

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 24

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., OCT. 14, 1889.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

How shall I express to you my thanks for so many beautiful congratulations on the return of my glorious Patron's Feast? Eclipsed as it was this year by the solemnity of the Blessed Virgin's Divine Maternity, the occasion was none the less interesting, but was thereby made more than doubly precious for us all; especially as it proved to be the forty-eighth anniversary of my first Mass in Vincennes, the end of our first long journey from our native land. Forty-eight years make a long period; but there are sometimes circumstances so striking that they can never be forgotten. Without any pre-arrangement on our part, we had left Le Mans, our dear home, on the 5th of August—the Feast of Our Lady of the Snows,—and without any delay or accident, we reached our journey's happy end in Vincennes, in time to celebrate holy Mass, on the Sunday dedicated to the Divine Maternity!

Such a double and remarkable coincidence was not received among us as mere chance (in which I never believed), but as a clear evidence that our Blessed Mother had taken our little band of seven devoted, humble servants under her own special care, and that she would see to our wants if she found in our breasts grateful and loving hearts. Ever since that memorable Sunday, her incessant and tender solicitude in our regard has been so evident that to deny it would prove nothing short of heartless insanity. How shall we thank her for all her daily increasing maternal munificence? This is not a vague, but a serious question which, in all honesty, begins to alarm my own soul.

When I think of the declaration of Our Lord Himself: *Cui multum datum est, multum requiretur ab eo*—"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required," I really begin to tremble for fear of being found guilty of that ingratitude which dries up even the source of divine grace.

Success is an invaluable blessing, the crowning of all human aspirations. But there is, even in the greatest success on earth, a fever always dangerous, and often fatal. To common minds it appears as a natural result of long and personal exertions, which indicates a time to rest. Hence the lack of primitive energy, gradually turning to indolence and apathy; hence the neglect of duty, which has been the cause of the ruin; not only of many social institutions, but even of a multitude of religious Orders, the end of which is undeniably assigned to the faint and dying observance of the Rules that had given them life and success.

Is it not a mystery that after reading the sad history of so many lamentable facts of religious ruins, any Religious may seem to ignore the great and incontestible motto: "Keep your Rule, and it will keep you"? Yesterday it was a delight for me to hear from one who knew what he stated that in his House, of fifty old religious, the rule was strictly observed from morning till night. Long live our dear old Religious! May they continue to their last breath to edify their younger associates and to teach them by their daily regularity how to become like themselves, real acquisitions to the Congregation.

The same happy news reached me from more than one other House; indeed, it is worth mentioning, for it is the greatest comfort I can enjoy in my old age. May God grant me to see not only all the Houses of the Congregation, but every individual member of it, a model of strict regularity, a living Rule, in every respect, a priceless treasure to the Community! What else can

make a Religious happy? What could compare in true enjoyments to the consciousness of having accomplished a duty to the best of human ability? Will a sumptuous table, a rich dress, or an easy life make a religious happy? The devil may suggest it as he did of old to Eve, but the results of her sad yielding need no comments.

Divine Providence has given us a new Eve to repair the evils brought on mankind by the weakness of the first. She has crushed the head of the serpent, and under her guidance and protection we, her children, are safe against the attempts of the enemy. By the last will or testament of our dying Redeemer she was given us for our Mother, and by our beloved representative on Calvary we accepted her and took her to our loving hearts. Oh! what a treasure! what a consolation and comfort! What an inexhaustible source of delights! How a Christian in the world can pass it over unappreciated, we may conceive. But a Religious, and especially one of the Holy Cross, remaining indifferent to the Blessed Mother of God would be a mystery.

As I advance in years, I cannot help foreseeing the day fast approaching when we shall have to part with each other; many of us may never meet again here below. But as I fully realize what I would wish to recommend above all at my last hour to the dearly beloved children of the Holy Cross, I now beg to express it in acknowledgment of your filial and touching expressions of devoted affection, namely: that you, each and all, in any part of the world, may remain united in charity and in an ever-increasing love of the Blessed Virgin; that, in order to honor and widen or further extend her maternal and powerful protection, you may for her sake and delight, observe your holy Rule, strictly, manly, religiously, fervently and heroically forever.

May the Holy Mother of God take our dear family of the Holy Cross forever under her especial and loving protection, and inspire every member of it with a boundless confidence in her power, her maternal solicitude and tenderness! Such will be the last breathing of my expiring heart. Such is my most cordial acknowledgment to all whose precious congratulations overwhelm me to-day with unprecedented joy and gratitude.

Meanwhile, I entreat with my whole soul everyone among us, to begin immediately and most sincerely a new life of devotedness to our glorious Queen. What a strong and infallible assurance for our general and personal eternal interests! What a blessed guarantee of success to all the devoted Heads of our Houses, and to each one of their subordinates, whatever their respective obediences may be! Where all hearts will be burning with love for the Blessed Virgin, everyone, for her sake, will make it a new duty and a source of delight, to follow the Rule and become every day more perfectly a model of regularity.

The teachers, prompted by such noble aspirations, will soon realize the sublimity of their calling, and their sacred obligations to mould the young hearts entrusted to their care, first of all by impressing upon them the sweet, salutary devotion to the Holy Mother of God; while those engaged in other tasks will secure for themselves and the Community blessings and heavenly favors which the Queen of Heaven refuses to none of her devoted clients.

As you may see, my long experience has created in my mind and in my soul a conviction which can never be shaken, namely, that nothing can secure the prosperity of a religious Order forever as a strict observance of the Rule, under the special protection and for the love of the Mother of God.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,
SUPERIOR-GENERAL.