

ST. ILLIDIUS, B. C.

ILLIDIUS, called in French Allyre, was the fourth bishop of Clermont in Auvergne, from St. Austremonius, and flourished in the fourth century. His great sanctity is extolled by St. Gregory of Tours. He died about the year 385, on the 5th of June, on which his festival is kept in his diocese and titular abbey, though his name occurs in the Roman Martyrology on the 7th July. His relics are kept with singular veneration in the ancient Benedictin abbey in the suburb of Clermont,* which bears his name, is of the congregation of St. Maur, and enjoys the privilege of having a regular abbot. See St. Gregory of Tours, l. 1, c. 40; Branche, Vies des SS. d'Auvergne, l. 2; Savaron, Origin. Clarom. &c.

JUNE VI.

ST. NORBERT, C.

ARCHBISHOP OF MAGDEBOURG, FOUNDER OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN ORDER.

From his life, faithfully written by Hugh, his first disciple, and successor in the government of his Order, abridged by Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres Relig.* t. 2, p. 164. Fleury, *Papebroke*, t. 1. Junii, p. 808, and several works of F. Charles Lewis Hugo, abbot of Etival, in Lorraine, of this Order, and bishop of Ptolemais, in *partibus Infidelium*, who died at Etival in 1739. See especially his life of St. Norbert, with curious notes, in 4to. printed at Luxembourg, 1704. His letters to the abbé de Lorkot, in defence of this life, at Nancy, 1705, and his *Annales Ordinis Præmonstratensis*, in fol. t. 2, at Nancy, 1736.

A. D. 1134.

ST. NORBERT was born at Santen, in the duchy of Cleves, in 1080. His father Heribert, count of Gennep, was related to the emperor, and his mother derived her pedigree from the

* Only seven Benedictin abbeys of the congregation of St. Maur are allowed to have regular abbots, viz. St. Maur, or Glanfeuil, in Anjou, Chezal Benoit in the diocese of Bourges, St. Sulpicius's at Bourges, St. Vincent's at Mans, St. Martin's at Seez, St. Austin's at Limoges, and St. Allyre's at Clermont. These abbots are elective and triennial. The other abbeys of this congregation are in the hands of commendatory abbots, and are governed by claustral priors.

house of Lorraine. The rank which his birth gave him was rendered more illustrious by the excellent qualifications of his mind and body. His application to his studies was equal to the quickness of his parts, and he went through his academical exercises with extraordinary applause. But being at first blinded by the flattery of the world, he suffered himself to be carried away by its pleasures and pastimes, and had no higher thoughts than how he might live in honour and at his ease. He even received the ecclesiastical tonsure with a worldly spirit; and though he was instituted to a canonry at Santen, and ordained subdeacon, he neither changed his spirit nor his conduct. Being naturally inclined to mirth and gaiety, he was the soul of all parties of pleasure, and by living in a circle of diversions, he drowned his soul in a round of vanities and trifling amusements, and was a stranger to serious reflection on himself which would have opened his eyes. He would not be prevailed on to receive any higher orders for fear of a greater restraint on his conduct; and he led the same manner of life in the court of his cousin, the Emperor Henry IV. who appointed him his almoner. God beheld with compassion the heart of this young nobleman enslaved to the world, in which he in vain sought that contentment and quiet of mind which no earthly advantages can afford, and which it is in the power of virtue alone to give. But to break his secret chains an extraordinary grace was necessary; and God awakened him from his spiritual lethargy by an alarming accident. Norbert was riding to a village in Westphalia called Freten, in pursuit of his pleasures, mounted on a horse richly caparisoned, and attended by only one servant, when, in the midst of a pleasant meadow, he was overtaken by a violent storm, accompanied with dreadful thunder and lightning. Finding himself at a great distance from any shelter, he was overwhelmed with perplexity and fear; and whilst he was going on briskly, having set spurs to his horse, a ball of fire or lightning, with a loud clap of thunder, fell just before his horse's feet, burned the grass, and cleft the earth. The poor beast, thus affrighted, threw his rider, who lay like one dead for near an hour. At last coming to himself, like another Saul, he cried out to God, in the bitter compunction of his heart: "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

