

body with lances, and gave up his blessed soul at Calamina, in the year forty-four.

25th.—*Christ's Nativity*, a solemn festival celebrated annually by the Catholic Church from the time of the apostles, in commemoration of our Saviour's birth at Bethlehem, called Christmas, from the mass then celebrated in honour of his holy birth. The nativity of our Lord is a great subject of joy to Christians: all ought to participate in the joy which the angels declared to the shepherds, Christ being born for the salvation of all. This joy consists in giving glory to God, and in relishing the peace given to men of good will. The faithful ought to give great attention to this adorable mystery; they ought not to fail to receive the most holy sacrament; they ought to go to church, as the shepherds went to Bethlehem, full of faith, admiration, and gladness; beholding the Son of God made man, they ought to adore him, to give him thanks, to learn from the child Jesus, humility, simplicity, a contempt of riches, flying from honours, a retirement from the world, self-denial, the love of sufferings, mortification, penance; they ought to reflect on the excess of charity, wherewith the eternal Father hath loved us, having given to us his only Son, to deliver us from sin; and, by such a reflection, to excite themselves to love God with their whole heart, and most earnestly to hate sin,

26th.—St. Stephen, the first martyr after Christ's ascension, was stoned to death by the Jews, in the year thirty-four.

27th.—St. John, apostle and evangelist; after writing his gospel, his banishment, and receiving his Revelations, lived to the time of Trajan the emperor, and both founded and governed the churches of Asia. Finally, worn out with old age, he died at Ephesus, aged ninety-three, in the year sixty-eight, and was buried near the same city.

28th.—*Holy Innocents*, a feast in commemoration of the infants barbarously slaughtered by Herod, when he sought to take away the life of our blessed Saviour. It is also called Childer-Mass Day, from the particular commemoration of those martyred children in the Mass of that day.

29th.—St. Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, and patron of the English clergy, for maintaining the privileges of the church of God, was martyred at Vespers in his own cathedral, in the year one thousand one hundred and seventy.

The several festivals of the saints are instituted by the Church to honour God in his saints, to teach us to imitate their virtues, and honour their martyrdom and sufferings for the faith of Christ.