

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER.

- Dec. 1st—1st Sunday in Advent
 " 8th—2nd Sunday in Advent.
 " 15th—3rd Sunday in Advent. (Notice of St. Thomas and Ember Days. Ember Coll. daily.
 " 18th—
 " 19th— } EMBER DAYS.
 " 20th— }
 " 20th—St. Thomas. A. & M.
 " 22nd—4th Sunday in Advent. (Notice of Christmas, St. Stephen, St. John, and Holy Innocent Days).
 " 25th—CHRISTMAS, Pr. Pss. M. 19, 45, 85. E. 89, 110, 132. Athan. Creed. Prop. Preface till Jan. 1st.
 " 26th—St. Stephen. First Martyr.
 " 27th—St. John. Ap. and Ev.
 " 28th—Innocents' Day.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

ADVENT.

Advent commences the Christian Year, and in it we have brought before our thoughts, the Four Last things: Death and Judgment; Heaven and Hell; and our Lord Jesus is presented to us as coming in the flesh at His Incarnation, and to come again at the Judgment Day, which we are always to expect, and for which we are always to be ready. On Advent Sunday Christians ought to review the way they have used the spiritual advantages of the Christian Year just concluding, and to make new vows for the year just beginning; and at the altar pledge themselves to a holier service, receiving Christ's Body and Blood as a help thereto.

ST. THOMAS.

St. Thomas' mind was so constituted that he did not readily believe anything; but when once convinced, his faith was immutable. Tradition says he preached the Gospel among the Parthians and Medes until he reached India, where a Body called the Christians of St. Thomas still exists. He was martyred by the Brahmins in Sumatra, and a spear was thrust into his side: recalling his Lord's words to him: 'Reach hither thy hand, and thrust into My side, and be not faithless, but believing.' Do

not forget the words of his confession of Christ: 'My Lord and my God!'

CHRISTMAS.

The festival of the Nativity was observed at a very early period. It may not be the exact date; but it serves to commemorate the wonderful birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. It is a day of great joy and festivity. We ought now to forgive any injuries which have been done us, and to cheer and succor the poor, and to show great love and tenderness for children, in honor of the Christ-child. All the Bible points to this day, all the world has an interest in it. Do not let any worldly festivities keep you from appearing in the Lord's House, and going to His Altar. The church is always hung with garlands of evergreens, and the Service is brightened with music and flowers.

ST. STEPHEN'S.

The three days after Christmas represent the three days of suffering, love and purity by which Christ's Incarnation bears fruit to the heart. St. Stephen came nearest to Jesus in suffering; St. John in love; the Holy Innocents, in purity. St. Stephen was the first Christian Martyr and the first Christian Deacon.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

St. John the Evangelist is known to all Christians as the Beloved Disciple. He was our dear Lord's cousin, a fisherman, and the only one of the Apostles who was not martyred. He died, Bishop of Ephesus, at the age of 100.

HOLY INNOCENTS.

This day commemorates the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, by Herod, in his attempt to kill the infant Christ. They were the first fruits unto God and the Lamb; and, as the ancient Collect says, 'not in speaking, but in dying, have they confessed Christ.'—Selected.

ADVENT THOUGHTS ON THE FOUR LAST THINGS.

DEATH.

Are you ready for it? And if not, what if God should say, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' (St. Luke xii, 30.)

[Think, seriously on what you chiefly apprehend were you to die this moment, and amend it immediately. Accustom yourself to perform every action as if you were to die instantly after it.]

There is but a step between me and death. (1 Sam. xx, 3).

But after this the judgment. (Heb. ix, 27.)
 There is no to-morrow for a Christian.—Ter-tullian.

JUDGMENT.

Every day and every hour you are adding to the bad deeds which you will be punished for or the good deeds which will be rewarded. 'If we judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord.' (1 Cor. xi, 31).

[Imagine yourself now before the tribunal of Christ. What are you most ashamed of at this very moment? Reflect seriously on it, and remember that all your secret sins shall at the day of judgment be exposed, if you do not here efface them by a sincere repentance.]

Who can stand before his indignation? (Nah. i, 6).

Woe even to the praiseworthy life, if, without mercy, thou, O God, shalt examine it.—St. Augustine.

HELL.

Do not put away the thought of hell, but let the thought of hell give you strength to put away sin. 'Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' (St. Matt. x, 28).

[Go down, in spirit, into hell. Consider what it is that has made the lost fall into it. Reflect

upon their present state, and learn of them to fear God, and dread your danger].

Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? (Isa. xxxiii, 14).

The impious pass from one punishment to another—from the burnings of concupiscence to the flames of hell.—St. Augustine.

HEAVEN.

Think well and often of heaven. If you get there you will not mind the sufferings of the way. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away." (Rev. xxi, 4). The very thought of it will strengthen and gladden you in any difficulty or sorrow.

[Excite within yourself a great desire of seeing God, and regard the earth with a proportionate contempt, Were you filled with the thought of heaven, nothing here below could allure or disturb you].

When I awake after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied. (Psalm xvii, 16).

If the labor terrifies, the reward invites.—St. Bernard.

CHRISTMAS.

Again the Christmas sun, in its circling course about the earth, awakens millions of redeemed and rejoicing worshippers to the glad tidings of a Saviour born. The Church repeats the simple wondrous story of His coming to earth. We behold the Roman laws and the Roman authorities unconsciously ordering the fulfillment of the old Jewish prophecies by compelling Mary and Joseph to journey to Bethlehem to be taxed. They enter the town with a multitude, bent on the same errand with themselves, called thither by the same stern decree. Toiling wearily on through the thronged and crowded streets, they come to that inn where there is no room for Mary the mother of Jesus, and finally gain a mean shelter among the cattle. But ere the morning comes, a multitude of the heavenly host are chanting 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good will toward men, and the mother is laying in the manger her first born son, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Oh, it is a precious thing, year by year, thus to study anew these external, earthly features of the Son of God taking to himself our human nature, and from these externals to be brought to the great fact which is clothed in them. Who would be without such a day as this? Who will refuse to mark with thanksgivings and holy festivities the coming of the Son of God?

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son! Was there ever record like this? Was there ever gift like this, that God should give His only Son? Was there ever love like this, that the Father should give His well beloved Son; that the Son should willingly empty Himself of His glory to take upon Himself our weak human nature? It is a love which passeth man's understanding. It is an infinite love. It is the majesty of God seeking for a gift which shall be worthy of His dignity and honor, and finding nothing thus worthy but Himself! It is the love of the Father endeavoring to kindle in us a love toward Him! It is the Son willingly offering Himself, that He might come to us, to draw and lead us, His younger brethren, unto the Father! Was ever gift or love like this? Angels, to whom no such love had ever been shown, no such gift been given, shouted Hosannas at the descending of the Son of God to earth, and shall men not welcome Him with loving and rejoicing hearts?

The Son of God became the Son of Man, that sons of men might become sons of God. It must be our earnest endeavor to become such. When, on this day, we partake spiritually of that flesh in which, so at this time, He veiled Himself,