7. LETTERS TO FATHER MARCELLIN COLLIN

Marcellin Collin was born in 1818 at Pontivy in Brittany. He studied first at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice and then tried out the life of a Trappist at the Grande Trappe for a period of six months (1840). In 1841 he became one of Father Libermann’s first novices. Ordained in 1843, he went two years later as a missionary to Reunion, from where he returned to France in 1852. After being director of Holy Ghost Seminary, he became Superior of the house of Langonnet and finally of the Mother House. He died in Paris in 1904.

Advice to a departing missionary. Never become angry with yourself because of your faults.

Letter One March 5, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 134

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

May the holy and abundant blessings of the Most Holy Heart of Mary fill you and accompany you at all times.

I have already made some recommendations to you; let me add a few, although it is possible that in some I shall but repeat what I already told you.

[Never Become Angry When You Commit Faults]

Look upon yourself in God’s presence as a poor man. Don’t be astonished when you commit faults. Never indulge in anger against yourself on their account, but remain very
quietly before our Lord in your poverty and humility while you contemplate how wretched you are. Don’t be in such a hurry to get rid of your defects. Be willing to remain subject to those weaknesses as long as it pleases our Lord to leave them with you. Remain thus humbly in repose and perfectly submissive to God’s good pleasure, not only in regard to what He positively sends you, but also for the things He permits to befall you.

Don’t entertain esteem for yourself on account of your talents or your knowledge. Don’t trust in your own lights. It is my opinion that the latter was the cause of the temptations [of stubbornness] you have lately experienced. This may have resulted from the fact that this year you enjoyed a better mental development than before and you may thus have felt a certain satisfaction and self-complacency. And this complacency may have inclined you to presumption. This in turn affected your will somewhat and it became more rigid and tenacious.

Now make sure not to yield to anxiety at the sight of those evil tendencies and your temptations. Adopt an attitude of peace and humility of mind and heart, acknowledging your poverty and wretchedness in our Lord’s presence. Tend to virtue with all gentleness and peace, trying to correct your faults.

[Such Anger is Useless and Rooted in Self-Love]

Never forget that it takes a very long time to get rid of such faults, especially when they contain an element of pride. If you become angry with yourself, become discouraged, adopt an attitude or rigorousness against yourself and those faults, what will you gain by such a behavior? For these dispositions and attitudes are themselves the product of self-love and of a rigid will. The thing to do, on the contrary, is to be patient with those defects until you are freed from them.
LETTERS TO FATHER MARCELLIN COLLIN

A multitude of reasons will rise before your mind to make you become vexed with yourself and to yield to agitation. Those reasons spring from self-love, and they do not prove at all that you ought not to bear those faults with patience, gentleness, peace and humility; on the contrary! Here are some examples of reasons that could come to your mind:

"These faults displease our Lord; they prevent me from attaining the perfection proper to my state; they are obstacles to the good I should otherwise be able to accomplish; they arrest the flow of God's graces. All this points to the conclusion that I must endeavor to use the best means to overcome those faults."

True, but the best means without any doubt is that of submitting peacefully, gently and humbly to the pain you feel at the sight of your faults; we have merely to drag ourselves before the feet of our good Master and put our entire confidence in Him. If you proceed in this way, sweetening your disposition, fortifying yourself in Jesus and Mary, humbling yourself peacefully and gently in God's presence at the sight of your wretchedness, you will make infinitely more progress than if you adopt the other method. You must have noticed that this is true and that every time you adopted the method I have suggested you became the master over yourself and over your faults.

[Humbly and Peacefully Submit to God's Will]

When you become aware of a fault, don't reason about it, but put yourself immediately under God's hands, and do this with humility, gentleness, peace and the loving surrender which I have described. Above all, avoid bringing in extraneous reasons; such enquiries are useless in any case. For example, you mentioned that you had been ordained too soon to the priesthood, that you should have remained
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

longer in the novitiate. Suppose for a moment that all this were true—but I tell you sincerely that those things are false—well, this would be like regretting that Adam committed original sin which was the cause of all our trouble.

Surrender yourself into God's hands and abandon yourself to His good pleasure. Be pleased not only with the things He does but even with whatever he allows to happen. Humble yourself at the sight of the evil you find in yourself and your wretchedness, but submit peacefully to God's will who permits that evil, and then put all your confidence in His goodness. He will not permit you to remain in that condition forever.

I must end this letter. I have to leave today. A letter from La Neuville informs me that the priest from Aire is at La Neuville with two postulants and that he is waiting for me.

Tell dear Father Blanpin that I have not even started my letter to him. I didn't have the time to write. I beg the Most Holy Virgin to tell him what I should have liked to express to him in my letter. She will do that much better than I.

Adieu, dear son. Your soul will always be dear to me in our Lord. Be always gentle, humble and full of confidence.

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN,
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Encouragement of a missionary at the painful moment of his first departure.

Letter Two  La Neuville, March 19, 1843  Vol. 4, p. 145

Dear Confrere:

I did not reply to your first letter because I thought it would not reach you before your departure. . . . I write now hoping that this letter will be forwarded to you at Bourbon [Reunion], in case you have already left.

[Be Strong Like the Master Who Sends You]

I was deeply touched at the sight of your afflictions, but at the same time I was not astonished. Don’t be astonished either, and don’t allow tribulation to cast you down. “This is the beginning of sorrows.” Do you think that we can save souls without sufferings? Don’t you recall our Lord’s words: “A woman about to give birth has sorrow”?

Consider yourself blessed when you experience sorrow and pain for the love of Jesus. Don’t continue to be weak like a child, but be strong like the Master who sends you. Consider yourself blessed when you experience sorrow and pain for the love of Jesus. Don’t continue to be weak like a child, but be strong like the Master who sends you. Consider all the pains and sorrows He suffered to save the world. Do you want to follow another way to procure the salvation of men? No! dear confrere and son, let such a thought be far from you.

You are still a novice in dealing with men. You are not yet accustomed to suffer for the love of Him who died for you, and, not having this habit, you are vexed at the approach of those unpleasant relations and those sufferings.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Have courage, lift up your soul; walk amidst the briars and the thorns; your feet will be torn, but if you walk with courage, you will go forward and reach your destination. Be courageous, dear soul, let yourself be wounded, crushed by tribulations, afflictions, even by death anguish if necessary; but continue to march toward the goal to which the Master guides your step. March on and don’t pay too much attention to sorrows and tribulations. You will suffer evils, annoyances, embarrassment, heartaches, mental troubles, humiliations of every sort. But the more you suffer the more your soul will advance in the way of holiness and also the more souls you will save.

