1. LETTERS TO EUGENE VIOT, SEMINARIAN

Eugene Viot entered the seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris, in 1827. He was forced to leave the seminary during the Revolution of 1830, but was finally ordained to the priesthood in 1833. Before the latter date he taught at the Junior Seminary of St. Francis, near Tours, and later became Canon of the Cathedral of that city.

It was to Mr. Viot that Libermann, a seminarian, addressed his first spiritual letters. Seven of these have been preserved; one containing matters of conscience was destroyed. The first letter was written in October 1828, less than two years after Libermann's conversion; the last dates from March 17, 1833. All breathe a spirit of humility, but the writer already speaks with authority, a thing often found in the utterances of saints. Libermann had already a clear idea of priestly sanctity; and he also manifested his preference for the virtues of detachment and self-renunciation which he considered to be the necessary foundation stones of perfection. It may be useful to copy here the letter of Canon Viot dated March 6, 1858, six years after the death of Libermann:

I am glad to be able to send you four letters written by my venerable friend, Father Libermann, with whom I spent my seminary days at St. Sulpice in Paris. I have always looked upon him as one who was predestined and I consider him now as a saint. I have begun to read his life which you sent me and have recognized many details regarding his conversion which he had confided to me. I still remember his deep sorrow and his admirable resignation when he received the letter in which his father crushed him with reproaches because of his conversion and spoke words
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

of malediction. Libermann was full of tears and told me; "But I am a Christian!" And amidst his tears I saw a smile of joy and happiness.

One of his first seizures of epilepsy took place during recreation in the great hall of the seminary in Paris, where we were walking because of the bad weather. We carried him to his room and laid him on his bed and did not leave him until the crisis was over. It would be difficult for me to describe the serenity and the gentle gratitude with which Libermann spoke to us as soon as he recovered consciousness. . . . I had had the honor of carrying him to his room! . . . Please take good care of the seven letters which I am forwarding to you, for they are precious relics of my dear friend. . . .

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Holiday relaxation should not make us lose sight of God.

Letter One  Issy, October 24, 1828 Vol. 1, p. 132

Dear Friend:

You certainly are to blame for leaving me so long without a letter from you; but I must imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in everything, and He pardons our faults when we make a confession of them. Well, you have confessed your fault, so I must in my turn pardon you. This argument, though not put in proper logical form, is very strong and so I already have pardoned you!

1References are made to the volumes of Notes et Documents relatifs à la vie et l'oeuvre de F.-M.-P. Libermann, Paris, 1926 ff.
LETTERS TO EUGENE VIOT

I am very pleased to learn from your letter that you have enjoyed much fun during your holidays; with the help of God’s grace, this will give you new strength to resume your exercises at the beginning of the coming year. You looked tired at the end of last year and were in need of a rest.

However, my dear friend, you mention visits, trips, picnics in the country, but tell me nothing about the persons with whom you were together on those occasions nor about the way in which you conducted yourself. You merely say in passing that those things prevented you from keeping your rule. All this gives me reason to worry greatly. I know that you have an extremely lively character and I am afraid that you might have let yourself go, following your craving for pleasure. You may have taken part in a number of such parties without offering them to God. Many a day may have passed when you failed to give even one thought to our good and divine Savior and to our good Mother who is in heaven. These two, who should be the only occupation of our minds and the only objects of our heart’s tender love, have perhaps often been erased from your heart because of your excessive attachment to worldly pleasures, for our nature is greatly inclined to seek enjoyments in this wretched world.

I fear also, dear friend, that your companions in those excursions may have been persons who were still full of worldly attachment, and it is possible that you may have adopted worldly ways. That would be most unfortunate. You had almost overcome such evil habits during the year you spent in the seminary and you might now have to labor hard to extirpate them again. Wouldn’t it be unfortunate if you had now to begin anew your battle against vanity, sensuality and the numerous other evils to which man’s heart is prone? And would you be certain that God would grant you
the same grace He gave you during the first year of your spiritual combat in the seminary?

