

for obtaining charity and other virtues; for marriage with the nuptial benediction, for birth-days, for the sick, for the dead, &c. In 494, pope Gelasius held at Rome a council of seventy bishops, in which he published his famous decree, containing a list of the canonical books of scripture then universally received; another of orthodox fathers; and a third of apocryphal books which are of two classes; some forgeries, as the Acts of St. George, &c. others genuine and useful in many things, but containing some falsity or error, and to be read with caution, or at least excluded the canon of scriptures.¹ This great pope's manner of writing is elegant and noble; but sometimes obscure and perplexed. He died in 496, on the 21st of November, on which day his name occurs in the Roman Martyrology, and those of Bede, Usuard, &c.

See the works of St. Gelasius, and the councils; Anastasius, in Pontificali ap. Muratori, t. 3, p. 122. Ceillier, t. 15, p. 288.

NOVEMBER XXII.

ST. CECILY, V. M.

A. D. 230.

THE name of St. Cecily has always been most illustrious in the Church, and ever since the primitive ages is mentioned with distinction in the canon of the mass, and in the sacramentaries and calendars of the Church. Her spouse Valerian, Tiburtius, and Maximus, an officer, who

¹ See his decree *De libris sacris et Apocryphis* in Gratian's collection; and more correctly in Fontanini's Appendix to Antiquit. Hortæ, and after him in Mansi's supplem. Conc.

were her companions in martyrdom, are also mentioned in the same authentic and venerable writings. St. Cecily was a native of Rome, of a good family, and educated in the principles and perfect practice of the Christian religion. In her youth she by vow consecrated her virginity to God, yet was compelled by her parents to marry a nobleman named Valerian. Him she converted to the faith, and soon after gained to the same his brother Tiburtius. The men first suffered martyrdom, being beheaded for the faith. St. Cecily finished her glorious triumph some days after them. Their acts, which are of very small authority, make them contemporary with pope Urban I. and consequently place their martyrdom about the year 230, under Alexander Severus: for, though that emperor was very favourable to the Christians, sometimes in popular commotions, or by the tyranny of prefects, several martyrs suffered in his reign.¹ Ulpian, the prefect of the prætorian guards and prime minister, was a declared enemy and persecutor; but was at length murdered by the prætorian troops which were under his command. Others, however, place the triumph of these martyrs under Marcus Aurelius, between the year 176 and 180. Their sacred bodies were deposited in part of the cemetery of Calixtus, which part from our saint was called St. Cecily's cemetery. Mention is made of an ancient church of St. Cecily in Rome in the fifth century, in which pope Symmachus held a council in the year 500. This church being fallen to decay, pope Paschal I. began to rebuild it; but was in some pain how he should find the body of the saint, for it was thought that the Lombards had taken it away, as they had many others from the cemeteries of Rome, when they besieged that city under king

¹ See Tillemont, *Hist. des Emper. in Alex.* art. 18. et *Hist. de l'Egl. t. 2.* in S. Urban. p. 260. Orsi, l. 6. n. 39.

Astulphus, in 755. One sunday, as this pope was assisting at matins, as he was wont, at St. Peter's, he fell into a slumber, in which he was advertised by St. Cecily herself that the Lombards had in vain sought for her body, and that he should find it; and he accordingly discovered it in the cemetery called by her name, clothed in a robe of gold tissue, with linen cloths at her feet, dipped in her blood. With her body was found that of Valerian, her husband; and the pope caused them to be translated to her church in the city; as also the bodies of Tiburtius and Maximus, martyrs, and of the popes Urban and Lucius, which lay in the adjoining cemetery of Prætextatus, on the same Appian road.¹ This translation was made in 821. Pope Paschal founded a monastery in honour of these saints, near the church of St. Cecily, that the monks might perform the office day and night. He adorned that church with great magnificence, and gave to it silver plate to the amount of about nine hundred pounds—among other things a ciborium, or tabernacle, of five hundred pounds weight; and a great many pieces of rich stuffs for veils, and such kinds of ornaments; in one of which was represented the angel crowning St. Cecily, Valerian, and Tiburtius. This church, which gives title to a cardinal priest, was sumptuously rebuilt in 1599 by cardinal Paul Emilius Sfondrati, nephew to pope Gregory XIV.² when Clement VIII. caused the bodies of these saints to be removed from under the high altar, and deposited in a most sumptuous vault in the same church, called the Confession of St. Cecily: it was enriched in such a manner by cardinal Paul Emilius Sfondrati as to dazzle the eye and

¹ Anastasius in Paschali I. ap. Murat. t. 3, p. 215, 216.

² Uncle to cardinal Celestin Sfondrati, author of the posthumous work, *Nodus Prædestinationis Dissolutus*, often mentioned in the schools.

astonish the spectator. This church of St. Cecily is called In Trastevere, or, Beyond the Tiber, to distinguish it from two other churches in Rome which bear the name of this saint.

St. Cecily, from her assiduity in singing the divine praises, (in which, according to her Acts, she often joined instrumental music with vocal,) is regarded as patroness of church music. The psalms, and many sacred canticles in several other parts of the holy scripture, and the universal practice both of the ancient Jewish and of the Christian Church, recommend the religious custom of sometimes employing a decent and grave music in sounding forth the divine praises. By this homage of praise we join the heavenly spirits in their uninterrupted songs of adoration, love, and praise.¹ And by such music we express the spiritual joy of our hearts in this heavenly function, and excite ourselves therein to holy jubilation and devotion. Divine love and praise are the work of the heart, without which all words or exterior signs are hypocrisy and mockery. Yet as we are bound to consecrate to God our voices, and all our organs and faculties, and all creatures which we use; so we ought to employ them all in magnifying his sanctity, greatness, and glory, and sometimes to accompany our interior affections of devotion with the most expressive exterior signs. St. Chrysostom elegantly extols the good effects of sacred music, and shows how strongly the fire of divine love is kindled in the soul by devout psalmody.² St. Austin teaches that "it is useful in moving piously the mind, and kindling the affections of divine love."³ And he mentions that when he

1 Angels and we, assisted by this art,
May sing together, though we dwell apart.

WALLER.

2 S. Chrys. in Ps. 41. t. 5. p. 131. ed Ben.

3 S. Aug, ep. 55. (ol. 118.) ad Januar. c. 18. t. 2. p. 142.

was but lately converted to God, by the sacred singing at church he was moved to shed abundance of sweet tears.¹ But he much bewails the danger of being too much carried away by the delight of the harmony, and confesses that he had sometimes been more pleased with the music than affected with what was sung,² for which he severely condemns himself. St. Charles Borromeo in his youth allowed himself no other amusement but that of grave music, with a view to that of the Church. As to music as an amusement, too much time must never be given to it, and extreme care ought to be taken, as a judicious and experienced tutor observes, that children be not set to learn it very young, because it is a thing which bewitches the senses, dissipates the mind exceedingly, and alienates it from serious studies, as daily experience shows. Soft and effeminate music is to be always shunned with abhorrence, as the corrupter of the heart, and the poison of virtue.

ST. THEODORUS THE STUDITE, ABBOT.

St. PLATO, the holy abbot of Symboleon upon Mount Olympus, in Bithynia, being obliged to come to Constantinople for certain affairs, was received there as an angel sent from heaven, and numberless conversions were the fruit of his example and pious exhortations. He reconciled families that were at variance, promoted all virtue and corrected vice. Soon after his return to Symboleon, the whole illustrious family of his sister Theoctista resolved to imitate his example, and renouncing the world, founded the abbey of

¹ S. Aug. Conf. l. 9, c. 6. l. 10. c. 33.

² Ib. l. 10. c. 33.