

the close of his last discourse, he begged the prayers of his audience, and told his flock that God called him from them. At which words all that heard him were filled with inexpressible grief. In the afternoon he went again to the church, and appointed a place for his burial; then he took to his bed, and on the Saturday following, the 19th of May, having received the viaticum, he calmly expired; closing his corporal eyes to the world, and at the same instant opening those of his soul to behold God with his angels in glory. His death happened the 19th of May, 988, the sixty-fourth of his age and the twenty-seventh of his archiepiscopal dignity. He was buried in his own cathedral in the place he had appointed.

John of Glastenbury relates, that his bones were translated to Glastenbury in 1012, two years after the martyrdom of St. Elphege; but this at most could only be true of some portion thereof. For in 1508, archbishop Warham found his relics remaining under his monument, which was then on the south side of the high altar. See his life in Mabillon, (*Sæc. Ben.* 5. p. 659.) by Osbern, precentor of Canterbury, in 1070, and that by Eadmer, in 1121; in Wharton, t. 1. p. 211. See also John of Glastenbury, in his history of that abbey, published by Mr. Hearne, t. 1. p. 115. ad p. 147. likewise Henschenius, t. 4. Maij, p. 344.

MAY XX.

ST. BERNARDIN OF SIENNA, C.

From his two lives, written with great exactness by two of his intimate friends; the one the same year in which he died, by Barnaby of Sienna; the other by Maffei Veggio, soon after his death. See Henschenius, t. 5. Maij, p. 257.

A. D. 1444.

ST. BERNARDIN, a true disciple of St. Francis, and an admirable preacher of the word of God, inflamed with the most ardent love of our divine Redeemer, was made by God an instrument to kindle the same holy fire in innumerable souls,

and to inspire them with his spirit of humility and meekness. He was born at Massa in 1380, of the noble family of Albizeschi, in the republic of Sienna. He lost his mother when he was but three years old, and his father, who was chief magistrate of Massa, before he was seven. The care of his education devolved on a virtuous aunt called Diana, who infused into his tender soul ardent sentiments of piety towards God, and a tender devotion to his blessed Mother. This aunt always loved him as if he had been her own son; and indeed his towardly dispositions won him exceedingly the affections of all who ever had the care of him. He was modest, humble, and devout; and took great delight in prayer, visiting churches, serving at mass, and hearing sermons, which he would repeat again to his companions with an admirable memory, and gracefulness of action. In that tender age he had a great compassion for the poor. One day it happened that his aunt sent away a poor person from the door without an alms, because there was but one loaf in the house for the dinner of the family. Bernardin was much troubled to see the beggar go away unrelieved, and said to his aunt, "For God's sake, let us give something to this poor man; otherwise I will neither dine nor sup this day. I had rather the poor should have a dinner than myself." This wonderfully comforted his good aunt, who never ceased to incite him to all virtues, and, according to his strength, to accustom himself by degrees to fasting. Young as he was, he fasted every Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin; which pious custom he always continued. At eleven years of age he was called to Sienna by his uncles, and put to school under the ablest masters, who all admired the quickness of his parts, and the solidity of his judgment; but much more his docility, modesty, and virtue. If he chanced to hear any word the least unbe-

coming, he, by blushing, testified what confusion it gave him, and how much it wounded his very heart; and though he was otherwise most condescending, civil, and respectful to all, he could never bear with patience any indecent discourse. For a single word of that kind he so severely reprimanded a man of quality, that it was to him a warning during the remainder of his life to govern his tongue; and many years after, hearing Bernardin preach, he was so moved, that he seemed to be drowned in tears. The modesty of the virtuous youth was a check to the most impudent, and kept them in awe in his presence: in whatever company, if the conversation was too free, it was dropped when he appeared, and the very loosest rakes would say, "Hush! here comes Bernardin:" as the presence of Cato among the Romans restrained the lewd libertinism of a festival.¹ Nor did the saint behave on these occasions in such a manner as might render virtue the subject of ridicule, but with a surprising dignity. Nevertheless, an impure monster had once the insolence to make an attempt upon his virginal purity, and to solicit him to sin. But the saint, not content to testify his scorn and indignation, excited the whole troop of his little innocent play-fellows against the lewd villain, who pelted him with clods and stones, and made him ashamed any more to show his face. Bernardin was exceeding comely and beautiful; but his known virtue secured him from any farther assaults; and he never ceased to beg of God the grace of purity, particularly through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When he had completed the course of his philosophy, he applied himself to the study of civil and canon law, and afterward to that of the holy scriptures with such ardour, that he could never from that time relish any other study.

