

Excerpts from Butler's *Lives of The Saints*

ST JOAN DELANOUE, FOUNDER OF THE SISTERS OF ST ANNE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF SAUMUR (A. D. 1736)

JOAN, the youngest of twelve children of a shopkeeper at Saumur in Anjou, was born on 18 June 1660 and at the age of twenty-five inherited the business from her long-widowed mother. Joan was not of a pious disposition, and caused scandal by opening her shop on a Sunday. Joan used also to provide accommodation for pilgrims. On the eve of the Epiphany in 1693 Françoise Souchet came to Saumur, and sought lodging with her. Her stay - in the event it lasted several years - and conversations changed the course of Joans life. She began to look after orphans, giving them shelter in her house, which people began to call Providence House. She was joined by other young women and together they founded a Congregation of nuns: the first group were clothed in the religious habit on 26 July 1704, the Feast of St Anne, hence the name of their institute. So great was the need that further premises had to be found for those to whom the nuns had given refuge in Saumur, and from 1721 elsewhere in France. Worn out by her labours for the poor, Joan died on 17 August 1736. She was beatified in 1947, and canonized on 31 October 1982.

ST MAXIMILIAN MARY KOLBE, MARTYR (A.D. 1941)

MAXIMILIAN, the son of Julius Kolbe and Mary Dabrowska, was baptized Raymond in the town of Zdunska-Wola in Poland, where he was born on 17 January 1894. When he was ten he had a vision in which Our Lady held out to him two crowns, one of white, the other red, asking him to choose between them: he took both. He was clearly destined for the religious life, and at only thirteen years of age he joined the Conventual Franciscans, making his vows in September 1911. After studies in Poland he was sent to Rome, and he was ordained there on 28 April 1918.

By the time of ordination he had already begun to implement his idea of a "Militia of Mary Immaculate", which received the blessing of successive popes. He propagated his Marian vision through the press - in particular through *The Knight of the Immaculate*, the bulletin of his Militia, which was published in a million copies in many languages. But the most extraordinary outcome of his vision were towns composed entirely of friars and dedicated to Mary, the "City of the Immaculate", *Niepokalanow* as it was called in Poland, where the first was established. Just before the Second World War it housed 800 religious, and another was set up Japan, where Maximilian, who travelled widely, had worked for a time.

At the outbreak of war Maximilian was in Poland, and on the capture of his country he was arrested by the Germans. He was freed shortly afterwards but in February 1941 rearrested and, eventually, sent to Auschwitz. He was housed in Block 14, and when a group escaped from that block, ten men were selected by the Germans for execution. One was a Polish sergeant, the father of a family. Maximilian, who had not been chosen, offered himself in the sergeant's place. He died on 14 August 1941, and was canonized on 10 October 1982.