

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

December	24, Sunday.—Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord.
"	25, Monday.—Nativity of Our Lord.
"	26, Tuesday.—St. Stephen, Martyr.
"	27, Wednesday.—St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.
"	28, Thursday.—The Holy Innocents.
"	29, Friday.—St. Thomas, Bishop and Martyr.
"	30, Saturday.—St. Elizabeth, of Hungary.

ST. JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of St. James the Great. He was a fisherman by trade, and was called to the Apostleship by our Lord along with his brother James when they were mending their nets by the shore of Lake Genesareth. They did not, however, entirely abandon their occupation until they received a second call along with St. Peter and St. Andrew after the miraculous draught of fishes, on which occasion they left all things and followed Jesus without reserve.

Among the twelve Apostles there were three who were specially favoured by our Blessed Lord; but of these the dearest to His Sacred Heart was undoubtedly St. John. Hence he is spoken of in the Holy Gospel as 'The disciple whom Jesus loved,' and while he shared the revelation of our Lord's glory on Mount Thabor and His agony in the garden with SS. Peter and James, he alone enjoyed the special privilege of resting his head on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper. The holy Fathers tell us that it was the spotless purity of St. John which made him so dear to Jesus, and which caused our Blessed Lord to make choice of him on Calvary as the most fitting guardian for His Virgin Mother. St. John responded to his Master's love by the ardour of his own affection to both the Son and the Mother. He was the only one of the Apostles who followed Jesus to the last, standing loyally with Mary at the foot of the cross to the very end, in spite of the scoffs and insults of the mob and his own bitter anguish at the sight of the cruel torments of his beloved Master. His devotion to Jesus was not without its reward, for our Lord with His dying lips bequeathed to St. John that which He held the most dear and precious in this world—namely, His beloved Mother. 'Woman,' said He, 'behold thy son; son, behold thy Mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.

After our Lord's ascension St. John seems to have remained chiefly at Jerusalem until the death of the Blessed Virgin, though no doubt he was often absent on various apostolic expeditions. He is said to have preached the Gospel in Parthia and the neighbouring countries. After the death of our Lady his labours were principally devoted to Asia Minor, where he exercised a general supervision over the numerous Christian communities, travelling from place to place to spread the Gospel, encourage the faithful, and provide the churches with worthy and zealous pastors. During this time he resided chiefly in the city of Ephesus.

In the persecution of Domitian, A.D. 95, St. John, then the sole survivor of the Apostolic College, was apprehended by the Procurator of Asia and sent to Rome. He was condemned by the cruel Emperor to be cast into a vessel of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved from injury. The memory of this miracle is preserved in the Church by a special feast, which is kept on May 6, and is entitled 'St. John before the Latin Gate.'

Being afterwards sent into exile to Patmos, a little rocky island in the Archipelago, St. John was favoured with the heavenly visions which he has described in the Apocalypse, and which relate to the future history of the Church and the awful events that will accompany the final judgment. His banishment was not of long continuance, for at the death of Domitian, A.D. 96, he was restored to liberty and returned to Ephesus.

It was about this time that he wrote his Gospel to supply the omissions of the other evangelists, and to refute the rising heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, who denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is also the author of three epistles, which are full of earnest exhortations to the love of God both in Himself and in our fellow-men. St. John was in truth the Apostle of Divine charity. Never was he weary of inculcating this lesson upon his disciples, and of exhorting them to prove the sincerity of their love for God by their love for one another. It is related that, when age and infirmity had so enfeebled him that he was unable to make long discourses to the people, he used still to be carried to the assembly of the faithful, and would always address them in these words: 'My little children, love one another.' And when at length his hearers, tired of this constant repetition, asked him the reason of it, he replied: 'Because it is the precept of the Lord, and if you fulfil it, it is sufficient.'—words which remind us of the saying of St. Paul: 'He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law.'

This great Apostle, so beloved of God and lovable of men died at Ephesus, A.D. 100, at the age of 94.

Choose such recreations as are healthful, short, transient, recreative, and apt to refresh you; but at no hand dwell upon them, or make them your great employment; for he that spends his time in sports, and calls it recreation, is like him whose garment is all fringes, and his meat nothing but sauces; they are healthful, changeable, and useless. And therefore avoid such games which require much time or long attendance; or which are apt to steal thy affections from more severe employments.

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