

## Lectio XXI DIOCLETIAN

Diocletian was mannered with cunning, perceptive also and of quite exact intellect, and who wished to satisfy his own severity with other's/ foreign envy. Nevertheless, [he was] a very diligent and very skillful leader. And he first brought to the Roman Empire the ceremony according to the custom of a palace/ king's tent more than of Roman liberty and he ordered that he be adored/ worshiped, when before him all (other leaders) were greeted. He put ornaments of gems on (his) clothes and shoes. For previously the sign/ mark of rule/ power was only in (wearing) a purple robe, (and) the remaining (clothes) of the community (i.e. the previous leaders only wore the purple robe to signify their rank and the rest of their dress was like everyone else in the community.)

However, Herculius (co-emperor) [was] openly cruel and of an uncivil nature/ intellect, also signifying/ showing his own severity by/in the horror of his expression. Indulging his own nature, he gratified Diocletian in all (his) more savage plans. Nevertheless while life was becoming weary, when Diocletian sensed that he was suited insufficiently for controlling the empire, he was advisor to Herculius, that they should retire into private life and they should entrust the position of defending the republic to more fresh, younger men. His colleague complied to this warily. Nevertheless each (of the two) in/on one day changed the mark of power with the private style of dress, Diocletian at Nicomedia, Herculius at Milan, after a famous triumph, which had been done in Rome from several nations, with an illustrious procession of floats, in which the wives and sisters and children of Narseus (conquered Persian king) were led before the chariot. Nevertheless they retired one to Salon, the other into Lucania. Therefore, it happened to him, which to no one after/ since men (were) born, that when he had died a private citizen, he was nevertheless taken back among the divine/ gods.

*Word-for-word translation*

Diocletian was of a crafty disposition, with much sagacity, and keen penetration. He was willing to gratify his own disposition to cruelty in such a way as to throw the odium upon others; he was however a very active and able prince. He was the first that introduced into the Roman empire a ceremony suited rather to royal usages than to Roman liberty, giving orders that he should be adored, whereas all emperors before him were only saluted. He put ornaments of precious stones on his dress and shoes, when the imperial distinction had previously been only in the purple robe, the rest of the habit being the same as that of other men.

But Herculius [*his full name was Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus Herculius Augustus*] was undisguisedly cruel, and of a violent temper, and showed his severity of disposition in the sternness of his looks. Gratifying his own inclination, he joined with Diocletian in even the most cruel of his proceedings. But when Diocletian, as age bore heavily upon him, felt himself unable to sustain the government of the empire, he suggested to Herculius that they should both retire into private life, and commit the duty of upholding the state to more vigorous and youthful hands. With this suggestion his colleague reluctantly complied. Both of them, in the same day, exchanged the robe of empire for an ordinary dress, Diocletian at Nicomedia, Herculius at Milan, soon after a magnificent triumph which they celebrated at Rome over several nations, with a noble succession of pictures, (20) and in which the wives, sisters, and children of Narseus were led before their chariots. The one then retired to Salonae, and the other into Lucania. That happened to him (Diocletian), therefore, which had happened to no one since men were created, that, though he died in a private condition, he was enrolled among the gods.

<sup>20</sup> *Pompa ferculorum illustri.*] *Fercula* are representations of cities, rivers, and other objects in the conquered countries, carried in procession at a triumph, in imitation of Romulus, who carried the spoils of a slain enemy *suspensa ferculo*, Liv. i. 10.—*Tzschucke*. *Ferculum* was a kind of frame in which anything might be carried or suspended.

*A more colloquial translation from Rev. John Selby Watson, 1853*