

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 74

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

Rome, March, 20, 1876.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Before leaving Rome, I must relate to you a few of my impressions since my last Circular. You have all heard, perhaps, that His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda was kind enough to accept an invitation to dine with us on the Feast of St. Joseph. Yesterday His Eminence, accompanied by a few friends, condescended to honor us with his presence, and all assured us of their perfect satisfaction. I then received through a friend the Benediction of His Holiness for the Congregation and the young children whom we intend to organize into an Association of Prayer for the Deliverance of the Holy Father and the Conversion of America. This new and precious favor was even more than I had hoped for. In answer to the few words of thanks which I addressed to His Eminence, the excellent Cardinal made me a few congratulatory remarks which every member of the Congregation would, I am confident, have been very happy to hear.

Last week I went to Loreto for the third time, with our good Brother Vincenzo, who, at the advanced age of 68, had never visited more than two or three other places a year in the city of Rome. Mgr. de Cornouiller, who paid the good Brother's expenses, accompanied us. On arriving, we found that we could say Mass at the altar of the Santa Casa itself, and at the second Gospel we read: "*Bonum est nos hic esse*,"—"It is good for us to be here; let us build three tents." Truly, St. Peter could not but say it. We, therefore built three tents there, for three days, during which time we enjoyed the precious privilege of celebrating Mass at the Altar of St. Peter, and of passing many happy hours in the most august and venerable Sanctuary in the world. I there presented to our Holy Mother, to her Adorable Son, and to the head of the Holy Family, each and every member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. I am confident that these three days were days of benediction for our Religious Family, and that they will be fruitful in good results. Between Rome and Ancona is situated the town of Foligno, and at an hour's journey from this town Assisi, with the tombs of St. Francis and St. Clare, and the celebrated Portiuncula. What a happiness it is in these days of trial in which we live to be able to kneel in those blessed Sanctuaries and to pour forth one's soul in prayer near the sacred relics of those holy personages whose eminent virtues were the glory of better days!

But there, as everywhere else in Italy, the results of persecution are unfortunately but too visible. No more revenues, no more magnificence, no more splendor—*Vix Sion lugent*—even around those tombs so long the object of universal veneration, but now neglected by the world, which pays homage neither to God nor to His Saints.

And yet this hardened world is not entirely given up to its own blindness. To recall it to Himself, God seems to multiply His prodigies. Only sixteen years ago a wonderful event excited the astonishment of all classes at Foligno. A nun had died in the odor of sanctity at the Convent of St. Anne, founded by Blessed Angelina. A few days after her burial she appeared to one of her pious companions, her countenance bearing the impress of suffering which cannot be described. She declared that she had been condemned for forty years to the flames of Purgatory, and that for a trifling fault against the vow of poverty which we would scarcely consider a venial sin. The Community, profoundly grieved, began to pray night and day, and at the end of three days the deceased Sister again appeared and announced that through the prayers of her charitable companions her condemnation had been reduced to fifteen years. The prayers of the Community then increased in fervor, and at the expiration of ten days they enjoyed the supreme satisfaction of seeing the soul of their departed Sister rising to Heaven in the form of a luminous globe, more dazzlingly bright than the sun; and in proof of the truth of what she had revealed she left on the door, which she touched with her hand, a mark of fire on which I laid my own hand, in the midst of the seals with which it is surrounded. However calculated to inspire terror this fact may be, it is nevertheless less frightful than another which recently happened at Naples, and concerning which the Superior General of the Lazarists has sent a Circular to his Congregation. In it he makes mention of a mark left by a hand of fire—that of a young girl, who appeared to a young man now in retirement with the Lazarists, telling him that prayers for her are useless, that she is damned.

To profit by warnings so serious, I have thought more than ever of our dear deceased brethren and of the means of relieving our own souls when it pleases God to call us to Himself. I am myself astonished at the success I have met, but all is not yet known. I hope soon to be able to place before the eyes of the Congregation a most consoling picture on this matter.

I intended to leave this evening, but while writing these lines I received an invitation to assist to-morrow at an international Audience at the Vatican. The thought of kissing once more the hand of our Venerated Father, and Pontiff, and of receiving from him one more benediction for our beloved Family, does not allow me to hesitate.

Your devoted in J. M. J.,

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,
Superior General.