LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

II. LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE
(SISTER PAULE)

Rose Lapique was one of the five girls who desired to engage in the apostolate to the Negro. She entered the Convent of the Blue Nuns of Castres and took the name of Sister Paule.

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Letter One 1842 Vol. 4, p. 228

Rule Proposed to Rose Lapique (before she entered the convent)

5:00 Rising. Give your heart to God immediately on rising. Offer Him your day and prepare to serve Him faithfully. Homage to Mary. Clean your room. If you have time after this, prepare the subject of your mental prayer and remain recollected and at peace. Avoid being tense and over-eager.

5:30 Mental Prayer. Spend fifteen minutes kneeling and the next fifteen standing; or else sit and kneel alternately. Follow the affections of your heart, make good resolutions and place them in the hands of Mary. Spiritual Bouquet.

6:15 Manual Labor until Holy Mass. Be peacefully recollected during your work. Do not be tense and over-eager, for such strain usually comes from self-love and tends to lead you away from God. After Mass, manual labor or breakfast, according to the rule of the house. After breakfast, manual labor.

10:00 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin. Follow this with a reading from the life of a saint. Read calmly with piety and affection and make good resolutions.

11:00 Manual Labor

12:15 Particular Examen concerning your principal fault. If it is convenient, make this exercise in church and,
at the beginning, recite the Litanies of the Holy Name of Jesus. After dinner take recreation.

1:45 Spiritual Reading
2:15 Manual Labor
3:00 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin
3:15 Manual Labor
4:15 Beads
4:30 Read the Life of a Saint.
5:15 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin
5:30 Manual Labor. Spiritual Reading for a quarter of an hour before supper. Supper with the community. Recreation. Evening Prayers. After that read attentively the subject for the following morning’s mental prayer.
9:00 Go to bed. Do this modestly, recalling some pious or thought, as for example, Our Lord stretched on the Cross or lying in His tomb, or the Child Jesus in His crib. Go to sleep in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Letter Two La Neuville, May 6, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 230

J. M. J.

My good Sister:

I knew that you would find happiness in the Community to which the good Lord has brought you. It is thus that Our Lord’s designs are gradually accomplished. Do your best to prepare yourself for the great ministry for which God has destined you. I do not need to recommend docility and obedience to you as you already know their importance. I trust that our good Master will give you the grace to practice them perfectly.
LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

Adopt fully the spirit of the holy Congregation of which you are a member and be like soft wax in the hands of your superiors that they may mold you accordingly. Let your heart be filled with love for Our Lord who is so full of mercy and love for you, and be generous at all times in making the sacrifices He demands of you. Be always ready for a life of sacrifice, living as one who is dead to self so that the life of Jesus may dwell in you. His life will be truly in you if you have no desires, no will of your own, but make His love your only desire and His Will your will. Replace self-love with the love of Jesus, Who is at the right hand of the Father, Who lives in His divine Sacrament and in the person of your Superiors and your Sisters.

Be humble and, even in spiritual things, avoid vainglory. Do not long for certain graces, nor adopt certain practices, or talk in spiritual tones in order to make others esteem and love you. Jesus alone and His divine love must be the end and purpose of all your actions. Do not become self-complacent when you become aware of the presence of divine grace in your soul. Do not be worried or discouraged when you notice that you lack the graces you see in others and which you would like to have. Do not desire to reach a high degree in the order of grace, but remain in your lowliness before God and accept with gratitude, like a beggar, whatever He wishes to give you, esteeming yourself unworthy to receive all these favors.

Try only to be faithful to that good Master and to increase your love for Him from day to day. Think how fortunate you are that others suffer you in the house of God and realize sincerely, in the presence of God, that you are the last and most unworthy among your Sisters. Guard against any external manifestation of extraordinary humility lest this might lead to vanity and to the conducting of yourself in such a way as to lead others to think that you are humble.
Act like the other Sisters and hide your humility in your heart, as well as the graces which God in His goodness gives to you.

Be quite open and straightforward in your relations with your Superiors. Do not hide anything from your good Mother and the Mistress of novices; tell her everything whether good or bad, and do so without circumlocution, exaggeration, or explanation. In your relations with your Sisters be charitable, mild, kind and attentive and in everything avoid affectation.

Shun particular friendships like a plague; they are ruinous to a community and fatal to devotion. Love all your Sisters with a pure and holy charity like that which Jesus has for you. Love your confessor as you do Christ, your superior as the Blessed Virgin and your Sisters as you love the Saints in heaven, and always let this love be pure and holy.

