

## SAINT BRAULIO,

BISHOP OF SARAGOSSA, CONFESSOR.

HE was the great assistant of St. Isidore of Seville, in settling the discipline of the Church of Spain, and is one of those holy pastors to whose zeal, learning, and labours it has always professed itself much indebted. He died in 646, in the twentieth year of his episcopacy. He has left us two letters to St. Isidore, an eulogium of that saint, and a catalogue of his works: also a hymn in Iambic verse in honour of St. Emilian, and the life of that servant of God, who after living long a hermit, was called to serve a parish in the diocese of Tarragon, where a famous monastery now bears his name.

## MARCH XXVII.

## ST. JOHN OF EGYPT, HERMIT.

From Rufinus, in the second book of the lives of the fathers; and from Palladius in his *Lausiaca*: this last had often seen him. Also St. Jerom, St. Austin, Cassian, &c. See Tillemont, t. 10. p. 9. See also the Wonders of God in the Wilderness, p. 160.

A.D. 394.

ST. JOHN was born about the year 305, was of a mean extraction, and brought up to the trade of a carpenter. At twenty-five years of age he forsook the world, and put himself under the guidance and direction of an ancient holy anchoret, with such an extraordinary humility and simplicity as struck the venerable old man with admiration; who inured him to obedience by making him water a dry stick for a whole year, as if it were a live plant, and perform several other things as seemingly ridiculous, all which he executed with the utmost fidelity. To the saint's humility and ready obedience, Cassian (1) attributes the extraordinary gifts he afterwards received from God. He seems to have lived about twelve years with this old man, till his death, and about four more in different neighbouring monasteries.

Being about forty years of age, he retired alone to the top of a

(1) Coll. b. 4. c. 21. p. 81.

rock of very difficult ascent, near Lycopolis.\* His cell he walled up, leaving only a little window through which he received all necessaries, and spoke to those who visited him what might be for their spiritual comfort and edification. During five days in the week he conversed only with God: but on Saturdays and Sundays all but women had free access to him for his instructions and spiritual advice. He never eat till after sunset, and then very sparingly; but never any thing that had been dressed by fire, not so much as bread. In this manner did he live from the fortieth or forty-second to the ninetieth year of his age. For the reception of such as came to him from remote parts, he permitted a kind of hospital to be built near his cell or grotto, where some of his disciples took care of them. He was illustrious for miracles, and a wonderful spirit of prophecy, with the power of discovering to those that came to see him, their most secret thoughts and hidden sins. And such was the fame of his predictions, and the lustre of his miracles which he wrought on the sick, by sending them some oil which he had blessed, that they drew the admiration of the whole world upon him.

Theodosius the Elder was then emperor, and was attacked by the tyrant Maximus, become formidable by the success of his arms, having slain the Emperor Gratian in 383, and dethroned Valentinian in 387. The pious emperor, finding his army much inferior to that of his adversary, caused this servant of God to be consulted concerning the success of the war against Maximus. Our saint foretold him, that he should be victorious almost without blood. The emperor, full of confidence in the prediction, marched into the West, defeated the more numerous armies of Maximus twice in Pannonia; crossed the Alps, took the tyrant in Aquileia, and suffered his soldiers to cut off his head. He returned triumphant to Constantinople, and attributed his victories very much to the prayers of St. John, who also foretold him the events of his other wars, the incursions of Barbarians, and all that was to befall his empire. Four years after, in 392, Eugenius, by the assistance of Arbogastes, who had murdered the Emperor Valentinian the Younger, usurped the empire of the West. Theodosius sent Eutropius the Eunuch into Egypt, with instructions to bring St. John with him to Constantinople, if it were possible; but that if he could not prevail with him to under-

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\* A city in the north of Thebaïs, in Egypt.

take the journey, to consult whether it was God's will that he should march against Eugenius, or wait his arrival in the East. The man of God excused himself as to his journey to court, but assured Eutropius that his prince should be victorious, but not without loss and blood: as also that he would die in Italy, and leave the empire of the West to his son; all which happened accordingly. Theodosius marched against Eugenius, and in the first engagement lost ten thousand men, and was almost defeated: but renewing the battle on the next day, the 6th of September, in 394, he gained an entire victory by the miraculous interposition of heaven, as even Claudian, the heathen poet, acknowledges. Theodosius died in the West, on the 17th of January, in 395, leaving his two sons emperors, Arcadius in the East, and Honorius in the West.

