

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

SEPT. 7th—14th Sunday after Trinity.

" 14th—15th Sunday after Trinity.

[Notice of Ember Days.]

SEPT. 17th—

" 19th— } EMBER DAYS.

" 20th— }

" 21st—16th Sunday after Trinity. St. Matthew A. & M. Athan. Cteed.

" 28th—17th Sunday after Trinity. Notice of St. Michael.

" 29th—St. Michael and All Angels.

THE POSITION AND WORK OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH.

By THE REV. MELVILLE M. MOORE, Rector of
THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY,
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.

(Continued.)

HELPING.

The work of the Church is two fold. First, to turn souls to Christ, and secondly, to train them for Heaven. Having won them, she must help them; help them to live holy lives, help them to conquer in the long and weary struggle against sin. This, undeniably, is the Church's mission. Here on earth, she is not an association of immaculate saints. She exists solely to help men to become saints. She is sent to convert the sinful, to enlighten the ignorant, to alleviate the miseries of suffering humanity. But to do this successfully there must necessarily exist a condition of mutual help between the Church's component parts of Clergy and people. It will go without saying that neither part can do the work alone, at least in this day. This mutual help must be given in two ways. First, in regard to the work among men within and without the Church. And, second, in regard to maintaining the Church itself. We know that God's especial messenger, the Priest, is charged with the duty of caring for the saved, as well as seeking for those who are lost. He must carry every member in his mind, and bear every soul on his heart. To instruct the ignorant, to en-

treating the negligent, to reprove and warn the unruly and the obstinate, and to encourage and comfort the faithful—these are his ordinary duties. But he must also seek those who stand aloof from the Church, who oftentimes make a mook of religion, and of his own holy calling. He is to be all things to all men, if by any means he may save some. In the working of a Parish there are many means to be employed not only to keep a live Parish alive, but to build up a dead or dying Parish. A constant and oftentimes dreary round of parochial visiting must be maintained; private as well as public exhortations be given to secure the regular attendance and the labor of the negligent and indifferent; society or guild work be planned, watched, and encouraged; the Sunday school carefully directed and teachers therefor secured and instructed. And, besides all this, the temporal concerns of the Parish seem to gravitate naturally to the Priest's shoulders. These details of parochial work are considered indispensable to success. Neglect of any one of them will speedily beget weakness, and neglect of all of them surely produces failure and deadness. This is so fully recognized by the Laity that a Vestry almost always carefully makes inquiry concerning the next new pastor as to his proficiency or past success in attending to these details—an inquiry, by the way, which often amounts to asking if the man has proved himself successful in doing the legitimate work of ten men. But let it be understood that

THE PRIEST IS NOT ALONE

in the responsibility for doing this work, because the work is Church work, and must be mutually done by Priest and people. Without the help of the Laity his labors are all but fruitless. If lay hands are held off, if lay hearts are cold and unsympathizing, if lay lips are silent, if lay energies are selfishly repressed, or but indifferently given, why, it is easy to calculate just how long one brave heart can bear the burden alone, and at last sink under it, or flee to another part of the Lord's great field, hoping for better success in going over precisely the same old round of duties. We repeat, in the practical working of any Parish or Mission, the obligation to work is upon the Laity as well as the Clergy, and the man or woman who shirks clearly defined duty will no more escape the consequences than will the Priest who shirks his duty. God will insert failure somewhere in their lives, and if the fault be a general one in any Parish, God will there, too, insert failure, and finally death. Says one 'we need on the part of the people a fuller and more unreserved recognition of their Parish duties, and on the part of the Parishes—both clergy and people—a fuller and more unreserved recognition of their Diocesan duties.'

A few facts may now be noted about

MAINTAINING THE CHURCH,

or in plain language, about paying its running expenses through the world. It is nothing new to say, that while God is omnipotent, while He has but to will to execute, yet in mostly all His dealings with man, so far as we know, He works through agents, and uses intermediate means to accomplish his purposes with men. For example, God revealed not His law in the fullness with which we have it, to all men, but only to some. The Decalogue is not spoken in the thunder tones of Sinai to every man as he comes into the world, but was once given to all men through Moses. And God saves men by men in the preaching of the gospel. Christ pardons men by men in the administration of His Sacraments. And so the Church, at once Divine and Human, must needs work among men with human means. Hence, for the purpose of maintaining the agencies for preaching and spreading abroad the Gospel, for administering the saving Sacraments, yes, for helping Christ Himself in the persons of His sick, and poor, and afflicted—for these works

the Church needs the currency of the earth, the gold and silver of the world, as well as the currency of Heaven, the prayers and praises of human souls. And this currency of the world must flow into her coffers if she is to do the work of her Lord and Master. The remark was once made by a man, that he 'didn't see the use of so much money going into the Church's treasury if the Gospel was free and without price.' It was an absurdly shallow remark. He might, with equal wisdom, have quailed about the amount spent for bread, because the moisture, the air, and the sunshine produced the wheat, or grumbled about paying for the clothing he wore, because the goodness of God turned grass into wool. So the work of maintaining the Church, of paying its running expenses, as we may say, is also a mutual work, if it is asked

WHAT PART THE CLERGY TAKE

in this work, it may be answered, first, that there is not one of them who is not called upon, and does not put his hand into his pocket more frequently to pay out money for the Church, than any ten laymen about him, taking them as they come. The amounts are usually small, of course, but relatively they are large. It may be answered again that hundreds of them, perhaps thousands, give regularly and religiously the tithe or tenth of their incomes to religious uses, whether their incomes are five hundred or five thousand dollars. But it may be answered finally, looking at the question from a purely worldly and pecuniary point of view, that the Clergy are, by long odds, the heaviest contributors to the support and carrying on of the Church's work. It is meant by this to say of the Parish Corporation—what any business man would say of his banking or insurance company—that the Priest who is receiving only a thousand dollars a year for his support, but who possesses such ability as would enable him to earn five thousand dollars a year in any secular calling, such a man is actually contributing four thousand dollars a year to the work of the Church, and especially to the parish in which he labors. This is a fact that must be taken into consideration in any merely monetary or business-like calculation as to how the Church is supported. It only requires a moment's thought to discover who are being benefited, in a pecuniary sense, by such an unequal distribution of the burden of parish support. But how is this part of the Church's work borne by the Laity? The question is ringing through the Church to-day, and God grant that its tones may grow louder and louder, until they penetrate the sordidness and covetousness that have enervated the consciences of Christians, and so sadly hindered the Church's work and success. Brethren of the Laity,

BY DIVINE RIGHT,

by copartnership right, by right of bearing a large part of this burden ourselves, we of the Clergy ask you, who of you all are giving to God's use by putting money into His treasury, anything at all approaching your ability to give? No man is required to go beyond his ability; but there is a vast deal of giving below that, though it may be asserted that the giving is in strict accord with the ability to give. But granting the undeniable fact that God's law demanding a tenth or tithe has never been repealed, we have in that law the Divine test of every man's ability to give of his means. While thousands are freely spending their money for comforts, luxuries, yes, even necessities, we plead with them to give honestly and lawfully for God's work—a necessity for them as well as for us—that the comfortable Gospel of Christ may be preached to dying souls, the life-giving Sacraments carried to famishing mortals, and that Christ's poor, and sick, and needy may be comforted and helped.

Finally, there is a mutual obligation in