10. LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

Joseph Marie Lossedat was born at Culnhat, near Clermont, September 24th, 1820. He entered Father Libermann's novitiate as a deacon in 1843 and was ordained a priest the same year. He went to the mission of San Domingo (Haiti) in 1844. When this mission failed, he went to Africa in 1845. Forced to return to France by illness in 1853, he spent two years in Europe before being reappointed to Africa. After laboring for thirty years in Goree and Dakar, he returned again to France and died at Chevilly on May 30th, 1887.

265

Libermann's letter of encouragement to two deacons of the Seminary of Montferrand who wanted to join his congregation.

Letter One La Neuville, February 12, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 106

J. M. J.

To my beloved brothers Lossedat and Thévaux, greetings, peace and blessing in Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Sovereign Master, and in Mary, our good mother.

[Do Not Try To Bargain with God]

I rejoice with my whole heart, dear confreres, because our Lord Jesus Christ has deigned to inspire you with such good sentiments and prompt the desire to work for the salvation of the most abandoned souls. It is my hope that He will fulfill His holy designs in your regard, will give you the strength to accomplish His holy will in everything, and make you reach the perfection of the apostolic spirit.

299
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

It is not a small matter to attain to the spirit that is necessary for so great and beautiful a vocation. Endeavor to die to yourselves and to all that is earthly, and to give yourselves entirely to our divine Master, and He will give you the grace of attaining at least in part to the holiness of your vocation. Don't go half-way but surrender completely. When we bargain with Him, we must expect Him to do likewise and we shall gain nothing by it. If, on the contrary, we act with generosity and surrender completely to Him, Jesus accepts our offering with the fullness of His divine love and complacency and He gives Himself also completely to us.

[Expect Crosses If You Wish to be True Missionaries]

If you wish to be perfect missionaries, you must be ready to live by privations, troubles, humiliations and crosses of every sort. Recall constantly that Saint Paul, wishing to prove that he was just as much an apostle as Saint Peter, Saint John and the others, gave as a major proof that he had suffered so much in labors for the glory of His Master. Henceforth, then, you must devote yourselves to suffer all pains, humiliations and troubles in the peace and joy of God's love. You must consider yourselves victims chosen by Our Lord to be sacrificed for the greater glory of His heavenly Father.

Maintain your souls in a state of perpetual peace in the presence of the Sovereign Priest who has to immolate you. Let not your will resist at any time when there is question of suffering. Be like motionless victims, bound and shackled before Him, and allow that divine Priest to do absolutely everything that is pleasing to His heavenly Father.

At present, you have but little suffering because the time of your apostolate has not yet arrived, but the time will come. You will have to tear yourselves away from your parents
and will meet with other small pains. Accept them in the meantime as an investment for the future. What you must do at present is to lose sight of your self-interest, your well-being, satisfaction and pleasure. Live like Jesus when He was on earth. He did not satisfy Himself; He never sought Himself, His own glory or greatness. He acted as if He had no personal interests. All He wished was to be immolated to the glory of His Father. That must be your life also.

As regards the realization of such a life, for the present you must be satisfied with desires. However, even now you can and must try to forget yourselves, to accept lovingly all the troubles that come your way and those little sufferings which are never wanting. Lead a humble, gentle, peaceful life. Forget yourself and let others forget you. From now on no one should be able to offend you any more, for you have put all your interest into the hands of your Master. You have no more personal interests; only the interests of your Master ought to concern you.

[Be Gentle and Humble]

Be gentle toward everybody. Accustom yourself to the practice of gentleness. It is a perfect virtue and is acquired perfectly only at the expense of all our natural affections and interests. Accustom yourselves to preserve in your souls a peace that is full of gentleness and humility. Don’t worry or become anxious at the sight of your faults or anything else. When you see something in you that is faulty, humble yourselves in all peace before Jesus your Master. Get the habit of remaining in your lowliness and poverty in the presence of the divine Master, knowing well that you have nothing in yourselves that is worth anything. Live in peace and humility of heart before Him, with firm confidence that He will not abandon you in your wretchedness.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Never consider yourselves to be worth anything. Even in the midst of the greatest blessings, preserve your spirit of poverty. Whenever your thoughts turn toward yourselves, let it be to behold how poor you are. Do this with gentleness and confidence in God. Never appear before Our Lord except in an attitude and spirit of lowliness and of peaceful surrender to His divine goodness, with full confidence and humble love.

[Realize That You are Not Sacrificing Very Much]

Get the habit of directing your souls to God with a peaceful and gentle movement of the heart, but let it always be accompanied with a realization of your littleness, incapacity and worthlessness. At the same time, desire to sacrifice everything, yourselves included, to His love. If you have all those sentiments, and even if some day you will have the happiness of sacrificing yourselves entirely, say to yourselves that you have merely given to God all that belongs to Him and that your sacrifice did not amount to very much.

Don’t imagine that you are doing great things by giving yourselves entirely to God, for all its happiness is for yourselves. All the glory ought to be for God; and the humiliation, oblivion and confusion for you. What advantage accrues to the Most Holy Trinity to have one more little worm? What favor are we doing to Him by giving Him a nothingness which belongs to Him even before we think of it? Woe to us if we do not belong to Him, for we refuse Him what is His. Poor miserable creatures that we are! We imagine that we are doing admirable things, when our God of mercy grants us the supreme happiness of being chosen to belong to Him. We dare believe that we are giving something as soon as we have merely the desire to sacrifice ourselves for Him.
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[Jesus Has Chosen You to be His Willing Victims]

Esteem yourselves very fortunate, therefore, my dear confreres, because Jesus, the King of heaven and earth, has chosen you for His victims. You are not doing anything to raise you in honor and glory. The glory belongs to Him and your role is to remain in your nothingness before Him, full of admiration because He has deigned to cast His eyes on you and consider your poverty.

O chosen vessels! If you are faithful, Jesus will use you for the salvation of many. But He will sacrifice you. He will teach you how you must suffer for His glory. Be faithful, therefore, and follow every impulse which Jesus wishes to give to your souls. Live by Him and in Him, keeping in mind your poverty, nothingness and incapacity. Don’t say: “I am going to save many souls.” It is Jesus who will decide that. He is the Lord who can at will foster His glory by means of the poorest instrument as well as by the richest. His Father made out of nothing this whole beautiful universe and the creatures of heaven. If nothingness has been the starting point for such a magnificence, a poor man can also serve as His instrument for the diffusion of His grace. However, it is He who will do it and not you. Say rather: “I will be a poor man before Jesus, in order that He may do with me and in me everything He wants. I will be docile, humble and abandoned to His hands, full of confidence, in order that He may do everything He wishes.”

The nothing, you see, did not resist the Creator. We are more wretched than nothingness, for we constantly resist Him. What an admirable thing this is that Jesus deigns even now to occupy Himself with us! It is a great thing for us to be perfectly docile to Him and never to resist Him in anything. There isn’t one saint in Heaven who never resisted Him in anything. Mary alone has that glory. That is why she is the supreme wonder. At least, try to resist as
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

little as you can; be docile and pliable, in order that He may fit you for His great work and use you afterwards according to His good pleasure.

[Summary]

I am quite lengthy. Well, if you learn by it the three things I wished to inculcate, the pain you took in reading this long letter will be well rewarded: 1. Forget your own interests and love suffering; submit to the divine will in all trials. 2. Constantly humble yourselves in Our Lord's presence; preserve a low opinion of yourselves and realize your incapacity and nullity; humble yourselves peacefully and quietly and be at the same time full of confidence and love. 3. Live an interior life, abandon yourselves to Our Lord. Do all that without contention, without violent and sensible efforts.

I pray our divine Master to fulfill all these things in your souls and I am, in His holy love and that of His most holy Mother,

Your most poor servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN

266

Gently endeavor to overcome the resistance which your parents offer to your departure.

Letter Two La Neuville, August 13, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 306

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

[Jesus Too Had to Leave His Mother When He Went to Preach]

Your letter touched me profoundly. I fully realize the pain you feel and your present embarrassment. Be faithful,
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

give your soul to Jesus and place all your confidence in Him alone and in His most holy Mother. Think of the conduct of the divine Master. He too had to leave His holy Mother to go about preaching and, besides that, to be crucified. It is true that Mary did not oppose His design. On the contrary, she desired to be with Him and make her own sacrifice. Nevertheless, He gives us the example if we wish our souls to be perfect.

It is most difficult and painful to have to offer resistance to persons who are dear to us and to whom we cause sorrow. But when the glory of our Heavenly Father is at stake, we must repeat after our divine Master, “Who is my mother and who are my brethren?”

Try to arrange things as gently as possible in order to soften the pain which your departure will cause your father. You could perhaps tell him that you want to come here at least to consider things better for one year and that, if the good Lord doesn't ask you to go to the missions, you will not go. A year is a long time. It gives time to reflect. Perhaps by proposing things that way, you will pacify him a little.

[Do Not Delay Your Departure]

I don’t think that the short time of vacation will console your father and give him better dispositions, and I see no advantage in your staying with him until the end of the holidays. I urge you to follow the counsel of your director in this respect. Asking many people for advice is not good.

It is a consolation to consider the reasons that are advanced against your vocation, for it shows you that the only obstacles are flesh and blood. If you prolong your stay at home, you may have to engage in more severe battles. A kind of compassion for the sorrows of your family will prompt even some priests to take sides with them, and things will become more difficult for you. The only thing I can say is, follow exactly the advice of Father Gamon. If you do, you
will have peace and assurance. I don’t know your situation well enough. I am too far away to be able to give you detailed advice.

Our novitiate will open on the eighth of September. It is possible that six of our missionaries will have left for Guinea by that time. Or they might still be here; this will be decided this week. We will not forget you in our prayers. You belong to us and share in the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ who must reign among us.

[Sundry Counsels]

I urge you to live in your own home in your usual way, without cutting down your customary activities or acting otherwise than the other members of your family. Acting differently might annoy your parents even more.

Don’t seek, don’t ask [your parents] for the goods of this world. What we need is divine gifts and grace, not earthly goods. Don’t reply to everything that is said against your designs for God’s glory. Let the world express its views. Reply in a non-committal or evasive manner. Turn the conversation to some other topic. Say that it is useless to discuss such matters.

If the pastor or any other person wishes to pay for your journey, accept, for we have presently heavy expenses for our missionaries who are ready to leave.

I put you in the hands of Mary, our good and amiable Mother. I am very busy because I expect the visit of Bishop Barron, the Vicar Apostolic of Guinea, who is going to spend a few days with us. He is on his way.

Adieu, dear confrere.

Your poor servant in Jesus and Mary and in their holy charity,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
Soon after being sent to Haiti, Father Lossedat became ill and experienced strong feelings against the way his superior (Father Tisserant) tried to solve the Haitian schism. Libermann sent him an encouraging and clarifying letter.

Letter Three Amiens, September 17, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 340

Dear Confrere:

[Rejoice That You Have Fully Returned to God]

Well, my dear confrere, your soul has passed through the crucible! Pains and crosses are the portion of those whom God wishes to sanctify. Be faithful, dear friend, and God's goodness will save you and use you for the good of many. You need courage. You say you have grown lax. This doesn't surprise me, although my heart grieves over it. You have fallen under the influence of a climate that is quite new for you; it has affected your temperament and brought about that evil effect.

