VI. LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLE-NEUVE, SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, CASTRES

It might be best to recall what Father Libermann himself wrote in a letter to Father Frederic Le Vavasseur on October, 1842, regarding the Sisters of Castres (the so-called Blue Nuns) and their Superior, Mother Mary de Villeneuve:

When Father Tisserant was temporarily engaged in work for the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, several devout young women who seemed capable, fervent, generous and of solid piety, came to consult him. This confrere told me that it was extraordinary that these ladies should come to offer themselves with the desire of becoming religious and working for the benefit of the Negro women. Father Tisserant accepted them and spoke to me about the possibility of forming a Congregation which would be the counterpart of our own. I was not at all in favor of the idea of establishing and caring for a Congregation of religious women. Soon afterwards, Father Bessieux told me that there was a society in his part of the country, which had been founded four years before and which had the same end in view. He also told me that the Superior of this new Congregation was a capable woman and that she led a very interior life.

Letter One La Neuville, October 8, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 311

My dear Reverend Sister:

Father Bessieux, who became a member of our little society, spoke to me about your Institute and your zeal for the poor neglected souls for whom God has called us to labor.
I was greatly consoled when I learned about your project and I pray with all my heart that the good Master may bless you in the good desires with which He has inspired you. I have longed for a Congregation of this kind for a long time and that is my reason for writing to you for some information regarding the fundamental end and purpose of your foundation.

Father Bessieux gave me a few notes but they did not contain the essential information I was looking for. I have a reason for seeking more detailed information. Several ladies who are fervent and capable, have offered to consecrate themselves to the salvation of young Negro girls and, in general, to work especially for the Negroes, who are so wretched from every point of view. If the end of your Institute corresponds with the aims of these generous persons, they might perhaps be admitted as members of your young society and could be of great help to you in establishing that holy work.

May I ask you, therefore, for clear information regarding the end and purpose you have in view, what means you intend to use, what spirit you wish to impart to your associates, and how you propose to prepare them for the works and functions so proper to so noble a vocation. May I remark that very great care is required in the formation of your candidates in the holiness which is so necessary for that holy state.

I realize that it is not possible for me to express myself properly in a letter. There are many questions I should like to ask, but not because of curiosity nor because I am distrustful. Our Lord has given you too many graces and favors to admit of distrust on my part; but I should like to be better informed regarding some points that need clarification.

I presume, my reverend Sister, that you will tell me that there are a number of questions to which you cannot give precise answers. This does not surprise me for, as a rule, God’s works unfold and develop gradually, little by little.
You have started the building. It does not belong to us, weak creatures, to finish it, but to Our Lord. He has placed you there as the first stone and it is possible that you may not know exactly what He has in store for you. This is God's way, usually, with the souls on whose foundation He desires to erect any work whatsoever for the glory of His Father.

If this is so in your case, and if such be the will of God, I should like to make the following proposal. We could gather these four or five women, who are all around thirty years of age, and place them in a novitiate at Amiens. It might be possible to buy a house there and make a foundation. If you agreed to this it would be necessary to place there two or three of your most fervent and capable religious to make arrangements for the foundation. A plan for the novitiate could then be made and some rules laid down for the life of the religious who would be sent to foreign lands.

In proposing this I am presuming that you have not yet evolved a clear plan and have not yet established a Rule. If, on the contrary, you have already regulated these matters, please let me know what has been decided. I should have liked to visit you in Castres but this is not possible.

Please examine my proposal before God. Ask the help of Mary, our good and most holy Mother. Let us not seek any other interest than that of our Master and our heavenly Father, who alone must reap glory from all our labors and desires.

Respectfully yours in sincere charity,

Your most humble and devoted servant in the Most Holy and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann
Dear Mother Superior:

Father Bessieux has further explained to me the nature of your work and it shows me that I was wrongly informed about the state of your Congregation. In the two previous talks I had about it with Father Bessieux, Divine Providence permitted him to explain things badly to me. In view of his further explanations I feel that it is God’s will that I should write to you again to correct the mistake of my last letter.

As I told you, Reverend Mother, several ladies have offered to consecrate themselves to the apostolate to the Negroes. They are capable, docile, generous souls and of solid piety. Before I learned of the existence of your Society I had consented to the keen wishes of my confreres to establish a Congregation which would serve the same purpose. I was as keen as they for the establishing of such a Congregation but I was afraid of taking on this new burden. I felt that the foundation of our own society of missionaries was itself beyond my powers. Still because of the providential way in which these ladies offered themselves, I could not resist the divine will, but waited hoping to receive greater light on the subject.

Then, like a ray of light, came Father Bessieux who spoke to me of your Society. As I knew little about your work, I was under the false impression that you had just begun and that nothing was yet clearly fixed or determined. Hence my last letter. Now I have learned that your Constitutions are already drawn up and have approval from the late Bishop of Alby. Other things which I have learned about your Congregation also pleased me.
This made me all the more anxious to get a more complete account of your Congregation, your Constitutions, and the spirit of your Sisters. That is why I once more urge you to establish a house in Amiens. I am grateful to Our Lord Jesus Christ because He has seen fit to acquaint me with the work of your Society before I had tried to establish a similar one in those foreign lands.

I entreat you, reverend Mother, not to hinder the desire I have to see these ladies enter as members of your Society. If we were to begin here the same sort of Society that you are developing in the South, the two societies would be mutually harmful. It is possible that the good Master may give me the grace to help in some way in strengthening your Society. Consider well before Our Lord Jesus and His Immaculate Mother how useful it would be if you were to agree to my proposals.

Firstly, it would be of great advantage to your Sisters to have devout missionaries living in community and able to direct them in those foreign lands, where religious are in great need of such assistance. If you have no one to direct them, they will grow lax and a great number will even be lost. It is not easy to find pastors who are able to give guidance to Sisters in those countries. Again, would it not be useful to have a novitiate house near ours so that your novices might from time to time be imbued with the spirit of our own missionaries? Secondly, it would be useful for you to have a house in the South and another in the North so as to facilitate the recruiting of vocations. I realize that there are great difficulties in having two novitiates, but it might be possible to surmount these difficulties. We should first examine the substance of a question before looking at the difficulties; we can then find a remedy for everything. I consider it very important that you should have one house near Paris, which will always be the centre of affairs. If you remain in the South, and have no representative in Paris,
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

how will you be able to transact business with the ecclesiastical Superiors in those parts? The same applies to the matter of sending subjects and sending things to them.

Reflect on all this before God, and please write giving me full information regarding your work. I should prefer an interview with you to any number of letters as this matter is worth the trouble involved, since it is of great importance for God's glory. However, I cannot at present leave here to visit you.

I leave everything in the hands of Our Lord and may that pious project mature under the care of the most Holy Heart of Mary who started it.

Respectfully yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your most poor and devoted servant,
FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Three  La Neuville, December 28, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 358

Dear Mother Superior:

I am ashamed to have made you wait so long for a reply to your last letter. The delay was caused by the fact that I wanted to give information about the matter to the principal persons who want to enter your Society. I believe you are very wise in what you told me about the foundation of a house in Amiens and I think it would be well to adopt the plan you proposed. I shall assist you in any way I can in the matter. Please let me know when you propose to go to Paris so that I too may make arrangements to go there, if this is
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

possible. If it is God’s will I should like to have an interview with you so that we may reach complete understanding regarding the undertaking.

I cannot tell you exactly how many want to give their services to the holy work. Six presented themselves and there is now a seventh, but I am not sure that we can count on all of them. The two who seem most outstanding are faced with temporary difficulties and might not be able to go to Paris at the time of your visit, but the good Lord will arrange everything according to His good pleasure. I think they will seek to enter with you a little later. I believe that at least two will be able to go with you. Moreover, you know as well as I that we must never put our trust in men or their good will. We should give our attention to God alone Whose divine Providence will arrange everything according to His wishes. Let us always follow the good desires for His glory which He inspires, and then wait peacefully until He accomplishes His design.

I wish to ask your permission to gather information about the spirit of your Society and the state of things in your community. It is not that I have any doubts, but I wish to give assurance to the good ladies who want to consecrate themselves to that holy work. I shall ask a holy priest from your part of the country, who is known to me, for this information. You see that I am acting with the simplicity of the children of God and I ask you to act with the same confidence and simplicity.

I can assure you that in acting thus my only aim is to serve the greater glory of God and the progress of the holy work which He has inspired you to undertake. I want to have a share in it, not by mingling in it by active participation, nor as in a work that will belong to me. Most of all I want to remain outside everything that belongs to the administration of the work. I believe that God has entrusted it to you and
that, therefore, it would be presumptuous of me to interfere. God has not called me for such a work.

All I want is to help you in every possible way and to have our missionaries help the good Sisters who are giving themselves to God with such great generosity. When I suggested a foundation in Amiens to you, it was not with a view to our taking a hand in its administration, but simply to help you in imparting the right spirit to that holy work. I also wished to help those good ladies whose generosity has so greatly impressed me. Furthermore I thought that it would be useful if your good Sisters received from the start direction similar to that which they would later receive from our missionaries, and that their spirit and ours ought to be almost the same. This I leave entirely in God's hands.

The one thing I should like before I send these ladies to your community, is the assurance that you will send them to the Negro missions. They desire this and it is for this reason that they are entering your Congregation. We shall discuss this matter when you come to Paris. I hope that God will make it possible for you to meet me there.

May I now make two observations with regard to your first letter and ask you to weigh them before God. After that, act according to God's wishes and not according to my poor human prudence.

I would suggest firstly that you should avoid being too specific and particular in the prescriptions of your Rule, but should, on the contrary leave room for changes. You have not yet enough experience especially with regard to the missions. Your Rule ought to be provisional for the next four or five years. After that it could be re-written with such additions, eliminations and changes as experience will suggest.

Secondly, I consider it necessary that the Sisters who go to foreign lands should be bound by vows. I shall explain this further if you wish.
Accept, dear Reverend Mother, the expression of my sentiments of respect and charity, in which I am, in Jesus and Mary,

Your very poor and devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann

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Letter Four  La Neuville, January 17, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 80

Dear Reverend Mother Superior:

This is just a hurried note. One of the young ladies who wish to work in the Negro missions came yesterday to visit us. She is a very fervent and capable person and belongs to a wealthy family of Brittany. Her parents have very little religion themselves and are opposed to her religious vocation. She has no hope of ever obtaining her parents’ consent.

Divine Providence sent her on a journey to Paris on some family business and she availed herself of the opportunity to come here as she is eager to withdraw from the world. This seems to be the moment chosen by Divine Providence, so I decided to send her to you immediately after receiving your reply. It is urgent that she should go to you immediately, for if she returns to her parents she will not be able to leave home without causing unpleasantness.

This lady intends to write to her parents stating that she wishes to make a retreat of one month in a convent in order to examine what God wants of her. At the end of that period she will let them know where she is staying or else she will return home. I suggested that she act thus so that
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

her parents cannot say that she acted with undue haste and without sufficiently considering her vocation.

She is twenty-six years of age, is serious-minded and shows maturity. I shall tell you more about her on another occasion. I merely state here that she is a good candidate whom Our Lord is sending to you for the holy work of the Negro missions.

I should like an immediate reply as I do not wish to send her to you without first obtaining your permission. On the other hand I do not want her to remain here very long lest her parents find out where she is. Some people from her part of the country know that one of our Fathers has contacts with some ladies who live there. Please mark the letter "Urgent", so that the postman may bring it here immediately as otherwise he might not deliver it for a few days after its arrival.

Please accept the expression of my sentiments of most sincere charity, with which I have the honor to be, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LlBERMANN

P. S. There are also a few other ladies who have the same desire as this lady and who will be ready to follow her soon. I shall speak about them later. If you intend to come to Paris soon I hope you will be able to see at least two of them. If not we shall make other arrangements. Please let me know what your plans are.
Reverend Mother Superior:

I rejoice before God that you are pleased with Miss des Loges. I never doubted but that you would be pleased. I am greatly consoled that our good Master is ever increasing your zeal for our poor Negroes. Here are a few details about Guinea.

Guinea is the native country of the Negro. The mode of life of the inhabitants is completely savage. Though the climate is very hot, Monsignor Barron, the Vicar Apostolic, told me that he suffered less from the heat there than in Rome, because in Guinea there is a fresh breeze from the sea. The climate is unhealthy as you will gather from the remainder of this letter. In the matter of material goods the inhabitants are the poorest and most destitute of men. They are farmers and live on rice and vegetables; they rarely go hunting.

