

SAINT BEDE THE VENERABLE

LIFE OF THE BLESSED FELIX THE
CONFESSOR

Beati Felicis Confessoris Vita

SABBATISMUS

Saint Bede the Venerable (672–735)
Beati Felicis Confessoris Vita · Life of the Blessed Felix the Confessor

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BEATI FELICIS CONFESSORIS VITA. (C)

Felicissimum beati Felicis triumphum, quem in Nola Campaniae civitate, Domino adjuvante, promeruit, Paulinus ejusdem civitatis episcopus versibus hexametris pulcherrime ac plenissime descripsit; qui quia metricis potius quam simplicibus sunt habiles lectoribus, placuit nobis ob plurimorum utilitatem, eandem sancti confessoris historiam planioribus dilucidare sermonibus, ejusque imitari industriam qui martyrium beati Cassiani de metrico opere Prudentii in commune apertumque omnibus eloquium transtulit.

Igitur Felix natus est in Nola quidem Campaniae, sed patre Syro, nomine Hermia, qui de Oriente Nola veniens, ibidemque quasi indigena inhabitans, genuit filium Felicem: eique defunctus reliquit haereditatem substantiae locupletis, cui tamen ipse promissae in coelestibus haereditatis dona praeposuit. Habuit autem et fratrem cognomine sui patris, id est Hermiam, cum quo patrimonium divideret terrenum: qui longe a Felicis moribus agens, atque ideo felicitate indignus perpetua effectus est. Nam terrena solummodo bona diligere studuit, et Caesaris potius quam Christi esse miles elegit.

At contra Felix nominis sui mysterium factis exsequens, mox a puero se divino famulatu subiecit, et crescente gratia virtutum, primo lectoris officium in Ecclesia suscepit, ac post ad exorcistae gradum provectus, immundos ex obsessis corporibus spiritus ejicere coepit. Cumque et in hoc ministerio virtutibus clarus exstisset, non mora, condignum meritis presbyterii gradum subiit. Nec minor gradu, mente et opere remansit, sicut etiam adveniens tentationum turbo probavit.

Nam tempore eodem exorta infidelium persecutio, gravi Ecclesiam certamine pulsavit: nec tamen portae mortis portas filiae Sion ab annuntianda laude sui Creatoris avertere potuerunt. Cumque magistri auctoresque perfidiae primum suae vesaniae conflictum contra ipsos veritatis ac fidei dominicae magistros intendissent, primosque episcopos vel presbyteros Ecclesiarum ad terrorem minorum, aut morti tradere, aut ad negandam fidem cogere conspirassent: factum est ut ministri erroris et infesti furoris Nola quoque pervenientes, episcopum urbis illius nomine Maximum, virum doctrina, pietate atque aetate venerabilem, ad tormenta quaererent. Quod ille animadvertens, memor dominici praecepti, quo dictum est: Cum vos persecuti fuerint in civitate ista, fugite in aliam, petit ad tempus secessum loci remotioris, relicto ad tuitionem civitatis Felice presbytero, quem filii loco amplectebatur, atque haeredem suae sedis accipere desiderabat.

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED CONFESSOR FELIX. (C)

The most fortunate triumph of the blessed Felix, which he earned in the city of Nola in Campania with the Lord's help, Paulinus, bishop of that same city, described most beautifully and fully in hexameter verses; because these are more suited to readers skilled in metrics rather than to simple ones, it has pleased us, for the benefit of the many, to elucidate this same history of the holy confessor in plainer words, and to imitate the industry of him who translated the martyrdom of the blessed Cassian from the metrical work of Prudentius into a common and open speech for all.

Therefore, Felix was born in Nola of Campania, but of a Syrian father named Hermias, who, coming from the East to Nola and dwelling there as if a native, begot his son Felix; and upon his death, he left him the inheritance of a rich substance, to which, however, Felix himself preferred the gifts of the promised inheritance in heaven. He also had a brother with the same name as his father, that is, Hermias, with whom he was to divide the earthly patrimony; this brother, acting far differently from the ways of Felix, was thus rendered unworthy of perpetual felicity. For he strove to love only earthly goods, and chose to be a soldier of Caesar rather than of Christ.

But Felix, on the contrary, carrying out the mystery of his name in his deeds, subjected himself to divine service from his boyhood, and as the grace of virtues grew, he first undertook the office of lector in the Church, and afterwards, having been promoted to the rank of exorcist, he began to cast out unclean spirits from possessed bodies. And when he had become distinguished for his virtues in this ministry as well, without delay, he ascended to the rank of presbyter, worthy of his merits. Nor did he remain lesser than his rank in mind and deed, as the coming whirlwind of temptations also proved.

For at that same time, a persecution by the infidels arose and struck the Church with a severe conflict; yet the gates of death could not turn the gates of the daughter of Zion from announcing the praise of her Creator. And when the masters and authors of perfidy had directed the first assault of their madness against the very masters of truth and of the Lord's faith, and had conspired to either hand over the foremost bishops or presbyters of the Churches to death or to force them to deny the faith, for the terror of the lesser ones, it happened that the ministers of error and hostile fury, arriving also at Nola, sought out for torture the bishop of that city, named Maximus, a man venerable in doctrine, piety, and age. When he perceived this, mindful of the Lord's precept, in which it is said: "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another," he sought for a time a retreat in a more remote place, leaving behind for the protection of the city the presbyter Felix, whom he embraced as a son and desired to receive as the heir to his see.

