

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

- October 21, Sunday.—Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. Feast of the Purity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 „ 22, Monday.—St. Cyril and Methodius, Bishops and Confessors.
 „ 23, Tuesday.—Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer.
 „ 24, Wednesday.—St. Raphael Archangel.
 „ 25, Thursday.—St. Boniface I., Pope and Confessor.
 „ 26, Friday.—St. Evaristus, Pope and Martyr.
 „ 27, Saturday.—St. Ubald, Bishop and Confessor.

ST. RAPHAEL, ARCHANGEL.

Among the Jewish captives who were carried off to Nineveh by Salamanasar, the Assyrian king, was a good and holy man named Tobias, who amid the general defection of his people had preserved his faith inviolate and kept with fidelity the precepts of the law. He continued to follow the same conduct in the land of his captivity and to exercise at the peril of his life the most generous charity towards his afflicted brethren. In the midst of his good works God sent him a severe trial, for one day when, wearied out with burying the bodies of the slain, he had laid himself down to rest under the wall of his house, some hot dung from a swallow's nest fell on his face and deprived him of sight. He did not, however, lose for a moment his patience or peace of mind, but continued to bless and praise God in the midst of his affliction.

Meanwhile his only son, the young Tobias, had grown up in innocence and piety, the perfect model of his father's virtues. The latter, believing that his end was not far distant, one day called his son to him, and after giving him his last advice, bade him seek out a trusty guide to conduct him to the city of Rages, there to receive a sum of money due to him by one Gabelus. The young Tobias, going out to fulfil his father's commands, was met by a youth of comely aspect, who was girded ready for a journey. In answer to his inquiries, the stranger told him that he knew the way to Rages, and was acquainted with Gabelus. He added, moreover, that he was ready to guide him on his road. Full of joy, Tobias brought him to his father, who asked him his name, little thinking that it was the great Archangel St. Raphael, whom God in reward of his piety had sent to take charge of his son. The youth replied that he was called Azarias—for this was the name which he had assumed—and he assured the old man that he would conduct his son in safety to Rages and bring him back again to his home. The two travellers accordingly set out, and rested the first evening by the banks of the river Tigris. Here Tobias went into the water to bathe his feet, when suddenly a monstrous fish came rushing forwards to devour him. In great terror, he called out to his companion, who told him not to be afraid but to take the fish by the gills and draw it to the shore. He did so, and having brought it to land, set aside by the direction of his guide the gall and liver as useful for medicine, the rest they cooked and carried with them as provision for the journey.

Thus they journeyed on till they came to the house of Raguel, and friend of the elder Tobias. Now it happened that Raguel had a daughter Sarah, who had been espoused to seven husbands in succession, all of whom had been slain by Satan on the first night of their nuptials. The angel bade Tobias ask her in marriage, assuring him that such was the Will of God. Tobias did so, and obtained her father's consent. The wedding was celebrated with great rejoicing, and the young couple sanctified it and drew down the blessing of God upon themselves by spending the first three nights in prayer. Meanwhile Azarias proceeded to Rages, and received the money owing by Gabelus. Soon afterwards Tobias, with his virtuous spouse and heavenly guide, set out upon his return home. As they drew near their journey's end, the faithful dog which had accompanied them went running forwards with signs of joy as if to announce their return. The aged Tobias rose hastily, and, leaning on a servant's arm, ran with stumbling feet to meet and embrace his son. After the first joyful greetings were over the young Tobias, by the direction of the angel, took the gall of the fish and applied it to the eyes of his father, who immediately recovered his sight.

With hearts overflowing with gratitude Tobias and his son raised their voices in praise to God, and then turning to the young guide, begged him to accept half of their substance as some return for his services. Upon this Azarias declared who he was, and how he had been sent by God to guide and guard the son, and to comfort and restore sight to the father.

'Bless the God of heaven,' he said, 'give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you. For I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord. Peace be to you, fear not. For when I was with you I was there by the Will of God. It is time that I return to Him Who sent me, but bless ye God and publish all His wonderful works.'

'And when he had said these words he was taken from their sight, and they could see him no more. Then they, lying prostrate for three hours on their faces, blessed God, and rising up they told all His wonderful works.'

Who can help loving the great archangel Raphael for his tender and watchful care of Tobias and his son, and his unwearied solicitude in their regard? This beautiful history enables us better to understand the exceeding charity of our guardian angels who, though invisible to our eyes, guard and defend us from the wicked spirits, preserve us from all evil both of soul and body, and guide us on our path to heaven.

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