This saint restored sight to a senator's wife by some of the oil he had blessed for healing the sick. It being his inviolable custom never to admit any woman to speak to him, this gave occasion to a remarkable incident related by Evagrius, Palladius, and St. Austin, in his treatise of Care for the Dead. A certain general officer in the emperor's service, visiting the saint, conjured him to permit his wife to speak to him; for she was come to Lycopolis, and had gone through many dangers and difficulties to enjoy that happiness. The holy man answered, that during his stricter enclosure for the last forty years since he had shut himself up in that rock, he had imposed on himself an inviolable rule not to see or converse with women; so he desired to be excused the granting her request. The officer returned to Lycopolis very melancholy. His wife, who was a person of great virtue, was not to be satisfied. The husband went back to the blessed man, told him she would die of grief if he refused her request. The saint said to him: "Go to your wife, and tell her that she shall see me to-night, without coming hither, or stirring out of her house." This answer he carried to her, and both were very earnest to know in what manner the saint would perform his promise. When she was asleep in the night the man of God appeared to her in her dream, and said: "Your great faith, woman, obliged me to come to visit you; but I must admonish you to curb the like desires of seeing God's servants on earth. Contemplate only their life, and imitate their actions. As for me, why did you desire to see me? Am I a saint, or a prophet like God's true

servants? I am a sinful and weak man. It is therefore, only in virtue of your faith that I have had recourse to our Lord, who grants you the cure of the corporal diseases with which you are afflicted. Live always in the fear of God, and never forget his benefits." He added several proper instructions for her conduct, and disappeared. The woman awaking, described to her husband the person she had seen in her dream, with all his features, in such a manner as to leave no room to doubt but it was the blessed man that had appeared to her. Whereupon he returned the next day to give him thanks for the satisfaction he had vouchsafed his wife. But the saint on his arrival prevented him, saying: "I have fulfilled your desire, I have seen your wife, and satisfied her in all things she had asked: go in peace." The officer received his benediction, and continued his journey to Seyne. What the man of God foretold happened to him, as, among other things, that he should receive particular honours from the emperor. Besides, the authors of the saint's life, St. Austin relates this history which he received from a nobleman of great integrity and credit, who had it from the very persons to whom it happened. St. Austin adds, had he seen St. John, he would have inquired of him, whether he himself really appeared to this woman, or whether it was an angel in his shape, or whether the vision only passed in her imagination.(1)

In the year 394, a little before the saint's death, he was visited by Palladius, afterwards bishop of Helenopolis, who is one of the authors of his life. Several anchorets of the deserts of Nitria, all strangers, the principal of whom were Evagrius, Albinus, Ammonius, had a great desire to see the saint. Palladius, one of this number, being young, set out first in July, when the flood of the Nile was high. Being arrived at his mountain, he found the door of his porch shut, and that it would not be open till the Saturday following. He waited that time in the lodgings of strangers. On Saturday, at eight o'clock, Palladius entered the porch, and saw the saint sitting before his window, and giving advice to those who applied to him for it. Having saluted Palladius by an interpreter, he asked him of what country he was, and what was his business, and if he was not of the company or: monastery of Evagrius? Palladius

(1) S. Aug. l. pro curâ de mortuis, c. 17. p. 294.

owned he was. In the mean time arrived Alypius, governor of the province, in great haste. The saint, on the arrival of Alypius, broke off his discourse with Palladius, who withdrew to make room for the governor to discourse with the saint. Their conversation was very long, and Palladius being weary, murmured within himself against the venerable old man, as guilty of exception of persons. He was even just going away, when the saint, knowing his secret thoughts, sent Theodorus, his interpreter, to him, saying: "Go, bid that brother not to be impatient: I am going to dismiss the governor, and then will speak to him." Palladius, astonished that his thoughts should be known to him, waited with patience. As soon as Alypius was gone, St. John called Palladius, and said to him: "Why were you angry, imputing to me in your mind what I was no way guilty of? To you I can speak at any other time, and you have many fathers and brethren to comfort and direct you in the paths of salvation. But this governor being involved in the hurry of temporal affairs, and being come to receive some wholesome advice during the short time his affairs will allow him to breathe in, how could I give you the preference?" He then told Palladius what passed in his heart, and his secret temptations to quit his solitude; for which end the devil represented to him his father's regret for his absence, and that he might induce his brother and sister to embrace a solitary life. The holy man bade him despise such suggestions; for they had both already renounced the world, and his father would yet live seven years. He foretold him that he should meet with great persecutions and sufferings, and should be a bishop, but with many afflictions: all which came to pass, though at that time extremely improbable.