At persecutores ubi episcopum invenire nequiverunt, nihil morati manus in Felicem mittere contendunt, eumque primum quasi maximam post episcopum urbis arcem, a constantia famosae suae virtutis dejicere, vel blandiendo promissis, vel poenis terrendo satagunt. Comprehensus igitur Felix ab adversariis furentibus, sed ipse multum de interna Spiritus sancti consolatione confisus, mittitur in carcerem tenebrosum, ubi manus simul et collum ferrea vincula stringunt, nervo pedes arctantur; fragmenta quoque testarum subter eum sternebantur, ne inter horrorem et frigora longae noctis ligatus, vel somnum vel requiem capere aliquam continuo horum acumine compunctus sineretur.

Interea episcopus, qui ad montium latibula hostem fugiendo secesserat, et ipse non minore martyrium passione gerebat, quam si ferro vinctus aut testis superpositus, vel flammis esset datus urendus. Urebat namque animum illius cura maxima sui gregis, urebat et corpus fames, una cum gelidae rigore hiemis; qui inter spineta sine tecto et alimento jacens, noctem una cum die pervigil sollicitis continuabat in precibus. Nec difficile membra senilia, et longis exhausta jejuniis, tanta vis malorum comprimens, vel ad mortem usque coegit.

Sed ut superna pietas apertissime, quanta sui cura vir ille dignus esset, ostenderet, mittitur e coelo angelus, qui beatum Felicem confessorem vinculis exemptum, ad quaerendum, recreandumque ac domi revocandum antistitem ocus venire praeciperet. Erant autem plures eodem in carcere clausi: sed angelus adveniens, soli Felici, qui pietatis gratia vinctus erat, apparuit, luce splendens corusca, et ipsam quoque domum gratia lucis adimplens, cujus voce simul et luce Felix motus intremuit. Ac primum quidem se somnii imagine illudi putavit; at angelus surgere illum, et se sequi exeundo praecepit. Qui stupens ad imperium jubentis, causabatur se exire non posse, quia et vinculis et claustro carceris et custodum diligentia teneretur. Porro angelus iterata voce surgere illum propere, nihil obsistentibus vinculis, jussit; et dicto citius catenae de manibus et collo ejus, compedesque cecidere de pedibus. Eduxit autem illum foras miro rerum ordine, aperta sibi quidem janua carceris, sed caeteris clausa; ita ut per ipsos custodes, quibus claudebatur, ignaros rerum iter agerent, ipso angelo instar columnae Mosaicae, et ducatum Felici et lumen, usque dum hostium manus evaderet, praesentiae suae fulgore praebente.

But the persecutors, when they could not find the bishop, without delay strove to lay hands on Felix, and they labored to cast him down from the constancy of his famed virtue—him who was, as it were, the greatest citadel of the city after the bishop—either by flattering him with promises or by terrifying him with punishments. Therefore, Felix, seized by the furious adversaries, but himself greatly trusting in the internal consolation of the Holy Spirit, was sent into a dark prison, where iron chains bound his hands and neck together, and his feet were shackled with a cord; fragments of pottery were also strewn beneath him, so that, bound amidst the horror and cold of the long night, he would not be allowed to get any sleep or rest, being continually pricked by their sharpness.

Meanwhile, the bishop, who had withdrawn to the hiding places of the mountains, fleeing the enemy, was himself enduring a passion of martyrdom no less than if he had been bound with iron, or placed upon potsherds, or given to the flames to be burned. For the great care for his flock burned his soul, and hunger burned his body, along with the rigor of the icy winter; lying among thorn-bushes without shelter or food, he continued through night and day, wakeful in anxious prayers. And it was not difficult for such a force of evils, pressing upon his aged limbs, exhausted by long fasts, to drive him even to the point of death.

But so that heavenly piety might show most openly how worthy that man was of its care, an angel was sent from heaven, who was to command the blessed Felix the confessor, freed from his chains, to come quickly to seek, revive, and bring back home the bishop. Now, there were many others locked in the same prison; but the angel, upon arriving, appeared only to Felix, who had been bound for the sake of piety, shining with a dazzling light and filling the very house with the grace of that light, by whose voice and light Felix was moved and trembled. And at first, indeed, he thought he was being deceived by the image of a dream; but the angel commanded him to rise and to follow him out. Astonished at the command of the one ordering him, he made the excuse that he could not leave, because he was held by chains, by the confinement of the prison, and by the diligence of the guards. Furthermore, the angel, with a repeated voice, ordered him to rise quickly, with the chains offering no obstacle; and quicker than said, the chains fell from his hands and neck, and the shackles from his feet. Moreover, he led him outside in a wondrous order of events, the prison door being open for him but closed to the others; so that they made their way past the very guards by whom he was confined, who were ignorant of events, with the angel himself, like the Mosaic pillar, providing both guidance and light to Felix with the brilliance of his presence, until he should escape the hands of his enemies.

