3. LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

The congregation of Jesus and Mary, also known as that of the Eudists, was re-established in 1826 by Father Blanchard. His successor Father Louis sent the few candidates who had sought admission to the Seminary of St. Sulpice. Among these was Guy Leray, remarkable both for his piety and his talents. He studied philosophy at Issy and then followed the courses of theology at St. Sulpice. Father Louis placed great hopes on him in his endeavor to rebuild his Congregation. Leray did not disappoint him; a number of seminarians, attracted by his example, became novices of the Eudist Congregation. Thus it was possible to open a regular novitiate for them at Rennes in 1837, of which Francis Libermann became the novice master.

Guy Leray died in 1843. Father Louis had looked upon him as the most saintly and capable of his subjects.

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The effects of fervent Holy Communion and how to prepare for it through self-sacrifice and interior peace. On vanity and praise.

Letter One Issy, July 24, 1834 Vol. 1, pp. 199

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere:

[Effects of Holy Communion]

I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without saying a few words about the immense love of our Divine Savior Jesus Christ for us. You have only to consider Him for one
moment as He is in the Most Blessed Sacrament and you will be completely overwhelmed. When this devouring fire visits us, we might expect to be reduced to ashes, but No! In His excessive love He desires to transform us into His very love. He wishes to make us one with Himself and His Father. The Father is in Him and He comes to us in order that we may be consummated in Him and His Father, who are one.

I believe, dear friend, that this great consummation of our charity, which will be fully accomplished only in heaven, must have its most beautiful beginning here below in the Holy Eucharist, the masterpiece of the union of our Divine Savior with His saints upon earth.

Our Lord has taken all the precautions that are necessary to keep us at all times perfectly united to Himself, by giving us His Holy Spirit, the "consummator" of all sanctity. In the Most Blessed Sacrament, however, He gives us such a fullness of the Holy Spirit and so great a gift of love and union, that we should unavoidably die if we clearly saw what was taking place. It seems to me that I can imagine why our Lord desired to conceal Himself in that sacrament. If He showed Himself therein such as He is, we would not be able to survive after receiving Him. This, to my mind, is the truth.

All this ought to show us a small part of what we should be after receiving Him so often, and to what point our hearts should be united with God and abandoned to Him. It is to the latter disposition that we ought to pay particular attention. If we were completely abandoned to Him, absolutely poor, and perfectly disengaged from every kind of self-love, freed from earthly desires, from love of pleasure and personal ease and all similar miseries, we should soon witness unheard-of and inconceivable prodigies of the love of Jesus in His Most Blessed Sacrament.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

Let me now quote a few words of our [friend and fellow seminarian] Mr. Lebeuf on this subject. It was on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he remarked: "The Church presents for our adoration the physical heart of our Divine Savior, just as on the feast of Corpus Christi she gives us His physical body, because God desires to sanctify our spirit by the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must, therefore, find the fullness of our sanctification in Holy Communion and discover therein the dispositions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

[How to Prepare for Holy Communion: Self-Sacrifice]

I found this remark inspiring and it filled me with joy. If we did our best to prepare well for Holy Communion, I think that God would be exceedingly glorified in us and that we would make great progress in the work of our sanctification. Don't you think that I am right? I believe that you agree with me.

But what is the nature of such a preparation? Although we have often spoken about it, it is useful to repeat it millions of times. It seems to me that we should abstain from every kind of pleasure and natural complacency, which have their source either in the events that occur, the things that surround us, the persons that we live with, the actions we perform, the graces we receive, or all the things we possess and are concerned with. . . . We ought even to avoid taking over-eager and excessive delight in supernatural things, being content with following the joy of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

It is hardly necessary to add that we must all the more sacrifice any coarse desire for self-satisfaction, ease and comfort. Nevertheless, it may be useful to recall that we must watch over ourselves in regard to all the things that we are obliged to grant ourselves because of ill health.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

[How to Prepare for Holy Communion: Interior Peace]

The second disposition, much more perfect than the first, and, as it were, its inseparable companion, is, I believe, to keep our heart in perfect peace. This peace must be a quiet abnegation of every sort of earthly affection and a total detachment from everything that is not God. But this is not all. We must remain in this calm determination before God, ready to receive every impression He may design to give us by His grace, to be satisfied and delighted with everything that He wishes to do with us. If we are ill, we must say, "so much the better"; if we are in good health, we must also be content; if we suffer, we must rejoice; if we do not suffer, we must still rejoice; and so on, in all things that may happen to us either in the order of nature or of grace.

We should consider ourselves as we do a piece of wood that we find on the street. Would we worry in any way about its being red or green, rotten or sound, good or useless? We must act similarly in regard to ourselves.

The one thing we must do is to remain silently united with our God, and place ourselves entirely at the disposal of His divine will, remaining before Him as victims completely devoted to His holy love. We should be totally abandoned to Him, seeing Him only, seeing nothing but Him, breathing only His love, wishing only what He wishes, keeping constant watch over our wretched selves. We should look peacefully at Him dwelling within us in order that we may obey and act upon the sweet and lovable graces by which He always speaks to us, in perfect calm and without offering the slightest resistance.

I believe that if we do this, our Communion will infallibly sanctify us. If we tend thus with all the power of our soul to this holy union, our Divine Savior cannot fail to communicate to us the fullness of His grace, in proportion to the strength of our dispositions toward this holy union, for He established the Blessed Sacrament of the altar for this sole purpose.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

[Let me give you an example of such interior peace. ]
Mr. Lebeuf left the seminary a week ago Monday; fears were entertained for his health. Dr. Lombard reassured Father Bursar, stating that he merely suffered from a weakness in the chest caused by his rapid growth, and that he would recover during the holidays. His illness did not make Mr. Lebeuf lose his habitual peace; even when he was told to leave, he preserved the same peaceful attitude. He left the seminary just as happy as if he had been permitted to remain.

You write that it is difficult for you to preserve interior peace during vacation. Watch over yourself; try to keep interior freedom of spirit wherever you may happen to be or whoever may be your associates. Don’t be talkative. Speak quietly and without affection. When you feel troubled, bear it peacefully and do not make an effort to get rid of it. Restrict yourself to a certain round of occupations, walks and persons. I think this will enable you to possess your soul in peace before God.

[Vanity and Praise ]

In regard to vanity, it is a troublesome fly that you must drive away but without worrying about it. Bear patiently, before God, with this importunity, and look upon it as a cross. With regard to the esteem and affection of men, it is not worth-while taking them seriously. Let us suppose that I come from a neighbor’s house. His little dog has shown me great affection and made very much of me. I esteem myself neither the better nor the happier for it. The same applies when people show this esteem for you.

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

Entirely yours in their holy love,
FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE
God’s greatness and our wretchedness. On pious conversations. The desire for solitude.

Letter Four Isy, September 23, 1834 Vol. 1, p. 199

Dear Confrere:

May the grace and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul and conform it to the most holy and most admirable interior of Jesus and Mary. Note well that the wonderful interior of the Blessed Virgin mirrors perfectly that of Jesus. A ray of light and grace proceeds, for all eternity, from the interior of Jesus, illuminating and warming that of Mary, and is admirably reflected in her as in a pure and spotless mirror.

Let us beg the Blessed Virgin to make us also pure and holy before God, so that we may put no obstacles in the way of the light of grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that His most holy will may be fulfilled in us entirely and without the slightest restriction.

