

The Month of Perfection.

IN the Catholic yearly calendar August may be rightly called the Month of Christian Perfection. This may seem somewhat strange, for even practical Catholics are accustomed to consider August the month of religious relaxation: the month of picnics and garden parties, of excursions by land and lake, of seaside resorts and country outings, and of social enjoyment generally. This is all quite true, and perhaps it is just because it is true, because the world would have August the month of pleasure, that the Church would have it, in a special manner, the month of Christian and religious perfection. The Church never forgets the *one thing necessary*, and she would gently remind her children that even in the midst of their social enjoyments they have to save their souls. She would tell them that not only the time of penance, but also the time of pleasure should be considered the time of salvation; that the souls which are saved in Advent or Lent should not be lost or endangered, even in the month of August. Now the Church, like the wise and prudent Mother that she is, knows very well that the best way to inculcate a lesson, especially a lesson hard to learn, is by presenting attractive pictures and living models of the virtues she desires to teach. She knows, too, that if she would lead her children to the practice of Christian perfection, she must meet them halfway in their pleasures and accommodate herself to their ways. She accordingly invites them in summer time to come with her on a picnic to her houses of religious retreat. Convents and colleges seem to be all shut up during the holiday time, and perhaps even many Catholics may be surprised to find that these institutions of piety and learning are often more crowded during the summer months than during the scholastic year.

Other pupils indeed crowd them during vacation time—the pupils of Christian and religious perfection. Separating themselves from even their ordinary work, our religious teachers, men and women, go into the solitude and silence of retreat during the month of August to think only of their own eternal salvation. This most instructive fact is in itself sufficient to make ordinary Christians reflect. Here are religious men and women thinking of their salvation only, just at a time when other Christians are strongly tempted not to think of their salvation at all. These devoted souls give days and weeks to prayer and penance, when even practical Catholics hurry their daily devotions, and will have only the shortest possible weekly Mass. The Church says to her children: "Look upon this picture and upon that," and she thinks the contrast should strike and instruct them. But besides presenting this striking picture of Christian perfection in houses of religious retreat, the Church would further impress her children by bringing in her Patron

Saints for August. The Church's daily sermons are the lives of her Patron Saints. All Saints are models of Christian perfection, but the Patron Saints for August are teachers and models of Christian perfection in a very special manner.

First comes the soldier saint, Ignatius of Loyola, with his military "company" to capture the world by the fire of love and the sword of the spirit, and to lead men to relish "spiritual exercises" even in the summer months. Ignatius, indeed, is not a Saint of August, but he comes on the eve of August to usher in the month of perfection and set all men thinking of eternity by his startling meditation on THE END OF MAN. Nearly all the Saints of August are Founders of religious orders. St. Alphonsus, St. Dominic, St. Bernard, St. Augustine, St. Cajetan, St. Raymond, St. Clare and St. Francis de Chantal. St. Alphonsus comes first with his Redemptorist Fathers to teach people and priests the practice of Christian perfection by their popular missions and ecclesiastical retreats. St. Dominic comes with his Rosary to tell the lovers of pleasure that when packing up for their outings they must not forget their Beads. And St. Bernard and St. Augustine come to sanctify summer schools and to tell men of science that God alone is great. St. Clare, the worthy companion of the gentle saint of Assisi, will teach Christian maidens how to perfect their lives in the cloister, and St. Francis de Chantal will show Christian mothers how to sanctify themselves and their families at home. Then that dear little amiable boy saint, St. John Berchmans, comes just in time to go on picnics with the Altar Boys, and indeed with all boys home for their holidays, and to show them how innocent play and pleasure may help to make boys good as long as they are accompanied by daily prayer and purity of life, and are such pleasures as Saints can join in. The girls, too, at their summer resorts have their sweet little Rose of Lima to teach them that fashion is fickle and beauty is vain, and that modesty, meekness and humble self-sacrifice will make them more pleasing to God and more attractive to men. And even the politicians have their patron in this month of universal perfection, the illustrious St. Louis, King of France, who lived the maxims his saintly mother taught him: "Death before dishonor, and the only dishonor a man should fear is the dishonor of deliberate sin."

To complete and crown all this teaching the Queen of all the Saints comes right in the middle of the month on the Feast of her glorious Assumption, to show her clients that Christian perfection is easy and within the reach of all, for it consists in humble conformity to the will of God.

ASPIRATION: Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation. *Indulgence*—300 days.