

J. M. J.

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OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

ON BOARD LA NORMANDIE, APRIL 12TH, 1885.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

DURING my recent and brief sojourn in Rome, one thing impressed me so forcibly that it actually monopolized most of my time and attention; from my arrival to my departure. It was a surprise, as wholly unexpected as important even at first sight.

Scarcely had I reached the Eternal City, when I received from a well-known and most worthy cloistered Community, in France, a long and elaborate request; and, a few hours later, an urgent solicitation from my best friends in Rome to the very same effect. Although both originating from the same source, viz., the reading of *The Ave Maria*, there was no sign whatever of mutual concert; and yet in the same breath, as it were, both strongly pleaded the same case.

The more I considered and weighed, in silence, this striking coincidence, the more inclined I felt to recognize in it, not a simple hazard, which I never admit in anything, but a real *monitum*, well worth a serious consideration.

From both parts I was urged in earnest to avail myself of this new visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*, to give my attention to a wonderful association, now more than ever

rapidly spreading over the globe, that of *Our Lady, or Mother, of Good Counsel*.

I was not a stranger to it; for, besides what had appeared in *The Ave Maria*, I had been daily reciting, since more than two years, the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel, of whom I had, in my room, a beautiful chromo, signed by Leo XIII. But all this was personal and private.

In presence of such sudden and simultaneous entreaties, I began earnestly to study the subject, to inquire into its actual importance, and investigate its possible results. After a few days of meditation and prayer, I commenced to wonder how and why I had not sooner understood something of the rich beauty of a devotion so antique in the Church (centered in Genazzano, since 1467, and known in Scutari, in High Albania, since the 4th century), so warmly recommended by a number of illustrious Popes, and especially by Pío Nono, who went in pilgrimage to Genazzano, in August, 1864, when, after a long and fervent prayer to the Beloved Mother of Good Counsel, he presented her with a rich Diadem, *éclatant de prières précieuses du plus haut prix*. His first Mass had

been celebrated before an image of the same glorious Madonna of Genazzano,—and since that day he never ceased to pray to and love her with his whole heart. Leo XIII shares in the same veneration. No wonder, indeed, if such a devotion, so beautiful in itself, and resting on innumerable prodigies of divine grace, has reached the extreme limits of the world; and yet, I never thought of taking any step to propagate it.

But now that light was made in my mind, I resolved to repair, if possible, my long and inexcusable indifference.

On the 25th of March, the Feast of the Annunciation, I applied for and received in due form an extensive Latin Brief, establishing the Pious Union of Our Lady or Mother of Good Counsel, at Notre Dame, Indiana, as a new central seat of admission for all the faithful who would wish to join it, and share in its abundant privileges and blessings. The following day, our worthy Bishop gladly sanctioned it.

Whoever will read attentively the accompanying and comprehensive sketch of the association shall readily understand why I hasten to return home, and offer a chance to our beloved Religious, and many other fervent souls, to become regular members of this admirable Pious Union. While I deeply regret the loss of so many years of unpardonable inactivity, or *far niente*, my only consolation is in my firm resolution to spare no pains, as long as I live, to spread it throughout our New World, convinced, as I am, that I could not confer a greater blessing upon our Christian families than by drawing their attention and raising their eyes and hearts to this heavenly Seat of Wisdom, where, above all, we find united the solicitude of a tender Mother, with all the lights and graces we need to secure our everlasting interests. Who will pause and fail to see its serious importance?

In an age like ours, when the worst ene-

mies of our Holy Faith—the Secret Societies, a most dangerous press, an immoral literature, an increasing thirst after riches, the burning fever of gratifying degrading appetites, and many other similar agencies—combine to weaken and obliterate the first and best instincts of a Christian heart. When surrounded and oppressed by so many conspiring deadly foes, where will the God-fearing soul turn for help? Where will youth and manhood and old age fly for salvation from danger and ruin? Do I exaggerate anything? No; but only single out a few from among the countless perils still increasing, with the undeniable result of gradually doing away with the spirit of faith, which alone can save society. *Saving counsels must be expected from above.* This admits of no reasonable doubt: the deepest and clearest sighted minds of the day see the danger and confess it. The question arises alike from all quarters: Where is the remedy?

Ah! if the Star of the Sea is so earnestly and anxiously looked to, on this boundless ocean, with humble and fervent prayer to shine upon and guide a frail bark safe from one shore to the other, how much more should she not fix the constant attention of wise and honest travellers, whose every step she offers to direct, through the dark paths of life, provided her guidance be accepted and adhered to?

Here, indeed, on the ever moving waves of the sea, one may feel very keenly the serious risks of a long voyage. But is it on the deep waters alone that man's life is exposed to danger? In one sense, a Christian soul is, we might say, safer on the ocean than in our largest cities. Here, though but a mere speck in the boundless space, in whatever direction you turn your eyes, you see the marvellous works of God as they came from His Hands, fresh and undefiled, singing and re-echoing the praises of the infinite power and wisdom

of their Creator: *Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum ejus annunciat Firmamentum.* An immensity above, with its myriad of bright stars, reflected by another immensity below, as in a clear and spotless mirror, forcing upon your mind the grandeurs of God, as no other standpoint on earth could ever afford; while, on the most brilliant centres of civilization and progress, alas! one often feels ashamed of what he sees; for, whatever glory attaches to such evidences of man's genius in the fine arts, a pure soul has frequently to repeat, after the prophet: "*Averte oculos meos, ne videant vanitatem.*" Here, among the vast and pure elements which encompass and permeate, as it were, your soul and body, you pray and adore and praise God, in close unison with all creation. But on land,—yes, in the finest walks of society, how often do not the most renowned masterpieces of immortalized artists, in painting and sculpture especially, reveal a snare, a trap of the evil spirit, ever seeking for some immortal soul he may destroy! Sad, indeed, is man's condition upon earth, if he rejects the Heavenly Guide offered him as a light, thro' the dark and dangerous paths he has to follow to the last: especially, when his own restless heart continually reminds him that his worst enemy lies hidden in his own breast.