[God’s Greatness and Our Wretchedness]

In the meantime we should remain in the most profound humility before the Most Blessed Trinity, aware of our utter incapacity. We must remain before God as beggars and wretches covered with mire and ulcers, so weak that we cannot move our limbs to procure relief, and so confused by the splendor of His glory that we scarcely venture to raise our eyes to Him in order to obtain some help amidst our excessive woes. Being thus prostrate, confounded and in a state of annihilation before Him, our hearts should be perfectly peaceful and filled with the greatest confidence in His mercy.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

Comparing God's infinite greatness, the light and splendor and glory that surround Him, with our utter incomprehensible littleness, with the great obscurity that envelops us and with our profound abjection, we should be full of joy and consolation; for we see that our God is so great and admirable, that to Him alone belong all homage, greatness, glory and love. To us, on the contrary, belong sorrow, suffering, abjection, humiliation, indifference and neglect on the part of the creatures and even of God himself.

If we were filled with these thoughts, we would not be very much preoccupied with ourselves. The sight of the extremity to which we are reduced, and of the contempt that we deserve, should make us carry our thoughts and all our love to God alone. We would always be humbly prostrate before Him, expecting everything from Him, and attaching so little importance to creatures that our hearts would never busy themselves with them. Our desires and affections would be entirely in God; and then our Divine Savior would not fail to come to us with the fullness of His graces and gifts. The Holy Spirit would act in us according to the whole force and the full extent of grace.

Our exterior would be a perfect image of the interior of our Divine Savior, because all desires, all our affections, and all our love would be the desires, affections and love of Jesus in the bosom of His Father. We would be indifferent and dead to the whole earth and to everything that it contains. God alone would live and reign in us, according to the whole strength of His grace. And the peace and love that would fill us and consume us in this life would prepare us and lead us to the consummation of the love of the Most Holy Trinity in its elects during a happy eternity.

Therefore, dear friend, do not fear anything. If you are wretched, let your soul be glad of it. Our God is great, rich and admirable in beauty and mercy. Abandon yourself to
Him, and His almighty strength will be in you. If you feel in yourself the seed and the horrors of sin, do not worry, but rather humble and annihilate yourself before the Most Blessed Trinity. Rejoice that God alone is pure, holy and admirable. If you suffer interior and exterior pains, give yourself over to the full joy and gladness of your soul, because this is an infallible means of destroying in you the reign and the horror of sin, and of making the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ triumph in you. To Him alone belongs all homage, all glory, all love.

Always be faithful to His most holy love. Never let anything worry or embarrass you. If it pleases our Divine Lord to place you at Rennes, remain there. If He wants you in Paris, come to Paris. Even if He wishes you to be in the world, be content to be in the world. The only thing that should preoccupy you is to preserve the peace, the love and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the rest is useless and insignificant. Let all your love and confidence be in Him alone. Keep yourself constantly in a quiet and peaceful recollection, so that you may be able to follow the holy inspiration of His grace. You must obey this alone, exclusively in everything, everywhere and always.

[On Pious Conversations ]

I wrote to you not very long ago through Mr. Dupont of Rennes. He had scarcely left Issy when I received your letter of September 2nd. You inform me that you are sometimes at a loss how to speak to God. This need not worry you. If you have nothing to say, say nothing. It seems to me we spoke of this once before at the seminary.

The great principle, from which we should never depart, is to act in all things according to God’s sole good pleasure, and to do nothing but from a movement of God’s grace which is within us. Never say to yourself, “I must do this
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

or that; I must speak in this or that manner to So-and-so.” If it pleases God that you should do a thing, do it; if not, then remain quiet. We should be interiorly conscious of what God demands of us, and never trouble ourselves about the rest.

Don’t imagine that it is human respect that makes you remain silent. Human respect will cause you trouble if you allow yourself to be influenced by it, but it cannot close your mouth against your will. It is only worry that makes you think so. You should make light of such a temptation. If it preoccupies your mind, it will often make your soul uneasy.

[The Desire for Solitude]

You desire to be alone with God at all times. This is excellent, and you should be happy if it were possible. Still, do not worry if such cannot be the case. Here is a maxim of St. Francis of Assisi which will teach you that solitude is not necessary for a true servant of God. He said that, “our brother, the body, is a cell, and our soul, the hermit, who dwells in it, in order that we may think of God without ceasing.” If a religious soul is not at rest within the cell of its body, exterior cells will be of little use. The words of the great Saint which I have just quoted show us what the life of a Christian should be.

I must inform you that Father Cahier will soon leave us. He will be Superior of the philosophy students at Clermont and will have about a hundred or a hundred and thirty seminarians under him. Father Dorveau replaces him here. This is a great loss for us. I hope that it will give me a little extra suffering, for Father Cahier sustained me [in my work]. If we cannot do as we please in our service and for the greater glory of God, I personally shall at least have the
incomprehensible pleasure of suffering a little opposition for His holy love.

I did not make a pilgrimage this year, for I am poor and no one gave me any money for that purpose. If the privation causes some disappointment, its reason should give great joy. Offer, I beg you, my homage and love to the Blessed Virgin. Pray to God for me, for I am a poor wretch, worthy of your compassion.

Best regards in the most holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your poor servant,

Francis Libermann, Acolyte

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The peace of Christ and how to prepare oneself for it. The passive state. Advice concerning spiritual direction.

Letter Three Issey, January 27, 1835 Vol. 1, p. 200

[May God's Will be Our Rule in all Things]

Dear Confrere:

[The Peace of Christ and How to Prepare Oneself for It]

May the most sweet, delightful, and excellent peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul, so that it may be completely offered and immolated to His heavenly Father and be a most pleasing victim in His sight. May His angels and saints rejoice, bless and glorify Him, because He has deigned to cast a look of mercy on you and your beloved confreres. I beg of Him, with all my heart, to bless and sanctify you with His almighty grace. If you find anybody
who has a taste for that holy peace which our Divine Savior made known to you to some degree, speak to him about it, according to the grace of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. But be fully convinced, dear confrere, that it is not your words that will win for him the priceless advantage of Our Lord's grace. It is God alone who will animate him, sustain and strengthen him in the holy paths of His sweet love.

However, you must do your best to make such a person realize that perfect self-abnegation, which makes us deny ourselves even the slightest satisfaction, is the most fundamental disposition for this holy peace. We must completely lay aside every desire, every self-attachment. We must take care to control our movements in everything, and avoid all interior haste. This, it seems to me, is most important. Calmly control your lively affections as well as your imagination. It would even be good for you, in the beginning, to moderate your external actions in some measure, so that you may be able to keep your soul in perfect calm, and may always be quietly and interiorly attentive to the grace of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.

[The Passive State]

These are, I believe, about the most important things for interior peace and calm. If you practice them well, they will establish you in that passive state before God in which you remain perfectly calm in His sight, and He will be able to act in you according to the fullness of His most holy will.

How beautiful is a soul that is totally submissive to God in that way. How the angels and saints rejoice and glorify God when they behold so great a grace granted to a poor and wretched creature that becomes so hideous as soon as God withdraws from it a single moment. How beautiful, on the contrary, when it is filled with God and entirely subject to His good pleasure.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMAN

Let us bless and thank our good Lord Jesus. But we should bless, thank, praise and adore Him in the most profound attitude of self-annihilation. Let us always be prompt to serve Him in this manner, so holy, so lovable, and so infinitely pleasing to our heavenly Father. It is certain that the greatest saints have served Him in that way; and I think they have called it the passive way. This, it seems to me, merely means that in this state we try to do nothing; we try to quiet all the movements of the soul and we gently correspond to the grace which is in us and prompts us in all our interior and exterior actions.

[Advice Concerning Spiritual Direction]

Pardon me, if I allow myself to be carried away by the ardor of my desires and my thoughts, and if I do not answer your questions. Perhaps you will find your answer in what I have just said. I think you are right in what you told me in your letter. Follow the inspiration of God in everything; for we should never tell others anything but what we ourselves feel and what we believe should be done. Again, we should not give it as a knowledge we have mastered, that is, in the tone of a professor who displays his learning.

When you wish to make others practice what you teach, do not think of them too often, but rather take care to form a clear picture of things in yourself. Then apply to them what you experience, according to the variety of the circumstances and the different ways by which God conducts them, for it is impossible for them to be like us in everything. As soon as you become aware of any resistance, stop there; follow grace; never proceed, never run ahead of it.

Moreover, you must be humble, mild and affectionate toward them. Always remember that you are a poor man
and perhaps the most wretched of them all. Do not expect everything all at once from a seminarian who eagerly pursues external activity. It will be a great deal if you get him to act with less absorption and to perform occasionally some interior practice, such as a mortification of the imagination, or to make frequent ejaculatory prayers, or to do something else that will make him recollect himself, make him, as it were, enter into his interior and avoid pouring himself out on external things.

You see that I tell you in all simplicity what comes to my mind. Do with it what you like. The only thing I desire is that you serve God with all the fervor of your soul.

[Seminary News]

Mr. Lebeuf is better; however, he is not able to reply to your note which, by the way, pleased him very much. I noticed that he left all the other letters aside without reading them, but yours he opened immediately after receiving it. He recommends himself to your prayers and I also recommend him to you most earnestly. He is exposed to greet danger and I am not without some misgiving concerning him. I would feel great grief if he lost his fervor, but let us hope for the best from the goodness of our Divine Savior and the great love of the Blessed Virgin. Let us pray and spare nothing to obtain for him a still more powerful grace than the one that God has given him until now. Mr. De Brandt is expected to recover very soon. He is already out of danger.

Adieu, dear confrere. Once more, may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul.

Entirely yours in His holy love and in that of the Blessed Virgin,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

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Reflections on the Holy Eucharist.

Letter Four  Issy, June 28, 1835  Vol. 1, p. 200

May God’s Will be done in all things

Dear Confrere:

[Christ’s Love for Us in the Blessed Sacrament]

How numerous the things I ought to tell you about the love which our Lord Jesus Christ manifests to us in the Blessed Sacrament! But if the saints and angels and seraphim are incapable of fully understanding it, how can you ask me to speak about it? And yet I must not remain silent. What our Divine Savior operates in us through this marvelous sacrament is so great that I cannot keep quiet about it; its marvels are beyond my power of expression. What, then, am I to do, dear friend? Everything—everything, poor, miserable sinners like us can do.

Let us endeavor to love Him with all the powers of our soul. Let us have no movement, no desire that does not directly tend toward Him. It is His love that should be the one and only mainspring of all our actions.

I must tell you briefly about a spiritual conversation held a short time ago with [several fellow seminarians]. We meet for at least one hour [once a week] on our freeday. Mr. Roussel also joins us with a few of the more fervent students of the Issy [Seminary]; in all we form a group of a dozen seminarians.

It was on the free day before the Feast of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Quite naturally it was this mystery that was chosen as the topic of our discussion. We follow the method that was used when you were still with us; however,
those seminarians don’t let me babble as much as last year. They also put in their little word.

The question under discussion was, what we should do to enter fully into the merciful designs which prompted our Divine Savior to institute His Most Holy Sacrament. This question naturally raised another, namely, what did He actually desire, what was the object He had in view when He instituted it?

The answer was that Our Lord had a fourfold end in view. There are probably more, for who can penetrate into the breadth, the depths, the height of the understanding and the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ in that incomparable Sacrament? We can only admire, praise, adore and bless our kind Lord for His immense charity toward us.

Let us endeavor, I beseech you, to correspond as far as lies in our power, with God’s ineffable love toward us. I think that, if we enter thoroughly into the four designs of which I am about to speak, we shall succeed, helped by God’s mercy, in rendering ourselves agreeable to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is certain that He did not send His Son into the world to work those numerous and incomprehensible miracles of grace for us if He wanted to tolerate our continued attachment to the earth and to ourselves. He did it rather to tear us away from every creature, to make us His cherished children, and to accomplish in us His immense and all-merciful designs. May His most holy Name be praised, blessed and adored by all the angels and saints, and especially by the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout all the ages.

The four objects which our Divine Savior had in view for us when He instituted the Blessed Sacrament are the following.

[First Aim: To Make Us Share in the Spirit of the Sacrifice]

First, Our Lord wanted us to share in His spirit of sacrifice, for the Most Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice. Our
Divine Savior comes down to us for the purpose of immolating us with Himself to His Father. If we, of our own accord, had offered ourselves as a sacrifice to the eternal Father, we should have become the victims of His justice and His anger, like the damned souls in hell. But Our Lord, who is the head and the source of all predestination, comes to us with the abundance of His grace and sanctity, in order to make our sacrifice pure and spotless in the sight of His heavenly Father. He does this by making us sharers in all the qualities which He possesses in His essence and which made Him an agreeable victim to His Father.

This shows that our first preparation for Holy Communion should be a spirit of renunciation to every desire, to all affection and self-will. We must refuse ourselves every satisfaction, every joy; for the quality of a victim demands a complete annihilation. We must annihilate spiritually in ourselves every natural being, which must be sacrificed to God, so that we may live no other life than that of God. I shall develop this point later on.

Examine, I beg you, everything that being-a-victim demands of you. Examine also everything that Our Lord did during His life, especially on Calvary, where He began His sacrifice. Imitate His interior [disposition] in all this and you will have the first disposition requisite for Holy Communion.

[Second Aim: To Make Us Share in the Resurrection]

Secondly, Our Lord Jesus Christ comes to us to be, as it were, the germ of our future resurrection. Our body is a body of sin and hence, of its nature, dead; it constantly inclines toward creatures; it finds no pleasure but in them and cannot enjoy God. It is an object of malediction for God and thus cannot be admitted to His glory. But our Divine Savior, having pity on us, comes and makes us par-
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

ticipate in the purity and glory of His adorable body. To our body of sin, corruption and death, He gives a share in the sanctity, the glory, the incorruptibility, and immortality of His own body.

If we wish to share in all the grandeur and the incomparable bounty which Jesus designs to bestow upon us, we must deprive our body of all the sensible and gross pleasures that we are able to deny it. We must chastise it in every way so that it will be more capable of receiving God’s gifts.

This body which is destined to share in the beauty, the joy, the grandeur, the splendor of Jesus’ glory in the bosom of His Father, must be initiated by participating in the sorrow, bitterness, privation and shame of every kind which He bore with so much love. And I am certain that the more our body has been mortified and humbled here on earth, for the sake of our Divine Savior, the more resplendent will be its glory after the resurrection. Mr. Liévin called my attention to an appropriate text of St. Paul, which says that if we would share in the glory of Jesus, we must begin by sharing in His Cross and His shame.

It is possible that what I am telling you makes you sad because you feel unable to practice it. Don’t worry about that. Poor wretches like the two of us should be satisfied with bearing the sorrows that God is pleased to send us. We should readily accept them with the greatest joy as a precious gift and a grace of predilection.

One day of sorrows sent directly by God is more efficacious for the sanctification of our body and our soul than are a hundred others that we obtain by our own efforts. And even if this were not true, we must desire that God’s will be done to its fullest extent. If we cannot do much in that direction, let us try to do a little; we shall make up for any loss by loving God with all the fervor and energy of our soul.
Thirdly, Our Lord comes to us to give us a share in His union with His heavenly Father. I should remain silent about this, for a poor fellow like myself ought not to speak about such high matters. Engaging in a discourse concerning union with God or the union of Jesus with His Father is like jumping into a bottomless abyss. I have told you frequently that our union must begin in this world and that it ought to keep on increasing until it is finally consummated in heaven.