Ut autem pervenit beatus Felix confessor ad locum deserti, quo episcopus secesserat, invenit eum aegra suspiria tenui flatu trahentem: et quidem gavisus, quod eum viventem invenerat; contristatus vero est multum, quod inventum morti proximum vidit. Itaque amplexus et osculatus est Patrem, coepitque tentare, si forte crebro anhelitu sui oris et sui fotu corporis, aliquid caloris posset gelidis ejus artubus afferre. Cum vero diu laborans, neque clamando, neque tangendo aliquid sensus vitalis in ejus posset vel animo excitare vel corpore, sed neque ignem aut alimentum in proximo, quo eum rigentem ac tabescentem recrearet, haberet: tandem invento salubri consilio, flectit genua sua ad Patrem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, suppliciter obsecrans, ut ipse coelitus eum juvaret, quo ministerium pietatis, quod jussus erat, erga Patrem suum explere valeret. Nec mora, exauditus vidit pendentem vicinis in sentibus uvam: et illius esse munus agnovit, qui naturarum conditor atque auctor omnium, et aquam de petra produxit arida, et ipsam cum voluit in vinum convertit. Laetatusque multum hoc munere divinae pietatis, tulit racemum, atque ad os episcopi morientis admovit: sed quia ille strictis dentibus instar mortui, utpote omni sensu et cordis et animae carens, oblatum sibi gustum prorsus accipere nesciebat; tandem sanctus presbyter Felix felici manuum suarum luctamine aperuit arida ejus labia, et sic ori ejus resoluta uva, quantum potuit succi salutaris infudit. Quo gustato, mox Pater sensum animae recepit et corporis, aperiuntur deinde oculi, linguaque quae siccis haerebat faucibus ad loquendum soluta est.

Et ubi plene reviviscens, Felicem esse qui ad se quaerendum venisset agnovit, paterna illum pietate complexus, et quare tam sero veniret conquestus est. «Ubi, inquires, tam diu demoratus es, fili? Nam te jamdudum Dominus ad me venturum promiserat. Vides autem quia etsi fragilitate victus corporis ad horam cessi, solidam tamen animi fidelis constantiam servavi, sicut etiam loci hujus, ad quem secessi, status indicat. Poteram quidem ad vicum aliquem sive aliam urbem, ubi ab hostibus essem tutus, intrare, si mihi vilis fides et chara haec vita fuisset. Nunc autem cuncta hominum refugia declinans, ad deserta vero montium confugiens, divinae tantum me gratiae tuitioni credidi, ut videlicet me ipse quocunque modo vel ordine vellet, aut in hac vita conservaret, aut in futuram transferret. Neque vero me spes, quae in Deum erat, fefellit, sicut tuo manifeste probatur adventu, per quem ab ipso, ut ita dixerim, limine mortis sum revocatus ad vitam. Unde, nate mi, complere festinus coeptum pietatis opus curato, et impositum me humeris domum reportare satage.»

When, however, the blessed Felix the confessor arrived at the deserted place where the bishop had withdrawn, he found him drawing weak sighs with a faint breath: and indeed he rejoiced because he had found him alive; but he was greatly saddened because he saw that the one he had found was near death. Therefore, he embraced and kissed the Father, and began to try if perhaps by the frequent breath of his own mouth and the warmth of his own body, he could bring some heat to his icy limbs. But when, after laboring for a long time, he could arouse no vital sense in his mind or body, neither by shouting nor by touching, and had neither fire nor food nearby with which to revive him as he grew stiff and wasted away: at last, having found a salutary counsel, he bent his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, humbly beseeching that He Himself might help him from heaven, so that he might be able to fulfill the ministry of piety which he had been commanded to perform towards his Father. Without delay, having been heard, he saw a bunch of grapes hanging on nearby thorn-bushes: and he recognized it to be the gift of Him who is the founder of natures and the author of all things, who both brought forth water from a dry rock, and, when He willed, converted it into wine. And rejoicing greatly in this gift of divine piety, he took the cluster and brought it to the mouth of the dying bishop: but because the latter, with teeth clenched like a dead man, lacking all sense of heart and soul, was utterly unable to receive the taste offered to him; at last the holy priest Felix, with a fortunate struggle of his hands, opened his dry lips, and thus, having crushed the grape into his mouth, poured in as much of the saving juice as he could. Having tasted this, the Father soon recovered the sense of his soul and body, then his eyes were opened, and his tongue, which was stuck to his dry throat, was loosened for speaking.

And when, fully revived, he recognized that it was Felix who had come to seek him, he embraced him with fatherly piety and complained about why he had come so late. "Where," he said, "have you delayed so long, my son? For the Lord had long since promised me that you would come. You see, however, that although I yielded for a time, overcome by the fragility of the body, I have nevertheless preserved the solid constancy of a faithful soul, as the condition of this place to which I have withdrawn also indicates. I could indeed have entered some village or another city, where I would be safe from enemies, if my faith had been cheap to me and this life dear. But now, shunning all human refuges and fleeing to the deserts of the mountains, I have entrusted myself only to the protection of divine grace, so that He Himself might, in whatever way or manner He wished, either preserve me in this life or transfer me to the next. Nor indeed has the hope that was in God deceived me, as is manifestly proven by your arrival, through which I have been recalled to life from the very threshold of death, so to speak. Therefore, my son, take care to quickly complete the work of piety you have begun, and make haste to carry me home placed upon your shoulders."

Quibus dictis, Felix celerrime quod jubebatur, explevit: revectumque humeris antistitem suam ad domum retulit, quam unica servabat anus. In tantum namque antistes venerabilis a mundi erat rebus alienatus, ut illi de omni turba domus, et summa census, anus una superesset. Pulsatis ergo foribus, hanc suscitavit Felix, surgentique ac januam aperienti dedit et commendavit episcopum. Tunc episcopus pro impenso sibi officio pietatis, beato Felici debitam gratiarum retulit actionem, et imposita capiti ejus dextera, paterna illum benedictione donavit. Qui egressus inde, paucis diebus et ipse in domo sua, donec persecutionis turbo cessaret, delituit. Quod dum fieret, deseruit latebram, et laetantibus de suo adventu civibus sese laetum reddidit: ac per omnia digrediens, solabatur et confortabat verbo exhortationis animos singulorum, qui acerbitate praemissae tempestatis non modicum fuerant conturbati. Nec solum vero verbo, sed et suo illos docebat exemplo et prospera mundi et adversa despicere, sola aeternae patriae gaudia quaerere, solam superni judicis iram formidare.

