CIRCULAR LETTER No. 72.

OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

to the

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

I have just returned from a precious audience at the Vatican, where I had once more before leaving Rome the happiness of spending at the feet of His Holiness some of those delightful moments, always too brief, and yet ever making an epoch in a man's life; some of those moments one always loves to remember as a foretaste of the joys awaiting us in heaven.

If over a man has been endowed with the gift of making others happy it must certainly be our inestimable Pio Nono: this last audience alone would testify to it most irresistibly.

Whilst I write, I feel deeply moved by what I have seen and heard, and it is almost a relief to inform you of it immediately. Little as we are, I am convinced that His Holiness is expecting something from us; indeed I might say a great deal more than we ourselves imagine. The new Association of the "Guardian Angels of the Sanctuary" has been the occasion of this manifestation. A little further on you will see the expressions of the Holy Father. Whilst blessing it again this evening, the Pope places in our hands a powerful arm to defend the Church in the darkest portion of her flock. But He wishes us, as we may bring little children to him to pray with him, that we show ourselves most careful to prepare them well for this singular privilege.

First of all He wishes that these dear little children be perfectly instructed, as far as age permits, in the knowledge of our Holy Faith. As a teaching body, here is our first duty clearly revealed: we must excel by a special care to place at the head of all sciences that of Religion; hence our chief end is to make of our pupils good Christians before they are learned scholars. The Holy Father is filled with this great thought, which in him seems to dominate everything else, as you may perceive presently. Hence when, contrarily to prescriptions, I asked Him if he would not write on my graceful tableau of the Association a special blessing for the pious group represented in it, and those who would soon join them by His own side, "Certainly, certainly, my beloved son," said He: "let me see again that fine drawing of our Gregori;" and while saying this the Holy Father took his pen and wrote with a firm hand the following blessing, which will follow this in a few days to Notre Dame:

"BENEDICT DEUS OMNES QUI AMBULANT IN SANCTA MANDATORUM SUORUM.

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If this Association the Holy Father has thus again blessed, after enriching it with a Brief and Indulgences, finds among you the welcome it deserves, as I feel confident it means of emulation: with a view to carry out the Holy Father's designs, I direct that on the Sunday which shall follow the reception of this Circular the head of each of our Houses assemble in Council all the teaching members of the Establishment, that they may examine before God what amendment may be made in their manner of imparting religious instruction. In the process verbal of the meeting, the Secretary shall set forth what is actually done; and in a second part, what appears feasible to obey the Supreme authority that has spoken; said process verbal shall be forwarded immediately to proper quarters.

Here it is we have reason to thank God for our religious vocation. Had we nothing more to teach than secular educators, as well might we have remained in the world. But what raises us above them is that our teaching leaves behind us all the aspirations of this world and fits our pupils for eternal life.

I start for Lourdes, thence to Lafaye, thence to Challes, and afterwards to a few other Establishments and to Paris, where I shall remain until May. May God bless us all and grant us to meet again. Oh! what a joy! Your devoted in Jesus Christ,

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