Those who go there to work for the salvation of these poor souls will of necessity have to live in great poverty. I don’t think I gave you these details in my last letter as I did not have time to write at length.

The people are good and docile and become attached to those who do good to them. Their religion is primitive but is well suited to prepare them for accepting the truths of Christianity. They acknowledge the existence of the Great Spirit who is said to be good and who never does harm to anyone. This will make it easy for them to accept the belief in the Incarnation and the Redemption. They also admit the existence of an evil spirit who is wicked and who is constantly persecuting them and doing them harm. They fear him and offer him sacrifices to placate his wrath.
is also an advantage as it may prepare them for belief in the Great Truths and the practice of the true religion.

You asked me what languages ought to be studied in order to deal with the Negroes. This is one of the major difficulties. The language, or rather languages, of Guinea are not very well known. There are numerous dialects and they differ considerably from one another. It would be well to know English and Spanish. English is the more important as with that to start with you will learn the language of the inhabitants during the first year that you are living among them. This first year is a year that is almost wasted, as far as missionary work is concerned, as one must spend it in becoming acclimatized. There are relations with the natives but only by means of interpreters. Those who know English or Spanish are easy to find. There are a grammar and dictionary of the language spoken in Cape Palmas and I shall ask the bishop to send me a few copies which I will forward to you. Negotiations regarding San Domingo are to be resumed and so it would be well if some of your Sisters learned Spanish in case you had to send a community there.

It would be very useful to teach writing and arithmetic to the natives and if your Sisters go to San Domingo they will have to do this. Even in Guinea arithmetic and writing are useful as you can teach them to write their own language in French characters. They have no writing of their own.

I do not have enough experience to give you any positive advice regarding manual labor. I think it is important to teach them to manage the home and how to do the ordinary things relative to their poor economic circumstances. As there is probably cotton in that country, it would be useful to teach them how to weave. Teach them also how to make bread, if the soil is suitable for the growing of wheat and barley. A knowledge of pharmacy is necessary in San Domingo and even more necessary in Guinea. We shall bring with us
1,500 francs worth of medical supplies. Some knowledge of medicine is equally important. I believe that the predominant afflictions of these poor people are skin diseases. During my next journey I shall consult an expert physician and get detailed information on this matter, and will send it to you. I know that leprosy is very common in San Domingo.

As far as food and clothing are concerned it is necessary to bring everything with you, even the very house in which you will live. Buy the various wooden parts and then put them together later. Clothes should be made from light material. During the rainy season which lasts for at least three months, the nights are very cool, even cooler than in our own country, and are also very humid. So bring with you a cloak which you can use when there is need for it.

Remember that nothing can be obtained in the country itself, not even for money, which is unknown except to the Europeans on the coast. If you want a plate of beef soup it is necessary to buy an ox and slaughter it! There are, however, fowl and eggs.

You will usually pay for what you have to buy, with objects that have been brought from Europe,—knives, articles in “crisocal”, bells and other simple toys, tobacco and the like. Without money it is impossible to find anything to eat. Bring all the clothes you need. In Guinea, cloth can only be got in the shops of Europeans and at exorbitant prices.

I have a list of everything already purchased and still to be bought and if anything is wanting, experience will tell us within a year. For the first year our diet must be the same as people living in Europe, as it would not be advisable to change our food too quickly. A year should be enough to enable the missionaries to become acclimatized.

We will so arrange their departure that they will arrive in Guinea a little after the heavy rains. If they arrived before or during the rainy season they would be liable to become ill,
but by arriving just after that they will be in no danger and will have time to get accustomed to the climate before the following rainy season. They will not leave, then, before the end of July.

There is no great hurry, therefore, for your visit to Paris. Should Bishop Barron return to France before that time, I shall let you know. If you come to Paris before that time, please let me know.

Miss des Loges should collect the small sum to which she is entitled.

Place your confidence in God and you will not be disappointed. I have written to Miss Lapique urging her to get ready to leave as soon as possible. I think she will bring a "dowry" with her, but I shall have more definite information about that in my next letter. I think we will have also two other young ladies about whom I have got very good reports. I shall try to have them make a retreat and this will enable me to judge them for myself. They are not bringing any money with them; one, I think, will be able to enter under the 8,000 francs of Miss des Loges; the other, I hope, will be sustained by the granaries of Divine Providence! Forgive my attempt at humor, for as the saying goes: "a hungry man does not enjoy a joke."

I see from your letter that, in general, you are not supposed to refuse postulants who do not bring a dowry, if they are persons who will be able to render great services. Nevertheless, we must practice a little moderation in this matter, and I, personally, intend to practice that moderation!

On the other hand, I believe that when such good vocations are offered us we should not demand a dowry from each one, for we might then risk leaving the qualities of the aspirants out of consideration. It will often happen that those who bring money are not suited for the work while others who bring nothing are well qualified. I shall do my best to
add a little of my money next year to pay for part of that dowry. I cannot however guarantee that this will be possible. I shall personally transmit your letter to the pastor of Our Lady of Victories. I have the honor of being, in the most holy charity and union of Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann

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Letter Six La Neuville, March 15, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 137

J. M. J.

My dear Reverend Mother:

I failed to reply immediately, as I had to go on two journeys immediately after I received your letter. I hope the good Lord will take into consideration your faith and confidence and will bless your poverty. Though I knew your great trust in God and felt certain that He would sustain you, I should not, nevertheless, have dared to send those two ladies to you if I had not considered it necessary for reasons of prudence and for the good of the work.

The spiritual directors of these two ladies are very interested in the work for the Negroes and they will always be able to send you a certain number of candidates. They are zealous for your holy work and ours, which are, really, one and the same work, and this fact will, I hope, make us always united in the charity of our Master and for His divine service. I considered it my duty to accept them and send one of them on with Miss Lapique. You see, I had promised
for a long time to accept them and they were already expected to come to Amiens to begin work. When they finally came, I feared that, if I refused to accept them, the fervor of those good directors might cool off and God’s work might suffer. The candidate I have sent is very good, simple, mild, patient, very docile, modest and reserved. She is not as refined and cultural as Miss des Loges but is of solid virtue. Probably she will never be suited to become Superior of a community, but she will labor tirelessly and well, under a Superior’s orders, for the salvation of souls. Her director assures me that never for any length did she lose the presence of God during the day. I do not know exactly what special talents she has. Her director says that she has good ability to learn, knows her catechism perfectly (I mean, that she can explain it to the poor). He thinks that she might have difficulty in learning English but that she would be good at instructing children. She writes poorly, knows sewing and ironing well, without being a “master” at these arts. To sum up, I don’t think that she is very strong in intellectual accomplishments, but is very solid in her piety and very devoted. This, I believe, seems to suffice.

Miss Lapique will not be able to leave before the beginning of April; so you still have time to tell me what you think about that other candidate. I have explained the situation to the two priests and asked them not to send any more postulants who have not a dowry. I am of the opinion that, in future, you should not take on an excessive burden by accepting persons who are unable to pay. However, in this matter I shall act as you decide since this is not my work but yours. You will reply that it is not yours but Our Lord’s work. You must admit, however, that it was to you that Our Lord entrusted it, and that I am only a poor man. I take the liberty to give you my opinion but you must follow God’s will, and my opinion only in so far as you find God’s will expressed in it.

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Miss Lapique is perfect in the art of ironing. She tells me that she could teach anyone to do it in six months. She can also make dresses and can do all kinds of work, and everything she does she does perfectly. She cannot make flowers but will learn how to do this before she leaves Paris. She is a very talented and accomplished person and clever at all work that is proper to her sex. She is firm and yet mild when she wants to be. She has a very keen mind and good judgment, is very good-humored and open, easy in her manner, simple and modest. In a word, I have met few people who possess so many brilliant qualities and in such a high degree. Added to this is her solid and true piety and great devotion to God and His glory.

This is a beautiful portrait and it makes me a little afraid. It is not easy for such a person not to be aware of her great qualities, and such natural gifts are ordinarily the occasion for temptations to pride, and might become a cause of trouble for that good soul. It is for this reason that I would like to tell you in advance how such a person should be dealt with.

I believe that you should be mild and moderate in your treatment of her. Use her talents—they can be useful to you—but without giving the impression that you consider them above the ordinary. Do not on the other hand act as if you were indifferent to her talents, but act as if you did not notice them, while at the same time making use of them. Treat her like anyone else with regard to the humiliations that are customary in your community and you will have no difficulty. I do not think that you should subject her to special humiliations as we read was done in the lives of some of the Saints. She has a very keen mind and would immediately see the reason for these special humiliations, and they would thus no longer do her any good. They might even amuse her and inspire thoughts of vanity.

To my mind, when you notice some temptation to self-love in her, you ought, in her better moments, try to make her see
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

it for what it is and then urge her to embrace certain practices which will lead her to perfect humility.

I believe that what I have said will not cause you anxiety since you are accustomed to the direction of souls and the temptations of novices. What I wish to show you is that you should be forewarned in view of the interior state of this devout person who is truly good and fervent, and should take the necessary precautions from the beginning and thus help this dear soul to advance in perfection.

There is also a third person. Her parents are opposed to her going to the South and wish her to remain in some convent near Amiens for a time, and there put her vocation to the religious state to the test. I have placed her in a good convent for a period of from six to eight months. I shall introduce her to you when you come to Paris and then you will be able to judge her for yourself.

I apologize for meddling in your affairs to the extent of advising you regarding spiritual direction. I feel sure that in your charity you will not take offense but will prudently make use of the advice as God will suggest.

As nothing has been yet arranged for the departure of Bishop Barron, I do not think it is much use waiting until then; and I would like to see you soon in Paris. I shall take care of that affair when the time comes.

I believe that it would be well to wait a little longer before we draw detailed plans for the things which our good Sisters ought to learn. Time and experience will tell us more exactly what is required. I expect that in a year’s time I shall know exactly what is required for Guinea and San Domingo, and I feel sure that divine goodness will open these two countries to us. I should prefer to have Guinea to San Domingo as the good to be done there would be incomparably greater, but, in all things we must find out what is God’s good pleasure and allow ourselves to be guided like children by His Providence.
English is not as difficult as you imagine, and it would not be necessary to have a perfect knowledge of the language. Spanish is easier and it might be useful in Guinea as well as in San Domingo. It is important, I think, not to make known our intentions with regard to certain countries until the time when we are ready to embark on the work.

The expenses of the passage, provisions, and even the clothes will not have to be borne by your house, but will be covered by the ecclesiastical authority that asks for your services. Therefore, you need not worry about this matter. We ourselves are obliged to collect the things we need but we would not have to bear this expense if we had not offered to do so in order to relieve Bishop Barron. He wanted to pay for our cassocks, books and linen, but I told him that we would see to these ourselves and that he could cover the rest of the expenses. It will cost me between a thousand and twelve hundred francs. There are always some incidental expenses but you can look after these to the best of your ability. Bishop Barron gave us a list of articles, to which we have added some others, and the sum of 8,000 francs, to cover their purchase. We will later receive a further sum to cover the remainder of our requirements.

Though it is not necessary to learn immediately all the things that will be useful in those countries, there are some that it would be well to prepare, as for instance pharmacy etc. I do not know if I mentioned in my last letter that one of our missionaries, who is very keen on your part of our holy enterprise, will arrive soon from San Domingo. He will, I am sure, make remote preparations for the coming of the Sisters, as soon as he arrives here. San Domingo will, perhaps, be easier than Guinea, but the harvest will be smaller. I should prefer Guinea, but we shall speak about that in its own time and place.

Since, as I told you, the ecclesiastical superiors will necessarily pay all the expenses for our dear Sisters, then it
dawned on me that you will not be faced with the necessity of demanding a dowry from the Sisters who offer their services for the missions, since they would no longer be a financial burden to the community once they had left the novitiate. Please consider this before Our Lord.

Miss Lapique has a little more than 2000 francs. I owe her 1,500 francs borrowed from that sum but I shall pay it back to you this year. She needs linen and clothes. I shall try to economize and save a few hundred francs which will assist you in covering the boarding costs of the ladies I send you. I would already have sent you something but for the great expense I had.

