

## The life of St. Eugenia (died 258 AD)

[Source: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, Early English Text Society vol. 76 (London, 1881).]

He who wishes it, may hear concerning the holy maiden Eugenia, the daughter of Phillip; how she by her virginity gloriously flourished, and by martyrdom overcame this world. A certain nobly-born thane was named Philip, whom the emperor Commodus (he who in those days ruled) sent from the city of Rome to the city which is named Alexandria; and he appointed him as chief ruler over Alexandria and the land of Egypt, and commanded him to observe the Roman law. This thane Philip was not baptized unto God, because Christianity was not yet known everywhere, and the cruel persecution was not yet stilled. His wife was named Claudia, on whom he begat two sons, Avitus and Sergius, and one daughter, Eugenia, of whom we now speak. Then her father Philip put her to school that she might be educated in worldly wisdom according to the Greek philosophy and Latin eloquence. Eugenia then, that noble maiden, well increased in wisdom and in philosophy. Then came into her hands the holy apostle's doctrine, [the words of] St. Paul, the famous teacher of all mankind. Then was her mind greatly aroused by the sacred doctrine, though she was still a heathen. Then prayed she her father that she might go away from his house in the city of Alexandria; she thus desired to seek after the Christian's doctrine, because she had no one in the city, no believing man who could instruct her, seeing that Philip drove away the Christians from Alexandria beforehand, all of them.

So then Eugenia quickly journeyed until she arrived where the Christians were singing with great joy, thus glorifying God: *Omnes dii gentium demonia; dominus autem celos fecit*: 'All the gods of the heathen are devils, and verily the Lord created the heavens.' Eugenia then was greatly stirred, and with weeping addressed her two servants, whose names were Protus and Jacinctus, who had been instructed in Latin and in Greek, together with Eugenia, in worldly doctrine, and were *eunuchi*, that is to say, castrated, and were to the mistress true and faithful. Then Eugenia took them apart in conversation, called them brethren, and besought that they would shear her hair after the fashion of men, and disguise her with garments as if she were a boy. She desired to approach the Christians in the garb of a man, that she might not be betrayed. Then went these three, and left their companions, until they arrived at the Christian's abode, where they praised their Lord by night and by day.

On that same day came a certain bishop, Helenus by name, of holy life, with a great multitude, unanimously singing: *Via iustorum recta facta est, et iter sanctorum preparata est*: that is to say, 'The way of the righteous is guided, and the path of the saints is prepared.' This bishop wrought many miracles by God's help, and it was revealed to him in a vision concerning this matter, and all the maid's intent was made known to him. Then the maiden addressed a certain mass-priest, Eutropius by name, in order that he might declare her errand to the bishop, speaking eagerly in these words: 'We three brethren are desirous to turn from foul heathendom to Jesus Christ, and we desire on no account to be separated from each other.'

When therefore in the morning the mass-priest reported the maid's message to the famous bishop, then the bishop bade her be called, greatly thanking Almighty God, that He had been pleased to reveal to him the maiden's will. Then he took her asunder, and said to her assuredly how she was no man, and of what kindred she was, and how she, by the virginity which she had chosen, greatly pleased the heavenly King; and said, that she should extremely suffer persecutions because of her virginity, and should yet be preserved by help of the true Lord, who shields his chosen ones. To her two servants he said, that they ought to preserve true nobility in their minds, though they served men, and said that Christ addressed them in these gospel-words, 'I call you not servants, but ye are my friends.' Then the bishop bade the converted maiden still to continue in the man's apparel, until they had all been

baptized in the font, and to join secretly in the service in the minster. Eugenia then dwelt in the minster with a man's mind, though she were a maid, with her two servants, unknown to every one, and observed in her conduct the holy service with gentleness of mind and great humility, and by her holy virtues pleased the Saviour. She increased in the doctrine of the true faith, and in divine writ, with a good will, and was changed (as it were) from a wolf to a sheep. Her servants also imitated her, Protus and Jacinctus, in private devotion, and wholly kept her secret.

Philip then, her father, was disordered in mind, and her mother Claudia was seized with murmuring, and all her kindred were stirred up in their minds, and sought for the maiden with much sorrow. They enquired of witches and of wise sorcerers, and eke of their false gods, concerning God's handmaid. Then it was reported to them for a true tale, that the Gods had taken her for her goodness. Then the father believed the lying tale, and bade men fashion, out of beaten gold, an image of her, and then worshipped it as a holy goddess; but it was gold still.

Then after three years since her conversion, the abbot, that was her elder, departed this life, and the brethren immediately began to choose Eugenia as their abbot, for her devout life, and knew not that she was a woman all the while. Then became the maiden extremely anxious how she was ever to direct men; yet durst she not offend them all and despise their election, but accepted the office. Well then, Eugenia set an example to them all with good devotion to God's service, and with carefulness governed the community. Then the Almighty Ruler granted her, that she might heal infirm men, whom ever she visited, as they lay in sickness. She drove away also foul devils from possessed men, through the true faith.

Then was there a certain woman, wealthy in possessions, by name Melantia, very sorely afflicted with a long-lasting fever, and she came to the woman. Eugenia then besmeared her with hallowed oil, and moreover marked her with the sign of the cross, and she vomited out all the evil venom that was harming her, and was healed by means of the holy maiden. Then the widow offered treasures to the maiden for her healing, but she refused them, and persuaded the other to distribute them to poor people and beggars, for sake of the sure reward. Then the widow returned home to her own, and afterwards came often, with a false mind, to the beautiful maiden; for she thought she was a youth, and wickedly offered her manifold treasures. But when she perceived that the virtuous woman recked not of her gifts, nor of her whisperings, then was she wholly filled with evil, and feigned herself sick with deceitful intent. She then besought Eugenia to visit her, and began to speak to her her dark thoughts, saying that she had been a widow for a year, and her husband had left her not a little property in land and in cattle, and in domestic servants; 'and we two had' (said she) 'no communion in this life. Now is my mind much inclined towards thee, that thou mayst be lord of my goods and of me. I ween it is no unrighteousness before God though thou shouldst enjoy a wife and happiness in this life.' Then Eugenia replied to this flattery, and spake to the woman to this intent, that the desires of this present world are extremely deceitful, though they be pleasant, and the lusts of the body oftentimes seduce and bring them to sorrow who love them most. After this persuasion and amongst other teaching, the wanton woman embraced the pure maiden, desiring to incline her shameful adultery. Lo! then Eugenia blessed herself, and said, to her shame, that she verily was a kindler of lust, a child of wrath, a companion of darkness, and filled with blackness, a daughter of death, and the devil's vessel. 'Let them that are like thee possess thy goods; we possess all things together with Almighty God.' Then was Melantia greatly ashamed, and supposed that she would betray her conversation, unless she herself beforehand made it publicly known. Then went she quickly to the city of Alexandria, to the chief ruler, who was named Philip, Eugenia's father, though the wicked one knew it not, and began to accuse her, and wished to speak falsely, saying, that she [Eugenia] came to her as she lay in bed in a physician's garb, and desired to lie with her, if she would put up with that shameful deed. 'But I cried

aloud quickly with sorrowful voice, until one of my women delivered me from him.' Then Philip believed the deceitful story, and very angrily bade her be fetched, and the brethren likewise, all bound, and kept them in bonds, and in a dark prison, until he with torments might avenge the woman.

