

## AUGUST VIII.

## SS. CYRIACUS, LARGUS, SMARAGDUS,

AND THEIR COMPANIONS, MM.

A. D. 303.

ST. CYRIACUS was a holy deacon at Rome, under the popes Marcellinus and Marcellus. In the persecution of Dioclesian, in 303, he was crowned with a glorious martyrdom in that city. With him suffered also Largus and Smaragdus, and twenty others, among whom are named Crescentianus, Sergius, Secundus, Alban, Victorianus, Faustinus, Felix, Sylvanus, and four women, Memmia, Juliana, Cyriacides, and Donata. Their bodies were first buried near the place of their execution on the Salarian way; but were soon after translated into a farm of the devout lady Lucina, on the Ostian road, on this eighth day of August, as is recorded in the ancient Liberian Calendar, and others.

To honour the martyrs and duly celebrate their festivals, we must learn their spirit, and study to imitate them according to the circumstances of our state. We must, like them, resist evil unto blood, must subdue our passions, suffer afflictions with patience, and bear with others without murmuring or complaining. Many practise voluntary austerities cheerfully, only because they are of their own choice. But true patience requires, in the first place, that we bear all afflictions and contradictions from whatever quarter they come; and in this consists true virtue. Though we pray for heaven our prayers will not avail, unless we make use of the means which God sends to bring us thither. The cross is the ladder by which we must ascend.

## ST. HORMISDAS, M.

ISDEGERDES, king of Persia, renewed the persecution which Cosroes II. had raised against the church. It is not easy, says Theodoret, to describe or express the cruelties which were then invented against the disciples of Christ. Some were flayed alive, others had the skin torn from off their backs only, others off their faces from the forehead to the chin. Some were

stuck all over with reeds split in two, and appeared like porcupines; then these reeds were forcibly plucked out, so as to bring off the skin with them. Some were bound hands and feet, and in that condition thrown into great vaults which were filled with hungry rats, mice, or other such vermin, which gnawed and devoured them by degrees, without their being able to defend themselves. Nevertheless, these cruelties hindered not the Christians from running with joy to meet death, that they might gain eternal life. Isdegerdes dying, the persecution was carried on by his son Varanes; and Hormisdas was one of the most illustrious victims of his tyranny and malice. He was of the chief nobility among the Persians, son to the governor of a province, and of the race of the Achemenides. Varanes sent for him, and commanded him to renounce Jesus Christ. Hormisdas answered him: "That this would offend God, and transgress the laws of charity and justice; that whoever dares to violate the supreme law of the sovereign Lord of all things, would more easily betray his king, who is only a mortal man. If the latter be a crime deserving the worst of deaths, what must it be to renounce the God of the universe?" The king was enraged at this wise and just answer, and caused him to be deprived of his office, honours, and goods, and even stripped of his very clothes, except a small piece of linen that went round his waist; and ordered him in this naked condition to drive and look after the camels of the army. A long time after, the king, looking out of his chamber window, saw Hormisdas all sunburnt, and covered with dust, and calling to mind his former dignity and riches, and the high station of his father, sent for him, ordered a shirt to be given him, and said to him: "Now at least lay aside thy obstinacy, and renounce the carpenter's son." The saint transported with holy zeal, tore the shirt or tunic,\* and threw it away, saying: "If you thought that I should so easily be tempted to abandon the law of God, keep your fine present with your impiety." The king, incensed at his boldness, banished him again with indignation from his

\* The Orientals have in all ages used light silk or linen tunics in hot weather; but the ordinary use of linen shirts is a very modern, though most convenient custom. Dr. Arbuthnot had reason to say that Julius Cæsar had neither a shirt to his back, nor glass to his widows. (Tr On Coins and Measures.)

presence. St. Hormisdas happily finished his course; and is named in the Roman Martyrology. The same tyrant, when Suenes, a nobleman of Persia, who was master of one thousand slaves, was inflexible in the profession of his faith, asked him which was the meanest and vilest among all his slaves, and to him that was named he gave all the rest, and Suenes himself, and his wife. The confessor still continued firm in the faith. See Theodorët, Hist. Eccl. b. 5, c. 39.

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AUGUST IX.

## SAINT ROMANUS, M.

HE was a soldier in Rome at the time of the martyrdom of St. Laurence. Seeing the joy and constancy with which that holy martyr suffered his torments, he was moved to embrace the faith, and addressing himself to St. Laurence, was instructed and baptized by him in prison. Confessing aloud what he had done, he was arraigned, condemned, and beheaded, the day before the martyrdom of St. Laurence. Thus he arrived at his crown before his guide and master. The body of St. Romanus was first buried on the road to Tibur, but his remains were translated to Lucca, where they are kept under the high altar of a beautiful church which bears his name. St. Romanus is mentioned on this day in the Antiphonary of St. Gregory, and in ancient Martyrologies.

The example of the martyrs and other primitive saints, by the powerful grace of God, had not less force in converting infidels than the most evident miracles. St. Justin observed to the heathens, that many of them by living among Christians, and seeing their virtue, if they did not embrace the faith, at least were worked into a change of manners, were become meek and affable, from being overbearing, violent, and passionate; and by seeing the patience, constancy, and contempt of the world which the Christians practised, had learned themselves some degree of those virtues.(1) Thus are we bound to glorify God by our lives, and Christ commands that our good works shine before men. St. Clement of Alexandria(2) tells us, that

(1) St. Justin. Apol. 1, (ol. 2,) p. 127.

(2) Strom. l. 1, p. 748