Do not be over-eager or strain after piety. Such straining is usually the result of self-love or vanity or springs from the natural satisfaction we get from piety. Accept from God whatever He gives you and do not fail to profit by it. If He leaves you spiritually dry, accept this as His holy Will. Therefore do not make efforts of mind or heart to remain recollected or to produce affections for, or good sentiments towards Our Lord. Allow our good Master to lead you. Have a fervent devotion for Mary since you are her child in a special way. I ask that good Mother to be your mistress and guide and to see that her beloved Son accomplish in you all that I have mentioned in this short letter.

In the meantime, I am, in their most holy love,

Your very humble servant,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

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Letter Three  (June or July) 1843  Vol. 4, p. 232  J. M. J.

My dear Sister:

You were justified in concluding that I had forgotten you; and yet this was not, in fact, the case.

Make good use of the precious time that is given to you in the novitiate. Profit by the good example you have before your eyes and the good advice you receive constantly from your good Mother (Superior). It is very important that you should be courageous in making the sacrifices which God demands of you. Be at peace and have confidence in God. If you are not reassured about your sanctification by what you find in yourself, put your trust in God’s mercy and in your good mother Mary. You know that the good Lord wants to help you, for has He not made you experience in advance how sweet it is to consecrate yourself to Him.

During these three months you are an apprentice learning to act as you will have to do throughout your life. Try to perform your function as well as possible, while at the same time remaining recollected interiorly. Do not, however, in your effort to remain recollected, lose sight of the task set you. The most important thing is to do the function which God has given you. Being recollected is simply a means of making you more pleasing to God in your work.

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Dear Sister:

Your heart is filled with joy (because you have received the habit). You are now wearing the uniform of Our Lord and therefore you belong to Him to be His handmaid. All that remains now is that you become His spouse and this too will be accomplished through His grace and mercy. Act like Mary, who, calling herself the humblest and poorest of God's handmaids, became the spouse of the Divine Spirit and the mother of the Son.

Be humble, docile, obedient, charitable, mild and pliable. Let your gratitude for all God's kindness lead you to be filled with love for Him. Be recollected, industrious in the work and functions confided to you, and at peace in your soul. Try to do well whatever work is given to you because you are working for God's glory. Nevertheless, while wishing to do all things well, do not worry about their success but accept God's will and remain humbly and peacefully at His feet. Try to do all things well, but trust entirely in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ alone.

May the peace of Jesus and Mary be with you. Do not be surprised that you have worries. Your vocation has to be tried and tested.

Your entirely devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

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Letter Five  July 30—August 3, 1845  Vol. 7, p. 238

J. M. J.

My dear Sister:

I admire your heroic charity. Your frankness was going to betray you, but your charity immediately restrained it. When I read your first words, I said to myself, "I am going to be taken to task!" Your charity, however, has considerately spared my weakness. And now I, in my turn, want to be frank and to say, in all truthfulness, that I was not worthy of such consideration. That I am very guilty is quite certain. I can only ask for your mercy and I feel sure that you and all the others will grant it to me, and that the word of Our Lord will be fulfilled in you: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

This does not mean that I do not wish to excuse myself and to show that I am not at fault, but not having enough imagination to conceive an excuse I am forced to admit that I am really at fault. I think that you will more readily believe me when I say this than if I gave you fine excuses. But I see that this word makes you smile since you, seeing before you a man who could not resist the desire to excuse himself, are now quite prepared to be incredulous. However, it is really true that there was something that prevented me from following the desire of my heart and that was my embarrassment at the thought of discouraging you. I was embarrassed that I could not offer you any definite and positive reasons for hope either with regard to a place or a definite time (for your departure for the missions). I was afraid to discourage you on account of the pains we have suffered and the difficulties we have met on all sides.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

If, as each pain or difficulty presented itself, I had told you of it, you would have had one sorrow after another, one discouragement after another. Now that, as a result of my wicked conduct, you are in a state of holy and generous anger or, if you prefer, indignation, and your soul is completely free and detached from all creatures and perfectly dependent on and submissive to God’s will, I can tell you all I wish. My words will no longer discourage you and whatever I say will only raise your hopes. I leave it to your good Mother to tell you how things stand; she will remind you that we have to wait patiently if we want to “become Negroes (to the Negro).”

