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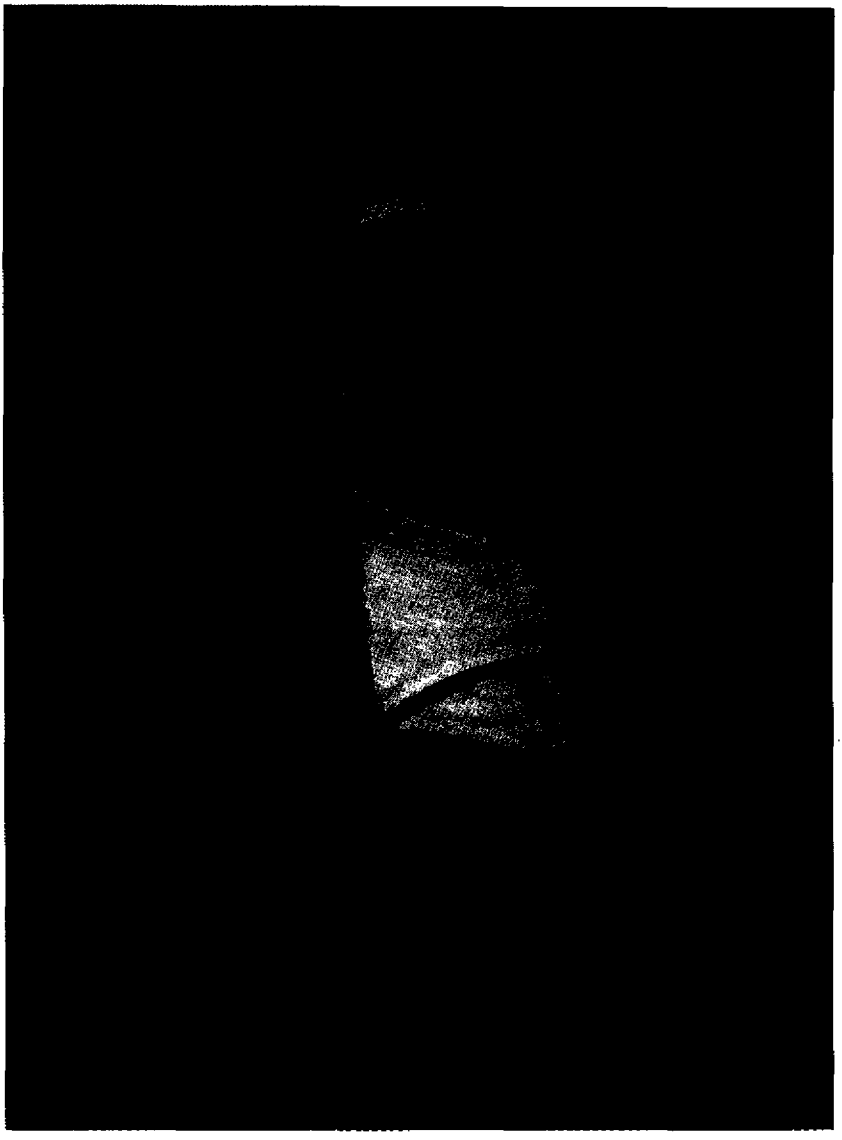
Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac



Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac

Correspondence and Thoughts

Edited and Translated from the French
by Sr. Louise Sullivan, D.C.

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DEDICATION

As we celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the birth of St. Louise de Marillac, we are drawn to reflect on the thousands of women who for over three and a half centuries have been inspired by St. Louise and have advanced her vision of service and community within the Company of the Daughters of Charity. This volume is dedicated to one such woman, Sister Mary Basil Roarke (1910-1988) who, not only continually deepened her personal knowledge of the words and actions of St. Vincent and St. Louise, but also through her creative presentations encouraged Daughters of Charity throughout the world to explore their rich heritage. In recognition of Sister Mary Basil's deep share in St. Louise's love of prayer, the poor, simplicity of life-style and the Company, and in gratitude for Sister's ability to make St. Louise so alive in this 20th Century, the Daughters of Charity dedicate this treasury of community history and spiritual inspiration.

"What a beautiful picture, O my God, this humility, faith, prudence, sound judgment, and constant concern to conform all her actions to those of Our Lord! O Sisters, it is for you to conform your actions to hers and to imitate her in all things."

(Conference on the Virtues of Louise de Marillac, July 24, 1660)

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION

There was a celebrated politician of the last century—Benjamin Disraeli—who once wrote:

"Read no history: nothing but biography, for that is life without theory."

One could almost distill that counsel further and say, "Read no biography, nothing but correspondence . . ." It is a person's letters that will often give the deepest insight into the workings of the mind and the heart. That is eminently true of Saint Louise de Marillac. It is in her letters, addressed for the most part to Saint Vincent and the first Daughters of Charity, that reveal the nobility of her soul; her love for each individual Sister of her Community; her concern that they live in unity and harmony; and her desire to direct their energies to the service of Jesus Christ as He presented Himself in the needy, poor and suffering members of His body.

The translation of Saint Louise's letters from the 1983 French edition, (Sainte Louise de Marillac, "Ecrits Spirituels"), is most timely this year, as we begin to celebrate the fourth Centenary of Saint Louise's birth on the 12th of August 1591. The present edition of Saint Louise's letters will be a rich mine from which all devotees of Saint Louise in the English speaking world will be able to draw, and so come to know more clearly this remarkable woman whom Pope John XXIII, thirty years ago, honored with the title, "Patroness of all those engaged in Christian Social Works."

To Sister Louise Sullivan, D.C. I offer my thanks for the accurate work of translation which she has so carefully and painstakingly done. Her work will introduce Saint Louise to many who hitherto have not known her. May Saint Louise herself introduce us all to Our Lord and His Mother whom in her life she loved and served so well.

Richard McCullen, C.M.
Superior General

PREFACE (FRENCH EDITION)

The Bible is Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ announced; Jesus Christ revealed; Jesus Christ communicated. The better we know Sacred Scripture, especially the New Testament, the more we will deepen our understanding of Our Savior. By means of this reading and meditation we become filled, little by little, with His personality and with His Spirit.

The same may be said of the saints who are the "friends of God." By revealing to us their experience of God, their writings bring to light their human and supernatural gifts and permit us to follow them on their journey toward God.

Therefore, it is a great grace for us, the Sons and Daughters of Saint Vincent, who have received so many letters and conferences of our Holy Founder, to possess also a large part of the correspondence of Saint Louise de Marillac, as well as her diverse spiritual writings. All this constitutes a veritable family treasure.

However, if, in the case of Saint Vincent, this treasure has been and continues to be well used, the same is not true for Saint Louise. It is only very recently that her work has been unearthed from the dust of three centuries. This discovery has already produced a few biographies and studies of great value. It is now a pressing invitation to as many Daughters of Charity as possible to become familiar with the personal writing of their Foundress.

What a wonderful undertaking it was to produce this new edition of the correspondence, the meditations, and the advices of all kinds which she has left us. Indeed, we are discovering, more and more, not only how inseparable she is from Saint Vincent, from whom she received so much, but also the great importance of her own contributions. After a somewhat difficult and uncertain beginning, their collaboration became one of the most marvelous and fruitful witnesses to complementarity between a man and a woman, between a male and a female saint who placed all the resources of their widely divergent personalities at the service of the same ideal.

Nothing is more instructive in this regard than the two conferences of July 3 and July 24, 1660 on the virtues of Louise de Marillac. How moving it is to see Monsieur Vincent, just a few weeks before his own death, thank Our Lord for having preserved him until that moment and express his wonder as the sisters relate their recollections of their Foundress. It is interesting to see him stress certain qualities which he judged characteristic of the person of Mademoiselle Le Gras and particularly important in the vocation of the Daughters of Charity: supernatural prudence, the

spirit and practice of poverty, the interior life, humility, gentleness, and above all, love of God and of the Poor.

"Father," said one sister, "I can say nothing else than that the life of Mademoiselle Le Gras is a mirror in which we have only to gaze."

This sentence sums up everything and invites us to find even greater joy in the appearance of this new edition of the writings of Saint Louise during this 350th anniversary year of the birth of the Company. The preceding edition, which we generally referred to as the "Gray Book," came out in 1960 to mark the 300th anniversary of the death of our Founders. It rendered great service as my predecessor, Father Slattery, hoped it would. In the letter that he wrote as a Preface for that edition, he said, "You can but rejoice at seeing an attractive personality of your Holy Mother emerge from the shadows in which her humility had hidden her. But above all, you want those who will know her better in the future, and who esteem her so highly, to find her in those who have the honor of being her Daughters. It is in her writings as well as in those of Saint Vincent that you will find the most perfect expression of your spirit."

For my part, therefore, I wish, with all my heart, that this new edition, in which they have tried to record with greater fidelity the exact words of Saint Louise, be for all the Daughters of Charity a guide for an evermore efficacious service of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of our Lords and Masters, the Poor. By reading it and by meditating on it often, especially during your retreats, you will understand in a very practical way what Monsieur Vincent said of Louise de Marillac in the Conferences mentioned above: "You did not make yourselves, Sisters; it was she who made you and gave birth to you in Our Lord."

Richard McCullen, C.M.
Superior General

INTRODUCTION (FRENCH EDITION)

At the end of the nineteenth century the numerous autographs of Louise de Marillac were classified and carefully regrouped in large bound collections by Sister Goeffre.

Collection Number One regroups 256 letters from St. Vincent to St. Louise, letters that Monsieur Coste has published in his immense work of fourteen volumes. This collection also contains five other documents: the account of the journey to Nantes, the regulations for Le Mans, and a letter to Brother Ducourneau.

Collection Number Two contains 187 letters written by Louise de Marillac to Monsieur Vincent, and thirty-four letters sent to various people: Priests of the Mission, Ladies of Charity, etc.

Collection Number Three includes the manuscripts of the 329 letters destined for the Daughters of Charity. A certain number of these letters were written by secretaries (especially Élisabeth Hellot and Mathurine Guérin), but they are signed by Saint Louise herself.

Collection Number Four groups the ninety-nine letters that were preciously preserved by the Abbé de Vaux, Vicar General of Angers.

Collection Number Five assembles the other writings of Louise de Marillac: retreats, meditations, diverse thoughts, regulations, conferences . . .

Two other collections, called the Notebooks of Marguerite Chétif, present copies made either by herself or one of the first sisters of autographs handwritten by the Foundress. Marguerite Chétif, named Superioress General by Monsieur Vincent in August, 1660, had asked Mathurine Guérin, Louise de Marillac's secretary for seven years, to send her a collection of Louise's principal virtues so that she might follow the Foundress's example in her role of authority.

Mathurine Guérin responds simply: "When I had the happiness of writing her letters, I did not consider them beautiful teachings at the time. However, now I admire the diversity she gave to them. In some, she instills the observance of the Rule, in others fear; in all of them the pure love of God.

"One of the greatest benefits of our Company is the most exact collection that she made and had made of the instructions of our late Most Honored Father. You could say that I am not teaching you anything new since you are just as aware of it as the others; but perhaps they all do not know the charity with which she urged the sisters charged with this work so that they would not fail . . .

"She often said that a day would come when our dear sisters would be comforted in having the writings of persons that we had had the good fortune of knowing.

"It would take quite a long time if I wanted to specify each of her charitable traits as manifested by the letters which she herself wrote or had written to each sister in particular and to the sisters in general, had they been kept together. What I could tell you would truly be another instruction for you, my dear Sister. As for me, I have several of them that I keep as relics of her spirit. Nevertheless, if I were commanded to reveal them, I would deny myself these benefits . . ."

In order to preserve the spirit of Louise de Marillac, Marguerite Chétif not only read and meditated upon the letters, but she recopied them in order to transmit the message to all the Daughters of Charity, for whom she was assuming the responsibility.

The copies contain no names of sisters and cities. Anonymity had to be preserved because several of the Daughters of Charity to whom these letters had been addressed were still living. Thanks to research work undertaken in the last few years at the Archives of the Motherhouse, it was possible to identify several copies with the autographs of Collection Number Three. The letters have been recopied according to their origin from this sister or that house. A series of letters comes from the house of Angers, another from Barbe Angiboust, Anne Hardimont, Laurence Dubois, etc. Several copies could not be identified.

For this new publication, a trial method of chronological classifications has been undertaken. The documents without dates are numerous, but by comparing them with the dated letters found in the work of Coste, along with the letters received by Louise de Marillac from the Daughters of Charity, the Vincentians and the Administrators, it was possible to date precisely a great number of them. The appearance of the autograph (writing, type of paper) also permits a certain approximation of the period in which the document was written.

When Sister Goeffre classified the different autographs, she assigned to each one a classification number. This number has been faithfully preserved. The letter "L" preceding a number indicates articles of correspondence; the letter "A" indicates diverse thoughts and regulations; the letter "S" indicates documents classified later. The letter "M" designates the copies made by Marguerite Chétif.

This edition presents numerous differences from prior publications because it seemed opportune to return to the complete text of the letters and different writings of Louise de Marillac without regrouping them by themes and without modifying the Seventeenth Century French.

Dates in brackets were written on the back of autographs by Brother Ducourneau, Monsieur Vincent's secretary. Dates or other entries in parentheses were determined by taking into account events transpiring in the Company of the Daughters of Charity or in the Congregation of the Mission at a given period.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The first edition of the *Écrits de Louise de Marillac* was published in 1960. In 1972, an English Language translation by Sister Helen Marie Law, D.C. of the *Letters of Louise de Marillac* appeared. After extensive research, a new French edition entitled *Louise de Marillac: Écrits Spirituels* was published in 1983. As the Editors stated in their Introduction, "this edition presents numerous differences from prior publications." A "trail method of chronological classification" was undertaken and there was a "return to the complete text of the letters and different writings of Louise de Marillac without regrouping them by themes and without modifying the Seventeenth Century French."

In order to present the English Language reader with the texts for which no previous translation existed, the portion of the 1983 French Edition entitled "Thoughts" was published in English in 1984 as *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac.* Nevertheless, it was deemed advisable, given the extensive revisions in the correspondence, to translate the entire volume. Thus, the present English Language text, *Louise de Marillac: Spiritual Writings: Correspondence-Thoughts,* is a translation of the integral 1983 French Edition and includes the 1984 English Language translation of the Thoughts. It therefore replaces all previous translations of the different writings of Louise de Marillac.

The primary goal of any translation is fidelity to the original text. Insofar as humanly possible, that has been attempted here. The reader's attention, however, is called to the following points:

1. the spelling of proper names was not fixed in Seventeenth Century French. Louise de Marillac sometimes spells the same person's name in more than one way (Magdelene vs. Madeleine Mongert). These have been standardized throughout the text to avoid confusion.

2. the "trail method of chronological classification" has given rise to some discrepancies in dates, names or addresses as they appear in the body of the text and as they are found in the Numerical Listing, Table of Contents, Footnotes or Index. These have all been brought into agreement with the body of the text unless other factors indicated another choice.

3. the Index is a translation of the French Index and concepts are indexed as they were classified by the French Editors. In some instances an entry includes both the mention of the concept by Louise de Marillac and texts which illustrate her practice of it (Condescension). Entries which have more than one heading in French (Décès—Mort) but are translated by the same English word (Death) are combined. Place subheadings are frequently repeated in the French text. These are combined in English (Barbe Angiboust-Paris). Entries which could not be verified have been eliminated.

The 1983 French Edition represents an extensive, painstaking work of research. This English Language translation hopes to present the same faithful portrait of Louise de Marillac during this Fourth-Centenary year of her birth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To all those Daughters of Charity, Priests of the Mission, colleagues and friends who have contributed the inestimable gift of their prayers and support.

A.2 - LIGHT

In the year 1623, on the Feast of Saint Monica, God gave me the grace to make a vow of widowhood should He call my husband to Himself.

On the following Feast of the Ascension, I was very disturbed because of the doubt I had as to whether I should leave my husband, as I greatly wanted to do, in order to make good my first vow[1] and to have greater liberty to serve God and my neighbor.

I also doubted my capacity to break the attachment I had for my director[2] which might prevent me from accepting another, during his long absence, as I feared I might be obliged to do.

I also suffered greatly because of the doubt I experienced concerning the immortality of the soul. All these things caused me incredible anguish which lasted from Ascension until Pentecost.

On the Feast of Pentecost,[3] during holy Mass or while I was praying in the church,[4] my mind was instantly freed of all doubt.

I was advised that I should remain with my husband and that a time would come when I would be in a position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same. I then understood that I would be in a place where I could help my neighbor but I did not understand how this would be possible since there was to be much coming and going.

I was also assured that I should remain at peace concerning my director; that God would give me one[5] whom He seemed to show me. It was repugnant to me to accept him; nevertheless, I acquiesced. It seemed to me that I did not yet have to make this change.

My third doubt was removed by the inner assurance I felt that it was God who was teaching me these things and that, believing there is a God, I should not doubt the rest.

I have always believed that I received this grace from the Blessed

1. Louise de Marillac (August 12, 1591-March 15, 1660) had wanted to be a Capuchin Nun. She had undoubtedly made a promise to God to do so. However, Father Champigny, her first spiritual director, told her that her delicate health would not permit her to become a religious. Following the advice of her family, Louise married Antoine Le Gras on February 5, 1613. He was secretary to the Queen Marie de Medicis. Their son, Michel, was born the following October 18.
2. Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, a friend of the de Marillacs and of Francis de Sales.
3. Sunday, June 4, 1623.
4. The Church of Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, rue Saint-Martin, the parish church of Louise de Marillac.
5. Vincent de Paul was, at the time, a tutor in the de Gondi household which was situated in the parish of Saint-Sauveur.

Bishop of Geneva[1] because, before his death, I had greatly desired to communicate these trials to him and because since that time, I have had great devotion to him and have received many graces through him. On that occasion, I had a reason for believing this to be so, although I cannot now remember it.

1. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and Founder of the Visitation, had died in December 1622.

CORRESPONDENCE

1625-1630

1625

April 17: *Founding of the Congregation of the Mission.*

c. November: *Monsieur Vincent began work at the Collège des Bons-Enfants in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.*

December 21: *Death of Louise de Marillac's husband in his home on rue Corteau-Villain in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs.*

1626

Louise de Marillac settled on rue Saint-Victor in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

Beginning of Louise de Marillac's participation in Monsieur Vincent's charitable works on behalf of the poor.

1629

Beginning of Louise de Marillac's visits to the Confraternities of Charity: In May the first trip to Montmirail.

Founding of the Confraternity of Charity in the parish of Saint-Sauveur in Paris.

1630

Founding of the Confraternity of Charity in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. Louise de Marillac becomes the first President.

Arrival of Marguerite Naseau who has "come to serve the poor."

November 10: *"Dupe Day": failure of the conspiracy organized to overthrow Richelieu, the Prime Minister. Arrest and imprisonment of Michel de Marillac, Keeper of the Seal, one of Louise's uncles. Another of her uncles, Louis, Field Marshal of France, will also be arrested and imprisoned a few months later.*

L.1 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

June 5, 1627

Monsieur,

I hope that you will excuse the liberty I am taking in telling you how impatient I have become because of your long absence, troubled as I am about the future and by not knowing where you are or where you are going. It is true, Father, that I find some comfort in my trial from the thought of the business that is keeping you away, but that does not

prevent the days from seeming like months for someone as lazy as I. However, I want to await calmly the hour of God, and I recognize that my unworthiness is delaying it.

I have been aware that Mademoiselle du Fay[1] has been more anxious than usual. We spent the Feast of Pentecost together. After services, she would have liked to confide in me but we remained open to and desirous of accomplishing the will of God. The work which your Charity gave me is finished. If the members of Jesus need it and you want me to send it to you, Father, I shall not fail to do so. I did not want to do this without your authorization.

At last, my Most Honored Father, after some worry, my son is placed in school. Thanks be to God, he is happy and is doing well there. If that continues, I shall be very relieved concerning him.

Allow me, Father, to bother you again about the 28 year old girl that they wish to send from Burgundy and confide to my care. From what I hear, she has a good background and is virtuous. Prior to this, the good blind girl from Vertus[2] had told me that her 22 year old companion might also come here. She has been under the direction of the Oratorians for the past four years and is a true country girl. I am not convinced that she wants to come but she has given me some assurance that she desires to do so.

I humbly implore you to tell me what I should do in this matter. The person who is going to Burgundy plans to leave Monday. Since I thought that you would be returning this week, I promised a reply.

For the past month our good God has permitted my soul to be unusually aware of Him, nevertheless I remain constantly in my imperfections. When I shall no longer place any obstacle in the way of the effects of the prayers which I hope to receive from your Charity, I believe I shall mend my ways. These past days I have greatly desired you to remember to offer me to God and to ask of Him the grace of accomplishing His holy will in me despite the opposition of my misery. Therefore, I most humbly supplicate you, Father, and ask your pardon for bothering you. By the goodness of God I remain, Father, your most grateful servant and unworthy daughter.

1. Mademoiselle du Fay, Lady of Charity of great devotion. Her paternal uncle, René Hennequin, married Marie de Marillac, one of Saint Louise's aunts.

2. Pilgrimage to the much frequented shrine of the Virgin Mary at Aubervilliers.

L.2 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 13, 1628

Monsieur,

About three weeks ago, while I was at Mademoiselle du Fay's, I had an opportunity to write to you. I am afraid that my letters have been lost. They dealt principally with the advice which I was asking of you concerning my son. However, I am no longer in the same situation, Monsieur. Either God does not want him to become a priest at this time, or the world has raised obstacles to his doing so because his fervor has greatly diminished. I found such a great change in his attitude that I spoke freely about it to the Mother Superior[1] who advised me to place him simply as a boarder with these good ecclesiastics[2] for reasons which I will explain to you if God grants me the grace, which I greatly need, of seeing your return. Certainly I have never been more acutely aware of your absence because of the needs which have since arisen. In this I must recognize my weakness and I assure you, Father, that if God grants me the grace of recalling the past I will not find in it reason to be proud of myself. For the love of God, I ask for strength through the help of your prayers. I thank you most humbly for the trouble you have taken to write to me and for the honor you have shown me by thinking of me. I do not deserve this, and God is indeed good to put up with me. O my very dear Father, offer my will to the divine mercy for I want, with the help of His holy grace, to be converted and to call myself truly, Monsieur, your very humble servant and unworthy daughter in Our Lord.

P.S. Mademoiselle du Fay is still suffering from her physical infirmities. She has been in bed almost constantly for the past two weeks. Fortunately she does not have a fever. She greatly desires your return.

L.3B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday Noon (May 1630)

For the past year there has been no Procurator for the Confraternity

1. Mother Superior of the Monastery of the Visitation, Mother Anne-Catherine de Beaumont.

2. The priests of the Seminary of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet, a community founded by Monsieur Bourdoise (1584-1655) for the education of the clergy.

of Charity.[1] However, there is a good man who faithfully records receipts and expenditures. At the present time he is quite willing to accept the office by election.

The Ladies of Charity have become a bit less fervent in the exercise of charity. They often fail to visit the sick on their appointed days because the Treasurer is so good-natured that she has the food cooked for them. Moreover, she and the Superioress have sometimes been satisfied with simply giving money to the sick. They have also given money to other needy persons and have frequently neglected to supply meat, preferring to give the sick eggs or some other thing they fancied.

These Ladies, or at least most of them, also go months without receiving Holy Communion. They need to have their fervor rekindled by a sermon when a priest goes there for the election of the Procurator.

The Superioress has been content to keep the strong box herself and has given both keys to the Treasurer. They are having problems receiving the sick. They claim that there should not be a Confraternity of Charity to admit only those who have nothing at all since there are few, if any, of this type while there are many whose goods are so tied up that they would rather starve than sell what they have and help themselves.

1631-1636

1632

January: *Monsieur Vincent and the Congregation of the Mission take up residence at Saint-Lazare.*

May 10: *Death of Field Marshal Louis de Marillac, uncle of Louise, beheaded on the Place de Grève in Paris.*

August 7: *Death of Michel de Marillac in his prison cell in Châteaudun.*

1633

c. February: *Death of Marguerite Naseau.*

November 29: *Founding of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.*

1634

Founding of the Confraternity of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris.

July 31: *First Conference by Monsieur Vincent to the Daughters of Charity.*

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1. Confraternity of Charity of Villepreux, established on the land of the de Gondi family.

1636

Transfer of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity to the village of La Chapelle.

L.4 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

To Monsieur Father Vincent

September 4 (c. 1634)

Monsieur,

I am returning the Rule of Saint-Sauveur to you. I had not seen it. It appears that the first part makes the Confraternity completely dependent upon the Pastor. I do not know if this is wise. It is certainly true that the Pastors in Beauvais would be delighted to have it that way. However, this would immediately lead them to want no one else to know what was happening within each Confraternity. On the other hand, I believe, Monsieur, that the Officers must keep them informed about the reception of the sick, at least telling them whom they will accept. A provision must be made in the Rule stating that the Pastor records the votes during an election and that the Treasurer gives the financial report in his presence. No mention should be made, however, of the Vicar General. The number of Ladies should be indicated as is the case in the present Rule. It should also state that vacancies will be filled by those upon whom the Company has agreed, and subsequently they will be presented to the Pastor to be incorporated and receive his blessing.

As for the question of a Procurator, I do not know if we can easily find one for every Confraternity. The Ladies would never turn over the records of the collections to him. As for keeping the accounts, I think that the women can take care of this themselves. There would be nothing else for him to do except perhaps to see to it that any legacies there might be would be administered for the benefit of the Confraternity. In that case, one Procurator for all the Confraternities would appear to be sufficient. These suggestions are only for Beauvais. The ordinary Rule is good for Liancourt, especially the provisions which recommend friendship among the members and give the greatest [details] concerning the morning and evening exercises and the practice of recalling the presence of God during the day. Also, Monsieur, I recommend that vacant places be filled as provided here. Good Procurators can be found everywhere.

Please let me know, Monsieur, if you will now add a particular article for this Officer who is seeking so earnestly to be admitted as Procurator

for the goods of the Confraternity. Let me know also if the Rule will provide for two girls to be named by Madame de Liancourt[1] as nurses for the sick. They would reside in the housing which the Duchess would furnish for this purpose and would be obliged to bring medicine to the sick of La Bruyère, Cauffry and Rantigny as well as Liancourt. They would be expected to visit the sick at least twice a week and to carry out all that is required by and provided for by the foundation set up for this purpose. In this area, collections are taken up in the homes on Sundays and in the churches on major feasts. The Procurators keep a book in which they record the receipts from each collection. The Treasurer does the same. Only strong boxes with two locks are to be used. I think that it should be added that the two guardians are to be members of the Confraternity.

I believe, Monsieur, that it would be appropriate to have a register in each strong box similar to the one which I left with you so that all the happenings of the Confraternity could be recorded in it. I think that the Act of Establishment should be written at the beginning, followed by the Rule, the names of the Ladies, and the results of the election of the Procurator and of the officers. Place could be left after this for subsequent elections.

Toward the middle of the book, a place should be indicated where a record is to be kept of the names of the Ladies who have died and of those who have replaced them. Another section should be reserved for pious legacies and for extraordinary gifts, while a list of furniture belonging to the poor should be kept in another section. The book that I brought you is from La Bruyère because the Act of Establishment contains all the necessary signatures.

I believe that the Superioress must also keep a register in which she writes the names of the sick poor, the date on which they were received, and the date on which they died or were discharged by the Confraternity.

If you had not told me to draw up this report, Monsieur, I would not have dared to do so. I do not know why I have delayed so long in writing except that I realize that my mind is very slow both to do good for others and for my own practices.

Good Sister Jeanne from the parish of Saint-Benoit[2] has just brought me three girls from Colombe who seem very promising and who desire to serve the poor anywhere that they are sent. I believe that they will go to see you one of these days. I am sorry that I missed the day that your Charity was willing to give me. I think it was my fault. I have great need of a few days to think about myself and be renewed. I believe, Monsieur,

1. Madame the Duchess de Liancourt, born Jeanne de Schomberg (1600-1674), Lady of Charity. She established the Confraternity of Charity on her estates.

2. Parish of Paris

when the time comes for me to take charge of the Confraternity of Charity of the parish of Saint-Laurent, if you wish to honor me by employing me for this, that I should spend a few days there. I could use this occasion, if you judge it appropriate. But for the love of God, Monsieur, ask the divine mercy to let you know my needs; otherwise, I will believe that He wishes to abandon me completely because He allows you to feel this way.

I am enclosing a report of each of the Assemblies of Beauvais. I believe that it would be well for the Rule that you are drawing up to be for Saint-Sauveur.[1] When you send it, you could ask that it be sent to the other Charities to be copied. If you would be so good as to take the trouble to re-read the letter I sent you from Liancourt, you will perhaps find something more that I am not telling you at this time. Please excuse the disorder of my presentation. I almost want to blame my poor memory, but you know me as I am and as I always shall be, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P. S. Collections are made every Monday in Beauvais, but I think it would be well to take them up also on major feasts in the church. I believe that with the imminent establishment of the Mission at Beauvais, as the Bishop wishes, it will be easy to obtain all that could be desired for the good of the Confraternity. I did not undertake to suggest this collection.

L.5 - TO MONSIEUR DEHORGNY[2]

(at the Collège des Bons-Enfants)

September 29, 1635

Monsieur,

I received the 100 pounds which you sent me. I beg you to take the trouble to tell me how many shirts, caps and handkerchiefs you want, as well as whatever else you need.

I am very sorry that the linen bourse was too large. I am sending you a chalice veil. Please let me know if it is the right kind. With the help of God, I shall not fail to do whatever you want. You are too kind to me.

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1. Parish of Paris

2. Monsieur Dehorgny, one of the first Priests of the Mission. He joined Monsieur Vincent in 1627. He was, in turn, Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants (1632-1635, 1638-1643, 1654-1659), Assistant General of the Congregation (1642-1644, 1654-1667), and Superior of the house of Rome (1644-1647). Monsieur Vincent often sent him to visit the Vincentian houses and those of the Daughters of Charity. At the death of Monsieur Portail, he was named Director of the Daughters of Charity.

I thank you most humbly for the honor you do my son. He is going to profit from the good you do him. God wants him to benefit from it and to be grateful for all your charity. I recommend him constantly to your prayers as well as myself who remain, Monsieur, your very humble servant.

L.43 - TO SISTER BARBE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Parish of Saint-Paul[2] (Paris)

(c. 1636)

My very dear Sister,

I am very concerned about the illness of our dear sister whom I most cordially greet at the feet of Jesus Christ, frequently inviting her, for His holy love, not to become weary of experiencing within herself the needs of our masters, the sick poor, for assistance, cordiality and gentleness. It is in this state that she can show her fidelity in loving the holy will of God. And I am certain that you, my dear Sister, are taking good care of her. But I beg of you, Sister, call a doctor immediately and take care of the sick of the parish.

You know how important it is, in that parish, not to give occasion to anyone to gossip. Visit the sick, please.

Although our other sisters look after them well and show them much charity, it is more appropriate for you to tend to them yourself. I hope that our good God will bless the care you give, and I pray that He will grant you sufficient strength and courage to overcome the little difficulties

1. Barbe Angiboust (1605-1658) from the parish of Saint-Pierre of Serville, near Chartres. She joined the very first Daughters of Charity on July 1, 1634. Louise discovered the richness of her character very quickly and sent her as "the foundation stone" to numerous establishments: 1636: the parish of Saint-Paul, then the parish of Saint-Sulpice in Paris; 1637: Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie; 1638: Saint-Germaine-en-Laye, then Richelieu; 1642: the galley slaves; 1645: probably Serqueux; 1646: Fontainebleau; 1649: Saint-Denis; 1652: Brienne; 1653: Châlons; 1654: Bernay; 1658: Châteaudun. Barbe Angiboust was also chosen for visitations: the foundlings placed with wet nurses (1644, 1648); houses of the Daughters of Charity: Liancourt in 1649; Sainte-Marie-du-Mont in 1657; Varize in 1658. On March 25, 1652 she committed herself totally to the service of the poor by making perpetual vows. She died on December 27, 1658.

2. Serving the poor of the parish of Saint-Paul from 1632-1633 onwards, the Daughters of Charity had to live there when the Motherhouse was transferred to the village of La Chapelle.

you will encounter. I remain in His most holy love, your very humble sister and servant.

P. S. If you still need another sister, please let me know.

L.6 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 1636

Monsieur,

Madame de Beaufort[1] told me that this is the opportune time to work for the establishment of the Confraternity of Charity of the parish of Saint-Étienne. She added that the Pastor strongly favors this and authorized her and another Lady to take up a collection during the present feast days, which they did. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to inform me how I should act in this matter.

I had thought of telling her, if you approve, that the Ladies who show the greatest desire for this holy work should go to the Pastor and tell him that, in order to begin well and to persevere, they need to gather together a large number of persons, both from the nobility and from the lower class, so that some of them will contribute most of the funds while the others will give themselves more willingly to visit the sick poor on their appointed days. So that no one will be inconvenienced, it will be suggested that it would perhaps be well to divide the parish into two districts. However, in order to work efficaciously, the first thing that must be done is to ask the Pastor to have a detailed report drawn up by an ecclesiastic who knows the parishioners well and then to have a sermon preached on this subject in his church after which all the Ladies named would be assembled. An announcement would also be made at Mass inviting all women, of whatever class, who would like to participate in the work, to come to the Assembly. At the Assembly, the Rule observed in other parishes would be proposed.

I am telling you all this, Monsieur, so as to save time. These good women have been trying to encourage one another to undertake this work for so long, that I feel we must strike while the iron is hot. However, please tell me if you want something different from what I propose. Please, you know it must be like that.

I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for your charity. God knows well that I needed this help and He sent the address of a good milkmaid who has been supplying us for three days.

Here we are at the end of the year. If God gives me the life to begin

1. Madame de Beaufort, Lady of Charity of the Parish of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont.

another, I want it to be profitable for His service. I beg your Charity to say a few words to me about this. The poor are satisfied with little. I will consider myself most fortunate since I gave myself to God through you, and I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and servant.

P.S. Monsieur, all your daughters take the liberty of recommending themselves to your charity.

1638-1639

1638

Beginning of the work with the foundlings.
Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Saint-Germain-en-Laye and at Richelieu.
Epidemic of the plague in Paris.

1639

Beginning of the work with the galley slaves.
Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at the Hospital of Angers: trip of Louise de Marillac with three sisters at the end of November.

L.7 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

La Chapelle (January 17, 1638)

Monsieur,

The Procurator of the Confraternity of Charity and our sisters are accomplishing wonders today for the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. They themselves wanted me to send a message to beg you to provide them with a conference for vespers. They cannot be recited before two-thirty. They would like to have Father de la Salle, but if that is not possible they would be pleased with another. I join my plea to theirs so that they may be encouraged to persevere.

I believe that you know that Sister Barbe[1] is here and that she and I are both in good health. I think it would be well if she had the honor of seeing you before she leaves. Should we not think about the little furnishings that she will be needing? Please do not worry about the wet-

1. Barbe Angiboust was sent to serve the poor in Saint-Germaine-en-Laye.

nurse for the infants. They have not arrived yet. Ours will suffice for the time you indicate and even longer.

I remain in the love of Jesus, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful servant.

L.26 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 2 (c. 1638)

Monsieur,

They have come to tell me that the plague[1] has broken out in the house where our sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu are living. I beg you to tell me if I should withdraw them or, if I leave them, whether I should tell the Ladies not to go there and whether we ourselves, that is, the sisters of this house[2] should go. Do you think there is any danger in taking them jellies for the Hôtel-Dieu?

You have forgotten me and the need which I told you I had to discuss with you. I do not know what the Lord is telling me in that, but I hope that your Charity will let me know because I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. I am not speaking to you about what I had done so badly for the sisters. I shall wait to hear what it pleases your Charity to tell me to do.

L.38 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday (c. 1638)

Monsieur,

I am sending your reply to Madame Pelletier[3] by Sister Turgis.[4] I am

1. The plague epidemic in Paris.
2. The Motherhouse at La Chapelle.
3. Madame Pelletier, undoubtedly the daughter of Madame de Herse, see Letter 126, who had married the nephew of Madame Goussault, see Letter 11. She did not continue in the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
4. Élisabeth Le Goutteux, the widow Turgis, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1636. Intelligent and cultured, she helped Louise de Marillac with total devotion and replaced her during the times of her absence from the Motherhouse. Louise de Marillac entrusted to her the responsibility for the new community in Angers in 1640. She sent her there again for a few months in 1644. Sent to Richelieu in 1646, to Chars

so wicked that I would have preferred, given her imminent departure, that this message had never been sent. Monsieur de Liancourt was here yesterday. I did not see him, but he sent me word that his wife was greatly upset by my return to Paris. My little blood-letting of yesterday put me into a sweat for the entire night which greatly relieved me, thank God, so I am now out of bed. Because I have neither the strength nor the health to go to see you in this bad weather, and I need to talk with you, I told the brother porter that I was going to beg you to take the trouble to come here. I take this liberty because of the confidence which your Charity gave me in this regard in the past and because I believe, Monsieur, that I am still, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.89 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday (c. 1638)

Monsieur,

Sister Turgis is greatly upset because the Sergeant of the Company of Monsieur de Castillon came to tell her that he would be sending soldiers to be billeted in the quarters at the front and in the ones where the children are housed. They will be noisy. Please let her know by this porter, if she does not come herself, whether upon her return she should refuse to let them stay, relying on the support of Madame the Duchess d'Aiguillon[1] or Madame the wife of the Chancellor until your Charity can obtain a prohibition from the Queen, or whether you have a better solution. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

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in 1647, then to Chantilly in 1648, she died after a brief illness in 1648.

