

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 1

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., Oct. 22, 1885.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

It was only last night, at a late hour, I could finish reading the numerous letters the return of my glorious Patron's Feast brings to me from all parts. Of my deep and heartfelt gratitude for such precious testimonies of filial love, and assurances of fervent prayers to God for the blessings I need more and more every day, none in our dear little family will doubt, I am sure, even for a moment. Indeed, the expression of your beautiful sentiments never made upon my poor, sensitive heart such a vivid and indelible impression. I wish I could express to everyone of my beloved well-wishers, individually, what I must address to all collectively: "With my whole soul I thank you all, and beg of God to return you an hundredfold the choicest favors you asked for me on St. Edward's memorable Day."

For many years St. Edward's Festival has been to me, not exactly an occasion of real enjoyment, but rather of profound humiliation. But of late, I have tried to enjoy it with the rest of the family; not because it does not reveal any longer my unworthiness, as clearly as it did before, but because of the undoubted and unfeigned happiness it visibly brings, all around, to so many pure, innocent and loving hearts, whose warm and fervent prayers I value so much, and on whom I centre all my attention, setting aside undeserved praises and compliments, which common courtesy would dictate, were they not prompted by the nobler impulses of generous souls. I now look, not to the praises I do not deserve, but to the prayers I so much need, and to the joy of which I am, not the *cause*, but the simple *occasion*. Therefore, I hail with delight the welcomed return of the joyous day which affords an opportunity to so many dear souls to reveal their best and most honorable sentiments.

I never was indifferent towards a loving heart; experience alone would have long since taught me the rich mine a loving soul possesses, compared to a heartless being sin has robbed of its most precious jewel. God Himself is charity—*Deus caritas est*; and he who does not love resembles . . . what? The true children of God always and everywhere bore this unmistakable feature or Divine stamp of resemblance with their Heavenly Father. They were born to love for time and forever. Three times our Blessed Lord asked the same of St. Peter: *Lovest thou Me?*—Why did He so readily forgive Magdalene? "Because she had loved much, all her sins were forgiven her." What brought the miraculous impression of the Sacred Face on Veronica's towel? The compassion of her loving heart. Charity covers a multitude of sins and imperfections. As long as there is love in a heart there is hope that the link binding earth to Heaven is not broken. The celebration of a saint's feast renews and strengthens our best aspirations to an endless love which alone can satisfy the wants of our hearts. But while it intensifies this Divine element, which raises our weak nature above itself, it permeates our whole being with that heaven-born spirit which made the first Christians an object of admiration to all who beheld the change. "See," they said, "how these Christians love one another."

When, therefore, an opportunity is offered to our beloved Religious to reveal the true sentiments of their honest and loving hearts for a religious purpose and by religious means—as a fervent Communion and humble supplications to God and to His glorious saints—I rejoice; it is a delight to witness such a manifestation. O Blessed Mother, do thou see that *they themselves* receive more than they ask for me! I wish to be clearly understood: namely, that every blessing asked for me be bestowed equally on the charitable petitioner; otherwise, to pass unheeded; witness St. Edward himself.

In a land of liberty, and in an age of free thought as ours, it is not a small gratification to see such a spontaneous and general manifestation of heartfelt happiness from so many virtuous and noble souls moving under the yoke of Obedience, and yet so prompt in declaring their unfeigned respect for authority. Little do they know how much they honor themselves, in the mind of the person addressed, by such expressions of respect and devotedness for one holding in their regard the first claim to their filial submission. What a consolation for him whose responsibility daily increases even from the unreserved surrender of their own will! To those who have honored me with their recent feast addresses, I hasten to say that I never felt more delighted than in reading such a series of affectionate epistles. These beautiful letters shall never be destroyed by me, but lovingly preserved. May God grant all your petitions in my behalf! None of you will lose by it, but find in it an increase of heavenly blessings. This I ask of our glorious Patron, as my due, on his Feast.

Thanks be to God and to our Blessed Mother, the scholastic year has opened, in almost all our Institutions, with unprecedented numbers and guarantees of success. What we now feel most keenly is the want of subjects, to meet the urgent demands made on the Congregation. The "Few Lines Worth Reading" will give every Religious of the Holy Cross a means to procure additional vocations. We are looking for this new proof of interest. One of our first duties, in both hemispheres, is now to fill up our Novitiates with proper candidates. *Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci*. Therefore, *Let us pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest*. (St. Matt., ix, 38.) This will be a test to prove the devotedness—nay, the *efficiency* of each member of the Congregation. Already, some have done it and done it well.

Unless new vocations are procured, we cannot meet, as we should, the vital question of the day. We must at once interest in it the Rev. Clergy, and the most zealous friends or acquaintances we may have, far or near. Whoever will prove the most efficient means of drawing the largest number of best vocations will deserve the best thanks of us all—nay, more, of the Church and of God Himself.

This may be my last acknowledgment of festive greetings, as accumulating years daily repeat to me. My next Circular in January shall be chiefly devoted to the important issues which are to mark the year 1886. It is none too soon to draw your attention to such an eventful epoch, when the destinies of the entire family of the Holy Cross are to be fixed again, as far as human wisdom, aided by the experience of past years can fix them, with the help of Divine grace. Everything is to be renewed, to answer general or local needs; every office vacated; new officers everywhere selected from among those *whose antecedents were most visibly blessed*; new organization wherever needed; to sum up, a new life thrown in every member of our growing religious Body. Let all earnestly commend it to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. May all and each one, during the nine following months, strive to secure a favorable report, especially by the strictest attention to the Rules, to the vows, to devotedness, to economy, regularity and piety.

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