Holy Communion is a heaven for the Christian soul. If the dispositions which I have mentioned are present, that union of the soul with Jesus is admirably accomplished. There are then unfailing and incomprehensible effects of grace, of blessings and knowledge that come from such a union, even though it is not as perfect as the one that will be ours in heaven. Such a union of a well-disposed soul gives an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit whom we must seek to retain within us.

There is, it seems to me, one disposition that is well calculated to make us share in this great union of grace and enable us to preserve it, namely, that of retiring within ourselves before God who dwells within. Examine yourself diligently on this point, for I consider it very important. This retreat within yourself should be constant, quiet, peaceful and free from all sensible effort. Take care lest you seek it for the purpose of self-satisfaction. Let us simply aim at union with God and at the accumulation of His graces and His love.

Fourthly, as a result of that happy union, Our Lord wishes to make us live His life in Holy Communion. He
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

shows this intention sufficiently by the way He unites us to Himself, namely, as nourishment. Just as food is the life of the body and is transformed into our very substance, so does our Divine Savior become the life of our soul. He assures us that He who eats His flesh and drinks His Blood will have everlasting life, and that he who fails to eat His Flesh has no life in Him. And what is this life if not our Divine Savior Himself? As he says, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

The question now is, what must we do to live the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Realize how carefully we ought to shed self, as it were, and make abstraction of it, to curb every movement of self-love and every return to and upon ourselves that is prompted by a desire of self-satisfaction.

We should, if possible, have no life for anything outside of God; we should no longer think, feel, taste, act, enjoy, we should no longer have any movement of soul, outside the impulse of the Holy Spirit who is within us. This, then, comes down to what St. Paul has said: “I live, no longer I, but it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.”

I know that man is not fully capable of attaining all this and that such a life is the inheritance of the elect in heaven; but let us try, at least, to come as near to that state as we can, so that we may share, as perfectly as possible, in the graces which our Divine Savior deigns to give in the Holy Eucharist.

Seminary News

You tell me you would like to come to Paris. I don’t think this is wrong; on the contrary, it is inspired by a good motive. Content yourself with moderating that desire; remain calm and peaceful about it and surrender entirely to God....
You congratulate me in regard to Mr. Limorin. You were wrong at that moment, for he was still far from being converted. He had, as usual, a certain amount of willingness to do well, but he lacked the courage to carry out his good intentions at the time when I wrote to you in my last letter. He was even doing worse than before and caused us much trouble. But since then God has moved him so strongly that he has finally taken the most efficacious and energetic resolution that I have ever seen him take. He left all and with wonderful firmness completely broke away from all those who would have held him back; he no longer wishes to see them. His resolutions are so generous and universal that I am filled with joy and admiration.

Pray for him that God may grant him the grace of perseverance. This is the only thing he needs to make him a fervent seminarian who will rapidly advance in perfection. If he perseveres he will go far; this we can foretell basing ourselves on the impetus with which he has begun. This child of sorrow will in the end become for us, I hope, a child of joy.

Mr. Saget is doing very well. He has had excellent dispositions for a long time and I trust that he will be even better next year. Mr. Roussel is not very well; he suffers from mental fatigue and will leave in a few days. But he remains spiritually the same, that is, he belongs entirely to God. The other seminarians in our group are doing extremely well in this respect. There are, moreover, several other seminarians whose fervor is exemplary. May the good Lord be blessed for it.

You will return to us very soon; this gives me great joy and I thank the Lord. Let your heart be filled with love for our good, sweet, lovable and most adorable Jesus in His Blessed Sacrament. Nourish an ardent desire for Holy Communion and receive it as often as possible.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

Excuse my bad writing and the obscure way in which I try to explain what I have in mind.

May the grace of our Divine Savior be with you.

FRANCIS LIBERMAN, ACOLYTE

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We must accept the awareness of our miseries and submit wholly to God. Temptations should not discourage us. Patience with our own peculiarities.

Letter Five Illkirch, September 7, 1836 Vol. 1, p. 203

May God's will be our rule in all things

Dear Confrere:

[Remain Submissive to God at the Sight of Your Own Wretchedness]

I notice in your letters that you continue to grieve because you see yourself so empty of God and so full of wretchedness. Well I am glad of it! There are many who are not blessed with this happy knowledge and who would make much greater progress if they had it. Try to draw profit from it, but don't let it become a source of worry. I don't think you would, but avoid even the kind of sorrow that is not suffered in God, that does not raise your mind to God because it has its source in nature. Such a sorrow is not a loving sorrow of self-humiliation before God, but a sensible grief and sadness oriented to ourselves. Avoid this. I know that you are greatly tempted to it, perhaps it is your greatest and most dangerous temptation, for it arrests your soul, prevents it from profiting by its miseries, and hinders loving and peaceful union with God.
Hence, every time you suffer at the sight of your wretchedness and weakness, consider such pain from the very start as a temptation, raise your soul to God, humble yourself before Him and accept your poverty. Submit yourself fully and lovingly to the most holy will of God who wishes to wait a while before admitting you into His full and only love. After that try to use this pain as a means to go to God and unite yourself with Him. Don’t worry if the sorrow persists; look upon it as a cross that you must carry lovingly.

If you act thus, I trust that through God’s mercy it will help you to make spiritual progress. Don’t fear the consequences, but abandon yourself fully into God’s hands. All we have to do is seek to be pleasing to Him in everything. He will do what is good in His sight, for He is the Lord. But we can and we ought to count upon His mercy, which is infinitely greater than our malice, although our wickedness is very great.

[Don’t Be Discouraged by Your Temptations]

I believe that you should not worry about “natural desires.” We should be aware of what we are able to do. Our wicked flesh is always with us; why should we desire not to feel its sting? Would our nature be better for that? So let us not fear the flesh, for the Lord will conquer it.

To be constantly exposed to warfare and to the danger of falling into sin is a matter of serious worry and great labor for us. But who are we that we should desire to enjoy quiet? Let us fight, let us labor and never become discouraged at the sight of our constant troubles and worries. Our Lord will conquer while we suffer; this ought to be our joy.

But, you’ll say, I don’t know my actual condition, whether I have conquered or have succumbed. So much the
better. We will not be appointed to judge the living and the dead, but He who will be the Judge will know the answer. This kind of fear will make us preserve great distrust of self, an attitude of great dependence on God and will, by that fact, unite us more closely with Him. This is a good we must draw from that fear. On the other hand, don't waste your time by becoming dejected.

[Patience with Your Own Peculiarities]

I do not think that there is any harm in the silly ways of acting [of which you speak], as long as they do not produce dissipation and you do not act that way through affectation or effort but with simplicity. We must preserve peace and quiet before God and we should avoid the things that remove that calm, unless they are part of our duty.

Matters that do not cause us worry usually are not bad, unless they are accompanied by an extraneous fault, for instance, if they trouble others. If that silliness annoys you, you may try to avoid it, but do not worry if it takes you by surprise from time to time.

The peace and calm I just mentioned will act as a good monitor, for the Holy Ghost will then enlighten you or, at least, will prompt you to do what is good and avoid evil. Remain in peace; He is in you and will not abandon you.

I am very glad to see that you do not feel at home in the world. It is a proof that God wishes to draw you to Himself and make you lead an interior life, centered on Him. May His holy Name be blessed.