But, dear friend, I must beg your pardon! My friendship is carrying me a little too far. I am perhaps causing you grief by saying such harsh and disagreeable things. However, you know my intentions. You know that my words spring from a heart that merely seeks to give pleasure and to be useful to you.

Let me then beg you, dear friend, to reflect upon your past behavior, entering into the detail of circumstances, and carefully avoid becoming a prey to illusions.

Before ending my letter, I want once more to ask your pardon, for I certainly have no business talking to you in that fashion. After all, I am at the seminary, yet I must reproach myself for many faults. However, it is this very fact that caused me to conceive fears for your spiritual well-being.

I remain your Argus-eyed Dutch uncle,

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

Natural motives may inspire your desire to switch to the Seminary of Issy. Yet God’s will should be all we want to do. Seminary news.

Letter Two  Issy, September 18, 1829  Vol. 1, p. 134

Dear Friend:

[Examine Your Motives for Wanting to Come Here]

I received your letter yesterday. I was glad to learn that you are no longer suffering those headaches. If they had
persisted, they would have prevented you studying during the coming year. It is possible that the bracing air of Issy would do you good and so you may be right in your desire to come here next year. But, dear friend, permit me to warn you that your desire to leave Paris might have wrong motives. Please examine this and don’t do anything against God’s will. You know well that my office of monitor obliges me to say what I think about such matters, although my ideas are ordinarily old-fashioned and unimportant.

Let me then state what I think about it. Your desire for a change might come from something that is characteristic of Frenchmen, especially of those who live near the South of France. They don’t like monotony; monotonous things get on their nerves and thus they like frequent changes.

Another reason might be that you have friends in Issy or perhaps the seminary life of Issy suits you better than that of the seminarians of Paris. If one or the other of those reasons influenced your thinking and prompted your desire to come to Issy, I believe that you should try to give it up and erase the thought from your mind, for all Christians and especially clerics ought to take God’s will for their only guide in all their conduct and even in all their thoughts.

[God’s Will Should be our Guide in All Our Actions]

We should, if possible, say to ourselves: “Does our Lord Jesus Christ want me to do this sort of thing?” And we should never do a thing without first looking at our lovable Savior and asking His advice. This is an infallible means for making us do all things well and remaining in His holy and lovable presence.

Oh, dear friend, how happy we should be, if this were our usual holy practice! Our lives would be spent in the midst of the joys of divine love! We should then be truly
mortified men. All our desires should be in accord with the divine will of our Savior. We would sacrifice all our natural thoughts to His divine love. We would then become good priests. There would then be no obstacle preventing us from serving our good Savior. All our desires would be aimed at saving souls. All that we would undertake for His divine glory would be successful, for we would act animated only by the spirit of our Savior and nothing in all the world would be able to block our action: riches, friends, parents, health and life itself, everything would be sacrificed to the glory of our good and lovable Savior.

You know, dear friend, that I speak the truth and that there is no exaggeration in my words. We ought therefore to aim at that holy perfection and pray ardently to God to grant it to us, for of ourselves we are incapable of achieving anything at all.

We ought also to try to be faithful to the least grace granted us by God, to every interior impulse that inclines us to do good, while at the same time avoiding to become troubled and upset when we sometimes happen to fail. On the latter occasion we ought to humble ourselves and resolve to do better in the future.

[Seminary News]

Father Renault has left; he is to be Superior at Bourges. At Issy the seminarians do not engage in the teaching of Catechism.

My health is all right. Since the holidays my nerves have been restful and I have not suffered any seizure [of epilepsy] since the one you remember. I walk much when the weather is nice and do not work at all! Those who have stayed in the seminary for the holidays have plenty of fun;
every evening we have a "song fest." Father Aribran has been named pastor of Parnasse. He is very amusing.

Best wishes in the love of God.

