

No. CV.

NOTRE DAME, OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY, Jan. 13, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

When I sent you my greetings of the 22d ult., I thought I had anticipated your best wishes of the season; but I failed then to anticipate the pleasure I was to realize from the expressions of sentiments contained in the voluminous New Year's correspondence I received since from both Continents. It seems now as though I had interviewed everyone at leisure, even those at a distance, and read in their letters the real feelings of their honest and loving hearts as plainly as I could see them on the happy countenances of those I met at home. To all, equally, I now feel obliged to offer my most sincere thanks, and to say to each: "This acknowledgment is for yourself personally." Such letters and addresses I keep as a rich and precious treasure to which I may return for new enjoyments. The heart has its needs as well as the body.

In the incessant anxieties, inseparable from my charge, and known only to God, the actual assurance of our truly sympathetic and perfect union of mind and heart *in charitate Christi*, goes a great way, as a soothing balm and a cheering boon, to keep up weak human nature against the crushing weight of sudden and multiplying trials, or ever-growing threats of even greater evils in a near future from which society at large can scarcely be saved but by a miracle. *La povera Francia!* said the saintly Pio Nono, let us pray for her; we could not forget her even for a day in our prayers. May the Blessed Mary, whose kingdom France always was—*Regnum Galliæ, Regnum Mariæ*,—save her from ruin! It is on this providential assistance our confidence rests for our temporal salvation as a Congregation. We know "that hope never confoundeth; that we must glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God; and that, even against hope, we must believe in hope—*spes contra spem*."

Such sentiments, unfortunately, are becoming too rare, even among Christians; but in a Community they are happily fostered by union and charity. There, and there only, lies our strength, our real power. The month of the Holy Infancy brings us in close contact with the Crib; Bethlehem is becoming daily more and more a delightful *rendezvous* to our faithful souls—a House of Bread in which every want of our eager and panting hearts is satisfied. Each time we approach it, in silence and in faith, we find in it the Divine Babe lying in the Manger, stretching out to us His loving little hands, soliciting our love and, as it were, saying, with an accent of a heavenly sweetness which none can resist: "Amen, I say unto you, unless you become as little children, you

shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He that shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the Face of My Father who is in heaven. It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. Let little children come unto Me, and forbid them not."

Here is what fastens us to the mysterious Crib. Oh, the admirable new doctrine! Oh, the lovely, the Divine Teacher! How could we express what we feel towards Him? For centuries, and even now in China and wherever the Gospel is unknown, children are treated as little brutes. But since the day God Himself appeared under the form of a Babe in the Manger in a stable, and made the solemn declaration that whoever receives one such little child in His name receives Him, the God-child, what a change has taken place! We wonder sometimes at the devoted zeal of saintly teachers for the training of their pupils: I wonder myself why every teacher who once knelt at the Crib of Bethlehem does not show the same unbounded devotedness.

Imagine, when kneeling enraptured before the Crib, to see the Blessed Mother offering you the Divine Child to hold in your arms for awhile, as she did to some favorite saints; the marvel would be, as it always was to my mind, how such a favor could be borne and not burst instantly the poor human heart. Or, again, fancy to hear that Divine Babe say to you, with an accent that cannot be described, while turning His eyes from you to the Blessed Virgin: "Here is thy Mother:" and then, looking to His Mother: "Here is thy Son." Could you hear it and live? With God's assistance you could, it seems to me. And yet, when I turn from the Crib to the Tabernacle and the Communion Table I understand, I realize that I am favored above all the privileged visitors of the Stable of Bethlehem—Bethlehem, indeed, was the beginning of the manifestation of God's love for man; the Last Supper in the Cenacle was the crowning of that infinite love of God for me. Once in their life the shepherds and the Magi beheld Him in the Manger; but I, every day, or every other day, I, poor sinner, receive Him, not in my arms, but in my own bosom, in my very heart, so truly that I may say with St. Paul: "I live: no, not I, but Christ lives in me!" O wonder! The very angels adore Him in my heart. How shall I thank Thee?

