

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 121

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

ON BOARD THE "ST. GERMAIN," JUNE 4, 1883.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

I need some little resignation, since a few days, to bear meritoriously with an absolute stoppage near the banks of Newfoundland, to repair our machinery, mysteriously disordered as of old on the *Amérique*,—but I trust not for 40 days, especially after a week of stubborn and strong head-wind that had retarded us more than a day. But perhaps I was too anxious to make a quick passage; with a fast boat, and in such a fine season, I expected to reach New York this evening, and be off early to-morrow morning. Now, we must take in the best part of the week, and put on our journey a round figure of 70 days! (We left on the 1st of April.) Thus our programmes are sometimes unavoidably disturbed: with this double *contretemps*, our long-desired visit to Canada becomes impossible this week, and must be postponed, to our great regret.

I begin to fear a punishment for yielding too naturally to the cravings of a poor, sensitive heart, which wanted to be home, and could not bear with any delay. Oh! what must be the delights of a soul reaching heaven, when a solitary spot in this valley of tears, where so much has been endured, is so intensely longed for that to see it again seems almost a condition of health and life! Is it simply a sign of old age, weakening the powers of nature, or, rather, a warning to prepare for the approaching final adieu? It may be both: a cross and a joy; both of which we should accept cheerfully. The truth is, that I never felt such a desire to see once more *my dear home and precious friends*. God alone knows the feelings with which He fills my heart for each of them and for all. May He bless them accordingly, and keep us all united in His Sacred Heart in the closest bonds of charity! What a bountiful source of heavenly joys is this Adorable Heart, where space and time only fasten and perfect the union of humble souls as in an *avant-gout* of the enjoyments of eternity! Oh! the beautiful rendezvous for the loving children of the same Heavenly Father to turn to, from the middle of the boundless ocean, or a far distant mission, or a little ignored corner, or a sick-bed,—there to be welcomed, and to rest and wonder, and to enjoy what can never be expressed in human language, as St. Paul says!

I wanted, however, something more than to see again my beloved home. I felt anxious to bring you the encouraging words and the Blessing of His Holiness. I had never seen him so fatherly, so loving, and so desirous to secure for us all the graces we might need. Then, again, I wished in real eagerness to convey to you something of my petitions, and thanks, and tears of happiness, as your representative at the Grotto of Lourdes for more than three days that we spent there, undisturbed, alone with her! Yes: alone with her! and yet with every one, in turn, of the dear Family, and at times with the entire little Family; and she, from the celebrated Rock, looking down attentively and motherly upon each and all, and that usually four times a day and from one to three hours each time. Never can I forget this fourth pilgrimage to the Immaculate Mother.

The place itself is scarcely to be recognized: convents and monasteries, hospitals and novitiates, have sprung up all around, and especially in sight of the blessed Grotto, or the Rock of the Apparitions, continually lighted up with countless candles, and literally covered with sticks and *béquilles*, each of them testifying to a miraculous cure by the Immaculate Virgin. What a rich tapestry! During a quarter of a century continual wonders of divine grace daily increase the number and the confidence of pilgrims. Two hours before we left, 8,000 *men* had arrived from distant points, and were on their knees, in earnest supplication before their Heavenly Queen; 25,000 are often seen, at a time, in the same act of devotion; a million, at least, are expected this year. Hundreds of miracles will probably be the result and the reward of this universal and ever-increasing piety. May Heaven be praised for this glorious saving sign among us poor mortals!

It must be a serious consolation for us, at Notre Dame, to possess such a neat and exact fac-simile of the real Grotto of Lourdes. I will visit it oftener than I ever did, and hope many others will do the same. Dear Brother Vincent, you will come and join me there, on fine days; will you not? You know Lourdes: you will show us how much you love it. I will assign you an object, an especial blessing to secure *there* before you die, viz.: the *increase*, the *development*, the *success of our Novitiates*. I promise to join with you on this vital subject, which engages more sensibly than ever the attention of all religious Orders everywhere. Many good souls will soon come to help you. We must find, we must form new members better than we are. We shall give our Immaculate Mother no rest on this most important point. Noyenas shall succeed each other without interruption until we have evident proofs that she has listened to our prayer and granted our request. I shall take or admit no other sign of her love for you, Brother Vincent!

E. SORIN, SUPERIOR-GENERAL C. S. C.