You have had yellow fever in your body before becoming acclimatized to that country; and your soul has passed through the fever of laxness, interior pains, anxieties, bitterness, and distrust, in order that you might become firmly established in virtue, acclimatized in holy humility and self-renunciation in the midst of your apostolic labors. Rejoice because you have now fully returned to God and His divine service. Adjust yourself to the situation of things in that country, I mean, sanctify yourself in the midst of all the evil that surrounds you.

[Avoid Prejudices Against Your Superior]

I have noticed in your letter that peace reigns in your soul. Try to preserve it, and guard against possible trouble
and agitation. It was probably the want of confidence in Father Tisserant that lay at the source of the evil from which you have suffered. This want of confidence usually prompts judgments about the conduct and the intentions of others; and these foster a spirit of opposition. I shall speak of all this to our dear confrere and shall then be better able to advise you. In the meanwhile, remain in peace. Discard your prejudices against him. Don't fret over that. What is past is past.

Several of our confreres have experienced that temptation in my regard. They are now totally cured of it. At the moment of temptation, we judge things improperly, we see everything upside down. After a while the mind becomes more calm; feelings of opposition cease; the soul returns to peace and our prejudices disappear.

I am sorry you didn't tell me positively what was the object of your prejudice, I mean what was the imprudence you reproached him with. I should then have understood things better. But no matter, calm yourself and put everything into the hands of the divine Master. It is possible that what caused the trouble was a certain natural ardor or a too lively desire to do good, a certain impatience in procuring it. Seeing the obstacles Father Tisserant refused to remove, you began judging him. If we want to accomplish true good, we must practice heroic patience. A premature ardor causes the loss of everything.

Secondly, you saw around you frightening moral evils and your soul was saddened by that sight. It was overwhelmed, became discouraged, yielded to trouble, to anxiety and irritation. This interior irritation coupled with those feelings may have inspired sentiments of opposition and distrust. Then there were your relations with the persons you mention who were not favorably disposed toward Father Tisserant. . . .
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[Supersiors Can Err, But That Does Not Entitle You to Go Your Own Way]

Suppose even that Father Tisserant’s conduct was reprehensible, you should express your opinion in a peaceful way and then leave things alone. You can’t be sure that you are right and he is wrong. But you have a certitude of faith that you are doing right by obeying. Suppose you are certain that he errs, it is not certain even then that God doesn’t wish to bless his way of acting. You have seen that his work has actually been blessed for, in spite of all obstacles, he has been accepted.

Remember that in order to succeed in an enterprise several means can be employed. If the means you conceive or those suggested by others are good, those chosen by Father Tisserant could also be good. Yours may be better, but those of Father Tisserant could also be successful. We should realize that in a mission as difficult as that of Haiti, it is necessary to count on God alone. This, I feel sure, is what Father Tisserant is doing. Of course, he can make a mistake: God will make up for it. It does not belong to an inferior to correct the conduct of the superior. You will see, dear confrere, how God’s blessing will be on you, if you are well united together.

You are both in a difficult situation. It is impossible for Father Tisserant to follow all our sentiments and opinions. There are as many opinions as there are men. Every man must act “according to the wisdom he has been given.” Father Tisserant will have to answer before God for the mission; he must act according to what he believes is right before God.

The lack of agreement must have done harm. But don’t worry, dear confrere; you had to pass through your apprenticeship. One always spends such a time more or less at one’s own expense. Your apprenticeship has not cost you much; your sickness has remedied everything. If I tell you all this,
it is not because I wish to convince you, but to put you on
your guard.

[Be Gentle and Patient with Sinners]

Avoid being bitter with sinners. Expand your soul when
you meet with sinners. To become angry at the sight of their
most abominable sins is absolutely contrary to the conduct of
Our Lord. You know well that He reproved this conduct of
the Jews. Our zeal must be gentle and full of patience, kind-
ness and compassion. It is in this alone that the apostolic
spirit is found.

Be full of deference for the priests who are not doing
their duty. You should try to win them and not become em-
bittered against them. When we become displeased, we merit
God’s punishment. What would we do if God’s goodness did
not overwhelm us with graces? Be gentle toward sinners,
gentle toward yourself, humble and peaceful in God’s pres-
ence, patient amidst all the evils that surround you. You will
see, God will help you.

I fear that you might be a little discouraged on account
of the difficulties. Don’t be too much in a hurry to accom-
plish good. Patience is of the highest importance in apostolic
works. When we are in a hurry we necessarily get discour-
aged, for we always experience great obstacles.

Adieu, my dear confrere. Be strong. Wait for the return
of Father Tisserant and the confreres he will take with him.
This will be better than all the reflections I make to you.

Entirely yours in the holy Heart of Mary.

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

268

Encouragement of an isolated missionary in an extremely difficult situation.

Letter Four  La Neuville, November 7, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 409

Dear confrere:

[In Your Isolation, Let Christ be Your Strength]

I am eager to write to you, for it is such a long time since you received news from us and you must be worried. I am overwhelmed with work, but I cannot leave you without news.

Have courage, dear confrere. God's goodness is trying us; but it lifts us up, strengthens us and will never abandon us. Good Father Tisserant has just suffered a very dangerous illness, but he is now out of danger. . . . It hurts me to see you alone for so long a time. Mary strengthens you and encourages you! Yes, indeed, a victim should not consider its own interests any more, but be courageous. "The Lord is my strength," this should be your motto. Courage then, my friend, Jesus and Mary are with you. The more pain and crosses you have at the present, the more you can count on consolations at a later time when you will reap the fruits of your labor.