Then came the day when the judge took his seat, and the cruel tortures were made ready, and then there were brought before the judge the guiltless Christians, in black fetters. Then quoth Philip with great anger to Eugenia, his own daughter, 'Say, thou condemned one, why wouldst thou betray the illustrious woman, Melantia, to adultery, and, in the garb of physician, wouldst lie with her?' Then quoth Eugenia that she could easily clear herself from the disgrace of adultery, and overcome by the truth Melantia's accusation, provided that Philip would assure her by an oath that the false accuser should not be condemned. Then swore Philip that he would let go free the false widow, though she should prove to be perjured. Then Eugenia besought that the servant should relate to the judge how it came to pass, and how she preserved her mistress against her [Eugenia's] desires. Moreover the judge commanded the servants of Melantia's household to declare this matter, if they had heard it. Then said the servant that she long ago knew how vilely Eugenia practised adultery, and at last endeavoured to violate her mistress, but she, with her screaming, cried out for her help; 'this these servants know, whom I called thither.' Then said the servants that it was true, and all with an oath lied against Eugenia.

Then was the governor greatly incensed, and asked Eugenia how she, by herself, could turn aside with an oath all these witnesses, or by any manifestation clear herself wholly. Well then, Eugenia, the noble woman, said that she had desired to keep herself secret, and to preserve her purity to Christ alone, living in virginity, unknown to man, and therefore at the first had assumed the robes of a man's garb, and had had her hair shorn. After these words she tore apart her robes, and revealed her breasts to the angry Philip, and said unto him; 'Thou art my father! And they spouse Claudia bore me as a child, and these that sit beside thee are my brethren, Avitus and Sergius, and verily I am named Eugenia, thine own daughter. And I, for Christ's love, abandoned you all, and despised as dung the lusts of the world. Here are also the servants to whom I told my secret, Protus and Jacinctus, thy foster-children, with whom I went to the school of Christ, and therein have ministered unto this present day, and Him will I serve ever, even unto the end.' Then Philip, as a father, recognized Eugenia, and Avitus and Sergius knew their own sister, and her household-servants humbly kissed her. This was soon told to Claudia her mother, and she was seized with wonder, and came to Eugenia with all joy. Then they adorned the virgin with gold, though she was unwilling, and set her up beside themselves. Then the people exclaimed that Christ was true God, and they all praised the Saviour with glory. Eugenia ere this had already interceded for the false Melantia to her dear father, (saying) that she would not avenge with torments her cruel persecution. But Christ himself sent a rushing fire from heaven above, which all men saw, to the house Melantia, and burnt it all up, so that there was left nothing that was hers.

Then were Philip and Claudia baptized, and their two sons, with true faith. And a very great multitude of the people were converted to Christ's service, and enriched the Christians. Then were restored, in the eighth year, the deserted churches, and the faith increased. Then sent Philip to Severus the emperor, and said that the Christians greatly benefited his kingdom and the Roman people, and they were well worthy of living unpersecuted in the very city whence he before had banished them. Then the emperor granted this boon to the governor, and Alexandria city was soon filled with much Christian people, and many churches; and in every town the Christians rejoiced, and with due worship honored God, as well as for this cause, that Egyptian folk, having forsaken their error, believed in the Lord. And Philip gave the Christians many possessions for their common use, and well protected them.

After this it came to pass that the false heathen accused Philip to the aforesaid emperor, and said that he renounced the living gods, and inclined all the citizens unto Christianity. Then was the emperor forthwith enraged, and commanded Philip to worship his gods, or he should be deprived of honor and goods. Then Philip secretly distributed his goods throughout all the province, to churches and needy men, and by his great faith confirmed many others, so that the Christians chose him as bishop. Then after twelve months the emperor remembered what had been told him, and sent from Rome another governor, with a severe command, so that he bade him kill the Christian Philip, if it were true, as had been told him. Then came the governor, and durst not kill him in the witness of the people, because of their friendliness; but he sent (to him) certain men, who said they were believers in Christ; nevertheless they lied. Then went these men to church with great deceit, and slew the illustrious bishop at his prayers. Nevertheless he remained alive after the wounds for the space of three days, and comforted the Christians, and so, with martyrdom, he afterwards departed to the living Lord, whom he worshipped in his life.

Eugenia ere this had already founded a minster for nuns, with much devotion, and her mother Claudia enriched it greatly; and there they buried Philip the bishop; and afterwards they all departed together, mother and daughter, to the great city of Rome, and the brothers also, Sergius and Avitus. And the Roman senators well received them, as well as for their old acquaintance with the noble Philip. Then very soon the senators appointed the youths to two chief cities, in conspicuous honor, one in Africa, and the other in Carthage. Then Eugenia dwelt in Rome, and there came to her many maidens, and she, by her example, converted them to Christ, and they dwelt in virginity, by her exhortation. Then was there a maiden in Rome, of royal birth, named Basilla, living in heathendom, who desired to hear the holy lore at the mouth of Eugenia, but she could not approach her, because Christianity was there held in abhorrence. Then Eugenia sent the two saints, Protus and Jacinctus, to the heathen maid. Well then, Basilla received them with joy, and, day and night, with the love-worthy saints, learnt God's lore, and never ceased from her prayers, until Cornelius, Bishop of the Christians, secretly baptized her, [washing her] from all filth. Then were frequently the dear maidens, Eugenia and Basilla, and likewise the bishop, much employed in private conversation, and secretly by night they often visited him, and performed their duties with the holy bishop. By means of the two maidens many others turned to faith in Christ, and to a pure service. By Claudia's means also pure widows turned with good will to faith in God; and many youths believed in Christ by means of the two saints, Protus and Jacinctus.

Basilla had a heathen suitor, named Pompeius, of very noble birth, to whom the emperor granted the royal maid. But she had chosen Christ for her bridegroom, and therefore would not accept the heathen suitor. Then the youth sought the feet of the emperor, and the Roman senators, with tearful complaint, and communed with them, and accused the virgins, Eugenia and Basilla, praying for his aid. Well then, the emperor said to him in answer, that Basilla would have to incline to the youth, or men, with a hard sword, should hew her in twain. And he bade Eugenia offer sacrifice to his gods, or men, with torments, should cruelly kill her. He also bade all the Christians be slain, if they would not return to vile heathendom. Then would not Basilla choose as her bridegroom any other but Christ, whom she had chosen, and thereupon was martyred for her virginity at home in her house, with a hard sword. After these words the two saints of God Protus and Jacinctus, were soon caught, and they had to offer their sacrifice to the gods, or else they must themselves be offered unto them. Then were they led to the loathsome idol, but it at once fell at their feet, as if crumbled to pieces, as soon as the saints said their prayers to God. Then said the judge that they by the aid of sorcery had overthrown the images, and was much incensed. Then he bade the holy witnesses be beheaded, and quickly they departed victoriously to Christ. These martyrs were never, throughout their lives, defiled with women, but continued in purity unto their lives' end, with much faith.

After this the faithful Eugenia was caught and dragged, with threatening, to the heathen temple, that she might offer the worship, due to God, to the goddess Diana. Then prayed Eugenia to the Almighty God, and the temple of the devil fell utterly to the ground, and sank in to the earth, with all its idols. Then the emperor bade men hang a hewn stone about her saintly neck, and throw her into the river. Even the stone brake in twain, and she sat upon the water, that the Christians might know the Christ was with her, even He who whilom led the holy Peter by the hand along, over the lofty surge, that the ocean billows might not swallow him up. Then the emperor bade men next to cast her into a burning oven, where were hot baths, but the fire was quenched, and the baths cooled down, and all the conflagration was extinct at her coming. Then was she thrown into a dark prison, and for the space of twenty days there was not granted her and sort of sustenance, amid the darkness. But the Savior came, with a heavenly light, and brought the maiden abundant sustenance, a snow-white loaf, and illuminated the prison. Then said the Savior to the holy maiden, "Behold! Eugenia! be not thou affrighted. I am thy Savior, whom thou highly honorest and whom with all thy mind and strength thou lovest. On that day shalt thou come to me, when I became man, and on the day of My nativity thou shalt be brought to heaven." Then came the executioner, on the day of Christ's birth, sent from the emperor, and he killed the maiden; so was she martyred, and Christian men buried her. Then wept her mother with much sorrow at her burial, until at last she saw her in a ghostly vision, adorned with gold, with the heavenly host, thus comforting her: "My mother Claudia, me hath my Savior Christ brought to the bliss of His saints, and hath placed my father among the number of the patriarchs, and thou shalt come to us, now on Sunday." Then departed the mother from the world to heaven on the Sunday, and her sons stood beside her, Sergius and Avitus, and they afterwards continued in the true faith, unto their lives' end. Be glory and praise to the gracious God, world without end, for all His benefits. Amen.

