

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 11

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., JANUARY 12, 1887.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Early, last month, I received from the venerable Dean of Tours, the saintly Director of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face, Very Rev. P. Janvier, the announcement of a pious and most appropriate design, namely: to raise a subscription, not in money, but in deeds and acts of faith and piety, in honor of the Jubilee of our Holy Father Leo XIII, among the generous members of the daily-increasing Society, lately founded in France by M. Léon Dupont—or the Holy Man of Tours. The object of this admirable circular is to procure as many Masses, Communions, Adorations and Beads, as possible, for the spiritual benefit of His Holiness, now so severely and wantonly tried by the enemies of the Church.

The illustrious Director wished to know what the Congregation of the Holy Cross would subscribe to the holy undertaking, and promised to gather all the subscriptions he could secure into a book richly bound, to be presented to our glorious Supreme Pontiff on the memorable day of his great Jubilee. Indeed, such a moving appeal could hardly be made to a heart more readily and sensibly affected by three such precious memories collected together in the names of M. Dupont, the Holy Face, and Leo XIII: the Holy man, for years my best friend beyond the sea; the Holy Face in whose Archconfraternity we are all enrolled, and on the eve of consecrating to its honor one of our most conspicuous altars; our Holy Father, the glory of the Church and the object of the tenderest love of his children! I responded from my inmost heart, expressing, as I felt confident, your truest and most devoted sentiments, and pledged myself, as your Superior and representative, to offer in the name of our Religious Family of the Holy Cross—

1st, 150 Holy Masses;

2d, 50,000 Holy Communions;

3d, 100,000 Adorations or Visits to the Blessed Sacrament;

4th, 50,000 full Rosaries, or 150,000 Beads.

Accordingly, every member is bound to offer, at most, 50 Communions, 75 Adorations and 50 full Rosaries in the course of the year, or one every week; not in addition to what we do according to our Rules, but by a special and direct offering for His Holiness of what we habitually do in obedience to the Rule. Of course, everyone is at liberty to add it to the customary religious practices of the day or of the week, but *not obliged*. Thus, this present year, which in all probability will make an epoch in the annals of the Church and of the world, will find us all better prepared, not merely to bear the trials apparently unavoidable, but to prevent, with God's assistance, the realization of Satan's infernal designs. Never did true Religious need, so much as at the present time, to seek for help in fervent and incessant prayers. A new obligation to pray will benefit us all materially; and, while it will secure Heaven's blessing upon our Holy Father, it will enrich the whole Church, and every member of it.

The above figures show of themselves a most satisfactory result. Ah! where there is a will, there is a way. But the same may be easily doubled, and more, if we extend—as we should—vigorously and energetically, the same appeal to our schools and parishes. Are not our scholars and parishioners children, as we are, of the common Father of all Christians? We have now in our schools and parishes and Hospitals and orphan asylums over 40,000 Christian souls equally interested and personally concerned with ourselves in securing for our Holy Father the protection of Heaven. To remain indifferent when our dearest interests are in danger, would be ranging ourselves among those children stigmatized by St. Paul as *sine affectione*. God forbid that there should be such demoralization in our ranks! From the beginning of the Church, the worst machinations of her enemies were ever defeated by prayer. St. Peter himself had been chained in iron and cast into prison, where he was closely guarded by soldiers; but, as the Sacred Text tells us, *Oratio fiebat sine intermissione ab Ecclesia ad Deum pro eo*; an angel came and delivered him from the jail, to the surprise and joy of all his followers.

In presence of the savage threats daily renewed around and against our Holy Father, our duty is clear; let our filial prayer for him ascend to Heaven, *sine intermissione*. St. Paul tells us that dangerous times will come—*tempora periculosa*. To overcome them, we must redouble our fervor, our zeal, and be full of hope, and *orationi instantes*. Thus the sight of danger will increase and intensify our confidence in this celestial weapon, which nothing can resist.

To show you the danger of the day, and the absolute necessity of praying and sanctifying ourselves, I will quote here a few lines from the *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* for this month:

"You will doubtless be surprised, dear associates, on discovering that again, this month, we claim the merits of your prayers and good works for the intentions of the Pope. But when you shall have read of the countless and blasphemies proffered with impunity, almost in his presence, by his most bitter enemies, when you shall remember that, in the space of only a few weeks, Leo XIII has sent no less than two official notes to his Nuncio, enjoining them to inform the divers governments that his position is becoming daily more and more intolerable, you will more easily imagine the anguish of his heart; you will feel that the moment has arrived when all his children ought to come to his aid, and endeavor to bring some consolation to his troubled soul.

"Listen, then, to at least a few of those cries of rage which, welling up from hell, have found an echo on Italian soil. At the anniversary of Mentana, celebrated some weeks ago by the extreme democratic societies of Italy, in honor of the Garibaldian dead of the campaign of 1867, several harangues, diabolic in tone and sentiment, were pronounced amidst the wild applause of the assembled rabble, and without any interference on the part of the Government authorities, who were, however, strongly represented on the scene by a battalion of infantry, a regiment of carabineers and an army of police and guards, delegates and inspectors of public safety. The following is a passage

