

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 2

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

Dec. 8

NOTRE DAME, EVE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, 1885.

REV. FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS IN JESUS CHRIST:

It has always been my custom, from a sense of duty, to consult Rome in all things of serious importance for the Congregation. As the time is approaching for the next General Chapter, and as the state of Europe seems more and more disturbed and threatening, I could not assume, spontaneously, the responsibility of fixing either the *place* or the *epoch* of its important sessions. The Holy See, having been respectfully consulted on the former, has recently replied, that "the Superior-General, who convokes it, is always free, considering the grave circumstances of the times, of which he is the judge, to select the place where it is to be assembled." As to the time, the Provinces of France and Canada have both expressed the same desire, namely, that the General Chapter should be held in May, instead of July or August. In this, the Province of Indiana acquiesces very cheerfully, and for the same reasons.

Now, that the solution of the first question is left to me, after fervently praying to God, and consulting, in a regular meeting, the members of the General Council, I have come to a conclusion of which, I trust, no one will disapprove, while all, I hope, will receive and acknowledge it as the only one that wisdom and justice could recommend. Not only the General Councilors, but all the authorities here, are unanimous in their conviction and declarations that the General Chapter must be held at Notre Dame, next spring.

One of the chief reasons for which the same General Assembly met here, fourteen years ago, was a consideration of economy in travelling expenses. There was a clear net saving of 6,000 francs resulting from the free passage granted to our French Religious on the trans-Atlantic line—a favor accorded only to Religious natives of France. Next year, the saving in the same way will be fully 12,000 francs. If such a saving in 1872 was admitted by all as justifying, by itself, the selection of Notre Dame as the place for the meeting of the General Capitulants, it must hold doubly good in 1886. The unnecessary and uncalled-for additional expense consequent to the selection of another place of meeting would prove a vexing remorse to my conscience while the Congregation is in debt. To bring over the waters, at such an expenditure of money and time, sixteen members, more or less indispensable; against five, who may come almost gratuitously, would certainly show very little judgment in our administration of affairs. Indeed, I would scarcely know how to insist afterwards on economy, and still less on the spirit of poverty. Here, common sense settles the question, as all will readily acknowledge.

How much more pleasant it must be for me to invite our dear Rev. *Confrères* and associates from France and Canada, who never visited this old forest of the West, to come and see with their own eyes the delightful domain the Blessed Virgin has made of it, in answer to their fervent prayers! If strangers, and even enemies of our Holy Faith, admire the change, and can scarcely find words to express their unfeigned astonishment, especially since the fire of 1879, can we suppose even for a moment that *our first and best members* would receive indifferently the warm and most cordial invitation I have the happiness to extend to them, to come and spend a few weeks with their loving Brothers at the New Notre Dame? Far from me such an unjust thought!

The invitation, I know well, will be welcomed by all; and when they reach the end of their journey, the happy souls their arrival will delight here and at St. Mary's (where the long wished-for Apostolic Approbation, we trust, shall have overjoyed every heart before), the loud and sweet tones of the great bell, and,

above all, the extended arms of Our Blessed Mother on the Dome, crowned with a halo of incandescent electric lights, will bespeak for them a welcome as they probably never received anywhere before.

An additional source of joy to all will be to learn that the solemn opening of the Chapter will take place on the auspicious Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, the 3d Sunday after Easter, the 16th of May; to close two weeks later, on the 5th Sunday after Easter, the 30th of May.

Those coming from Rome and Paris, leaving Havre on the 1st of May, by the steamer of the "trans-Atlantic line," may reach New York, as I did last spring, on Monday morning, the 10th, in time to choose between coming directly, or *via* Montreal, where they can join the Canadian party, and start together, after a few days' rest and pleasant fraternal visit, arriving here on the evening of Saturday the 15th. A messenger from here will meet them on their landing in New York, and accompany them either way, freeing them from all trouble until their arrival at Notre Dame.

May the Star of the Sea bless every one of the Capitulants while coming to and remaining at Notre Dame for such important deliberations and results! To-morrow, the Immaculate Virgin Mother will be entreated so fervently to grant our request that she will see at once she cannot refuse it.

One thought came to my mind at my hour of Adoration this morning, namely, that at our next General Chapter the Congregation should be made known so thoroughly to the Capitulants that every one of them should thereby become familiar with all its Houses and all its members. Hence the following suggestion: that each Province be strictly and conscientiously examined in a Provincial Council, towards the end of April; and a complete report of its movements, since six years, its full history, in ten or twelve pages, in French and English, signed by all its members, be entrusted to the Very Rev. Provincial to be read in Chapter, with the list of all the Religious of each Province, every name *qualified* and perfectly made known to the Chapter. A full day shall be given to each report. Then it will be clearly seen that, in spite of persecutions and hard times, the state of our dear Family was never more consoling, nor its prospect as bright and encouraging.

Without any intention to present here the *schems* or list of subjects to be examined in the next General Assembly, I may state in advance that our deliberations shall chiefly centre, 1st, on the religious life we must lead, and, 2d, on Education, as the next object for which our Congregation exists.

Therefore, after praying and consulting, I now declare and by this present Circular make known to the Congregation of the Holy Cross, and especially to the Capitulants General, whether by right or election, namely, the Right Rev. Procurator-General in Rome, the Very Rev. Provincial in France, with a Priest and two Brothers, the Very Rev. Provincial in Canada, also with a Priest and two Brothers; the Very Rev. Provincial here, with two Priests and four Brothers,—in all, with the General Assistants, ten Capitulants representing the Priests, and ten representing the Brothers,—I hereby make known to all my resolution to open the next General Chapter here at Notre Dame, *D. v.*, on the 16th day of May, 1886, by a Solemn High Mass, at 8 o'clock a. m. I convoke thereto, without further personal invitation, the ten Priests and the ten Brothers that are to compose said General Chapter.

The Right Rev. Procurator-General is hereby respectfully requested to solicit and bring with him the Apostolic Blessing upon the all-important labors of the Assembly.

From the date of reception of this Circular, the members of the Congregation shall all recite every morning the *Veni Creator* and the *Memorare*, in order to draw down on our deliberations the lights and blessings of Heaven; said prayers to be continued, in all possible earnest and fervor, to the end of May next.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

*Superior-General.*