Accept, my dear Reverend Sister, the expression of the most sincere charity, with which I am united to you in Jesus and Mary, in Whom I am,

Your most devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Letter Seven La Neuville, March 26, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 159

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Reverend Sister:

Do not worry about the interior state of soul of our good Louise des Loges; it is a good state and there is no difficulty in seeing that it comes from God. I do not think that these violent emotions will do any great harm to her health. She may become weak for a time but I do not believe that there will be any bad aftermath. It is my belief that Our Lord
makes use of those sensible graces in His desire to dispose her to serve Him faithfully later on. We must place our trust in Him. Nevertheless, we should not neglect the precautions necessary for safeguarding her health. Should you notice that her condition is getting worse and that her health is too greatly affected by those strong emotions, you must not hesitate to distract her a little. You could shorten her meditations under various pretexts, as, for example, by giving her such functions as would necessitate the curtailment of the time of mental prayer, or in some other way. You might also seek to divert her during recreation. I am well aware that you will not be completely successful in helping her to get rid of those interior impressions, but you can, at least, reduce the evil effects they might have on her health. It would be well, however, to avoid diverting her in such a way as to distract her completely and cause her to abandon her state of sensible love, as this might eventually cause her to worry and might lead to scruples. Moreover, we must not run counter to the Holy Spirit of God Who is at work in her. Aim merely at helping the body without doing harm to the soul. It is right that she should fear illusions. Nevertheless, you must not try to encourage that fear lest you cause her trouble and anxiety of mind.

You ought to appear to reassure her, and must never say anything that might cause her to think that her fears are well founded. When I say “appear”, I mean that you should not insist on it very much, but just enough to let her know that you have no anxiety about the matter. Do not try to reassure her too much, as it is very useful for her to retain some suffering in that matter, as this will help her to control the faculty of the imagination which gets mixed up in such things. This pain which she suffers will save her from yielding too trustfully to that sensible impulse. Such a thing would be dangerous for her.
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

I think that, in relations with her, you should not seem to regard her state as extraordinary; and, after all, up to the present it is not very extraordinary. Don't worry about the weaknesses she has suffered. The violent emotions she undergoes will give you an occasion for offering her reproaches: sometimes she listens too much to herself; at other times she is too fond of sensible graces; or again, she yields interiorly to vain complacency and this makes her imagine she is somebody important, since God is so evidently good to her; or, she will imagine that she is not sufficiently generous, and so on . . . . But, in order that she may think that you are convinced that she is at fault, or that you know some fault or defect in advance, even though this is not the case, you must always have an apparently good reason for making the reproaches.

You should take these precautions with souls in general, as otherwise they might suspect that you were reproaching them simply to try them and this would have no effect, or might even have the effect of making them think that you esteemed them more than the rest.

On the other hand, be gentle with her and make her tell you all that is taking place in her soul so that the enemy may not take that good soul by surprise. Always keep her humble and perfectly obedient.

The family of Miss Lapique met with some misfortune and this necessitates that she remain until at least the Tuesday after Easter.

I am sending you good Pauline Bernard alone. She seems to be good, very good, in fact, and capable of good service some day for Our Lord and for the poor neglected souls whom He will entrust to us.

The Bishop gave me news recently about Guinea. He left an Irish priest in his Vicariate and the latter has informed
him that the king and the prominent people of that place are very favorable to the Catholics. Some Protestants tried to spread calumnies against us but the king examined the facts and found that they were calumniators. The same priest also told the Bishop that he has not yet been able to persuade even one chief to give up the many wives he has and to live with one wife. The Bishop adds that these countries need Sisters who will easily be able to inspire a horror for bigamy in the native girls and this would be an excellent antidote to the evil.

I have a feeling that he reported this because he wishes to have a small community of Sisters without delay, but I am not certain about this. If you think you have three or four Sisters among the older ones whom you could send next August, please let me know, and I shall tell the Bishop. If you have such a group, we would provide everything they might need and also arrange for their support in the countries to which they might be sent. This would not be easy, but since the Irish priest now in Guinea has expressed the desire to have Sisters, Bishop Barron could send him money and give him charge of arranging everything. I believe that this plan should be kept secret from your Sisters until we receive the reply of the Bishop, since I am not certain that that was his intention. Please reply to me as soon as possible, so that I may write to him. I should like to write to him soon as my reply is already overdue.

I shall write sometime soon to the priests who sent me those two postulants from the North. It is possible that they might find others who would be suitable. I shall let them know what are your intentions in the matter.

I am very pleased that Our Lord has made you approve my suggestion with regard to the dowry, as this will make it easier to accept postulants.
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

Respectfully yours in the charity with which I am, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

28

Letter Eight La Neuville, May 5, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 225

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Sister:

I had a letter today from Miss Lapique in which she says that she is ready to leave and will go to your convent on next Monday (May 8). I have only a little time to reply to your last letter as I will send this reply by Miss Lapique. I am very glad that she has at last decided to enter, as I always feared that a serious obstacle might hinder her.

So the good Lord continues to bestow his favors on our good Louise! I don’t know what can be done to give her consolation but you must place your trust in our good Master. If it is His wish to use that good soul for His glory in the service of others, He will know how to sustain her amidst the violent shocks to which He exposes her. I know well that this violent state of soul which God sends her weakens her body, but I am confident that there will be no lasting ill effects. It is possible that these experiences will injure her health, but I believe that despite this the good Lord will make use of her for His work. After all, even if she should become

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incapacitated, is not Jesus master of His possession? Will He not use it to fulfil His wishes? If He desires to act in that soul in a way that destroys her body, what right have we to object?

My dear Sister, you are acting most correctly in submitting to the good pleasure of the divine Master. It is my opinion that the condition of Louise will not last very long. Even if it were to last a year or more, this would not entirely stifle our hopes regarding that good person. On the contrary, her experiences will help her to become firmly established in perfection and will enable her to labor for the glory of the Master with the natural resources still left to her.

The way you treat her seems very wise to me. Do not be afraid to distract her from her absorption in God. You will not be successful but you might be able to lessen somewhat the bad effects which her state of soul has on her health. I should not like that you should be successful in distracting her from God, as there would be no advantage in that. You should avoid the things that naturally lead to dissipation, for they sometimes produce violent reactions, and the result might be the very opposite of what you wish to attain.

What she needs is a mild and peaceful distraction but at the same time one that is sufficiently strong. It would be a good thing if the members of the community did not know of her condition, but since they have begun to notice it, you should treat it like an ordinary physical weakness and avoid giving the impression that you know anything about the sensible graces that are the cause of that weakness. Avoid showing esteem for the state of Louise, but while treating her with ordinary gentleness, act towards her the same as you would to the other Sisters. I would advise that, in your ordinary conversations with her, you should avoid giving her the impression that you consider her graces extraordinary. Dismiss her ideas about ecstasy and rapture, and be satisfied
with pointing out to her that Our Lord favors her with very strong sensible graces as is His wont with beginners; that, however, because she is organically weak and has weak nerves, such experiences cause violent reactions in her body and thus cause her discomfort. Tell her that there is nothing she can do about this but practice patience until the time when those graces will be less sensible and more solid.

In speaking thus you will be telling the exact truth. Ecstasy is in fact an infirmity which comes from the weakness of our organs; but the thing that causes ecstasy is a great favor of God, a great grace of divine love which usually produces great things in souls. It is the grace of beginners and does not usually last very long. It can last for two or three years but this is exceptional. There have been extraordinary cases where such phenomena lasted for a much longer time. When those physical reactions gradually diminish or disappear they are sometimes replaced by interior pains. At other times, other graces of a similar kind, but more intimate and of a higher order, take their place. Again, it happens that souls leave that state and enter gradually into a state that is more solid, stable and of a higher order. If we are permitted to desire anything, it seems to me that this latter state is the most desirable of all.

When you come to Paris, you might do well to stay in Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. I usually stay there at the Hotel de Strasbourg. Close by is the Hotel d’Espagne. This would make it easy for us to meet and to have a much-needed discussion of the matters that concern the good of our poor Negroes. It would also bring you near the church of Our Lady of Victories. However, if your business demands that you stay elsewhere, do not put yourself to any inconvenience in trying to follow my suggestion.

The good Pauline needs to be instructed. I hope you will be able to impart to her the knowledge she needs to do the
work the good Lord has in store for her. Once she acquires that knowledge, I think she will be very useful for God’s work and will make a very good religious. I am convinced that in the beginnings of religious societies, there is a greater need for good example than for talent. The good Lord is at the helm. It is enough to have a few good heads at the principal posts. Further, the knowledge required from those who have to instruct our poor Negroes need not be extensive. Our Lord will provide.

Little Adele who is still here is more open. She is alert and yet quite modest, and is always gay. She seems to be of excellent character and well disposed to piety. I shall do my best to enable you to bring her back with you when you come to Paris.

Your most devoted and poor servant, in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

29

Letter Nine La Neuville, August 8, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 286

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Sister:

I received your letter eight days ago and felt very badly about having made you wait for a reply but the good Lord prevented me from answering.

Let us always place our hopes in Jesus Christ and in our holy Mother! We shall then be well off because we will have
uppermost in our minds that it is not our work we are doing, that we are but poor, useless instruments in the hands of our Master who uses us to accomplish His will. When we meet with success let us not rejoice because we are successful or because our honor is saved but because our divine Master is fulfilling His will and because souls will be saved. In times of distress, let us remain in our nothingness; and if we are not able to do good, we are at least reaping confusion and shame for ourselves. When we suffer such humiliations we should remain humbly prostrate before God. When men show approval let us consider them as sent by God to encourage our weakness. Let us bless the good Master for it, without attending to these men and their words (I mean, without reflecting with complacency on their remarks). When they criticize, scold and show disapproval of us, let us look upon them as God's emissaries sent to confound us and to make us realize our poverty and nothingness. We should then encourage our feelings of weakness and wretchedness in God's presence, put ourselves under His divine authority and live always in that subjection, while at the same time refusing to occupy ourselves with the men who ill-treat us or to pay attention to their words.

I am not surprised that the Bishop has become more favorably disposed towards you. Since God has given him charge of the guidance and conduct of your Society, He will give him the necessary light to direct it according to the divine plan. If the Bishop sometimes opposes your views, it is because of a secret order of divine mercy, which is directed to cleansing and purifying your soul more and more and making you more reserved and more humble and submissive to the grace of Jesus Christ, and thus enabling you to be faithful to His divine guidance. Rejoice then, my dear Reverend Mother, and accept gladly anything that befalls you. As long as your soul, in all humility and mildness, is
submissive to God, all things will serve to glorify the heavenly Father and foster the work intended by God, and will at the same time sanctify your own soul.

I find it hard to make positive pronouncements regarding the peculiarities of our good Louise which you have described to me. Her state of ecstasy does not worry me, since everything points to the fact that her mind is alright. It is true that that state weakens her, but Our Lord can do what He pleases with the souls that belong to Him. If He wishes to use that good soul for His glory, He will know how to preserve her life in this world. If He wants to purify her in a short time and then take her away, He is the Lord! Besides I know that you yourself are not worried about that.

You say that “when she was in those states, she represented certain sensible objects in her mind.” In what states? Was it when she had an “absence of sense activity”, or was it during those “states of absorption in God?” Are those representations continual or intermittent? Do they last a long time? How long? What effect do these representations produce on her soul while they are present? Do they cause that “absorption”, or do they, on the contrary, arise when she already is absorbed? What is the principal object of her devotion? What are those things she sees in Our Lord and which arouse in her those outbursts of love and cause her to become absorbed in Him? Is this His Sacred Passion or some other mystery that she represents to herself or experiences? How long has she been influenced by a great devotion for the mystery which makes such a lively impression on her? Is it her mind or her heart that is affected by the impression that is produced by those representations? I mean, is the thing that impresses her due to the fact that she considers that devotion to be beautiful, important, etc., or is she first strongly seized with a lively emotion of the heart which inflames and absorbs her mind either bit by bit
or suddenly? What are the progressive stages in those visions, or the objects of those visions? Did she first feel affectively drawn to the Five Wounds of Our Divine Savior, or was it her mind that inclined her to them, or did the vision come to her suddenly without previous impressions? What effect did her first vision produce on her? Does she attach much importance to those things? Does she seem displeased when others give no credence to the words she claims to have heard? Does she obey you reluctantly and does she dislike dismissing those thoughts from her mind when you order her to do so? You told me that “she represents certain objects to herself” etc. . . ., I think that you are describing this exactly. Is that “representation” of objects done by sight or the imagination or is it in the mind; or is it presented as something real? I mean by the latter, is she undergoing those representations in a passive manner? Is she active throughout or partially active; or is she purely passive? When these representations are not present does she arouse them actively? When they tend to diminish or disappear, does she seek to prolong them? How do these visions come to an end? Is it suddenly or do they diminish gradually? In both cases, what is taking place in her soul while she is experiencing these things? What state is she in and what impression remains in her immediately after they disappear? If these representations disappear gradually, in what way does this come about? When they are present, is her soul completely passive so that she no longer has any active movements, or does she still act so that, besides receiving the impressions, she still retains the power to produce and actually does produce movements by her own action with the assistance of grace?

