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09. Giving oneself up to the Spirit

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Giving oneself up to the Spirit

To Father Blanpin¹

Fr. Blanpin² was working on the island of Bourbon, along with Fr. Collin. He had troubles relating to his confrere, so he informed Libermann about the problem. Libermann takes some of the drama out of these problems and, writing from his tiny cell at La Neuville back in France, he dreams of being with his missionaries in the front line.

The first part of this text has been omitted. It deals largely with family problems, particularly Blanpin's mother and the question of her will. Below is the final section of this letter, which contains Libermann's metaphor of a boat to describe the respective roles of the Holy Spirit, the soul, the heart and the human spirit.

April, 1845

My dear Son and Confrere,

... Try not to complain too much when you can give so little time to personal prayer and study. It is a blessing for a missionary to be absorbed by work for the salvation of souls. You should be congratulated rather than pitied. I only wish I was in the same position. I too do not have a moment during the whole day to devote to my soul or to do a little study, but in my case, I am eaten up by letters - and these never directly concern the salvation of souls.

Your life is given over totally to such work - mine is swallowed up by administration! I am like a secretary who works for a great banker. He keeps the accounts in order, deals with millions in his calculations, works out brilliant investment

¹ N.D. VII, pp. 144-148

² See index

schemes - but it is ultimately of no benefit to himself. Others collect the profits from the transactions that fill his day. When he leaves the office in the evening, his own pockets are empty. This is what my life is like; I calculate, speculate and make gains for others, but I finish up empty handed. At Judgment Day, I shall be pleading for the Lord's mercy.

So there is no need to worry if you are unable to pray properly or if you have your share of troubles. Just make sure that you are faithful to God in the exercises prescribed by the Rule. You suffer in the service of the Lord; I suffer from headaches! You are in pain because of your apostolic work; I am in pain because I am a sinner. But we must both suffer with patience and with love.

Do not worry if you have trouble relating to Fr. Collin. You will get over it gradually. The arrival of new confreres should help the situation a little.

A word of advice on how to live and work: A ship has sails and a rudder. The wind blows into the sails and pushes the boat forward in the general direction in which it should be going. But this is not accurate enough and eventually the boat could end up way off course. Your soul is the boat, your heart the sail. The Holy Spirit is the wind and he blows on your will and your soul in the direction that God wants you to go. Your spirit is the rudder and its role is to make sure that you do not deviate from the direct path determined by the goodness of God. Your spirit must gently and calmly watch over what you say and do, totally submissive to the will of God.

There is no need to be surprised by what is going on within you. You are not yet fully formed, but you will eventually become calmer.

Yours in Jesus and Mary,

F. Libermann, Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary