

## AUGUST XVI.

## ST. HYACINTH, CONFESSOR.

From the bull of his canonization by Clement VIII. published by Fontanini, in 1729, in *Codice Canonization*; his life by Alberti, and the Polish historians. See Touron, de Vic S. Domin. l. 6, et Cuper the Bollandist, t. 3, Aug. p. 309.

A. D. 1257.

ST. HYACINTH, whom the church historians call the apostle of the North, and the Thaumaturgus of his age, was of the ancient house of the counts of Oldrovans, one of the most illustrious of Silesia, a province at that time united to Poland, now to Bohemia, or Germany. His grandfather, the great general against the Tartars, left two sons. Yvo, the younger, was chancellor of Poland and bishop of Cracow. Eustachias, the elder, was count of Konski, the first fruit of whose virtuous marriage was St. Hyacinth, born in 1185, in the castle of Saxony, in the diocese of Breslaw in Silesia. His parents diligently cultivated his happy natural dispositions for virtue, and he preserved an unspotted innocence of manners through the slippery paths of youth during his studies at Cracow, Prague, and Bologna; in which last university he took the degree of doctor of the laws and divinity. Returning to the bishop of Cracow, predecessor to Yvo of Konski, that pious prelate gave him a prebend in his cathedral, and employed him as his assistant and counsellor in the administration of his diocese. Hyacinth showed great prudence, capacity, and zeal in the multiplicity of his exterior occupations; but never suffered them to be any impedient to his spirit of prayer and recollection. He practised uncommon mortifications, and was assiduous in assisting at all the parts of the divine office, and in visiting and serving the sick in the hospitals; all his ecclesiastical revenues he bestowed in alms. Vincent, his bishop, abdicating his dignity with the view of preparing himself for death in holy solitude, Yvo of Konski, chancellor of Poland, was placed in that see, and went to Rome, whether to obtain the confirmation of his election, or for other affairs, is not mentioned. He took with him his two nephews, Hyacinth and Ceslas. St. Dominic was then at Rome; this happening in the year 1218.





sic, capital of Regal Prussia; and though the Lutheran heresy in the sixteenth age destroyed or profaned all the other churches, that founded by St. Hyacinth still remains in the hands of the Catholics, is their parish church, and is served by Dominican friars. The saint left Prussia and Pomerania to preach in Denmark, Swedeland, Gothia, and Norway; in all which countries there still remained many idolaters. Lest the devil should shortly destroy the fruits of his labours, he every where founded monasteries, and left disciples to preserve and extend them. Notwithstanding his fatigues and hardships amidst barbarous nations, in excessive cold climates, far from allowing himself any dispensation in the perpetual abstinence and other severities of his rule, he continually added to them new austerities. His fasts were almost perpetual and on all Fridays and vigils on bread and water; the bare ground was his bed, and sometimes in the open fields; neither hunger, thirst, weariness, rains, extreme cold, or dangers could ever abate his ardour to gain a soul to Christ. He abhorred even the shadow of sin; was humble, charitable, and compassionate, bearing the bowels of a father towards all; every man's distress drew tears in abundance from his eyes; and he comforted and encouraged all who groaned under the burden of any affliction.

After the abovesaid missions he went into Lesser Russia, or Red Russia, where he made a long stay, and induced the prince, and great multitudes of people, to abjure the Greek schism, and unite themselves to the Catholic church. He there built the flourishing convents of Leopold or Lemburg, and of Halitz upon the Niester; from thence he penetrated as far as the Black-Sea, and into the isles of the Archipelago. Thence returning towards the north, he entered the great dukedom of Muscovy, called also Great Russia, or Black Russia, where he attacked a hundred-headed hydra of idolaters, Mahometans, and Greek schismatics. The few Catholics remaining there had not so much as one church to assemble in. He found the Duke Voldimir inflexible in his errors; however, he obtained of him permission to preach to the Catholics. He no sooner began to announce the gospel, confirming his doctrine by miracles, but Mahometans, heathens, and schismatics flocked to hear him, and in great multitudes became docile to the truth.

St. Hyacinth founded a great convent at Kiow, then the capital of both Russias. Seeing one day an assembly of idolaters on their knees before a great tree in an island in the river Boristhenes, commonly called the Nieper, he walked over the water to them, and easily prevailed with them, after the sight of such a miracle, to destroy their idols, fell the great oak, and embrace the faith. All these conversions gave no small uneasiness to the duke, who hereupon began by threats and by overt acts to persecute the Catholics; by which he drew down the vengeance of heaven; for the Tartars, so formidable to all Europe in the thirteenth age, after a most bloody and obstinate siege, took Kiow by assault, sacked it, and setting it on fire reduced it to a heap of ashes. St. Hyacinth, in the midst of this desolation, whilst the streets ran in streams of blood, and many parts of the city were on fire, carrying the holy ciborium in one hand, and an image of our Lady in the other, passed through the flames and over the river Nieper.(1)