If she has no active movements, has she passive movements, that is, is her soul put in motion towards those various
objects by a passive impression, or is there no sensible action at all? If she is active, do her movements whether passive or active, take place in her mind, her imagination or her heart? If in the mind or the heart, are they violent, lively, passionate, or, mild, peaceful, languid and like those of a soul that is at rest with God? Or are they movements of pure faith and are they solely in the intellectual part?

I am ashamed of bothering you with all these questions, for no doubt, most of them are useless; but it would be difficult for me to make a judgment on all that is taking place in that good soul, if I had no more information than what you sent me. I realize that one who is versed in such matters would not have to ask so many questions, but I think that I have already told you that since I have read hardly any spiritual authors, I am not at all instructed in those matters through my reading. That is why I ask you not to object to my asking so many questions.

We are dealing with an important matter and I believe that those questions will help us to see things clearly. However, I would say this, that it is possible that if you proposed so many questions to the good Louise herself, this might cause her to become fixed in her state and this would be harmful. I leave this to your own prudence. I firmly approve your manner of acting towards that good soul.

You might even sometimes choose to listen a little to her without paying any special attention to what she is saying, but this ought to be done without affectation. In general, you should not show that you attach great importance to what is taking place in her. Listen to her as if to something useful that might help the good of her soul, and because you do not want her to become a prey to illusions. Then you must still examine each thing she tells you. Even by taking such safeguards regarding the reality of some of her visions, you still cannot be certain that all are real. Even allowing
that they are all good, I would advise you not to adopt all those devotions, though they happen to be holy and approved by the Church. It is in accordance with God’s will that we should test those things before we help to disseminate them.

Rose is a good girl and she is frank and open. Still she will not always tell you all that is taking place in her soul. She needs to be studied specially so that we may know her interior life properly. Tell good Sister Rose that I am not forgetting her before Our Lord.

Tell Miss Morillon that I am praying for her as she asked. She will become a good and holy religious if she learns to keep silence well. She will have to practice silence for a long time if she wants to speak, later on, the language of Jesus. If we want to speak the language of grace well, we must forget the language of our fallen nature. We forget the latter only by perfect silence. If she wants to become a holy religious, she will also have to observe the rule perfectly in its smallest details. All, however insignificant their piety or religious spirit, observe the important and essential rules. Holy religious and those who aspire earnestly to become such, observe the smallest rules and this because of their great love for God. For when it is a question of pleasing God everything becomes great and important. She must also become perfectly obedient, obeying immediately all the known intentions of her Superior, with cheerfulness and humility and without making objections. When observations are made to her she should accept them and love sincerely those who make these observations. She should be entirely open with her Superiors, telling them simply all that is taking place in her soul, the pains as well as the pleasures, the temptations as well as the graces, and she must follow the advice given her.

She should never yield to discouragement for any reason whatever, but should inform her Superior immediately when
sadness or discouragement enter her soul. She must never become annoyed with herself or worried at the sight of her imperfections. She should never compare herself with anyone unless it be to humble herself and be edified by the perfections she sees in her Sisters. She ought never to judge anyone and, should such thoughts enter her mind, she should humble herself before Our Lord Who said: "Judge not and you shall not be judged." She should consider it particularly serious to judge and scrutinize her Superiors. If the devil has tempted her seriously in this matter, she should never make known her judgment to anyone, nor indulge in grumbling. If she does make it known it ought to be to her Superior and by way of self-accusation. Let her be full of confidence since it is Mary who brought her where she is and it is Mary who will make her advance in perfection.

May I ask you, Reverend Mother Superior, to tell Miss Morillon that I have returned the two hundred francs to Father Schwindenhammer. It would be well if she fixed up things with regard to her deposit in the savings bank. Little Adele is anxious to leave. She is well and will probably enter towards the middle of September. She will have to go alone as the other little one, about whom I spoke to you, did not come.

Father Tisserant wrote to me from the Island of Saint Lucia (an English colony in the West Indies) that he had found a mulatto lady between twenty-six and thirty years of age, who is full of piety and zeal, and takes delight in serving poor Negro women and the sick. "She belongs to a respectable family" to use Fr. Tisserant's words. He has had her under observation for several months and considers that she would be suitable for your holy work. He asks if he could send her to you and if he could use some of the money which is to the credit of Miss Lapique to pay for her passage. There are thus two questions: first, would it be wise to accept her?
secondly, should her voyage be paid for with the money of Miss Rose?

To the first question I would answer yes, provided her good dispositions are certain. I should say no to the second question. First of all it would be necessary to obtain Miss Lapique's consent, and she ought not to give that consent. It would also require your consent and I believe that you likewise ought to refuse, as I do not think we should pay postulants. It is already a sufficient burden for you to accept them when they bring nothing with them. You are not in a position at present to undertake such expenses. If God wants vocations He will send her to you; if not, you need not go and bring her over.

You are well justified in having confidence in God, since Our Lord's goodness and Mary's protection have been sufficiently in evidence to confirm you in that confidence. As a safeguard against presumption, distrust self and be convinced of your poverty and helplessness. Remain thus in peace and humility before God and refuse to be carried away by an excited imagination or pride. When we have such an interior spirit of humility and peace, we can boldly place our trust in God alone and we have nothing to fear.

One all-embracing rule regarding the subject of superiorship is that we did not come to be served but to serve. You are the first servant of your community. The difference between your service and that of domestic servants is that you must sacrifice yourself for your mistresses. An ordinary domestic servant owes only his labor to his mistress. Our Master has said: "I did not come to be ministered unto but to minister and to lay down my life." These words sum up all the duties of Superiors, for they were addressed to them. Mildness and humility should therefore be the characteristics of your rule. You must not ask your subjects to execute YOUR orders, but the orders of the Master, because both
you and they are His servants. You are a domestic servant in the house of Jesus Christ, and are charged with seeing that the children carry out His will. A domestic servant is the servant of both children and master, and she must give very careful attention to his beloved children and respect them in her heart. She must herself fulfill, and make others fulfill the will of the Master, but she must not assume the airs of the mistress. If you do this Our Lord will tell you: “You know not of what spirit you are; yours should be the spirit of a servant towards souls, and you assume the spirit of a master.”

You might object, “Must I not see to it that my authority is respected?” I reply: “Your authority must not be respected, but the authority of Our Lord who is in you and Whom you represent in regard to your Sisters, while you yourself remain a very poor servant. You do not deserve respect; Jesus alone deserves it and it is He alone whom your religious must respect in you.”

Now note that if you strive to make them respect the authority which Jesus has given you, that self-love which is inborn in us as a consequence of sin, will constantly tend to demand respect for your own person, and insensibly the respect that is due to the sovereign Master of heaven and earth will be directed to a poor and useless creature. Forgive me for using such terms, but it is true that we are all wretched creatures and do not deserve the attention of others, much less their respect.

But, you will say to me, how can I govern a community, if my authority is not respected? I do not say that your authority should not be respected. Your Sisters must have the greatest respect for you, but not for yourself who are nothing, but for Jesus Christ, their Master, Whose representative for them you are. If one or other Sister sometimes is wanting in that respect, you must regret it and pray much, because she has failed in respect for Jesus Christ, but you must not
LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

consider it your duty to avenge your authority, much less to be angry with or entertain aversion for such a Sister. On the contrary, try to develop a great and sincere affection and compassion for her and lead her to accept her obligation of respect. In trying to achieve this you should be entirely occupied with the interior state of that Sister, and do not reflect on the injury You have received yourself. When you entertain such ideas you will run the risk of having thoughts of self-love instead of the thought of compassion which is a holy thought. If you think of the insult you will be prone to choose wrong means, but when it is compassion that moves you, you will choose the means that are appropriate. The use of sweetness and mildness is most in harmony with the spirit of our good Master.

Now, how ought you to act in order that the authority of Jesus residing in you may not be despised? This is done by not striving to make others respect You, and by avoiding airs of superiority. It is by adopting such airs that earthly kings lord it over their subjects, and even so the subjects are expected to consider them as benefactors; but we must not act in this way. Our Lord is our Model. Our government must be a holy servitude consecrated to Jesus Christ and to the souls He entrusts to us. He has given us His command: “Let him who is the first among you become as the servant of all.”

But how can we act as servants and at the same time ensure that the authority of Jesus Christ will be respected? By acting as He acted. Be modest, serious, peaceful, consistent and humble; renounce yourself in all things and never seem to seek yourself in anything; rely on God alone. If you act thus you will not have to seek the esteem of your Sisters, nor should you even think about this. Do not seek to be loved by them, but love them all with equal tenderness. Treat them with mildness and sweet firmness, without rigor or harsh-
ness. If you do that, you will be loved and esteemed, but if on the contrary you look for love and esteem, you will be the slave of men and will no longer rely on God alone.

You may say that I thus run counter to all the ordinary principles laid down for Superiors. I do not think so, but I want them to reach the same results without being preoccupied with these principles. The words of Our Lord which I have quoted are formal and explicit. If we do not adopt the spirit of Jesus, we cannot claim that we are His own; and if we govern in a manner that differs from His, we do not possess His spirit. If our conduct is truly holy and modelled on His, we need not occupy our mind with our personal authority. This is difficult, for superiorship demands supreme evangelical perfection.

In your conduct with your Sisters, when occasion demands that you give orders, grant or refuse permissions, or in general exercise any function of authority, act with mildness, modesty and recollection, and speak little. With subordinates let that little you say express mildly and humbly what you have in mind; rarely explain your reasons for giving such an order, etc. If you have done something wrong or imprudent, or if in some circumstance your advice was unwise, do not try to excuse yourself, but allow each Sister to think what comes to her mind, and humble yourself at the feet of Our Lord.

Always remember that gentleness and persuasion penetrate into souls, while firmness and rigor only cause an external change. Therefore, with regard to the external order in the house, be firm and yet mild and gentle. With regard to the direction of the interior life of souls, be mild and gentle. If you want to lead souls, you must learn how to bend and be adaptable. You should follow them in their various states, considerate at all times, adapting yourself to each in order to support and encourage them according to their various
dispositions and states of soul. This is what St. Paul means by becoming all things to all men.

Note well that severity and direct opposition to the evil dispositions of souls serves merely to break them; it almost never leads to a cure. Tolerate the evil for a long time, and if, sometimes, you think you ought not to suffer it any longer, suffer it still, and you will see in the end that you did the right thing; whereas you will hardly ever see happy results from severity and direct opposition.

Remember what I told you in Paris: the majority of souls are lost through discouragement. This is the universal evil especially among the devout. Sustain and encourage, and you will see that Our Lord will come to your assistance. We often reprove and scold and pursue a soul that is doing wrong under the pretext of preventing an offence against God, and often this is not true, for we are acting in impatience. We are too weak and too imperfect to support the weaknesses and imperfections of others, and we convince ourselves that we are acting through zeal; but, however hard we try, we find it difficult to so convince ourselves.

Be also on your guard, my dear Reverend Mother, against one fault which is rather common among women Superiors: it is a certain lack of sympathy with persons whose character they dislike, and a particular repugnance for certain faults and ways of behavior. These Superiors are inclined to judge such persons unfavorably and to treat them harshly for such faults; they show coldness, indifference, testiness, severity, etc., towards them.

