

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

- December 16, Sunday.—Third in Advent.
 „ 17, Monday.—St. Leonard of Port Maurice. St. Agnes of Assisi, Virgin.
 „ 18, Tuesday.—Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 „ 19, Wednesday.—St. Urban V., Pope and Confessor. Quatuor Tense.
 „ 20, Thursday.—St. Josephat, Bishop and Confessor.
 „ 21, Friday.—St. Thomas, Apostle. Quatuor Tense.
 „ 22, Saturday.—Quatuor Tense. St. Deusdedit, Pope and Confessor.

EXPECTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

The Feast of the Expectation has been instituted by the Church to commemorate the longing desires and fervent aspirations with which the Immaculate Virgin greeted the near approach of that happy day when she was to bring into the world the long expected Messiah, Whose coming to redeem mankind had been the continual object of her sighs and prayers. Now the time appointed by the Divine Decree was accomplished, and the Great Mystery hidden under veils and figures from the beginning of the world was about to be revealed to the astonished eyes of angels and of men. During 4000 years had the earth groaned under the dominion of Satan, while kings, patriarchs, and prophets had looked eagerly forward for the coming of the promised Redeemer Who was to break the fetters with which mankind was bound and restore men to the liberty of the sons of God. Meanwhile the promise made by God to our first parents, that the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head, was carefully treasured up and handed down from father to son through succeeding generations.

The same consoling promise was confirmed and more clearly defined by the announcement to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, a prediction which was afterwards repeated in favor of his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. As time went on the promise was renewed to King David, of whose family it was declared that the Redeemer was to be born. Many of the psalms of the royal prophet are full of ardent aspirations after the coming of the Saviour Who was to destroy the power of hell and re-establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. It was also permitted him to behold in the far off future the accomplishment of the promises of God by the Incarnation, Passion, and Death of our Lord. These sacred mysteries he has described to us with a minuteness which reads rather like a record of the past than a prediction of the distant future. The same may be said of the writings of some of the other prophets, who were sent by God to prepare the minds and hearts of men for the coming of His Son. Conspicuous among these was Isaiah, who after announcing that the Redeemer would be born of a virgin, relates in detail many circumstances regarding His Passion and the establishment of His Church. In his ardent longing for the speedy coming of the Incarnate God he cries out, 'Drop down dew ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the Just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour.'

Thus did the saints of old continually aspire after the coming of the Son of God, Whom, however, they were not permitted to behold with the eyes of flesh. Wherefore our Blessed Lord reminded His Apostles of the special privilege which they themselves enjoyed in beholding and conversing with Him during His mortal life 'Blessed,' said he, 'are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they ear. For amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard, them.'

ST. AGNES OF ASSISI, VIRGIN.

When the holy maiden Clare, enamoured of chastity and poverty, fled from home to tread in the footsteps of St. Francis, she left behind her a young sister of 14, named Agnes, a child of great piety and purity. Inspired by the Holy Ghost to imitate the example of her beloved sister, the saintly girl followed her to the Convent of St. Angelo a few days later, and declared her firm determination to remain with her and share her penitential life. Upon the discovery of the flight of Agnes, her father, who was already much incensed by the departure of his elder daughter, set no bounds to his anger. He and his relations accordingly set out to recover Agnes at any cost. On their arrival at the convent they first appealed to her filial affection and obedience, but finding her resolution unshaken, they threw aside all reserve and commanded her in an angry tone to return at once. As she still refused, they laid violent hands upon her and tried to drag her away. But behold! all of a sudden their arms became powerless, and they were unable to move the light burden of her tender frame. At length, finding their strength exhausted, they began to load her with reproaches, while one of her uncles more cruel than the rest raised his sword to strike her. But in a moment his arm became useless and his weapon fell to the ground. At this juncture her sister Clare came running up, and by her entreaties prevailed upon them to desist from further efforts. Whereupon they returned to the father, who, on hearing what had happened, recognised the hand of God and left his daughter at peace to follow the Divine call.

Agnes assisted at the triumphant funeral of her holy sister and witnessed the miracles which were wrought at her tomb. Soon afterwards she was called in her turn by her Divine Spouse, and took her flight to heaven on November 16, A.D. 1253.

THE GALVESTON DISASTER.

COMMENTING on certain generally overlooked phases of the Galveston disaster, Mr. James R. Randall writes entertainingly and instructively in the *Catholic Columbian*:

To our eyes 'looking through a glass darkly,' there were some singular or contradictory events in the Galveston tragedy. Besides the Cathedral only two other churches were spared. One was the Jewish Synagogue and the other a negro Catholic chapel. In one of our grander churches the only stained glass window intact represents St. Peter Claver baptizing a negro. The brewery was practically unharmed and few saloons were blown down. The Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. owed his life to the inmates of the Ursuline Convent. Ghouls were spared, to meet later on, an ignominiously swift death, while good men who saved many lives perished. The common answer to seeming incongruities is that given to Holy Job, by God Himself, when murmuring ceased at the tremendous question: 'Where wert thou when I built the foundations of the earth?' In portentous calamities death, like rain, falls upon just and unjust alike, and the sacrifice of the just is, in a certain sense, atonement for the unjust, not as to their eternal destiny but humanly speaking. The people of Galveston deliberately built their city on a perilous spot known to be such. Only a miracle could have made them secure permanently under existing circumstances, and God performs miracles in His own way, which is not our way. At Lisbon the mighty earthquake killed thousands of persons in the churches while assisting at the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, and a tidal wave engulfed 30,000 fugitives on the river bank. A record states that not a disreputable house in Lisbon was overthrown. The staunch of Faith do not get discouraged at such curious happenings. They who keep in constant preparation need not care how or when and where they are to die. Out of this awful visitation at Galveston, God will, in season, draw beneficent results. By a little effort, comparatively, the Catholics of this country, can replace their ruined temples and institutions. Conversions to the true Faith will come, I think, to not a few who would never otherwise gain that crown. If all of the survivors now recognise the emptiness of carnal things and the ineffable importance of things eternal, the catastrophe at Galveston will be a salutary lesson, often to be taught in no other manner.

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