Your friend, in Jesus Christ, our Savior,

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

Please give my respectful greetings to your parents and to Mr. Bonneville. How is your health? I am very interested in that matter.

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When one loses patience it is never for the glory of God. Detachment from self opens the soul to the Holy Spirit.

Letter Three October, 1829 Vol. 1, p. 136

Dear friend:

[God's Glory Never Demands That We Become Impatient]

I had already done the errand for you when I received your letter. I am sorry that I cannot send you the dictionary for which you asked. The simple reason is that my brother did not return it to me. This is but another occasion which God uses to exercise you a little more in the virtue of patience.

You certainly need that book, but God's glory does not require that you be so impatient about getting it and you know very well that we should do all things for that glory.

On this occasion, dear confrere, allow me to say something to you that has been on my mind for a long time. It is a pleasure for me to admonish you a little, for I am certain
that you are always disposed to receive the admonition in good part. You will even be delighted with what I have to say and you will draw profit from it unless I say foolish things, of which I am quite capable.

It seems to me that the last retreat you made was not successful in ridding your heart of love of self and of the other things to which you are unduly attached. Let me mention, for example, a certain amount of impatience which I have noticed in you. What is the cause of your trouble? It is your excessive love for the study of Greek. You reply: "But the glory of God demands that I apply myself to that study!" This is very true, but God's glory does not require that you apply yourself to it with that over-eagerness. When one loses patience it is never for the glory of God!

Isn't it possible that you desire to pursue that study for your own sake? I don't mean solely for your own satisfaction, but isn't the glory you receive from men one of your motives for getting so ardently involved in that work? I have mentioned this one example among others. You ought therefore to examine your whole conduct and your interior, to see if you still entertain that attachment to self and to creatures.

Please forgive me for what I have just said. I assure you that I do not believe it myself, but you know that it is the duty of a monitor to say in all simplicity what runs through his mind regarding the spiritual state of his friend. Rest assured that I am not prompted by ill will when I speak in that fashion. The more I love you, the more often will I make similar remarks; for the friendship which we owe to each other should always be solely in our Lord Jesus Christ and for His greater glory. As soon as you conceive for me any friendship other than in Jesus Christ and for His glory, I beseech you, cast it out of your heart as soon as possible.
LETTERS TO EUGENE VIOT

I will, therefore, have the boldness of examining you on that point; for perhaps your heart has a greater attachment to self and to creatures than you realize. If we do not faithfully ask God to reveal our wretchedness to us and do not seek to know it by careful examination of all our thoughts and actions, it will be difficult for us to appreciate what we are. Moreover as I have often told you, you seem to be subject to illusions.

[Self-Detachment Opens the Soul to the Holy Spirit]

Dear friend, don’t be astonished if I insist so much on this point. For it is my conviction that, if we are not completely freed from all that is not God, it is impossible for us to be perfect. The Holy Spirit constantly knocks at the door of our heart. We most ardently desire to have Him enter and by this desire open the door for Him. But how can He enter if He finds no room, if He finds this heart, which should belong unreservedly to Him, filled with adverse affections? He is then obliged to remain outside. But He is so unbelievably good that He waits until He finds a little place, which grows in proportion as we rid ourselves of those wretched attachments.

The more we permit the Holy Spirit to enter into our hearts, the more strongly we drive out God’s enemies. It is essential, therefore, that we work with the Divine Spirit to put them out of our hearts; for He will not force them out unless we firmly will it. Hence we should address fervent prayers to the Holy Spirit and use all the strength He gives us to cooperate with Him in that task of eviction.

There is another matter to which I want to draw your attention. Be on your guard against forming particular friendships and do not frequent those who are not filled with the clerical spirit. Such associations would cause you great harm; they would be more harmful to you than to anybody else.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Adieu, dear friend! Best regards in the burning charity of our Savior. In our good Mother, the Blessed Virgin, I am,

Your brother and friend,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

Give my best regards in Jesus Christ to our friend [Charles] Ozanam.¹

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Whether we live or die, we are in God's hands. "My beloved illness." As seminarians, we should not worry about political events.

