

That the emperors name shall be contained in documents and public records and that the date, indicated by Latin letters, shall be written more plainly.

(Ut nomen imperatoris instrumentis et actis praeponatur, et ut tempora Latinis litteris indicata accuratius scribantur.)

Emperor Justinian to John, praetorian prefect the second time, exconsul and patrician.

Preface.

The most important document or record or any other memorial made by man is that which is graced by the mention of the empire. The mention of consuls indictions and any other designation of time among us are methods suitable, no doubt, to identify what is intended, nor do we abolish any of them, but make an addition thereto, so that the course of time may be designated in a better and more perfect manner. If anyone looks back to the most ancient times and to the antiquity of the republic, Aeneas, the Trogan king, founded the republic, and from him we are called Aeneads; should anyone consider our second beginning as a result of which the Roman name appeared among men in splendor, Kings Romulus and Numa made it, the former of whom founded the city of Rome, the latter regulated it and gave it laws; should anyone search for our third beginning, he will find the great Caesar, and the holy Augustus, and hence our republic which now flourishes - and may it be immortal - and which was founded by them. Hence, it is absurd that the name of the emperor should not be put first in documents, court records and other memorials of men.

c. 1. We therefore ordain that keepers of records, either in court or wherever documents are registered, and notaries (tabelliones) and other persons who draw up documents in any form, whether in this great city or in the provinces which God has given us to govern, shall begin documents in substantially the following manner: "In the ___ year of the reign of ___ , most holy Augustus and emperor;" he shall secondly put the name of the consul of that year; he shall thirdly

mention the indiction, and follow that with the month and the day. In that manner, the time will be indicated in every respect, and the mention of the emperor and consul and the other formalities inserted in the documents, will generally prevent forgeries thereof. 1. But if among the people of the Orient or others there is a custom of noting the year of the city, we are not averse to that being done; but the name of the emperor shall be given first, followed, as has been stated, by the name of the consul, the indiction, the month and the day during which the documents are made and written, and this may be followed by the year of the city. For we do not forbid anything which was accustomed to be done before, but simply make an addition of the imperial name. The beginning shall be made with the first indiction, which by God's grace is now current, and the persons above mentioned must write substantially thus: "In the eleventh year of the reign of Justinian, most holy Augustus and emperor, in the second year after the consulship of the honorable Flavius Belisarius, in the month of _ _ _ the _ _ _ day." And so in all documents shall be mentioned the year of our reign, so long as God shall prolong it, and then that of the others who follow after us. It is clear that now the eleventh year of our reign is to be written, but from the coming first day of April, on which day God gave us the government of Roman affairs, the twelfth year is to be written and so on as long as God prolongs our reign. Aside from the laws and the enactment of laws, our name will thereby be made immortal, since the mention of our reign will be made every time.

We make this further addition: Since obscure and antiquated signs are used in courts in order to denote the time, we order that after these ancient signs others shall be written which are clear and commonly used by all, which can easily be read by all and which denote the time of the proceeding, so that those who want to know the

time may not be left in ignorance till he finds someone who really understands these signs. If the language used immediately after such obscure signs is in Greek, the time also shall be written in Greek; if the context of the document is in Latin, the time shall also be stated in Latin, following the obscure signs above mentioned, but a better order and more clarity shall be used, so that all who are not altogether ignorant of Latin may be able to read.

Epilogue. Your Sublimity will take care that this, our will, declared by this law, may be made known in this great city and in the provinces under your jurisdiction, so that no one may dare to denote the time, or do the other acts, in a manner different from that herein specified.

Given August 31 (537).