

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

FEBRUARY	1.—SEPTUAGESIMA.
"	2.—PURIFICATION OF VIRGIN MARY.
"	8.—SEXAGESIMA.
"	15.—QUINQUAGESIMA.
"	18.—ASH WEDNESDAY.
"	22.—First Sunday in Lent.
"	24.—St. Matthias, Ap. and M.
"	25.—EMBER DAY.
"	27.—EMBER DAY.
"	28.—EMBER DAY.

## Quinquagesima Sunday.

The Collect, Epistle and Gospel for Quinquagesima Sunday provide fitting introduction to the great Penitential Season of the Church, upon which we are so soon to enter. They emphasize the necessity of possessing as the prerequisite of all Lenten work that spirit of *Love*, which "makes and counts not sacrifice," and which forms the true basis of "Lenten self-discipline and self-denial—without which it may be *Pharisaic* in self-righteousness, or *superstitious* in self-torment."

The Collect (says Bishop Barry)—substituted in 1549 for an old Collect evidently referring to Confession and Penance at the opening of Lent—at once declares the main idea of this Sunday by the prayer for charity as the very *life* of the Christian life, and the bond (of unity) between all virtues.

The Epistle is St. Paul's celebrated picture of charity—that is Love (properly in its relation to man, though there are analogous features in its relation to God). Under the beauty and freedom of the description lies a profound sequence of thought. Following out the subject of spiritual gifts, treated of in the previous chapter, he (a) exalts true love above the two chief gifts of tongues and prophecy, and above even that faith in God's special gifts which was the condition of all miracle; (b) he next contrasts the *inner reality* of love with its *outward signs* towards God and man—the devotion of martyrdom and the sacrifice of all to feed the poor; (c) from this negative description he passes to a climax of the positive characteristics of love—patience and kindness—self-forgetfulness and humility—unselfishness and readiness to forgive (*"reckoneth not the evil"*)—delight in all that is good and true—bearing, believing, hoping and enduring *without limit*; (d) lastly, he dwells on the *eternal permanence* of love, when in the perfection of the manhood of the future all that belongs to our present imperfect state of childishness—prophecies, tongues, knowledge—shall pass away, even of the graces which abide—faith, hope,

love—love is the greatest, *because* most of the essence of God, for God is love.

The Gospel is obviously connected with the idea of the day by its opening with the prediction of the Great Act and Pattern of Love, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for our redemption.

## Lent.

We very much fear that the remarks of the Right Rev. Dr. Quintard, Bishop of Tennessee, in his very useful "Helps for Holy Lent"—"That there are many persons in the Church who have no definite idea about this holy season, whose notions fall as far short of the truth as those of persons out of the Church"—are still too true. It cannot we think be denied that the observance of this holy season is becoming more general among Church people of all shades of opinion, but still we fear that there are many who fail to realize the advantages to be gained from its faithful use, and who regard it rather as an arbitrary appointment than as one claiming their full assent and obedience. And yet this season of humiliation has been observed by the Church from a very early period, and some writers trace it back even to the *first* century.

"We are not to look on this appointment of a penitential season as an arrangement of our own," says Bishop Huntington; "it is rather a sacred part of of that divinely ordained system of spiritual ministries by which the Lord quickens the consciences and trains the holy life of His children. Traces of such a solemnity of forty days continuance are found all through the earlier and later ages of Revelation. We know that it was the discipline of prophets, the reverential school of saints, who lived wonderfully near to God. Entering once more upon it, we have not to *contrive a scheme of self-improvement without the guidance of the Spirit and the Bride*. He who hallowed Lent by the Great Fast on the threshold of His mediatorial work for sinful souls, passes into this still retirement with us. All these coming days and nights He will be our Witness and our Companion. The sincerity or formality of our special observances will be known to Him. Our self-denials He will share; the vows we make will be recorded in His book. As the Gospel for Quinquagesima Sunday tells us, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by"; the cry of our blindness and our weakness will not need to travel far to reach His ear, nor will He ever rebuke it either for its ignorance or its importunity; it is with Him we are to walk all the way going up to Jerusalem."

The remarks of Bishop Huntington, above quoted, breathe the spirit of the Church in reference to this Holy Season of Lent; it is one in which she requires her children to "turn unto the Lord with all their hearts, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning"; in the words of the Collect for Ash Wednesday (which, in order to continue her spirit throughout the whole of this penitential season, she requires to be repeated daily) "worthily lamenting their sins and acknowledging their wretchedness, that they may obtain of Him who is the God of all, more perfect remission and forgiveness."

Though the time during which the observance of a Fast before Easter has varied, the observance itself is recognised in the Apostolic Canons, and by various writers in the second and third centuries. Origen speaks of forty days before Easter being set apart for fasting; and at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) this period was taken for granted, and both this Council and that of Laodicea (A.D. 365)

speak of Lent as an institution generally observed by the Church. "It is a very precious legacy of the primitive Church, and if we make a proper use of it, we shall find it a means of grace full of blessing to our souls. The object of the Church is to prepare our minds and hearts for the proper contemplation of the *passion and death* of our Blessed Lord, and we need the discipline which the season is designed to afford. Another writer of "Lenten Thoughts" most truly says: "There is no season in the Church more precious to the sincere believer than Lent. Its coming is (by such an one) looked forward to with interest; its departure is accompanied with a feeling of sadness, as when we bid farewell to a tried and trusted friend. The voice of the Church in all ages has spoken its worth. She calls upon her children by her frequent services to the solemn teaching to draw nearer to God. And when the season has passed, the Christian who has availed himself of its advantages feels that he has been "strengthened with might" by the power of the Holy Ghost for his future conflicts against sin, the world and the Evil One."

## The Influence of the Christian Woman.

The influence of woman can scarcely be over-rated. The customs of society, and the popularity or unpopularity of certain habits of life, depend far more on woman than on man, even in spheres which are common to them both. If man does most of life's work, woman creates most of life's atmosphere. What she reprobates is usually avoided, what she smiles on is generally followed, and if only this subtle authority were still more devoutly and wisely used, some unblushing vices would hide their heads for shame, and some unpopular graces would blossom into vigorous life. In the education of the young this power is most conspicuously and effectually exercised. The effects of such teaching abound in this Christian land. Men of business whose integrity is unquestioned, teachers whose whose influence is as good as it is wide, parents whose homes are very sanctuaries, servants of Christ who are ready for every good word and work, became what they are because the grace of God flowed into their hearts through the holy channel of wife, or mother, or sister. While the world hurries on its busy way, and theology stands gazing up into heaven, these have been quietly building the habitation of God through the Spirit. Scarcely less important than home influence is the power wielded by those wise-hearted women who mould the characters of the young who are brought under their influence in the day-school or in the Sunday-school. The impartation of knowledge is but a small part of the work of education, and therefore the value of a teacher's work depends on *character* as much as on *ability*. To teach accuracy in mathematical calculations, while disregarding carelessness about the truth—to prohibit an ungrammatical sentence, and not to suppress the angry, malicious or impure word—to show the wonders of natural phenomena, and to ignore the existence of spiritual truth—to evoke love of study, but never to suggest the blessedness of love to God—this is *not education* in the *truest* sense. For education is not a memory of facts and dates, it is "*a drawing out*" of all those latent possibilities which are within the child, the loftiest of which are love to God and fellowship with Him. Any one who would fully discharge duties so onerous needs to be inspired, not with "the enthusiasm of humanity," but with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Presupposing this as a motive, there are three qualities which are essential to a right exercise of