### **St. Euphrosyne (died 470 AD)**

[Source: Early English Text Society, vol. 114 (London, 1900).]

There was a certain man in the province of Alexandria named Paphnutius, who was beloved and honored of all men, diligently keeping God's commandments; and he then took a spouse of birth equal to his own rank; she was filled with all honorable virtues, but she was barren. Then was her husband exceedingly afflicted, because there was no child between them who should succeed to his possessions after his death: and she therefore daily distributed her wealth among the poor, and frequently sought churches, and with supplications besought God that He would give them a child, especially because she saw her husband's sorrow. And he himself likewise traveled through many places, (to see) if perchance he might find some man of God who might assist his desires.

Then at last he came to a minster; the father of this minster was very powerful before God. So he paid in a great sum of money, and made much friendship with the abbot and with the brothers; and then after a good while he told his desire to the abbot. So the abbot compassionated him, and prayed God earnestly that He would give the nobleman the fruit of a child. Then God heard the prayer of them both, and gave them a daughter. When Paphnutius had seen the abbot's great service, he seldom left the minster; likewise he brought his wife into the minster, to the intent that she might receive the abbot's blessing, and that of the brethren.

When the child was seven years old, then they that her baptized, and named her Euphrosyne; then her parents rejoiced exceedingly on her account, because she was acceptable to God, and fair in countenance; and when she was twelve years old, then her mother died. Then the father instructed the maiden in holy writings and godly readings, and in all worldly wisdom; and she so deeply received the lore that her father greatly wondered thereat. Then sprang her fame and wisdom and learning

throughout all the town, because she was adorned with virtues, and many were attracted so that they desired her in honorable marriage, and spake of it to her father; but he always answered, 'God's will be done.'

Then at last came to him a noble who was wealthier and worthier than all the others, and desired her for himself. Then the father received his pledge, and promised her to him. Then after a great while, when she was eighteen years old, her father took her with him to the place where he usually went, and paid in there a great sum of money, and said to the abbot, 'I have brought hither the fruit of thy prayers, my daughter, that thou mayest give her thy blessing, because I wish to give her to a husband.' Then the abbot bade take her to the parlor, and spake a long while with her, and taught her purity and patience, and to have the fear of God; and she abode there seven days, and devoutly listened to the brothers' canticles, and beheld their conversation; and greatly wondering at all this said, 'Blessed are these men who in the world are like unto the angels, and by such means shall obtain everlasting life.' And she became observant of this.

Then on the third day said Paphnutius to the abbot, 'Come, father, that thy handmaid may salute thee, and receive thy blessing; because we desire to go home.' When the abbot came, she fell at his feet, and said, 'Father, pray for me, that God may beget my soul unto Himself.' Then the abbot extended his hand and blessed her, and said; 'Lord God, Thou who knewest Adam ere he was created; vouchsafe to have care of this Thine handmaid, and that she may be a partaker of the heavenly kingdom.' So after these words they returned home.

It was Paphnutius' custom that, as often as any monk came to him, he brought him into his house, and prayed that he would bless his daughter. Then it befell, in about the course of a year, that it was the abbot's ordination-day. Then he sent a brother to Paphnutius, and invited him to the solemnity. When the monk came to his hall, he did not find him at home; but when Euphrosyne knew the monk was there, she called him to her and said, 'Tell me, brother, for true charity, how many are there of you in minster?' Then said he, 'Three hundred monks and two and fifty.' Then again she asked and said, 'If any one desire to turn in thither, will your abbot receive him?' 'Yea,' quoth he, 'but with all (joy will he receive him), the rather for the Lord's voice who thus said; him that cometh to Me, I will not drive him from Me.'" 'Sing ye all,' said she, 'in one church, and fast ye all alike?' The brother said, 'We all sing in common together but each of us fasteth according as he hath leisure, so that none of us be contrary to holy living, but do willingly that which he doeth.' When she had enquired about all their manner of living, then said she (to the brother), 'I would turn to such a life, but I fear to be disobedient to my father, who for his vain (and transitory) riches desireth to join me a husband.' The brother said (to her), 'O sister! suffer thou not that any defile thy body, neither give thou thy beauty to any shame; but wed thyself to Christ, who for these transitory things can give thee the heavenly kingdom. But go now to a minster secretly, and lay aside thy worldly garments and clothe thyself with the monastic habit; thus mayest thou most easily escape.' Then this speech pleased her, and she thereupon said (to him): 'But who may shear me? (Verily), I would not that any one should (do it who) hath not faith in God.' (The brother said to her): 'Look now, thy father is going with me to the minster, and will be there three days or four; then send thou meanwhile after one of our brothers; any one will blithely come to thee.' In the midst of this came home Paphnutius, and as soon as he saw the monk, he asked him why he had come. Then he told him that it was the abbot's ordination-day, and that he was to come to him to receive his benediction. Then Paphnutius was greatly rejoiced, and (at once) went with him (the brother) to the minster.

Meanwhile Euphrosyne sent a servant (one whom she knew to be very faithful, and said to him, 'Go to Theodosius' minster, and go into the church, and whatsoever monk (thou shalt find) in the church,

bring him to me.' Then (it happened), by God's mercy, (that) he met one of the monks outside the minster; and then the servant prayed him to come with him to Euphrosyne; and when he came to her, she saluted him, and said, 'Pray for me.' Then he prayed for her and blessed her, and sat beside her. Then she said to him, 'Sir, I have a Christian father who is a true servant of God, and (he) hath great possessions; and his consort my mother is departed from this life; now desireth my father, for his vain riches, to give me to a husband; but I would not (ever) defile myself thereby. And I dare not be disobedient to my father, and I know not what to do as to this; verily all this night I continued alone, praying God that He would show His mercy to my miserable soul; and so, this dawning day, it liked me to get one of you to come to me, that I might hear God's word from him. Now pray I thee, for the sake of the reward of thy soul, that thou instruct me in those things which pertain to God.' Then said the brother, 'The Lord said in His gospel, "Whosoever will not forsake father and mother and all his kindred, moreover his own soul, he cannot be My disciple." I know not what I can say to thee more; nevertheless, if thou canst withstand the temptations of thy flesh, then abandon thou all that thou ownest and depart hence; thy father's riches will find heirs enough.' The maiden said to him: 'I trust in God's assistance and in thine, that I shall attain to my soul's salvation.' Then said the brother, 'thou must not let such desires grow slack, verily thou knowest that it is now the time of repentance.' Then she said, 'therefore I summoned thee hither for that I desired that thou shouldest bless me, and afterward cut of my hair.' Then the brother invested her with the monastic habit, and blessed her and thus said: 'The Lord, who hath delivered His saints, preserve thee from all evil.' He then after this joyfully went home, glorifying God.

