8. LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

Paul Carron studied at the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris and was quickly noticed on account of his outstanding piety and talents. Immediately after his ordination, he became secretary to the Archbishop of Paris. The numerous letters Father Libermann addressed to him indicate the lasting spiritual friendship between those two zealous men.

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Trials draw us closer to Jesus.

Letter One  Issy, September 21, 1836  Vol. 1, p. 324

Dear Confrere:

May the good Lord preserve you in His peace and most holy love.

You probably blame me very much for having received your two letters and not having answered a single one of them. It is unpardonable, isn’t it? And yet it is not a great fault on my part. I would have replied immediately after I had received your first letter, but I had to leave a few days later. I thought I would be able to see you before my letter would have reached you, for I reckoned that you would remain at Issy during the whole Octave, and my letter would have reached your place during your absence. Regarding the second, I wanted absolutely to send you the enclosed papers, and they were not ready at that time. Mr. de la Bruniére, who had the job of copying them, was somewhat behind in his task. Anyhow, provided you love God, and I also, we can both of us be satisfied. I should have been very glad to see you at Issy. One of the reasons why I hastened to leave Strasbourg was that I might come in time; God did not wish it. May His Holy Name be blessed.

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SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

[Trials Help You to Overcome Self]

It appears that God wants to try you a little bit; so much the better. May His Holy Name be blessed again. We must rejoice heartily at this. I am not aware of the nature of the trial you are undergoing; but whatever it be, as long as you do not offend God, we have every reason to rejoice. It is surprising that God bestows this grace upon you, who are but just beginning to serve Him. Take care, dear friend, not to pride yourself on this great favor, but try to profit by it. Nothing is as powerful as contradiction to form us to perfect self-denial in all things, to the love of God and perfect union with Him. I hope that the Blessed Virgin will not allow you to neglect such beautiful opportunities for your sanctification.

See to it, however, that the difficulties and the contradictions which you experience from men, do not make you too serious, chagrined, harsh, indifferent toward your neighbor, abrupt in your speech, and your manner, tenacious of your opinion, or austere of character. On the contrary, they should render you humble before God, and gentle toward yourself and others.

[Rejoice That You Are Despised]

When you find that your heart is oppressed, bear such oppression with love and profound humiliation before God. Keep yourself simply in His presence in this state of affliction or any other kind of trouble that may fall to your share. Cast upon Him a simple look of meekness, of peace and tenderness. All this you must do in the most profound humiliation of your soul, and with a great and peaceful desire to be ever more closely united to Him, and to draw from that union all joy, all happiness, all love, and all light.

If men despise, neglect, and humble you, it is the greatest happiness that could befall you. Make these humil-
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

iations and contempt serve you as a nourishment of gentleness and love before God. Fill your soul with it, and God will drench you with His love, and will clothe you with His sanctity.

I love you with all my heart, dear brother, and am happy to see you humiliated, despised and contradicted by creatures; for God will repose in you, place you on His bosom, and make of you an object of His particular love. Console yourself, therefore, and bravely support these little miseries which God deigns to send you.

Be ardently desirous of outrage and contempt, and God will fill you with justice, love and holiness. If men despise you, if they are indifferent toward you, retire within yourself; hold yourself in still greater contempt and in greater abjection before God, in whom alone should be all your joy, all your hope, all your happiness, all your love, all your greatness, all your glory, and all your light. What need have you of anything else, if you are with Him, and if you have no life but in Him and through Him? May the earth and all its desires perish, but let God alone with His love live and reign in you.

[Remain Kind Toward All]

Whatever may be the troubles and contradictions that you are experiencing, keep yourself always in peace before God and in God; but in a peace that is humble, meek, loving, and founded on a perfect renunciation of every creature, of self, of pride, of your own interests, whatever they may be, either spiritual or temporal. Be gentle and affectionate toward all, and surrender your soul to God alone, who must be your All, at all times, and in every circumstance....

Be constantly united to God in the greatest peace, the greatest love and the greatest gentleness of soul. Do not
worry about anything. God has heretofore wished to preserve you from [interior] troubles. I hope that you will constantly grow in the renunciation of self and of every creature for the love of God alone.

Best regards in the charity all holy, all pure, all delightful, all gentle and all peaceful, of Jesus and Mary.

Your humble brother and servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

Devotion to the holy angels. We imitate them through a life of union with God.

Letter Two 

Issy, September 28, 1836 

Vol. I, p. 325

Dear Confrere:

I am going to be more prompt this time; I have scarcely received your letter and I am already answering it.

You are surprised that you are asked to engage in those affairs; and I, well, I am surprised to see your surprise, for this is only a matter of taking care of your own sanctification and in no way that of busying yourself with the sanctification of others. It was only for the purpose of helping your own spiritual progress that I proposed that thing to you. However, when I said that we must be occupied with ourselves, I did not mean that we must isolate ourselves and must not make common cause with others. Such an attitude would be very dangerous; for you would deprive yourself of a powerful means for your own advancement.

No dear friend, you should unite with the most fervent and the most faithful servants of your good Lord Jesus, in order that they may communicate to you the in-
terior goods with which they are filled. I hope that the good Lord will pour His blessings upon us and will make us prosper in the holiness of His love...

[The Holy Angels are Perfectly United to God]

You should be heartily glad because God has deigned to inspire you with devotion to the holy angels. It seems to me that those blessed spirits are great models for us. They are worthy of our admiration on account of the great things which God is pleased to operate in them; worthy of our tenderness because we see the power and the light of God shining forth in them in an extraordinary manner. In Hebrew, “angel” signifies “sent.” The angels are constantly executors of the holy will of God, and this holy will reigns uninterrupted in them. All the faculties of their being are constantly applied to God, and permanently disposed to be faithful to His holy will, which God imprints on them by His grace.

As soon as an all holy impression of the Divinity makes itself felt, these faculties obey in such a way that the angels are always in God and God always acts in them freely and fully. This fidelity and continual and direct return to God have not begun to exist only now; these admirable qualities existed already when they were tempted. They distinguished the holy angels from the multitude of rebels who fell with Lucifer: the former had no other thought but in God and for God, and the latter regarded themselves. This has merited for the chief of the good angels the name of Michael, which means, “Who is like unto God?” As soon as Lucifer tempted Him, this angel cried out in astonishment, “Who is like unto God?” For this reason, God gave him such great strength that he conquered, for, according to their natures, Lucifer and his followers were more powerful than he.
Who can in fact, resist him who sees God alone in all things, whose every look is constantly turned toward Him, who expects everything from Him, and does not rely in anything upon himself? The power of God reigns in him in union with His love and His esteem.

Why should we not imitate those who have preceded us, in their faith, their confidence, their entire abandonment to God and to His love—love that united them so closely to Him who dwelt perfectly in them and made them triumph over the apostates?

[We Imitate the Angels Through Union With God]

Besides, it is necessary for us to imitate them, since holy Scripture calls the priests the "angels of the Lord of Hosts." This passage struck me today during the reading at table. We must be angels of purity, holiness, simplicity, and abandonment to God. All these virtues must be confirmed in our souls, since God dwells in us, just as He dwells in the angels. In speaking of the angel who was destined to guide the Israelites into the Holy Land, God said to Moses that He recommended to them fidelity and the observance of His will, for He added, "My name is in Him."

Well! the holy Name of God, that is, His power and His grace, reside in us as well as in the holy angel. He does not dwell there just as perfectly, because we are neither pure enough nor holy enough for that; but let us be more faithful and He will dwell there more nobly and more abundantly.

Another thing that strikes me in the holy angels is that there are always seven of them before the face of God. How blessed these privileged angels are, to receive the light and the perfection of the Divinity more intimately and more directly than the others. How this perfect sight must keep them elevated and in admiration! How they must be pene-
trated with their nothingness, their misery, when they behold so much beauty and so much grandeur! It is this union and this view of God that we must desire; there is no holiness outside it. When we lose sight of this union, we come back to earth; when we turn our look away from God, we immediately bring it back on ourselves.

There is nothing so important for our sanctification as this life of recollection and of union with God. All the virtues that we have to acquire are impossible outside of that life, and we can really acquire them only in God alone. All that is not drawn from this only source of purity and sanctity is of no value. I have never seen true knowledge or solid virtue in a man who did not aim at this life in union and interior recollection with God.

[How to Obtain This Life of Union With God]

You ask me how to acquire it. Dear friend, you know that very well. Lay down, as your first principle, the firm, sincere, and only desire of perfect and universal denial of self and of all things. When this resolution is once taken, and followed out in practice, there are only two things to be done. The first is to tend toward God in all your affections, in all the desires and movements of your soul, but with great peace, with meekness, with abandonment of soul, worrying about nothing, never giving yourself over to the harshness or excitability of your character, or letting yourself be troubled by any event whatsoever.

You understand me, I suppose. I mean that in all your thoughts, all your actions, either interior or exterior, and in all the movements of your soul, you must take the habit of directing yourself toward God in your innermost being, and that in a peaceful manner, as I have just told you.

We must take care not to make any sensible effort in this direction. In the first place, this union does not reside
in the senses, and, further, we would not be able to acquire it by our efforts. God alone can give it to us. All that we can do is to desire it and to dispose ourselves to receive it. God gives us a great grace by implanting in us this desire and this disposition. Everything must be done gently and peacefully.

The second requirement which is presupposed by the first, is that we moderate our affections and our desires in everything. If we let them develop to the fullness of their ardor, we shall never succeed in establishing ourselves in this life of union and interior recollection. We must, therefore, moderate them, and that solely with a view to be united to God alone, toward whom we must tend in all things.

Jesus be with you and Mary also, dear brother. Best regards in their most holy and loving charity.

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Liberman announces his departure for the Eudist novitiate. God alone. Indifference toward health or illness.

Letter Three July 13, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 327

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

[I Am Leaving for the Eudist Novitiate]

May the peace and the love of our Divine Savior fill your soul. I announce to you, if not the exact, at least the probable date of my departure. Father Louis [Superior of the Eudists] has been here since Tuesday; he left yesterday for Amiens and I remained here. He will be back in eight
or ten days and will then return to Rennes. He has decided that I would go with him. I cannot tell you exactly what day he will arrive in Paris or when he will leave for Rennes. For this reason I would like you to come a little earlier than you had planned; for it is possible that two weeks from Sunday I shall no longer be in Paris.

[God Alone]

God must be the principle and the motive of our conduct in this as well as in all other things. He alone should be the life and movement of our soul, just as our soul is the life and movement of our body. Let your life and your existence be entirely in Him and through Him.

I would rather see you dead at my feet than that you should live locked up within yourself and outside God. If you thus acted within yourself and by yourself outside God, it would be far better if movement ceased both interiorly and exteriorly, in body as well as in soul.

Remain quiet and peaceful before God in everything and for everything. Let the world with all it contains take its course according to God’s good pleasure. Preserve your equanimity and indifference in everything that may happen; but let your soul remain in God, and let it live for Him alone.

He directs and arranges all things and events. It is our well-beloved Father, our love and our life, who wills them, and this is for us a reason to rejoice. Our whole attention, our love, our joy, our health, our happiness and our life are in Him alone.

[Indifference Toward Health or Illness]

Why should we pay attention to anything but our life and our love? Why should we meddle with anything else? If your man of flesh decays and disappears, do not worry about it. Rejoice in your God and Lord, who does all things
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

everywhere according to His sole good pleasure. Do not worry nor be gladdened if this man of corruption and sins regains strength and shows signs of recuperation. But rejoice in your God and Lord Jesus that He does with you according to His good pleasure. May His most Holy Name be blessed, praised, and adored by all of us, as well as by His angels and His saints.

Praised by Jesus. May His love reign in your soul. Best regards in Him, and in His most holy love, and that of our well-beloved Mother.

Your humble brother and servant,
FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

P.S. If you are unable to come to Paris before my departure, please let me know.

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Advice to a troubled soul. Pious exercises should be adapted to one's spiritual needs.

Letter Four Rennes, August 8, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 482

Dear Confrere:

My heart is gladdened in our Lord Jesus Christ at the great mercy that God has shown you. You are agitated, troubled, tormented, attacked on every side. May the most holy Name of God be blessed. You realize, of course, how much you need to be purified from all self-seeking, all the deviousness and artifices of self-love. Our kind Lord is pleased to employ the most excellent and most efficacious means for this purpose, and consequently you have only to keep quiet and let Him act. We do not live for ourselves, nor should we live in or by ourselves. Jesus is our life and our existence. We must therefore maintain ourselves wholly
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

in interior peace and tranquillity before Him, so that He may act according to His own good pleasure.

Sometimes He acts with a certain rigor, at other times in a concealed manner and in a number of ways that crucify the soul. Poor souls! What else can they do except remain as dead within themselves and for themselves, so that they may allow Jesus, their only life and love, to act and live in them with perfect liberty. If it please this dear Lord to live and act in them with rigor, they keep themselves as dead within themselves, they forget themselves for the purpose of fixing their interior gaze upon their well-beloved Jesus alone.

[Let Jesus Do With You What He Wants ]

The divine Master labors in them to the full extent of His love; He strikes, cuts off, immolates, annihilates, and the poor soul maintains itself in peace and immobility. It sees only Jesus and the pleasure of His well-beloved Heart. It is perfectly resigned to everything that He does, or, rather, it rejoices in Jesus, and does not even occupy itself with what He is doing. This is so because it forgets all self-interest and self-seeking. I tell you all this in order that you may know what to do.

Take note especially of these last words: the soul must not be occupied with what Jesus is doing within itself. It seems to me that this is very important. Do not content yourself with suffering patiently or even with complacency. Do not even tell yourself that these things will be useful to you for your sanctification.

Although all this is very good, excellent even, there is something better if you wish to be agreeable in the sight of God. It is to neglect and forget everything in order to think of Jesus alone and occupy yourself exclusively with Him. Therefore, do not worry when you are filled with these troubles and this spiritual fatigue, but try to reduce your
mind to a state of repose without busying it or applying it to any particular thought or idea.

[Meaning of "Thinking of God Alone"]

Do not even fix your mind's attention upon the thought of God, but keep it in a condition of openness, calm, independence and interior liberty in the sight of God, in such a manner that your mind is turned to God without being fixed upon Him. It is difficult for me to explain my meaning, but you realize that "to have the mind fixed on God or in His presence," expresses, up to a certain point, a condition of constraint, a certain natural movement or impulse; and this is of no use to you for your present interior state.

When your mind has attained liberty and repose before God, continue to occupy yourself with everything that comes along throughout the day, and at the same time busy yourself with nothing; that is, take everything as it comes, without making an occupation of it.

Act in meditation as at table; I mean, preserve that liberty of spirit, that complete forgetfulness of self and tranquil peace before God. Remain like this all day long. If manual labor will render this easier for you, take it up, but I do not think that it will be necessary.

[Remain in God's Presence Rather Than Busying Yourself With Pious Exercises]

You tell me that after your meditation you have one or two hours at your disposal to spend either in further meditation or in reading. But why should you do that? After your meditation, you must place yourself in the same frame of mind as during recreation. I believe that you ought to read nothing after coming out of meditation, unless you are perfectly peaceful and entirely yourself. I here also include the reading of Holy Scripture, for I think it would be better to have it at some other moment of the day. If such reading
helps you to come nearer to God, choose some other moments of the day. Don't worry about your reading. Do as I told you some time ago, that is, keep yourself simply before God and read thus in His presence, without precisely determining that you are going to read, or that you are going to profit by the things which you are reading, or that you are going to impress them on your memory or even on your heart. Simply determine that you are going to keep yourself in the presence of God, and that is all.

If you prescribe for yourself any other reading or any rule whatsoever, it will be, I suppose, when God gives you the taste to execute your design, but you should not rigidly adhere to it. The interior condition of your soul demands that you do not bind yourself down in any manner. There is nothing that could do you more harm than to subject yourself slavishly to certain practices. Even if Father Galais prescribed certain rules for you, you need not be a slave to them; for this is certainly not his intention. If you have a distaste for reading, walk around or do something else during your moments of leisure, but do it in the way I have explained in this letter.

Think as little as possible about your interior troubles and perturbations. Forget everything in order to live only in Jesus and with Jesus. This is all I have to tell you for the present. If I have explained myself badly, or if I have forgotten anything, please write to me.

May the peace of Jesus and Mary be in you. Best regards in their most holy charity.

FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE

P.S. I have been slow in replying to your letter because I got it only last night when I was ready to go to bed. I had been away for eight days and came back only last
night; this is why I received your letter only yesterday. May the good Lord be praised, blessed, and adored.

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Letter Five Rennes, August 12, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 483

Dear Confrere:

I am delighted with the letter that you sent through Mr. Dupont, but with a joy entirely in our Lord Jesus Christ. May His most holy and all adorable will be accomplished in us.

[Do Not Desire Health, But Jesus Alone ]

Let us sacrifice ourselves to Jesus, our great Master. Let not only each one sacrifice himself, but let us mutually sacrifice each other to His divine love and to His all adorable will. The “animal man” is leaving you; it is just as well that he is going, since our good Lord Jesus wishes it. If this man of flesh regains his health, let him regain it, since everything comes from our All. Let everything take its course according to God’s sole good pleasure. Let Him be everything in all of us, so that each one counts for nothing in himself or in his brother. Jesus, and Jesus all alone! The rest is nothingness, misery, and abomination.

I tell you frankly that this is the reason why, far from being saddened by the knowledge that you are suffering in your flesh, as well as in your soul, I experience a sensible joy on beholding the will of our God accomplished in you according to the extent of His plan. Abandon yourself entirely and in everything into the hands of Our Lord. We
belong to Him and to Him alone. We therefore have no right over ourselves, but everything belongs to Him; consequently, He can do in and with us, whatsoever He wishes.

[God’s Action Sanctifies Your Soul]

What is most beautiful and wonderful in all this is that, no matter how He acts in us, His action is always supremely holy and sanctifying. We are blessed if we abandon ourselves entirely to His divine and incomparable operations. For the more complete our surrender is, the more admirable and full are His operations in us; and the more complete God’s action is in our soul, the greater sanctity will He bestow upon it. We conform in fact most perfectly to His divine action through this complete surrender, this perfect conformity. We participate in His spirit of sanctity which operates in us, and through this incomprehensible participation, the sanctity of Jesus is infused into our soul and renders it holy.

[The Spirit of Jesus]

Just as a bar of iron thrust into the fire is covered and penetrated with the fire, so that, as it were, it becomes identified with it; so also by our surrender, our union and perfect adhesion to the spirit of Jesus we are penetrated and saturated with His spirit. We possess and represent in ourselves all the properties of this supremely lovable and adorable spirit, especially the chief quality, sanctity, which He wishes to reproduce in us.

It seems to me that in this world the entire action of the Holy Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ tends to holiness; and consequently He wishes to be our spirit of sanctity. This is practically the same as saying that He wants to separate us from all creatures in order to be united to God, to be plunged into the bosom of God and not to have any
other life but His. In heaven, where God lives fully in us, and where nothing created can approach us, His action will be an operation of reward and of glory, while here upon earth He becomes our life of separation, a life, consequently, of merit and of suffering, whose recompense He Himself will be.

But, dear friend, I see that I have “let myself go a little too much!” Accept in all this what you consider to be true and do not attach too great importance to it. The thing that is important for you is constantly to possess your soul in perfect peace in the midst of your miseries, and to abandon yourself fully into God’s hands.

I say nothing about the special points you mentioned. I think you do not need any answer, for I believe that you are doing the right thing concerning them. I have replied to your last letter.

Adieu, dear friend. Yours in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Jesus living in us.

Letter Six Rennes, August 21, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 484

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Cast Off the Old Man]

May the peace and love of Our Lord fill your soul, and make of it a victim of love before His Father. For this purpose you must cast off, more and more, all that still re-
mains of the old creature, which is forever incapable of being sacrificed and consecrated to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is wholly impure. It is incapable of submitting itself to God; it has no other thoughts, no other movements than toward itself, for itself, and in itself. Jesus alone can become a victim of love in us, because He alone has within Himself the whole substance of love. He wishes to communicate it to us, or rather to represent it in us by the life of holiness and love which He leads in our soul.

[Jesus Living in Us]

Oh, what an incomparable victim He is! Jesus living in us by His spirit of sacrifice becomes in us an ever-living victim of love, ever-existing in the presence of His heavenly Father. He lives in us and exists in His perfect sanctity through the separation, the detachment from creatures and from self in which He keeps our soul.

Let yourself be bare of itself and in itself, dear friend, so that it be covered in its action by the strength of Jesus Christ, and in its interior by the interior of Jesus. The angels, the saints, and all those who see only with the eyes of Jesus, who speak only the language of Jesus should see only their well-beloved Jesus in our soul, and in speaking about us, they will speak only about Jesus. May He live, therefore, and reign fully in you. But remember that Jesus will live fully in you only when your own human spirit, your own human love, and your own human life are dead and have been exterminated. He will reign fully in you only when the flesh and the spirit of the flesh have been completely vanquished and destroyed.

May, therefore, the most Holy Name of Our Lord be blessed and adored, because it pleases Him to keep you bowed and crushed beneath His hand. Let Him strike, execute, sacrifice, annihilate everything in you that does not
belong to His Heavenly Father so that His spirit of love may establish itself perfectly in you, and may keep you in continual immolation and sacrifice before Him. Have a constant care to forget yourself, so that your interior may be always turned toward God, who is your All.

You must be nothing in yourself, for yourself and to yourself, if you would have Him be all in you and for you. Your mind and your heart must not revert upon or to yourself; but in everything and everywhere, they must be turned to God and must keep themselves at His disposal in His presence, so that He may direct them and do with them according to His good pleasure. This is all, dear confrere, that I have to tell you at present concerning your actual condition.

[Personal News]

You have seen Father Pinault. If you have arranged something with him for next year, please, let me know. Kindly tell me also if everything is going well at Issy during the holidays. Did you speak with Mr. Dupeloux? How is he?

We are doing fairly well here. Mr. Laval has arrived. We are reading the constitutions of our little Congregation [the Eudist Fathers]. I greatly admire them. I have not read much of them yet; but the little I have read is wonderful. Good Father Eudes requires of us an extraordinary perfection, such as we read of in the most elevated works. Pray to God that He may give it to us. If Father Galais is leaving, please let me know. Good-bye in Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours in their holy love,

Francis Libermann, acolyte
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

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The spirit of Jesus living in the soul. His purifying action. Restraint from scrutinizing God's action in the soul.

Letter Seven    Rennes, September 20, 1837    Vol. 1, p. 484

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul. May it govern and direct it according to God's sole good pleasure. May it establish and strengthen there the virtues and perfections of our good and most beloved Master; may it be all life, all movement, and all existence in your soul, so that Jesus may appear there all alone before His Father in the condition that He wishes to appear before Him and in Him.

[Let the Spirit of Jesus Live in You]

Be holy because the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is holy, and because His Spirit, who should live and act in you, is holy. Enter fully into the designs of holiness which our great Master has upon you. Anathema upon everything that is not love, upon everything that is not sanctity in you. Deny yourself in all things and under all circumstances so that the Spirit of Jesus may dwell, act and live in you, according to God's merciful kindness toward you. Abandon yourself fully to the Spirit of sovereign sanctity, and He will not only live fully in you, but your life will no longer be yours; it will be that of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who will be all things in you.

For this purpose, He must be the only light of your mind, the only motive of your will, and of all your actions,
the only desire of your heart, the center and origin of all the affections of your soul. There must be no impression in you foreign to this Spirit of holiness and love. Your soul must experience no sentiment, no movement, no impression whatsoever, it must have no life, but in this Spirit and by this Spirit of the love of Jesus. You can say that He lives in you and that He is your life; and if He is your life, your life will be one of holiness, since He possesses all sanctity in Himself and His life is sanctity itself.

Rejoice, therefore, with all your heart in the most holy love of our good Master and Lord Jesus, but rejoice in all the lowliness and humiliation of your soul before Him. He has deigned to look upon you, a poor and wretched soul, and to approach it. He wishes to attach it to Himself; forget yourself and plunge into the interior of Jesus. Let the eyes of your soul be turned upon Him alone. Remain in Him by a motive of pure faith, and let Him act according to His great pleasure.

[Do Not Reflect Upon Your Sufferings]

These interior and external sufferings which it has pleased Him to send you have caused me great joy, because I expect that they will sanctify your soul. I may certainly rejoice at them in this light before our good Master. As for yourself, I advise you not to think of them in any way when you have them. When our dear Lord is pleased to act in the rigor of sanctity with you, keep yourself in your nothingness, and do not try to attach yourself to anything. Don't tell yourself that these sufferings are going to be useful to you, that they will produce such or such an effect of holiness in your soul.

Forget yourself, and keep yourself simply in your poverty, your detachment and your abjection before the loving and lovable Master, who strikes you or makes use of the
enemy's hand to strike you. Keep yourself thus in His presence, and say yes to everything that He permits. Say this yes with great complacency in this dear Master, not because you are delighted at being struck—unless He urges you specially and evidently to do this, for you know that everything must come from Him—but because you are pleased that it was He who struck you.

You know that we must mistrust every reflection upon ourselves. We must not even try to recall the examples and words of the saints who have been in similar straits; for this is still more dangerous. I believe that I told you all this in an answer that I gave you concerning this topic, when you were troubled the first time.

I do not need to remind you that you must not seek consolation from men. Besides, no matter how much you tried, you would find only the contrary. Still, I think that in these circumstances you must communicate everything that takes place to somebody who is able to guard you against illusions, because we are more exposed to let ourselves be deceived at such a moment. I beg of you, therefore, dear brother, to write to me at such times of vexation, if you think that I can be useful to you for the greater glory of God.

Always live in a spirit of immolation and of sacrifice as long as it pleases God to urge you to it. With this desire of immolation and sacrifice, remain in a state of self-forgetfulness and interior annihilation before God and in God, who must be all things in you. If He wishes to immolate or sacrifice you, live in Him or let Him live in you, in the spirit of victim and sacrifice, but never permit self to become prominent. He must operate all things in you.

Your briskness of mind does not alarm me, because I expect that the spirit of Our Lord wishes to live alone in
you will triumph over His sinful and wretched creature. Simply laugh at it, and let God alone act.

[Abstain From Examining God's Action on Your Soul]

With regard to your state of prayer, I see nothing objectionable in it. Abandon yourself entirely into the hands of God. You do not seem to grasp very well what takes place; but that makes no difference. It is for Him to do as He likes, and for us to let Him act. It matters little whether we understand or not. Provided God alone is everything in us, we need nothing else. It seems to me that I understand your interior condition perfectly, and I see nothing reprehensible in it.

Place yourself in the hands of God, and beware of trying to render yourself an account of your interior movements during meditation, of the state in which your soul is, of your way of going to God. I find that this wish of figuring all this out in your mind is one of the greatest dangers to which you are exposed. The best that you can do is to keep yourself peacefully before God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in perfect forgetfulness and complete interior annihilation. Let the self never appear, never revert to yourself or to anything that happens within you, but constantly remain in your poverty and lowliness before God...

I desire, dear confrere, to form with you one and the same victim immolated and sacrificed in the Spirit, and by the Spirit, of our Lord Jesus.

Entirely yours in Him and His most holy Mother,

Francis Libermann, acolyte
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

130

Jesus' reign in our souls. Self-forgetfulness.

Letter Eight  Rennes, October 17, 1837  Vol. 1, p. 488

Praised be Jesus Name

Dear Confrere:

[Jesus Wants to Live and Reign in You]

I thank Our Lord because He wishes to establish His reign so ardently in your soul. Keep yourself in nothingness and let Him act freely and according to the full extent of His Father's will. We do not know whither He wishes to lead you. It matters not, provided He lives and reigns fully and alone in you. If you live, it is Jesus who will live in you; if you die, it is then that you will live completely in Jesus, and Jesus in you. If you suffer, it is Jesus who will suffer in and through you; if you are at ease, it is in Jesus that you take repose. I know for a certainty dear confrere, that He wishes to be your All. He wishes to be your repose, your consolation, your suffering, your humiliation, your death, your life, your love, your happiness, and your All. May He then be your All, but your All exclusively.

[Let Him Act Freely in You]

Maintain yourself constantly in your nothingness; let Him fashion this miserable nothingness as He pleases. Let Him freely and willingly transform and reproduce Himself in this vile and abject nothingness according to His Father's design of mercy. Oh! if you knew how glad I am when I think of this reign of mercy, of love, and of justice which He wishes to establish in your soul.
Mercy and love will be yours, nothingness and sinner though you be. In your soul He will take justice upon Himself, He will nourish Himself, He will satiate Himself with it. That is why I tell you: let Him act. Be not of little faith; be not weak; resist Him not. He will perfect His undertaking; for He is infinitely powerful, essentially wise, and possessed of the plentitude of love within Himself. Let Him act according to His Power, demolishing and annihilating the flesh. Let Him freely use His divine wisdom to enlighten and bring order into the dark chaos of your soul, and He will succeed in establishing the life and the reign of His love in you.

He will do so to your detriment, that is, to the ruin of the flesh, to the annihilation of the proud creature you are. It appears that this will cost you dearly since our sweet Love wishes to cut you and burn you. But you see at the same time that, instead of suffering, you will rejoice, because as I told you, Jesus suffers and will suffer in you.

Wonderful and incomprehensible effect of His love! Man is a sinner, and should feel all the weight of divine justice before beholding the kingdom of God, His love and His life established in himself. Jesus should enjoy, love and live in our souls; and it is we that should suffer, since all evil resides in us, and all good in Him alone. But by His inconceivable mercy, He takes all the weight of justice and all our sorrows upon Himself, and He seems to deliver His life, His reign, and His love unto us and place them at our discretion.

[Self-Forgetfulness]

It is indeed He who lives, reigns, and loves in us. But we may say with truth that He leaves the enjoyment of these to us, and appropriates only the sorrows to Himself. Be therefore in continual peace before Him and in Him.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

Abandon yourself fully to His guidance, whatever the place or condition, either interior or exterior, that He puts you in. Let everything in you belong to Jesus and let Jesus be all in you. Let Him do with you as He pleases.

Moreover, try to remain in peace in your misery, your poverty, your abjection, your lowliness, and your ignorance. Watch over yourself, yet peacefully and quietly, and in surrender to the Spirit of Jesus, who wishes to do everything in you; watch lest you think yourself of any consequence or value.

Forget yourself more and more. This is now more necessary to you than ever, because, living isolated from all occupation of the mind, you have more of an opportunity to revert to yourself. But self-occupation would ruin the whole edifice which Jesus wishes to raise in your soul. Away with presumption! away with satisfaction of self! away with complacency in yourself and your deeds! away with tenacity, and the whole swarm of vices which your self-love engineers. Forget yourself, and be forgotten by everybody.

I do not mean that you should make positive efforts to be forgotten, but that you should always act in disregard of self and of what others might think about you. Let God act in you and through you. Keep the eyes of your soul always fixed on Him in all your actions and movements, and let your will be always fully and solely dependent on God alone.

Best regards in the unique and most holy love of Jesus and Mary. In them alone I ardently wish to be wholly yours.

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE
Humiliations are preferable to crosses. Personal troubles of Father Libermann in the novitiate.

Letter Nine    Rennes, October 26, 1837    Vol. 1, p. 489

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear confrere:

[Humiliations are Preferable to Crosses]

May Jesus, Our Lord, preserve you in His peace, and may He continue to bestow upon you the great favor of keeping you upon His beloved cross. If I wish you anything good, and you know I do, I could and would never wish to procure for you anything better than humiliations. Crosses are exquisite, but humiliations are still more precious. Crosses are pure gold, but humiliations are pearls and precious stones. Oh, how ardent my desire is on this subject! How I wish to see you dragged in the dust in abjection! Profoundly humble yourself before God until the moment that it will please Him to satiate you.

I do not mean that you should run after humiliations, and act in such a way that people will have a bad opinion of you. You know very well the spirit in which I speak to you; and you also know that this is not my idea. I speak thus to you with the sole object of reminding you that you are still very weak, and that you will not grow strong before God until you have learned through this delightful experience that you are a wretched man, and that you should be dragged in the mire. You will, perhaps, never attain true surrender to God without humiliations; it will, I assure you, be very difficult, at the least. At present I am more con-
vinced of the truth of it than ever. However, remain in peace.

Everything goes very well here. I behold marvels of grace that I never saw at St. Sulpice. I am not at liberty to tell what prodigy God is working here at present; but I am in the greatest astonishment at it. Our good Father Eudes was a wonderful man; the constitutions he has drawn up are beyond anything I could have ever dared to hope. Give thanks to the good Master, who has so highly favored us. I see now that we should always have vegetated had the divine bounty not brought us hither.

[Libermann's Personal Troubles]

I expect great things, at the least, for the sanctification of our good seminarians. As to myself, I am always, I fear very much that I will always, remain the same. Pray for me. The devil is persecuting me at present in order to force me to give up an undertaking that is driving him mad with rage.¹

Still, this matter appears to be turning against me, and perhaps I am very guilty before God. It is an enigma for you; but I cannot tell you more about it. Let it suffice for you to know that I believe I am in very great danger. My trouble sometimes is so great as to be inconceivable for you. Still I must act; the Master wishes it, and He is very much glorified by it.

The devil is beside himself with rage and makes me undergo unheard-of torments. But our good Lord gives me strength, and I am not shaken, despite the enemy's rage. Pray for me so that the most Holy Name of God be blessed, praised, and glorified. Keep profoundly secret what I have

¹Father Libermann alludes here to the difficulties he was experiencing in the novitiate. Most of them were caused by Mr. de Brandt, formerly one of his most devoted followers. Cf. Adrian L. van Kaam, C.S.Sp., A Light to the Gentiles, Milwaukee, 1962, pp. 69 ff.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANNTold you; pray, and that is all. Do not write to Mr. de Brandt anymore, and prevent the others from writing to him; everybody here is dead to the world. I alone am always living and devoid of virtue. Believe me, I beg you, and do not laugh. Our novitiate should be like a cemetery where there ought to be none but the dead.

Do not be afraid to write to me. Although I now have much less time than formerly, still I shall always have enough for you and for the other friends of my heart, no, not of mine, but of and in the Heart of Jesus...

Best regards, dear confrere, in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

FRANCIS LIBERMANNT, ACOLYTE

132

Jesus, the source of supernatural life. Libermann's personal trouble.

Letter Ten {Rennes,} December 1, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 490

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May Jesus our sovereign All, live in your soul. I desire this so ardently that it seems to me my heart is on fire. I pray to Him, day and night, that He may establish His reign fully in your soul, and that He may do so by the divine Cross. My joy is very great on learning that He keeps you in lowliness, and ignorance and humiliation. Let us bless, praise, and adore His most holy and admirable name and His most lovable and admirable will, which wishes to take deep root in your soul in order to produce His perfect...
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

reign, but to the detriment and complete destruction of your flesh and of its weaknesses.

Keep yourself in peace, love, and perfect surrender in the hands of our dear Master. Be completely dependent upon Him, so that you see, know, understand, desire, wish, move, live and be but in Him and by Him alone. I am very glad that Father Galais has yielded at last, and that he leaves you entirely in the hands of God. You will there find the life of God sooner than in all the works of men, however holy and powerful they may have been on earth.

[Jesus, the Source of Spiritual Life]

Our kind Master told us admirably, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink, ... streams of water will flow from his bosom." If we are thirsty, it is not in books that we should seek to slake it, we must go straight to our adorable Fountain, partake of it, gently drench ourselves in it. This well-beloved Source will soon fill us and make us superabound in such a way that rivers will come forth from our soul to overflow and fill an innumerable multitude of other souls, whom the divine Master will make us moisten and fill with the same abundance. It is not we who shall moisten and fill them, but He Himself, who has filled us, and who lives in us in His plenitude.

No, it is not we who shall fill these souls. We shall not, in fact, have anything of ourselves in us, since the Spirit of Jesus will fill us to such a degree that He will overflow in us and will come forth from us in streams that is, with superabundance, strength, gravity, gentleness, and without disorder, but carrying everything along with Him.

Behold the wealth and superabundance in a soul that is entirely in Jesus, that places its all in Jesus, is nothing in itself or in anything, and that withdraws from all things in order to live only by and in Jesus. Come, surrender fully to
Forsake yourself and all creatures; abandon yourself fully to Jesus and in Jesus, and He will live fully in you.

If it please Our Lord to leave you during the whole period of your life in lowliness, abjection, and uselessness, remain in that state in all love and surrender to Him, and do not even move the little finger of your left hand to come out of it. I do not need to insist upon this matter. You are convinced already, for Our good Lord Jesus Christ has made you feel it too strongly that you should forget it so very soon.

[My Personal Troubles]

The enemy's violence against me has diminished somewhat. I assure you, however, that I do not quite know where I stand. May the most holy Name of our beloved Master be blessed, praised and adored. We are nothing and He is everything in us and in all things. It belongs to Him to do in us and with us whatever pleases Him.

My troubles are related to the direction of souls which Father Superior had entrusted to me. I assure you, dear friend, that it is not a good thing to be raised above others. I am not the superior of the novitiate. On the contrary, I am the last of all, but I am in charge of the direction of the consciences of my dear confreres; this gives me a very great authority in our little community. You cannot imagine what troubles this has caused me for the last month or six weeks. There were moments when I thought that our good Lord and Master was going to abandon me and cast me off.

Continue to pray to Him that this may not happen, for I am not yet delivered from this fear. I abandon and entrust myself to the adorable and divine disposition of the heavenly Father so that He may fulfill His good pleasure in everything, and especially in me.

In life and death, in time and eternity, everything for Him and in Him alone. May He alone, with His most holy
will, live and reign in everything and everywhere. I confess, however, that with all this the idea of being cast out of the bosom of our kind Master makes me shudder. Nothing will come of it, will there? I have taken the resolution not to think of it anymore, and to let Him do with me and in me as He pleases. Live Jesus all alone! Death in Christ and oblivion to every creature, and to me first of all!

I am sending you a letter which I ask you to transmit to Mr. Leray; it relates to Father Eudes. If you want you may read it before you give it to him. I think it will give you pleasure and edify you. He was one of the greatest servants of God in his time. . . .

Best regards in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary.

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

133

Advice for remaining united to God without mental tension.

Letter Eleven Rennes, January 9, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 493

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May the spirit of the Child Jesus fill your soul and make you live of His divinely childlike life.

[The Danger of Tension]

Since my reply to you has been delayed, I want to say only a few words about your condition. I have considered your interior life before Our Lord, and here is the conclu-
sion I have come to on the subject. I do not believe that it is advisable for you to remain whole hours at a time without any occupation than that of keeping yourself in prayer before God. In your actual interior condition, if you keep yourself for a notable length of time in this disposition of prayer, and without any other occupation, the sensitive and organic part of you will necessarily grow restive and will strive to tend to God or to attach itself to God. This will take place without your being aware of it and in spite of yourself. You will find that in the beginning you will not be aware of these efforts, but after a notable time you will realize that your mind is in a state of tension, bent up and coiled, as it were. I don’t know if I am using the proper expression, but you understand what I mean—and your body will feel exhausted.

[How to Avoid Tension]

This is why I think you should not remain idle. I would not recommend reading but rather manual labor, because the organs and the sensitive part of your being will then remain pacified, and interiorly you will be united to God, just as if you were engaged in mental prayer. The very thought of occupying yourself with mental prayer, its actual and sensible presence in your mind, would be enough to make your senses get busy. Despise this life of the senses, and give them no share in things heavenly. The donkey must eat thistles, while the master dines at the king’s table. Your soul is the master and your body is the poor donkey.

For this reason, dear friend, don’t resolve and say to yourself that “you are going to meditate.” Pass your day peacefully in the sight of God, occupying yourself with some material work, and maintaining the interior communion of God with your soul, without mingling any action of your own with it.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

Your soul should go to God, and live in Him in the greatest purity of faith, in faith alone. It should be without life and movement of its own, so that Jesus alone lives in it. If you find that manual labor does not furnish you with a distracting occupation—I mean one that will keep the sensible part of your nature busy—limit yourself to walking in the little garden. Do not, however, walk around with the idea of mental prayer, but keep yourself tranquilly at Our Lord's disposal, in complete renunciation. Pass your time looking at a fly, a bird, a blade of grass, or similar trifles. Try this, I beg of you, if God wills it, and let me know afterwards what success you have had.

I wrote recently to Father Galais. I am afraid that I have caused him pain because I may have seemed to assume professorial airs. However, he is so humble that he has well received, I believe, all that I have told him....

Best regards in the holy love of the Divine Infant and His most admirable Mother.

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

134

Jesus' hidden life in us. Total surrender to Him.

Letter Twelve Rennes, February 3, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 494

Praised be Jesus Name

Dear Confrere:

[Let Jesus Lead His Hidden Life in You]

May the Divine Child continue His life of love and abandonment in your soul. He is our All! Let us be lost and annihilated in Him. He is hidden in our innermost soul, as He is hidden in the poor house of Nazareth after His return
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

from Egypt. Let us keep our souls in poverty and privation so that this dear child may deign to live in us and hide Himself in the intimacy of our hearts. Oh yes! the Divine Child must be hidden in us, hidden not only to the eyes of men, but even to our own eyes.

Let us not try to find where He is hiding in our souls, but rejoice with our whole heart because the beloved Master deigns to live concealed in us. For several reasons it is better that He live there hidden rather than openly. Let it suffice for me to tell you that such is His good pleasure, and after that, should we not want to be full of joy? Yes, let us rejoice that Jesus does in us and with us all that He pleases.

If He finds nothing in our own substance that is pleasing to Him in ever so small a degree, we should be exceedingly well satisfied that He at least finds there His most holy will and that of His heavenly Father. This divine will is as pleasing to Him in us as it is everywhere else. We should, therefore, allow Him to follow this divine will in our souls, without trying to become acquainted with His action. We should abandon ourselves, and keep ourselves in our nothingness before Him and in Him, so that He may live in us according to His good pleasure, and according to the life which He leads in the bosom of His heavenly Father. He knows how He lives in us, and His father knows also; why, then should we want to interfere? Let us live in our ignorance and imbecility in our poverty and our interior nakedness. Let us be nothing and annihiliated, for ourselves and all things, so that Jesus alone may be all things in us and for us. I find something so delightful in the hidden life of Jesus in our souls, that it seems to me everything should be sacrificed to it.

The hidden life of Jesus in us is an admirable life; but it demands our complete interior destruction; for if our eye
still casts a look upon our interior, how can Jesus conceal Himself within us? No, my well-beloved brother, do not look anymore or, rather, place the eye of your soul at the disposal of Jesus, in order to have no sight but through Him and in Him, and in order not to see at all if He wishes it so. O blessed blindness, by which our soul no longer sees, no longer understands, no longer feels, no longer lives because Jesus holds it within His hands, and becomes all things in it! This is what I have to tell you for the present.

I don't know if you understand what I want to say. I hope that the divine Jesus will make you understand not what I have wished to say to you, nor even what He is doing in your soul, but that He will make you understand your imbecility, your poverty, your incapacity, and your nothingness. He will make you understand also that you must continue in that imbecility and nothingness, in that incapacity; and you must allow Him to live hidden in the depths of your soul.

[Perfect Surrender to Our Lord]

I saw in your last letter that I was mistaken in what I said to you about your mental prayer. This shows you, dear friend, what trust you must place in men. They are all blind, some more so than others, but certainly there is not one who is capable of seeing the things of God unless the good Master shows them to him.

From your letter I had gathered that you spent sometimes three hours in meditation; that you did this during the day when you were unable to work; that for that purpose you remained seated in your place trying to meditate; and that it was this that tired you. This is why I gave you that irrelevant advice. I knew, of course, that your mental prayer itself did not produce that effect. Disregard, therefore, what I told you in that letter and go on as if nothing had hap-
pened. But I am very glad that I made that mistake; it called forth some explanations that gave me a better insight into your interior. May Our Lord be blessed for everything that He deigns to do with you and in you. Abandon yourself to Him, surrender always to Him; all that is needed is perfect surrender and nothing else.

[Seminary News]

You doubtlessly know that dear Mr. Dupéloux is with us. This dear lad is as well disposed now as when I left him. Temptation has not at all changed him. He is entirely freed from it at present, and perfectly at ease. He is advancing very well in the way of God, and I expect that our good Master will make him the instrument of the glory of the Heavenly Father. May His most holy name be blessed.

When the seminarians hear this, those of them who do not yet perfectly understand the strength and the grace of our good Master will not fail to bestow praise upon me, as if I had delivered this dear lad. Do not allow them, dear friend, to make this mistake, but convince them of the truth: I count for absolutely nothing in the good effected; it is the Divine Master who has accomplished this work in him, and I have only spoiled it in part. I am sure that if an imbecile like me had no part in this affair, things would be much better for him. I feel certain that you also are convinced of this.

This, dear confrere, is all for the present. May Jesus alone be all things in you.

 Entirely yours in His holy love and in that of His holy Mother,

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

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LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

135

Jesus triumphs in your soul by means of the cross.

Letter Thirteen    Rennes, February 28, 1838    Vol. 1, p. 495

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Rejoice That Jesus Makes You Share in His Cross]

May Jesus, our Divine All, be all things in you. The means which He uses to become all things in you is well worthy of His kind and most lovable wisdom and bounty. I was informed by your letter of all the blows that He has given your soul, and I must confess that I could not but rejoice fully in His divine love. I did not even think of compassionating your ills, although, in the estimation of men, they seem to be immense and absolutely unbearable. Every wound inflicted on your soul is a powerful blow given to your flesh by the adorable hand of Jesus. May it succumb, may it be crushed, so that Jesus, our most holy All, may alone live, reign and exist in your soul. It seems to me that I see Him in your innermost soul, moving its mechanism, wishing to rule and govern that flesh, but "with an iron rod." He subdues and crushes it, because it is impure and rebellious. Let the divine king of our souls act. Let Him erect His throne in you; abandon yourself entirely into His hands, and live only by His life.

Do not breathe or have any movement, but by Him alone. And as His life in you must be a life of crosses and extermination, your only happiness and your only life must be sorrow, prostration, night, death, and the destruction of everything in you that is yours.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

All that you have to do, therefore, is to repose blindly on Our Lord, who lives and works in you as your Sovereign Master, but the sovereign Master of a perverse creature, whom He wishes to clothe with His supreme holiness.

[Abandon Yourself to the Arms of Your Good Master]

Know, dear friend, that the sanctity of Jesus, wishing to manifest itself in our souls, must necessarily cast down, crush and annihilate everything proper that it finds there—I mean everything that in our souls is of them and belongs to them, because all life that is not His own, and all existence that is not in His Father and from His Father cannot subsist before Him and is essentially excluded from His sovereign and adorable sanctity.

Be faithful, therefore, in abandoning yourself, as you desire, into the arms of our good Master, in order that He may govern and direct you internally and externally. Desire nothing but through Jesus and in Jesus; enjoy, love nothing but through Jesus and in Jesus; or rather allow Jesus to will, desire, know and love in you. Be dead and null in yourself and by yourself. Imagine yourself entirely dead. A corpse no longer has any thoughts, any desires, will, or enjoyments; it has no longer any movements or impression in itself and by itself. Be just like it. It is certain that such is the good pleasure of the Master, since He effects all this in you without asking your permission or your help. He keeps you in this complete nullity; remain in it, and follow His movement and the divine impulses which He gives you. Through them He will act in His supreme, most pure, and most adorable sanctity.

[God is Taking Possession of Your Soul]

I admire with inexplicable joy the combats of this adorable sanctity against the flesh. Its blows are terrible;
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

this wretched flesh is astonished to see itself attacked in so formidable a manner. May this divine sanctity of Jesus live and reign in your soul. May it spread there, occupy it, and take complete possession of it.

I know very well that it will meet with some resistance. If it did not meet so much, its progress would be far greater and its reign far more powerful. However, don't worry, our Master will always be wonderful in His works, and we, wretched. It must be thus, so that all the glory and all the praise be bestowed upon Him, and that our share be all the ignominy and confusion. It is for this too, that our souls should be full of joy and love for this well-beloved Master and Lord.

Be resigned in this as in everything else. If it pleases Him to let us creep in the mire and dust, in the midst of His operations all holy and full of love, purity and mercy, what need we do but say to Him: “Be You blessed, O well-beloved of my soul!” Besides, is it not supreme happiness for us to be allowed to crawl before Him? It seems that this should be more delightful than to walk with the head erect; because His glory, beauty, gentleness, His holiness and all His other perfections, which He deigns to display in our abode of clay, are for this reason but the more brilliant and the more luminous. May He therefore be blessed, praised and adored for everything and in everything that He pleases to do in and with you.

Keep yourself in your nothingness and your lowliness, in complete forgetfulness of self, and of everything that relates to self. Be like a machine in the hands of your Master, doing all things by the sole movement of Jesus. Never think of what will become of you, of what you will do, or what you will be, at the next moment.

Adieu, dear friend! Let us rest on the cross of Jesus, and live only by it. It will be a great consolation for me if
God deigns to bring you to Rennes for some weeks, for the purpose of restoring your health. I cannot tell you my reasons for this just now. If God wishes us to meet, I shall tell you. But, dear Confrere, everything in God, and nothing outside of Him! He alone is our All, and He alone must move us and act in us. May He live and reign in your soul and in mine, with all the force of His divine and well beloved cross.

Entirely yours in Him alone,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

P.S. It has pleased our good Master to prevent me from writing to you until today. Please tell Mr. de la Brunière and Mr. Maigna that I hope to write to them tomorrow.

136

Libermann discloses the secret of his personal troubles in the novitiate.¹

Letter Fourteen Rennes, March 16, 1838 Vol. I, p. 496

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Jesus Has Given Me a Heavy Cross to Bear]

May Jesus and His divine cross fill our souls. This beloved cross has been weighing most heavily on me for a very long time; may the most holy name of God be praised and adored for it. It pleases our good Master to strike us in a most grievous way. I have now been overwhelmed by the

¹Cf. above, Letter Nine, p. 213.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

weight of that divine cross for more than three months. I did not wish to speak to you about it because I feared that I might be looking for human consolations, when Jesus ought to be our All.

When Our Lord strikes us we should receive His chastisements, however terrible they might be, with submission and love; and we should not try to evade them nor seek for comfort and relief. I am writing to you now lest I be guilty of prolonged silence. Your prayers and those of your dear confreres could obtain from God's goodness what He has inspired me to ask for persistently and insistently during all that time. May His most Holy Name be blessed, praised and adored.

Begin by humbling yourself before our divine Master and tell Him that you submit fully to everything that His divine Majesty wishes you to suffer, for what I am about to announce to you will overwhelm you with grief.

[A Pious Seminarian Changed into a Malicious Novice]

Dear Confrere, it concerns our poor Mr. de Brandt. The state in which he has been for the last three months is dreadful. Imagine the most dissipated, the most wicked, proud and malicious seminarian; well, you have then the portrait of this poor confrere. So great is his wickedness and malice that I have never met with the like. I don't know what to do, for I have no power over him; he has a mortal hatred and supreme contempt for me. He observes none of the rules, rejects all curbs and restraints, and from morning till night thinks nothing but evil. During prayers and other pious exercises he sleeps or is occupied only with laughing and making others laugh at all sorts of jokes and strange actions. He often plays pranks with the same intention before the Blessed Sacrament. During recreations it is impossible for others to say anything of an edifying nature; he himself speaks only
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

of foolish things, about hunting parties or other things of that sort, and he indulges in jokes and histrionics with a malice that is truly frightening. During evening recreation things are regulated and it is not permissible to get off the track; for the rule wants us to speak then about some edifying topic; but he tries to sneer or to turn the devout things that are said into a joke, or he walks outside of the group in mournful silence and indulges in all sorts of foolishness, such as goose stepping or dancing.

[He Tries to Corrupt a Fellow Novice]

He has formed a particular friendship with poor Mr. Dupéroux; and this is another very great misfortune, for he does much harm to that poor lad. This friendship is particularly strong and of a special kind; it is diabolical and is rooted in malice alone. He is constantly running after the lad, tells him jokes, tries to make him dissipated, etc. Mr. Dupéroux is running a very great danger; God alone knows if he will be able to extricate himself from it. And if he does, I shall no longer have the high hopes which I had placed in him, for he was advancing well. It is greatly to be feared that, even if Mr. de Brandt does not ruin him entirely, he will give him such a blow that Mr. Dupeloux will feel its effect for a long time.

The poor boy does his best to get away from him; sometimes he flees from him, shows him indifference and dissatisfaction, and he does not permit any familiarity; but at certain moments, which until now have been rare, he does yield a little. But I see that Mr. de Brandt's malice is gaining ground. He sometimes succeeds in injecting his poison; and every time the poor lad has been in contact with him he returns in a very bad state of mind. He has already had two crises after those unfortunate meetings in which he listens to de Brandt's jokes with a certain satisfaction and speaks with
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a certain familiarity with him. These crises have not been as strong as those he had at Issy, but they nevertheless put the lad in a bad state of mind. I had forbidden him to do those things; but, at times he is no longer master of himself and is carried away. This makes me tremble.

I have noticed one terrible thing: Mr. de Brandt sometimes transmits to him his hatred against me; and he does it without saying a word, through a kind of spiritual communication. If Mr. de Brandt wins out, the poor lad is lost; and I shall be obliged to look on that horrible spectacle without being able to offer the least remedy.

Praised be Jesus. I am ready to receive all the blows. Let Him strike, let Him annihilate my sinful heart; let Him tear it to pieces, and consume it in the sorrows and the pangs of death. There are moments when I am in a sort of frightful agony, but I bless the Holy Name of our Master for all He is pleased to do. Until now, nothing has been lost, as far as Mr. Dupeloux is concerned, but I have the greatest fear for him. He has permitted himself to lose too much ground. I had foretold him that this would happen; I had taken precautions to prevent him from being carried away, but he probably thought that I was exaggerating and he did not take them fully. Those precautions were not excessive, but were rigorously exact; and because he yielded a little, he was already almost carried away. The reason is that Mr. de Brandt’s malice is so great for seducing him and his cleverness in profiting by all circumstances gives him so great an advantage that, if Mr. Dupeloux is even a little careless, he will surely succumb. May the most Holy Name of Jesus be blessed for and in all things.

[His State is, I Believe, Diabolical ]

The state of Mr. de Brandt is truly diabolical. I had some hope at first, but for some time his condition has been
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getting worse and has become habitual. At first, things happened only now and then; there were at least small intervals of peace, but now there are none and his malice is continuous. I believe that his nerves are affected and I can no longer see an end to his ills. The consequence will be deadly; at least this is what I fear, and I do not see much hope for a perfect return to God. Nevertheless, God can do all things and His mercy is infinite. Let us pray.

We are making a novena which will begin Saturday and end on the day of the Annunciation; in it we shall honor the divine maternity of Mary; we shall invoke the intercession of Sister Marie Desvalées; Mr. Leray will tell you who she is; do what your devotion will inspire.

If you think it proper, show this letter to Mr. Maigna and Mr. de la Brunière, so that they may make the novena with us. In any case show it to Mr. Leray. You understand now, no doubt, why I told you in my latest letter that it would give me great comfort to see you here. I was hoping that you would at least be able to be useful to Mr. Dupeloux to prevent his fall. At that time the danger was not yet great; now your help would be more necessary. Do in this only what God’s will dictates.

I could tell you many things regarding the antecedents of that terrible catastrophe, things that are very important for you and for our dear confreres. This is another reason for my desire to see you. Distrust yourself and tell others not to be confident in themselves, seeing this frightening blow. Keep this matter secret, but show my letter to Father Pinault and ask him to keep the secret.

Best regards in Jesus and Mary. May they alone be blessed during all eternity.

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

In spite of all that the novitiate is very fervent.
Praised be God, for, through Mary, He has restored peace to our novitiate.