¹ Martial, epigr.

At seventeen years of age he enrolled himself in the confraternity of our Lady in the hospital of Scala to serve the sick. Here he began with new vigour to tame his flesh by severe fasts, watchings, hair-shirts, disciplines, and other austerities; but he applied himself more to the interior mortification of his will, which rendered him always most mild, sweet, patient, and affable to every one. He had served this hospital four years, when, in 1400, a dreadful pestilence which had already made great havoc in several other parts of Italy, and was increased by the concourse of pilgrims to the jubilee, reached Sienna; inso-much that twelve, eighteen, or twenty persons died every day in this hospital, and among others were carried off almost all the priests, apothecaries, and servants that belonged to the place. Bernardin therefore persuaded twelve young men to bear him company in the service of the hospital, expecting heaven for their speedy recompense; and they all strove which should come up the nearest to Bernardin in cheerfulness, humility, and assiduity in performing the most abject offices, and in exerting themselves in the service of the sick. The saint was intrusted in a manner with the whole care of the hospital, which, in the space of four months, he put into excellent order. It is hardly credible how many lives he saved, or with what charity and pains he night and day attended the patients, and furnished them with every comfort and succour which it was in his power to afford them. God preserved him from the contagion during these four months, at the end of which the pestilence ceased. He then returned home, but sick of a fever which he had contracted by his fatigues, which obliged him to keep his bed four months; during which time he edified the city, no less by his resignation and patience, than he had done by his charity. He was scarce well recovered when he returned to the like

works of charity, and with incredible patience attended a dying aunt for fourteen months, named Bartholomæa, a woman of great piety, who was blind and bed-ridden. When God had called her to himself, Bernardin retired to a house at some distance from the city, making the walls of his garden the bounds of his inclosure. Here in solitude, fasting, and prayer, he endeavoured to learn the will of God in the choice of a state of life. After some time he took the habit of the Order of St. Francis, among the fathers of the Strict Observance at Colombiere, a solitary convent a few miles from Sienna; and after the year of his novitiate, made his profession on the 8th of September, 1404. Having been born on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, out of devotion to her, he chose the same day for the principal actions of his life: on it he took the religious habit, made his vows, said his first mass, and preached his first sermon. His fervour increased daily; and whilst some sought interpretations to mollify the severity of the rule, he was always studying to add to it greater austerities and heroic practices of virtue, the more perfectly to crucify in himself the old man. He was pleased with insults and humiliations, and whatever could be agreeable to the most ardent spirit of humility and self-denial. When he went through the streets in a threadbare short habit, the boys sometimes cast stones at him, with injurious language; in which contempt the saint found a singular joy and satisfaction. He showed the same sentiments when a near kinsman with bitter invectives reproached him, as disgracing his friends by the mean and contemptible manner of life he had embraced. These and all other virtues he learned in the living book of Christ crucified, which he studied night and day, often prostrate before a crucifix, from which he seemed one day to hear our Lord speak thus to him: "My son,

behold me hanging upon a cross: if thou lovest me, or art desirous to imitate me, be thou also fastened naked to thy cross, and follow me; thus thou wilt assuredly find me." In the same school he learned an insatiable zeal for the salvation of souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ. Having in retirement prepared himself for the office of preaching, his superiors ordered him to employ his talent that way for the benefit of others. He laboured under a natural impediment from weakness and hoarseness of voice; the removal of which obstacle he obtained by addressing himself to his glorious patroness, the mother of God. For fourteen years his labours were confined to his own country; but when the reputation of his virtue was spread abroad, he shone as a bright light to the whole Church.

In vain doth the minister of God confide in the weak resources of mere human eloquence and pomp of words, by which he rather debases the dignity and majesty of the sacred oracles: whilst he pleases the ear and gains the applause of his audience, he leaves their hearts dry. The great apostle of Andalusia, the venerable holy John D'Avila, being desired to lay down some rules for the art of preaching, answered, he knew no other *art* than the most ardent love of God and zeal for his honour. He used to say to young clergymen, that one word spoken by a man of prayer would do more good and have a more powerful influence than all the most eloquent discourses; for it is only the language of the heart that speaks to the heart; and a life of mortification and prayer not only draws down the dew of the divine benediction upon the labours of the preacher, but it replenishes his soul with a sincere spirit of humility, compunction, and all virtues, and with an experimental knowledge and feeling sense of the great truths which he delivers. Zealous ministers who are

filled with the Spirit of God, are a great blessing to the people among whom they labour; and this reflection unfolds the secret how saints possess so extraordinary a grace of converting souls to God. This was the excellent talent of Bernardin. They who heard him preach felt their souls to melt in sentiments of compunction, divine love, humility, and the contempt of the world, and returned home new men, striking their breasts, and bathed in tears. The word of God was in his mouth as a fire, and as a hammer breaking the hardest rocks. Another eminent preacher of his Order being asked the reason why his sermons did not produce equal fruit with those of Bernardin, answered, "Brother Bernardin is a fiery glowing coal. What is only warm hath not the power of kindling a fire in others like the burning coal." The saint himself being consulted what was the way to preach with profit, gave this rule, "In all your actions seek in the first place the kingdom of God and his glory; direct all you do purely to his honour; persevere in brotherly charity, and practise first all that you desire to teach others. By this means the Holy Ghost will be your master, and will give you such wisdom and such a tongue that no adversary will be able to stand against you." This he faithfully practised, and from his assiduous communication with God he imbibed that eminent spirit of virtue which gave him the most powerful ascendant over the hearts of men. Among the great truths of religion, he principally laboured to inculcate a sincere contempt of the vanity of the world, and an ardent love of our blessed Redeemer. He wished he could cry out with a trumpet which could be heard over the whole earth, that he might sound aloud in the ears of all men that great oracle of the Holy Ghost: *O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after*

*lying?*¹ *O children, how long will you love childishness?*² And he never ceased with the thunder of his voice to raise men from grovelling always on this earth, to the important consideration of the things which belong to their eternal welfare, and to the love of Jesus Christ. So much was he affected with the mysteries of the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, that he could never pronounce his sacred name without appearing in transports of love and adoration. Often at the end of his sermon he showed to the people the sacred name of Jesus curiously cut on a board with gold letters, inviting them to adore Christ with him on their knees, reciting a pious doxology. This was misconstrued by some, who also cavilled at certain expressions which he had used. Upon their complaints, pope Martin V. summoned him to appear, and commanded him silence for a while. The humble saint meekly acquiesced without making any reply. But his holiness, after a full examination of his doctrine and conduct, dismissed him with his benediction, high commendations, and ample leave to preach every where. The same pope pressed him to accept the bishopric of Sienna in 1427; but he declined that dignity, alleging for his excuse, that if he were confined to one church he could no longer employ himself in the service of so many souls. In 1431 he no less resolutely refused that of Ferrara, which Eugenius III. earnestly desired to confer upon him, and again that of Urbino, in 1435. When the saint preached first at Milan, the haughty duke Philip Mary Visconti³ took offence at certain things which he

¹ Psal. iv. 3.

² Prov. i. 22.

³ In him was extinct the family of Visconti, descended by a younger branch from one of the Lombard kings. They were first viscounts or deputy-governors, and afterward dukes of Milan; which sovereignty, upon the death of Philip Mary Visconti, in 1447, devolved upon Francis Sforza, his general, to whom he had given his natural daughter in marriage. Whence ensued the bloody wars between the emperors, French, and Milanese.

had said in his sermons, and threatened him with death if he should presume to speak any more on such subjects; but the saint declared, that no greater happiness could befall him than to die for the truth. The duke, to try him, sent him a present of one hundred ducats of gold in a golden bowl. The saint excused himself from receiving the money to two different messengers; but being compelled by a third to accept it, he took the messenger with him to the prisons, and laid it all out in his presence in releasing debtors. This disinterestedness turned the duke's aversion into the greatest veneration for the saint ever after.

St. Bernardin preached several times through the greatest part of Italy; some say also in Spain; but this seems uncertain. Nothing was more spoken of over all Italy than the wonderful fruit of his sermons, miraculous conversions, restitution of ill-gotten goods, reparations of injuries, and heroic examples of virtue. The factions of the Guelfs, and Ghibellins then horribly divided many cities of Italy, and gave frequent employment to the saint. Hearing once of a great dissension at Perugia, he hastened thither from the marquisate of Ancona, and entering the city, thus addressed the inhabitants: "God, who is highly offended at this division among you, hath sent me, as his angel, to proclaim peace to men of good will upon earth." After preaching four sermons to persuade them to a mutual forgiveness of all injuries, and a general amnesty, at the end of the last he bade all those who forgave each other and desired to live in peace, to pass to the right hand. All present did so except one young nobleman, who staid on the left, muttering something between his teeth. The saint, after a severe reproach, foretold him his sudden death, which happened soon after, and without the benefit of the sacraments. In 1433 he ac-

accompanied the emperor Sigismund to his coronation at Rome; after which he retired for a short time to Sienna, where he put the finishing hand to his works.¹

Amidst the greatest applause and honours, the most sincere humility always appeared in his words and actions; and he ever studied to conceal the talents with which God had enriched him. How great his esteem of humility was he testifies when a brother of his Order asked him the means by which he might speedily arrive at perfection. The saint, instead of giving him any answer by words, threw himself at his feet; showing at the same time his own great affection to humility, and also that this virtue raises the soul to divine love and every grace. God, however, was pleased to honour his servant before men. Besides several predictions and miraculous cures of many lepers and other sick persons, the saint is recorded to have raised four dead to life. He was appointed vicar-general of his Order of the Strict Observance in Italy, in 1438, in which he settled a rigorous reformation; but, after five years, obtained a discharge from his office; and in his old age continued the function of preaching through Romania, Ferrara, and Lombardy. He returned to Sienna in 1444, preached a most pathetic farewell sermon at Massa on concord and unity, and being taken ill of a malignant fever on the road, still preached as usual till he arrived at Aquila in Abruzzo. There, being confined to his bed, he prepared himself for his passage out of this life by the rites of the Church. When he was speechless he made a sign to be taken off his bed and laid upon the floor; where, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he surrendered his pure soul into the hands of his Creator on the

¹ They are printed at Paris in 1636, in 5 tomes, fol. They treat chiefly on prayer, divine love, the life of Christ, and the last things. F. John de la Haye has published a new complete edition of this saint's works, printed at Venice in 1745, in 5 vols. fol.

20th of May, 1444, after a life of sixty-three years, eight months, and thirteen days. His tomb was rendered illustrious by many miracles, and he was canonized by Nicholas V. in 1450. His body is kept in a crystal shrine, inclosed in one of silver, in the church of his Order at Aquila.

ST. ETHELBERT, KING OF THE EAST-ANGLES, M.

IN his childhood, after the hours of his studies, he stole away from his schoolfellows when they went to play, and spent most of the time allotted to recreation in prayer. He succeeded young his father Ethelred in his kingdom, which he ruled forty-four years, according to the maxims of a perfect saint. It was his usual saying, that the higher a station is in which a man is placed the more humble and benevolent he ought to be. And this was the rule of his own conduct. To secure the tranquillity of his kingdom by an heir, he was persuaded to marry; and having heard much of the virtue of Alfreda the daughter of Offa the powerful king of the Mercians, he thought of making her his royal consort. In this design he paid a visit to that king, who resided at Sutton-Wallis, on the river Lugg, four miles from the place where Hereford now stands. He was courteously entertained, but after some days, treacherously murdered by Grimbert an officer of king Offa, through the contrivance of queen Quendreda, that his kingdom might be added to their own. This happened in [793]. He was privately buried at Maudine or Marden; but his body being glorified by miracles it was soon after removed to a fair church at Fernley, that is, Heath and Fern, now called Hereford; which town had its rise from this church, which bore the name of St. Ethelbert when Wilfrid king of Mercia much enlarged and enriched the same. Quendreda died miserably within three months