[God Has Chosen You as His Victim]

Don’t indulge in self-pity. Forget self! Does it matter if a poor nothing suffers sorrows and anguish, if this fosters God’s glory?

Blessed, a hundred thousand times blessed are you, if your soul and body are sacrificed for the love and glory of Him who has done so much for you, who created you and, at the price of His blood, his labors, humiliations and afflictions without number, bought poor abandoned souls to whom He sends you!

My dear confere, although my heart is broken with sorrow at the sight of all your anguish, my joy, at the same time, surpasses and almost entirely erases that pain. Who are you that the divine Master was pleased to choose you and to destine you to suffer in His Name, for His glory and His love? What a victim He chose! He immolates you, sacrifices you, penetrates to the very marrow of your bones, to the utmost depths of your soul, to tear up and crush, to sacrifice you completely to His glory. So much the better, dear confere!
LETTERS TO FATHER MARCELLIN COLLIN

[God Wants You to Sacrifice Your Desire for Solitude]

You tell me that you look back with nostalgia at the solitude [of the novitiate.] Well! dear friend, there is no doubt about it that solitude is much more pleasant than having to deal with men. Do you recall what I once told you about that in regard to myself? Perhaps you did not then understand what I meant. You now experience the same thing, but don't allow yourself to yield to that inclination. On this earth you should not live for yourself and on your own. It is Jesus who is the lord of your soul. He disposes of it as He pleases; you should not even make any reflection in regard to the execution of His divine will. He does not want you to serve Him in solitude, in peace and sweetness. On the contrary, He wants to cast you into the midst of pains and annoyances which you will suffer in your relations with the world. Be a faithful instrument in His hands, and He will accomplish His glory through you.

You are more sensitive than others. I know that there are few who feel such pains as keenly as you do. So much the better! It enables you to suffer more for Jesus and for the souls you have to save. Don't worry about all that, then, but accept your troubles in a spirit of gentleness, peace, humility and love. Remain humbly prostrate in your littleness at the feet of our good Master. Don't allow yourself to become agitated and do not follow the suggestions of disturbing ideas.

[No Self-Pity]

Don't be full of self-pity. The great sensitiveness with which you feel those annoyances is not an evil but a good, for it obliges you to suffer more for the salvation of souls. It is a sword in the hands of our Supreme Priest, by which He kills His victim. But if sensibility is a good, self-pity is an evil. What you need is submissiveness, surrender to
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

God, gentleness, peace and humility of heart in the midst of the pains and contradictions you suffer on the part of men.

During your novitiate I often repeated to you what your conduct ought to be in such circumstances. Pray the divine Master to help you put those suggestions into practice. I feel sure that you will commit faults in the beginning. This should not astonish you; you will learn how to act by and by according to the rules which you now know only theoretically.

[Listen to the Voice of Jesus, Speaking in Your Heart]

Don’t grieve because at present you find yourself, as it were, abandoned to yourself. Say to yourself, in the depths of your heart: “I am not alone but He who sent me is with me.” It is about time for you to become a man. You must accustom yourself to listen to the voice of Jesus who speaks in the depths of your soul and to be molded according to that divine Model through the power and the guidance of His divine grace. Have confidence, pay attention to the divine words He addressed to His apostles at the moment of His departure. They were then in a situation similar to the one in which you are at present.

Until now you have enjoyed the sensible presence of the divine Master through the instrumentality of one who took His place and had the grace and power to guide you. Although the latter of himself is among the most wretched of men, the weakest and most incapable, he was Jesus Christ Himself for you. He had His wisdom and power; your soul was in peace and repose in the presence of that divine Master.

But now, like the Apostles, you are abandoned and obliged to address yourself to that Lord of souls only through the channel of pure faith. But this, precisely, is incomparably better. It is a reason for joy rather than for grief. Moreover,
this makes your sacrifice so much greater, for you don't receive the same amount of human assistance.

[Confidence in God]

The divine Master repeats to you what He said to His beloved Apostles: "Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid." Faith in His Father and in Him is enough for you. It will enable you to have Him always with you. "Fear not, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you a kingdom." Why and what do you fear, dear son? Jesus gave you His peace before He sent you [to the missions]; He has also left you His peace; hence your heart should not entertain any fear or anxiety. His Divine Spirit will be your Master; have confidence and abandon your soul to His guidance.

Adieu, dear confrere.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN
Missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Remain in God's presence as a victim to be immolated for the salvation of souls. Conduct aboard ship.

Letter Three April 1, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 170

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Confrere:

[Remain in God's Presence as a Victim]

This now, I hope, is the time, more than ever, when our Lord wants to use you for the salvation of a great number of
unfortunate and neglected souls. Hence I must confess that I have rejoiced in my heart while at the same time shedding tears at the news of your sufferings. Suffer, dear friend; Jesus also suffered to save the world. It is precisely when your heart is torn to pieces that you live through a most precious time. Open your heart to Jesus; prostrate yourself before Him and His heavenly Father and offer yourself to all the torments and tribulations that accompany labor for the salvation of those souls.

Let your soul be torn and broken. Let it be like the grain of wheat that is crushed so that it can be given to the hungry poor. Console yourself, beloved confrere; the more God’s goodness tears up your heart, the more it will make His grace develop from it, enabling you to feed those poor souls that are so empty of God and His love.

Are you going to feel sorry because you have to suffer? Reflect how greatly your sufferings will foster God’s glory and serve the salvation of those wretched souls that are the prey of the devil. Courage! Have courage dear confreres!

Deliver yourselves to sufferings, to labors and to the most intense sorrows. This thought, which I expressed to you on other occasions, should be always before your minds prompting you to remain constantly in His presence as a victim, as a target for all the darts He might wish to direct against you.

