

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 104

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

FEAST OF THE PURITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

NOTRE DAME, IND., October 17, 1880.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

The avalanche of letters the Feast of St. Edward has lately brought to his poor client, has unavoidably retarded the acknowledgments you are entitled to. But even at this late hour, I scarcely know how to reply to such manifestations and undoubted assurances of filial devotedness and fervent prayers. Thirty-nine returns of the same anniversary should have made me familiar with the sentiments of our Religious Family; and, yet, these last outpourings of affectionate feelings surprise me, while they leave me, this time, no thought of returning you any thing like adequate and proper thanks. Would to God that I should deserve one-half of the esteem and love you so generously profess in my regard. May the glorious Queen we all love with our whole soul, and whose purity permeates our hearts to-day with such a veneration, purify more and more our mutual feelings, and thus make us more worthy of each other, and, above all, more worthy of our Divine Brother's Virgin Mother! But, alas! I fear, we only fancy that we love her; and, yet, who could say how much we owe her since nearly forty years? It will never be known in this world. If I have a wish for each and all in return for so many pious desires, it is this: *that we may finally commence to know and love our Blessed Mother.*

When a child is frightened to whom does it turn instinctively? Who could say that all is in peace around us? That there is nothing to fear? How easily we deceive ourselves! The elements, now so terribly disturbing peace and order in Europe, are here as well at this very moment. Secret societies now govern the world: they threaten the same dangers *everywhere*; prayer alone can avert their blows from the church. For a while, their opposition may remain latent; but it has already made itself felt; to resist it we need proper weapons, viz.: fervor in our piety, superior merit in our class-rooms, devotedness and zeal in the discharge of duty, and a character above suspicion in all our Religious.

Who will secure all this? The Blessed Virgin—if we know how to interest her in our labors. St. Edward himself looked to her in all his wants; almost all the other Saints did the same. Why not we? You may say that I have always the same remedy for all sorts of evils. Even so, if it never failed? I speak from experience, and I say: Try it in earnest, and you will thank me in heaven.

Indifference towards our Blessed Mother would mean complete idiocy in me, or something worse than idiocy—she has marked too many days of my life with the indelible prints of her maternal love ever to leave me insensible.

But a mother's heart is always moved more sensibly by the tears of her child than by his joys; we have all learned this at home, and every day perfects our convictions. My holy Patron's Feast I celebrated this year, I may say, between two coffins, or the burials of my two oldest and best friends in the country, with the grave fear of actually hearing of the expulsion of our Fathers from France. Next day brought the sad news of the sudden death, from apoplexy, of our dear and saintly Father P. Chappé, in France.

Thus our short-lived joys are often preceded and marred and followed by cruel sorrows, continually reminding us that we journey through a valley of tears. Even in these personal afflictions here below we find a soothing balm in raising our hearts to the sweet Mother of Consolation. But when the crushing thought of a national persecution surges before the eyes of our mind, we feel our only natural refuge is the Heart of the Mother of the Afflicted.

I fear we are on the eve of trying days, too severe for common virtue; days of relaxation and pride, shaking even the elements of faith and dissolving ordinary religious sentiments as fire melts the snow. O Blessed Mother! To whom shall we turn to stay the impending storm, if not to thee? Never did we need as much as now to *live by faith*, so as to make of our life an incessant prayer. "Walk before Me and be perfect," said the Lord to Abraham. Here is the secret of all progress in perfection. I bring it out here to your attention because of a late occurrence in the chapel where I noticed some unnecessary noise which should have been prevented even by the least sentiment of faith, or rather by more attention to the sacredness of the place. As Religious, we spend daily considerable time before the Tabernacle; these precious visits alone should amply suffice to keep the lamp of our Faith burning in our hearts, day and night. But to make them profitable we must, even before reaching the door, recollect our minds, and then enter and walk, and kneel, or stand or sit down, *noiselessly*; as we certainly would did we see, with our own eyes, angels prostrate in adoration, as we believe them to be, around the altar. To honor and propitiate our Blessed Lord, to please His Holy Mother, to imitate the saints, to join with the angelical adorers, let us try to collect ourselves there in deep faith, and show that we realize where we stand or kneel or move, ever fearing to fail in reverence and disturb anyone around.

In conclusion, let me assure you, that while I thank God with all my heart for the extra flattering prospects of our schools this fall, I never felt as keenly as I now do the necessity for all our teachers to spare no pains to improve themselves in their studies as well as in their religious spirit, in order to become *able and superior teachers*, and thus materially raise the educational character and standard of their respective houses. May God grant us a universal renewal of fervor and zeal, and this scholastic year will be one of unprecedented success and satisfaction.

Let each Establishment keep a scrupulous minute of its daily receipts and expenses, and forward its Quarterly Accounts in time and due form. Strict economy, perfect regularity, incessant recourse to God, to our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, will secure all we need.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior General.