Try also to avoid having a special affection for one or other Sister. There should be no preferences and, still less, any manifestation of such preferences. When you examine and judge your Sisters—a thing that is necessary since you must reach a proper estimate of them—do not allow any bitterness to enter your mind, but let charity fill your heart and let
charity be the soul of your examination so that, in spite of the evil you discover, you may not be moved by irritation, interior severity, or lack of appreciation. Let two elements dominate such judgments: First, your mind should be free from prejudice and evil suspicion, and should look peacefully at the workings of the soul you are seeking to know. Examine the soul calmly in the presence of God, not assuming any superiority to your Sister, but acknowledging your poverty before God. When you see some evil, you should will charity and sympathy for the soul; humble yourself and feel sorry with all meekness and trust in God.

Secondly, being likewise at peace in God's presence, consider the means necessary for the cure of that soul which is afflicted by evil, the means suitable to her particular state, and adopt these means calmly and confidently, using them always with charity and following the guidance of the Spirit of God Who enlightens our minds.

In connection with being abandoned to God's will, it seems certain that you should not take into consideration the question of money when deciding about postulants. Your work is God's work and He will not forsake you. We should not take on any work if we are not able to place our trust in God. I need not develop this point because I am certain that you accept it.

I find it difficult to give you positive advice regarding the other point you mentioned, since it does not concern your work essentially, but is an undertaking that is merely connected with it. Here we are no longer dealing with fundamentals, and you would need to look for a manifestation of God's will before you plan to leave the ordinary course of things. Regarding your essential work it is God's design that you ought to place all your confidence in Him alone; this is of the very nature of the work. If you all feel an intimate attraction for abandoning yourselves to God's guidance, you
need not fear that you will commit a fault of presumption. If doubts, worries, and embarrassments of various kinds arise, I would advise you not to rely on that idea of abandonment, but to wait until God's will is more clearly manifested.

Bishop Barron will be here one of these days. Please reply immediately regarding the mulatto woman, and pray for us.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Letter Ten    La Neuville, August 25, 1843   Vol. 4, p. 323

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother:

Little Adèle is bringing my reply to your last letter. The Sisters of the community in which she stayed praise her very highly. Her conduct was always most edifying and above reproach. She has shown great courage in trying to follow her vocation. I believe that she will make a good member of your society. I take the liberty of asking on her behalf that the six months which she spent in that devout community should count as part of her postulancy. The courage and constancy with which she bore the opposition of her family and persevered in her vocation, despite her attachment to them, should be considered as a period of trial. If you add to that another six months during which you yourself can test her, you will be able to judge whether she is suitable for your community. I presume to propose this to you be-
cause I believe that you promised that the time she would have to wait would be counted as part of her postulancy. However, I am not certain about this promise. I make this suggestion to you in all simplicity and leave it to you to judge whether it is proper or not. It is not my place to meddle in any way in the affairs of your community.

Adèle will, I think, bring along the sum of two hundred francs, some of which she will have to use to pay for her journey, but a small sum will be left for other expenses. She has linen but no bed sheets. Had I not been obliged to provide for six missionaries who are ready to leave, I would have provided her with a few pairs. Please keep the two hundred francs which Miss Morillon owes me, not as partial payment for the 1,500 francs owed to Rose Lapique, but to help you in covering the expenses of little Adèle.

Do not become discouraged at the want of material resources. Place your confidence in God. Do not spend more than is necessary, but at the same time abandon yourself to the good Master regarding the things you need. I believe that we ought not to refuse good candidates because of lack of money and I know that you share this opinion. If you notice that you have not enough resources, reduce the number of the poor children in your care rather than the number of your postulants. I believe that God will not be found wanting to you, He who provides even for the needs of the wicked. Work for His glory and He will work for you. You will have moments of trial, sadness and discouragement from time to time, but bear all these things with humility, love, confidence in God and submission to His will. Let your soul be at peace and silent before our Lord Jesus, and allow Him to do with you whatever He pleases.

You will, at times, also have to bear the heavy burden of dealing with imperfect souls and you will have your worries
about the future. But all this is as nothing for a soul that lives for God and in God. Such a soul prostrates herself before her Master, at peace in His presence, and with humility, meekness, and love. She walks in all simplicity, accepting things as they are, doing her best to bear everything, to be patient with herself, and all this with a view to procuring the glory of Him Who is the sole end and goal of her life. Remember, my dear Reverend Sister, that you are living for Jesus Christ. The life He lends you must be spent for His glory; nor ought you to seek satisfaction and happiness; think rather of suffering for His glory. If you are enjoying your life then you are not sacrificing your life for Jesus; but if you seek to live in Jesus and die to self, you will find it easy to accept, to receive, and to bear the enormous burden of caring for souls and administering a work of God.

Practice resignation, my dear Reverend Mother, and carry the burden which the divine Master lays upon you with peace, love and abandonment. Do not be frightened at the faults you see in souls; suffer them as Jesus suffers them, lead them as He leads them, console them as He consoles them with sweetness and peace. Where possible avoid annoying souls. Trials are for perfect souls; the imperfect we should direct as best we can and we should use gentleness to obtain from them what they are able to give.

Forgive me for writing in this perfunctory and sententious manner. I am hurrying because of the departure of our missionaries. You know that I do not presume to direct you but simply to convey to you what is in my mind, and so I continue in the same vein. Avoid most carefully in your community any disagreements that arise because members come from different parts of the country. This postulant is the fifth that has come to you from the North. These five must not form a community within a community but there must be a fusion born of the charity and kindness of the older members.
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who come from the South and who form the major part of your community.

Do not worry because Rose wants to go to the missions before the older members. It would be well if you did not speak of it to her, but turned her attention away from the subject and let her believe that she will certainly go there. When the time comes she will listen to reason. She will not, I think, be hard to manage, provided she is allowed to work for the good of the missions.

Avoid worrying too much about Louise. Do not conclude that she is the victim of her imagination because she has sometimes been misled by it. I am convinced that even in the case of the greatest saints who have had extraordinary supernatural experiences, there have been visions in which their imagination had some share, and some visions were purely creations of the imagination. It would be very strange if the weakness and wretchedness of human nature born in sin did not manifest themselves even in the midst of the greatest graces, especially when supernatural experiences affect the constitution of a person. I am not in a position, from the little you told me about her, to make an absolute pronouncement about the state of Louise, but I am becoming convinced that the supernatural has a share in her condition. The very fact that I have asked you so many questions shows you that I need further details. You say that if those ecstasies were to cease entirely, this would be proof that they were the product of her imagination and the result of organic weakness. I do not agree with you in this. They could become rare and finally stop entirely and yet they might not have been produced by the imagination, at least not all of them, nor even the greater part of them. Such matters admit of variation. Some may have come from her imagination, especially towards the end.
What I suggest is that you examine the effects that have remained in her soul. I would judge the tree by its fruits, and in this way we shall not go wrong. Do not easily convince yourself that a good and humble person like Louise becomes the prey of such grave illusions, and that these afterwards produce good results for her sanctification. Again take care not to plunge her into anxiety and discouragement. Even if all the things that pertain to her state had their origin in illusion—which is not the case—you should make use of them to benefit her progress. If she becomes distressed and discouraged, you will find it very difficult to rouse her from that state. Act then, test her, try her, but only in proportion to the strength you know her to possess.

May the light of Our Lord be with you. I will pray for this with all my heart.

(signature missing)

31

Letter Eleven  La Neuville, September 16, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 337

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother,

I see that you are firmly nailed to the cross and that your heart is pierced by a thousand swords of sorrow. It is possible that you will have to bear these things for a long time. You are no doubt sorrowful unto death but try to realize that giving birth to children and educating them is accompanied by much pain. When we first take on the work of God, we do not reflect on all the bitterness that will fill our hearts before that work is completed. We might consider those things in theory but we have no practical experience
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

of this pain. If we had, we would not have the courage to undertake the works. Nevertheless, with God’s help, you will persevere in your good desires and make use of the cross to advance God’s work through the sanctification of your soul. Be strong in faith and put your trust in God and He will supply everything necessary. The enemy will not be able to destroy what God’s eternal decree has decided to accomplish.

The letters of those poor girls cause me great grief and embarrassment. I considered and reconsidered the sad affair, but it was all in vain. I did not know what to answer to those poor afflicted souls to make them recover peace of mind. I choose the middle path of not declaring myself for or against their claims, lest a formal pronouncement on my part might aggravate Rose’s temptation and sadden them all. I considered that I might be able to allay their emotion if I temporized and especially if I told them that I intended to go to Castres.

This will set their minds at rest a little. Further, since they have not given me a full account of the case, I cannot get a clear idea of their state of mind, nor can I know what would satisfy or console them. They say vaguely that they believe and fear that they are not where God wants them to be, yet they do not say explicitly what is the cause of their trouble.

Little Rose is the one who suffers most severely. I hope it will do her good. It is in accord with God’s providential designs and will serve to sanctify that good soul. But her needs are great; God grant that her mental afflictions will help her to improve to a certain extent. She should be handled with great consideration so that she will stand up well under this trial.

I believe that I told her that the novitiate lasted three years normally. I even seem to remember that because of that she
expressed the desire to have it shortened, and that I told her that perhaps (word missing) something, but that it was not certain.

Poor Louise also has her troubles! Be full of charity towards her, my dear Mother! Be mild, patient, and sustain those poor afflicted souls. Watch over Louise lest she commit a fault and suffer harm from all these troubles, and lest the enemy prevail in her soul at the expense of Our Lord. I still contend that her favors, past and present, are from heaven. The imperfections and faults that still remain can co-exist with these graces.

I don't think that it would be wise for Rose to talk things over with Louise or the other Sisters, as this would merely tend to increase their trouble and agitation. Hence you will notice in my reply to Rose, that I recommend her not to speak about these matters to Louise.

If you have the opportunity, why not begin to study English? We should always prepare things a long time in advance. If we wait until everything is ready it will be too late. The most important thing to do is to converse with people who know the language. It is an easy language to read but difficult to speak.

We have just sent off seven missionary priests and three brothers. They will be divided into two communities, one of which will go to Senegal and will land at the island of Goree which is near that country. The other group will go to Guinea and will probably settle down at Garroway, near the Cape of the Palms. The Bishop intends to set up residence in Senegambia. Our missionaries are on their way; please pray for a happy voyage and God's blessing on their future missionary work.

Please excuse this hurried letter; I am overburdened with work that clamors for attention. Let us pray for our poor
Dear Reverend Mother:

You see now what it means to undertake a great work for the glory of Jesus Christ! It is necessary for us to pass through great tribulations. Consider yourself fortunate that you thus resemble the One for whom you labor. He began with sorrow and ended with ineffable joy; He began with ignominy and anguish and ended with glory. Submit calmly to the divine will which places that burden upon your shoulders. We are not on earth for enjoyment but to suffer, and it does not matter that we poor "nothings" suffer anguish, humiliation and extreme pain. Jesus alone is great and glorious! To Him be all glory and to us, poor creatures, be all shame! Remain in your nothingness before Him, and consider yourself most blessed when, for love of Him and for His glory, you are weighed down by tribulation.

It is with cause that you are angry with me because of all you have to suffer on account of those souls who are so sorely tempted, for it was I who placed this burden on you. Now let me tell you the whole story, for it seems to me that I have not done so before.
From the very beginning one person urged me to undertake the founding of a society that would work for the Negro missions. My great weakness made me fear the taking on of the additional burden of a society for women, and I felt incapable of making such a decision. I honestly believed that I was too weak for this heavy responsibility. I felt extreme repugnance for and a sort of horror of launching such an enterprise; hence my great joy and consolation when I got word of your community.

I frankly confess that I preferred that Our Lord should entrust such a work to you than to me. This shows you what sort of a man I am. All this took place before I became acquainted with Rose and Louise. Father Tisserant was their first director and he helped them to decide their vocation; after his departure they asked me for similar help. I had already made arrangements with you, or had at least nearly completed such arrangements, for Louise came to you at Castres only a few weeks after they had contacted me.

It was always my intention that they should be attached solely to your community and be members of it like the other Sisters. It would have been impossible for me to speak otherwise since I always loathed the idea of being in charge of another community besides my own. Therefore I could not possibly have entertained such a thought. On the contrary, it was my firm intention that these good souls should become members of your community alone and that I should not have any authority over them. It seems to me that I always made it clear to them that I did not want to interfere in the conduct of your work, or mix in the business of their own consciences. I merely told them that they might write to me if they so wished. ...

