

ing." St. Alexander of Jerusalem and other ancients exceedingly commend the sanctity of his life. The late pious French author of the *Bibliothèque portative des Pères de l'Eglise*, observes, that Clement is one of the great masters of an interior life among the ancient fathers of the church, and that his principal maxims are, that the Gnostic or spiritual Christian ought to pray at all times; and in all places, both in the secret of his heart, and often by singing psalms and hymns to the Lord: that he must have crucified all inordinate desires, and must hold his passions in perfect subjection, and that though he be united by charity to his beloved, he pray assiduously for the pardon of his sins, and for the grace not to sin. St. Clement died at Alexandria, before the end of the reign of Caracalla, who was slain in 217. His name had a place in the martyrology of Usuard, which was long used in most churches in Gaul, but never in the Roman. Pope Benedict XIV., in his learned dissertation, addressed in the form of a brief, to the king of Portugal, prefixed to the edition of the Roman Martyrology, made in 1749, excellently shows, that there is not sufficient reason for ever inserting his name in the Roman Martyrology. The authority of certain private calendars, and the custom of sacred biographers suffices for giving his life in this place. See Tillemont, t. 3, Ceillier, t. 2, and John Potter, then bishop of Oxford, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, in the accurate edition of the works of St. Clement of Alexandria, which he published with notes, at Oxford, in 1715, t. 1, p. 1. t. 2, p. 10, 40, et seq.

DECEMBER V.

ST. SABAS, ABBOT.

From his life excellently written by Cyril, monk of Palestine, in 557, author of the life of St. John the Silent, of that of St. Euthymius and of this of St. Sabas, which is correctly published by Bollandus, 20th of January, and in Greek by Cotelarius Monum. Gr. t. 3, pp. 220, 574. These acts in Metaphrastes are adulterated by certain counterfeit additions. See Assemani, t. 5, p. 410.

A. D. 532.

ST. SABAS, one of the most renowned patriarchs of the monks

of Palestine, was born at Mutalasca, in Cappadocia, not far from Cæsarea, the capital, in 439. The name of his father was John, and that of his mother, Sophia: both were pious, and of illustrious families. The father was an officer in the army, and being obliged to go to Alexandria in Egypt, took his wife with him, and recommended his son Sabas, with the care of his estate, to Hermias, the brother of his wife. This uncle's wife used the child so harshly that, three years after, he went to an uncle called Gregory, brother to his father, hoping there to live in peace. Gregory having the care of the child, demanded also the administration of his estate, whence great law suits and animosities arose between the two uncles. Sabas, who was of a mild disposition, took great offence at these discords about so contemptible a thing as earthly riches, and, the grace of God working powerfully in his heart, he resolved to renounce for ever what was a source of so great evils among men. He retired to a monastery called Flavinia, three miles from Mutalasca, and the abbot received him with open arms, and took great care to see him instructed in the science of the saints, and in the rules of a monastic profession. His uncles, blinded by avarice and mutual animosity, were some years without opening their eyes; but at last, ashamed of their conduct towards a nephew, they agreed together to take him out of his monastery, restore to him his estate, and persuade him to marry. In vain they employed all means to gain their point. Sabas had tasted the bitterness of the world, and the sweetness of the yoke of Christ, and his heart was so united to God, that nothing could draw him from his good purpose. He applied himself with great fervour to the practice of all virtues, especially humility, mortification, and prayer, as the means to attain all others. One day, whilst he was at work in the garden, he saw a tree loaded with fair and beautiful apples, and gathered one with an intention to eat it. But reflecting that this was a temptation of the devil, he threw the apple on the ground, and trod upon it. Moreover, to punish himself, and more perfectly to overcome the enemy, he made a vow never to eat any apples as long as he lived. By this victory over himself, he made great progress in all other virtues, exercising himself by day in labour, accompanied with prayer, and by night in watching in devotions, always flying idle

ness as the root of all evils, sleeping only as much as was absolutely necessary to support nature, and never interrupting his labours but, to lift up his hands to God. Though he was the youngest in the house he soon surpassed all the rest in fervour and virtue. So tender was his charity and compassion, that once when he was serving the baker, who had put his wet clothes into the oven to dry, and, forgetting them, had put in fire, seeing him much troubled for his clothes, he went into the oven and fetched them out through the flames without hurt. When Sabas had been ten years in this monastery, being eighteen years old, with the leave of his abbot, he went to Jerusalem to visit the holy places, and to edify himself by the examples of the eminent solitaries of that country. He passed the winter in the monastery of Passarion, governed at that time by the holy abbot Elpidius. All the brethren were charmed with his virtue, and desired earnestly that he would fix his abode among them: but his great love of silence and retirement made him prefer the manner of life practised by St. Euthymius. He cast himself at the feet of that holy abbot, conjuring him with many tears to receive him among his disciples. St. Euthymius judged him too young to continue in his *laura* with the anchorets; so extreme a solitude being only proper for the most perfect; for a *laura* consisted of a cluster of separate cells or hermitages in a desert. Euthymius, therefore, recommended him to the monastery below the hill, which was under the conduct of Theoctistus and a kind of noviceship to the *laura*, from which it lay about three miles distant, the *laura* itself being twelve miles from Jerusalem.

Sabas consecrated himself to God with new fervour, working all day, and watching in prayer a good part of the night. As he was very lusty and strong, he assisted all his brethren in their offices, and prepared himself the wood and water for the house with extraordinary care and cheerfulness. He served the sick with singular diligence and affection; and was always the first and the last at the divine office, and in every regular duty. A temptation put his virtue to the trial. He was sent by his abbot as companion to another monk on certain affairs to Alexandria. There his parents knew him and desired to engage him to accept his father's post and estate in the world;

out he gave them to understand that would be to apostatize from the service of God which he had chosen. They pressed him at least to accept a large sum of money for his necessities; but he would only take three pieces of gold, and those he gave all to his abbot on his return. When he was thirty years of age he obtained leave of St. Euthymius to spend five days a-week in a remote cave, which time he passed without eating any thing, in prayer and manual labour. He left his monastery on Sunday evening, carrying with him palm-twigs, and came back on Saturday morning with fifty baskets which he had made, imposing upon himself a task of ten a-day. Thus he had lived five years, till St. Euthymius chose him and one Domitian for his companions in his great yearly retreat in the deserts of Rouban, in which Christ is said to have performed his forty days' fast. They entered this solitude together on the 14th of January, and returned to their monastery on Palm-Sunday. In the first retreat Sabas fell down in the wilderness, almost dead with thirst. St. Euthymius, moved with compassion, addressed a prayer to Christ, that he would take pity on his young fervent soldier, and, striking his staff into the earth, a spring gushed forth; of which Sabas drinking a little, recovered his strength so as to be enabled to bear the fatigues of his retreat.

After the death of St. Euthymius a relaxation of discipline crept into that monastery: on which account Sabas, sensible that a religious house in such a condition is like a general shipwreck, in which every one must save himself as he can, retired into a desert toward the East, in which St. Gerasimus lived. The devil here endeavoured to affright him by appearing in divers shapes of serpents and beasts: but the servant of God, armed with prayer and faith, surmounted all his assaults. Four years the saint had spent in his wilderness in a total separation from all commerce with men, when, directed by an admonition of heaven, he chose his dwelling in a cave on the top of a high mountain, at the bottom of which ran the brook Cedron. The water of that torrent not being there drinkable, he fetched what he used from a spring, five miles off, through a very rough and steep way. He was obliged to hang a cord down the descent to hold himself by in mounting it. Wild herbs which grew on the rocks were his food, till some countrymen who

found him by this cord, brought him on certain days a little bread, cheese, dates, and other little things which he might want.

After he had lived here five years, several resorted to them, desiring to serve God under his direction. He was at first unwilling to consent; but charity overcoming the resistance which his humility raised, he founded a new laura, which at first consisted of seventy persons, all desirous to devote themselves to praise and serve God without interruption. He marked to each the place to build their cell; and, having prayed to God that that they might find water, caused a pit to be dug at the foot of the mountain, where a spring was discovered which subsisted in succeeding ages. He built also a little chapel with an altar. The number of his disciples was shortly increased to one hundred and fifty; which obliged him to extend his laura on the other side of the torrent. He watched over all, and provided for their necessities with an incredible attention. He taught them to overcome their passions, to discover and defeat the artifices of the devil, and to pray with fruit and holy perseverance. To cut off all necessities and pretexts of ever leaving their solitude, by the help of certain charitable persons, he supplied them with all things in a manner suitable to persons dead to the world. He had no priest in his community, and he thought no religious man could aspire to that dignity without presumption. He grieved, however, to depend upon the opportunity of some strange priest for the celebration of the divine mysteries. Certain factious spirits in the community formed a schism against their holy abbot, and accused him to Sallust, then lately made bishop of Jerusalem. The prelate found their invectives groundless, except that the want of a priest was a real defect in the community. He therefore compelled Sabas to receive that sacred character at his hands. The abbot was then fifty-three years old. The reputation of his sanctity drew persons from very remote countries to his laura. Our saint assigned a particular chapel for the Armenian monks, where they performed the first part of the divine office, which consists of prayers and instructions in their own tongue: but met in the great church to finish it, and to make the oblation and receive the communion with the rest. After the death of the saint's father, his mother came to him, and served God under his direction. With the mony