Truly, the life of man upon earth is a war, an unceasing struggle: *Vita hominis militia, super terram.* To such countless perils, from within and without, none will sooner fall a victim than he who apprehends nothing. *Vigilate!* To watch is the first condition of safety. St. Paul himself, enumerating the perils to which he was exposed, in his II Epistle to the Cor., chap. ii, makes a list of 28 such sources from which he suffered: perils everywhere. If such a saint found no rest anywhere, what else but perils should we look for ourselves?

Late as I come, at the 11th hour, I feel

that I bring with our Lady of Good Counsel a remedy to many an evil, a preventive or a cure of many a suffering, a relief, a source of joy to a multitude of tortured hearts, a precious light to countless souls blinded by passions and sin. Unless I am deceived as I never was in my life, this miraculous and heaven-born association, the most comprehensive, as they say, and most beautiful of all, in its origin and results, will make among us, as wherever it was received, an epoch; it will create a new era, not only in the House and Family, but in each member, in each office and employment. The rich and the poor, the aged and the young, the quiet and troubled soul, all conditions and ranks, will feel its marvellous effects, in proportion to their confidence in its prodigious virtue. Who has not to deplore in the past some regrettable loss or failure? some act of blindness or folly? Some imprudence in words or deeds, damaging to character and standing in society? What brings up everywhere so many sad and humiliating reminiscences? Lack of wisdom—want of better knowledge, of proper counsel. Oh! what misery a proper counsel would have saved us from! But here dawns a new aurora. The night is over, and whoever opens his eyes sees the light. Behold a counsellor who knows all our wants; a Mother who feels for us as no other ever felt; a power who can save us from all danger and loss, as no human being could ever promise or afford.

Wealthy business-men, rich companies and firms have their own lawyers, to protect their vast interests. With what readiness and delight would not such an offer be accepted, if believed in, at such quarters? But where is the Christian who could, for a moment, even question the veracity, the full reliability of the present declaration: "who knows our wants, and feels for them and can fill them, as the Mother of God, given us for a Mother"? For it is of her Jesus Himself said to each

of us, in the person of the one He loved: *Ecce Mater tua!* "Behold thy Mother!" Could any Christian feel any longer unconcerned, indifferent? One day St. Gertrude saw the Blessed Virgin covered with a large mantle, under which had fled for protection a multitude of wild beasts, attracted by her caresses. The Saint understood from this that our Blessed Mother takes care, not alone of the little Lambs, as her Divine Son, or of pure souls like His own, but even of the greatest sinners, to change them into lambs and followers of the meek Shepherd; and therefore no sinner, however deeply sunk into the mire of iniquity, should ever despair, nor even question a moment the clemency of Mary, whose holy name will no sooner be invoked in prayer than the protecting mantle will cover and save the poor sinner from endless misery. If such is the tender love of Mary for sinners and enemies, what will it be for those who, like St. John, take her for a Mother "and receive her into their own"?

I know some good souls who will love to say with me: "Sweet and dearest Mother! what a consolation for me to see the Mother of my God coming, with her Di-

vine Son Himself, to rescue me from all dangers! Alas! I am blind, and she offers me a mother's loving hand to guide me through this pathless wilderness to the gate of Heaven! Weak and exhausted from so many falls and wounds, she raises me and promises to support me, thro' all obstacles and hardships, upon the saving arm of her divine charity! All she wants of me is an attentive readiness to follow the every movement of her unfailing direction. Dearest Mother! How shall I ever be able to acknowledge such a gratuitous and boundless love! To thee, and to thee alone, I promise to look as a child, for every step and every act of mine; from this day forward be thou my light, my support and my guide! To my last, I will cleave to thee as a child to its mother. In all my doubts, difficulties, troubles, and pains, to thee I will turn, with unmeasured confidence and an ever-increasing gratefulness. Let no false friend, no terrestrial interest or ambition of this world; let no bent of a vitiated nature be listened to any more. O my Mother! O my Sovereign! *Sonet vox tua in auribus meis! Trahe me post te, et curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.*"

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior-General.

ON BOARD THE NORMANDIE,
Sunday, 11.30 A.M.

We are looking for a Pilot, but scarcely expect to land before to-morrow morning—too late, I fear, for the first train. At all events, I hope to reach home Wednesday morning. What a joy for me and for so many dear souls, whose memory follows me ever since I left Notre Dame! My Circular will reach the *Ave Maria* Office, I trust, on Tuesday. Please to say to our active printers that it should be out next day. Sunday, 26th, is the festival of Our Lady of Good Counsel, and the *Triduum* should precede it, by all means.

From this heavenly association we expect:

1. A new wisdom at large, for every member.
2. Preservation from all accidents and plagues.
3. A new spirit of fervor, devotedness, obedience and purity.
4. An increase in our Novitiates, and solid vocations.
5. A full success in all our Institutions.
6. A new and unprecedented love for our Blessed Mother.
7. An exemplary life and a happy death for us all.

I never felt as anxious for anything as I actually do for the boundless success of our Mother of Good Counsel. I never knew of any devotion more beautiful or more abundant in blessings and rich universal results. Oh! that I may live to see it spread and appreciated far and wide! What a delightful Eden it will make of Notre Dame and St. Mary's! Remember me kindly to our dear Rev. Fathers and Brothers and Sisters. My supreme happiness is now to place everyone I love in the arms of our Blessed Mother of Good Counsel!

E. SORIN, C. S. C.