

As to Rufinus, he leaves to God his intention in translating this work.\* In this epistle he calls all people and nations scattered over the earth, the parts of his body.† He sat three years and ten days, dying on the 14th of December, 401. St. Jerom says, (1) that God took him out of this world lest Rome should be plundered under such a head: for in 410, it fell into the hands of Alaric the Goth. The remains of this holy pope have been often translated: the greater part now rest in the church of Saint Praxedes. The Roman Martyrology commemorates his name on this day, which is probably that of one of these translations; see Ceillier, t. 8, p. 556, &c.

### ST. ZITA, V.

SHE was born in the beginning of the thirteenth century, at Montsegradi, a village near Lucca, in Italy. She was brought up with the greatest care, in the fear of God, by her poor virtuous mother, whose early and constant attention to inspire the tender heart of her daughter with religious sentiments seemed to find no obstacles, either from private passions or the general corruption of nature; so easily were they prevented or overcome. Zita had no sooner attained the use of reason, and was capable of knowing and loving God, than her heart was no longer able to relish any other object, and she seemed never to lose sight of him in her actions. Her mother reduced all her

(1) Ep. 96, ad princip. p. 782.

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\* F. Garnier published this letter in his edition of Marius Mercator, p. 3; but interpolated in the end, where it is pretended that Anastasius declares Rufinus himself to have been condemned by the holy see. This interpolation is omitted in the accurate edition of Coutant, t. 1, p. 738. It is not found in the best manuscripts; and is contrary to what this pope had said before in the same epistle, that he leaves Rufinus's conscience and intention to God his judge.

† *Mihi cum non deerit, evangelii fidem circa meos populos custodire, partesque corporis, per spatia diversa terrarum diffusas, quantis possum litteris convenire, ne qua profana interpretationis origo subrepat, quæ devotas immissâ sui caligine mentes labefactare conetur.* Anast. Papa, Ep. ad Jean. Hier. apud Coutant. Ep. decretal. t. 1, p. 739. Pope Celestine afterwards, writing to the clergy and people of Constantinople, uses the like phrase: *Nos licet longe positi, ubi cognovimus perversitate doctrinæ membra nostra lacerari, paternâ solitudine nos urente, pro vobis alieno flagravimus incendio.*—Cum nostra viscera sitis, jure tremamus, &c. p. 1. Conc. Ephesin. cap. 19.

instructions to two short heads, and never had occasion to use any further remonstrance to enforce her lessons than to say: "This is most pleasing to God; this is the divine will," or "That would displease God." The sweetness and modesty of the young child charmed every one who saw her. She spoke little, and was most assiduous at her work, but her business never seemed to interrupt her prayers. At twelve years of age she was put to service in the family of a citizen of Lucca, called Fatinelli, whose house was contiguous to the church of St. Frigidian. She was thoroughly persuaded that labour is enjoined all men as a punishment of sin, and as a remedy for the spiritual disorders of their souls: and, far from ever harbouring in her breast the least uneasiness, or expressing any sort of complaint under contradictions, poverty, and hardships, and still more from ever entertaining the least idle, inordinate, or worldly desire, she blessed God for placing her in a station in which she was supplied with the most effectual means to promote her sanctification, by the necessity of employing herself in penitential labour, and of living in a perpetual conformity and submission of her will to others. She was also very sensible of the advantages of her state, which afforded all necessities of life, without engaging her in the anxious cares and violent passions by which worldly persons, who enjoy most plentifully the goods of fortune, are often disturbed; whereby their souls resemble a troubled sea, always agitated by impetuous storms, without knowing the sweetness of a true calm. She considered her work as an employment assigned her by God, and as part of her penance; and obeyed her master and mistress in all things, as being placed over her by God. She always rose several hours before the rest of the family, and employed in prayer a considerable part of the time which others gave to sleep. She took care to hear mass every morning with great devotion, before she was called upon by the duties of her station, in which she employed the whole day with such diligence and fidelity that she seemed to be carried to them on wings, and studied when possible to anticipate them. Notwithstanding her extreme attention to her exterior employments, she acquired a wonderful facility of joining with them almost continual mental prayer, and of keeping her soul con-

