

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

A Spiritan Anthology

Anthologie Spiritaine

1-1-2011

14.The Missionary is to be faithful to God, his confreres and those in his care

Christian de Mare CSSp

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/anthologie-spiritaine-english>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#)

Repository Citation

de Mare, C. (2011). 14.The Missionary is to be faithful to God, his confreres and those in his care.

Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/anthologie-spiritaine-english/66>

This Chapter III is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthologie Spiritaine at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in A Spiritan Anthology by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

**The Missionary is to be faithful
to God, his confreres and those in his care**
To the Community at Dakar¹

This letter encourages the confreres in Dakar to be faithful. Libermann sees community life as a road to holiness, a constant journey towards sanctification. It is a school for those who are called to the apostolate. It helps them live that salvation which they are bringing to others by their preaching: "Your fidelity will bring about your own sanctification, but, even more important, the salvation of the people will depend on it. He insists on the need for humility, which is the opposite of self-love, and puts before his missionaries a threefold loyalty: loyalty to God, to their confreres, and to those in their care.

The Community at Dakar had just received new confreres; Bishop Truffet and his six companions had arrived there on 8th May: "The older members must give good example to the younger ones, and the younger confreres are to encourage their elders by their fervour and fidelity."

Amiens, 11th June 1847

My dear Confreres,

I am as happy as you are to see these reinforcements arrive in Africa. It is evident that the good and merciful Lord is smiling on we, his servants, who began this work. We have been greatly blessed from the moment our dear brothers were sacrificed to His glory for the salvation of the poor people to whom we have been sent.² Now it is up to you to be faithful

¹ N. D. IX, pp. 172-174.

² Libermann is referring here to the first group of missionaries who were sent to Cape Palmas and were decimated by sickness only weeks after their arrival.

and to use these graces you have received with wisdom, fervour, and fruitfulness. Your fidelity will bring about your own sanctification, but, even more important, the salvation of the people will depend on it.

It will be your great joy if, one day, you can say to God that you have never been negligent in your loyalty to Him. His beautiful words will then be applied to you: "*Euge, serve bone, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam: intra in gaudium Domini tui*"¹. How happy you will be if, like our Lord, you can say to your Father in heaven: "*Quos dedisti mihi, nemo (perit) ex eis*"²!

Henceforth, your lives must be based on a three-fold loyalty: loyalty to God, loyalty to your confreres, and loyalty to those confided to your care. Beware of laxity and all those other weaknesses which do such harm to the spiritual life; the end result is dissipation, idleness and the loss of recollection and you are left with nothing to sustain you when things become difficult. If you pay no attention to this fidelity, your life will become useless. It will be full of discouragement and you will feel depressed when you are faced with suffering. But if you concentrate upon always being faithful, your soul will retain its energy, despite the heat of the local climate which tends to weaken you. If you are recollected, you will find you will get all the help you need from God - contentment in moments of calm and strong support when suffering presents itself. Troubles will only serve to increase your strength and fervour; you will overcome them and use them to progress in holiness.

Beware of self-love, which is always our most lethal enemy. It mixes up with our faults of character and becomes a source of

¹ Translation: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in little things. I will place you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord".

² Translation: "I have lost none of those you have given me".

great evil. The more we allow pride to dominate us, the stronger it grows. If we continue down that road, we will find ourselves with fewer resources to call upon in our struggle against that vice. This is because pride clouds and falsifies our judgement and casts us into a state of darkness and illusion.

Now that you are becoming more numerous and the Mission is developing little by little, you must watch over yourselves more than ever before. I say that because the more you experience success, the more the vice of pride can ravage your souls. So from the start, cultivate a genuine humility, which attaches us to God and removes all self-love. Humility gives us open minds and prevents us from stubbornly holding on to our own ideas. It makes our souls gentle and peaceful and helps us to put up with the faults of our confreres. As a result, we learn to treat them with respect and love and pay no attention to the hurts they may cause us. Humility makes us prudent, balanced and calm, and kind and gentle in our exercise of authority. The humble person always obeys without difficulty or argument, because he does not insist that he is always right, nor expects always to be getting his own way. Humility is the mother of regularity in our lives, the support of our fraternal unity and the most solid guarantee that we will always be ready to keep in the background. Humility is the foundation of charity, while pride destroys it.

Try then to build your lives on this beautiful and important virtue of humility. If you are humble, all the other virtues will be easily acquired. Your mind will be full of insight and free of delusion. Your heart will be gentle and empty of bitterness and your will full of strength and energy. Depression, weakness and discouragement are most often found in a person dominated by self-love; if these arise from other sources, they will always find in selfishness a strong support which encourages their growth.

Since you have now received a group of new confreres, it is up to those of you who have spent some time in the mission to offer them a good example. On the other hand, the new arrivals, should encourage their elders by their fervour and dedication. I am sure that none of you will fall down on this duty and that, united in the charity of Jesus Christ, you will march forward together in peace, love and enthusiasm. Support and encourage each other to an ever greater degree of holiness. All of us here are praying for you, so that together we may make one heart and one soul with the Holy Heart of Mary, in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In that way, we will be blessed in this world with grace and holiness and showered with glory and happiness in the next.

I have not given you any detailed news of what is happening here because I am very busy arranging for the departures of Fathers Blanpin and Jérôme who are off to Reunion.

I greet you all in the love of the most holy Heart of Mary.

*Libermann,
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary.*