



FLEMISH CAPSULE RELIQUARY
SAINT HYACINTH [APOSTLE TO THE NORTH] – OF SLAVIC INTEREST
SAINT REMIGIUS [APOSTLE TO THE FRANKS]
SAINT PETER CLAVER [PATRON SAINT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS]
AFTER 1850, BUT BEFORE 1888



A ttractive Flemish capsule reliquary, circa 1850 – 1888, with relics of Saint Hyacinth, Saint Remigius, Saint Peter Claver, and a small ceramic effigy of Saint Hyacinth bearing a statue of the Virgin Mary and a ciborium. Cap diameter 35 mm, base diameter 31 mm, by 9.5 mm tall. Self contained reliquary capsule of threaded birch. The interior of the threaded cap bears the monogram SIXXR, surmounted by a stylized Omega with a serpent threaded through a crescent lunula beneath it.



The effigy of Saint Hyacinth is offset from the rest of the reliquary by flanking paperoles; the cedula for Saint Hyacinth is at the top wall of the reliquary, flanked to the left by the abbreviation O.-L.-V. [Onze Lieve Vrouw]. The relic of Saint Hyacinth is affixed above the effigy underneath the cedula.

Saint Hyacinth, *Swiety Jacek, Jacek Odrowaz*. Feast day: 15 August. He was educated in Paris and Bologna. A Doctor of Sacred Studies and a priest, he worked to reform convents in his native Poland. While in Rome, he witnessed a miracle performed by Saint Dominic, and became a Dominican. He brought the Dominican Order to Poland, then evangelized throughout Poland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Scotland, Russia, Turkey, and Greece. He was called the Apostle of the North.

He was the son of Eustachius Konski, scion of the noble family of Odrowaz; born 1185 at the castle of Lanka, at Kamien Slaski (German: Groß Stein) , in Silesia, Poland; died August 15, 1257 in Kraków, Poland, of natural causes. He studied at Cracow, Prague, and Bologna, and at the latter place merited the title of Doctor of Law and Divinity. On his return to Poland he was given a prebend at Sandomir. He subsequently accompanied his uncle Ivo Konski, the Bishop of Cracow, to Rome, where he met St. Dominic, and was one of the first to receive at his hands (at Santa Sabina, 1220) the habit of the newly established Order of Friars Preachers. After his novitiate he made his religious profession, and was made superior of the little band of missionaries sent to Poland to preach. On the way he was able to establish a convent of his order at Freisach in Carinthia. In Poland the new preachers were favorably received and their sermons were productive of much good. Hyacinth founded communities at Sandomir, Cracow, and at Plocko on the Vistula in Moravia. He extended his missionary work through Prussia, Pomerania, and Lithuania; then crossing the Baltic Sea he preached in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. He came into Lower or Red Russia, establishing a community at Lemberg [Lviv] and at Galich on the Dniester; proceeded into Muscovy, and founded a convent at Dieff, and came as far as the shores of the Black Sea. He then returned to Cracow, which he had made the centre of his operations. On the morning of 15 August he attended Matins and Mass, received the last sacraments, and died a saintly death. God glorified His servant by numberless miracles, the record of which fills many folio pages of the *Acta SS.*, August, III, 309. He was canonized by Pope Clement VIII in 1594. A portion of his relics is at the Dominican church in Paris.

One of his miracles is connected with the Tatar attack on a monastery in Kiev. Hyacinth was about to save a Monstrance (or possibly a Ciborium, it is unknown exactly which one) containing the Blessed Sacrament when he heard the voice of Blessed Virgin Mary asking him to take her too. So he decided to take also the statue of the Holy Virgin. Despite the fact that it weighed far more than he could normally lift, it became



miraculously weightless. Thus he saved both the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of Our Lady. For that reason the saint is usually shown holding these two items.

Saint Czeslaw was a close relative of Hyacinth, and may have been his brother. Hyacinth was canonized on April 17, 1594 by Pope Clement VIII, and his memorial day is celebrated on August 17. In 1686 Pope Innocent XI named him a patron of Lithuania.

In Spanish-language countries, Hyacinth is known as San Jacinto - which is the name of numerous towns and locations in Spanish-speaking countries, and of two battles fought in two of these locations.

He is the patron saint of St. Hyacinth's Basilica, in Chicago, Illinois and of those in danger of drowning.

He is also the patron saint of Ermita de Piedra de San Jacinto in Tuguegarao city, Philippines wherein his feastday is celebrated with a procession and folk dance contests. A town called Camalaniugan in the Philippine is also under the said saint's patronage.

The town church dedicated to San Jacinto or Saint Hyacinth is home to the oldest church bell (the Sancta Maria 1595) in the Far East.

Saint Remigius, Remy or Remi, (French: Saint Rémi or Saint Rémy; Italian: Remigio; Spanish: Remigio; Occitan: Romieg; Polish: Remigiusz; and Breton: Remig), was Archbishop of Reims and Apostle to the Franks, (c. 437 – January 13, 533). On 24 December 496 he baptized Clovis I, King of the Franks. This baptism, leading to the conversion of the entire Frankish people to Nicene Christianity, was a momentous success for the Catholic Church and a seminal event in European history.