Does it matter if a wretched man suffers all his life and even for all eternity if such a thing be necessary? Are we not created for God? Are we not His property? Is He not allowed to do with His property what He pleases? It has been His wish to make you His chosen vessels, and this was not for your glory or your well-being. It was for the glory of His heavenly Father and for the increase of the spiritual riches of His holy Church. If He wishes to use you to your own disadvantage, you have no valid objection.

Remain peacefully and lovingly before Him then, and let Him tear and crush you as much as He pleases. It is some-
times He himself who makes you suffer; or He uses men to cause you grief; or certain circumstances hurt you; or you will have to suffer from the very souls whom He sends you to save. It doesn’t matter. Don’t reflect upon such things. Accept the pains and the sorrows whatever be their source; accept them as coming from His hand for your own sanctification and that of those He entrusts to your care. Accept as certain the principle that the more pains and interior sorrows you suffer the more souls you will save. Abandon yourself to Jesus, then, forget yourself and your own well-being, desiring that Jesus alone may be praised, glorified and loved by all creatures.

[Conduct Aboard Ship]

The way to conduct yourselves on board ship is very simple. Accept peacefully any pain and annoyance which some passengers may cause you. Do not show your grief; oppose no one; don’t get mixed up in their disputes and wrangles of any sort. Practice indifference in the depth of your souls. At the same time, however, learn from those contacts to know the spirit and character of men, refraining at the same time from judging or condemning them. This will teach you how to deal with all, and you will gather experience for your future conduct in regard to men.

In general be kind toward all. Don’t talk freely nor unburden yourself to everyone with whom you come into contact. Try to be pleasing to all; console them in their pains and seek to distract them when they feel bored. Enter into the views of others when they are in accord with God. Take no notice of what is defective in what they say, for this is not the time to speak, and you would gain nothing from your criticism. As you know, prudence dictates that
you be in good relations with everybody. Act thus with them, and do not act or speak like one who is superior to them in mind, judgment, piety, or conduct, but be modest, humble, gentle and kind toward all.

Have recourse to God alone when you have trouble or interior trials. Seek in God alone the consolation you need, and try to console all, in a great spirit of modesty, charity, humility and simplicity; and you will gain the upper hand without anyone noticing it.

Don’t argue even when they say the most foolish things. Follow your rule; remain occupied during your voyage; don’t bother anyone; try to satisfy everyone and be always kindly disposed and affable, ready to listen to those who need your advice and to render service to all. Do all this without tension, over-eagerness, or affectation; but be gentle and calm, moderate and simple. You may then feel certain that our Lord will bless you.

In regard to Father Launay, be affable in your relations with him. But don’t get mixed up in his quarrel with the Prefect Apostolic and with others. Don’t seek his company; even for the sake of charity do not seek him out. Be polite, reserved and moderate in your exterior conduct toward him. This is about all that I consider proper to tell you regarding those matters.

Rejoice, dear confreres and sons, because Jesus is pleased to give you a share in His holy Cross; no greater happiness could come to you. Belong entirely to Jesus through Mary and with Mary; all the rest is valueless.

Adieu, my very dear confreres and friends. I will always remain united with you in Jesus and Mary and will remember you in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We finished our novena [for you], for we thought you had already left
LETTERS TO FATHER MARCELLIN COLLIN

because an easterly wind has been blowing here for the last two weeks.

Adieu.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
missionary of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Crosses are useful for your sanctification. God is withdrawing from you all sensible consolations to make you live a life of pure faith and perfect surrender to him.

Letter Four March 8, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 98

Dear Confrere:

[Crosses are Very Useful for Your Sanctification]

Your letter filled me with compassion for your soul in its present affliction. I trust that this very pain which God's goodness sends you, or at least allows you to undergo, will be very useful for your soul. Such afflictions seem to be almost a necessity in the beginnings of religious works. A ministry that gives you so much consolation, that brings you success among the good souls whom the merciful Lord entrusts to you, the affection of those dear people and your tender love for them, all these might have done you harm if you had also enjoyed perfect interior peace of the kind you imagine and desire. Or at least your intentions in your labors might have been less pure, and your works might gradually have been spoiled without your noticing it.

Crosses, pains and interior embarrassment are precious safeguards against all such dangers. Hence submit peace-
fully to God's will which lets you suffer those troubles. Abandon yourself confidently to His divine good pleasure and His adorable guidance. If you adjust yourself properly to your condition you will commit less faults in your conduct. And if there are defects in it, don't worry, for God knows how weak and poor you are. He also knows the desires of your heart.

Souls that generously sacrifice themselves run no dangers. God's goodness passes over their small faults. Answer me, dear friend; do you commit those faults out of malice? Surely not. Do they show ill-will? No! I say "no" without any hesitation, although at times it might seem otherwise to you. All your faults are sudden spurts; they are weaknesses, and these very weaknesses are most often accompanied by a certain agitation which lessens their sinfulness. Now, it is certain that God readily forgives such faults and that that sort of fault does not prevent the action of grace.

[God Wants You to Live Henceforth a Life of Pure Faith]

In regard to the present condition of your soul, it is possible that you are a little mistaken in your appraisal of it. I really think that your interior state is about the same as when you were here; there is only less and less sensible devotion; you have gradually less feeling of God's presence.

You know, dear confrère, that you walked then in great simplicity and experienced very little sensible devotion, although there still remained a certain feeling that it existed. You no longer experienced that lively affection, but you had a slight and intimate realization of the way you stood with the divine Master. This sufficed for you and you were pleased. Although your satisfaction sprang from the fact that your soul was attached to God and you were pleased seeing that you stood well with Him, that satisfaction was not wholly pure. You were still too dependent on your
feelings, on sensible emotion, and did not yet want to be without such emotions, without a feeling of security that was based on such emotions, or rather without both the feeling of security and those emotions.

You realize, then, that your soul was looking for support; it desired contentment; it did not want to live by God alone in a spirit of faith and independently of all pleasure at the sight of your interior state. But now God wants to force you to abandon your soul to Him alone. He deprives you of all support. He wants you to live in a spirit of pure faith, with a hope that is based on His goodness alone and not on an interior condition of soul of which you are conscious. He wants you to live in all simplicity and perfect charity and to labor for His glory with pure and honest intentions, refraining from using His divine graces for your own satisfaction.