Rursum mota persecutione, quaeritur Felix, veniuntque hostes usque ad habitaculum ejus, illum ocus rapere ac morti tradere sitientes: qui tum forte ab aedibus suis absens, in medio civitatis cum amicis consistebat, et more sibi solito verbum fidei circumstantibus turbis praedicabat. Quem eo loci esse audientes adversarii, mox strictis gladiis accurrunt: sed pervenientes ad eum, mutato divina provisione aut vultu ipsius, aut corde illorum, nequaquam eum quem optime noverant, agnoscere valebant. Interrogantibus ergo ipsum, ubi esset Felix, intellexit vir prudentissimus, divinitus actum esse, ne eum cognoscerent, ridensque inquiringibus: «Nescio, inquit, Felicem, quem quaeritis.» Nec prorsus fefellit: nemo enim seipsum facie novit.

Qui statim relinquentes eum, diverterunt alio, et quos forte obvios habebant, interrogabant ubi esset Felix: e quibus unus causae prorsus ignarus, et furere eos credens, coepit objurgare eos dementiae, qui praesentem non possent cognoscere eum, cum quo loquebantur: pariterque eis quo discederet ille, quem quaerebant, ostendit. Qui gravius furentes, statim vestigia beati Felicis insequuntur.

Having said these things, Felix most swiftly carried out what was commanded: and carrying the prelate back on his shoulders, he brought him to his own house, which a single old woman kept. For the venerable prelate was so alienated from the things of the world that of all his household and great wealth, only one old woman remained to him. Therefore, having knocked on the doors, Felix roused her, and to her as she rose and opened the door, he gave and entrusted the bishop. Then the bishop, for the pious service rendered to him, returned due thanks to the blessed Felix, and placing his right hand on his head, he bestowed upon him a paternal blessing. And he, having departed from there, also hid himself in his own house for a few days, until the storm of persecution should cease. When this happened, he left his hiding place and joyfully presented himself to the citizens who were rejoicing at his arrival; and going about through all places, he consoled and strengthened the souls of each one with the word of exhortation, who had been no little disturbed by the bitterness of the preceding tempest. And not only by word, but also by his own example, he taught them to despise both the prosperity and adversity of the world, to seek only the joys of the eternal homeland, and to fear only the wrath of the supernal judge.

The persecution having been stirred up again, Felix was sought, and enemies came to his dwelling, thirsting to seize him quickly and hand him over to death. But he, being by chance absent from his house at that time, was standing in the middle of the city with friends and, according to his usual custom, was preaching the word of faith to the surrounding crowds. Hearing that he was in that place, his adversaries soon ran up with drawn swords; but upon reaching him, his face or their hearts having been changed by divine providence, they were by no means able to recognize him whom they knew very well. Therefore, when they asked him where Felix was, the most prudent man understood that it was brought about by divine will that they should not recognize him, and smiling, he said to the inquirers: "I do not know the Felix whom you seek." And he did not deceive them at all, for no one knows himself by face.

They, immediately leaving him, turned elsewhere, and whomever they happened to meet, they asked where Felix was. One of these, entirely ignorant of the matter and believing them to be mad, began to rebuke them for their foolishness, that they could not recognize the man present with whom they were speaking; and at the same time, he showed them in which direction the one they sought was departing. Raging more fiercely, they immediately followed the tracks of the blessed Felix.

At ille, appropinquantibus eis, admonitus tumultu praecurrentis civitatis, et clamoribus attoniti adventu hostium vulgi, secessit in secretiorem locum, qui nil quidem munimenti firmioris habens, semiruti tantum muri erat fragmine praeseptus: sed mox ut virum Dei recepit, miro eum divinae manus est opere tutatus. Repentino etenim rudere concrevit ibidem agger qui eumdem locum praecluderet: sed et aranea divino nutu, cui omnis creatura deservit, confestim nutantes ipso in loco telas suspendit. Quo cum pervenissent, obstupuerunt hostes, et presso gradu loquebantur mutuo, dicentes: «Nonne stultum est nos huc hominem quaerendo ingredi, cum liquido appareat, neminem hic praeisse? quia si quisquam intrasset, nequaquam hic aranearum fila integra remanerent, quae etiam muscae perrumpentes minimae nonnunquam scindere solent. Constat ergo quia qui huc secessisse Felicem dixit, astu fecit, ut nos ab ejus inventione longius abstraheret: ergo recedamus ac dimittamus hic hominis latebras scrutari, ubi ipsa loci facies neminem intrasse praemonstrat.» Sic delusa sollicitudine quaerentium, discedunt propere frementes et non minus quam in Felicem, rabida mente frendentes in eum qui se in loca talia suis dolis induxerat: ubi multa claruit sapientia pii conditoris ac protectoris nostri. Certe nonnunquam muri urbium altissimi ac munitissimi, cives suos obsidentibus adversariis produnt magis quam liberant: et humilem Christus famulum suum a persequentibus armatis hostibus, tremulis aranearum casibus, ne inveniri vel capi posset, abscondit, vere ut venerabilis Pater Paulinus de his loquens ait: Ubicunque Christus adest nobis, et fiet aranea murus: At cui Christus abest, et murus aranea fiet.

