

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

- JAN. 1—CIRCUMCISION of our Lord.
" 5—Friday—Fast.
" 6—EPIPHANY.
" 7—1st Sunday after the Epiphany.
" 12—Friday—Fast.
" 14—2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
" 19—Friday—Fast.
" 21—SEPTUAGESIMA. (*Notice of Conversion of St. Paul*).
" 25—Conversion of St. Paul.
" 26—Friday—Fast.
" 28—SEXAGESIMA. (*Notice of Purification*)

NOTES ON THE EPISTLES.

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SEPTUAGESIMA.

"So run that ye may obtain."—1 Cor. ix, 24.

I.—We now enter upon the second part of the Christian year. These three weeks are a transition period between the festal commemoration of Christmas Tide and the penitential observance of Lent. Turning from the contemplation of the Great Healer of men, we are called to meditate upon the evil in man which the Divine Son became incarnate to take away. "His Name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." And in this connection we have set before us to-day the need and use of self-discipline of that *Temperantia*, which is one of the chiefest Christian virtues, and was highly extolled even by heathen philosophy. The whole passage brings home, seriously and even sadly, the struggle, the hardness, and the danger of the spiritual course which the Christian has to run to attain eternal life. The individuality of Christian life. Each athlete alone, solitary, striving with others for a prize, each hoping to obtain the crown or wreath of wild olive. The beginning of the race. Only one can obtain the coveted prize.

II.—The fading chaplet was the object of desire, the "bravium," or prize; and for this how much had been given up, and suffered. The continence and discipline of ancient foot-racers was proverbial. The Apostle points out how much these men were ready to give up and endure for an uncertainty. "One only receiveth the prize," although all run. There was but one wreath. Yet with this uncertainty before him, how strenuous the efforts of the runner, how careful his preparation, how severe the training. A graphic illustration in the hands of St. Paul of the Christian athlete running his course from earth to heaven. A race meant effort, progress, hope—three chief features of the religious life.

III.—But there must be a preparatory training for the athlete if he would have any hope of success. The taming of the body necessary

above all. To strive for the laurel crown in the great Isthmian games, without a long antecedent exercise of severe bodily discipline of sense and passion, and taste, was to court defeat. The Corinthian Church had an object lesson in their popular public character—the successful competitor in these public contests. Their faults were due to a neglect of the virtue of Temperance or self-restraint of the body. See chaps. v, vi, xi, 18-34. (Note the sharp, concise and graphic expressions of this passage.) The Christian must run so as to win his prize. Earnestness, care, thoughtfulness must mark his preparation for the great race; advance, effort, hope must be seen in each stage of the contest. Christian life a serious thing, a struggle, a conflict, a striving to attain something yet far off, and only to be won by persevering and unflinching zeal and pain and vigilance. "I therefore run." I am so convinced of the truth of what I say that I not merely preach it but practice it in my own person, "so run not as uncertainty" as do the heathen racers, for one only of them receives the prize. "So fight I." The figure changes from the race ground to the wrestling ring by an abruptness peculiar to St. Paul when much moved, "not as one who beats the air" or fences with a shadow or adversary of the fancy only. "I chasten my body" in an athletic sense, literally I bruise it with blows, as a boxer does his adversary in the arena, with bruises. "I reduce my body to slavery." Power over the body a Christian duty. To enslave the body and make it a servant of the Spirit. The Corinthians had pleaded their power to indulge their bodies in gluttony and uncleanness.

