

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR MARCH.

MARCH 3rd—Quinquagesima. (Notice of Ash Wednesday).

" 6th—ASH-WEDNESDAY; Pr. Pss. M. 6, 32, 38, Communion Service. Evening, Pss. 102, 130, 133.

" 10th—1st Sunday in Lent. (Notice of Ember Days).

" 13th }  
" 15th } EMBER DAYS.  
" 16th }

" 17th—2nd Sunday in Lent.

" 24th—3rd Sunday in Lent. (Notice of Annunciation).

" 25th—Annunciation of Virgin Mary.

## LENT:— THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

And yet did not the end begin with the ministry of the Master began?

Mr. Holman Hunt's last and greatest masterpiece was called "The Shadow of Death."

It represents Christ standing in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth, dressed in the workman's garb of the times, looking up for a moment from His plain toil; and as He stands there the departing sun looks in at the window, and by a masterly conception of the artist causes the shadow of a cross to form by the tools on the wall, and to fall upon the shoulders of our Lord. There is no halo about His head, but the look of melting sadness in His face reveals the "Man of Sorrows." There is a revelation of Christ's sufferings. Even in the commencement of His ministry. He was bearing the cross and ever before Him in His pathway, there was a shadow of death. Take the words spoken at its very commencement—words which seem to expose its very kernel—"I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." How empty and unintelligible they must have seemed to those Jews. Yet He knew that life to men could only come through Calvary and by the suffering of His great heart. It was ever before Him this shadow of death. At the wedding He knew that if He performed that miracle He must die for the people, so He said, "Woman, mine hour is not yet come." Christ bore His cross long before He toiled with it up Calvary. The

atonement required that Christ should voluntarily conquer himself. And when a man has a sacrifice to make, and he, in his secret bleeding heart resolves to make it, though he die, the sacrifice is already made. The rest, the actual giving up—is nothing compared with that. The mastery of self is all. And when Christ went to that last feast—when as St. Luke graphically tells us "He set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem," then the atonement was virtually completed. We would not disparage the last hour of agony. If Christ had gone to the foot of the cross in obedience, and turned there, salvation would never have been assured. But we must understand, too, that the atonement means more than those last few moments of suffering. Christ bore His cross in the wilderness, and in his daily contact with evil and in His Gethsemane agony. But there must have been moments, when the knowledge of the end pressed more heavily upon Him. And in one of those moments He called His disciples around Him, and after talking of His own death He says, "If any man will come after me, let Him deny Himself and take up His cross daily and follow Me." It was as though He had said, "I am bearing my cross daily. And as there is a cross for me, so there is a cross for you; if you would follow me, you must share in some degree my sufferings." Christ was making a daily atonement, and He calls us to follow Him. We cannot win heaven by good works, and yet we can make an atonement. When a child has done wrong, and it feels it, and it comes and lies in penitence—"mamma," and puts up its mouth to be kissed, that child has tried to make an atonement. It has tried to be obedient, and so to follow Christ. And every sob of the soul on account of sin, while it cannot save, yet it is in one sense an atonement. It is our effort to be obedient. It is our poor imperfect answer to the call "Follow Me."

But this obedience must be *daily*. Our modern danger is too like Peter's. We are full of enthusiasm to-day and the next day we deny Him. With some, religion is a religion of spasms. They wind themselves up like the alarm of a clock, and go off with a loud noise, and then stop—short—"never to go again." We are not called to spasmodic cross-bearing. We must bear it even as Christ bore his; not petulantly, try and fling it from us. Christ's glory was in His cross—His obedience. There is a sacred light around us when we carry our cross. That light is extinguished the moment we fling it down!—*The Church Messenger*.

## LENT.

Before the next issue of this paper the season of Lent will have begun, with all its Christian activity. May it be a season of revival and renewed zeal among us. The first thought connected with Lent is that which forms the first word in all preaching, "Repent." This was the first word of our Lord when He came "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." And following this example, our Ash Wednesday services have for their theme the necessity of repentance. But the whole season of Lent need not be occupied with this sorrow for sin and with mourning and lamentation. The word Lent means spring and we may be thankful that in the providence of God so appropriate a name has become attached to this season of spiritual life. Let our activity be like that of the husbandman, who in the season of spring begins his labour again with renewed zeal. His heart is not heavy and sad, but full of determination and hope. If he has made any mistakes in the past, he determines to avoid them in the future, and to work more wisely, and he looks forward with joyful expectation to the time of harvest. We may imitate in spiritual life this zeal which is shown in temporal matters. Let our repentance be decided and complete, and

then let us go to work for the Master in every department of duty, laboring with hope and joy for our own blessing and for the salvation of others.—*Church Life*.

## "A THOUGHT AND A PRAYER FOR EVERY DAY IN LENT."

[E. P. DUTTON & Co., NY.]

### ASH-WEDNESDAY.

It is well that we should have a considerable portion of the Church's year set apart for special recollectedness, reflection, and devotional exercises—for taking measure of ourselves, comparing ourselves with the divine rule—for coming before God as sinners—for laying hold on Him in Whom was no sin (made sin for us), seeking ever to deepen our repentance—seeking help to overcome—seeking eternal salvation.—*Grant, Lord, that I may use all opportunities for good.*

### FIRST THURSDAY.

During this season, let us do all that we can to go forward in personal religion; let us be given to more sober thought—more fervent prayer more frequent Communion—more godly work, valuing our Christian calling, our Bible—our Church. Let us see whether we cannot make some real progress—there must be motion—oh, that it may not be backwards, but forward!—*Lord make me to grow in grace, give me steadiness of purpose, and grant that I may strive earnestly.*

### FIRST FRIDAY.

How welcome is the bidding to lift up the heart! How good is it to lift up our hearts to the Lord—to seek from above strength to resist temptation, and to do our work—to cast cares and anxieties on one side—to leave off fretting—to rise above the sorrows and annoyances of earth—to become more spiritually minded, and to hold communion with God!—*Draw my heart heavenward, O Lord, of thy great goodness.*

### FIRST SATURDAY.

If we look upon Jesus as our Teacher, shall we not value His teaching and try to carry it out? Shall we not find ourselves striving to live as He did? Shall not our homes be the happier if Christ's teaching be attended to, mutual duties being more thoroughly fulfilled? Whatever our position in the world or in the family may be, we may learn from the great Master.—*Teach me, Lord Jesus, the lesson that I need most.*

### FIRST SUNDAY.

Do we delight in our Sundays—are they helping us to sanctify the whole week—are they preparing us for, and pointing us to, the time when types and shadows shall cease? Are our affections becoming sanctified—our wills more in conformity with God's will? Does Heaven appear more near?—our hearts must be in Heaven before we can hope to go there. How can we answer these questions?—*Fit me, O God, for eternal Sabbath-keeping.*

### FIRST MONDAY.

Am I learning to realize by faith the world unseen? Am I viewing this world as I ought—looking at it from a Christian stand-point? Have I learned to take a right estimate of humanity? Am I growing into a more perfect man? Am I thinking more often and more carefully about my duty? Am I loving God more and more, knowing Him better, and finding greater pleasure in His service?—*Teach me, O God, to examine myself.*