Then Euphrosyne thought thus, saying; 'if I go now to a women's convent, then my father will seek me there, and will find me there; and then he will take me thence by force for my bridegroom's sake; but I will go to a man's minster where no man will suspect me.' Then she put off her womanly garb from her, and clothed herself with a man's; and in the eventide departed from her hall, and took with her fifty mancuses, and that night she hid herself in a secret place. Then afterward in the morning came Paphnutius to the city, and then, according to God's will, he went into the church. Meanwhile Euphrosyne arrived at the minster which her father visited; then the porter went to the abbot and said to him: 'Father, here is come a eunuch from the king's household who desireth speech with thee.' So the abbot went out; and she immediately fell at his feet, and when she had received his blessing, they sat together. Then quoth the abbot: 'Child, for what cause camest thou hither?' Then said she, 'I was in the king's household and I am a eunuch; and I ever desired to turn to the monastic life, but such a life is not customary in our city; now I have heard of your illustrious conduct, and my will is that I may dwell with you, if that be your will. I have manifold possessions; and if God will grant me rest here, I will cause them to come hither.' Then quoth the abbot, 'Welcome be thou, my child; behold, this is our minster; abide here with us if it please thee.' Then asked he him what his name was. Then said he, 'I am called Smaragdus.' The abbot said to him: 'Thou art young; thou canst not dwell alone, but thou needest to have one who can teach thee monastic life and the holy rule.' Then quoth he, 'I will do, my father, according to thy words.' Then he drew forth the fifty mancuses, and gave them to the abbot, and said, 'Take, father, this money on account, and if I continue here the remainder shall come here.' Then the abbot called a brother to him who was named Agapitus, a man of holy life and honorable in manners; and delivered to him the aforesaid Smaragdus, and said to him: 'Henceforth this shall be thy son and thy disciple.' Then Agapitus took him into his cell.

Then, because the same Smaragdus was beautiful in countenance, as often as the brothers came to church, the accursed spirit sent manifold thoughts into their minds, and they were exceedingly tempted by his fairness; and at last they were all stirred up against the abbot because he had brought so beautiful a man into their minster; and he thereupon called Smaragdus to him, and said: 'My child, thy countenance is beautiful, and to the brothers cometh great ruin on account of their frailty. Now I will

that thou sit by thyself in thy cell, and sing there thy hours, and eat therein; but I desire not that thou go anywhere else.’ And he then bade Agapitus to prepare an empty cell and bring Smaragdus in thither. So Agapitus fulfilled that which his abbot commanded him, and brought Smaragdus into the deserted cell, where he occupied himself in fastings and vigils day and night, serving God in purity of heart; so that his master greatly wondered thereat, and related to his brethren his way of life.

But Paphnutius her father, when he came home, went very quickly into the bower wherein his daughter was wont to be; and when that he found her not there he became very uneasy, and began to question of all, both slaves and free-men, (what) had been done with his daughter Euphrosyne? Then said they: ‘At night we saw her, but we knew not in the morning where she had gone to; but we supposed that her bridegroom who was betrothed to her had taken her there.’ Then he sent to the bridegroom and enquired for her there, but she was not there. When her bridegroom heard that she was lost, he became greatly troubled and came to Paphnutius, and found him, on account of his sadness, lying on the earth. Then said some, ‘Perchance someone hath deceived her and taken her away.’ Then he sent riding men through all the land of Alexandria and Egypt, and they sought amongst travelers in ships, and in women’s convents, and in deserts and in caves, and at the houses of all their intimate friends and neighbors; and when they nowhere found her, they bewept her as if she were dead. The father-in-law bemoaned his daughter-in-law, and the bridegroom his bride. The father bewept his daughter and said: ‘Woe is me! my sweetest bairn, woe is me! the light of mine eyes and the comfort of my life! Who hath bereaved me of my treasures or scattered my goods? Who hath cut away my vineyard, or who hath quenched my lamp? Who hath deprived me of my hope, or who hath polluted the beauty of my daughter? What wolf hath seized my lamb, or what place on sea or on land hath hid so royal a countenance? She was the consoler of the mourning and the rest of the wearied. Oh thou earth! Swallow thou never my blood ere I see what hath been done with Euphrosyne my daughter!’ Hearing these words, they all began to weep, and great lamenting was throughout all the city.

When Paphnutius could have no patience, nor receive any comfort, then went he to the abbot and fell at his feet, and said, ‘I pray thee that thou wilt not cease to entreat for me that I may find the toil of thy prayer; verily I know not wither my daughter is gone.’ When the abbot heard this, he became very sorrowful, and bade then all the brothers assemble before him, and said: ‘Show now true charity to our friend, and pray we God in common that He would vouchsafe to show him what has been done with his daughter.’ Then all the week they fasted and continued in their prayers, but no revelation came to them such as was customary to them when they prayed for anything. Truly, the holy woman Euphrosyne’s prayer to God was, both day and night, that she might never during her life be discovered. So when no revelation came to the abbot or the brethren, then he consoled him and said: ‘Son, weary thou not of the Lord’s discipline, because He correcteth every son whom He loveth; and know thou that, without God’s will, not one sparrow falleth on the earth. How much more can anything happen to thy daughter without God’s ordinance? I know that she hath chosen for herself some good counsel, and therefore was nothing revealed to us concerning her; and if it were the case, and far be it from it, that thy daughter had slidden into any harm, God would not despise the labor of these brethren; but I trust in God that He will yet in this life reveal her.’ Then was he heartened by these words, and went home praising God, and busied himself in good works and alms.

Then one day came he again to the abbot, and said: ‘pray for me, because my sorrow about my daughter waxeth more and more in me with anguish.’ Then the abbot, compassionating him, said: ‘Wouldest thou speak with a brother who came from King Theodosius’ household?’ For he knew not that she was his daughter. Then said he, that he gladly would do so. Then the abbot bade Agapitus to take him to brother Smaragdus. Then, when she looked on her father, she became all suffused with tears; and he thought that it had been from devotion, and recognized her not, because she was much



thinned by reason of the severe and austere life; and she covered her head with her cowl, that he should not know her; and when they had ended their prayers, they sat together. Then began she to speak to him of the heavenly kingdom's blessedness, and how the entrance to it is to be won by almsdeeds and other unnumbered good works; and that a man should not love father and mother and other worldly things before God; and told him the apostolic saying that 'tribulation worketh patience,' and he shall thus be tried. And she said yet again, 'Believe me, God will not despise thee; and if thy daughter were fallen into any loss, then would God show it thee, that she should not be lost. But trust in God that she hath chosen for herself some good counsel. Lay aside thy great torment; Agapitus my master hath related to me concerning thee, how sorely thou art afflicted about thy daughter, and how thou hast besought the aid of the abbot and his brothers. Now will I myself also, though I be weak and sinful, pray God that He will give thee endurance and patience, and grant thee that which is best for thee and fittest for her. Frequently have I desired to see thee that thou mightest find some comfort by means of me, humble as I am'; and she then said to him: 'Go now, my lord.' Then Paphnutius was much strengthened by her exhortation, and departed from her, and went to the abbot, and said to him: 'My mind is strengthened by help of this brother; I am as blithe as if I had found my daughter.' And he commended himself to the abbot and to the brothers for their prayers, and went home praising God. Then Smaragdus fulfilled, in that unknown state, eight and thirty years, and fell into a sickness, and therein likewise died.

