

last moment—from Bethlehem to Calvary. Ever since, He has given us occasionally admirable copies of the Divine Original. Even in our midst we find every day the same precious examples of humble obedience, reminding us of the vow which is the basis of a religious life. May we all profit by such telling counsels, and become, one and all, living models of obedience.

I wish an additional importance may attach to this recommendation of obedience, as it may be the last New Year's Circular you receive from me. Age and infirmity, these last three months, have been telling me that the end cannot be far distant. At best, we have but a short time to live, as we shall realize again, in a few hours, in accompanying our excellent Brother Matthias to his resting-place. I long for peace and solitude where I may pray the more for us all. A successor more active and more exemplary would implant a new life in all devoted hearts. It would be much better for me to enjoy a little rest, to prepare myself for my eternity, and for the Congregation to be directed by an able and comprehensive head, a strong arm and a generous heart. Have I not borne long enough already the weight of such ever-growing responsibilities?

Here, however, I express an honest, a heartfelt desire, and not an intention to carry it out at any cost of the peace and interests of the Congregation; as long as I can work, *non recuso laborem*. But the sooner I may be relieved from my actual and oppressive responsibilities, the better, infinitely, for all.

The *triennial* report I am preparing for the Holy See will show a considerable increase in Religious and pupils.

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

P. S.—Is it not somewhat strange that among the members of the same Religious family—working alike for the same end—the authorized recommendation of a means sure to bring blessings and success would be so thankfully and readily received by some, and scarcely noticed by others? Beware! the usher may be very insignificant; but the one he introduces, and who meets a refusal, may resent it; especially when she presents herself to be introduced to her own beloved and innocent children. Let no vain excuses be resorted to. They all vanish away before the simple motto: “Where there is a will there is a way!”

E. S.

No. CXIX.

NOTRE DAME, IND., Jan. 5, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Since I addressed you last, on the 22d ult., I received so many

touching letters, so many requests, with so many promises of fervent prayers, that I can scarcely postpone any longer my unfeigned acknowledgments of your filial devotedness. I am now completely restored to health and vigor—a blessing I honestly believe I owe to your sincere and pious pleadings at the Crib of the Infant Saviour. Relying upon the continuation of the same, I come to assure you that, with God's help, I am now fully determined to fight with you the good fight to the end. May God and His Holy Mother bless us, each and all, more abundantly than ever! May this new year prove to me and to every Religious of the Holy Cross a rich mine of merits, a due and early preparation for our last! Let all remember their promise to pray more fervently than ever for

Yours devotedly,

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior-General.

No. CXX.

NOTRE DAME, IND., Jan. 9, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Yesterday's mail brought us the dreadful account of the terrible calamity of Saturday night at Belleville, Ill., when, in a single hour, the Convent of the Immaculate Conception—a flourishing boarding school conducted by the excellent Sisters of Notre Dame (of Milwaukee)—was reduced to ashes, with a loss of twenty-seven lives—five Sisters, among whom was the Superior herself, and twenty-two young ladies, from fourteen to eighteen years of age!

Who could pause unmoved before this appalling catastrophe, which has cast such an unprecedented gloom over the land, and so cruelly snatched so many precious lives? Oh! let us hasten to pray most fervently for those twenty-seven innocent victims. Who could feel more deeply this lamentable accident than we ourselves, so lately tried in the same fiery crucible? Once more, I most earnestly commend their dear souls and their desolated families to your Holy Masses and Communions.

Such a new warning—and the twelve other fires reported from various parts in the same night—should not pass unheeded, but should leave among us a lasting impression by which we should be continually and forcibly reminded, especially during these dangerous months of winter, of what may happen any moment, to any one of us, unless we move in constant fear which, more than anything else—after prayer—is the mother of safety to our best interests and our very lives. Unless you watch and pray, you may again see another terrifying blaze over your own heads, ruining all around you, and burying yourselves in a blazing grave. "*Vigilate et orate*"

impresses the same saving fear upon every youthful mind and heart around you.

Grave and common dangers, more than anything else, draw closer everywhere the links of real affection and devotedness. Let us, then, pray more fervently than ever for each other's happiness and preservation from all accidents and misfortunes. Before closing these timely remarks and counsels, I feel once more obliged to thank our dear family of the Holy Cross for the incessant flow of filial outpourings of attachment which I did not even suspect when I wrote the Circular of the 22d of December. Had I ever needed a vote of confidence, I certainly have it to my full satisfaction. If the fear of a change has pained your loving hearts, beyond all my anticipations, let the assurance which the expression of it has naturally drawn from me, to fight with you the good fight to the end, prove a new encouragement to us all, and a new source of devotedness to our noble and sacred cause. Now, then, more than ever before, let us form a family of devoted, exemplary children, ready to sacrifice the world to God, nature to faith, time to eternity; and for this let all live up to the Rules.