Discesserunt ergo, incumbente jam vespera, hostes, et Felix illis abeuntibus, liberior alias petit latebras, gaudens de adiutorio divinae protectionis, secumque decantans: Nam etsi ambulem in medio umbrae mortis, non timebo mata, quoniam tu mecum es. Die autem facto, secessit in locum, inter ipsa aedificiorum tecta secretiorem, ubi sex mensibus continuis ab hominum quidem notitia omnium segregatus, sed divinae praesentiae gratia fruitus, manebat absconditus, videlicet juxta vocem Psalmistae, in abscondito vultus ejus a conturbatione hominum, qui etiam miro illum atque hominibus inusitato ordine tanto temporis spatio pavit. Manebat namque in vicinis aedibus quaedam mulier Deo devota, cujus ministerio nescientis scienter ipse, qui est totius scientiae fons et origo, Dominus utebatur.

But he, as they were approaching, warned by the tumult of the city running ahead and by the cries of the crowd astonished at the arrival of the enemies, withdrew to a more secret place, which, having no stronger fortification, was enclosed only by the fragment of a half-ruined wall. But as soon as it received the man of God, it protected him by a wondrous work of the divine hand. For a mound of rubble suddenly grew up in that very place to block it off; and a spider, by divine will, which every creature serves, immediately hung its trembling webs in that spot. When the enemies arrived there, they were astonished, and walking softly, they spoke to one another, saying: "Is it not foolish for us to enter here seeking a man, when it is clearly apparent that no one has gone before? For if anyone had entered, the spider's threads would by no means remain intact here, which even the smallest flies breaking through are accustomed to tear. It is clear, therefore, that he who said Felix withdrew here did so with cunning, to lead us further from finding him. Therefore, let us withdraw and cease to search for the man's hiding places here, where the very face of the place shows that no one has entered." Thus, the anxiety of the seekers having been deluded, they departed quickly, fuming and, no less than at Felix, gnashing their teeth with rabid minds at him who had led them to such places by his tricks; wherein the great wisdom of our pious creator and protector shone forth. Certainly, sometimes the highest and most fortified walls of cities betray their citizens to besieging adversaries rather than free them; and Christ hid His humble servant from the pursuing armed enemies with the trembling snafus of spiders, so that he could not be found or captured, truly as the venerable Father Paulinus, speaking of these things, says: Wherever Christ is with us, a spider's web will become a wall: But for whom Christ is absent, even a wall will become a spider's web.

The enemies therefore departed as evening was already falling, and Felix, with them gone, sought other hiding places with greater freedom, rejoicing in the help of divine protection and singing to himself: "For though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." When day broke, he withdrew to a more secret place among the very roofs of the buildings, where for six continuous months he remained hidden, segregated indeed from the notice of all men, but enjoying the grace of the divine presence, that is, according to the voice of the Psalmist, "in the secret of His countenance from the disturbance of men," who also fed him for so long a space of time in a wondrous and humanly unaccustomed manner. For in a neighboring house lived a certain woman devoted to God, whose unknowing ministry the Lord Himself, who is the fount and origin of all knowledge, knowingly used.

Coquebat enim panes mulier, coquebat alias escas in cibaria domus suae: et facta in excessu mentis, eo loco inferebat has, ubi Felix confessor latebat, ibique sumendas illi ponebat, ita ut neque huc se intrasse neque redisse unquam scire posset: sed praeparatas escas domi se posuisse credens, ita semper abibat, ponendae memor, et mox positae immemor escae. Et sic B. Felicem ferunt sex, ut dixi, mensibus in iisdem latebris obscuri et angusti tecti mansisse, ab humana quidem societate sejunctum, sed nunquam civium supernorum praesentia desertum; et parco nimirum victu, sed coelitus ministrato, vitam duxisse felicem. Quo tempore perhibetur etiam divinae colloctionis dono saepius dignus fuisse habitus. Erat autem iisdem, in quibus morabatur, habitaculis, cisterna vetus, de qua ipse in primis pauperem potum hauriebat: sed haec cum nimio aestatis esset siccata calore, non tamen beato confessori, unde viveret, defuit. Etenim pius conditor ac provisor salutis nostrae, qui quondam sicco aere caetero, unum solummodo vellus pluvia coelesti perfudit, ipse suo confessori, silenti prorsus ac sereno aere, prout opus habebat, occulti roris gratiam, qua sitiens recrearetur, ministravit

Completo autem hoc tempore, admonitus est oraculo divino procedere de latebris, eo quod jam persecutionis turbo pertransisset. Qui ut repentinus apparuit in publico, gratissime ab omnibus, quasi a paradiso veniens, susceptus est. Coepit autem ex tempore fidem confirmare omnium, quae saevitia tempestatis erat non minimum convulsa. Interea Deo dilectus antistes Maximus, longa provectus aetate, diem clausit ultimum. Nec mora: Felix in episcopatu omnium iudicio eligitur, qui et confessor existens invictissimus, et doctor suavissimus, et quae bona ore docebat, ipse cuncta opere compleret. Verum Felix, ut etiam humilitatis quantam in corde haberet sublimitatem insinueret, verecunda se voce, ne hunc gradum suscipere deberet, excusavit, dicens compresbyterum suum Quintum, multo dignius honorem praefati gradus posse subire, eo quod is septem diebus ante quam ipse, ad ordinem presbyterii fuisset promotus. Quod ita, ut postulabat, expletum est: susceptumque episcopatus officium ita idem Quintus administravit, ut humiliter beatissimo confessori submissus, illum pro se sermonem ad populum facere juberet, et ipse plebem officio, Felix doctrina regeret.

Qui videlicet Felix, cum constantia confessionis et virtute valde praeclarus esset humilitatis, etiam summus voluntariae paupertatis amator exstitit. Possederat namque ex paterna haereditate praedia multa, domosque ac divitias plurimas, sed tempore persecutionis proscriptus, cuncta amiserat.