Remigius was born, traditionally, at Cerny-en-Laonnois, near Laon, Picardy, into the highest levels of Gallo-Roman society. He is said to have been the son of Emilius, count of Laon (who is not otherwise attested) and of Celina, daughter of the Bishop of Soissons, which Clovis had conquered in 486. He studied at Reims and soon became so noted for his learning and sanctity, in addition to his high status, that he was elected Bishop of Reims in his twenty-second year, though still a layman.

The story of the return of the sacred vessels (most notably the Vase of Soissons), which had been stolen from the church of Soissons testifies to the friendly relations existing between him and Clovis, King of the Franks, whom he converted to Christianity with the assistance of Saint Vedast (Vedastus, Vaast, Waast) and Saint Clotilde, the Burgundian princess who was wife to Clovis. Even before he embraced Christianity,



Clovis had showered benefits upon Remigius and the Christians of Reims, and after his victory over the Alemanni in the battle of Tolbiac (probably 496), he requested Remigius to baptize him at Reims (December 24, 496) in the presence of a large company of Franks and Alemanni: according to Saint Gregory of Tours, 3,000 Franks were baptized with Clovis.

King Clovis granted Remigius stretches of territory, in which the latter established and endowed many churches. He erected bishoprics at Tournai; Cambrai; Théroouanne, where he personally ordained the first bishop in 499; Arras, where he installed St. Vedast; and Laon, which he gave to his niece's husband, Gunband. In 530 he consecrated Medardus, Bishop of Noyon. Remigius' brother Principius was Bishop of Soissons and also corresponded with Sidonius Apollinaris, whose letters give a sense of the highly cultivated courtly literary Gallo-Roman style all three men shared.

The chroniclers of "Gallia Christiana" record that numerous donations were made to Remigius by the Frankish nobles, which he presented to the cathedral at Reims.

Though Remigius never attended any of the church councils, in 517 he held a synod at Reims, at which after a heated discussion he converted a bishop of Arian views. Although St Remigius's influence over people and prelates was extraordinary, upon one occasion his condoning of the offences of one Claudius, a priest whom Remigius had consecrated, brought upon him the rebukes of his episcopal brethren, who deemed Claudius deserving of degradation. The reply of Remigius, still extant, is able and convincing.

Few authentic works of Remigius remain: his "Declamations" were elaborately admired by Sidonius Apollinaris, in a finely-turned letter to Remigius, but are now lost. Four letters survive: one containing his defence in the matter of Claudius, two written to Clovis, and a fourth to Bishop Falco of Tongeren. The "Testament of St. Remigius" is apocryphal. A brief and strictly legendary "Vita" was formerly ascribed to Venantius Fortunatus. Another, according to Jacobus de Voragine, was written by Ignatius, bishop of Reims. A letter congratulating Pope Hormisdas upon his election (523) is apocryphal, and "the letter in which Pope Hormisdas appears to have appointed him vicar of the kingdom of Clovis is proved to be spurious; it is presumed to have been an attempt of Hincmar to base his pretensions for the elevation of Reims to the primacy, following the alleged precedent of Remigius."

A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles (edited Villalpandus, 1699) is not his work, but that of Remigius of Auxerre.

St Remigius' relics were kept in the Cathedral of Reims, whence Hincmar had them



translated to Épernay during the Viking invasions and thence, in 1099 to the Abbey of Saint-Rémy. His feast is celebrated on October 1.

There was an early legend associated with St. Remigius known as the Legend of the Baptism of Moribund Pagan, according to which a dying pagan asked for baptism at the hands of St. Remigius, but when it was found that there was no Oil of the Catechumens or sacred Chrism available for the proper administration of the baptismal ceremony, St. Remigius ordered two empty vials be placed on an altar and as he prayed before them these two vials miraculously filled respectively with the necessary Oil of the Catechumens and Chrism.

Apparently when the sepulcher containing the body of St. Remigius was opened in the reign of Charles the Bald and while Hincmar was the Archbishop of Reims, two small vials were found, the contents of which gave off a aromatic scent the likes of which was like nothing known to those present. If one recalls that when St. Remigius died, the ancient art of perfumery was still known and practiced in the collapsing Roman Empire, but was unknown in the Carolingian empire four hundred years later. These vials may have originally simply have bottles of unguents used to cover the scent of decay of St. Remigius' corpse during his funeral, but the memory of the two vials miraculously filled in the story of the Baptism of the Moribund Pagan and the unusual, seemingly otherworldly scents issuing from these two vials found buried with St. Remigius combined to suggest to those present that these two vials were the miraculously filled vials of the legend.

It should be remembered as well that it was not uncommon for chalices, patens and other sacred vessels to be buried with high ranking clergymen.

Hincmar, adroitly combined the discovery of these two vials with their unique, unearthly fragrance, the Legend of the Baptism of the Moribund Pagan and the historical memory that St. Remigius had baptized Clovis into a new Legend identifying one of these vials as the actual vial of Chrism used at the baptism of Clovis to create the new Legend of the Sainte Ampoule, (i.e., that the Chrism used by Remigius when he baptized Clovis was miraculously supplied by heaven itself) which Hincmar then used to strengthen his claim that his own archepiscopal see of Reims—as the possessor of this heavenly sent Chrism—should therefore be recognized as the divinely chosen site for all subsequent sacre/anointings of French kings. The fate of the second vial is uncertain. It has been suggested that since in the original form of the legend this would have been the vial containing the Oil of the Catechumens and that the French coronation ordinals prescribe the Oil of the Catechumens, rather than Chrism, for the anointing of queens, it was subsequently used for anointing the queens of France and it is possible that a vial



currently identified by some of the Bourbon Legitimists as the Sainte Ampouille is actually this second vial.

Saint Peter Claver [beatified 1850, canonized 1888, hence dating of this reliquary]. Saint Peter Claver (Spanish: San Pedro Claver Corberó) (26 June 1580 – 8 September 1654) was a Jesuit who, due to his life and work, became the patron saint of slaves, of Colombia and of African Americans.

Peter Claver was born into a prosperous farming family in the Spanish village of Verdu, about 54 miles from Barcelona, in 1580, about 70 years after King Ferdinand of Spain had set in motion the brutal colonial slavery culture by authorizing the purchase of 250 African slaves in Lisbon for his territories in New Spain. His parents were devout Catholics and taught Peter from early childhood to let nothing come between him and the love of God. As a student at the University of Barcelona, Claver was noted for his piety as well as high intelligence. He was given permission to enter the Jesuit College at Palma, Majorca in 1602, and after two years of study there, he wrote these words in a notebook which he kept with him throughout his life, "I must dedicate myself to the service of God until death, on the understanding that I am like a slave." He was respected by his instructors for his, "humility and obedience, silence and reserve."

Claver arrived in Cartagena in 1610. By this time the slave trade had been established in the Americas for about 100 years and Cartagena was a chief center for it. Ten thousand slaves poured into the port yearly; crossing the Atlantic from West Africa under conditions so foul and inhuman that an estimated one-third of them died in transit. Although slave-trading was condemned by Pope Paul III and later labeled "supreme villainy" by Pius IX, there were fortunes to be made and it continued to flourish.

Peter Claver's predecessor, Jesuit Father Alfonso de Sandoval, had devoted himself to the service of the slaves for 40 years before Claver arrived to continue the work - declaring himself, "the slave of the slaves forever."

As soon as a slave ship entered the port, Claver headed for the wharf and moved into its filthy and diseased hold to doctor and minister to the ill-treated and miserable human cargo. After the slaves were herded from the ship and penned in nearby yards to be studied by crowds and buyers, Claver plunged in among them with medicines, food, bread, brandy, lemons and tobacco. With the help of interpreters and pictures which he carried with him he gave basic instructions and assured his brothers and sisters in Christ of their human dignity and God's saving love. During the 40 years of his ministry, Claver single handedly catechized and baptized an estimated 300,000 of these slaves. Furthermore, Claver followed up to see that as Christians they were accorded their legal



rights.

His apostolate extended beyond his care for slaves. He preached in the city square, gave missions to sailors and traders as well as country missions - returning every spring to visit those he'd baptized and to follow up that they were being treated humanely. During these missions he avoided, whenever possible, the hospitality of the planters and overseers, and would lodge instead in the slave quarters. Through the force of his own extraordinary personality and saintliness, applied over many years, the state of the slaves began to improve.

His work on behalf of the slaves did not prevent him from caring also for the souls of the more well-to-do members of society and for the traders and visitors (including Moslems and English Protestants) to Cartagena, or for condemned criminals, many of whom he prepared for death. He was also a frequent visitor to the city's hospitals. Over time he became a moral force, indeed, the apostle of Cartagena.

Illness finally forced the saint into his room, where he lingered another four years, largely forgotten and neglected. He died on 8 September 1654. The city magistrates, who had generally considered him a nuisance for his constant solicitations on behalf of the slaves, ordered a public funeral, at public expense, and he was buried with great pomp and ceremony. It was only after his death that the true scope of his work began to be realized – which was extensive even before the astronomical number of people he personally baptized is considered. Miracles, prophecies, the gift of reading hearts, and the practice of severe personal penance were all ascribed to him.

He was canonized in 1888, and Pope Leo XIII declared him the worldwide patron of missionary work among black slaves.

Comment: The Holy Spirit's might and power are manifested in the striking decisions and bold actions of Peter Claver. A decision to leave one's homeland never to return reveals a gigantic act of will difficult for the contemporary mind to imagine. Peter's determination to serve forever the most abused, rejected and lowly of all people is stunningly heroic. When we measure our lives against such a man's, we become aware of our own barely used potential and of our need to open ourselves more to the jolting power of Jesus' Spirit. Quote: Peter Claver understood that concrete service like the distributing of medicine, food or brandy to his black brothers and sisters could be as effective a communication of the word of God as mere verbal preaching. As Peter Claver often said, "We must speak to them with our hands before we try to speak to them with our lips."