which she brought he built two hospitals, one for strangers, and another for the sick; also an hospital at Jericho, and a monastery on a neighbouring hill, called Castel; and another small one a mile distant, for the young, where they learned the psalter and religious exercises. When they were perfect in these, and ripe in years, he translated them to the house of Castel; and drew out of this nursery those that were most perfect into his laura. Sallust, patriarch of Jerusalem, established St. Sabas exarch or superior-general over all the monks of Palestine, who lived in several cells, and St. Theodosius over all who lived in community, or the Cenobites. St. Sabas, after the example of St. Euthymius, left his disciples every year after the octave of the Epiphany, and passed the whole Lent without being seen by any one, eating nothing all that time, except that he received the holy eucharist every Saturday and Sunday, which he always took with him for that purpose. If any of his disciples accompanied him, he caused them to carry with them some dried bread for their subsistence. In one of these retreats he found a holy hermit who had lived on wild herbs, without seeing any man thirty-eight years. He had with him very edifying discourses; but the next year he found him dead and buried him. The patriarch Sallust dying in 493, the rebellious monks above-mentioned went to his successor Elias, hoping that he would hear their complaints. Sabas was informed of their cabals, and, not to be an occasion of others' malice, withdrew himself privately, saying, that we must resist the devils, but yield to men, for the sake of peace.

He went into the desert of Scythopolis, near the river Gadara, where he went into a great cave to pray. It happened to be the den of a huge lion. At midnight the beast came in, and finding this guest, dared not to touch him, but taking him gently by his garments, plucked him as if it had been to draw him out. The saint was no ways affrighted or troubled, but began leisurely and with much devotion to recite aloud the midnight psalms. The lion went out, and when the holy man had finished matins, came in again, and pulled him by the skirts of his clothes as he had done before. The saint spoke to the beast and said, the place was big enough to hold them both. The lion at those words departed, and returned thither no more.

Certain thieves found St. Sabas in his cave, and were so moved by his example and discourses, that they all embraced a penitential life. Many persons here, again, put themselves under his conduct; but, finding himself distracted by their direction, and by a number of visitants who resorted thither, he abandoned his cell to them; and this place grew into a monastery. He enjoyed the sweetness of perfect solitude some time, when, moved with tender charity and compassion, he went to visit his former rebellious monks, who continued hardened in their iniquity, and were joined by twenty others. The saint was pierced with grief to see them thus give death to their own souls, and draw others into the same perdition. It seemed to him that he felt his own limbs torn from his body whilst he saw his monks separated from him. In order to soften their hatred and malice, he gave them every token of the greatest sweetness, tenderness, and goodness; but they were not yet to be gained. He left them a second time, to ask their conversion with greater fervour of the Father of mercies. He retired near Nicopolis, living some time under the boughs of a shady tree, the fruit of which furnished him with food till the master of the field built him a cell and afforded him his scanty diet. Elias, the patriarch, ordered Sabas to appoint a superior for the disciples whom he had gathered at Nicopolis, and to return to his great laura, to which he sent his orders to receive him. The factious monks, in a rage, threw down a building which he had raised, and, after many disorders, left that place, and settled in certain old ruinous cells near the brook Theon. The great laura was freed from their scandals, and Sabas soon renewed in it the spirit of fervour and charity. His zeal and compassion for the seditious apostates made him still weep for them. He even procured and sent them seventy pieces of gold to build them a church and furnish them with necessities. This excess of goodness made them enter into themselves, confess their crime, and submit themselves to their abbot. St. Sabas nominated a superior to govern them; and, under his direction, this became a new and very regular monastery. The saint founded several others after the same model.

The eastern churches were then in great confusion. The Emperor Anastasius supported the Eutychian heresy, and ba-

nished many Catholic bishops. The patriarch Elias sent to him as deputies St. Sabas, with other famous abbots, to endeavour to stop the fury of this persecution. Sabas was seventy years old when he undertook this journey to Constantinople. As he was dressed like some poor beggar, the officers at the gate of the imperial palace admitted the rest, but stopped him. Sabas made no reply, but withdrew into a corner to employ his time in prayer. When the emperor had read the letter of the patriarch, in which great commendations were bestowed on Sabas, he asked where he was? The saint was sought, and at length found in a corner reciting the psalms. Anastasius gave the abbots liberty to ask what they wanted or desired for themselves; the rest presented their petitions, but Sabas had no request to make in his own name. Being pressed by the emperor to ask some favour, he only begged that his majesty would restore peace to the church, and not disturb the clergy. The emperor gave him a thousand pieces of gold to employ in charities. Sabas staid all the winter in Constantinople, and often visited the emperor to gain his point. The prince had caused a heretical council at Sidon to condemn the general council of Chalcedon, and required the bishops to subscribe his decree, banishing many who refused to do it. However, he spared Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem, at the repeated entreaties of Sabas, and dismissed the holy abbot with honour, giving him a thousand pieces of gold more to be distributed among the poor in his country. The saint returned to his solitude, and the emperor dying, according to what our holy abbot had foretold, Justin, his successor, favoured the true faith. St. Sabas, laying hold of that opportunity, went to Cæsarea, Scythopolis, and other places, preaching the Catholic faith, and bringing back many monks and seculars into its fold. A drought which had continued five years, produced a famine in Palestine. The prayers of the saint obtained supplies for his seven monasteries in their extreme necessity, and at last rain, to the universal joy of the whole country.

