

OCTOBER VII  
SAINT MARK, POPE, C.

See the Pontifical published by Anastasius ap. Muratori inter *Italicarum* *Scriptores*, t. 3, p. 112; also Baron. ad an. 336; Bosius and Airinghi, l. 2, c. 15.

A. D. 336.

ST. MARK was by birth a Roman, and served God with such fervour among the clergy of that church, that, advancing continually in sincere humility and the knowledge and sense of his own weakness and imperfections, he strove every day to surpass himself in the fervour of his charity and zeal, and in the exercise of all virtues. The persecution ceased in the West, upon the abdication of Dioclesian and Maximian, in the beginning of the year 305; but was revived for a short time by Maxentius in 312. St. Mark abated nothing of his watchfulness, but endeavoured rather to redouble his zeal during the peace of the church; knowing that if men sometimes cease openly to persecute the faithful, the devil never allows them any truce, and his snares are generally most to be feared in the time of a calm. The saint contributed very much to advance the service of God during the pontificate of St. Sylvester; after whose demise he was himself placed in the apostolic chair on the 18th of January, 336. He held that dignity only eight months and twenty days, dying on the 7th of October following. According to the Pontifical published by Anastasius, he built two churches, one on the Ardeatine Way, where he was afterwards buried; another within the walls, near the capitol. He was interred in the Ardeatine Way, in the cemetery of Balbina, a holy martyr buried there. It was originally called of *Prætextatus*, probably from some illustrious person of that name, and was situate without the Ardeatine gate, not far from the cemetery of Calixtus, on the Appian Way. St. Mark had very much beautified and adorned this burial-place, out of respect to the martyrs there interred; and he being buried there, it from that time bore his name. Pope Damasus, in his epitaph, extols his extraordinary disinterestedness and contempt of all earthly things, and his remarkable spirit of prayer, by

which he drew down on the people abundant spiritual blessings. His name occurs in the Liberian Calendar, compiled soon after his death, and in all other Martyrologies of the Western church. A church bore his name in Rome in the fifth century. His remains were translated into it by the order of Gregory VII. The pontificals mention that the church was repaired by Adrian I., Gregory IV., and Paul II. This last pope built near it a palace which was the summer residence of the popes till Sixtus V. preferred the Quirinal hill, or Monte Cavallo.

It was by constant watchfulness over themselves, by assiduous self denial, and humble prayer, that all the saints triumphed over their spiritual enemies. They never laid down their arms. A Christian ought to be afraid of no enemy more than himself, whom he carries always about with him, and whom he is not able to flee from. He therefore never ceases to cry out to God: Who will preserve me from falling through myself! Not my own strength. Unless thou, O Lord, art my light and support, I watch in vain.

#### SS. SERGIUS AND BACCHUS, MM.

THESE two glorious martyrs are mentioned with great distinction by Theodoret, John Mosch in the Spiritual Meadow, Evagrius, St. Gregory of Tours, Bede, and other ancient Martyrologists. They were illustrious officers in the army, and suffered with great constancy cruel torments and a glorious death under Maximian: the theatre of their triumph was Rasaphe in Syria, in the diocese of Hierapolis. Their tomb at Rasaphe was famous for miracles in the year 431,(1) when Alexander, bishop of Hierapolis, built there a stately church in their honour. Out of respect for their relics, Justinian caused this town to be fortified, called it Sergiopolis, and made it the metropolis of the province. He also built many churches in their honour in several provinces of the East. They are the titular saints of a church in Rome, which has been famous at least ever since the seventh century, as appears from Anastasius; nevertheless no authentic acts of their martyrdom have reached us. Two other churches in Rome bear their names, one called *ad montes* belongs to the Russian college, and

(1) See Lupus in Conc. Ephes. pp. 232, 279, 299.