But what is the consequence, the real sentiment forced upon us by the contemplation of the mystery proposed to our faith since the 25th of December? Most undoubtedly that a grand, a noble

task has been assigned to us as educators of Christian youth; a task, the importance of which none of us can duly appreciate, and for which we shall never be able here below to return proper thanks to Heaven; for we have been singled out to take charge of a kingly race and train it to sit and reign forever on imperishable thrones. Such is our office; such our responsibilities. Can a teaching Congregation overrate the importance or the sublimity of its mission? Where shall we find words to thank Heaven for our beautiful vocation? . . . But where words fail, deeds must speak the gratitude of a generous and willing soul. Hitherto, I fear, I never proved, O God, that I appreciated my holy calling! But henceforth, with the help of Thy grace, O Lord, I mean to show that I value my vocation. I would not be ungrateful to a child for a look of love; nor even to an enemy for a favor; how could I repay my Father who is in heaven with open ingratitude?

But in a Community like ours, all are not actually teaching. What of this? In the human body, says St. Paul, there are many members, yet but one body: (See the whole of ch. 12, 1st Cor.)

In a clock, the hand pointing out the hour is alone seen; but that same hand could not even move, were it not for a number of inside wheels which no one can see, though they are all, even the smallest, equally indispensable to the intended effect. The same is true of every artistical mechanism of whatever magnitude. What appears outside would not be worth attention were it not for the unseen agency of the internal combination. Hence, no cause for regret or jealousy. Those of our members who spend the whole day in the class-room need their regular meals and many things else, without which they could not teach long or well. In our largest Houses Superiors might almost dispense with the presence of the Faculty two days in the week; could they dispense with our unpretending cooks as well? Could they even dispense them from rising earlier than the Community? And yet these devoted members are scarcely ever remembered but when they fail to suit our tastes and exigencies. My heart always went with the hardest workers, the most devoted.

When the Meditation-bell is heard in the morning we all instinctively hasten to come and kneel before the Tabernacle, around which the angels have been watching the whole night. What a delight for each of us, especially through this lovely month of the Holy Infancy, to bow before the Infant Saviour and offer Him the homage of our hearts—the first and only thing Himself cares for! We assure Him that we come with the shepherds and the Magi to adore Him, and take His orders for the day. It seems I hear a voice from the Manger: "*Lovest thou Me?*" and a reply: "*Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love Thee!*" And again, "*Feed My lambs;* for each of them I came to this stable; for them I will lay down

My life. Go, and take the same care as thou wouldst take of Me." O sweet Jesus! How can I ever thank thee? I go, my Lord; I leave Thee here to find Thee there. "Thou hast opened the eyes of a poor blind one," do Thou now "open my senses and my lips," that I may spend myself in full upon each of my precious little ones, for the sake of my sweet Jesus. Assist me—*adjuva me*—until I return and report to Thee.

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

No. CVI.

NOTRE DAME, QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

The Gospel we read at Mass to-day has always been to me a subject of serious reflections. How is it that when our Blessed Lord had spoken to the Apostles, so clearly, so emphatically, of the sufferings and death He was about to meet in Jerusalem, as the Sacred Text has it—"Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve and said to them: 'Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man; for He shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again.'"—how is it, I ask, that the next verse reads as follows: "And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them; and they understood not the things that were said"?

The Apostles often visited the temple; for three years they had been taught at the school of Jesus Himself; they could not but know that all the ceremonies all the sacrifices, all the figures typified only the Sacrifice of the Cross; and yet, "they understood none of these things." Oh, how weak and obscure is man's mind until the rays of Divine light shine upon it! The first woman, formed out of Adam's rib in sleep, was the figure of the Church to be drawn out of the side of Jesus on the Cross on which the Jews had crucified Him. Abraham, lifting up his hand to sacrifice his only Son to God, typified the Eternal Father delivering His own Son to the death of the Cross. Abel, slain by his brother Cain, represented Jesus Christ who was to be killed by the Jews, His brothers. The scape goat, sent out yearly from the city, afterwards to be killed, figured Jesus Christ, who was to suffer and to die outside of Jerusalem—*extra portam*. Joseph, sold by his own brothers, was another striking figure of the same. And yet, "they understood none of these things"!