1. Marie de Vignerod (1604-1678) was the niece of Richelieu. Widowed at 18 years of age, she who had become, despite herself, the Marquise de Comlet, entered Carmel. Her powerful uncle brought her back to the court of Louis XIII against her will and gave her the dukedom of Aiguillon as a dowery. The Duchess d'Aiguillon participated in all of Monsieur Vincent's works and assisted him out of her immense fortune.

L.8B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday (c. 1638)

Monsieur,

Just a word. I believe that it is necessary to attend promptly to this poor girl who has so won the hearts of the local people that rumor has it that they will not accept another if we remove her. She has been seeking advice for a long time from everyone, especially a bachelor club known as the Gentlemen of the Corner from whom she receives delicacies, bottles of wine and pâtés, and thanks to whom she lives excessively well. I humbly beg you, for the love of God, to reflect on the problems resulting from this terrible situation of which I think I am the cause. I beseech you, Monsieur, to pray to God to ask Him to pardon me, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.9 - TO THE MOTHER SUPERIOR OF THE BENEDICTINES

at Argenteuil[1]

La Chapelle, May 16, 1639

Madame,

You are perhaps surprised, since I do not have the honor of knowing you or of being known by you, that I am taking the liberty of writing to you. I would not do so were I not convinced that you would not be offended because it is for the love of God, whom we desire to love and serve, that I am sending you a girl from here who is of good character and filled with good desires to fill the place of a lay sister which I have heard is vacant in your house.

I was informed of this by one of the daughters, servants of the sick poor of the parish Confraternities of Charity, whom God has called and maintained in this state for eight years. I did not want to believe, Madame, that it was you who ordered her to be turned away from her vocation. I could not imagine that those who know the importance of a vocation would want to set up obstacles to the designs of God and place a soul in danger for her salvation by withdrawing help from the abandoned poor who are in great need and who can only find relief in the service of these good girls, who are detached from all self-interest and who give themsel-

1. The Confraternity of Charity was established there in 1634.

ves to God for the spiritual and corporal service of these poor creatures that His goodness wills to look upon as His members. Would to God, Madame, that the girl you already have in your house is serving you well and is happy. I want to believe that she was not called to the work in which she was employed, otherwise she would be most blamable. But Madame, I beg of you no longer to permit them to be accepted as candidates with your consent. This could be a temptation for many others, although it does not prevent me from being, as I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.11 - TO SISTERS BARBE ANGIBOUST AND LOUISE GANSET[1]

(at Richelieu)[2]

October 26, 1639

My dear Sisters,

I have no doubt that you have been greatly moved by the death of Madame Goussault,[3] widow of the President. The debt we owe her should lead us to imitate her so that God may be glorified. I hope that you will do so with the help of His grace. You have already felt the effects of this grace, my Daughters, in the good which His loving kindness has willed you to accomplish in the place where you now are. However, I have learned what I have always greatly feared. Your work, which has been succeeding so well for the relief of the sick and the instruction of girls, has done nothing for your advancement in perfection. On the contrary, it seems to have hindered it since the good odor of virtue which you were spreading is beginning to dissipate.

Reflect, my dear Sisters, on what you are doing. You frequently cause God to be offended. God is not glorified and your neighbor is scandalized. On account of you, the holy exercise of charity is held in less esteem. How will you dare one day to appear before God to render Him an

1. Louise Ganset, Daughter of Charity, was sent to Richelieu in 1638, to the galley slaves in 1644, and to Maule a few years later.

2. Richelieu: As early as 1637, Cardinal Richelieu asked Monsieur Vincent for missionaries for the city, south of Chinon, which he had had constructed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Daughters of Charity were sent there at the end of the year 1638 to serve the sick and to run the school.

3. Madame Goussault, born Geneviève Fayet. In 1631, she became the widow of Antoine Gousault, Advisor to the King and President of the Administration of Finances. She suggested the establishment of the Confraternity of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu to Monsieur Vincent and became its President. She favored sending the Daughters of Charity to Angers. She died like a saint on September 20, 1639.

account of the use you have made of the great grace which He gave you when He called you to the state in which He has placed you? He had expected to derive glory from your works but you have usurped it. You, Sister Barbe, do so by your lack of cordiality toward the sister whom God has given you, by your haughty attitude and by the little forbearance you show for her infirmities. How could you forget that when you were placed with her as her superior you were obliged to become like a mother with even greater responsibilities than a natural mother since you must help your sister to work out her salvation and grow in perfection. This obliges you to act with great gentleness and charity as the Son of God recommended when He was on earth. When you accepted this duty, were you not immediately aware of the degree of humility which it required of you since it furnishes you with so many occasions to recognize your weaknesses? Should you not always keep before your eyes the awareness that when you command something you are doing so by obedience, and that of yourself you have no right to order anything?

Courage, my dear Sister! I hope that the harm is not so great that it is without remedy. Place your faults clearly before your eyes without making excuses because in reality nothing outside of ourselves is the cause of the evil we commit. Admit this truth before God. Stir up in your heart a great love for our dear Sister Louise. In the sight of the merciful justice of God, throw yourself at her feet and ask her pardon for your coldness toward her and for all the pain that you have caused her. Promise her that, with the grace of God, you will love her as Jesus Christ Himself wills you to and will show her the concern that you must have for her. Then embrace her with these true sentiments in your heart.

And here you are, my dear Sister Louise, fallen once again into your bad habits! What do you think of the state you are in? Is it a life without restraint? Far from it. It must be one of continual submission and obedience. Is it possible that you have never reflected upon this, or if you do so that you have so little love for God and so little fear for your salvation that you fail to do what you are obliged to do? My Daughter, practice a little mortification. What do you gain by making visits or going on pilgrimages without permission? Do you want to live according to your own will in everything? Have you forgotten that you must not do anything or go anywhere without the permission of Sister Barbe, whom you accepted as your superior before your departure, and whom you must love as much or more than if she were your mother? I think that you never reflect on your state in life because you do so many things that are incompatible with it. Would you not regret losing your vocation for such trifling satisfactions?

I believe that the cause of most of the faults that you commit—and this has just occurred to me—is that you have money and have always liked possessing it. Take my word for this and rid yourself of this

affection. Place everything in the hands of Sister Barbe and be satisfied with what she considers appropriate. Cultivate a love for poverty in imitation of the Son of God. By so doing, you will obtain the graces necessary to be a true Daughter of Charity. Otherwise, I doubt very strongly that you will persevere. I say this to you with the fear that you will not heed my word, but I could not refrain from speaking. Accept it graciously because it is the love that God gives me for each of you that causes me to speak in this way. Courage, my dear Sister! I am confident that you will not disregard my little corrections. Recognizing how much God merits to be loved and served, repent for having so badly acquitted yourself of this responsibility from the time He gave you the grace of calling you to this way of life, and particularly to this place where He has bestowed His blessings upon your holy employment. Take a much firmer resolution than you have made in the past. Throw yourself at Sister Barbe's feet with . . . (letter torn).

Do you not see that your souls are not at rest, and therefore, that you are not sharing in the holy peace which the Son of God brought to those who are of good will, nor are you partaking in that peace which He left to His holy Apostles when He ascended into heaven.

Admonishing you of your faults has brought my own before my eyes. This causes me, my Daughters, to tell you that the one that troubles me most at this time is the bad example I have given you in the practice of the virtues which I recommend to you. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to overlook this, to ask pardon of God for me and the grace to amend my life, which I desire with all my heart.

I have also been very negligent about writing to you. I hope and pray that you pardon me. I offer to our good God the act of reconciliation which I am convinced you will make with hearts filled with good will. I unite my heart to yours so that together we may obtain the mercy of which we stand in need and the grace to live henceforth in the love of Jesus Crucified, in whom I remain, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Do you know, my very dear Sisters, what I expect of your reconciliation after a renewal of affection? It is that you will open your hearts to one another; that you will rarely be seen one without the other; that you will make your visits to the city together; that you will avoid particular friendships with the Ladies, refraining from visiting them at all and preferring to remain at home with one another. I do not mean that you should refuse the visits that good women will have the charity to make to you. True humility will regulate everything.

1640

February: *Louise de Marillac's return from Angers.*
March 30: *The Ladies of Charity take charge of all the foundlings of La Couche.*
August: *Monsieur Lambert's first visit to Angers.*
Publication of the Augustinus, posthumous work of Jansenius.

L.12 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX[1]

(at Angers)[2]

Friday (1640)

Monsieur,

Our good woman is very willing to do as you wish. If I am not mistaken, she will serve you well. I have explained all the necessary conditions to her and she finds them quite acceptable. She told me that ever since she has been employed at the hospital she needs wine while she is working. However, one ample portion a day is sufficient for her. I told her to come back to see me tomorrow or that I would let her know if this good position for her could be arranged.

The administrators have asked me to tell them the best manner in which to bury the sisters. I am including my thoughts on the matter as well as some of the practices observed for the first sisters. I beg you, Monsieur, to review it and to add or delete what you see fit. Our young sister is still very ill and, as usual, I need to be assisted by your charity before God in whose love I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to take the trouble of returning the document to me so that I can show it to the administrators tomorrow after dinner. They are expected early. They have had the official act[3] signed, but I do not think that the one that I am supposed to have will

1. Monsieur Guy Lasnier (1602-1681), Abbot of Saint-Étienne-de-Vaux in Saintonge and Vicar General of Angers. He met Monsieur Vincent during a retreat at Saint-Lazare in 1635. He became the protector and advisor of the Daughters of Charity at the Hospital of Saint-Jean in Angers. There are 101 letters from Louse de Marillac to Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux kept in the archives of the Motherhouse.
2. Louise de Marillac left Paris with three sisters at the end of November and arrived in Angers on December 6, 1639 (Coste I, 609).
3. The official Act of Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at the hospital was signed on February 1, 1640 by Louise de Marillac, Cécile Angiboust, Élisabeth Martin and Marguerite François.

be ready. Would it not be just as well to have it sent to us in Paris? I humbly beg you, Monsieur, to let me know.

L.13 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(February 1640)

Monsieur,

I am ever so grateful to your Charity for remembering my needs both when I am ill and when I am well. Yesterday I received a letter from Monsieur Vincent. who continues to urge me to travel by carriage. I shall not fail to follow the advice which you gave as well as his in this matter. I am indeed distressed, Monsieur, that my infirmities prevent me from fulfilling my obligations during your present illness by offering you whatever little services I could render. If you think that I can do something from a distance, please tell me, I beg of you, so that I can obey you and prove that I am, Monsieur, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.14 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

From Saint Martin, February 24, 1640

Monsieur,

Your Charity has once again added to my already heavy debt of gratitude to you by depriving yourself of your footman to furnish this comfort for me.[1] I had thought of thanking you for this and for all the other benefits[2] I have received from you. However, I must avow, Monsieur, that expressions of gratitude for the benefits bestowed on me by persons such as yourself, whom I greatly esteem, seem so beyond the requirements of politeness that I rarely express them. This is what renders me speechless, Monsieur, at a time when I am particularly obliged to give proof of my gratitude to you. Please forgive me, for I am so foolish that

1. Louise de Marillac left Angers in the carriage of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux of Angers.
2. Ill when she arrived in Angers, she stayed in the Abbé de Vaux's home for a few weeks before joining her sisters at the Hospital of Saint-Jean.

I behave the same way with God, whose innumerable gifts to me inspire within me more admiration than thanksgiving.

Accept my silence then, Monsieur, because I cannot act otherwise. Allow me to tell you, however, that I have never been more indebted to anyone than I am to you. Thus I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

P.S. I believe, Monsieur, that you asked me to send you the formula for rose syrup as well as the method for administering it to the sick. I am enclosing it. Please excuse the deficiencies. Our Master, the loving Doctor, whom I have asked to aid you will make up for them.

L.15 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

February 26, 1640

Monsieur,

By the grace of God, we have arrived safe and sound in Tours. I have decided to hire a coach to take us to Orléans. I humbly thank you for the use of your carriage. I am returning it to you undamaged, thank God. I hope that the return trip will be just as safe.

I am very anxious to have news of our sisters. Please be so kind, Monsieur, as to ask Sister Turgis[1] to write to me about them. I hope that we will reach Orléans Wednesday. However, I shall have to wait until I return to Paris before receiving word. You may be certain of how happy I will be when I receive reassurances about your health because you know, Monsieur, that I am truly your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. For a number of reasons I have been obliged to change route here.

1. Élisabeth Turgis, see letter 38, accompanied by Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78, and Clémence Ferré, See letter 34, left Paris on December 23, 1639 and arrived at Angers at the beginning of January (Coste I, 612).

L.16 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

La Chapelle, March 23, 1640

Monsieur,

Please excuse me for imposing on your Charity. I had promised myself to get news of you every week, either personally or through someone else. Since this has not been possible, I am taking the liberty of interrupting the holy occupations of your Charity to ask you humbly to bring me up-to-date on the state of affairs in the establishment of our daughters.

I am a bit concerned about them because I was supposed to have come to see them but could not because of my trip. I am so subject to committing faults that I should not be surprised by this. Since I am good for nothing, I can but hope that God can and will often derive glory from persons such as I, showing thereby that in His power He has no need of His creatures to carry out His plan.

With the help of God, the three sisters[1] that I promised will leave without fail on Tuesday. It took longer than I expected to send them because of the difficulty we had in withdrawing them from where they were. I assure you, Monsieur, that they are the elite of our remnant except for one sister who is very necessary here. It would be a fault on my part not to recommend them to your charity because I have so many reasons for believing that our loving God has committed this enterprise to it. I have but one humble favor to ask of you, Monsieur, which is to pardon me for my failure to provide spiritual nourishment for these good sisters and to have the charity to correct me so that by mending my ways I may see to it that you have less difficulty with those who will come later.

I do not recall if in my earlier letters I presented to you the humble greetings of Monsieur Vincent. I will make up for this omission in this one which I conclude by humbly begging you to honor me by a continued remembrance in prayer. I ask this in the belief that I am, in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

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1. Geneviève Caillou, see Letter 19, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102 and Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

L.17 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

March 24, 1640

Monsieur,

I have just received the news which your Charity was kind enough to send me. I am somewhat disturbed by it, but with the help of God I will conform my will to the will of God whatever He allows to occur.

Would it not be appropriate, Monsieur, to reinstate the article that had been removed which states that the administrators have the right to dismiss the daughters just as we have the right to recall them? This will make it clear that it was never the intention of Monsieur Vincent to take over the hospital. As long as the arrangement is reciprocal, there is no advantage to one party or the other.

I shall not fail, Monsieur, to send your letter to Monsieur Vincent.

Yesterday I wrote to Monsieur Solimon[1] and requested that while the number of our sisters is small, they go out as seldom as possible. However, Sister Turgis was wrong in not buying what the administrators[2] wanted. If you consider it appropriate, please tell her to apologize for this. I am very much afraid that these gentlemen allow themselves to be influenced by their deference for complainers because it does not appear to me, in view of the action of God in the accomplishment of matters of this importance, that they are sufficiently disposed to excuse entirely the inconvenience caused them by the weakness of our daughters.

I cannot tell you, Monsieur, what a consolation it is for me that the divine goodness has confided this affair to the care of your charity. This is a comfort for me in all the difficulties that may arise and even in a total separation, should God permit this to happen, because I am confident of the continuation of the charitable concern which you still do me the honor of showing for this poor, wretched person who is so grateful to you. I am thus assured that you believe me to be, in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your humble daughter and obedient servant.

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1. One of the hospital administrators.
2. Fathers of Charity: name given to the hospital administrators.

L.18 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 27 (1640)

Monsieur,

I beg your pardon for hastening to answer you by return mail, but it is because I had a request made to Monsieur Vincent for missionaries for the places where you would like to employ them. He gavè me a verbal reply which I misunderstood and that is why, Monsieur, I did not send you his regrets for not being able to give you anyone from here at this time. However, concerning the matter of the charity of which you speak in your letter, he said that, if it is agreeable to you, he will ask Monsieur Lambert[1] to go to see you. He admires, Monsieur, the charity which our good God gives you for our poor sisters. This leads him to express the hope that He will inspire you to be so kind as to give them a little conference, even if it is only for fifteen minutes, on the virtues of which they stand in need and particularly those to which they are obliged by their vocation.

I am very concerned about Sister Turgis. I believe, Monsieur, that she needs a remedy if she is to avoid serious illness. However, she will have to be ordered to take it because she is extremely reluctant to take any drug. Your charity in taking the trouble to write to me about Sister Marie[2] greatly consoled me. I was afraid that she was upset. I beg you, Monsieur, to let me know if our poor Sister Marguerite[3] is dying or did die peacefully. From the news that I have received of her, I can only surmise that she is dead. Blessed be God in all things! Perhaps Sister Clémence[4] will be emotionally stronger once her body, which has been weakened by disease and medications, is restored to health. I feel that too much strain should not be placed on her memory or her imagination, and that she should not be asked to make meditation at all for a long time.

Forgive me, Monsieur, for taking the liberty of speaking to you of all these details. I find the courage to do so from the charity which has led

1. Monsieur Lambert (1606-1653) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1629. Superior in Toul from 1635 to 1637, then at Richelieu from 1638-1642, he was named Assistant General of the Congregation. After another stay in Richelieu (1645-1646), he returned to the Collège des Bons-Enfants in Paris. Monsieur Vincent sent him many times to visit the sisters of the hospitals in Angers and Nantes. In 1651, he was sent to Poland. He died on January 31, 1653, victim of his dedication to the plague-stricken. His death upset Monsieur Vincent a great deal (Coste IV, 567).
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
3. When they arrived at the hospital, the plague continued its devastation in Anjou (Coste IX, 40). Many sisters fell ill, one of them, Marguerite François of Saint-Nicholas in Lorraine, died from it.
4. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.

you to fill so perfectly the place of our father. May God be eternally blessed for this!

It is in the love of Jesus Crucified that I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. Monsieur, I am taking the liberty of sending you the letter for our sisters unsealed so that you may see what Monsieur Vincent is telling them about obedience.

L.19 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

May 3, 1640

Monsieur,

We have good reason to praise God who softens by His mercy the lashes which His justice inflicts upon us.

Our Sister Geneviève[1] is now better. How worried I would have been had you further exposed yourself! I beg of you, for the love of God, Monsieur, do not let our sisters impose upon you to this extent. I am afraid that, seeing the great charity which God gives you for them, they will take advantage of it without considering the danger which this poses to you any more than they consider the danger to themselves. They are very much in the wrong if they want to conceal their illness when you or the administrators order them not to do so or when they do not remain sufficiently isolated.

I am not writing to them by this mail because I do not want to interfere with the time devoted to the service of their sick poor, who, I hope, will not suffer any harm. They will not, unless the sisters are a little too protective of themselves. You always tell me only the good they do. Do not be afraid, I beg of you, Monsieur, also to speak to me of their faults.

I believe that I did not clearly understand what you were asking me to present to Monsieur Vincent concerning the Mission. I assume that you have received the second letter which I wrote to you about this matter and understand his reasons.

I praised God when you informed me of the election of these two good persons as Fathers of the Poor. But can the good Monsieur Gardeau[2] do

1. Geneviève Caillou of Saint-Germain: at Angers from March 1640 until the end of 1644; at the parish of Saint-Gervais in Paris in 1645 and 1646; sent to Le Mans in May 1646. As a result of the difficulties experienced in the effort to establish the Daughters of Charity in that city, she returned to Paris (Coste II, 599). She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company on August 8, 1655.

2. One of the administrators of the hospital of Angers.

nothing more? I believe that, unless he works on the matter, the implementation of the contract will continue to be delayed.[1] It seems to me, Monsieur, that the gentlemen are very wrong in fearing the establishment of a community, because the power that they reserve for themselves and which we willingly accord them of removing the sisters, should convince them that they retain permanent control.

I am certain that you will not fail to continue to remind the sisters of their duty to obey. Monsieur Vincent humbly greets you. He is in constant admiration of your charity. I hope that our good God will grant you holy perseverance. I beg Him to inspire you with a thought for my needs during the holy sacrifice of the Mass since I am by His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and servant.

L.20 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

Paris, May 6, 1640[2]

Monsieur,

I must make use of the hand of another to respond to the letter which you were so good as to write to me on the thirtieth of last month. I assure you, Monsieur, that I do so reluctantly. I hope to write myself for the next mail. I would willingly do so now, I think, were it not that I do not dare to push myself too soon. Moreover, I took some medication this morning which limits my activity.

I was greatly consoled by the news that you were kind enough to send me about our poor daughters. I have no doubt that God will bless this work provided we place no obstacles in His way. We shall try always to act with trust and dependence upon His divine will.

It seems to me that your manner of handling the matter of the two girls about whom you wrote leaves nothing to be desired. If you consider it appropriate, we will accept the one who has nothing. As for the other girl, if you approve, she may as she wishes, use the rent from her house to assist her few relatives. As for the young lady, I have nothing to say but leave the matter in your hands. We shall continue to follow your advice concerning her.

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1. Literally, "to be left on the hook." The hospital administrators contested the article of the contract which affirmed the dependence of the sisters upon the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission.

2. Letter written by a secretary and signed by Louise de Marillac.

While waiting for the time when I shall have the honor of writing to you myself, I am and shall always remain, Monsieur, your very humble and grateful servant.

L.44 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers
Archdeacon and Canon of the Church of Paris–Île de la Cité

(May 1640)[1]

Monsieur,

The fever which has racked me for the past two weeks with some rather bad effects prevents me from having the honor of writing to you myself to thank you very humbly for the great concern that your Charity has for us. I thought that in my last letter I had stated clearly, Monsieur, that I expected good things of the two girls about whom you had written and that you could always be certain that with a recommendation from you they would be well received. Nevertheless, Monsieur, since you want a more specific directive, let me say that Monsieur Vincent has no objections. As for me, I beg you to honor them by accompanying them yourself. I hope that they will be free of the weaknesses to which girls from Angers are subject when they come to this area. I believe that Sister Marie, whom I brought [with me], will be the first of those who will be energetic and strong. The two girls who came just before her became chronically ill as soon as they arrived. They were sickly from the beginning and are now on their deathbeds. I am speaking of the Perrine girls, whom I think you remember, Monsieur.

I rejoice in the hope that you give us of having the honor of seeing you again. On the other hand, I am fully aware of the loss that this will be for our sisters and the need in which they may find themselves, especially if the Reformed Canons Regular of Saint Augustine take over the hospital during your absence.

I beg you, Monsieur, for the love of God, to leave some directives with them and with whomever your Charity will assign as their director, concerning how they should act should this happen. I supplicate God to grant you the strength and health necessary to accomplish His designs upon you. I remain in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

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1. Letter written by the same secretary who wrote Letter 20.

L.21 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

Paris, May 26, 1640[1]

Monsieur,

The seriousness of my illness forces me to ask someone else to write to you for me to express my profound gratitude for the honor of your last two letters and to recommend me to your prayers. I have great need of them in the serious state in which I have been for the past three or four days and from which I have not yet recovered.

I believe that Monsieur Vincent will send a complete reply to your letters. I ask only that you have Sister Madeleine,[2] who has written instructions from her mother, promise that she will pay the debt she owes to her cousin, a good priest who lives here in the city and who is pressing hard for payment because he needs the money. Please just send us her promise and we will take care of it. With this I assure you that I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and grateful servant.

P.S. I humbly ask you to remember me to our poor Sisters of Charity and to assure them that I hope to be well enough to write to them by the next mail.

L.22 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

May 29, 1640

Monsieur,

Just a word to express my humble gratitude for all your goodness to our daughters and for sending me news of them. May God be your eternal recompense! I am very worried about our poor Sister Élisabeth.[3] I do not

1. Letter written by the same secretary who did the two preceding letters.
2. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
3. Elisabeth Martin of Argenteuil, one of the first Daughters of Charity. In 1636, she was at the parish of Saint-Paul in Paris. She left for Angers with Mademoiselle. There she assumed responsibility for the hospital community from 1640 to 1642. Her weak health forced her to rest often. After a short stay at Richelieu, she returned to the Motherhouse (1643). The young sisters were placed in her hands. She then went to Liancourt. The Founders recalled her from there in order to entrust her with the responsibility for the new community leaving for Nantes (1646). In 1647, difficulties within the community

know if she is having a recurrence of an old illness. If such is the case, I think that it would perhaps be well, Monsieur, after conferring with the doctor, to see if she is strong enough to send her back to us. I am asking Sister Turgis, after she has had you speak to the two good girls who want to come to us and after you have given your approval, to send them here. Our good sister could travel with them. Excuse my brevity. My weakened condition prevents me from writing more and makes me close here by assuring you, Monsieur, that I remain, your most obedient daughter and servant.

L.27 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ELISABETH MARTIN

(at Angers)

(c. 1640)

My very dear Sister,

With all my heart I share in your suffering, and I lovingly praise God for the courage which His goodness is giving to you. I think that if you stopped all medication and drank a lot of pure water you would feel better. Be at peace concerning the question about which you spoke to me. Renew your good desires and believe that in the eyes of God the deed is already accomplished. I recommend myself to your prayers and to those of all our sisters. I am, my very dear Sister, your very loving sister and servant.

L.28 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

(1640)

I humbly beg your Charity to take the trouble to let us know if tomorrow after dinner is a suitable time so that I can inform our four sisters. I forgot to mention Sister Anne[1] of Saint Paul who, I believe, must be handled gently and Sister Geneviève[2] of the Hôtel-Dieu who is

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took their toll on her health. Placed once again at Richelieu, she died there at the end of the year 1648.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. Geneviève Poisson entered the community before 1636. She was first placed at the

now here to rest. She was exhausted from working with the foundlings during the last part of Lent. In this case there will be five or six sisters. At another time, some of the sisters may be missing, so this would enable more than four of them to profit from the instruction which it pleases God to give us by your charity. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and grateful servant.

L.29 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

July 9, 1640

Monsieur,

The short distance between La Chapelle and Paris has permitted me to receive the two letters you were so kind as to write to me since your little trip. I humbly thank you for them. I am taking the liberty, Monsieur, of speaking to you about the good intentions of this holy religious. If he had reflected that the best way to teach is to do, he would have told the sister who came to him for advice that God acts in diverse ways in the guidance of souls. But the sisters are in a pitiful mental state from running after different opinions. What does not appear to be sin, can it not be endured by the humble soul who does not fail to make use of it to grow in self-abasement? Would to God that I would do what I say; I would be better if I did. I am not as yet terminally ill, Monsieur. That will come in God's good time. In the meantime these good gentlemen are carrying out their plan for these poor souls who are in danger of being lost.

I assure you, Monsieur, I am greatly consoled and in no way will I be displeased if these good girls who had wanted to join us serve in this work, if such be the will of God. My desire to have with us only those who are truly called to this life, without any material consideration, leads me to have no strong feelings in this matter. That, Monsieur, is why I am extremely pleased with the way in which you have handled those who have approached you.

I am a bit concerned about our sisters because I have not had a letter from them for a long time. They must still not be feeling well. I believe that if Sister Élisabeth[1] and the other sisters got used to water and drank

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Hôtel-Dieu of Paris. In July 1647, she helped to settle the foundlings at Bicêtre and she devoted herself to this work for many years. In 1651, she participated in the Council as a representative of the older sisters. On August 8, 1655, she signed the Act of Establishment of the Company. She was named Treasurer on May 22, 1657.

1. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.

a good quantity of it they would be much better. However, we tend to denigrate what we have. In my opinion, Sister Élisabeth will not have a fever again for a good while. I do not think, Monsieur, that there is any danger in letting her resume her activities provided she does not overdo it and takes time, at least twice a day, to go for a walk or work in the garden.

What will you say of the great liberty I take of speaking about everything? It seems to me that this is what your Charity told me to do? That is why I have become in a particular way, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and very humble daughter.

L.47 - MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

La Chapelle, Feast of Saint Anne (July 26, 1640)

Monsieur,

I am well aware of your frequent trips out of the city and of a certain disorder among our daughters there. I do not know if Monsieur Lambert[1] has gone there. If he does so, I humbly beg of you to speak very openly to him of the state of the sisters, individually and as a group.

I praise God with all my heart that this good girl has given herself to the service of the Penitents. I assure you that had I been there and had she sought my advice, I think that I would have tried to persuade her to do the same thing. As you know, when I was there I never spoke to her about remaining with us nor did I do so to others who would have willingly joined us for the sake of this establishment. Is it not reasonable, Monsieur, to serve all souls redeemed by God?

The sisters of Angers are as dear to me as those elsewhere and, if I dared, I would say that they are even a bit dearer. But this is self-interest because of the honor and charity I have received there. So, Monsieur, may the holy will of God be accomplished in us and through us in time and in eternity! I have no thought at all concerning the girls about whom your Charity did me the honor of writing. Perhaps this is because I was waiting for you to be so good as to give me further information about them. I think that I would be almost as hesitant about a person who, for whatever reason, would fear nothing, as about one who, moved by human prudence, would want to be reassured. I also have misgivings about those

1. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.

who have worked as domestics or who live in the city. However, the Spirit of God breathes where it will.

I have not had the honor of seeing the person whom you placed in charge of the *Psalms* of the late Monsieur de Marillac.[1] I do not know if it can still be purchased. His works on Job were never published.[2] My son told me that your nephew would be returning soon. I will give him my copy for you if I cannot find another. See, Monsieur, how simply I speak and deal with you. I would be very relieved to know the true situation in Loudun when you get back. Permit me to continue to recommend our poor daughters to your charity. I feel that Monsieur Tonnelier[3] will do no harm. Believe me ever in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and obedient servant.

L.23 - TO SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

One of the Daughters of Charity (at Angers)

(1640)

My dear Sister,

How I share in your suffering! I would want you to relieve your pain by the continual thought that you are in the state that God wills for you. By so doing, you would no longer worry that you are a burden because you cannot work as you desire. Thus you would reject all those thoughts which keep you from being totally united to the heart of our good God and which are perhaps also an obstacle to your recovery. Recall that God wants you to be peaceful and cheerful in the midst of your suffering. Imagine that I am often near you to say: "My dear Sister, remember that you were in this condition once before and that God restored you to health when He willed you to serve Him."

I am hurt that you have not written to me yourself even once since I left. Please do so, if you are able. But speak to me openly of your suffering. I will read and understand everything.

My regards to all our sisters. Encourage them in your pain. Believe me, Sister, to be your sister and best friend.

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1. Michel de Marillac (1563-1632), Keeper of the Seal. A man of great spiritual depth, he worked on a treatise on eternal life while he was in the prison of Châteaudun. He also undertook a translation of *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, *The Psalms* and *The Book of Job*. His daughter-in-law, who joined him at Châteaudun, took care of the publication of the books.
2. The publication was not yet done.
3. Monsieur Tonnelier, confessor of the sisters at the hospital of Angers.

L.103 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

Feast of Saint Lawrence (August 10, 1640)

Monsieur,

You were unaware that when I am employed for some good work the faults that I commit in carrying it out invariably bring down upon it some sign of the justice of God to prove to me that I accomplish nothing worthwhile. It is I, therefore, who am the cause of the murmuring in these little establishments. I ask your pardon for the trouble this has occasioned for you, but, Monsieur, can you not satisfy His Excellency, your Bishop, with the reason that your Charity gave me concerning the proposal that I made to him to look into the matter; namely, that since the hospital did not seem to be as completely dependent upon him as it perhaps should be, it was not appropriate for him to authorize this action?

I know nothing at all about this establishment for penitent women except what you have told me which, it seems to me, is that they are simply a group of women gathered together in a house. I do not know if they are cloistered. Permit me to say that I am astonished that your Charity has not been to see them so that this little difficulty would not worsen. Our good God would express His displeasure about this, for what can be accomplished without you? What would we have done without your guidance? It is God who gave it to us, may He be blessed!

Am I to be told nothing about the visit of Monsieur Lambert?[1] From Sister Turgis' letter it appears that it did them no harm. I see that she is unaware that there is any thought of recalling her. I believe that that is just as well. She spoke to me about five or six girls. However, Monsieur, it is very important to know them and to accept them with the understanding that we can dismiss them. I beg you to take the trouble of interviewing them to discover their motivation. Try to find out if the constant chatter of the one about whom you wrote to me is not due to the frivolity and habits she contracted in the household where she worked. This attitude would certainly not be suitable for us. We accept no one if there is the slightest suspicion that she has fallen. This is certainly too important for all the daughters.

I was somewhat annoyed that you were accommodated so promptly by the person[2] who procured the works of Monsieur de Marillac for you. I had no idea that his letters had been published. Please let me know, Monsieur, the name of the publisher.

Please let me tell you that my heart was touched when I heard that

1. Monsieur Lambert had just made the visitation.

2. It was a question of Michel Le Gras, Louise de Marillac's son.

you had thought of giving back to God the charge which He had perhaps given to you. Oh, it seems to me, Monsieur, that there is much good to accomplish both for yourself and for the neighbor. Although I am unworthy, I shall not fail to offer my humble prayers to God for this intention.

I cannot tell you how pleased I was to hear that your sister is in Paris. I hope to have the honor of seeing her, but I asked her to wait until after her lawsuit is settled. Then I will remind her that she promised me that she would spend a few days at our little hermitage where she can see Monsieur Vincent.

I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for the information concerning our sisters which you gave to Monsieur Lambert. I believe that it was absolutely necessary. I hope that our good sister from Richelieu[1] will do very well if God permits her to go to Angers. She is a prudent woman who is not upset by rumors and who does not give rise to them. She is also very virtuous. We had thought of her from the very beginning. I beg God to reveal His holy will to you in this matter. It is in this holy will, Monsieur, that I remain your very humble daughter and servant.

P.S. The reverend administrators are saying nothing more about the articles of the contract. It will be something else. I beg you, Monsieur, to let me know your thoughts on the matter. I believe that it will be well if the sisters do not know if Sister Turgis is to be dismissed until just a few days ahead of time.

L.426 - (TO THE SISTERS OF THE HOSPITAL OF ANGERS)

(August 1640)

My dear Sisters,

In my mind's eye I see myself now among you as you serve supper to our dear masters. O my God! What a happiness you experience! Unworthy as I am, I can know it only in desire. Courage then, my dear Sisters! Let us serve with hearts filled with the pure love of God which enables us always to love the roses amidst the thorns. How short is this life of pain! How long, love-filled and desirable will be our blessed eternity! But we can attain this only by following Jesus who constantly labored and suffered. And even He could not have led us to this had His perseverance not led Him to death on the Cross. O my Sisters, are we to

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43; the Founders thought many times of sending her to Angers (Coste II, 18 and 67).

spare ourselves and thus deceive ourselves? Oh let us be on our guard against this! If we work for 49 years[1] and then if during the fiftieth, when God calls us, we have ceased to do so, we will have accomplished nothing during our lifetime. Perseverance then, my dear Sisters, must be the last flower in our crown since we must acquire it in the final moment of our lives by the grace and love of God. Would we not be miserable creatures if self-love or attachment to passing things prevented us from attaining this vitally important perseverance. O my good Sisters, ask God to grant me His mercy so that my cowardice may not deprive me of His love for all eternity. How often I have merited this punishment because of my sins.

L.106 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

August 29 (1640)

Monsieur,

Blessed be God for having silenced the complaints for as long as it pleased Him! If you think, Monsieur, that speaking to these gentlemen of the articles[2] which they themselves wanted and proposed will lead to more suspicion, in the name of God do not bring up the matter. I believe that your maxim is true, and I assure you I have no desire for any greater assurance than Divine Providence. You know that even should the Rule and the articles appear in the proposed form, they provide no assurance or commitment on either side. They will serve only as a validly drawn-up contract stating the terms by which the sisters were employed for the service of the poor so that, with the passage of time, nothing may be modified by one party or the other so long as they remain in this place.

Monsieur Lambert could not keep your cordial hospitality to himself. It is not up to me to thank you, Monsieur, but rather to ask our good God to continue to shower His graces upon you, particularly those which He granted you for the direction of our poor daughters. I have asked Sister Turgis to welcome all the girls whom you recommend. However, please remember, Monsieur, that they should be warned that if they do not live up to their promises, they will be sent back or they will have to find employment as domestics. I am telling you this, Monsieur, but they must commit a serious fault before that will happen.

1. Louise de Marillac, born on August 12, 1591, was going into her fiftieth year.

2. See Letter 19. The study of various articles of the contract continued for one year. Registration by the civil courts of Angers did not take place until March 18, 1641.

I had the honor and consolation of seeing your sister. I am sorry that you wanted this before her lawsuit was settled because I know the great amount of work she has to do in this matter. She told me that she could not promise to come for the week of rest which I had hoped she would take in our little hermitage. I asked her to consider a full day. She expressed her great desire to see Monsieur Vincent. He will willingly see her if we let him know when she will be so good as to come. She brought me great joy in the hope that we might have the honor of seeing you here this winter. I desire this if it is the holy will of God in which I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient daughter.

