

CIRCULAR LETTER, No. 40,
OF THE
VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL
OF THE
Congregation of the Holy Cross.

ROME, July 2, 1873.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN JESUS CHRIST:

Yesterday I had the happiness of obtaining an audience with the Holy Father and an Apostolic Benediction for all the members of the family of Holy Cross. To say that His Holiness gave me the best reception, would be telling you nothing new. He has never received me otherwise. But I had never seen his countenance so radiant with joy as when I announced to him that all our debts were to be paid this very month. They were the source of all his anxiety in our regard. "You will live again!" he added, with a paternal smile which can never be forgotten, and which I love to consider prophetic. I cannot express the satisfaction which this happy news produced upon the Congregation of the Propaganda. It remains for us to justify the hopes which are raised here by this new era upon which we enter on our coming out of the crisis in which the Congregation would have perished had not heaven evidently wished to maintain it.

I never despaired of our Work; and to-day, after five years of almost unheard of trials, wherein each showed himself so generous, and so unshaken in constancy and firmness, I have the most thorough conviction that God wishes this Work, and that we should all, if we are faithful, expect for it a destiny full of consolation.

I learn that in a few weeks our Capitular Acts are to be submitted to the examination of the Ordinary Congregation of the Most Eminent Cardinals; if there be no delay, the promulgation of them may be made at the General Retreat, in the month of August. I have been assured that the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda gave kindest reception to them, as well as to all the requests that I have been able to present since my arrival, except the dispensations relative to the Novitiate, concerning which we must be content, His Holiness having again pronounced upon the subject last Sunday.

With these acts of the General Chapter, there will be remitted to you all the Rules announced these many years; but whose publication has been delayed until they could offer you the highest guarantee desirable, and thereby acquire more legitimate right to the scrupulous submission of all. Let them, therefore, henceforth be the law in all our Houses, and let each member find therein the expression of the will of God upon his conduct; in that is our future, much more even than in the good management of our temporal interests.

In order that the minds of all be well penetrated with their importance, their spirit, and even with the forms which they must give to the Congregation, every day, except Sundays and festivals, for a year, the Meditation, the Particular Examen and the Spiritual Reading shall be made on this new edition of the Rules. Superiors and Directors shall regard it as one of their first duties to explain them to all the Religious of their Houses; and, above all, exact a faithful observance of them on the part of all, without tolerating any usage contrary to them. I write these lines with a certain fear, but with a firmly determined will. The recommendation is very grave,—indeed, vital. I beseech you, Reverend Fathers and dear Brothers, to receive it as such. For a long time it was said that a revision of the Rules was expected, in order to submit to them entirely, and under this pretext greater or less dispensations were made in the observance of the Rules. Hence arose indifference and a too general relaxation, which would have infallibly ruined the Work if they had continued, and which would still produce the same result if the heads of Houses did their duty by half in establishing religious discipline in all its holy vigor. Let it then be well understood that these should, and shall be, henceforward the soul of each House.

In this sweet hope, I renew, my Reverend Fathers and dear Brothers, the assurance of my most devoted and affectionate sentiments.

E. SORIN,
Superior General.

P. S. I have consulted his Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, upon the interpretation of a point of the Constitution. As I had already thought myself, the Deputies of each Province to the General Chapter have no precedence except during the holding of the Chapter.