

in to him through a little window. In this martyrdom he lingered six years, till the death of Leo the Armenian, who was murdered on Christmas-day, in 820. Michael the Stutterer, who then ascended the throne, released the prisoners. St. Nicetas chose, out of humility, neither to return to his monastery, nor to live at Constantinople; but, shutting himself up in a small hermitage near that city, prepared himself for death, which he met with joy on the 3rd of April, 824. Many miracles rendered his name illustrious on earth. See his life, by an intimate acquaintance, in Surius, d'Andilly, Papebroke, Fleury b. 46.

APRIL IV.

ST. ISIDORE, BISHOP OF SEVILLE.

From his works and those of SS. Braulio and Ildefonse his disciples.

His life, compiled by Luke, bishop of Tuy, in Galicia, in 1236, extant in Mabillon, Sæc. Ben. 2. shows not that accuracy and judgment which we admire in the books of that author against the Albigenses: nor is it here made use of.

A. D. 606.

ST. ISIDORE is honoured in Spain as the most illustrious doctor of that church, in which God raised him, says St. Braulio(1), to stem the torrent of barbarism and ferocity which every where followed the arms of the Goths, who had settled themselves in that kingdom, in 412. The eighth great council of Toledo, fourteen years after his death, styles him "the excellent doctor, the late ornament of the Catholic church, the most learned man, given to enlighten the latter ages, always to be named with reverence." The city of Carthagera was the place of his birth, which his parents, Severian and Theodora, persons of the first quality in the kingdom, edified by the example of their extraordinary piety. His two brothers, Leander and Fulgentius, bishops,* and his sister Florentina, are also honoured among

(1) Prænot. lib. Isidor.

* F. Flores proves this St. Fulgentius, bishop of Ecija, suffragan of Seville, to have never been translated to the see of Carthagera, as Card. Belluga and some others have advanced upon incompetent modern authorities. Flores, Espana Sagrada, t. 5. p. 97. *Disertacion Critica sobre si S. Fulgencio fue Obispo de Carthagera.*

the saints. Isidore having qualified himself in his youth for the service of the church by an uncommon stock of virtue and learning, assisted his brother, Leander, archbishop of Seville, in the conversion of the Visigoths from the Arian heresy. This great work he had the happiness to see perfectly accomplished by his indefatigable zeal and labours, which he continued during the successive reigns of the kings Reccared, Liuba, Witeric, Gundemar, Sisebut, and Sisemund. Upon the decease of St. Leander, in 600, or 601, he succeeded him in the see of Seville.* He restored and settled the discipline of the church of Spain in several councils, of all which he was the oracle and the soul. The purity of their doctrine, and the severity of the canons enacted in them, drawn up chiefly by him, are incontestable monuments of his great learning and zeal.† In the council of Seville, in 619, in which he presided, he, in a public disputation, convinced Gregory (a bishop of the Acephali) of his error, who had come over from Syria; and so evidently did he confute the Eutychian heresy, that Gregory upon the spot embraced the Catholic faith. In 610, the bishops of Spain, in a council held at Toledo, agreed to declare the archbishop of that city primate of all Spain, as, they say, he had always been acknowledged; which decree king Gundemar confirmed by a law the same year; and St. Isidore subscribed the same. Yet we find that in the fourth council of Toledo, in 633, the most famous of all the synods of Spain, though Justus, the archbishop of Toledo, was present, St. Isidore presided, not by the privilege of his see, but on the bare consideration of his extraordinary merit; for he was regarded as the eminent doctor of the churches of Spain. The city of Toledo was honoured with the residence of the Visigoth kings.

St. Isidore, to extend to posterity the advantages which his labours had procured to the church, compiled many useful works: in which he takes in the whole circle of the sciences, and discovers a most extensive reading, and a general acquaintance with the ancient writers, both sacred and profane. In

* Not in 595, as Cave, &c. say; for St. Gregory wrote to St. Leander in 599. l. 9. ep. 60, 61.

† See on the councils the dissertations of the learned cardina. d'Aguirre.

the moral parts his style is pathetic and moving, being the language of a heart overflowing with sentiments of religion and piety: and though elegance and politeness of style were not the advantage of that age, the diction of this father is agreeable and clear.* The saint was well versed in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages.

St. Ildefonse says, that this saint governed his church nearly forty years, but cannot mean above thirty-six or thirty-seven. When he was almost fourscore years old, though age and fatigues had undermined and broken his health, he never interrupted his usual exercises and labours. During the last six months of his life, he increased his charities with such profusion, that the poor of the whole country crowded his house from morning till night. Perceiving his end to draw near, he entreated two bishops to come to see him. With them he went to the church, where one of them covered him with sackcloth, the other put ashes on his head. Clothed with the habit of penance, he stretched his hands towards heaven, prayed with great earnestness, and begged aloud the pardon of his sins. He then received from the hands of the bishops the body and blood of our Lord, recommended himself to the prayers of all who

* The Latin and Greek languages are a necessary introduction to learning, they are requisite to open to us the sources of sacred studies, and are adopted by the church in her liturgies to prevent the inconveniences and dangerous consequences of continual alterations and variations: they are likewise the key which unlock to us the original and most accomplished masters of polite literature, and almost all the sciences. These and other reasons moved St. Isidore to cultivate the study of those languages. The Latin tongue, though degenerating from its purity ever since the reign of Domitian, still continued the living language among the old Roman inhabitants of Spain; but began to be debased by the mixture of the Goths: and this alteration was afterward much increased by the irruption of the Moors, and by the commerce of other barbarous nations. To preserve the knowledge of the Latin tongue, St. Isidore wrote several treatises on grammar. He compiled others on philosophy, on the holy scriptures, and on various subjects of piety; as on prayer, penance, and the contempt of the world. He has likewise left us a list of ninety-two ecclesiastical writers from Pope Sixtus III. with whom St. Jerom concluded his catalogue, a chronicle from the beginning of the world down to his own time, and a history of the Goths. F. Flores has favoured us with a new complete edition of St. Isidore's book, *De Viris Illustribus*, with a preliminary dissertation, in an appendix to the fifth tome of his *Espana Sagrada*, p. 440. Also of this father's *Historia de Regibus Gothorum, Wandalorum et Suevorum*, *ibid.* t. 6. Append. 12. p. 474. The most famous of St. Isidore's works are twenty books of *Etymologies*, or *Origins*, in which he lays down the principles of the different sciences, beginning from grammar. His three books of

were present, remitted the bonds of all his debtors, exhorted the people to charity, and caused all the money which he had not as yet disposed of to be distributed among the poor. This done, he returned to his own house, and calmly departed this life on the fourth day after, which was the 4th of April, in the year 636, as is expressly testified by *Ædemptus*, his disciple, who was present at his death. His body was interred in his cathedral, between those of his brother, St. Leander, and his sister, St. Florentina. Ferdinand, king of Castile and Leon, recovered his relics from the Moors, and placed them in the church of St. John Baptist, at Leon, where they still remain.

All who are employed in the functions of Martha, or of an exterior active life, must always remember that action and contemplation ought to be so constantly intermingled, that the former be always animated and directed by the latter, and amidst the exterior labours of the active life, we constantly enjoy the interior repose of the contemplative, and that no employments entirely interrupt the union of our souls to God; but those that are most distracting serve to make us more closely, more eagerly, and more amorously plunge our hearts in Him, embracing him in himself by contemplation, and in our neighbour by our actions.

the Sentences, or on the *Summum Bonum*, are a summary of theology on the divine attributes, on virtues and vices, consisting of sentences gleaned from the writings of SS. Austin, Gregory, &c. In his two books on the divine or ecclesiastical Offices, he explains the canonical hours, ceremonies, feasts, and fasts of the church. He says that our fathers established the festivals of the apostles and martyrs to excite us to an imitation of their virtues, to associate us to their merits, and that we may be assisted by their prayers; yet to none of them do we offer sacrifice, but only to the God of martyrs. (l. i. c. 34.) Among the fast days he mentions two which are not now observed, viz. the first days of January and November. His monastic rule, which he addressed to the monks of Honori, resembles that of St. Bennet. In it he orders mass to be said for every deceased brother, and on Monday in Whitsun-week for all the faithful departed. He prescribes that the monks prostrate themselves at the end of each psalm in the divine office. St. Isidore put the finishing hand to the Mosarabic missal and breviary, which St. Leander had begun to revise. Le Brun thinks it was compiled by the latter. Flores takes it to have been the ancient Roman and African missal introduced among the Goths in Spain, by St. Leander, with some few things from the old Spanish liturgy. See Flores, *Espana Sagrada*, t. 3. *De la Missa antigua de España*, p. 187, 198. F. Lesley, a Jesuit, who has given a new edition of the Mosarabic liturgy at Rome, in 1755, with curious notes, brings many arguments to show that it was the old Spanish liturgy, used probably from the beginning of that church, with some additions, which St. Leander adopted for the use of the Goths. See Lesley, *Præf. ib.*