

# FIRST CIRCULAR LETTER

December 10th, 1861 - Letter - N. D. de Montolivet

*L.J.C. et M.I.*

*My reverend and dearly beloved Fathers and my very dear brothers,*

The General Chapter convened for the fifth of this month, because of the death of our dearly loved and ever missed Father and Founder, and for the election of a Superior General, has just taken place. The weighty role of Superior has been placed on my weak shoulders. Obedience put an end to the fears that came to my mind as I considered the huge task that I had been given. God made known His will in such a way that I had only to adore Him and give in to that will. I belonged to the Congregation, my dearly beloved Mother; I had given myself to her entirely and without reservation. She called me through the voice of her representatives; she could do it; it was up to me to submit to her will. Had I thought about it, I could not have refused, in the face of the beautiful, supportive and encouraging reactions that came from the members of the Chapter, as you yourselves will see once the minutes have been sent to you. After all that I have seen and heard during the Chapter, no matter how strongly I sense my own weakness, my trust in God is all the more profound. Yes, God has blessed us; God will always bless us. Our Father, on his deathbed, left us this gentle hope and we have just had its first achievement.

More than ever, then, here I am, yours forever: I belong to each and every one of you, whoever you are, Fathers and Brothers, dearly beloved children of the best of Fathers and of the dearest of Mothers; here I am, yours with all my heart, all my soul, all my body. I am at your disposal; I will never be happier than when you will show me that I belong to you. It seems to me that my most urgent need is to work for you and become all things for all of you.

Allow me to ask you, my dear Fathers and Brothers, a favour that I really yearn for and that I will try to merit more and more by my dedication: please look upon me as your father, as your devoted friend, and by that fact, I ask that you tell me of your joys and sorrows, but especially your sorrows; for they are mine too - don't hide from me a single one - that's what I really wish.

Let us be one in spirit and in heart; then we will be strong in doing good. Let us be one in the memory of an ever beloved Father. I had the joy of knowing his heart, so good, so great; I don't pretend to fill the void that he left us with his death: this void which nothing on earth could fill; only God can fill it. But from afar, I will try to walk in the footsteps of the one whom we will always mourn. His noble and devoted spirit still lives with us in the blessed Rules that he left us as a proof of his love, as an everlasting witness of his great faith and of his burning charity. I have promised a faithful and sincere observance of these Holy Rules; I have solemnly promised to demand of everyone their faithful practice. I ask that the Lord not allow this holy gift to be wasted while in our hands; that He not allow us to lose even the smallest part of this precious gift; complete obedience to all of their demands will be the source of our joy and of our strength.

Let us rekindle in ourselves the spirit of our vocation. Because of the abundant blessings it has pleased the Lord to pour out upon our works, we must strive to become ever more worthy to attain the glory of God who has entrusted to us his most holy plans; and the glory of our Immaculate Mother whom we must cause to be respected, loved and honoured everywhere; and of our Father and Founder whose memory we will never be able to sufficiently praise.

Through our common prayer, through our humble and fervent prayer, may we obtain the graces that we need! Please pray for me, my beloved Fathers and Brothers, that I might not be overcome by the task that has been given me. Pray that I might be good and resolved; ask it of God, the giver of all gifts; and of Mary, our Immaculate Mother and Patron; and of St. Joseph, the glorious head of the Holy Family.

To this end, beginning with the receipt of this letter, all of the priests of the Congregation will recite for nine days during Holy Mass the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion *de Spiritu Sancto*. Those who are not priests will offer their communion three times for this same intention. Likewise, for nine days, at the end of evening prayer, in all of our houses, there will be recited the *Veni Creator*, the *Tota pulchra es*, and the verses and prayers of the Holy Spirit, the Immaculate Conception, and of St. Joseph.

My dearly beloved Fathers and Brothers, I would like to continue this first chat, for it seems to me that the burden becomes lighter as I speak with you, but it is necessary to close. Besides, I will soon speak with you more at length. In closing, let me beg you in the Lord to remember our beloved Father's deathbed counsel, so as to bring down upon us and on our works, the most abundant graces: *Practice among yourselves charity, charity, charity, and beyond, zeal for the salvation of souls.*

My Reverend and beloved Fathers and my dearest Brothers, accept this expression of my most devoted and heartfelt affection.