9. LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

Charles Blanpin was born at Ligny-lès-Rely, in the Diocese of Arras, on May 10th, 1817. He studied first at St. Sulpice and then entered as a deacon in Father Libermann’s novitiate in 1842. Ordained to the priesthood in the same year, he left in 1843 for Reunion with Father Collin. Having lost the use of his voice, he returned to France in the Spring of 1846. He was cured at the Shrine of Mater Admirabilis, Trinità dei Monti, Rome, on November 7th of the same year, and returned to Reunion in 1847. In 1856 he went to the island of Mauritius, where he labored seven years. After four years in Bordeaux, he was appointed to Martinique in 1867. He died there in 1890.

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You have been sent to sanctify souls and not for your own satisfaction. Always retain control of your emotions. Brotherly love.

Letter One  Feast of St. Joseph, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 150

May Jesus and His holy love reign in your soul!

Dear Confrere:

I would have liked to reach you by letter before your departure, . . . but you are now probably on the high seas. . . . We are so certain that you have left the port that we are going to start the novena of prayers [for a safe journey].

[You Have Been Sent for the Sanctification of Souls and Not for Your Own Satisfaction]

Be full of confidence in God’s goodness; He will not abandon you. You have met already the kind of difficulties
that always accompany our first contact with men. Don't worry on account of the pains they cause you. You were not sent there for your own pleasure but for the salvation of souls. You must labor for their salvation and sanctification in spite of the sufferings that are attached to such work. Our good Lord deigned to save men by dying a most cruel death for them. Consider yourself fortunate when you can suffer some trouble inflicted by men, for it is a sign of God's good pleasure in regard to your labors.

Avoid worry and don't become harsh toward them. . . . When men are mean toward us, we should treat them with great kindness and suffer them with patience. When we have to act and combat their evil ways, we should avoid any trace of ill humor and self-love in our reproof, for such evidence will produce an evil impression on the minds of the persons concerned. . . .

[Always Retain Control of Self and of Your Emotions]

Tell Father Collin that it is most important for both of you to be always masters over yourselves and your emotions in your relations with others. If you suffer grief, humiliation and the like, don't allow those feelings to lord it over you. Be their master in the presence of God and in the presence of men. Before God, in the sense that you are not the slaves of those sentiments and that they do not make you act against His will, but in a way that is uniform and submissive to His adorable guidance. Before men, in the sense that your emotions should be so controlled by you so that they do not unduly influence your senses. Be masters over yourselves in such a way that people will not know what is going in you. Still less should you act explicitly with the design of showing what is going on in you. Being thus masters over yourselves and acting as if you were not
stirred up by a lively emotion, follow God's will and you will procure His glory.

Practice equanimity, uniformity of disposition at all times. With such a conduct you will go far and very soon you will be masters of everything the good Lord wants to make subject to you for His glory. If, on the contrary, you give rein to your emotions, you will do many foolish things and men will be your lords and masters as it were.

[Brotherly Love]

Live together like children of God, in all gentleness and peace. Suffer each other's small and great defects, act in harmony and union. You are serving the same Master and seek only His glory. You are employed in the same work. The same spirit of charity animates both of you. Don't be men but angels of Jesus Christ. You act as men and not as angels every time you yield to ill humor, even if you do not manifest your sentiments to the other. You have gone to that country to preach the Gospel of peace to men who do not know this peace. You are therefore messengers of peace; live as such. May the peace of Our Lord fill your souls. If your characters are not perfectly suitable to each other, it is not a motive for not loving each other tenderly or not bearing each other wholeheartedly. He who can't bear the brother's faults of character is a mere man; he still has the imperfection of Old Adam. God's grace prompts us to suffer all things. "Charity is patient, kind" etc. Love each other, then, my dear confreres and sons. Love each other in the love of the Divine Master and our Beloved Mother.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplish in you what my heart and yours so ardently desire—that you love in all gentleness and perfection. He who loves fulfills the whole law of Jesus Christ. If you don't love each other, you who are victims immolated on the same altar to the
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

glory of Jesus, how can you love others? Love each other, therefore, in spite of your different natural tendencies which lead to impatience as soon as something contrary occurs. Then the peace of Our Lord which surpasses all understanding will fill your hearts and consume them in divine love....

I visited your home eight days ago and preached in your church which was as full as an egg.... I had dinner with your grandmother.... I had to promise your mother that I would come back to preach the Stations of the Cross.... Your mother is very well at present....

Adieu, dear confreere.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,
FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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To counteract certain dangers inherent in your ministry, avoid familiarity and practice self-restraint.