L.107 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 6 (1640)

Monsieur,

I believe that the honorable Administrators and Fathers of the Poor will not object if we withdraw Sister Élisabeth Turgis.[1] I assure you we have great need of her here and, had the sisters not been ill, we would have asked for her return long ago. You are aware, Monsieur, that these gentlemen were reluctant to have her remain there so I think they will be quite pleased.

Should anyone want to make it appear that it is essential for her to remain, or should she herself desire it, I humbly beg of you, Monsieur, to overcome these objections so that she can leave as soon as possible. I told her, Monsieur, to bring with her the girls whom your Charity judges suitable.

We had the honor of a visit from your sister. I am sorry to say that she surprised us and came on a day when Monsieur Vincent was not at Saint-Lazare. I assure you how sorry he was about this. I was not able to tell him where Madame du Plessis[2] was staying. My continual infirmities have prevented me from visiting her. I had thought to diminish your work a bit by removing a daughter. Will I not add to it instead? I abandon everything to Divine Providence. The assurance of your charity is also a great comfort to me. It leads me to believe that you consider me, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

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1. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

2. Madame de la Brunetière du Plessis-Gesté, sister of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux. Amicable relations existed between the de Marillac and du Plessis families: the wife of Michel de Marillac (Barbe de la Forterie) was a native of Le Maine.

L.108 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 19 (1640)

Monsieur,

You are justified in complaining of my laziness which apparently has kept me for so long from thanking you most humbly for all the trouble your Charity has taken for our daughters. I do not know how I let this day go by without sending the letter which I should have been honored to write to you to beg you most humbly to be so good as to convince the administrators of the hospital that we should withdraw Sister Turgis for the reasons which I set forth in my last letter.

We are grateful for their good will toward Sister Élisabeth,[1] but it seems to me that this poor sister would perhaps feel better in this air. Nevertheless, I leave the matter entirely up to you. However, I assure you, Monsieur, that Sister Barbe from Richelieu has all the qualities necessary to lead this little community, although it is true that she does not write as well as Sister Turgis. She is the older sister of Sister Cécile.[2]

I had not heard that your sister[3] had lost her lawsuit. I was very edified by the truly Christian dispositions with which she awaited the results.

If Sister Turgis has not already left, I humbly beg you once again, Monsieur, to consider everything that I have asked you and to handle the matter of the two girls as you judge best. I ask your pardon for the liberty I take with your charity while I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.33 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Denis (1640)

Monsieur,

The friends of the mother of one of our infants are strongly urging

1. Élisabeth Martin was always ill. Mademoiselle thought about her transfer, see Letter 22.
2. Cécile Angiboust, who entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity a few years after her older sister, Barbe. She arrived at Angers in December 1639 and stayed there until October 1657. The numerous letters from Louise de Marillac that she had carefully saved allow one to follow the hospital community's history. In 1648, she was named Sister Servant of that community. After her return to Paris in 1657, she was sent to the Petites Maisons.
3. See Letters 103, 426, 106 and 107.

us to settle the legal proceedings that have been taken against her in her absence. They are asking that we propose to them what we want so that they can extricate her from her difficulty. There is an ecclesiastic[1] who is meddling in the matter as well as the master of the household where she works. I promised them our decision. We can either make an example of her for others and press charges against her which will completely ruin her, or we can follow a more lenient course and demand that she pay her child's expenses; that she take the child with her after she has obtained the written guarantee of a responsible person stating the she will not harm the child but will raise it in keeping with her obligation; that she make a donation to the house (please let me know the sum).

I believe that those who are meddling in this affair will pay whatever we ask so I think it should be a goodly sum. Or, Monsieur, before making these demands you might prefer them to propose a sum themselves. Please, without deference to other matters, be so good as to respond to all of this since Monsieur Leroy[2] has put the matter entirely in my hands.

It is my intention to do everything connected with this affair in obedience to you as Superior of the Ladies, whom I would like to see meet here every week. If you judge it good, after I have received your reply, I will notify them to come to a meeting here to resolve the matter. Or, if you prefer, please tell our sister to ask them to assemble here tomorrow, Wednesday, at 11 a.m. at which time I am expecting Monsieur Bret, who is coming for the response which I am to receive from your Charity.

Madame Turgis[3] has arrived. Do you think that the sister whom she brought with her should make her retreat here along with the sister who spoke with you at Sainte-Marie, or would you prefer her to make it at the residence of the deceased Commander?[4]

I told the good sister from Saint-Germain[5] that we cannot keep malcontents here, nor can we put up with those who disedify the other sisters. I warned her that if she wished to remain she would have to change her comportment, and that she would not be fit to serve the poor for at least the next few years.

Our money is all in French currency. We have very little gold of any weight. I am quite willing for God to make use of it if such be His holy will. I met Madame de Villeneuve[6] who told me that she had been shown a house at La Chapelle. I do not know which it could be if not ours.

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1. "Beneficiary": owner of an ecclesiastical benefice.
2. Monsieur Leroy, one of the adminstrators of the work with the foundlings.
3. Élisabeth Turgis arrived from Angers, see Letters 107 and 38.
4. The Commander de Sillery, who died on September 26, 1640.
5. Parish of Paris.
6. Madame de Villeneuve, friend of Louise de Marillac, founded the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross in 1641. She died on January 15,1650.

Please think about it. I believe that we would have to inform you of all the structural problems, as well as those that can be remedied before we move,[1] so that we will have no regrets later on.

I beg the goodness of God to allow nothing to interfere with the accomplishment of His designs and that I may remain truly, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

L.30 - (TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX)

House of the Foundlings,[2] October 3, 1640

Monsieur,

I am very annoyed with Sister Turgis for leaving this good girl behind. I had told her not to be deterred by the cost of the journey if that were the only obstacle and that, should an occasion present itself, she should send her. She knew that she would be welcome, as would the girl about whom your Charity had done me the honor of speaking. Blessed Monsieur de Sales did not exclude these poor creatures from his order, that is, the order of his daughters, so we would be very much in the wrong were we not to accept them.

I am embarrassed to have gone so far for a question of schedule. I thought, Monsieur, that I had placed the whole matter in your hands. Please settle it, as everything else, for the good of our sisters who are so indebted to you, as I am also on account of all that I have come to owe your Charity because of your attention to my difficulties. It is you, Monsieur, by your charitable concern, who have, by the grace of God, led them to the practice of that detachment which you have observed in them on the occasion of this separation. You can see, Monsieur, the need they have of your assistance to accomplish the holy will of God, which seems to be that Sister Élisabeth[3] remain in Angers since His goodness has restored her to health. This was the only reason that we had considered withdrawing her.

I was beginning to fear that you were ill, and I had decided to contact your sister[4] to have more accurate news of you. Thanks be to God it was good. May He grant us the grace of preserving you for His glory and

1. It was a question of buying a house near Saint-Lazare in order to transfer the Daughters of Charity Motherhouse there (Coste II, 130, 333).
2. Responsibility for all the foundlings was achieved on March 30, 1640.
3. Élisabeth Martin, Sister Servant of the community of the hospital at Angers, see Letter 22.
4. Madame du Plessis, see Letter 107.

His love in which I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

L.7B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(November 28, 1640)

Monsieur,

Madame de Liancourt[1] has informed me that she will send someone for me tomorrow around 8 a.m. I humbly beg your Charity to let me know if there is some reason why I should not visit her. I also wish to remind you of what I told you today about our sisters. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the day, five[2] or seven years ago, that, albeit poorly, the first sisters came together in community. This evening I had a thought which warmed my heart: since by the grace of God, they are better now than they were at the beginning, after the few years that I hope to remain on earth, the one whom God will send them will draw upon them even greater blessings by her good example. This is what I desire with all my heart and I ask it of our good God. May I remain until my final hour. . .

L.34 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

La Chapelle, December 21, 1640

Monsieur,

I praise God with all my heart for the blessings which His goodness has bestowed on the charitable concern which you manifest in the direction of our dear sisters. I am still a bit worried about Sister Clémence's[3] apparent naïveté. I hope that God will enable you to discover her true dispositions. I am also concerned about Madame Terrier's retreat

1. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4, a friend of Louise de Marillac who frequently invited her to come to rest on her estates.
2. In November of 1638, Monsieur Vincent was not in Paris.
3. Clémence Ferré: in Angers from January 1640 to April 1644. After a period in Liancourt, she was in Chars in 1657.

at the hospital for the reasons pointed out by your Charity. But, Monsieur, would there not be a way of closing off the door which separates her room from the sisters' little kitchen? She has a fireplace. Moreover, she could make use of the main kitchen in which the sisters wash the dishes of the poor. I believe, Monsieur, that it is very important for the administrators to approve this arrangement before this good woman leaves the house where she is now. I do not know who advised her to move, because I think that she can render great service to God by working for the salvation of the souls residing there. I have no recollection of her having asked for sisters for this establishment, and still less of having given her any hope that this could be arranged, because I know that we cannot even consider it since we have only enough sisters for the care of the sick.

I am surprised that the doctor is complaining that the sisters do not accompany him on his rounds because this is the responsibility of Monsieur Nabulo, who does not fail to carry it out and is sufficiently exact in informing the sisters of the needs of the sick. Nevertheless, I humbly ask you, Monsieur, to tell them to do whatever you judge necessary. It is a great hindrance for sisters who have such a holy occupation to want to learn to read when they are not able to do so. For this reason I have sometimes refused to allow this for a long time even for those sisters who can read a little.

It is true that our letters have been somewhat delayed. I think that the fastest way would be to send them by my son. For although he is not in Paris, his mail still goes to the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

I take advantage of your patience. I beg you to forgive me for this and to honor me with the certitude that I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.

1641

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Nanteuil-le-Haudoin and Sedan.

Monsieur Lambert's second visit to Angers.

Transfer of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity to the Saint-Denis suburbs, to the parish of Saint-Laurent near Saint-Lazare.

L.56 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

January 4, 1641

Monsieur,

Monsieur Brouart has told me of the gossip circulating about our sisters, and I remain troubled about it. If our sisters are at fault, I humbly beg you to be good enough to inform me and to excuse me for writing to you so often. This time it is to send you my humble greetings at the beginning of this new year and to take the liberty of sending you a letter for our sisters. I am afraid that those which I sent directly to them have been lost because it has been so long since I have had any news of them. Nevertheless, I am at peace because you are in the city. I am sure that your Charity would let me know if anything untoward happened to them.

But now, Monsieur, winter is slipping by and you have yet to honor us by letting us know if you will come to Paris as you had planned and, if so, when. With all my heart I would want to see this happen if such be the holy will of God in which I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.57 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

January 28, 1641

Monsieur,

Accept my very humble thanks for the goodness which your Charity has shown by sending me news of our sisters and by informing me of their faults. This is one of the greatest proofs I could have that you honor us by seeking our good and the perfection of those souls for whom God has given you such great love. You discover therein, Monsieur, the goodness of Divine Providence which placed them under your guidance and which is thereby eternally glorified.

Sister Madeleine[1] has explained to me the faults of which the sisters

1. Madeleine Mongert of Sucy-en-Brie, sent to Angers in March 1640. Named Sister Servant in October 1641 at Élisabeth Martin's departure, she experienced a few difficulties in running the small community. Mademoiselle summoned her to Paris for a few months in 1644. After many chnges of sisters in the hospital of Angers, she reassumed

are accused in such a way that I find it difficult to see how they could do any better since there are too many people giving orders. This is something that I said to the administrators when I told them that they would never be completely satisfied with the service rendered to the sick by our sisters if they did not trust them to do this. Very often one person orders what the other forbids.

I am not trying to excuse their faults, Monsieur; on the contrary, I am sure that they commit more than I realize. Would it not be possible, Monsieur, if the administrators complain to you about them, to suggest for matters concerning the care of the sick, that there be one person only to order the little things which are constantly arising and that they authorize the sisters, in keeping with their Rule, to carry out the orders of the doctor when it is possible for them to do so?

Sister Madeleine did not speak to me about any disunion among them or about complaints made against Sister Clémence,[1] who she tells me, is quite ill after her fall at the fountain, or about the grumbling heard from Sister Cécile[2] during her illness. However, I am concerned about what is not a lesser evil, namely, that they are putting the sick sisters in the wards with the other patients. I am not certain, Monsieur, that this should be allowed. When we send them another sister, which, with the help of God, will be soon, they will be better able to take care of one another. We, both they and I, have great reason to thank God that the fault which caused the fire did not do greater damage, at least according to what I have been told. I am convinced that there is still some envy which gives rise to all these complaints in the city. I beg God to accomplish His holy will in which I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.

P.S. Our good sisters inform me that they are at their best on the days when you visit them. I am not telling you this, Monsieur, to ask you to show greater concern for them but rather to indicate a sign of the weakness of our sex. If they could recognize this fault, it seems to me that you would be greatly encouraged.

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responsibility for the community until 1648. Her state of health made it necessary to replace her by Cécile Angiboust. She died in Angers at the end of 1648. (Trans. Note: Although when referring to Madeleine Mongert, Louise de Marillac frequently writes Magdeleine, Madeleine will be used whenever reference is made to her.)

1. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

L.36 - TO MY DEAR SISTERS BARBE AND LOUISE[1]

at Richelieu

February 1, 1641

My very dear Sisters,

I am pleased that you sent back the crosses which I had given you. Here are the two of them which I am sending to you. They are not completely filled with relics. I have left a place so that you can add any that you might have.

I was very happy to have news of you from Monsieur Vincent when he returned. With all my heart I beg God to continue to bestow His graces upon you and to grant you the courage to be faithful to Him. Please remember me in your prayers and in your holy employments. Greet Monsieur Lambert very humbly for me and tell him that the two girls he sent us are in good health and doing fine. I ask him to be so kind as to send us news of their family and friends from time to time. Sister Vincente[2] would like to have news of her former mistress. I beg you to supplicate our dear crucified Lord to grant me the grace of loving Him well.

I remain in Him, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.115 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

February 8 (1641)

Monsieur,

Your Charity was so kind as to underline the last article of our Rule.[3] I am returning it to you. Please re-do it as you judge best.

Forgive me, Monsieur, if I take this liberty as well as that of telling you that, if you have not already been purged, I would be pleased to

1. Barbe Angiboust and Louise Ganset, see Letters 43 and 11.
2. Vincente Auchy, native of Richelieu, had just entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity. She seemed to have always stayed in Paris, outside of a few months spent in Chars in 1652. She did not know how to read or write. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company with an "x" on August 8, 1655.
3. See Letters 19 and 106.

render you this little service by preparing you a potion which I believe should be made up of the equivalent of the weight of three copper coins of senna steeped overnight in a good mixture of refreshing, pleasant-tasting herbs. To this add one-half ounce of cleaned black currants mixed with an ounce of peach syrup (the pharmacist here has given me some that is excellent) or, if this is not available, the same amount of pink rose syrup. However, I believe that you should wait until the pain which is causing the inflammation has subsided completely, or at least for a week, so as not to bring on another attack. What will you think of me for being so complacent? The freedom which your goodness accords me makes me believe that your Charity will not be offended by my suggestion since I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and obedient servant.

L.36B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 9, 1641

Monsieur,

At last our good Sister Marie[1] is here and she is filled with good will. I find her a bit tired from the work that she has been doing for the past week and apprehensive about departing alone[2] and being separated from her sisters. Nevertheless, she is acting in a proper manner without complaining or raising any obstacle in the way of obedience. She simply seems very frightened.

However, I am not so docile. The resolution that I thought you had taken never to send a sister out alone is so deeply rooted in my mind that I find it necessary to send someone with her. She could fall ill on the way or, once there, she could meet evil persons who will get a wrong impression of her and cause her problems. Moreover, we are not insensitive and recognize that it was no little thing for these good girls to leave everything. She could suffer a great deal, and not being able to find relief in her troubles, it is to be feared that she will become discouraged. I am afraid that it might also be harmful for others who

1. Marie Joly, one of the very first Daughters of Charity, was introduced by Madame Goussault in approximately 1632. She served the poor in the parishes of Paris: Saint-Paul, Saint-Germain. In 1641, she was chosen for the new establishment in Sedan. She stayed there until October 1654. Upon returning to Paris, she lived at the Motherhouse. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company and shared her reflection at the time of the conference of virtues of Barbe Angiboust (Coste X, 647).

2. At Sedan. This formerly Protestant city had just returned to the Catholic faith following the abjuration of the Duke de Bouillon in 1634 (Coste II, 131).

will believe that we do not care much for our daughters since we let them go all by themselves. All these reasons, Monsieur, cause me to take the liberty of begging you to reconsider the matter. If a solution can be found, she will be an example and an encouragement for the others. The trip will not cost us much. In addition to the ten écus that she brought a week ago, she gave me the same amount yesterday.

As for their living expenses, since they have been accustomed to frugality, I believe that whatever small amount is given to one of them would help to support the other. They can work to earn the rest. Although she had a great deal of work and many sick persons at Saint-Germain, Sister Marie did not hesitate to take in laundry to earn money.

If you approve, Monsieur, I thought to give her our big Sister Claire. She is the one who went to Sainte-Marie to be received by you and was accompanied by her mother. She is quite a docile soul, and I think that they would get along very well. I humbly ask you to be so kind as to let me know if you find this satisfactory; when they should leave; and if I should reserve places for them on the coach.

I am distressed to bother you during your illness, which I beg God to cure. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. The sister whom I am suggesting we send with Sister Marie Joly knows how to read, but Sister Marie does not. She could teach poor little girls. If your Charity would prefer another sister, please name her so that we can give our good Sister Marie a companion.

L.37 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

April 22 (1641)

Monsieur,

At the very time that I received the letter that you did me the honor of sending to me, I was reflecting on a directive which your Charity had given me. This confirmed the thought I expressed to you the last time I had the honor of seeing you and of discussing the subject treated in your letter. Therefore, since you wish it, I shall write to our sisters for Wednesday. I will leave the name blank so that God may make known which of our sisters, Sister Cécile or Sister Madeleine,[1] He wills to take

1. Cécile Angiboust or Madeleine Mongert. It is the latter who was chosen to replace Élisabeth Martin, who left to rest.

the place of our dear Sister Élisabeth, whose departure has touched me very deeply. I believe her to be a good and true servant of God. I ask your Charity please to be so good as to fill in the name. I am astonished that the good gentlemen of the administration said nothing about her illness when they sent me the documents concerning the establishment, which I received last week.[1] This led me to believe that you had not returned, since they were not sent to you. May God will that the business that is keeping you here in the city succeed for His glory. I would be distressed, Monsieur, to cause you to waste your precious time. The knowledge that God has given me of your charity suffices to make me confident that you will exercise it for the needs of her who is truly, in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your least worthy and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.56B - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

Wednesday (April 23, 1641)

Monsieur,

I no longer have the letter from our sisters which I confided to someone yesterday to bring to you. I think that it is essential, regardless of the state of health of our good sick sister,[2] that she select someone to replace her. I humbly beg of you, Monsieur, to believe [that] if I left the name blank it was not out of a spirit of ceremonious deference, but with the sole thought that I had to act thus so as to accomplish the will of God. Had Monsieur Vincent been here, he would have done the same. I had thought either of Sister Cécile or Sister Madeleine, but to choose between them I would need the kind of knowledge of them which God has given you during the time that they have had the honor of being directed by you. You will note, Monsieur, that I am only proposing one of these sisters as superior temporarily since I believe that perhaps Monsieur Vincent might send one[3] of the sisters presently at Richelieu. She is one of the oldest and most capable in our little band. However, we must wait for his return which will not be before next week. Moreover, I am not at all certain that the matter will be taken care of promptly.

1. The contract with the hospital and the Rule of the Daughters of Charity were recorded on March 18, 1641 by the civil clerk of the seneschal's court at Angers.
2. Élisabeth Martin, see preceding letter.
3. Louise de Marillac was still thinking of Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 103.

Yesterday I received further word of the seriousness of the illness of our sister. This reinforces the ideas which I have expressed above. Nevertheless, should Divine Providence permit you to return, it would be a great consolation for me, and it would certainly be more appropriate for your Charity to give this order to them personally.

The administrators have not said that the absence of our sister is detrimental to the service of the poor, which leads me to believe that a couple of weeks would not be prejudicial. Oh, my God, Monsieur, how your charitable humility puts me to shame! I would be content if you treated me otherwise because, by the grace of God, I am aware of many of the dispositions with which His goodness has filled your soul. May He be forever glorified! It is in His holy love that I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.41 - REQUEST PRESENTED TO THE RECTOR OF NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

by Mademoiselle Le Gras

(May 1641)

Monsieur,

Louise de Marillac, widow of Monsieur Le Gras, secretary to the Queen, Mother of the King, very humbly supplicates Monsieur des Roches, Rector of Notre-Dame de Paris, informing him that the sight of the great number of poor in the Saint-Denis district leads her to desire to take charge of their instruction. Should these poor little girls remain steeped in ignorance, it is to be feared that this same ignorance will be harmful to them and render them incapable of cooperating with the grace of God for their salvation. Should you agree, for the glory of God, Monsieur, to give the above-mentioned suppliant the permission required in such cases, thereby allowing the poor the liberty of sending their children free of charge to schools where they would be unhindered by the rich, who do not want those who teach their children to accept and keep poor children so freely, these souls, redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, would be obliged to pray for you, Monsieur, in time and in eternity.

RESPONSE OF THE RECTOR[1]

Michel le Masle, Councilor to the King for both Councils of State and private matters, Prior and Lord des Roches de Saint-Paul, Rector and Canon of the great metropolitan church of Paris, to our beloved Demoiselle Le Gras, residing in the parish of Saint-Laurent of Paris,[2] *greetings in Our Lord.*

In consequence of our position as Rector of the above-named church of Paris, we are charged with the licensing and administration of the elementary schools operating within this city and in its suburbs and environs. After our own inquiries, the report of your Pastor and the testimony of other trustworthy persons who have knowledge of your life, morals and practice of the Catholic religion, you have been found worthy to operate schools. Therefore, we grant you the necessary license and permit you to operate a school. This you shall do in the Saint-Lazare area of the Saint-Denis district on the condition that you teach poor girls only and do not accept others; that you educate them in good morals, grammar and other pious and honest subjects. You shall do all this after first swearing that you will faithfully and diligently operate these schools in keeping with our statutes and decrees. The present authorization shall be valid until our next synod. Given in Paris under our seal and that of Master Jean Le Vasseur, Apostolic Notary, our ordinary scribe and secretary, in the year of Our Lord sixteen hundred forty-one, on the twenty-ninth day of the month of May.

On the order of my Lord, the Lord Rector.

Le Vasseur

L.388 - (TO THE SISTERS OF ANGERS)[3]

(1641)

My very dear Sisters,

I believe that you must be a bit surprised by the absence of our dear Sister (Élisabeth)[4] and consoled that our dear Sister (Madeleine)[5] will be

1. The response was written in Latin on the same sheet.
2. The purchasing contract of the house on rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis was not signed until September 6, 1641 (Coste II, 184).
3. The copies made by Marguerite Chétif, after the death of Louise de Marillac, bear no name in order to maintain anonymity because the majority of the sisters to whom the letters were addressed were still alive.
4. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
5. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

taking her place for the time being. I praise God for this with all my heart and urge you to be cordial and submissive to her and to look upon her as the one from whom you are to receive your orders so that you may acquit yourselves well of your (duty). On this point alone, Sisters, you will find the occasion to practice many virtues and to acquire a high degree of perfection. Without it you will accomplish nothing worthwhile. If some of you have had occasional problems and difficulties, examine your conscience on this point and you will see, Sisters, that this fault, mixed with a little self-love, is the cause. How troublesome self-love is! It causes us totally to lose our perspective and even at times to forget God. If some of you are worried or troubled, I beg of you, in the name of God, to turn immediately to prayer and to be very faithful to our Rules and to the practice of the virtues required by your state. Be faithful also in communicating your trials to your Reverend Director whom you should consider as taking the place of your Guardian Angel or to the sister who is responsible for your well-being. Never turn to others.

Remember me in your prayers.

L.45 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

June 6, 1641

Monsieur,

Yesterday I missed the opportunity of sending you the prompt reply that you desired. I very humbly beg your pardon. I must add that I am not at all concerned that you did not consider the girl who was nursing Monsieur de Pichery to be suitable, but I am very disturbed that our sisters are evincing too much spiritual fastidiousness. If there is a way of doing so, I beg you, Monsieur, to be so charitable as to help them to overcome this dangerous weakness.

I believe that the Loire River is not very far away, so if the doctors feel that this remedy is necessary for our good sister and if you have no objections, Monsieur, I think it would not be a bad idea for her to give it a try, provided you agree that the administrators should provide a girl to help her other than one of our sisters for, as you pointed out, it does not appear that the six remaining sisters are sufficient for the service of the poor. However, should it happen that her life would be in danger at this time, I believe, Monsieur, that she should have the consolation of having one of our sisters with her.

Blessed be God, Monsieur, for the perseverance of the good girls who desire to join us. If the one that your Charity spoke of as coming from

Saint-Esprit is the good Marguerite Deshaies, she will be most welcome. If it is not she, I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to be so good as to make inquiries about her. You know how cautious one must be not to admit into a community those who are not suited for it. As for the others, my memory is so bad that I cannot recall what your Charity told me about them. Let me simply tell you, Monsieur, that I humbly beg you to believe that any whom you judge suitable will be most welcome. Please be careful that their desire to come is not motivated by a wish to see Paris or a need to earn a living. Be sure also that they are strong and healthy. Of the six who have come since your departure, some are sickly and others are too young. They are very good girls but not ready as yet to render all the necessary service to the poor.

When he returned, Monsieur Vincent asked me to thank you most humbly for your greeting and to greet you for him. I beg your pardon for not having done so sooner and ask you for the charity of sharing in your holy Masses and of offering to our good God, whatever He plans for His poor little servants, so that they not place any obstacles to the accomplishment of His designs and that I might call myself more truly, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. Monsieur, after finishing my letter, I remembered that I should beg you very humbly to be so good as to speak to these good girls about the change in habit. We have a young woman of rank here who is one of the best adjusted of our sisters who has no difficulty with this. It would appear that her example is an evident sign of the necessity for this uniformity.

L.46 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

Daughter of Charity, Serving the Sick Poor
of the Hospital Saint-Jean of Angers.

July 5, 1641

My very dear Sister,

It is evident that you are very close to our good God because He is continually showing His mercy to you. Have courage and do not worry, I beg of you. Live in the hope that God will derive glory from your misery. It is a source of consolation for me, my dear Sister, when in my own case I see myself so frequently chastised by Divine Justice, to know that I can serve as an example to those who would offend God as I have, by showing that He knows how to deal with those who would break His law. Remain cheerful, I beg of you, and do not get upset about what is

going on at the hospital while you are not there. If the sisters come to you individually, encourage them to love and trust Sister Madeleine.[1]

I beg our dear Jesus Crucified to attach us firmly to His Cross so that we may be closely united to Him by His love and that our little sufferings and the little we accomplish may be in and for His love in which I remain, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.59 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(July 1641)

Monsieur,

I completely forgot to give you an answer concerning the desire expressed by our sisters for bodily mortifications. If I may say so, Monsieur, it is up to you to regulate this according to their needs. As a rule we are willing to give them permission only for the discipline which, as our Blessed Father says, helps to stir up devotion. I am sending you two hair shirts and six belts. I believe some of the sisters already have such things. I ask your Charity to be good enough to have them employ them when you judge it appropriate. There are so many things to be taken into consideration that it would be impossible to send them directives from here. We are expecting the girl[2] whom you are so good as to send us. Please God she will not have as much difficulty adjusting as Sister Renée.[3] The advice that your Charity gave me concerning her was very helpful.

I recommend myself most particularly to your good prayers for a need which I often have and which is caused by my infidelity to God. Unfortunately, I am aware of it only when He wills events which call it to my attention. All this makes me realize how difficult self-knowledge is for human nature. You know me well enough, Monsieur, to recognize the truth of what I am telling you and to incite your charity to implore God to have mercy on my poor soul through the merits of Jesus Crucified, in whose love I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you, Monsieur, that from here I am unable to help those two penitent girls. It is very dangerous for such persons to come

1. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57, assumed the responsibility of Sister Servant during Élisabeth Martin's rest period.
2. Marguerite Deshaies: she did not persevere in her vocation of Daughter of Charity.
3. Young sister arriving in Paris in October 1640.

to Paris. The poor girl of whom I spoke to you has been dismissed from the residence of Monseigneur de la Grandière. With the help of God she will be all right.

L.35 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(August 1641)

Monsieur,

Five or six sisters began their little retreat today. Most have expressed the desire to go to confession. Sister Barbe[1] would also like very much to do so. She wants to gain her Jubilee this week because she was not sufficiently well-disposed for it last week. Please let me know if you prefer all of them to go to La Chapelle[2] so that you can select those whom you judge ready, or if you want me to send those who say they would like to go and keep the rest here. I think that I should talk to you before sending anyone to Mademoiselle du Mée.[3]

I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. All the sisters would like to go now rather than risk not being able to go to you at another time.

L.66 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

August 7, 1641

Monsieur,

I spoke to Monsieur Vincent of your Charity's desire to have Monsieur Lambert[4] visit our good sisters. He told me that he would write to him about it. You can decide together if Sister Élisabeth[5] has recovered or if her health requires a change of air. I also spoke to Monsieur Vincent about bodily mortifications so that we can regulate them, except for those

1. Barbe Angiboust returned from Richelieu, see Letter 43.
2. The Motherhouse was still in La Chapelle.
3. Mademoiselle du Mée, Lady of Charity, took care of the foundlings.
4. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.
5. Élisabeth Martin, after the rest that her health necessitated, see Letter 388.

which you judge necessary in individual cases. He feels that, so long as they are able, the sisters should keep the Church fasts and Friday abstinence. Their health permitting, they shall wear the belt on Monday during the morning only, and take the discipline on Friday.

Our daughter[1] arrived safely, thanks be to God. I hope that she will do well. I humbly thank you, Monsieur, for all the trouble you have taken on her behalf. It is not enough, Monsieur, for your Charity to take such great care in meeting the needs of our sisters who serve your poor, but God further encourages us by the same charitable care you take for our growth. In the name of God, heed the thoughts which His goodness gives you for this work and be so charitable as to offer it constantly to God along with the lowliness of all those whom He has chosen to be employed in it. You see, Monsieur, that I speak of my concern with a true awareness of my needs and with the filial trust owed by one who is, in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you, Monsieur, that I spoke to Monsieur Vincent of the reluctance shown by one of our sisters to go to a particular confessor. I believe that it was Monsieur Pichery. He told me that we must rid them of this fastidiousness. I beg you most humbly, should similar difficulties arise, to help them to understand how wrong this is. As for my suggestions concerning Monsieur Lambert, I am afraid that business of Monsieur Vincent will delay his visit to Angers. Therefore, do whatever is needed concerning the recovery of Sister Élisabeth and let her speak with and receive visits from externs if you judge it necessary.

L.58B - TO SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

One of the Sisters of Charity Serving the Sick Poor at Angers

August 7 (1641)

My very dear Sister,

Blessed be God that your health is better! Take care of yourself for the love of God and reflect that one way to do this is to remain cheerful by conforming yourself completely to the holy will of God and not worrying about anything. State your needs very simply and do not be upset that your illness makes you useless. You are the only one who thinks so.

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1. Marguerite Deshaies, see Letter 59.

I was very consoled by my talk with the good Monsieur Avril. I beg our good God to continue to bestow His graces upon all of you. I beg you to encourage our sisters to persevere and, above all, to live together in very cordial peace.

Thank you, my dear Sister, for the beautiful gold spoon[1] which you sent me. I am making good use of it. Be assured of my constant friendship in the love of our dear Jesus Crucified whom you know to be the bond uniting our hearts. Thus I am often near you. Pray for me, my dear Sister. Follow the directives of Monsieur l'abbé about how you should act with regard to the suggestions which you made to me about Sister Madeleine.[2] Obey her lovingly. With all my heart, I wish you the perfection of holy love in which I remain, my very dear Sister, your humble sister and servant.

L.67 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday, August 7 (1641)

Monsieur,

Enclosed is a letter from our good sister in Sedan.[3] I beg you to be good enough to read it, and in your charity, to address her some words of comfort. I read portions of her letter to our sisters so that her example might be an encouragement to them. Their reaction reminded me of that of soldiers responding to a call to arms. This was especially true of Sister Henriette[4] who would have preferred to leave today rather than tomorrow, although she is still in retreat.

I ask your Charity to please let me know if you think that I should write to Madame de Bouillon[5] as she wishes. Also, I hope that you will accord me the benefit of speaking with you at least by Saturday or Sunday, so that I may place myself in the proper dispositions to begin my fifty-first year which I enter upon Monday, the feast of Saint Claire, if God grants me the grace of continued life.

1. It was a question of a copper spoon, no doubt; it was still a brand new luxury. Except for those using silver, one only used wooden spoons.
2. Madeleine Mongert, who took responsibility of the community in place of Élisabeth Martin.
3. Mary Joly, left for Sedan in February, see Letter 36b.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Madame de Bouillon, Turenne's sister-in-law. Her husband was one of the instigators of the Fronde in France between 1648-1652, during the infancy of Louis XIV and the government of Mazarin.

The Pastor of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois[1] sent me a message asking if a lady could come here to make her retreat. I do not know if perhaps her husband is not planning to make his with you. From what I have heard, they are people who have suffered a great deal, but I do not know their name. I told him that I would send him a reply tomorrow after I have had the opportunity of discussing the matter with you. Please be so kind as to let me know what I should tell him and to remember that I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. There are five good sisters in retreat: Henriette, Marguerite from Saint-Laurent,[2] the relative of the Pastor of La Gève, Claude Laurraine who works with the children and the one from Angers.[3] Friday morning or after dinner they could go to confession. For some it would be a general confession while for others it would cover a four to five year period. Please set the time,[4] Monsieur.

L.8 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(August 1641)

Monsieur,

Enclosed is a letter from the mother of Sister Aimée of Troyes whose brothers refused to bring her. I humbly beg you to be so good as to tell me when this good lady of whom she speaks is returning, and whether I should give her some money for her expenses and for her place in the coach. If so, how much would you suggest?

The opportunity which I believe God gave me of speaking with you today led me to an awareness of similar faults which I often commit. However, my Most Honored Father, I think that this conversation should also convince your Charity of the need that I have of being assisted in accomplishing the holy will of God, and that nothing at all should be expected of me except what you do me the honor of ordering, for in those matters it seems that God gives me the grace to remember this.

One of the things that is uppermost in my mind is to ask your advice on how to deal with our good Sister Barbe[5] and to tell you that she greatly needs to speak with you. I am convinced that she will not be at peace until she does so. If you could come to La Chapelle Saturday, it would do us all a great deal of good.

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1. Parish of Paris.
2. Parish of Paris.
3. Marguerite Deshaies, see Letter 59.
4. Monsieur Vincent answered on the same sheet (Coste II, 178).
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, returned from Richelieu.

I am very much afraid that our Sister Marguerite,[1] the young gentlewoman, will end up having a nervous breakdown. If your schedule would permit me to speak to you before this happens, I would be grateful.

Could your Charity please remember to send me the material that you promised me so that I could speak to our sisters two or three times a week in order to try to encourage them. It seems to me that I merit great punishment because of all their failings. With tears in my eyes, I beg you to ask God to send someone who will serve them better. How can it be that God has granted me the grace of communicating with Him through you for so many years and I am still as I am? Please ask Him to have mercy on my poor soul which He has placed in your hands so that I am ever, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.107B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

September 11 [1641]

Monsieur,

The desire which the good Mademoiselle Chamillac expressed to me to have your Charity pray for her, causes me to beg you most humbly to assist her in this time of her greatest need since I have just been informed that she is dying. I believe that in all truth I can say that it is the love of God which has brought her to this point. I am losing a great deal with this good woman. My only consolation is that it is completely in keeping with the holy will of God, to which I wish to be entirely submissive. It is with this in mind that I very humbly supplicate you to do us the charity which your goodness leads us to expect and which we greatly need. The occasions which have prevented you from doing so will continue to arise as always unless you do us the honor of postponing them.

Pardon me for taking this liberty; it is prompted by the fear I often have that it might appear that Divine Providence is depriving us of this good. With all my heart I beg God to preserve for us what He has given us in you. I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

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1. Marguerite Deshaies, see Letter 59.

L.49 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 17, 1641

Monsieur,

I believe that you are about ready to return to Angers and, nevertheless, I have not as yet been able to answer the last letter which your Charity was so good as to send me. I gave it to Monsieur Vincent who said that he wanted to respond to it; however, his many responsibilities and his illness have not yet allowed him to do so. I hope that he will write to you, Monsieur, in the next mail. I cannot tell you what a consolation it is for him to see your goodness in this matter. He feels that our good God has sent you for the benefit of His dear poor in whose number I am most happy and grateful to be included. Please continue this favor for me by imploring our good God to grant me the grace to profit from the advice which your Charity gives me since I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.51 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

October 18, 1641

Monsieur,

I humbly beg you, if you judge it proper, to be so good as to tell our sisters not to go for so long without writing to us. I fear that it could be prejudicial to them not to communicate with us for such a long time, especially during your absence.

