

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 83

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

June 8

NOTRE DAME, Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1877.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

On this glorious Feast, the chief Patronal of our Congregation, my heart wholly goes with the following words of the Divine Office, with a burning desire that they may truly apply to this place and to every House of the Congregation: "I have chosen," says the Lord, "and have sanctified this place, that My Name may be there forever, and My Eyes and My Heart may remain there perpetually." (Par. ii, 7-16.) Oh! how fervently each of us should wish they should apply to our own hearts!

While exhorting you all to strive to honor the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord, and to make It your abiding place for time and eternity, I beg to present you with a few reflections, which I have withheld hitherto for fear of infringing on responsibilities which, on principle, I always respect wherever obedience has located them.

Before the close of this scholastic year, I deem it my duty to call your attention to a fact which, although plain and self-evident, might not impress your minds as it ought, having come upon us not suddenly but gradually, and, to some extent, somewhat imperceptibly. Nevertheless it now stares us in the face, and we have to accept it and deal with it, not alone as an undeniable reality, but as a most dangerous crisis actually calling forth our best energies, if we wish to avoid a ruin already met by so many others for twelve months past.

Since thirty-six years that our Congregation has been established in this New World, it never passed through such times. It would be idle to conceal from you what most of you know as well as I do myself, viz.: that the scarcity of money throughout the land has materially affected even our best and most prosperous Institutions. Would to God that I might add that the prospect for an immediate future is more cheering. The future is known only to Heaven; but as far as we can interpret its present signs, they appear more threatening than consoling. Were it not for my boundless confidence in Divine Providence, I would feel myself alarmed.

My object, however, in writing this is not to create alarm in our ranks, but to state to every member of our Religious Family that the moment has arrived to test the devotedness of each and of all. Yes, to maintain our ground and reputation we need at this hour, as we never did before, to find in every heart a ready willingness to meet the present emergency at any personal sacrifice of ease and comfort, as well as of choice or preference in obediences. Until the horizon clears and brightens, our general motto must be, *to save all we can, and to procure resources more than ever*. We are all interested alike in bringing about a favorable solution of a difficulty which none of us has created, but in which we are none the less all involved, no doubt for some wise purpose of an All-Merciful Providence.

Let all visits and journeys during vacation, be abandoned, unless assurances can be honestly given to proper authority that instead of an expense, they will prove a real profit to the Community. As much as practicable, let every head of a House remain at the post of obedience with the best help to prepare and secure a full reopening in September. In fact, all distant establishments would gain more by keeping their subjects, if suited, and suitable, than by paying a double fare on the road, however much we would like to welcome them home. On this point, Superiors may be timely consulted.

It is unnecessary to say that all accounts should be promptly forwarded to headquarters, with whatever funds can be made available. Let us understand clearly the exact Status of each House. This year will prove the worth not only of those who govern in the Congregation, but of many others who never did but obey. In a human point of view, every member of the Congregation must be, both in mind and, as far as possible, in effect, a canvasser for our common cause. Understand me: we must all be devoted to prayer, and next, to very active exertions. A general and supreme effort on our part may yet change our prospects next September; but nothing less will do it. I know our best members have understood me fully, and they will be only too happy to act accordingly. Meanwhile let us well understand that when we have done all in our power for our dear Congregation, we are still but *useless servants, whose labors are vain unless God blesses them*. Who knows if God does not permit these trying times to punish us for our lukewarm habits in His service? surely, we have nothing to fear if we are true to our holy profession.

The first merit of a House is to be free from debt, or to show proofs that its debts will soon be liquidated. One may succeed a foolish predecessor, whose memory will only be kept as long as a cent of the previous administration's debt shall be due; it is indeed a sad inheritance; but the first duty of the present incumbent is to pay what is due. Means to effect such a result are at first very scanty; but if there is anything like a superior mind in the head, and a real devotedness in the members, the debt will vanish away like a cloud or a dream. Means did not exist before, but under the influence of both a superior mind and general devotedness, they will be called into existence. Experience has taught us on this point; means were always at command at the bidding of superior mind and virtue, while dull and sleepy beings, by contrast, ever proved the same.

There was a time when elements of success poured around our Establishments; then a sound head and an ordinary devotedness were sufficient to secure prosperity. But now-a-days, you must go after or create those elements; and the same prosperity absolutely requires an extraordinary activity, with a spirit of self-sacrifice ready to spend itself and be spent from 4 to 9 every day. I say to you in earnest: to expect success in any of our Houses, on any other ground, is now simple illusion and folly. Let us awake to the exigencies of the hour, and reorganize everything in such a manner that we may see everywhere at the head of our Houses all the guarantees above required, with the powerful example of regularity and strict assiduity to duty. Every pupil of our Institutions should be, more than ever, an object of special attention; and in our Boarding Houses, parents and visitors should be received with such a courteous care as to remember with delight the hours they spent with us.

Until further orders, to propitiate Heaven upon the Congregation, the Litany of Loreto shall be recited daily, with the three usual Invocations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Holy Hearts of Mary and Joseph.

"The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." (St. Paul, 1 Cor.)

H. SORIN, C. S. C.,  
Superior General.

P. S.—The Custodian of the University Library here has just informed me of a number of Books missing; let all such volumes be returned without fail, by those coming home this month or next.