

CIRCULAR LETTERS

of the

VERY REV. SUPERIOR GENERAL.

ROME, July 22, 1868.

VERY REV. FATHER GRANGER:

VERY REV. DEAR FATHER:—Our elections have, at last, been made. You will be surprised, and I hope, from your old friendship of more than thirty years, you will grieve at the result for your poor old friend. You understand full well what I mean. Until five o'clock this evening I shall entertain some hope, for the Holy Father kindly sent us word last night, at ten o'clock, that he would receive us all at five o'clock to-day; I still hope that he will release me. The day before yesterday, when the votes for a new General were cast, under the presidency of Mgr. Simeoni, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, as Delegate of the Cardinal himself, who could not be present; no sooner had my name been proclaimed than I humbly declined, on my knees, such a responsibility, and formally declared that I could not in any way accept it, unless His Holiness should expressly command. But when the eminent Prefect of the Propaganda came in person yesterday to preside at the closing sitting, he almost destroyed in my poor heart all hope of release; still, to the last moment I will hope even against hope. One thing, after all, will remain to console me, viz., that I have done all that I could do to avert what has happened. But when I could not protect myself, you must not wonder at my inability to shield you; therefore, in total disregard of whatever I said in your favor, the Chapter has appointed you to the office of Provincial in my place. If any one loves me at Notre Dame and around, now is the time to pray for me.

But I hasten to add that in whatever manner our visit to the Vatican this evening may end, it will change nothing in my arrangements to leave Brest on the 1st of August. Of course, Rev. Father Dillon will return with me, and probably our Father Ferdinando, D. D., *utriusque juris*. As to the length of time I shall remain with our dear American families, the best I can say is that when they are tired of me I shall return to France.

E. SORIN.

At Sea, July 23d.

DEAR REV. FATHER:—Yesterday when I closed my brief and unlooked-for report, I found some consolation in the thought that it was yet possible for both of us to be relieved by a kind word of His Holiness. But that word did not come from his lips; we were received rather formally, *dans la Salle du trône*. The audience was pleasant to all, except to me; I came home with a heavy heart; and no sooner had we reached Sta. Brigitta than they commenced the ceremony of the installation, a thing which I had never seen nor read about. Since then I am under the yoke. May our Blessed Mother, the comfort of the afflicted, have pity on me!—your burden is light, while mine is all but unbearable.

We left Rome this morning by the eight o'clock train, and in thirty hours we expect to get to Marseilles. The sea is beautiful. St. Bridget, whose festival is kept to-day in Rome, and under whose special auspices we placed this morning our homeward return, favors us, so far, as much as we could desire. On Sunday morning we expect to be in Paris. Friday night we leave for Brest, as I have already stated; and unless something very unexpected come across us, I anticipate no cause of delay to deprive us of the pleasure of celebrating with you the glorious Assumption of our Holy Mother. May God give us that joy!

E. SORIN.

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No. I.

PARIS, Dec. 31, 1868.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN JESUS CHRIST:

From the various complaints I have received almost daily, these few weeks past, I perceive that at least one package of my sea correspondence, containing six or seven letters, has been lost on its way. It grieves me the more, as I thought I had spared nothing to satisfy everybody; but I cannot be responsible for the failure of some of my messages in reaching their destination.

* Be this as it may, I can safely assure all who had a right or a promise in this matter, that my apparent silence is no proof of a change in my sentiments, nor even a sign that I am going to forget my friends beyond the sea. My heart bears me a different testimony. Indeed, I feel at times, too keenly, that distance only increases affection, if it is real and sincere. I am here in France bodily, but in spirit and in heart I live on the other side of the Atlantic, among my own beloved friends, whose cheering countenances are continually present to my memory. Should I go to the end of the world, my imagination would bring them likewise, as daily companions of my every step. One after the other, the pleasant moments I have spent with them, collectively or individually, come up again and vividly depict themselves on my

mind, thus renewing many a precious delight which I had scarcely expected ever to recall and again enjoy so far away.

I may live in France as long as obedience and duty will require; but to consider myself happy—my poor heart forces the word to my pen—no, never, I *fear*. And yet, all around me are very kind, every one vying to make my return to France as pleasant as possible. The few relatives time has spared me, have shown me all the affection I could wish for; the dear spot where I was born and all its surroundings I have revisited with pleasure for a moment; but neither persons nor places here can distract my mind from the spots where I have labored so long, where my best sentiments are centred, and my aspirations incessantly drawn as they are nowhere else on earth.

Notre Dame and St. Mary's, with their varied and delightful dependencies and associations, will forever stand paramount in my mind above all other places I can visit or imagine. It seems to me that even here few institutions possess the advantages which Divine Providence has bestowed there. No people appear as happy as the dear inmates of Notre Dame and St. Mary's. I find nowhere in France a little world of students as those I left at Notre Dame, last October. Could I say less of St. Mary's? I may be blinded by affection, as parents are generally suspected to be, but thus far I am not conscious of it. The more I reason with myself for fear of being too partial in my appreciations of persons and places and things, the more clearly I see, or fancy I see, that my preferences are well grounded, and that my own dear little family in the New World is the best entitled to my predilection and devotion. Do you not say the same yourselves? Divine Providence has blessed us not only with local and temporal advantages, seldom met with anywhere in the same degree, but also with spiritual and religious privileges calculated to attach the best sentiments of the soul to our dear home: It has blessed us with a spirit of devotedness and energy which will remain, I trust, as the characteristic feature of all the children of Holy Cross in America: It has blessed our schools with a life, an activity and discipline, which I consider a proof as well as a cause of real success: It has blessed us with friends than whom we could scarcely desire better, and of whom no community could present a larger or more imposing array; and among them, how many have not repeatedly proved their interest, their unfeigned attachment and their generous liberality?

