

MAY XXX.

ST. FELIX I. POPE, MARTYR.

See the Bollandists, and Tillemont, t. 4.

A. D. 274.

HE was a Roman by birth, and succeeded St. Dionysius in the government of the Church in 269. Paul of Samosata, the proud bishop of Antioch, to the guilt of many enormous crimes, added that of heresy, teaching that Christ was no more than a mere man, in whom the Divine Word dwelt by its operation, and as in its temple, with many other gross errors concerning the capital mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation. Two councils were held at Antioch to examine his cause, but by various arts and subterfuges he escaped condemnation. However, in a third, assembled at the same place in 269, being clearly convicted of heresy, pride, and many scandalous crimes, he was excommunicated and deposed, and Domnus was substituted in his room. Paul still maintained himself in the possession of the episcopal house. The bishop therefore had recourse to the emperor Aurelian, who, though a Pagan, gave an order that the house should belong to him to whom the bishops of Rome and Italy adjudged it, as Eusebius writes.¹ St. Felix had before declared himself against that heresiarch; for the council had sent that synodal letter to St. Dionysius, who being dead, it had been delivered to St. Felix. It must have been on that occasion that our holy pope wrote to Maximus, bishop of Alexandria, a learned epistle, quoted by the council of Ephesus, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. Vincent of Lerins; in which he clearly

¹ L. 7. c. 80. p. 282.

explained the Catholic doctrine of the whole mystery of the Incarnation. St. Cyril has preserved us a fragment of it.¹ The persecution of Aurelian breaking out, Saint Felix, fearless of dangers, strengthened the weak, encouraged all, baptised the catechumens, and continued to exert himself in converting infidels to the faith. He himself obtained the glory of martyrdom; which title is given him by the council of Ephesus,² by St. Cyril,³ and by St. Vincent of Lerins.⁴ He governed the Church five years, and passed to a glorious eternity in 274. The western Martyrologies name him on the 30th of May.

The example of Christ, and of all his saints, ought to encourage us under all trials to suffer with patience, and even with joy. We shall soon begin to feel that it is sweet to tread in the steps of a God-man, and shall find that if we courageously take up our crosses, he will make them light by bearing them with us. The soul will find it sweet to be abandoned by creatures, that she may more perfectly feel their emptiness, and learn that men are false and treacherous. Then will she place her whole confidence in God alone, and cleave to him with her whole heart. Forsaken and forgotten by creatures, she finds no relish but in God, who enters her more powerfully, and fills her with his consolations the more sweetly, as she is the more weaned and separated from all earthly things, and more purely adheres to him who never forsakes those who sincerely seek Him. O happy exchange! cries out St. Francis of Sales; the soul thus abandoned in the eyes of men, now possesses God instead of creatures.

¹ Apologet. p. 852.

² Act. 1. Conc. t. 1. p. 512. ³ Apol. t. 3. Conc. p. 852. ⁴ P. 375.