They are correct in saying that I told them that they would be sent to the missions, and that they would not be employed in any other work in France. This was quite natural. These
poor girls had no other vocation than that of going to the missions, and I could not have sent them to you except under the condition that they would go there. I remember that their first director, Father Tisserant, often said to me: "If you send them to the convent of Castres, they will be kept in France and their plans will be frustrated." I always answered him that this was the condition I would lay down, that they should be sent to the Negro missions. I recall that I wrote this to you. I also recall telling you when I was in Paris (I don't know on what occasion) that you were quite free to keep them in France, but I added, "provided you employ them in work for the missions, in which case you would fulfill the conditions." You could, for instance, keep Louise in the novitiate to form those who are destined for the missions, and she would not be able to object to this. I believe that it was on the occasion of that visit that I told you about that.

I know well that you do not want to exclude them from the work of the missions, and this is precisely why I believe it would be prudent for you to convince them that they will go to the missions, and give them this promise. This, I feel, would restore their peace of mind. It would have been a good thing if the question had not been raised at all since you do intend to send them there anyway.

I think that all you can do is to dismiss those among them whom you consider unsuitable for the missions, or propose to them that they remain under the condition that they will be employed in other works in France. But you have a duty to send those you consider suitable to the missions, because of the agreement, at least tacit, which you made with them.

Perfect obedience would demand that they be more adaptable and docile, but I believe that it would not be good to speak about that at this time, especially since they are still so far away from the end of their novitiate. It would be well to help them to keep in mind the thought of their first voca-
tion, and to let them grow peacefully in the virtues that they need and which they still lack. When we have to deal with people with lively imaginations, it is important to keep away strong temptations until we find that they are firmly established in virtue. Once we arouse such thoughts and imaginings we are in for trouble. Self-love will partly rule them, and sometimes it will gain even absolute dominion; it will show itself in all its power and might lead them to unfortunate extremes, at times even for a long period. We must not be astonished at the distress of these poor girls, seeing that their imagination is aroused and they are still weak in virtue. They are separated from their friends and their own part of the country, and such circumstances easily arouse grave temptations, for these girls now imagine that all their hopes are shattered. Let us not forget that they left everything to follow the vocation to which they thought God had called them.

When ardent minds meet such obstacles as the present they are greatly irritated. That is why I entreat you, dear Reverend Sister, to have sympathy for these poor souls in their present condition, to console them by removing the stumbling block from their path. Reassure them by promising that they will go to the missions. Be content with urging them to apply themselves to the acquiring of the virtues that are necessary for such a work.

Pardon me for pleading the cause of those good girls with so much vigor. I owe it to them since it was because of my promise that they left all to join your community. It was because they felt sure that they would go to the missions that they came to you. If I were you I should encourage that intention in their minds. It would be unjust for me to abandon them at this stage.

Moreover, you know that I am not afraid of speaking my mind to you, as you yourself wish I should do, and you have
given me permission to do so. I tell you, therefore, that this question should not have been raised and that they should not have been given the occasion for this distress. Now that the thing has happened, I see no other way of undoing the harm than that you should reassure and calm them. How could I now tell them that they ought to be resigned to remain in France, when I had given them the assurance that they would go to the missions, and since I am convinced that you would do them an injustice by keeping them there against their wishes? All I can say to them is that the more perfect way for them would be to submit to the holy will of God. I cannot tell them that they must submit to the will of their Superior rather than to God's will, since, having already told them that it was God's will that they should go to the missions, this would upset them. Forgive me for insisting on this point, but I believe that this is the source of all that is troubling them. I did not appreciate this when I wrote my first letter; had I done so I would have mentioned it.

You will object that you are not allowed to accept subjects on the condition that they will go to the missions and will not be employed in France. That is a question which does not concern me at the moment, since it applies to another matter. It does not enter into the question we are now discussing. The only thing we ought to consider is what are the conditions under which these girls were received. The condition was that they would be sent to the missions, and it is easy to see that those conditions were necessary at the beginning. I was on the point of forming a society for the missions and you had a like desire. With you, however, it was only one project of a number. You had other works in view besides the missions, but you had difficulties. When I heard about your project, I gladly seized the opportunity which divine Providence gave me, and sent you the girls
who were destined to enter the small society for the missions. You, on your part, were in need of such subjects to initiate and give a decisive direction to your society. It was therefore quite natural for both of us (incomplete in original); so the condition, that they were to be sent to the missions, was accepted and the agreement was made accordingly.

On my part I could not have sent you those postulants had I not been assured that you would send them to the missions, for I had the double duty of safeguarding the interests of those sent to you and also the interests of a community that was destined to labor for the Negro missions. Now, if I had not laid down that condition, how could I have taken a chance on the future of those girls? Secondly, I should have run the risk of failing in my plan for a society that would work for the Negro missions, since if your community failed to give me the assurance that these girls would be sent to the Negro missions, I should then have had nothing to go on except your good desire for such a work. If, on the other hand, I had left the decision regarding those girls entirely in your hands, so that you could either keep them in France or send them to the missions, I would have lost the few vocations that were at my disposal.

This then is why I ask you once more to reassure these ladies and to grant them the fulfillment of their desires. The time of their departure, however, must be entirely in your hands, though I would strongly urge that you should not mention this latter fact. Do not let them think that you will keep them after their novitiate in order to give them further training. What good would come from telling them such things? You should leave the matter alone and turn their minds away from it.

I also entreat you, through your love of God, to put aside your lack of confidence, to reestablish perfect accord between you and the girls and to avoid showing any signs of distrust.
Look upon their temptation as something that will pass, let things return to the condition in which they were in the beginning, and reestablish mutual confidence. If you wish I shall not send any other postulants except under the condition that they will be willing to remain in France if that is necessary.

A priest of Arras spoke to me about two other candidates. I shall tell them that this is the condition under which they will be accepted. With regard to the four or five, make an exception, even if it happens to be contrary to your original intention. We must admit that, at least, there has been a misunderstanding in the matter. Do not be so unbending. I shall explain things thus in my letters to Rose and Louise. You can see that something is amiss and that they are not entirely wrong, since Pauline, who does not even know what malice is, shares the opinion of the others. When I consider the matter I feel certain that something is wrong, and the only thing I can find is that they think that their original plan of going to the missions will be thwarted.

Rose says that she wants to be the first to leave for the missions. This is childishness. She will go when she is sent. She is excited, and when she is in that state she gets out of control. Make use of every means to calm and sustain those girls. Do not show that you are dissatisfied with or distrust or dislike those who are suffering temptations of this kind. You ought to support them with all your heart. If we succeed in calming them, I believe that we need not worry as to how things will turn out with them. They are undergoing a very serious temptation but it will pass. Those who have suffered harm will recover and will attain a high degree of perfection.

My opinion about Louise should not influence your own estimate of her. I am not acquainted with the circumstances and therefore not in a position to pass judgment on the mat-
ter. Still I cannot convince myself that all that happened was purely in the imagination. It is easy to say things like that in a speculative way, but from what I learned of Louise before she left for Castres, I find it difficult to change my opinion of her. It is, of course, quite true that every time the imagination plays a part in such things, self-love inevitably manifests itself. Louise was at heart sincerely and deeply humble. She preserved this humility during the first period of her state. It was only later on that self-love showed itself, and I think that the imaginary state appeared only at the end. In any case discussing this matter leads nowhere; the important thing is that she be cured of her present temptation and restored to peace.

You should, I think, be on your guard against something which usually occurs when we deal with people who are suffering severe temptations. We are always inclined to judge unfavorably all that has gone before, and to misinterpret such things in the light of the bad things we see in the temptation. This prejudice comes from our natural distrust of our neighbor and our irritation with those who are tempted in this manner. Add to this the fact that we are afraid that we have made a mistake, and this fear is rooted in self-love. We should be full of charity, and try to overcome our distrust by practising simplicity. Curb your displeasure, your opposition and irritation, and cultivate a great spirit of kindness and tenderness towards those souls who are so severely tempted. Tend always to judge them favorably; despise that fear and timidity which prompts you to think, act, judge and speak to the disadvantage of those who are so worthy of our compassion, for we are thus prompted because we are anxious to safeguard our honor in our own eyes and in the eyes of others. We should humble ourselves and remain in our nothingness before God, desire to become anathema in the eyes of men, and to appear ignorant, superstitious and des-
picable, for the sake of serving the spiritual good of those whom we ought to love and treat more tenderly than others. If we do not see clearly what is their trouble, let us suspend our judgment, refraining from favorable or unfavorable opinions, treat them with tender affection, alleviate their pains and deal with their temptations as one deals with physical ailments.

Do not think, my dear Reverend Mother, that I reproach you for the way you have judged and acted towards them. God preserve me from such a thing! I only wish to describe what ordinarily takes place in souls that are weak, wretched and full of malice. We are very much inclined to sacrifice souls, and I am worse in this respect than everyone else. I have experience in such matters. I have had to deal with at least half a dozen souls that were tempted like those ladies. I considered the unfavorable judgments that were generally made against them, and the successive mistakes made by the critics, and I beg you to avoid such mistakes. I myself have struggled for a long time against this wrong method of dealing with afflicted souls. I have committed many faults of that sort and have learned to correct my way just a little, but at the expense of those dear souls. Oh, how much the Lord will punish me for it! I tremble and fully deserve it! For when we devour sick sheep, because we are seeking our own advantage, we are truly wolves. Almost all those whom I have seen undergoing such terrible trials, except one with whom I am not in contact, have been freed from that state. They have become more or less perfect, but all have great qualities and they immolate themselves constantly for the glory of the Master.

Let me give you just one example of a person, which is an extreme case. He was a young man who, like all those to whom I referred, had a very active mind. He was very fervent at the beginning and everyone admired him. Yet
there was still in him a remnant of self-love; he certainly had very much more of it than Louise ever had. This, however, went almost unnoticed by others. It so happened that this man was placed in a situation where others opposed his excellent spiritual views. As a result of these contradictions, or for some other reason, he fell into a state of mind such as I have never seen in any other person. The temptations to which Rose and Louise are subject are not one tenth as strong as that which he endured.

Now, it was said at the time that his initial fervor was evil. Some said that he would become insane, others that he would never do any good, and all spoke according to their own views. Men who were very devout and well versed in spiritual matters, three in particular, were asked for their opinion. Two of them judged him very unfavorably, and recommended that he adopt means that were very bad. The third judged more in accord with the charity of Jesus Christ, but he was the only one of the six or seven consulted, who refrained from judging unfavourably. All the others yielded to a feeling of displeasure, to that natural distrust which is always prompt to suspect evil and claims to have discovered it as soon as there is any basis for conjecture. The result of all this was that that good man was finally freed from his temptation. He later became profoundly humble, and is one of the holiest and most zealous priests I know.

Let us learn then from that example not to be eager to condemn souls that are tempted, nor to judge them severely; nor ought we to despair of their future perfection. We must bear all things with the charity and humility of Jesus Christ, our Master. We are much more unbearable to Him than these poor souls are to us, and He suffers us, who are but slaves. How much more ought we to bear the pains and ills of His children! If He consoles us who have offended Him and deserve a thousand times to be lost in hell, ought not we to
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console these poor sick sheep whom He has entrusted to us? Have courage then, my very Reverend Mother, be strong in the faith that is animated by charity, be vile in your own eyes, be ready to endure all things for the love of Jesus, and carry out peacefully, calmly, humbly and vigorously the work He has confided to you. One does not save souls without being crucified.

May the love of Jesus produce these sentiments in your heart!

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

33

Letter Thirteen La Neuville, December 13, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 460

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Reverend Mother:

I have delayed rather long in replying to you because I wished first to fix up our affairs with the Ministry. The matter is now settled and the freedom of our missionary work is also guaranteed. A salary of 1,500 francs a year will be given to each missionary. That means that three such salaries will go to each station and 400 francs to each Brother. Besides this the government will provide a chapel and a residence for each community, free passage and enough money for the trousseau and for the journey from here to the port of embarkation. These are the principal advantages. Moreover, our sick will be cared for at the expense of the State. The government will supply the things needed for worship
and the missionaries have the right to be accepted aboard government ships for the voyages they have to make.

