

"Pope Urban VIII to his beloved sons the Discalced Carmelite Religious staying in Persia.

"Beloved sons, greeting, etc. Though everywhere man's life on earth is a warfare, our everlasting Emperor seems to have highly valued your virtue which He has preferred to keep in a war-camp rather than in sensual pleasures. You serve Christ as His soldiers in those tracts wherein the banners of the Muhammadan superstition hold sway; nor is any access to anyone's goodwill open to you which you have not first to carry by the assault of piety and by the help of Heaven. Ah! happy you who have been chosen for the most distant provinces by the Sun of Righteousness Himself to shine on the East which dwells in the shadow of death, for the purpose that you wonderful men may carry the Lord's name before the Gentiles in the sight of the powerful. But be it noted: while treading in the Apostles' footsteps you must never lay down the arms of light amid the sons of darkness. However, that these helps, the arts of godliness, exist We do know, whereby the Lord's service can be honoured in you, and the practices of prayer whereby the helps of the heavenly host are easily summoned. Now as We have word that you do carefully attend to this point, it can hardly be told how great a comfort to Our Pontifical disquietude you are through whose exertions the Christian commonwealth owes to a foreign King favour bestowed. Extenders of the Christian empire and protectors of the heavenly Kingdom will be your name if God's grace be not vain in you. Accordingly, as We long for so great a guerdon for you, We promise you Pontifical protection and We impart the Apostolic benediction. Forth! beloved sons, and carry with you the spirit of mighty armies; bring unbelieving peoples under the banner of Christ's Cross; walk upon asps and basilisks, thinking naught so much to be desired in this life as the triumph of that precious death which enrols the martyrs incarnadined by their own blood within the assemblages of them that reign in eternal bliss. So, that you may do this more eagerly, We grant and confirm for you by Our authority all the privileges and indulgences that the Pontifical affection has hitherto granted to those who are sent by the Apostolic See to convert the infidels. Moreover, We urge you to adopt for yourselves in so irksome a life abroad the most holy Apostles Simon, Jude and Thomas as patrons, that they may teach you how to hurl spiritual thunderbolts by means of those fiery tongues which descended from heaven and which were the Holy Ghost's javelins and two-edged swords for utterly taming the world and breaking despots' proud mien. But, that Our Pontifical love be demonstrated to you not only by encouragement but also by boons, We unlock the treasures of the Church with devout generosity. Accordingly, We grant a plenary indulgence to all and each who duly approach churches built in these parts or to be built, on those days on which the Roman Church solemnly keeps those three Apostles' birthdays. We embrace you with the arms of Apostolic love, dear sons, and beg the Father's compassion that by the happiness of your devotion He keep safe the barbarian tribes and comfort the Christian commonwealth.

"Given at Rome at S. Peter's, etc., 9th March 1624 in the first year of Our Pontificate."

The position was difficult and delicate in most directions by this time; but it was the financial stringency which most hampered the Carmelites and made them depute the Prior to proceed to Rome and obtain funds: he set off, 12.9.1624, reaching Aleppo, 13.12.1624, "without a farthing".<sup>1</sup> It was presumably unusual in simple missionaries, but yet an affirmation of the special status as the Pope's representatives, recognized for them in the past, that the Fathers should address Pope Urban VIII direct in this connection:

"Holy Father, After most humbly kissing your feet . . . on account of the things, which happened in this Mission of Persia in the years last past, and because of other needs and business supervening at this juncture, it has been seen fit to dispatch Fr. Prosper of the

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Prosper, 27.2.1625, O.C.D. 23 d.