

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR MAY.

- MAY 1—*St. Philip and St. James—A. & M.*  
 “ 6—5th Sunday after Easter. (*Notice of Rogation Days and Ascension Day.*)  
 “ 7—  
 “ 8— } ROGATION DAYS.  
 “ 9— }  
 “ 10—Ascension Day. (Pr. Pss. M., 8, 15, 21; Even. 24, 47, 108; Pr. Pref. till 17th inclusive.  
 “ 13—Sunday after Ascension,  
 “ 20—Whitsun-Day. (Pr. Pss. M. 48, 68; Even. 104, 145; Athan. Cr., Pr. Pref. till 26th. Ember Collect daily. (*Notice of Ember Days.*)  
 “ 21—Monday in Whitsun-week.  
 “ 22—Tuesday in Whitsun-week.  
 “ 23—  
 “ 25— } EMBER DAYS.  
 “ 26— }  
 “ 27—Trinity Sunday.—Athanasian Cr., Pr. Pref.

## WHAT LAYMEN MIGHT DO.

The Rector of one of the principal churches in Boston said to me the other day; “It is one of the most difficult things in the world to make our laymen believe that they have anything to do beyond the giving of money for the maintenance of Church services. It is not a working Church for laymen—ours is not; it is quite proper for our men to go to service once on a Sunday, and then their duty to God and man seems to be discharged. They count for little or nothing in the Sunday-school, and are not trained or expected to take a hand in the work of teaching, or visiting, or supplementing the efforts of the Rector to increase the congregation. The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Congregationalists have hosts of workers in the Sunday-school and in the parish, but it seems as if our own Church were a sort of Saints’ rest for people who have been worried in other denominations, and like our ways chiefly because they can be respectable Christians without doing anything for the winning of souls.” And then he quoted a prominent New York Rector, who said that he had long ago given up all efforts to organize anything in his parish, because he could not depend upon his laymen for anything beyond contributions of money.

Then I recalled what the late Dr. D. P. Sanford used to say about the Connecticut Churchmen of one or two generations ago, who were not only thoroughly informed about the history, polity and doctrines of the Church, but rejoiced to find occasions for teaching others, and had their classes of youths and adults in the Sunday-school or at private houses during the week, and were often quite as well qualified as their Rectors for all the requirements of public teachers of religion. Such men carried immense weight in the communities where they lived for intelligent religious belief and the consistent following of Christ, and the

great conquests of our communion in that part of the country have been due quite as much to the work of the educated laity as to the labors of the clergy. It was not difficult to find laymen who were ready and glad to engage in parish instruction, or in the holding of meetings for spiritual refreshment, and the whole congregation were ready for sound instruction in the Scriptures and in the duties of Christian living. The people were everywhere instructed. You found the standard Church publications in nearly every house or they were taken from the parish library, and there was a Church atmosphere which everybody felt and enjoyed. In this atmosphere missions flourished at home and abroad; the family altar was established in many households, and the consecration of the spiritual life was constantly felt. The laity were incorporated into the heart of the Church, and the rule was that every male communicant had something to do in the work of the parish.

