

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 16

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA, APRIL 19, 1888.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

It seems so long since I have seen or even addressed most of our dear Religious Family that I can scarcely bear it any longer. I therefore avail myself of the near approach of the beautiful month of Mary, not so much to strengthen our feelings of mutual and well-known affection, which,—like the smooth and majestic river that grows wider and deeper as it nears the end of its course and flows into the boundless sea—expand and deepen on the stream of life from a continual influx of daily meritorious and edifying deeds, until they pass into the ocean of eternal rest; not so much, I say, to recall those true sources of happiness, which we appreciate more and more every day, as to intensify and perfect our sentiments of love and veneration, of gratitude and absolute confidence, of unceasing aspirations and willing exertions to increase around us, if possible, our Blessed Mother's glory, and to extend the limits of her domain farther and farther wherever obedience has assigned a mission to our zeal.

Within a few weeks the devotions of the month of May will open a new life for the most devoted children of God's Holy Church all over the globe. For full thirty-one days, these faithful souls will experience a delight beyond expression, as they kneel in prayer before their glorious Mother's beloved image, knowing and feeling that millions of devoted children are united with them, yielding to the same irresistible impulse of filial love and gratitude, and especially pouring forth their most fervent petitions, that the Church, in her present and unprecedented trials, may find in Her a Mother; for, from every faithful breast will come the same moving supplication: *Monstra te esse Matrem*. Here, nature itself is our guide: a child suddenly frightened at an unsuspected danger, turns and runs to its mother, and feels reassured only when folded in her arms.

Who at this moment can seriously question the gravity of the evils, the frightful dangers that are threatening society? Only a few months ago I was in Europe, and for a while in Rome. I saw and heard the Holy Father himself. Delighted as he felt with the unprecedented homages of the world, on the occasion of his sacerdotal Jubilee, he could not conceal his increasing apprehensions of the dangers with which he felt himself surrounded. He made no secret of it, but openly declared repeatedly, that the persecution of which he is the object, from the enemies of the Church, is making his situation in Rome *unendurable*. Since then, as I learn from reliable sources, things have grown even worse; and if the new code of laws, laid a few weeks ago before the Italian Chambers (the most infamous code ever known), becomes the law of Italy, God alone knows how sad will be the result for the Church in that once Catholic and happy country.

But I know beyond doubt that his Holiness looks to the month of Mary as to the dawning of a new era. Numberless pious souls, from all parts of Christendom, join with him in the same hope and confidence. Shall we not do the same ourselves? Can we remain unconcerned when and where every noble Christian heart feels so deeply interested? No, indeed! no such indifference must be found in our ranks. We shall all come to the front *with a will*, and show ourselves the true soldiers of the Cross. With our Blessed Mother we will stand at the foot of the saving Cross, reminding her that on that sacred spot, from which she beheld her Divine Son dying, she heard Him bequeathing us to her as to our mother. *There is our precious rendezvous*, where we may meet and feel and say: "It is good for us to be here"—*bonum est nos hic esse!* For a whole month it will be our great consolation to join with our Blessed Mother in her unspeakable sorrows, entreating her to accept our humble prayers with those of the legions of young and unspotted souls entrusted to our care. Sometimes it seems to me that I am myself a witness of it; when I remember my first Mass in Jerusalem, at the foot of the Cross, I can scarcely help listening again and again to the sacred voice of the dying Redeemer addressing, for the last time, His Holy Mother: "Woman, behold thy son;" and turning to the disciple He loved: "Behold thy Mother; and from that hour the disciple took her to his own." Oh! what a consolation! what a joy this double and solemn declaration then brought to my heart! Then it was, indeed, I felt, as I never did before, that the beloved disciple was there our representative, more truly and perfectly than I was *yours*; and yet, to the best of my ability, I acted surely as your representative, and realized that I was acknowledged as such by every member of our dear Family, to consecrate it entirely and forever to the mystery of the Cross—to the dying Saviour and to His sorrowful Mother. Oh! what a glorious name we have! Religious of the Holy Cross!

While praying for our Holy Father, we know we pray for the Church. When praying for our common father, we are all naturally reminded of our sweet duty to remember, effectually and lovingly, our dear parents, dead or alive. How readily our Rev. pastors and best teachers will avail themselves of this blessed month of Mary, now spreading more rapidly than ever in all Catholic centres, to plant or cultivate in the pious hearts committed to their solicitude the love of the Mother of God! Now is our time to implant in young souls a tender love for Mary. To some of us it may be the last chance. Yes! it may be the last for myself. Hence my sincere, my burning desire to see our Blessed Mother, honored and thanked, praised and loved more than ever before,—to see her the absorbing centre of all our thoughts and desires, the cause of our joys, as a mother is to her child.

The Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, which is to be celebrated next Sunday, will not, I trust, pass unnoticed among us, but will prove a most acceptable occasion for all of us to thank our glorious Patron of old, from our inmost souls, for the continued and innumerable blessings we owe him since the very beginning of our religious existence. Oh! how glad and happy we shall all feel, to show him our gratitude for the past, and our boundless confidence for the future! May the glorious Feast of his Patronage find and leave us all more than ever devoted and deserving of his paternal solicitude! Let us all commend to his protection our dear and venerable patriarch, Bro. Vincent, now 92 years old, but very sick, and yet full of confidence in his first and great Patron, St. Joseph.

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