I have sent to the good Mother printed copies of the letters of our missionaries in Bourbon, and this will prove to you that I have not abandoned all interest in you. These letters will give you a better understanding of these poor Negroes who are so wretched because no one goes to their rescue. I know that this will make you all the more eager to fly to their assistance and that you will suffer more because you are cooped up in your convent in France. To add to your torment, I am enclosing with the letters a note that shows the good dispositions of the Negroes of Haiti, that, being thus tormented, you will pray fervently to God and will clamor so loudly that He will finally open the door for you.

Here now is some advice I wished to give you regarding this. Act as spoiled children do, imitate their pleading with their mother who finds it impossible to refuse them anything. Be convinced that Haiti is yours; but have patience; patience, I tell you, always practice patience! This is the great virtue of a future Negress. We must wait until our poor Haitians stop their brutal savagery.

You may say, no doubt, that even this time I am late in replying to your letters, but the reason for that is that I had
five letters to write. Ask your good Mother not to allow all four of you to write to me at the same time. She will thus spare me the embarrassment of being late in my replies. You have no idea how people sometimes disturb me. My letter to Mother Superior was written on July 22; yours, begun on the 30th was finished on August 3rd. When I have only two or three letters to write to your house and a letter arrives which demands an immediate answer, I put off replying to it until I have finished the two or three letters to you. But I could not do this if I had five letters to write to you, since this would delay too long the urgent letter. This will explain why you have had to wait for your letters. You will say to yourself: “Here is a man who is worried and wants to excuse himself. This shows that he feels guilty.” It also shows that he is sorry for his fault!

Pray to God for me and for all of us.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Letter Six (October 24) 1847 Vol. 9, p. 300

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

My dear Sister:

No doubt you are very angry, but your anger is also a holy anger! You wrote to me on June 19 and you had not then received a reply to your letter of October which you were so anxious to get. You will not be displeased with me when
you learn the reason for my silence, and especially when you read the good news I send you. I did not want to reply earlier because I would have had to give you distressing news and I had still hope.

At the time of your letter, I learned that Bishop Truffet, who knew nothing about your community, had applied elsewhere for help. He had not made any final arrangements and it was possible to postpone his plans so as not to prevent your departure. However, I was afraid that all our plans, especially with regard to Guinea, might be upset.

Yesterday the answer came. Everything is settled. If you are ready you will be on board ship in a fortnight. What do you say about that, dear Sister? I am sure that you are all upset.

My task now is to preach serious sermons to you. In the past I preached patience to you; now I must preach peace, calm, and moderation. Until the time of your departure try to keep recollected, so that you may draw down God’s blessing on you.

My dear Sister, you are now full of great joy, and I am afraid that you might allow yourself to be excessively carried away by it. So, to balance things, I am going to make a confession of your sins to you. I am sure that you will not mind but on the contrary will be pleased. However, this pleasure will cause you to direct your attention more to your interior life and thus prevent frivolity that might result from your joy.

My dear Sister, your character is too much inclined to pride, and might lead you to lack complete submissiveness to the judgment of your superior. You, perhaps, make unfavorable judgments about your Sisters and even about your superiors. You might also put too much trust in yourself and be too forward in your relations with your Sisters, and might be inclined to act haughtily.
I accuse you, also, of being a bit rigid by nature, and this might cause you to cling too stubbornly to your own ideas, to be somewhat harsh with your Sisters. It is possible that you are brusque with those to whom you should be kind, as for example with the children you have to instruct, etc. The result of this might be that you are firm to the point of a little rudeness, and harsh in the way you cling to your own will.

I accuse you of being somewhat wanting in religious modesty in your behavior. You are, by nature, a little too much of a tomboy. You are inclined to be violent, vivacious, and haughty. You will never be able to get rid of these habits completely, and this does not worry me, because they will give you a motive for humbling yourself when you realize that in the eyes of men you will never seem a perfect religious. However, in the eyes of God, you will not be the poorer for that, so long as you try to be humble and meek of heart.

Poor Sister! What a dressing down I have given you! If you were not my beloved daughter in Our Lord, I should not use such language to you. If I cause you to suffer, it is but the beginning of your sorrows. You will meet with other troubles. You must be humiliated, bruised and broken under the hand of God, while all the time your soul remains at peace and in submission.

If you need any explanations or advice regarding the points I have mentioned, let me know, but mention the particular point explicitly, as you will realize that I could not possibly remember all the things I have told you.

Your most devoted father and servant,

Francis Libermann