Isaias had spoken of Him so clearly that he seemed to have written more as an Evangelist than a Prophet: "We have seen

Him, despised and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity. Surely, He had borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; but He was wounded for our iniquities; He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth." Had not David spoken of His hands and of His feet nailed to the Cross? "They have pierced My hands and feet: they have numbered all My bones. They have parted my garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots." The Apostles knew all these prophecies and yet, "They understood none of these things." From such wonderful ignorance let us learn, ourselves, how little we know, naturally, of the deep and elevated doctrine or science of the Cross. God alone can reveal its rich treasure and beauty.

The doctrine of the Cross is the most mysterious secret of Divine wisdom. It is a *scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles*, or the wise of this world. In our nature, all is sensual. By nature, our faculties, our senses will never rise above the flesh. The science of the Cross, which should be eminently our own, as Religious of the Holy Cross, is the science of the heart more properly than the mind. To understand the doctrine of the Cross we must love the Cross after the manner St. Paul loved it when he said: *Absit mihi gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi!* or, as St. Teresa loved it when she repeated her admirable motto: *Aut pati aut mori*—"to suffer or to die!"

What will it avail us even to admire the beauty of our glorious standard if we refuse to carry it generously, resolutely? What shall we gain from knowing and believing that Jesus Christ died for us upon the Cross, unless we are willing to suffer upon it with Him? Let us show by our *deeds*, especially during this holy season of penance and prayer, that we *believe* in our crucified Redeemer and *hope* in Him. If we actually pride in being the soldiers of Christ, let us exhibit no ungenerous delicacy under a Leader who has borne so much for each of us. Let us join our prayers, our tears our mortifications to His own. Let us bear with everything as He did, and unite, if possible, our blood with His Blood, our death even with His death, that we may share in His resurrection—a favor to be granted only to those who shall have been associated with Him in the pains and torments of His Passion.

Ah! let us say, from our inmost hearts, with the blind man of this same Gospel: *Domine ut videam*—"O Lord, that I may see!" Once He found us on the road, He opened our eyes and showed us the true, the beautiful light; and we followed Him, blessing Him. But how few are completely enlightened as St. Paul on the road of Damascus! Alas! many of us may yet say, in perfect truth: "O Lord, my eyes are shut by my passions, by the maxims of the world, by my personal inclinations and wicked desires. Do Thou

open my eyes that I may see; that I may realize the beauty of my vocation; that I may glorify Thee as Thy follower, in time and eternity. Do Thou make me a real lover of Thy Cross!

Much as we desire to see the number of the true lovers of the Cross increase among us, we have reason to fear that there are some in our ranks who move under our glorious banner, since more than *three years*—even in closer relationship with Jesus than the Apostles did—of whom it might be said, concerning the requirements of *Obedience* and *Poverty*, that “they understand none of these things,” although they have bound themselves by vows to observe them.

At the next general Retreat the Secretary shall present a strict account of the resources of each establishment. It is sad to see how little some Religious bring home yearly.

Journeys have become an abuse. They must be restricted, and allowed only when necessary.

The Rules for Lent are the same as last year.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

*Superior-General.*

No. CVII.

NOTRE DAME, April 20, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Once more, imperative necessity calls me to the shores of Europe, at least for a brief visit. Before leaving, I deem it my duty to recommend my journey to your fervent prayers. I will embark on the 22d, by the *City of Rome*, ten or twelve days later than I had intended, as no berth could be secured before that time. This will account for the disappointment I involuntarily inflict upon those I had promised to visit this spring; a disappointment, I am sure, more painful to myself than any one else. This unavoidable absence, however, will not be long, I trust; for I certainly intend, *D. v.*, to return before the end of May. One thing consoles me: I go again in the interests of our dear Congregation. Its trials in France are such as to call for some particular manifestation of sympathy, at any sacrifice, on my part. And as it takes but two days to go from Paris to Rome, I shall not fail to obtain our Holy Father's blessing upon us all.

