

Circular Letter.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN JESUS CHRIST:

I had indulged, until quite recently the consoling hope to spend the winter with you; I had almost given you the assurance of the same; but circumstances beyond my control oblige me to return to France without further delay. The will of the Holy Father to this effect having been manifested to me by the Rev. Procurator General, I obey and lay aside all sentiments of nature, however strongly they incline me to protract a little longer my sojourn at Notre Dame. Indeed it is a sacrifice, to leave thus a spot endeared to me by so many titles; where I have grown gray in labors and trials known only to God; and to leave it when, under the loving countenance of our glorious Queen and Protectress, it has become, as it were, a little earthly Paradise. Yet it is not to the soil or to the walls I am attached, but to the many dear old friends whose fidelity and devotedness have long made upon me an impression which distance or time will never change. To them, and to those in general who ever honored me with their esteem and affection, I may say unhesitatingly that I always and cordially reciprocated their best sentiments. Although I have often left Notre Dame before for the same journey, still I feel to-day, on the eve of my departure, more sensibly than ever "that we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." I may have to travel yearly between the two continents; even to this, if required, I submit; at least there will be this consolation about it, viz.: that we shall never suffer long separations. I have no intention to protract my sojourn in France, this time, beyond the early part of spring. During the winter, I shall visit as many of our establishments as possible. At this moment, I am almost a stranger to the greater part of our Brothers in Europe; it is but natural and reasonable that we should wish to become mutually acquainted.

I regret to leave before having received and published among you the Decrees of the late General Chapter; but as I now learn that the Congress of Cardinals in which they have to be examined will assemble only in the course of November next, we must wait in patience a few months longer.

But I cannot part with you without leaving to your knowledge what you would have learned sooner from me, had I not anticipated an earlier reception of the acts alluded to.

It would be gratifying to us all to know that our beloved Congregation in Europe is blessed with even greater prosperity than here and in Canada. But in truth I owe it to you all to say that since some years, it has pleased Almighty God to make it pass through trials, which alone, as they pass over it and leave it still standing, demonstrate in its existence something more than natural. Since a few years three heavy losses, amounting in the aggregate to the enormous sum of one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, have successively weighed it down, each time threatening almost entire ruin.

How many new Congregations would have stood such repeated assaults and lived? My object in here mentioning this is not to accuse or blame any one; nor even to complain of the ill will of civil tribunals by which the Congregation was twice deprived, God knows how unjustly, of two splendid estates, nor of the poor unfortunate Brother whose imprudent and unauthorized negotiations so deeply involved the Mother House; I mention it because you have a right to know it, and still more, that you may pray for our dear elder Brothers in Europe now so severely tried in the crucible of adversity. Men who have persevered through such an ordeal well deserve our sympathies and our confidence, nay, our most sincere esteem and admiration. No wonder if this dreadful storm has carried away a few whose virtue was not equal to the requirements of the emergency; but I am happy to learn from the Very Rev. Provincial in France, that after this purification, all the Establishments that remain, fifty-four or fifty-five, are now better supplied and organized than at any previous epoch.

The unavoidable result, however, of such disasters is to leave all our Houses in Europe very rich I trust in merits, but otherwise in real and stern poverty, even after sacrificing every thing that could be disposed of, to meet liabilities thus rendered

totally beyond their means. This sad information is not intended to prepare your minds for the further intelligence that we must raise funds here to cover those unfortunate deficits, for I too well know our inability to attempt any thing of the kind; but what I intend to signify is this, viz.: that in the actual distressing calamities now encompassing our dear family beyond the sea, we cannot honorably remain insensible to such a sight; at least we must hasten to assist the Congregation in taking upon us from here to support and maintain the present General administration for which, even a house is to be procured, Ste Croix being now unavoidably for sale to meet the debts mortgaged upon it. It would grieve me to go and add the budget of the General officer's maintenance to the burden of pecuniary embarrassments already well nigh unbearable. I would much prefer to receive it from your spontaneous generosity than from obligatory Decrees of a General Chapter.

Therefore I beg of all our Houses here to use more than ever the strictest economy and to forward the Very Rev. Father Provincial, here, for me, whatever they can save between this and Christmas, towards the support of the new Mother House in Paris.

(My address will be: Notre Dame de Ste Croix, Neuilly, Paris.)

Let not this distress any one's mind; stout hearts will face, unshaken, all the afflictions by which Divine Providence may choose to try them. Real Soldiers of the Cross, like the Apostles who rejoiced "that they had been accounted worthy to suffer" we must bear in mind "that it is by many tribulations we may reach heaven." Who knows if such is not to-day the positive design of God, thus to purify our young Congregation and bring it to-morrow invigorated anew from the jaws of death unto a new life, the germs of which were hidden in the baptism in which it is now immersed? We have no reason to apprehend that any one should fail in courage and manhood here, but we, on the contrary, may trust that it will nerve all of us to fight manfully and to the end the good fight in which we have volunteered and in which we hope to live and die under the glorious Standard which has saved the world.

But at the same time, we must all profit by the warning given us from above, to stir up our fervor and renew our devotedness; especially to rally closer around the Cross and to offer oftener and more generously our daily and hourly sacrifices in union with that of the Redeemer Himself.

We certainly have many reasons to be grateful to God. See what a beautiful home He has given you here! What a consolation it must be for all to behold, not only its actual prosperity, but above, all the good spirit, the harmony reigning throughout the Province, the religious dispositions of the Superiors and the confidence so justly placed in them everywhere; and at last what a source of abiding joys for our dear family to feel that none here is left an orphan where all can so readily meet the eyes of their living Mother whose sacred image becomes daily more and more the center to which all aspirations point, and through which innumerable blessings continually come down upon her beloved children. In spirit or in body, let all look up to that glorious throne of mercy.

With these comforting considerations I close my brief farewell address. We part only for a season; very soon *D. v.*, we will meet again. Let every one do his duty, not as to please men, but God. The consciousness of having thus truly acted to our promise will redouble our joy at our next reunion at our beloved Notre Dame.

Although separated by the ocean we shall remain united in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. May we all meet often in these Holy resting-places and Divine Sanctuaries. There and there alone I convene you, my Rev. Fathers and dear Brothers in Christ. Meanwhile pray for me and believe me

Ever your most sincere
and devoted friend,

E. SORIN, Sup. Gen.

NOTRE DAME, Oct. 27th, 1868.