With best wishes, dear friend,

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANNE, ACOLYTE

P.S. I shall leave for Issy the day after tomorrow, that is, on September the 10th.
If you are doing what God wants you to do, why should you worry?

Letter Six September 20, 1836. Vol. 1, p. 204

Dear Confrere:

Several seminarians have expressed great displeasure with regard to our meetings\(^1\) and they intend to oppose them next year with everything in their power; they say that in their opinion they will thus render a greater service to the Church. Let us pray for them. They are very angry and I am afraid that they are guilty before God, although they firmly believe to be right.

As for ourselves, we need not worry about anything. If it pleases God to cast a loving glance on us, no one will be able to harm the work we undertake for His greater glory and love; and, in case He does not approve, why should we try to do something that goes against His wishes? Let us follow the promptings of our good Lord and labor in union of mind, gently, peacefully and energetically for the purpose of pleasing God and establishing His reign and love in our hearts and the hearts of all our confreres.

If someone ties one of our hands, let us work with the other; if they tie us up in such a way that we cannot move even one member, let us abandon ourselves entirely to the love of our good Lord Jesus and avoid worrying about anything. He is able to accomplish His work without us.

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\(^1\)Groups of selected seminarians, under Francis Libermann's direction used to meet for pious conversations in order to aid one another in attaining a higher level of spiritual life. As long as Libermann was there to guide and moderate their efforts, these groups were very successful.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

It seems that Father Louis came here and he wanted to see me. Father Mollevault told me that he would have liked to take me along. I replied, "Send me and I will gladly go." He told me then that this ought to be decided by divine Providence. This shows that Father Mollevault is not sure about that plan; neither am I. The good Lord has not told me anything definite. May His Holy Name be blessed in everything He desires to do with me and with all others who wish to belong to Him.

With best regards in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

We must be patient with our own imperfection and realize that it can never be fully overcome.

Letter Seven Rennes, December 2, 1837 Vol. 1, p. 428

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

May the divine will be our guide in all things. This dear will has prevented me from writing to you during all this time. May It be blessed for that, as for everything else.

The classes we are giving in Catechism are wonderfully successful. I was afraid that they might cause some slight trouble in our poor little community which is entirely taken up with them. I hope, however, that nothing of the kind will happen. Beg Jesus and Mary to bless our imperfect labors. If those classes are properly conducted, they will result in much fervor in the boarding school.
Success is very difficult of attainment but we must bless God for anything that pleases Him and for everything He deigns to do in and with us. We must go unquestioningly whither He leads us; we should not wish for one thing or another, but only seek His most holy and adorable will; this alone must be our strength, our love, our way and our life. to Him alone belong all glory, adoration, homage, all praise and love. As for us, we can expect only confusion and disgrace. Blessed are we if He is pleased to give us at least a little bit of trouble. Provided He alone be praised, blessed and glorified, our joy should be perfect.

[Be Patient with Your Own Defects]

Now let us come to your own affairs. You are, no doubt, very imperfect, but what to do about that? You must be patient with your poor flesh, and bear it throughout your whole life upon this wretched earth. Drag it along with you as long as you live, but do it with perfect peace, mildness and gentleness of soul before God. Walk quietly in His presence and never worry about anything.

We were born amidst misery and shall die in the midst of it; hence we should suffer this great, this extreme misery in peace before God as long as He wishes to leave us in it, that is, during the whole time of our sad pilgrimage on this wretched earth. When overburdened, let us not yield to sadness. Let us be content with possessing the life of Jesus and make use of our very miseries to enable Him to live and reign ever more fully in us.

Those miseries chiefly exist in your mind. I think that it is only by a rebound that your heart is affected. That is why you should always gently calm your mind before God and pursue your way without paying attention to those annoyances.
[Why We Can Never Be Entirely Free From Defects]

Let me explain this a little. God gave us a wholly spiritual soul and a body that is wholly carnal and that will remain inclined to sin during our whole life. The body will not fully participate in the perfect life that Jesus gives to our souls until the resurrection. This soul is united in a mysterious way to the body. It follows from this union that there are [as it were] two men in us. There is the interior and purely intellectual man, independent of the flesh by the grace of Our Lord, and there is also the sensual man.

Our soul, because of its union with the body, is subject to sensible affections and impulses and thus the "two men" are not always in harmony. The one may be in perfect peace and entirely devoted to God who dwells in him. The other, on the contrary, may be agitated by all kinds of sentiments and emotions which of themselves tend to take away our mind from God or distract it.

Some of these tendencies are called vices; they are evil and tend to a complete estrangement from God. Others are called defects; they do not directly incline us to become estranged from God but they are obstacles.

Your tendencies are of the latter kind. God continues to dwell in your innermost soul, and those impulses of the sensitive part of your mind cannot tear this treasure away from you. These obstacles you must try to overcome by patience, gentleness, peace and calm. As long as peace reigns in your soul, the defects will not become deeply rooted in your soul, and in the end your soul will manage to overcome them entirely and pay no attention whatever to them. Try to disregard them as much as possible and to proceed in peace before God. Carry your cross as long as He leaves it with you. Calm your anxieties, moderate your activity, keep yourself in peace in the midst of the assaults and agitations to which your mind may be tempted to yield.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

[Restraint in Arguing with Others]

As for arguing with others, be on your guard against letting yourself be carried away, but this watchfulness should be peaceful and gentle. Never act hastily in the little affairs of your [spiritual] meetings. Do all these things quietly; avoid becoming disturbed and losing the sweet and peaceful union of your mind and heart with God. When, on occasion, you argue too lively, all you have to do is gently to reestablish yourself in peace before God and continue your way as though nothing had occurred.

If teaching Catechism tires you, I think you should discontinue it; at least speak about it to your director. . . .

Wish all our confreres a Happy New Year for me and tell them that we do not forget them.

Jesus be with you and Mary also.

Entirely yours in their most holy love,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

94

Advice on the preparation of exhortations, mortifications, and pious conversations.

Letter Eight     Rennes, December 12, 1837     Vol. 1, p. 428

May God's will be our guide in all things

Dear Confrere:

I have already given a letter for you to Father Superior. I shall now reply to your two letters which I have received since. I do so in a few words, for I have very little time at my disposal.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

[Advice on the Preparation of Exhortations]

I think that you would do well not to write out your exhortations completely. In its stead, fill your heart and mind with your topic before God and in a spirit of prayer, and then express as well as you can what God has put in your heart. When you speak in your catechism class you may follow that emotion you have described, provided it does not cause you agitation or trouble.

Do everything peacefully and gently but also with freedom and simplicity. Do not look for emotional effects, but touch the hearts of the children without having recourse to human eloquence. Speak gently in peace of heart and use a simple and easy style. Don't say to yourself; "Here is a good expression that will touch them, here is a figure of rhetoric that I shall use." But follow the impulse that will be given to you if you are intimately united to God, and go about it peacefully with purity of mind and heart. Anyhow, don't worry about those mental preoccupations; try to put them aside and go on.

[On Mortification]

Be careful with regard to mortifications. If you take it into your head to mortify yourself, it will cause you trouble. Go your way—eating, drinking what God gives you, and don't waste time tormenting yourself about trifles. There is no reason for mortifying ourselves beyond what God asks of us.

The performance and the desire of mortifications may be wholly self-willed. In that case they will do us no good. If we mortify ourselves by force of reasoning, by proving to ourselves that we ought to practice mortifications they will be of little value before God and sometimes will even be harmful. You may do those which your confessor permits. Stop worrying about that matter.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Advice About Spiritual Conversations

When you are with seminarians who are not very fervent you may speak about indifferent things, but it seems to me that it would be very dangerous to do so with the fervent, not exactly on account of what this might do to you but on account of the good to be procured in the seminary. Try simply not to become dissipated by your conversations. However, in my opinion, you should not make it a rule to speak only about edifying things. . . .