Has not the same kind Providence blessed you all with Superiors who never knew what it was to spare themselves, but who spend themselves for the good of the community, even beyond the limits of common prudence! Thank God, I know none among them claiming respect upon a title; but rather upon unquestionable evidences of self-sacrifices to teach others, daily, by acts and deeds more than by

Holy Cross
Spirit.

words and exhortations. A religious, it is true, will always venerate authority; but we must confess that virtue makes it doubly venerable. Another consideration tends greatly to make me prefer the scenes of my missionary life. Here, priests and religious are almost too numerous; there is no room to move, but a narrow circle for each; nothing for one to do which could not be done as well, and often better, by another; it makes one feel even too much how easily the world could dispense with his assistance. Not so with us in America: not one soul too much; we never have enough of good hands. The humblest and most unpretending, if animated with a good will, will give glory to God.

Had we not crossed over to those distant shores, who could tell how many precious souls, either already gone to everlasting happiness, or rejoicing among us in the knowledge and love of truth, would have been left seated in the darkness of death? Who can enumerate the legions our little Congregation will continue to drill, under its glorious standard of the Cross, for the armies of the Lord? Ah! how admirable are the ways of the Lord! Whilst at sea for the first time we sent to heaven a dear little soul, only two years old, who otherwise would never have seen God. Happy, fortunate little Mary! She was the first fruit of our mission. Ever since, she prays for us. Very probably by this time she has obtained the conversion of her parents, who seemed much moved by the event.

Good Brother Vincent should not forget, in his old age, his precious god-child, now in the company of her Blessed Patroness for twenty-seven years and five months. She owes us a debt of gratitude, which cannot be so soon laid aside. I reminded her more than once of the fact, and each time she seemed well disposed to acknowledge it. Since then, I have baptized many others; and, as far as I remember, they did me honor. Some of them have already gone to join our first little heroine, our standard-bearer; others are on their way; and some even gathering, as they journey onward, as many as they can to share with them the rich reward awaiting them in heaven. Go on, my brave little band, with your noble work of gratitude; be just and honest; make good returns; give in proportion to what you receive. Many a member of our Congregation of Holy Cross has been laid under no ordinary obligations to God! Let all pay their debts with a magnanimous heart.

In answer to your beautiful and touching expressions of regard in this holy season, I beg to say to all who have written me, or prayed for me, that I, too, wish a happy New Year for my beloved children in the New World. I wish them to walk worthy of their vocation, in the discharge of all their duties; to secure for themselves and their labors the indispensable blessing of God, that they may stand unshaken to the end, and that they may be found at the

post of obedience when God will summon them from this life to appear before His awful tribunal. Some of us may not see many another New Year; neither age nor vigor will avail; but a holy life will enable us to look steadfastly upon death as a deliverer from temptation and misery, holding out "the crown promised to those who shall have persevered to the end."

I am often asked already when I expect to return. May is the time I fixed upon when starting; I look forward to this cheering month with as much eagerness, to say the least, as any of you.

I have commenced the visit of our Houses in France. By the middle of January we intend, *D. v.*, to pass over into Africa, with one of our Rev. Fathers, to see the three establishments of the Congregation in that Province. My correspondence will be forwarded to me there, without any additional postal charge.

In order to obtain all the blessings I need to do some justice to the affairs of the Congregation, I beg of all the members of Holy Cross to commence on the Sunday following the receipt of these lines a novena of Communions, in honor of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; not, however, that any one be *obliged*, but directly exhorted, to make an effort, and try to live so guardedly and so religiously as to be permitted by his own conscience to approach the Holy Table every day during the novena. The prayers to be recited are: the Litany of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, if it can be had; otherwise, that of Loreto, with the *Memorare* and the three ordinary invocations of 1, 2, and 3 o'clock p. m. Let all seriously strive to make of these nine days a time of renewal of fervor in the whole Congregation.

E. SORIN.

No. II.

PARIS, January 15, 1869.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS:

At all times economy is a virtue in a Religious Community. There are, however, circumstances which make it an imperative duty, not only upon all the members of a congregation, but especially on the administration of its finances,—on those who, by office or direct obedience, have this heavy responsibility added to those of a religious life. On the other hand, it would be a mistaken idea to hold the executors of the will of the administration, viz., the stewards, accountable for whatever may go wrong in the administration of an extensive community. Here we must have correct views of these officers' obligations. What is a steward's duty? Is it to buy or sell, or dictate as he pleases? If such were the case, the steward should have all the authority vested in himself alone. In reality, however, the steward is simply the agent to carry out