The saint returned to Cracow, upon this accident, in 1231, being then fifty-six years old; and enjoyed some repose in his house of the Holy Trinity the two following years, still continuing to preach and instruct both in the city and the country. After two years he made the painful visitation of his convents and communities among the Danes, Swedes, Prussians, Muscovites, and other nations; and penetrated among the Tartars. To preach in Cumania, a country inhabited by the Jazyges, on the Danube, had been the object of the zealous desires of St. Dominic, this being regarded as the most barbarous and obstinate of all infidel nations. Some Dominican preachers had entered this province in the year 1228. St. Hyacinth came into their ungrateful vineyard, and, in consequence of his preaching, in a short time several thousands of these barbarians received the sacrament of baptism, and among them a prince of the Tartars, who went with several lords of his nation to the first general council of Lateran in 1245. We read in the life of St. Lewis, that when he landed in Cyprus in 1248, he met an embassy sent him from a powerful Christian prince of these Tartars. Though Great Tartary be a vast wild tract of land, St. Hyacinth travelled quite through it, announcing Christ

(1) See Bolland t 3, Aug. p. 318.

every where, penetrating into Thibet, near the East-Indies, and into Catay, which is the most northern province of China. The missionaries who in the last age visited these parts, found in them many remains of Christianity once planted there.

St. Hyacinth returning into Poland, entered again Red Russia, and there converted many from the schism, particularly prince Caloman and his wife Salome, who both embraced a state of continency and perfection. Also the inhabitants of Podolia, Volhinia, and Lithuania were exceedingly animated by his zealous sermons to the practice of penance, and to a change of manners. The great convent he founded at Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, is the mother-house of a large province of this religious Order. After having travelled above four thousand leagues, he arrived at Cracow in the year 1257, which was the seventy-second and last of his life. Boleslas V. surnamed the Chaste, and his pious wife Cunegunda, were directed by his advice to square their lives by the maxims of Christian perfection. Primislava, a noble lady, having sent her son to invite the saint to come and preach to her vassals, the young nobleman was drowned on his return in crossing a great river. The afflicted mother caused the corpse to be laid at the feet of the servant of God, who, after a fervent prayer, took him by the hand, and restored him to her alive and sound. This is the last miracle recorded in his life. In his last sickness he was forewarned by God on the 14th of August, that he should leave this world on the next day, the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, his great patroness. He made a pathetic exhortation to his religious breshren, recommending to them especially meekness and humility of heart, and to have great care always to preserve mutual love and charity, and to esteem poverty as men who have renounced all things of the earth. "For this," said he, "is the testament or authentic instrument by which we claim eternal life." The next morning he assisted at matins and mass; after which he received the viaticum and extreme unction at the steps of the altar; and expired a few hours after in fervent prayer on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, being seventy-two years old. His glory was manifested by a revelation to Pandrotta, the bishop of Cracow, and attested by innumerable miracles, with the history of which the

Bollandists have filled thirty-five pages in folio. He was canonized by Clement VIII in 1594. His relics are preserved in a rich chapel built in his honour at Cracow. Anne of Austria, queen of France, mother of Lewis XIV. obtained of Ladislas, king of Poland, a portion of them, which she deposited in the great church of the Dominicans in Paris.

All Christians are not called to the apostolic functions of the ministry; but every one is bound to preach to his neighbour by the modesty of his deportment; by a sincere spirit of meekness, humility, patience, charity, and religion; by an exact fidelity in all duties; by fervour and zeal in the divine service; by temperance and the mortification of all passions and ill humours. These, if not suppressed, easily scandalize and injure those who are witnesses of them. Nothing is more contagious than self-love. He that is nice, fretful, hard to please, full of himself, or a slave to sensuality, easily communicates his malady even to those who see and condemn it in him; but no sermon is usually more powerful than the edifying example of a man of prayer, and of a mortified Christian spirit. This qualification every one owes to God and his neighbour; zeal for the divine honour, and charity for our neighbour, lay us under this obligation.

#### ST. ROCH, C.

WE find this eminent servant of God honoured, especially in France and Italy, amongst the most illustrious saints in the fourteenth century, soon after his death; nevertheless, says F. Berthier, we have no authentic history of his life. All that we can affirm concerning him is, that he was born of a noble family at Montpellier, and making a pilgrimage of devotion to Rome, he devoted himself in Italy to serve the sick during a raging pestilence. Maldura says this happened at Placentia. Falling himself sick, and unable to assist others, and shunned and abandoned by the whole world, he made a shift to crawl rather than walk into a neighbouring forest, where a dog used to lick his sores. He bore incredible pains with patience and holy joy, and God was pleased to restore him to his health. He returned into France, and in the practice of austere penance, and the most fervent piety and charity, he wore out his last years at Montpellier where he died, as it is commonly said, in