As the date of my embarking at New York is the eve of a sad anniversary, you may well imagine with what a heavy heart I shall leave the shores of the New World. But I must confess that, during the past forty years, no event has more sensibly and materially increased my faith and confidence in the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph than the crushing and sudden calamity of the 23d of April, 1879. Humanly speaking, it should have proved a death-blow.

For a while Satan may have indulged in such anticipations; but St. Joseph was entreated to take the matter in his own hand, and he did. And very soon he showed to the arch-fiend that she whose blessed statue he had dared to drag down into the flames was ever able and ready to assert her perfect dominion over him, and thus give new evidence of the complete fulfilment of the prophecy of old, which proclaimed her own Immaculate Conception. (Gen., iii, 15.) And now, to his deep humiliation, the wicked one again realizes that, however artfully he may lie in wait for her heel, she will infallibly crush his head. Every one can see here a new proof of this; and, indeed, such is the declaration on the lips of every visitor when comparing the New Notre Dame with the Old.

In feeble acknowledgment of all that we owe to the glorious Queen of our dear home here, and to her beloved Spouse, St. Joseph, —the Patron of our family and of our grounds, lake, river, and county—I succeeded, two years ago, in affiliating the whole Congregation of the Holy Cross to the Confraternity of the Holy Family, which has been duly approved by the Holy See. The new and beautiful chapel of the Sisters here has been dedicated, for the same reason, to the Holy Family. On my return from Rome I shall make known the new Indulgences and special encouragements bestowed upon this Confraternity by our Holy Father; meanwhile, I earnestly beg of every member of the Holy Cross who has not yet joined it, not to fail to be enrolled on the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, 30th inst., and thereby secure the Plenary Indulgence offered to all on the day of admission, with the usual conditions. The object of this Holy Confraternity is to honor the Holy Family, that all its members may study and imitate the life of that earthly Trinity, and secure for themselves the protection of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Evidently, it is adapted to none better than ourselves; in every way, it should be our *own* Confraternity.

Need I say, while parting with you for a time, that my heart remains with you all? I could not forget, even for a moment, a single member of a family which God Himself blesses so abundantly every day. My unceasing prayer will be to see you again as soon as I may, and to find you, if possible, even more attached and more devoted to the interests of our dear Congregation than I am myself. *Pax vobis*—"Peace be with you!"

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

No. CVIII.

NOTRE DAME, IND., June 1, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Your welcoming congratulations on my speedy and joyous re-

turn to our dear home, intensify, almost to a state of suffering, the desire or, rather, the real want of my heart to see you all and each one in person, as soon as your schools shall have closed. Pray, then, do not delay one day unnecessarily your departure; come home without stopping anywhere on the road; but, like true Religious, come after properly fixing everything in your respective Houses. If possible, try in due time to secure reduced rates.

True Religious always return to their headquarters with something worth bringing home, viz., the general esteem of those they had been sent to; some precious vocations; some new boarders, etc. Devoted Religious do not forget the interests of their Order.

For some, this last month, consecrated as it is to the Sacred Heart, may prove a most consoling crowning of their long and earnest efforts; and if nothing else, they will leave behind them an edifying record—the undying memory of their virtues and merits. But how should a school be closed? If you cannot make them successful, do not attempt any public closing exercises. Unless children can be trained up to such a degree of perfection as to deserve admiration by their *standing*, their *bowing*, their manner of speaking, their motions and gestures, they will prove a mortification to their parents and a disgrace to the school. Be not deceived: the closing of a school is a trying occasion! Then and there you will be *judged*. It is not for me, but for yourselves, to foresee the verdict of the public. At all events, everything must go on in perfect order.