As in all other matters, we must entrust ourselves to Divine Providence for all that might happen should the Reformed Augustinians[1] be established in Angers. As for sending one of our sisters, I believe we should wait a while, Monsieur, because of the bad weather we are having here. I am concerned about your trip because of it. I beg God, with all my

1. The Hospital of Saint-Jean in Angers was founded and equipped in 1153 by Henri II Plantagenêt, Count of Anjou and King of England, in atonement for the murder of Thomas Becket. The nuns who had the spiritual responsibility withdrew little by little. In order to rekindle fervor, some Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, reformed by Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld, were requested.

heart, to protect you, and I remain in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.53 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

October 23, 1641

Monsieur,

I only received your letter of September 25 the day before yesterday, so I am not certain where you are now. Nevertheless, I feel obliged to thank you most humbly for all your charitable care. I must admit that I am disappointed that we must try a change of air in an effort to improve the health of our good Sister Élisabeth.[1] I am very surprised that in all this time I have received no word either from the administrators or from Sister Madeleine.[2] I shall wait until they ask us for another sister before sending one unless your Charity honors us by informing us that our sisters need one. I told Monsieur Vincent of the desire expressed by the administrators of the Hospital of the Poor to have our sisters serve their patients.[3] He asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he would [very willingly] do so were it feasible and if we had a sufficient number of sisters. However, we could not hope to do this in the near future. If what I have been told is true and we may hope to see you in the city soon, I will explain the matter in greater detail. I believe, Monsieur, that our good Sister Madeleine needs a great deal of help to acquire the dispositions which your Charity pointed out to me and which are so necessary for her. Therefore, if you judge it proper, Monsieur, I beg you, before your departure, to be so kind as to speak about it to the person in whom she confides.

We have seen Monsieur Lambert who told us that he is very pleased with his trip to Angers. God is thereby providing us with new assurance of your continued charity for these souls who have such great need of it, as well as with a great reason for praising God by admiring the conduct of His Divine Providence to which I must abandon, Monsieur, this possible change in spiritual administration proposed for Saint-Jean. I believe, Monsieur, that this cannot be done without the approval of the Bishop of Angers. In this case you would be involved and that puts my mind completely at rest. I just recalled that it has been two days since

1. Élisabeth Martin, Sister Servant from 1640 to 1641, left for Richelieu.
2. Madeleine Mongert, the Sister Servant at that time.
3. In another house called the Hôpital des Pauvres Renfermés (Hospital of Poor Shut-ins).

your sister, Madame du Plessis,[1] did me the honor of writing to me, and I have not as yet answered her. With the help of God, I shall do so in the next mail. Help me please, Monsieur, so that she will excuse me and do me the honor of believing that I am most truly your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.48 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday morning (October 1641)[2]

Monsieur,

I forgot to tell you that Madame Traversay[3] sent me word asking me to remind you about the documents for the galley slaves which you are to bring to the Procurator General. I also want to tell you that one of the sisters who is supposed to make her Jubilee confession today is the one from Normandy from the same area as that poor little man who is at the seminary and who, in his great goodness and simplicity, sometimes gives her advice. Thursday morning he asked her to visit him. I did not dare allow her to do so without your permission. He also gave her some holy pictures, but I think that was because he could not keep them himself. I am holding them until you let me know what to do.

I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, to consider what Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux told me about the establishment of the Religious of Sainte-Geneviève and whether it might not be fitting to suggest to the administrators that they ask His Excellency, the Bishop of Angers, to approve the residence and service of our sisters at the hospital. In this case they should ask his pardon for not asking his approbation until after a period of experimentation, explaining that they were afraid that the priests might want to make them religious. I fear, now that Sister Élisabeth is no longer there, that the others might be easily persuaded to do just that.[4]

I also call to your attention the fact that there are now only six sisters serving the poor there since the seventh is ill, and that neither Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux nor the administrators nor the sisters are asking for another.

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1. Madame du Plessis, see Letter 107.
2. See responses from Monsieur Vincent in Coste II, 196.
3. Madame de Traversay, born Anne Petau, Lady of Charity, assisted Monsieur Vincent with the foundlings, the galley slaves, etc. She took charge of the Daughters of the Cross after the death of Madame de Villeneuve and founded the Monastery of the Conception, on rue Saint-Honoré.
4. Louise de Marillac once again explains her fear in the following letter.

I also ask your Charity to let me know what I should do about this good woman from the shrine of Vertus[1] of whom I have spoken. The messenger leaves today. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and grateful daughter.

P.S. Would your Charity please let me know what time our sisters should go to La Chapelle.[2] Yesterday I had the happiness of seeing Madame de Chantal.[3] I do not know what our good God will do with me who am so sinful and so unfaithful to Him.

L.50 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

October (or November)[4] 9, 1641

Monsieur,

I realize full well that we must give up the hope of seeing you here in the city since the good Madame de Chantal[5] is leaving Monday for Moulins. Blessed be God in all things! I am very surprised that we have not heard a word from a single administrator of the hospital since the departure of Sister Élisabeth.[6] Is it because they are angry and therefore are not asking for another sister to take her place? Be so good, Monsieur, I beg you, as to let me know if this is the case. I pray that God will be glorified by the arrival of these good religious.[7] Permit me to share with you the thoughts which the advice you so kindly gave me evoked in me. In the future would you not consider it advisable, if the administrators find that their patients have been well served, that they tell His Excellency the Bishop of Angers about the state the sick were in before our sisters arrived? They could then explain to him that because they wanted to avoid any disorder for their own protection, they brought the sisters to

1. At Aubervilliers, see Letter 1.
2. The transfer of the Motherhouse, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, had not yet taken place. Some repairs to the house were necessary.
3. Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot de Chantal, see Letter 50.
4. Louise de Marillac must have made a mistake in writing the date because Madame de Chantal left Paris on November 11, 1641.
5. Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot, Baronness de Chantal, founded the Order of the Visitation with Francis de Sales. She was born in Dijon in 1572 and died in Moulins on December 13, 1641. Monsieur Vincent and Louise de Marillac held this servant of God in great esteem.
6. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22, left to rest in Richelieu.
7. The Reformed Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, see Letter 51.

the hospital for a trial period before presenting the matter to him, but that now, after this trial period of two years which proved successful, they desire the service to be continued by his order and pleasure, thereby providing his approbation for the work. Perhaps I am mistaken, but I think, Monsieur, that this could protect the sisters from a number of difficulties that could later arise, because it seems to me that once there are religious men in the establishment it could lead to a desire to have women religious also. It is not, Monsieur, that I would be upset should there be nuns there. However, our sisters must not become such since this would have consequences for our little undertaking. This precaution is perhaps human, but I know well the one to whom I am confiding my thoughts and am certain that you will approve or disapprove of it as you see fit.

Your mention of this good countess leaves me somewhat confused. My ignorance can only tell you that I know absolutely none of the priests or directors.

What do you think, Monsieur, of the Jesuits? If none are available, are you not acquainted with Monsieur Renard who was one of the first priests of the [Tuesday] Conferences and who has been employed in the missions? He is highly respected as a spiritual director. Among those whom he is guiding is the young Madame de Marillac[1] who is a great example of virtue. As for Monsieur Vincent, it is true, Monsieur, that he does not have the time to meet the needs of a soul just beginning to desire to become devout.

May I be so bold, Monsieur, as to ask for an explanation of the last words of your letter which cause me to be concerned about you: "within the next six months." The trials of this life should make us yearn for the stability of eternity. I stand in great need of your prayers in this regard. May I remain always, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

1642

March 25: *First vows of Louise de Marillac and four Daughters of Charity.*

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Issy and Fontenay-aux-Roses.

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1. Jeanne Potier, wife of Michel de Marillac, Deputy of Parliament, and grandson of the Keeper of the Seal, see Letter 47.

L.55 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

January 3, 1642

Monsieur,

I imagine that two weeks ago you received my response to the letter which your Charity was good enough to send me. You had it before my answer to your letter of the eighteenth of last month which took a very long time reaching me. I reply to it first of all, Monsieur, by expressing my very humble gratitude for your charitable concern. I am still suffering from my habitual infirmities. This, plus the fact that I am somewhat busier than usual, may have prevented me from responding fully to your earlier letter. If such is the case, I beg your pardon.

I am rather disturbed about the familiarity of Monsieur Pichery.[1] He should not be coming to the sisters' pantry asking for his little supplies. This appears dangerous, and it was already beginning to occur when I was there. I ask your Charity to be so kind as to look into what is going on and to take whatever measures you judge necessary.

You shame me, Monsieur, by seeking my lowly opinion about the directives which, in your goodness, you give our sisters. I believe that you are humbling me for my pride. Nevertheless, I will give you my views on the devotions for Sister Madeleine. I think that she could easily say two decades of her chaplet daily and three on Saturday for the complete rosary for the week. As for sleeping on straw, that seems to me to be more the shadow than the reality of mortification.

As for the sister who wishes to join the Confraternity of Saint Francis, this would necessitate her going out. I would think that the Company to which they belong would preclude all other confraternities. Nevertheless, Monsieur, if you do not see any problem with her going out, this is not against their Rules since no obligations are involved.

I do not know what to tell you about the sister who wants to wear the belt. Would you not agree, Monsieur, if you feel that she needs it, that she should limit it to two or three hours a day? I do not know if she is still using the discipline. You know that our Blessed Father[2] recommended it.

It seems to me that it would be inadvisable for the sisters to go to the wards of the sick in the morning without eating. On fast days of obligation, at least during Lent, those who are healthy could manage by taking or inhaling a little vinegar.

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1. Monsieur Pichery, Confessor of the sisters.
2. Monseigneur Francis de Sales.

As for the sisters who are asking permission to go out to Mass, could it not be arranged to have one in the hospital at 9 or 10 o'clock as is done at the Hôtel-Dieu? I am concerned about their developing the habit of going out.

I am distressed that bad weather has prevented me from sending help to our poor sisters. I will do so as soon as possible.

Monsieur Vincent has not been to Richelieu, and I have not heard him speak of going there. I beg God to direct for His glory the affair which may bring you here to the city. I hope the remembrance of my needs will lead your goodness and charity to present them to our good God in whose love I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.114 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

(February 1642)

Monsieur,

I believe that Monsieur Vincent plans to have the sisters assemble tomorrow. It would be a consolation for me to have your Charity meet the whole group. However, my concern at the possibility of not having an opportunity of speaking with you leads me to tell you this beforehand so that, if you judge it appropriate, you can take the trouble of coming to speak with him yourself about the wishes of the administrators, or you can put off this personal inconvenience. The sister[1] who will go to Angers will be named tomorrow. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for your charity which I hope will enable me to spend a good Lent, as well as for the letters which you were kind enough to send me. Your charity cannot be exhausted by my constant demands. I hope to have the honor of seeing Madame de Marillac before the time you indicated to me. May God accomplish His holy will in your affair. It is in this holy will that I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

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1. Claude Brigide, one of a scrupulous nature, was in Angers from March 1642 until the end of the year 1644. Placed in the parish of Saint-Barthélémy in Paris at the begining of the year 1646, she was chosen for Le Mans in May, then returned to Angers in June. Passing through Angers in August of the same year, Lousie de Marillac brought her to Nantes. She was in Chantilly in 1648, at the time of the death of Élisabeth Turgis. In 1655, she was in Saint-Denis.

L.58 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

March 7, 1642

Monsieur,

I am very sorry that for the time being we cannot send more than one sister[1] to Angers. I hope that she will leave next Monday with one of my friends[2] who is going there on business. I would have sent her to you, had you been there, so that she could humbly ask you for a letter of introduction to the Carmelines,[3] whom she wishes to join. She is a widow whom I have known from birth. She can be accepted with no hesitation either about the dowry that she has promised or other obstacles which may stand in the way of someone who is unknown to them. Were she not too young to remain in the world and were I not convinced that her great attraction for Carmel was a true vocation, I would do everything in my power to keep her here with us. She has a sister in this order who has offered to receive her, but because her six years as Prioress are up, she prefers to wait until after the election of a new Prioress before accepting her. This would necessitate her remaining in the world for a longer period than she is willing, either because she is mistrustful of her own strength or because she is afraid that her mother and father will retract the permission which they have given her. She wishes to enter as soon as possible and is profiting from this trip to do so. This is why, Monsieur, I beg you most humbly to be kind enough to write a recommendation for her to the Prioress. Also, if you think it is appropriate for our sister to present herself to the administrators[4] with a letter of recommendation from you, I will send her to receive your blessing, if you will let me know at what time you will be available. I ask your blessing also for the love of God in which I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Madame Raffy, see Letters 61, 62 and 63.
3. The Daughters of Carmel.
4. The hospital administrators.

L.61 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 1, 1642

Monsieur,

I beg God with all my heart that your charity for our good widow[1] may be rewarded by the glory which He will receive if she makes good use of the grace which your kindness has obtained for her. She should make a large donation to the Church, but it seems that this is no longer being discussed. I must also importune you again and ask you to be so good as to allow me to speak with you about this before you leave. Please forgive me for taking this liberty and for all the other problems I cause you. I am good for nothing else although I truly am, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.62 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 22, 1642

Monsieur,

I thought our widow[2] was more generous than she appears to have been. My hearts aches for her. I am certain, if you have taken the trouble to speak with her, that you must have realized that she needs to be away from the world at least for a few years. Although I have already imposed upon you in this matter, I must once again humbly plead for your charity, Monsieur, and ask you to see if it would be appropriate for her to become a boarder in a religious house, if possible in Angers. She would be as well off there as any place else. This thought occurred to me while I was writing this letter, so please, Monsieur, accept it only if you are in agreement.

Please accept my humble thanks for the news of our sisters. I beg you, Monsieur, if the administrators of Saint-Jean speak to you about recalling Sister Élisabeth,[3] whom one of them went to see in Richelieu, do not give

1. Madame Raffy, widow and Louise de Marillac's friend, desired to be a Carmelite in Angers. One of her sisters was Prioress of the Carmel. Madame Raffy did not adapt to this new life.
2. Madame Raffy, see Letter 61.
3. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.

them any hope that this can be done. I believe that it would lead to many problems. Please recall what I told you about Sister Claude.[1]

I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter.

L.63 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

May 9, 1642

Monsieur,

Your charity in all things is inexhaustible. I am distressed at always being an extra heavy burden to you, and I ask your pardon for this. However, I must blame Divine Providence for once again placing our poor widow[2] in your hands. You really know her very well, so blessed be God! I imagine that you are also well aware, Monsieur, that she greatly needs to be enlightened about her self-deception. I believe that she will profit from the good advice that you give her, since she has had sufficient proof of the uselessness of the counsel she received from persons who did not know her. If you do not judge it appropriate for her to remain in a convent, it would be a great honor for her to accompany your sister[3] on her return trip. I must avow, Monsieur, that I am a bit worried about what will become of her. If you are in agreement, it would perhaps be a great advantage for her if she could make up her mind to live as a true widow and let this be seen in society. I humbly beg you to be good enough to speak to her about this.

You have greatly consoled our poor sisters by allowing them to make a retreat. Since you have ordered me to do so, Monsieur, I shall tell you quite simply how the sisters here make their retreats. They make two half-hour meditations at different times in the morning and one after supper at 5 p.m. The subjects are taken from the book by our Blessed Father.[4] After they have been to confession, they are given meditations on the life and death of Our Lord. The meditation before confession is taken from a lengthy text in Grenada designed to obtain from God the grace of true contrition. The reading on the day preceding confession deals with subjects which encourage penance and expiation. We send a sister to read to those who do not know how. After confession the reading

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Madame Raffy, see Letter 61.
3. Madame de la Brunetière du Plessis-Gesté, see Letter 107.
4. The Introduction to the Devout Life of Monseigneur Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva.

is from Gerson[1] or another similar text which inspires the soul with the love of God. They make repetition of meditation at least once a day. They are advised to remain recollected by reflecting during the day on their previous meditations; to make not only general but practical resolutions in keeping with their own needs and especially concerning the practices necessary in their way of life in imitation of the actions of the Son of God and of His Holy Mother who are their patrons and whom they should often keep before them during prayer. They say vocal prayers, as usual, and work or sometimes go for a walk. Briefly put, Monsieur, this is an outline of their horarium. Please completely disregard it and organize their retreat in whatever way it pleases God to inspire you. I beg your pardon for this lengthy disorganized little discourse. It is because I am in a great rush.

Thank you once again for all your charitable concern. Be assured, I beg of you, that as soon as we have available sisters we will not fail to send them to you. We always have the same problem because of the number needed here.

Our good Sister Anne[2] from Angers has been very seriously ill. I hope that God will give her back to us. She has been in bed for nearly two months. I cannot write to our sisters by this mail. I have time only to beg you to present my great needs to God and to honor me by believing that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.68 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. May 1642)

Monsieur,

Councillor Belot anticipates trouble in the affair of Sister Anne. He is afraid that there will be a lawsuit because it seems that Monsieur du Ruisseau and the leading citizens[3] want to keep her there. She is convinced that her brother, who is executor of the will of the foundress of the house, and her heirs will be opposed and that this point of honor will lead to conflict between them. Would it not be possible to contact the Pastor, whom she told that I was opposed to his visiting her, and to have her speak with him and with Monsieur du Ruisseau? I do not believe that

1. Spiritual author.
2. Anne Vallin, one of numerous postulants in Angers. Little is known of her life; she was at Saint-Denis with Barbe Angiboust (Coste X, 640). She was in Paris in 1659.
3. The inhabitants of Fontenay-aux-Roses.

they would oppose anything that you suggested. I am distressed that I was not sufficiently on my guard against this dangerous attitude.

Sister Anne of the parish of Saint-Sulpice, another girl from Lorraine, came to me the day before yesterday and begged me to remove her from there, claiming that she faced too many problems and contradictions. It is true that the gentlemen who are involved with the Confraternity of Charity have great contempt for the sisters. I am afraid that the good sister from Fontenay has spoken with or sent word to her because she would like to take someone with her.

Madame d'Humières[1] is determined to wait until you are able to hear her confession. I told her that you were not well, but she continues to hope that you will be able to come someday next week. She would appreciate hearing tomorrow.

Please be so good as to tell me what I should do about Sister Anne of Saint-Sulpice. She seemed to me to be in a great rush. We are very happy that our good God has given you, Monsieur, a paternal heart to put up with us and especially with me who am your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.128 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday Evening (c. June 1642)

Monsieur,

1. Should Sister Henriette[2] go to Sedan before your return? Should we recall Sister Gillette?[3] In that case, should we send two sisters?

I think so.[4]

2. Should Sister Barbe[5] remain with the galley slaves? I have had to send a third sister there because Sister Barbe is weak and infirm.

That will be fine. Because the galley slaves are leaving soon, two sisters will be quite sufficient.

3. Should the Procurator General not be contacted concerning his refusal to allow Sister Henriette to leave?

Yes.

4. Is there no way to see to it that our sisters at Saint-Sulpice[6] are not

1. Louise de Marillac received some Ladies of Charity who came for their spiritual retreat.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
3. Gillette Joly was in Sedan with her sister, Mary Joly.
4. Monsieur Vincent answered in the blank space left by Louise de Marillac.
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
6. Parish of Paris.

overburdened with medicines that they must take to persons who have not been accepted as patients by the Confraternity of Charity? There are five or six people telling them what to do, and this is very disheartening for all of them, as is the contempt and suspicion of which they are the object. Is there no way they can be lodged elsewhere?

I will make this clear to the Duchess[1] *when I get back, unless you prefer to speak to her about it.*

5. What shall I do to get Sister Anne out of there?

You will find a way.

6. When the Chancellor's wife goes to Fontenay, should she not be brought up-to-date on matters? Since I am to speak to Sister Anne[2] at a time when I am to go to the foundlings, would it not be better to take her with me than to leave her here where she may cause trouble?

Yes, do tell the Chancellor's wife about the trip. Do as you suggested and take the sister to the foundlings with you.

7. Whom should we put there in her place? If it is to be Sister Jeanne Lepintre,[3] should we not speak to her about her headdress? If she is willing to go, provided that she is allowed to wear a headdress on account of her bad eye, should she be permitted to wear one, perhaps of black cloth? Would it be better to send Sister Perrette from Saint-Germain because of her run-in with the Pastor which we must discuss?

Send Sister Jeanne Lepintre. Suggest the black headdress to her. In the meantime, do not do anything this soon about Saint-Germain.

8. What shall I do about the sisters who talk about leaving whenever they meet with the slightest contradiction?

With the help of God, the next time I speak to them we shall try to remedy this fault.

9. If the foundlings and their nurses are to come here, should I tell Madame Lote that we need her room? She has not used it for nearly a month because we have not put any shutters on the windows.

That is a good idea.

10. While you are away, should the Ladies buy or rent a house for the foundlings?

Whatever they wish.

11. Should all the sisters be assembled so that they can share their thoughts with one another, thereby encouraging one another as well as calling attention to any faults that might be committed in the service of the poor, in their dealings with the Ladies, and in the area of the cordiality that should exist among them?

Please try it.

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1. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.
2. See the preceding letter, see letter 68.
3. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

12. Should we accept the two girls who are seeking admission, especially the one being presented by Madame Henriette? If so, when?

Whenever you think it appropriate.

13. The foundlings have surplus bread at the present time. Could we have it? Should we speak to the Ladies or at least to the Duchess about this?

Talk to the Duchess.

14. If the foundlings and their nurses come here, should they pay their expenses or should we do as we do at La Chapelle so as to avoid complaints about what is taken by one or other of them?

I think that they should pay for it.

15. Is some repair needed on the fireplace that Monsieur Portail[1] has already looked at? Should we get it done?

Yes, please. We will take care of it.

16. To whom shall I go if some problem arises? Whoever it is should be told not to condescend to my desires and inclinations but rather seek to submit to Divine Providence speaking through our most honored Superior.

Monsieur Portail. I will tell him.

17. The Count de Lannoy[2] wants to know if we will give him the assistance that he has requested.

Please suggest this to Madame de Herse.[3] I forgot to speak to her about it.

18. Madame de Beaufort wants to know how she should act toward the lay administrators of the parish of Saint-Étienne who want to be present as a group for the Treasurer's report and for the election of new Officers or, at the very least, to name a Procurator who would be present.

She should try to put it off, if she can, until the present administration is replaced.

19. I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, if there is any way possible, that it be here that I have the honor of speaking with you so that all the sisters of the house may be encouraged in the practice of virtue by having the happiness of receiving your blessing. I assure you that we have great need of it. I would appreciate knowing the time that is convenient for you. Please be aware of how I dread your absence so that before God, you may console the heart of your poor daughter and grateful servant.

I will try to be there in the late afternoon. However, let me tell you that you are a woman of little faith and I am your servant.

Vincent DEPAUL

1. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.
2. The Count de Lannoy, governor of Montreuil-sur-Mer. The sisters were not sent there until 1647.
3. Madame de Herse, see Letter 196.

L.102 - TO SISTER CLAUDE (BRIGIDE), THE FIRST[1]

Sister of Charity Serving the Sick Poor
at the Hospital of Saint-Jean at Angers

(c. June 1642)

My very dear Sister,

I share in the suffering that I know you are enduring because of your attacks of sadness and depression. I hope that interiorly you are making good use of them. This is the grace I ask of God for you with all my heart. I wish you could share them with me, my very dear Sister, along with the thoughts they have evoked in you. I will try to be of some help to you in this matter having, perhaps, experienced the same difficulties myself. Try, I beg of you, to get your mind off them. Do not dwell on them. Our mortal enemy, the devil, often uses these occasions to fill us with troublesome thoughts. His principal aim is to discourage us imperceptibly, without our being aware of it, in our service of God. He most particularly wants to prevent us from persevering in our good resolutions and sometimes, in his wickedness, he even tries to cause us to lose our vocation, which is the thing we must fear the most and which is the most detrimental to our salvation. This is why, my dear Sister, I advise you to do your best to overcome this dangerous temptation by asking the Holy Spirit for joy, which is one of His seven gifts. Stay as busy as possible. Observe your Rules faithfully. Above all, have sincere and cordial confidence in the advice you receive from our good Monsieur l'abbé[2] and in our good Sister Madeleine.[3] I am not writing to her at this time, but I greet her and all our sisters most affectionately.

I beg you to love one another dearly and to take good care of the sick of the hospital and especially of your sick sisters. I feel deeply for our good Sister Marie-Marthe[4] who, I am certain, is burning with the love of

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114. The term "the first" permits one to distinguish between the different sisters bearing the name "Claude"—Louise de Marillac rarely used surnames.
2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
3. Madeleine Mongert, Sister Servant, see Letter 57.
4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau arrived in Angers in March 1640 and returned to Paris in June 1647. In 1648, she served the poor in the parish of Saint-Paul. In 1653, she was named Sister Servant of the community of Nantes. She stayed there for two years. On July 31, 1656, she was sent to the mission in La Fère. In September 1658, Louse de Marillac called her back for the establishment of Cahors.

God as she is racked with fever, and for our good Sister Clémence,[1] to whom I will write as soon as possible.

Greetings, my dear Sisters. I am always available to you and I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified your very loving sister and servant.

P.S. I ask all of you to join us in thanking our good God for the grace He granted us on the eve of Pentecost by saving us when the ceiling in our room collapsed,[2] and we had time only to move a few steps away.

L.441 - (TO SISTER MADELEINE MONGERT[3])

(at Angers)

(June 1642)

My very dear Sister,

I cannot tell you how consoled my heart was when I received your last dear letter. I praise God with all my heart for the improved health He has given you. I had spoken to Monsieur . . . [4] about the medicine proposed for you. Be grateful for it. And all of you, my dear Sisters, be thankful for the care which Divine Providence takes of you by providing you with all that is necessary. And you, my dear Sister . . . [5] what joy you give me by letting me know of the present dispositions of your soul. I was always certain that your troubles would pass. It is in this way that we must remain open to God, who wants us to desire only what He wills. Be very courageous then in the distrust you must have for yourself. I say the same thing to all our dear sisters. I desire all of them to be filled with a great love which will immerse them so sweetly in God and so charitably in the service of the poor that their hearts will no longer have place for so many thoughts which endanger their perseverance. Courage then, my dear Sisters. Seek only to please God by faithfully observing His commandments and evangelical counsels because the goodness of God has deigned to call us to this. This should lead us to observe our Rules exactly but also cheerfully and diligently. Serve your masters with great gentleness. Be very respectful to the administrators and greatly honor the clergy. You owe this to them.

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1. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
2. A beam broke. Louise de Marillac was exremely affected by this accident, see Letter 102 and Coste IX, 75.
3. Copy made by Sister Marguerite Chétif (Angers series). The names are omitted to respect anonymity.
4. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux.
5. Claude Brigide, see Letter 102.

Alas! My poor sister . . . [1] here you are sick again. God wills it. Will it also. I am confident that this fever will enable you to come out of this illness with more strength and health than you had before. I ask all of you, my dear Sisters, to be very faithful to God. I remain united to you in His holy love.

L.277B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday, July 4, 1642[2]

Monsieur,

Madame de Traversay[3] forgot to ask you if we should seek another decree since that one deals only with the foundlings and not with the proposal of the Duchess.[4] Although I told her that you had examined it, she wants me to ask you and to let her know tomorrow morning. I beg you most humbly to allow me to speak to you a while before you leave, otherwise I will be very handicapped. We have a sister here who has nearly made up her mind to leave. She has been with us for more than a year. I met her this evening when she got back from the Foundling Hospital, and I advised her to go to confession tomorrow. If possible, could Monsieur Guérin[5] hear her confession since Monsieur Portail is still ill? Also, could it be in the morning since I have no one but her to send to help the sisters at Saint-Sulpice where, from what I have heard, a sister is critically ill. I am a bit overwhelmed by all the spiritual and emotional problems faced by the greater number of our sisters. I assure you, Monsieur, that my inability to help these good girls reach perfection is a subject of humiliation for me before God and the world. I beg the goodness of God to reveal this to you along with the means to remedy it. I remain, Monsieur, your humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
2. The date was on the back of the letter with Monsieur Vincent's reply (Coste VIII, 523).
3. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.
4. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.
5. Monsieur Jean Guérin, the younger, entered the Congregation of the Mission in February 1639 (Coste II, 22).

L.64 - TO MY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Schoolmistress at Saint-Germain-en-Laye[2]

July 5, 1642

My very dear Sister,

I was very happy to receive your two recent letters, as was Monsieur Vincent to whom I showed one of them. Continue your good works, my dear Sisters, and strive to overcome the failings which you know are displeasing to God. I feel that you did not receive the consolation that you had hoped for on the Feast of Saint Peter. Remain at peace as you await it. When I return from the little trip that I plan to make next week, I will let you know when you can come. As I see it, it will not be before August. Sister Anne of Fontenay[3] has given us every possible proof of her sorrow for her slowness in obeying. She has made her retreat and more than ever, she is determined to live and die as a Daughter of Charity. She left with Sister Jeanne Dalmagne[4] to teach school in Nanteuil.[5]

I believe that she will also return to the city around August 15 so as to celebrate fittingly this holy feast and to strengthen herself in virtue. Pray for all our sisters who share her intention. I told you about the grace which God granted us a month ago today.[6] Well, this very day we have received yet another. One of our newly arrived sisters was washing the linen of the Hôtel-Dieu when she fell into the river. By a very special grace of our good God she was pulled out, and I heard that after being unconscious for three hours, she revived. So you see, my dear Sister, how obliged we are to be faithful to our holy vocation. Ask this grace for me, I beg of you.

Read this letter to our good Sister Jeanne-Baptiste,[7] to whom all the

1. Jeanne Lepintre, employed in the home of Madame Goussault, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity around 1638. After a stay in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, she lived at the Motherhouse (1644 to 1647), except during the unsuccessful attempt to establish the Company at Le Mans in May 1646. In 1647, she visited the communities of Angers and Nantes. Then named Sister Servant in Nantes, she remained there until November 1653. From Châteaudun (1654-1657), she went to La Salpétrière (1659) then to Saint-Fargeau (1660). At the end of her life, her senility required her placement at the Hospice du Nom-de-Jésus.
2. Saint-Germain-en-Laye: In 1638, the Queen had asked for two Daughters of Charity to serve the poor and for the school for little girls.
3. Anne from Fontenay, see Letter 68.
4. Jeanne Dalmagne, see Letter 69.
5. Nanteuil, see Letter 69.
6. See Letter 102.
7. The elder Jeanne-Baptiste: at Saint-Germain in 1642, then Richelieu; at Issy in 1644. With the foundlings in 1646 until her death in December 1648.

sisters and I send our greetings. Tell her that I am for both of you, my very dear Sisters, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know if your uncle has written to you. He told me that your father and stepmother are well but that their affairs are going badly. I believe that their mill has been destroyed once again. I asked Sister Turgis[1] to go herself to see them so as to get first-hand news and to find out if they are in need. Do not worry about them. Entrust them to God. I will let you know what I learn, and we will take care of it. May you find peace in the desire to accomplish the most holy will of God and to work for your own perfection. I would have already sent this letter but I was waiting for the enclosed news. Take care of your health. I believe that you have been bled for the swelling. I know of no other remedy. Take purgatives frequently. Farewell for now to you, my dear Sister, and you also my good Sister Jeanne-Baptiste. Take care of one another, watching over the health of your bodies and the sanctification of your souls.

L.64B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday evening, July 6 (1642)[2]

Monsieur,

Sister Françoise[3] seems to be very open to going to Liancourt[4] or to remaining here. She forgot to tell you that everything has been settled for her to inherit the property of her deceased mother. She rented out a part of the house three or four years ago but has received nothing for it. She would like to sell what property she has in her village. She thinks that she could put her little affairs in order if she accompanied me. I very humbly ask you to let me know what I should do. Although she seems to be very attached to her vocation,[5] is there perhaps some risk in leaving

1. Élisabeth Turgis was at the Motherhouse, see Letter 38.
2. Monsieur Vincent answered on the same sheet (Coste II, 267).
3. Françoise Noret spent a large part of her life at the Motherhouse. In 1642, she was suggested for Liancourt. In 1645, she was sent to Saint-Denis. She accompanied Louise de Marillac during her trip to Nantes in July and August 1646. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company on August 8, 1655.
4. Called by the Seigneur de Liancourt, Duke of La Roche-Guyon, the Daughters of Charity arrived in Liancourt in approximately 1642. The contract of establishment was not signed until 1645.
5. Words written and crossed out by Louise de Marillac: "Could you not bring her with

her there after the suggestion made to her by the good priest? I am still somewhat troubled that our sisters believed that I did not want them to talk about their difficulties. After reflecting on my conduct, I can think of only two instances which might create such an impression. The first concerns Monsieur Thibault,[1] who came here to see three or four sisters whom he knows. Among them was Sister Claude[2] who, at that time, could not stop talking about her sorrow for a sin that she had already confessed. I advised her not to speak to him about it. Another occasion concerns Sister Louise.[3] She delights in frequently talking[4] about her acts of mortification, so I told her that she should stop this, that she should continue with the practices which have been permitted and, should she discontinue them, that she could begin them again without discussing them. Other than these two instances, Monsieur, I do not know of anything else which might have given any sister reason to say that I did not approve of their speaking of their difficulties. If they have complained of other things, your Charity ought to look into the matter so as to understand better the attitude of the sisters.

It seems to me, Monsieur, that I asked you to let Sister Turgis take my place with the sisters because of some little remark which was made indicating that this was necessary, but I cannot recall the details. At the same time, Monsieur Portail spoke to several sisters, almost all of them of vows, about making a retreat. Those who are weak and impatient will have no peace and will put off any good resolutions until the time of the retreat. I think that to prepare themselves for a good retreat they should, after certain failings which frequently occur, first of all strive to do better. We should propose a date to them only a short time before we can offer them a retreat, since it is a bit more difficult for us than for religious because we have to send someone in place of the sister making the retreat.

I think, Monsieur, that in order to remedy promptly the disorder among our sisters at Saint-Sulpice it might be better to send Sister Henriette[5] there immediately. We could recall Sister Catherine to make her retreat and then keep her here afterwards. We could put off Sister Henriette's retreat because I am afraid that their little disorders will continue. I ask your Charity to let me know, to excuse my possibly inappropriate requests, and to give me your holy blessing since I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

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you and not keep her there."

1. Monsieur Thibault (1618-1655), priest of the Mission. Was in Saintes in 1644, in Paris in 1646, then in Saint-Méen from 1648 to 1655.
2. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
3. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
4. Words written and crossed out by Louise de Marillac: "of her little mortifications."
5. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

L.65 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(August 1642)

Monsieur,

Had I not thought that you were in the country, I would not have delayed so long in expressing my very humble gratitude for all the goodness that your Charity showed the good Madame Raffy;[1] but I do so now. She has gone to live with her mother and father as you advised her. I sincerely hope that she will be as faithful to the other advice you have been kind enough to give her. I received your dear letter. Answering it reminds me that Sister Madeleine[2] told me that some girls have presented themselves for the service of the poor. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to look carefully into their vocation and their emotional stability. Then, if you find them suitable, they will be most welcome. They must be strong and healthy.

As for the sick sister, I do not see any harm, Monsieur, in giving her water provided it not be too strong, in case her problem is pulmonary. A half glass of this water mixed with orange juice and a little sugar could be given to her fasting, and then again in the evening as a potion. I hope that they are not omitting frequent blood lettings, especially in the foot. I am not writing to our sisters in this mail on the subject about which you did me the honor of speaking. God willing, I will not fail to do so. I am writing to Sister Claude.[3] I beg you, Monsieur, to be good enough to look into what is troubling her and to honor me by telling me if I can do something about it. I most humbly supplicate you, Monsieur, to have the charity to remember my weaknesses in your holy Masses, believing me to be, Monsieur, your humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

1. Madame Raffy, see Letter 61.
2. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
3. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

L.547 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE[1]

(at Angers)

(c. August 1642)

My very dear Sister,

You made me very happy by speaking to me of your difficulties. Talk of them very openly with Monsieur l'abbé[2] or, in his absence, with Monsieur Ratier.[3] Trust that they will pass but, my dear Sister, so long as they remain, look upon them as occasions permitted by God to enable you to make progress in virtue. May they keep you humble so that you may love and esteem our good sisters and show them, in matters concerning the service of the poor, the submission you owe them because of their long experience in the house. O my dear Sister, cherish your state in life that many ladies envy! When I reflect on the happiness that you all enjoy, I praise Divine Providence for having chosen you. Make good use of this gift, and please God by serving your masters and His dear members with devotion, gentleness and humility. Do not be upset if your senses rebel, but reflect that our good God is satisfied by a heart filled with good will. I beg His goodness to fill yours with His holy love in which I remain, my dear Sister, your sister and servant.