Letter Two       March 8, 1844       Vol. 6, p. 105

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

I must begin with a temporal matter. Don't worry any more about your dear mother; everything is going well. Your poor mother has given me much grief and sorrow.1 I went twice to see her and used every means to win her confidence, but it was all in vain.... I then resolved to wait for the moment of God's Providence. The good Lord must have

1Mrs. Blanpin was a wealthy widow, pious but very scrupulous, and suspicious of becoming a victim of fortune hunters.
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

heard your prayers! . . . I left her in a state of consolation and she was relatively calm, but she will never be perfectly at peace with herself . . .

It seems that it has pleased Our Lord to try you by illness. This has not frightened me; it was due to the change of climate . . . I strongly disapprove the conduct of all of you who worked so hard from the very beginning. Those who go suddenly to an entirely different climate should take care of themselves and proceed slowly at first . . .

Watchfulness is in order everywhere. “Watch and pray” said Our Lord. I am not surprised hearing about those dangers you speak of, although I didn’t expect that they would be so great. Watch and pray, dear friend. The shepherd who runs after his sheep follows them to the precipice but takes care not to fall into it, for he then loses both himself and the sheep. Be reserved in your external behavior, avoid any semblance of familiarity with such people, while remaining gentle and charitable. Don’t invite familiarity on their part. They are naturally inclined to become familiar. They notice the Fathers’ kindness toward all the Negroes; they have confidence in you, become affectionate and find it easy to open their heart to you; they find consolation in you just as they suffer rebuts from others. So be reserved in your conduct with them.

Safeguard also internal reserve. I mean, you should not relish the affection of those good people or let your heart dwell in the pleasure it feels in your pious relations with them. Dangers will always be present, but prayer and confidence in God will enable you to conquer. Moreover, the most holy and pure Heart of our good Mother will watch over you. Listen to Father Le Vavasseur [your superior]. He knows all the dangers you will meet with and is better able to give advice than I am. Don’t be anxious. Our Lord and His good Mother will watch over your reputation. Use
the precautions which Father Le Vavasseur suggests and then be calm. Try to practice recollection without striving too energetically for it. Such over-eagerness and contention in a missionary cannot last. Place your confidence in Our Lady at all times . . . .

Entirely yours in the charity of the most Holy Heart of Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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*We must patiently endure the troubles resulting from the character of our confreres. They serve to sanctify us.*

Letter Three November 9, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 413

Dear Confrere:

I have just received your report about the mission you preached at Colimaçons. We rejoice with all our heart because God's goodness deigns to bless your work. . . . Have courage and put your confidence in God. He will bless your works more and more. . . .

*[The Faults of Your Confrere Serve to Make You Grow in Holiness]*

Good Father Collin has a quite unique character. I know that from the beginning you did not see eye to eye, but there is considerable good in this. It gives you an occasion for practising virtue, and God's grace will help you to grow in the spirit of our good Master. Nothing else serves your spiritual formation as well as that exercise.

Moreover, your annoyance with him will not last forever. Once you are freed from it, your soul will have twice as
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

much repose and holy freedom as it had before. You yourself realize well the great good that will result for you, for you call it a treasure from which you wish to draw profit. You are quite right in calling it a treasure: you cannot imagine all the goods that result from it. Be like a victim constantly offered on the altar; sacrifice, immolate yourself, immolate your self-love. That temptation which exists between you and Father Collin is the hammer in the hands of God by which He wishes to break up all that is defective in your souls. It is a flail which, by striking the ear of corn and shaking it violently, separates the grain from the straw.

[Try to Control Yourself]

Remain humbly prostrate before God. Acknowledge your miseries and weakness and walk always with courage in the way of God. That temptation must also be the occasion for patience, longanimity and forbearance with the neighbor. You know that “patience has a perfect work.” It will also teach you self-control, to be moderate and reserved. It will oblige you to have frequent recourse to God and to humble yourself before Him, to see what you really are.

All this is very good and largely compensates for the faults of weakness and frailty which self-love, sensitivity or briskness cause you to commit. That is why the Divine Savior, in His great love for you, has preferred to expose you to the danger of those passing faults rather than deprive you of the good that will result for your soul. I can say the same about our dear Father Collin. He most probably grieves because of the faults he commits through frailty and would like to live in perfect harmony with you. Here you see the results of a difference in characters: souls of good will are tried and establish themselves in solid piety. They work, commit faults, but by and by gain mastery over themselves.
I feel certain that it is not pride or contempt that makes Father Collin take those apparently haughty airs. The real reason is that he is irritated by your way of acting and talking and also because of your different characters. He makes efforts to overcome himself but doesn't seem to be always successful. I expect to hear a jeremiad from him also. He will certainly complain spontaneously in his next letter.

