

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

- FEB.** 1st—Sexagesima—*Notice of Purification.*
 “ 2nd—The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin.
 “ 8th—Quinquagesima. (*Notice of Ash-Wednesday.*)
 “ 11th—ASH-WEDNESDAY. Pr. Pss. M. 6, 32, 38. E. 102, 130, 143. Com. Service.
 [The forty days of Lent are to be observed as Days of Fasting or abstinence. Ash-Wed. Coll. to be used daily].
 “ 15th—1st Sunday in Lent. (*Notice of Ember Days.*) Ember. Collect daily.
 “ 18th—
 “ 20th—
 “ 21st—
 “ 22nd—2nd Sunday in Lent. (*Notice of St. Matthias.*)
 “ 24th—St. Matthias. A. & M. (*Athan. Cr.*)

THE COMMINATION SERVICE.

An address by The Very Rev. The Dean of Montreal, at St. George's Church, Montreal, on Ash-Wednesday, February 11th, 1891.

The solemn service in which we have just taken part gives us the true keynote to the whole Lenten season. Why does the soul rise up AGAINST this Commination service? Why do men and women naturally criticize its spirit, and its special teaching? Because my friends no person cares to see the possibilities of sin over himself or herself made plain; because no sinner persevering in sin, longing to gratify sin, desires to feel the dagger in his or her own heart. Stab after stab, as that really awful service—awful because true—goes on the EVEN tenor of its solemn way.

And the rough tongue moves in angry criticism, because not only does that service teach the possibilities of sin over ourselves individually, but because it PICTURES what, persevered in sin, must in the long run, end in, 'the worm that dieth not'; the fire that is not quenched, 'the fan of the Lord purging his floor'; the 'terrible voice of most Just Judgement,' deadening the cry for Mercy that comes 'too late,' to gain a hearing. We do not naturally care to listen to these things; and we would often, if we could, strike dumb the voice that rings

them out, as this awful service does without fear, favor, or affection, sparing neither young or old, or rich or poor, or high or low, but telling out God's truth, in God's own words to God's own children lost, straying or strayed.

The service, I say, gives us the keynote to the whole Lenten season. It takes for granted, the deadly nature of persevered in sin, and it shows how such sin becomes the mother of personal and individual retributions.

'You cannot sin on unrepentant, unhumiliated,'—it says: 'without the retribution at some time falling, it will come, it must come.' It is not that God hurls it at you vindictively, but that you through your persevered in sin, create the curse, rear it, educate it, train it, and some day, the child that you have reared will turn on you like a rabid beast, and rend and tear your heart to pieces.

'Therefore,' says this awful service, 'realize what sin is; realize how persevering in it, spite of conscience; and spite of God. the curse must come, as surely, though not as quickly, as the sting of pain follows the angry blow.'

Having thus laid bare the power and penalty of sin, this service goes on to strike out the NEXT Great Lenten thought. It says to me, it says to you, 'have you the courage to bring your own daily life, under the clear, illuminating power of God's word? Dare you try it, test it by the word of God?'

Then there is raised up before me in startling words of SCRIPTURE, what I, and I, only, know I myself really am; or what I know I am growing into; or what if I be not careful, I may begin to grow into—what at least it is possible, I might be—a terrible and awful picture of realities or possibilities,—showing me that the light of the Day of Judgment will be flung—not, on the mere doctrine I may hold, not even on the Church I belong to, but, on the life I live, or on the life I battle to live. My life, my lost, degraded, smirched, or tainted life; or my erring, straying, tried, or tempted life, or my self loving, pleasure seeking, self caressing life, or my life of self esteem, of passion, of dogged obstinacy, or of self corroding jealousy—this is what I am called to look into—MY life. And not my life alone for forty Lenten days, but my whole life—the life that is drawing nearer every hour, closer to Death, to Judgment; to Heaven or Hell—to God or DEVIL.