Everything is going well here, thank God. Jesus and Mary be with you.

Entirely yours in their most holy love,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

95

Self-defense of Francis Libermann: willingness to accept all crosses coming from God does not exclude legitimate defense against calumny.


May God’s will be our guide in all things

Dear Confrere:

I am writing now for something that is certainly connected with the accomplishment of God’s holy will. May it be fulfilled regarding myself and all that concerns me, in every detail. This I desire with all my heart. I do not want to take one step to escape from any evil if the trials come from that adorable divine Will. Should the whole world unite to assail and combat and crush me, if it is armed by the divine Will, I think that I would remain silent and allow myself to be crushed under the feet of all.

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LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

[The Accusation]

Yet, at this moment, it is God's will, I believe, that I prevent a cross and a very great affliction that might strike me if I did not try to remove it in time. It could arise in connection with Mr. Dupeloux.

You know that he is here with us, but you do not know how and why he has come. His departure, I am afraid, has been misrepresented to Father Carbon and a rumor spread that I took him away by force.

I beg you, dear friend, not to be scandalized by my pusillanimity and my fears which seem purely human. It seems to me that they are not. You know how much I owe to the good Fathers of Saint Sulpice and, hence, how necessary it is for me to do all I can to be agreeable to them and not to cause them any grief. This is why I assure you that I am very much put out at the thought that someone might prejudice them against me. That could easily come about as a result of what has taken place. What I fear most is that it might displease Father Carbon and Father Houssard. I believe that complaints have already been made about me to Father Mollevault in connection with the groups of seminarians who foster spiritual conversations. They must have come from some thoughtless seminarian. Now, I would grieve greatly if these two Fathers also became displeased for you know how much I love and respect them in our Lord Jesus. Yet, I fear that this will happen unless you warn them and prevent the blow.

[Libermann's Self-Defense]

Appearances clearly are against me. De Staplande and Dupeloux left suddenly to come here, and the latter did it by flight. Now who could have maneuvered such a thing if not I? However, with respect to Mr. de Staplande, there is nothing whatsoever that could have given rise to such an
accusation. Since my arrival here, I have never received any news directly or indirectly from him, neither have I ever written or sent word to him through others. And regarding Dupeloux, I have not uttered one word or syllable to suggest that I wanted him to come here. Let me tell you exactly what happened.

This poor fellow was, as you know, very fervent during his first year at the seminary, from the third month on. He was a model seminarian and everyone admired him. A few weeks before my departure from Issy, he began to be sad and troubled, but it was not serious. I did my best to console him. His troubles, however, increased after my departure to a point that is impossible to imagine. I am not permitted to reveal their nature, being bound to observe secrecy. I shall tell you merely that, when I read his letters, I was unable to restrain my tears at the sight of the numerous great evils overwhelming that dear soul. Yet, I did not say one word to prompt him to come, although I felt certain that he would find peace here. His soul was in the greatest danger and from all appearances it seemed that it would be absolutely impossible for him to resist if he remained until the end of the year.

He wrote to me one day to announce his arrival, telling me that he wanted to come here and had been told that he would be welcomed. I spoke about this matter to Father Superior, explaining the condition of that poor boy. He was filled with compassion and told me to invite him to come. My joy was very great and I must confess that I tried to persuade the Superior that he ought to accept him. I continued to do so, even when the boy's father refused to give his consent, although I saw that this complication would do no good to the [Eudist] Congregation.

The Superior agreed, full of compassion for this privileged soul that was so terribly afflicted and ran the risk of almost certain ruin.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

This, dear friend, is what brought that dear soul to us. I believe that God willed it. God brought him to us safe and sound, that is, he still had the same excellent dispositions which I knew him to have at my departure. He now enjoys perfect peace and progresses as if nothing had occurred. The finger of God is clearly seen in that affair. Pray for him. He is now in great danger of being torn away from this place of refuge. He knows it, he fears it, but he is with us all the same!

Adieu, dear confrere. Try, please, to explain all this to Fathers Carbon and Houssard. Let us always love only Jesus and Mary.

Entirely yours in their holy love,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE

96

The hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth and in the bosom of His Father.


J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

May God’s will be your rule in all things. What can I tell you at present for the glory and the most holy love of Jesus and Mary? From now until Quinquagesima Sunday we should, in accordance with the will of Father Eudes [our Founder], honor the hidden life of Jesus in the bosom of the little “community” of Nazareth.

[Jesus’ Hidden Life in Nazareth]

It seems to me that this mystery is most precious, especially for us who belong to the Holy Family and have

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SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

the duty of continuing this community of Nazareth. Oh, the dear community! It was there that peace, gentleness and interior mildness in God reigned. I had the opportunity of giving three subjects of meditation on the hidden life of Jesus. What struck me most, and should be very useful to you who are inclined to think of self, is the fact that Jesus' human faculties were so entirely lost in His Father and that He, as it were, completely forgot all existence outside of His Father.

It is wonderful to see Jesus completely hidden, enveloped, plunged, engulfed, absorbed, lost and annihilated in the immensity of His Father's glory. We admire in the hidden or retired life of Jesus in the house of Nazareth many things that are as nothing in comparison with that astounding loss and submersion of Jesus in His heavenly Father, whose splendor, glory, and boundless grandeur enclosed Him from all sides and prevented all communication outside of the bosom of His Father.

How greatly I should like to see you hidden in that way. Everything flowed from that source. It was the source of all the incomprehensible and marvelous things that we admire in Jesus' hidden life. This is the way we should especially contemplate the hidden life of our good Master.

It was a small thing to be hidden and closed up in the house of Nazareth and to be unknown to men. This cost Him no trouble, for He loved only His Father and could enjoy only His Father and the most holy will of His Father.

[Jesus' Hidden Life in the Bosom of His Father ]

If we wish to see the hidden life of Jesus, we must see Him hidden in His heavenly Father, in complete forgetfulness of all creatures and of Himself, and living only in His Father, for His Father, and with His Father. We must
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

see Jesus thus hidden in His Father and solely moved, animated by the spirit of His Father, who produced in His holy humanity effects as incomprehensible as its union with the Word. For these operations of the Holy Spirit were proportioned to the union of the most holy humanity with the Word. If only we were able to penetrate into this sanctuary and get a glimpse of the extraordinary dispositions of the divine humanity so submerged and lost in the bosom of His Father!

Note that in the midst of all His external labors, even during the time of His public life, Jesus was as much hidden in His Father as during His stay in the little house of Nazareth. Nevertheless, the mystery of His hidden life should be especially honored in connection with his sojourn in Nazareth. For, when He manifested His various mysteries outwardly, He did so to reveal Himself to our eyes and fill us with respect, love, adoration, and gratitude and also to merit for us and communicate to us, in a special manner, the different graces attached to those mysteries. Thus He lived thirty years, in order to make us participate largely in this heavenly life, and to impress us with its importance.

[How to Attain a Participation in Jesus' Hidden Life]

This hidden life contains great treasures. Peace, gentleness, humility of the heart before God, repose of the soul and docility to the Holy Spirit obtain for us this incomparable grace that is essential for the great ministry to which we are called. To attain it, we must be, as it were, dead, and oblivious of all things and of self.

