

## Circular Letter of the General Chapter of 1880.

NOTRE DAME DE STE.-CROIX, April 28, 1880.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN CHRIST:

The General Chapter, which was opened here with the benediction of his Holiness Leo XIII, on the 18th inst., under the patronage of St. Joseph, has just closed its sessions. The Capitulants now hasten to lay before the Congregation the result of their labors. They are convinced that this general assembly will form an epoch in the annals of the family of Holy Cross, and that soon it will be seen that prayers have not been offered in vain for the success of their deliberations. It is itself a blessing to have enjoyed perfect peace for fully eleven days within the walls of a great city, a prey to so many terrors, threats and agitations of every kind. It is also a great consolation that, after the loss sustained by the Congregation in the person of the venerated Father Champeau, there can be shown an increase of one hundred and thirty persons since the last Chapter held in 1872, and that in one day the whole administration of the Congregation can be renewed—something which, probably, has never yet been seen amongst us—no more than such a figure in the total number of our Religious, especially among the Professed.

The Sovereign Pontiff, being consulted on the propriety of transferring the General House at Neuilly to some other Province of the Congregation, advised that the transfer should be made, on account of the circumstances in which civil society and our Institute are placed in France.

The General Chapter of 1880 has made no innovation. Its labors were directed especially to enforcing the observance of the Rules in everything, everywhere, and always;—convinced that, if this result is obtained, the Congregation has nothing to fear: its existence and its future are assured. Hence the necessity for all to study our sacred Rules, to make them more than ever the subject of our meditation, the motive of our acts; and the end of our religious life; and this love of the Rule will manifest itself in good Religious who are animated with it by a prompt, constant, universal, joyful obedience—as sweet to those who practise it as edifying to others. Were there no other result to hope for from their efforts, the General Capitulants would still consider themselves happy and be amply compensated for their sacrifices and trouble. At a time when *might* takes the place of *right*, when authority is no longer respected, when the spirit of insubordination and revolt prevails everywhere, it is very difficult for a Religious to preserve himself free from the influence of a contagion surrounding him on every side. It can be done only by redoubling his efforts to lead that life of obedience

which is the soul of the religious life. Before the brazen effrontery of an unbridled liberty which plunges into every excess of license, it is necessary for the Religious, in order to guard against the danger of being carried along with the almost universal excitement, to take refuge under the protection and safeguard of the Rule, without ever failing in the reverence which the true Religious always shows for authority.

Inasmuch as civil society is disorganized, and a complete renovation has been made in the administration of the Congregation, the General Chapter expects that all the family of Holy Cross will hasten, not only to accord to each functionary the respectful and religious reception which he deserves, but also that they will consider it a duty to personally assure the Superiors, named by this assembly, of their obedience, and of their conviction that it will be for their security and joy to live in absolute dependence upon them.

A disorder, which it is important to end at once, has been remarked in one Province of the Congregation: certain Religious have been accustomed to keep small sums of money for their personal wants. It is sufficient to mention this violation of the vow of poverty to understand that the Chapter absolutely condemns it. Whatever be the profits from sums entrusted to a Religious, the money must be given to the Steward or Treasurer; and no one can withdraw any sum without a written authorization from the Superior or Director. Those Religious who, in times past, obtained permission to assist their parents, must have this permission reconsidered by the Provincial, in Chapter, at the Annual Retreat.

The General Chapter makes the Provincials responsible for all expenses incurred by unjustifiable journeys during vacations, and refers to Circular No. 63, of 1878.

The Spirit of God breatheth where it will. Heaven, for the moment, tries us in France,—it sends us prosperity in the New World; it is always God whom we should bless, in trial as well as in prosperity. The one important thing for all is to know and kiss that paternal Hand whose blessings or punishments have for their object to bring us nearer to Him who is our last end, and who wishes us for Himself. We need not be unduly concerned about the alarming signs at present existing in France; the danger which threatens us is not an individual danger; our cause is that of all religious communities, and we all share in the same destiny.

#### DECREES OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1880.

1. From the present, up to the time of the next General Chapter, exclusively,—a period of six years—the Mother-House will be established at Notre Dame, Indiana.