Letter Fifteen  Rennes, March 29, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 500

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

"Bless the Lord for He is good; for His mercy is forever." Praised be Jesus living in Mary, and Mary living by, in and through the life of Jesus. Let us beg our divine Master to make us participants in that divine life which He came to live in Mary. He knows well that our life is a life of the flesh, a life imbedded in clay, in mud, in dirt, a life wholly filthy and disgusting; yet He came amongst us and in us to free ourselves from our despicable and wretched life, and then infuse in us His own life that is pure and divine.

Let us rejoice with all our might in this life of the well-beloved of our souls. Our life is in Mary, I mean that true and only life without which we are but repulsive corpses; it is a life in Mary, our Mother. It is for that purpose that Mary is truly our Mother; for, if Jesus is our life, it is Mary who has given it to us and continues to give it to us every day. Hence she is indeed our Mother, for we have only the life which she has begotten on this wintry day.

This week, dear friend, I saw clearly that Mary is giving us life in what she has done for our beloved Mr. de Brandt. I have good news for you. Our divine Master has struck us because we have sinned, we deserve these chastisements and merit incomparably greater ones than those which He has inflicted. And if it pleased Him to send us greater sufferings, should we not accept them with the greatest joy, prais-
ing, blessing and adoring Him with the greatest love? Yes, certainly, for He deserves it well; for He alone deserves praise, glory, love, and we, confusion, contempt and hatred not only on the part of all creatures, but even on the part of our one and only Lord and Master. May He then be blessed, praised and adored because of everything He wishes to do to all these servants who are not even “useless servants” on this earth.

[Mr. de Brandt Has Recovered, Thanks to Mary]

Last Friday, Mr. de Brandt underwent a sudden change. Saturday morning I went to see him and found him much better; however, he had not completely recovered. Yesterday he seemed perfectly well again and this condition remains today. I have not seen him so well as he is at present for the last four months. Moreover, I have found that he had better dispositions than he has had for the last five or six months, for during that time his dispositions were unlike those of last year. So you see, dear friend, how the Most Holy Virgin must be dear to us, for she has life in herself and communicates it to those who belong to her.

Mr. de Brandt told me last Saturday already that it was she who had operated that change, and that on Friday evening when the change took place, his first reaction moved him strongly toward the Blessed Mother. This could be the first true sentiment of piety that he has had for the last four months. He has no doubt had intervals of repose from time to time, but there was never any real change; his dispositions of pride remained always to the full. At this moment he is almost as good as he used to be. Nevertheless, he has still some interior agitation and he has not completely recovered in that respect. But the thing that gives me such great joy is that his dispositions of humility, of obedience, and of piety seem to have come back.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

I beg you and all those who have become acquainted with my first letter, to make a novena of thanksgiving in the same manner as the first. Let all pray the most Holy Virgin to give him perseverance and to finish in him what she has so well begun, if this is pleasing to her well-beloved Son. In this we must practice perfect abandonment and make no restrictions. Let us not pray, resting on our own strength and our own desires; we must let the divine Spirit ask for it in us and through us; we must abandon ourselves fully to His impulse and His guidance.

Poor Mr. Dupeloux was going from bad to worse since I wrote to you and there were moments when I had no more hope for him. Since the return of Mr. de Brandt, things are stirring in him also, but I don’t know what is taking place. He has not yet recovered, but that stirring gives me hope. I do not want to be curious about where things stand in his regard; I prefer to let God alone act in him, and not to interfere with His action in the least; I would merely spoil everything, if I were to put my hand in it. Tell Father Pinault that I will give him news as soon as I know something that is certain.

[It Was My Fault That Caused His Trial]

In the midst of all those miseries it has pleased God to show me my own, which is probably the greatest of all. However, His goodness and mercy toward me are something unique and wholly extraordinary. I have never read in any book or heard anyone tell things of that sort. He is the Master of all things, and I have no business to ask Him why He acts in that way; this is what He wants and it should fill me with joy and love.

But consider the incomprehensible way of His divine wisdom. He punishes and treats rigorously good souls which He had overwhelmed with His favors and which are cer-
tainedly much better than myself, and He punishes them for my sins. Perhaps you don't believe this, but I assure you that it is true. I who am the greatest culprit am left in peace by Him! I assure you that this surprises me greatly, but may His most Holy Name be blessed, praised and honored. He knows what He is doing, and I am a true imbecile! If Mr. de Brandt has failed and undergone this trial, as I believe, because of his faults, those faults so terribly punished, were first committed by me. Poor Mr. de Brandt has merely inherited them from me who am the true culprit.

[God Does Everything; Man is Nothing]

One other thing of great importance which it has pleased our Lord to show on that occasion is the extreme uselessness and incapacity of us all. You have no idea, dear friend, of our worth or rather of our want of it. Far from being useful in any way, we serve only to spoil and lose everything; and it seems to me that if God did not arrest the evil we do, all the works we undertake would turn to the detriment and the loss of souls.

Accustom yourself, therefore, dear friend, to the practice of never thinking that you have done anything whatsoever, when it pleases God to sanctify souls with whom you are in contact. Be fully convinced that the greatest obstacle to the sanctification of the souls we deal with, is none other than we ourselves. Yet we imagine that we are useful to them, because of our excessive pride and malice. Let us nevertheless follow the prompting which He deigns to give us for the sanctification of souls to whom He directs us, without becoming discouraged at the sight of our extreme stupidity, uselessness, incapacity, and the harm we cause to poor souls. Let us not examine the good and the evil which are found in our conduct, but follow like blind men all the adorable wishes of our divine Master. Let us allow His divine Spirit
to handle and manipulate us, while we remain before Him in our lowliness and abjection.

You see that all that has taken place in Mr. de Brandt was a terrible trial and of diabolical origin. That is what I have always believed and of which I felt certain; I feared only the consequences.

Please show this to all those who saw my first letter. Kindly tell Father Pinault that I will comply with the request he made through Mr. Leray as soon as Father Superior will give me his answer. He desires first to consult the good Lord.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Jesus lives in us on the ruins of our self. Advice concerning the reading of spiritual books. Protection against illusion, and reliance on God's guidance. The decision regarding your vocation is in God's hands.

Letter Sixteen Rennes, March 31, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 503

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

[Jesus' Life in Us Requires the Ruin of Our Sinful Self]

May Jesus alone live and reign in Heaven and on earth in those who belong to Him. And what else have we to do but to wish that He live and exist in us and through us? There remain for us, and can remain for us, only death, destruction, and annihilation before the adorable majesty of our sovereign Master and Lord Jesus. May He therefore
live and reign in us to the detriment and the ruin, the annihilation and the complete destruction of the life and existence of self.

This triumph of Jesus over sin and self will cost us many a hardship and many a tear, many a sorrow, and anguish of every kind. Before our abominable flesh and wretched self are dead, they must receive many a blow from the powerful hand of our all-lovable Master. This is, at least, His most holy will, for if He wished, He could easily crush them with a single blow. But no! He wills that this flesh, which is so opposed to our God and Lord, die in prolonged suffering and anguish.

What else can we do but rejoice in all His wishes and His good pleasure? If it pleases Him that our agony be a long one, let it be long. Oh yes, long, very long, and longer still, if thus it please our good Lord Jesus. We are good for nothing; we can do nothing; we are of no value; we are nothing.

Should we not be exceedingly glad that we are at least objects upon which our divine Master may exercise His holy will? We will therefore remain in a state of death and interior extinction, devoid of all movement, all life and all being before Him. Let us be and remain nothing before Him, so that He may operate with this “nothing” according to His incomparable good pleasure.

We must say nothing, do nothing, and think nothing, so that Jesus alone may speak, act and think in us. When shall we at length be as nothing before Him? When will He work in us according to the full extent of His adorable will? Whenever He will deign to do so. May it reign, this dear love, this all-lovable All of our souls. I am very glad to see you subdued by the violent blows which you have received.

Tell Mr. de la Brunière the same thing for me, if you please, for I am very glad to know that our divine Master is
plying him with powerful blows. Both of you should remain in the most profound humility before this well-beloved Lord, lest your hearts be puffed up by all the divine mercies of this great Master. For I am astonished to see how much He deigns to crush and annihilate you before His Father.

Be faithful to this spirit that would reduce your self to nothing. All that He does should show you how full you are of horror and corruption. Just see how your flesh still lives, even after He has sent you all this suffering and anguish. But I hope that He will at length bring it to an end. May His most Holy Name be blessed, praised and adored. He does wonderful things continually, and we resist Him unceasingly. Praised be Jesus and His most holy and crucifying love.

[Prefer Our Divine Master to St. John of the Cross]

 Providentially I am just reading the works of St. John of the Cross, so that I know, in some small measure at least, what this great author and holy man says. I have not gotten very far yet; I am at the fourth chapter of the third book. This is what I think of him according to the divine will of our kind Master:

I believe that St. John of the Cross was very much enlightened by God, and that all he says is wonderful. But I also believe that our divine Master is still more wonderful; and what we learn from Him is more beautiful, more luminous, and more sanctifying for our souls. I even believe that He alone can enlighten us, can make Himself known to us, and make us known to ourselves.

It is, therefore, certain that we should seek our light, our holiness and our life in Him alone. So don't worry about anything. Go to Jesus with your whole soul, and look for nothing outside of him. Abandon yourself solely to Him.
You are afraid of illusions. So much the better. That is necessary; for how could you mistrust yourself otherwise? And without distrust of self, you can never be anything else than [full of] presumption. Illusions are very numerous and dreadful; but what can we do? Are we capable of defending ourselves against them? Will reading of human words protect us against them? Certainly not. If reading protects me against one illusion and then makes me the prey of another, what have I gained? No! no! dear confrere, do not place your trust in men. Jesus alone! Nothing more and nothing less!

To protect ourselves against illusions, we should:

1. Mistrust ourselves, that is, never consider ourselves safe, and avoid that kind of human boldness with which we think and act.

2. Forget ourselves and not think of ourselves. Our soul must be simply borne toward God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, by considering Him alone, seeing Him alone, and thinking of Him alone, so that we abandon ourselves recklessly to His divine love.

3. Never value great graces, lights, and similar gifts, but esteem and see God alone, without paying attention to these extraordinary graces.

4. When the Master deigns to take us and fill us with His life in one way or another, surrender ourselves into His hands, and keep our eyes on him alone, by tending, or allowing ourselves to be borne toward Him alone, and all this purely and simply.

We should not consider the things that are taking place in us, but be indifferent to them, and let them bring us to our Master. The eyes of our soul should be constantly
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

turned toward this dear Master, and our soul should tend toward Him alone. If we examine or consider what takes place in us, we are in greater danger from our self-love, secret complacency, and presumption. Illusions will then come spontaneously, and we will no longer prevent them.

If you follow this advice, you can walk before God in that fear and surrender to Him, without being harmed by illusions. You will occasionally have some, but who hasn’t? There is probably no saint in heaven who has not had a great number of them in his life, excepting, however, the Blessed Virgin, and a few others. I tell you with confidence that those who make strong efforts to avoid them, have more and worse illusions than others. Walk in all simplicity and confidence before God, abandoning yourself into His hands and letting Him do in you and with you what He wishes.

[It is Not Presumption to Expect God’s Guidance]

You have been told that it is presumptuous to expect an extraordinary light from God to guide you. But that warning does not apply here. We do not expect any extraordinary lights, but very ordinary ones, such as are bestowed on everyone who denies himself and gives himself completely to God. If He cannot manifest Himself to everybody, it is because everybody is not willing to empty himself of self.

The greatest impediment to this divine life and this communication of God to our souls, comes from the life of self and from the activity of the mind which wishes to be self-sufficient. Did our Master have no end in view when He came upon earth? He came to communicate Himself fully to our souls, to our minds as well as our hearts. And how can He communicate Himself to our minds in any other way than by being our light, as well as the love of our hearts?
Jesus is our Model. We should do in a small way what He accomplishes on a large scale, or rather, it is His divine Spirit who should effect in us in a limited fashion what He did so liberally in the most holy humanity of Our Master. But did the human mind of Our Lord ever see anything by its own light?

Moreover, in addition to what He teaches us Himself in a number of passages of the holy Gospel, St. Paul repeats unceasingly that Jesus alone should be our light. This Divine Master tells us that He is the light of the world, that we must walk in this light, etc. Don't be afraid, dear friend, there is no presumption in this. On the contrary, if we want to act all alone, and not in union with the Divine Master, that is a sign that we are attached to our own opinion. Annihilate your mind before Him, and lose it in Him alone, for He alone is and shall be our light and our life. Those who say the contrary know nothing about the ways of God. They have not even read, or at least, they do not at all understand, the holy Gospel or St. Paul.

Do not worry if you have read anything in St. John of the Cross that would seem to contradict what I have just said. You should understand the thought of this great saint exactly, and then know how to apply it. Remain silently united to our good Lord; act under His inspiration in all things; see things only by His light; love things only with His love, and live only by His life. We should not scrutinize the lights which He gives us through this continual union and surrender to His Divine Spirit. We must not say to ourselves: "Such a view, such a sentiment, such a disposition came from Our Lord." We should not examine the interior movements of our soul too closely, nor fasten our attention upon them, in order to know what comes from God. This would be falling into the fault of which I spoke above, and forgetting to pay attention to the interior gifts of God and to His graces.
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We should be content with keeping ourselves united to Him and with aiming at Him in everything, with trying to act by His movement alone, with having no opinion but in Him alone, with living only by His life, and then with advancing in all simplicity, doing all things in Him, for Him and by Him.

This is all, and I assure you that there is no presumption in such conduct, but on the contrary, a very great perfection. Unless, of course, one calls it presumptuous to wish to be perfectly agreeable to our kind Master and to belong to Him without reserve. If such is the case, let us be as presumptuous as we can.

[The Reading of Mystic Spirituality]

With respect to the study of mystic theology, I believe that the reading of certain books may be useful to certain persons. But, as a general rule, in the beginning, before the state of our soul is well settled before God and firmly fixed, we should not at all read any mystic authors. At least, we should make a careful choice, and read only those who speak about perfection in a general manner, laying down the fundamental principles, without entering into the details of special ways toward God, like Father Olier and others of the same kind. Otherwise one could easily fix his mind upon a mode of action that might be pleasing to self without being agreeable to God. For in the beginning we are full of self-love, we always seek what appears grand and beautiful and we are filled with illusions.

We should read very little, especially in the beginning, and aim by preference at establishing our soul in the interior life by the practice of perfect self-denial. We should not succumb to the itch for reading, under one fine pretext or another. If we wish to read, we should not read books of theory but lives of the saints.
Nor should such reading be done with an imagination which delights in brilliant actions, nor with an activity which devours page after page, nor with a will engrossed with the idea of putting into practice everything that we see the saints do. We should read with the desire of our sanctification, exciting ourselves to fervor on beholding the beautiful things in these holy souls, and in the desire of uniting ourselves more closely to God, of conquering and denying ourselves in everything and everywhere.

As for you, dear friend, read St. John of the Cross, since you have to read him. But this is how I think you should do your readings in general: never try to gain instruction from books. Our Lord alone is our teacher. It is He who wishes to instruct us and make us learn all the things that we ought to know. It is in Him that we should seek all our light. This, I believe, holds true for everybody; all should deny themselves, and seek their only light in Our Lord in the constant union of their souls with this dear and adorable Master.

If you read books, it should not be with the purpose of finding rules of conduct in them. There is no harm in reading, but read little. If you read in such a way, you rectify quite a number of misapprehensions. It is with such a way of reading as with study, which corrects many ideas.

This way of reading, moreover, gives us greater facility of expressing ourselves with exactitude. Perhaps you will not understand what I mean by that. No matter! I don’t think that that reading will do you harm, if you attach no great importance to it. When you begin to read, let your soul be simply united and abandoned to God, as it should always be, so that it is more closely applied to God than to what you are reading. Do this without restraint, but in your usual manner.

God alone, God alone, and always God alone! Let everything disappear before Him, and let nothing outside of Him
exist in your soul. The reading of St. John of the Cross will have this advantage for you: it will render you more reserved and will protect you against presumption, because you will grow more timid and distrustful. I believe that this will be the greatest advantage that you will draw from it. This is a great deal and will help you to arrive at perfect annihilation of self before God.

[Not I, But God Must Decide Your Vocation]

I do not know why you are in any danger at home. It is doubtlessly far better, generally speaking, to be in the seminary or in some religious house than in the world, especially if you are not made to live in it. But since the good Master keeps you there, I do not see why you should leave it in spite of Him.

I should be very glad to see you here, because I have a great many things to tell you, things very important for the sanctification of our souls and for the greater glory of our kind Lord. My joy would still be greater if I saw you join us. But in all this, Jesus, the sovereign Disposer of His servants must alone decide.

Regarding this last point, here is what I have experienced about it: I have felt in me an interior movement and a spiritual view which put you among us, which showed me that Our Lord was attracting you. However, I have never examined the question in you; I have never had the desire or the power to examine God's will for you in your own soul.

I have at times (sometimes for three weeks or a month) had such ardent desires and prayed so strongly in order that Our Lord might draw you, that I believed that this would come to pass. In all that, however, dear friend, allow yourself to be led only by the hand of Him who must be in all things your only Master, do not move except when He
moves you. Your greatest affair is a life of total surrender to God and complete death to self. I don’t think that I should examine this matter at this moment, for I believe that God’s will is not in evidence. He wants us to keep quiet for the present. Let us be dead and as nothing in His hands.

In regard to staying in our house during the holidays, undoubtedly Father Superior would receive you with the greatest charity, but I don’t think that your parents would ever consent to it. All as God wills! He will bring you here, when it pleases Him. He wants us to be dead in the meantime. Well, let us be just that, and live only through His divine love and in that of His most beloved Mother, in whom I am,

Entirely yours,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Libermann humbly submits a letter he wrote to the judgment of Mr. Carron.

Letter Eighteen Rennes, April 4, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 504

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May Jesus be your only treasure and all your riches on earth, as He will be for you in heaven through the mercy of His Father.

It is for the love of that great treasure of priests and of all faithful souls, and for the glory of His divine and admirable priesthood that I make you pay the postage of this letter. Father Aubriot asked my advice regarding the
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

proper way of preaching. You know as well as I do what is the trouble, for, according to what he tells me, I see that he has consulted either you or Mr. de la Brunière. It grieved me to hear that he is always lagging behind and I would like to encourage him. This is why I replied immediately to him. But when I had finished my letter I was astonished to see how forceful it was. I was afraid to send it and let Mr. de Brandt read it to see what he thought about it. He also considered it quite strong but he told me: “If you don’t send it, Father Aubriot will remain all his life in his present condition.”

