

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER No. 107

OF THE

VERY REV. SUPERIOR GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., February 6, 1881.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

After due consultation with the members of the General Council, I deem it my duty to convey you the result of our deliberations, which, I feel certain, will please you, as it will afford you a new proof that we neglect nothing to ensure order, discipline, and harmony, not only on distant Missions, but particularly here, where our interests are more important by far than anywhere else.

As you are aware, Notre Dame is now the Mother-House, the Headquarters of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. It is also the centre of the Province of Indiana, and, in fact, of the United States, and, as such, it possesses here a Novitiate, a Scholasticate, and a Professed House for the entire Province.

Again, this new Mother-House has radiated into several institutions, more or less important, but as distinct as independent from each other, viz.: a University, a Manual Labor School, a Parish with church and graveyard, a Farm, a Printing Office, an Old Men's Home, each one of them headed by a President or Superior, or Director, freely moving in his own sphere, without ever encroaching on the rights of another, and all equally looking to the same higher authority for help, when needed, or redress, etc.

You will readily understand that one of the first duties of the General Administration is to regulate, in its own House, as perfect an organization for the government of its various branches as possible; that every officer in charge may know the exact amount of responsibility resting upon him, as also the means given him to meet the expectations of the Community; that none may claim more power than is required by his office, to the surprise or detriment of others, and that each one strive his best to succeed in his department with what means have been assigned him by a competent authority. As a rule, model Religious seldom complain of not having enough of responsibility: they always fear the contrary.

We are all fast passing away: to-morrow our successors may see their labors more abundantly blessed; most probably, because God will be better pleased with their humility, their true zeal for His glory, and their utter disregard of human applause. It is something for a Religious to leave behind him a clear record, and no precedent which history may present, as it does often, to show a weak point, instead of a virtue.

The Superior-General's long Rule (II) places upon him an awful responsibility, for the bearing of which it also confers ample powers; it would be well for some of our Religious to read it attentively; they would, at least, pity him a little more; for they would see that one of his duties is

"To preside wherever he is: (395) to administer the goods of the Congregation, to determine the jurisdiction of Local Superiors, etc. It is his duty to set all in motion, through his assistants and the other functionaries, which supposes an acquaintance with the whole work, and devotedness and firmness in the highest degree; so that he may understand all, maintain all, and render all productive, within the limits of his powers (397).

And what is still more authoritative, the Constitutions declare, page XVIII, 59:

"He assembles the General Chapter; he presides it, as well as all the Provincial and Local Chapters, as he deems it expedient."

He being first responsible for the financial state of his House, no debt should be created nor money expended, without his knowledge and sanction.

That all may harmonize, in a House to which the other Houses in the Congregation should look, as to a model, there is every Friday morning, under his presidency, a Council at which all the heads of the various Departments assist. - It is desired that those who hold a weekly local meeting in their Department, particularly the President (or Superior) of the University, the Director of the Apprentices, the Director of the Farms, and that of the Printing Office, should bring with them the minutes of their Council last held. Through the week, any case requiring immediate attention is referred to Rev. A. Granger, appointed by the General Chapter Local Superior of all who are constituted under Directors; he also presides, in the Superior-General's absence, at the weekly Council on Friday. This leaves under the exclusive jurisdiction of the President or Superior of the College, all Religious directly and wholly engaged in it; and this is surely enough for one whose every moment is required at his post; for, visibly, no other officer has less leisure.

In my earnest desire to do justice to all, I have ordered an annual summing up of receipts and expenditures for our six departments here. It will soon be ready.

I also gladly inform you of another resolution the General Council has recently taken for the honor of the Congregation, viz.: to send to Rome and to Louvain four of our best subjects to finish their theological studies. I will see myself to their expenses while there. They are to be chosen from among those the Community declares the most deserving, not alone in point of talent, but even more in consideration of their religious habits and the entire confidence their conduct has inspired all around.

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