In the ninety-first year of his age, at the request of Peter, patriarch of Jerusalem, he undertook a second journey to Constantinople, in favour of the Christians of Palestine, who had been calumniated at court. Justinian, who had then occupied

the imperial throne, received him with great honour, granted him all his requests, and offered to settle annual revenues for the maintenance of all his monasteries. The holy abbot thanked his majesty, but said they stood not in need of such revenues, as long as the monks should serve God. However, he begged a remission of all taxes in favour of the people of Palestine for a certain term, in consideration of what they had suffered by the plunders of the Samaritans: that his majesty would build an hospital at Jerusalem for the pilgrims, and a fortress for the protection of the hermits and monks against the inroads of barbarians: that he would bestow some ornaments on the church of our Lady which was lately built, and would afford his protection to the Catholics. All which things were granted. It happened one day that the emperor being busy in council in despatching certain affairs of the saint, who was himself present, when it was the hour of tierce, the abbot went out to recite his prayers. His companion, called Jeremy, said it was not well done to leave the emperor on such an occasion. "My son," replied Sabas, "the emperor does his duty, and we must do ours;" so exact was he in all the rules of his state. St. Sabas returned into Palestine with the imperial orders, which he delivered to the magistrates of Jerusalem, Scythopolis, and Cæsarea, and saw everywhere put in execution. Soon after his return to his laura he fell sick: the patriarch persuaded him to suffer himself to be conveyed to a neighbouring church, where he served him with his own hands. The pains of the saint were very sharp, but God supported him under them in perfect sentiments of patience and resignation. Finding his last hour approach, he begged the patriarch that he might be carried back to his laura. He appointed Melitas of Berytus his successor, gave him excellent instructions, and then lay four days in silence, without seeing any one, that he might entertain himself with God alone. On the 5th of December, in the evening, having received the holy communion, he departed to our Lord, in 532 (not 531, as Jos. Assemani demonstrates against Baronius, &c.), being ninety-four years old. He is commemorated on this day both in the Greek and Latin Calendars.

St. Sabas met with persecutors among the monks, to whom his virtue seemed too scrupulous a severity; and these men were

long insensible to his mild remonstrances, and holy instructions, animated by the example of his admirable sanctity. How easily do men blind themselves in their passions, and excuse to themselves, nay canonize, their more subtle vices! And how difficult is it for such sinners to be reclaimed! It is much easier to convert a notorious sinner, than one who is falsely just. The one feels his miseries, the other crowns himself with his own hands, and, like the proud Pharisee, makes his own panegyric or apology. This dreadful blindness is a frequent case: men every day study by a false conscience to palliate crimes, and allow themselves many unjustifiable liberties under false pretences. As St. Austin complains, what our passions strongly incline us to, we often call holy. Not to perish by such illusions, we must banish out of our hearts all self-conceit, learn perfectly to die to ourselves, especially in regard to our darling or ruling passions, and never take our passions for our counsellors or guides, as we shall be sure to do if we rely too much on ourselves. We must often suspect and narrowly examine our own hearts, which are frequently the greatest cheats with which we can have to deal. We are often imposed upon by other men: but a thousand times oftener by ourselves.

ST. CRISPINA, M.

ST. AUSTIN informs us,⁽¹⁾ that this glorious martyr was a lady of high birth, very rich, and engaged in the marriage state; that she had several children; and that though of a delicate and tender constitution, she was endued with a masculine courage, preferred heaven to earth, and God to the world, and, despising the tears of her children, rejoiced to see herself taken and called to confess Jesus Christ on a scaffold, and in the sight of the whole world. Her acts we have only imperfect, giving an account of her last examination. By them we learn that she was a native of Thagara, in the Proconsular Africa, and was apprehended for professing the faith of Christ, and conducted to Thebeste, before Anulinus the proconsul of Africa. This magistrate exhorted her to sacrifice to the gods, as the edicts of the emperors commanded. The martyr answered: "I have never sacrificed, nor do sacrifice to any other

(1) S. Aug. in Ps. 120 and 137, pp. 1362, 1392.