

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

J. M. J.

NOTRE DAME, December 29, 1873.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN JESUS CHRIST:

The consecration of the Province of Cincinnati to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, having been fixed for New Year's Day, I anticipate the usual epoch of the Annual Circular of the new year to exhort all the members of our Congregation, wherever they are, to join in spirit, to consecrate themselves on the same day to the adorable Heart, together with their Houses, their pupils, and all their interests temporal and eternal. Indeed, no Community in the Province has a better right than ourselves to rejoice at this glorious movement, carrying Catholicism, all over the globe, to this Divine Source of all graces, for our chief Patron is the Sacred Heart; we, therefore, from the beginning of our Society, were dedicated, first of all, to this Glorious Heart; we belong to the Sacred Heart, by right, and above all, as a Religious Family among the various orders recognized by the Church; and none should feel more delighted than ourselves, at the wonderful diffusion of this beautiful devotion through the world. Indeed, it is a matter of the deepest consolation, as well as a cause of best and greatest hopes, to see the Heart of our Blessed Lord becoming, of late years, so rapidly and so universally, the central point towards which all eyes are turning in confidence, as a last and sure refuge against the innumerable temptations and dangers that encompass our every step in life. A Society thus returning, as a man, to the very Fountain of Life, cannot perish. Of all the signs of resurrection we have noticed since a few years, among the *débris* of every religious sentiment, there is none more certain, more infallible. What is true of Christianity at large, applies with the same strength here,—to any individual spiritual corporation like ours. If the teaching Body in the Church exhorts, so powerfully and unanimously, all Christians to seek salvation in the Sacred Heart, we, consecrated as we are by our own Constitutions to this adorable Heart, should be foremost in this solemn act, by the fervor of our souls and the entire offering of our whole beings to the loving Heart of our Divine Saviour. Among the thousands and hundreds of thousands consecrating themselves, in all directions, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, none should derive from this act of religion greater fruits than ourselves. We have studied, as a speciality, the adorable perfections of the Divine Heart; we are supposed to know them more perfectly; consequently, we are expected to start on our preparations with a greater care and zeal, that nothing be wanting on our part to secure every blessing and favor our Blessed Lord has in store for those who thirst after the waters of life.

Therefore, let every Religious of our Congregation prepare himself duly, by an extra confession on the eve, and by the recitation of the Litany of the Sacred Heart at the close of night prayer, to be repeated likewise after the morning prayer. Then at Mass, immediately before Communion, whether in common or privately, let the Act of Consecration be read, piously and fervently; and until noon let there be no recreation, no distraction from this great object of devotion, every one endeavoring to spend, as much as possible, that forenoon before the Blessed Sacrament, renewing by himself, again and again, the unreserved consecration of his faculties and senses to the last moment of his life. This first part of the day being thus employed in wishing a happy new year to our Blessed Lord, to His Holy Mother, to our dear St. Joseph, to our patron Saint, and our guardian angels, we shall be better prepared for the ordinary courtesies of the season in the afternoon. Let all understand that such a day must make an epoch in our Religious existence. The emblem of the Sacred Heart shall be worn ostensibly on the heart the whole day.

I avail myself of this opportunity to thank you all in advance for the pious prayers which, I know, you will offer to Heaven in my behalf, on New Year's Day; and to assure you, in return, that I will not forget you at the altar on that occasion ever so impressive on sensible hearts. Present and absent I will remember alike in the Holy Sacrifice.

I am pleased to be able to say, that not only I am not conscious of ill will towards any member of the Congregation, but that I feel most kindly disposed towards each and all.

We are wellnigh closing a year which we might call an eventful one, for its severe trials on society at large, and on our own Community. For the past twelve months we have met serious losses in our *personnel*; but at this juncture we may well rejoice at the sight of the abundant blessings Divine Providence has so bountifully bestowed on us in all directions. In every one of our Establishments this ending year witnesses an increase of pupils we had scarcely ever seen before. Many of the Houses have become too small, and are now urging before the General Council their respective claims for an enlargement.

While I bless God for such an unprecedented success, I deem it my duty to state here, for the instruction of all concerned, that after the terrible lessons of the past, we cannot be too cautious in the administration of our finances, and never dream of an outlay beyond our means. The children of the Holy Cross should dread, for a century to come, even the shadow of debts. I must go one step farther, and declare that, more than ever, the administration of each House in the Congregation must be, henceforth, the object of a most serious attention. I recommend to our Very Rev. Provincials to see to this immediately, and take measures to secure everywhere a regular Council and an Administration that can bear due scrutiny, both at the time of the Visit and at the Annual Retreat. And inasmuch as in certain Houses, for years, no regular accounts or statistics could be enforced by the Provincial Secretaries, I must waste neither time nor paper in renewing unheeded entreaties to this effect; but to come at once to a radical change by which all will be benefitted, I hereby order the regular, conscientious, honest and complete quarterly statistics to be forwarded to the Provincial Secretaries, in due form and time, under pain of exclusion from the Sacraments, until this grave duty be performed.

E. SORIN, C.S.C.