[Suffer with Love and Confidence in Jesus]

You should suffer your temptation patiently and avoid displeasure with yourself. Try to remain in a spirit of gentleness and confidence in Our Lord and Our Lady and preserve peace. Remain very humble, but aim at this peacefully and in the presence of the good Master. Suffer with love, distract your mind from thoughts about your confere, quiet your imagination and don't readily think that you consent to those outbursts. All this takes place in the senses and imagination; generally it is not real nor is there consent. It is a cross, a misery. Bear it as a cross and humble yourself on that occasion as in any other trouble.

Don't be afraid because of your unfaithfulness. Jesus will make up for all that is wanting to you. Labor for the salvation of souls for and through the love of Jesus and Mary. When people come to you, receive them in Jesus' name. He will do what you are unable to accomplish.

[Be Like a Child with Jesus and Mary]

Regarding meditation, abandon yourself to the good Master; remain in peace in His presence. When you have distractions, quietly return your mind to your prayer, gently raising it to Jesus and Mary. Don't feel ill at ease with so good a Father and so good a mother. Approach them as a child, with sweet affection, cast a glance to Jesus and
Mary and then remain in His presence. Have confidence and courage! Nothing you complain about contains any danger for your soul.

Your mother is a saintly woman; she is deeply attached to God, . . . [but pursued by fortune hunters]. How unhappy are those who possess the goods of this world! But don't let all that trouble you, dear friend. Have confidence; your mother will sanctify herself in spite of everything. She has made great progress. The thing that grieves me is that people who are interested in money cause her so much trouble and agitation. However, things are improving in this respect.

 Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,  
 Father Francis Libermann

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Our defects can help us to become more firmly established in the way of God. He makes use of a troublesome confrere to overcome your self-love. Jesus is our All.

Letter Four {January, 1845} Vol. 7, p. 40

Dear Confrere:

Your mother spent three days with us. I invited her to the dedication of our chapel and I asked her to pray for our poor Negroes, so that she might in some way share in the labors of her son. I did my best to make things as pleasant for her as possible. I was glad to see that she was more calm and peaceful than I have seen her at any other time. She is a holy woman who would be very happy if she had peace of soul. She would enjoy that peace if people didn't annoy her. . . . She has left very satisfied and perfectly at peace. . . .
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

[Our Defects Can Help Us to Become More Firmly Established in God's Love]

Now let me say a word for yourself. The good Lord puts you through a trial. Don't worry because of all the temptations you have undergone. Go with confidence to Mary: her motherly heart will not abandon you. Don't be surprised that the enemy torments you. It would be surprising if he did not. Feel sure he will not be successful. Profit by your state of affliction and remain in humility before God.

We know for certain that we are poor and weak and that we have defects. We know we aren't good for anything but doing evil. This we know through faith, but this is not the same as having experimental knowledge of it. We have to pass through a state of wretchedness to make us realize profoundly that we are nothing. We are entering the way of holiness. I assure you, dear friend, that I don't know anyone who arrived at solid and stable perfection without passing first through the crises you have experienced. I'll say more: the miseries you mention are insignificant in comparison with the things I have seen in very privileged souls who, after their sorry experience, advance with giant steps. Be courageous therefore, dear friend, and full of confidence in God and in Our Lady.

The thing that should ordinarily be done in such a state is to remain in one's poverty before God, in a spirit of humility and submission to His will which leaves us in our weakness and misery. Be convinced that what you went through was but a passing squall. Troubles, agitations and temptations of this kind occur only at a certain stage of the spiritual life. They last some time according to God's designs and, after that, one is firmly established in the way of God.

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Moreover, your difficulty was due to a special circumstance, the difference between your temperament and that of Father Collin. I guess that he will continue to find exercise for his teasing mind! He often annoys you without really intending it and even against his will. Feel certain that that difference between your temperaments was but an occasion. You had to suffer and would have suffered in any case, but God's goodness made use of a confrere for that purpose. At the root of your trouble there is probably a certain amount of self-love, a certain over-sensitivity and a spirit of contradiction. Don't be surprised to find such evil sentiments in you. They are in all of us. When God in His goodness keeps those poisonous springs closed, we are then at peace, but when He allows them to be stirred up for the sake of our spiritual progress, they produce an awful stench.

Be patient, dear friend! Those evil times will pass and your soul will regain peace, a stable peace, founded on firm renunciation. Be patient with yourself while waiting for better times. Once you enjoy the company of other confreres—and I hope this will be soon—you will be separated from Father Collin. You will have less relations with him and things will go better; you will be more tranquil.

Don't envy the lot of Father de Regnier.¹ Your turn has not yet arrived. You will have to labor and suffer and sanctify yourself. Surrender your soul to Jesus and Mary....

