

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 131

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

Jan. 5

NOTRE DAME, IND., VIGIL OF THE EPIPHANY, 1885.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

When I addressed you my last Circular, on the Octave of the Immaculate Conception, I anticipated your ever welcome greetings of the season, and sincerely thanked you, in advance, for the joy they would bring me, as well as to yourselves. Thus, I thought, New Year would find us all square, and satisfied with each other, on the exhibition of our mutual sentiments, on the closing of the year 1884.

But after reading attentively every letter brought to me since a week, and listening alike to the numerous addresses with which I have been honored from so many pleasant quarters, I must confess that my annual account with you does not appear to me to be fairly settled. Much as I wish to deal honestly with everyone; fervently as I have tried to pray for you before the Crib of the Divine Babe, I yet feel, in strict justice, not a little, but deeply in debt to every member of the Family dealing with me these last twelve months; and, what is worse yet for me, I scarcely see any prospect of covering my actual deficiency for some years to come.

I never weighed more seriously the expressions of your hearts' sentiments and good wishes. Possibly, many of you honestly felt that it might be their last New Year's compliments to an aged Father nearing 72! At all events, I found them more touching than on any previous occasion of the kind. Hence my feelings of a large indebtedness to each member of the dear family.

Many beautiful letters have been handed to me during the past few days. I have perused every one of them with the same interest I would have shown the writer in person, and with each of them it was a delightful interview. Indeed, these have been for me grand Reception Days. What a difference between the Court, State, political and worldly receptions, which the cold etiquette of society commands everywhere at this time of the year (often a burden to those who meet), and the cordial outpouring of affectionate sentiments for those we love in God, and in whose behalf we feel so happy to offer our warmest prayers to the Giver of all good gifts! What a precious reality of enjoyments, over and above the poor people of the world!

With a few exceptions, I have seen again, or heard from, with unprecedented pleasure, all our Beloved Religious, from all quarters; and to each and to all I hasten to return my most sincere acknowledgments, with my best wishes. May the Divine Babe bless you all abundantly with an increased love for obedience, poverty, and chastity,—for humble simplicity, and devotedness to duty. Such will be the chief objects of my daily prayers at the Crib, around which we will meet morning and evening, to the end of the month. Oh! what a lovely, heavenly *rendezvous*!

When you pause before the Manger and contemplate the beauty of the Divine Infant, remember the touching remark of a saintly and most eloquent Bishop: "That Jesus may come to you, your heart must become the image of His first Tabernacle on earth, the Immaculate Heart of Mary." To secure this priceless boon, let us all try to commence this new year, which will probably be the last for some of us (possibly for you who read this in the prime of life), as we never did before:

- 1st. Living by faith, not by nature; not for time, but for eternity; for God, and for Him alone.
- 2d. With more fervor in the reception of the Sacraments, each time as if it were the last.
- 3d. Taking more at heart the honor and interests of the Congregation.
- 4th. Improving ourselves daily in the discharge of our respective duties.
- 5th. With a faultless regularity in attending every exercise and duty.

I see with no ordinary pleasure that all remained at home, since the issue of my last Circular, except two, whose travelling dispositions should have been checked by the Heads of their Houses. Oh! what a blessing for a House, when a proper Head directs its every member in the ways of the Lord!

To-morrow, the Feast of the Epiphany! What an impressive anniversary for us all! The first call of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the true God! The Wise Men, or Kings, to whom a new star appeared in the East, were our forefathers in the Faith. The Epiphany is eminently our Feast. Two weeks ago, we came with the shepherds to the stable, where we found Mary and Joseph, with the Child in the manger. To-morrow, we shall accompany the Kings of the East to Bethlehem, where we shall again meet Mary and Jesus; and, prostrating ourselves before the Divine Infant, and opening the treasures of our joyful hearts, we shall offer him our best presents. . . . But, before you rise to leave, listen: an angel speaks—"Return not the way you came!" Return a convert, an apostle, a saint.

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