You might possibly get satisfaction when reflecting upon what you find in yourself, but it will not be self-complacency at the sight of God's grace in you, and this grace will more fully animate your actions. God allows you to have consolations in your ministry, but he does not want you to experience joy in the interior grace which He gives you. Rest assured that those graces are constantly producing an increase of holiness in you.

[Holiness Does Not Reside in Sensible Feelings]

This sort of holiness will not be in accord with your own ideas, but it will be in conformity with God's ideas and designs regarding your soul. You form a concept of a certain type of holiness which you imagine God demands of you, and when you are unsuccessful, judging things according to your plans, you grieve. But this is your mistake, dear friend; it is not your idea of holiness that has to be realized. You battle and you torment yourself, but you will
never be successful in accomplishing things according to your own views.

You imagine that your holiness ought to be something that you can feel. Now this is not so; it must, on the contrary, be an attitude of the will. You should remain before God with your will, your desire, peacefully occupied with your labors, contented and tranquil and without feeling anything. This is a state of entire privation; it is incomparably better and more perfect than a state of soul in which you feel things, although being deprived of such feelings seems to be wrong, at least in the beginning.

You do wrong in trying to put yourself in a state that conforms with your own concepts; you are trying to feel things, when you ought to live in pure faith and pure good will. Your efforts are a sort of strain; they are not a sentimental effort, for you are wanting in sentiment, but you live in a state of inertia, of incapacity, for God's goodness wants you to act in a more spiritual way and through pure faith.

You strain with your will in following the false idea you have conceived, and your mind is in the dark. Your idea of perfection is rather a phantasy; it is not really something you believe in, nor is it based on a view of your intellect. Hence what you call "remorse" ought not to be called by that name—at least this is so most of the time. It is an embarrassment of your mind that is based on a faulty phantasy or on a worry springing from the darkness of your mind.

[Be Patient with Your Own Faults]

Don't will so eagerly; don't strive so vehemently to reach sanctity in accordance with your concept of holiness. Be supple and flexible in God's hands and docile to the guidance of His grace. Don't take a fancy of your imagination or a movement of your will for an inspiration of grace. Walk in
all simplicity and honesty. Preserve peace of soul at all times. Do your best tranquilly, without strain or tension. Leave to God the care of perfecting you in harmony with His wishes.

In the meantime bear your weaknesses with peace and patience. Avoid rigidity and tenseness as the greatest evils. Believe me, you will have better results. It is not necessary at all to have a sensible awareness of the presence of God and of your union with Him. Your will tends Godwards; this ought to suffice for you. But there is more, for your mind is united with God at times when you think it is least united with Him. Be satisfied with your present state of soul and don’t seek to put yourself in the state which you imagine you should have. It is a real fault to make efforts in the latter direction. Live in peace and with confidence in God’s mercy. Banish fears and strain, for these are purely on the natural level. Have great freedom in your actions, as is proper to a soul that desires to belong to God.

When you do something that is faulty, humble yourself in all peace. You worry because you feel unable to open your soul to [your Superior] Father Le Vavasseur, and you are wrong. I assure you that I felt quite certain beforehand that sooner or later you would not be able to have the same openness with your director as [with me] when you were here. If you were still with me, you would now have the same feeling toward me that you have toward him.

[It is Time for a Manly Spiritual Life]

At the beginning, when we are still in the way and state of sensibility—you were still in that state during your noviti- ate, although less toward its end—we are in a state of child- hood; we need someone’s guiding hand. This is an imperfec- tion. I do not mean to say that direction, obedience and opening oneself to a spiritual director are an imperfection, but the need for them is an imperfection, since we then still lean
on a creature. Later, when that sensibility has disappeared, when we live more by pure faith, we become men. God leads us by way of faith. Pure faith presupposes that there is no longer any sensible support of our conduct; hence we are then disposed to be deprived of everything and even of spiritual direction.

It is certain that you are now in a state that has gone beyond that of sensibility, one in which pure faith ought to reign. Remain then purely and simply attached to God, and don't worry if you have nothing on which you can lean. You have God, and God alone; this should be enough for you. It hurts, it is hard, for it seems that our whole life then becomes, as it were, a shadow. The soul seems void and apparently has no more spiritual or supernatural life. But we are greatly mistaken; our interior life has become more pure, more simple. I said "this hurts," but only in the beginning, before we have submitted and have abandoned ourselves perfectly to God.

If, when you receive this letter, you have not completely overcome yourself in this, do it immediately. Give yourself, body and soul, to God, and don't seek any more for support in a creature. The time of childhood is past; the mature age of Christian perfection must begin for you. "When I was a child, I felt as a child, I thought like a child. But now that I have become a man, I have put away the things of a child."

This is no longer the time to be carried around in the arms of a father. You must walk alone. Don't worry so easily when something is wanting to you. A child weeps when someone makes faces at him; a man does not weep even when someone beats him with a stick. Be stronger, therefore, and don't easily yield to pusillanimity. Don't think immediately that you are on the wrong road, that something is wanting to you, as soon as you are not in the state of soul that is the object of your own desire. As soon as a child is tired, he
wants to be carried by his father, and if the father refuses the child weeps and grieves. A man, however, continues to march by the adult strength that animates him. Your manly strength is your faith and confidence in our Lord and His holy Mother.

Continue your spiritual direction with simplicity of heart; tell your director what may be useful for you. If there are things that trouble you excessively and you don't know how to explain them, you need not tell them, and don't worry about those things. Our Lord wants to replace all and everything. I think you will not lose anything through it.

[Abandoning All Desires and Worries, Live Only for God]

Dear friend, don't strive to be in this or that interior state; but be pliable and practice indifference in God's presence. Let Him give you what He pleases and do with you and in you what He wishes. You live in privation. This does not matter, provided your soul truly belongs to our Lord. I feel sure that your soul belongs to Him in spite of the small troubles in which you sometimes find yourself.

The same thing applies to [the study] theology and to all the rest. Don't desire anything and don't worry about anything. If you find time to study theology, do it; if not, be at ease. You must not have anything anymore on earth to sustain you, but only God, through faith and charity, and without the accompaniment of any feeling. Theology served formerly to keep you in a state of sensible repose; but sensibility is a thing of the past for you. You must now live in a state of privation, based on pure faith, pure interior charity, and without sentiment, but with complete confidence in Jesus and Mary.

