

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 27

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., MARCH 14, 1890.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

As the Feast of our dear Protector, St. Joseph, draws near, I cannot remain silent in regard to one of the gravest questions of the day—a question that becomes daily more and more important, as every one who observes with a comprehensive mind the progress of the age must realize more forcibly than ever, not only in this New World, but all over the globe; I mean the vital question of Christian education. It is a question that should appear, especially to the members of teaching Orders, paramount among all the questions that now agitate civil society. This is the all-important cause in which I most earnestly entreat every one to invoke the intercession of our glorious Patron with greater fervor than ever, for it is now especially that we stand in need of manifest proofs of his paternal and powerful assistance. If my request is understood, I have no doubt of its happy results, namely, the filling up of our Novitiates with pious and noble souls thereby saved from the dangers of the world and enabled to do an immense good.

More than once already, I have called upon the teachers in our schools to exert themselves to procure such precious vocations from among the best scholars entrusted to their personal direction; but unfortunately, my appeal to their religious feeling and interests remained, as a rule, a dead letter; and yet they must be aware of the serious responsibilities of their sacred charge; for the training of the child is the forming of the man, of the citizen, of the future saint.

Now, with each day the desires of my appreciative and burning heart become more intensified, and my appeal must be more extensive and made to reach every soul in our dear family, without any exception or distinction in the ranks of the religious life. To-day, in presence of the growing importance of the great question so universally discussed, and affirmed in the highest ranks of the sacred hierarchy, and of the cruel unavoidable necessity of refusing so many urgent demands, we would be so happy to accept, if we had only a sufficient number of subjects; my great desire is to see St. Joseph so fervently invoked that he may give us this evident proof of his love and power—an increase of religious vocations. If I desire to live a few years longer, it is, above all, to see this precious favor bestowed upon us.

To secure this great blessing I prescribe no special novena, nor any addition to our monthly devotion to St. Joseph, but exhort each and all to renewed fervor in our constant aspirations and supplications from our inmost hearts to our glorious Protector that we may soon receive from him this clear and new proof, "that it has never been known that anyone besought in vain his protection and assistance." Let us all join in this pious and efficacious resolve, persuaded as we must feel, that where there is a will there is a way, and success is assured. Some may think and say that they are not employed in teaching, but spend their time in manual labor. Do we not daily invoke St. Joseph under the beautiful title of "simple Artisan?" Was he not the most perfect model of all ever called to take care of youth? Since the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the universal Church by Pius IX., of happy memory, and the unceasing and admirable efforts of his wonderful and saintly successor, Leo XIII., the devotion to our glorious Patron, the Foster-Father of Jesus, the representative of God upon earth, for thirty years, has spread so rapidly and gained such ground in the whole Church that all Christian souls are filled, as they never were before, with an increasing and boundless confidence in his fatherly protection. Should we be the last to rejoice in it? May God grant us to head the happy and promising movement for our very best interests! Let everyone pray fervently, incessantly, to the last hour of the month, at least, for the great blessing of which all see the necessity, an increase of promising new candidates for all our departments.

I have just returned from the chapel where, before our beautiful statue of St. Joseph, I especially enjoyed my holy hour of adoration. Of course, I spoke to him freely and at length on the subject of this appeal, as I had after the great fire in 1879, and concluded by begging of him to appoint every member of our Religious Family as a particular agent in the great question above mentioned. He seemed pleased with the request and ready to confirm it with a rich reward. Now, then, let it be clearly understood that all the children of the Holy Cross have been presented and accepted as faithful and devoted agents in a vital question for our Congregation. Every one is equally appointed, without any distinction, from the highest to the lowest. To pray with unfailing perseverance is the surest guarantee of success; but after praying day and night, we all must exert ourselves by every possible religious act of exterior zeal and devotedness, to realize the object in view, the importance of which is equally appreciated by all our devoted Religious. More than ever we need additional subjects everywhere.

Now the hour has come for all to show what they can do for the life of the Community, and the honor of St. Joseph. Undoubtedly some will find it easy to interest in their cause many kind friends, Rev. Pastors and influential acquaintances in the world; others will secure such treasures from their own household and be doubly blessed for it. God alone knows how grateful I will feel to any one who will procure even a single worthy vocation, at a time when there is such a palpable need of the same. I welcome them in advance heartily. Energy, prayer, earnestness and union will make a strength, a power which all will soon call, I trust, a surprising success. *Deo gratias!*

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