

ST. VALENTINE, PRIEST AND MARTYR.

(February 14).

The priest Valentine lived in Rome under the reign of Claudius II. A great renown of wisdom and holiness had gained for him the veneration even of the pagans. His zeal was ardent, by his charity he was a father to the poor, his mild and affable conversation drew all hearts towards him.

The Emperor apprised of his merit, wished to see him ; as soon as he saw him, he wished to attach him to his person. " Why, said he to Valentine, before the whole court, will you not be my friend, since I will be yours ? Why do you not adore our Gods ?—Lord, answered Valentine, if you knew Him whom I serve, you would detest the worship of demons, and with me you would adore the only true God, whose Son is Jesus-Christ. — What do you think of the great Jupiter ? asked one of the courtiers.—What you should think of him yourself with your poets, that he is the type of perversity." Everybody seemed shocked at what was considered a blasphemy, but none knew what to answer.

The Emperor wished to have a private interview with him. The holy priest spoke to him of the religion of Christ with so much wisdom and evidence, that the monarch was on the point of being converted. But alas ! what a hold human respect has on the heart of man ! Claudius, not daring to affront his pagan court, delivered the servant of God to the prefect Calpurnius, who had him thrown into prison and arraigned before the judge Asterius.

The judge summoned Valentine before his tribunal : " How can you, said he, a man of sense and wisdom, look upon the Christ as the true light ?—Believe it, Asterius, Jesus-Christ, my Saviour and my God, is truly the light that enlightens every man in this world.—If it be so, let him prove it, let him restore