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October 1794 : The Ursulines climb the scaffold.

The Ursuline Order, officially recognized in 1612, was founded by Sister Angela of Brescia, who died on January 27, 1540. Saint Ursula is the patroness of the Order. From 1791 on, because of laws banning the convents, all were closed, including those of this Order ; the Sisters were then expelled from their Convent.



VALENCIENNES.

A the request of the d'Oultreman ladies, who wished to open a school for girls, seven Ursulines arrived in Valenciennes on April 10, 1654, and settled in the

Lalaing hotel on Cardon Street. In 1790, there were thirty-two members in the community. That very year, the constituent Assembly decided to suppress religious Orders, but the houses ensuring education were not concerned.

CLOSING OF THE CONVENTS

From 1791 on, after the laws banning the Convents were enacted, almost all of them were closed and their inmates expelled. The Ursulines endured inquiries, visits, different searches in the Convent. On April 3, 1792, the Convent where twenty-nine Sisters resided, was sold by the city of Valenciennes.

Reverend Mother Clothilde could not leave her religious life and took with her twenty-six Sisters in good health, as well as the Benedictines of Saint-Saulve, in order to find refuge in Mons. Five Sisters, in weak health, left for their families.

French and Austrian troops fought against one another in Belgium, and the French were victorious in Jemmapes (on November 6, 1792), with the triumph of Dumouriez and Dampierre. On January 22, 1793, Belgium was annexed to France and all religious goods were confiscated. After the Austrians' victory on March 19, 1793, they conquered Mons again and went forward to Valenciennes. The city was besieged during 87 terrible days, before falling into the hands of the enemy. Then, those who had emigrated (including the Sisters), returned to Valenciennes. The Ursulines came back to their house on November 11, 1793.

The French troops reconquered the city a few months later, and on September 1st, 1794, the Ursulines were ordered to leave their house immediately. Terror had ceased in Paris, but settled down in Valenciennes. A scaffold was erected on the "Place d'Armes", and an executioner arrived from Cambrai in October, beginning trials and executions.

In 1925, in the Saint-Roch cemetery, the tomb of five sisters was found. On June 13, 1920, Pope Benedict XVI beatified eleven of these « Martyrs ».