¹One of the victims of the first missionary expedition in West Africa.
humility and perfect submission to God's will. Jesus is with you; be in peace. Sacrifice yourself constantly to His glory. Live like a servant, belong to Him. Be constantly at His disposal that He may do with you all that He pleases. What have we on earth and what do we seek for in heaven if not our sweet Jesus and the fulfillment of His divine will?

We are nothing; we cannot do anything; we are worth nothing. We belong to Jesus; this is all our glory and our only happiness. Well, dear friend, if our good Lord Jesus accepts you in spite of all your miseries, and takes and leads you as His beloved child, are you not blessed upon earth? Abandon yourself to the good Savior. Give yourself to His good and lovable Mother and suffer in peace for love of Jesus.

Adieu, dear confrere and son. Write to me more often than I write to you.

Entirely yours in the living and pure charity of the most Holy Heart of our Mother,

Francis Libermann

priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

Disregard any worries caused by your temporal possessions. I greatly admire your mother. Your sufferings are the result of your love of God, mine come from my sins.

Letter Five {April, 1845} Vol. 7, p. 144

Dear Son and Confrere:

I can give you only a short word in reply to your letter, for I want to give it to our confreres who are at Toulon
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

[ready to embark for Bourbon]. I hope that it will reach them still in time.

[Do Not Worry About Your Temporal Goods]

Don't worry because I might have trouble on account of your temporal goods. I have always said that we are never more at ease than when we have nothing. However, since those goods were given you by God's Providence and He desires that I take care of their administration, I have to shoulder that task. I am accustomed to suffer afflictions on the part of men; this is my life. Yes, dear confreere, it is my life, for when I have no trouble, I don't serve God and do nothing for Him. . . .

Neither should you grieve because you possess those goods. God, in His goodness, has wished to make them serve for our own sustenance. True, if that resource had been wanting, He would have given us another. Nevertheless, since God willed that you should give us that help, rejoice before Him and know that He will reward you, giving you the hundredfold by His grace. . . .

[Your Mother is a Holy Woman]

Your mother is very well. We agree perfectly. She doesn't want to hear about business and interest. I can't tell you how attached I am to that good holy lady. She continues to consider herself the most wretched of creatures. I admire her devotedness to God, her spirit of sacrifice and her humility.

You can't imagine how wretched I feel when I compare myself with her. I am hoping that I shall soon be able to pay her my annual visit. She urges me to come and would like to see me. This shows that things are going well. She suffered constant annoyance from her relatives and the
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

Reverend pastor who wished her to make a will in their favor and they said things to make her feel sorry that she had let you go away. They said I was doing everything to get hold of her property and yours and that those goods belonged to her relatives. I knew this was going on, though she didn’t tell me. I gathered it from a number of circumstances. But she has since told me explicitly. The pastor now understands the state of affairs and leaves her alone so that she enjoys great peace....

[You Suffer Because of God’s Love, I Suffer Because I Am a Sinner]

Don’t complain because you can give so little time to mental prayer and to study. Blessed is the missionary whose time is absorbed by work for the salvation of souls. You are much more to be congratulated than pitied. You have a great happiness which I don’t have. I too haven’t a moment during the whole day to occupy myself with my wretched soul, nor have I time for study. What keeps me busy? Letters! And these never serve directly for the salvation of souls.

But your life is occupied with saving souls. Mine with making arrangements. I am like the secretary of a great banker. The secretary is good at arithmetic, he puts order into accounts, deals with millions in his calculations, makes brilliant commercial speculations, but all that is in the purely speculative order so far as he is concerned. Others collect the profits which he has calculated and the benefit of his speculations. He leaves his office and sometimes hasn’t a penny in his pocket. This is my situation. I calculate, speculate, make plans for your gains. And I have empty pockets. I shall be happy on Judgment Day if I obtain the Lord’s mercy. You, on the contrary, save souls. What a blessing!
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

Be at peace therefore. Don't worry if you aren't able to make your meditation properly and if you suffer some trouble. Make sure only that you are faithful to God in your exercises prescribed by the Rule. You suffer for the love of God, and I suffer migraine, that is all! Your pains belong to your apostolic work and result from them. I suffer because I am a sinner. Suffer with patience and with love. . . .

Don't be surprised at the things that are taking place in you. You are not yet fully formed. You will become more calm by and by.

Adieu, dear confrere.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Your affliction (the loss of the power of speech) is a punishment for my sins. Offer your trouble for the salvation of souls and your own spiritual growth.

Letter Six  La Neuville, September 6, 1845  Vol. 7, p. 296

Beloved Confrere:

[My Sins Fall on Every Member of the Congregation]

I cannot write more than a couple of words. . . . Yet I would have liked to write at greater length to console you who are so dear to me in the charity of our good Master. No doubt you are in need of that consolation. I wish I could be with you for one hour at least every week, to help you carry the cross which God's goodness has laid on your shoulders.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Dear son, my heart is suffering with you. If at least I were able to give you some relief! I have prayed frequently to the Blessed Virgin to do this for me. But I fear that the prayers of a wretch like me are not heard. Pardon me for my spiritual poverty and my sins. Do you have to suffer on their account? Yes, dear friend, and this is what grieves me most when I see what a poor man I am. Yes, certainly, the sins I commit indirectly fall on every member of our dear Congregation and on its works. “God does not hear sinners,” yet I have to pray ceaselessly and be heard for everything that concerns our holy and admirable work.

I often pray Our Lord that He may deign to punish me alone for my sins and may hear my prayers as if I were most agreeable to His eyes. Oh! let Him overwhelm and destroy me if need be, provided my wickedness does not affect the souls of you whom He loves with a love of predilection, nor the works He has entrusted to us.

[Offer Your Troubles for the Souls Entrusted to You and Your Own Spiritual Growth]

Regarding yourself, remain humble and peaceful in His presence and count on His mercy. Offer your pains and troubles for the souls to whom you would like to speak about His divine love and are unable to do so. I assure you that you will be more pleasing to the Heavenly Father and will do more for souls than if you were speaking to them. Once your speech is given back to you, the good you will accomplish will be so much greater. Moreover, the good you will do during this time of silence which God’s goodness imposes upon you will be more useful to your own soul, for you will become more firmly established in humility and habitual submission to God’s will. . . .
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

Your good mother now enjoys perfect peace. It is so important for her to preserve it at all costs...

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,
FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary


Letter Seven  La Neuville, March 20, 1846  Vol. 8, p. 85

Dear Confrere:

I have waited a few days before replying because I had to pay due respect to my beloved companion, my migraine. You act in harmony with the designs of our good Master by spending a few days in the home of your family. Don’t you recall that when the Apostles returned from their mission, Jesus said to them: “Rest a while.” Well, the Lord has told you the same thing through my mouth. Now let me deal with the various items in the order you mention them in your letter.

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

I remember what that holy man, Father Desgenettes, who assisted me, said to me at my first Mass in the Church of Our Lady of Victories: “My good friend, you are now in the third Heaven as you stand at the altar. When you will have said it as often as I have, you will be more cold.” I understood then what was taking place in his soul. You see then that the holiest among men can experience the same things as yourself. Hence there is no reason for worry.
Use the following means to counteract your "coldness." Try always to take some time for a suitable preparation and use it to put your soul at Our Lord's disposal that He may do with it what He pleases. Keep your soul peacefully and humbly before Him during that preparation. While going to the altar, preserve this disposition of humility and readiness to be sacrificed. At the altar, if your preparation has produced a suitable disposition, try to retain it and remain in it. If you have a pious thought so much the better. Be guided by it. If, on the contrary, you experience nothing, be content with remaining in your nothingness and poverty before God, ready to offer yourself and sacrifice yourself with Jesus to His Father. You may also give yourself to Mary, that she may offer you with Jesus to His Father. This thought suffices and it is not even necessary that it be always present to your mind. It suffices that you have it at the bottom of your heart, in your desire and intention. Having this desire, you need not fear that [Holy Mass will become a matter of] routine.

During the day, preserve that disposition, for the priest must at all times be what Jesus is at the altar and what he is there together with Jesus—a victim immolated to God, immolated to His divine will. Remain in a spirit of surrender to God throughout the day and in an attitude of perfect submission to His good pleasure. Stay, like a very small child, in the hands of Mary who offers and sacrifices you to God's will. This divine will must be everything for you at any cost. . . .

2. **Self-Will**

I don't worry much about that. I feel certain that the evil is not as great as you imagine. I know your soul, its strength and its weakness and I am certain that the picture you paint is not quite correct. You have all that is required
for being truly obedient. I think that the independence of which you complain is more a question of lack of attention than independence of your will. And your repugnance for obedience when things were not to your liking, was rather a matter of irritation toward Father Collin.

In any case we shall clear up all that when we talk together. I feel certain that all this will quiet down and pass away. Don't reason about it. Have no fear. Put your confidence in Mary and be at peace. You will see that once we shall have discussed these matters for a few weeks, everything will clear up and you will no longer see things in such dark colors.