stantly attentive to the divine presence. Who would not imagine that such a person should have been esteemed and beloved by all who knew her? Nevertheless, by the appointment of divine providence, for her great spiritual advantage, it fell out quite otherwise, and for several years she suffered the harshest trials. Her modesty was called by her fellow-servants simplicity, and want of spirit and sense; and her diligence was judged to have no other spring than affectation and secret pride. Her mistress was a long time extremely prepossessed against her, and her passionate master could not bear her in his sight without transports of rage. It is not to be conceived how much the saint had continually to suffer in this situation. So unjustly despised, overburdened, reviled, and often beaten, she never repined nor lost her patience; but always preserved the same sweetness in her countenance, and the same meekness and charity in her heart and words, and abated nothing of her application to her duties. A virtue so constant and so admirable, at length overcame jealousy, antipathy, prepossession, and malice. Her master and mistress discovered the treasure which their family possessed in the fidelity and example of the humble saint, and the other servants gave due praise to her virtue. Zita feared this prosperity more than adversity, and trembled lest it should be a snare to her soul. But sincere humility preserved her from its dangers; and her behaviour, amidst the caresses and respect shown her, continued the same as when she was ill-treated and held in derision; she was no less affable, meek, and modest; no less devout, nor less diligent or ready to serve every one. Being made housekeeper, and seeing her master and mistress commit to her, with an entire confidence, the government of their family and management of all their affairs, she was most scrupulously careful in point of economy, remembering that she was to give to God an account of the least farthing of what was intrusted as a depositum in her hands; and, though head-servant, she never allowed herself the least privilege or exemption in her work on that account. She used often to say to others, that devotion is false if slothful. Hearing a man-servant speak one immodest word, she was filled with horror, and procured him to be immediately discharged from the family. With David, she desired to see it composed

only of such whose approved piety might drawn down a benediction of God upon the whole house, and be a security to the master for their fidelity and good example. She fasted the whole year, and often on bread and water; and took her rest on the bare floor, or on a board. Whenever business allowed her a little leisure, she spent it in holy prayer and contemplation in a little retired room in the garret; and at her work repeated frequently ardent ejaculations of divine love, with which her soul appeared always inflamed. She respected her fellow-servants as her superiors. If she were sent on commissions a mile or two in the greatest storms, she set out without delay, executed them punctually, and returned often almost drowned, without showing any sign of reluctance or murmuring. By her virtue she gained so great an ascendant over her master, that a single word would often suffice to check the greatest transports of his rage; and she would sometimes cast herself at his feet to appease him in favour of others. She never kept anything for herself but the poor garments which she wore; every thing else she gave to the poor. Her master, seeing his goods multiply, as it were, in her hands, gave her ample leave to bestow liberal alms on the poor; which she made use of with discretion, but was scrupulous to do nothing without his express authority. If she heard others spoken ill of, she zealously took upon her their defence, and excused their faults. Always when she communicated, and often when she heard mass, and on other occasions, she melted in sweet tears of divine love: she was often favoured with ecstasies during her prayers. In her last sickness, she clearly foretold her death, and having prepared herself for her passage by receiving the last sacraments, and by ardent sighs of love, she happily expired on the 27th of April, in 1272, being sixty years old: one hundred and fifty miracles wrought in the behalf of such as had recourse to her intercession have been juridically proved. Her body was found entire in 1580, and is kept with great respect in St. Frigidian's church, richly enshrined; her face and hands are exposed naked to view through a crystal glass. Pope Leo X. granted an office in her honour. The city of Lucca pays a singular veneration to her memory. The solemn decree of her beatification was published by Innocent XII. in 1696, with the confirmation of her imme-

morial veneration. See her life compiled by a contemporary writer, and published by Papebroke the Bollandist, on the 27th of April, p. 497, and Benedict XIV. De Canoniz. l. 2, c. 24, p. 245.

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## APRIL XXVIII

### ST. VITALIS, MARTYR.

From Fortunatus, l. 1, carm. 2, p. 33. His acts and the suppositious letter under the name of St. Ambrose, were written only in the ninth age.

#### ABOUT THE YEAR 62.

ST. VITALIS is honoured as the principal patron of the city of Ravenna, in which he glorified God by martyrdom in the persecution of Nero. He was a citizen of Milan, and is said in his acts to have been the father of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. The divine providence conducted him to Ravenna, where he saw a Christian named Ursicinus, who was condemned to lose his head for his faith, standing aghast at the sight of death, and seeming ready to yield. Happy is he who, by a perfect diffidence in himself and a sincere humility, obtains strength and comfort from above in the fiery trials of his last conflicts; when the devil rages with the greatest fury, knowing that he has only a little time to compass the ruin of a soul for ever. Vitalis was extremely moved at this spectacle. The honour of God, which was in danger of being insulted by sin, and the soul of a brother in Christ which appeared to be upon the very brink of apostacy, were alarming objects to awaken his zeal. He who dreaded the presumption of rashly seeking the combat, knew his double obligation of preferring the glory of God, and the eternal salvation of his neighbour to his own corporal life: he therefore boldly and successfully encouraged Ursicinus to triumph over death, and after his martyrdom, carried off his body, and respectfully interred it. The judge, whose name was Paulinus, being informed of what he had done, caused him to be apprehended, stretched on the rack, and, after other torments, to be buried alive in a place called the Palm-tree, in Ravenna, as Fortunatus and his acts relate. These acts add that his wife, Valeria, returning from Ravenna to Milan was beaten to death by certain pea-