Yours devotedly,

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior-General.

P. S.—Since the above lines were written, the startling newt comes to us of a threatened disaster in our very midst! Last night the Novitiate narrowly escaped being destroyed by fire. Thank God, Our Lady and St. Joseph for their protection! Again, I say, watch more carefully and pray more fervently than ever before.

The privilege offered to the children of our own schools, to obtain, at half price, the precious Journal of our Blessed Mother, is hereby extended to the 15th of Feb., as many have written that they did not receive my former Circular in time to do much canvassing. Let all exert themselves to the utmost to obtain as many new readers for the *Ave Maria* as possible. I want this plan to have a fair trial among ourselves before having it proposed (as we are thinking of doing) to schools in general. If among our own members, who owe so much to the Blessed Virgin, there is lack of zeal in her service, we shall have scant hope of seeing it manifested elsewhere. Let it be well understood that the proposal is *exclusively for the children*.
E. S.

No. CXXI.

NOTRE DAME, IND., February 16, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Among the many deaths of which we have lately learned, none

has affected us more sensibly than that of our venerated friend, the Rev. F. Ramière, S. J., the pious founder of the Apostleship of Prayer—an Association we were the first to introduce, at his request, in this country, as the first volumes of *The Ave Maria* clearly and amply show. Ever since we have naturally taken an especial interest in the wonderful progress and propagation of this glorious Apostleship of Prayer. Were it a human work, we might apprehend for it something of a death-blow in the regrettable and almost sudden demise of its saintly founder; but, as he said himself, on the eve of his death, the Apostleship of Prayer was not his work, but rather the work of the Heart of Jesus; and, therefore, far from anticipating that his removal would paralyze its progress, he confidently announced that it would soon afterwards assume the development God intended when he started it.

The Apostleship of Prayer! We still remember the delight with which we introduced it in the pages of the Messenger of Mary to our pious and fervent readers; and our unbounded admiration of the Divine work has never diminished a moment since it was brought to our attention. Indeed, we were blessed in this act of charity: we read first and then published our translation; and if anything has convinced us of the necessity of prayer in our own work here, and shown us the beauties of a real spirit of prayer; it is the publication of that marvellous Apostleship. What a privilege to be thus invested with the sovereign power of prayer!

Year after year our faith in prayer has increased; and after a personal and close observation of men and things for more than forty-six years, we feel and realize that God has blessed among ourselves nothing but what has by prayer been made His own work. What a lesson for us all on the eve of the holy season of Lent, which is eminently the season of prayer! Only a few days ago, we met at the foot of the altar to commemorate the Orison or Prayer of our Lord. A whole day was thus given us to attentively behold and contemplate our Divine Model and Master in the Garden of Gethsemany, prostrate upon the ground, and praying for each one of us. It was on the eve of His Passion. "His disciples also followed Him, and when He came to the place, He said to them: *Pray, lest ye enter into temptation*; and He was withdrawn away from them a stone's-cast; and kneeling down, He prayed, saying: *Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done*. And there appeared to Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed the longer; and His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground, and when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and He said to them: *Why sleep you? Arise; pray, lest you enter into temptation*.

From the moment our Blessed Lord came down into the Immaculate bosom of His Virgin Mother to His last breath on the Cross His whole life on earth was, above all, an incessant prayer; not only for His devoted disciples, but even for His cruel murderers—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Not satisfied to teach us by word and example the importance of prayer, He has left us a formula—the “Lord’s Prayer”—with a special injunction to repeat it after Him and with Him, and the following solemn promise: *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name; ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* Here you have plainly revealed the cause of the boundless and unspeakable joy of saintly souls whose loving prayers are the admiration of the angels in heaven, while they are a stinging reproach and a plain condemnation of all who neglect to pray. Do they bring you praise or blame?