[I Have Every Reason to Mistrust Myself ]

I know well that he needs to be shaken up but that the shock might be too strong and discourage him. Are you angry with me to see how little abandoned I am? Dear friend, a man who has caused such great evils to souls is right in distrusting himself; this is why I beg you to read that letter, and if the good Lord tells you to hand it to him, do it. Soften the pain which it might cause him and tell him that I love him with all my soul in Our Lord Jesus, and that if I dare to speak in that way to him, it is for his greater sanctification. Beg him to write to me as soon as possible so that I may know what are his dispositions in that respect.

I assure you that I am really astonished and ashamed, considering what I say and the way I say things in that letter, especially since it is addressed to a priest and because I myself am but a poor man, as you very well know. I fear doing something wrong, so I put everything on your shoulders. If you judge that the letter ought not to be given to him, write to me as soon as possible so that I may reply in some other way to Father Aubriot’s letter.

Our dear Mr. de Brandt, without being entirely delivered of his obsession which still makes itself felt rather
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rudely from time to time, is nevertheless in the very best dispositions at the present moment. May our good Lord Jesus be blessed above all.

Mr. Dupeloux has not yet recovered but is getting better. I see in him the same effects, at least in part, as in Mr. de Brandt. In certain circumstances it absolutely looks as if the evil spirit who animated Mr. de Brandt were also acting in him.  

Entirely yours in
Jesus and Mary,
FRANCIS LIBERMAN, acolyte

Allow Jesus alone to reproduce His image in your soul.
Self-forgetfulness.

Letter Nineteen   Rennes, April 29, 1839   Vol. 1, p. 506

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Do not Interfere with the Way Jesus Forms His Likeness in You]

I rejoice before our Lord Jesus that He has been pleased to keep you nailed to His most Holy Cross. I really admire His incomprehensible kindness in this. He deigns to look upon His poorest servants, who have thus become like unto Him in spite of themselves, and without having contributed

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1 Both de Brandt and Dupeloux soon after left the novitiate. De Brandt became a diocesan priest in Amiens and greatly assisted Father Libermann when the latter founded his own congregation in the Diocese of Amiens.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

anything toward it. This is what is sweetest and most delightful in the admirable Cross of Jesus. He alone does everything, and we do nothing and can do nothing toward it.

When Jesus wishes to reproduce Himself in a soul, His divine image is much better executed if His own hand alone touches it. Any human hand meddling with it would only mar it. It would be like a monkey which wanted to finish a picture at which he saw his master working. You can imagine the results! He sees his master dipping the brush into the colors and then applying them to the canvas, but that is all. He is unable to distinguish the skillful strokes that the painter draws on the canvas. As soon as the master leaves the studio, he takes hold of the brush, dips it into the paint and applies it to the picture. Fancy the masterpiece his daubing would produce. Well, such is our work.

We have not the slightest idea of what our divine and most adorable Master wishes to do in our souls; we cannot distinguish a single stroke. Still we sometimes wish to interfere with His work and reproduce in ourselves the wonderful lineaments of this dear Love. Let us beware of that.

Why not leave our kind Master act? He will execute His design, provided we cast ourselves entirely into His hands, and give Him complete freedom of action, according to the full extent of His sovereign will and His most lovable good pleasure. In the state of crucifixion, in which you are, you have urgent need of keeping yourself dead before Him and lost in His Divine Spirit.

What would you do if Jesus did not work as Master, and as sovereign Master? Keep yourself constantly as nil and not-existing before Him. Never look upon yourself. Your attitude toward yourself must be the same as though you had never existed. I have told you this repeatedly. God’s will must work in you, as it has produced the world
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from nothing. We must make it a point to reduce to nothing what exists, so that it may be replaced by what does exist. Your flesh must, therefore, be destroyed with everything that it has, that it can do, and that it wishes, as well as with everything that is in it, so that Jesus and His divine Spirit may take their place.

When God, in His divine goodness and wisdom, condescended to turn His attention to nothingness, the latter did not resist. It allowed God's will to act fully, freely, and completely. Preserve the same attitude before your divine Master. He imposes upon you His most lovable and admirable Cross, for the purpose of effecting in your person this disposition of nothingness. He destroys, crushes and annihilates the flesh with its powers, and He alone will remain the Master.

[Self-Forgetfulness ]

Nothingness paid no attention to itself. It did not consider the divine operations that were in action; neither did it reflect upon them, or have any complacency in them. Try to do the same. Never look upon yourself nor upon anything that relates to you. Let all the events that concern you, either interiorly or exteriorly, happen without an afterthought upon yourself.

Let everything run its course, like the water that flows in a river. The drops pass on and are immediately succeeded by others. The river is always the same, and nobody pays any attention to this succession of drops. In like manner, you should pay no attention to the events that happen to you. They are just so many drops of water that the Master wishes to have pass there.

Your soul should always be firm and immovable in God, indifferent to, and heedless of all those things. This rule applies even to the very graces that the Master deigns to

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bestow upon your soul. Accept them all but do not fix your attention upon them. Your soul should always be in repose and without movement before God, expecting, accepting and letting all the graces, crosses, and tribulations pass by that He makes flow in you. You should do all this for the purpose of uniting and attaching yourself to the divine Master alone, by the purity and in the purity and holiness of faith. No doubt, you understand my thought, when I say "Without Movement." It does not mean that you should refuse to yield to the interior impulse which Our Lord deigns to give you; you should on the contrary always follow it.

I wished to write you several times already, but it was impossible for me to do so. No matter how often I began to write, I never found either words or ideas. This was for me an evident sign that the divine Master did not wish it then. I can readily see the reason. He wishes you to be in all the purity and holiness of His love. Walk in the lowliness and humiliation of your soul, before this dear Lord. Distrust and despise yourself constantly before Him. . . .

[News About the Novitiate ]

Good Father Pinault must have been very sorry about the departure [from the novitiate] of his protégé [probably Mr. Dupeloux]; but what can we do? God’s will is our all; let us not have or will anything outside of that. Let us rejoice in the midst of our sorrow and bless the Master if He afflicts us, but with love and joy of heart. He has afflicted us terribly; He will perhaps afflict us even more. What can we do, but be full of joy and love for a Master who is so great, so mild, so good, so lovable and adorable?

I hope as you do, that the Blessed Virgin will not abandon her children. Mr. Dupeloux was well disposed when he left and it is to his great advantage that he was able to be here for some time.
Mr. de Brandt is somewhat better, but I don't know yet what the divine Master wants to do with him. What I know is that His most Holy Name will be blessed, praised and adored on account of him. I remain full of hope, but a hope founded only on divine mercy.

Let us belong to Jesus and Mary, dear friend. Let both of us be forever lost in their divine love.

Entirely yours in this dear love,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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On the dangers of spiritual friendship.

Letter Twenty Rennes, June 17, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 507

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confreres:

To my well-beloved brethren in the most holy love of Jesus, greetings, love, grace and the blessing of Jesus and Mary.

I write this letter to both of you, because the things I speak of concern you both. I hope, moreover, that the Holy Spirit unites you, and makes you one and the same in the divine love of Jesus. Be pure and holy as our Master is holy above all things. And how can we live before Him, and in Him if we are not altogether holy and separated from all creatures?

Love each other but with the same love with which Jesus loves you. Be united but with the same union in

1This letter was addressed to Mr. Carron and Mr. De la Brunière.
which your souls are united to Jesus, and, with Him, in His heavenly Father. But if you should be thus united with a holy and heavenly love, should not each one of you, with much greater reason, love himself with the same love? I know that our dear Lord Jesus has filled you with horror at the sole thought of loving yourself, but I cannot refrain from saying a few words on the subject.

I have no fear for the love of the flesh. God's love has deigned to banish it from your souls, although the basis of it still exists in the flesh. But I do fear the complacency and satisfaction of the mind. This is to be dreaded even in mutual charity. We must be united by the bond of the Holy Spirit, who effects all charity in our souls. But this union must be exempt from all complacency of the mind.

[Self-Satisfaction and Complacency]

Keep your minds free from this wretched contentment and complacency. Let everything in you be pure and holy, and may the sanctity of God be manifested in you by His undisturbed existence in your souls—in your minds as well as in your hearts. This existence of God in you must show and produce itself in all the interior actions, all the tendencies, and all the movements of your minds and hearts. The flesh will always keep going its own way and will not cease to annoy you with its evil inclinations. But your soul will always remain inviolate and pure before God and in God, who will dwell in it, live in it, and govern it in all things as its sovereign Master. This complacency is far more harmful and dangerous in regard to yourselves.

I beg Our Lord Jesus that He may watch over you, for I know of no man in this world that is exempt from it, so frightful are our corruption and our folly. The greater God's graces are, the more we strive to live and to serve God according to the purity of faith and the spirit of perfec-
tion, the more subtle and delicate also become the afterthoughts, or rather the subterfuges of our complacency. For this reason, it is very difficult to discern them.

However, do not become anxious and worried about this. He who has withdrawn us from the deep abyss of corruption and perdition will know how to defend us against the malice of the enemy and against our own flesh. Let us surrender our cause into the hands of our divine Master, so that He alone may procure our sanctification, in accordance with the eternal designs of His Heavenly Father.

[Distrust of Self]

When I sometimes consider my own malice, all the wiles of the enemy, all the snares that he has continually set, and still sets for me—snares in which I have often become entangled; when I think of my weakness, my blindness, my corruption and my extreme incapacity, I really do not know what will become of me. Who will ever be able to deliver me from so many evils, and to prevent me from deserting my God? It is Jesus, brethren, but Jesus alone with His divine Mother.

You are in the same position as I am. Do not despair, but let us give ourselves up to our kind Master and His Divine Spirit. Let us remain in our misery and our extreme poverty before Him. Let us constantly mistrust not only ourselves, but all that we do, and all that we say and think. We must keep watch over ourselves, and not act with that boldness which takes on the appearance of true and absolute surrender to God, while yet remaining very far from it. Let us do everything in conformity to God, with gentleness, modesty, and a great interior lowliness.

Oh, how dangerous and execrable is all this exaltation of the mind, this presumption in our actions, this determination and violence of our will in the eyes of our divine
Master. You cannot imagine it. I am overwhelmed with sorrow when I think of it. Proceed, therefore, in your lowliness and forgetfulness of self, strive to be ignored and forgotten by men. Never put yourself forward for anything whatsoever, even if the salvation of the whole world depended upon it. Do not desire what is useful for the glory of God and for the sanctification of souls, if it is calculated to raise you in the esteem of men or in your own eyes. If God should imprint this desire [for His glory] in your hearts, remain in fear and trembling before Him.

You may feel a certain esteem for the grace that God gives you and for the knowledge that you have of interior life; you may still be afraid that people may have a bad opinion of you on this or that point and may judge you wrongfully; it may happen that you want to display before the eyes of men the things you believe worthy of esteem in yourself, in your thoughts, in your actions, or in your words; or some other similar illusion may present itself to your mind. Anything like this may be only a temptation that often returns. Yet in case this happens, I think that you should break off all pious relations with men, even if they are entertained for the purpose of bringing them to God, and no matter what good might otherwise result from them. I do not mean that you should break off these relations forever, but for a certain length of time until the flesh is subdued.

How I would like to see you, in order to make my meaning clear, in and with the divine charity of our Master! However, may all things be accomplished according to the designs of Our Lord.

[I Am Greatly Worried About You]

I frighten you, perhaps, with my fears. This would not worry me, provided you remain in the peace of our good
Master. I confess that, for myself, I have not yet gotten rid of the extreme terror into which God was pleased to cast me by the terrible punishment that is still present to my eyes. Do you wish me to tell you more about it? For well nigh two months I have suffered great anguish on your account. My God, I do not know why I have no rest! Why can I not be with you for at least a few days?

Jesus, my kind Lord, may You be blessed above all things! Do not worry about my extreme affliction and torment. My sins, which are more numerous than the hairs on my head, are the cause of it all. I see no particular reason at present that could cause this fear. I have not even got any light about anything whatsoever; but God strikes me, because I deserve it. May His most holy Name be blessed.

Still the anxiety in which I am, and which has cost me many tears, makes me fear lest the devil may be setting a snare for you, and that you may be in danger. On the other hand, I think that my sins, which have already caused so many evils to souls, are perhaps the only cause of my trouble. But I am afraid that I may yet cause you harm. Excuse my sorrow, it is too great. But in the adorable Name of Jesus, and in the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I beg of you to listen to what I tell you, without, however, giving yourself up to agitation and worry.

If I were not the cause of all the evils that have befallen those whom God has brought into relation with me, I might obtain from God the grace of seeing you and of speaking to you a little; but I scarcely venture to expect it. And yet I do hope so, for the mercy of God is great. In the meantime, and whether it pleases God or not to bring you here, I beseech you to give up for some time all pious relationship with whomsoever it might be. Take your time, in order to consider before God the trials and difficulties you experience, and examine if it would not be better to remain isolated until the enemy is subdued.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

Write to me about this, if you think it useful and in conformity with God's will. But I am of opinion that you should give up your relations of piety with your friends from outside the seminary. Live in a great mistrust of yourselves. Pass your time as well as you can, but without appearing before the eyes of men. Keep yourselves before God in the humility and lowliness of your soul. Never consider yourselves, nor what is taking place within you, except to tremble before God and to ask for mercy. Perhaps He will have pity on you and on me, for He loves to listen to the poor and the wretched.

[Examine Yourselves Before God]

Let us humble and abase ourselves. For he who raises himself, who thinks himself something, who strives to be something, will not fail to be humiliated by the arm of our all-powerful Lord. This is what I can tell you for the present. I would have liked to enter more into detail, but I cannot do so. I thought it was sufficient for me to show you some of the worries and fears that I experience. It is about two months that I have had these worries and fears, but I have always delayed writing to you about them. I was afraid to trouble you, and God, I think, did not want it.

This letter was begun about a month ago! I wrote ten lines of it at that time but was unable to continue. I still hesitate very much to let it go. But I place my trust in God, and I hope you will examine the matter before Him, for it is not at all sure that I am right. These fears are not founded either on any fact or on any word. I mention them to you, in the hope that you will be able to draw from them something to humble and sanctify yourselves, supposing even that I should say something foolish. In any case, I beseech you to reply as soon as possible.

Adieu, dear brethren. Best regards in the most holy charity of Jesus and Mary.

FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE
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Illusions have their usefulness Relations with others.

Letter Twenty-One Rennes, June 19, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 507

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May Our Lord be your strength, your peace, your life, your love and your all!

Enclosed I am sending you a letter for Mr. de la Brunière, and another for both of you.¹ The latter was written before I received yours. This is why I also add one for each of you in answer to your own letters. I beg you, dear friend, to read that long letter, which is for both of you, in a spirit of gentleness, peace and charity. I would have liked to enter into details, but I have not been able to do so. I think that what I have said will suffice, whatever be the danger you may encounter. I cannot do anything, for I am keenly aware of the fact that I can only spoil things; therefore, place everything into the hands of Our Lord.

[Illusions Have Their Usefulness]

Do not become troubled on account of what you read in that letter, for I don’t think you have fallen, but I am afraid that you might fall. Yes! I fear this, without knowing why, as I tell you in that letter. If you think you would thus do something pleasing to God, reassure me a little in my misery. Take your time so as not to tire yourself out. Moreover, suppose there is something wrong with your conduct and your interior, you must not become anxious on that account, even if the evil were considerable.

¹See the preceding letter.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

I frankly confess that it would give me a certain amount of satisfaction to learn that you have been ensnared a little or even a great deal, provided it serves to reduce you to your proper stature before God and men, and in your own eyes; for it is this which will establish true surrender to God in your soul. I am morally certain that you have been entrapped by some illusion. I had not even a doubt about that before my departure from Paris. However, this does not frighten me, for that was necessary for establishing you in God.

I can assure you that I myself have been a victim of so many illusions that I was sometimes frightened by them; but I see well, at least in part, what is their source; and I hope that Our Lord will draw glory from evil itself, and holiness from our corruption. This, then, dear friend, is what should fill us with joy, the sort of joy which humbles and annihilates us before God.

Keep a peaceful watch over yourself, dear friend; fear any elation of mind which inspires excessive liberties and license, and causes you to relinquish your state of lowliness, subjection and peaceful distrust of self; fear such promptings and do not yield to them. Never act with over-confidence. No doubt we must abandon ourselves entirely to our good Master, but this very abandonment should give us an interior restraint, moderation, gentleness and modesty, and cause us to follow the divine impulse step by step, rather than advance by reliance on our own efforts.

Sometimes, instead of abandoning ourselves to God's action, we rush forward, following our imagination which makes us see surrender to God where it is not. Our progress in the way of interior life is then considerably slowed up. If one of these troubles has affected you—for all of them and a multitude of others have affected me, as I shall tell you when I see you with the eyes of the flesh—if then one
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

or other of those miseries, or even a greater evil has be-
fallen you, do not worry. There is no reason for alarm, for,
through God’s mercy, your mind does not stubbornly cling
to its own ideas, nor do you construct an individual program
of action for yourself; but you are willing to follow the
impulse which it pleases God to give you. Now a man of
such disposition would be rescued from the very bottom of
the abyss.

[Relations with Others]

You speak of difficulties which you experience in your
relations with certain confreres. If they merely concern
these confreres themselves, because, for example, they resist
things that are for their spiritual advancement or cling to
erroneous views, do not worry about it, but place everything
into the hands of God; for your words and nothing are
almost synonymous. God alone is the master of souls. If, on
the contrary, the difficulties concern yourself, I believe, dear
friend, that you should break off all relations with those
who occasion these difficulties. Your present interior state
and your exterior isolation do not allow you to expose
yourself to danger in any way. I am certain that if you were
to expose yourself, God would no longer be with you. I am
telling you this, not because of my present fear, but because
I believe it to be dictated by a universal principle. ...

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

P.S. The reason I did not write, dear friend, was that I
was afraid that you might be ill. I did not receive news
from you for a long time, and I did not dare to say those
things, for fear my letter might fall into the hands of others.
I see clearly that the Master has not desired that this
should come about.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

A short time ago I asked Father Pinault to say that to you, so that you might send a word to me. He has no doubt forgotten it—as usual.

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Libermann considers himself the source of evils afflicting his spiritual children. Concerning judging others.

Letter Twenty-Two  Rennes, July, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 509

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

The only thing that now remains for us is to bless Our Lord for everything He has done, is doing every day and will do, in His infinite mercy, for His most poor servants.

They do not even deserve that He should cast His eyes upon them; but rather to be chastised and driven forth from His presence. Before such incomprehensible goodness and mercy, we can only adore in silence, with the utmost respect and a most humble and profound gratitude. We have failed in many things, we have deserved to be rejected, but Our Lord has deigned to have pity on us. How shall we ever be able to render Him adequate thanks? Let us be most loyal and humble, putting all our trust in Him and loving Him alone.

