

A Murderer Dies Repentant.

A murder took place in Cleveland on New Year's Day in 1948. Harold Beach, 23, made advances towards eight-year-old Sheila Turley. When the young girl resisted him, he stabbed her with a small kitchen knife seven times in the back and head. The attacker fled, and the girl crawled to the porch of a nearby house and clawed at the window. No one was home, and Sheila fell exhausted on the porch and died.

The killer was captured and sentenced to death. The story of what happened in the death chamber was told in the Cleveland News by Harold Beaufait, a staff writer. The news article follows:

Columbus -- Death is a time for prayers. I realized that with sickening force last night when I saw Harold Beach electrocuted for the murder of 8-year-old Sheila Ann Turley. The small electrocution chamber in Ohio's crumbling penitentiary was as full of prayers as a funeral parlor is crowded with flowers.

Walking upright and calm the last dozen steps to the chair, Beach was as bolstered by prayer as a scarecrow is held up by its rigid props. Beach died clinging desperately to the last syllable of a Hail Mary.

Only seven witnesses and seven guards, including Warden R. W. Alvis, saw the execution. Each prayed in his own way. Some followed the prayers aloud, repeating the words after the priest and the condemned youth. A newspaperman standing at my left said the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary and the Act of Contrition as he took notes of what was happening before his eyes...

I had the impression that everyone present in that close, severe room, its walls lined with photographs of the 262 persons who have preceded Beach to the chair, would have collapsed without their individual appeals to God...

Beach's hands were folded in front of him. They held a large wooden cross. With the priest at his side, he walked slowly toward the awkward, waiting chair, repeating the Lord's Prayer... "Our Father, who art in Heaven ---" Beach completed the Lord's Prayer as he seated himself in the chair... The priest reached over and took the wooden cross. "Hail Mary...blessed art thou among women...Beach said the words clearly... Next was the Act of Contrition. "Oh, my God, I'm sorry. I confess my sins." Beach was breathless and nearly shouting...A deputy pressed a button. Beach jerked. The prayers of the living continued...Beach's two hands were clenched on the arms of the chair. From the left hand dangled --- a Rosary.

Beach was a Catholic when he died. But he did not grow up in the Faith. A murderer influenced him in becoming a Catholic. Robert Daniels was condemned to death for a triple murder. While awaiting execution, Daniels became a Catholic. He went to the electric chair saying over and over, "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee." Before he died, he told Harold Beach about Christ and His Church. God gave the Gift of Faith to Beach, who asked the prison chaplain for convert instructions. He received Baptism a few days before he died.

Take what you need from this story. Maybe you need repentance too, or to show more zeal in telling others about the Faith, or to start finding strength in prayer.