

04 Chapters 20-23

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Germany

Chapter 20: Norbert is Forced to Leave the City The uproar of the evil doers still did not cease. They complained that they had been deceived because the venerable priest had evaded their trap. So they made a pact among themselves that on an appointed day they should all come together drunk so that if they did anything wrong it would be attributed to drunkenness rather than to premeditation. And they agreed that if anyone went against this decision his home would be confiscated. When this was relayed to the princes of the territory, who seemed to care for the Archbishop because they knew he was a just and holy man, they advised him to leave for a while. He refused and, rejoicing, awaited the martyr's palm. The day agreed upon arrived and when the signal was given the citizenry began to make a lot of noise and shouting. When the Archbishop asked what this was all about, he was told that a large mob was trying to expel his confreres from the Church of the Blessed Mary. But he smiled and said: "It is not to be, because a foundation which the Heavenly Father has planted cannot be uprooted." [131] Then as the people began to gather, horses were prepared and he was forced to leave. He went to the Abbey of Saint John the Baptist [132] which was located in the suburbs of the city. There he spent some time putting his affairs in order. He then went to Gevekenstein Castle [133] to rest from all this turmoil. When he found this castle closed to him - for the enemy arriving ahead of him had seized the fortification - he went to a church of canons which was nearby, where he remained for several days praying that God would direct his way in accord with His will. While he remained there in a humble and saddened frame of mind, peace was restored with the help of god and the mediation of those who were loyal to him. His adversaries gathered contritely and were humbled before him. He received them kindly and demanded only one thing of them, that they not hesitate to be reconciled to his wounded soldier. This they accepted most willingly and repaired the soldier's ruined house and gave him forty silver marks in compensation for the wound he received. After this the fortress, which had previously been closed at his arrival, was opened to him and he was received there with honor, surrounded by a band of many nobles. All the people praised God for the constancy of such a Bishop who remained undefeated, secure in body and spirit, in spite of the evident danger of death. These events took place in the third year of his archepiscopacy. After this he ruled for five years, and from day to day gave honor to the ministry entrusted to him by God, advancing in all religion and virtue, preserving the unity of the Holy Church and resisting and protesting against those who disturbed it and against all schismatics, embracing the good, giving counsel to the desolate, supporting the poor and orphans and widows, fostering and helping to spread religious orders, while setting an example of religious life, presenting himself affably both to the lesser and the greater according as the dignity of his office could bear. Not unmindful of the divine generosity and grace, he daily offered to the Lord his God an upright conscience with a pleasant and charming personality.

Chapter 21: Pope Innocent is Restored to Rome There was still a very serious schism at that time. The Catholic Pope Innocent worked here and there among the Catholics and the schismatic Pierleoni occupied the See of Rome with the help of his relatives and supporters, committing many crimes in the city against the laws and statutes of the Fathers. Because of this, the Emperor Lothair, after holding council with the princes of the empire, arranged an expedition to Italy in order to oust the sacrilegious Pierleoni with the material sword inasmuch as he resisted the spiritual sword. Father Norbert joined this expedition, obedient to the command of Pope Innocent and at the call of the emperor. Though

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frail in body he was nevertheless prompt and resolute in spirit. Afterwards it was clear how necessary and useful he was for the Church while on this expedition. Now while the emperor halted with his army in a place which the inhabitants call "ad sanctum Valentinum"[134], and Pope Innocent was staying at Viterbo, legates from Rome sent by Pierleoni approached the emperor. They tried in various ways -- by entreaty, by bribes, as well as by reasoning - to persuade the emperor to agree with him. When these attempts failed, since Father Norbert spoke against them, they demanded a hearing and appealed to a tribunal of justice. With this, they won over to their side the minds of some of the princes as well as the rest of the faithful to some degree. Hence Norbert, concerned for the peace and honor of the Catholic Church, hastened to Pope Innocent and explained what was happening in the camp. He advised him insistently not to put off providing for himself and his people. Although Norbert was told that it was not fitting for the Sovereign Pontiff to be subject to the judgement of man or be present at tribunals, Pope Innocent, freely and honorably looking to his own interest, put himself at the disposal of Prince Lothair, saying that he would allow himself to be permanently imprisoned if he did not present himself for examination by the royal tribunal at the place and time set for him. And so the deception of Pierleoni, who sought the papacy like a roaring lion[135], was brought to naught. Innocent gradually became more acceptable to all those with sound judgement. Next Lothair moved his army and advanced on Rome following the difficult circuit through Orte and Narni[136], encamping first on Mons Latronum[137], then boldly within the walls of the city on the Aventine[138] close to Santa Sabina.[139] Finally he placed Innocent on his throne in the Lateran Palace. Later when the day arrived on which Lothair was to be consecrated emperor by Pope Innocent, Rome was suddenly thrown into confusion and uproar, fearing that the solemn imposition of the imperial crown by Innocent would bring the inevitable deposition of Pierleoni. And so it was. From this time on Innocent began to grow and gain power, and Pierleoni's power grew weak and declined. Pope Innocent then, along with the cardinals and bishops and his entire clergy, solemnly welcomed Lothair as he entered with his forces and solemnly consecrated him emperor amid the cheers of all present. After his coronation, however, with little forethought the Emperor requested that the Pope grant him the right of investiture of the bishoprics, i.e., that the freedom of the churches be handed over to him for the honor of the empire and the firming up of the bond which he had pledged with the Pope. The Pope seemed inclined to grant this request. Since none of the many bishops present spoke out against this abuse, Archbishop Norbert stepped into their midst in the presence of the Emperor and his military and said: "Father, what are you doing? To whom are you exposing the sheep entrusted to you only to have them torn to pieces? Will you reduce to a maidservant the Church which was free when you received it? The Chair of Peter demands the deeds of Peter. I promised obedience to Peter and to you for the name of Christ, but if you do what is asked of you, I will speak against you in the face of the Church." Thus Father Norbert pleaded his case. And so the Emperor backed off from his improper request and the Pope from his illicit granting of it. This same emperor Lothair was a God-fearing man, an active leader of war, distinguished in arms, prudent in counsel, frightful to the enemies of God, an ally of justice, an enemy of injustice. His courage was known in Sicily, renowned in Saxony, and as long as he lived the Roman Empire which he governed remained firm with the help of God. He too loved the man of God Norbert in that he was often guided by his advice and through him was daily nourished by the word of God. One day a soldier in the Emperor's army was ill and troubled by an evil spirit. Tearfully the soldiers presented this man to the Pope to be cured. Objecting to their intrusion, the Pope went inside to his chambers and left the possessed man in the church to the care of Father Norbert and a few who were with him. Norbert took pity on him and said to his confreres: "Let us approach the Lord in a spirit of humility and contrition to see if perhaps He may deign to look upon the work of His hands in

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this poor man." He said this and immediately looked for a quiet place to pray. After Norbert gave way to tears and groans from noon until evening, he obtained the cure of the infirm man. In the twilight of the night, after many horrid words, the evil spirit left him. The man himself collapsed into the hands of those caring for him and fell asleep. After a little while he woke and got up healthy. The man of God urged him to go to confession, and, both for the remission of past sins and in thanksgiving, he ordered him to abstain for several days from sumptuous foods. He told him straight out that, if he should stray from this rule of abstinence, the same punishment which he just escaped would happen again. Thus cleansed and reconciled to God the formerly possessed man proceeded to Pisa with the man of God. There, he misused his freedom. Because he did not do what he should, he suffered what he didn't want to. While he was staying in Pisa, he was not on his guard but out of curiosity wandered around alone. He was suddenly seized and miserably tormented. Once again he was delivered by the grace of God through the ministry of the priest of God.

Chapter 22: The Death of Norbert After so many labors, physical strength began to forsake the man of God. Worn out by long and severe penitential austerity, his health declined both from the strain of the journey and from the corrupt condition of the air. Nevertheless he returned from Italy and was brought to his city of Magdeburg, but not without great difficulty. There he lay for four months and was overcome with great feebleness. Finally, after having administered his diocese wisely and faithfully for eight years, fully conscious and giving his blessing to those in attendance, he died in blessed peace. As Augustine said, one could not die badly who had lived well[140]. It was the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1134, the Wednesday after Pentecost, the eighth day before the Ides of June[141], in the fifth year of Pope Innocent, in the ninth year of the reign of Lothair.

Chapter 23: The Burial of Norbert Now after the Bishop died, no little contention arose between the cathedral and the Church of Blessed Mary concerning the place of his burial. The Canons of the Cathedral claimed that it was worthy and just, because he had been the head of the churches of that city, that his bones should bring honor to the principal church, and there await the coming of the Sovereign Judge. There he held the title of the church even if he would have lived for a long time. The confreres of the Church of Blessed Mary, on the contrary, said that he had not only been the Archbishop but also a special father to them and their provost till the end. Therefore they ought to have his body, especially since devotion to him demanded that he be buried and rest among his confreres and sons whom he had begotten for God by the seed of the Word of God. To settle this argument a delegation was sent to the Emperor Lothair so that if he himself judged in this matter it would be considered settled. Meanwhile the body lay unburied and day by day was brought to the different monasteries of the city where vigils and those prayers which are due to the faithful departed were devoutly celebrated. Although the heat was intense, no odor of corruption was emitted by the body over so many days. The messengers who had been sent out returned eight days[142] later and by command of the emperor the body was taken to the Church of Blessed Mary and buried before the altar of the Holy Cross. Some years later it was moved to the choir where it awaits the final day in the hope of a blessed resurrection desired greatly by every faith filled soul.