

life.(1) This is also the manifest inspired doctrine of St. Paul,(2) and in the revelations of St. John,(3) spotless virgins are called, in a particular manner, the companions of the Lamb, and are said to enjoy the singular privilege of following him wherever he goes. The tradition of the church has always been unanimous in this point; and among the Romans, Greeks, Syrians, and Barbarians, many holy virgins joyfully preferred torments and death to the violation of their integrity, which they bound themselves by vow to preserve without defilement, in mind or body. The fathers, from the very disciples of the apostles, are all profuse in extolling the excellency of holy virginity, as a special fruit of the incarnation of Christ, his divine institution, and a virtue which has particular charms in the eyes of God, who delights in chaste minds, and chooses to dwell singularly in them. They often repeat, that purity raises men, even in this mortal life, to the dignity of angels; purifies the soul, fits it for a more perfect love of God, and a closer application to heavenly things, and disengages the mind and heart from worldly thoughts and affections. It produces in the soul the nearest resemblance to God. Chastity is threefold, that of virgins, that of widows, and that of married persons; in each state it will receive its crown, as St. Ambrose observes,(4) but in the first is most perfect, so that St. Austin calls its fruit a hundred fold, and that of marriage sixty fold; but the more excellent this virtue is, and the higher its glory and reward, the more heroic and the more difficult is its victory; nor is it perfect unless it be embellished with all other virtues in an heroic degree, especially divine charity and the most profound humility.

SAINT FRUCTUOSUS, BISHOP OF TARRAGON,

AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS.

From his most valuable acts in Ruinart, quoted by St. Austin, Serm. 273. and transcribed by Prudentius, hymn 6.

A.D. 259.

ST. FRUCTUOSUS was the zealous and truly apostolical bishop of Tarragon, then the capital city of Spain. The persecution of Valerian and Gallien raging in the year 259, he was apprehended by an order of Emilian the governor, who sent the soldiers,

(1) Wells, Paraph. on S. Matt. p. 185. (2) 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8, 25, 27, 32, 38.
(3) Apoc. x'v. l. 3, 4, 5. (4) S. Ambr. l. de Virginitate, T. 5. p. 636.

called *Beneficarii*,* for that purpose. They seized the good bishop in his lodgings with two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, on Sunday the 16th of January. He was then laid down on his bed, and only asked leave to put on his shoes; after which he cheerfully followed the guards, who committed him and his two companions to close prison, where he spent his time with them in fervent prayer, full of joy at the prospect of the crown prepared for them. He gave his benediction to the faithful who visited him, and recommended themselves to his prayers. On Monday he baptized in gaol a catechumen named Rogatianus. On Wednesday he kept the usual fast of the stations† till none, or three o'clock in the afternoon. On Friday, the sixth day after their commitment, the 21st of January, the governor ordered them to be brought before him, and asked Fructuosus if he knew the contents of the late edict of the emperors? The saint answered that he did not, but that whatever they were, he was a Christian. "The emperors," said Emilian, "commanded all to sacrifice to the gods." Fructuosus answered: "I adore one God, who made heaven and earth and all things therein." Emilian said: "Do you not know that there are gods?" "No," replied the saint. The proconsul said: "I will make you know it shortly." St. Fructuosus then lifted up his eyes to heaven, and began to pray in private. The proconsul broke out into this exclamation: "What will any man fear or adore on earth, if he condemn the worship of the immortal gods, and of the emperors?" Then turning to the deacon Augurius, he bade him not regard what Fructuosus had said: but he satisfied him in few words that he adored the same Almighty God. Emilian lastly addressed himself to the other deacon, Eulogius, asking him if he did not adore Fructuosus? The holy man answered, "I adore not Fructuosus; but the same God whom he adores." Emilian asked Fructuosus if he was a bishop; and added, upon his confessing it, "say you have been one;" meaning that he was going to lose his dignity with his life: and immediately condemned them to be burned alive.

The pagans themselves could not refrain from tears, on seeing them led to the amphitheatre; for they loved Fructuosus on

* *Beneficarii* were soldiers distinguished by certain privileges, and who stood for promotion, as Vegetius informs us, l. 2. c. 7.

† Wednesdays and Fridays were fast-days at that time; but only till none, that is, three in the afternoon, and called the fast of the stations.

account of his rare virtues. The Christians accompanied them with a sorrow mixed with joy. The martyrs exulted to behold themselves on the verge of a glorious eternity. The faithful offered St. Fructuosus a cup of wine, but he would not taste it; saying, it was not yet the hour of breaking the fast, which was observed on Fridays till three o'clock, and it was then only ten in the morning. The holy man hoped to end the station, or fast of that day, with the patriarchs and prophets in heaven. When they were come into the amphitheatre, Augustalis, the bishop's lector, came to him weeping, and begged he would permit him to pull off his shoes. The martyr said he could easily put them off himself, which he did. Felix, a Christian soldier, stepped in, and desired he would remember him in his prayers. Fructuosus said aloud: "I am bound to pray for the whole Catholic church spread over the world from the east to the west;" as if he had said, as St. Austin observes, who much applauds this sentence: (1) "Remain always in the bosom of the Catholic church, and you will have a share in my prayers." Martial, one of his flock, desired him to speak some words of comfort to his desolate church. The bishop, turning to the Christians, said: "My brethren, the Lord will not leave you a flock without a pastor. He is faithful to his promises. Do not grieve for me. The hour of my suffering is short." The martyrs were fastened to wooden stakes to be burnt; but the flame seemed at first to respect their bodies, having consumed only the bands with which their hands were tied, giving them liberty to stretch out their arms in the form of a cross in prayer, in which posture they gave up their souls to God before the fire had touched them. Babylas and Mygdone, two Christian servants of the governor, saw the heavens open, and the saints carried up with crowns on their heads. The faithful came in the night, extinguished the fire, and took out the half-burnt bodies. Every one carried some part of their remains home with them; but being admonished from heaven, brought them back and laid them in the same monument. Saint Austin has left us a panegyric on St. Fructuosus, pronounced on the anniversary day of his martyrdom, on which his name has been always famous in the western church, especially in Spain and Africa.

(1) Serm. 273.