[Apostolic Beginnings are Always Difficult]

Don't judge matters according to the actual conditions of things. All beginnings are difficult and offer little foundation for hope. When the apostles began their preaching in Jerusalem, the situation seemed desperate: the priests and the mighty ones resisted them; it looked as everything would fall into ruins; the Christians were dispersed. Nevertheless, they
did not lose their apostolic vigor. By and by they began once more, and then they met with wonderful success. O my beloved confrere, be an apostle! It is not by fiery zeal that everything must be gained. We must join to it patience, gentleness, constancy and fidelity in remaining humble and loving in God's presence, in the midst of pains, resistance and contradiction. Apostolic longanimity is a powerful weapon for the salvation of souls. It is hard; we have to be perfect victims in order to practice it perfectly. Be such a victim; put your confidence in Jesus and Mary. That patience, that constancy and longanimity guarantee that the source of our zeal is in God. Avoid agitation, dear friend, do not indulge in animosity against those who contradict you and against great sinners, and you will act according to the Spirit of God. Everytime you experience excitement of mind and agitation in yourself, distrust it, restore calm, and bring your soul back to Our Lord.

Be full of confidence. God's goodness will not abandon you. You will see before long that good will be accomplished in Haiti. Don't base yourself on the present condition of things and the present dispositions of the inhabitants. With God's help everything will change for the better. You will see piety revived in a great number, and order re-established. The Haitian government will be consolidated little by little and peace will return. Some bad individuals will squawk here and there; but they will have little influence; religion will recover its lustre.

**[Avoid Becoming Involved in Politics]**

Moreover, if troubles begin again, a thing which I hope will not come to pass, this will not prevent you from doing great good. Avoid mixing into political affairs. "Let the dead bury their dead," that is, let the men of the world busy themselves with worldly affairs. Try in all your re-
lations to calm the minds. Take no sides in agitations that may take place. Content yourself with your ministry. Save souls; bring them the happiness of God’s grace and establish them in virtue and piety, as much as depends on you. If you cannot do all the good you would like to do, be patient and wait until God’s moment has come. It will come, my dear friend; this is sure; and it may not be far off....

Here everybody is well. ... I would like to have you here for the dedication of our chapel which will soon be finished, ... but we must not seek satisfactions on this miserable earth. Crosses and pains are things through which we save souls. We shall think of you on that day....

Adieu, my dear confrere.

Entirely yours in the holy love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

269

Do not become discouraged. Tolerate anything rather than preventing the appointment of a bishop by antagonizing anyone.

Letter Five {November 27, 1844} Vol. 6, p. 455

Dear Confrere:

[Do Not Become Discouraged]

The news you sent me about Haiti doesn’t worry me. Be more and more convinced that if we want to do good we must expect to meet all sorts of opposition. I feel certain that good will be accomplished in Haiti. Don’t yield to discouragement; be patient and you’ll see that God’s mercy will shine
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

upon that country that is ruined by bad priests. At present you aren't doing anything remarkable. You cannot do much because you are alone, but you are preparing the terrain. Be patient therefore. Wait peacefully for God's own moment which is not far off. . . . In six weeks time I hope to be able to send you a confrere. . . .

[Tolerate Anything Rather Than Preventing the Appointment of a Bishop]

Be very moderate, I beg you, dear confrere. Don't cause any rows. If you can manage things in such a way that a bishop can be appointed in Haiti, the country will be saved. But if you anger people, if you act in a way that arouses suspicion, you will estrange them and retard or prevent perhaps forever the appointment of a bishop. What an evil that would be! Tolerate any kind of abuse rather than putting obstacles in the way of the nomination of a bishop. I take the responsibility for any fault that, you fear, may result from acting with gentleness and moderation.

That is all right now. I returned to Paris with a violent migraine and a bad head cold. I don't know how I have been able to gather my wits enough to write you this letter!

Adieu, dear confrere. I don't forget you. Remember always that you must be a victim immolated to the glory of God. A victim does not get angry; a victim does not become impatient. Do you hear that? You laugh no doubt, but since I see you in such good humor, I want to add: a victim never gets discouraged. Be humble and peaceful in God's presence and before Mary.

Entirely yours in the charity of the most holy Heart of our good Mother,

Francis Libermann

priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

1At the time Haiti was in schism and the last refuge of ecclesiastical misfits.
Reinforcements are coming. The work of an apostle resembles that of a farmer.

Letter Six  Orphanage, December 15, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 484

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

[Reinforcements Will Soon Arrive]

I write just a couple of words, for I want my letter to leave by the next boat and give you the consoling news as soon as possible. You will soon see the arrival of Father [George] Paddington and of one of our most fervent novices, a man who will rejoice your heart. I can’t send Father Thévaux yet but hope to be able to do so a little later. He is all afire with the desire to go to Haiti. The name of the novice is Father [Maurice] Bouchet, who was the most fervent seminarian of Saint Sulpice at one time. Are you pleased? You smile! But this isn’t all. If possible we shall send you two others and perhaps even three...

Well, does this renew your courage? Why get discouraged at the sight of the difficulties and yield to thoughts of despair regarding the salvation of a country, because you have not yet been able to do anything for it. My dear friend, the time has not yet come! You and Father Tisserant had merely the task of preparing the terrain. If I were but one short moment with you, I would make fun of you. Look at the great apostle who is all upset! I now dare to laugh at you, because I announce good news which will make you cheerful. If I still noticed a knitted brow, I would take a more serious tone.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

[An Apostle Labors in Sorrows Before the Harvest Comes]

Allow me to make a comparison to show you that you have done wrong in yielding to the temptation [of discouragement]. The farmer who cultivates his field during the winter does the hardest work of the year. He perspires and gets tired without seeing any fruit of his labors. The soil is black and rough and there is not one blade of green in sight. This is the situation in which you are at present. Have courage and patience! God's hand will not be shortened in Haiti. All the considerations that trouble you are worthless. It is from the almighty power of God and your fidelity to grace that you must expect everything, and not from the political measures taken by the Government.

When Spring comes along, the farmer sees but little green; he waits with patience. The grass grows a little; then bad weeds mingle with the crop and give him a lot more trouble and pain. This time will come a little later for you. Don't be afraid, the time for the harvest will come. Have courage, patience and pray! Calm yourself! When the confreres have joined you the dangers you now fear will disappear and your soul will enjoy peace.

Be faithful; God knew that you would have to suffer. It is not in vain that He gave you the desire to sacrifice yourself for His glory. Well! This is what is beginning to come about. But be convinced that this is the "beginning of sorrows." Remember, dear friends, that no good is ever produced without great sorrows. It is necessary to tear up the soil to make it produce fruits. You are now all "torn up"; soon you will produce, but you will realize that it is not you, but the divine Master alone [who produces fruitfulness]. You will then have greater confidence in Him and will not count on your own efforts.

Remain in peace. You have merely to obey and try to do good. I hope to be able to write to you at length on this
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

subject and the conduct you should adopt toward the inhabitants of Haiti . . . I cannot write more, for I haven't any paper. I am obliged to use this ugly sheet, for I cannot find anything else here and everybody is at the High Mass of the orphans.

Entirely yours,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

Encouragement in a difficult situation. Be flexible. The trials you are undergoing serve to purify your soul.

Letter Seven  'La Neuville, December 27, 1844  Vol. 6, p. 505

Dear Confrere:

It must be a pleasant surprise for you to hear that I’ve changed my mind and am sending you Father Briot instead of Father Bouchet. . . . [He will be sailing on January 2.] Have courage, dear confrere, and the good Lord will help you.

[You Are Like Someone Who Tries to Rescue a Drowning Man]

The poor mission of Haiti resembles a drowning man. Evil men want it to sink deeper and deeper and lose everything. But you, a poor servant of God, are like the person who, seeing the drowning man, runs to his rescue. He comes to the edge of the water but doesn’t dare to jump in, for he is afraid. So he stays at the edge and tries to save the drowning man. He grabs him by the hair. He feels happy to be able to help, but soon tires of holding up the man, for he is unable to draw the poor fellow out of the water. He
hasn't enough strength to pull him out, particularly because the poor fellow is stuck in the mud and the weeds. The rescuer nevertheless prevents him from drowning. For some time he shouts, worries, calls for help, and feels discouraged. He weeps, groans, is ready to abandon the poor man, but what then? The man would be lost, and the good-hearted rescuer would forever bewail the fact that he had lacked courage and had not persevered a little longer until help would arrive.

If on the contrary he has enough courage to wait, he turns this way and that. He adopts different postures to enable him to keep hold of the drowning man. He prays and puts his confidence [in God]. And at long last he gets help and, aided by God's help, they are now able to draw the man out of the water. He is half dead but gradually revives. The poor man so courageously sustained is very tired but he is saved, and the rescuer rejoices and is happy.

[Do Not Hold Too Tenaciously to Your Own Opinions]

Don't be weak, dear friend. Don't lose hold. Put your confidence in God and in the long run your difficulties will disappear. Don't fret so much because of the existing abuses. These can't be cured overnight, for they are inveterate. You must advance step by step. Father Tisserant's authority is not yet sufficiently established to permit him to act energetically. Moreover, his authority is too recent. Be patient. You will see that you will gain ground little by little. After all, from now on you will have confreres with you, and they are good. This will give you great help in your personal difficulties. . . .

I assure you that if I were in your place, I would content myself with expressing my opinion peacefully and would then follow the opinion of others rather than my own, if mine did not seem right. On the other hand, I beg you, don't worry about the past; be calm and peaceful . . .
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[The Trials You are Passing Through Serve to Purify Your Soul]

If you worry much about the past, you will let interior troubles get hold of you and lead you to discouragement. Let Our Lord act and remain in repose. Don’t be astonished that you have had temptations. They were necessary to educate you in a solid apostolic spirit. It would have been impossible for you not to be tempted. You will see, dear confrere, that good will result from it for your soul. I have never known any soul that was solidly established in the love of God that did not first pass through the kind of pains you have experienced.

Be convinced that the moral disorders in Haiti and the conduct of Father Tisserant were merely an occasion. What can we do? We are but poor fellows, full of pride and imperfections. There is a time in the spiritual life when we all must pass through the trials you have suffered and which, I hope, are coming to an end. Peace comes after that and we are then little by little settled in solid piety. Feel reassured about your past and present conditions.

Aim at profiting by it to remain in your poverty in God’s presence. Learn little by little to be gentle and humble of heart. It is in this alone that you will find rest.

I am sure that if you had been here, you would have felt the same afflictions and the same distrust. Don’t imagine that they were caused by the conduct of Father Tisserant. They spring from your own nature and the condition of your soul. The soul passes through various states before it reaches perfection. You were, and perhaps are even now, somewhat in the state in which God purifies you more and more. Don’t you know that when someone sweeps a chimney, he scrapes it very strongly and tears off pieces from it because of his violent strokes. Our souls are black like chimneys. They need cleaning. You have undergone a strong cleaning and
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

this doesn't frighten me. On the contrary, it will all be to the
good; when you recover peace you will be the more humble
and devoted to God.

This is very consoling for you. God has purified you
through pain, anxiety, agitation, and temptations. He always
acts in this way. Why? "In order that we may bear more
fruit."

You may have committed certain faults—this always
happens in that sort of trial—but our good Master knows
how to appreciate your good will which belonged to Him
alone. Recall the parable of the vine which expresses so
well what I had wished to say. The bad branch is cast off,
the vinedresser puts it away and leaves it alone. This is the
condition of a number of bad priests whom God suffers with-
out grieving them. They are running to their perdition. But
regarding the other, the good branch, Our Lord says: "The
Father will purge it." This shows you what God's goodness
expects from you. Let him cut and fashion you. Entrust
yourself to God and try to become more and more attached
to Him. Despise all those little miseries that occur in your
soul, and place yourself humbly at the feet of Our Lord in
order that He may crush you as much as He wishes.

Have courage, dear friend. You have enough interior
pains and troubles. Lift up your soul. It is not an evil, be
sure of that. It was necessary for you to pass through that
trial. Once more, if you had been here, the good Lord
would have made me the object of your trouble. It is my-
self you would have distrusted. For these things are not
founded on reason. You merely undergo a trial, a state
through which your soul must pass.

I have seen absolutely the same kind of trials and even
stronger ones in chosen souls which, after passing through
all that foolishness, are doing wonders for souls. Have
courage then, dear confrere. All that has happened in you

320
should be a reason for hope. Hence don't look upon your sentiments in regard to Father Tisserant as something serious and rational. Look upon them as temptations and pay no attention to them. Henceforth you will not always be with him and your trouble will disappear by and by. You will no longer go to confession to him nor have him any more for your director. You now have Father Briot; this will be already a great relief and a great means to get rid of all those miseries. Those miseries are nothing; you will shed them and work for the glory of God.

We have painful news and also good news . . . . Father Briot will tell you about everything and the hopes we have. I leave you now, for it is time. You can't imagine how overwhelmed I am with work at the present moment.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMAN
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

272

When, after the failure of the mission in Haiti, Father Lossedat was transferred to Africa, Francis Libermann wrote him an encouraging letter, warning him at the same time to expect more crosses.

Letter Eight February 1, 1846 Vol. 8, p. 70

Dear Confrere:

[The Great Things Which Our Lord Expects from You Demand Perfect Generosity]

Well, you have reached port safely! God's goodness has preserved you and you are destined to do great things for His
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

glory. I am not joking but very serious: you have to do great things for the God of goodness. We must remember well that we won’t do great things if we seek earthly satisfactions. We need courage, ardor and perseverance, and we will then overcome all obstacles. I have known since we became first acquainted and have often repeated it to you: never forget that your life should be a life of sacrifice and sorrow. It is almost metaphysically impossible for you to sanctify yourself and save others without complete generosity, for, considering your character and the vocation God has given you, you will necessarily suffer heavy crosses. At the same time, however, your character will enable you to achieve much good if you are faithful in bearing your crosses properly.

It is well to note what usually happens in this matter. All whom God calls to do considerable and lasting good are also called to suffer great trials. Their own character is at least partially responsible for this. That’s why you must expect pains and trials and thank our good Master for them. If He crucifies you, know that it is for the salvation of others. However, you will be the first to draw profit from it if you are faithful.

[Guard Against Discouragement and Emotional Outbursts]

You should be on your guard against discouragement and those sudden outbursts. If you overcome yourself on these two points, I answer for the rest. You are in danger of committing those two faults because of your excessive sensitivity, irritability and quickness of character. If you overcome yourself in this, all the energy of your soul will tend to good. Be on your guard against first impressions. They are the ones producing that discouragement and those outbursts.
In all probability you have felt one of those emotions from the moment of your arrival at Goree. Don’t let it control you. No doubt, the people you have to deal with are crude and hard to handle. But this precisely is our reason for going to them. We must sacrifice ourselves for God’s glory. We will overcome all obstacles if we practice patience. Patience, animated by confidence in God, is a great and admirable virtue.

Be brave, dear confre, in doing two things. First, arrest the emotion either of repugnance or excitement from the very start. Secondly, be patient and suffer pains and difficulties. I feel certain that if you have the courage to practice those two things, you will be an instrument in God’s hands for the salvation of a great many souls. Everything depends on that. You have in you everything that is needed to be an excellent missionary. It is that twofold courage you should try to acquire. All the particular virtues for your own sanctification, all the virtues related to community life for the good of your confreres, all the apostolic virtues for the salvation of souls, depend on your courage. It is therefore your big affair to acquire that courage. All the pains you may have to endure are not too high a price to pay for it. How great is my wish to be with you for one year to help you in that arduous task! But our good Mother will do this better than I . . . .

Adieu, dear confre. Belong entirely to our good Lord.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann

323
In this masterful letter Father Libermann explains the principles which should guide superiors in their dealings with their subordinates.

Letter Nine April 15, 1846 Vol. 8, p. 109

Dear Confrere:

I wrote to you a few days before I received your letter of March 4th. I think that letter will disappoint you, for you won't realize that I merely replied to the first word you wrote to me before your last letter and you will grieve because I didn't reply to your questions. I know you and you, well, I believe that you know me. So, you realize, dear confrere, that I am very eager to console you in all your troubles and wish to do it as quickly as possible. I would very much want to be with you at least for a whole year, but this is not according to God's wishes. He does not want me in the missions. I would have written to you earlier, but my absence prevented it. . . .

[Confidence in God]

I am well aware of the fact that your mission is a difficult one. Yet it is my opinion that you are exaggerating certain difficulties because of the trouble you are experiencing. Let us put our confidence in God. Don't think that Mary will abandon you. I feel sure that there are grave difficulties which you have not even noticed and which I consider to be most serious. However, they do not frighten me.

Our Lord is with us. With His help we will overcome all obstacles. Let's go on and do what our weakness permits. It belongs to Him to bless our works and He will bless them. It belongs to Him to straighten out our foolish mistakes and He will do it.
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[Divine Providence Makes Allowance for Human Frailties]

We make perfect designs and want those perfect ideals to be executed to the full. That, however, is not and never has been the way of God's providence. God wants all beginnings to be weak and imperfect. He does not want everything to run smoothly from the very start. We must submit to God's will, do things the best we can, and then leave the rest to His care. Hence, I urge you to remain very peaceful about the faults that will be committed. And don't worry when things don't develop according to what you think ought to be done to insure their success.

I feel sure that very often your ideas will be right and true. However, when you get excited about things, when you grieve and are troubled, more evil than good will result. It is proper to the highest wisdom, even mere human wisdom, in such cases to sacrifice a part of one's own views and to do the best you can with the means available. When you see that your confreres don't share your views, even when it is evident that they are not choosing the better course, it is preferable not to cling too much to your own ideas and not to contradict them.

Allow everyone to follow his own ideas and accomplish the good in his own way and encourage them in doing so. This method will make them yield the maximum they can produce. They would have accomplished more if they had had other ideas but that can't be helped. They don't have those ideas. If you try to force them to adopt your own ideas, in general much less good will be accomplished. They will be upset and might even become discouraged.

[Beware of Imposing Your Personal Ideas on Others]

It is difficult to realize the importance of tolerance. We can't expect men to have identical views. When we are intolerant we arrest the good, we are always in trouble, we
deprive ourselves of the necessary rest, discourage others and often discourage ourselves. On the contrary, if we let everyone act according to his personal ideas, according to his character, mentality and his whole make-up, great good will be accomplished.

It is true that many will commit faults and imprudences, but in due time they will get experience and each will perfect himself in his own way. This then is a very important principle and one that is universally applicable: We must always be on our guard against expecting or demanding perfection. It's good for us to know how things should be to attain success. We should know what conduct should be adopted and the best means to attain the best results. But it is even more important to be able to modify our plans, to yield and accommodate ourselves to persons, to things, and to the circumstances in which we are placed.

Feel certain that you'll never be able to execute things according to your wishes. It is a vain ambition to aim at a result that perfectly fulfills what we conceive and desire. It is of the utmost importance to adjust and accommodate ourselves to everything, if we wish to attain success. Otherwise we shall get crushed in our struggle with the difficulties that arise from persons and things.

I know and have always been aware of the fact that you have sound judgment. However, you cling too much to your own views and especially to the method to be used in executing them. You do not know how to be flexible and to adapt yourself to the attitudes of others. You are not sufficiently tolerant regarding their behavior when that is not quite correct or suitable.

[The Evils of Intolerance]

This intolerance contains a threefold evil. The first concerns yourself. It will make you live continually in trouble
and have constant heartbreaks. You know, dear friend, how sorry I am when I see you in trouble. I am eager to remove its cause. Learn, then, to bear the faults of your neighbor. Learn to suffer a job that is only half done, even one that is done badly. If you want to have peace of soul, if you want to be able to accomplish great and important things, you must at all costs learn to practice a certain indifference regarding the ills you are not able to cure. Be convinced, dear confrere, that you will remedy many ills if you learn to suffer them in the manner I have suggested.

The second evil consequence concerns the neighbor. As long as you don’t use the method I have described, you will impede the other’s march, you’ll prevent him from doing all the good he is able to accomplish according to his particular way, especially if he has a weak or narrow mind. You will discourage him and perhaps cause him to commit numerous faults and imprudences.

The third evil consequence affects both yourself and the others. If you become tolerant, if you learn to yield, to bear with others, even to encourage everyone in his way, you will unavoidably acquire a certain influence over their minds. Thus you will do not only the good accomplished by yourself but also be a great help to others. On the contrary, if you can’t remain quiet about the least faults you notice in your confreres, the time will come when you will be almost always in opposition to them, for you’ll almost never find men who are exactly as you want them. As a result, you will not acquire any influence over their minds.

[Encourage Each One to Perfect Himself According to His Own Way of Being]

It is certain that I have a much greater influence over our confreres than you would be able to have. Well, what is the most powerful means which I use to guide them?
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

It consists in tolerating in everyone the faults which I foresee, I shall not be able to eliminate. I sometimes tolerate manners of conduct that are most improper, most crude. I especially leave everyone in his own condition and seek to perfect everyone according to his way of being.

Rest assured that nothing is ever accomplished in such matters through force, contradiction and resistance. Everything, on the contrary, is accomplished, everything is gained by means of encouragement, tolerance, gentleness and calm. I say “everything.” I don’t mean that one succeeds in making others lose their character and their natural way of being, or even the faults inherent in their way of being. However, we gain and obtain everything that can be gained, and we make those who would have been useless under the opposite regime, contribute their share to the good.

Let me take an example. Suppose you wished to make Father Arragon moderate, polite, friendly in his ways, you would be chasing a will-o’-the-wisp. It would be easier to stop the sun in its course. But if you treat him in a friendly fashion, if you let him act according to his character and act toward him in the way I have suggested, you will certainly produce the good effect I have described. If, on the contrary, you yield to vexation of spirit, if you show him displeasure, if you chide and reprove him, you will reap all the bad results I have mentioned.

Leave everyone then in his proper condition and way of being. God made him that way. He is ready to do everything for the good, and you should encourage him. Then each one will do this as it has been given him from above. Hence don’t expect to receive comfort from men. Seek rather to console and encourage others. Remain the master of your own soul and you will be the lord of the whole world. It is in this that the superiority we must possess consists.
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[Disregard Your Own Afflictions]

Have courage! You suffer and will continue to suffer, but those sufferings will cause your soul to expand. Believe me when I say that I suffer and will always suffer as much and probably more than you. At least, I am as sensitive to afflictions as you are, but is this a reason for yielding to discouragement? Never! No, never, with the grace of God! Should we manifest those afflictions to others? Again, no! I will never complain. Be strong and firm against yourself, and you will render great service to God. If you yourself don't learn to suffer, you will always remain below that which God expects of you.

This sums up your whole job: you must be master over yourself, suffer without paying attention to it, offer your sufferings with generosity to God. Bear and sacrifice yourself, and bear the others, in spite of their faults. You love great and beautiful things. Now here surely is a thing most beautiful, it's sublime. Ask for the grace to act in that manner.

I shall do my best to make appointments in a way that will give you peace. I might be able perhaps to arrange things so that you, either alone or in the company of Father Gravière, can explore the coast in view of a new foundation.

In any case, we shall try to arrange things for the best. When Father Gravière is in those parts, he will have greater facility to judge what is most suitable, and he is greatly interested in you.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

Letter Ten

Amiens July 27, 1847

Vol. 9, p. 229

Dear Confrere:

Finally we have received two or three good letters from you. I am pleased and hasten to reply. I shall limit my answer to the last letter, which is most important.

You are wrong, dear confrere, in saying that you made me sad because you desired to come back from Africa, as Father Gravière told me. I was sad in the sense that I pitied you in your afflictions but not in the sense that I was displeased with you.

The state you were in quite naturally made you wish to be with us again in Europe. However, for your own good and that of your work, I judged it better that you should stay. I found it hard to be so "cruel" and let you get bored to death in Goree. But I was unable to do anything else. Your return would have been harmful [for it would have discouraged the others]. Nevertheless, if your illness had obliged you to return, I would have received you with joy and without anxiety. Everybody would have felt that it was a matter of health.

So it was not your wish to return which worried me, but rather your stubborn silence. My last letter still needled you on that subject. I didn't know why you kept silent and thought you were angry with me because I didn't call you back. Now, at long last, I feel happy and I hope that from now on we shall not be without news from you.
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

[Your Forced Inactivity Has Been a Major Cause of Your Troubles]

And now let me speak in detail about the various reasons you mention for your troubles. Your first grief comes from your sickness and inaction. I dare even say that your sickness in all probability was somewhat due to your forced idleness and to the annoyance and boredom resulting from it. . . .

All this must have been for you a source of sorrow, trials and temptations. To a great extent they must have caused your illness and, in turn, your illness must have affected your morale thus aggravating your pains and sorrows. I could think of only one remedy for your trouble. . . . [to let you become active again and] undertake missionary work along the coast. Father Gravière was wrong in not letting you do this from the very beginning.

[An Apostle Should Not be Full of Self-Pity]

I hope that you will feel better from now on. Always, however, expect that you will have to suffer some pain. One who consecrates himself to God in a task as important as yours must expect suffering. Renew and keep your courage then and don't let tribulations cast you down, no matter where they come from.

An apostle is not a child. He is not sorry for himself and full of self-pity. He has learned to forget himself and to meet his afflictions with bowed head. His heart is strong like a rock in regard to his own sorrows, but gentle and tender like a dove toward the evils affecting others.

Recall that Jesus Christ saved the world by the sufferings of the Cross. If you want to be His follower, to be an apostle—and this you do desire—act like Him. Recall that He was very gentle toward those who crucified Him and that He forgot His own sorrows to compassionate the evils
of his mortal enemies. He counseled the women not to weep over Him but over Jerusalem.

[Do Not be Too Much in a Hurry to Accomplish Things]

The second reason for your afflictions was without any foundation. As you know now, [the mission was being reorganized]. You should not want to proceed too rapidly. Things develop slowly, but if you proceed prudently, you will invariably succeed. You can be sure that the most successful procedure is always to advance step by step without trying to hasten things. . . . Let's not run too fast lest we fall flat on our backs. We are on difficult terrain, where we should make one step and advance to the next one only when we have secured a solid footing. It is in this way that we shall advance little by little and whatever we do will be more solid. . . .

[Be Gentle and Tolerant in Dealing with the Authorities]

Regarding the third reason, the troubles arising from difficulties in your relations with government officials, let me give one very important piece of advice. I have always foreseen that one of my major difficulties would be to make the missionaries have pleasant relations with the officers that are on the coast. I'm convinced that it is of the utmost importance for the good of the mission that you be in agreement with those men.

For the most part they are good men but they are inflexible and authoritarian. If you don't handle them with gentleness, they will give you trouble and hinder the good you wish to accomplish. . . .

You should not be surprised when you suffer annoyances on the part of government agents. This is a necessary evil we must bear patiently. If you read the letters of St. Francis
LETTERS TO JOSEPH LOSSEDAT

Xavier you will see that he had to suffer much more from them than you have, even though in his time men were full of faith.

It is amidst such troubles and contradictions that God wants us to do good. We must do all we can to live in proper friendship with those who annoy us; we must be gentle and attentive in our relations with them in order to win them to ourselves. . . .

If, on the contrary, you treat them harshly and openly oppose them, they will not yield. Virtue, piety and prudence don't consist in being on good terms with those who are very kind to us, but in being able to get along with those who are mean toward us. You are all good men, that is sure, but I have no doubt that your own inflexibility has gotten into trouble with those men.

[Never “Declare War” Against the Government]

You say that Captain Brisset is unbending. Of course he is. I can say this without knowing him, because I know that all our army and navy officers are unyielding. The proper way to deal with them consists in never hurting their feelings. Never attack their authority by words, even when they happen to be wrong. And when you have to resist them, when your ministry demands it, act with all prudence and gentleness, taking beforehand every precaution to avoid a conflict with the authorities. Once war is declared, they will not budge. So do your best to prevent declarations of war, even when they ask you to do things that your conscience is not permitted to grant. In a word, gentleness and charity will always be most helpful. Rigor and inflexibility will be interpreted as intolerance. Once they consider you intolerant, you become useless. For those men, who are poorly instructed in religion and are prejudiced against you, the term “intolerant” is a terrible word. They are quick to apply it and put you beyond the pale of humanity. . . .
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Don’t become discouraged because of all those troubles. Put your confidence in God. Be gentle, moderate and patient. If the French officials are unbending, impatient and even downright wicked sometimes, it is your duty to be compassionate, and to humor them to the extent that your duties allow. Be particularly gentle in your behavior toward them when the fulfillment of your ministerial duties is involved. Avoid rigor, haughtiness and similar faults in that matter. Add to that a note of charity, of sympathy, and kind attention. This will win them if it is at all possible.

Adieu! Write often.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary