

NOVEMBER XVIII.

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCHES OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, AT ROME.

THE Vatican church, dedicated in honour of St. Peter, is the second patriarchal church at Rome, and in it reposes one half of the precious remains of the bodies of SS. Peter and Paul. The tombs of the great conquerors and lords of the world have been long since destroyed and forgotten: but those of the martyrs are glorious by the veneration which the faithful pay to their memory. Amongst all the places which the blood of martyrs has rendered illustrious, that part of the Vatican hill which was consecrated with the blood, and enriched with the relics of the princes of the apostles, has always been most venerable. "The sepulchres of those who have served Christ crucified," says St Chrysostom,¹ surpass the palaces of kings, not so much in the greatness and beauty of the buildings (though in this also they go beyond them) as in other things of more importance, namely, in the multitude of those who, with devotion and joy, repair to them. For the emperor himself, who is clothed in purple, goes to the sepulchres of the saints, and kisses them; and, humbly prostrate on the ground, beseeches the same saints to pray to God for him; and he who wears a royal crown upon his head, holds it for a great favour of God, that a tentmaker and a fisherman, and these dead, should be his protectors and defenders, and this he begs with great earnestness." And St. Austin, or another ancient father:² "Now at the

¹ S. Chrys. in 2 Cor. Hom. 26. t. 10. p. 625. ed. Ben.

² S. Aug. ol. Serm. 28. de Sanctis, nunc Append. Serm. 205. t. 5. p. 41, ed. Ben.

memory of the fisherman the knees of the emperor are bowed, and the precious stones of the imperial crown shine most where the benefits of the fisherman are most felt."

The body of St. Peter is said to have been buried immediately after his martyrdom, upon this spot on the Vatican hill,¹ which was then without the walls, and near the suburb inhabited by the Jews. The remains of this apostle were removed hence, into the cemetery of Calixtus, but brought back to the Vatican. Those of St. Paul were deposited on the Ostian Way, where his church now stands. The tombs of the two princes of the apostles, from the beginning, were visited by Christians with extraordinary devotion above those of other martyrs. Caius, the learned and eloquent priest of Rome in 210, in his dialogue with Proclus, the Montanist,² speaks thus of them: "I can show you the trophies of the apostles. For, whether you go to the Vatican hill, or to the Ostian road, you will meet with the monuments of them, who by their preaching and miracles founded this church." The Christians, even in the times of persecution, adorned the tombs of the martyrs, and the oratories which they erected over them, where they frequently prayed. Constantine the Great, after founding the Lateran church, built seven other churches at Rome, and many more in other parts of Italy. The first of these were, the churches of St. Peter on the Vatican hill (where a temple of Apollo, and another of Idæa, mother of the gods,³ before stood) in honour of the place where the prince of the apostles had suffered martyrdom, and was buried:⁴ and that of St. Paul, at his tomb on the Ostian road. The yearly

¹ See Onuphrius de 7 Urbis Basilicis.

² Ap. Eus. Hist. l. 2. c. 25.

³ See Bianchini, Præf. in Pontific. p. 72.

⁴ Foggini de Rom. S. Petri Itin. Exerc. 17. p. 403.

revenues which Constantine granted to all these churches, amounted to seventeen thousand seven hundred and seventy golden pence, which is above thirteen thousand pounds sterling, counting the prices, gold for gold; but, as the value of gold and silver was then much higher than at present, the sum in our money at this day would be much greater. These churches had also a yearly income of above one thousand six hundred pounds upon the spices which Egypt and the East furnished. The churches of St. Peter had houses at Antioch, and lands round about that city; at Tersus in Cilicia, and Tyre: also in Egypt, near Alexandria, in the province of Euphrates, and elsewhere. A part of these lands was appointed every year to furnish a certain quantity of spikenard, frankincense, balm, storax, cinnamon, saffron, and other precious drugs for the censers and lamps. Anastasius gives a large account of the rich vessels of gold and silver which Constantine gave for the service of these churches; but perhaps confounded some later presents with those of this emperor.¹

These churches were built by Constantine in so stately and magnificent a manner as to vie with the finest structures in the empire, as appears from the description which Eusebius gives us of the church of Tyre; for we find that the rest were erected on the same model, which was consequently of great antiquity.² St. Peter's church

¹ Anast. Bibl. in Sylvestro, ap. Muratori Ser. Ital. t. 3. par 3 p. 105.

² In countries where architecture was at a low ebb, churches resembled other buildings. St. Sulpicius Severus tells us, "that in the deserts of Lybia, near Cyrene, he went with a priest, with whom he lodged, into a church which was made of small rods or twigs interwoven one with another, and not much more stately and ambitious than the priest's own house, in which a man could hardly stand upright. But the men who frequented these churches were men of the golden age, and the purest morals." (S. Sulpic. Sev. Dial. l. c. 2. p. 391.) Bede informs us, that anciently there was not a stone church in all the land, but the custom was, to build them all of wood, so that when bishop Ninyas built one of stone, it was such an unusual thing, that the place was

on the Vatican, being fallen to decay, it was begun to be rebuilt under Julius II., in 1506 and was dedicated by Urban VIII., in 1626, on this day; the same on which the dedication of the old church was celebrated.¹ The precious remains of many popes, martyrs, and other saints, are deposited partly under the altars of this vast and beautiful church, and partly in a spacious subterraneous church under the other. But the richest treasure of this venerable place consists in the relics of SS. Peter and Paul, which lie in a sumptuous vault beyond the middle of the church toward the upper end, under a magnificent altar, at which only the pope says mass,

called from it *Candida Casa*, Whitern or Whitechurch. (Hist. 1. 3. c. 4.) The same author mentions, (l. 3. c. 25.) that Finan, the second bishop of Landisfarne, built a church in that island fit for a cathedral see, which yet was not of stone, but only timber sawed, and covered with reed, and so it continued till Eadbert, the seventh bishop, took away the reed, and covered it all over, both roof and sides, with sheets of lead. Of the low rough manner of building, in use among our ancestors, we have an example yet standing, in part of a church within half a mile of Ongar, in Essex. The walls are only trunks of trees reared upright, of man's height, closed with mortar on the inside; with a covering of thatch. Such churches our most illustrious saints frequented. But then their houses were not of a finer taste.

¹ The Vatican church, the finished masterpiece of architecture, was begun by the famous Bramante Lazari, who died in 1514; and continued by Raphael Urbin, the prince of painters, and a great architect; then by Michael Angelo Buonarota, whose name stands first in the list of modern statuary and architects, and is one of the foremost in that of painters. The designs of the great cupola and principal parts of this church were his work, and the edifice, as it now stands, is chiefly his plan. He was succeeded in the execution of this work by Barozzi, who was followed by James de la Porta, and Maderno. The church was finished under Paul V. by Bernini. For the description both of the old and new church see Fontana, de Basilica Vaticana, 3 vols. in folio, at Rome, in 1694, and Ciampini, de Templ. Vatican. The authors of Roma Subterranea, and Foggini, de Rom. S. Petri, Itin. et Episcop. Romæ, 1741.

St. Peter's church, from the outside of the walls, including the portal, is seven hundred English feet long, and five hundred and nine broad. St. Paul's, in London, five hundred and nineteen long, and two hundred and fifty broad, according to the dimensions taken by the able mathematician, F. Christopher Maire, S. J.

St. Paul's church stands on the Ostian road, five miles from the Forum of Rome, supported by one hundred and forty pillars of white marble, taken out of Antoninus's baths. In a subterraneous vault under the patriarchal altar lie half the relics of SS. Peter and Paul. It belongs to a rich abbey of Benedictin monks of the congregation of Mount Cassino.

unless he commissions another to officiate there. This sacred vault is called, The confession of St. Peter, or, The threshold of the Apostles (*Limina Apostolorum*) to which devout persons have flocked, in pilgrimages, from the primitive ages.

Churches are dedicated only to God, though often under the patronage of some saint; that the faithful may be excited to implore, with united suffrages, the intercession of such a saint, and that churches may be distinguished by bearing different titles.¹ "Neither do we," says St. Austin, "erect churches or appoint priesthoods, sacred rites, and sacrifices to the martyrs, because, not the martyrs, but the God of the martyrs, is our God. Who, among the faithful, ever heard a priest, standing at the altar which is erected over the body of a martyr to the honour and worship of God, say, in praying: We offer up sacrifices to thee, O Peter, or Paul, or Cyprian; when at their memories (or titular altars) it is offered to God, who made them both men and martyrs, and has associated them to his angels in heavenly honour."² And again:³ "We build not churches to martyrs as to gods, but memories as to men departed this life, whose souls live with God. Nor do we erect altars to to sacrifice on them to the martyrs, but to the God of the martyrs, and our God." Constantine the Great gave proofs of his piety and religion by the foundation of so many magnificent churches, in which he desired that the name of God should be glorified on earth, to the end of time. Do we show ours by our awful deportment and devotion in holy places, and by our assiduity in frequenting them? God is every where present, and is to be honoured by the homages of our affections in

¹ See Catech. of Montpell. t. 2. near the end.

² S. Aug. l. 8. de Civ. Dei, c. 27, t. 7. p. 217.

³ Ib. l. 22. c. 10. p. 673. See this point treated at large by Thomassin, Tr. sur la Discipline de l'Eglise, and among the Protestants by Hooker, on Ecclesiastical Polity, b. 5.

all places. But in those which are sacred to him, in which our most holy mysteries are performed, and in which his faithful servants unite their suffrages, greater is the glory which redounds to him from them, and he is usually more ready to receive our requests: the prayers of many assembled together being a holy violence to his mercy.

SS. ALPHÆUS AND ZACHÆUS; ALSO
ROMANUS AND BARULAS, MM.

IN the first year of Dioclesian's general persecution, and the nineteenth of his reign, upon the approach of the vicennial games for the twentieth year of his reign, the governor of Palestine, who resided at Cæsarea, obtained the emperor's pardon for all criminals, (as it was the custom at the quinquennial, decennial, and vicennial games of the emperors,) only the Christians excepted, as worse than murderers. At that very time, Zachæus, deacon at Gadara, beyond the Jordan, was apprehended, and presented to the prefect, loaded with chains. By the judge's order, he was inhumanly scourged, then torn with iron combs, and afterward thrown into prison, where his feet were stretched to the fourth hole; by which his body was almost rent asunder: yet he lay in this condition very cheerful, praising God night and day. Here he was soon joined by Alphæus, his cousin, a man of desires, that is, endowed with an eminent spirit of prayer. He was a native of Eleutheropoli, of a good family, lector and exorcist in the church of Cæsarea. In the persecution, he boldly encouraged the faithful to constancy, and, being seized, baffled the prefect in his first examination, and was committed to prison. At a second appearance in court, his flesh was torn first with whips, then with iron hooks: after