The only true means of attaining it is by total forgetfulness of every creature and of self, by the death and extermination of every purely human [way of] life, but with perfect peace and repose of the soul before God, and by calmly waiting for the Divine Spirit to produce this peace in
our souls. For we cannot attain it by our own strength and activity; on the contrary, our own efforts and activity serve only to carry us away and delay us. We should abandon ourselves completely into the hands of our most beloved and sovereign Father. It is for Him to give it to us and do with us, as He thinks fit in His admirable wisdom; we on our part must keep ourselves in repose and calm expectation before Him.

You will find obstacles in your inclination to eagerness and contention of spirit. Remain nevertheless in repose and advance until our good Master begins to free you from yourself. In the meantime, bear with this inclination [to tenseness] with tranquility, peace and abandonment to God. When you surprise yourself in making positive efforts, do not yield to worry, but be content to put your mind in repose before God. Then continue on your way as if nothing had happened, constantly aiming at easing your mind and keeping it in repose before God. This is all, I think, you have to do.

I leave you in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Lead a hidden life in their spirit.

Entirely yours in their holy love,

Francis Libermann, acolyte

97

The model seminarian should preach by deed and not by words. Beware of "accommodating piety."

Letter Eleven Rennes, July 20, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 429

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

May God's will be your guide in all things. I have received the letter . . . you mentioned in yours. I have already
answered it, but I don't think I have said all that was necessary. Please supplement whatever I may have forgotten.

[Be a Model in Deeds But Not in Words]

Tell our beloved “apostles” that they must watch over themselves. They must be “models,” but this does not mean that they should work directly for the sanctification of their confreres, for this would be a very bad way of aiming at perfection. They must be models to others “in deed.” May they always remember a great and fundamental principle for all who want to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls: we must always labor at our own personal sanctification, not only in the sense that we must never lose sight of it, but that we must apply ourselves solely to that task.

Those who labor earnestly to deny themselves and to be interior men, living only by the love of God, men who are dead to self and live for God and in God alone, shall by that very fact never fail to work seriously and efficaciously for the salvation and sanctification of souls; yet their great occupation will remain their personal growth [in holiness]. Such men seek nothing but to please their divine and adorable Master with all their might. They do everything that is agreeable to Him, and, almost without appearing to, apply themselves to the task, they procure the sanctification of their brethren with a zeal and effectiveness which a multitude of others taken together might not be able to achieve. Let them therefore be peaceful, occupied with their own sanctification, and the rest will also go well.

[“Accommodating Piety”]

They will meet with contradictions and annoyances on the part of their confreres, but, after all, this sort of thing is
necessary if they want to sanctify themselves. Let them not be misled under the specious pretext of charity. It is a great mistake to associate with the lukewarm and dissipated in a community and to become dissipated and lax with them, under the pretext of charity. Charity is always full of love of God, and God alone is at the root of it. He is its beginning, its end, and everything in between. Those who thus mingle with the dissipated members of a community will never gain anything from it, either for their own sanctification or the sanctification of others. Such a “charity” is often mere vanity, either because one seeks to avoid blame or desires to gain esteem and praise. Woe to a seminarian who has this sort of charity!

Such a charity is often only weakness, and in that case, how can it fail to lead to final ruin? For, how can a seminarian who wishes to sanctify himself, who works earnestly for it, and then through weakness endangers everything, how can such a one, I say, resist the occasion of sin? . . .

Let them avoid also a certain air of piety which springs from principles that are very wrong and destructive of all true holiness. I mean the sort of piety that may be called “accommodating piety” and which falsely claims to follow St. Francis de Sales. Those who allow themselves to be misled, will never acquire solid virtue. They will be very satisfied with themselves; they will sometimes be effusive in expressions of humility, while being full of vanity and self-complacency. Beware of being deceived by this spirit of the world, for that sort is merely a worldly kind of piety. True piety is that of Our Lord and His Apostles, a manly and vigorous piety which teaches us to leave the world and all that it contains, and to conquer ourselves in all things.

We must be gentle and mild in all our dealings with all our brethren, but it must be a holy gentleness, based on
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

complete self-renunciation and perfect patience with our neighbor. We must love our neighbor from the bottom of our heart, bear with his failings, and so on, but above all, love him with holy charity. Those who conceive piety to be simply that kind of "accommodating kindness" are not only full of vanity and devoid of solid virtue, but they do not truly bear with their neighbor. For they are accommodating and charitable toward those by whom they are loved and who are on their side; but to those who do not seem to approve them or share their dispositions, they are cold, indifferent or scornful, treating them "as strangers," to use the words of our good Master. They are friendly toward those who are endowed with certain external gifts. They seek to be with them and admire such persons, but they are less friendly toward persons of simple or poor appearance.

Recommend, therefore, to our dear confreres to seek a piety that is solid, fervent and interior, a charity that is genuine, simple, mild, peaceful, open, unvarnished and unaffected. Let them seek first their own sanctification, and afterwards that of others. They should avoid as evil the imaginary charity of which I have spoken, for it is indeed a purely imaginary one and unreal. May their conversation never become dissipating. Let them be joyful and open, but with gentleness and moderation, as is fitting for children of God.

I must stop now, dear friend, for I am in a hurry. Mr. de Brandt leaves today and he will take this letter with him. He was kept back by some work he had begun and which the Superior wished him to finish before his departure.

Entirely your in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE
An exhortation to true holiness

Letter Twelve  Rennes, July 14, 1838  Vol. 1, p. 431

Praised be Jesus and Mary

To my dear Brothers of the Sodality of the Holy Apostles, greetings, peace and love of Jesus and Mary.

I am writing this letter to you because I was told that the good Lord wants it and you also desire it. Otherwise I should certainly not have dared to write it, for fear of spoiling the good which God is accomplishing among you. Don't imagine that my repugnance proceeds from a lack of charity toward you, for this is certainly not so. On the contrary, I am filled with a most tender love toward all of you, and with a great desire for your sanctification. Thus, you have a right to demand from me whatever you want. This is my reason for thinking that I am permitted to write this letter to you.

[Be Holy as Jesus is Holy]

Love our Lord Jesus most ardently, for He loves you in a very special way, and bestows great graces upon you. Be faithful to those divine graces and to this unfathomable goodness of Jesus.

Be holy as your divine Master is holy. How could you wish to belong to Him without being truly holy? You must take this literally: Be holy as Jesus is holy. And you know as well as I do how this dear Lord was and remains holy. Keep always this great and admirable Model before your mind, and unite your soul continually to that of Jesus; carry

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1This letter was addressed to Guy Leray and other seminarians belonging to the sodality of the Holy Apostles.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

Him also in the depths of your heart, constantly reproducing His interior life in your own.

What will remain, if you grow remiss, if you amuse yourselves, if your life passes like a dream, if you do not sanctify your soul every instant of the time spent in the seminary? You will lose Jesus, you will go farther and farther away from Him, and your life will no longer be that of Jesus. What is a soul that is void of Jesus? What is life when it is not lived solely in Jesus? Be therefore holy, as Jesus is holy, that is, have in your soul the very holiness of Jesus.

[Holiness Is the Principle of All Apostolic Zeal]

Never forget that holiness is the great law of all apostolic life, and the fundamental principle of all zeal. Our good Master, head and life of the Apostles, has said: “For them do I sanctify myself.” He desired to sanctify the world, therefore He had to sanctify Himself. He desires to communicate a special holiness to His chosen ones. He was therefore obliged to possess a super-abundant sanctity. This holiness of Jesus we must possess in ourselves in order to give it to others. This is also the fundamental rule which you must follow among yourselves: first, your own sanctification, secondly, your own sanctification, and always your own sanctification! Be not satisfied, dear friends, with beautiful thoughts, with sweet sentiments. Our holiness must be that of Jesus; it is for this that He first sanctified Himself: “that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

[Holiness is Based on Perfect Renunciation]

It is easy to construct a plan of holiness in the imagination, but this is worthless, and not what you need. Cast out those ideas of imaginary piety; aim at true holiness based on perfect renunciation. Begin with foresaking all desires,
all affections, all pleasures, every human and natural movement, in order that Jesus may live in you. Have no self-love nor seek yourself in anything. Renounce your own mind, your own will, to have only that of Jesus, even as He has none other than that of His heavenly Father.