from a discourse pronounced on the occasion by a certain Valzania, formerly a Garibaldian colonel: 'I offer a sorrowful tribute of affection to our brothers assassinated beneath the walls of Monterotondo, by the balls of the vile mercenaries of a priest—mercenaries whom we have always combatted generously, and whom we have respected as prisoners after the victory of Monterotondo.' (Voices in the crowd: 'Assassins! they should have been massacred!') 'There remains a sacred duty to be performed; we must combat the butchers of our martyrs, the sovereignty of the priest and his partisans who attempt a reaction. But woe to them, if they provoke the revenge of the blood shed here by our brothers! We shall be always ready to fight them with our tongues and with our guns, as we shall be always ready to combat every enemy of our liberty, of our country and of the welfare of the nation.' The deputy Giovagnoli spoke in the following strain: 'We want no more tyranny; we shall no longer yield to the venomous influence of the abhorred sect of priests.' (Voices from the crowd: 'Down with the priests!') 'Beneath the shadow of liberty, the priests organize themselves into menacing phalanges, and pretend to recall a past which shall never return' ('No, never! Down with the priests! Death to clericals! Death to the Pope.') 'Some poor victims of error, some miserable simpletons have devised schemes of conciliation, as if the past and the present, tyranny and liberty could ever be reconciled.' ('Down with the first article of the constitution!' yells the crowd) 'We have to come at the priests always and everywhere. Let meetings be held and subscriptions opened in every village and town of Italy, to urge the application of the law against clerical conspirators.' ('Down with the guarantees!') 'The clericals must be everywhere unearthed. The right to bear arms is inborn to men, but the law restricts it. We ought, then, to demand a law which will rid the country of clerical snares; it matters not that it be anti-liberal, if it be only patriotic. Italy, is one and will remain one, notwithstanding the united efforts of all foreign powers and influences. We must reduce Rome to a mass of ruins ere she become anew the respected See of the Pontiff; it need be, let us adopt dynamite and nitro-glycerine, so that the archeologists of the future Rome may not find even a capital nor *carmie*.' Two or three other discourses, quite as virulent, having been pronounced, the series was closed by the following diatribe from a miserable Garibaldian: 'O, *Torquernado* of the Vatican! these are the martyrs who, pierced by the archers of Napoleon III, effected the breach of Porta Pia. You know it well, ravenous priest! The people, more just than your God, rose up, and your fall was complete. We must fly your pestilential breath, O priest! you, who to rule by imposture and cowardice, have created for yourself a God! Tremble, cruel and tyrannic priest! this red shirt will always be your enemy, and will combat incessantly both you and the armed iniquity!' 'Whilst all this was going on at Mentana an anti-clerical meeting was held at Milan. It resolved that an end be put to all connivance with clericalism; that the first article of the statute be abolished, as well as the guarantee laws; that lay education and instruction be prescribed; that ecclesiastical property be given to the nation and to labor; and that the expense of worship be at the charge of those who profess religion; that monastic orders be suppressed, and that every effort be made towards a system of government which will have no need to be civil to the Church.'

From the *Universe* we translate the following:

"ROME, Dec. 24, 11.30 p. m.

"The Holy Father received yesterday the homages and congratulations of the Sacred College. Responding to Cardinal Sacconi, His Holiness pronounced a most important and eloquent discourse.

"After thanking the Cardinals for the part they have taken in his trials, and for the expressions of their sentiments towards him, His Holiness said that he felt keenly the need of Divine consolations. In fact, if His Holiness experiences no bitterness for the attacks directed against his person, overwhelmed with offences and bitter outrages, he is deeply afflicted by the violent war which is raging against the Church and Papacy.

"The Pope laments greatly all that is done in opposition to those two holy causes, even amongst Catholic nations, and he is doing what his Apostolic duty imposes upon him, to defend everywhere the sacred rights of God—and those of the Church. He is especially grieved at the sight of what takes place in Italy, and particularly in Rome, where the attacks are the more grievous, because they assail directly the supreme power to which are closely united the good, the life and the social action of the Church throughout the world. And these causes of sorrow have been increased beyond measure by the designs revealed in the recent and odious manifestations against the Church.

"The Holy Father deplures, moreover, that new laws have been enacted to confiscate ecclesiastical property; that war has been waged against Catholic teaching; that odious measures have been taken against inoffensive and worthy religious deserving all respect. Furthermore, the assaults have become more furious, the hatred more implacable against the Roman Pontificate, publicly denounced as the enemy of Italy at all times, and designated by such opprobrious and contemptible names that decent language cannot repeat them without horror. What marvel if, in popular meetings and in public *comicia*, and in the press, they dart against the Pope the vilest outrages and the meanest injuries? What marvel if, after this, the hatred thus stirred up, the most horrible affronts against the pontifical dignity were committed in various cities of Italy? What marvel if they have planned the most ferocious designs—if they have threatened Us and Our peaceful See with the utmost violence?

"What is worse is that such manifestations of hatred and fury against Our most beneficial intentions for the world, and especially for Italy, have been made freely, without any effort being made to prevent them. Each one sees then how they respect the dignity, the security, the honor and person of the Sovereign Pontiff. What safeguard and what liberty! They say that the Pope is not hindered in the government of the Church. What does this signify?

"During the first ages the Popes governed the Church in the midst of persecutions, in prison and in exile. This proves the Divine origin of the Church, but not the liberty of the Pontiff. If the government of the Church is not made impossible, it is rendered much more difficult.

"Hence it is evidently impossible for the Pope to accommodate himself to this critical condition of affairs; and as his enemies, supported by human power, omit nothing to perpetuate this painful situation, it is his duty to renew against old and new attempts the most formal protestations, to demand for his safeguard and independence—the sacred rights of the Church and of the Holy Apostolic See. His confidence is in God. May the Most High deign to grant the ardent prayers of His Vicar upon earth!"

After reading such articles, known all over Europe, and even here, no one will be surprised, I am sure, at my present and urgent request to secure from our devoted Religious all the assistance they can offer to our Holy Father, now, more than ever, a hated target to the darts of the most hellish fury. For my part, it will be one of my first consolations to fulfil, without delay, all I have promised, and to renew the same again and again to the end of the year. How could I remain indifferent and call myself a Christian? Oh! that I may prove a Religious, were it only to be heard when I pray for our glorious Pontiff, so cruelly persecuted!

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior General.