

Godounov, brother of the Tsarina Irene and all-powerful minister of Tsar Feodor, who had died, or was murdered—apparently the last of his dynasty, in 1598. Then Boris Godounov had himself proclaimed Tsar, only to be confronted by a pretender, who claimed to be Dmitri and to have escaped by a ruse the generally assumed assassination of 1591. This “prince” Dmitri by 1604 had invaded Muscovite territory at the head of some 30,000 Poles and Cossacks, and marched against Tsar Boris Godounov: he relied much on Polish support, was known to be well disposed towards the Catholic Faith, and had in fact promised to introduce it into Muscovy, having Jesuits and Franciscans in his train.

When therefore the little Carmelite band, who left Vilna in the guise of chaplains and part of the entourage of an envoy, who was being dispatched by the “grand chancellor” of Lithuania to Tsar Boris, crossed from the Polish frontier town of Polocia on 4.12.1604, it was to find themselves held up by the “palatine” of the district of Novalia who, informed that the Carmelites were being sent by the Pope to the Shah of Persia, after detaining them for a fortnight, signified to them by instructions of the Tsar Boris that, as coming from the territory of king Sigismund of Poland, whose support of the pretender Dmitri he resented, they would not be allowed to continue on their journey. As a concession, however, and act of courtesy towards Pope Clement VIII, Tsar Boris would admit them into Muscovy by Ivangorod, on the gulf of Finland, or Archangel on the White Sea.

Retracing their steps to Polocia the Carmelites there passed Christmas, then they went back to Vilna, 1.1.1605, and thence to Warsaw where the Polish Diet was convoked; and with the Nuncio and others it was planned to change the route of the Religious to one across the Black Sea, and so to Georgia and Armenia. But hardly had they set out with the Court, at the conclusion of the Diet, on its return to Cracow early in March than the Cardinal Primate learnt of the death of Pope Clement VIII, and therefore they waited in Cracow to learn the issue of the two conclaves, which followed in quick succession, and from the second of which Cardinal Borghese issued, 17.5.1605, as Pope, and began his long and important reign as Paul V.

The new Pontiff lost no time in giving the expedition his support and addressing to the three Carmelite Religious in July 1605 a Brief worded as follows (Arch. Sec. Vat. Arm. XLV, 1, p. 50 (formerly 39)):

“POPE PAUL V

“to Our beloved sons Paul Simon, John Thaddaeus and Vincent, Carmelite Brothers.

“Beloved sons, greetings and the Apostolic benediction. Our beloved son Peter of the “Mother of God of your family of Carmelites has brought Us word how exceedingly “long, difficult and peril-fraught a travel into Persia you have eagerly undergone by the “command of Our predecessor Pope Clement VIII, whose memory is blessed, in order “that you may fulfil the Lord’s precept by which when about to return to the Father He “bade His holy Apostles go forth into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every “creature. And indeed, beloved sons, you have entered upon a province worthy of your “piety and the wont of the higher life you profess, so that in that province you have been “able with much interest to trade with the talent of love you received from the Lord. “Assuredly you cannot do a work more grateful to Us, since naught is dearer to Us than “the salvation of souls and the increase of the glory of the divine Name. And so We “wished to write to you that you might understand how pleasing and delightful to Us is “this spiritual business of yours and to urge you to the speedier completion of the course “you have begun and to the fulfilling of this holy Apostolic ministry with the greatest “courage care and love, in order that as soon as possible God’s church may get rich fruits “from your so many and great labours. And that you may go forward more easily and “freely and in addition that We may honour this praiseworthy travelling abroad of yours “with some special favour so that you may the more be able to infer Our fatherly good- “will towards you, firstly We impart to you Our Apostolic benediction; in the next place