The latest recommendations I bring from the Eternal City are to suffer among us no nominal Religious, but rather to get rid of such if we have any, and that, too, without leaving it in their power to deceive others. Which means, of course, no dispensation or release from vows, but *dismissal for cause*. Alas! we may be obliged in a short time to dismiss one or two from our ranks, unless they seriously amend and prove materially different from what they now appear to be. I beg in their behalf the earnest and sincere prayers of the Religious family entrusted to my care, as I do also for a few dear souls who have more than merited well of the Community, and who are now lying in the agonies of death. Oh! let us all pray for them if we ourselves wish to receive the same charitable help when we need it. This is the great boon in a Community; where else can it be found nowadays?

Before you start for home, I request you to send to the general quarters your annual statistics, covering the entire scholastic year, up to the 15th inst., duly signed by the members of the local administration; and all mailed on the same day (June 15th). The report for the remainder of the month shall be added on your arrival. They shall receive prompt and careful examination; and if deficient in anything, they shall be returned at once, before you



leave, for revision, correction, greater completeness or accuracy, etc. All accounts must be, as nearly as possible, perfect and worthy of every confidence.

This year, the fortieth anniversary of our arrival at Notre Dame, we must judge of every foundation we have made. As a rule, we shall find out that all of them have succeeded or failed according to the merit of the heads that presided over their destinies. When I came, in 1841, with my six beloved Brothers in the steerage, we expended very little money. In 1846, when I returned with seventeen devoted members, in the steerage as before, and in the emigrant cars from New York, we again spent but little, and felt happy. Devotedness rejoices in saving money. Blessed are those who are imbued with the spirit of poverty!

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

No. CIX.

NOTRE DAME, Oct. 17, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

The above date may seem late to offer you my grateful acknowledgments, when so many honest and devoted hearts have a right to be thanked for the touching expression of their affectionate sentiments. Indeed, for five or six days I have felt, perhaps more keenly than ever before, the urgency of returning something like adequate thanks for such a tribute of filial utterances of love and devotedness; but I could not begin my pleasing though arduous task until I had opened and read, to the last, the huge mass of letters which every mail has brought me. With attention and pleasure I perused every line of the voluminous correspondence; but when I read, a moment ago, that one of those I love most tenderly had received from me but one answer in six years, I felt ashamed. I could not delay another moment thanking, from my inmost heart, not every one individually—that would take a month—but all *in globo*, and humbly, but earnestly, begging of God to bless all my pious and sincere well-wishers according to the depth and fervor of their prayers for my personal happiness.

I have no recollection of such a bountiful harvest of blessings invoked upon me, and, therefore, I never felt, as I do to-day, the weight of the obligations under which it places me to the Congregation of the Holy Cross and its many friends in both hemispheres.

It is true, the very word "harvest" brings home to me the thought of the autumn of my life; but I turn it into a consoling expectation of the rich and abundant fruits and crops for which a faithful husbandman looks from the day he begins to sow. I confess (I should be the last to deny it) that our good God has

blessed me, through the mediation of His Holy Mother and St. Joseph, far beyond what, forty years ago, I could have anticipated. But the merit of our success I cheerfully ascribe to your generous and unfaltering devotedness. What could I have done, were I not supported by your heroic good will, which has ever sustained me amid trials and sufferings? May God, in His infinite mercy, be mindful of the noble soldiers of the Cross who have already fallen on the glorious battle-field; and may He bless especially and above all the dear veterans whose fidelity entitles them to my esteem and gratitude in proportion to the length and importance of their services! Long life to our first pioneers! Time passes swiftly away; very soon every one will share, I trust, in this precious blessing.

It is not in my power to reply individually to more than eight hundred well-wishers who have done me the honor and pleasure to express, in their admirable style, their truly honorable sentiments of affection and respect; and yet I feel so grateful to each and to all that I can scarcely rest in peace until they know that their congratulations, either in person, or in writings or presents, have been received with an appreciative heart.