For the woman would bake bread and cook other foods for the sustenance of her household; and, being in an ecstasy of mind, she would bring these to the place where Felix the confessor was hiding, and there she would place them for him to take, in such a way that she could never know that she had entered or returned from there; but believing she had placed the prepared food at home, she always departed thus, mindful of placing the food, and immediately forgetful of the food once placed. And so they say that Blessed Felix remained for six months, as I have said, in the same hiding places of a dark and narrow roof, separated indeed from human society, but never deserted by the presence of the heavenly citizens; and he led a happy life on a meager diet, to be sure, but one ministered from heaven. During this time, it is also reported that he was often deemed worthy of the gift of divine colloquy. Now, in the same dwellings where he was staying, there was an old cistern, from which he at first drew a meager drink; but when this had dried up from the excessive heat of summer, the blessed confessor was nevertheless not left without means to live. For the pious creator and provider of our salvation, who once soaked only a single fleece with heavenly rain while the rest of the air was dry, Himself ministered to His confessor, as he had need, the grace of a hidden dew in the utterly silent and serene air, by which he might be refreshed in his thirst.

When this time was completed, he was admonished by a divine oracle to come forth from his hiding places, because the storm of persecution had now passed. When he suddenly appeared in public, he was most gratefully received by all, as if coming from paradise. From that time, he began to confirm the faith of all, which had been no little shaken by the savagery of the storm. Meanwhile, the bishop Maximus, beloved of God, advanced in great age, closed his final day. Without delay, Felix was chosen for the episcopate by the judgment of all, as he was a most unconquered confessor, a most gentle teacher, and had fulfilled in deed all the good things he taught with his mouth. But Felix, to show also how great a sublimity of humility he had in his heart, excused himself with a modest voice from having to accept this rank, saying that his fellow presbyter Quintus could much more worthily undertake the honor of the aforesaid rank, because he had been promoted to the order of the presbytery seven days before himself. This was carried out as he requested; and Quintus administered the office of the episcopate he had received in such a way that, humbly submissive to the most blessed confessor, he would order him to preach the sermon to the people in his stead, and he himself would rule the flock by his office, while Felix ruled by his teaching.

This Felix, who was indeed very distinguished for the constancy of his confession and the virtue of his humility, was also a supreme lover of voluntary poverty. For he had possessed many estates, houses, and very great riches from his paternal inheritance, but having been proscribed in the time of persecution, he had lost everything.

At vero pace Ecclesiis reddita, cum posset jura sua repetere, nequaquam ultra volebat: sed amicis suadentibus, ut debita sibi jura reciperet, quae recepta cum fenore magnae mercedis dispergere ac dare pauperibus posset, nullatenus id facere consentiens, forti sententia suggestiones eorum repellebat, dicens: «Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt. Absit enim ut res, quas causa confessionis perdiidi, repetam; absit, ut terrenas opes, quas coelestium bonorum contemplatione semel contempsimus, quasi haec minus sola sufficiant, ulla ratione reposcam: quin potius pauper spiritu sequar Jesum, quo opulenter regni coelorum dona percipiam: nec diffidendum quin ille, qui me et vinculis tenebrisque diri carceris eripuit, et ab hominibus secretum tanto tempore pavit, etiam caetero vitae meae spatio, jactantem in se cogitatum meum, ipse me enutriet. Hunc retinens animum beatus confessor, tria tantum jugera ruris modici, et haec conducta, et unum hortulum proprii juris, unde viveret, habuit. Sed haec utraque, ne uno quidem famulo adjutus, propria manu coluit: fructum autem ejusdem suae messis, vel hortuli adultum cum pauperibus semper communicare gaudebat. Eandem autem et in habitu parcimoniam vir beatissimus sectabatur, ita ut simplici tantum vestimento, et quod nonnunquam vix sibi sufficeret, esset contentus; si quid vero superesset, pauperibus erogaret: et si forte aliunde contigit ut geminum haberet indumentum, mox nudum meliore refovit.

Tali vivens pietate vir et nomine et merito Felix, plenus dierum atque operum bonorum defunctus est: ac viam patrum secutus, aeternam est receptus in gloriam, sicut etiam signa quae in ecclesia in qua sepultus est sunt facta perplura testantur.

Erat enim ibi quidam rusticus pauper rebus, sed fide integer, qui angustam pauperiem duorum solummodo boum possessione sustentabat, vel ipse videlicet his utens, vel vicinis utendos pacta mercede commodans: quos cum multa inops cura diligeret atque servaret, quadam nocte furto ablatos perdidit: ac mane facto, cum eos furatos certissime comperisset, amissa omni spe suae quaesitionis vel inventionis, petit rapido cursu ecclesiam sancti Felicis;

But when peace was restored to the Churches, although he could have reclaimed his rights, he no longer wished to do so: and when his friends urged him to recover the rights owed to him, which, once recovered with the interest of a great reward, he could distribute and give to the poor, he by no means consented to do it, but with a strong resolve he rejected their suggestions, saying: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. Forbid it that I should reclaim the things which I lost for the sake of my confession; forbid it that I should, for any reason, demand back the earthly riches which I once scorned in contemplation of celestial goods, as if these latter alone were not enough: rather, poor in spirit, I shall follow Jesus, so that I may more richly receive the gifts of the kingdom of heaven: nor should it be doubted that He who rescued me from the chains and darkness of a dreadful prison, and who fed me in secret from men for so long a time, will Himself also nourish me for the rest of my life's span, as I cast my cares upon Him." Retaining this spirit, the blessed confessor had only three acres of modest land, and these rented, and one small garden of his own right, from which to live. But he cultivated both of these with his own hand, not even aided by a single servant: and he always rejoiced to share the grown fruit of his harvest or of his small garden with the poor. Moreover, the most blessed man pursued the same parsimony in his attire, so that he was content with only a simple garment, which at times was barely sufficient for himself; if indeed anything was left over, he would bestow it upon the poor: and if by chance it happened from some other source that he had a second garment, he immediately warmed a naked person with the better one.