IV.—i. The reality of the Christian Life, its responsibilities and requirements forced home by this Epistle. Life not a dalliance, a dream, a languor, but a contest. It has a purpose—a prize. A Crown that fadeth not away. The consequences of Christian Life—eternal. What is lost here is lost forever. ii. St. Paul had not already attained the prize. He had no assurance of his final acceptance with God. He did not presume. The prize lay at the end of the course. He might yet "be a castaway." Free grace—the Apostle a conspicuous example of—yet he was not certain in his own mind that he would continue to the end. iii. Be not high-minded, but fear. Falls from grace possible. The Christian has not to "run only" but "so run" as to obtain. He may run only to lose. iv. Need of this teaching in our own day, when luxury is on the increase amongst us, and bodily and sensual indulgences are growing and spreading a baneful influence over Church Life. The severe simplicity of life despised. Needless indulgences to be put away, and things that hinder progress, the "weights" to be laid aside. v. A stricter observance of the vigils and fasts of the Church year by church families, would be found helpful in raising the tone of Church Life, and developing a deeper spirituality amongst us.

A GLANCE AT THE COLLECTS.

(From the American Church S.S. Magazine.)

(CONTINUED.)

The Sundays immediately following the season of the Epiphany are reckoned with reference to the coming Easter. The first Sunday in the quadragesimi, or forty-day fast of Lent, was designated Quadragesima. The Sunday before Ash Wednesday, being exactly fifty days before Easter, was called Quinquagesima. Sexagesima and Septuagesima Sundays, which are respectively fifty seven and sixty-four days before Easter, are supposed to have been called by analogy from the next decades. According

to Durandus, monastics were wont to begin the observance of the Lenten fast at Septuagesima, the Greeks at Sexagesima, and the secular clergy at Quinquagesima. The time of observing Lent varied very considerably in the early Church, according to the rule laid down for fast days. In some parts fasting was not allowed on Sundays, Thursdays or Saturdays, and in order to make Lent include forty fast days, it would be necessary to commence it at Septuagesima Sunday. Possibly Sexagesima and Quinquagesima marked the beginning of Lent when different rules obtained. As these titles are used with so much uncertainty as to their meanings, we are glad to find the more exact titles in our Prayer Books, which explain them to be respectively, "the next Sunday before Lent," "the second Sunday before Lent," and "the third Sunday before Lent."

The intention of their services is no doubt to prepare us for the observance of Lent, and to supply a connecting link between Lent and Christmas; for they direct our minds to the original cause of our Lord's coming into the world, and to the necessity imposed upon Christians of emancipating themselves, through His power, from the sins on account of which He died. The Collect for the first two of these pre-Lenten Sundays, which come on the 21st and 28th of this present month, are both found in the Sacramentary of Gregory. That for Septuagesima consists of [1] "A confession that we are justly punished for our offences; [2] "A prayer that we may be mercifully delivered by God's goodness." The subject of our Sexagesima Collect is "Trust in God." It consists of [1] "A declaration that we do not put our trust in anything we do; [2] "A prayer that we may be defended by the power of God against all adversity." It seems to look forward to the discipline of Lent, and warns us not to trust to the merits of any good works in which we may engage during that season. One Saint's Day stands conspicuously before us in the Calendar for January—that dedicated to St. Paul on the 25th. Saints' Days are usually observed on the day of a saint's martyrdom or death, as being in the Christian point of view the anniversary of his entrance upon a new and better life. To quote from Goulburn: "In the mediæval offices the martyrdom or death of a saint is called his *natalitia*, that is, his birthday entertainment, the notion being that the passage of his soul into Paradise is truly a birth into a new world, where he is greeted by those who have gone before him, and where, lying in his Master's bosom, he drinks the new wine of the kingdom." St. Paul is one of three exceptions to this general rule in the English Calendar; for his conversion, as having been effected in a manner so stupendous, and having been productive of such great results to the future of Christianity, is observed instead of the anniversary of his martyrdom. Thus "The Conversion of St. Paul," and the Collect based upon that wonderful event. It is expanded from one in the Sacramentary of Gregory, and consists of [1] "A commemoration of the missionary labors of St. Paul; [2] "A prayer that we may show forth our gratitude for his conversion by following his teaching." We close our article by reproducing it. "O God, who through the preaching of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; grant, we beseech Thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

THE PERPETUAL INCARNATION.

That Church which observes the Church Year gives to its congregation a systematic course of instruction in theology. These great historic festivals are vocal monuments to great