The same year, St. Petronius, with six other monks, made a long journey to pay St. John a visit. He asked them if any amongst them were in holy orders? They said: No. One however, the youngest in the company, was a deacon, though this was unknown to the rest. The saint, by divine instinct, knew this circumstance, and that the deacon had concealed his orders out of a false humility, not to seem superior to the others, but their inferior, as he was in age. Therefore, pointing to him, he said: "This man is a deacon." The other denied it, upon the false persuasion that to lie with a view to one's own humiliation was no sin. St. John took him by the hand, and

kissing it, said to him: "My son, take care never to deny the grace you have received from God, lest humility betray you into a lie. We must never lie, under any pretence of good whatever, because no untruth can be from God." The deacon received this rebuke with great respect. After their prayer together, one of the company begged of the saint to be cured of a certain ague. He answered: "You desire to be freed from a sickness which is beneficial to you. As nitre cleanses the body, so distempers and other chastisements purify the soul." However, he blessed some oil and gave it to him: he vomited plentifully after it, and was from that moment perfectly cured. They returned to their lodgings, where by his orders they were treated with all proper civility, and cordial hospitality. When they went to him again, he received them with joyfulness in his countenance, which evidenced the interior spiritual joy of his soul; he bade them sit down, and asked them whence they came? They said from Jerusalem. He then made them a long discourse, in which he first endeavoured to show his own baseness; after which he explained the means by which pride and vanity are to be banished out of the heart, and all virtues to be acquired. He related to them the examples of many monks, who, by suffering their hearts to be secretly corrupted by vanity, at last fell also into scandalous irregularities; as of one, who, after a most holy and austere life, by this means fell into fornication, and then by despair into all manner of disorders; also of another, who, from vanity, fell into a desire of leaving his solitude; but by a sermon he preached to others, in a monastery on his road, was mercifully converted and became an eminent penitent. The blessed John thus entertained Petronius and his company for three days till the hour of None. When they were leaving him, he gave them his blessing, and said: "Go in peace, my children; and know that the news of the victory which the religious prince Theodosius has gained over the tyrant Eugenius is this day come to Alexandria: but this excellent emperor will soon end his life by a natural death." Some days after their leaving him to return home, they were informed he had departed this life. Having been favoured by a foresight of his death, he would see nobody for the last three days. At end of this term he sweetly expired, being on his knees at prayer, towards the close of the year 394, or the beginning of 395. It might probably be on the 17th of October,

on which day the Copts, or Egyptian Christians, keep his festival: the Roman and other Latin Martyrologies mark it on the 27th of March.

The solitude which the Holy Ghost recommends, and which the saints embraced, resembled that of Jesus Christ, being founded on the same motive or principle, having the same exercises and employments, and the same end. Christ was conducted by the Holy Ghost into the desert, and he there spent his time in prayer and fasting. Wo to those whom humour or passion lead into solitude, or who consecrate it not to God by mortification, sighs of penance, and hymns of divine praise. To those who thus sanctify their desert or cell, it will be an anticipated paradise, an abyss of spiritual advantages and comforts, known only to such as have enjoyed them. *The Lord will change the desert into a place of delights, and will make the solitude a paradise, and a garden worthy of himself.*(1) In it only joy and jubilee shall be seen, nothing shall be heard but thanksgiving and praise. It is the dwelling of a terrestrial seraph, whose sole employment is to labour to know, and correct all secret disorders of his own soul, to forget the world, and all objects of vanity which could distract or entangle him; to subdue his senses, to purify the faculties of his soul, and entertain in his heart a constant fire of devotion, by occupying it assiduously on God, Jesus Christ, and heavenly things, and banishing all superfluous desires and thoughts; lastly, to make daily progress in purity of conscience, humility, mortification, recollection, and prayer, and to find all his joy in the most fervent and assiduous adoration, love, and praise of his sovereign Creator and Redeemer.

### SAINT RUPERT OR ROBERT, C.

#### BISHOP OF SALTZBOURG.

HE was, by birth, a Frenchman, and of royal blood; but still more illustrious for his learning, and the extraordinary virtues he practised from his youth. He exercised himself in austere fasting, watching, and other mortifications; was a great lover of chastity and temperance; and so charitable as always to impoverish himself to enrich the poor. His reputation drew

(1) Isa. lxiii.