To which the divine grace interiorly suggested this reply: "Turn away from evil, and do good: seek after peace, and pursue it." Being thus humbled in the full career of his passions, he became upon the spot a sincere penitent. Returning no more to the court, he withdrew to his canonry at Santen, there led a life of silence and retirement, wore a hair shirt next his skin, and spent his time in tears, holy prayer, and meditation. Now taking a serious review of himself and the world, he detested his past ingratitude to God, and his folly in serving a deceitful world which mingles in all its delights much gall and bitterness, far outweighing the false and momentary pleasure. The remembrance of the divine mercy which had spared him, whilst many others had been cut off in their sins, and in a moment been buried in hell, pierced his heart to the quick, and drew daily from his eyes streams of tears, by which he endeavoured to wash away the stains of his soul. The fire of divine love thus kindled in his heart, gained strength every day by his fidelity, and by fresh supplies of grace. But his conversion was completed by a retreat which he made in St. Sigebert's monastery near Cologne, and by the pious exhortations of Conon, the holy abbot of that house, who was made soon after bishop of Ratisbon. Norbert was at this time in the thirtieth year of his age.

After his conversion, he employed two years in preparing himself for the priesthood, which he received from the hands of the archbishop of Cologne, together with the order of deacon, his fervour seeming a sufficient cause for such a dispensation. At the time of his ordination, he appeared in a lambskin cassock tied with a cord, and thus published to the world, that from that moment he renounced all its vanities. After his ordination he returned to Conon, and made, under his direction, a severe retreat of forty days to dispose himself by tears, prayer, and fasting to say his first mass, which he came back to Santen to celebrate with his chapter. After the gospel was sung at high mass, he mounted the pulpit, and made a most pathetic sermon on the vanity of the world, the shortness of human life, and the insufficiency of all created beings to satisfy the heart of man; and he indirectly inveighed against the disorders of his colleagues. In a chapter which was held the next day, he

pointed them out more distinctly, and pressed a reformation so vigorously, that several of them became perfect converts, and loudly condemned their past irregularities. But others, who could not bear that their sores should be touched to the quick, burst out into intemperate rage against him, and not content with ill usage, they accused him to the pope's legate as an innovator, a hypocrite, and one who covered pernicious designs under the specious pretence of zeal for a reformation of manners. The saint, having before his eyes the sins of his past life, confessed that he deserved all manner of contempt and ill treatment, and rejoiced under injuries and afflictions. Nevertheless, reflecting on what he owed to God's honour, he purged himself before the legate, in a council held at Fritzlar, in 1118. Soon after, inflamed with an ardent zeal to live to God alone, he resigned all his ecclesiastical preferments into the hands of the archbishop of Cologne, and sold his own estate, giving the money to the poor, reserving only to himself ten marks of silver, a mule, and sacred vestments and ornaments for the altar. Thus divested of all that could engage his stay in his own country, he travelled barefoot to St. Giles's in Languedoc, where Pope Gelasius II. was at that time. He threw himself at his holiness's feet, and with extraordinary compunction, made to him a general confession of his whole life, begging absolution of all his past disorders, especially of the irregularity committed in his receiving the holy orders of deacon and priest at the same time, without observing the interstices prescribed by the canons, though it had been done by the dispensation of his diocesan; and cheerfully offered himself to make any satisfaction. He obtained of the pope faculties to preach the gospel where he judged proper. It was then the depth of winter; yet he walked barefoot through the snow, and, inflamed with an ardent love of God, and desire of promoting his glory, seemed insensible to the rigours of the season. His whole life was a perpetual lent, and he never took his meal till evening, except on Sundays. He preached penance with incredible fruit over the provinces of Languedoc, Guienne, Poitou, and Orleanois. Till he came to Orleans, he had been accompanied only by two laymen; but, passing through that city, was joined by a subdeacon, who desired to assist him in his mission. His three disciples all fell sick, and

died at Valenciennes, in Haynault, in 1119. In that city Burchar, bishop of Cambray, who had been acquainted with the saint in the emperor's court, meeting him was extremely edified with his humility, penance, and zeal; and Hugh, his chaplain, quitting his hopes and prospects in the world, resolved to accompany Norbert in his apostolical labours: this great man afterwards succeeded him in the government of his Order. With this companion, the saint preached penance through all Haynault, Brabant, and the territory of Liege. The people crowded to hear him wherever he came, and his sermons, enforced and illustrated by an evangelical life, procured the conversion of great numbers, reconciled those who were at variance, and engaged usurers and others to make restitution of their ill-gotten goods.

Pope Calixtus II. having succeeded Gelasius II. in 1119, Norbert went to Rheims, where his Holiness held a council soon after his exaltation. The prelates of that assembly were no less charmed with the eloquence, wisdom, and piety, of this great servant of God, than amazed at the austerity of his penance, which some advised him in vain to moderate. He was introduced to the pope, who was one of the greatest men that had filled the apostolic chair, by Bartholomew bishop of Laon, and obtained a fresh grant of the privileges and faculties he had received from his predecessor. That prelate earnestly requested, that his holiness would allow him to fix the holy man in his diocese, that he might employ him in reforming the regular canons of St. Martin's church at Laon. The pope readily consented, but these canons could not be induced to submit to his severe regulations. Wherefore, the zealous bishop gave the holy man the choice of several places to build a house. The saint pitched upon a lonesome valley called Premontr , in the forest of Coucy, where he found the remains of a small chapel which bore the name of St. John, but stood in so barren a soil, that the monks of St. Vincent at Laon, the proprietors of it, had abandoned it. The bishop bought of them this desert piece of land, and there built a monastery for the saint, who assembled out of Brabant thirteen brethren, desirous to serve God under his direction. Their number soon increased to forty, who made their profession on Christmas Day, 1121. The saint gave them the rule of St. Austin, with a white habit

destining them, in imitation of the angels in heaven, to sing the divine praises on earth. Their manner of living was very austere; but their Order is no other than a reformation of Regular Canons. It was soon spread over several parts of Europe. Among the foundations made by our saint, that of St. Michael's at Antwerp was attended with circumstances which were illustrious proofs of his zeal. That town was then in the diocese of Cambray, and consisted at that time but of one parish, which fell into the hands of an unworthy pastor, by whose sloth and irregular conduct the flock was sunk into great disorders. Tankelin, a bold and eloquent heretic, took his advantage of this unhappy state of the church at Antwerp, and openly asserted that the institution of the priesthood is a fiction, and that the eucharist and other sacraments are of no service to salvation. He drew after him three thousand persons, who believed him a great prophet, and were ready to commit any outrages to support his impious extravagances. After he had spread his errors in the dioceses of Utrecht, Cambray, and the adjacent churches, luring the people with magnificent banquets, and practising the most filthy abominations of the Gnostics, he was slain in 1115, in those tumults which himself had raised, meeting with the usual fate of the authors of seditions and disturbers of the public peace.

The combustion, however, continued still to rage with no less fury than ever, and to fill the whole country with desolation. The reputation of the sanctity and erudition of Norbert attracted the eyes of all Europe; and the canons of Antwerp, in this distress of their church, being joined by Burchard their bishop, who resided at Cambray, implored his charitable assistance. The saint lost no time, and arrived at Antwerp with a select number of his canons who laboured under his direction. Such was the success of this mission, that in a short time the people were undeceived, the heretics converted, abuses reformed, and the city restored to its former tranquillity and lustre. The clergy of Antwerp settled St. Michael's church on the saint and his Order; and removed the ancient college of secular canons to our Lady's, which in 1559 was erected by Pope Paul IV. into a cathedral, when Antwerp was made a bishop's see. The bishop of Cambray confirmed the donation of St. Michael's to

the saint in 1124. St. Norbert revived the devotion of the people to the holy sacrament of the altar, and its frequent use, which heresy had interrupted, and had the comfort to see this church flourish in piety before he returned to his first settlement. His Order was then much increased, and contained ten abbeys and eight hundred religious men. Amongst others who embraced his rule, Count Godfrey, a nobleman of high renown in the empire, put on the habit at Floreffe near Namur, and led an exemplary life in that convent, serving God in the humble quality of a lay-brother. Several other persons of distinction fled from the corruption of the world to the sanctuaries established by this great director in the paths of salvation. His institute had been approved by the legates of Calixtus II., but a more solemn confirmation being judged necessary, St. Norbert undertook a journey to Rome in 1125. Pope Honorius II. who had succeeded Calixtus II. in the close of the foregoing year, and was a great encourager of learning and of good men, received him with all possible marks of respect and affection, and granted all he desired, as appears by his bull, dated in the February following. The saint at his return to Premontre, put the abbey of St. Martin's at Laon under his rule, which the canons then demanded, though they had rejected it six or seven years before. The abbey of Viviers in the diocese of Soissons made the same step. Theobald, a prime nobleman of France, desired to embrace his Order; but the saint diverted him from that design, showing him that God, by the situation in which he had placed him in the world, pointed out what he required at his hands; he made him sensible that his obligations to his family and bleeding country were ties in conscience, and that by faithfully acquitting himself of them, he would most effectually labour to advance the honour, and accomplish the will of God.

Norbert having completed the great work of the establishment of his Order, was obliged to quit his monastery, to be placed in a more exalted station for the benefit of many. The Count of Champagne, who did nothing of importance without the advice and direction of our saint, took him into Germany, whither he was going to conclude a treaty of marriage between himself and Maud, a niece to the bishop of Ratisbon. After the death

of the unhappy Emperor Henry V., Lothaire II. Duke of Saxony, was chosen king of the Romans in 1125, though he was only crowned emperor at Rome in 1132, by Pope Innocent II. This excellent prince, whose reign was equally glorious and religious, was holding a diet at Spire when the count and St. Norbert arrived at that city. Deputies from the city of Magdeburg were come to the same place to solicit Lothaire for an archbishop in the room of Roger, who died the year before. Two persons were proposed for that dignity; but Lothaire preferred Norbert to them both. At his name the deputies rejoiced exceedingly; and indeed the saint was the only person not pleased with the nomination. The pope's legate, Cardinal Gerard, who afterwards sat in St. Peter's chair under the name of Lucius II., made use of his authority to oblige him to comply. The deputies of Magdeburg took him with them to that city, where he was met at a distance by the principal persons and by his clergy. He followed the procession barefoot, and was conducted to the church, and thence to his palace. But his dress was so mean and poor, that the porter shut the door against him, saying: "Why will you go in to disturb my lords?"—Those that followed cried out: "He is our bishop." The saint said to the porter: "Brother, you know me better than they do who have raised such a one to this dignity." In this high station the austerity of his life was the same he had practised in a cloister, only his humility was more conspicuous. By the joint weight of his authority, eloquence, and example, he made a great reformation both in the clergy and laity of his diocese; and by his strenuous and undaunted resolution, he recovered a considerable part of the lands of his church which had fallen into the hands of certain powerful secular princes. But his zeal made those his enemies whom his charity could not gain to their duty. They loaded him with injuries, decried him among themselves, and encouraged one another in their disobedience and contempt of his person, calling him a stranger, whose manners were opposite to theirs. To such an excess did their rage carry them, that some even made attempts upon his life.—One who saw himself obliged by the saint to renounce his licentious manner of life, hired a villain to assassinate him under pretence of going to confession on Maunday Thursday. The

saint was apprized of his design, as some authors affirm, by revelation, and he caused him to be searched as he came in, and a dagger was found upon him. Another shot an arrow at the saint, which only missed him to wound another that was near him. Of these villainies Norbert only said, without the least emotion: "Can you be surprised that the devil, after having offered violence to our divine head, should assault his members?" He always pardoned the assassins, and showed himself ever ready to lay down his life in the defence of truth and justice.—By his patience and unshaken courage he in three years broke through the chief difficulties which obstructed the reformation of manners he laboured to introduce, and from that time he carried on the work, and performed the visitation of his diocese with ease and incredible success. He continued still to superintend the observance of discipline in his Order, though upon his episcopal consecration he had left the government thereof to his first disciple Hugh. The fourth general chapter consisted of eighteen abbots.

After the death of Pope Honorius II., an unhappy schism divided the church. Innocent II. was duly chosen on the 14th of February, 1130: notwithstanding which, Peter, the son of Leo, under the name of Anacletus II., was acknowledged at Rome, and by Roger Duke of Sicily. The true pope was obliged to fly into France, where he held councils at Clermont, Rheims, and Puy in Velay. St. Bernard and St. Norbert laboured vigorously to prevent or remedy the disorders which the schism brought into many places. St. Norbert assisted for this purpose at the council which the pope assembled at Rheims in 1131. Upon his return home, the Emperor Lothaire, who resolved to march with an army to Rome to put Innocent II. in possession of the Lateran church in 1132, carried our holy bishop with him in that expedition, trusting that his piety, prayers, and zealous exhortations would contribute very much to the success of his undertaking; and the event answered his expectations. The saint returned to Magdeburg, where he fell ill, and after four months' tedious sickness, died the death of the just on the 6th of June, in the eighth year of his episcopal dignity, the fifty-third of his age, of our redemption 1134.—He was canonized by Gregory XIII. in 1582. Pope Urban

VIII. appointed his festival to be kept on the 10th of June.(1) His body remained at Magdeburg till that city embraced the Lutheran doctrine and revolted. The Emperor Charles V. laid siege to it; but was prevailed upon to withdraw his army for a great sum of money. In the reign of Ferdinand II. the Lutheran magistrates, at the request of the Norbertine Order, and of many princes, consented that the body of St. Norbert should be removed out of their city. The emperor ordered that it should be translated to Prague; which was done with great pomp in 1627. The sacred treasure was carried into that city by fourteen abbots with their mitres on, and laid in the church called of Mount Sion, all the orders of the city attending the ceremony in the most solemn and magnificent procession.*

St. Norbert is usually painted holding a ciborium in his hand. He is distinguished by this symbol on account of his extraordinary devotion to the blessed sacrament. He inculcated in all his sermons the frequent use of this divine food, being sensible from daily experience, and from the words of truth itself, that a neglect, and much more a distaste or loathing of the holy communion, is a deplorable symptom of a most dangerous state in a spiritual life. A short interval in order to a better preparation is often a wholesome counsel, and sometimes a necessary duty. But "he who seldom approaches, because he is tepid and cold, is like one who should say, I never approach the fire, because I am cold: I have not recourse to the physician, because I am sick," as the devout Gerson writes.(2) This divine sa-

(1) Urban VIII. Anno 1643. Bullar. Roman. t. 5, p. 421.

(2) Gerson, l. de Præpar. Missæ.

* The Order of the Premonstratensians, or Norbertins, according to Helyot, is divided into thirty provinces, and contains one thousand three hundred monasteries of men, and four hundred of women. In its primitive institution it was very austere. The religious never wore linen, and observed a perpetual abstinence from flesh, and a yearly rigorous fast of many months. For Hubert de Romanis, the disciple of St. Dominic, and general of his order, writes that this holy founder borrowed these observances from the Premonstratensian rule. But several mitigations were introduced into it; which gave occasion to various reformations approved by Gregory IX. and Eugenius IV. and one in Spain, of all others the most rigorous, confirmed by Gregory XIII. The Premonstratensians were called by our ancestors White Canons, and had in England thirty-five houses, according to Bishop Tanner. Not. Monast. Pref.

crament is the most powerful strengthener of our weakness, the sovereign remedy of our spiritual miseries, and the source of heavenly comfort to alleviate the labours and sorrows of our mortal pilgrimage. The deeper sense we have of our spiritual indigence, with so much the greater eagerness ought we continually to cry out: *If I shall but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be saved.*(1) Can we slight the most tender invitations of our divine Redeemer? Can we disobey his repeated commands, and contemn his threats?(2) Above all, can we be insensible to that excess of infinite love by which he has wrought so many wonders, that he might here abide in us by the strongest alliance?(3) That person cannot love Jesus who is not solicitous to unite himself often with him in this sacrament of love. The devil employs all his artifices to deprive us of this seed of immortality, as the fathers style it. Holofernes, when he besieged Bethulia, seeing the place impregnable, attempted to take it by stopping the pipes which conveyed water to the city, being sure by this stratagem to reduce it. In like manner the devil seeks to draw a soul from this banquet, that when she has lost her strength he may make her an easy prey. St. Ambrose* applies to this spiritual food that passage of the psalmist: *They that go far from thee, shall perish.*(4)

ST. PHILIP THE DEACON.

So much was the number of the faithful increased after the first sermons of St. Peter, that the apostles being entirely taken up in the ministry of the word, it was judged proper to choose seven men, full of the spirit of God and of wisdom, to have care of the poor, under the name of deacons or ministers. St. Philip is named the second in this catalogue,(5) who, according to St. Isidore of Pelusium, was a native of Casarea in Palestine. The deacons were not confined to what seemed to give birth to the institution; for at that time the divine mysteries were sometimes administered to the faithful at a supper, as appears from St. Paul,(6) though afterwards the apostles ordered that

(1) Matt. ix.

(3) John vi. 57.

(5) Acts vi. 5.

(2) John iv. 52, 54.

(4) Psalm lxxii. 27.

(6) 1 Cor. xi.

* St. Ambr in Psalm cxviii. Domine, de hoc pane scriptum est, &c.