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01. Simple advice for the spiritual life

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Simple advice for the spiritual life

To a seminarian¹

A few months after moving to the Eudist novitiate in Rennes, François Libermann still kept close contact with the seminarians of Saint-Sulpice, especially those who were members of the “Bandes de piété”.² We do not know exactly who the recipient of this letter was, but it is evident that he was new to the spiritual life. Libermann answers his request for advice with a few simple suggestions on how to proceed, all of which are rooted in the Gospel.

September 9th, 1837

My dear brother,

May the peace of Our Lord and the gentleness of his sacred heart fill yours to overflowing. This is all you have to do in this world, my dear friend: let yourself be filled by the Spirit of our good Master with all the tenderness, gentleness and peace which he still conveys to his mother, Mary.

Be submissive and pliable in the hands of the Spirit of life, whom the Lord has sent into your soul to be everything for you. He must become the beginning and the source of all your feelings, your desires and the movements of your soul. He must be the motivator of your intelligence and the guide of your soul through the inclinations which he imprints on it. He must be the only one that guides you life, for if you mix your own violent activity into these things, you will only spoil them.

Pay great attention to these words of Our Lord, “Ego sum via – I am the way”. Keep your eyes peacefully focused on Jesus

¹ L.S. I, pp. 366-369 (3rd edition), completed by N.D. I, pp. 417-418.

² “The bands of piety” were meetings of seminarians to strengthen their interior life. François Libermann was their leader.

living in your soul, and only approach the Father through Him – a path which is always close to you and not difficult to find. This path is in the depths of your soul; you only have to remain there and you will go directly to the Father. Jesus has left you his Holy Spirit to guide you along this road; only the Spirit knows this road and can help you to walk along it.

Our Master also said: “Ego sum Veritas – I am the truth”, a wonderful name that is above all human expression. Jesus is the truth, and so when, by his grace, we stick to this road which is himself, we are in possession of truth itself and, consequently, once we are moving along that way, we have already arrived. And what more do we need? Keep peacefully to this wonderful road which is within you. And being within the very depth of your self, hold on to this way; it is, and always will, be truth itself that is within you.

This way will be the light of your mind and the love of your heart. So stay close and united to the Lord who is so loveable, who lives in you and is the whole truth and he will be your life.

Being the light of your mind and the love of your heart, when you give yourself totally into his hands, he will grasp your soul and possess it in such a way that he will become life itself within you. It is only then, my dear brother, that you will begin to really live, because Jesus is the real life.

This is what Jesus meant when he said: “Ego sum via, veritas et vita”, so try to live by this truth. Be cooperative and simple in his hands so as not to wander off on your own path, for you will find nothing there but lies and death. Do not worry if you still have traces of your scruples; laugh at them and continue your journey as if they never existed. Try to remain balanced in your enthusiasms and only act along the lines of which I spoke to you at length last year, – and always in a spirit of peace and interior calm.

I am rather worried about M. Dupeloux¹; I have written to him and I will write again shortly.

My best wishes in the love of Jesus and Mary.

François Libermann

¹ Dupeloux - a novice at Rennes who came from the seminary of Issy.