Live in peace and don't make violent efforts which would only make you act against the holy will of Jesus. . . . Take care of your health . . . and don't kill yourself [through
excessive work]. On the other hand, avoid worrying about your health. Commend it to the care of Jesus and Mary.... 

Adieu, dear Father.

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

FRANCIS LIBERMAN
priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

We have undertaken many works at the same time, but what can I do? God forces us.

Letter Five  {August, 1844}  Vol. 6, p. 321

Dear Confrere:

I cannot let this opportunity go by without sending you a short word for yourself, although I have nothing particular to say.

Don’t be angry if I don’t send you help for your poor Negroes of Bourbon. I believe that by the very fact that we are sending missionaries to Madagascar you will get more men from time to time and it may even happen that at a later date the community of Bourbon will be much more important.

Take courage and don’t get angry if things do not immediately run to perfection. You must realize that I am not doing what I want. Divine Providence directs our affairs in spite of myself. For I assure you that if I had followed my own ideas, I would carefully have avoided undertaking so many things at the same time. I am afraid of this, but what can we do? Can I resist the will of God
that forces me absolutely? Our poor human prudence does not extend very far.

It is possible that my fears will be changed into gratitude toward God's goodness because He has led us thus with drums beating. According to human judgment, it is imprudent to undertake everything at once, but God will provide and make up for things when He obliges me to act entirely against my own likes. Moreover, my fears are not such that I believe that great evils will result for the work. All that might happen is that we might be obliged to neglect one part, or even to abandon one, if this were necessary. God will make known His will and designs. Let us not cling stubbornly to our ideas; let's not be unbending. Things will go badly if we permit our poor human prudence to battle against Providence.

Our affairs have developed in such a way for the last two years that I don't know what to think of them; and I would consider it a crime to resist the things that are taking place. Judging from the turn things are taking, I believe that in two years' time we shall have everything concerning our missions regulated and fixed. We must allow ourselves to be led by divine Providence . . .

Adieu.

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

Francis Libermann

Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Worrying about your miseries impedes your progress in holiness. Consider Jesus' mercifulness.

Letter Six {November, 1844} Vol. 6, p. 429

Dear Confrere:

I must write a short word to you. I learned that you have been ill; but the good Lord has not yet desired to take you, for you are still too wicked! You must finish the "eight years" [you have promised yourself]. We shall then let you go, but not before that.

[Do Not Worry About Your Miseries]

My dear friend, work for the glory of our good Master. Have a free mind; never yield to anxiety or trouble on account of your miseries. Every time your soul is peaceful, you will more easily overcome yourself and grow in holiness. When you are agitated you are worthless. You become mean toward yourself, toward the good Lord, and toward man. You have no reason for yielding to anxiety in the midst of your miseries, for you have all the divine Master's love in your favor, and it is to this love that you should constantly sacrifice yourself.

Be of good will; and you are, dear friend! If so, be at peace, for "peace unto men of good will." Give yourself wholeheartedly to the service of Our good Master. Do not count the number of distractions you have in your meditation; your soul belongs to God, that suffices. The flesh, that is, the sensible part of your nature, is as nothing in the balance against a will that is sincerely attached to God. Divine grace is in you. Rejoice, then, and proceed with confidence. God is fighting for you; remain in peace!
LETTERS TO FATHER MARCEL LIN COLLIN

[Jesus is Merciful]

Some faults will, as it were, escape you now and then; the good Lord will purify you of them in other circumstances. Don’t worry about them, God does not count and reckon things so rigorously when it concerns souls that desire to belong entirely to Him alone. Jesus’ conduct toward you is full of mercy. Remain in His mercy, and don’t fear His justice so much. Moreover, if you commit some small foolishness, you will merely have to take a few “beatings” in Purgatory, but not many, for the divine Master will purify you before you leave this earth.

Don’t be a coward and don’t entertain so much fear for the “beatings” that will purify you. Avoid committing faults, but if you fail through weakness, don’t worry.

Always consider Jesus merciful rather than severe. This will be profitable to your soul. Mary, after all, our good Mother, ought to be of great assistance to you. Avoid rigidity, try to be gentle in your interior at all times. Don’t be harsh; always lean to the side of mercy and gentleness. This is what you should attend to, for you have a strong inclination to the opposite and herein lies your great fault.

We are all well here. Father Le Vavasseur will give you the news, good and bad.

Don’t be angry because we have undertaken the mission of Guinea, which has cost us so dearly. God desired it. Keep quiet, adore Him, bless Him, and don’t reason about it. He will repay us a hundredfold for what we have lost and will give us the means to save Guinea. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere.

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

Francis Libermann,
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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Jesus loves you despite your faults. The reproaches you experience do not come from Him but from yourself. Do not try to "break your character." Purity of intention. Mental prayer and union with God. Relations with your confreres.

Letter Seven
January 29, 1845
Vol. 7, p. 34

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere;

[God Wants You to Be Patient with Your Imperfections]

Your letter of May 1, which I received not very long ago, touched me most deeply. There is one piece of general advice I must give you: accustom yourself to living at peace with your enemy. Let me explain. You have a troublesome character, a temperament that torments you. Don't put it into your head that it is absolutely necessary for you to get rid of it, but convince yourself that it is God's will that you should live with that enemy. Submit peacefully to this divine will, bear yourself with patience and gentleness. Don't yield to sadness, pain, or disappointment. When your temperament has shown the tip of its ear or even sometimes has shown its whole head, making you act harshly, humble yourself, regain your peace of mind, and forget all about it. Be convinced that your sentiments of unyielding harshness are not as wicked as you imagine. This harshness is a trait of your temperament in spite of yourself. You are impelled that way before you have the time to make a contrary act of the will. Once your interior is stirred up, you need time to restore your balance. All violent efforts are fruitless. In such moments you have nothing to do except to remain
humbly submissive to God's will which permits you to remain in that condition.

[Jesus Loves You in Spite of Your Faults]

You may rest assured, dear son, that if you submit humbly to the divine Will which permits you to groan under the weight of your imperfections, if you join to it peace and confidence in the goodness of Jesus, you can be certain that the good Lord will be pleased with you.

What a joy you gave me comparing me with the divine Master! Yes, certainly, when every week [in the novitiate] you returned to me to tell me all the faults that you had committed through frailty, my heart was full of tender compassion for you, and all those faults did not shock me in the least. I knew that you had once more forgotten yourself, that they were frailties which in turn aroused your will to give yourself entirely to God. How much more then does the divine love of Jesus go out to you with all tenderness. If such a thing were possible, His love would increase on the occasion of those frailties.

Our Lord knows better than anyone else how extremely weak we are. Be at peace therefore, dear friend, and feel certain that your soul is agreeable to Jesus. Don't torment yourself; you are not saddening His divine Heart. At least you did it much less frequently than you imagine, for most of the time your will has no share in the wickedness of your lower self, and if it does take part in it, it is usually because it is taken by surprise.

What can you do? You have a very bad temperament. You must live in peace and with humble submission to God in this respect. You want to belong to God; you do belong to Him and will later be more truly attached to Him. Always revive your courage; work, sacrifice yourself for the glory of the Master.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Don't be dissatisfied with your lot; the imperfection of your nature is compensated for by greater interior graces which you do not notice, graces which are fruitful in spite of the wickedness of your character. This wickedness will serve to keep you poor and small at the feet of our Lord. It is like the fertilizer we put on plants to make them produce more.

[Your Feeling of Remorse Does Not Come From God]

You are wrong thinking that the remorse of which you speak is our Lord's reproach to you. No! dear confrere. Jesus does not speak so harshly to your soul. He loves it too much for that. The very harshness of the reproach shows that it is your wicked nature that is its source, and its voice is raucous. I beg you, for the love of God, don't listen to that so-called reproach. Boldly and fearlessly despise that voice; turn away your mind from considering it. I take upon myself all the evil that might result from this; I myself want to bear responsibility for it before God. Don't take the voice of the wolf for that of the lamb. Be convinced that those reproaches are not remorse or inspirations of the Holy Spirit. I will answer for that with my head if necessary. Here is the proof:

1. As I have just told you, those interior clamors have the same sound, they are of the same kind as your temperament.

2. They never give you courage; you will never, or at least almost never, be able to follow them.

3. Those interior activities do not lead you to God. They cause you to be occupied with yourself and with all sorts of things, and they excite your imagination, whereas the voice of our good Master is sweet and peaceful; it inspires courage
for the accomplishment of what it proposes and directs the soul Godwards.

You consider that "your state is a punishment." This is a serious error. Don't reason about that; be content with belonging to God and sacrificing yourself for His glory. Suffer your miseries as I have told you above, and keep your soul in peace. I repeat and repeat again what I have already said: Our Lord Himself must be the director of your soul. This is true not only for you but it is true for every apostolic man.

Consult, however, [your superior] Father Le Vavasseur in regard to your interior life. Don't do it in order to find consolation, but sacrifice yourself to the divine Master. Consult him in order to avoid acting presumptuously and so that you may preserve simplicity.

[Do Not Try to "Break Your Character"]

I must return to what I said a moment ago. Don't talk about "breaking your character, crushing the hardness of your character." We don't break iron; we soften it in the fire. The line of conduct I have traced for you is the only one to follow: It softens your harshness and rigorousness to the extent that the good Lord desires it. Hence don't be too much in a hurry to get rid of that fault. Don't desire it with excessive eagerness and don't put too much ardor in that tendency. This would do more harm than good; it would make you lose peace, interior humility, submission to the divine will and confidence in God.

You may sigh gently under the weight of your chains, but be patient. When you are alone with our Lord, don't make any reproaches to yourself, have no remorse, turn your mind away from your faults and give yourself peacefully to God's love with confidence, humility and surrender to Him.

I repeat once more that those reproaches spring from your own nature, from your particular character, sometimes even
from self-love. Despise them and speak trustfully with our Lord instead of speaking harshly and anxiously with yourself.

If you were called to render an account of your state of soul at this moment, you would not be in as bad a condition as you imagine. The crude imperfections that are found in you are not voluntary; moreover, they are purified by interior grace to a greater extent than you think.

[Purity of Intention]

In respect to purity of intention, I have only a few words to say to you. Self-love, self-interest, self-complacency in your actions: these are enemies which you can overcome only by despising them. The more you take such sentiments to heart the more they will trouble you. They are enemies which will die only at our own death. You must suffer them with peace and humility. Reject them by despising them, by indifference, by looking on them as out of place. They will gradually diminish and finally disappear almost entirely, though not altogether.

[Mental Prayer Should Not be Forced]

Mental prayer is an important affair and yet quite simple. You must make your method of mental prayer as simple as possible. You need not make numerous considerations. Do not seek to execute every detail of the method of Saint-Sulpice; you would not succeed. What, then, ought your mental prayer to be? It should consist in a simple, calm and fully confident repose in our Lord's presence; this is all. Don't seek to make many reflections or to produce numerous affections. Absolutely nothing you do during mental prayer should be "forced." Remain before Jesus like a poor child before its father; nothing more. Don't seek to utter to Him the sentiments you have or would like to have; don't make
efforts to express your needs to Him. Remain before Him in all your poverty and weakness. Put yourself at His disposal in order that He may do with you whatever He pleases.

Look upon yourself, in His presence, as a thing that belongs to Him, as a thing of which He can dispose to the whole extent of His wishes. And you should do this without effort and without many words, whether interior or exterior. It should be a habitual attitude of the soul, which remains constantly in His presence and which, during meditation, is isolated from everything else for the purpose of showing the divine Savior what it is to Him. This manifestation must be done without labor or strain. Remain before Him with the will of being at His disposal. Content yourself with casting a glance toward Him from time to time for that intention. When distractions assail you, try from time to time to dismiss them gently and without anxiety, by casting a peaceful glance toward Him to whom you belong.

[Union with God During the Day]

In the course of the day act likewise. From time to time cast a glance without effort but with the intention of belonging to Him, and accompany it by the awareness of your poverty and wretchedness. But all this must be done tranquilly with the peaceful desire of belonging to Him in spite of your wretchedness. Don’t seek more than that.

In seeking contact with our good Master act similarly, allowing Him to direct you; do not prescribe anything to Him; do not formulate plans, imagining that things ought to be this way or that. Be content with being in His presence, at His disposal, and abandon yourself to His guidance like a blind man, without seeking too much to talk to Him or to hear Him speak to you. Be at His disposal, abandoned to His direction, placing all your trust in Him alone.
LETTERS TO FATHER MARCELLIN COLLIN

[Relations with Your Confreres]

Continue to act toward your superior as you have been doing. Don't be afraid. I will not listen to everything he will tell me in order that he may be discharged of his function. I know him as well as you do. It is perhaps because of your difficulties with Father Blanpin that he has wished to be discharged of the superiorship. He did not tell me anything about that, but this might be the case. Do all you can to give him the consolation of having peace in the community.

Dear Father Blanpin is a child of the good Lord; he is extremely simple and very good. It is your character that is the source of all that trouble. However, don't torment yourself on that account; this will not last. Have as few relations with him as possible. Nevertheless, do not avoid him, and don't make it appear to him that you are shunning his company. Try in every way to be kind to him. You cannot imagine what pain a good, fervent soul suffers from such opposition. This is a time of temptation for him; it will pass and he will be very good. . . .

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

FRANCIS LIBERMAN,

Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
I must confess that I have made a mistake. But, do not expect that everything can be perfect, not even in a religious congregation.

Letter Eight January 28, 1846 Vol. 8, p. 40

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

I begin where you leave off. You are distressed because I don’t write to you. . . . Don’t suspect that I am forgetting you; far from it! . . . Fine! I prefer to see you cast yourself into God’s arms, forgetting all that is dear to you, and then to receive consolidation for the forgetfulness of which you thought I had been guilty, but I can assure you that my heart is very close to you.

[I Must Confess That I Made a Mistake]

Now let me immediately speak about the grievous wound I have inflicted upon you by sending you poor Father Plessis. You two (Father Le Vavasseur and yourself) are trying to crush my heart and you are right. I deserve it, for I am very guilty. But what can I do? I made a mistake when I accepted that kind of person and am still wondering why I did it. Father Plessis was better then than he is now; he was regular and had sensible fervor, but I could and should have foreseen what would happen. I thought of it, reflected upon it and felt it. I am truly without excuse before God. I am perfectly in agreement with you if you wish to send him back to me; I shall then have the opportunity to expiate my fault.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Your letters hurt me greatly, but the violent pain they caused me was a great consolation for me. I committed a fault; I deserve to suffer, and I must offer something by way of expiation.

If I sent Father Plessis to Bourbon it was because I thought that Father Le Vavasseur was the man most capable of managing him. But it was my mistake, for instead of that he himself became discouraged and imagined all sorts of things against us. And you, my little man, entertained the same thoughts. But set your mind at rest, my dear confrere; things are going much better here than you think.

You can rest assured that we will never accept any one into the Congregation whom we do not consider to have solid virtue, devotedness and ability to acquire the religious spirit. We shall make frequent mistakes, but this occurs in all congregations. . . .

[Do Not Expect Perfection in a Religious Congregation]

Your views regarding the administration and the direction of a congregation are as impractical as mine are with respect to the politics of Louis Phillippe. If I had followed the plan you gave in your letters—and I mean both of you—the Congregation would already be dead and buried. Leave me the freedom to act. You should presume that our Lord will grant me the grace of His divine light for the administration of the work of the Most Holy Heart of His dear Mother. I may be unfaithful and might be caught occasionally, but don’t believe that God will abandon me to such an extent to my blindness that I shall upset and destroy the hopes of a work that is dear to Him.

You are bad philosophers. You conclude from the particular to the universal. You reason: one unworthy or incapable candidate was accepted; therefore everything is lost; therefore I am careless. . . . Now, note well that we are
still in an unsettled condition of affairs. We have not yet the personnel that is required to conduct our Society with the complete regularity we should like; and we are still without the material resources that will be needed. So why not wait a little? Give us the chance to get settled; but you are terribly impatient!

You cannot conceive, dear friend, how difficult the beginnings of works such as ours are! What solicitude, what troubles we have had to pass through to obtain what we now possess!

Don't be so severe in your judgments, dear confreres. If you had been in my place, you might have committed greater faults and more numerous ones than I am guilty of. I am truly tempted to think that this would be the case, judging from the rigor and inflexibility which you want us to use. I am longing for the time when the good Lord will give me a Council. You cannot imagine how hard and painful it is to be obliged to do everything yourself. . . .

I want to add another observation, although it is a repetition of one I have made before; I mean that you are judging things a little too much from a highly speculative standpoint. You have such an optimistic view about religious life that its realization will not be found in any religious society. In practice it is impossible for a community to be composed of men who are perfect according to your standards. . . .

Adieu, dear confreres. Although you have both given me a scolding, I love you just the same and with a most profound and lively charity. May the peace, the strength and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your souls.

Entirely yours in His divine love and in the love of His Holy Mother,

Francis Libermann,

Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary
Discouragement is unworthy of a servant of God. Such a feeling is disagreeable to God. Remember that we are not doing our work but His.

Letter Nine {1847} Vol. 9, p. 62

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere and Son:

Give me a strong scolding because I have not written to you for so long a time. However, if you had been here you would have understood that I was not at fault.

During my absence of five months I was not able to write, and at my return I was overwhelmed by urgent business and had to attend the new arrivals, who numbered forty. Then there were the Brothers. Each of them wanted to speak to me about his spiritual affairs. All this was of great importance, for I had to know whether things had gone on all right during so long an absence . . . Then there was the affair of buying the abbey of Notre Dame du Gard . . .

[It is Unworthy of a Servant of God to Yield to Discouragement]

And now let's come to your own business. It would seem that you and your confreres in Bourbon have yielded to discouragement. This has pained me greatly. Our Lord has sent me many afflictions in the work He has put in my care, but I can assure you that none has been more painful to me than seeing you suffer pains and anxieties. There is nothing bad in suffering pains and even anxieties in the service of God.
These trials are given for your sanctification, to make you more flexible in His hands, more humble, more detached from yourselves and more confident in God. But to yield to those anxieties and to allow them to agitate you and cast you down is not worthy of servants of God. What else have we to do on this earth except to put ourselves, body and soul, into God’s hands so that He may dispose of them as He sees fit and that we may be wholly sacrificed to His glory?

