

# 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—  
“ 20th—  
“ 21st—16th Sunday after Trinity. St. Matthew A. & M. Athan. Creed.  
“ 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.

### CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

Probably in nine cases out of ten where a Parish is struggling for existence, the fault is mainly laid upon the Rector in charge. Clergymen come and go, and to each is attributed some fault that has served to retard the success of the Parish. Each successive Rector is expected to infuse new life into a dead or dying Parish, and to accomplish alone and unaided such results as will put the Parish upon a firm basis. But the same old struggle is repeated, and oftentimes scarcely a year passes ere a resignation is sent to the Vestry, to be at once accepted, because, 'the Parish is not prospering under our present Rector, and perhaps we will now be able to get a man who will build us up.' If specific charges are made they are usually against some peculiarity of character, which is supposed to neutralize all the good traits of the man. But if the unsuccessful and discouraged Rector is asked his view of the cause of failure, he will probably attribute it to a lack of general co-operation on the part of the people. And we would ask if it does not seem entirely reasonable to suppose, that if an honest, capable, earnest man, notwithstanding a few unimportant idiosyncrasies, were generally and heartily seconded in his

Parish work, there would not more frequently be success where failure is now witnessed?

Our proposition is, that

### THE CHURCH'S WORK

is to be done by the Laity equally with the Clergy. Let us understand, humanly speaking, of what the Church consists. It has two component parts; it is composed of Clergy and Laity, of Priests and People. While in one sense all its members may be spoken of as constituting a royal priesthood, yet for its principal object and work the Church's component parts must consist of Clergy and Laity. For there cannot be a Church composed of either part alone. They are as inseparable as the two great commandments, love to God and love to man, or as the two prime factors of salvation, faith and works. Such being the composition of the Church, we must necessarily understand the purpose of its existence. These purposes may be classed under the three general heads of TEACHING, HELPING and WORSHIPING.

### TEACHING.

As these three duties are the work of the Church as a whole, the obligation and responsibility of doing this work does not and cannot rest upon either part of the Church alone. To teach, to help, to worship, and undoubtedly the duties of the Clergy. But is it, can it be, more their duty than the Laity's? The Clergy have indeed vowed before the Altar to forsake and set aside all worldly cares and studies, and to give themselves wholly to their sacred duties. But the work is a Church work, because the Church is the light to lighten the world, and therefore the divine command, 'Let your light so shine before men,' is a command that is addressed to Clergy and Laity. True, it is written, 'the Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.' But as often as it happens, as it did in the reign of Aza, king of Israel, that the people are left without the true God through ignorance, left without a teaching priesthood, left without clearly defined exposition of God's laws, it necessarily follows that God forsakes those by whom He is forsaken, and sin, and crime, and moral and religious anarchy prevail. If the confessedly growing turpitude of business, social and political life in our times, is appalling to devout and thoughtful minds, we do not hesitate to say that it is equally as appalling to witness the weakness, the timidity, and the time-serving cautiousness with which the Church, as a whole, attempts to rebuke it, or even stands in shameless silence before it. The Priest's lips should keep knowledge, indeed, and the law should go forth from his mouth, for he is especially the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But will any one dare to say that the Laity are exempt from keeping the law? or from the duty of knowing it and enforcing it upon others? Will any one dare to say that the Laity, Christ's own brothers, surnamed with His name, are not in equal measure responsible for the dissemination of a knowledge of God's law, and for its enforcement in business, social, and political life?

### THE RESPONSIBILITY

is not that of the Priest alone. It is on the Church, and he is but a part of the Church, and is to do but a part of the Church's work. A report on Lay Helpers in the Journal of the Diocese of Long Island for 1885, says: 'Here is the root of the matter. When our Laity are willing to acknowledge the responsibility of their own vows, to fight and serve in the cause, then shall we have a band of Lay Helpers whose power for good it were impossible to calculate. Will not the Laity recognize the duties and vows of the royal priesthood into which they have been called? Until they do, the work will be but imperfectly done, the Church be clogged and hampered as she strives to march onward and heavenward, and the Master look down with

tender reproach, if not with hot displeasure, upon those who work not, while they pray—'Of Thy great mercy vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, so to direct, sanctify and govern us in our present work by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the Comfortable Gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly realized, and truly followed in all places, to the breaking down the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death; till at length the whole of Thy dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life.' If the Laity are what God's word says they should be, that is, children of light, then they are commanded to let that light shine before all the world. The law or knowledge, especially knowledge of God's Word, imperatively demands diffusion. It cannot be shut up in a few heads only with safety, because ignorance will grow too strong for it, and will eventually defy or rule it. History tells this fact over and over again in regard to the family, the state, and the Church. Therefore, no matter how much knowledge the clergy possess, if the other constituent part of the Church becomes an ignorant part, an unteaching part, eventually the ignorance within and without the Church will rule or defy it. Now, is

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of our day falling into a dangerous state of ignorance concerning religion and the Church? We think he is, and we suggest to the reader some proofs which he may use as opportunity presents. We will ask him to ascertain how many there are of his immediate friends, in the Church, who can give an intelligent explanation of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and their application to the human soul; or how many who can explain the doctrine of Original sin, and its consequences and remedies; or how many can explain the Catholic doctrines of Justification by Faith, of Good Works, of Predestination and Election, and of the nature and efficacy of the Sacraments. Or let him ascertain how many can comprehend and intelligently teach the Church Catechism, or how many have any clear idea of the origin, growth, and continuity of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Apply these tests, and the results may well appear appalling. But

### THE CONSEQUENCES;

think of those! We ask, can the knowledge of a few thousand Clergy, and the lamentable ignorance of a few hundred thousand Laity, have any appreciable effect for good upon the millions upon millions of ignorant, careless, indifferent, sinful souls that constitute the objective point of the whole Church's work on earth? In short—for the subject is a large one, and this is only an attempt to give direction to the thoughts of others—in short, that man who is a Christian, a professed disciple of Christ, who is not studying the doctrines of Christ, who is not daily becoming more familiar with God's word, who is not informing himself of the true character, history, work and duty of the Church, which is Christ's Body, and who, consequently, is not thus fitting himself to discharge his part of the teaching duty of the Church—such a man is a drone in the Church, is an useless member of Christ's Body, is an obstructionist to the labors of others, is a hinderer of those who would enter into the kingdom of Heaven; and the sooner such chaff is swept out of the way, dead, and buried with the Church's service, the sooner will good and true men be found to occupy the place of the barren and unfruitful.

(To be Continued)

## "SUCH A DIVINE AND COMFORTABLE THING."

It is a safe guard in any inquiry connected with religious questions—the declaration of St. Paul, "now we know in part." After all the vain boasting of natural philosophy, what has