

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 94

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY, 1879.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRST:

I have delayed my acknowledgments until I had read each line sent me, from all parts, on the occasion of the New Year. It has taken time, for I have no recollection of such a number of letters addressed to me within a few days, at any previous epoch. With one exception, (which I deemed not sincere, and returned,) I treasure them all, as precious mementoes of filial devotedness, equally creditable to the dear writers and gratifying to myself.

Were it feasible, I would take a special delight in answering each one separately; but this being out of the question, I must beg leave to send at once, and by the same mail, a line in common, conveying, in substance, what I feel for each and for all. I thank you with all my heart; God bless you, and return you a hundredfold every good gift you have asked for me.

In presence of so many unfeigned tokens of affection, one should carry a stone, and not a heart in his breast to remain unmoved. I readily confess they affect me very sensibly. They would even increase, if it were possible, my devotedness to our dear Congregation at large, and to every member of it personally, for love calls forth love; but, this time, they make me feel the more keenly my inability, from sickness, to attend, as I would wish, duties and calls which unavoidable delay only multiplies while urging their attendance. But until my health be somewhat restored, I must satisfy myself with repeating every morning: "I am truly a useless servant." For more than six months I have not enjoyed, for a fortnight, anything of my usual vigor and strength. To me especially, at this closing and opening of years, it is a warning which perhaps I did not heed soon enough: *Dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum.*

This may be a fit occasion to state what I have learned from reliable sources, viz.: that, for many in the Community, these Circulars of mine were in reality more a matter of form than an efficient means on which I could rely for any serious purpose, there being, as a rule, no effort ever made, and continued, to enforce their prescriptions, besides the transient customary reading of the printed lines.

Be this as it may, I will none the less regularly fulfil my task, for the benefit of those whose right to these religious communications cannot be set aside by the lack of proper feelings in others. The Gospel itself will not save all, but will prove the condemnation of many. Shall we not hear again in a few weeks hence, Simeon's inspired and terrific words: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel"? (St. Luke, ii, 34.) When God Himself permits His own word to remain unheeded by men, can we make it a condition, *sine qua non*, for the fulfilment of our duties, that every one concerned must, and will, profit by it? Let the responsibility rest anywhere but with us. I am more than repaid when I can reasonably hope to benefit the majority.

Let me, then, remind all who recently sent me their cordial greetings, of the rapidity with which time flies from us, and of the fast approaching hour when we must realize that "there is no more time for us."—*Tempus non erit amplius.*

Less, perhaps than anyone of you, have I any assurance to again enjoy in your midst another such happy meeting or exchange of heartfelt good wishes. The end of all temporary joys must come. Let us all try, more earnestly than ever, to consolidate our hopes of an endless union in Heaven, by a faithful discharge of our respective obligations, and, above all, by a daily increasing union of hearts upon earth.

I will not close these remarks without a reference to the Solemn Feast we are commemorating. The Epiphany is eminently our Feast, both as Christians and as Religious. There is no anniversary in the Catholic Cycle better calculated to awaken in our hearts the deepest sentiments of gratitude and love; for while it reminds us of our first call to the knowledge and worship of the true God, in the persons of the Wise Men, our forefathers in the Faith, to whom God spoke by the star, does it not likewise refresh our memory of that other star that shone for each of us in the darkness of our wearied minds, and brought us to the crib of salvation? Each one was led on by his own; perhaps no two could be found brought here alike. But to each and to all a star appeared, and moved on, and rested on the mysterious spot where every faithful follower found all he had desired, viz.: the Child, and His Mother and St. Joseph. What more could be wished for? What have we not learned around that mystical Crib? What did we know before we knelt and listened to the Word made flesh? Who could say what we felt there at the feet of Jesus and Mary? Who could even insinuate a disappointment? In what could we have been disappointed when we had found Jesus, Mary and Joseph? Ever since, as to our fathers, God has spoken to us, in many and various ways; we hear His voice everywhere, we meet Him at every step: since we conversed with Him in the stable of our Novitiate, we never parted. *His delights are to be with us*; our greatest happiness is to live for Him and with Him, to follow Him and obey His holy will. Oh! the blessed star that shone for me, and led me from afar to the House of the true Bread! Praised be forever the merciful, the loving Saviour who singled me out of so many, and brought me from the deepest ignorance and abjection, to the sunshine of His incomprehensible charity. May I never forget the Epiphany that revealed unto me my God, my all!

Whilst I was rejoicing upon the unprecedented successes of the Congregation in Canada, the news of the Senatorial elections in France, yesterday, suddenly came to realize all my apprehensions. Let us pray more than ever for our dear associates there; they are threatened with the worst of evils.

Need I remind the members of our Community, of what stares us all in the face, viz.: the universal misery that reigns around us, to a degree never known before? When the question for millions of our fellow-beings is, how to keep soul and body together, can we feel justified in exacting the comfort and abundance of better times? Shall we not rather, in presence of daily decreasing resources, spontaneously resolve to be satisfied with the mere necessities of life?

I beg all our regulators to bear in mind that the time for morning prayers and meditation, as a rule, cannot be abridged by anybody. It must cover 30 minutes. Everything else has to be adjusted to this primary and fundamental principle.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Amen. (Galatians vi, 18.)

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