

ST. FINTAN,

ABBOT OF CLUAINEDNECH,

WHICH Usher interprets the Ivy-Cave, in the diocess of Lethglean, in Leinster, in the sixth century. He had for disciple St. Comgal, the founder of the abbey of Benchor, and master of St. Columban. Colgan reckons twenty-four Irish saints of the name of Fintan; but probably several of these were the same person honoured in several places. Another St. Fintan, surnamed Munnu, who is honoured on the 21st of October, was very famous. See Colgan, Usher, and Henschenius.

FEBRUARY XVIII.

ST. SIMEON, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM,

MARTYR.

From Euseb. l. 3. c. 32. Tillem, t. 1. p. 186. and t. 2. Le Quien, Oriens Christ. t. 3. p. 140.

A.D. 116.

ST. SIMEON was the son of Cleophas, otherwise called Alpheus, brother to St. Joseph, and of Mary, sister of the Blessed Virgin. He was therefore nephew both to St. Joseph and to the Blessed Virgin, and cousin-german to Christ. Simeon and Simon are the same name, and this saint is, according to the best interpreters of the holy scripture, the Simon mentioned,(1) who was brother to St. James the Lesser, and St. Jude, apostles, and to Joseph or José. He was eight or nine years older than our Saviour. We cannot doubt but he was an early follower of Christ, as his father and mother and three brothers were, and an exception to that of St. John,(2) that our Lord's relations did not believe in him. Nor does St. Luke(3) leave us any room to doubt but that he received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost with the Blessed Virgin and the apostles; for he mentions present St. James and St. Jude, and the brothers of our Lord. Saint Epiphanius relates,(4) that when the Jews massacred

(1) Matt. xiii. 55.

(2) John vii. 5.

(3) Acts i 14.

(4) Hæc. 78. c. 14.

St. James the Lesser, his brother Simeon reproached them for their atrocious cruelty. St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, being put to death in the year 62, twenty-nine years after our Saviour's resurrection, the apostles and disciples met at Jerusalem to appoint him a successor. They unanimously chose St. Simeon, who had probably before assisted his brother in the government of that church.

In the year 66, in which SS. Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome, the civil war began in Judea, by the seditions of the Jews against the Romans. The Christians in Jerusalem were warned by God of the impending destruction of that city, and by a divine revelation(1) commanded to leave it, as Lot was rescued out of Sodom. They therefore departed out of it the same year, before Vespasian, Nero's general, and afterwards emperor, entered Judæa, and retired beyond the Jordan to a small city called Pella; having St. Simeon at their head. After the taking and burning of Jerusalem, they returned thither again, and settled themselves amidst its ruins, till Adrian afterwards entirely razed it. St. Epiphanius(2) and Eusebius(3) assure us, that the church here flourished extremely, and that multitudes of Jews were converted by the great number of prodigies and miracles wrought in it.

St. Simeon, amidst the consolations of the Holy Ghost and the great progress of the church, had the affliction to see two heresies arise within its bosom, namely, those of the Nazareans and the Ebionites; the first seeds of which, according to St. Epiphanius, appeared at Pella. The Nazareans were a sect of men between Jews and Christians, but abhorred by both. They allowed Christ to be the greatest of the prophets, but said he was a mere man, whose natural parents were Joseph and Mary: they joined all the ceremonies of the old law with the new, and observed both the Jewish Sabbath and the Sunday. Ebion added other errors to these, which Cerenthus had also espoused, and taught many superstitions, permitted divorces, and allowed of the most infamous abominations. He began to preach at Cocabe, a village beyond the Jordan, where he dwelt; but he afterwards travelled into Asia, and thence to Rome. The authority of St. Simeon kept the heretics in some awe during his life, which was the longest upon earth of any of our Lord's disciples. But as

(1) Eus. l. 3. c. 5. Epiph. hæ. 29. c. 7. hæ. 30. c. 2.

(2) L. de Pond. et Mensur. c. 15. (3) Demonst. l. 3. c. 5.

Eusebius says, he was no sooner dead than a deluge of execrable heresies broke out of hell upon the church, which durst not openly appear during his life.

Vespasian and Domitian had commanded all to be put to death who were of the race of David. St. Simeon had escaped their searches; but Trajan having given the same order, certain heretics and Jews accused him, as being both of the race of David and a Christian, to Atticus, the Roman governor in Palestine. The holy bishop was condemned by him to be crucified: who, after having undergone the usual tortures during several days, which, though one hundred and twenty years old, he suffered with so much patience that he drew on him a universal admiration, and that of Atticus in particular, he died in 107, according to Eusebius in his chronicle, but in 116, according to Dodwell, bishop Loyde, and F. Pagi. He must have governed the church of Jerusalem about forty-three years.

The eminent saints among the primitive disciples of Jesus Christ, were entirely animated by his spirit, and being dead to the world and themselves, they appeared like angels among men. Free from the secret mixture of the sinister views of all passions, to a degree which was a miracle of grace, they had in all things only God, his will and honour before their eyes, equally aspiring to him through honour and infamy. In the midst of human applause they remained perfectly humbled in the centre of their own nothingness: when loaded with reproaches and contempt, and persecuted with all the rage that malice could inspire, they were raised above all these things so as to stand fearless amidst racks and executioners, inflexibly constant in their fidelity to God, before tyrants, invincible under torments, and superior to them almost as if they had been impassible. Their resolution never failed them, their fervour seemed never slackened. Such wonderful men wrought continual miracles in converting souls to God. We bear the name of Christians, and wear the habit of saints; but are full of the spirit of worldlings, and our actions are infected with its poison. We secretly seek ourselves, even when we flatter ourselves that God is our only aim, and whilst we undertake to convert the world, we suffer it to pervert us. When shall we begin to study to crucify our passions and die to ourselves, that we may lay a solid foundation of true virtue and establish its reign in our hearts?