

only seems to withdraw himself from us, that we may follow him more earnestly, and unite ourselves more closely to him.

ST. ANASTASIUS, MARTYR.

From his genuine acts, which are commended in the seventh general council, about one hundred and sixty years after his death.

A.D. 628.

ST. ANASTASIUS was a trophy of the holy cross of Christ, when it was carried away into Persia by Chosroës, in the year 614, after he had taken and plundered Jerusalem. The martyr was a Persian, son of a Magian, instructed in the sciences of that sect, and a young soldier in the Persian troops. Upon hearing the news of the taking of the cross by his king, he became very inquisitive concerning the Christian religion: and its sublime truths made such an impression on his mind, that being returned into Persia from an expedition into the Roman empire, he left the army with his brother, who also served in it, and retired to Hierapolis. In that city he lodged with a devout Persian Christian, a silversmith, with whom he went often to prayer. The holy pictures which he saw, moved him exceedingly, and gave him occasion to inquire daily more into our faith, and to admire the courage of the martyrs whose glorious sufferings were painted in the churches. At length, desirous of baptism, he left Hierapolis, which city was subject to the Persians, and went to Jerusalem, where he received that sacrament by the hands of Modestus, who governed that church as vicar, during the absence of the patriarch Zachary, whom Chosroës had led away captive into Persia. In baptism he changed his Persian name Magundat, into that of Anastasius, meaning, according to the signification of that Greek word, that he was risen from death to a new and spiritual life. He had prepared himself with wonderful devotion for that sacrament whilst a catechumen, and he spent in no less fervour the several days after it, which persons baptized passed in white garments, in prayer, and in receiving more perfect instructions in the faith. At the end of this term, Anastasius, the more easily and more perfectly to keep inviolably his sacred baptismal vows and obligations, desired to become a monk in a monastery five miles distant from Jerusalem. Justin, the abbot, made him first learn the Greek tongue and the psalter; then cutting off his hair, gave him the monastic habit, in the year 621.

Anastasius was always the first at all spiritual duties, especially in assisting at the celebration of the divine mysteries. His attention to pious discourse testified the earnest thirst of his soul; nor was he less fervent in practice. He never read the triumphs of the martyrs without abundance of tears, and burne, with an ardent desire of the like happiness. Being molested beyond measure with blasphemous thoughts of magic and superstitions, which his father had taught him, he was delivered from that troublesome temptation by discovering it to his director, and by his advice and prayers. After seven years spent in great perfection in this monastery, his desire of martyrdom daily increasing, and having been assured by a revelation, that his prayers for that grace were heard, he left that house, and visited the places of devotion in Palestine, at Diospolis, Garizim, and our Lady's church at Casarea, where he staid two days. This city, with the greater part of Syria, was then subject to the Persians. The saint seeing certain Persian soothsayers of the garrison occupied in their abominable superstitions in the streets, boldly spoke to them, remonstrating against the impiety of such practices. The Persian magistrates apprehended him as a suspected spy; but he informed them that he once enjoyed the dignity of Magian with them, and had renounced it to become an humble follower of Christ. Upon this confession he was thrown into a dungeon, where he lay three days without eating or drinking, till the return of Marzabanes, the governor, to the city. Being interrogated by him, he confessed his conversion to the faith, and equally despised his offers of great preferments, and his threats of crucifying him. Marzabanes commanded him to be chained by the foot to another criminal, and his neck and one foot to be also linked together by a heavy chain, and condemned him in this condition to carry stones. The Persians, especially those of his own province of Rasech, and his former acquaintance, upbraided him as the disgrace of his country, kicked and beat him, plucked his beard, and loaded him with burdens above his strength. The governor sent for him a second time, but could by no means prevail with him to pronounce the impious words which the Magians used in their superstitions: he said, "That the wilful calling them to remembrance would defile the heart." The judge then threatened he would write immediately to the king against him, if he did not comply. "Write what you please," said the saint, "I am a Christian: I repeat it again, I