Remember that you must belong entirely to Our Lord Jesus. He desires to be all things in you and for you; you also must be wholly consecrated and devoted to this Divine Master, so that your life is entirely in Jesus and in nothing else. You live no longer for yourselves; therefore seek no longer your own interest in anything. In fact, nothing in the world should interest you any more; for what object can possibly have an interest for you, since you have, must have, and wish to have Jesus alone, who is the only life of your souls?

O how blessed you will be, if you are able to remain constantly in that spirit of perfection, by which the soul ceaselessly detaches itself from all creatures and from self, by which, as it were, it loses itself and its natural existence, to live and to exist solely in and for Jesus. Aim at attaining this sweet, this holy and peaceful union with the Spirit of our Lord who is in you; yet, while striving for this delightful and uninterrupted union, work in a special manner at self-renunciation, for this must be your constant occupation.

Even when we have attained great perfection, we need to watch over the flesh, over our self-love, and our desire to be somebody. We must constantly preserve great interior purity before God, and keep in view our lowliness and wretchedness. We must renounce ourselves in all things and everywhere, but always in a spirit of peace and gentleness, uniting ourselves to our divine Master, and being faithful to the divine impulse of His love. Have Jesus always present in your mind and let it have no other lights but in Him. Let it be constantly turned toward Him alone. However, do not
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

make any tense effort, but act peacefully and gently, with calm and tranquillity, seeking to know Him perfectly and to possess this knowledge without interruption.

[Relations with Others]

In your practical conduct, be calm and peaceful in all your actions. Do nothing hurriedly. Avoid tenseness and over-eagerness, and be not led by your imagination. In all things remain peacefully united to God, and act as our Lord has acted. This moderation, tranquillity and restraint will give you great spiritual advantages. Keep yourself always in a profound humility of mind and heart. Do not think that you are somebody because God has granted you graces not given to others, but remain constantly in a profound lowliness before Him. Never consider yourself better than your confreres because you think you understand holiness better than they. I can assure you that one may have great insights and remain a wretched man. Remain little before God and before men.

Never judge and especially do not condemn anyone. When you feel like judging others, enter into your own heart, unite your soul to our Lord, humble your spirit, seeing that you wish to judge others whereas you yourself are wretched. If you fail to notice your own great wretchedness, this is one more reason for humbling yourself, for the greatest wretchedness is to be wretched and not to know it. Be little and poor in your own eyes, and dwell constantly in this attitude before God.

[True and False Peace of Soul]

Do not aspire to extraordinary graces, great lights, exalted gifts. Aim rather at perfect renouncement and at entire death to self, endeavoring to live only by the life of our
Lord. Do not lessen, do not minimize your faults in your own eyes, with the thought of thus obtaining peace of soul, for this would be a false peace. But try to live in great peace and great union with our Lord, ever keeping in mind your wretchedness, your poverty and wickedness. If this view and knowledge of your wretchedness results in peace and intimate union with Our Lord, rejoice before God, lower yourself more and more, and be filled with your abjection and your misery.

Pay close attention to this peace, and never cease to aim at it before and in God; but let it be a peace of denial and death [to self] and not a peace resulting from indifference. It should be a peace of love and union and not a fictitious peace arising from mere forgetfulness of your troubles or from a purely human effort. Your peace must neither fear nor always shun difficulties and trials, but should surmount them.

Be serious and modest, but with gentleness and kindness, without purely human effort and labor. If your soul is peacefully and humbly united to God, you will always be truly serious and modest. If you are lovers of yourselves, you will never attain true modesty. Woe to him among you who is a lover of self! He is not worthy to belong to Jesus; he will not belong to Him very long, and even now he has very little of the life of Jesus in his soul.

[The Living Image of Jesus]

Dear brothers, have the life of Jesus in you. Be always a perfect image of Jesus. In your relations with God, be an image of Jesus crucified, humbled, annihilated for His adorable glory. In your mental prayer, be always united to Jesus, and, like Jesus, follow only the movement of divine love. In your relations with your confreres, be the image of Jesus conversing with men.
LETTERS TO GUY LERAY, EUDIST

Be strong and vigorous, for the power of Jesus dwells in you. You know in what your power must consist. It does not consist in severely reproving those who do not act as they should, nor in resisting others or forcing the world to serve God perfectly. It is up to our beloved Master to see to that. But you, be strong in repressing all natural sentiments, all desires for love and esteem, and other evil inclinations, so that you may act in all things solely for His greater glory, for the most holy love of your God and with the sole desire of pleasing Him, doing all things in union with your divine and most lovable Master, Our Lord Jesus, and following only the movement of His divine Spirit.

Have in your interior and in your exterior the divine gentleness of Jesus which made Him radiate mildness and heavenly grace wherever He worked. Everything in Him was so adorable and gentle that He was almost irresistible. Dear brothers, if we were able to behold the admirable treasures of Jesus’ gentleness we would die of joy and love. Be gentle like Jesus, but let it be an interior and holy gentleness, springing from true, interior and tender love and union with the most gentle Jesus. Why be satisfied with a poor imitation of divine gentleness? Try to possess it in your soul, with that depth and spirit of holiness which characterized our Master. See to it, dear friends, that it be not your gentleness; for it is not you who should be gentle, but Jesus, living in you with His gentle spirit of mildness.

[Simplicity, Reserve, and Harmony]

Shun all affectation in your ways of thinking, speaking and acting. Live in a spirit of simplicity and abandonment in the hands of God, working under the inspiration of His Divine Spirit. Let not your conduct be fashioned as if it were meant to please man; but live simply as souls belonging to Jesus, and who desire only to have the life of Jesus in their hearts.
SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Do not manifest externally what is happening in your interior. Jesus alone wants to know the secret of what He is doing in your souls, and it often happens that a grace made public leaves us or even turns against us. Nevertheless, act and speak with great simplicity, and fill one another with fervor and with the love of God.

Remain united in close harmony and Jesus will always be in your midst. He has promised this in His holy Gospel, and I know from experience that He keeps His promise. But let this union be holy and fervent, solely for the sake of love, in and through the love of Jesus. Be filled with desires for the sanctification of your confreres of the community, and spread fervor throughout the seminary. If you are faithful to the grace of Our Lord who dwells in you, you will succeed. It is not by rational calculations, by industry, or by strokes of your imagination that you will sanctify the seminary, but only by the holiness of your life, by your interior spirit, by the perfect love of Our Lord and the most holy Virgin. If you love Jesus, you will also love Mary; and if you have in your souls the pure and perfect love of Jesus and Mary, what else is wanting?

It is time for me to finish this long epistle. I end then, leaving you all filled with the love of Jesus and Mary. This is at least my great desire. Remember, sometimes, the poor fellow who writes to you, but only in the most holy love of Jesus and Mary. If you do not love Jesus and Mary with a genuine love, I want to forget you and be forgotten by you. This would not matter very much, but God Himself also would forget you. If, on the contrary, this love fills your souls and becomes the principle of all your actions, you will be an object of delight for the Most Holy Trinity and for the Saints. Live therefore solely by the holy love of Jesus and Mary.

Your poor servant in that holy love,

Francis Libermann, Acolyte