Then came Paphnutius again to the minster, and after speech with the abbot and the brothers, he prayed that he might go to Smaragdus; then the abbot bade them conduct him thither. So Paphnutius sat beside him being thus sick; and, weeping, said to him: 'Woe is me! where are now they promises which thou didst promise me, that I might yet see my daughter? Lo now! We had some comfort by thy means, and thou wilt leave us! Woe is me! who shall now comfort my old age; to whom shall I go that will succor me? My sorrow is doubled. Now is it for eight and thirty years that my daughter hath been lost to me; and no revelation hath come to me, though I have earnestly yearned for it; unendurable sorrow holdeth me; in what may I henceforth hope, or what comfort can I receive? Mourning thus on every account, I shall go down to hell.' Then Smaragdus, seeing that he would receive no comfort, said to him: 'Wherefore art thou thus grievously troubled and wilt kill thyself? Sayest thou that the Lord's hand is weak, or that anything is hard for Him? Put an end to thy affliction, and remember how God revealed to Jacob the patriarch his son Joseph, whom he likewise bewept as if he were dead. But I pray thee that thou leave me not for three days.' So Paphnutius [remained] for the space of three days, thus saying: 'Perchance God hath revealed to him something concerning me.' And then, on the third day, said he to him, 'I have waited, brother, these three days.' When Smaragdus, who before was hight Euphrosyne, perceived that the day of her departure had come, then said she to him; 'God Almighty hath well ordered my poor life and fulfilled my desire, that I might manfully end the course of my life. It was not by my own might, but through the assistance of Him who preserved me from the snares of the fiend; and now, my course being ended, the glorious crown of righteousness is kept for me. Be no longer careful about thy daughter Euphrosyne. Verily I, miserable one, am she herself; and thou art Paphnutius my father. Lo! Now thou hast seen me, and thy desire is fulfilled; but let not anyone know this, neither suffer thou that any man wash and prepare my body, save thyself. Moreover, I told the abbot that I had great possessions, and I promised him that I [would] bring them in hither if I continued here; now perform thou that which I promised; for this place is worthy; and pray for me.' This said, she gave up her spirit.

When Paphnutius heard these words, and saw that she was departed, then all his limbs trembled, so that he fell on the earth as if he were dead. Then ran Agapitus thither, and saw Smaragdus dying, and Paphnutius half alive lying on the earth. Then he threw water on him, and lifted him up and said: 'What is come to thee, my lord?' Then said he, 'Let me here die; verily I have seen God's miracle to-day.'

And he therewith arose, and fell upon her, weeping and thus saying; 'Woe is me, my sweetest child! Wherefore wouldest thou not make thyself known to me, that I might of my own will have lived here with thee? Woe is me! that thou hast so long concealed thyself! How hast thou passed through the old enemy's snares; and now hast entered into the eternal life!' Then Agapitus, hearing this, began to be much amazed, and went hastily to the abbot, and showed him all; and he thereupon came thither, and fell upon the holy corpse, and said: 'Euphrosyne, bride of Christ, and offspring of holy parents! Be not thou forgetful of thy fellow-servants and of this minster; but pray to the Lord for us, that He may make us come manfully to the harbor of safety, and make us partakers with Him and His saints.' Then he bade that the brethren should assemble, and reverently commit the holy corpse to the grave. Then when they found that she was a woman, they gloried in God, Who in the womanly and tender nature worketh such wonders. There came thither a certain brother who was one-eyed, and he then, with weeping, kissed the holy corpse, and touched her; and his eye was given to him again, and they all glorified God, of Whom are all such things as are good; and they then buried her in the sepulcher of her fathers. Then her father paid into the minster and into God's Church a great part of his possessions, and entered the minster with the most part of his riches, and dwelt ten years in the cell wherein his daughter had before lived, and exercised himself in leading a good life; and then departed to the Lord. Then the abbot and his company buried him beside his daughter; and the day of their departure is honored in the minster unto this present day; to the glory of God the Father and His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost; to Whom be glory and worship for ever and ever. Amen.

## **The Life of the Holy Radegund (died 587 AD) by Venantius Fortunatus**

1. Our Redeemer is so richly and abundantly generous that He wins mighty victories through the female sex and, despite their frail physique, He confers glory and greatness on women through strength of mind. By faith, Christ makes them strong who were born weak so that, when those who appeared to be imbeciles are crowned with their merits by Him who made them, to garner praise for their Creator who hid heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. For Christ the king dwells with his riches in their bowels. Mortifying themselves in the world, despising earthly consort, purified of worldly contamination, trusting not in the transitory, dwelling not in error but seeking to live with God, they are united with the Redeemer's glory in Paradise. One of that company is she whose earthly life we are attempting to present to the public, though in homely style, so that the glorious memory that she, who lives with Christ, has left us will be celebrated in this world. So ends the Prologue.

2. The most blessed Radegund was of the highest earthly rank, born from the seed of the kings of the barbarian nation of Thuringia. Her grandfather was King Bassin, her paternal uncle, Hermanfred and her father, King Bertechar. But she surpassed her lofty origin by even loftier deeds. She had lived with her noble family only a little while when the victorious Franks devastated the region with barbaric turmoil and, like the Israelites, she departed and migrated from her homeland. The royal girl became part of the plunder of these conquerors and they began to quarrel over their captive. If the contest had not ended with an agreement for her disposition, the kings would have taken up arms against one another. Falling to the lot of the illustrious King Clothar, she was taken to Athies in Vermandois, a royal villa, and her upbringing was entrusted to guardians. The maiden was taught letters and other things suitable to her sex and she would often converse with other children there about her desire to be a martyr if the chance came in her time. Thus even as an adolescent, she displayed the merits of a mature person. She obtained part of what she sought, for, though the church was flourishing in peace, she endured persecution from her own household. While but a small child, she herself brought the scraps left at table to the gathered children, washing the head of each one, seating them on little chairs and offering water for their hands, and she mingled with the infants herself. She would also carry out what she had planned beforehand with Samuel, a little cleric. Following his lead, carrying a wooden cross they had made, singing psalms, the children would troop into the oratory as somber as adults. Radegund herself would polish the pavement with her dress and, collecting the drifting dust around the altar in a napkin, reverently placed it outside the door rather than sweep it away. When the aforementioned king, having provided the expenses, wished to bring her to Vitry she escaped by night from Athies through Beralcha with a few companions. When he settled with her that she should be made his queen at Soissons, she avoided the trappings of royalty, so she would not grow great in the world but in Him to Whom she was devoted and she remained unchanged by earthly glory.

3. Therefore, though married to a terrestrial prince, she was not separated from the celestial one and, the more secular power was bestowed upon her, the more humbly she bent her will more than befitted her royal status. Always subject to God following priestly admonitions, she was more Christ's partner than her husband's companion. We will only attempt to publicize a few of the many things she did during this period of her life. Fearing she would lose status with God as she advanced in worldly rank at the side of a prince, she gave herself energetically to almsgiving. Whenever she received part of the tribute, she gave away a tithe of all that came to her before accepting any for herself. She dispensed what was left to monasteries, sending the gifts to those she could not reach on foot. There was no hermit who could hide from her munificence. So she paid out what she received lest the burden weigh her down. The voice of the needy was not raised in vain for she never turned a deaf ear. Often she gave clothes, believing that the limbs of Christ concealed themselves under the garments of the poor and that whatever she did not give to paupers was truly lost.

4. Turning her mind to further works of mercy, she built a house at Athies where beds were elegantly made up for needy women gathered there. She would wash them herself in warm baths, tending to the putrescence of their diseases. She washed the heads of men, acting like a servant. And before she washed them, she would mix a potion with her own hands to revive those who were weak from sweating. Thus the devout lady, queen by birth and marriage, mistress of the palace, served the poor as a handmaid. Secretly, lest anyone notice, at royal banquets, she fed most deliciously on beans or lentils from the dish of legumes placed before her, in the manner of the three boys. And if the singing of the hours started while she was still eating, she would make her excuses to the king and withdraw from the company to do her duty to God. As she went out, she sang psalms to the Lord and carefully checked what food had been provided to refresh the paupers at the door.