I trust that at a later date, when you are ready, God will also take care of your affairs. I think that we should not rush into things, for the results would be less satisfactory. Let us place our confidence in God and our good Mother and all will go well.

Never allow yourself to become dejected because of crosses and tribulations. You will learn more and more what it means to undertake a work for the glory of God, especially when it is an entirely new society you wish to establish. If you had merely considered your personal interests, your own comfort and peace here in this world, it would have been so much better to enter a cloister and to live there as a simple lay Sister. But a person who wants to belong to God does not do what pleases herself. She must not seek her own satisfaction but must be at the disposal of the Sovereign Master, ready to be employed at anything He considers good, and ready, if necessary, to be despised by all creatures. Let us not have proud thoughts, thinking that we are undertaking great things for the Lord; but we must remain prostrate before Him and consider ourselves most fortunate when, for the fulfilling of His designs, we are sacrificed to His adorable will in any way He desires.

It is understood that we ought to work with all our strength at the work God is pleased to entrust to us, but we must avoid making this "our own work". We should make use of all the means He puts at our disposal to do the work as perfectly as possible for His glory, but all the time remaining at peace and not being excessively concerned about success. It is our task to plant and to water; to Him belongs the task of bringing forth and gathering fruits. These fruits are His, and His are the field and the laborers. Hence He has the full right to employ the laborers as He wishes, when he
wishes, and for any purpose of His choice. He, the Master, decides whether He will allow us to produce fruits or remain without them, make us labor or keep us idle; let us be prepared before Him, to be used as His instrument, or to accomplish nothing if such be His wish.

Divine goodness will use the interior and exterior crosses you have to bear, in order to train you in that heavenly life and greatly increase your attachment to God. In accordance with God's designs there will come one storm after another. Be strong in faith and always remain prostrate at His feet in humility and love. Be willing to be used by Him according to His wishes, and desire to belong to Him and not to self, so that the work in which you are engaged may be His and not yours, and the souls you serve may be sanctified for Him and not for your own satisfaction, or by your own choice.

You will have to suffer sorrows and great afflictions in order that those souls may be sanctified. He has suffered much for you and you are not yet sanctified. Their sanctification will be accomplished through you and at the expense of your poor nature. Have courage, therefore, my very Reverend Mother! It is a blessed thing to be able to suffer in and with Jesus. You will profit by your sufferings if you bear them with humility and love as you prostrate yourself in His presence. In general I approve your method of dealing with these good souls.

I am certain that the good little Adèle will accept with resignation whatever will be decided with regard to her postulancy. If Miss Morillon is not a suitable candidate, what can we do? Pray that the Lord may enlighten you. It is your responsibility to decide whether a person is suitable or not. I had nothing but presumptions in favor of those I sent you, especially since I had not been their spiritual director, nor had I been long enough acquainted with them to know
them better than you. I have told you often that I do not wish to interfere in the affairs of your convent or the way you conduct these affairs. What you and your assistant decide on such occasions is much better than any advice I can give, since you have those persons right under your eyes, whereas I have rarely even seen them.

I shall write to Father Toping soon. It might be well for Pauline to write also. I shall also write to Mrs. Tisserant about the group. When I get news from our missionaries I shall transmit it to you. Remember us always in your prayers, and I shall not forget to offer all of you, together with all your intentions and good desires, at the holy altar, that you may all be sacrificed to the glory of the Master. Be pure and holy victims worthy of the Holy of Holies.

Your most devoted servant in Jesus and Mary,

Father Francis Libermann

P.S. Father Schwindenhammer asks me to send you his greetings. His sisters have decided to enter the Society of the Good Shepherd. He had already mentioned this during the holidays. I did not think it proper to try to persuade them to do otherwise, and in any case it would be useless. He has been anxious to write to you for some time but I prevented him from doing so, since I did not think it necessary to make you pay the postage on such a letter. He wishes to be excused. Father Toping is not in a hurry with regard to the two subjects of whom I have spoken to you. He would like to wait until you have a house in the North. I hope that this will be decided within a year.
Dear Reverend Mother:

I owe you an apology for not having written for so long. My last letter crossed yours and those of our very dear Sisters. After that I had so much work on hand that I neglected my correspondence for a time.

A few days ago I met poor Miss Morillon. I am not surprised to learn that you dismissed her. The poor girl was very upset and I have done my best to console her. It is painful to see others suffer, but you cannot keep a person in your house who will never be able to adopt its spirit. Therefore do not worry about the pain she caused you by the things she may have said before she left.

You must not be surprised to find the Sisters still so imperfect. Where can we find souls that are perfect? It may sometimes happen that we meet those that are less proud, less difficult, but it rarely happens that such evil tendencies do not manifest themselves sooner or later. I prefer such things to manifest themselves during the novitiate than later on. The good little Adèle, who is doing so well now, will later experience trouble. We must take that for granted and we should not always take as a misfortune what is sometimes only a temptation.

If I may add to the advice I have already given you, I would suggest that you allow great liberty of spirit in your house and never upset anyone. Correct faults at the right time and in the right place with mildness and in a way that aims at consoling the offenders. Every correction that agitates and embitters is one that is badly administered. It is
possible that the trouble with the novices from this part of
the country was that they were bewildered. It is important
for a community with members from various parts of the
country that a common bond of charity should be formed
amongst them, and that the question of whether they are
Bretons or Normans should never be brought up. Teasing
about nationality, even if it be done in a joke, leaves a bad
aftertaste.

I received news from Father Tisserant of Haiti. It is
probable that in a year or so he will ask you to send Sisters
to that country. He found it in a deplorable condition. It
is full of bad priests and there are scarcely any good ones.
The people have the faith and are full of goodwill but they
are unbelievably ignorant. Hence numerous superstitions and
corruption are prevalent. British Protestants are doing their
very best to win over the country.

At the time of Father Tisserant’s arrival there was great
antagonism to the Catholic religion and the Protestants were
in favor. Father Tisserant had an interview with the Presi-
dent; and one of his relatives who is a good and influential
man also did his best to make the atmosphere more favor-
able to the Catholic religion. The government urged Father
Tisserant to provide good priests. I wish I had half a dozen
to send him in October as this would do much good. I have
just sent two priests, one a member of my Congregation and
the other a secular priest, and also one Brother. It is so
important that we help that country. If we do not do so
within a year or eighteen months, it will be lost to the
Protestants. If, on the contrary, we are able to send even
six or eight priests, I feel sure that within eight months or a
year it will be saved and the harm done by Protestantism will
be undone. The Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda wants
us to take charge of it. I should like to be able to send a
greater number, or at least to send a few toward the end of
the year, say in the month of October, but I need all those
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who will be ready to go at that time (six or seven) for Guinea. I cannot abandon the countries in which communities have already been started.

It is probable that as soon as priests are established in Haiti, Father Tisserant will make a request to you for Sisters. The good to be done is immense. It is probable that you will find candidates there even for your houses in Europe, but not at the beginning. Since the faith in that country is very strong, it is likely that you will get vocations in the good families there. Pray and make your dear Sisters pray that God's will may be done and that we may not put any obstacles in its way.

I have not yet received any news from our missionaries of Guinea since their arrival in that country, but this does not mean that they are late in writing to me, since I have had more recent news from there than has been received at the Ministry.

Place your trust in God and He will not abandon you. He who labors for God's glory must expect pains and burdens, but God's help is never wanting to those who are faithful to Him.

I forgot to mention that when Father Tisserant arrived in Haiti, he was very upset because he was unable to exercise any ministry. The pastor of Port-au-Prince absolutely forbade anyone to instruct the people, and he himself did not give them any instruction, for he said that instruction did not do them any good. For this city with a population of at least thirty thousand souls, he held divine services only in the parochial church, although there was another church, a Cemetery Church, at the opposite end of the city. Father Tisserant spoke about this to the President when he met him and an order was issued to the pastor by the President and the municipality to the effect that:
1. The catechism should be taught twice a week in the parochial church;

2. An instruction should be given to the people of the Cemetery Church every Sunday;

3. The pastor must send priests to administer the sacraments to the people living in the suburb of Mornes.

Father Tisserant was charged with all this. Finally, baptism should be administered by the pastor or by others every time children were presented for the sacrament. That wretched man (the pastor) did not allow anyone to baptize after dinner, even if people were dying! This gives you an idea of the priests of that country, for this man is not one of the worst.

Respectfully yours in Jesus and Mary.

Your most devoted servant,

Francis Libermann,
missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

45

Letter Fifteen  April 23, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 172

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother:

This is my reply to your letter of April 3. I was on a journey when your letter arrived.

I have not received any further news about Haiti. The newspapers speak of troubles that have started in that country. I hope that there will not be any unhappy results. It would
be a good thing if the present government were to remain in power. Let us pray! God will do what He judges proper. I believe that English is of no use in Haiti. There are some English Protestants there who try to lead the country into error but it is not the English language that is used. There are two sections in the island, one called San Domingo where the language is Spanish and in the other French is spoken. Therefore, strictly speaking, French would be sufficient, but Spanish would be very useful and it might be necessary later on.

I have not yet received news from Guinea. Our Fathers wrote to me from the Cape of Palms where they had been only about two weeks, and hence they were unable to give precise information. They did not remain in that section which is one of the least productive on the coast because Protestant ministers have been settled there for over eight years and a Protestant colony is established there.

Bishop Barron will no doubt write as soon as he sees the possibility of installing Sisters in that country. It would be imprudent to start off with such a foundation. I bless the Lord for giving you peace. We relish it with so much more consolation when it comes after great storms and when it comes unexpectedly. Everything can be overcome with patience, confidence in God and humble prayer. The more you advance in solid virtue, the more indulgent you will become to the weaknesses and failings of your Sisters; you will be more gentle towards them and more at peace in your soul. I can do no more than give you general rules for the direction of souls. Since I do not know the practical circumstances, it is impossible for me to enter into details.

A Superior of a certain convent told me that I was too mild in my direction and that I should be more severe with women. Another said that I did not understand women. Well, I readily accept condemnation if I am wrong, but I find it hard
to abandon the spirit of Our Lord in His dealings with souls. I want to avoid following the impulses of my evil nature in the direction of souls and do not like to abandon the fundamental principles governing such direction.

For yourself, dear Mother, do what the Lord suggests to you. My way of acting is different. I am more considerate towards women than towards men because of the difference of their characters, and because the imagination of women is more sensitive and impressionable. I am not indulgent to their imaginings but treat them with consideration. The results, so far, have proved me right.

The confidence of those who are devoted to God's glory never meets with disappointment. God will not be outdone by His children. His merciful action may be delayed but it will come with interest.

I shall unite my heartfelt prayers to yours for the intention you have recommended to me. I was greatly consoled by what you wrote about the Sisters.

Respectfully yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

Your most humble and devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

46

Letter Sixteen  La Neuville, June 18, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 241

Reverend and dear Mother:

I have delayed my reply until I should have received the letter of Adèle, in order to save you the extra postage.

It is a blessing that your building is now completed. It is very important for the regularity of a community that it be
properly housed and that the various parts be properly arranged to serve the needs of the members. A building thus planned has great advantages.

Always have great confidence in God, and divine goodness will enable you to bring the project to a happy conclusion. The work of the missions in general, and that of the Negroes in particular, is a work of the Cross. We have to suffer and suffer much. Do not imagine that your pains and your need for practicing patience are at an end. This is something that will last as long as life itself. Consider yourself very fortunate then, my Reverend Mother, that divine Mercy has chosen you to have a share in the Cross of Jesus. From the beginning you have had to live in pain, to walk amidst crosses, to drag a heavy burden, following in the steps of the crucified Jesus. Something of this will remain with you for the great day of judgment and all your Sisters will benefit by it for their sanctification.

Further, it is in this way that God’s work will be perfected. We must learn to suffer, and this with patience, love, sweetness and humility, and Our Lord will then be with us. Thanks to God’s goodness, crosses have not been wanting to us until now, nor have the graces to bear them fruitfully and holily been denied us.

I decided not to do anything further about the postulant who was offered by Father Toping. His letter led me to think that there was no need for it. I agree fully with you that you should follow the ordinary rules for the acceptance of subjects. When, according to these rules, we are justified in believing that a candidate will not adopt the spirit of the society, we should not accept her, unless we are morally certain that the ordinary rules do not apply in this case.