But can anyone you ask stand this test? Certainly, otherwise there would be no meaning in religion. For this Glorious service, rolling back the clouds of gloom and pouring forth the full brilliancy of the sunshine of God's Gospel proceeds to show us how all can stand the test. All can stand it, it says, and take joy out of it, and strength and comfort, who are trusting in the Lord JESUS for daily pardon for daily sins; who are conscious of their sins and faults, and strive themselves, in Christ, to beat them down and keep them down; all who are consciously striving to lead the higher life, who are praying and working and trusting in Christ to be better,—all who in all things seek to do the right, because sin is wrong; and spite of lapses and falls seek on;—all such thank God can bring their lives to the test of God's word and say 'O God I thank Thee that I have Thy promise; that Thou wilt not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax.'

'But how few,' you say, 'are doing this.' More than you, who are not doing it, think. And it is for you, who are not striving to do it, that this service is pre-eminently meant—not alone for those who are striving and battling and believing in honest faith,—but above all for the cold and dead and apathetic, without one real throbbing of Godly life within their hearts—it is for such this service is pre-eminently meant to arouse you to two great living facts—the SAVIOUR that saves the soul from the power of sin; and the honest, upright, unassuming life in Christ—without which all religion is in vain.

Take this Service with its shades of gloom and light home with you and seek to apply it

to yourself. Read it, and as you do so ask—where does it touch me? What message does it bring to me? and as your heart must tell you that it is full of warning, counsel, comfort for your own soul, take it as your Lenten friend and guide and teacher, and in the strength of its meat, live out your forty Lenten days of prayer and watchfulness.

SYSTEMATIC GIVING.

SYNOPSIS OF A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CLERGY OF ST. LOUIS BY THE REV. WM. ELMER.

The question of ways and means is a very important one to nearly every rector who seeks to keep his parish out of financial trouble, and bring it into line with others, who bear their full share of the burdens laid upon them by the opportunities of the times, and in fulfilment of the baptismal vow. The spiritual growth of his people is first in the heart of the faithful pastor, and yet he sees only too often, that this, his dearest wish, is checked by the need of his being continually called upon to demand contributions from his flock, to support, to maintain even, the very existence of his parish. Instead of bringing his people, like Mary, to the feet of Jesus, he is compelled to let them become, like Martha, careful and troubled about the affairs of this life. In small towns where churches are multiplied and the struggle for existence is keen, all imaginable ways are resorted to in order to obtain a few dollars to pay a pressing debt, or to meet liability to the rector, and the work and toil, the clashing of contrary minds and opinions, often cause heart burning and strife which tend to lower the standard of zeal and piety.

No one wishes to see this state of things continue. Most of us believe there is some better way; and that God never intended that His kingdom should be supported by such uncertain methods. No one questions this proposition: that the Kingdom of God is dependent in addition to the Divine blessing, on temporal support for its prosperity; that in order to support churches, to maintain missions and missionaries among us, and to carry the same to foreign lands, money is an absolute condition.

This also is true, that this temporal support must come from those who are members of this kingdom. We do not expect those opposed to us to contribute, or that the different forms of opposition to Christ's kingdom are going to give one dollar to advance a cause they seek to overthrow. We are dependent then on ourselves, and if ever the Gospel is to extend throughout the world, it must be carried by those who believe it.

Then we are confronted by another fact; that there is now no law in the Church demanding a definite sum, or that a tithe should be given for her support. Here Christianity makes a wide departure from the Jewish economy, and I do not think it was an oversight, but was done to put into operation a grander principle, viz, that a man ought to measure his gift to God according as 'God hath prospered him'; and that his gift should be a free-will offering, made willingly and cheerfully. In thousands of cases a tenth would involve no sacrifice, and would inadequately express God's goodness to them.

It is often questioned, when we consider the enormous increase in material prosperity, whether the Church is as liberal as it was three or four hundred years ago; and whether we could to-day replace the cathedrals scattered over the world, the nobly-endowed institutions of learning which stand as monuments of living faith and generous liberality. I sometimes doubt it. Why is this so? Men are not less humane, are not harder hearted than of old, for when a great cause demands it, there is invariably a generous response. Neither is there