5. At night, when she lay with her prince she would ask leave to rise and leave the chamber to relieve nature. Then she would prostrate herself in prayer under a hair cloak by the privy so long that the cold pierced her through and through and only her spirit was warm. Her whole flesh prematurely dead, indifferent to her body's torment, she kept her mind intent on Paradise and counted her suffering trivial, if only she might avoid becoming cheap in Christ's eyes. Reentering the chamber thereafter, she could scarcely get warm either by the hearth or in her bed. Because of this, people said that the King had yoked himself to a monacha rather than a queen. Her goodness provoked him to harsher irritation but she either soothed him to the best of her ability or bore her husband's brawling modestly.

6. Indeed, it will suffice to know how she bore herself during the days of Quadragesima, a singular penitent in her royal robes. When the time for fasting drew near, she would notify a monacha named Pia, who, according to their holy arrangement, would send a hair cloth sealed carefully in linen to Radegund. Draping it over her body through the whole of Quadragesima, the holy woman wore that sweet burden under her royal garment. When the season was over, she returned the hair cloth similarly sealed. Who could believe how she would pour out her heart in prayers when the king was away? How she would cling to the feet of Christ as though He were present with her and satiate her long hunger with tears as though she was gorging on delicacies! She had contempt for the food of the belly, for Christ was her only nourishment and all her hunger was for Christ.

7. With what piety did she care solicitously for the candles made with her own hands that burned all night long in oratories and holy places? When the king asked after her at table during the late hours, he was told that she was delayed, busy about God's affairs. This caused strife with her husband and later on the prince compensated her with gifts for the wrong he did her with his tongue.

8. If she received a report that any of God's servants was on his way to see her, either of his own accord or by invitation, she felt full of celestial joy. Hastening out in the night time, with a few intimates, through snow, mud or dust, she herself would wash the feet of the venerable man with water she had heated beforehand and offer the servant of God something to drink in a bowl. There was no resisting her. On the following day, committing the care of the household to her trusted servants, she would occupy herself wholly with the just man's words and his teachings concerning salvation. The business of achieving celestial life fixed her attention throughout the day. And if a bishop should come, she rejoiced to see him, gave him gifts and was sad to have to let him go home.

9. And how prudently she sought to devote everything possible to her salvation. If the girls attending her when she dressed praised a new veil of coarse linen ornamented with gold and gems in the barbarian fashion as particularly beautiful, she would judge herself unworthy to be draped in such

fabric. Divesting herself of the dress immediately, she would send it to some holy place in the neighborhood where it could be laid as a cloth on the Lord's altar.

10. And if the king, according to custom, condemned a guilty criminal to death, wasn't the most holy queen near dead with torment lest the culprit perish by the sword? Row she would rush about among his trusty men, ministers and nobles, whose blandishments might soothe the prince's temper until the king's anger ceased and the voice of salvation flowed where the sentence of death had issued before!

11. Even while she remained in her worldly palace, the blessed acts which busied her so pleased Divine Clemency that the Lord's generosity worked miracles through her. Once at her villa in Péronne, while that holiest of women was strolling in the garden after her meal, some sequestered criminals loudly cried to her from the prison for help. She asked who it might be. The servants lied that a crowd of beggars were seeking alms. Believing that, she sent to relieve their needs. Meanwhile the fettered prisoners were silenced by a judge. But as night was falling and she was saying her prayers, the chains broke and the freed prisoners ran from the prison to the holy woman. When they witnessed this, those who had lied to the holy one realized that they were the real culprits, while the erstwhile convicts were freed from their bonds.

12. If Divinity fosters it, misfortune often leads to salvation. Thus her innocent brother was killed so that she might come to live in religion. She left the king and went straight to holy Médard at Noyon. She earnestly begged that she might change her garments and be consecrated to God. But mindful of the words of the Apostle: "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed," he hesitated to garb the Queen in the robe of a monacha. For even then, nobles were harassing the holy man and attempting to drag him brutally through the basilica from the altar to keep him from veiling the king's spouse lest the priest imagine he could take away the king's official queen as though she were only a prostitute. That holiest of women knew this and, sizing up the situation, entered the sacristy put on a monastic garb and proceeded straight to the altar, saying to the blessed Médard: "If you shrink from consecrating me, and fear man more than God, Pastor, He will require His sheep's soul from your hand." He was thunderstruck by that argument and, laying his hand on her, he consecrated her as a deaconess.

13. Soon she divested herself of the noble costume which she was wont to wear as queen when she walked in procession on the day of a festival with her train of attendants. She laid it on the altar and piled the table of Divine Glory with purple, gems, ornaments and like gifts to honor Him. She gave a heavy girdle of costly gold for the relief of the poor. Similarly, one day she ornamented herself in queenly splendor, as the barbarians would say, all decked out for *stapione*. Entering holy Jumerus' cell, she laid her frontlets, chemise, bracelets, coif and pins all decorated with gold, some with circlets of gems on the altar for future benefit. Again, proceeding to the venerable Dato's cell one day, spectacularly adorned as she should have been in the world with whatever she could put on, having rewarded the abbot, she gave the whole from her woman's wealth to the community. Likewise going on to the retreat of holy Gundulf, later Bishop of Metz, she exerted herself just as energetically to enrich his monastery.

14. From there her fortunate sails approached Tours. Can any eloquence express how zealous and munificent she showed herself there? How she conducted herself around the courts, shrines, and basilica of Saint Martin, weeping unchecked tears, prostrating herself at each threshold! After mass was said, she heaped the holy altar with the clothing and bright ornaments with which she used to adorn herself in the palace. And when the handmaid of the Lord went from there to the neighborhood

of Candès whence the glorious Martin, Christ's senator and confidant, migrated from this world, she gave him no less again, ever profiting in the Lord's grace.

15. From there, in decorous manner, she approached the villa of Saix near the aforesaid town in the territory of Poitiers, her journey ever prospering. Who could recount the countless remarkable things she did there or grasp the special quality of each one? At table she secretly chewed rye or barley bread which she had hidden under a cake to escape notice. For from the time she was veiled, consecrated by Saint Médard, even in illness, she ate nothing but legumes and green vegetables: not fruit nor fish nor eggs. And she drank no drink but honeyed water or perry and would touch no undiluted wine nor any decoction of mead or fermented beer.

16. Then, emulating Saint Germanus' custom, she secretly had a millstone brought to her. Throughout the whole of Quadragesima, she ground fresh flour with her own hands. She continuously distributed each offering to local religious communities, in the amount needed for the meal taken every four days. With that holy woman, acts of mercy were no fewer than the crowds who pressed her; as there was no shortage of those who asked, so was there no shortage in what she gave so that, wonderfully, they could all be satisfied. Where did the exile get such wealth? Whence came the pilgrim's riches?

17. How much did she spend daily on relief? Only she who bore it to the beggars ever knew. For beyond the daily meal which she fed to her enrolled paupers, twice a week, on Thursday and Saturday, she prepared a bath. Girding herself with a cloth, she washed the heads of the needy, scrubbing away whatever she found there. Not shrinking from scurf scabs, lice or pus, she plucked off the worms and scrubbed away the putrid flesh. Then she herself combed the hair on every head she had washed. As in the gospel, she applied oil to their ulcerous sores that had opened when the skin softened or that scratching had irritated, reducing the spread of infection. When women descended into the tub, she washed their limbs with soap from head to foot. When they came out, if she noticed that anyone's clothes were shoddy with age, she would take them away and give them new ones. Thus she spruced up all who came to the feast in rags. When they were gathered around the table and the dinner service laid out, she brought water and napkins for each of them and cleaned the mouth and hands of the invalids herself. Then three trays laden with delicacies would be carried in. Standing like a good hostess before the diners, she cut up the bread and meat and served everyone while fasting herself. Moreover, she never ceased to offer food to the blind and weak with a spoon. In this, two women aided her but she alone served them, busy as a new Martha until the "brothers" were drunk and happily satisfied with their meal. Then, leaving the place to wash her hands, she was completely gratified with her well-served feast and if anyone protested, she ordered that they sit still until they wished to get up.