Letter Four {Paris} October 16, 1830 Vol. 1, p. 136

Dear Friend:

I am ashamed and am almost afraid of writing to you, for I have done very poorly in executing your orders.

I went to work to fulfill your wishes immediately after I received your letter. Failing to find the key of your dresser, I forced the lock but did not break anything in the wood or the lock. I was greatly surprised . . . [when all I found appeared to be junk]. I then asked myself whether you wanted me to send you all those old things. You had asked for "everything," so I thought that I should send the stuff although it seemed not worth the expense of mailing it.

I should have liked to send you the rabats, pictures and collars [you ordered], but I had a very good reason for not

¹Brother of Frederic Ozanam, founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.
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doing so. You know that storekeepers dislike selling on credit and that I am a poor man. (I had three and a half pennies in my pocket.) This explains why I failed to do the second errand for you,...

[Whether We Live or Die, We are in God's Hands]

In regard to ourselves, dear friend, we have returned to the seminary in Paris [St. Sulpice] to the number of seventy; we are expected to have one hundred students this year. We are leaving the [political] turmoil and worries [of the Revolution] to the children of the world! They worry greatly and go to much trouble to reap worthless things that will soon escape from their grasp. Our sole task is to seek God['s will], in the most profound peace and calm. If it is God's wish that we should die, so much the better; we shall then go to see Him in heaven. This blessedness has been waiting for us for a long time and it is the sole object of our efforts and our hopes.

If God wishes us to live, so much the better too. We shall then have the happiness of suffering much, of suffering a long time for His divine glory. In any case, may His will be done in every detail. We are only wretched and unworthy instruments of His divine will. We have merely to wait in all peace and calm until our heavenly Father condescends to employ us for His greater glory. Then, it does not matter whether He makes use of us by letting us die or keeping us alive.

["My Beloved Illness"]

You write that you would like to see me happy. I don't understand what you mean by that. Do you wish me to be rich, in good health and without suffering here below? Poor man! Do you want me to be in hell? O my friend, leave me my dear poverty, my beloved illness and a hundred
thousand other sufferings. It is only through suffering that I can be made like to our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you wish to see me happy, come and see me, and your wish will be fulfilled. I am a Christian. Our divine Lord, Jesus Christ, died for me. He almost overpowers me with His favors and graces. I have but a small portion of His sufferings and His cross. I have hope that He will give me a greater share. And you think that I am not happy? What then do we need to be happy?

[As Seminarians, We Should Not Worry About Politics]

As for yourself, dear friend, preserve always interior silence, peace and calm. Don’t allow yourself to be disturbed by the things that take place in the world. Do not even seek information about those things. Let people act and say what they like; occupy yourself only with your self-perfection. You have only one task—namely, to please God and fulfill His divine will. All the rest is vanity. We worry on the pretext that religion is connected with the happenings of the world; this is often a false zeal and I am sure that God disapproves of it.

I could say more on this subject and give you my reasons but I have no more room. Let it be sufficient for me to invoke the authority of Father Mollevault, who is angry with those whom he directs when they do not accept those truths.

Best regards, dear friend, in the divine charity of our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady.

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

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Beware of adopting worldly manners. Advice in illness. As seminarians, we pay no attention to political events, but trust in God.
Dear Brother in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

You see that I am quick in replying to your last letter. If we were children of this world, I should begin by wishing you a Happy New Year. I would even have considered it a duty to do so long ago. But we are not children of the world; we belong to heaven. So I am content to wish you, in God’s presence, a happy eternity, which is well worth a Happy New Year! I am sure that you will gladly pardon me for not having written before I got your letter, as I should have done.