am a Christian." Marzabanes commanded him to be forthwith beaten with knotty clubs. The executioners were preparing themselves to bind him fast on the ground; but the saint told him it was unnecessary, for he had courage enough to lie down under the punishment without moving, and he regarded it as his greatest happiness and pleasure to suffer for Christ. He only begged leave to put off his monk's habit, lest it should be treated with contempt, which only his body deserved. He therefore, laid it aside in a respectful manner, and then stretched himself on the ground, and without being bound did not stir all the time of the cruel torment, bearing it without changing his posture. The governor again threatened him to acquaint the king of his obstinacy: "Whom ought we rather to fear," said Anastasius, "a mortal man, or God, who made all things out of nothing?" The judge pressed him to sacrifice to fire, and to the sun and moon. The saint answered, he could never acknowledge as gods, creatures which God had made only for our use; upon which he was remanded to prison.

His old abbot hearing of his sufferings, sent two monks to assist him, and ordered prayers for him. The confessor after carrying stones all the day, spent the greater part of the night in prayer, to the surprise of his companions; one of whom, a Jew, saw and showed him to others at prayer in the night, shining in brightness and glory like a blessed spirit, and angels praying with him. As the confessor was chained to a man condemned for a public crime, he prayed always with his neck bowed downwards, keeping his chained foot near his companion not to disturb him. Marzabanes in the mean time having informed Chosroes, and received his orders, acquainted the martyr by a messenger, without seeing him, that the king would be satisfied on condition that he would only by word of mouth abjure the Christian faith; after which he might choose whether he would be an officer in the king's service, or still remain a Christian and a monk; adding, he might in his heart always adhere, to Christ, provided he would but for once renounce him in words privately, in his presence, "in which there could be no harm, nor any great injury to his Christ," as he said. Anastasius answered firmly, that he would never even seem to dissemble or to deny his God. Then the governor told him, that he had orders to send him bound into Persia to the king. "There is no need of binding me," said the saint: "I go willingly and cheer

tully to suffer for Christ." The governor put on him and on two other prisoners the mark, and gave orders that they should set out after five days. In the mean time, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the 14th of September, at the request of the Comercarius, or tax-gatherer for the king, who was a Christian of distinction, Anastasius had leave to go to the church and assist at the divine service. His presence and exhortations encouraged the faithful, excited the tepid to fervour, and moved all to tears. He dined that day with the Comercarius, and then returned with joy to his prison. On the day appointed, the martyr left Cæsarea, in Palestine, with two other Christian prisoners, under a strict guard, and was followed by one of the monks whom the abbot had sent to assist and encourage him. The acts of this martyrdom were written by this monk, or at least from what he related by word of mouth. The saint received great marks of honour, much against his inclination, from the Christians wherever he came. This made him fear lest human applause should rob him of his crown by infecting his heart with pride. He wrote from Hierapolis and again from the river Tigris to his abbot, begging the prayers of his brethren.

Being arrived at Barsaloe in Assyria, six miles from Discartha or Dastagerde, near the Euphrates, where the king then was, the prisoners were thrown into a dungeon till his pleasure was known. An officer came from Chosroës to interrogate the saint, who made answer, with regard to his magnificent promises, in these words: "My religious habit and poor clothes show that I despise from my heart the gaudy pomp of the world. The honours and riches of a king, who must shortly die himself are no temptation to me." Next day the officer returned to the prison, and endeavoured to intimidate him by blustering threats and reproaches. But the saint said calmly: "My lord judge, do not give yourself so much trouble about me. By the grace of Christ I am not to be moved; so execute your pleasure without more ado." The officer caused him to be unmercifully beaten with staves, after the Persian manner, insulting him all the time, and often repeating, that because he contemned the king's bounty, he should be treated in that manner every day as long as he lived. This punishment was inflicted on him three days; on the third the judge commanded him to be laid on his back, and a heavy beam pressed down by the weight of two men on his