L.70 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 17, 1642

Monsieur,

Although I do not know if as yet you have returned from your visits, I can no longer put off writing to you to greet you most humbly and then to beg you to be good enough to send me news of your dear self and of the state of our sisters. I have not been able to write to any sister except, I believe, Sister Madeleine,[4] since your Charity went to the trouble of telling me that I should do so. I most humbly beg your pardon for this, Monsieur, as well as for the fact that Monsieur de Marillac[5] did not

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
4. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
5. Michel de Marillac, Deputy of Parliament, grandson of the Keeper of the Seal.

pay his respects to you as he would have had he received the letter which I wrote to him as soon as you were good enough to inform me that he was in Angers. I was astonished to see him back here in the city knowing that he had had no news from me. I am often caught by surprise like this because I have very little experience in conversation. I am ashamed of this before God because I do not use this separation from the world to be closer to Him. This is one of my greatest faults. I acknowledge it to you in the hope that you will be so charitable as to ask pardon of our good God for me. I remain in His love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter.

P.S. The administrators have asked me to send sisters to serve the farmers who sell the wine. I could not do so for many reasons, one of which was one that these very farmers gave me, namely, that the sale of the wine of the poor is used as an opportunity to sell a lot of other wines. I did not explain this difficulty to the administrators, and I am afraid that they will be displeased by my refusal. I assure you, Monsieur, that I do what I can.

L.127 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity Serving the Poor Galley Slaves

(c. 1642)

My very dear Sister,

We must willingly submit to the good pleasure of God in what has happened to our good sister. I would regret her loss if I dared, but instead I pray that the holy will of our great Master may always be accomplished by all of us and in all of us.

Monsieur Vincent has ordered her to be buried this evening after vespers. Please notify the Pastor to see if this is acceptable. Prayers for the dead will be said over her body. The funeral service will be Wednesday.

Please see to it that there are six half-pound candles and six two-ounce tapers. I think that you can get the candles from the church; if so, you will not have to buy them. Also you will need 40 two-penny candles for the sisters. She should be buried near our deceased Sister Michelle. You will need a casket and a spray of white flowers. Have our sisters from Saint-Nicolas notify the sisters from Saint-Benoit, Saint-Étienne[1] and the Foundling Hospital. We will take care of informing the rest.

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1. Parishes of Paris.

Remember me to Monsieur Compaing.[1] Keep Sister Françoise[2] until this evening, but do not let her carry the soup pot because she is not feeling well. I do not know if I have forgotten anything, but you will take care of whatever I have omitted.

Good-bye for now, my dear Sister. There is a candle shop on the Place Maubert. Contact Madame Metay[3] and ask her to help you with all this. I remain your loving and affectionate sister and servant.

L.69 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(1642)

Monsieur,

Sister Jeanne Dalmagne[4] has arrived from Nanteuil.[5] The coach which brought her leaves tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. I do not know if she will return also or if you think it would be well for her to stay here for a few days. Because she went to the funeral of our sister, I do not know what she has to tell us. Perhaps you will find out in this letter which she brought you. I very humbly ask you, Monsieur, to let me know about her stay and to remember me before God tomorrow at the holy altar as your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.71 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

October 14, 1642

Monsieur,

I found a letter from your Charity when I got back from a short trip of over two weeks. I must tell you, Monsieur, that I am very annoyed

1. Monsieur Compaign, vicar of Saint-Nicolas, of the community of priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, founded by Monsieur Bourdoise.
2. Françoise Noret of the Motherhouse, see Letter 64b.
3. Lady of Charity who took special care of the refugees from Lorraine.
4. Jeanne Dalmagne, born in Herblay in 1611; Daughter of Charity in 1638; sent to Nanteuil in 1642; deceased in March 1644. One of her letters to Louise de Marillac is kept at the Motherhouse.
5. Nanteuil-le-Haudoin: Requested by the Marquise de Maignelay, the Daughters of Charity went there in 1642.

about all this business to be transacted by the farmers[1] concerning the tax on the sale of the wine. I am afraid that the priests from Saint-Lazare cannot satisfy the administrators of the hospital for the reasons which I explained to them. I imagine that Monsieur Vincent has contacted you about this matter.

For what possible purpose could that group of sisters have banded together? How unfortunate that appears, and how sorry I am for the trouble that this matter may cause your Charity. We still remain indebted to you for the help that you have obtained for them from Monsieur Ratier.[2] I would most willingly write to thank him, but I am afraid of adding to his burden. I beg our good God to be his eternal recompense. The second letter that you wrote to me, Monsieur, gives me a somewhat better opinion of Sister Clémence.[3] I am relieved because I cannot bring her back here for two reasons. First of all, because she is not so capable as the others and has been serving the poor for only three years, it would not be reasonable to place her now with just one sister. The strong must help the weak. The second reason is that it is up to the administrators to dismiss any sister who may have failed seriously in her responsibilities. I most humbly beseech you, Monsieur, to be good enough to make a decision in this matter. As for the four sisters,[4] I do not think, Monsieur, that we can send any again so soon. I might add concerning the four, that they had first requested twelve. Moreover, had these good gentlemen asked for them when I was there, it would have been feasible because we sent sisters to other places. Nevertheless, I can assure you that we will do our best. Because of some problems which have arisen, I cannot as yet give you an answer about the good girls that your Charity was kind enough to recommend to us. As soon as I have consulted Monsieur Vincent, I will let you know his decision.

Monsieur de Marillac[5] is distressed at not having had the honor of meeting you during his trip to Angers. I believe that he had already left when the letter that I wrote to him about you arrived there. Should he return to Angers, he will make up for the fault I committed by not letting him know far enough in advance. Could I reveal all my failings to you, I would rely on your goodness to ask God's mercy on my soul. I humbly beg this of you now, Monsieur, for the love of God in which I remain your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

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1. See Letter 70.
2. Monsieur Ratier, priest of Angers, entrusted by Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux with the spiritual service of the Daughters of Charity at the hospital.
3. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
4. A letter from the administrators dated February 15, asking for four sisters to do laundry and one to replace Élisabeth Martin.
5. Michel de Marillac, see Letter 70.

L.72 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 9, 1642

Monsieur,

Here is the letter that I had planned to write to our sisters when I last wrote to you. I was unable to do so sooner. I do not know if they can read or understand it, or if you think that it should be given to them. This is why I am sending it to you unsealed. I thought that if your affairs, Monsieur, do not allow you sufficient time to take the trouble of reading it, perhaps Monsieur Ratier would perform this act of charity, as he does so many others, for which I am most grateful. I am also indebted to you because I never weary of imposing upon you or of begging you, for the love of God, to allow these poor daughters to continue to occupy the place that He has given them in the pure charity with which His goodness has filled your soul. Since I have been fortunate enough, Monsieur, to experience personally the effects of your charity, I dare to hope that you are aware of my interior state and of my great spiritual needs. Therefore, if you do not want me to be afraid that you consider me incorrigible and most unfaithful, I very humbly beseech you, at the beginning of the new year,[1] to help me before God by warning me of my faults and by telling me what you believe God is asking of me. In His love, I ask for your holy blessing and assure you, Monsieur, that I am your very humble daughter and servant.

L.112 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE[2]

Daughter of Charity with the Galley Slaves

(c. 1642)

My very dear Sister,

With all my heart I beg God to be your consolation as you wait to learn what He has decided for your relative.

I think that it would have been better had you consulted Monsieur Accar[3] or Madame Traversay[4] before cutting down on the portions for

1. New liturgical year.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
3. Monsieur Accar, administrator of the house of the galley slaves.
4. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.

the galley slaves and giving the surplus to others, because those who send these people to you are not concerned where the food comes from provided they are fed.

Pray to God for us. Please remember me to Sister Catherine[1] and believe that with all the love of my heart I am, my very dear Sister, for both of you, your very humble and very loving servant.

1643

January 25: *Conference by Monsieur Vincent on the Imitation of Country Girls.*

May 14: *Death of Louis XIII, King of France. Regency of Anne of Austria with Mazarin as Prime Minister.*

Condemnation of The Augustinus by the Pope.

L.75 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(January 17, 1643)

Monsieur,

Enclosed is a letter from Sister Jeanne at Issy.[2] You can see what she has done about the copy of the receipt that she was asked to produce. I think it would be well, Monsieur, to settle this matter as soon as possible. The Pastor of Baron[3] expects to get a sister after Candlemas Day. We are waiting for Divine Providence to inspire your Charity to give us a conference. Our sisters, as well as I, believe that we have been deprived of this benefit for such a long time as a punishment for the poor use we have made of it in the past. We regret this and recognize the fact that we will not be able to do better in the future without a great deal of help from your Charity, whose poor little daughter and most grateful servant I remain, Monsieur.

Feast of Saint Anthony

1. Catherine Bagard, Daughter of Charity around 1636-1638, left for Nantes with Louise de Marillac in July 1646. Her relationship with the chaplain provoked great difficulties in the community. Shortly after her return to Paris in August 1647, she left the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
2. The Daughters of Charity stayed in Issy for only a few years, from approximately 1642 to 1649.
3. Locality near Senlis.

L.76 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 25, 1643]

Monsieur,

I beg you most humbly to be charitable enough to let me know at what time you will be saying Mass tomorrow, and to pray for my son and to remember my humble request during it. We cannot possibly send Sister Henriette[1] to Issy because she is needed at Fontenay[2] to teach school. The sister who is remaining there does not know how to read.

This good, simple sister, whom, as I told you, I had thought of dismissing, has not made a retreat because I did not think that she was capable of it. I ask you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so kind as to tell me if I should put her into it with the others. I hope that our sisters will make good use of the instruction that your Charity gave us Sunday.[3] Their hearts are filled with the desire to do so. They would like to be able to remember it forever. This causes me to ask you most humbly to send me the outline of the principal points which you had with you. I think that it would enable me to recall the better part of what our good God said to us through your words. Before I die, will I not be in the state which God desires of me for love of Him? Do me the charity of reflecting a little on this and on my faults, so that at the hour of my death I will not experience the shame I should because of my infidelity to the designs of God, particularly when He asks me for an account of the period since His goodness has granted me the grace, my most Honored Father, of being your most insignificant daughter and your most grateful servant.

P.S. I forgot to ask you if I should write the formal act of acceptance, which I sent to you, on the back of the sheet containing the final settlement of the account, or on the front in the margins so that it will be included in the settlement.

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.

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1. Henriette Gesseaume, one of the first Daughters of Charity. In the early years, she was in Paris and its vicinity: at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1638, Fontenay-aux-Roses in 1643, the parish of Saint-Germain in 1644. In July 1646, she was sent to Nantes where she became known for her great competence in the pharmacy. Upon her return to Paris in November 1655, she served the poor in the parish of Saint-Severin. Louise de Marillac sent her to visit the community of Chantilly in 1658. In August of the same year, she left to go to the aid of the wounded soldiers in Calais. Upon her return, she served the galley slaves.
2. Fontenay-sux-Roses.
3. Conference on the Imitation of Country Girls (Coste IX, 79).

L.77 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 9, 1643

Monsieur,

Madame de Lamoignon[1] and Madame de Nesmond[2] came here after their visit to the hospital of Saint-Denis.[3] They plan to ask for the Sisters of the Charity for the work if the nuns of the hospital are unwilling to accept the conditions they want to impose on them. These ladies wanted very much to see you, Monsieur, to tell you that they do not think that the Bishop of Beauvais is going to Saint-Germain and that his sister could accompany them instead, if you approve. However, their main reason for hesitating to undertake the trip is that they have heard that Monsieur de Noyers[4] is at Versailles with the King, and they feel that unless he is at Saint-Germain there would be little profit in going. They are also uncertain as to whether they should simply thank the Queen and recommend the work to her or ask her to become its protectress. They will await your recommendation on the matter before deciding about their trip. They will send a messenger to you for your response tomorrow morning unless, Monsieur, you consider it necessary for your Charity to send a reply sooner.

The Pastor of Issy came here. After asking for assistance for a little girl, he asked if we were sending Sister Jeanne back soon. I explained to him that I was waiting to clear up any doubt I had about the intention to continue this Confraternity of Charity. I quite simply laid the whole matter before him (no harm done, it seems). He is supposed to talk to Mademoiselle de Montdésir[5] and to let you know what she wants to do. He would have liked to blame us for the little the sisters have received since they have been at Issy. I ask your Charity to please be good enough to let me know if I should still put off sending Sister Jeanne back to Issy. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and servant.

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1. Madame de Lamoignon, born Marie des Landes, wife of Chrétien de Lamoignon, Magistrate of supreme justice of Parliament in Paris. Lady of Charity very devoted to all (beggars, prisoners, refugees) she was nicknamed "Mother of the Poor" by the people of Paris. She died on December 30, 1651.
2. Madame de Nesmond, born Anne de Lamoignon, sister-in-law of Madame de Lamoignon.
3. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Saint-Denis did not take place until August 1645, see Letter 143.
4. Monsieur des Noyers, Secretary of State, was a friend of Michel de Marillac, Louise's uncle.
5. Mademoiselle de Montdésir, Lady of Charity at Issy.

L.78 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

February 10, 1643

Monsieur,

Is it not high time that I expressed my gratitude to your Charity for the great good that you have done for me by instructing me on a practice that I so greatly needed? It is truly God, Monsieur, who has spoken to me on this matter through your words. It seems to me that this practice is the foundation and support of this work which God has begun and that it will be its continuation. It is a great subject of humiliation for me to see how my natural inclination to evil causes me to seek to avoid this manner of acting, and how often I spoil things when I try to interfere with them. It is not sufficient, Monsieur, to have clearly shown me this evil or to have taught me the true remedy for it. You must also assist me in putting these remedies into practice as you can, if you wish, by the help which I ask of you before God and for love of Him, and by your admonitions on the occasions which your Charity will find and which will be indicated to you by the holy will of God. If you only knew how weak I am and how gladly I would tell you about it had I the time. I beg God and my good angel to make you aware of it.

I informed Madame de Marillac[1], the one who is the religious, of your desire to have the writings of her deceased father. I believe, Monsieur, that you will be one of the first to see a copy. Very little of the story of Job still has to be printed. When this is finished, they will begin to publish the complete works. I believe, Monsieur, that the same inspiration which God gave you to let me know His designs for me will have enabled you to put up with the state in which His goodness placed you when you went to the trouble of writing to me, and Divine Providence permitted that I should not notice this part of the letter until long after receiving it. (I do not know how that happened). You will see clearly how this oversight prevented me from saying anything to you on this subject; otherwise, I would have appeared to be too rash in believing that I should obey you and too naïve in doing so.

1. Madame de Marillac, daughter-in-law of Michel de Marillac, Keeper of the Seal, entered Carmel after the death of the latter. She took care of the publication of his works, see Letter 47.

I am concerned about Sister Claude[1] and Sister Barbe[2] because Sister Madeleine[3] has told me that they often think of leaving us. I do not know if they have spoken to you or to Monsieur Ratier[4] about this, Monsieur. I humbly beg of you, if you judge it appropriate, to obtain their consent to inform Monsieur Vincent who sends you his cordial greetings and his sincere gratitude for everything for which the goodness of God has willed that we and all the Daughters of Charity should be indebted to you. We can only thank you by offering to God all the intentions which your Charity sends us, and I personally can but beg His infinite goodness to find His good pleasure in you in time and for eternity in your accomplishment of His holy will in which I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.80 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

March 10, 1643

Monsieur,

I see the workings of Divine Providence in my delay in reading the first letter that I had the honor of receiving from you this year. It was a powerful reminder for me not to fear disobeying you without appearing to be bold. But because you desire it, I will tell you quite simply that we must wait peacefully for grace to produce true humility in us by revealing our powerlessness to us. We are thereby led to recognize it and to accept willingly to endure what you call our little infirmities, pride and sensitivity, without any hope that they will be destroyed in us because we are and will be tossed about by such disturbances throughout our lives. As for the other things that you told me, Monsieur, I thought that I should communicate with Monsieur Vincent because, for the good of the neighbor, your Charity perhaps needs his advice on this matter. If he does not write to you in this mail, it is because he has been prevented from doing so by the continual demands placed upon him. He told me that he wanted to do so. You would be unwilling to listen if I told you

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Barbe Toussaint of Suresnes arrived in Angers in January 1640. She returned to Paris at the end of the year 1644. She was sent to the parish of Saint-Sulpice in August 1645.
3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
4. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

the thoughts which your humility evoked in him.

Monsieur Constantin[1] took the trouble to bring your dear letter to me himself. I cannot tell you, Monsieur, how consoled I was to see his fervent love of God. There is great reason to hope for the perseverance of this soul.

I see that the spiritual immaturity of our poor sisters is continuing. It seems to me that they are bearing the fruit of the miserable garden of my weak initial formation. I am not writing to the two sisters[2] who are suffering this trial since I do not know if I should. I am very disturbed by the weakness that Sister Madeleine[3] has shown. I believe, Monsieur, that your Charity has already brought this to her attention so I will not mention it to her. As for changing her, I shall have to wait for a reply from Monsieur Vincent concerning the length of time they are to hold the office of superior. However, I hope that Monsieur Lambert[4] will visit Angers. Then I would ask you please to be good enough to confer together about all the sisters' needs.

I recommend a matter of importance to your prayers and Masses. It appears to be going well for the glory of God, but because I am involved in it, I am afraid that the just cause I give Divine Justice to be displeased with me may be an obstacle to His mercy. Trust in your charity makes me importunate. Be assured that I am, Monsieur, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.172B - TO SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE

Sister of Charity (at Angers)

March 29 (1643)

My very dear Sister,

Blessed be God for the grace He has granted you of making a retreat! You must profit from all the thoughts and good resolutions which His goodness has given you, although you feel that you have done nothing worthwhile. Fine! If you are dissatisfied with yourself, this is perhaps a sign that you have been pleasing to our good God. I beg this of Him for you with all my heart. As for your desire, cherish it within you, my dear

1. Monsieur Gabriel Constantin, one of the hospital administrators.
2. Claude Brigide and Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.
3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
4. Monsieur Lambert, then Assistant General of the Congregation of the Mission, see Letter 18.

Sister, like a treasure which your dear Spouse has given you and of which He will one day demand an account. Wait peacefully until He wills it to be carried out.

I recommend myself to your prayers and to those of all our sisters. I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your most obedient sister and servant.

L.84 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

June 6, 1643

Monsieur,

I communicated your letter to Monsieur Vincent, who told me to tell you that, since he has great respect for all the priests of the Company of the Oratory,[1] he sees no difficulty in having their Superior assist those good Ladies in their mutual efforts to renew their fervor if you consider it necessary, and since you are in Angers, if you do not foresee any danger in the practice.

Monsieur, I did not see the person who brought the letter that I had the honor of receiving from you. Therefore, once again I was unable to learn where Madame, your sister, was staying. I greatly desire the privilege of seeing her and of rendering her the service I owe her on account of her merit.

I humbly beg you, Monsieur, if anyone speaks to you about Madame Turgis,[2] to explain that she cannot leave the employment in which she is presently engaged. We would have great need of many more like her.

I beg your pardon for not having given you a reply concerning those good girls. I no longer recall their qualities. However, since it is essential for us that all our members have the dispositions appropriate for our employment, it seems to me that I did not find them particularly apparent in those girls. I even thought that your Charity had some doubts concerning them.

In the name of God, Monsieur, do not abandon our poor sisters. I am aware of the charity which Monsieur Ratier[3] has for them and how profitable it is for them but you are the Father of this work. If you consider it advisable for us to change Sister Barbe,[4] I humbly urge you

1. Company of the Oratory, founded by Cardinal Pierre de Berulle.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
4. Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.

to be so kind as to let me know. I am confident that you are conscious of Monsieur Vincent's great responsibilities. I hope that you will do him the charity of showing him your compassion and of helping him before God. He is still the same, and I hope that he will not change particularly with regard to the esteem that he has for the graces which God has conferred upon you, Monsieur. I beg Him with all my heart to increase them until the last moment of your life, and I assure you, Monsieur, that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and most obedient daughter.

L.85 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

June 8 [1643]

Monsieur,

Madame Pelletier has just left here. She came to tell me that Monsieur l'abbé Buzais was coadjutor[1] to the Most Reverend Archbishop. She said that she thought immediately of my son. Without mentioning anything to me, she spoke to Father Emmanuel[2] who told her to find out if I wanted him to propose [Michel] to serve Monsieur Buzais. I do not know if it would be as almoner or in some other capacity more suitable for him. Now, since I had absolutely nothing to do with this, I thought that I should not fail to take the liberty of asking you, Monsieur, how I should act in this matter, and should you consider such an appointment feasible, humbly to entreat you to do us the charity of assisting us with it. I believe that if my son had some distraction in his melancholy, which, in my opinion, is the cause of his difficulties, these problems would soon disappear. He has always appeared to me to fear God and to want to acquit himself faithfully of the duties placed upon him. If you wish to afford me the honor of speaking with you on this subject, may your Charity be so kind as to let me know. Believe me, Monsieur, I am your most grateful daughter and servant.

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1. Jean François Paul de Gondi, vicar of Buzais, was named coadjutor of his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, on June 13, 1643.
2. Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi, father of the above, in whose home Monsieur Vincent had been a private tutor. Upon the death of his wife in 1625, he entered the Company of the Oratory. He died in June 1662.

L.86 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

June 12 (1643)

Monsieur,

Madame Soucarière,[1] Madame de Romilly[2] and Madame Traversay[3] went to [Saint-Lazare] to tell you that the Chancellor received them most cordially and informed them that in order to take possession of the château of Bicêtre[4] they would have to speak to the Queen and have a petition drawn up. They humbly beg your Charity to speak to her yourself about this, and if you have not already had the petition drafted, to let them know whom they shall have do it and whether the Chancellor or Madame de Brienne[5] should present it.

The Chancellor also offered to give the Ladies a permit allowing them to use part of the money given for the poor little children for their current needs. Please let them know how much they should request.

These Ladies are afraid that Madame de Lamoignon[6] has ruined everything by speaking to Monsieur de Nesmond.[7] I urge you to speak of the matter to the Queen as soon as possible lest Her Majesty hear about it from someone else. I also want to remind you to inform her of how deeply grateful the people will be for any decrease which the King makes in the grain tax. Monsieur de Romilly has already discussed this with you.

I told Monsieur Portail that your Charity had given us reason to hope for a meeting with you Sunday. He thought it would be well to suggest to you as a subject for the conference, the importance of observing what is in their little Rule on the way of life of the Daughters of Charity, and to have this read. It seems to me that the sisters should be told that a good means to become accustomed to this practice is for each sister from the parishes and one sister from this house to render an account of their observance either of all of it or of a part at each meeting. Also, Monsieur,

1. Madame de Soucarière, Lady of Charity, was the President of the Confraternity of the Hôtel-Dieu after Madame Goussault.
2. Madame de Romilly, see Letter 191.
3. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.
4. The *château* of Bicêtre was an immense building constructed under Louis XIII to accommodate disabled officers and soldiers. Upon the death of Louis XIII, the plan was abandoned and the *château* remained empty. The Ladies of Charity wished to acquire it to house the foundlings.
5. Madame de Brienne, Lady of Charity. Her husband was Secretary of State.
6. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
7. Monsieur de Nesmond, brother-in-law of Madame de Lamoignon, Magistrate of Supreme Justice of Parliament.

if you think it is appropriate, you could do us the charity of giving us an instruction on one or two points of the Rule during each conference. If you want all of us to meditate on the subject of the conference, I would ask your Charity to give us the points so we can send them to the sisters when we notify them.

I will come early tomorrow morning to find out what you want me to do about all these matters. Allow me to beg you to remember my needs at the holy altar, particularly the fault that makes me so guilty in the sight of God, that prevents me from placing my complete trust in His holy Providence, and that makes me unworthy to call myself your daughter, although I remain so by His goodness, Monsieur, as I also remain your most grateful servant.

L.104 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

June 29 (1643)

Monsieur,

Please accept my humble gratitude for the advice you gave me concerning the behavior of the good girl from Angers. If she does not want to return home, then we will be obliged to let her find employment as a domestic since I know of no other place where I can put her for the reasons which I explained to your sister. When I first saw her, I was certain that you had not sent her to us, and I hesitated keeping her. We need girls with a strong desire to reach perfection, and I believe that this one would still like to see and experience the world. There is a young woman who, on her own, came to see us and said that she has desired for a long time to enter the Company. She added that she preferred it to a religious community. I was immediately struck by her openness and goodwill, which disposed me very favorably to her request. I think that one day she will be able to render great service to God in this Company. When I mentioned her to your sister, she spoke so highly of her that it made me desire even more to have her serve among us. However, I have since heard that some of her relatives are trying to change her mind and are claiming that the fervor of her desire is diminishing. Nevertheless, she spoke in very different terms yesterday to Sister Élisabeth.[1] If God wants to give her to us, He will certainly find a way. For my part, Monsieur, I assure you that I shall esteem and love her as if she were my close relative in the hope that we can work together for the glory of God. I had hoped

1. Élisabeth Martin was in Paris, see Letter 22.

to have the joy of rendering a few little services to Madame du Plessis,[1] but I am afraid I will not have this honor. I beg our good God to bring her lawsuit to a successful conclusion. I also humbly ask you, Monsieur, please to remember Monsieur Vincent when you celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass. He is in greater need than ever of your prayers. I greatly fear that he may collapse under the weight of work. He is suffering from his habitual fevers but his work continues as usual. I have no idea what to say about Monsieur Lambert's[2] trip. I had thought that when he returned from Sedan, he would go almost directly to Richelieu but he has not as yet gotten there. Whenever he does, he will surely not fail to go to Angers. I beg you, Monsieur, for the love of God to continue your constant charitable care for our poor sisters, who will persevere as they have begun only with your assistance. Both we and they are extremely grateful to the Divine Goodness for having granted us this grace.

I am most grateful to Madame du Plessis, who took the trouble to come here twice. I cannot tell you how ashamed I am that I cannot give her proof of the affection she deserves because I do not have her address. I was so distracted that I did not think to give her a ticket to participate in the ceremonies[3] being held at Notre-Dame for our deceased King. I only realized this when they were over. I point this fault out to you, Monsieur, so that you can see from it that I commit many others even with regard to the assistance that I must seek for my salvation. I most humbly supplicate you, Monsieur, to do me the charity of helping me before our good God, in whose love I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.96 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday (1643)

Monsieur,

Yesterday Madame Traversay asked me to tell you that the Ladies will assemble Thursday in the arranged place and that the Chancellor's wife will also be there.[4]

I was sorry not to be able to tell you about the behavior of Father

1. Madame du Plessis, sister of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 107.
2. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, went to Sedan to negotiate the establishment of the Priests of the Mission.
3. King Louis XIII died on May 14, 1643.
4. This letter followed Letter 86.

d'Attichy[1] during the visit that he made to the Duchess concerning the affairs of my son. He planned this visit a long time ago without my knowledge. When I met him at the Carmelite Convent where I had been asked to come by the Countess de Maure[2] for her business, he asked me about my son and reproached me for doing nothing for him. Madame de Maure also told me that I knew Monsieur de Noyers[3] well enough to have already spoken to him. What I did was to write two days later to Father d'Attichy to tell him that the only motherly duty in which I seemed to have failed my son was in not letting him know that my late husband had devoted all his time and his life to looking after the affairs of the d'Attichy family while completely neglecting those of his own family. I added that since he was determined to look after my son without my knowledge, that I was begging him, in order to make up for my fault, to inform the Countess that Monsieur de Noyers knows me from having met me often at the home of Monsieur de Marillac,[4] Keeper of the Seal, and that I was certain that your Charity would recommend my son to him should he be mentioned. Before God that is all that I contributed to this affair. I very humbly beg you to believe this. I would have done nothing at all had I not met these people and been completely unprepared for what they had to say. My son knew nothing about it.

I beg our good God to reveal His will to you in this matter and to let you know that I would rather die than deceive you in anything because I am, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and very humble daughter.

L.74 - TO BE DELIVERED TO MONSIEUR VINCENT PERSONALLY

(1643)

Monsieur,

I have learned what Monsieur Compaing[5] had promised to find out for me on this matter, and I am as afflicted by it as I could possibly be. This is why I beg you, for the love of God, to allow me to speak with you today, here if possible, or I will go to see you. I believe that the time

1. Father d'Attichy, a Jesuit and one of the cousins of Louise de Marillac. His parents, Octavien d'Attichy and Valence de Marillac, who died in 1614 and 1617 respectively, left seven children, who were still young, in a precarious financial situation. Antoine Le Gras and Mademoiselle took care of the d'Attichy family.
2. Anne, one of the daughters of Valence de Marillac, married the Count de Maure.
3. Monsieur de Noyers, a friend of the family, see Letter 77.
4. Michel de Marillac, Louise's uncle, see Letter 47.
5. Monsieur Compaing, vicar at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, see Letter 92.

has come to find a remedy for this serious evil which is worse than you can imagine. I have great reason to be afraid and to pray that God will support me and inspire your Charity with a way of procuring His glory in so great an evil. I believe that I am willing to submit to anything, but I dread eternity. In the name of God, Monsieur, consider this matter to be of the utmost importance and do me the honor of believing that I am your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.125 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 19 (1643)

Monsieur,

Here are the problems which come to my mind and about which you told me to write. I would be reluctant to do so were I not convinced that it will not interfere with the accomplishment of God's designs in this matter. I very humbly beg you to do me the honor of letting me speak with you as soon as possible about my son. I believe that this is essential because it is also up to your Charity to look after his needs in the sight of God and as you see best. Divine Providence has given you the added burden of all the acts of charity which you have performed, and continue to perform, for her who is by the love of God, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

The difficulties in remaining at Bicêtre[1] are first, the size of the building and the extent of the grounds. In better than two years it could not be half-filled. Second, the inconveniences that occur, even in Paris, when houses have been the dwelling place of persons of ill-repute. With even greater reason is this to be feared in a place which has been for years a refuge for all sorts of wicked people who have hidden out night and day in the château and on the grounds.

Third, the danger for the sisters on the roads, since they are often obliged to go to and from the city.

Fourth, the impossibility of carrying the children and the difficulty of transporting them on the backs of animals on account of the muddy terrain and the bad roads as well as rain, hail and snow.

Fifth, the large number of sisters that would be needed because of the trips that have to be made, as well as for the work with the children and the needs of the house. We do not have a sufficient number suitable for this work.

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1. Bicêtre, see Letter 86.

Sixth, the danger that all these trips may lead to disorders among the sisters either now or in the future.

Seventh, the great expense required to make the place habitable now and to keep it supplied with provisions, more of which are needed there than elsewhere to meet necessities. This is rather obvious.

Eighth, the difficulty the sisters have in coming to the Conferences and to the House once a month as well as the difficulty of going there to visit the children.

Finally, if there were a question of placing all the Sisters of Charity there, it seems to me that this would be very prejudicial to the entire Company because of the necessary visits of the sisters who serve the poor in Paris, and the work of this house in caring for the sick poor, in treating wounds, and in instructing the young. It would be especially prejudicial to the necessary communication between the sisters and their superiors and occasionally the Ladies of the parishes.

Nevertheless, if despite all these difficulties, it is necessary to go to Bicêtre, then two men should be in residence at least during the winter. There must be daily Mass in the chapel where fonts can be placed for the baptism of the children; this would use up the fifty pounds given for the baptisms. They would also need a small coach and a horse to transport the children. It would help a great deal. One of the men could bring it.

If this is to be done, the men must be carefully selected because of the contact with the sisters and with the nurses.

L.91 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 16 [1643]

Monsieur,

Madame Traversay and Mademoiselle Viole[1] have just left here. They send you their humble greetings. The latter asked me to inform you that her brother told her that the Advocate General had told him that he had learned on good authority that a military pensioner wanted to ask the Queen for the revenues from the tax paid by the grain carriers and that, if he succeeds in preventing those who should ask from doing so, the children will lose everything. This good young woman was most anxious for your Charity to be informed.[2] Madame de Liancourt[3] also asked me

1. Mademoiselle Viole: Treasurer of the Confraternity of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu and of the foundlings.
2. This letter followed Letter 86. It was a question of the purchase of the Château of Bicêtre for the foundlings.
3. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.

to speak to you about the pensions of the *lay monks*[1] in each abbey because she would like to suggest to the Queen that the same provision could be made for cripples. If you do not feel that she should do so, please be so good as to let her know. I ask you also to reflect before God on how I can be faithful to my obligations to Him since I am so inclined to my own will, which I seem to follow in everything, and this is a great obstacle to my accomplishing the will of God in which I remain, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and unworthy daughter.

L.130 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 17, 1643

Monsieur,

Because I am certain that you will be good enough to believe that I have delayed in writing to you so that I could give you Monsieur Vincent's opinion on the matter that you did me the honor of proposing to me, I will not offer you any excuses. However, I will tell you that, because he did not have time to have the letter read to him, he asked for it. By way of reply, he asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he approves of your idea of spending six months in Paris and six in Angers, at least until Divine Providence indicates something else. He also thinks it appropriate, after considering what you were good enough to tell me, to change some of our sisters. He had me write to Monsieur Lambert[2] to tell him to visit the sisters as soon as possible.

Sister Madeleine[3] told me about her strange behavior. All the sisters felt your absence. I hope, Monsieur, that your return will reanimate their fervor.

I am amazed at the complaints of the administrators to whom I had written, as well as to you, a good six weeks ago. I am very much afraid that my letters have been lost. I had also written to the sisters. I have an idea that these gentlemen have been moved by some reason other than all the faults of which they accuse our sisters, although these faults are

1. The lay monks: disabled soldiers placed in abbeys before the creation of the Hôtel-Dieu des Invalides by Louis XIV.
2. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, did not come until the month of February 1644.
3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

certainly serious, if the sisters have been foolish enough to have become as lax as they are accused of being.

I most humbly urge you, Monsieur, to continue your charity so that you may discover the truth in this matter, and since God has placed the sisters under your holy guidance for many years, so that they may, with the help of God, return to their first fervor once you have returned. I hope for this from the goodness of God. I also ask your Charity to remember my needs and to beg God's mercy for me who am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

P.S. I forgot, Monsieur, to apologize for Monsieur Vincent and to send you his very humble greetings as he asked me to do. He is still so overwhelmed with work that it is pitiful. I am sure that in your charity you pray for him.

L.92 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

From the Foundling Hospital, Thursday, the 19th [November 1643]

Monsieur,

I led Mademoiselle Viole[1] to hope that she might be able to speak with you here tomorrow at a time that would be convenient for you. Therefore, she is coming in the morning and will not leave before evening.

Enclosed is a letter which Monsieur Compaing[2] gave me to show you. He told me that you were well informed about this affair.

I beg our good God to give you renewed health and strength for His glory. I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1644

February: *Another visit of Monsieur Lambert to Angers.*

March: *Death of Jeannne Dalmagne, Daughter of Charity.*

October: *Pilgrimage of Louise de Marillac to Chartres. Consecration of the Company of the Daughters of Charity to the Blessed Virgin.*

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1. Mademoiselle Viole, see Letter 91.
2. Monsieur Compaing, see Letter 127.

L.31 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday, January 14 (1644)

Monsieur,

So our good God wills you to be ill. May He be forever blessed! However, He also wills that for His love, you manifest the same charity toward your body as you would toward the body of a poor person. If I dared, my Most Honored Father, I would go so far as to tell you that He absolutely wills you to do so. Profit then from this opportunity, I beg of you, and pardon the excessive liberty I take in speaking to you as one who is deeply concerned for the glory of God.

Madame Traversay, Madame Romilly, Madame Fortia and Mademoiselle Viole[1] are very disturbed about the affair involving Mademoiselle Serquemann. They came here to tell you, Monsieur, that Monsieur Lavocat[2] had summoned them to court, where he had this woman appear, because he was offended that his wishes had not been followed. He was convinced that this good young woman had reason to complain, and he wanted her to tell these Ladies all that she had told him in private.

First, she stated that a meeting was held in a carriage of a council of three persons: you, Madame de Traversay and Madame Romilly, at which it was decided that the children should be taken to the country and that Monsieur Pelletier[3] should be prevented from continuing his alms. This the Lady did, and Monsieur Pelletier wrote it down in the presence of this young woman. He then awaited a response, which was also written, which said that this Lady had asked her brother to wait a week before sending money. This is not with the document.

When Mademoiselle Serquemann was asked who had revealed this secret to her, she said that since there were only the three of you, it must have been an angel.

Monsieur Lavocat also told these Ladies that, after he had spoken with you, Monsieur, he saw the Chief Justice, who said that he did not believe what you had told him and that this good young woman had stated that you were well aware of the plans of the Ladies, although you claimed not to be. This infuriated Monsieur Lavocat who said that the idea of moving the children to the country must be dropped and that Mademoiselle Serquemann must not be prevented from receiving the alms she had for their care.

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1. Ladies of Charity who took care of the work with the foundlings.
2. François Lavocat, the King's chaplain, deceased in 1646.
3. Monsieur Le Pelletier, nephew of Madame Goussault, financial administrator.

She made quite a scene with Monsieur Pelletier, threatening to leave the children on his doorstep. She let it be understood that she had been promised a foundation, that the Chief Justice had guaranteed a hospital and that the Ladies were interfering with this good work. She complained loudly that you had refused to speak to her, although she had gone to see you on the Feast of the Epiphany in great distress because she had been rejected completely by Monsieur Pelletier, who had sent her word that he had ordered a payment of 100 pounds to cover a month's expenses for the children whom he supported, but that he did not intend to continue. She went about complaining that she was seriously in debt.

The Chief Justice told her to present her petition and that he would stand behind it. He also said that the children would not be removed from her care and that no less than 3000 pounds would be needed as a guarantee. These good Ladies believe that the reputation of the Company is lost. They are upset that you are implicated and ask for some remedy for this evil.

I forgot to tell you, Monsieur, that yesterday when she was pressed to give some satisfaction to Monsieur Lavocat, so as to appease somewhat Mademoiselle Serquemann, Madame Traversay sent word to Madame de Romilly to tell her nephew whatever her good angel inspired her to say. This morning when he was at table with her she said, "I am here to tell you to do whatever God inspires you to do for this business of the Hôtel-Dieu."

They also asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that they believe that Monsieur Lavocat, along with some of the Ladies of the Company, ought to see Monsieur Pelletier in the presence of Mademoiselle Serquemann so that he can discover for himself the desires of this benefactor, who will verify for him that he never intended to create a foundation nor even to continue supporting the children indefinitely. This will prove to Monsieur Lavocat that the other statements made by this good young woman are more the product of her wishful thinking than of any solid hope for a foundation. It is incredible how much faith the Chief Justice places in this good woman. It is to such a point that Monsieur Lavocat and the Ladies of the hospital are constrained to say that they need her.

The purpose of these Ladies in holding this meeting is to enable Monsieur Lavocat to assure this good judge of the sale of this enterprise. They very humbly beg you, Monsieur, if you can, to give them some advice tomorrow. Were Monsieur Pelletier not ill, they would have suggested that he go himself to see the Chief Justice.

I hope that our good God will be able to derive glory from this unfortunate incident. I beg this of Him with all my heart as I beg Him also to restore your health.

I hope from your goodness to be helped by a participation in your suffering and in your holy Masses because you know our needs and that

I am, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant, Mademoiselle Le Gras.

L.32 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(1644)

Monsieur,

I very humbly beg you, if you approve of Monsieur Lavocat's going to see Monsieur Pelletier,[1] as I asked, to let me know which Ladies of the Company should accompany him. Madame Traversay and Madame Romilly are the most implicated. Would it not be well for a few others also to be there with them?

I believe that you would recover more quickly from your cold if you went to bed earlier. Overwork and standing heat the blood. I beg God to reveal His will to you in this matter, and it is in His will that I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. My blood-letting of yesterday has practically completely cured me. Thank God.

L.94 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

February 3, 1644

Monsieur,

I am distressed that Monsieur Lambert has not yet come to see you. The need that our sisters have of this, according to the information that your Charity did me the honor of sending, causes me to fear that you are also disturbed. He told me that because of a slight illness, he will not be able to go there before the beginning of Lent. I hope that he will not fail to do so. So it is, Monsieur, that God permits everything that is done in this little Company to be plagued by difficulties. I believe that my weaknesses are the cause.

I do not know if my letters are actually reaching you. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to give me some reassurances about this. I wrote to

1. See preceding letter.

you at the beginning of the year and told you the opinion of Monsieur Vincent of the request you had made to me concerning the spiritual service of the hospital. I very humbly ask your pardon for all the trouble we give you. Were I not aware of your great charity, I would fear wearying you, but by the grace of God, I am far from this thought. Rather, I am led to look upon you as our good and honored father when I see your cordial support for the very weak children who are under your holy direction. I beg God with all my heart to be your eternal recompense. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant.

L.95 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

February 23, 1644

Monsieur,

I sent the last letter which I had the honor of receiving from you[1] to Monsieur Vincent. He does not understand, nor do I, what benefice you have resigned, one here in Paris or one in Angers. However, he asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he is convinced that good will come from whatever you undertake, and to thank you very humbly for the two letters you sent to him. He begs you also to excuse him for not answering them. He praises God, Monsieur, for the detachment from flesh and blood of which you spoke to him since it is a powerful means for following the maxims of the spirit of Jesus Christ. I am sure that you realize that his pressing responsibilities alone prevent him from writing to you. To this I must also add the continual ailments from which he has been suffering for the past month without any reduction in his work load.

You honored me by confiding this matter to me, but it would cause me to be somewhat fearful that you would deprive your neighbor of the good God has given him in you, were it not for the assurance to the contrary which I believe Monsieur Vincent has given you. I think that Monsieur Lambert is with you in Angers. I beg you very humbly to be so kind as to inform him in detail about the state of our sisters and also about all the complaints against them. Please do me the charity, for the love of God, Monsieur, of asking His goodness to bestow not only on

1. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux wrote to Louise de Marillac on February 8 saying that he wished to divest himself of his benefice of the archdeaconry of Brie in the diocese of Paris.

me but on all those whom His Divine Providence will call to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, the spirit which you desire for us, which, in my opinion, is conformable to the plan of God for our continued existence. I praise Him with all my heart for having revealed this to you as clearly as He has and for preserving or saving you from danger since He wants to make use of you. How powerful these special graces must be in a loving heart!

I still have another charity to ask of you. A great need of a person[1] who is very close to me prompts me to beg you to remember him at the holy altar. My duty and my desire oblige me to beseech you to believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.98 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

March 21, 1644

Monsieur,

I am most indebted to you for your kindness in sending me news of Monsieur Lambert's trip. I knew that he had returned, but knew nothing at all about what he had done in Angers. Blessed be God, Monsieur, for the good you expect from it. As for me, speaking as a person of little faith, I am afraid that it will not be so because of your inevitable absences. I beg of you most humbly, Monsieur, to find a way to make the sisters understand the trust and submission they owe the person whom your Charity shall judge suitable to direct them. If it is necessary to appoint someone, please be good enough to send us his name before you leave and before you speak to the sisters so that Monsieur Vincent can tell them that they must be submissive to him. I am certain that he is quite willing to write to them to tell them that they are to carry out whatever recommendations you have taken the trouble to give them. Since this work was blessed in the beginning by being established through your instrumentality, I also believe, Monsieur, that our good God wants it to continue under your guidance.

I told Monsieur Vincent about the matter you did me the honor of communicating to me concerning the two clerics who wish to give themselves to God for the Mission. He asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he will approve whatever you do and that anyone whom you send

1. It was a question of her son, Michel.

to him will be welcome. He recommends nothing other than what God will inspire you to do in directing them. You teach me a great lesson, Monsieur, by desiring God to change things from which you could derive satisfaction into crosses. It seems to me, Monsieur, that this is a powerful means for us to purify our intentions in the unknown circumstances that await us. Do me the charity, I very humbly beg of you, of asking our good God for this grace for me for His holy love in which I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.39 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. March 1644)

Monsieur,

It is over a month since Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux informed us that he had to come to Paris at the beginning of May and that it was necessary to appoint a director for our sisters before his departure (which he did only after I had submitted all his suggestions to you) and to change some of them.

My lack of experience and of ability prevents me from communicating to your Charity information that would enable you to gauge the danger which I see of the entire Company perishing little by little rather than becoming more firmly established. This often reminds me of Hagar who feared the death of her son and did not want to see him perish. But in my case, these thoughts are more appropriate because my sins are the cause of all these disorders. I most humbly beg your pardon for burdening you with such problems. If I did not think that it was the will of God that I do so, I would try to look peacefully at all these dangers. I beg His goodness to remedy them and your Charity to believe that I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful servant.

L.97 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SICK SISTER

(Sister Jeanne Dalmagne[1] at Nanteuil)

(March 1644)

My beloved Sister,

I adore with all my heart the manner in which Divine Providence seems

1. Jeanne Dalmagne, see Letter 69.

to be arranging your life. If it is the most holy will of God to call your soul to Him, may His holy name be blessed! He knows how much I regret not being able to assist you in this final act of love which I am confident you will make by willingly offering your soul to the Eternal Father, desiring thereby to imitate the moment of death of His Son.

Our good Sister Elisabeth[1] will assure you of the affection of all our sisters and of their desire for you to remember them in heaven when God will have shown you His mercy. This is particularly true of Sister Anne-Marie who says that she deeply regrets not being able to render you these last services. Remember then, my very dear Sister, the needs of the poor Company to which God has called you. Become an advocate for it before the Divine Goodness so that He may accomplish His plans for it. If His goodness permits it, beg our good angels to assist us. Good night, my very dear Sister. With all my heart I beg Jesus Crucified to grant you all the virtues which He practiced on the Cross, and I remain in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.99 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

April 19, 1644

Monsieur,

I communicated the letter which I had the honor of receiving from your Charity to Monsieur Vincent who continues to approve the directives which you are leaving for our sisters of the hospital. He also approves your selection of Monsieur Ratier[2] as confessor. He can name other confessors for the extraordinary confessions of the sisters at the times you judge appropriate. I hope, Monsieur, that your charitable care for them during your prolonged stay in Angers has served to move them to desire to acquire the virtues which they lack and that your good prayers will obtain them for them.

Our good Sister Élisabeth[3] is still sick. This is why, Monsieur, we were unable to send her. However, we will send Sister Turgis[4] in her place for

1. Élisabeth Martin, then in Paris, see Letter 22.
2. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71, was going to assume the role of Director of the Daughters of Charity during Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux's long absence.
3. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
4. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

three months. I believe that will suffice. We will also recall Sisters Barbe, Geneviève, Clémence and Madeleine[1] to stay here with us while Sister Turgis is in Angers. I hope that the sisters[2] whom we are sending to replace those whom we are recalling will leave no later than the beginning of next week and that your Charity will continue to look after us by being so kind as to persuade the administrators to accept this type of change by assuring them that they will be better satisfied and that the poor will be better served in keeping with their desires.

I assure you in this matter, Monsieur, that it is with the greatest reluctance that we are withdrawing Sister Turgis from the foundlings, where she is very much needed because of the great intelligence necessary for such a work.

May our good God renew the blessings which for His glory He bestowed at the beginning of this work. May we not one day suffer the reproach that your work has been in arid soil.

I am sorry for our sisters that you are leaving Angers but consoled that God is calling you to this city in the hope that it will be for the accomplishment of some good. I admit that some of my own self-interest is mixed in with this but I believe that God wills it since it is in the love of Jesus Crucified that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.100 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 28, 1644

Monsieur,

I hope that Divine Providence has kept you in Angers so that the needs of our sisters may be taken care of as advantageously as their establishment was made through the blessing of your charitable direction. I take the liberty of speaking to you as their father and asking you to undertake the responsibility of giving them the order they must have to enter the hospital. I am certain, Monsieur, that in your kindness you have convinced these gentlemen that these new sisters whom we are sending are only going there for their greater consolation to renew the fervor of the first sisters so that they may better serve the poor together.

Sister Turgis will show you her directives for her entrance into the

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1. Barbe Toussaint, Geneviève Caillou, Clémence Ferré and Madeleine Mongert.
2. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b, and Catherine Huitmill, see Letter 70b.

hospital and for the necessary changes she is to make if you consider them appropriate. If you think that she should be otherwise employed, she has been told to obey you in everything.

The sisters whom Monsieur Lambert[1] told us had to be withdrawn are Sisters Barbe, Geneviève and Clémence.[2] We are sending only two. The third will wait here until Sister Turgis returns. Then she will accompany Sister Madeleine,[3] who will be returning, or another sister whom you will find acceptable to replace Sister Turgis.[4] Please let her know, Monsieur, all that she has to do and also dispose the administrators to accept her return. Please send the two sisters whose recall is most urgent. I beg our good God that all the charity you show them in this matter may draw down upon them the blessings they need to attain the perfection required of them. May the prayers which they and we are obliged to offer for you, so as to express our gratitude in some way, be pleasing to Him.

I do not know, Monsieur, if the two letters which I had the honor of writing to you have reached you. In them I urged you on behalf of Monsieur Vincent to arrange for a director[5] before your departure. Once again, Monsieur, I beg you to do so and to believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

L.180 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

(c. May 1644)

Monsieur,

Please God, the sister who is bringing this letter will find you still there so that I may have news of you before your departure; may it be that you are in perfect health. I am also sending some preserves which I think will be much better for you than the pills I mentioned.

I believe that you have had no word from the administrators in Angers. Providence has permitted this because we would have great difficulty at the present time[6] in sending them any sisters. I beg God to grant you a

1. After the visitation of the house that he made in February of that same year.
2. Barbe Toussaint, Geneviève Caillou, Clémence Ferré.
3. Madeleine Mongert, who went to Paris for a few months, see preceding letter.
4. Élisabeth Turgis came for three months during Madeleine Mongert's absence.
5. It was Monsieur Ratier who was chosen.
6. Since 1642, the administrators of the Hospital of Angers had been asking for four additional sisters. This request was not filled until the end of the year 1648.

pleasant trip, and I remain in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

P.S. I told Monsieur Vincent that you had taken the trouble of going to Saint-Lazare to speak to him about your business. I shared with him the latest state of affairs, which I had the honor of hearing from you. He told me that he was distressed not to have spoken with you. I cannot tell you whether he is displeased that you are resigning the archdeaconate or whether it is the manner in which it is being done.

L.142 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS BARBE AND MARIE[1]

Feast of Saint John (June 24, 1644)

My very dear Sisters,

Blessed be God for the strength and courage He gives you in all your works. You are accomplishing wonders. You did not let us know if you have given orders to bring back the girl whose food was paid for by Madame Sangé. It seems to me that you have not followed the path that was proposed to you. As soon as I have the decision of the Ladies, I will give it to that good notary who has been so charitable. Do not fail, I beg of you, to send us all the children who are able to walk well on their own and to wean those over 18 months.

Monsieur Vincent has seen your letters. He does not approve of the title "Reverend Mother." Oh my dear Sisters, we are not the ones who should be using such terms! This is why I urge you to speak more simply.

The Ladies agree that the impounded goods should be sold, but they want them kept impounded until we discover what has become of the two children. I will inform the proper persons. I beg you to act as gently as possible with all the poor people you will meet in these circumstances.

Send me news of yourselves as often as you can. Believe me to be in the love of our Crucified Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You need not go to Nanteuil if this is out of the way for you because Sister Andrée has come and she brought us news from there.

1. Barbe Angiboust and Marie Daras, who visited the children placed with wet-nurses. The address and a part of the letter were written by Jeanne Lepintre.

L.286B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday, June 30 (1644)

Monsieur,

I very humbly beg your pardon for being so persistent, but the fear of offending God by going any longer without receiving Holy Communion causes me to take this liberty in contacting you since I cannot do so until I have had the honor of speaking with you. I entreat you, for the love of God, to believe that I did all that I could to overcome the fear which prevented me from receiving Holy Communion yesterday. You know that this is unusual for me and that I am, Monsieur, your most grateful and most unworthy daughter and servant.

L.355 - (TO A SISTER SERVANT)[1]

(1644)

My dear Sister,

You have sent me a very distressing letter; nevertheless I was happy to hear from you. I realize full well that you are disturbed at the sight of spirits that are so lacking in submission. Evidently, I was not fully aware of the situation from the beginning. I know that we all have faults and I more than anyone. However, the support we owe to one another should prevent us from noticing the weaknesses of our sisters, except if we are able to help them.

I consider you very fortunate to be assisted by the holy advice of your directors. The submission and obedience which our sisters practiced toward them brought the blessings of God on the early years of this work. I hope, my dear Sister, that your patient gentleness will correct everything and that the example you give will reanimate the spirit of the Company which is that of Our (Lord).

1. Unfinished letter, without address or signature. Perhaps it was the beginning or a rough copy of the following letter.

L.104B - TO THE SISTERS

(at Angers)

July 26 (1644)

My very dear Sisters,

I can no longer hide the sorrow of my heart at hearing that much is to be desired in you. What, my poor Sisters! Is our enemy to prevail over you? Where is the spirit of fervor which animated you when you were first established in Angers and which led you to esteem your directors so highly? You looked upon their advice as orders which you never failed to carry out with the respect and esteem you owed them. Is it not completely unreasonable now to oppose their counsels and directives? I am referring both to your spiritual and to your temporal superiors. Where are the gentleness and charity that you must preserve so carefully when dealing with our dear masters, the sick poor? If we deviate in the slightest from the conviction that they are the members of Jesus Christ, it will infallibly lead to the weakening of these beautiful virtues in us.

Could it be possible that some attachment to creatures is putting you in danger of losing the beautiful treasure of your vocation? Be on your guard, my dear Sisters. This danger is invisible. Likewise, if we are not careful, we fail to see the vanity which may exist under these poor habits and ugly headdresses. Under the guise of cleanliness and neatness many serious faults are committed in this regard.

I do not want to believe that any of you, my very dear Sisters, would entertain any thought contrary to your holy vocation or that, in this matter, you would think of wanting to speak with persons who could prejudice the purity of the love that you should have for God, who is jealous of souls that He has called to His holy service! If any of you have been in the slightest marked by this passion, O my dear Sisters, do not allow this viper to hide in your breast! Reveal the thoughts of your heart to the person whom God has sent you as your director, namely, the one appointed by Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux. God will not fail to grant you the comfort and assistance that you need in these circumstances.

Renew then, my very dear Sisters, your first fervor. Begin by a true desire to please God, recalling that His Providence has brought you to the place where you are established and has united you so that you can help one another to grow in perfection. But in order to fulfill His holy plan, on which your salvation depends, there must be great union among you which will lead you to show great forbearance for one another; that is to say, you will not object when you are warned of your faults or told how you must act. You will also excuse any fault you perceive in any of your sisters. My God, how reasonable that is, my dear sisters, since we

commit similar faults and need to be forgiven. If our sister is depressed or forlorn, if she is too quick or too slow, what in the world do you expect her to do about it? This is part of her character. Although she often tries to overcome herself, nevertheless, she cannot prevent these inclinations from frequently appearing. And should her sister, who is supposed to love her as herself, become annoyed with her, be rude to her or frown upon her?

O my dear Sisters, be on your guard against acting like this. Instead, pretend that you do not notice it and do not criticize her, bearing in mind that it will soon be your turn and you will want her to act this way toward you. This, my dear Sisters, is what it means to be true Daughters of Charity, for the mark of charity in a soul is, among all other virtues, this ability to put up with everything. Also, show great esteem for what God says to you through the person who holds the place of your Sister Superior, whoever she may be at one time or another. When obedience replaces her by another, you must no longer consider the manner in which her predecessor governed you but follow in everything the directives of the one you now have, unless, of course, she would want you to do something contrary to your Rule or to the way of life which has been prescribed for you, which, I hope, will never happen if we are faithful to God.

I never weary of praying to our good God for you, so great is my desire to see you become agreeable to His goodness. It is getting late. I beg you to pray for the whole family here. It is now more than 35.

Our two sisters, Barbe and Marie Daras,[1] have returned in good health, thank God, from their six-week visit to all the foundlings, placed with wet-nurses. Thank God for the grace which God has granted us in them. I do not know where Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux is. Sister Turgis,[2] I urge you to give me news of him and to send him my very humble greetings if he is in Angers. Tell him that I had thought for a long time that he was in Paris, but I still do not know. I would be distressed if he left here without our having the honor of seeing him. Please remember us very humbly to Monsieur Ratier[3] and all the others whom we should greet as well as to the Ladies. I ask all of you, my dear Sisters, to believe that I am, with all my heart, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

1. See preceding letter.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, in Angers for three months.
3. Monsieur Ratier, who replaced Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux during his absence.

L.105 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS,

Sister of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital of Saint-Jean at Angers

August 24 (1644)

My very dear Sister,

I am very anxious to know if you have received the letter which I wrote to all of you in general and sent in care of Mademoiselle la Franchandière. Please let me know. Its main purpose was to let you know how displeased I am to see the bad dispositions of our sisters and the disunion which seems to exist among you.

I am also astonished to hear that there are those who, at the slightest contradiction, yield to the desire to return to Paris without having been summoned there by obedience. Oh my dear Sisters, there is every reason to say that they do not know what they are asking! So you are offended when the Fathers of the Poor[1] humiliate you in front of your masters, the poor. Do not give them cause to do so. Do everything so well that they will find nothing to criticize. If on such an occasion you feel that you have not failed in anything, or that some of these gentlemen have reprimanded you too rudely for your taste, and you think that this will serve to discredit you with the sick, humble yourselves and endure it patiently at the time. Afterwards, explain your reasons to them in private and ask them to warn you of your faults. If you act in this way, I assure you, my Sisters, there is not one of your sisters who would not consider herself fortunate to be in your place.

I beg you, therefore, my dear Sister, to give the first example of virtue that I hope to see in all our sisters. I noticed the slight aversion you mentioned on the part of one of the sisters. O my God, what great compassion and forbearance must characterize your charity for her. Are you not well aware that ordinarily such reactions are natural and that we are not masters of them? It is up to those who have charge of the sisters to try to do so and to help them to overcome this trial without their realizing it. We must not be so sensitive that we are hurt if someone does not speak to us or does not smile at us. We should rather try to win their hearts by support and cordiality.

Finally, my dear Sister, those who have the care of others must not think of their personal satisfaction but disregard their own sensibilities. Blessed be God for relieving the suffering of our Sister Brigide.[2] If she knows that you are aware of it, warn her to avoid carefully all those

1. Fathers of the Poor, the hospital administrators.

2. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

dangers that might cause her to fall into similar difficulties such as overfamiliarity and excessive curiosity.

I do not think that Monsieur Vincent will recall one of our sisters when you return. They should fear rather than desire this. Let them think only of growing in perfection in their present occupation, which is so noble and so pleasing to God and which constantly provides them with opportunities for serving Him. I beg you, Sister, to be certain that great respect is shown to the confessors and that the sisters never speak of them among themselves except in that way. They must never threaten one another in this matter and, my good Sister, I do not think that it is appropriate for you to speak to the confessors about the sisters. Leave it to Divine Providence to enable them to know the sisters, except in extraordinary circumstances. If you think that the sisters are not practicing the same charity toward you and that perhaps they are complaining about you, leave your justification to God.

When a sister shows repugnance about speaking to the director,[1] ignore it without letting the other sisters know that you have noticed it, and excuse her to them. Prevent them from discussing it among themselves by adroitly changing the subject rather than by interrupting it in a rude and authoritative manner which should be avoided on any occasion. Later, speak to her (the sister) in private. I know, my dear Sister, that it is very difficult for us to carry out our responsibilities well, but God who has given them to us will not deny us His grace. Let us humble ourselves profoundly so as to obtain it. This we can do by manifesting holy distrust of ourselves and great confidence in His goodness, which will lead us to ask Him quite simply what He wants us to do to benefit our dear sisters, whom we must look upon as His beloved creatures and servants.

I do not know what to tell you about the persons you mentioned who have expressed a desire to enter our Company except that I have considerable misgivings about the intentions of candidates coming from that area. We must consider only those who are very suitable for the Company both with regard to their physical health and their mental stability. Make further inquiries about them and then write to us about what you have learned. Likewise, if at all possible, they should not be over 30 and be recommended by persons, who, if they can be found, have known them since birth.

We have reason for thanking our good God for the grace He has granted us by restoring our Most Honored Father, Monsieur Vincent, to us. He has been very seriously and even dangerously ill. Please have our sisters offer some special prayers for this.

Please remember me to Monsieur Ratier and all the others and to our dear sisters whom I embrace with all my heart, wishing for them the

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1. Monsieur Ratier, Spiritual Director, see Letter 71.

perfection of Saint Joan and of Saint Catherine of Siena, as I do also for you, my dear Sister, as I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.107C - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL[1]

September 9 (1644)

Monsieur,

I sincerely hope that Monsieur Vincent does not think that I am the one who sent this good Monsieur Boëtte to him. I beg you to assure him that he is an outstanding gentleman and that it would be a great charity to obtain what he desires for him. He is quite wealthy but has been very ill for a number of years.

I forgot to tell you that I hope for great things from the girls from Sedan, which is why, Monsieur, if you think it is acceptable, we can have Monsieur Gallais[2] send us the young woman he is recommending. The two from Argenteuil have left us.

The trip is arranged to bring Sister Turgis[3] back from Angers, so I beg you, Monsieur, not to let me lose the opportunity of speaking with Monsieur Vincent about this and about two or three other matters that have been suggested to me. Please have the charity to pray for us and believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient servant.

1. Monsieur Antoine Portail, born on November 22, 1590 in Beaucaire, near Arles in Provence. Being the first fellow worker of Monsieur Vincent, his name appeared on the contract of foundation of the Congregation of the Mission passed on April 17, 1625. Monsieur Vincent held him in great esteem and trusted him on several occasions with many important missions. In 1642, he was named Director of the Daughters of Charity. In 1646, he visited the houses in the West of France: Le Mans, Angers, Nantes, then he left for Rome. Upon his return in May 1649, he stopped in Marseilles and returned to Paris in September. In 1655, he visited the houses in the North and East of France: Sedan, Brienne, Montmirail. He died on February 14, 1660.
2. Monsieur Gallais, born in 1615, entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1632. He was in Sedan from 1643 onwards. After a stay in Crecy (1644-1645), he was sent to Le Mans. He left the Congregation of the Mission in 1653 and took charge of the presbytery of Touquin in Brie.
3. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

L.125B - TO THE SISTERS

at Angers

September 9, 1644[1]

My very dear Sisters,

Divine Providence has at last led us to recall our dear sister[2] for a time. Do not be upset by this, I beg of you, since it is the most holy will of God. I hope, my Sister, that you have willingly taken up the yoke which she left you because it is Monsieur Vincent who has ordered us to leave you there. Take it up anew then with great humility and distrust of yourself, recalling the instruction which the Son of God gave us when He told us to learn of Him to be gentle and humble of heart. Enter upon this charge in the spirit of Him who said that He had come not to be served but to serve. Listen to Him willingly when He tells us that those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and that the one who would be the greatest must begin by becoming the least so as to be great in the sight of God. Finally, my dear Sister, look upon yourself as the beast of burden of the house, the one who must carry the entire load. This you will be when you treat all our sisters with great forbearance and gentleness, often overlooking their faults so as to keep your own before your eyes, warning them charitably of their failings when it will be most beneficial for them. Never manifest a particular affection for any of them but treat all of them in such a way that they will believe that you love and support each of them.

And to all of you, my dear Sisters, we are sending reinforcements.[3] I beg you to act in such a way that those sisters who have been the longest in the house will be distinguishable only by the good example they give, especially by their reserve in speech. Never comment on one another's moods. Always see Our Lord in Sister (Madeleine)[4] and look upon her directives as the will of God and believe me in His love . . .

1. This letter, recopied by Marguerite Chétif, bears the date September 9, 1645. It seems that the copyist made a mistake. This letter seemed to be from September 1644, when, after the departure of Élisabeth Turgis, Madeleine Mongert once again took over as Sister Servant.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, who stayed in Angers from May until September.
3. Three new sisters arrived: Marie Despinal, Marguerite Tourneton and Jeanne de Chinon, see Letter 113b.
4. Madeleine Mongert, Sister Servant, see Letter 57.

L.70B - TO SISTER MADELEINE[1]

at Angers

(September 1644)

My dear Sister,

Are you being very courageous? Are you imitating the Good Shepherd who risks His life for the welfare and safety of the flock under His care? I think so. Although we do not often meet with occasions when we are called upon to risk our lives, we do not lack those in which we must sacrifice our wills so as to yield to the desires of others, or so as to overcome our habits and inclinations in order to give good example to our sisters, or so as to conquer our passions in order to avoid arousing those of others. This, my dear Sister, is how we must act if we are to maintain cordiality, to practice forbearance and to live in that close union which marks the charity of Jesus Crucified and which I beg God to grant us. Tell Sister Marie-Marthe[2] that I hope she will be Marie and Marthe not only in name but in reality. Bearing the name Marie she must live with great purity, gentleness and modesty and be ready to please everyone. Her name Marthe obliges her to be very exact in the observance of all the requirements of the Rule. As for Sister Cécile,[3] oh how peaceful and gentle she must be so as to imitate her patroness who sweetly sings the praises of God.

Our dear Sister Brigide[4] must embrace constant suffering with perseverance and in conformity with the designs of God for her. I hope that God will bestow His grace on Sister Françoise[5] so that the strength of her spirit may make up for the weakness of her body. Tell her, my dear Sister, that she needs great courage to respond to this grace. With all my heart I hope that no trace of her illness remains and that she is very cheerful. What is our good Sister Catherine[6] doing? Do the wheels and

1. Letter sent to Madeleine Mongert, who resumed the office of Sister Servant after the few months spent in Paris. Louise de Marillac took advantage of this to give a personal message to each one of the sisters of the community.
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
4. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
5. Françoise Claire arrived with Élisabeth Turgis in May-June. Because of her violent character, Monsieur Lambert asked to have her recalled to Paris after the visitation in 1648.
6. Catherine Huitmill, native of Arras, also arrived in May-June 1644. In May 1646, she left the Company (letter from Monsieur Ratier to Louise de Marillac).

fire of hard work torment her? Does she have that same love for God that her patroness did to overcome everything? Tell her that it is entirely up to her. Her dear Spouse will grant her the same graces and love that He bestowed on the great Saint Catherine provided she is as faithful to Him. I say the same thing to Sister Barbe.[1] I wish her and all of you, my dear Sisters, holy perseverance and continued growth toward perfection. Always remember the needs of the Company, which needs the help of your prayers and especially the merit God gives to your actions performed for the service of the poor.

L.110 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Superior General of the Priests of the Mission

(c. October 1644)

Monsieur,

The confidence which God has instilled in my heart with regard to your Charity overcomes the fear which I should rightly experience at the thought of bothering you by begging you very humbly to recall that the time is approaching when we must carry out an article contained in the little outline that I sent you before your departure.[2] I also wish to remind you, Monsieur, of the desire expressed by Monsieur Guillon concerning the hospital where his sister now is. I am afraid that he will be offended if we do not give him a response before the date by which he hoped to have sisters, which is the Feast of All Saints. Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to ask when we can hope to see you return. Oh, how relieved I would be if I could make known my fears! They all end in the dread of being abandoned by God, which I have often merited. I beg you most humbly to allow me to make a pilgrimage to Chartres during your absence so that I may entrust all our needs and the suggestions I have made to you to the care of the Blessed Virgin. The time has surely come for me to reflect on myself in the sight of God. I must tell you that I am convinced that the good of our little Company requires it.

Last week the widow of a gentleman named Monsieur Sigongne came here to see if she might serve God with us. She is still grieving for her

1. Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.

2. Monsieur Vincent left for Richelieu on September 21. He returned on approximately October 29.

husband, whose loss has completely detached her from everything. She does not have any children. I do not know if God has sent her. I felt very sorry for her seeing her so deeply afflicted. If she returns, do you think it would be well, Monsieur, to keep her here for a little retreat which, in the light of her needs, would serve to distract her a bit from her afflictions? I felt that I should not make a decision in this matter before communicating with you. But, alas, our good God has permitted this long trip without granting what I had asked of Him. I beg His goodness to send you back soon and in excellent health. Do me the charity of taking the time to reassure me about your condition and continue to honor me by believing that our good God wants me to be able truly to call myself, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Allow me, Monsieur, to send you the very humble greetings of your daughters, our very dear sisters, who were as surprised as I by your departure. Our Sister Anne[1] from the parish of Saint-Paul is seriously ill. We are all beginning to feel that it has been too long since we have had the happiness of coming together with your Charity for a conference.[2] We look forward to it with deep affection and ask for your holy blessing so that we may prepare for it in all humility.

This lady has been a widow for nine months. She is of high rank. You know full well that had you been traveling in the Beauce, I would have waited for your return to make the pilgrimage for which I requested your permission. I beg you to forgive me for bothering you so often about this matter.

L.111 - (ACCOUNT OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO CHARTRES)

(1644)

We arrived in Chartres on Friday, October 14. My devotion for Saturday was to render to God, in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, the

1. Anne Hardemont. The numerous letters that she saved allow one to follow her. In the parish of Saint-Paul from 1640 onwards, she was chosen for the mission of Montreuil in 1647, then in 1650 for that of Hennebont. Ill, she returned to Nantes, where she remained until 1653, when she was sent to Châlons to aid the wounded, then to Sedan in 1654. She was present in Paris on August 8, 1655, and signed the Act of Establishment of the Company. After having been sent to La Roche-Guyon, she returned to assume responsibility of the Petites Maisons. In 1658, she left for Ussel.

2. There had been no conferences since January 1, 1644. The next one was on December 11 (Coste IX, 160).

thanks I owe Him for the many graces that I have received from His goodness.

Sunday's devotions were for the needs of my son. On Monday, Feast of the Dedication of the Church of Chartres, I offered to God the designs of His Providence on the Company of the Daughters of Charity. I offered the said Company entirely to Him, asking Him to destroy it rather than let it be established contrary to His holy will. I asked for it, through the prayers of the Holy Virgin, Mother and Guardian of the said Company, the purity of which it stands in need. Looking upon the Blessed Virgin as the fulfillment of the promises of God to mankind, and seeing the fulfillment of the vow of the Blessed Virgin in the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation, I asked Him for the grace of fidelity for the Company through the merits of the Blood of the Son of God and of Mary. I prayed also that He might be the strong and loving bond that unites the hearts of all the sisters in imitation of the union of the three Divine Persons.

In my prayers for myself, I placed in the hands of the Blessed Virgin the decision to be made concerning the outlines which I have given to my Most Honored Spiritual Father, as well as my desire for practices to help me to prepare for death while awaiting the plan of God in my daily life through the practice of holy obedience.

L.113 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 2 (1644)

Monsieur,

I am extremely anxious about my son, who arrived on Saturday with the Countess de Maure.[1] She sent me word that she had given him a note on Sunday and that he was supposed to come here to see me. She does not know where he could be. What should I do? I do not know if he went to the Bons-Enfants. Should I send someone there or would you, Monsieur, be willing to go to the trouble of doing so? I mean simply to send someone to inquire if he has been there and what he has done. I most humbly beg you to do this for me for the love of God. You are aware of how great my sorrow is and that my misgivings are considerable.

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1. The Countess de Maure, cousin of Louise de Marillac, see Letter 96.

I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I have no one in the world to help me in this matter and I scarcely ever have except your Charity.

1645

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Serqueux, Saint-Denis, Maule, Crespières.

The foundlings are placed in 13 houses on the Champ-Saint-Laurent, near Saint-Lazare.

L.113B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor of the Hospital of Saint-Jean (at Angers)

(January 1645)

My very dear Sisters,

Truly it has been too long since my heart has conversed with yours that have been so kind to me and that pardon me and excuse me because they are aware of my many responsibilities. Our good sisters[1] arrived in excellent health, thank God. This continues as well as their fervor and devotion. It has been quite a while since you sent us any news of yourselves. We have received nothing since the arrival of our sisters. I beg you to write, Sister. Do not wait for an answer. Three or four lines at least once a month would suffice.

How are the sisters who have just arrived[2] and Sister Huitmill and her companion?[3] I urge all of them to be very courageous especially in perfecting themselves in the practice of true humility, gentleness, obedience, cordiality and support for one another.

You should all be holy with the many opportunities that are constantly available to you to serve God and the poor. I believe that those sisters

1. At the end of the year 1644, Claude Brigide and Barbe Toussaint left for Paris.
2. The last three to arrive at the end of the year 1644: Marie Despinal, see Letter 458, Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149 and Jeanne de Chinon, see Letter 145.
3. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b.

who have been in the house for some time will have renewed their resolutions to grow in perfection after being reminded by the newest arrivals of the happiness that is theirs, and which would be the envy of all the sisters in the Company if God did not command them to be satisfied with accomplishing His most holy will. Let us cherish this most adorable will and see it in all that holy obedience requires of us. Let us carefully avoid particular friendships and cliques which share little secrets as things which are detrimental to mutual charity. O my Sisters, pardon me for giving you this admonition. I cannot believe that such things exist among you. Therefore, I beg God to bless you with holy union and cordiality so that you may all be of one will under His guidance by means of the charitable ministry of our dear Sister Madeleine. I greet her with all my heart as I do the entire little family, from whom I would like to hear individually.

I am enclosing nine pictures. Please select one for your director, Monsieur Ratier, and tell him that I am sorry for having put off answering him for so long. I do not have time to do so now either. Remember me to all those whom I should greet. The entire family here sends you affectionate greetings. Believe me, my dear Sisters, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

L.116 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MADELEINE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital of Angers

March 16, 1645

My very dear Sister,

We are very concerned about the condition of our dear Sister Françoise Claire.[1] Monsieur Ratier told Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux that she is critical. My God, my dear Sister, I wholeheartedly entrust her to your loving care. Console her and help her to make good use of the grace which God is bestowing upon her by allowing her to suffer for His love and service.

I also entreat you to urge all our sisters to strive to overcome excessive spiritual sensibility. In order to do so, they must resist when at times God tries them by permitting temptation to get the better of their weakness and timidity so that they find it difficult to communicate with the person

1. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b.

whom they are fortunate enough to have as their director. Assure them that if they overcome this temptation a few times, the little struggle will win many graces from God for them and help them to advance in virtue.

This does not mean that they cannot request an extraordinary confessor from time to time. However, this should be done only very rarely, just a few times a year. Our Most Honored Father warned us in our last conference of the danger to be found in listening to these little temptations. I spoke to him of the desire expressed by these good gentlemen to have our sisters in Beaufort. I assure you, Sister, that we cannot send anyone at the present time. Moreover, I feel that two sisters would be insufficient for all the work that must be done. Recently, we have been called upon to send six sisters to three villages and three or four to a hospital[1] near here, where as yet I believe there are no more than ten patients.