I see no prospect of obtaining anything for the trousseau of Sister Aloysia. She should write to Father Borgnier; it is possible that he might be able to do something for her.
There has been no news about Guinea. Our missionaries have not been able to do anything. The Governor of Senegal is expected in France soon and I hope to see him. I shall tell you any news he may have that is interesting.

I am anxious to make my journey to the South. I hope to be able to come on the occasion of the departure of our missionaries in October or November. However, I am not yet sure about anything. God will arrange things for the best.

I have the honor to be in Jesus and Mary,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

47

Letter Seventeen La Neuville, September 4, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 332

J. M. J.

My dear Reverend Mother:

I begin with a remark concerning the end of your letter, which, incidentally, filled me with great joy. You see now clearly that it is a good thing to be faithful to our good Master and to place all your confidence in Him. I never doubted that He would bless your community and yourself. The work is now established and I feel certain that Divine Providence will also provide the money you need.

The work of the "Refuge" is very difficult but it is perhaps the most fruitful. It is a source of great suffering but also of great consolation. You were right to separate it from your
own house, since that kind of work casts a shadow on a boarding school that is housed under the same roof.

Divine goodness has called you to labor for the good of souls in His Church. With all my heart I implore Our Lord to grant that your dear Congregation may be a faithful handmaid in His holy house. Consider yourself one whom the great King wishes to employ in His house, and do lovingly all the work He entrusts to you, no matter how low and menial it may seem.

I sent your letter to Father Dalmond after I had added something about your intentions. He forgot to reply, either because he was busy or else he may wish to reply directly to yourself. I think that a knowledge of pharmacy would be more useful than anything else in the missions, and you would do well to have also a little practical medicine. There are some books on this subject used by the Sisters of Charity and they might be useful to you in many respects. When I go to Paris I shall consult a physician about tropical diseases and ask him for a list of books that could be useful for missionaries. I shall send all useful information regarding this to you.

It is absolutely necessary that your Sisters should study Sakalave, the language of Madagascar. These languages are easy and one can acquire speaking knowledge sufficient to hold conversation with the inhabitants in about three months. If Father Dalmond has not already sent you books for learning the language, I shall send some as soon as possible, or I shall bring them if I am able to journey to the South. However, I shall not be able to come before Spring.

The 1,300 francs that are owed to Sister Paule have not yet arrived. I doubt that Father Tisserant has sent them, as he himself has to return to France. I think that he will be here about the middle of next month. It is possible that he will ask you to give him Sisters, if not immediately, at
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least in a year or so. I almost forgot to remind you that you should not send less than four Sisters to Madagascar. Father Dalmond would not, I am sure, want less than that. He is not as badly off as you think and his friends in the island of Bourbon are helping him a lot. Your Sisters will not cost you much more once they are established in that country.

I trust that Father de Regnier is now enjoying the beatific vision, for he died a death worthy of envy. If he is in heaven, you may count on his protection, as you cannot imagine how interested he was in your work, of which he spoke very often.

I have the honor of being in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

48

Letter Eighteen    Paris, October 31, 1845    Vol. 7, p. 354

J. M. J.

Reverend and dear Mother:

I failed to reply to your letter as I was very busy and had to go on two journeys. At any rate the things you wrote about did not demand a reply immediately. I am writing this letter from Paris and have not yours before me as I write, so you will have to excuse me if I forget to reply to anything you mentioned.

I came to Paris because I received a letter from the Ministry of the Navy. They made advantageous proposals while asking nothing that was burdensome and leaving us full apostolic liberty. I submitted my proposals and they accepted
them. They will pay 1,500 francs a year for each missionary, will provide a house and a chapel for each station and all that is needed for Sacred Worship. Besides that they will pay the board, during their time in the novitiate and house of studies, of such missionaries as we put at their disposal. The agreement has not been completed but these conditions have already been examined and agreed to. I shall give them a definite reply in a few days.

I spoke to the Director of the Colonies who inquired if you were in Paris, and I told him that you were not. The civil authorities are anxious to have Sisters. I stressed the importance and usefulness of nuns and they agreed. You may be sure that they will make an appeal to you, but since they were not in a hurry to get Sisters, I considered it inopportune to press the matter. It is important that we should not give them the impression that we want to force the question, but neither should we show indifference. I gave your address to the Director but since he did not make a note of it I think that he will not take up the matter immediately. No doubt he will ask for your address when the time comes to consider the matter, and when he does I shall let you know. I think that it would not be prudent for you to initiate anything, as I feel certain that they will open negotiations with you. The Minister of the Navy is a good and zealous man and is convinced that nothing will be accomplished in that country without the help of priests and religious Sisters. When you are ready to send Sisters for one or two communities I shall know how to remind them, but I feel sure that this will not be necessary and that they will themselves initiate the arrangements.

They will probably begin by gathering information about your house from the Bishop of Alby. You should see to it that his reply makes it clear that you are what they seek. He ought not to mention that you are not certain about your vocation to the missions. Therefore it might be prudent to
explain gradually to the Bishop that you have finally decided
that your call is for the missions and in particular the missions
to the Negro. You might find it easy to convince him of
this if you tell him how many subjects have presented them-
selves to you for the sole purpose of going to the missions
and that this is the wish of the older religious. You see then,
my dear Reverend Mother, that after the crosses and anxie-
ties, you receive consolations. Be filled with confidence,
struggle for a few months, live in poverty, and you will see
that the good Lord will come to your aid.

I have a still further cause of hope but as it has not yet
matured I cannot give you any further information. It con-
cerns another source of help which Divine Providence seems
to wish to put at our disposal to help us in our mission to
West Africa. Let us pray to and have confidence in God
and not in men. It is for Him that we work and He will not
abandon us. I hope that our poor novices will persevere in
peace.

I remember that you have not told me anything further
about Louise. There is little that I can say about her. How-
ever, all you have said about her does not convince me that
she has always been in a state that was illusory and imagi-
nary. What you first said in her favor seemed to show that
her state was good and supernatural. I did not dare to make
an absolute pronouncement on that subject, but I thought I
saw favorable signs. What you have told me since seems to
show that her present state is a result of her imaginings. I
had little fear until you mentioned visions; this latter rather
worried me. What you told me recently does not, to my mind,
in any way run counter to our first impression. However,
I have no definite opinion on the matter nor do I worry about
it since I am in no way charged with the direction of her
soul. But it is important that you should not make a mistake
in her regard. You may be correct in what you have judged
but the reasons you give do not allow me to come to the same
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conclusion as you. It is because of this that I persist in repeating that I do not agree with your opinion, even though I have no fixed opinion of my own. I persist in order that you may distrust your opinion in some measure.

If I myself had to guide that soul, I would try to forget what you have told me and I should distrust everybody no matter how wise, for I feel certain that prejudices greatly influence us either for or against a person. I find that in certain cases it is as dangerous to allow ourselves to be influenced against supernatural things of that kind as it is to allow ourselves to be influenced in their favor. I think that the case of Louise might be such a case. It is possible, in her present state, that your direction and manner of acting towards her might, as a result of a wrong judgment, do her grave harm. I say "it is possible," because I am not sufficiently acquainted either with her state or your method of dealing with her to judge properly.

Please do not be annoyed at my seeming distrust of your direction. I assure you that I distrust my own just as much. Whenever someone, in whose soul extraordinary things seem to be taking place, comes to me, I am sad and worried. Do not imagine that I consider myself more clever than others and that that is the reason why I offer objections to your opinion. I can tell you truthfully that I rarely see things clearly. I have to direct those who come to me but I remain totally blind. It would be a great joy to me if no one ever asked me for direction. But I can say frankly that neither have I found any others who have a clear view of such matters. There are innumerable errors in all sorts of circumstances; errors regarding the state of a soul, errors regarding God's manner of acting in a soul, errors regarding the dispositions of those who seek direction.

O my dear Mother, how insignificant we are! How little our worth, how little our knowledge! Let us crawl in the
dust and remind ourselves of what we really are. Woe to us who have charge of others! It is bad enough to have to drag our own miseries, why must we also have others realize how poor we are?

Let us look on these souls as a precious trust and be on our guard against spoiling or losing them. Let us ask Our Lord to take care of His good souls, for we are quite incapable of such a charge. It is so easy and comfortable to preach to others and to urge them to do what we ourselves fail to do.

May the peace of Our Lord be with you!

Father Francis Libermann

49

Letter Nineteen Amiens, May 31, 1847 Vol. 9, p. 154

J. M. J.

My very dear Mother:

I have a pleasant surprise for you as well as for our good Sisters. We shall have an unexpected visit from Father Bessieux who has returned for a time from the depths of Guinea. He it was who was chosen by Divine Providence to be the occasion, or rather the instrument, of establishing relations between us. You will be even more pleased to learn from Father Bessieux himself that he wishes to have your dear Sisters in Gabon and Dakar. I am not without hope that this can be arranged. I shall not go into any details as Father Bessieux will be in a better position to do so. He will not settle anything finally, as he can only make remote prepara-
tions and arrange certain things and then must report to the Vicar Apostolic. There are financial difficulties in the way, but I do not doubt but that Divine Providence will solve that problem. The harvest seems to be ripe or almost so, and your Sisters would accomplish an immeasurable amount of good for the benefit of the poor Negroes.

I am happy to have this opportunity of reawakening the courage of our good Sisters. I hope that they will not have lost anything by waiting and that God will reward them for their patience. They will learn more and more that it is always well to wait until God's own time has arrived. The impatience that is rooted in our evil nature wants to hasten things, and, were such a thing possible, even "to create God's moment." And then, if unfortunately we accomplish something before the time laid down in God's eternal designs, we are elated and self-satisfied. But as soon as difficulties arise, we are like men with broken arms and legs, troubled and anxious, and discouragement enters our souls and replaces the joy and assurance and unruly elation we first experienced.

When God has designs of grace and mercy in regard to good souls who love Him, even though they may love Him with an impetuous love, He thwarts their beautiful schemes. They hurry, rush forward and are out of breath; they want to reach the goal before they have started. God arrests their progress by placing all kinds of obstacles in their path. They fall, rise, and start to run once more, and are out of breath. He closes one exit after another and finally they are brought to a full stop. They then collapse, full of sadness, agitation and discouragement. But bit by bit they come to realize their weakness and their nothingness. They humble themselves before God, and realizing their extreme need of help, turn to God to find support. Peace gradually returns to their souls. They begin by becoming resigned because they see there is nothing they can do, and they end by submitting completely
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to the divine guidance. It is then a new phase begins for them. Their life now is less inspired by nature and is more animated by grace. Their desires, though strong, are moderate and submissive to God’s good pleasure. Their intentions are purified and they submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such a soul becomes gradually an instrument, at first a poor and defective one, rusty and bent, but sufficiently pliable, in the divine hands that use it, to allow it to cooperate a little for the glory of Him who alone accomplishes all that is good. That pliability, which makes the soul a faithful instrument in God’s hands, comes only to a soul whose first desires and hopes have been overthrown. When the soul is thus restored and remade, God’s moment arrives, but, lest the soul fall back into its first impetuosity, it comes gently. Blessed is the soul that is faithful!

You know well, my dear Reverend Mother, at whom these reflections are aimed. I think they retrace part of the story of our dear Sisters whom the Lord has finally made good and wise. He has had a hard time trying to form them, but at last the work is finished and their good souls are the more beautiful and pleasing to God for it. If you should think it wise to read these remarks to them, I can see Sister Paule rejoicing in the Lord. She will say that I am mean. Sister Aurelia will lower her eyes and make a good act of submission to the good Lord. Sister Aloysia will say with joy: “This is true” and Sister Cecilia, “This is hard.” Yet I feel that none of them will be angry for they all know that their souls are very dear to me and that I always pray for them.

I did not want to write directly to them about the matter since I did not know whether you wished to give them news of our plans just yet. I presume that you do wish to tell them but I felt that it was your place as their dear Mother to reveal the plans to them in the first place. If you do decide to tell
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them then I shall once more urge them to practice patience, calm submission and abandonment to God.

I urgently recommend myself to your prayers, my dear Sister, and assure you that I shall not forget you and your community in mine.

Always united to you in the charity of Jesus and Mary, in which I have the honour to be

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart
of Mary

P. S. Please give my regards to the Father Chaplain, whom I have not forgotten and to whose prayers and Holy Masses I recommend myself.