18. Summer and winter, on Sundays, she followed a praiseworthy rule. She would provide an undiluted drink of sweet wine to the assembled paupers. First she doled it out herself and then, while she hurried off to Mass, she assigned a maid to serve everyone who remained. Her devotions completed, she would meet the priests invited to her table for it was her royal custom not to let them return home without a gift.

19. Doesn't this make one shudder, this thing she did so sweetly? When lepers arrived and, sounding a warning, came forward, she directed her assistant to inquire with pious concern whence they came or how many there were. Having learned that, she had a table laid with dishes, spoons, little knives, cups and goblets, and wine and she went in herself secretly that none might see her. Seizing some of the leprous women in her embrace, her heart full of love, she kissed their faces. Then, while they were seated at table, she washed their faces and hands with warm water and treated their sores with fresh

unguents and fed each one. When they were leaving she offered small gifts of gold and clothing. To this there was scarcely a single witness, but the attendant presumed to chide her softly: "Most holy lady, when you have embraced lepers, who will kiss you?" Pleasantly, she answered: "Really, if you won't kiss me, it's no concern of mine."

20. With God's help, she shone forth in diverse miracles. For example, if anyone was in desperate straits because of pus from a wound, an attendant would bring a vine leaf to the saint speaking with her about what was to be done with it. As soon as the saint made the sign of the cross over it, the attendant would take it to the desperate one, placing it on the wound which would soon be healed. Similarly an invalid or someone with a fever might come and say that he had learned in a dream that to be healed he should hasten to the holy woman and present one of her attendants with a candle. After it had burned through the night his disease would be killed while the invalid was healed. How often when she heard of someone lying bedridden would she sally forth like a pilgrim bearing fruit, or something sweet and warm to restore their strength? How quickly would an invalid who had eaten nothing for ten days take food when she served it herself and thus receive both food and health together? And she ordered these things herself lest anyone tell tales.

21. Weren't there such great gatherings of people on the day that the saint determined to seclude herself that those who could not be contained in the streets climbed up to fill the roofs? Anyone who spoke of all the most holy woman had fervently accomplished in fasting, services, humility, charity, suffering and torment, proclaimed her both confessor and martyr. Truly every day except for the most venerable day of the Lord, was a fast day for that most holy woman. Her meal of lentils or green vegetables was virtually a fast in itself for she took no fowl or fish or fruit or eggs to eat. Her bread was made from rye or barley which she concealed under the pudding lest anyone notice what she ate. And to drink she had water and honey or perry and only a little of that was poured out for her, however thirsty she was.

22. The first time she enclosed herself in her cell throughout Quadragesima, she ate no bread, except on Sundays but only roots of herbs or mallow greens without a drop of oil or salt for dressing. In fact, during the entire fast, she consumed only two sestaria of water. Consequently, she suffered so much from thirst that she could barely chant the psalms through her desiccated throat. She kept her vigils in a shift of hair cloth instead of linen incessantly chanting the offices. A bed of ashes served her for a couch which she covered with a hair cloth. In this manner, rest itself wearied her but even this was not enough to endure.

23. While all the monachas were deep in sleep, she would collect their shoes, restoring them cleaned and oiled to each. On other Quadragesimas, she was more relaxed, eating on Thursday and again on Sundays. The rest of the time when health permitted, except for Easter and other high holy days, she led an austere life in sackcloth and ashes, rising early to be singing psalms when the others awoke. For no monasterial offices pleased her unless she observed them first. She punished herself if anyone else did a good deed before she did. When it was her turn to sweep the pavements around the monastery, she even scoured the nooks and crannies, bundling away whatever nasty things were there, never too disgusted to carry off what others shuddered to look upon. She did not shrink from cleaning the privies but cleaned and carried off the stinking dung. For she believed that she would be diminished if these vile services did not ennoble her. She carried firewood in her arms. She blew on the hearth and stirred the fire with tongs and did not flinch if she hurt herself. She would care for the infirm beyond her assigned week, cooking their food, washing their faces, and bringing them warm water, going the rounds of those she was caring for and returning fasting to her cell.

24. How can anyone describe her excited fervor as she ran into the kitchen, doing her week of chores? None of the monachas but she would carry as much wood as was needed in a bundle from the back gate. She drew water from the well and poured it into basins. She scrubbed vegetables and legumes and revived the hearth by blowing so that she might cook the food. While it was busy boiling, she took the vessels from the hearth, washing and laying out the dishes. When the meal was finished, she rinsed the small vessels and scrubbed the kitchen till it shone, free of every speck of dirt. Then she carried out all the sweepings and the nastiest rubbish. Further she never flagged in supporting the sick and even before she took up the Rule of Arles did her weekly tour of service preparing plenty of warm water for them all. Humbly washing and kissing their feet, the holy one prostrated herself and begged them all to forgive her for any negligence she might have committed.

25. But I shudder to speak of the pain she inflicted on herself over and above all these labors. Once, throughout Quadragesima, she bound her neck and arms with three broad iron circlets. Inserting three chains in them, she fettered her whole body so tightly that her delicate flesh, swelling up, enclosed the hard iron. After the fast was ended, when she wished to remove the chains locked under her skin, she could not for the flesh was cut by the circlet through her back and breast over the iron of the chains, so that the flow of blood nearly drained her little body to the last drop.

26. On another occasion, she ordered a brass plate made, shaped in the sign of Christ. She heated it up in her cell and pressed it upon her body most deeply in two spots so that her flesh was roasted through. Thus, with her spirit flaming, she caused her very limbs to burn. One Quadragesima, she devised a still more terrible agony to torture herself in addition to the severe hunger and burning thirst of her fast. She forced her tender limbs, already suppurating and scraped raw by the hard bristles of a hair cloth, to carry a water basin full of burning coals. Then, isolated from the rest, though her limbs were quivering, her soul was steeled for the pain. She drew it to herself, so that she might be a martyr though it was not an age of persecution. To cool her fervent soul, she thought to burn her body. She imposed the glowing brass and her burning limbs hissed. Her skin was consumed and a deep furrow remained where the brand had touched her. Silently, she concealed the holes, but the putrefying blood betrayed the pain that her voice did not reveal. Thus did a woman willingly suffer such bitterness for the sweetness of Christ! And in time, miracles told the story that she herself would have kept hidden.



**Radegund cures Bella: from the original MS life of Radegund**

27. For example, a noble matron of Gislad named Bella, who had suffered from blindness for a long time, had herself led from Francia to Poitiers into the saint's presence. Though won over with difficulty, she had her brought in during the silence of a foul night. Prostrate at the saint's knees, the woman could barely ask her to deign to sign her eyes. As soon as she impressed the sign of the cross on them in the name of Christ, the blindness fled; the light returned. Daylight shone on the orbs so long darkened beneath the shades of night. Thus she who had been led there, went home without a guide.



28. Similarly, a girl named Fraifled, whom the Enemy vexed, was violently contorted and most wretched. Without delay, she was found worthy of a cure at the saint's hands at Saix. Nor should we omit to mention the following miracle, revealed through the blessed woman at this time. The next day a woman named Leubela, who was gravely vexed in the back by the Adversary, was publicly restored to health when the saint prayed for her and Christ worked a new miracle of healing. For a rustling sound came from under the skin of her shoulder blades and a worm emerged. Treading it underfoot, she went home liberated.



**Radegund expels the demon: from the original MS**

29. What she did secretly was to become known to all people. A certain monacha shivered with cold by day and burned with fire by night through an entire year. And when she had lain lifeless for six months, unable to move a step, one of her sisters told the saint of this infirmity. Finding her almost lifeless, she bade them prepare warm water and had the sick woman brought to her cell and laid in the warm water. Then she ordered everyone to leave, remaining alone with the sick woman for two hours as a doctor. She nursed the sick limbs, tracing the form of her body from head to foot. Wherever her hands touched, the sickness fled from the patient and she who had been laid in the bath by two persons got out of it in full health. The woman who had been revolted by the smell of wine, now accepted it, drank and was refreshed. What more? The next day, when she was expected to migrate from this world, she went out in public, cured.

30. Let us increase her praise by recounting another miracle that has rightly not been forgotten. A certain woman labored so heavily under an invasion of the Enemy that the struggling foe could scarcely be brought to the saint. She commanded the Adversary to lie prostrate on the pavement and show her some respect. The moment the blessed woman spoke, he threw himself down for she frightened him who was feared. When the saint, full of faith, trod on the nape of her neck, he left her in a flux that poured from her belly. Also from small things great glory may accrue to the Creator. Once, a ball of thread which the saint had spun was hanging from the vault, when a shrew mouse came to nibble it. But, before he could break the thread, he hung there dead in the very act of biting.

31. Let our book include another event worthy to be called a miracle. One of the saint's men named Florius was at sea fishing when a whirlwind appeared and a mass of billows surged. The sailor had not even begun to bail when a wave came over the side, the ship filled and went under. In his extremity, he cried out, "Holy Radegund, while we obey you, keep us from shipwreck and prevail upon God to save us from the sea." When he said this, the clouds fled away, serenity returned, the waves fell and the prow arose.

32. Goda, a secular girl who later served God as a monacha, lay on her bed for a long time. The more she was plied with medicine, the more she languished. A candle was made to the measure of her own height, in the name of the holy woman, and the lord took pity on her. At the hour when she expected the chills, she kindled the light and held it and as a result, the cold fled before the candle was consumed.

33. The more we omit for brevity's sake, the greater grows our guilt. Therefore, as we dispose quickly of the remainder, our relief is slowed. A carpenter's wife had been tormented by diabolic possession for many days. Jokingly, the venerable abbess said of her to the holy woman: "Believe me, Mother, I will excommunicate you if the woman is not purged of the Enemy and restored in three days." She said this publicly but she made the holy woman secretly sorry that she had been so slow to heal the afflicted. To be brief, at the saint's prayer on the next day, the Adversary went roaring out of her ear and abandoned the little vessel he had violently seized. Unhurt, the woman returned to the hospice with her husband. Nor should we neglect a similar deed. The most blessed one asked that a flourishing laurel tree be uprooted and transferred to her cell so she could enjoy it there. But when this was done all the leaves withered because the transplanted tree did not take root. The abbess jokingly remarked that she had better pray for the tree to take root in the ground, or she herself would be separated from her food. She did not

speak in vain for, through the saint's intercession, the laurel with the withered root grew green again in leaf and branch.

34. When one of the monachus closest to her suffered because her eye was flooded with a bloody humor, she laid hold of some wormwood which the saint had about her breast for refreshment. When she placed it on her eye, the pain and blood soon fled and, from the freshness of the herb, the eye was suddenly clear and bright again. And that reminds me of something I almost passed by in silence. Children were born to the blessed one's agent, Andered, but he scarcely saw them before he lost them and the sorrowing mother had to think about burying her child even while birthing it. During the preparations, the tearful parents wrapped the lifeless babe in the saint's hair cloth. As soon as the infant's body touched that most medicinal garment and those noble rags, he came back from the dead to normal life. Blushing away his tomblike pallor, he rose from the mantle.

35. Who can count the wonders that Christ's merciful kindness performs? A monacha Animia suffered so with dropsical swelling that she seemed to have reached her end. The appointed sisters awaited the moment when she would exhale her spirit. While she was sleeping, however, it seemed to her that the most venerable blessed Radegund ordered her to descend nude into a bath with no water in it. Then, with her own hand, the blessed one seemed to pour oil on the sick woman's head and cover her with a new garment. After this strange ritual, when she awakened from her sleep, all trace of the disease had disappeared. She had not even sweated it away for the water was consumed from within. As a result of this new miracle, no vestige of disease was left in her belly. She who was thought to be ready for the tomb rose from her bed for the office. Her head still smelled of oil in witness of the miracle but the pernicious disease was no longer in her belly.

36. Let us now tell a tale in which the whole region may rejoice. One evening as twilight cast its shadows, the lay folk were singing noisy songs near the monastery as they danced around accompanied by musicians with cithers. The saint had spent some time exhorting two listeners. Then one monacha said, joking: "Lady, I recognize one of my songs being preached by the dancers." To which she responded: "That's fine if it thrills you to hear religion mingled with the odor of the world." Then the sister stated: "Truly, lady, I have heard two or three of my songs which I have bound together in this way." Then the saint said: "God witness that I have heard nothing of any worldly song." Thus it was obvious that though her flesh remained in the world, her spirit was already in Heaven.

37. In praise of Christ, let us proclaim a miracle from our own time patterned after an ancient model in the tradition of the blessed Martin. When the most blessed female was secluded in her cell, she heard a monacha crying. At the signal, she entered and asked what was the matter. She answered that her infant sister was dead, and though still warm she was laid out and ready to be washed in cold water. Consoling with her, the saint bade her bring the corpse to her in her cell. There she took it into her own hands, closing the door behind her and ordering the other to withdraw to a distance lest she sense what she was doing. But what she did secretly could not be concealed for long. By time the services for the dead were prepared, she had handled the corpse of the dead little girl for seven hours. But seeing a faith He could not deny, Christ utterly restored her health. When the saint rose from prayer, the infant rose from the dead. The old woman got up

when the infant revived. When the signal was repeated, she joyfully restored alive the one who was dead when she had tearfully received her.

38. And this noble deed should be commemorated. On the day the holy woman migrated from earth, a tribune of the fisc named Domnolenus who was wasting away with a suffocating disease dreamed that he seemed to see the saint approach his town in state. He ran out and saluted her and asked what the blessed one wished. Then she said that she had come to see him. And since it was the wish of the people to establish an oratory for blessed Martin, the most blessed one seized the tribune's hand, saying: "There are venerable relics of the Confessor here with which you could build a shrine which he would consider most fitting." Behold the mystery of God! The foundation and the pavement where a basilica had been built were revealed. Then, in addition, in his slumber she drew her hand over his jaws and stroked his throat for a long time, saying: "I came that God might confer better health on you." And he dreamed she asked: "On my life, because of me, release those whom you have in prison." Waking, the tribune recounted what he had seen to his wife, saying: "Indeed, I believe that at this hour the saint has gone from this earth." He sent to the city to confirm the truth of this. He directed the prison that the seven prisoners held there should be admonished and released. The messenger, returning, reported that she had mi- grated from the world in that very hour. And the saint's oracle was proved by a triple mystery: the relief of the prisoners, the restoration of the tribune's health, and the temple building.

39. But let this small sample of the blessed one's miracles suffice, lest their very abundance arouse contempt. And even this should in no way be reckoned a small amount, since from these few tales we may recognize in the miracles the greatness with which she lived in such piety and self-denial, affection and affability, humility and honor, faith and fervor, with the result that after her death wonders also ensued upon her glorious passing.

*Source:* Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), pp.70-86; <http://www.mw.mcmaster.ca/scriptorium/radegund.html>.

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