[Beware of Adopting Wordly Manners]

I am happy to see that you are [teaching] in a junior seminary. If you had remained with your parents, you would certainly have acquired wordly manners that a holy priest ought to detest. This world is so ugly and loathsome that it causes a shudder of horror in those who have had the good fortune of breaking with it for good. I know that your parents are very devout and love God with all their hearts, but you know that even the most pious persons living in the world can hardly protect themselves fully against its contagion at least so far as their exterior behavior is concerned. We cannot blame them for this, for it is absolutely impossible to walk in the mire and not be besmirched.

[Advice in Illness]

You tell me that your head still troubles you. So this nasty headache does not want to leave you? What then ought we to say? “So much the better! May God be blessed for it!” This suffering will not prevent you from procuring His glory, for if it were an obstacle, He would cure you.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

That is why I think it best for you to remain in perfect peace about it and not to desire, at least not too eagerly, to be cured. Prefer, if it is at all possible, to leave yourself completely in the hands of His wisdom, which accomplishes all its works so admirably.

Frequently recall the words of the Following of Christ: “Few are made better in sickness.” We often aggravate the evil and fall from the perfection to which God calls us by the excessive care we take to avoid suffering. We must put all our confidence in God, yield nothing to nature and suffer with great joy, in union with our Divine Savior Jesus Christ and His most Holy Mother Mary on Calvary.

Pardon me, dear friend, for so readily giving advice. A man as weak as I am, should always keep his mouth shut; but the glory of God and your spiritual welfare seem to require that I speak. Besides, you remember Balaam’s ass did as much for its master, so take what I tell you as coming from the mouth of an ass.

[As Seminarians, We Keep Aloof from the World and Trust in God]

Everything is very peaceful here at the seminary. During the [political] disturbances of December several of us, on the advice of the Superior, took the precaution of hiding in the city for two or three days. We made our annual retreat together with those who were to be ordained; I was not among the latter.¹ The retreat ended on the Saturday before Christmas. God gave us also Sunday to strengthen our resolutions. On Monday, He let the good people of Paris have their own way and they proceeded to create a huge uproar. He then ordered them to be quiet so that His children could celebrate the Feast of Christmas in peace; and thus it was.

¹His epilepsy kept him from being ordained for twelve years.
LETTERS TO EUGENE VIOT

You see how this adorable and admirable Father takes care of His children. This is why we enjoy perfect peace here at the seminary, knowing the goodness of our beloved Father and our well-beloved Mother.

Mr. Sieuray and Mr. Henry did not return this year. The seminary is, if possible, more fervent than ever. Though the world might turn upside down, we would not even notice it, so little attention do we pay to it. We wear our cassocks within the house; outside the seminary we wear secular clothes or a mantle over the cassock or even a surcoat. We go to the parish church wearing surplices but do not walk in procession.

It is very kind of you to be so interested in my health. It is about the same or rather appears to be better this year. I have not had any [epileptic] attacks yet. May God do as He pleases! . . .

Adieu, dear friend. Best regards in the most holy charity of our divine Master and His dearest Mother.

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

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Our friendship should be based on God alone. Beware of the spirit of the world.


Deus meus et omnia

Dear Confrere:

I am sure that you blame me for not replying sooner to your last letter; yet it was not really my fault. It came when I was confined to bed with a fever which lasted ten or twelve days. I am presently on my way to recovery. Your expression of friendship ought to touch me profoundly, but it is an even greater reason for surprise. How can you love
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

a poor wretch like me? You will say to yourself that I am making a pretense of humility but this is not so.

[Our Friendship Should Be Based on God Alone]

Are you going to resemble the worldlings who love mere human beings? Dear confrere, please engrave deeply in your memory that I am only sin and corruption. Do not love, I beg you, do not love nothingness; do not love wretchedness, abomination and sin. For this is all that I am and all that men are. We sometimes imagine that we love a brother in God when our friendship is in reality concentrated on the man, the creature, a nothingness; and God then has no share in it.