[Any Movement of the Soul Which Tends to Discourage or Trouble Us is Disagreeable to God]

Let’s have no other thought in mind except that of walking in the way traced for us by God’s providence and endeavoring to foster His glory and save souls. If we wish to be faithful instruments in His hands, we should not be occupied with ourselves. Let’s stop worrying about our own person, and walk with simplicity before Him, doing the work that lies before us with peace and confidence. Let us never occupy our minds with the future nor torment ourselves about the past. Let us now, in the present moment, put our soul into God’s hands in all peace, humility and gentleness, having no other desire than that of abandoning our lot into God’s hands, sacrificing ourselves to His divine will every moment of our life.

God’s goodness will often try us. Let us be docile, peaceful, and humble in His hands. Let us not yield to sadness nor permit our imagination to disturb us. When we allow sadness and our imagination to trouble us, we not only do wrong but we do harm to our soul and to the souls of others, and we very often compromise God’s own work. In general, any movement of our soul that tends to discourage us or give us trouble is disagreeable to God. If we yield to it,
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we open wide the gates of our soul to the devil. He will not fail to profit by it to destroy us.

[We Are Doing God’s Work, Not Our Own]

Your discouragement in our present circumstances causes me embarrassment. . . . I intended to send you men, but I don’t dare to present them to the Government for fear that your discouragement might afterwards oblige me to change my plans. I hope that this will not happen. . . . In any case don’t yield to discouragement. Place everything in God’s hands. It is not our work we are doing but His. We are not seeking our own interest, but His—saving souls for Him. He has the power to give it success. If He wishes to arrest our efforts this concerns Him alone.

We should avoid judging and analyzing the conduct of our Divine Master and content ourselves with praying and waiting. My dear friend, for the love of God, be more strong-hearted, more detached, and less excitable. . . .

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

FRANCIS LIBERMAN

priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

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The tendency of missionaries to neglect their religious life in favor of apostolic labors endangers many souls.

Letter Ten Notre Dame du Gard, September 21, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 293

Dear Confrere:

Before replying to your letters of July 16, I shall say a word about the affairs that occupy us here at present.
Yesterday, September 20, we held the last meeting of the Council. The whole day we discussed the general situation of the Congregation and the measures that ought to be taken to consolidate it and especially to maintain it in the Spirit of God and in sound discipline.

[Missionaries Easily Tend to Sacrifice Religious Life to Apostolic Work]

We have reached a moment when there is a pressing need for taking serious measures to insure the good of the Congregation. If we had taken such measures before this time, it might have been too early. Taking them later might prove to be too late. We have to safeguard ourselves against an imminent danger that is inherent in all missionary work. It is a danger that threatens every community, every missionary at a particular stage of his labors. Being full of eagerness and being prompted by a zeal inspired by God, they want to devote themselves totally to the work in which they are engaged. They are tempted to sacrifice to it the Rule, submission to the orders of superiors, and the community spirit.

If we were to yield to such a temptation, it would mean that after a few years the Congregation would be dislocated in all its joints. God knows what would become of the holy enterprise which He in His wisdom has entrusted to us, a work for which we have already made and are still making great sacrifices.

[They Become Totally Absorbed in Their Work and Lose All Religious Spirit]

The missionary, the superior, and the ecclesiastical head of a mission, each in his own sphere, see only the work with which they are charged, the good that lies before them,
and they launch themselves into the field of battle with all
the ardor of their zeal. They become totally absorbed in
their particular work and forget that they belong to a body
of men who must march together. They free themselves
too easily of the bonds with which God bound them together.

In this way there are as many isolated men as there are
missionaries. The gains that were temporarily made by
them will eventually be counterbalanced by hundredfold
losses.

The missionaries behold souls to be saved and work to be
done, but community life seems to them to be an impediment,
and they get rid of it. They think that by living holily, ac-
cording to the spirit of the community and in the observance
of the Rules, they will not do as much good or save as many
souls as if they had freedom of action. So they follow their
eager desires and sacrifice community life. There is then no
longer any regularity, no more interior spirit, no more rela-
tion of obedience with superiors than is consonant with their
ease. At least there is no longer perfect obedience, and the
bonds between communities and the Superior General and the
Mother House are broken.

[By Weakening the Bond of the Congregation,
They Cause Great Harm to Souls]

They think they are inspired by zeal, but in reality they
follow the impetuous urge of their nature. They console
themselves for the loss of their interior spirit and community
life by the consideration of the good they have done for
souls they wanted to save, and fail to take account of the
evil they are doing to themselves and to others. They ac-
complish a small amount of good and do evil on a large scale
because they weaken the bonds of the Congregation, destroy
all hope for its perseverance in fervor, and deprive it of the
mighty power that springs from a united march and a strong
discipline.
A dislocated body cannot move. It exists only for suffering. What purpose could be served by the Congregation if it were reduced to that state by the imprudent zeal of its members? How many souls will not be lost because of such imprudence that sacrifices everything for a present advantage? When a missionary lets himself be guided by such effervescent zeal that is not directed by the Spirit of God, he exposes himself to losing thousands of souls in order to save one.

It is our duty therefore to occupy ourselves seriously with the vital question of the general discipline of the Congregation. We must carefully watch the ardor that devours you who are in Bourbon, the ardor that destroys regularity in Mauritius, an ardor that is also felt in Guinea. We have resolved to be on our guard against the egoism of individual missions, communities and missionaries. When they are interested only in the work in which they are directly engaged, they sacrifice everything for it, and this, if you examine it well, is clearly selfishness.

[As a Superior, You have the Duty to Secure the Observance of the Rule]

I am not at all making reproaches to you, Father François will tell you that I have always been satisfied with the community of Bourbon. I know that you have always done all that was possible in the circumstances in which you were placed. But I want to put you on your guard, you and your dear confreres, against the natural tendency of a missionary and the future dangers that will result.

Try then to do all in your power to maintain the good that already exists among you and to better conditions. I believe that your present situation is more favorable to community life than the previous one. You need no longer worry
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about what the civil authorities might say, nor need you worry too much about the opposition of the clergy. The only precaution you have to take is to come to an understanding with the bishop. He will understand very well that we are not permitted to infringe on our Rules.

Watch over the effervescent ardor of Father François! Don’t let him kill himself and don’t let him set aside the Rules and obedience. I approve your prudent conduct in regard to his fasting. Father François should fast only to the extent that his health is not endangered.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior