

St. Paulinus, who died in the year 431. See St. Paulinus of Nola, Ep. 2, 9, 12, 48; and Gallia Christ. Nov. t. 2, p. 789.

JUNE XIX.

SS. GERVASIUS AND PROTASIUS, MARTYRS.

From St. Ambrose, Ep. 22, ol. 54, ad Marcellinam Soror. and St. Austin. de Civit. Dei, l. 22, c. 8, et l. de Cura pro mortuis, c. 17, et Conf. l. 9, c. 7. See Tillemont, t. 2, p. 78. Orsi; and for the history of the great veneration which has been always paid to their relics, see the learned Dissertation of Joseph Antony Sassi, prefect of the Ambrosian library, entitled, *Dissertatio Apologetica ad Vindicandam Mediolano Sanctorum Corporum Gervasii et Protasii possessionem*. Bononiæ, 1709. See also S. Paulinus, Nat. S. Felicii II. published by Muratori, Anecd. Lat. and in the new edition of St. Paulinus's works at Verona, p. 468. Consult above other moderns the accurate Puricelli, Diss. Nazar. et Monum. Basilicæ Ambros.

ST. AMBROSE calls these saints the protomartyrs of Milan. They seem to have suffered in the first persecution under Nero, or at latest under Domitian, and are said to have been the sons of SS. Vitalis and Valeria,(1) both martyrs, the first at Ravenna, the second at Milan. This latter city was the place which SS. Gervasius and Protasius rendered illustrious by their glorious martyrdom and miracles. St. Ambrose assures us, that the divine grace prepared them a long time for their crown by the good example which they gave, and by the constancy with which they withstood the corruption of the world. He adds they were beheaded for the faith.* They are said to have been twin brothers.

The faithful at Milan, in the fourth age, had lost the remembrance of these saints. Yet the martyrs had not ceased to assist that church in its necessities; and the discovery of their relics

(1) Ep. 22, ad Marcell. Soror.

* The pretended letter of St. Ambrose to the bishops of Italy, Ep. 53, giving a particular history of the lives and sufferings of these saints, notoriously contradicts the genuine letter of that father to his sister, and is universally rejected. See Tillemont, note 2, p. 499, t. 12, and the Benedictin editors of St. Ambrose t. 2, Append. p. 483

rescued it from the utmost danger. The Empress Justina, widow of Valentinian I. and mother of Valentinian the Younger, who then reigned, and resided at Milan, was a violent abettor of Arianism, and used her utmost endeavours to expel St. Ambrose. The Arians did not hesitate to have recourse to the most horrible villanies and forgeries to compass that point. In so critical a conjuncture, our martyrs declared themselves the visible protectors of that distressed church. St. Austin, both in his twenty-second book *Of the City of God*,⁽¹⁾ and in his *Confessions*,⁽²⁾ says, that God revealed to St. Ambrose by a vision in a dream, the place where their relics lay. Paulinus, in his *life of St. Ambrose*, says, this was done by an apparition of the martyrs themselves. The bishop was going to dedicate a new church, the same which was afterwards called the Ambrosian basilic, and now St. Ambrose the Great. The people desired him to do it with the same solemnity as he had already consecrated another church in the quarter near the gate that led to Rome, in honour of the holy apostles, in which he had laid a portion of their relics. He was at a loss to find relics for this second church. The bodies of Saints Gervasius and Protasius lay then unknown before the rails which enclosed the tomb of SS. Nabor and Felix. St. Ambrose caused this place to be dug up, and there found the bodies of two very big men, with their bones entire, and in their natural position, but the heads separated from their bodies, with a large quantity of blood, and all the marks which could be desired to ascertain the relics.*

A possessed person who was brought to receive the imposition of hands, before he began to be exorcised, was seized, and, in horrible convulsions, thrown down by the evil spirit upon the tomb.⁽³⁾ The sacred relics were taken up whole, and laid on litters in their natural situation, covered with ornaments, and conveyed to the basilic of Faustus, now called SS

(1) C. 8.

(2) Conf. 1. 9, c. 7.

(3) St. Ambr. Ep. 22, ad Sor.

* When St. Austin says the bodies were found entire, he means only that the bones were not broken, mouldered, or separated out of their places, as is clear from St. Ambrose; not that the flesh was incorrupt, as some have mistaken his meaning.

Vitalis and Agricola, near that of St. Nabor, which at present bears the name of St. Francis. They were exposed here two days, and an incredible concourse of people watched the two nights in prayer. On the third day, which was the 18th of June, they were translated into the Ambrosian basilic with the honour due to martyrs, and with the public rejoicings of the whole city. In the way happened the famous cure of a blind man named Severus, a citizen of Milan, well known to the whole town. He had been a butcher, but was obliged, by the loss of his sight, to lay aside his profession. Hearing of the discovery of the relics, he desired to be conducted to the place where they were passing by, and upon touching the fringe of the ornaments with which they were covered, he that instant perfectly recovered his sight in the presence of an infinite multitude. This miracle is related by St. Ambrose, St. Austin, and Paulinus, who were all three then at Milan. Severus made a vow to be a servant in the church of the saints; that is, the Ambrosian basilic, where their relics lay. St. Austin, when he went from Milan, in 387, left him in that service,(1) and he continued in it when Paulinus wrote the life of St. Ambrose, in 411. Many other lame and sick persons were cured of divers distempers by touching the shrouds which covered the relics, or linen cloths which had been thrown upon them. Devils also, in possessed persons, confessed the glory of the martyrs, and declared they were not able to bear the torments which they suffered in the presence of the bodies of the saints. All this is attested by St. Ambrose in his letter to his sister, in which he has inserted the sermon which he preached in the Ambrosian basilic when the relics arrived there. Two days after, he deposited them in the vault under the altar on the right hand. St. Ambrose adds, that the blood found in their tomb was likewise an instrument of many miracles. We find the relics of these saints afterwards dispersed in several churches, chiefly this blood, which was gathered and mixed with a paste, as St. Gaudentius says.(2) Also linen cloths dipped in this blood were distributed in many places, as St. Gregory of Tours relates.(3) St. Austin mentions a church in

(1) S. Aug. Sermon. 286.

(2) S. Gaud. Sermon. 17.

(3) De Glor. Mart. c. 47.

their honour in his diocese of Hippo, where many miracles were wrought, and relates one that was very remarkable.(1) He preached his two hundred and eighty-sixth sermon on their festival in Africa, where we find it marked in the old African Calendar on the 19th of June, on which day it was observed over all the West; and with great solemnity at Milan, and in many dioceses and parish churches, of which these martyrs are the titular saints. St. Ambrose observes, that the Arians at Milan, by denying the miracles of these martyrs, showed they had a different faith from that of the martyrs; otherwise they would not have been jealous of their miracles: but this faith, as he says, is confirmed by the tradition of our ancestors, which the devils are forced to confess, but which the heretics deny.*

ST. BONIFACE, ARCHBISHOP, M.,

OF THE ORDER OF CAMALDOLI, AND APOSTLE OF RUSSIA.

BRUNO, called also Boniface, was by extraction a nobleman of the first rank in Saxony, and agreeable to his high birth was his education in the study of the liberal arts, under Guido the philosopher, and other great masters. From his very cradle, piety was the predominant inclination of his heart, and he received very young the clerical tonsure. The Emperor Otho III. called him to his court, and appointed him his chaplain, with the superintendency and care of the imperial chapel. So much was this prince taken with the virtue of the young saint, and with the sweetness of his disposition, that he placed in him an entire confidence, could not forbear publicly testifying on every occasion his tender affection and esteem for him, and usually called him his soul. Boniface was not at all puffed up

(1) L. 22, de Civ. Dei, c. 8.

* Papebroke once imagined that the bodies of SS. Gervasius and Protasius had been translated to Brisach in Alsace; but this mistake was refuted by Joseph Antony Saxi, prefect of the Ambrosian library, and ingenuously retracted by the author. One of the most ancient parish churches in Paris, mentioned in the sixth century by Fortunatus in his life of St. Germanus of Paris, is dedicated to God under the invocation of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. The frontispiece composed of the three Grecian orders, the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, one above the other, is esteemed by architects the greatest masterpiece of their art in France. The chapel of our Lady in this church is also admired.