

C I R C U L A R
OF THE
VERY REV. SUPERIOR-GENERAL
OF THE
Congregation of Holy Cross.

PARIS, Dec. 31st, 1868.

By the various complaints I have received almost daily, these few weeks past, I perceive that one package, at least, of my sea correspondence, containing six or seven letters, has been lost on its way. It grieves me the more, as I thought I had spared nothing to satisfy everybody; but I cannot be responsible for the failure of some of my messages in reaching their destination.

Be this as it may, I can safely assure all who had a right or a promise in this matter, that my apparent silence is no proof of a change in my sentiments, nor even a sign that I am going to forget my friends beyond the sea. My heart bears me a different testimony. Indeed I feel at times, too keenly, that distance only increases affection, if it is real and sincere. I am here in France bodily; but in spirit and in heart I live on the other side of the Atlantic, among my own beloved friends, whose cheering countenances are continually present to my memory. Should I go to the end of the world, my imagination would bring them likewise, as daily companions of my every step. One after the other, every pleasant moment I have ever spent with them, collectively or individually, comes up again and successively and vividly depicts itself to my mind, thus renewing many a precious delight which I had scarcely expected ever to call back and again enjoy so far away.

I may live in France as long as obedience and duty will require; but to consider myself happy, my poor heart forces the word to my pen—no, never, I *fear*. And yet, all around me are very kind; every one vying to make my return to France as pleasant as possible. The few relatives time has spared me, have shown me all the affection I could wish for; the dear spot where I was born and all its surroundings I have revisited with pleasure for a moment; but no persons nor places here can distract my mind from the spots where I have labored so long, where my best sentiments are centred, and my aspirations incessantly drawn as they are nowhere else on earth.

Notre Dame and St. Mary's, with their varied and delightful dependencies and associations, will forever stand paramount in my mind above all other places I can visit or imagine. It seems to me that even here few institutions possess the advantages which Divine Providence has bestowed there. No people appear as happy as the dear inmates of Notre Dame and St. Mary's. I find nowhere in France a little world of students as those I left at Notre Dame last October. Could I say less of St. Mary's? I may be blinded by affection, as parents are generally suspected to be, but thus far I am not conscious of it. The more I reason with myself for fear of being too partial in my appreciations of persons and places and things, the more clearly I see, or fancy I see, that my preferences are well grounded, and that my own dear little France in the New World is best entitled to my predilections and devotedness. Do you not yourselves say the same? Divine Providence has blessed us not only with local and temporal advantages seldom met with anywhere in the same degree, but also with spiritual and religious privileges calculated to fasten the best sentiments of the soul to our dear home: blessed us with a spirit of devotedness and energy which will remain, I trust, as the characteristic feature of all the children of Holy Cross in America; blessed our schools with a life, an activity and discipline, which I consider a proof as well as a cause of real success; blessed us with friends than whom we could scarcely desire better, and of whom no community could present a larger or more imposing array; and among them, how many have not repeatedly proved their interest, their unfeigned attachment and their generous liberality?

Has not the same kind Providence blessed you all with Superiors who never knew what it was to spare themselves, but who spend themselves for the good of the community, even beyond the limits of common prudence! Thank God I know none among them claiming respect upon a title; but rather upon unquestionable evidences of self-sacrifices to teach others, daily, by acts and deeds more than by words and exhortations. A religious, it is true, will always venerate authority; but we must confess that virtue makes it doubly venerable.

Another consideration goes a great way with me to prefer the scenes of my missionary life. Here, priests and religious are almost too numerous; there is no room to move in, but a narrow circle for each; nothing for one to do which could not be done as well, and often better, by another; it makes one feel even too much how easily the world could dispense with his assistance. Not so with us in America: not one soul too much; we never have enough of good hands. The humblest and most unpretending, if animated with a good will, will give glory to God.

Had we not come over to those distant shores, who could tell how many precious souls, either already gone to everlasting enjoyment, or rejoicing among us in the knowledge and love of truth, who would have been left seated in the darkness of death! Who could enumerate the legions our little Congregation will continue to drill, under its glorious standard of the Cross, for the armies of the Lord? Ah! how admirable are the ways of the Lord! Whilst at sea for the first time, we sent to heaven a dear little soul, only two years old, who otherwise would never have seen God. Happy, fortunate little Mary! She was the first fruits of our mission. Ever since, she prays for us. Very probably by this time she has obtained the conversion of her parents, who seemed much moved by the event.

Good Brother Vincent should not forget, in his old age, his precious god-child, now in the company of her Blessed Patroness since twenty-seven years and five months. She owes us a debt of gratitude, which cannot be so soon laid aside. I reminded her more than once of the fact, and each time she seemed well disposed to acknowledge it. Since then, I have baptized many others; and, as far as I remember, they did me honor; some of them have already gone to join our first little heroine, our standard bearer; others are on their way, and some even gathering as they journey onward, as many as they can to share with them the rich reward awaiting them in heaven. Go on, my brave little band, with your noble work of gratitude; be just and honest; make good returns; give in proportion to what you receive. Many a member of our Congregation of Holy Cross has been laid under no ordinary obligations to God! Let all pay their debts with a magnanimous heart.

In answer to your beautiful and touching expressions of regard in this holy season, I beg to say to all who have written me, or prayed for me, that I too wish a happy new year for my beloved children in the New World. I wish them to walk worthy of their vocation, in the discharge of all their duties; to secure for themselves and their labors the indispensable blessing of God, that they may stand unshaken to the end, and that they may be found at the post of obedience when God will summon them from this life to His awful tribunal. Some of us may not see many returns of new years; neither age nor vigor will avail; but a holy life will enable us to look steadfast upon death as a deliverer from temptation and misery, holding out "the crown promised to those who shall have persevered to the end."

I am often asked already when I expect to return. May is the epoch I fixed when starting; I look forward to this cheering month with as much eagerness to say the least, as any of you.

I have commenced the visit of our houses in France. By the middle of January, we intend, *D. v.*, to pass over into Africa, to see three establishments of the Congregation, numbering twenty-five Brothers, with one of our Rev. Fathers. My correspondence will be forwarded to me there, without any additional postal charge.

In order to obtain all the blessings I need to do the affairs of the Congregation some justice, I beg of all the members of Holy Cross to commence on the Sunday that shall follow the receipt of these lines, a novena of Communion, in honor of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, not, however, that any one be *obliged*, but directly exhorted, to make an effort and try to live so guardedly and so religiously as to be permitted by his own conscience to approach the Holy Table every day during the novena. The prayers to be recited are: the Litany of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, if it can be had; otherwise that of Loreto, with the *Memorare* and the three ordinary invocations, of 1, 2, and 3 o'clock p. m. Let all seriously strive to make of these nine days an epoch of renewal of fervor in all the Congregation.

E. SORIN.