

The Church Guardian

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SPECIAL NOTICE.

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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

MAY 1—ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES. A. & M.

" 3—Fourth Sunday after Easter.

" 10—Fifth " " "

" 11 } Rogation Days.
" 12 }
" 13 }

" 14—ASCENSION DAY.

" 17—Sunday after Ascension.

" 24—WHITSUNDAY.

" 25—Monday in Whitsun-week.

" 26—Tuesday " "

" 27 }
" 28 } Ember Days.
" 29 }
" 30 }

" 31—Trinity Sunday.

Fifth Sunday After Easter.

"Ask and ye shall receive; that your joy may be full."
—John xvi, 24.

Such are the directions of our blessed Lord conveyed to us in the passage selected for the gospel of the day. These directions are the key to the subject the Church proposes for our consideration. This subject is the operation on the heart of the Christian of the Holy Spirit, and the instrument of the Spirit is prayer. In almost the same words she has used in the preceding collect—as but another branch of the same subject—the Church leads us to pray for God's inspiration to think those things that are good, and for His merciful guiding to enable us to perform the same. It is a subject very naturally and reasonably proposed to us at a season like the present, when, during our Lord's sojourn on earth, between his resurrection and ascension, he was preparing the minds of his disciples to receive that heavenly guidance he was about to vouchsafe them. We confess, as the very groundwork of our prayer to God, that it is He from whom all good things come. The mind must first be firmly and faithfully possessed with this truth. Scripture teaches that a man can receive nothing except it "be given him from heaven;"—and again, that it is God only who in His mercy maketh us to differ from others, that is, that we have no privilege, nothing distinguishing us from the rest of our race, however fallen they be in superstition, in bigotry, in error, or in idolatry, that we have not ourselves received from God. Without Christ we can do nothing, and he who would by God's inspiration think those things that are right, must submit his reason to the direction of the wisdom of God. That reason was given him

by God, and must be used in his service; not following the momentary dictates of the flesh which perisheth, but of the spirit, which lives forever. The portion selected for the epistle from the writings of St. James, continued as it is from that of last Sunday, shows us what is the spirit of those good things that we shall think, if we are guided by the Holy Spirit of God. We shall be doers of the word (that ingrafted word mentioned in the former epistle), and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves. Remark this expression, not deceiving others, but deceiving our own selves. The Apostle contrasts the hearer and the doer of God's will, and compares them to one looking into a glass. When before it, he has exactly represented to him what manner of man he is. The word of God sets the same truth before us—we see what manner of men we are—our sins, our hypocrisies, are all brought home to us; but if we see this only with our natural eyes, although the fact may be at the time undeniable—if it be not the Holy Spirit of God working together with our spirit, which brings it home to us, we forget, as soon as our attention is diverted from the subject, what manner of men we were; we become merely hearers, and not doers of the law. Who then is he, who, by holy inspiration, thinks those things that be good? Why, he who, looking into the perfect law of liberty, the Gospel—that law which controls men only for their own eternal welfare, whose commandments are not grievous, and whose service is perfect freedom, who, looking into this, followeth all its wise directions, and imbibing its spirit, continueth therein—such an one, being not a forgetful hearer—not one who thinks his duty done as a Christian merely in hearing the word of God, but as carrying it out in all the duties of life is a doer of the word, "this man shall be blessed in his deed." The consistency of the whole life of the Christian is then set before us. It must not only be seen in our actions—it must bridle our tongues. It is in vain we seem to be religious, in vain we trust to purity of doctrine, or to charity in our practice,—to any standard however pure, to any practice however honest, unless we have that pure and undefiled religion of the heart as it is open before God, which evidences itself in faith working by love, and in that purity and holiness of life which is the peculiar characteristic of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit.

The gospel selected from the same passage of St. John as the last, sets before us the same truth, that the whole business of religion is spiritual, the work of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, manifesting itself in works of holiness, and piety, and obedience. How are we to attain this Spirit? The passage answers us, "Ask, and ye shall receive. that your joy may be full." Prayer is the means by which God's inspiration is to be procured. Prayer, under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, is the link by which the soul is brought, through the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, into communion with God. "I say unto you," saith our Saviour, "that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." The prayer directed in His name to the throne of grace shall be received: "for this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us," and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." The power of prayer, whose efficacy is the spirit it breathes, who can set limits to?—it has been beautifully said to

move the hand that moves the world, and may be considered the instrument with which the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, works with us for our comfort. Like our blessed Lord in the gospel, the Christian can never be said to be alone in the world, so long as he may communicate with the Father by prayer. The Spirit is with us, as God was with Christ; and has He not promised, that wherever two or three of His disciples are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them? By God's merciful guiding then shall we be enabled to perform as well as think those things that be good. The Gospel has been given us, that, in the cheering and comforting truths it reveals, we should have peace:—peace to the soul. Whatever may be the trials and tribulations that await us in the world, we may be able, by identifying ourselves with the promises of the Gospel, to withdraw ourselves from the world, and to enjoy that peace of soul which passeth man's understanding, and which the world cannot give. It may give wealth, it may give honours, pleasures or prosperity; but there is that which it cannot give, and which is more difficult of attainment in exact proportion as we possess worldly advantages; it cannot give that peace of the soul which enables us to resign ourselves, with indifference to this world's tribulations into the hands of God. This peace is more the poor than the rich man's privilege, and equalizes, far more than the worldly-minded man will allow, the blessings that are allotted us in our course through the world. This peace is expressly the fruit of the Spirit, and classed with love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It must be nurtured in faith, for this is the victory that overcometh the world—even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he "that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Be then of good cheer; Christ has overcome the world. Thus, then, do we see it established in these services, as it is taught in the collect, first, that all good things are from God; andly, that by his Holy Spirit alone can we think things that are good; and 3rdly, by his guidance alone perform the same. Lessons of practical and spiritual obedience are thus enforced, and he who reads them aright will be thereby confident of this very thing,—that God, who hath begun a good work in us by the operation of His Holy Spirit, will never fail to perform and to complete it in us, until the day of Jesus Christ.

The New Bishop.

On Friday last, the Reverend Charles Hamilton was solemnly set apart and consecrated to the high and holy office of a Bishop in the Church of God, and thus another link was added to the mystic chain which unites the Church in Canada with the Church of the Apostolic age, and another witness borne to the truth of the declaration in our Prayer-Book, "It is evident unto all diligent readers of the Scripture and ancient authors that from the beginning there have been these three orders of ministers in Christ's Church—BISHOPS, Priests and Deacons." The Episcopate is, in the judgment of the Church, not merely a superior office, but a distinct order, with gifts, powers and prerogatives restricted to itself, such as confirming the faithful, admitting to the lower orders of ministry, and last, but not least, the power of admitting others to a share of its own responsibilities and privileges.