

J. M. J.

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OF THE  
VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL  
TO THE  
Congregation of the Holy Cross.

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N. D. DE ST. CROIX, NEUILLY, PARIS, MAY 27, 1878.

REV. FATHERS AND WELL-BELOVED BROTHERS IN CHRIST:

After having prayed and reflected for a long time, consulted our Reverend Fathers the Provincials, and taken counsel here and in Rome from most distinguished ecclesiastics, the General Council not excepted, I think it my duty to inform you, without any further delay, that the General Chapter is put back to the year 1880, and that this delay has already been sanctioned by his Holiness Leo XIII. Functionaries will keep their positions until the next Chapter, unless some, for some exceptional reasons, would desire to be replaced before then.

Besides, the difficulties of bringing together these General Assemblies are far from being removed in the midst of the excited times in which we live. Moreover, the development of the Congregation, as has been perfectly understood by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda and the Archdiocese of Paris, leads us more and more to this important point of great Religious Orders, whose General Chapters take place but every eighth year.

I believe there is a well-founded reason to fear that amongst our Religious there exists a certain abuse of power, as erroneous in its principle as it is deplorable in its results—I mean the punishments which are too often unreflectingly imposed on students. With some, this is an unfortunate routine; a madness which, with them, has not been the object of a serious examination or of a wise discretion; with others, the result of a violent and hasty character; but, as a whole, it is always, or nearly always, when examined seriously, the unquestionable proof of the *incompetency of the teacher*.

I am not unconscious of the fact that there are hard, very light, even wicked children; dissipated and almost ungovernable classes: but we should not forget that children are not grown up persons, and that it is to us that belongs the task of forming and perfecting them. If punishments were the most efficacious means to obtain this end—which is even the object of education—teachers of superior merit would more frequently make use of it. But what do we see, even amongst us? Precisely the contrary. Amongst us, as everywhere else, men of superior merit, and who have made of teaching a practical study, punish so seldom, that it is evident that where *real merit* resides, the child is the first one to recognize it, and, perhaps, without even doubting about it, proclaims it by a prompt obedience, the joy of the teacher and of the pupil. This is the triumph of the professor worthy of the name. To punish is something too easy to reveal a great merit. Hence, as a general principle, the more accomplished the teacher, the less he need punish.

I go further: The frequent punishment of children (I do not speak here of bodily chastisements, which remain absolutely forbidden in the Congregation), far from raising their morals, lessens and degrades them insensibly, weakening, at the same time, their love for study, their personal affection both for the teacher and the establishment, and yet it is necessary for their present success, and their happiness afterwards, that this feeling increase in their hearts until the last day of their studies.

We have all ourselves been children, students. Do we, to-day bless, from the bottom of our hearts, those who have most humbled, afflicted and despised us, or have rendered us unhappy, causing us to shed tears? Now more than ever it is of importance that the child who is confided to our care, be, and remain, the grateful friend of the house that gave him education. It is of equal importance that his whole family bless that house. But is it then by continual punishments that we will obtain this result? (See the Rule of Professors).

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

Since a month the health of Rev. Father Champeau disquiets me seriously, and I make it my duty to ask the prayers of the Congregation for his speedy and entire recovery.

I learn the death of Madame Fleurat, a signal benefactress of the Congregation. I pray all the members of the Congregation to offer a Mass or Communion for the repose of this precious soul.