

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 28

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, October 14, 1890.

REV. FATHERS and BELOVED CHILDREN in JESUS CHRIST:

How shall I express my unbounded gratitude for your filial and admirable manifestations and expressions of esteem and love on this joyful return of the feast of my glorious Patron? I never felt so completely at a loss how to return proper acknowledgments for those cordial, touching evidences of devotedness, especially after the long, incessant and fervent prayers you have recently offered to God for my restoration to health, and to which, I sincerely believe, I owe my providential recovery. *Oratio fidei salvabit infirmum*. May God reward you, each and all, for these new proofs of your generous and noble religious hearts! For some time, of late, it has been to me a source of deep regret not to be able to answer any letter or even to receive any visit. But I prayed for all who felt interested in me.

When I say that I prayed for all who were praying for me, it was, I am sure, what you expected from me. What sweet mutual consolation, what real spiritual comfort for true friends in trials! Prayer is the wealth of all Christians through life; but how few seem to appreciate it in a world of endless distractions amid human pursuits! It is the privilege, the treasure of Religious, almost exclusively. It is to enjoy it, that they left the world; and every day they appreciate more and more sensibly the blessing bestowed upon their new life. What an edification, what a joy, to read on the countenance of a prayerful soul the peace derived from this happy disposition! What a promise for a community! Long live among us the spirit of prayer! With it, new blessings may be looked for every day in every House. Without it, nothing but disappointments and failures.

The spirit of prayer has always and everywhere been the chief feature of sanctity. Our Blessed Lord Himself gave us such examples and such positive precepts on this fundamental means of salvation that no serious mind can doubt it a moment. He prayed even for His murderers before expiring on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a lesson for us to pray, not only for our friends, but even for our adversaries! But what another serious teaching for us to see the same Divine Master refusing "to pray for the world!" What have we lost in quitting such doomed and deceitful paths? Oh! let us pray fervently that we may daily appreciate more and more worthily the gift of our vocation; for in it we find the invaluable means of continually practising and perfecting our mode of praying and living with God; moving under His eyes and securing His blessing on everything we do. Thus the spirit of prayer enables us, in the humblest spheres, as well as in highest offices, to realize the Divine declaration: *Ambula coram Me, et esto perfectus*.

But I cannot conclude these remarks on prayer without mentioning one of the chief objects for which generous souls love so much to pray, namely, the eternal rest of those we have lost, and who now from the excruciating flames of purgatory continually cry to us: "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends." This, indeed, is a touching sight for generous hearts. For my part, I may say, it is making upon me day by day an ever-growing impression.

Delighted as I feel with your new proofs of filial devotedness, I must be permitted to state here that one of the chief reasons of my delight is the assurance they give me that you will remember me when I am gone.

When I die, my first and greatest consolation will be to leave in our dear Congregation a true spirit of prayer, as it will be a real and most assured guarantee of continued and progressive success for the salvation of souls. We never had a more evident and sensible need of God's blessings and protection. In Europe, the persecution is becoming every day more Satanic. Only a few weeks ago, three of our novices were sent to the *caserne* for three years, and several of our schools were secularized. Oh! Let us pray against increasing evils. Let us all strive to perfect the fervor of our prayers—from the pulpit, from the class room and from every seat of labor obedience may assign.

Once more, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. May God grant you to become models of piety, daily progressing in the saving spirit of prayer!

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