

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

- SEPT 2nd—14th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 9th—15th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 16th—16th Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of Ember Days and St. Matthew*).
 " 19th—EMBER DAY.
 " 21st—St. Matthew. Ap. E. & M. (Athenasian Creed).
 " 21st } EMBER DAYS.
 " 22d }
 " 23rd—17th Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of St. Michael*).
 " 29th—St. Michael and All Angels.
 " 30th—18th Sunday after Trinity.

WEEKLY COMMUNION.

We have thus far reached the conclusion that, since the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is a means of grace, is food and sustenance to the soul, it is so ordained because that grace and nourishment are what we need, and is made a continual feast because we need it often. The Church of the Apostolic age, under divine illumination, so understood it, and, accordingly, made the Holy Communion the central and highest act of worship, with weekly, and sometimes even daily, celebrations. Before we conclude our study of this subject, it is proper that we should listen to some of the voices of the Church of England (whose utterances ought certainly to command our respect) in regard to the practical religious light in which we should personally look at the question of expediency, of human taste or opinion, nor yet of the spirit and demand of one age in contradiction to another; it is simply one of rational assent to the universal judgment of the Catholic Church, and of faith in and obedience to that which has been commonly accepted and practiced as the gospel rule of spiritual life and health for every age and every soul. What we should all understand is that the very nature and purpose of this Sacrament have always been construed by the Church, and ought to be accepted by us, as involving directly not only frequent celebrations of the Church's altars, but just as frequent communicating on the part of every earnest believer. Let us listen, then,

once more to the consecrated learning of the Church. As we stand in God's house and contemplate this mysterious transaction, "we have before us Jesus Christ as a divine Giver, First blessing, breaking, giving, and saying 'take eat'; then taking the cup, and saying 'drink ye all.' The first impression which we have is that of an ordinance in which Christ gives and we receive something—not an ordinance in which we do something. So our first impression of Holy Communion must be that it is a means of grace, not a work. It is a means in the right use of which we look to receive from Christ; and all that we receive at the hands of Christ, we receive of grace. In the right use of this ordinance our blessed Redeemer must have intended to make us partakers of some amazing benefit." And so this service becomes "the most solemn memorial possible, before God and men, of the sacrifice of the death of Christ," and this Sacrament becomes by necessity "the most prominent act of worship in the Christian Church." (Sadler's Church Doctrine, &c.) Every consideration of the teaching of our Lord, and of the declarations of St. Paul concerning the nature and the relations of the Sacrament toward ourselves, leads inevitably to the conviction that it has a spiritual potency which is of incalculable moment to the progress of the Christian soul in the way of salvation. "The practical theology of a plain Christian man, who pins his faith to his Saviour's words, will, therefore, lead him to look to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as the means by which to further develop and strengthen in the soul the grace which was planted there at baptism, and confirmed by the laying on of hands. And after the words, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no life in you,' he cannot doubt the importance of a continued frequent reception of it toward sustaining the nearness of the soul to God." (Blunt's Household Theology). The same writer, also speaking of weekly Communion as ordered by the Church of England, says: "The most solemn ministerial work done by the Church on earth, and that in which she draws nearest to the throne of God, is to be done thus frequently, not only for the benefit of those who partake of the Communion, but also that this memorial of Christ may be frequently presented to God as the most fervent and solemn of all devotional acts that can be rendered. . . . Looking at the Holy Communion also as a means of grace, it must be the earnest wish of every faithful pastor that he and his flock should gain as much benefit as possible from it to help them forward in their Christian life." From which the conclusion is that the often receiving this blessed Sacrament will be the spirit of all, pastor and people alike, who look to the grace of God as the real foundation of holy living; and who depend upon that grace for the continued maintenance of their spirituality, and not an occasional excitement of their feelings." [Practice of Pastoral Work]. To the same effect other writers speak of the prevailing disuse of frequent Communion as the result of, and certainly resulting in, a decline in practical religion; as marking an era in the Church's life when spiritual activity had died out of her and she was chilled with religious apathy. In our own time we notice very commonly that where these means of grace are most faithfully ministered, there is the greatest parochial activity and earnestness in all Christian sacrifice and good works; and nothing is more strikingly distinctive than the sanctity of those who are most constant and devout at the Church's services and Communion, and the worldliness and vanity of those who treat such things with indifference or disrespect.

It is hardly necessary to add the testimony of other writers. Suffice it to say that there are plenty of them, and they "all speak the same thing." The fact is that the grace of God is given us as a source of spiritual life, and it is worse than idle,—it is unbelief and insubordination against the wisdom of God,—to suppose

that we can live the life of God without a constant supply of the grace of God. And if we are to have that grace we must seek it through the means of grace, of which the very highest, most wonderful and direct is the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not "a mere memento and legacy of His dying love"; it is not "a mere banquet of the risen Saviour with his disciples"; it is the great "Festival of the New Dispensation, blessed and graced with His spiritual Presence (a higher and greater thing than even the Presence of His risen, natural body), and in which He communicates Himself to His faithful people in the closest of all unions, they dwelling in Him, as a body in its atmosphere, He in them, as a soul in its body." [Goulburn's Holy Catholic Church]. Here our inquiry must rest. It has been meant for the instruction and guidance of the mass of men and women who constitute the laity of our diocese and the people of our parishes; and the writer hopes that it may help some, possibly many, of them to understand aright and thoroughly appreciate the movement of the Church in our day, in which their own parishes and clergy may be enlisted, for the restoration of weekly celebrations of the Holy Communion.

We only desire to add that, as weekly celebrations are what the Apostles practiced, what the Church has always intended, and what our own system of worship implies and provides for, so weekly communicating is what it is intended for, and needed by every Christian who wants to be a loyal churchman, and live a truly devout, spiritual life. The whole subject ought to suggest to every one of us how absurd it is for a Christian to recognize the system of frequent Communion, and to suppose that he can fulfil the daily requisitions of a Christian life with only an occasional renewal of the soul's powers during the year; to undertake to walk such a journey in such a world as this, and get along with such scanty supplies of food as only result in spiritual starvation and inertness. How remote from everything like consistent churchmanship, or a true following of Christ, is that kind of religious life, so common in all our parishes, which is content with going to Church indifferently, and receiving the Holy Communion perhaps four or five times a year; whose conformity to the ordinances of the Christian religion is more the exception than the rule; who is quite as much known to his brethren by his absence as by his presence; and who, nevertheless, strokes his complacency with the soft persuasion that he is a good churchman, and his religious estate is above reproach? "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."—R. N. P. in the North East.

SHOULD THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING IN MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER TO BE SAID BY THE MINISTER ALONE, OR BY THE MINISTER AND PEOPLE TOGETHER?

(From the Church Review.)

[CONTINUED.]

THE RIGHT REV. A. N. LITTLEJOHN, D.D., LL.D.

As to the proper use of the General Thanksgiving I have nothing to add to what I have already said in the following words, which I send you as my contribution to the discussion of the subject.

The changes introduced by the Revision of the Prayer Book authorize a diversity of use not hitherto lawful. Not a few were opposed to touching the Prayer Book because this would be one of its consequences. To this new and authorized diversity we must become accustomed as best we can. But it should not be increased beyond what is necessary and lawful. All attempts in this direction originating in the