

Conforti: Circular Letter #3

Corniana, Italy September 1, 1912

In Omnibus Christus! Christ in All!



To all my brothers in Christ, members of the St. Francis Xavier Institute, Parma

Missionaries of the Vicariate Honan, China

The Lord has heard our prayers, our long awaited wish has been fulfilled! The Vicariate, which holds such fruitful future promise, has received a final approval from the Supreme Authority of the church, by the elevation to the episcopate of the man who is to guide it.

Again I say, thank the Lord for this signal blessing, and consider well what this means and what consequences flow there from.

The church of Honan now possesses what is necessary for its expansion. It has that Episcopal ministry, by which Christians receive the fullness of spiritual life which is nurtured by that complete paternity residing in a Bishop alone. This event is significant also for the fact that the new Prelate and his faithful co-operators have been chosen as the foundation stones of a new Church destined to attain full growth and development in the not too distant future. Along with this grace, the Lord entrusts you with the unique task of being the first apostles of a hitherto unexplored civilization by the gospel, recognize the grandeur of the grace they have received. However, the reason for your consolation should be the awareness that your names will be written in the book of life. Your reward will be great if you faithfully fulfill the mission the Lord has called you to in His infinite love.

Consider the new obligations and duties which are assumed with regard to this vast mission which expects much from you. The Institute, looks to you, its first alumni, to provide those coming after you with the example of a life program which is truly apostolic. There are obligations also regarding the new Bishop, who was chosen from among your ranks, proposed by your vote to be elevated to the episcopate by the Holy See. Before this happened, he was your esteemed superior, and you showed him obedience and submission. Now that he has been invested with the fullness of the priesthood and he returns signed with this August character, greater is your obligation to honor and obey him, and in him to recognize the person of Christ, whom he more closely and more perfectly represents. Recall the words of the martyr Ignatius: "Follow and listen to your Bishop, just as Christ followed and heeded His heavenly Father," in this way you will be of one heart and spirit. Let nothing impede or stand in the way of this union, even at the cost of sacrificing viewpoints, convenience and personal interests. This was the divine Savior's wish, before His ascension He prayed His heavenly Father that all who would believe in Him might always be one: that they may be one. Here lies the secret to overcome all obstacles along the road of the apostolate. This is the secret of success which will enable you to win over to Christ this vast mission entrusted to you by the common Father of the faithful.

This holy union will grow stronger day by day if Christ's love remains the bond binding your hearts together, if the rules of our Institute, especially the evangelical counsels which you profess, remain the unchanged rule for our work. Love poverty, be satisfied with bare necessities as poor people do, don't look for what is superfluous in dress, housing, food. Preserve and prudently guard priestly purity, avoid anything which might diminish its splendor, even in the public eye alone so as to have nothing of remorse in the secret of your heart. Above all else I recommend the spirit of submission and obedience, which is not popular today. The prevalent spirit of insubordination today dampens the spirit of obedience even among the clergy of every rank. This is a weakness, our division and discord is one of the main reasons why our enemies continue to gain ground.

The Lord will be with you if you are one in mind and heart with those who represent Him. Always work in unison with these, remember the words of bishop, St. Ignatius: "Do nothing unbeknown to the bishop". Following this wise advice, it provides greater assurance of the Lord's blessing, and you can count on obtaining more abundant fruit from your apostolic work. Thus will this beloved mission proceed forward, in the way in which it so well began, by building and providing consolations for those who have worked so hard for its development. After thanking the Lord, the giver of every gift for this, I am grateful to each of you who have been instruments of mercy and salvation for so many poor infidels.

When I remember you, working with such sacrifice and abnegation in that remote region for the kingdom of God, my spirit is uplifted and I take heart in the midst of many trials and difficulties in the pastoral ministry. I have experienced how the holy and noble example of others offers strong incentives to work for holiness.

Unable to do more for you, I will remember you every day to God at the Altar. This is an especially fervent remembrance for you and that vast mission which I love as much as I love this diocese to which I am bound by solemn and sacred bonds.

Perhaps I do not write as often as you and I would like. I am ever close to you in my mind and heart, nonetheless, for these know distances. Be assured of this; forgive me if the increasing occupations, which constantly preoccupy me, do not permit me to visit China more frequently at least by letter.

The Vicar Apostolic can tell you all the news that you wish to have about the Institute, the city of Parma, friends and acquaintances. This is no need for me to write more, I embrace you individually in the charity of Christ, I ask you for your prayers, and my prayers for you are for all that a friend and brother can wish.

Affectionately

+ Guido M., Archbishop/Bishop
Superior of the Institute
St. Francis Xavier Foreign Mission Society