As for myself, I love you, of course. I love you with all my heart, but I am extremely careful not to lower myself to the mere creature. I love you in God, or rather I love God in you. I endeavor never to leave God when I come down to you, the creature. I should like to raise you to the very bosom of God in order to love you only in Him, by Him and for Him.

I beg you to love me in the same way. Our friendship will then not be worldly friendship; it will be pure, holy, stainless, all in God and for God. If our holiness is built on these foundations, we need never fear to be without the love of him whom we love, for otherwise we would have to suppose that he does not even have a spark of love in his heart.

[Beware of the Spirit of the World]

Pardon me for making these remarks, dear friend. It ill becomes a wretch like me to speak thus to a venerable deacon. I was afraid that there still might remain a little of that worldly spirit in you, a spirit that so readily animates us. Such a spirit would ruin all the fruit of your ministry. This wretched world! It is so miserable and so full of abomina-

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from the horrible state in which it lies. I know very few priests who do not allow themselves, at least in some measure, to be taken by surprise.

But you, my friend, must not fall in the trap. Remove all the leaven of the world that still remains in you. Destroy its work thoroughly. Surrender wholly and unreservedly to God. Do not fear the world. Defy this wretched world. Do not worry about what it will say or think of you. Its judgments are vain and carry no weight in the mind of a true priest. God alone should know and judge his actions. Esteem yourself fortunate if the world says that you are not well-bred. Rejoice when it despises you. It is then that you will be a true priest, a priest that will save souls.

"Fear not," said our divine Lord Jesus Christ, "I have overcome the world." It is not with the worldly spirit that you will be able to overcome the world but only with the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"I have overcome the world," He says. He alone and nothing else can conquer it. But if you tremble before the world, if you flatter it or even assume its manners, know that your ministry will be sterile. You will lose souls instead of saving them. You will have to bear a terrible responsibility before the all-just Judge. It is not I who say this. It is Our Lord Himself.

As for me, I daily beg our divine Savior and the Blessed Virgin not to leave me in the midst of this wretched world but to let me serve God perfectly in some religious order. Pardon me, I beg you, once again, for all the unpleasant things I have said in this letter. God knows that I act for His glory alone.

Best regards in Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours in their holy charity,

Francis Libermann, acolyte
Thoughts concerning the approach of the priesthood.

Letter Seven | Issy, March 17, 1833 | Vol. 1, p. 139

All for Jesus Through Mary

Dear Friend:

Your letter gave great joy to my heart when I saw the good sentiments with which our Divine Savior has deigned to inspire you. You are on the point of becoming a priest and the prospect seems to fill you with happiness and consolation. But you also tremble at the thought of being raised to a dignity which even the Seraphim are not worthy to approach. You have good reason to fear, for, no matter how great your progress in Christian perfection, you are not fit for so high a function, not worthy to exercise the holy calling of the evangelical ministry.

[God Alone]

This is even more true if something of the "old Adam" still remains in you, if the world is not entirely erased from your heart, if a spark of its spirit still glows in your soul, if the love of pleasure, ease, comfort or any other sort of vanity or selfishness that have caused so much harm to God's priests, still have a hold on you. But, my friend, I feel sure that your heart is now completely detached from all those foolish things.

You desired and sought only one thing, namely, to accomplish God's most holy will always and everywhere. Your latest letter seems to prove this beyond a doubt. This fills me with joy and consolation. God alone, my dearest friend, and nothing else! You recall the words of our dear Lord
when He was still on earth: "It is my food to do the will of Him who sent me."

This is the motto of the priest, of the true priest: to accomplish the will of his God; it is for him as necessary as eating and drinking are for other men. He should be more able and ready to abstain from any drink than to abstain from fulfilling always the most holy will of his heavenly father. And according to a well-known expression of a Father of the Church, "The priest is another Christ."

Everything in the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ was for His Father. There was nothing for [the mere love of] creatures, nothing for the world, the world which He abhorred; nothing for vanity. He belonged entirely to God, His Father; He belonged to God alone.