3. Judgments

Here is what you ought to do. Remember that Our Lord said: “Nolite judicare, nolite condemnare.” There are two points in this text. He says, “Nolite,” we should not will such things, we must refrain from willing to judge others. Once you are involved in dealing with men, you will easily notice how wicked the world is. Quite often it is impossible not to notice the evil that is found in our neighbor. In such a case one deals with such a thought as one does with bad thoughts; one tries to think of something else.

When the evil does not leap to the eye, let us not look for it nor scrutinize it, but pay no attention to it. Of course, there are exceptions when we need to know those things in order to guide our conduct accordingly. When we act this way, we have nothing to fear; we fulfill the word of the Master, “nolite,” our will is not in it.

The second point is “condemnare.” When we have noticed some evil in our fellow-man, we are displeased, we get vexed and are angry with him. In that case we condemn. We should calm ourselves and refuse to consent to this. “Nolite.” This we learn gradually. I am not astonished that
such things took place in you. You had been walking in all simplicity, with so much thoughtlessness that you saw something good even when there was evil.

But when you acquired experience of the world, your eyes were opened and hence you readily judged and condemned the world. You will correct that little by little and overcome it in the long run.

It was even a good thing that this happened to you, for you might have adopted the ways of those people because of your excessive simplicity and your want of attention. However, I did not fear this, because I knew for sure that Mary would watch over you. You had to run that risk. Now you are out of danger, because you are more inclined to judge people than to imitate them. May Jesus and Mary be blessed for it, not because of the evil that might be contained in those judgments but because of the good that has resulted from it for your dear soul.

[Sundry Counsels]

Don't be astonished, dear son, that your heart is sometimes invaded by sadness. This is because of your illness and no serious evils will result. I have often remarked this phenomenon in many persons who were naturally very jolly and gay. As soon as they were cured of their indisposition, their gaiety returned. Another occasion for your sadness is your present situation. You need distraction. That is why I decided to take you with me in my travels. Moreover, when you are with us we shall do our best to provide distraction for you....

Remain [with your family] as you have promised until Passion Week, and come to us after that. You realize we can't do without you on Palm Sunday. How can we find chanters for the Passion if you aren't there? I also think you would become bored if you were to stay longer. Here we
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

shall try to distract you and this is easier here than where you are. . . .

I am angry with you because you are afraid you are bothering me. Does a child bother and importune his mother when he embraces her? Now it is only in such a way that you bother me when you tell me about what concerns your soul.

Your love for your mother is of a more sensitive nature than your love of Jesus. The reason is that you see her with your senses and you hadn't seen her for a long time. But your love for her is not, nor should it be, as strong in reality as your love for Jesus, nor should you prefer her to the love of Jesus.

Be always prepared from the bottom of your heart to sacrifice your natural love as soon as your love for Jesus requires it and in any circumstance. Don't worry about the rest. . . .

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Rejoice that you are able to suffer something for Jesus. In your loneliness, throw yourself into the arms of Mary.

Letter Eight Rome, August 4, 1846 Vol. 8, p. 205

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

Your letter arrived here eight days after you mailed it. I reply now when in all probability you have already made use of [the curative waters of] Eaux-Bonnes.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

[Rejoice That You Have Something to Suffer]

Poor son! Your sensitive soul is made for the cross. It is true, you will always have to suffer as long as you are in this world but you know that at the end there is the heavenly glory. The cross is the shortest and straightest way to that goal. It is Jacob's ladder on which the angels of the earth—the children of God—must ascend to their Heavenly Father, and where angels of Heaven descend to lend their help to their earthly brothers, in the painful labor of ascent. Dull souls who seem to have no other sensations than those of animals, have no pains in this world. Nothing annoys or pains them as long as they have fodder. Must we envy their lot? We should envy them as little and perhaps even less than we should envy the lot of beasts.

Rejoice, then, in the midst of your sufferings of mind and heart. You should perhaps have more reason for grieving if you did not have those sufferings than now that you have them. We are not here in a lasting city. All things pass away, they pass with the rapidity of lightning. Blessed are those who suffer. They will not cling to this fleeting world and will constantly tend to a world that does not pass, the heavenly father-land where Jesus expects us with the radiating glory of His sacred Cross.

[Throw Yourself in the Arms of Mary]

Your sensibility is certainly a gift of God and at the same time a source of pains of body and mind. God's love for us is the reason why He makes us pass through that crucible. I wish I could have been with you to encourage and sustain you in your moments of grief. But no! Jesus wishes you to be alone with Him for a few days. He wants to be your only Consoler. Be patient, gentle, humble and peaceful in His presence. When you experience feelings of
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sadness, throw yourself like a child in Mary’s arms. It is our glory to belong to Jesus crucified, to be the child of the Heart of Mary which was constantly pierced by the sword of sorrow. It is our glory to be children of sorrow.

The thing that grieves me most is to see you alone. But I feel certain that the good Lord Jesus will give you courage and that Mary will be with you. Try therefore to keep yourself occupied without tiring yourself out. Vary your occupation and interrupt it with walks and distractions. Avoid anxiety about your health. If you are getting better, blessed be God. If things do not improve, let us also bless the Lord. Remember also that, most of the time, the effect of the waters does not show itself immediately.

Put your lot into the hands of Mary, be with her like a little child with his mother. If he is hurt, he immediately goes and shows the wound to his mother. He is much less occupied with being healed than with the desire of showing his pain to his mother in order that she may pity him and caress him. The mother caresses him and dresses his wound, and the little one, without worrying about his cure, is contented and tranquil. His mother gives him a kiss. She says a loving word to him and he is satisfied. Remain in that way with your good Mother and suffer with love all that Jesus is pleased to let you suffer.

As regards myself, I am in very good health in the midst of the most intense heat. Nothing is wanting except La Neuville. We shall get there also, please God. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere and son. Write me often.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

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The miraculous cure obtained through Mary should serve to sanctify your soul. Do not lose your simplicity in the midst of all the curiosity you are causing.

Letter Nine  La Neuville, November 28, 1846  Vol. 8, p. 357

Beloved Confrere:

Our joy and our consolation is very great. Your second letter, which has just arrived, confirms more and more the grace God has given you. I feel sure that that exterior grace of the first rank which God has granted you through the hands of his most holy Mother, who is also ours, will have its repercussions in the depths of your soul. That miraculous cure [of your throat] is a grace of the first rank, which is given to produce the sanctification of your soul. I know that in this circumstance God has merciful intentions for others, but you come first and have the first share in His favors. That grace, therefore, will resound in your soul and make you a holy child of Mary. Your words show me that you have the determination to serve God better than ever. It is Mary who will guide you and, I hope, she will make you perfectly pleasing in His eyes. She has restored to you the use of your voice in order that you may please Him. I don’t doubt that she is speaking loudly in your heart.

I see in your letter what I had expected. Everybody wishes to see you and hear you speak. It’s hard for you to refuse to satisfy the pious curiosity of those good people. Be on your guard, however, and don’t allow their importunities to lead to the dissipation of your own piety. Proceed with

1For the story of this cure see Libermann, *Letters to Religious Sisters and Aspirants*, Pittsburgh 1962, p. 52.
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simplicity, for you know, dear child of the Heart of Mary, that simplicity is pleasing to Mary. She should be your inheritance. At the same time, and while acting with gentle and kind simplicity, try to preserve moderation and peace. Keep your soul gentle and peaceful in order that the grace and favor you have received from God may produce in you the sanctification which God's goodness intends to impart through it...

Adieu, dear confere.

Entirely yours in the most lovable and merciful Heart of Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Shortly after his cure, Father Blanpin suddenly underwent a great change. Hitherto as simple and unassuming as a child, he now wanted to be independent and his own master. This changed disposition, coupled with his extreme sensitivity, made him suspicious of Father Libermann and resent authority. As soon as he had sailed again for Reunion, Libermann wrote him a letter in which he pointed out the dangers of uncontrolled sensitivity.

Letter Ten Amiens, October 22, 1847 Vol. 9, p. 294

Dear Confrere:

It was with a heavy heart that I assisted at your departure. I returned with your good mother, she with tears in her eyes and I, silent, because it grieved me to see you leave with sorrow in your heart. And if I was saddened before, so also seeing you agitated, I was anxious at the thought that
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you were sailing with grief in your soul. What a sad voyage you must have made! . . . Your letter written on the high seas seems to bear marks of that sorrow. A letter of Father Jerome reassured me a little. For he told me that you were full of charity and kindness toward the others. That showed that you were regaining your cheerfulness. Well, I have placed you in the hands of Our Lady.

It is my hope that once arrived in Bourbon, your sorrow will have gone. According to the letters I have received from Father Le Vavasseur, he was impatiently waiting for you and eagerly longed for your arrival. That gives me hopes that he will act toward you in a way to please you. On your part, I feel sure that you will do all you can to control yourself in painful moments. It is my opinion that from now on your life will have its burden of sufferings. Your natural sensitiveness will always cause you some trouble, but that sensitiveness, so often and so easily bruised, is a source of holiness for you. I feel sure that with the help of our good Mother you will profit by it. Recall our conversations on that subject.

[The Dangers of Excessive Sensitivity]

Excessive sensitiveness brings about sadness and irritation. It would be dangerous in others, but you are a privileged child of Mary. Those who have character like yours usually come out even or double. It can lead to the highest sanctity but sometimes it prompts a person to lose everything. The bad feature about such a character is that emotional impressions run ahead of reason. They are violent, painful, crucifying; they generate sadness; they arouse the person not only against the object that caused the impression, but create a disposition of great irritability.

