SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

IV. LETTERS TO MISS ADELE BRUGES (SISTER ALOYSIA)

Adele Bruges was one of the girls who, like Louise des Loges, Rose Lapique, and Pauline Bernard came to the Shrine of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, with the desire of entering religious life and laboring on behalf of the Negro Missions. She eventually became acquainted with Father Libermann who directed her to the newly-founded Society of the Immaculate Conception of Castres. His summing up of her character is contained in his letter to the Mother Superior of the Society (May 5, 1843): “She is lively, always laughing, yet modest. Her character is excellent and she is well disposed to piety.”

Letter One  Paris, Feast of All Saints, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 417

My dear Sister:

I was convinced, before my departure from Amiens, that you would be happy and satisfied once you were settled in the place where Divine Providence wants you. Rejoice with all your heart because God’s goodness has chosen you from among so many, to be used for the salvation of souls and especially for those who are so wretched and so badly neglected.

You are now in a holy solitude where you have to prepare yourself for that great work. The holier you are, the greater will be your capacity for serving God and saving souls. Endeavor therefore to sanctify yourself during the time you are cut off from the world. Your favorite virtues during the novitiate must be humility, mildness, charity, the spirit of prayer, and crowning all, obedience. If you practice these
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virtues during your novitiate they will produce rich fruits at a later date. Love Our Lord with all your heart and with generosity. Sacrifice for Him all that is agreeable to you. When troubled by pain or temptation, bear them with love, peace and patience. Open your heart with simplicity and confidence to your superiors and you will always find consolation.

Be a child of God in the house of your Heavenly Father and in the midst of God’s other children. Love all your Sisters equally. Console and sustain those who suffer. Do not attach yourself to anyone in particular, but let the affection of your heart be for all.

Always maintain and strengthen the spirit of your vocation. Do not make comparisons between the house you have left and the one to which the good Lord has brought you. Forget the past and consider yourself as belonging to this house. Attach yourself to it and adopt its spirit.

I saw Mr. Toping recently and he asked me for news of you. It is possible that I am not replying to what you wrote in your letter because I am now in Paris and have not your letter with me. I did not have time to reply sooner nor to pay a visit to the good Sisters of the Holy Family.

I leave you in the peace of Jesus and Mary. May the blessings and the love of Our Lord and His Holy Mother increase in your soul.

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Postscript to Another Letter undated Vol. 4, p. 418

My dear Sister:

It is too late now to reply to your letter. It is probable that the circumstances are no longer the same with regard to the matter that concerned your parents.

The fact that you are still wearing worldly clothes will make your good Sisters jealous of you. However, I don’t doubt that your heart has no share in the world even though your clothes resemble it. Forget the world and all it contains more and more. God alone must take the place of everything else. We lose nothing when we give up the world to enter into the possession of God.

Worldings would readily give a handful of sand in exchange for a piece of gold. Have courage, my dear Sister! I see that you are satisfied and peaceful and so much the better. But you cannot expect to have fair weather all the time; a day will come when you will meet with storms. Don’t let that worry you. Pains and crosses which are inevitable during the novitiate, will purify your soul, detach it from itself, strengthen it in the way of God, and purify your vocation. The Holy Spirit tells us in the Scriptures: “My child, prepare your soul for temptation.” Be faithful to your God and be humble, obedient and adaptable. Desire to be perfect, be generous, have the spirit of sacrifice, and be faithful in little things.

I have not yet received positive news about our missionaries of Guinea. No ship has yet returned since they arrived.

May the peace of Jesus and Mary be with you.

Your most devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann
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Letter Three    Feast of St. Aloysius, 1844    Vol. 6, p. 243

J. M. J.

My dear Sister Aloysia:

I am very glad that at long last I am able to address you by this name, and you really deserve it. Our Lord gave you a great grace when He made you feel so great happiness in His divine service. Advance constantly in purity of heart, in simplicity in all your conduct, in forgetfulness of the world and of self, in love of God, in zeal for your sanctification and the sanctification of others. Imitate your holy Patron in his fervent love for Jesus and Mary. Let your mind be receptive, adaptable and unresisting to the Will of God as made known to you by your superiors and in any other way that God chooses. From now on your own will must be submerged and God’s will must take its place. What a happiness!

Strive for great purity in what you desire and do not allow self-love or any other evil motive to mar or taint anything you do. Never desire anything except what God may desire. This is the means of obtaining the fulfillment of your good desires. When we allow our desires to drive us on forcibly, we rarely have peace of soul and our intention is rarely pure. Do your best to remain calm and peaceful in God’s sight at all times. He is the Lord of your soul; let Him do what He wishes with His property; remain prostrate and at peace before Him. Have peace of soul but also a great spirit of love and humility. Approach God with love and never allow fear to trouble your soul. You are a child of God, of the family of Mary, and fear is out of the question in their company. Love alone must be the prevailing element in your
soul and it must enter into all your actions. All that has happened in the past should teach you to love, praise and bless Him Who has never, for one moment, ceased to overwhelm you with gracious favors, and Who desires to give you even greater graces.

When vexations, temptations and pains, whether interior or exterior come, remain calm, adaptable, docile and submissive in the presence of the God of mercy. Remain prostrate before Him and allow Him to do whatever He pleases with you.

Realize fully that no one owes you anything and that therefore it is not possible for anyone to offend you. You have given your soul to Jesus Christ and soon, all that you are and all that you have must belong entirely to Jesus. Already now you must act as if this were so, thus preparing for the holy life which one day you will lead. Because of this you must no longer call anything your own. Everything you have belongs to Jesus Christ, and therefore, no one can now really offend you. Since Jesus, then, is the owner of your soul, leave to Him the care of defending His property. Instead of being preoccupied with yourself, think only of pleasing Him, the Lord to Whom you belong.

In your ordinary conduct do not be occupied with yourself, nor wish others to be occupied with you. All your desires must be that you and others should live for Jesus and be occupied with Him. Desire that He may look with complacency and love on your soul, and this will be much more profitable for you than winning the good opinions of creatures. My dear Sister, these are the graces I will constantly beseech Our Lord to grant to you and to the good Sisters whom I always remember.

Please tell this to Sisters Paule, Aurelia, and Cecilia. I made a rash promise when I told you that I would come in the month of May. I see now that our only promise ought
LETTERS TO ADELE BRUGES

to be to do the will of our heavenly Father. It is He Who prevents me from keeping my promise and it is His right to do so for I did not ask whether He agreed. I hope, however, that I shall be able to visit you at a later date. Oh! how great is my desire to see you all!

Your very humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary