

107// HERE NEXT FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. GERMAIN

St. Germain was of much noble lineage born in the city of Auxerre and was well learned in the arts liberal. And after, he went to Rome for to learn the sciences of droit [rights, law] and of the law, and there received he so much dignity that the senate sent him to the Frenchmen for to have the rule and dignity of Burgundy.

HOW HE CAME TO BE A BISHOP

And thus as he governed the city of Auxerre more diligently than the other, there was in the middle of the city a tree called a pineapple tree, on which were hanged on the branches of this tree, for the marvel of chase and hunting, the heads of wild beasts that had been slain. But when St. Amadour, which was bishop of this city, reprov'd them of such vanities, and warn'd [advised] them to hew down this tree, they would not consent thereto in any manner. And on a time, when Germain was not in the city, the bishop did do hew down this tree, and did do burn it [i.e. had it cut down and had it burned].

And when Germain knew it he was much angry, and forgot Christian religion, and came with a great multitude of knights for to have slain the bishop. And then the bishop knew by revelation divine that St. Germain should be his successor, and forbore and gave place to his hastiness, and went to Autun, and after, when he was come again to Auxerre, he enclosed much subtilly Germain within the church and sacred [consecrated] him there, and said to him that he should be his successor in the bishopric, and so he was; for a little after St. Amadour died and all the people required St. Germain to be bishop.

Germain is said of germ and of ana that is high, that is that there were found in the seed of Germain three sovereign things, that is heat natural, humour, and nourishing, and reason of semence or seed. Germain is said seed burgeoning, for he had in him heat by ardour of great dilection, humour by eagerness of devotion, and seed by virtue of his predication by which he engendered much people to the faith. And Constantinus the priest wrote his life to St. Censurius, bishop of Auxerre.

A LIFE OF FASTING AND SELF-DENIAL

And then he gave all his riches to poor people, and changed his wife into his sister, and tormented his body by the space of thirty years, that he never ate bread of wheat, ne drank wine, ne used no pottage, and would have never salt to make his meat savoury. And two times in the year he would drink wine, that was at Easter and Christmas, and yet for to take away the savour of the wine he would put therein plenty of water, and in his refection [meals] he would take barley bread with ashes, and fasted every day, and never ate but in the even. In winter ne summer he had but one clothing, and that was the hair [hairshirt] next his body, a coat and a gown, and if it happed so that he gave not his vesture to some poor body, he would wear it till it were broken and torn.

His bed was environed [surrounded] with ashes, hair, and sackcloth, and his head lay no higher than his shoulders, but all day wept, and bare about his neck divers relics of saints. He wore none other clothing, and he went oft barefoot and seldom wore any girdle [belt]. The life that he led was above man's power. His life was so straight and hard that it was marvel and pity to see his flesh, and was like a thing not credible.

MIRACLES OF ST. GERMAIN

Devils at Table

And he did so many miracles that, if his merits had not gone before, they should have been thrown phantasms. In a time he was harboured in a place where always after supper the tables were covered when all men had supped, whereof he marvelled, and demanded the host wherefore they covered the tables again after supper, and the host said it was for his neighbours that came to drink each with other. And that night St. Germain concluded to watch for to see what it should be. It was not long after that there came in there a great multitude of devils, and sat at the table in likeness of men and women; and when the holy man saw them he commanded them that they should not depart, and then sent to awake the host, and all the neighbours and guests on all sides, in such wise that every man and woman were found in their houses, and he made all them to come and see if they knew any of them. And they said nay; and then he showed them that they were devils; of whom the people was much abashed because the devils mocked them so. And then St. Germain conjured them, and they went their way, and never after returned.

The Blinding of Attila's Soldiers

In a time St. Lupus bishop of Troyes was besieged by the king Attila, and St. Lupus went upon the gate, and demanded who he was that assieged and assailed them, and the king said to him: I am he, Attila, the scourge and rod of God.

And then the meek bishop said to him, sore weeping: I am Lupus that have wasted the flock of God and have need of the scourging of God.

And then St. Lupus commanded to open the gates, and all the people of Attila were so, by the will of God, blinded, and they passed through the town, and saw no men of the city, ne did no hurt to nobody.

St. Lupus in Britain with St. Germain

And then the blessed St. Lupus took St. Germain with him and went into Britain, whereas there were heresies. But when they were on the sea there arose a right great tempest, which by the merits of St. Germain was anon appeased. Then they were honestly received of the people of the country, whose coming the devils that St. Germain had driven out of such bodies as were beset had told their coming. And when they had been a while in England and had convanquished the heretics, they returned into their countries and proper places.

St. Germain Safe from Fire

On a time it happed that St. Germain lay sick of a malady in a street, and the street was taken with fire, and men counselled him to be borne thence for peril of the fire, and then he put himself against the fire, and the flame burnt all about, and touched nothing that Germain lay in.

St. Germain Revives a Disciple

Another time he returned in to Britain for the heresies, and one of his disciples followed him hastily, and fell sick and lay down in a town, and there died; and when St. Germain returned thereby he demanded to see the sepulchre of his disciple which there was dead, and did do open his sepulchre, and he called him by his name, and demanded him what he did, and if he would no longer go with him, and that other answered and said that he was well, and all things were to him soft and sweet, and would no more come here; and the holy man granted it him that he should abide in rest, and he remised himself [put himself back] in his grave and slept in our Lord.

Miracles and Prophecies in Britain

He preached on a time in the country of Britain in such wise that the king of Britain forbade him his house, and his people also. Then it happed that the king's cowherd went to the pasture with his kine, and received his portion at the king's palace, and bare it to his little house. Then went St. Germain and his fellowship for to see where they might be lodged, and the cowherd brought them to his house, and he saw that they had great hunger, but he had not meat [food]for them and him. This cowherd had but one calf; he slew it and gave it to them, and they took it debonairly [humbly] of the little good that he had, and when they had supped and said graces, St. Germain did do gather together all the bones of the calf and laid them under the skin, and after, made his prayers to God, and anon then the calf arose all alive and whole as he was tofore.

And the next day after, St. Germain demanded the king why he had forbidden him his house, and the king was much abashed and could not answer. Then said St. Germain to him: Thou shalt no more reign, but thou shalt leave thy realm to one better than thee.

And as they of Saxony should fight against the Britons, and they saw that they were but few, and saw the holy man pass by, they called him. And then St. Germain and his fellows preached so long to them that they came to grace of baptism. And on Easter day they cast off their armours, and by great desire of faith purposed them to fight. And when the other [i.e., the Britons] heard that, they purposed to go against them hardily [boldly] for they were dissevered [disarmed]. And St. Germain hid him away with his people [the Saxons], and warned [advised] them when he cried “Alleluia!” they should answer with one voice.

And when the saint had cried “Alleluia!” and the other [the Saxons] had answered, their enemies had so great dread that they threw all their harness [equipment] and armours away, and weened [imagined] certainly that all the mountains should fall on them and also heaven, and so they fled all afraid.

St. Germain Speaks with St. Cassian

On a time as St. Germain passed by Autun and went to the tomb of St. Cassian, he enquired how it stood with him; he answered to him out of the tomb wherein he lay, and said: I am in sweet rest and abide the coming of the Redeemer.

And he said to him: Rest in peace in the name of our Lord, and pray for us devoutly that we may deserve the holy joys of the resurrection.

HIS DEATH IN RAVENNA

And when St. Germain came in Ravenna he was received much honorably of Placida the queen, and of Valentinian her son, and at the supper she sent to him a great vessel of silver full of delicious meat, the which he received, and gave the meat to his servants, and retained the vessel of silver for to give to the poor. And instead of this gift he sent to the queen a dish of wood or of tree and a barley loaf, the which she received gladly, and after, did do cover that dish [i.e., had it covered] with silver and kept it long in great devotion.

On a time that the said queen had desired him to dine with her, he accorded thereto gladly, and because he was weary of travail, of fasting and watching, he came upon an ass from his house unto the palace, and anon as he was at dinner his ass died. And when the queen knew that his ass was dead, she was much sorrowful, and did do present him a right fair and good horse. And when the saint saw him so richly adorned and apparelled he would in no wise take it, but said: Show to me where mine ass is, for he that brought me hither shall bring me home again.

And then he went to his ass, that lay dead, and said to him: Let us return home again, and anon the ass arose and shook him as he had risen from sleep and that he had no harm, and then Germain remounted on his ass and rode home.

But tofore ere he departed from Ravenna he said that he should not be long in this world, and anon after he became sick of the fevers, and the seventh day after, he passed unto our Lord and his body was borne into France, as he had required to the queen. And he died about the year of our Lord four hundred and twenty.

THE CANDLES AT VERSAILLES

St. Germain had promised, by his life, to St. Eusebius bishop of Versailles, that when he returned he should hallow his church that he had founded and when St. Eusebius, bishop of Versailles understood that he was dead, he would himself hallow his church, and made to light the candles and tapers, but the more they lighted them the more were they extinct and put out. And when Eusebius saw that, he perceived that the dedication was made ere he would come and do it, or else of some other bishop. And when the body of St. Germain was brought to Versailles, as soon as it was entered in to the church all the tapers were lit divinely. Then St. Eusebius remembered the promises of St. Germain, and that which he promised, living, he would do it being dead.

But it is not to be understood of the great Eusebius of Versailles, that this was done in his time, for he died under Valens the emperor, and from the death of him unto the death of St. Germain was more than fifty years from that one to that other, but this was another Eusebius under whom this said thing was done.

The [iconography of St. Germain](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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