Let us now reveal to you a secret which to many will scarcely sound as a revelation, namely, that since our arrival here all the successes we have obtained are due to prayer. Not a few were already well aware of it; but we all want to know it, as an undeniable fact. To this declaration we shall add another, viz.: that whoever among our beloved Religious wishes to see a House of the Community, or an office or an obedience, an employment, an undertaking, blessed, prayer will be the first, the indispensable means to secure success. We believe in no other, nor do we look for any such result as *success* among us without prayer. Our convictions on this important subject may be stronger to-day than ever before, fortified as they are by a long and close observation of men and things, as stated above. But they are not by any means new. As a proof of it, we might refer to what we published in the first numbers of *The Ave Maria*: among many other lines written on this beautiful subject we may quote the following (Vol. II, p. 94):

“Is it not, then, something monstrous to find men who do not pray? A man who does not pray is an unfaithful priest, who refuses to God a worship which he ought to pay Him, not only in his own name, but also in the name of all sentient and inanimate beings, which are incapable of offering to God an intelligent prayer full of love.

“The Arabs of Algeria, at the sight of the French unbelievers, used to say: ‘They are detestable men;’ they are injurious, because they do not pray.”

“And, in truth, a man who does not pray is a man deprived of all the good which can be obtained only by prayer; he is weak and infirm, the miserable dupe of all errors, the unhappy victim—the vile slave of all passions; and therefore he is a man without faith and without morals, capable of committing every crime and every excess. Prayer is not only a want, it is a comfort. If God had not commanded us to pray, we should ask of Him a favor—the grace of praying to Him. Prayer is the fusion of the heart of man into the Heart of God; it is the consolation of exile, the delight of hope, the sigh of love, the beginning of celestial conversation, the token of eternal bliss.

“Happy is he who understands this important doctrine! Happy he who

makes prayer his study and his delight! A man who prays is a man who will be saved; a man who prays not is a man who will be lost. True science, true philosophy consists in knowing how to pray. To pray well is to live well; and to live well is to be happy both in time and eternity.

"You who read these hurried lines, pray for yourselves, and pray also for him who has written them."

As we grow in age, we grow in love for prayer. Hence our lively sense of gratitude towards those loving hearts whose daily prayers have been recently poured forth, not only for general but even personal blessings—as the speedy recovery of our dear Rev. Father Granger and ourself from our late accidents prove. Oh! let us pray more than ever, and spread around us, by example and teaching, by constant and increasing efforts, the wholesome, the saving spirit of prayer. Who do you suppose are the most valuable members in our little Religious family? Undoubtedly, those who pray best. Then, each one may say, why not I? Many others, in the eyes of the world, may stand more precious; but before the Supreme Judge prayer may bring me to the front. Is this a dream? Prayer may most certainly make it a reality. Oh! God of mercy, I desire nothing else! Hitherto, I see, I have lived a burden to others; but henceforth *I will pray!* Bless my office; bless my every act and every step; direct my heart upwards. May the future repair the past! To my last breath may my soul ever aspire after Thee! I will pray, indeed, for our dear Congregation!

Our great consolation here is the Perpetual Adoration in our midst, and the perpetual daily Mass for our own Religious and benefactors. Upon these two widespreading wings may we not, each and all, daily rise above the dense and thick fogs of this dreary land of exile? When we die, this double insurance against forgetfulness will prove to be a rich investment, a precious solace—aye, a source of joy for our last hours, but especially for those whose life is moulded after the Divine precept—always to pray and never to faint.

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

No. CXXII.

NOTRE DAME, IND., FEAST OF THE VISITATION, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Oh! the beautiful Feast! From my earliest infancy, the lovely Feast of the Visitation has ever made the deepest impression upon me—an impression I never could express in words. No mystery of our holy Faith has filled my mind and my heart with greater admiration and veneration for our Blessed Mother. Her glorious *Mag-*

nificat affects me as no other portion of the Gospel ever did.

This year, in particular, the Blessed Virgin has given so many manifest marks of her love for our little Religious family, wherever it exists, and so abundantly blessed her devoted children in every clime, that, more than ever before, I feel at a loss how to express my gratitude. Our colleges and schools have closed with unprecedented success and general satisfaction. As a rule, our students have gone home better pleased than ever. Thanks to our Blessed Mother's protection, public opinion is more than ever setting in our favor. Here, in particular, with renewed exertions and prayer, we may confidently hope to see next year 500 boarders. Our parishes also have sensibly increased. At South Bend, where I found only 7 Catholic families in 1842, we have now over 5,000 Catholics and 4 churches.

Our Annual Retreat, I trust, will afford every one of us an opportunity, dear to all, to show their gratefulness to our glorious Queen. It will open here on the 2d prox., and on the 9th at St. Mary's, immediately followed by the Chapter. Meanwhile, classes will be strictly attended to in all the principal Houses, every forenoon until the Retreat. Let no one be scandalized at the number of those who have obtained leave of absence this vacation; they all pledged their word to prove on their return that it would be to the benefit of the Congregation. As a consequence, however, of the unavoidable absence of some of our principal men here, we have now to postpone to another year the solemnity of the crowning of the Statue, which had been announced for the 14th of Sept.

Much as I would personally like to visit every one of our Establishments and all our beloved Religious, I find it impossible; and I beg to offer to each and to all a consolation that will more than repay for our common little sacrifice, namely, to humbly and fervently beg of our Holy Mother to come and visit all our Houses as she did that of St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth. Oh! during these days of peace and rest, let everyone say daily, sincerely, earnestly, lovingly and fervently: "Do thou arise, my beloved Mother, and hasten to come and visit me! Let me look upon thy precious face, my dove, my love! Let thy voice sound into my ear! For thy voice is sweet indeed, and thy face is all beauty to me." To obtain our request, let us often go and kneel down before her beautiful altar and pray, that she may see that we are her children. Oh, how richly she will return every one of our visits! Our needs are simply immense; but, knowing, as we do, that she is not only able but even anxious to supply all our wants, why not go to visit her again and again, with boundless confidence, with loving and grateful hearts? Oh, beloved Mother! should we even forget to visit thee, forget not to visit us!

Visits from above are not always of gladness and of joy, but much oftener of pain and sorrow; we must be prepared to receive them all with faith and merit. A child never turns more quickly to his mother than when in danger or in suffering. When does she receive and press him to her loving heart more tenderly than in his fright and pain? That she is the best of mothers is well known to us all. May, then, our souls be with her in continual communication to the end; and when the last visit of Divine Providence shall come upon us she will assist us and soothe our pains as no human mother could ever do. Oh! the precious visit we expect from her at that last solemn moment!

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

No. CXXIII.

NOTRE DAME, IND.,

EVE OF THE HOLY PURITY OF THE B. V. M., 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

I never felt more absolutely at a loss how to thank you all somewhat adequately for the numerous and touching testimonies of affectionate devotedness poured upon me this week, at home and from all directions far and near, on the occasion of my glorious Patron's Feast. Would to God that I had deserved one half of your thanks and praises! No other occasion brings to my sensitive heart a deeper sense of my unworthiness. Above all, I wish to do justice, and credit everyone with his own merit. How, then, could I feel justified in accepting your eulogies for blessings and successes due to your own prayers, devotedness, and long self-sacrifices? Fortunately, crediting others with the whole merit, in which we may have a share, is no loss to anyone of you; for the day is coming when God Himself will render full justice to every one according to his own deeds.

Much as I desire to know and fully appreciate the personal merits of all our worthy Religious, delighted as I feel to discover in any one of them new treasures of heart and mind, my sentiments of increasing esteem and love, while exhibiting my inability to reward what touches me so keenly, raise my thoughts and aspirations to God, who alone can reward what I can only admire. Our dear Religious family never appeared more worthy of our love and confidence. Persecuted in the Old World, it is blessed in the New, even above our expectations; with very few exceptions, our Houses are filled as they never were before, notwithstanding the hard times we pass through. Let us show our gratitude to Heaven, and especially to our Blessed Mother, during this beauti-

ful month consecrated to the holy Rosary, by a daily increase in fervor and in devotedness to duty. The Blessed Virgin has done so much for us that no child of the Holy Cross should fail to thank her, if not as she deserves, at least as fervently as is possible to an honest heart. Oh! who can tell the blessings, the treasures she holds in reserve for those who will justify their claims, their actual rights, to her loving motherly tenderness?

Occasions like this place me in direct and pleasing contact with the Congregation at large, and give me an excellent opportunity of knowing, and even reading, the hearts of our beloved Religious, who by words or letters joyfully reveal their true sentiments. What a delight for me to hear, or read expressions of filial respect from such pious souls whom Heaven has so singularly blessed or evidently prepares soon to become the favorites of God or of His Holy Mother! For such there are among us whose labors have been blessed unquestionably more than those of others. Year after year, they have proved *treasures* for the Community. Others, though younger, already inspire, and daily confirm the same consoling hopes. Why not all? Are not the same opportunities offered to all? Is not each one supplied with the same means of becoming a Saint? Most undoubtedly; but in religion as in the world, we must confess, some are more in earnest than others. Some live for God, others for themselves.

