

Conforti: Circular Letter #2

Parma, Italy: Motherhouse January 25, 1907

In Omnibus Christus! Christ in All!

To all my dear brothers of the Xaverian Institute, Missionaries in Honan

Health, Peace, Blessing!

I am pleased whenever I think you and all that you are doing in distant regions of China. I am envious of your good fortune, I encourage you to continue even to your death, this work which you have so well begun.

I can well understand that you experience setbacks and difficulties of every kind. At times your apostolate may appear sterile, it may produce little of the fruit, which you expected. Don't be discouraged; the Lord measures not so much the results of your labor as the right intention with which you work.

Persevere always with a simple spirit, humility, mortification, good intention, cleanliness of heart, fraternal charity and you will constitute a formidable army, for the Lord will be by your side. Like the light which dissipates darkness, you - by preaching the good news, by the example of your life - will eliminate error, sin, ignorance in those regions still under the slavery of Satan. Why did the Lord send you so far away? Perhaps the words of Paul regarding the attitude of the Philippians were to have toward gentiles is an answer: "that you may be without grumbling in the midst of a depraved nation, among whom you shine like stars in the sky" (Cf. Phil. 2,14ff). Only if we act in this way can we repeat to those whom we have won over to the faith: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ...Walk according to what you have received from us...walk as if you were like us."

Don't forget that Paul's capability of walking in the midst of the people, doing good to all, showing his concern to all, answering every kind of need, distributing heavenly blessings everywhere, flowed from his likeness with Christ. You can carry out this same sublime mandate if your heart ever beats with the love of Christ which embraces all, does all for all, to lead all to God.

This norm which the Apostle of the gentiles ever followed, however, should not give rise to the belief that to win over the Chinese to Christ, one must adapt to their customs, even if these are not reproachful, to become more Chinese than the Chinese. I am far removed from you, the situation is quite different from here, yet I believe nonetheless, that this way of acting would be more a hindrance than a help in preaching the gospel. Such customs are widely founded on human viewpoints and are not in conformity with the norms given by Christ to His apostles. They were to win over the world by humility, poverty, and especially by that love which bears with all, sustains all, is superior to all, and



conquers all. I am not saying that Chinese customs are to be avoided, rather that you should use them only to the extent that they are indispensable to enable you to touch the heart of the poor pagans. Accompany them in order to bring them along with you. How often you read that Xavier used this method with great success.

I am writing, not because I feel that I can give answers to your situation. I have spoken with wise and well-prepared persons who have been to China. They mentioned that perhaps one of the principal causes for the slow acceptance of the faith there could be that generally speaking missionaries too often adapt themselves to the Chinese customs, and these see to impede the spreading of the gospel. Take whatever you think is helpful in all of this, and ever regulate yourselves in the way best indicated to accomplish your mission, to win over for Christ the greatest possible number of souls.

This letter is a sign of my great affection for you. I send it along with Fathers Dagnino and Guareschi, who join you as zealous co-workers in the apostolate. They can tell you how I think of you always, and speak of you often. You hold a special place in my heart, in your Masses remember the one who professes himself to be.

Affectionately yours as a brother,

+ Guido M., Archbishop

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