The celebration of St. Edward's Feast, here and at St. Mary's, calls for my unbounded thanks to all who took part in it.—Only one thing deprives me of the intended honor and gratification, and that is, the consciousness of not deserving it. We are blessed, now more than ever before, thanks to your general devotedness and religious spirit. But, at the same time, and above all, let us not forget to pray for *la povera Francia!*

Before closing this address of thanks, as I am growing old, I must be permitted to disburden my heart of a load, daily becoming heavier, and now well-nigh unendurable, owing to recent remarks of many of our best friends. They had expected to see the Dome, and in its place they saw but a big smoking chimney. They were pained; but, more than any of them, I am grieved. I wish you all to know that my greatest desire is to see our Blessed Mother's statue on its fitting pedestal—the magnificent Dome—which alone will justly crown her monument, and delight the Christian soul that feels an interest in the Institution, and in the cause of its glorious Queen. It seems to me that our Blessed Mother will bless everyone who will take a hand in placing her on her glorious throne. "She shall exalt thee; she shall glorify thee; she shall give to thy head increase of graces, and protect thee with a noble crown." (Prov., iv, 8-9.) Hence my desire to extend this precious privilege even to the poorest children of good will. All our schools must share in this honor: the contribution, were it only one cent, will entitle every scholar to the inscription of his or her name on the list of the "Loving Children of Mary," now to be opened in all our establishments, and to be forwarded to me during this month of the Angels.

These lists shall be carefully preserved, in the order of their respective amounts, and will remain a lasting monument of the devotedness of our beloved pupils throughout a land dedicated to the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin. Since writing the above I feel relieved and even rejoiced. The Dome will rise in its majestic splendor, 195 feet from the ground, conspicuous and visible far and wide through the day, and changing the darkness of night into bright light by means of its electric crown of twelve brilliant stars.

Such is the monument we intend raising to the Mother of God—a monument I should like to call mine, were it not to be the monument of every donor, no matter how small the gift. It will cost \$25,000. It must be strong enough to resist any storm; besides; *it shall be gill*, like the Dome of the *Invalides* in Paris. To meet the above expense, I have already received two donations—one of \$1,000 and another of \$10. The rest will come in due season. Our Holy Mother, resting upon this monumental Dome, will make it, I trust, a *life-insurance* for every loving soul who shall have invested however little in its erection. Thus shall be verified once more the Divine declaration: "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.*" Indeed, she will; and with our eyes, surely she will draw all our hearts. On Assumption Day she was carried to heaven on the wings of a legion of angels. Here, on her own lovely domain, she will be lifted up on high, chiefly by the loving hands of beautiful little, innocent children, whose affection for their dear mothers at home will be increased each time they will look up to see their heavenly Mother raised to draw all hearts from the earth.

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

No. CX.

NOTRE DAME, IND., Nov. 9, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Before making any remark upon the manner in which the regular monthly Bulletins are returned I waited until I could compare them with each other. The same difference is noticeable this month as in October. While I congratulate myself on the happy and important results of this regular monthly communication between all our Religious and myself (excepting a few, who are likely too wise or too great to submit to such a childish measure, although I have met aged, saintly Sulpicians sending scrupulously to their Superior the same report of themselves every month), I deem it advisable to point out a way for all to do it alike:

1st. All Bulletins from the same house should be mailed in one envelope, instead of using a half dozen or more.

2d. But little writing is required; simply *yes*, or *no*; or a few figures, at the end of each printed question, on the same line.

3d. Every Bulletin must be signed.

4th. Black ink should be used.

5th. If sealed, it should be done so as to cause no tearing before anything can be read.

Some of our Establishments paid very little attention to my Circular of the 17th ult.; not because they are too poor, for the poorest have cheerfully and admirably complied with my modest request. But let it pass; the loss is theirs more than mine. The Dome was intended to be the work of every child of our schools, were it only through a subscription of one cent. In associating our dear school-children in this meritorious task—which, when once completed, as Sig. Gregori has lately designed it, will certainly be the wonder of the country,—my object was to divide among them a singular honor, one of which they might well feel proud all their lives.

But I am prepared for occasional disappointments, *not discouragements*. If our Blessed Lord intends this honor for His Holy Mother, a few insignificant failures will not prevent it. Had the Holy Father waited for the approbation and help of all Catholics when contemplating the erection of the Dome of St. Peter's, the Dome—ever since the admiration of the world—would be yet a scheme, an idea, instead of an accomplished fact. On the whole, I gain more than I lose. This was a test: a few dollars more or less are nothing compared to the knowledge acquired of the real spirit of each House.

Were I to ask from each Establishment an effort to obtain half a dozen subscribers to *The Ave Maria* and *Scholastic*—the two weekly papers in which all our Religious should evidently take the liveliest interest, even for premiums,—I know full well that I would meet with the same zeal and success in some Houses, and the same total indifference in others. If stars differ from each other above, it should not be surprising to find a difference among Religious on earth. In any case, we may at least know the respective worth of every member of our Family.

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

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No. CXI.

FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Dec. 27, 1882.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

The approach of a new year affords a fresh opportunity of again assuring you of my best wishes for your greatest happiness. Time passes like a dream; eternity alone should fix our attention.

Illusions are common everywhere, especially in our age of levity and of thoughtless rush towards enjoyments of nature. Such has always been the real status of the world; never more so, however, than at this hour. But, what may appear somewhat surprising, the same fatal evil is found even in the Religious life. Here, indeed, it is abnormal; for communities should be, first of all, a safe guarantee against the illusions of the world. For why did we leave the world to retire into a Community? Chiefly because we had seen, in the light of the Gospel, the vanity of the illusions of the world. To be consistent with ourselves, should we not have tried to keep both our minds and our hearts forever proof against such well-known and dangerous temptations?

The answer is obvious; but does it rest on real and undeniable facts? Before an impartial jury, even of our best associates who know us well, what would be the verdict? But if we feel apprehensive, and, for reasons of our own, rather decline any such human judgments, there is a Court where we shall have, some day, to appear, each and all—a Tribunal whose decisions are irrevocable as well as infallible; would it not be a wholesome thought, in our next monthly retreat, to which the close of the year naturally adds such an especial importance, to transport ourselves seriously in spirit before that Supreme Judge whose scrutiny we shall have to stand, perhaps much sooner than we expect? If the fear of God's judgments—so different from man's views—has caused saints, after years of a solitary and most penitential life, to tremble, where can we place our rest and confidence?

It is not without reason or cause I entertain you to-day on such a subject. Rumors have reached me of late that I can scarcely believe; but they will justify me in trying to caution innocent souls against deception. From apostates we may look for anything; but from Religious, living members of a Community, we are not prepared to hear *that vows can be easily dispensed with*. St. Liguori thought differently, and he was not alone.

What am I going to say I have first applied to myself, as I know I shall have my account to render, probably sooner than any of you; an account, the very thought of which makes me shudder. I see myself, I see each one of you, standing alone, to be judged for an eternity! . . . Oh, the awful moment! No help will you be to me, no more than I can be to you. Personal merit alone will decide our lot forever. Oh! let me offer you now an acceptable, a saving aid. To-day it is time yet; to-morrow may be too late: *Hodie, si vocem Domini audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra! The Judgment sat and the Books were opened.* (Dan., vii, 10.) *The Lord is the God of Judgment.* (Isaias, xxx, 18.) *Cui multum datum est, multum quæretur ab eo.* (St. Luke, xii, 48.) Who has received more than the Religious?

Suppose, then, you who read this, represent yourself standing alone before God's Judgment-seat, trembling with apprehension; illusions are gone; Divine light is shining and revealing all in stern truth and reality. Oh, my God! who will stand it and live?