[I am to Blame for the Evils Afflicting You and Others]

Dear friend, I am to blame for all the ills you have suffered and I shall never understand why our beloved and holy Master has not struck out my name from His Book of Life. I have merited it over and over again. I hope that He has pardoned me, but I feel most keenly that His hand is still raised above me, and that He will administer many
more blows on my wretched and unworthy soul. This is indeed necessary in order that I may more fully recognize the greatness of the evil dwelling in me, for I must confess that I fail to appreciate it.

I see clearly, however, that I have greatly harmed all souls whom it has pleased Our Lord to direct to me, and that I will continue to do harm all my life, unless our good Master arrests my wretched course and purifies my interior. This has been my chief fear and concern for the last two months. I was at first unable to discover the cause of my anxiety. I had a vague feeling that I had done harm to souls and had poisoned them, at the very time when God was helping so powerfully with great and wonderful graces. I felt effects of God’s anger and trembled at the thought that He might overthrow everything. May His most holy Name be blessed for all His mercy, as well as for all the blows delivered by His justice, which are themselves expressions of His incomparable kindness.

Dear friend, who will dare to face His divine justice and His unfathomable holiness? May He act according to His divine good pleasure. Those same fears and the thought of the harm I have caused you, made me anxious to see you and, if necessary, to apply the proper correctives. The principal thing was the “presumption” about which you spoke to me. I see that, through the mercy of God, you know the state of your soul, at least in part, and I hope that the good Lord will do the rest. Hence I am not so eager at present to have you visit me, and I am glad you have not yielded to the desire to come. It would always please me greatly to receive a visit from you, as you know well, but I would not make the least effort with God, or with you, to have this come about; hence remain calm in regard to that subject.

Recognize once for all that no one needs me in order to be able to serve the good Lord properly or to correct his
faults, especially those defects he may have contracted through my fault. You know and realize this fully, and I assure you it is a great blessing for me as well as for you. . .

[Do Not Judge Others ]

And now, let me warn you against another danger which would lead to an evil that is worse than the former. For the last two years you have noticed several defects in your soul. Do not conclude from it that the same faults exist in your confreres. Be careful not to judge anyone. Consider, if you wish, the extent of your defects and mine; this I desire with all my heart, but do not search for such faults in the souls of others. Never condemn anyone except yourself.

Be careful not to reject everything that has been said or done by others. You have noticed your defects; condemn and reject them, and humble yourself before God. But reject only your defects; the rest was very wholesome and in accord with the teachings of Our Lord. This appeared new to you; but the sins of the one who announced those truths to you were the cause of it; I have never thought that it was something new, and I have seen very clearly this year that it was not so.

Read Father Lallemant; you will find in him all the necessary principles, as you will also find in St. John of the Cross. His doctrine is true; it belongs to you to put it into practice, and then everything will turn out well. A number of things will have to be added for the greater good of souls. Men more enlightened than we have done this long ago.

Take care of your soul, then, dear friend, for the devil is very clever and full of malice, and he may tempt you on the subject to which I have referred. I do not want to say anything on this matter, for I am poor, and I have resolved to remain silent unless asked to speak. I shall often fail to keep this resolution, sometimes because Our Lord may want it,
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

or because of my self-love and my other defects. But let us always place our confidence in God and trust that He will assist you in conquering yourself so that you may live for Him and in Him alone.

Adieu, dear friend.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE

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Gratefulness for charity. Trust in Jesus, in spite of innumerable faults. Libermann's reluctance to write.


Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Your Charity Pleases Me Greatly]

Let us give our souls to Our Lord, do all things with the sole purpose of being perfectly pleasing to Him, and act only in and according to His spirit. I greatly rejoice in Our Lord because you still preserve a little charity toward me, in spite of all the evils which you have encountered through my fault. May God's Holy Name be blessed. He alone is holy and admirable in all His works, and all men are sinners; but there are sinners and sinners.

I don't want to recall the past, lest I seek to establish myself instead of establishing God alone, and for fear that while seeming to accuse myself, I dissimulate the evil. It is good, I believe, to forget everything; and it is to be hoped that Our Lord, on His part, will forget also and that He will make His grace superabound where iniquity abounded. I prefer to leave in doubt the faults I have committed, faults
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

that have been so severely punished, and to refrain from entering into details concerning them. Moreover, I have no very clear view about that matter, and I think it will be useful for me henceforth to be on my guard against similar faults; it is my hope that our good Master will safeguard you against such faults.

Cast yourself recklessly into the arms of Jesus, our divine Lord. He will receive you and make up for all that is wanting in you. If you are proud or presumptuous, He will pour into your soul a great spirit of lowliness, misery, poverty, self-forgetfulness, abasement before every creature, and of a singular esteem for all His servants.

I had a desire to speak about your interior, but it has pleased Our Lord to hide it from my view. I do not know at present what stage you have reached. What, then, is to be done except to wait, in your poverty, at the feet of Jesus, and to rejoice because of this ignorance concerning all that He is pleased to do with us and in us? I don't know whether you yourself have knowledge of your interior. This is another reason to establish yourself more and more in complete confidence in the divine mercy of Our Lord, in true distrust of self, of your own ideas, your affections and your actions, lest malice, pride, presumption and other vices spoil what Our Lord is accomplishing in you, for the sanctification of your soul.

[Have Trust in Jesus, Despite All Your Faults]

Know well and acknowledge before God that your interior is full of faults and abominations. It is truly wonderful that the divine Lord Jesus has so much patience and gentleness toward you, that He desires to remain in souls that are mean, wretched, rebellious, and constantly resist the inspirations of His divine will. They constantly attribute to themselves the good which Jesus works in them and blame
others for the evil which they find in themselves and for which they alone are responsible. Again, they justify themselves in their own eyes for the evils which they are unable to impute to anyone else. Wilfully blind, they hide from themselves their own evil conduct, and constantly foster their own illusions. Perfectly self-contented, they want to be able to say to themselves that they are remarkable.

But is it true that we are really so abject and wretched in God's sight? Yes, dear friend, and incomparably more than we are able to conceive. We could enumerate a great many more evils. Is this a reason for despair? Certainly not! On the contrary, the depth of our wretchedness should fill us with a great trust in and an entire surrender to Jesus, our good Lord. We should remain in our great abjection, misery and lowliness before Him, expecting little from ourselves but hoping everything from Him. Our soul must always preserve great self-distrust and remain in profound humility before God and man.

[Though Less Eager to Write, I will Always Reply to You]

Do not imagine that my charity for you has cooled off, because I spoke to you in my last letter as if I were neglecting your soul and were indifferent to your sanctification. Neither the one nor the other is true. If I were to say that henceforth, according to the resolution I have taken, I will, I hope, be more reserved in the matter of writing letters to you, this does not mean that I feel a distaste for writing to you. No, dear friend, this is not so at all. Write to me as often as the Good Lord prompts you to do so; it will give me great consolation to be able to reply to you.

I assure you that every time I think of you before Our Lord, I experience a very great interior joy. My greatest desire is to see you make great progress in the way of sanc-
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

tifying your soul. This matter has been the cause of my grave concern. Perhaps my concern has given you sorrow, but I am glad that it is so, and I would like you to have more grief of this sort; for this is precisely what you need. It will make you more humble and interiorly more docile and more perfectly annihilated before Our Lord.

I said that I would not take the initiative in writing letters or in other matters, and you can guess the reason. But, generally speaking, I could not refuse to answer anyone who writes to me on a subject regarding the sanctification of his soul or the glory of God. This would be a formal unfaithfulness to my duty, for it is clear that Our Lord wishes me to be a servant in His holy church and not a master. I must therefore always be ready to serve everybody. Yet, I must confess, that since the beginning of this year, I have so great a distaste for writing letters that to write even a few is most burdensome to me. But I believe that this arises from the body, for once started, all disgust vanishes. It is only putting myself to the task that is difficult, and this costs me so much that I often remain doing nothing for days, because I do not have the courage to begin. Here is a slave who does not want to put his hand to the task which the divine Master prescribes to him! This is even one of my great faults of the past, namely, that I left my servitude and acted too often as a master. God has punished me severely. But He has had pity on the poor man through His truly incomprehensible mercy.

Adieu, dear friend. Remain constantly humbled and abased before God. Never judge the persons or the things you see, but keep yourself always in all simplicity and humility of heart before Jesus and Mary. In their love I am,

Entirely yours,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE

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Dear Confrere:

[The Dangers of Living in the World]

May Jesus and Mary live in your soul. Be always wholly to God, that God may be always all things to you. You are condemned to live in the midst of the world, and I am told that you will probably not return to the seminary next year. May the good Lord be blessed.

But take care of yourself. Although the devil is able to set his snares in any place, it is certain that he has infinitely more facilities in the world than in religious communities. In the world he finds easier access to us and disposes of a greater number of means, either in the persons with whom we come in contact, or in circumstances more adapted to his end. He sometimes even makes use of devout persons who lack the necessary discretion, who are unable to distinguish the things of God from the snare of the enemy, and who are often ignorant of the kind of piety that is suitable for us. They do not appreciate what things are harmful to us; they do not understand our defects or the sort of conduct that we should have. The result is that they frequently cause us considerable harm.

We ourselves, because of our accursed self-love, make numerous mistakes, and deliver ourselves into the hands of the devil. Our mind is so full of error that a powerful grace
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

is necessary to safeguard us, even in circumstances otherwise most favorable and much more, of course, when they happen to be adverse. If, in addition to these difficulties, we have self-love, undue self-confidence and similar defects, our perseverance is far more difficult.

[How to Counteract These Dangers]

We should therefore be very reserved, very recollected, very united and abandoned to God, very peaceful and moderate in all our conduct, very modest in words and actions, particularly distrustful of self, and filled with the fear of being carried away by a multitude of illusions into which the devil wants to cast us. Let us therefore keep in mind our lowliness and our poverty, distrusting ourselves, our ideas and our own lights. We must be reserved and moderate in all things, seeking and desiring only God's love and occupying ourselves solely with what is pleasing to Him, both in our interior life and our exterior conduct.

We should also avoid relations which are apt to turn us away from that interior life, embarrass or harm us in any way. Let us place all our trust in God's goodness, abandoning ourselves entirely into His hands, ardently desiring to be always and in all things agreeable to Him alone. We may then hope that Our Lord will sustain us against all dangers, against all enemies, and against ourselves.

To sum up, do not be disturbed by the fact that it pleases God to keep you in the world, but at the same time do not consider yourself perfectly secure. Fear, greatly distrust yourself, and remain full of the presence of Our Lord. There is one most joyful and consoling thought: the Lord Himself dwelt in the world. Hence we have but to unite ourselves with His life and conduct, in order to sanctify ourselves. It remains always true, dear friend, that we need to be very pure, that we must fear self, and keep our-
selves in a great spirit of humility and self-annihilation, if we wish to have a large share in that life.

[Remember What You are in the Sight of God]

Remain constantly in your lowliness and your poverty in God’s sight, amidst darkness and affliction. The precious results will be: the destruction of your attachment to your own opinions, contempt for self, for your own mind, your own will, the destruction of all your cravings, of your self-love, and of esteem for all those great graces which you find in yourself. [By remembering what you are in the sight of God,] you will be so well aware of your wretchedness that you no longer will consider yourself somebody of importance because of the graces God has given you. You will no longer seek to be a somebody either in your own eyes or in the eyes of others, but remain aware of your misery. Your soul will keep itself before God in fear, humiliation, and in a profound and loving reverence. This is an excellent disposition and makes us perfectly docile and submissive to God’s will, which has then full dominion over our souls.

I received the letter of Mr. de La Brunière which you sent me, but have not had the time to read it. I have scarcely been able to read yours and reply to it and to two others which required an immediate answer. But I hope to read it tonight and reply to it tomorrow. It is not that I am extraordinarily busy, but the beginning of our holidays brings with it a multitude of petty concerns which have left me scarcely any free moments for the last eight days.

I have learned from your cousin that the beautiful project of Mr. Levavasseur will not be realized. May the good Lord be blessed. Let us keep our souls in humility, poverty, abjection and in sweet peace before God, living only in and by Him.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

Praised be Jesus and Mary. May all natural love of creatures perish from our souls.

Adieu, dear friend. Let us remain always united in the holy love of Jesus and Mary. In their love I am,

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE

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Peaceful surrender to Jesus, the master of your soul. He will conquer through crosses.


Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Friend:

[Abandon Yourself Peacefully to the Master of Your Soul]

May Our Lord Jesus, and He alone, live and reign in your soul, in the fullness of His divine love. It seems to me that it is indeed His divine will thus to reign in you, in spite of all the obstacles He has found and, no doubt, continues to find in you. But you know very well, dear friends, that He can smash and overthrow all barriers.

When the Divine Master is absolutely determined to reign in a soul, nothing can resist Him. He overthrows everything and triumphs over all obstacles. I have had a good experience of the effect of this will when He deigned to take hold of me to make me belong to Him alone, in spite of innumerable obstacles, the infidelities, and the spiritual sloth which I have constantly put in His way. Do not give in to shame or anxiety, because you notice the crooked ways
and disorder of your self-love which, doubtless, still offers a considerable obstacle to the establishment of the absolute reign of Jesus in your soul. Remain before Him in profound lowliness and in your extreme misery. Wait for this divine Lord with meekness, humility, and full realization of your wretchedness. And He shall come with the power of His divine love and seize your soul, in order to communicate to it His own life and His own inclinations, affections and dispositions.

For this purpose, you, in turn, must abandon yourself always to the divine Spirit of Our Lord, with the dispositions of a poor man, fully aware of his wretchedness and the humiliating state of his impotence. You must remember your constant opposition or cowardice by which you continually shun that divine and only life of your soul. Recall that, on the contrary, you are always aiming at being sole master of your self, and desirous of preserving at all times your own wretched life, mingling your own movements with the holy and heavenly impulses imparted by Our Lord. Keep your wretchedness and perpetual infidelity constantly in mind, and abandon yourself entirely to the divine goodness and incomprehensible mercy of the good Lord Jesus toward you. Fear nothing, dear friend! It is He alone who will accomplish His task. He works amidst sorrows and crosses, and this is for the better.

[New Crosses Await You]

Up to the present all your crosses have been limited to your soul and were of an internal nature. This may have been advantageous in many respects; they may have enabled you to reach a certain degree of interior life if you have made good use of them. I mean, if you have not offered resistance to the divine action of Jesus in your soul. But all this was not sufficient, for it was taking place only in you.
More was needed to let Jesus be truly triumphant in your soul. The particular crosses and afflictions which you have suffered until now were destined to make you advance to a certain degree in divine love, by detaching you from creatures and by taming the concupiscence of the flesh, with all that this implies. But they were not sufficient to give you the spirit of true and heavenly surrender to God and to make you enter into the perfection of the contemplative life.

In order to enter this perfect life, it is necessary that pride and everything connected with it be trodden down, and that you be entirely dead to self and in self. You have not yet reached this state, dear friend.

[Expect That Others Will Despise You]

In order to attain it, you need a cross quite different from the ones you have borne until now. You need to be neglected and despised by men, or at least to be deprived of their esteem for you. You need to grasp most clearly and feel keenly the utter wretchedness of your soul. That is why I rejoiced when I seemed to discern in your letter that men had begun to draw away from you, to distrust your dispositions, and to become indifferent toward you.

My greatest desire in all this is that you be truly despised and abandoned by all, so that you have no longer anyone to whom you may unbosom yourself but experience a constant anguish of heart. May all men distrust you, in order that you may no longer yield to their attraction, and that you be obliged to attach yourself solely to God, living by Him alone.

My heart will greatly rejoice if it pleases God to lead you to this condition. If, on the contrary, He prefers to leave you where you are at present, please write to me, provided, however, that it be God's will. I have for quite a while been unable to obtain a clear view of your soul, and I
know no longer its true interior condition. I have always been afraid that your too engrossing relations with men might turn your soul away from its true state. I sought information, but no one was able or desirous to tell me what was happening in your soul. I assure you that this ignorance of your condition has caused me considerable grief. It seems to me that a new dawn is coming, but there is still little light. If it pleases God to leave me in my stupidity, I ask nothing better; and you, on your part, do not worry.

Best regards, dear friend, in the most tender charity of Jesus and Mary.

Devotedly yours,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Allow Jesus to operate unhindered in your soul. Distrust of self.

Letter Twenty-Six  Rennes, October 16, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 511

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Faithfully Abandon Yourself to Jesus' Hidden Action]

Preserve always the peace and tranquillity of Our Lord in your soul. Be content with all that He is pleased to give you. He always treats us with excessive kindness. Even when He chastises us, He does it lovingly and to sanctify our souls. Realize, dear friend, that you are, like myself, a wretched man. I do not say this either to cause you grief or to insult you, but because it is a truth of which we are both equally aware.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

By knowing myself, I sense what you are. There are times when I am overwhelmed and, as it were, discouraged by the sight of all the wretchedness, all the filth and all the self-love which I find in myself. And it seems to me that you are almost equally poor; that is why I say this to you. What can people like ourselves do, except consider ourselves as we are before God, and remain before Him in our poverty? We may consider ourselves blessed because He deigns, in His great goodness and mercy, to occupy Himself with us. Perhaps He has even more pity with my misery than for yours, since mine is greater.

But, beloved brother, whatever His conduct toward you, remain before Him in all peace and confidence. Do not ask or desire anything beyond what He gives you. Receive with love, joy and gratitude, the most severe treatment of our good Lord. He keeps you in complete darkness and ignorance of all that He is accomplishing in you. Remain peacefully in your ignorance before Him. Know for certain, or at least confidently believe, that this darkness is the fruit of grace in your soul, rather than a sign that His grace and action are absent. They will certainly bring about your sanctification, if you faithfully abandon yourself into the hands of the Divine Master.

[Remain Peacefully in the Arms of Jesus]

Therefore, remain tranquil and peaceful in the arms of Jesus. Keep yourself in your poverty, your nakedness, and your lowliness before Him. You are in a state of complete incapacity of doing or knowing anything whatsoever. Well! remain quiet, and follow step by step the divine impulse which Our Lord gives you without your knowledge.

Deliver yourself entirely to Him, in a great spirit of humility and of annihilation of your whole interior, of the work and the silence of your soul, of the operations of the
mind and the affections of your heart. May everything in you be most perfectly subject to Him alone. May all your sentiments and all your interior and exterior actions be submissive to the holy and perfect guidance given by the will and the holy operation of Jesus dwelling in you. Follow peacefully your good Master; abandon yourself entirely into His hands, and lose yourself in His divine Will, permitting Him to accomplish everything in and through you.

[Self-Distrust]

For the rest, distrust the world, distrust self; distrust your mind and your heart, distrust your weakness. Jesus alone is your strength in the midst of the world. Distrust everything except Jesus, our most beloved Lord, and the Mother of God, who is also our Mother.

Abandon your soul into their hands, without measure or reservation. Always preserve a wholesome fear and never feel self-assured, but at the same time be ever full of hope and allow nothing to shake or disturb you. Preserve carefully the holy and lovable simplicity of Jesus; it would be a great evil to lose it.

Be holy, because your heavenly Father is holy. Rejoice always before and in your divine Master, for His spirit of holiness dwells in you. Oh, how frightening is this spirit of holiness! How great the purity and holiness He demands of us that we may be pleasing to the divine Spirit of holiness of Jesus, that we may preserve this spirit in its fulness in our souls. Be holy, dear brother; be always in a most holy joy; be also full of a holy, yet peaceful fear in the sight of our Lord Jesus.

Best regards to Mr. de Brandt in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary.

Truly yours in their love,

Francis Libermann, acolyte
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

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How to behave in spiritual darkness. Advice concerning study.

Letter Twenty-Seven  Rennes, January 4, 1839  Vol. 1, p. 512

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Surrender Fully to God]

May Jesus, our only love, be the light, the strength, the sanctity of your soul. How lovable is the divine Lord Jesus! He is full of love, of goodness, of complacency toward the souls that belong to Him, that place their trust in Him alone who dwells in them. Abandon yourself always to His holy guidance and take care, dear friend, never to entertain fears or distrust in regard to His divine grace. His action is unknown to you, and the way is dark and difficult. He is guiding you all the same, in safety, with goodness and love. May your soul therefore be always entirely abandoned in His hands.

Live as not belonging to yourself and as possessing nothing as your own; belong entirely to Jesus with all that you are and possess. It belongs to Him alone to dispose of His property, to use it for His greater and only glory, and to do with it what He deems fit. You have no right to ask: "Why, Lord, do you act this way?" Abandon yourself; surrender yourself entirely [to God], and remain thus in a state of servitude, of sacrifice, of immolation and of continual annihilation of your entire self, surrendering to the good pleasure of Him to whom you totally belong.

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[Proceed by Faith and Not by Reasoning]

The practical conduct which you must adopt in the midst of your fears, troubles and obscurities seems to me very simple: since Jesus dwells in you and is your guide, in spite of this darkness, follow Him with all gentleness, peace and love. Do not walk hesitatingly, but follow your Guide step by step. For this purpose keep your soul gently and peacefully turned toward your divine, lovable and most beloved Guide. You will not always see Him; He is with you nevertheless and guides you all the while. Although your mind does not behold Him, it will nevertheless operate only through and in Him. Hence avoid giving free rein to your mind; restrain its eager activity, its urge for reasoning. I mean that you should not proceed by way of reasoning but through faith, and by simply looking at Our Lord with the eyes of your soul.

You may be tempted to reason; you might risk to succumb to this temptation, because of the obscurities which prevent you from seeing what the light of Jesus manifests to you. Do not allow yourself to be fooled; walk in all simplicity before Our Lord as an ignorant man. Avoid also a certain harshness and rigor of mind and tenacity. Be pliant; be gently docile to the divine inspirations, although you may not feel them. I mean by this that your mind should keep a disposition of suppleness and abandonment before Jesus; that is, instead of strain and eager striving, preserve a disposition of allowing yourself to be moved, and do not tolerate any other impressions than His.

[No Self-Scrutiny]

Avoid also self-scrutiny to discern what you are doing, thinking, and how you are acting. This would produce tension and struggle and would reawaken a selfish and stub- born mind. Avoid also examining the action of God in your
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

soul. As He desires to hide this action, you must not try to see it but merely deliver yourself into His hands, with great confidence and perfect surrender, coupled with a certain distrust of self and a fear that is full of peace and love.

When I told you to have your mind peacefully turned toward Jesus, I did not mean to specify the method of approaching Him. Keep your soul in its normal state of mental prayer before God; avoid awkwardness, effort and fatigue; but walk in His presence in such a way that your mind is at rest and at ease before Him. If you do this, you may be full of confidence and assurance even though you see nothing, for you hold the rope by which He guides you and you follow Him without seeing Him. Continue your placid progress, abandoning yourself entirely to your adorable Guide, in peace and trust, mildness and moderation.

You see, dear friend, what ought to be your conduct, as it seems to me. It must be a life of privation, of absence of all pleasure and satisfaction; a life of devotedness and entire sacrifice of self. It is a life in perfect accord with the grace of the subdiaconate; a life of moderation of mind, of distrust of self; a life of pure yet obscure faith; a life of simple, constant and sweet union, devoid of tension or struggle and also, as it were, imperceptible; a life of abandonment and of carefree surrender, full of confidence and love, into the hands of our divine and most adorable Love. All this, without knowledge, without light, without feeling, without enjoyment, and without any examination whatsoever. In this way, you will walk tranquilly before God; you will be peacefully abandoned to Jesus, guided in all things by His blessed love, without even noticing it.

Do not examine, dear friend, whether this obscurity is a punishment of God or not. Whatever its source, do not busy yourself with it. Be content with giving yourself more and more to the divine Master, loving Him more and more, and
living only in Him and through Him, consenting at all times, in every place and circumstance, to whatever He wishes to do with you, in you, and through you.

I also advise you not to entertain the thought that this state of yours is only for a little while. Such a thought is liable to enter your mind, if it has not yet done so. Act as if you were to remain permanently in this state, and consecrate yourself to our adorable Master, for the rest of your life.

I still believe that you should not worry about what you say to your confreres in order to quicken their love for God. Say what comes to your mind and do not worry about the results. The fear which you have of falling a prey to illusion is not evil. It will sometimes afflict you but cause no harm, provided it does not worry or upset you. Do not seek to have this fear; but relish it when it comes to you and keep yourself in your lowliness in God’s sight, in all gentleness and peace.

[Advice Regarding His Studies]

I am in perfect agreement with you regarding what you say about studies. I have always believed that they are necessary for a priest, at least to a certain degree. If it is done properly, study is always useful even from the spiritual point of view. I advise you, however, not to adopt this view in a rigorous fashion and to push it to its ultimate consequences.

Study before God and in God, as was done by Saint Thomas. Study earnestly, seriously and confidently, drawing all your strength and your light from God alone. Do not examine to what extent study and science are necessary or useful. You are pursuing the course of higher studies; prepare the matter and study your authors. Occupy your mind seriously with them in God’s presence. Take care, however,
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

that your mind be not carried away and preoccupied with this study; do not let it nourish self-love or produce confidence in your own knowledge and generate a sort of self-sufficiency.

I tell you all this that you may always distrust self and live only in God and by God.

Entirely yours, dear friend, in the holy love of Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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We nearly always mingle self-love with God’s grace but should not be discouraged by this. The “science of the saints” and worldly learning.


Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Our Self-Love Feeds Even on God’s Grace]

Abandon your soul to the guidance of Our Lord and His divine Spirit. He alone should be your guide, and you should have no view of your own in the matter. If you remain faithful, this darkness will be rather a help toward the sanctification of your soul. It will teach you to abandon self more and more, and to leave out entirely your own lights and your own will, so that you will be guided by the divine Spirit alone. When Our Lord manifests Himself to our souls, we frequently inject in it our self-love. Witnessing great and high things [in ourselves], we conceive high
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hopes and beautiful projects of greatness and of spiritual elevation, which are not always genuine or conformable to true holiness.

I think that it is very hard to find souls that are sufficiently pure to be entirely self-forgetful in such great circumstances, and to refrain from conceiving high ideas about themselves, either for the present or for the future. Our good Master overwhelms us with ever-increasing favors and suffers, with incomprehensible love for us, the abominable self-complacency and a multitude of other serious faults which arise in our soul on the occasion of the great graces He grants us. These great and lofty graces accomplish an immense good in our souls, even though they are the occasion of those great faults, and serve to feed our self-love.

Our adorable Master does wonders in the midst of our muck and mire. He allows us to mingle with all these wonderful goods, a multitude of abominations, and He works, in spite of them, at our true sanctification. It is certain that the divine Master is administering hard blows to the devil, to the flesh, and even to our pride, at those very moments when we would think that, on the contrary, He is giving us food for our self-love. We must note, of course, that in these conditions God's operation is less perfect in us than later; yet, in spite of everything His work in us is surprisingly powerful for establishing our souls in true holiness.

[Past Faults Need Not Discourage Us]

I tell you these things, dear friend, in order to console you for your past life. You were in an imperfect state; you committed many faults; you were entangled in many defects. Blind as I am, I noticed this before my departure from the seminary. Yet the imperfection has not prevented
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

grace from producing in you true fruits of holiness. It was at that time that Jesus, our most adorable Architect, placed the foundations in your soul; and the perfection which you ought to attain should correspond to these first beginnings.

You were a wretched man; but God was present, and He accomplished in you things according to His holiness and His spirit of truth. This is why, dear friend, you should not despise your former state. There are many who, being in the state in which you are now, do themselves much harm by imagining at times that their faults are the cause of this sort of helplessness and blindness in which divine grace leaves them, whereas these are an effect of the pure and admirable mercy and the incomprehensible gentleness of our divine Master.

[Let Jesus Act in You as He Wishes]

After thus laying the foundations in your soul, our most beloved Lord Jesus desires to build thereon. You were full of faults, but these were not rooted out by the graces you received in the past, for it is not in the nature of those graces to destroy such faults. That is why, after having worked enough in you in the first way, at least according to the designs and eternal determination of His heavenly Father (although you have certainly not drawn from it all the fruit of holiness which He desired to grant you), He now wishes to destroy and annihilate the enemies that remain. For this purpose He makes use of another kind of grace. Make sure, dear friend, that you allow free action to our most lovable Master.

Faithfully remain in your lowliness and your misery before Him. Enter into His views, humbling your mind and destroying your self-will. Be pliant under the action of His divine grace, considering yourself of no account, and living only with the desire of pleasing Him and belonging to Him alone.

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Desiring thus to do all things for love of Him, walk with simplicity, act with gentleness, peace, and confidence in His divine goodness. Your mind and your heart being directed to Him through faith and love, you will preserve the liberty of the children of God in the sight of our heavenly Father, and you will act at all times with perfect purity of intention in the midst of all these obscurities and afflictions.

[The Science of the Saints is Learned From Jesus and Not from Books]

Regarding study, approach it with the simplicity of a child of God. Study because it is your duty, but do not put your trust in books. Jesus is the only light of our minds. You may be sure that the divine light is in you, in spite of this obscurity of your soul. Be faithful, trusting in our most adorable Master. Be full of simple faith and love, and this light will dwell in you. This light will be hidden to the extent in which it pleases the divine Master to cover it with the night of the spirit. But sooner or later, when the time for its manifestation shall have arrived, you will see more clearly. Then only will you possess a true knowledge of divine things, and be able to acquire true Christian prudence and to distinguish the movements of the Holy Spirit from the motions of nature and the devil, either in yourself or in others. Place, therefore, your entire confidence in God alone, and abandon yourself simply and lovingly to His holy and adorable guidance.

[Study is Necessary, but It alone Does Not Save Souls]

Study the books of theology, and do it with relish, but let us not imagine that it is from books that we shall draw the science of God. Books and learning should not be considered to be the great means God uses to save souls. Study is a good thing, and is according to the order of God’s will.
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

He who despises it or thinks that he can do without, runs great danger of falling into illusions and presumption. We must, nevertheless, remember that excellence in learning is far from necessary [for the ordinary ministry.] Those who do not have a special calling, can easily do without this excellence. Study therefore, but without putting your trust in it, or esteeming it too highly.

Esteem God and Him only. Study, but seek the light for your soul in God alone. Study is useful, in particular, because it dispels a number of illusions of the mind and rectifies many false notions which we may have concerning holy things. Study just as you eat or sleep. You must eat and sleep, in order to be able to save souls, for otherwise you would die. But who will say that therefore eating and sleeping cause the salvation of souls? Must we preach to everybody to eat and to sleep? If someone were to neglect doing it, we should urge him, of course, to act differently. The same applies to study. Knowledge is useful. It is even necessary to a certain extent—I am speaking here about learning acquired by mental labor—it is therefore necessary to study in order to acquire it. But it must be done without being too occupied with it, without placing too much value in it, without being too eager to acquire a vast amount of it. We must content ourselves with studying the best we can before God and in God, and then be satisfied with whatever result we have obtained.

[The Love of God Should Prevail Over the Desire to Know]

You should not desire to acquire this learning with so much ardor, but be content to study at the time and in the circumstances willed by God. Place your confidence in His divine lights alone. Listen to no one in this matter... We have the Gospel of our good Master; we have Saint Paul;
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we have the good and truly spiritual authors; we have the examples of the greatest saints, of almost all the saints: they did not so much draw attention through their learning, but above all sought to bring about the holy love of God. Let us follow these great masters; let us get hold of the lessons of Jesus, our sovereign Master, the lessons of His apostles and His saints, and let us not listen to men who speak merely as men. . . . Their words must be like so much wind to you. If their conversations trouble you, avoid them.

Adieu, dear friend.

Entirely yours in the love of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

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Libermann requests his friend's assistance with respect to his relatives.

Letter Twenty-Nine (Rennes, June (?), 1839 Vol. 1, p. 513

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May I ask you to do me one more favor for the love and glory of the good Lord? I have two brothers in Paris who are also converts. One of them was baptized only two years ago. They came back from the United States and made a journey to Alsace where they visited another brother who is also a convert.¹ Both the latter and his wife are among the

¹These brothers were David (Christopher) and Samuel (Alphons). They returned soon after to the United States. David died a few years later (1845), but Samuel established himself in a leather good businesss in New Orleans, where he died around 1887.
most fervent Christians I know and they are particularly eager to give a Christian education to their children. However, their many children are a great financial burden; hence they find it difficult to give a good education to the oldest of their boys. They are unable to place him in a boarding school because of the expenses. Now they have foolishly sent this boy to Paris to their two brothers of whom I spoke a moment ago, hoping thus to secure a suitable education for him. They are worrying about the religious education of that poor boy and, having confidence in me, they imagine that I shall be able to find a good school for him in which he will enjoy religious security.

Well, I don't know any place like that, but I have thought that you might be able to come to the assistance of that poor lad and prevent his moral ruin. There is no one to whom I can address myself, for I don't know anybody in Paris, at least so intimately that I can entrust the care of that soul to him. If you think that you will render a service to Our Lord if you occupy yourself with this matter, please go and see that boy and find out what the two brothers intend to do with him. I have no exact information about their intentions. All I know is that his father has sent him to Paris and he has asked me to do all I can to preserve the piety of the child.

Those two brothers are also eager to find a good school for him where his morals and piety will be safeguarded and they do not want to send this boy back to their oldest brother with a weakened faith and corrupt morals. I think you would do well to busy yourself with that work.

You could perhaps do much good to those two men also. They are Christians, have the faith, but are not very fervent. The younger one has been a Christian for the last thirteen or fourteen years and the older for two years. But the younger one has been in America for the last five years.
and it is quite certain that he lost there the fervor he had when he was here. The other went there immediately after his conversion, and his fervor must also be weak. He is a good and sincere man. Approach him with great simplicity, for you will notice that he has no polished manners, but acts somewhat bluntly. The way to start the conversation? Well, that is easy; you are visiting him as my friend; you could speak about my youth, question him regarding the things I did, etc. You could perhaps speak about them to a zealous priest who could give them some work (they are shoemakers), and through that find a way to do them much good.

Regarding that poor boy, I told them in a letter that I would ask a friend of mine to visit them to see what could be done. So you have merely to say as you enter that I told you to render them that service. It might be well to make the boy follow lessons in the Catechism. If he could go to Saint Sulpice for that purpose it might be a good thing. See, then, dear friend, if the good Lord wants you to do something in that matter; if not, let it alone and worry no more about it.

 Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

 Francis Libermann, Acolyte
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

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The dark night of the soul. In your illness be submissive to God.

Letter Thirty   Rennes, June 15, 1839   Vol. 1, p. 515

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

May the good Lord keep you in His peace and His love. I see you are still a poor man, but does it matter if you belong to Our Lord? What more do you want? You will tell me that you do not know whether you belong to Jesus; but you hope so, and so do I. Let us remain in this hope and our hope shall not be confounded.

[Live by Faith Through the Darkness of the Senses]

Go forward in the darkness of the Cross of Jesus. You rejoiced in Him while you had His divine light in a sensible way; but you have no doubt committed several faults and you had several defects. You continued your progress all the same, constantly increasing your desire of belonging entirely to our Lord. It is this that the Divine Savior recommended to His apostles while they enjoyed His visible presence on earth: "Walk in the light while it is day, for the night cometh when no one can work."

Now is the moment of the cross, of privation, of interior obscurities, when the senses cease acting and are dead. It is the moment, dear friend, of living by faith, a faith full of hope in God’s goodness, yet full of fear and self-distrust, but in a quiet, gentle and peaceful fashion. I am speaking of that living faith which principally exists and is active in the interior acts of the soul, which constantly adheres to our
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Lord and to His divine words, and which in all its works tends to the divine love, in order to please Jesus in all things and everywhere.

This night is most beneficial, for it is in it and through it that our souls are perfected and lose little by little the defects which cling to them. Remain before God in order that He may act in you according to His sole good pleasure, in the midst of all the darkness and interior obscurities...

[Be Submissive to God in Your Illness]

I behold you still poor and miserable, still suffering and ill. May the good Lord and the most holy Virgin console and strengthen you, in order that you may sanctify yourself in this long infirmity, and that by this means the perfect love of Our Lord may grow constantly in your heart and take possession of your whole soul. For this is the whole man, all the rest being but vanity and affliction of spirit.

Do not worry because you are not able to study and acquire knowledge, even of the sacred science of theology and of Holy Scripture. For I assure you that in such studies also there is a great admixture of vanity and of self-love, and this constitutes another great affliction of mind for a very great number.

Let everything in you be entirely subordinated and submissive to God’s will, and to the holy and perfect love of Jesus. Let this, as it were, be the soul of all your desires, of all your thoughts, words and actions, of all your conduct both in general and in particular, and of your entire life.

Take care, dear friend, not to be misled by appearances, but remain always on the solid and unshakeable foundation, which is and will always be our most adorable Lord Jesus. Keep your soul always united to Him alone through the bonds of a love most pure, most holy, and most perfect. And let everything else be animated and guided by this holy love. Be holy, and everything will come about according to
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

the will of God; hence everything will be successful. May Jesus and Mary watch over your soul and over your sanctification.

[Charitable Requests]

If you go on a journey, don’t do it in a purely human way; always distrust purely human views. In connection with your journey, do you recall the poor army conscript whom I recommended to you sometime ago? Please tell me whether you have taken up a collection for him, for I don’t know and the young man is greatly worried because I am not able to tell him anything definite about that. If you were to leave before giving me the answer, I should be greatly embarrassed, or I would not know what to reply to him when he comes to get information.

Please have the kindness, therefore, of telling me what has been done at the Seminary for that lad.