O my friend, if you live in that way, what an object of admiration you will be for the angels and saints who live and reign in the company of our well-beloved Jesus. The thought alone brings tears to my eyes. It seems to me that I already behold you as I wish you to be.

I beseech you to aim at this. Gladden the adorable Heart of our well-beloved Lord. Console Him for all the grief which unworthy priests inflict upon Him. Give yourself entirely to Him and direct all the desires of your heart to Him. Entertain no affection for creatures. Let the world be an object of horror and abomination for you. Let it be to you as one crucified. Rejoice even if it despises and detests you. It would surely be a source of great happiness for you if you were able to say with St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me and I to the world."

[Of Yourself You Are Unable to Do Any Good ]

Consider yourself as an object that is vile in God's sight, as one that is incapable of doing any good, as fit only to spoil everything that God desires to do by your ministry.
Consider your many imperfections and miseries that always oppose the action of grace in your soul, an action which prompts you to do everything for the greater glory of God and the salvation of others, and you will become fully convinced of your absolute uselessness and nothingness. Our kind Master told His Apostles to consider themselves useless servants even when they had done everything that God had demanded of them.

This conviction of his uselessness is absolutely necessary for a good priest if he wishes to draw down God's blessing upon his work. Without such a conviction he will often labor for the devil and, at the end of his career, he might be led to believe that he had accomplished much whereas he had done nothing for God.

If we are convinced of our poverty and uselessness, we shall not feel elated when our ministry is successful, for we will realize that the good we accomplished came from God and that the work of God would have been a thousand times more successful if we had not been obsessed by vanity.

We will also realize that we have spoiled a large part of the good work we should have accomplished. With such proper disposition we shall not worry on account of our want of success since, thoroughly convinced of our poverty, we had not expected to accomplish much.

When those noble sentiments truly animate us, we shall sanctify ourselves even more the less successful we are in our ministry, because we shall become more and more convinced of our utter wretchedness and uselessness. All our thoughts will be turned Godward, our heart with all its sentiments and desires will be more and more detached from creatures for the purpose of belonging to God alone.

I trust that what I say is not new to you but that, on the contrary, you have long since entered upon the sublime
LETTERS TO EUGENE VIOT

road of Christian perfection and complete self-denial. Such perfection and self-denial are absolutely necessary for every good Christian; they are even more necessary for any good priest.

[Trust in Mary]

However, dear friend, you need not be discouraged if you see that you are still far away from the summit of that beautiful perfection of the Gospel. If only you have an ardent desire to attain it, you will certainly succeed. Moreover, don’t you know that the Blessed Virgin has special designs of goodness and mercy in your regard? Hence proceed without fear or hesitation, for this well-beloved Queen will vanquish all the devils that might wish to hinder your onward course.

Have you not noticed that Mary began long ago to sow the desire for perfection in your heart? Her efforts have not been in vain. For, unlike ourselves, she is not inconstant and incapable of realizing the good which she undertakes for those whom she loves. She lives and reigns in the splendor of her Son, who places His omnipotence at her disposal, and she dispenses it as she sees fit.

Besides, your desire for a hidden life and a community life is a positive proof of God’s merciful designs for you. Endeavor, I beg you, to preserve that blessed desire in your heart. Try to render yourself worthy of realizing that eminent perfection to which God calls you, by aspiring to it with constant yearning. If you try to nourish in your heart this love for a hidden life and a community life, it will sustain you, I hope, and bring you all the more easily to the perfection which you so earnestly pursue.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Adieu, dear friend.
Your poor servant in the most holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte

P.S. Pardon me I beg you, for speaking like a doctor [of Theology], as if I were qualified to speak to you about Christian perfection. I assure you that I am only a novice. I beg you not to be scandalized if you find that I say foolish things. You are well aware that I am only a little mind, filled with pride, and always seeking the esteem of others. . .