Living with such piety, the man Felix, both in name and in merit, died full of days and good works: and having followed the way of the fathers, he was received into eternal glory, as is also testified by the very many signs that have occurred in the church in which he was buried.

For there was a certain peasant, poor in possessions but sound in faith, who sustained his narrow poverty with the possession of only two oxen, either using them himself, you see, or lending them to his neighbors for an agreed-upon fee: which oxen, since he loved and guarded them with great, needy care, he lost one night, stolen away by theft: and when morning came, since he had ascertained most certainly that they had been stolen, having lost all hope of seeking or finding them, he made his way with rapid course to the church of Saint Felix;

ibidemque adveniens, ante fores domus sanctae prosternitur, fixoque in terram vultu implorat et obsecrat sanctum Felicem reddere sibi boves quos perdiderat, testatus multum cum lacrymis, nunquam se inde, si non boves reciperet, exiturum. Quod cum die toto voce quidem rustica, sed fidelissima mente fecisset, superveniente vespera, ejectus est violentia turbae, et sacris propulsatus ab aedibus. Venit autem domum, nec omittit continuis in lamentis noctem ducere pervigilem. Verum quia omnis qui petit accipit, et qui quaerit invenit, et pulsanti aperietur, et sicut Psalmista ait, desiderium pauperum exaudivit Dominus: medio noctis tempore cum caeteris hominibus ac rebus omnibus quietis, ipse solus excitante suo dolore ac paupertate pervigil jaceret: mirum dictu, venere subito ad ostium ejus boves, quos quaerebat, divino videlicet nutu et praedonibus erepti, et ad domum domini per loca avia inter tenebras noctis errorisque revocati: pulsantesque cornibus ostia ejus in quo manebat tugurii, jam sese advenisse signabant. Sed ille multum tremens, non jam boves suos, sed fures sibi rursus adesse credens, diutius fores aperire tardavit, donec iidem boves, quasi causam domini tardantis intelligentes, mugitu quoque emisso se esse, qui ad ostia domestica pulsarent, demonstrarent. Receptis autem bobus rusticus, non rustice sed docte ac fideliter agens, festinavit primo mane debitas redditori suo gratias rependere. Assumens enim secum boves, venit ad ecclesiam sancti Felicis, omnibus et illo iter faciens et ibidem perveniens, beneficia quae a sancto confessore percepisset, laetabunda voce replicans et ostendens. Et quia multum plorans, vel inquirendo suos boves, vel in recipiendo prae gaudio, oculorum quoque aciem non minimum laeserat: et hujus detrimenti solatium a beato Felice quaerens, accepit. Sicque domum rediit, duplici gratiae coelestis munere repletus.

Cumque in honorem ejusdem beati confessoris angustior ecclesia fabricaretur, erant in proximo ipsius ecclesiae duo rustica aedificia importuna situ, simul et deformia visu, quae omne decus ecclesiae non parum sua obscuritate foedabant. Volens autem venerabilis ac Deo dilectus antistes Paulinus tolli haec aedificia, et emundari loca in quibus sita fuerant, postulavit eos, ad quorum possessionem pertinebant, hanc beato Felici praebere reverentiam, ut ad illustrandum decorandumque locum ecclesiae ejus privata sua tecta paterentur auferri.

and arriving there, he prostrated himself before the doors of the holy house, and with his face fixed to the ground, he implored and beseeched Saint Felix to return to him the oxen he had lost, attesting with many tears that he would never leave that place if he did not get his oxen back. When he had done this for the whole day with a rustic voice, but a most faithful mind, as evening approached, he was thrown out by the violence of the crowd and driven from the sacred edifice. He went home, however, and did not fail to spend a sleepless night in continuous lamentation. But because everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened, and as the Psalmist says, the Lord has heard the desire of the poor: in the middle of the night, when other men and all things were quiet, he alone lay awake, roused by his grief and poverty: wonderful to tell, the oxen he was seeking suddenly came to his door, snatched from the robbers by a divine nod, you see, and called back to their master's house through pathless places in the darkness of night and confusion: and striking the doors of the hut in which he lived with their horns, they now signaled that they had arrived. But he, trembling greatly, believing not that his oxen were there, but that the thieves had returned to him, delayed for a long time to open the doors, until the same oxen, as if understanding the reason for their master's delay, by letting out a moo also demonstrated that it was they who were knocking at the household doors. But having received his oxen, the peasant, acting not rustically but wisely and faithfully, hastened at first light to render due thanks to his restorer. For, taking the oxen with him, he came to the church of Saint Felix, and to all whom he met on the way and who were there when he arrived, he recounted and showed with a joyful voice the benefits he had received from the holy confessor. And because, by weeping much, both while searching for his oxen and out of joy upon receiving them, he had also injured his eyesight not a little: he also sought and received from the blessed Felix solace for this harm. And so he returned home, filled with a twofold gift of heavenly grace.

And when a rather narrow church was being built in honor of the same blessed confessor, there were nearby that very church two rustic buildings, inconvenient in their location and at the same time unsightly to view, which marred not a little all the beauty of the church with their obscurity. But the venerable bishop Paulinus, beloved of God, wishing these buildings to be removed and the places where they had been situated to be cleared, asked those to whose possession they belonged to show this reverence to the blessed Felix: that they permit their private dwellings to be taken away to illuminate and adorn the site of his church.

At illi preces ejus rustica obstinatione spernentes, magis se animas dare quam suas possessiones relinquere posse dicebant. Cumque episcopum taederet rusticos rixa vincere, victi sunt divinae potentiae manu. Nam nocte quadam quiescentibus cunctis, subitus ignis ex una cellarum earumdem exoriens, vicina paulatim aedificia petere coepit, ita ut magis magisque suis incrementis adauctus, et prope et longe posita habitacula cuncta consumpturus esse videretur. Tunc tantis excitati fragoribus et globis ignium, cives accurrerunt, ut vel incendium, si possent, omne aquas fundendo restingerent: vel de suis singuli domibus quaecunque possent igni praeipientes auferrent. Cumque se nil valere posse conspicerent, coeperunt quaerere divinum, ubi humanum cessabat, auxilium. Advolant ergo duce episcopo ad ecclesiam sancti Felicis, flectunt genua, supernae auxilia protectionis implorant: divertunt inde ad ecclesiam beatorum apostolorum, quae contigua erat ecclesiae beati Felicis, et inde per intercessionem apostolicam coelestis praesidii dona flagitantes. Ubi postquam oratum est, rediit domum episcopus, sumptamque de ligno dominicae crucis non grandem assulam, misit in medium incendii furentis, statimque immensa illa volumina flammarum, quae tanta virorum manus aquas spargendo extinguere nequiverat, ipse lignum addendo restinxit. Tanta etenim sanctae crucis erat virtus, ut sese natura relinqueret: et ignis qui omnia solet ligna devorare, ipso ligno dominicae passionis velut exustus, absumeretur. Ubi vero tempestas tanta sopita est, et mane redeunte cives dira noctis opera considerare venerunt, credentes se non parva tantis incendiis damna esse perpeccos, inventum est nihil prorsus exustum, nisi quod debebat aduri. Ex illis etenim domibus duabus, de quibus praediximus, quas et homines consumere atque auferre disposuerant, unam flammis absumptam videbant. Quo facto multum erubuit rusticus ille, qui sua tecta contra decorem sanctorum aedificiorum stolidi obstinatione defenderat, cernens se invitum nulla mercede perdidisse, quae in gratiam sanctorum sponte nolebat amittere: et mox ipse, quod igni superfuerat de aedibus, propria coepit manu abolere, quatenus ocissime omnis circa ecclesiam beati confessoris locus congrua sanctis claritate ac luce redderetur insignis.

But they, spurning his pleas with rustic obstinacy, said that they would sooner give up their souls than relinquish their possessions. And when the bishop grew weary of trying to overcome the rustics by quarreling, they were overcome by the hand of divine power. For one night, while all were resting, a sudden fire, arising from one of those same storerooms, began gradually to attack the neighboring buildings, so that, growing more and more with its own increase, it seemed that it would consume all the dwellings situated both near and far. Then, roused by such great crashing sounds and fireballs, the citizens ran up, either to extinguish the whole fire by pouring water, if they could, or for each to snatch from the fire whatever they could from their own homes and carry it away. And when they saw that they could do nothing, they began to seek divine aid where human aid failed. Therefore, with the bishop as their leader, they fly to the church of Saint Felix, they bend their knees, they implore the help of heavenly protection: from there they turn to the church of the blessed apostles, which was adjacent to the church of the blessed Felix, and from there, through apostolic intercession, they demand the gifts of celestial aid. After they had prayed there, the bishop returned home, and taking a small splinter from the wood of the Lord's cross, he sent it into the midst of the raging fire, and immediately he himself extinguished those immense billows of flame, which so great a band of men had been unable to put out by throwing water, by adding wood. For so great was the power of the holy cross that nature abandoned itself: and the fire, which is accustomed to devour all woods, was itself consumed, as if burned out by the very wood of the Lord's passion. But when so great a tempest was calmed, and with the return of morning the citizens came to consider the dire works of the night, believing they had suffered no small losses from such great fires, it was found that nothing at all had been burned, except what ought to have been burned. For of those two houses, which we mentioned before, which men had also arranged to consume and take away, they saw one consumed by the flames. At this, that rustic blushed greatly, who had defended his dwellings against the beauty of the holy buildings with stupid obstinacy, seeing that he had, against his will and for no reward, lost what he had been unwilling to give up voluntarily for the sake of the saints: and soon he himself began to demolish with his own hand what of the buildings had survived the fire, so that the whole area around the church of the blessed confessor might as quickly as possible be rendered distinguished with a brightness and light fitting for the saints.

Ablata autem omni foeditate ruderum ac sordium earundem, perstabat beatus antistes Paulinus ecclesiam quam coeperat ad perfectum deducere: cujus aedificium omne tribus annis perfecit, et in picturis atque omni ornatu suo debito fine conclusit: in qua felicissima beati Felicis vita et passio in aeternum memorabilis celebratur; qui die quarta decima mensis Januarii, consummato cursu certaminis gloriosi, percepit coronam vitae, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se.

Moreover, with all the filth of the rubble and of those same squalid things removed, the blessed bishop Paulinus persisted in bringing the church he had begun to perfection: he completed its entire construction in three years, and concluded it with its due end in paintings and all its ornamentation; in which the most happy life and passion of the blessed Felix is celebrated, memorable for all eternity; who on the fourteenth day of the month of January, having completed the course of his glorious contest, received the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.