Moreover, those impressions excite the imagination of such persons carrying it away and giving it an extraordinary
LETTERS TO FATHER CHARLES BLANPIN

effervescence. That is very bad, but even worse is the fact that the sensitiveness arouses the imagination and that the latter, in its turn, increases the sensitivity. Not only do such persons then suffer a heartbreak and moral evil, but there are rash and unreasonable judgments, great exaggerations, judgments against both persons and things and consequently powerful illusions.

Since self-love dwells in us, as soon as such impressions occur, this self-love is aroused. It becomes a partner in the disturbance, takes the lead and direction of the entire revolt and upsets everything in the end. Self-love increases the illusions, makes the irritation unbending and vivid. From this, finally, follow chronic irritations, positive repugnances and calculated opposition.

This, my dear friend, is the portrait I sometimes paint to myself of what is taking place in you, at least in part. It would give me anxiety if it concerned anyone else, for such a condition can have dire consequences when the person is not very faithful to grace. But Mary is with you and it is not possible that you will fall. You may, of course, become guilty of a passing infidelity, but these do not lead to those evil consequences.

[I Myself Am Also Very Sensitive]

There have been moments lately when I myself was [excessively] pained, namely, at the time when your agitation was most severe. I consider it my duty, dear friend, to accuse myself before you as of a very great fault though I have already confessed it in the sacred tribunal as soon as I had returned from Paris. I hope that God has pardoned me.

I have the more reason for being sorry because of that excessive sensibility that was so unreasonable on my part, for I fear it took place because your bruised sensitivity—which your heart was unable to control—was directed against me.
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Those phantoms of suspicion that came over and over again before your harassed imagination pictured me to your eyes in ways that horrified me. I have my moments of weakness. You should pardon me for them; they did not last long.

I already suffered when I saw the gradual diminution of your friendship for me. This made me desolate, for I assure you that I loved you with all my heart and as always in spite of all that. I sorrowed later and suffered inexpressible pains, seeing that you had conceived suspicions in my regard, but I was never irritated. For I have this advantage over you that, though being as sensitive to moral pains as you are, I experience no irritation or disturbance in the imagination . . . .

In any case, forget all that, I beg of you. I would have asked you to do this a long time ago, but I felt great sorrow for having afflicted your heart perhaps on account of a certain self-love. But God, I trust, has pardoned me and you also.

I saw your good mother toward the end of the holidays. I saw her at Aire. She is at peace, leaving aside the small annoyances she suffers in her family. As long as her conscience is at ease, she can bear all sorts of pains . . . .

Adieu, dear confrere. Write to me and tell me how you are doing. Rest assured that I am and always will be

Your most affectionate friend in
Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
Trials and sufferings are to be expected by anyone who wants to share in the work of the Savior.

Letter Eleven    February 20, 1851    Vol. 13, p. 37

Dear Confrere:

I have suffered with you greatly on account of the troubles and contradictions you have had to endure since the departure of good Father Le Vavasseur. How painful those contradictions must have been to you who are so straightforward especially because they were underhand. I have frequently thought of you and said to myself that Mary, our beloved Mother, will lighten those burdens and will not permit you to become discouraged. Well, you are now at the end of your miseries. I feel confident that the good Lord will give you henceforth as much consolation as men have sought to give you pain. That shows us what the life of missionaries is in this world.

Sorrow is their daily bread. God uses it to sanctify them and render them capable of saving souls.

Jesus came into this world to save souls and it is in sorrow that He has engendered all the elect. His servants, who through the designs of His love are associated in that holy and great work, must have a share in His suffering and His ignominy in order that they may have a true share in His work. It is only through sorrow that we can save souls, because Jesus, the great Savior, has not wished to accomplish His work in any other way. Again, the enemy of souls will always cause suffering to those who have come to snatch them away from him in the name of Jesus.

That is why it is a great glory for us to suffer persecution. I have said that I hoped that the good Lord would
console you. But do not fear. In the midst of all those consolations, He will not allow you to be without tribulations, for a servant, a helper of Jesus cannot be without sufferings. However, those sufferings are repaid a hundredfold by the happiness attached to them for the souls chosen by Jesus and Mary.

You are going to receive a new confrere in the person of little Father François! You will see that he is full of piety, gentleness, energy and that he has all kinds of good qualities that will make him a pleasant and edifying companion. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere. May the peace of Jesus and Mary fill your heart.

Entirely yours in their holy charity,

Francis Libermann, Superior