legs, crushing the flesh to the very bone. The martyr's tranquillity and patience astonished the officer who went again to acquaint the king of his behaviour. In his absence the jailer, being a Christian by profession, though too weak to resign his place rather than detain such a prisoner, gave every one free access to the martyr. The Christians immediately filled the prison; every one sought to kiss his feet or chains, and kept as relics whatever had been sanctified by their touch: they also overlaid his fetters with wax, in order to receive their impression. The saint, with confusion and indignation, strove to hinder them, and expressed how extremely dissatisfied he was with such actions. The officer returning from the king caused him to be beaten again, which the confessor bore rather as a statue, than as flesh and blood. Then he was hung up for two hours by one hand, with a great weight at his feet, and tampered with by threats and promises. The judge despairing to overcome him, went back to the king for his last orders, which were, that he and all the Christian captives should be put to death. He returned speedily to put them in execution, and caused Anastasius's two companions, with three score and six other Christians, to be strangled one after another, on the banks of the river, before his face, whom the judge, all the time, pressed to return to the Persian worship, and to escape so disgraceful a death, promising, in case of compliance, that he should be made one of the greatest men in the court. Anastasius, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, gave thanks to God for bringing his life to so happy a conclusion; and said he expected that he should have met with a more cruel death in the torture of all his members: but seeing God granted him one so easy, he embraced with joy that end of a life which he otherwise must shortly have lost in a more painful manner. He was accordingly strangled, and after his death his head was cut off. This was in the year 628, the seventeenth of the Emperor Heraclius, on the 22nd of January, on which day both the Latins and Greeks keep his festival. His body, among the other dead, was exposed to be devoured by dogs, but it was the only one they left untouched. It was afterwards redeemed by the Christians, who laid it in the monastery of St. Sergius, a mile from the place of his triumph, in the city Barsaloe, called afterwards from that monastery, Sergiopolis. The monk that attended him brought back his Colobium, or linen tunic without sleeves. The saint's body was afterwards

brought into Palestine. Some years after, it was removed to Constantinople, and lastly to Rome.

The seventh general council (1) proves the use of pious pictures from the head of this holy martyr, and his miraculous image, then kept at Rome with great veneration: where it is still preserved in the church belonging to the monastery of our Lady ad Aquas Sylvias, which now bears the name of SS. Vincent and Anastasius. (2) The rest of his relics are deposited in the holy chapel ad Scalas Sanctas, near St. John Lateran. See the history of many miracles wrought by them in Bollandus. St. Anastasius foretold the speedy fall of the tyrant Chosroës: and ten days after his martyrdom the emperor Heraclius entered Persia.

JANUARY XXIII.

ST. RAYMUND, OF PENNAFORT, C.

From the bull of his canonization, by Clement VIII. in 1601, and his life, written by several Spanish, Italian, and French authors. See Fleury, b. 78. n. 55. 64. and chiefly Touron, *Hommes Illustres de l'Ordre de S. Domin.* T. 1. p. 1.

A.D. 1275.

THE house of Pegnafort, or, as it is pronounced, Pennafort, was descended from the counts of Barcelona, and nearly allied to the kings of Arragon. Raymund was born in 1175, at Pennafort, a castle in Catalonia, which in the fifteenth century was changed into a convent of the order of St. Dominick. Such was his rapid progress in his studies, that at the age of twenty he taught philosophy at Barcelona, which he did gratis, and with so great reputation, that he began then to be consulted by the ablest masters. His principal care was to instil into his scholars the most perfect maxims of solid piety and devotion, to compose all differences among the citizens, and to relieve the distressed. He was about thirty years of age when he went to Bologna in Italy, to perfect himself in the study of the canon and civil law, commenced Doctor in that faculty, and taught with the same disinterestedness and charity as he had done in his own country. In 1219 Berengarius, bishop of Barcelona, who had been at Rome,

(1) Act 4.

(2) Mabill. Iter Ital. p. 141.