

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR AUGUST.

August 1st—6th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 8th—Transfiguration of Our Lord.  
 " 8th—7th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 15th—8th Sunday after Trinity,  
 " 22nd—9th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 24th—St. BARTHOLOMEW, A. & M.  
 " 29th—10th Sunday after Trinity—Beheading of St. John Baptist.

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## THE CLERGY AND LAITY IN PARISH WORK.

The question, "How can parish work be successfully conducted?" was recently discussed in an admirable article in the *Family Churchman*, which struck us so forcibly that we have decided to reproduce its leading points with such alterations as our local circumstances render expedient.

The first point made by our esteemed contemporary is a very important one, viz., that *spiritual authority* in a parish is vested exclusively in the Incumbent, and that all the helpers must recognize, as in duty bound, their subordination to their clergy. Well-meaning clergymen sometimes divest themselves of this authority, but they invariably regret it. Whatever relates to the public instructions of the parish, or to the administration of the sacraments, or to the appointment and regulating of church services, or to spiritual discipline, or to the character of church music, all these things come under the official direction of the clergy alone. Of course, in exercising this official authority, they are expected to do it with meekness and not with arrogance. They are not to lord it over God's heritage, but exercise their office with discretion and according to the dictates of common sense. And if they are wise they will often take counsel with their lay brethren in every department of church rank.

How to set the laity practically and harmoniously at work?—this is the problem in its barest outline. Lay work—lay help, especially the help of men. Such help it is no

doubt extremely difficult to procure, but it ought not so to be. Why is it? Why this almost universal backwardness on the part of the men of our congregation? Is it because we have lifted the priesthood of the clergy so high that we have sunk the priesthood of the laity out of sight? Or is it some defect on our parochial system? Whatever be the cause, the testimony of an American clergyman is too generally true, the men quietly "watch the women while they do the church work."

We are convinced that it is no defect of the parochial system. As long as there is church work to distribute, and as long as individual men's capacities are limited by nature, so long the parochial system will be the best mode of advancing the church's interest. Doubtless, in large towns it is hard to fix the dividing line, yet it ought to be drawn, and pastors who have a number of people from other parishes should insist that these persons take up some of the duties, as well as participate in the privileges of their adopted parish.

In the next place, in order to secure unequivocal success, church work must be carried on on church lines. You cannot successfully carry on the work of the Church on sectarian principles, much less can you dovetail the church into sectarian organizations. It can be shown from statistics that in those places where the claims of the Church have been most stoutly asserted, and where the principles have been most fearlessly presented, there the church has made the greatest progress.

We would not be understood to say that the first and foremost work of the Church is to teach a mere ecclesiasticism. No, her great mission is to proclaim salvation to a world lying under condemnation, to point out the promise of redemption, to hold up the blood of Jesus Christ as the only means of reconciliation between God and man. Still, when all this has been done, there remains something else to be done. The claims of the Church are to be presented and enforced. Her doctrines and principles are to be expounded and vindicated, and her usages are to be explained. This is too much neglected, and the result is that our church members are woefully ignorant on these subjects. The average Churchman cannot give a reason for the hope that is in him when he is asked, and the reason is that he has never been taught. From the fact that some of the principles of the Church are distasteful to the popular mind, many of the clergy hesitate about pressing them. They are afraid of being called illiberal, exclusive, and uncharitable. But there is no law of charity which requires the suppression of the truth. It should be remembered that God has committed to the clergy certain truths, a *depositum* of truth which has come down from the beginning, relating to the Church, and the Faith, and the Ministry and the Sacraments, and they are not to change those truths, nor mutilate them, nor cover them up, through fear or favor of any man on earth. It takes a little courage sometimes to tell the truth, but the better way is to tell it, and if it is told in a proper spirit, no man of common sense will take offense at it.

We are not advocating cleaving other people's heads and making war on our neighbors; we do not believe in that. But we do

believe in pressing our claims, and making the principles of the Church known, and carrying them out in methods of church work. It is one of the duties of the clergy to make these principles known, and direct them into action. First, then, they should carry out the system of the Church as it is drawn out in the ritual year. Those parishes suffer loss in which the festivals and fasts and holy days of the Church's year are ignored.

Again, the clergy should explain to the people what the principles of the Church are, and the reason for them. Especially they should explain those principles which are most found fault with, and which seemingly make the Church appear exclusive and illiberal, and, it may be, uncharitable. They should explain, for instance, why Ministers of other communions are not allowed to officiate at our altars, and why our Church buildings are never loaned to other religious organizations. They should teach the people the true Church idea, that it is a divine institution, and not man-made—and the position of the Church on unity and sectarianism, and many other kindred topics. By such means we may hope to unite clergy and laity in real church work.

## SPONSORSHIP.

The other day we noticed an article in a religious journal attacking the Church for her use of sponsors in Holy Baptism. The writer claimed that it was unscriptural, a corruption, and triumphantly laid down the proposition,—"Sponsors are nowhere mentioned in Scripture."

We were not at all surprised to see the attack. The breadth of view on which the sponsorship is founded—the deep Scriptural basis on which it rests—can hardly be appreciated by one who argues instead of trying to comprehend. The spirit which condemns and annihilates, at one sitting, a practical universal and primitive in the whole Christian Church, because the word "sponsor" is not in the Scriptures, is a spirit that is quite unable to appreciate the thoroughly Christian and Scriptural and beautiful nature of sponsorship. "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so fulfil the law of Christ," is the sufficient Scripture on which sponsorship stands. The relation is based on the very central principle of Christianity,—love and help for others.

Parents bring their children to baptism. They make pledges and promises for them there. The Church, in Christ's name, demands and receives those pledges. But the parents can add nothing to their natural responsibilities. Their natural relation binds them already to all they promise. The promise is no voluntary assumption of duty on their part. The duty is there, pledge or no pledge. To bring up their children Christians is the obligation of the parental relation, in God's divine organization of the family.

Therefore the Church, though admitting parents as sponsors, prefers rather to have others, who can be sponsors in deed. She recognizes the fact that the father and mother are bound already, and seeks an additional security and help for the child which she takes into her arms, by laying others under an obligation toward it, voluntarily assumed.

These others assuming a quasi-parental re-