2. The number of Assistant-Generals shall remain at four, and they shall perform the duties of Secretary, Steward, and Treasurer General; but care will be taken that no other duty incompatible with these charges be imposed upon them.

3. In future, the General Council shall be composed, as much as possible, of members taken from each Province of the Congregation.

4. The number of delegates from each Province to the General Chapter shall be fixed according to the number of Professed members in said Province: one delegate for every fifty Professed; but when the number of Professed exceeds the half of the number fixed for the nomination of a delegate, the said Province shall have the right to a new delegate; thus, a Province having more than twenty-five Professed, shall have a right to one delegate; one that has more than seventy-five, shall have a right to two.

5. No Superior in the Congregation shall permit any of his subjects to have money about them for their personal wants.

6. Provincials shall not permit their subjects to assist their parents in their temporal needs with the goods of the Community, save in so far as natural law obliges them;—all permissions granted heretofore must be reconsidered.

7. Every deposit in the bank must be made in the name of the Superior of the House making the deposit, and he alone can sign drafts or checks on the same.

8. Article 487 of the Rules shall be rigorously observed by all Stewards in the Congregation.

9. "In virtue of holy obedience," all the subjects of the Congregation must submit their correspondence to their respective Directors or Superiors, conformably to the Rules.

10. In accordance with the Constitution, Provincials alone must determine in what cases the journeys of subjects shall be made at the expense of the Congregation, or that of the travellers.

11. All establishments of the Congregation, of whatever kind, shall transmit an account every three months, as the Rule prescribes, to the Provincial Steward, according to the formula adopted.

12. The Chapter is of opinion that, in America, Article 9 of Constitution II may be amended by substituting the word *dollar* for *franc*.

13. In all the Provinces of the Congregation, monthly ecclesiastical conferences shall be organized, following the programme published in the *Ordo*.

14. Regular visits to every House shall be made each year, as prescribed by the Rule. The first act of the visitor shall be to read Rule XLIV in presence of the assembled Community.

15. No subject shall be allowed to persevere obstinately in any vice or notable irregularity; but all means allowed by the Rule

shall be employed to overcome his obstinancy, especially admonition in Local or Provincial Council.

16. Every three months the Superior or Director of any House of the Congregation shall send, without delay, to the Provincial a report on the discipline of his House according to the subjoined model.

17. The dress of the Religious of the same Province must be perfectly alike—summer and winter, especially on journeys.

18. Except in cases of real necessity, Novices during the year of their novitiate shall hold no communication with the other members of the Community.

19. No Novice shall be removed before the end of his novitiate, except for grave reasons, judged such by the Provincial Council or Chapter.

20. In order to give subjects the means of perfecting themselves in their studies, new foundations shall be made only after strict examination—and preference will be given to the young professed who show the greatest ability.

21. The Philosophy of St. Thomas shall be introduced in all the scholasticates and classical colleges of the Congregation.

22. Provincials are charged to establish in their Provinces as perfect a uniformity as possible, both in the text books and the method of instruction.

23. In each Province a Scholasticate shall be established as soon as possible, with a course of studies well carried out.

24. The Master of Novices shall have, as assistant, a Brother capable of teaching the Novice Brothers.

25. Every Brother in the Congregation shall lay aside his religious Habit before engaging in manual labor, and resume it when about to assist at the common exercises.

26. Henceforth, whoever enters the Congregation as a Postulant Brother, renounces, by the very fact, all right to become a Priest in our Congregation.

27. There shall be one Monitor to every House; and each year, after the Annual Retreat, the Houses of the Congregation shall send to their respective Provinces the name of the one whom they choose as Monitor of the House. This latter, if approved by the Provincial, shall communicate to the President of the Chapter, on each Friday, any delinquencies against the Rule during the week, and shall notify the Provincial himself, on the first Sunday of the month, of all that the Superior or Director shall have failed to correct. This Monitor shall take care, in the performance of his duty, to follow the evangelical maxims as expressed in Rule XX.

28. The residence of the Rev. Father Provincial of France is henceforth fixed at the House of Neuilly.