The Church has grown immensely, not only in Connecticut, but in other parts of the country; it has grown among the people at large; it has grown in the esteem of the wealthier class in our great cities; it has entered, as other religious bodies have, into the stream of worldly tendency, and has felt the swing of the tide which rules secular life; but it is to be feared that there has been no sufficient understanding among the new-comers of the principles, the polity, the doctrines, and the spiritual system which constitute the Church’s life, and prepare Churchmen to communicate intelligently to others what they believe themselves. The richer and more prosperous laymen believe in attending the service once in a day, and that is often the sum total of their thought about the spiritual responsibility that rests upon them. They feel that their social position, or the excessive demands of the week upon their nervous energy, which in the case of most able professional and business men is something which only those can understand who bear the burden, excuse them from the humble ministrations by which a clergyman’s efforts are multiplied a hundredfold in the community in gaining influence over human souls. Suppose the late Enoch R. Mudge, who was one of the largest minded laymen I have ever known, and whose business interests were as absorbing as any man’s could be, had excused himself from parochial services and from attendance on important diocesan committees because he preferred the club or the social circle, and had not put, as he did, his religious convictions into his daily life; what weight would he have carried in the community where he lived, and where he was known as the foremost layman of the Church? He was a tower of strength wherever he went, because men felt that he believed in his religion. The conviction that our laity do not believe in the Church, and do not care for its advance and the increase of its work, cannot be resisted when you do not see our leading men in a given parish in any of the posts of service where a layman has decided influence. You can go into hundred of Sunday-schools in our best parishes, and find that the men who carry weight in the community during the week, and are called good Churchmen, are coiled up in their arm chairs on Sunday afternoon, or entertaining their friends, while the Rector and a handful of women are struggling to drive the devil out of the hearts of the children whom they gather into the Sunday-school with difficulty, and hold there by main strength, largely because the *imprimatur* of the leading men in the parish is against the whole thing. No Sunday-school and no Church work can succeed in a way that carries force and power of conviction, unless the men are in it who are the men of weight in our secular life.

Now, there is much to be said for laymen who are overworked—who feel that Sunday afternoon, or Sunday morning before service,

or one or two of the leisure hours of the week, is more than they can spare for any spiritual duty; but if they cannot spare a little time for the practical development of the spiritual life by assisting in teaching or influencing others, how can they sustain, in the rapid whirl of affairs in which they are involved, anything like the nearness to God without which the soul itself is starved? Here is the secret of much of the strong and wholesome piety which the world knows and values in the religious efforts of the great evangelical denominations. They have trained men and women from childhood in the Sunday-school and in the prayer-meeting, until they have caught the spirit of true Christian service, and feel that they are also stewards under Christ in ministering to the needs of human souls. Their religious life is rounded out into radiant beauty, and has the glow of intense feeling, because they give out to others as they receive from the Holy Spirit, and make their daily walk and conversation such that they are known and read of all men as the companions of Jesus. It is not intended in this writing to imply that all our laymen are lacking in the spirit and willingness to assist in the instructions needed by younger persons, or in the readiness to give their time and influence to such ministrations as are possible for them; but it is believed that there is very great negligence on the part of many who have excellent qualifications for spiritual usefulness, and who do nothing, or next to nothing, for the personal winning of souls. It is believed that if the educated and truly earnest men in every parish, in the city and in the country, would come forward and assist their Rectors in reaching out to the people who do not attend Church because they feel that they are not wanted, and who could easily be won to places in classes for religious instruction, if men of character and nerve had the management, a great and manifest change might be wrought in every community where our services are established. It is believed that there has not been for years such an opportunity for work of this kind among the great mass of bread-winners as exists to-day. When you can see the capitalist and the lawyer, and the schoolmaster and the merchant taking their places among those who really believe in Christianity, and trying to instruct other men and the neglected youth in the truths which God has revealed to them through Jesus Christ, there will no longer be raised the cruelly sarcastic question, why does not the Church reach the people? When our laymen step down from their dignity, and throw themselves as earnestly, under their clergy, into the winning of souls as they throw themselves into their secular life work, the Church will be carried to the people, and the day of a new Pentecost will dawn upon us.

But working under the clergy implies that the clergy have a certain responsibility in the case which is not always discharged. Our laity are subject to the conditions of social life in which they find themselves, and easily fall into the lines that are made for them. They are not set up to serve as lay popes, taking parish authority into their own hands, and it has been felt by many that this is well; but what laymen might do in our communion depends very much upon what the Rector trains them to do. It is for the Rector, in most cases, to discover the capacities of his laymen and indicate what they can do, and there are few men or women in the Church who will not, when approached in a Christian spirit, respond to the efforts of their Rector to extend the usefulness of our ministrations to individual souls. Often the best work of a wise clergyman in the smaller parishes, where there is time for it, is this training of individuals to feel with himself that there is a royal priesthood of the laity as there is of the clergy. The problem of the use of the laity of the Church is easily solved where there is a mind to have it practically