

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 105

OF THE

VERY REV. SUPERIOR GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, Christmas Eve, 1880.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Hitherto, at this holy season of the year, I have usually waited until I had received the joyous expressions of your good wishes, before returning you my acknowledgments, with the assurance of my own sentiments of affection and devotedness. But as there is no binding rule to keep me behind and last, when the promptings of my heart would bring me forward in the observance of a laudable custom of Christian society, I beg, this time, to come out first, and wish every member of our beloved religious family a most happy Christmas and New Year.

The reason of my anticipating, this year, your well-known declarations of filial regards, you will readily appreciate, when I say that, since we began to exist as a Religious Order, we perhaps never needed as much as we do now, to find among ourselves the consolations and the strengthening virtue which true friendship and real union of souls alone can procure.

Times are disturbed to such a degree that peace, more than ever before, seems to be promised exclusively but to men of good will. Who could have foreseen twelve months ago what has since become an accomplished fact, sad and deplorable as it appears to every Christian soul? While we meet here, in this New World, but with kindness and charity among so many creeds and nationalities, we know that in our Catholic native land, in the very centre of Christian civilization—in Paris—our beloved Fathers are actually dispersed, and not allowed any longer to live together under the roof which even recently sheltered the Mother-House of the Congregation.

Oh! let every one of them know and realize how deeply we sympathize with them in this uncalled-for and wicked persecution, and how our hearts bleed for them. We feel confident that the unjust trials they are momentarily subjected to, will only reveal to ourselves and to the world their beautiful character as true Religious, and therefore increase, if possible, our esteem and affection towards them. At the chosen hour of Divine Providence, they will come out victorious, "and rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Jesus."

Whether the present legal ejectment of Religious in France continues, or ends in another bloody

commune, we understand that our great duty is to pray more fervently than ever for the successful final issue, not alone of our own Congregation, but of the Catholic cause all over Europe, from the dreadful and far-reaching storm that threatens on so many points all our most precious interests. To propitiate Heaven towards the Congregation, through these troubled times, all the members of the Holy Cross Family shall recite on their knees, daily, after the Gospel, at the Particular Examen, three times the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father, etc., with our three invocations, until peace is restored. What else shall we do to secure a favorable hearing of our petitions in Heaven?

At all times and everywhere, but especially at the beginning of a new year—which may be the last for more than one of us—it will not be amiss to consider seriously, in a spirit of faith, 1st, *How we observe the Rule*. Do we reflect that Heaven blesses, and that our associates esteem and love, only the strict and zealous observer of the Rule? Have we yet to learn that the want of a scrupulous fidelity to the Rule begets scandal and contempt? 2d, *How we fulfil our obedience*. This second point should be, for some at least, as momentous as terrifying. Personal carelessness has caused, and may cause again, deplorable, ruinous disasters: fires, heavy and sudden losses; establishments sunk in debts; others lost to public confidence, and then unavoidably abandoned; looseness and irregularities of all sorts, in lieu of discipline and order, the only guarantee of success; such are the consequences of an obedience half fulfilled. When shall we learn that officers are to stand or fall, here as in the world, by their energy and success, or the absence of either? and every other Religious, by the exemplary fulfilment of all that is covered by obedience; or the disorder created by its loose and irregular discharge. 3d, *What sort of Religious we are*. What response from the inner Community? From our own conscience? From God? Shall we allow another year to begin and continue and end, as so many others before? Will not each of us say: No—no—no: this time I begin earnestly, before God a new life. I will redeem the past; I will be a Religious, or die in the attempt. May God bless our resolve.

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