As regards my young nephew, I believe that his father wants him to follow a complete program of studies. His father and mother would be very glad if he chose to become a priest. There might be some difficulty in making them consent to his being incardinated into the diocese of Paris. But it seems to me that we should not think so far ahead. The good Lord in His own good time will provide for everything. It would be well to put him up in one of those small boarding houses which you mentioned.

Adieu, dear friend.

Entirely your in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE
Saint Peter, model of surrender to the will of Jesus. Reason for Libermann's infrequent letters.


Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Saint Peter's Perfect Surrender to Jesus]

I see by your letter that the good Lord has given you a breathing spell; your whole letter gives evidence of it, and I would have guessed it even if you had failed to mention it. However, be not deceived by this moment of respite, but be always entirely at the disposal of Our Lord, so that He may do with you and in you what He desires. The great St. Peter, whose feast we celebrate today, was not troubled when our good Lord Jesus told him that he would be bound, shackled and led where he would not. The holy apostle did not even make a reply; he remained ready for the moment when it would please His master to accomplish it. This, dear friend, should also be your way: to be always tranquil and peaceful in the hands of Our Lord, always ready and disposed to be led by His divine will and accept what seems good to Him.

Notice that Our Lord announced this to St. Peter only after the latter's threefold confession of love toward Him. It is because this sort of surrender, this complete resignation of our entire self in the hands of Our Lord, this joy, this tranquillity with which we deliver ourselves completely to His most holy will for life and death, can only result from a love that is genuine and strong. Hold yourself ready therefore to receive from the hand of God health as well as sick-
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ness, well-being as well as sorrow and affliction; that is, be watchful and reject the joy and satisfaction of nature which triumphs because it sees itself in good condition and protected against former sorrows and fears.

If you recover perfectly, dear friend, you will see how holy and blessed is a state of trouble and affliction for a soul which earnestly desires to belong to God. If, while your health is good, you restrain the excessive satisfaction which nature takes in its well-being, you will make ready for times of sickness. Keep yourself always united to Our Lord, esteeming and desiring Him alone and neither enjoying nor desiring any satisfaction save Him only. I will content myself today with these few words. I have twelve letters to write, and other business to attend to besides my regular work. I beg you to pardon me and to be satisfied, out of love of our Savior and His Holy Mother.

[Reasons for My Infrequent Letters]

Write to me, please, before your departure for Rome, if the good Lord lets you go there. Possibly, even probably, I will be obliged to go to Paris. My brothers who live there are tormenting me to do it. If you are still there when I arrive, we shall have a long talk together, if such be the will of our good Master and of His most holy Mother. If I go, it will be immediately after the Assumption, at least I think so.

Don't be vexed with me, dear friend, because I write you so infrequently. I find it very hard to write to you without special reasons. I would be afraid of displeasing Our Lord and of acting on my own account, being prompted by self-love, if I spoke to you about your interior when you have not introduced the subject yourself. You cannot imagine how much it costs me to write without being asked; and this applies not only to you but to everybody. It
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

is certain that if I could take the resolution to write, I would write to you and to Father Pinault before others; but writing is so hard a task for me that you cannot possibly imagine it. It is now four or five months that I have not written one solitary word to good Father Pinault. I believe that I wrote to him the last time during the month of February and for a reason which I thought important. Yet it has seemed to me since that I should not have done so, for the thing with which I was concerned did not materialize at all.

Pardon me for this weakness and pray Jesus and Mary for me.

Adieu, dear friend.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte

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Libermann announces his departure from the Eudist Novitiate and his journey to Rome to seek approval for his own congregation.

Letter Thirty-Two  Lyons, December 19, 1839  Vol. 1, p. 677

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

I beg you to be satisfied once more with a few words. Mr. de la Brunière must have written to you from Rennes to announce my departure to you.

[I Have Left the Congregation for Good ]

Father Louis [the Eudist Superior] wanted it to be said everywhere that I was leaving only for a while and he
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

wanted people to believe that I would soon return. This is why I asked Mr. de la Brunière to speak to you in some such manner. He did not like it much; he would have preferred to tell you exactly where things stood, and I don’t know whether he did so or not. But it doesn’t matter. I now come to tell you what I should have told you then.

I left Rennes and the Congregation [of the Eudists] for good. If I were able to speak to you by word of mouth, I would explain my reasons at length; but the good Lord has not wanted me to see you before my departure and I must now be satisfied with seeing you some other time and giving those explanations.

I beg you not to be disagreeable to that poor Congregation, or to have a bad opinion of it because of my departure. I certainly believe that a great number of young men who are well disposed will like it and will be able to serve God properly in it. If, then, you see some young men who have a taste for teaching, you may fearlessly urge them to enter in that society. I think that it would be rendering a great service to the Church. It is certainly an actual need in France to have people who are willing to undertake the work of junior seminaries. I am convinced that Father Louis will select that purpose. If, then, several enter, the Congregation will gradually develop. Those who live in it will follow a rule that is mild and easy, and they will have many more means to save themselves than if they were in the world. That Congregation will perhaps not rank first in fervor, as one would wish, but it will be good nevertheless; its rules will gradually be established, and God will be able to do great good by its means.

[We are Going to Rome to Submit the Plan for a New Congregation]

Now let me say a little word about myself. I shall not say much; I reserve this for some other time. I beg you to
keep all this strictly secret. I know that I will not tell you anything about which you have any doubts, especially after the things I made known to you at Rennes. I have not been able to remain in Rennes because I saw how wretched and useless I was. I consulted Father Pinault especially, and since then, also other persons; and I have left in order to enter into the Work for the Negroes. Nothing is yet fixed and settled. I am going to Rome with Mr. de la Brunière. God alone knows what we will do there. At least Saint Peter and Saint Paul are there, and we will pray at their graves if God grants it. Meanwhile I will keep busy with the rule to be followed. Once that is settled, we will take steps to obtain the necessary permissions from the Holy See.

In the meantime the good Lord may bring about some favorable situation, which we would be able to use the better to establish ourselves. Since everything is in the hands of Our Lord, we have only to place our trust in Him—which is what I like most in this affair.

[Humanly Speaking, Our Plan is Sheer Folly]

So far as I am concerned, dear friend, you see what my situation is. I am abandoned and without any help. I don’t even have any income or livelihood. I have no place where I can live and no hope whatsoever for assistance by men. That is surely enough to drive a poor man like me to despair. But Jesus and Mary are my all.

I am going to undertake the work questioned above, I am going to speak to important and powerful people—but will they even look at me? Obviously, I am hopelessly lost. Thinking about the whole matter, I must confess that I consider it a foolish undertaking. I would hold it to be very presumptuous on my part if I did not feel in my soul a great humiliation before God in the fact that I dare to get mixed
LETTERS TO PAUL CARRON

up in such an enterprise. I cannot understand it at all and sometimes am so surprised [by my own daring] that I don't know what to think of it.

However, I put my trust in Our Lord. He will act as He sees fit. What else are we before Him but simple playthings with which He can do what he likes? What consoles me greatly is that, in any case, whether I succeed or not, I will have the happiness of sacrificing myself out of love for Our Lord. At times I am afraid of becoming discouraged by the great troubles I will have to suffer, but I put my trust in Jesus and Mary. They will sustain me in my afflictions and I will put my salvation in them.

That is all, dear friend, I can say right now.

Yours devotedly in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

P.S. I shall not write to you from Rome until I get a letter from you, lest my letter get lost because of your change of residence. Ask my address from Father Pinault; he will have it in a month or six weeks. My journey to Rome must be kept as secret as the rest of the project.

Much precaution is necessary: you know what a nice reputation they are giving me in Paris! I recommend that whole affair to your prayers.
Dear Father:

[Reasons for My Tardy Reply]

If I did not know your very great charity toward me, I would no longer dare to write to you, for you have much reason to be angry with me. I have left your little letter without reply for all this time, although it deserved a totally different treatment. I thought, however, that we did not need to feel embarrassed in our mutual relations and that there was no danger that you would entertain unfavorable or uncharitable sentiments toward me. I assure and proclaim in all sincerity that the bond of friendship, which Our Lord himself seems to have established between us, still exists in all its strength. I hope that in spite of this sort of neglect on my part, this bond will not be broken in you.

The reason I did not answer was solely constant occupations which I did not want interrupted by anything at all. I have found this procedure extremely important, the more so because I had to reply to several letters, and if I had attended to them they would have distracted me from the main business and put me in a different circle of ideas.

The life I have led and am still leading in Rome is very retired. I have no relations with any one; I do not seek the company of anyone, not even of those I have known in Paris, not even Mr. de Conny. This is very painful to me,
for I am eager to see him sometimes and find edification in his company. But it has seemed to me that my retired conduct would be more useful to both of us, for the reasons I shall explain in a moment.

To tell you now how things are going in regard to my affairs is very difficult, for I don’t know it well myself. Nothing is lost and nothing gained; I nevertheless have great hopes. At the beginning I suffered great difficulties and believed that all was lost. This did not give me much anxiety, for reasons which I cannot now describe. I shall explain by word of mouth when I meet you, or by writing, if that visit is delayed, once the affairs are somewhat settled. I want you to be informed about all that has taken place, on condition, however, that you always keep these things secret. I beg you to be charitable and patient with me. It would be difficult for me to show you a building that is only half finished; but once the thing is built, everything will explain itself; and I shall merely have to tell you what took place. Do not believe, I beg you, that it is because I distrust you that I do not give an account of the progress of that affair; I assure you that this is not so.

[Mr. de Conny Warned Against Me]

At the beginning, several persons of eminent piety who render great services to Our Lord for the good of souls, made me suffer much and attributed sentiments and intentions to me which I did not have. Mr. de Conny did much to strengthen those persons in their prejudices. I cannot imagine what prompted this good man to entertain all that kind of suspicion regarding me in his mind.

When I arrived, I began to explain fully to him our affair in Rome; I say “ours,” that is, that of Mr. de la Brunière and myself. He took it very badly; and his mind was much worked up over it. He took with me that air of contempt and indifference which he adopts so easily when
he wants. And in his excitement he went to see those saintly persons and God knows what he told them! I was greatly tempted to pay frequent visits to Mr. de Conny—I still love him in Our Lord—in order to eat the last “morsel of tribulation” that the good Lord provided, and to try to be reconciled with him. However, Mr. de la Brunière, to whom I did not reveal my idea, thinking that I did not know what was going on, did all he could to prevent me from doing it—he was, of course, displeased with the conduct of our friend—and in fact that was the best way to act under the circumstances.

Mr. de Conny, when the time for his ordination was coming near, was reconciled with me. He even consulted me regarding his interior and I believe he did this sincerely. However, not long ago, I went to see him and found him once more displeased with me. I asked someone to bring about our reconciliation. I don’t know if he has tried, but Father de Conny left for Monte Cassino. Pray the good Lord that he may give peace to his heart. On my part, I don’t see what I can do. I shall remain quiet and profit by any opportunity that might present itself to put him at ease. God knows how anxious I have always been to procure him his spiritual well-being and how much trouble he has given me since we became acquainted.

[I Failed to Obtain Dimissorial Letters]

In Rome I was advised to seek to be ordained to the priesthood; at least, they wanted me to make efforts in that direction, and I received the same advice in Paris. This is why I took some steps in Paris to obtain my dimissorials, but I failed. In Rome, I did not take any steps for that purpose and I am resolved not to take any. From now on I shall remain perfectly tranquil and shall wait until God’s will manifests itself on that point. I no longer want to do any-
thing myself, but will wait until I am called by the voice of my Superiors.

[My Companion Has Been Persuaded to Leave Me]

Mr. de la Brunière left me and went to the Foreign Missions [of Paris]. The good Fathers¹ who had been misled in my regard and seemed to consider me a seducer, have done everything in their power to separate him from me. They did this in spite of the fact that that dear confrere always manifested opposite intentions. He never wanted to express what he felt about the affair and was angry against them; he suspected that there was a special reason why they tried to take him away from me; for it was not to send him to the Foreign Missions that they desired to separate him from me.

When I finally told him that he would do well to choose some other vocation and not to remain with me, he consented to make a retreat as he had been urged to do for a long time. These good priests then realized that he was determined to go to the Foreign Missions and they recognized that this was God’s will. So they decided in favor of that resolution.

All this was a great source of affliction for me because I had—and still have—a high esteem for the profound piety of those Fathers. Moreover, the one who made the greatest efforts [to separate de la Brunière from me] was my own confessor. He made use of everything I told him in direction to create disgust in the mind of my dear confrere. This showed me that men of God who are eager to procure His glory, can adopt singular ways of action which I cannot possibly justify. The only consoling aspect of the affair was my realization that they acted with the desire of serving the

¹Jean de Rosaven and Philippe de Villeford.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANNN

glory of God. So I told myself: "If Our Lord is pleased with their conduct, why should I be dissatisfied with it?"

[I Have Been Greatly Tempted Against Charity]

It was so much the more easy for me to remain in peace before God in that respect because I had foreseen, prior to our departure from France, that it was not God's will that Mr. de la Brunière should be with me. Nevertheless, for two days I had strong temptations against charity, against those persons and their action. I then went to see my confessor and told him all that was taking place in me. As I foresaw that I would embarrass him in several points (for he did not know that I had been informed of all that had happened), I made him promise not to reply to all the things I would reproach him with. This was perfectly successful; I was completely freed from my temptation. At this moment, we seem to be rather goods friends. This is a nice story, isn't it? Keep this secret, please.

In your next letter tell how Mr. Ferret is doing. I am afraid that he might be angry with me because of the letter I sent him from Lyons. Please try to convince him that he should not be displeased and tell him that I am filled with the most profound respect and the greatest charity and that I have always had such sentiments in his regard, although I did not share his opinion regarding the question that was dealt with in that letter.

And you, dear friend, cast out all the evil thoughts or judgments which I might have caused you to have by my fault.

 Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

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Father Libermann explains his policy regarding vocations to his society and the difficulties he is having with the Archbishop of Paris.

Letter Thirty-Four  La Neuville, August 2, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 243

J. M. J.

Reverend and Dear Father:

I haven't had the time to thank you for your charity toward me, on the occasion of Father Maurice's departure, for I have not been able to find one little moment to pen you even a few words.¹ I believe that you have sent us a good present in the person of that good priest, who seems to take a liking for our work and for the spirit in which we have to live. I have most willingly accepted him; first, because you sent him to us as a man whom you know very well; secondly, because it seemed to me that he will fit in well with our work. He seems devout, well-disposed and docile; being disposed to accept the impressions of grace, he will easily realize what is required by that kind of vocation. He left contented and full of consolation and good resolutions. He expects to return after the Assumption or a little later. If he returns I shall receive him with joy.

[My Policy is Not to Recruit Novices, but to Wait for Those God Sends Us]

Our novitiate is growing these days; we are five at present and four or five others are expected within this month.

¹Father Maurice later went to the United States and became pastor of St. Ambrose Church in Greece, near Buffalo.
We live in peace in our solitude. Our Lord has granted us great union among ourselves, great tranquillity and a limitless confidence in His goodness toward us. We go ahead gently and with little noise; I don't make any efforts to get novices, but wait for the Lord of the vineyard to send them to us. I don't send away those who offer themselves and are marked by the sign of God's will, but I refuse to accept those who, I think, are not destined for us according to God's designs.

I take it as my fundamental principle that I am in charge not of a business belonging to me, but of a work that belongs to God. I am but a small and very insignificant servant in the house of the Father of the family. I wait peacefully in this small corner of the house where He has placed me, until it will please Him to send me work and laborers to accomplish it. I shall be careful not to choose my proper work. I don't think I have made such a choice, but it is the Master who has entrusted it to me.

Neither will I get hold of servants already employed in His house to make them do my work. I am too keenly aware of the fact that I am one of the last servants in that holy house, and it does not belong to the last of the servants to draw to him and put under his orders those who are occupied elsewhere. This thought and method are for me a source of peace and consolation. When aspirants present themselves, I am glad because it has pleased the Master to send laborers in this poor corner of the vineyard which is so neglected and so much in need of care. If no one offers himself, I remain quiet and peaceful.

The only grief I have and will always have, comes and will always come, from some holy men who believe they are doing right in causing me trouble. They are right in acting against me; they consider me proud, vain, ambitious, hot-headed, weak in the head, and other nice things of that sort.
Hence it is not surprising that they should not be pleased with me. What can I do? The good Lord wants me to be tormented in this way; so this is what I must bear.

[The Archbishop's Displeasure with Me is Without Foundation]

My great sorrow is the fact that I have been blackened in the mind of the Archbishop of Paris. I feel sure that if he knew the great affliction of my heart, he would have compassion for me, however great might be his indifference or contempt for me. It is not that I fear that he might take away a prospective member from us or that he would grant me vocations if he looked favorably on me. I assure you that no idea of self-interest enters my mind in that respect. If he took all my men away, I would not make any effort to recapture them. I have never taken any steps to obtain those whom his goodness has granted me, but have merely accepted those who sought admission. I have considered myself bound in conscience to accept them because I believed they were suitable for the work with which I am occupied. I feel certain that His Excellency would not be so displeased with me if he knew how little I have influenced the vocations of priests of his diocese. I must confess that his displeasure is at this moment the heaviest cross I have to carry.

The thing that has aggravated the evil is the spectacular procedure of a few high-spirited individuals. All this has been blamed on me, at least, I assume that this is the case. But it is certain that I had no hand in the extraordinary decision of Mr. Douai.

I affirm without hesitation and am willing to put my hand on the Gospel to declare that, if he had consulted me, I should have advised him to do the very opposite of what he has done. I was the one who advised him to return to
the seminary. When he was in trouble on account of his father, he wrote to me in Strasbourg and I disapproved his precipitate conduct. He came to see me upon my arrival in Paris and I strongly urged him to return to the seminary and to be patient. This is the sum total of all the consultations he has had with me since he felt called to the missions; hence I am in no way responsible for that vocation.

As regards Father Senez, he did not decide according to my advice. On the contrary, he came to spend a few days with me at the beginning of this year and I advised him to remain in the ministry until he had further proofs of his vocation. Having decided for the missions without asking my advice, he wrote that this matter was settled and completely decided, and he asked me whether I thought that the good Lord called him to join us. I replied formally that in my opinion he should no longer think of such a possibility. I merely told him that if he were to go and work in San Domingo, we would consider him as a friend and an agrégé of our Society; that he would be permitted to come from time to time to make a retreat and rest for a few days in the house of our missionaries. After all, we had to grant him something in order not to displease him, but I told him that I did not believe in his vocation to become a member of our Congregation.

Oh! how much I wish I could explain everything to the archbishop! I feel perfectly sure that he would accept the evidence and would no longer have anything against me. But I leave this completely into the hands of Jesus and Mary. I put all my confidence in them. In their love I am, with all the sincerity and affection of my heart,

Your poor and devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann