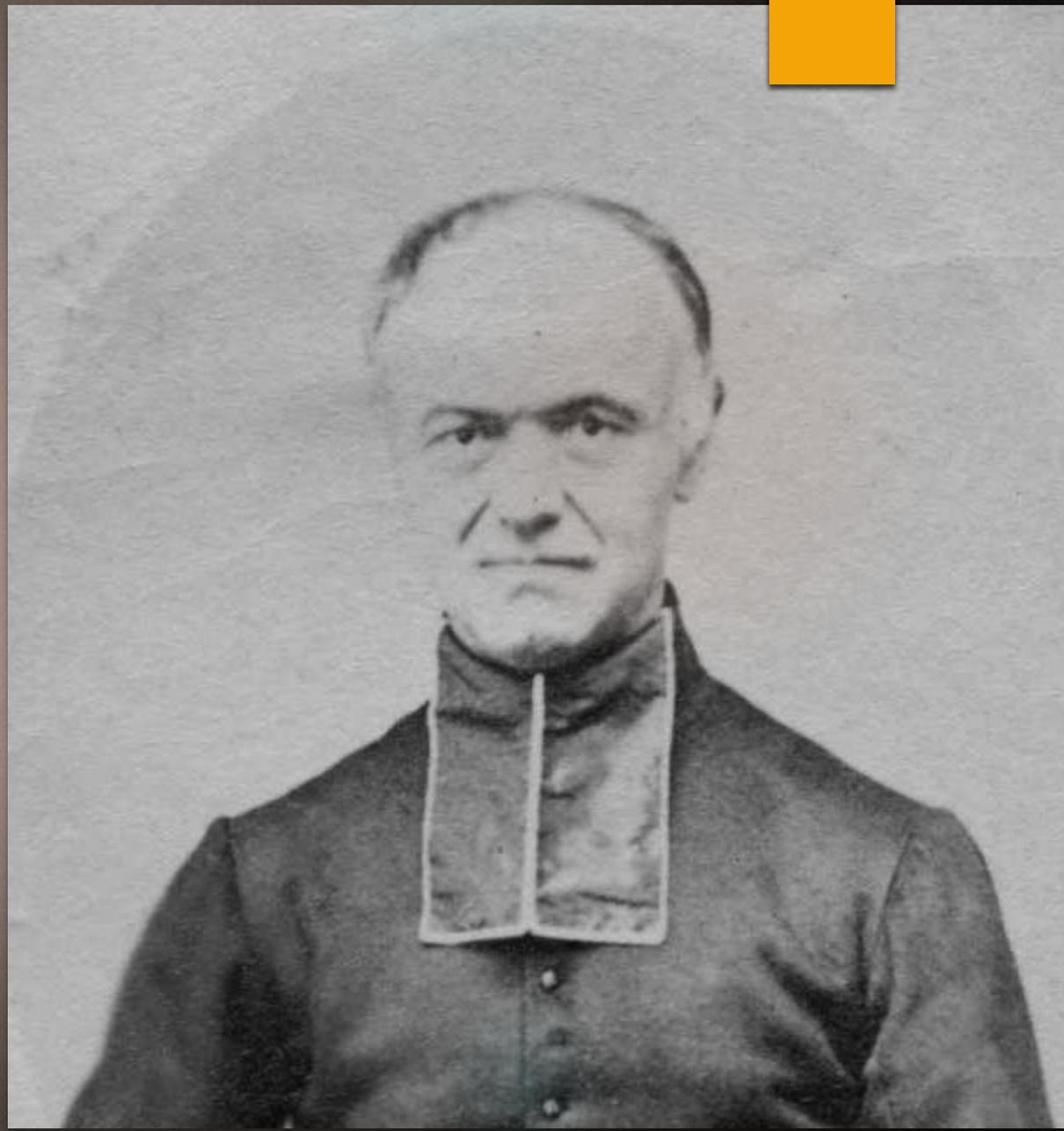


Frézal Tardieu (1810-1871)

Prayer composed by him 7 years prior to his martyrdom:

[...] Grant me through the intercession of the B.V. Mary, the grace to always do your holy will. Make me reach the perfection of my vocation according to the spirit of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, so that my joy may be perfect.

Give me good will, firm and persevering and a deep peace. Make me, always walking in your presence, find you in all things and grant me to constantly tend to you out of love and gratitude, and reach you through the palm of martyrdom so that I can praise you, bless you and eternally sing your mercies. Amen".



6. The beatification

On 11 May, 2021, the Theological Consultants approved the ***Positio super martyrio*** presented by the Congregation.

On 25 November, 2021, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints authorised the Congregation to promulgate the Decrees related to the martyrdom of our four brothers.

The **beatification ceremony** will be held on **22 April, 2023**, at 4:00 p.m. in the church of Saint Sulpice in Paris. Along with our martyrs, Father Henry Planchat (Saint Vincent de Paul) will also be beatified.



7. Main bibliography

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- TOUTIN, A., *Traspasados por amor a la Iglesia/Pierced for love of the Church*, (Études Picpuciennes 23, Rome 2022).
- HERNOUT, E. Several articles in <https://www.sccpicpus.com/en/Martyrs-of-1871>