First of all, as a Religious, you must answer your Judge on your vows. They bound you before God, to whom you made them; their observance alone would have secured you the possession of heaven. You vowed holy obedience. Has your life since been one of obedience—continual, universal, and devoted obedience? edifying, exemplary for all? or, have you not rather chosen to do your own will?—that *will* you had solemnly renounced and sacrificed? Christ's obedience was unto death; even to the death of the Cross. Where is your resemblance to your Model? Oh, what a sad series of dreadful illusions!

You had also vowed poverty. Here, again, Christ had taught you by example, from His first entrance into the world to His last breath on Calvary; you vowed it, and the angels recorded it in the Book of Life. To the saints the same vow was a prolific source of merits. They loved it; they delighted in its strictest observance; they never disposed of anything; they would not call a *pin* their property. To them, privations, want of comfort, destitution, were loved and blessed opportunities. But, alas! what a dreadful contrast! You have made the same precious vow, and this is nearly all! No: for, by its daily disregard and incessant violations it has multiplied your sins instead of increasing your merit. Regularly professed, you have lived for ease and enjoyments, and found your rest only in the want of nothing! So little satisfies modest desires; scarcely did you cover your expenses, and still you complained as though you had vowed holy poverty on condition never to be left in any need. Worse again! Oh, how terribly you deceived yourself!

As to the third and beautiful vow of purity, the real gem of the religious life, we delight in the hope of being found true and spotless before God as before men, in keeping our sacred and angelical engagements. But when we look and see the immense ground it covers for merit and offence: acts and words, thoughts, intentions and desires, who will stand it? Alas! even the senses, the faculties given us to bring grace to the soul, have brought Satan to defile its purity! Ah! to preserve to the end the freshness of the lily of a virginal heart let us pray to the Virgin of virgins every day of our life; for we must all know that we carry, in frail hands, a most precious vase of which a casual stumble may cause an irreparable loss, or even a vitiated breath forever destroy the heavenly fragrance and perfume.

These are only a few points among the many we shall have to answer, and yet they leave scarcely a doubt that we hitherto lived

too often in illusions and not enough in reality. Good God! I see now the danger of my position. Alas! how blind I must have been! Seeking human praises; caring little to be a true Religious; satisfied with appearing good; finding fault with all, except myself; taking counsel only of myself; freely disposing of the Congregation's funds; wasting and wasting without concern for debts, scandal or ruin! With Thy holy grace, I will begin a new life; I will be a Religious, not only in name, but in all earnestness. Alas! I may have caused, by my irreligious conduct, the eternal loss of some souls! I may have ruined, by my total want of religious spirit and observance of the Rules, not only my companions, but even the House I should have saved; my name should have been one of edification, esteem, and blessing. What is it to those who know me best? Shall I carry to my grave nothing but the burden of my infidelities? My Lord and my God! I thank Thee for Thy long and merciful patience. This very moment, with Thy divine grace, I begin a new life. I will be a Religious, cost what it may! Grant me some days; I will repair the past; I will secure my eternity. May God bless this saving resolve!

Our dear associates in France continue in the same critical situation. See again Circular No. XCV.

□ Have you forgotten to look for Postulants?

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

No. CXII.

(To Superiors.)

NOTRE DAME, IND., January 15, 1883.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

My last Circular has brought me more grateful acknowledgments than any other I have issued for fifteen years. This fact alone shows me that our best Religious realize that, in proportion as society at large becomes daily more thoughtless and faithless, serious minds see and feel more keenly the necessity of seeking a proper and counterpoising remedy in the grave and infallible teachings of our holy Faith. We must all appear, some of us very soon, before God, to be judged according to our deeds and merits, and to receive a sentence for an eternity! This is awful for all; but how much more so for those who govern! Here is the consideration that overpowers me—a consideration which should of itself terrify every sensible soul charged with any responsibility; for, indeed, "He will examine your works, and search your thoughts. Horribly and speedily will He appear to you; for a most severe judgment shall be for them who preside." (Wisdom, vi, 6.) As the hour of my own dreadful judgment and irrevocable