On the eve of such a beautiful Feast, let me suggest a means by which each one of us may become an especial object of blessings, a rich treasure to the Community, a model, an edification to all, a *favorite* of the Blessed Virgin, and an object of sincere esteem and love to all around. What can be the means or the source of such prolific abundance of precious results? A serious resolve, with God's holy grace, to honor above all, and to our last breath, the purity of the Blessed Virgin. Such a virtue never goes alone. Purifying every day with a will, earnestly, generously, not only our senses and our acts, but our intentions and thoughts and affections, our whole being, will delight our Guardian Angels, who will report promptly, joyfully, to their heavenly Queen, whom they will find aware of it, and rejoicing, even anxious to come and reward what she herself ever loved best on earth. The moment the seal of purity shines on a religious heart it becomes her own treasure; wherever she sees it she blesses it, and makes of its owner a centre of graces and merits. It matters not whether it shines in the lowest or highest office; it spreads a light over the whole ground of duty. Oh! the blessedness of pure hearts! Such a benign and delightful light rejoices a pure soul in the accomplishment of the humblest or hardest duties as it did some of our glorious martyrs when it shone in their dark dungeons and gave them a foretaste of what awaited them next day in heaven.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." They will find Him wherever obedience calls them. Feeling, realizing His presence, they will execute His holy will in delight to the very best of their ability.

Holy purity! what a significant, magical word for the first pioneers of the Congregation at Notre Dame! They had left their beloved home in sunny France on the Feast of Our Lady of the Snows—*Stæ. Mariæ ad Nives*—and on their arrival here they found the entire premises, water and land, wholly covered with a thick, rich and beautiful mantle of snow, such as they had never before seen in their lives. Was it not a delightful reminder of the lesson imparted on the memorable 5th of August? For full five months the virginal, stainless mantle covered the domain of our Blessed Mother. The object could in no way be misunderstood. It made upon all an indelible impression: evidently, the Blessed Virgin wished to see this glorious spot of her own adorned and shining, above all, with holy purity, reflecting not alone from the limpid waters of its lakes, but from every heart breathing on it, the purity of the sky—nay, the purity of the angelical spirits of the kingdom above. Man's designs often change, Heaven's designs never change.

From the beginning and forever we are all urged to lead an angelic life. *Beati immaculati in via! ambulantes simpliciter in luce Domini.*

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

No. CXXIII.

NOTRE DAME, IND.,

OCTAVE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

After an absence of five weeks from home, during which I have been obliged to suspend nearly all correspondence with you, I feel anxious to resume my communications with our dear family.

The grand Plenary Council, in which I have represented our beloved Congregation for an entire month, I shall remember with delight as long as I live. It will undoubtedly make an epoch in the history of our holy Church in the United States. Of its numerous and important Decrees, even regarding religious orders, I am not at liberty to speak before they are sanctioned by the Holy See. But that they all tend to make everything more perfect must be obvious to all. Hence the natural result, for Religious in particular, *to adhere to their holy Rules more strictly than ever.* Indeed, I rejoice at the immense blessings this venerable assembly of eminent dignitaries—Archbishops and Bishops, mitred Abbots,

Religious, Theologians, etc.—has endeavored to secure to the Church in the States; but I rejoice especially at the particular attention that has been paid to the Religious families—to make them what they ought to be, the first and most efficient soldiers of the Cross by a devotedness to duty exemplary to all. Therefore the spirit of obedience, of poverty and purity must shine in each of them more conspicuously than in any other class of society. First of all, Religious must be in the front of all the standard-bearers of the sacred and saving Sign—close observers of their Rules even in the smallest things.

What I write here I mean to carry out fully and enforce, as our best members will gladly expect. As a proof of it, I hereby prescribe:

1st. That the Rules be attentively read at the Spiritual Reading until Easter.

2d. That no Religious be dispensed from any one of them, but by higher authority. *The Rules must be observed.*

3d. That the Vow of Poverty be observed everywhere, in its strictest sense, from the first to the last in each House.

4th. That all visits necessitating an absence at night, all travels and journeys from home be suppressed—unless allowed by the highest authority. Let everyone stay at home, as a Religious, unless duly sent on a special mission or message.

Hard times evidently stare us in the face. Let us all strive to save something to help the suffering members of Christ the winter will send to us everywhere. Let everyone of us try to save and to live economically. I say again: times are hard, and require from us all something more than a silent acknowledgment of the same; devotedness alone, with a sacrificing resolution, will enable us to keep our ground!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our beloved Religious earnestly preparing themselves in prayer around the Crib for a life of regularity, fervor and devotedness, in full accord with the universal expectations of greater efficiency than ever for the edification of all in the Church!

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

No. CXXIV.

NOTRE DAME, IND., VIGIL OF THE EPIPHANY, 1885.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

When I addressed you my last Circular, on the Octave of the Immaculate Conception, I anticipated your ever-welcome greetings