

CIRCULAR LETTER, No 23. (No. 20.)

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, Indiana, Oct. 15, 1871.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN CHRIST:

In reply to the numerous and affectionate congratulations which you have so kindly sent me from all directions, on the occasion of the feast of my glorious Patron Saint, I hasten to offer you, in return, my grateful acknowledgments, with a new assurance of devotedness to the interests of our beloved Congregation. Nothing can give me more courage to bear the burden of my charge than to hear from your own lips or pens your unfeigned declarations of fidelity to your sacred engagements, and to see with what zeal and eagerness each one fulfils his duty. It is a refreshing thought for one on whom such responsibilities mainly rest, to know that those who form his Religious Family, show themselves worthy members of it, and honor it before all by their virtues, their efficiency, and their blameless lives.

My God grant us all this precious and mutual consolation so to love our dear Congregation as to make it daily more respected, and never to dishonor it by any mean or unworthy deed.

With this Circular you will receive the first part of the method to be used henceforth in our schools. An oversight has caused a delay of three months in the forwarding of it to the various Establishments. Brief as it is, it yet contains many valuable points, and, I may add, embodies most of the matters on which a rule has so long and so often been urgently asked. Let it be strictly observed, and there is reason to believe that it will soon show its beneficial effects.

As I am first responsible for the maintenance of the Rules and of the discipline and the spirit of the Congregation, I deem it my duty to exhort all Superiors and Directors, to make renewed efforts to bring all their subordinates to a "regular observance" in attending their daily exercises, in fulfilling their obediences, in wearing the religious dress as defined by the Rules, etc.

The Provincials shall send me by the 1st of January next, a full statistic of their respective Provinces, setting forth with care and accuracy the state of their portion of the Congregation, according to the usual form of statistics, but accompanied with many more personal and local remarks, v.g., giving a brief sketch of each Establishment, and some qualifications in a few lines to each Religious. The reason of this is, that I must myself prepare for the General Chapter a complete statement of the temporal and moral status of the Congregation, and without such data my task would be totally impossible. Furthermore, I must require for the same epoch and same reason, from all our Religious, a written and conscientious direction, after the method embodied in the Rule 21st.

A Report to the General Chapter and to the Holy See is a serious act—an important document. To do it justice, I shall need all I ask, and I expect it.

If possible, all Religious should know their Rules by heart. A cursory reading will not impart a sufficient knowledge of the obligations and direction they contain; still less will it, at once, unfold their spirit. They must be meditated upon in silence before God. I therefore direct that in all our Houses a meditation be consecrated to each Rule. To learn our duties is one thing; to obtain grace to fulfil them is another; and more importance is attached to the latter. In a serious meditation both will be reached, and the result will doubtless justify the effort, viz.: the Rules, once properly viewed and weighed in God's presence, as a standard after which we must all be judged, will be held in due respect, and observed in a religious spirit.

Times are evil and threatening; God's anger is clearly manifested. We, at least, must profit by the warnings. Never, never, did we stand more in need of Heaven's protection.

May our Blessed Mother keep us all in the holy fear of the Lord.

E. SORIN.