I believe that Sister Cécile[2] needs a good purging.

I urge you and all our sisters to practice holy cordiality and mutual support so necessary in preserving union among true Daughters of Charity; gentleness and holy affection toward the sick poor; modesty and reserve in all your actions; and obedience to the gentlemen of the administration.

I beg God with all my heart to bestow His most precious blessings upon you. I remain in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters send their greetings. Thank God we are all keeping fairly well.

One of our sisters who came from Sedan to enter our Company died right after receiving Extreme Unction. She is the tall Sister Marie. Sister Marie Gonain[3] has been very ill and is still manifesting somewhat serious symptoms. She is the good young woman presented by Sister Turgis. I recommend her to your prayers.

If Sister Cécile has a stone, fairly strong water would be good for her. Good-bye for now, my dear Sisters.

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1. In the city of Saint-Denis.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Marie Gonain, see Letter 325.

L.117 - (TO MADAME, THE WIFE OF THE CHANCELLOR)[1]

March 1645

Madame,

I believe that I would be unfaithful to my responsibilities if I did not refresh your memory concerning the trust which our most honored deceased wife of the President, Madame Goussault,[2] confided to your benevolence when she recommended to you the Company of her poor Daughters of Charity, who are and who always will be yours, Madame, if you so wish. Because of this truth, I also take the liberty of presenting the needs of the said Company to you. Moreover, your Charity has ordered me to do so. These needs continue to increase as God bestows His blessings upon it and the numbers grow. I hope that your goodness will continue to honor us with your benevolence and protection and that the continuation of your charitable donations will draw down upon you a well-merited blessing allied to our obligation to continue our little prayers for you, Your Highness. United with all our sisters, I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified . . .

L.73 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1645)

Monsieur,

Although we have a good number of sisters, I do not think that any of them are sufficiently formed as yet to begin the service of the poor at Saint-Gervais[3] (they have told me this), because I know that others are already serving them. Nevertheless, if Madame de la Porte[4] would be willing to lend us just Sister Henriette[5] for two weeks, I believe that we could send some between now and then. However, I believe that the Pastor and the Ladies of Saint-Gervais would have to know that Sister Henriette is just being lent to them so that they would not be offended

1. Unsigned, unaddressed letter, perhaps a copy of the letter sent.
2. Madame Goussault, see Letter 11, deceased on September 20, 1639.
3. Saint-Gervais, one of the parishes of Paris.
4. Lady of Charity of the parish of Saint-Germain.
5. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76, was at the parish of Saint-Germain.

by such a rapid change in personnel. If I think of anyone else, I will let you know.

I am very apprehensive about the subject I confided to your Charity in the note I sent this morning. I fear these dispositions and have misgivings about the state of the soul. It is with difficulty that I submit to Eternal Justice in this matter. For the love of God, I beg your Charity to look into it and to believe that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful servant.

L.118 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

Thursday (May 25, 1645)

Monsieur,

I beg our good God to grant me His grace so that my repeated requests will not overburden your charity. I ask your pardon for the trouble my needs cause you. I urge you, for the love of God, to give me one or several intentions which should be the object of my little retreat and to accord me the grace of assisting at your holy Mass tomorrow so that I may receive your paternal blessing. The great feast[1] which is approaching is a powerful reminder for me of all the special graces that His goodness granted to me some 22 years ago,[2] which obtained for me the happiness of giving myself to Him in the way your Charity knows. I feel within me a disposition which I cannot define, which seems to be leading me to desire to attach myself yet more closely to God. However, I do not know how to go about it. Please, my Most Honored Father, tell your poor daughter and servant what you think of all this. Do so in the name of Jesus, in whom we are to God what we are to Him. I expect great help from your prayers and ask your most honored angel to remind you of this.

1. The Feast of Pentecost.
2. Light obtained on May 25, 1623, see A2.

L.120 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday, Vigil of Pentecost (June 3, 1645)

Monsieur,

I pray to our good God that the medicine was beneficial to your health. However, I truly fear you took it too early. Several days ago I was thinking of suggesting bouillons to you; I think they would do you a lot of good. Please allow us to send you some tomorrow. I, myself, took some this week and felt markedly better as a result.

My Most Honored Father, I cannot wait any longer to tell you of the state I was in during my little retreat. I believe God does not wish me to taste fully this sweetness for I have been distracted since yesterday by one of our sick who received Extreme Unction. She is a fine girl who was at Saint-Barthélemy; her father is a merchant in Tours, and her name is Catherine de Gesse.[1] Our other sick sister, who is mentally ill, does nothing but reproach us for not wanting to tell you that she has asked to see you. We are working towards sending her away after the feast days, if God so wills it. As for me, my dear Father, what should I do tomorrow? Should I not refrain from receiving Communion until I have let you know the faults I discovered during my examen?

O good God! What great reason I have to avow and recognize that I do nothing of any value. Nevertheless, my heart is not embittered, although I have reason to fear that God will tire of showing His mercy to a soul that is constantly displeasing to Him.

Today is the anniversary of the falling of our ceiling,[2] and tomorrow the anniversary of our good God's revelation of His will to me. My desire for tomorrow is that His holy love give itself to my heart as a perpetual law. My Most Honored Father, please see the need for this, and perhaps give me a word of advice. Please tell me also if tomorrow I should take the Gospel of the day or the Descent of the Holy Spirit as the subject of some of my meditations; or should it be the subject for the entire day?

Forgive my importunity, although it seems to me that by this I am doing the holy will of God, through which I am, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and most obedient servant.

P.S. For the love of God, I recommend my son to your prayers. The thought came to me to ask whether there was a large cross in his room.

1. Catherine de Gesse, native of Tours, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity around 1641-1642. She served the sick poor in the parish of Saint-Barthélemy, then in Saint-Gervais. In 1648, she was sent to Maule. In 1655, she was in Montmirail.

2. Accident that took place in 1642, see Letter 102.

L.121 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MADELEINE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor
of the Hospital of Saint-Jean at Angers

June 27, 1645

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished that you did not receive an answer concerning the sisters requested of you for Beaufort.[1] I wrote to Monsieur Gouin about it, and I was assured that the letters had reached Angers and you. I wrote and had someone write to you about the matter two or three times. I told Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux my response, and I ask you to pass it on to Monsieur Gouin.

My God, my poor sister, I cannot hide the pain I felt as a result of the faults you made known to me in your last letter. I thought you were above these small weaknesses. Do we think, my dear Sister, that we should never be contradicted? Do we think that everyone must give in to our wishes, and that they are obliged to find everything we do and say good? Do we think we can do as we wish without being held accountable? Is this not against the obligation we have of imitating the way Our Lord lived and acted? He always subjected Himself to others, saying that He did not come upon earth to carry out His will. He came to serve, not to be served. What have our poor sisters done all this time? Has not your example harmed them? I beg our good God to strengthen them greatly. Nevertheless, I must tell you that I do not believe things are as bad as you make them appear. Console yourself then, my very dear Sister, and do not look upon this fault with bitterness. Admire the goodness of God for having allowed this failing so that you might learn to humble yourself more perfectly than you have in the past. I believe you have not failed to humble yourself before those whom you have disedified, and that God has given you brand new courage for His service and for your advancement in the perfection He asks of you.

Have great love for our dear Sister Marie-Marthe,[2] to whom God has given such a loving heart for works of charity. You must believe that she gave all the service she could to our dear sisters, whom I greet most humbly with all my heart. I beg them to renew themselves in the spirit of fervor, humility and cordial gentleness, and in a very simple and true obedience. O my dear Sisters, it is not enough to be engaged in the service of the poor in a hospital, although this is a blessing which you will never be able to esteem enough. What is necessary is to have the true and solid virtues which you know are essential in order to carry out well the work

1. See Letter 116.

2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

in which you are so happy to be employed. Without that, my Sisters, your work will be almost useless to you.

It is not that I wish to discourage those who are working a bit slowly toward their perfection, if there are any of them in your company, but it is that I want to share with you a reproach which God makes often to me interiorly for my laziness. Let all of us, then, make a powerful resolution to rid ourselves of our own judgments and desires, of our laziness, of our ungraciousness and especially of our pride, which often is the source of all our imperfections. Let us make a solid resolution to work earnestly toward the practice of the virtues contrary to these faults. My dear Sisters, you know that because of my age I have some deeply rooted habits, and that is why I truly need the help of your prayers. I ask you this for the love of Jesus Crucified in which I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our good Sister Anne Moisson died two weeks ago Friday, at noon, after having shown great virtue. Our Sister Marie[1] from Sedan is very sick there, and Monsieur de Vinsy is near death. Pray for all these souls. Give my most humble greetings to Monsieur l'abbé and to Monsieur Ratier. I am not well enough to write to them.

L.87 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 19 (1645)

Monsieur,

I forgot to tell you yesterday that Madame Chavenas wants our sisters at Saint-Gervais[2] to be given the five sous that the Ladies who have the food prepared for the poor formerly gave to the woman who distributed it before the arrival of our sisters. She also believes that the bit of beef added for this woman should be for the sisters, along with the two loaves of bread that she gives them. Presently all this goes to the profit of the poor because Madame Chavenas collects the five sous from our sisters every day and has the rest given to the poor. This causes problems for our sisters because the Ladies ask them whether or not they are being paid, and whether or not Madame Chavenas wishes them to say that they are giving her this money. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to let me know what I should tell them to do, because Madame Chavenas had given me reason to hope that things would be going differently. I also

1. Marie Joly, who was in Sedan, see Letter 36b.
2. See Letter 73.

need to know whether we should try to keep Sister Jacqueline at Saint-Jacques[1] or here. She is the one who was at Saint-Leu.[2] I should relate to you all the difficulties in the matter, but I would not dare ask to speak to you unless I knew you would accept. Both matters are equally pressing.

How I need your charity to alleviate my misery. I can only be helped by the guidance of the will of God, in which I am, Monsieur, your most unworthy daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. I beg you most humbly to let me know whether or not you gave some money to my son, and whether or not I may go to the Daughters of God this morning for a service to which Madame de Vertamont invited me through one of her aunts, in which case I could use her carriage.

L.123 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 21, 1645

Monsieur,

I felt that I must send you this letter so that you could be kind enough to look at it. I am very surprised, if the mother had it written, for I let her know how little I could do for the house, and how uncertain I was that what I could do would serve any purpose. This does not mean that if I stay there I do not wish to contribute toward and procure their well-being in any way I can.

I know well that the majority of the girls there give nothing. If what this girl says is true, she still would be able to provide a rather sizable dowry for a girl of her station, even if she only had half of what she says she has back home. I believe the good nuns placed great trust in the reasons she gave them for carrying out her plans. I most humbly beg your pardon, Monsieur, for this importunity. My intention is to let you know the state of this unfortunate affair for when your Charity goes to see these good nuns. They say they are in great need of seeing you.[3]

May the Divine Goodness increase your strength in proportion to the matters with which everyone is overwhelming you. In the midst of all that, please do me the charity of remembering my needs and of entrusting them to God, since this is my sole aim in carrying out His most holy will, in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

1. Parish of Paris.
2. Parish of Paris.
3. See the following letter; these letters speak about Michel Le Gras' relationship with a young girl.

L.124 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Anne (July 26, 1645)

Monsieur,

I believe it has been quite a long time since I have taken the liberty of speaking to you, and for that reason please excuse me if I tell you that I am worried about your illness.[1] I fear that it is worse than we had been led to believe. If you were of our poor, it seems to me that our fortified water from Monsieur Desner would have cured you quickly. I also believe that any type of ointment used only heats the wound and keeps it festering.

I do not know, my Most Honored Father, if the good priest from the Daughters of the Madeleine has spoken to you. He is pressing for a decision on the departure of this person[2] and seems strongly convinced of her conversion. She assures him she never wants to think of the person[3] to whom she is attached and that she has decided to return to her region. I remembered later that that was the resolution they had both made before their capture. The letter which I had since shown to your Charity indicates that his plan is to become a partner, after the wedding, with this girl's parents — they are wine sellers — or else to withdraw to this region and live there peacefully — as idlers. It would appear, then, that she has the idea that he will join her there as soon as she has left.

I most humbly beg your pardon, Monsieur, for speaking to you about such a matter. It remains as vivid to me as when it began, and at times, more painful than I can say. My thought that I am very near death remains with me. Although I truly wish to die, if God so wills, I would be leaving all my little affairs in a poor state of disarray, and I cannot help but suffer in this matter even though it would be the will of God. Also our little Company has never been so weak. Finally, my Most Honored Father, I do not know whether or not it is your long absence from us, but we are doing badly. I most humbly beg your Charity to remember the suggestion I made to you for a weekly conference attended by one of your priests. At the time, it seemed that you were close to a decision, and you even did me the honor of naming a priest. There would be only one sister from each parish at each conference in order to avoid

1. Ulcer of the leg from which Monsieur Vincent suffered until the end of his life.
2. The young girl with whom Michel Le Gras had a relationship.
3. Her son, Michel.

inconveniencing the poor. Please give us your holy blessing, and be so good as to see me before God as I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.124B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. August 1645)[1]

The number of girls employed in the service of the foundlings is greater and must increase at All Saints in order to accommodate the number of children who will be brought there.

Is it necessary to prolong to such an extent the praises of the aforementioned girls in the line which begins: "And that which is most notable . . . ?" Would it not suffice to say that, "besides the corporal service which they give to the said sick poor, God blesses the little admonitions which they give the sick for their salvation, if they are dying, or so that they may lead a good life if they are recovering? This is most fruitful and makes it evident . . ."

I would like to name the other places where they are first, and say: "for a few days, or a little while at the Hospital Saint-Denis." I would like to name Sedan and mention that those in the countryside serve by instructing the children, caring for the sick and treating wounds.

There should be no mention at present or in the future of the goods of the said young lady.

There are a few widows who contribute, but rarely. Ordinarily none do so.

Regarding the employment of the sisters of the House, following these words: "let blood and dress the wounds of the poor who come in for such treatments," it should be added: "prepare or give medications."

The two-o'clock reading and silence is not specified, nor is the other time. Perhaps it is not necessary.

Would it not be necessary to mention that the money placed in the common purse serves to buy the necessary provisions of the house and clothes for the sisters, even those living in the parishes, where their habits are made, in order, by this means, to be always uniform?

In this article: "they shall show respect and obedience in everything regarding their conduct and the treatment of the sick poor to the said . . ."

1. This letter was Louise de Marillac's reflection on the petition text, which was to be sent to the Archbishop of Paris to obtain the approval of the Company of the Daughter of Charity (Coste II, 548).

L.325 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

September 2 (1645)

Monsieur,

I beg your Charity most humbly to do me the favor of giving this letter to Monsieur Vincent. It is not intended to inconvenience or distract him. It does not even require a response from him, unless in his great charity he wishes to give one.

I also beg you to find out from Monsieur Lambert[1] whether or not he knows the response which Monsieur Vincent wishes me to give Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux on the subjects of Mademoiselle Marie Gonain's[2] return, the hospital in Nantes, and the poor shut-ins of the city of Angers. Several of the administrators in Angers, who spoke on the subject some time ago, are pressing Monsieur l'abbé for a response in the matter. I commend myself to your holy prayers and am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient servant.

L.109 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1645)[3]

Monsieur,

My son's servant boy just told me that he was sent away by my son yesterday and that he does not know where he now is. You can imagine my distress. I beg your Charity most humbly to comfort and assist me in God's name, and to recommend to His mercy my son's possible present and future state. Please do me the kindness of sending someone from your house to find out what he did and whether he said anything, without revealing my apprehensions or the dispositions of which he informed you. It would be a great comfort to me to learn something. Because I fear the worst, the thought came to me that he took the furniture from his room in order to move out entirely, without my knowing where he is. I am

1. Monsieur Lambert was at Saint-Lazare.
2. Marie Gonain, a postulant from Angers, who returned with Élisabeth Turgis, was ill (nervous breakdown). It was a question of her return home to Ingrandes, between Angers and Nantes. In 1646, with her health improving, she asked to return to the Community: see the deliberation of the Council of the Company (Coste XIII, 618). It does not seem that she returned to Paris.
3. Letter concerning her son, Michel, see Letters 123 and 124.

most upset at causing you much distress, but it is impossible to look for comfort elsewhere. Not only that, but I am very apprehensive about anyone knowing my distress for fear that they will come and say something to me which will add to it. How great my pain is! If God does not help me, I do not know what I will do. Help me to keep myself strongly attached to Jesus Crucified in whom I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. Something I said to my son because of my great distress . . .

L.52 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

(at Paris)

(From Saint-Denis, August 1645)

My very dear Sister,

I would ask you to send Sister Louise-Christine[1] tomorrow morning to take little Pavie to Mademoiselle de Lestang[2] in the suburb of Saint-Germain, telling her that this is the child about whom Monsieur Chomel spoke to her. If there is a problem with her being received because she is so badly clothed, have Sister tell Mademoiselle that she believes that the Duchess d'Aiguillon[3] will provide for her little needs. There is no need to tell the little one that she is going to be confined and that Sister Louise must make sure that she does not leave. Sister shall make her devotions in this neighborhood and then have dinner with our sisters at Saint-Sulpice. Enclosed is the letter from Monsieur Chomel which she can give to Mademoiselle de Lestang.

If I am not home tomorrow, you may have conference and go to Holy Communion. However, Sister, I beg you, if any sister appears bitter or agitated, to calm her without seeming to do so, so as to maintain gentleness and cordiality.

It is not my intention at all to keep the little girl from Sedan in Paris. However, there is no need to speak to her about it until evening or the morning she leaves. I thought you would have sent the good Sister Michelle because of what I told you. I would ask you to say something

1. Louise-Christine Rideau, a sister of the Motherhouse, see Letter 149.
2. On rue du Vieux-Colombier, Marie Delpech de Lestang had gathered approximately 50 orphans whom she was raising. In 1640, she came to live near the Novitiate of the Company of Jesus. Saint Vincent oversaw this work and gave her as director Monsieur Gambart, a priest of his Conference whom he considered strong. He suggested to Mademoiselle de Lestang the idea of seeing and consulting Mademoiselle Le Gras, who possessed a high degree of talent in directing souls.
3. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.

about it to Monsieur Portail. I only know that it is a matter of the white cloth belonging to little Marie; her trip will be more costly, but we shall see, nonetheless.

If Monsieur Portail finds no danger in our sister being given powder without speaking first to the doctor, give her 24 grains, eight of each kind. Monsieur Vacherot[1] finds no problem in it. When she is a bit better, it would be well for her to come to the House. Tell Sister Louise to remind Sister Antoinette[2] from Saint-Sulplice that the sisters must change neighborhoods at least every two weeks, and that they should balance out the number of sick so that each sister is caring for the same number. There are several other reasons also why this should be done. Sister Marie-Marthe may go to see her sick mother. The sister from Saint-Leu may not do so, because her mother lives out in the country. You may send Sister Jeanne-Baptiste,[3] from Richelieu, to Issy. Also from Richelieu, Sister Louise[4] may be sent to serve the galley slaves; although this can be a lot of work, she can handle it.

I continue to recommend the little flock to you so that forbearance, cordiality and loving gentleness may reign in it, in the love of Jesus Crucified in whom I am, my dear Sister, your very (humble) sister.

P.S. I would ask you to send the enclosed letters for Angers to Monsieur Jean.[5] They can be given to Sister Henriette.[6] The only dried apricots you sent me were few in number and quite ugly. I was waiting for them so that they could be distributed.

Recommend me wholeheartedly to the prayers of all our sisters. The sisters here greet you warmly and affectionately.

L.150 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

at Paris

(August 1645)

My very dear Sister,

I believe the little girl from Sedan[7] should be sent back Tuesday.

1. Monsieur Vacherot, the community's doctor.
2. Antoinette Labille, one of the first Daughters of Charity, seemed to have always stayed in Paris. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company in 1655.
3. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, see Letter 64.
4. Louise Ganset, see Letter 11.
5. Don Jean Morisse was from Nantes.
6. Henriette Gesseaume, probably at the parish of Saint-Germain.
7. Little Marie, see preceding letter.

However, speak first to the hostess of the coach to make sure that the girl will be entrusted to persons who will look out for her. Find out what she brought; she does not really need anything else. It would be well to send someone to visit the sisters at Saint-Roch[1] and to send Sister Toussainte[2] back to Saint-Séverin.[3]

The sisters must not come to stay at the House unless they have been invited. Not long ago, I spoke to Sister Geneviève from Saint-Germain. She is truly a good daughter, and I hope that God will give her the grace to surmount her little difficulties. Comfort her if you see her; she is a bit sensitive.

I am writing to Monsieur Portail[4] for Barbe[5] so that he can speak about her to Monsieur Vincent. He will tell you all you have to do. Also, it is quite fitting that you send someone to Saint-Sulplice. I do not know which day I shall return since we still have not accomplished anything.

Recommend us wholeheartedly to the prayers of our sisters; comfort the weak, and help those who are troubled by speaking with them individually. I beg God to give you His holy love, in which I am, my dear Sister, your most obedient servant and loving sister.

P.S. Give a warm welcome to the sister who should be arriving there tonight or tomorrow morning. Monsieur Vincent has received her.

L.143 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

(at Paris)

(From Saint-Denis, August 1645)

My very dear Sister,

I beg the goodness of God to guide you always.

I would ask you to send this package to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[6] promptly, and if she is not there it should be given to Madame de Nesmond.[7] In case Madame de Nesmond is out in the country, the package should be brought back to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon's home.

1. Parish of Paris.
2. Touissainte David did not know how to write. She signed an "X" on the Act of Establishment of the Company. In 1650, she was in Valpuiseaux and in Sedan in 1659.
3. Parish of Paris.
4. Monsieur Portail, Director of the sisters, see Letter 107c.
5. Barbe Toussaint returned from Angers, see Letter 78.
6. Mademoiselle Madeleine de Lamoignon (1608-1687) rivaled her mother Madame de Lamoignon, in charity, see Letter 77.
7. Madame de Nesmond, Mademoiselle de Lamoignon's aunt, see Letter 77.

Inquire at both houses and find out if Madame de Nesmond left a paper to be sent to us. Pray for us. My sins are the reason why we still have not been assured of being able to remain here.[1] Greet all our dear Sisters. If you have something to tell me, I would ask you to do so. However, do not delay our sister too much.

I am with all my heart in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. (Let me know) some news about our sick sisters.

L.129 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

October 28, 1645

Monsieur,

Because I once again have reason to believe that you are not in Angers, or if you are, that you are busier than usual with your holy duties, and since I have not had the honor of hearing from you since your departure from Paris, I must beg you most humbly to continue in your desire to provide the charitable care which you know we so greatly need. I, in particular, need this care, as do our sisters at the hospital who inform me by each mail of always having the sick present and of occasionally being refused by the administrators. This leads me to believe, Monsieur, that these gentlemen are not really happy with our sisters.

I beg you most humbly to take the trouble to let me know if you know of some way to bring about order in this matter. I am writing to these gentlemen, without speaking to them about this little matter, in order to allow them the opportunity to air any complaints they might have. I believe, Monsieur, that your concerns lie more in Anjou than in Paris. Considering the interest of the glory of God, I have nothing to say about that. But, for His love, do me the charity of asking His mercy for me and for a person[2] very close to me who is causing me great affliction for purely human reasons, and even more because I fear for his salvation. Since this appears to be an irremediable evil, the omnipotence of God will be needed to cure it, and for that reason I have recourse to your charity, in which I am in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and obedient servant.

1. On August 22, Louise de Marillac left to accompany Élizabeth Turgis, Marguerite Lesoin and Françoise Noret to the hospital of Saint-Denis.

2. Michel Le Gras, her son, see Letters 123 and 109.

L.344 - (TO THE SISTERS SENT TO SERQUEUX)[1]

(October or November 1645)

My very dear Sisters,

God be blessed for the grace which He has given you in taking care of you during your journey. I assure you that we truly sympathize with you although many envy the service which you give to God. If Beauvais is not too far out of your way, it would be wise to go and speak to that good man at the church and learn that recipe which you shall prepare. Remember that fistulas are not always malignant, and when they are, they may be caused by other things.

I would not dare send you any more than ten écus. If you need more, borrow from Blanche and I will repay it here. I do not think you will have to change much. I would ask you to be very exact in writing down all you find and all that you distribute. I think you will have to use a large book since you do not have any paper.

O my dear Sisters, you appear consoled even amidst so much fatigue! Be of good heart! Work well toward your perfection in the numerous occasions you have to suffer and to practice gentleness and patience. Rise above rejection and any contradiction which you may encounter. Be so stout-hearted that you find nothing difficult for the most holy love of God and of His Crucified Son in which I am, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our entire Company greets you. I gave news of you to Monsieur Vincent today. He is praying for you. The number of our sisters is increasing so rapidly that there were 30 of them at the first table. Good evening, my dear Sisters. Sister Jeanne-Christine[2] and Sister Geneviève[3] from Angers are at Saint-Gervais.[4]

1646

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Nantes and Fontainebleau.

June: *Monsieur Portail's visit to Angers.*

1. Probably Barbe Angiboust and Perrette Chefdeville.
2. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, a daughter of peace. From Saint-Gervais she went to Fontainbleau in 1648, Liancourt in 1651 and Sedan in 1654.
3. Geneviève Caillou returned from Angers, see Letter 19.
4. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Saint-Gervais had just taken place, see Letter 73.

July-August: *Louise de Marillac's journey to Nantes.*
November 20: *Approbation of the Confraternity of the Daughters of Charity by Jean François Paul de Gondi, coadjutor of the Bishop of Paris: the Confraternity in made dependent upon the Bishops.*

L.303B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(March 1646)

I am unworthy of the guidance of Divine Providence, which your Charity did me the honor of pointing out to me, as a means of drawing me away from my infidelities. Thus, I renounce these apprehensions about the future so as to desire only what God wills each day. Nonetheless, I do not feel I can avoid the just fears that I have because of my infidelities, even with this submission.

It was not at all my intention that the picture of the Blessed Virgin be either for our oratory or for the foundlings. Rather, it was to serve as an adornment at an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, as a kind of reparation for the faults of my son. I had it made with some rings which I still had. That is why, Monsieur, I humbly beg you to allow this token of reparation to be placed in your church. I have been most sad that this son[1] of mine perpetrated the offense at one of your houses.

The little chaplet is the devotion for which I asked permission of your Charity three years ago as a personal devotion. I have in a small box a quantity of these little chaplets, along with some thoughts on this devotion written on a piece of paper, which with your permission, I wish to leave to all our sisters after my death. Not one of them knows it. It honors the hidden life of Our Lord in his state of imprisonment in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and congratulates her on her happiness during those nine months. The three small beads hail her under her beautiful titles of Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit. That is the main thought behind the devotion.

By the grace of God, unworthy as I am, I have continued this devotion since the time I mentioned, but I hope to discontinue it, aided by God's same grace, if your Charity so orders. By means of this little exercise I intend to ask God, through the Incarnation of His Son and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, for the purity necessary for the Company of the Sisters of Charity and for the steadfastness of this Company in keeping with His good pleasure.

I will send you tomorrow, with the help of God, a letter for Monsieur

1. See Letters 129 and 132.

Portail[1] which I would ask you to look at and decide if it should be sent to him. Thus, I will try to be present in spirit at the holy sacrifice of the Mass tomorrow, and although I do not really believe that your Charity will celebrate it downstairs, I will have the happiness of assisting at it if you will let me know the time. Please do not forget to answer Madame de Lamonignon, the President's,[2] question concerning the continuation of the collections. Also remember that I am, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and obedient servant.

L.132B - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

at Le Mans

March 20 (1646)

Monsieur,

I pray that God has kept you well during your trip and that He will continue this same grace until your return. If your priests propose any good candidates to you along the way, I beg you to inform them fully about the Company and to determine whether or not they are suited to us. Our Sister Marie[3] finally departed and left the Company. The tall Anne from Richelieu likewise fled when she discovered that we wanted to remove her. That happened yesterday and we do not know where she went. You see, Monsieur, that we need the help of your holy prayers. I, in particular, need them because of all the evil I cause, and I beg you to ask God's forgiveness for me.

Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux told me that he had met you while on the road[4] and that he had truly wished to speak with you. Nevertheless, the only advice he gave me was that which I have already related to you. He did say that all our sisters in Angers have the tacit desire to come to Paris someday. I beg you, Monsieur, to speak to Monsieur Ratier and to Monsieur Tonnelier, who is the confessor at Sainte-Marie, before speaking to our sisters. I believe Monsieur Tonnelier has some good advice to give you concerning the sisters, although he infrequently visits the hospital. Please see whether one of the sisters could be left in charge as Sister Servant in place of Sister Madeleine[5] in the event that she is simply

1. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107C, was visiting the West of France.
2. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
3. Marie Gonain, a postulant who came from Angers, see Letter 325.
4. Monsieur Portail embarked upon the visitation of the houses of the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in the West of France.
5. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

transferred or that she must come to Paris because of the illness which threatens her. I also think, Monsieur, that it will be necessary to give some advice to their confessor. I fear that, until now, they have been led to believe in a great necessity to express themselves. They are so overly eager to do this that they believe that they have great need of it. This amusement leads them to desire to communicate with persons other than those assigned as their directors. This disturbs them greatly.

I informed them through a letter, which I had my son take to Angers, of the sister who was named some time ago to assist me in taking care of the business of the House and how our sisters go more often to her for help than they come to me. I believe that I can truly say that the sisters seem to be profiting greatly from the arrangement, so for this reason please mention it to our sisters at Le Mans, if you feel it appropriate.

Today Monsieur Lambert did us the charity of beginning catechism. I hope that, by the grace of God, we will benefit much from this, especially if we are aided by your prayers. All our sisters beg this of you most humbly and likewise send their greetings. In the love of Jesus Crucified I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble servant.

L.137 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(March 24, 1646)

Monsieur,

I have great reason to humble myself in light of God's guidance of me, and I am unworthy of the grace which I desired in order to prepare myself for our very dear Feast of the Incarnation. I beg God in His goodness to grant me this before the close of the Easter season, and I pray that, with an end to your ailment, you may be in perfect health for that and for all that our good God wills of your Charity. I pray that through the most holy love of Jesus, we may truly give ourselves to Him once again. Tomorrow I will offer this painting to His Holy Mother to adorn an altar dedicated to her under the beautiful title of her name, and will ask her for renewed aid for my son. I have heard no news from him since the seventh of this month, and this truly distresses me. Likewise, I have heard nothing from the Mother Superior of the Visitation at Tours nor from Monsieur d'Esvre, and this makes me quite fearful.

I also beg you most humbly, my Most Honored Father, to do me the charity of remembering our entire little Company, sinful and hard of heart as we are, at the holy altar tomorrow so that the most holy will of

God may be accomplished in us. O my very dear Father, if our good God reveals my interior to you, how frightful I shall appear. I see nothing in myself that is not criminal except my feeble desire to do better. Help your unworthy daughter, through your holy prayers and charitable advice, to belong entirely to God and to obtain from Him His pity on her poor son.

Here is a book which Monsieur Guérin, confessor to our sisters at Saint-Gervais, sends to you through them. He sent us one also. May we find profit in it for the glory of God. Prostrate in heart and affection at your feet, with the greatest humility possible, I ask of you your holy blessing so that my soul may attract the graces it needs in order to be truly, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

The vigil of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

L.132C - TO MONSIEUR PORTRAIL

at Le Mans

March 27, 1646

Monsieur,

It would be most presumptuous of me to consider myself necessary for the establishments of our sisters in the localities to which God calls them, especially the one where you are. Rather, I should truly fear spoiling everything. I think that what leads me to visit various places is the mistrust I have of the qualifications of our sisters caused by my bad example and the little effort I put into their guidance. Since my words surpass my deeds one hundred-fold, it seems that in giving detailed advice to these little establishments I am only repairing the faults I have committed earlier.

Thus when Monsieur Vincent approves, we will send you two of our sisters. I beg you, Monsieur, as I know that you know them, to do us the charity of naming those whom you feel the most suitable. I had suggested Sister Jeanne Lepintre[1] for Sister Servant to Monsieur Vincent. Please remember that we have the two who returned from Angers: Sister Claude,[2] serving at Saint-Barthélemy, and Sister Geneviève,[3] who is at Saint-Gervais. Also, perhaps our Sister Andrée,[4] who was at Saint-Étienne, should

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
3. Geneviève Caillou, see Letter 19.
4. Andrée left for Le Mans on May 4. Faced with the impossibility of the establishment,

be sent a distance from Paris. See who would be the most suitable, Monsieur.

I had asked you if there was some way that the girls wishing to join our Company might come here. I believe this to be necessary so that we might be able to send you four of our sisters from here. Although they may seem to you to be entirely submissive, it is to be feared, Monsieur, that in the exercise of their duties they may belie their reason for being there and that this could become habitual in other places. When we were in Angers we did not enter the hospital until everyone had left, except for one woman who stayed on until she found work. She also provided us with a few addresses we needed.

It would truly be difficult for me from here to give our sisters the necessary advice that they will need once they are there. I would have to know the customary way of serving the sick, the number of sick, the situation of the hospital (meaning the lodging arrangements for the men and the women), whether there are officers who prepare the meals for the sick, whether there is a pharmacist, and whether bloodletting is allowed. Also, it seems to me that Monsieur Gallais[1] told me of a number of women servants there besides those he called sisters. However, Monsieur, this seems to me a point of great importance. In my opinion, it is more appropriate to have a large number of sisters and to remove the servants entirely as gently and charitably as possible. It seems to me also, Monsieur, that the establishment at Le Mans is an undertaking of great importance to us, especially because it is being realized through our priests, and because I believe there are many people to satisfy. I beg the goodness of God, through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, that Divine Providence will guide it. If we receive news from you and God gives me some other thoughts, I will be sure to let you know them.

I most humbly beg your forgiveness — I just now found the letter which I said I had sent to you. It is the result of my memory! I commit so many other faults. I beg your Charity to ask God's forgiveness for me for it, and for the grace to do better.

Today, I am in His most holy love and in that of the Blessed Virgin, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

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she was sent to Angers, where she stayed until June 1648.

1. Monsieur Gallais, Priest of the Mission, see Letter 107c.

L.132D - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday (May 2, 1646)

Monsieur,

I most humbly beg your Charity to remember that seats have been reserved for Le Mans for next Friday. Also remember the need we have for the conference you so kindly promised us for tomorrow, Thursday. I most humbly beg you to let us know the subject of the conference so that we can inform our sisters.

I calculated all the funds that our parish sisters brought to the House during the year 1645. It amounts to 1,129 pounds, 12 sous; from that we needed to furnish 43 girls with habits and linens. I believe there were nearly 400 pounds left for the House, minus expenditures and without figuring in the linens and clothes made by the sisters of the residence. I believe, Monsieur, that it would be well if your Charity would say something to the sisters on the matter so that they may understand that the amount they bring in is almost exactly equal to the amount of expenses; the ones who bring in more must supplement any insufficient amount brought in by the others. I ask this because I do not know whether the entire Company is capable of understanding that their savings truly support the House—some of them exhibit little restraint and most of them too freely tell all they know. I beg the goodness of God to make you truly aware of our needs and our weakness, particularly mine. I am, by the order and guidance of His holy Providence, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.[1]

L.133 - (NO ADDRESS)

(Thursday, May 3, 1646)[2]

With God's help we shall not fail to send our sisters, if they are ready tomorrow.[3] The sisters from Saint-Jacques[4] will receive the blessing of Monsieur Vincent. Please find out from him whether it would be useful for Monsieur de Marillac[5] to write to some of the city officials who are

1. Monsieur Vincent answered on the same sheet (Coste II, 587).
2. Unsigned, unaddressed note written by Louise de Marillac.
3. They left for Le Mans.
4. Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas (Parish of Paris) a new establishment.
5. Michel de Marillac, grandson of the Keeper of the Seal. His grandmother was a native

his relatives in order to assure them that our sisters will in no way disturb the administrators of the Hôtel-Dieu, to whom they render total obedience and the necessary submission.[1] However, I believe it necessary that their confessor be a Priest of the Mission. In my opinion, it is essential to pray for this establishment. May God's will be done.

It will be difficult if the six sisters have to feed and maintain themselves on the 100 écus. Find out whether it is Monsieur Portail's intention to give the money to the administrators so that the sisters may be clothed and fed by the house as are the poor.

L.458 - (TO SISTER MADELEINE MONGERT)

at Angers

(c. May 1646)

My very dear Sister,

Once again our God visits you in the person of our dear sister. In the name of God take good care of her. I know well that she will lack nothing but do not grow weary of urging her to take all she needs. I greet her with all my heart. Her illness increases my affection for her because I believe her to be in close union with the most holy will of God, which I beg her to love greatly. How I love the good heart of my Sister (Marie),[2] a true daughter of the Blessed Virgin! I beg you to tell her that I only expect her to do her utmost to fill the hearts of our dear sisters with blessed joy. All our sisters here greet you. If you could see them all working, tilling the soil, you would truly hope for good fruit from this earth. Pray for them, I beg you, and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister.

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of Le Mans.

1. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity did not succeed. The former servants of the hospital did not accept them.
2. Marie Despinal was ill. Arriving in Angers in 1644, she died in May 1646. A conference on her virtues was given at Angers. This conference was not preserved.

L.139 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

(May 11, 1646)

Monsieur,

I most humbly thank you for the trouble you constantly go to for us; we do not deserve it. I did not write to Monsieur Portail[1] on the matter about which your Charity informed me because I had already asked him to speak to Monsieur Ratier,[2] before speaking to our sisters, so that he might be informed of their individual dispositions.

As soon as I knew of the seriousness of your deceased brother's illness, I did not fail to inform Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Lambert. Also, since his death, I have recommended his soul to the prayers of the Company. The obligations we have to you, Monsieur, are witness enough that we did the best we could in this matter.

I was truly distressed that I was not able to have the honor of seeing your sister at Saint-Lazare, nor the honor of visiting her at home before her departure. I hope her goodness will allow me to retain the honor of her friendship with the belief that I hold her in particular esteem.

I beg you, for the love of God, Monsieur, to offer to His goodness, at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, everything which your Charity can think of which He wills for me so that the time I spend during my few days in retreat, which starts today, may be pleasing to Him. Please believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, if you write to Monsieur Ratier, to urge him to speak most openly to Monsieur Portail about all the needs of our sisters.

L.138 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

at Angers

May 11, 1646

Monsieur,

I beg you most humbly to let me know the state of our sisters[3] when

1. Monsieur Portail visited the house in Angers.
2. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
3. The sisters sent to Le Mans.

you left them, and to give me the advice we need to have an understanding of them through letters so that we can deal with the difficulties which may arise between them and the other girls.

I also beg you, Monsieur, to let me know the agreement you made with the administrators and with this girl you are sending us from the hospital. Is it purely so that she may be one of us, without the obligation to send her back except in the manner we do with others?

How long do you feel we should leave Sister Jeanne Lepintre[1] there? Can we expect your return this year? Wherever you are, Monsieur, please give us news of your dear self from time to time. I must tell you, in all truth, that your absence is costing the entire Company dearly; every day we experience it more and more.

May God be blessed for everything, and may His blessed will be preferred above all else! We truly hope for your help before God. All our sisters—your dear daughters—are most particularly joyful in hearing that you remember them, and they greet you with all their hearts. They assure you that they are truly praying for you; their Sister Servant would be most ungrateful if she failed to do so. I believe, Monsieur, that the good sister, Mlle. Marie Gonain,[2] is going to come to you to ask you again if she can rejoin the Company. Please, Monsieur, do not give her any hope, but really make her understand that she may consider herself of the Company and that the service she renders to God in His poor gives her this association.

Monsieur Ratier[3] informed Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux that there are three or four girls wishing to join us. You know how we need them, but you also know how necessary it is that they have all the proper dispositions. I beg you either to receive them or to turn them away. Perhaps the girl of whom Monsieur Tonnelier[4] has already spoken to us is one of the four. Please speak with her individually. I believe there are several things to tell you about our sisters. Please make them understand that it is not enough simply to be willing to go wherever they are sent. They must be willing to remain where obedience has placed them until obedience removes them. Please give us news of each one in particular. Sister Marie Despinal's[5] former master and mistress still have the same interest in her.

I hope that your Charity will send us our Rule[6] as soon as possible,

1. Jeanne Lepintre, superior of the little community sent to Le Mans.
2. Marie Gonain, who left the Company for health reasons, see Letter 325.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
4. Monsieur Tonnelier, the sisters' confessor in Angers.
5. Marie Despinal who was in Angers, see Letter 458.
6. Monsieur Portail studied the Rule of the Daughters of Charity, which would be submitted to the Archbishop of Paris for his approbation, see Letter 145.

and the instructions we need to put it into practice so that the trouble you have taken for us may be followed by the good you have intended. This I hope for, aided by your holy sacrifices and prayers. I beg this of you most humbly for the love of God in which I am, your obedient servant.

L.136 - TO SISTER MADELEINE (MONGERT)

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor in the Hospital at Angers

May 23 (1646)

My very dear Sister,

I am truly distressed by the condition of our good Sister Marie Despinal.[1] If God has not taken her from us yet, greet her for us, and tell her that I beg her to do all she can in order to be in good health, so that she may use well the rest of her days in the service of God. Oh, she will have such a sympathetic love for the sick poor after such a great exercise in suffering, which I hope the goodness of God will have blessed with great assistance and consolation.

How you astonish and distress me with news of our poor sister![2] When did you first notice her aversion for her vocation? Assure her that she will be welcome and that we will take particular care in placing her if she wishes to withdraw to a servant position. That is why she must truly avoid committing the fault of withdrawing as would a vagabond. Her brother, who I told you is a Priest of the Mission, will not allow her to live on her own like that.

I am astonished that our sisters are so agitated given the great task they have. I would ask them to renew often their desire to perform all their actions in the sight of God and for His love, and to think of the great grace which His goodness bestows on them in calling them to such holy work. So many qualified persons are employed in this work, and they labor with such fervor that they have no time to think of themselves or to busy themselves in seeking personal satisfaction.

I hope that Monsieur Portail will be there soon. As soon as the administrators have decided to request sisters from us for the needs of which you informed me, we will send some to you, by the grace of God.

I heartily and affectionately greet all our dear sisters, and I would ask them to receive all that I am telling you in this letter as if it were written

1. Marie Despinal died at the end of the month, see Letter 458.

2. Catherine Huitmill weakened in her vocation, see Letter 70b.

to each one of them in particular. All our sisters, both healthy and ill, ask for your prayers. I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

L.140 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

(at Le Mans)

May 25, 1646

Monsieur,

If your Charity had not recognized our troubles a long time ago, I would say that our good God is causing you to experience them in the difficulties that He wills you to have in negotiations on the matter on which you are working so generously for the service of His poor. This is a great embarrassment for us, to think that it is only our laziness and bad dispositions which are causing so much trouble concerning our employment. I beg you to ask God's forgiveness for us, to forgive us yourself, and for Monsieur Gallais[1] also to forgive us all the trouble we cause you. We have great reason to praise God for all He does through you and for having entrusted this matter to you by His Providence. It is only through His goodness that plans are made and carried out. If Providence does not will that we be there, then our sisters in Angers will receive some relief,[2] for I believe that the administrators have resolved to ask for four more. Moreover, we were informed that our good Sister Marie Despinal[3] was near the end three days ago, and we are led to believe that God has taken her. When you go to Angers, you will learn of the fine dispositions of her soul in this most important event of our life. I beg you, Monsieur, to thank God for the graces which His goodness bestowed on her.

All our sisters wish you were here, and two or three are in great need of your presence. I believe you received the letter in which I begged you to speak with Monsieur Ratier[4] and the confessor of the Religious of Sainte-Marie, Monsieur Tonnelier, before going to the hospital. Also, I urge you most humbly to find out as much as you can about the girls who must come to you if they wish to join us. I also beg you, Monsieur, before leaving Le Mans, to speak to Madame du Clos. She incessantly

1. Monsieur Gallais, superior in Le Mans, see Letter 107c.
2. Two of the four sisters who had come to Le Mans left for Angers: Claude Brigide, see Letter 114, and Andrée, see Letter 132c.
3. Marie Despinal of Angers, see Letter 458.
4. Monsieur Ratier, who replaced l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 71.

writes to Sister Jeanne Delacroix,[1] causing her scruples for having left her mother. Please find out for sure from her whether Sister Jeanne's mother needs her or her sister Renée, the last girl you sent, who told us that her mother herself wished her to be received by us. All three[2] of them are good girls, provided they have hidden nothing, as I believe.

We have never been in such great need of girls as we are now. We have at least 12 sisters who are ill or infirm, in particular our Sister Andrée in Issy whom we do not think capable of living much longer. She received Extreme Unction a few days ago. I recommend her to your prayers and am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.141 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor (at Le Mans)

May 25, 1646

My very dear Sister,

God be blessed for guiding you throughout your entire trip,[3] especially for the good health He gave you and for all the contacts, as well as the contradictions, of which you informed me. I believe His goodness gave you the grace not to be bored with nothing to do, since it does not matter that we are not doing something. It is enough that God knows that we are all ready to work whenever He wishes. It is true, my dear Sisters, that you are quite a burden to our good priests, but you should not be troubled by it since you know their charity. Be sure to pay them with the coin they expect, namely great submission to God and edification of your neighbor by all your words and actions. If Providence wills that you remain there, try to foresee the advice you will need to ask of Monsieur Portail before he leaves. I beg you, Sister, to be on guard that all our sisters exhibit great modesty and reserve, and especially that they show great respect for the priests, being careful not to take advantage of their great goodness and gentleness. If you do this, the virtues of humility and charity which they practice will not put you to shame because you do not imitate them.

Please greet Madame du Clos for me and truly be thankful to her for the charity she shows you. However, in the name of God, Sisters, be careful, if you remain there, not to form any close relationships with Ladies of Charity so that you do not begin to waste a lot of time. If you

1. Jeanne and Renée Delacroix were natives of Le Mans.
2. The third sister coming from Le Mans was Salomée, see Letter 141.
3. The sisters left Paris on May 4.

see Sister Salomée's[1] mother or sister, give them her regards, as well as ours, and assure them that she is well. Tell the mother that her daughter wishes her to write to her father.

Pray for our good Sister Marie Despinal,[2] whom we believe to be before God; Monsieur Ratier told us many good things about her.

All our sisters send heartfelt greetings. Our three sisters from Le Mans[3] are well, thanks be to God. Give their regards to anyone asking about them and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

P.S. Assure our dear sisters of our affection and loving remembrance.

L.177 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

May 28, 1646

Monsieur,

I believe that the disorder occurring in the service of the poor is due to the right of the director of the Hôtel-Dieu of Le Mans to appoint two sisters while the administrators appoint the rest. Would it not be better if the director offered to waive this right, while still contributing the agreed-upon sum? Would it not also be better if, in order to carry out their duties, the administrators, without claiming any other right than that of administrators, would call upon girls of another community to serve their sick poor? Perhaps you see no possible use in two of our sisters remaining amidst this disorder. I beg God to make His holy will known to you.

God was pleased to take our good Sister Marie Despinal,[4] in Angers, by a happy and Christian death. Her confessor informed us of it. I beg you most humbly to recommend her to the prayers of your holy Company and to remember that an answer needs to be given soon to the good gentlemen in Nantes.[5] Remember too that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

1. Salomée, native of Le Mans, fell ill in August 1646 and died in November 1647.
2. Marie Despinal, who was in Angers, see Letter 458.
3. Three sisters, natives of Le Mans: Salomée, Jeanne and Renée Delacroix.
4. Marie Despinal, see Letter 458.
5. The Daughters of Charity were requested for the Hospital of Nantes.

L.214B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. June - July 1646)

Monsieur,

We are in a hurry to send Sister Guillemine[1] to Saint-Paul so that we may bring Sister Anne[2] here. If you have the time to say a word to her, we will send her as early as today. I had asked Monsieur Lambert[3] to send us your mason so that we could show him the place to construct the parlor,[4] and I forgot to tell you that a room could be built above it; the parlor really must be covered too. When Madame de Liancourt[5] came by, I spoke to her about it because she knows what is involved in building. I believe she would contribute to the expenses if she could use this room for her little retreats. I ask your pardon for my importunities and I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.144 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SISTERS[6]

(July 1646)

My very dear Sisters,

I leave you so that you may conform yourselves entirely to the most holy will of God by the pact that we all made together never to complain about the guidance of Divine Providence, but to abandon ourselves entirely to it. Let all of us take this journey itself as an exercise in the practice of this promise which we have renewed so many times.

Sister Jeanne Lepintre,[7] you are aware that this same Providence had you named by our Most Honored Father as Sister Servant of the entire Company. I hope that God will give you the grace to carry out your office faithfully. As for important matters, when you are unable to obtain an

1. Guillemine Chesneau, sent to Saint-Paul in 1646 (see the Council of the Company, Coste XIII, 599) then to Saint-Étienne in Arves (Picardie) in 1650.
2. Anne Hardemont, placed at the Motherhouse for a time, see Letter 110.
3. Monsieur Lambert was at Saint-Lazare, see Letter 18.
4. The decision to build the parlor was made at the Council of June 28, 1646 (Coste XIII, 601).
5. Madame de Liancourt, Lady of Charity, see Letter 4.
6. Recommendation that Louise de Marillac left for her Officers before her departure for Nantes.
7. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

order from Monsieur Vincent, obtain one from Monsieur Lambert.[1] Insofar as you are able, every two weeks gently and cordially communicate with your two co-officers[2] concerning what you have to do.

Sister Anne,[3] you and Sister Jeanne[4] shall take care of treating the out-patients. You shall also be in charge of the pharmacy and shall make sure that the sisters serving the sick of Saint-Laurent give you an account of the manner in which they are serving them. Pay attention to their conduct toward the Ladies and see whether they are careful to give them accounts. Especially, be sure they prepare the remedies well and take care of the medications. Sister Marguerite Lesoin[5] will remain here as portress, and Sister Marguerite from Vienne[6] as cook, although she may visit the poor from time to time.

I believe Sister Marguerite[7] has returned from Angers. I would ask you, Sister Jeanne, after she has rested, to have her make a retreat with someone else wishing to make one. Sister Jeanne Fouré[8] shall be sent to the Foundling Hospital as a nurse along with Sister Jeanne-Baptiste,[9] and you shall give one of the two sisters who are with Sister Antoinette[10] to Sister Vicente,[11] if she wishes one and feels the Ladies will not be annoyed by the frequent changes. It is only because she cannot read, and this is a difficulty for her. If she can make do until our return, fine. In that case give this sister to Sister Phénix at Saint-Nicholas. I truly wish that Sister Rose[12] would wait until we return before making a retreat because she is a bit scrupulous and must receive guidance entirely different from the others.

Monsieur Vincent thought it appropriate that some of our sisters visit[13] the sisters of the parishes every eight or ten days namely: Sister Henriette,[14] Saint-Sulpice; Sister Geneviève[15] of the Hôtel-Dieu, Saint-

1. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, replaced Monsieur Portail, who left on visitations.
2. The two co-officers were: Julienne Loret, see Letter 220, and Élisabeth Hellot, see Letter 152.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
4. Jeanne Lepintré, see Letter 64.
5. Marguerite Lesoin returned from Saint-Denis.
6. Marguerite from Vienne, a sister who was at the Motherhouse for a long time.
7. Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149.
8. Jeanne Fouré, see 173b.
9. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, see Letter 64.
10. Antoinette Labille, see Letter 52.
11. Vicente Auchy, see Letter 36.
12. Anne Rose, a young sister who did not know how to write, signed an "X" on the Act of Establishment of the Company on August 8, 1655.
13. A few days later, Monsieur Vincent made recommendations to the sisters for these visitations.
14. Henriette Gesseaume who was in the parish of Saint-Germain, see Letter 76
15. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.

Barthélemy, Saint-Séverin and Saint-Étienne; Sister Barbe,[1] Saint-Gervais and Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie; Sister Antoinette,[2] Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas; and Sister Hellot,[3] the galley slaves and Saint-Leu. All visits shall be made in this manner, my dear Sisters. You shall envision this action as something important which you are doing in the sight of God, as an act of holy obedience; therefore, you shall begin with an act of humility, looking at your faults and infidelities; and in order to honor the actions of the Son of God, you shall propose to yourselves the imitation of His great gentleness. Your visits shall be of a cordial nature, and in your affectionate conversations you shall only talk about your work, the grace which God has given you in calling you to it, your regret for not carrying out your duties well, and your awareness that it is necessary often to think of what God asks of us: great gentleness toward the poor and great respect for the priests, doctors and Ladies. Without that, my Sisters, I warn you that we will become insolent to the point where the Ladies will be obliged to dismiss us, and . . . (the letter is unfinished)

L.487 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

July 19 (1646)

Monsieur,

I thank you most humbly for the good news about our sisters which you took the trouble to give me. I hope most sincerely that we will be able to serve at your hospital for shut-ins. I cannot tell you any more, Monsieur, because I have not been able to speak to Monsieur Vincent about it. I found out only yesterday that the matter concerning the benefice,[4] about which you did me the honor of writing, has not yet been concluded. This has been due to the number of other matters which have accumulated and our not having held council for nearly a month. Nevertheless, Monsieur, perhaps the enclosed letter, which I just received, will give you additional information about it.

I praise God with all my heart for Mademoiselle Marie's improved disposition. Perhaps Divine Providence destines her to serve Him and provide good example in her home region.[5] If He has a similar plan for

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Antoinette Labille, see Letter 52.
3. Élisabeth Hellot, see Letter 152. Louise de Marillac always called her Sister Hellot.
4. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux wished to divest himself of his benefice, see Letter 95.
5. Marie Gonain returned to her home in Ingrandes, see Letter 325. Louise de Marillac was going to meet her at the time of her trip to Nantes.

you, since it is a rather extraordinary thing, I also hope for the continuation of the extraordinary graces which He has bestowed upon you until now. To that end, I beg His goodness, Monsieur, to give you true knowledge of His most holy will, and I ask you for a share in your holy prayers and sacrifices, in the belief that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.122 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday (July 20, 1646)

Monsieur,

It seemed essential to send our Sister Élisabeth[1] to Saint-Germain-en Laye to investigate the conduct of our sister there. At the same time, she can go to Maule and Crespières,[2] which are quite close-by. While there she can determine more precisely the need to reassign Sister Marie,[3] the one whom Madame de Bouillon[4] has asked us to remove. This is to be done without anything being obvious, except that she needs a change of air. However, since she is accustomed to a heavy workload, I am afraid that she might fall ill when it is time to leave. I did not think to make this suggestion to our sisters yesterday. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to let me know if you find this acceptable. She could leave today and spend the night at Saint-Germain; and if you wish, she will give Mademoiselle de Bouillon an answer to her request that you send one of your priests there to receive reports from the Treasurers. In order to prepare myself for Holy Communion, I ask your Charity for your holy blessing, and I am, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and obedient daughter.

1. Élisabeth Martin was to leave for Nantes on July 26 with Louise de Marillac.
2. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Maule and Crespières took place in 1645.
3. Probably Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
4. Madame de Bouillon, see Letter 67, had a château at Morainvilliers, near both Maule and Crespières.

L.145 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

(at Richelieu)

From the boat, near Tours, July 30 (1646)[1]

Monsieur,

I do not know what caused the delay in sending a sister to Richelieu, but Providence showed us that it should be Sister Turgis.[2] God only made us think of her at the moment we were obliged to have her called to Paris. May the name of God be blessed for this! He has the goodness to make up for the deficiencies and imprudence of His miserable creatures. I envy Sister's happiness if she is so fortunate as to see you.

I beg you, Monsieur, to point out her faults to her[3] because I attribute many of them to her lack of awareness. Beneath her apparent gentleness and charity there lies the search for self-satisfaction and vain esteem. However, this is entirely hidden from her because she truly desires perfection. May God will this for the purity of His love.

If Sister Turgis becomes fond of and undertakes the practice of the Rule, I hope that the faults of the others will be erased, aided by the fine guidance of your priests.[4] I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so charitable as to advise our sisters on the respect they owe the priests and on the importance of not becoming familiar with them; and especially on the use they are able to make of the advice which the priests, in their goodness, will give them.

I also think, Monsieur, that it would be wise to warn them that their reserve and great modesty should not be impeded by the consolation they experience when speaking to someone from the house. I noticed that some lacked this a great deal in these encounters, and this is of very great importance. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for all the trouble you have taken for our poor sisters in Angers.[5] I praise God for having given you this charity and I beg Him not to allow me to become the enemy who throws bad seed in among the good seed which you have sown.

You did us a great favor by sending us the conference on our deceased sister.[6] Monsieur de Croisille came to see us and remarked on Providence's

1. Louise de Marillac is on her way to Nantes. She confided her letter to Élisabeth Turgis who left her to go to Richelieu, see Letter 159.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Louise de Marillac is speaking of one of the sisters presently at Richelieu, undoubtedly Marguerite, see Letter 148.
4. The Priests of the Mission of the house at Richelieu.
5. Monsieur Portail has just made a visitation in Angers.
6. The conference on the virtues of Marie Despinal must have taken place in the presence of Monsieur Portail.

remarkable guidance of this soul toward salvation. Monsieur Lambert sent us a copy of the request made to the Bishop of Paris,[1] which includes the principal points of our Rule. However, it is not the complete one that Monsieur Vincent gave us after explaining it at a conference and that your Charity promised to return to me. In the name of God, Monsieur, I beg you to have it sent to us because we do not have a single copy of it. I believe that nothing has been done. If you have some advice to give me for our sisters in Angers, I believe, Monsieur, that you could write to me in care of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux or Monsieur Ratier. I hope to pass by there again on my return from Nantes, where we are taking six of our sisters. On the way, we will stop for Sister Jeanne from Chinon[2] and leave in her place Sister Perrette from Sedan.

Please help us with your holy sacrifices and prayers, I beg of you, and believe that all your daughters remember most tenderly all the acts of charity they have received from your goodness. They, along with me, wish for your return in the submission that we owe the most holy will of God, in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

L.146 - FOR SISTER HELLOT[3]

(August 1646)

My very dear Sister,

If your heart has been as steadfast as you tell me, oh, then I love it with all mine and even more because, since it is the love of God which produces such effects in it, it must be honored and cherished. I beg this holy love to fill it completely. I do not think our journey will be as long as we thought because our good health precluded our staying in Orléans and Angers as long as I had anticipated. I passed on some information from Sister Jeanne Delacroix[4] to Sister Jeanne[5] but forgot to tell her that if someone writes to her with a response to her request it will be either you or Sister Jeanne, and that she will be given the decision she requests when I return. You must do likewise with anyone making an extraordinary request when you are unable to be advised on it by our priests. When

1. See the text of the Petition (Coste XII, 557).
2. Jeanne from Chinon, who arrived in Angers at the end of 1644, was ill. She cannot leave for Nantes. Claude Brigide is chosen to replace her, see Letter 148.
3. Élisabeth Hellot, see Letter 152.
4. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
5. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

you write to them, continue to write in the same manner. Please write whenever Sister Jeanne asks you to do so, and when she writes, she shall sign her letters. Dear Sister, I truly expect you to write to me in each mail. Write at least once a week and let me know the news of your dear self, of Monsieur Vincent, of Monsieur Holden[1] (to whom I cannot write at the moment), of my son, and of little Sister Anne[2] because I would truly be comforted to know that she is working at becoming totally virtuous. Her good aunt is well. I believe you received a long letter which answers all your questions. If it has been lost or if you have some difficulty, you would do well to go see Monsieur Vincent. Remember, I beg you, that all you did for Saint-Denis[3] was well done, and I am letting them know what they will have to do. Never be scrupulous about anything you tell me. I hope from the goodness of God that, as He bestowed on us His grace in giving us the will to work only for His glory and the good of our sisters and our neighbors, He will not be offended by the way we act in this matter. He is too good, my dear Sister. Let us truly love each other in Him, but let us love Him in each other since we are His. It is in the holy love of Jesus Crucified, that I am, my dear and beloved Sister, your very loving sister and very humble servant.

P.S. I do not know whether I told you to ask Sister Jeanne[4] to answer our sisters or to wait until she gave you the answer. Good evening, Sister, but be sure to tell all our sisters what they must be told on my part.

L.149 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Paris

(August 11, 1646)

My very dear Sister,

I am surprised that I have not received a single one of your letters except those you wrote on the Saturday[5] following the Thursday we left. You did not give me a lot of news at that time because not much had happened. I wait from day to day for you to bring us up-to-date. I beg you to tell our dear sisters who inquire about our return that our business is progressing very well, and that I would ask all of them to thank God

1. Monsieur Holden, see Letter 152.
2. Anne Rose, see Letter 144.
3. The first three Daughters of Charity: Élisabeth Turgis, Françoise Noret, and Marguerite Lesoin had been sent to Saint-Denis in August 1645.
4. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
5. Saturday, July 28, 1646.

for the blessings His goodness gives this establishment. If He continues these graces, you will see us soon. However, we have been on the road[1] for two weeks, and I fear it will take us just as long to return. May the most holy will of God be done. I have been in such good health that it is no longer necessary to fear going on long journeys or anything else which the will of God leads us to undertake for His service in serving the poor. It is your prayers, my very dear Sisters, which attract from the goodness of God all His graces. Be most thankful for them, and all of you work toward acquiring the perfection and fidelity that God asks of you. Oh how miserable and unworthy of God we would be if our laziness caused us to fail in this! If you see my son, I would ask you to tell him that I am surprised that he does not give me any news of himself. If it were not for Brother Ducourneau, I would have been most anxious. I pray God to keep him and all of you well, my dear Sisters. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your most obedient sister and servant.

P.S. I greet all our dear sisters as a group and individually, and I embrace them with all my heart. I wrote to Sister Hellot,[2] Sister Jeanne Delacroix[3] and another one, Sister Tourneton,[4] and I complained to Sister Anne[5] for not writing to me. I am sure that Sister Louise[6] would like to write to us. A few words in her own hand would console me. Little Sister Anne[7] can add a line to it. Sister Marguerite from Vienne . . . Oh I will disown her if she too does not write to me! Today I wished for a nice quarter of a melon for her community. Did Sister Anne receive the gravel that Sister Francoise[8] sent her for her pigeons?

L.147 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 11 (1646)

Monsieur,

Yesterday I received a letter which appeared to be from your Charity,

1. See the account of the trip to Nantes, Letter 159.
2. Élisabeth Hellot, one of the Assistants, see Letter 152.
3. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
4. Marguerite Tourneton had just returned to Angers, where she had been sent at the end of 1644. She left the community suddenly in June 1647.
5. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
6. Louise-Christine Rideau of Saché had been at the Motherhouse since 1642. She was sent to Montmirail in 1655. In 1660, she was elected Treasurer.
7. Anne Rose, see Letter 144.
8. Françoise Fanchon, the gardener, see Letter 595.

but since I saw no indication of your handwriting, I was greatly distressed for fear that you were ill. However, I was a bit relieved because the good Brother Ducourneau[1] did me the charity of giving me news of you. In the name of God, Monsieur, you know that you must take some time to recover your health and attempt to maintain it for the service of God.

I am very surprised that you did not receive the letter I wrote to your Charity from Orléans. Since God was giving me enough strength, we only stayed there Saturday morning so that we could reach this area. O my Most Honored Father, if your Charity knew the assistance of His divine guidance, you would express gratitude to compensate for my infidelity and ingratitude. I beg this of you most humbly for the holy love of God. I do not know what will become of this establishment. I have yet to detect any thorns, although I have heard some little complaints from the people. However, so much praise from everyone . . . it is incredible! We only stayed for three days in Angers, so I did not allow myself the honor of writing to you. We spent four or five hours in Tours, and thus we only arrived in Nantes on the eighth of August. We were on the boat so long because the water level was extraordinarily low. Although we had done all we could to make sure no one knew the day of our arrival, the good Mademoiselle La Carisière[2] had arranged for us to be met at the boat and taken to Mademoiselle des Rochers' residence after our visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament. Mademoiselle des Rochers greets you most humbly. She told me that she was somewhat saddened that she had gotten no response to the two letters which she had the honor of writing to you after the death of her good husband, who was greatly loved and esteemed in this city.

I had informed you of the possible difficulty in asking Monsieur des Jonchères[3] to be spiritual director of our sisters. However, if I receive no order from your Charity other than that which you gave us, I see no other choice than to follow this advice and will suggest to him in his charity to accept. He is not, as I had been told, a Father of the Poor, and I do not see how his sister can cause any harm because she is very zealous and reasonable and does good, not only in this hospital but in all the houses of piety and need. Would to God, my Most Honored Father, that I had enough power and love to recognize the care Divine Providence takes in guiding us. Oh, how highly I would sing its praises! I must keep this short and content myself with inviting the Celestial Court to give utmost glory to God for this. I ask you, our Most Honored Father, to

1. Brother Ducourneau (1614-1677) of the Congregation of the Mission, Monsieur Vincent's very devoted secretary.
2. Mademoiselle de la Carisière and Mademoiselle des Rochers, Ladies from Nantes who helped to establish the Daughters of Charity there.
3. Monsieur des Jonchères, a priest from Nantes, who became the sisters' confessor and advisor.

whom our good God makes known His designs for us, to compensate for our deficiencies.

This holy Providence, which knows my attachment to my decisions, allowed us to find our sister[1] sick with a knee problem when we wanted to bring her here. This led us to choose another who needed to be reassigned. Oh, let us bless God forever for His mercy; and I must do so most particularly for the grace of being, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. I believe our business will progress well during our two weeks here.

L.148 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

at Richelieu

August 13 (1646)

Monsieur,

I can tell you that I believe it was Divine Providence and not we that sent Sister Turgis[2] to Richelieu. I had not thought of her at all until two evenings before we left for Nantes, where we have been since Thursday evening. However, I believe, as you do, that she will do well there and that that is a good place for her since she does not have enough strength for any other location, although we had had plans for her elsewhere. I hope with the grace of God and your holy instructions that they repair the failings noticed by the others.

Please be aware, Monsieur, that it was Sister Anne, rather than Sister Marguerite, who introduced the style of headdress of which you did me the honor of informing me, because I know she has a tendency to appear the know-it-all, the scholar, the deeply devout woman, not to mention, the little saint. She behaves this way everywhere, with the Ladies as well as with the poor, and she likes to say a great number of humble things which apparently bring her praise. There is much evil in this. Nonetheless, Monsieur, I intend only to speak of natural dispositions, and I hope that grace will draw some good from it. I dare not say anything to you about this suggestion for a little veil except that I believe that Monsieur (Vincent) is greatly apprehensive about it, and with good reason, although I suggested to him several times not a veil, which would be totally unacceptable, but something which could protect the face a bit from

1. Jeanne from Chinon, who was replaced by Claude Brigide.

2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38, arrived in Richelieu in July.

extreme cold and heat. Our sisters just receiving the headdress were then permitted to wear a white linen cornette for this purpose. As for black, oh Monsieur, that does not seem feasible to me! Because of the shortcomings you have noticed, as well as so many other inconveniences, I believe it necessary to await the decision of Monsieur Vincent on the above matter.

Blessed be God, Monsieur, that this practice has stopped. In the meantime, I know the customs of this area, and I do not know if it would be advisable for our sisters to adopt them rather than follow their own. Divine Providence, having anticipated your advice on Sister Brigide,[1] led us to find Sister Jeanne[2] ill and not in any condition to leave Angers. This brought about our decision to bring Sister Brigide, knowing her need as well. Is not God admirable in His guidance of our little Company? I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to thank Him, thus making up for our ingratitude.

How your humility has taught my pride a lesson! I must tell you, Monsieur, that the last time I spoke with Monsieur Vincent about the vows, I had in mind to resolve whether, for the young sisters, they should be temporary or permanent. I believe that he will have made this decision in time for the Feast of the Assumption, to which date his Charity had postponed the vows of several of our sisters. He also told me to leave a note about it for Monsieur Lambert.

What a great consolation it was for me to have the honor of seeing you and of finding out about how long you would need to finish the business entrusted to you by the most holy will of God! Since you are going to Gascony, oh Monsieur, do not forget to find out all you can, so that you can answer all the questions I am going to ask you in an effort to know better the person[3] who is the dearest in the world to us. How happy I was at the trouble you went through for us in Angers, and how astonished I am, after all that, at the little weaknesses that our sisters still possess. For them and for me, the neediest, I beg you to continue your holy assistance before our good God, so that we may obtain the blessings we need, especially our sisters at this hospital, which is extremely difficult to serve.

I am continually overwhelmed with visits, which does not give me the time to answer Sister Turgis. I beg you to convey my apologies to her and to believe me always in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

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1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Jeanne from Chinon, see Letter 145.
3. Monsieur Vincent, native of Pouy, near Dax.

L.153 - FOR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

(at Paris)

(August 1646)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the guidance of His Divine Providence in the affairs of the Company. We have such reason to adore Him for it that we would be the greatest ingrates in the world if we did not confide ourselves to it. It is Divine Providence alone which must keep us and provide for all our needs, particularly those which human prudence can neither foresee nor meet. With all my heart, I hope that all our sisters will enter totally into these sentiments without ever relying on anything else.

I am glad that Sister Salomée[2] is at the House for a while. It seems to me that you had her come there so that she could be purged. If the sister replacing her is doing well, I think, my dear Sister, that it would be wise not to send her back so soon. You truly brought joy to me by telling me of the care and charity of our Most Honored Father. We must be truly thankful to our good God for it.

I wrote to my son. I do not know if all my letters are faithfully given to you, but it seems that I do nothing but write. Please express my apologies to all our sisters for not writing to them individually. I assure them that my heart belongs to each one of them and that I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.152 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER HELLOT[3]

Sister of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Paris)

Tuesday, August 21 (1646)

How happy you made me, my dearly beloved Sister, by giving me the details of my son's illness. I have feared this more than he did. It must have been brought on him by his congested state and highly weak nature.

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Salomée, see Letter 141.
3. Elisabeth Hellot, born into the upper middle class, entered the Community in 1645. She was Louise de Marillac's secretary until her death at the end of the year 1650. She wrote letters but also took notes during Monsieur Vincent's conferences and afterwards compiled them.

Did he consider the grace which God bestowed on him? He was in great danger of being suddenly suffocated, and knowing full well that a relapse may occur, I would have been greatly distressed if you had not gone to the trouble of relieving my anxiety by your knowledge of his illness. I am grateful to all our sisters for having labored for my son, and I thank them wholeheartedly for their dear affection, that they could not have demonstrated on a more meaningful occasion. I cannot write to them all individually, but I hope to have the happiness of seeing them soon. I am always in a hurry when I write because there are people with me or waiting for me constantly.

I hope to leave Nantes a week from today so that we can take the coach on the following Saturday to Angers, and from there to Paris. Expect to receive a good reprimand for all your cowardice. Do you think that I want to accept as mine a heart which gives in to its fears and imaginings so much that it still seems to come across as a novel? I declare to you that if it does not give more to Divine Providence than you say it does, and does not stop listening so closely to its apprehensions, I do not want it. Alas! What would I do with it? On the other hand, I will truly desire it once it returns to God and demonstrates to Him that it only wants what He wants and when it examines the future in order to carry out acts of valor and generosity. However, because that cannot occur without putting a great strain on nature, let us content ourselves with acquiescing to the present. Let us leave in doubt all that does not appear to us as submission to God, and let us humble ourselves if our acts of submission are not without vestiges of pain and desire.

I beg you, dear Sister, to continue your charitable care for my son. Who is this Count de Mauny with whom he was associated? Is he an acquaintance of the ladies with whom he lodges, or someone from the past that I do not know? I ask you not to tell him my interest, but if this man is one of his past acquaintances, I urge you to dissuade him from this journey. I fear that if he went to the country right after his recovery, he would only suffer a relapse worse than the initial illness.

Monsieur Holden[1] gave me one of the most remarkable joys that he has given in his life when he advised you to write to me. I beg you to thank him for it but to tell him also that I do not know if it is great enough to eradicate his having said that he did not want to tell me anything since I was not writing to him. It does not seem necessary to me to resort to that. Blessed be God, my dear Sister. We will tell you everything else, if it pleases the goodness of God, and I will show you how reasonable it is for me not to grant you the title for which you asked verbally, although my heart, which is so filled with affection, causes me

1. Monsieur Holden, a friend of the Marillac family, born in England in 1586. He was the almoner of Michel de Marillac, the Keeper of the Seal, and afterwards entered the community of priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.

to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, my beloved Sister, your very loving and very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please greet Monsieur Vacherot[1] and his sisters for me, and give me news of the patient with the bad foot.

L.151 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday, August 21 (1646)

Monsieur,

I believe that you have received the letter in which I told you that I thought that Divine Providence wanted us to follow the order that your Charity gave us for the direction of our sisters. I also told you of the grace His goodness bestowed on us in the matter about which I wrote to you concerning the difficulties with Sister Perrette.[2] I believe our sisters will have the Visitation Nuns' confessor[3] as their ordinary confessor. He would like to be chaplain at the hospital, taking the place of the one who has been there a long time. I am truly apprehensive that these good religious are going to attribute the cause of their impending displeasure to us. They do not know about this yet, and I am going to do all I can to have the honor of seeing them beforehand for fear that they will blame me for it, although I had nothing to do with it.

I thank you most humbly, my Most Honored Father, for the goodness you have for my son. It gives me great peace of mind. The day I received the honor of your dear letter I had had a strong desire to give him and to abandon him entirely to God. That helped me deal with the news your Charity gave me.[4]

I hope that our business with these gentlemen will be completed tomorrow. All that remains is to see to the completion of the arrangements I requested of them, and for a little while, to observe our sisters in the exact practice of their Rule, each one according to her duty. However, the fear I have of needless self-satisfaction and of remaining ill makes me resolve to leave next week in order to take the coach from Angers—if I continue to have this God-given health.

Sister Jeanne Lepintre[5] informed me that a man of the church was at

1. Monsieur Vacherot, the Community's doctor.
2. Perrette from Sedan, who left Paris with Louise de Marillac, stayed in Angers.
3. Monsieur des Jonchères, see Letter 147.
4. Michel Le Gras was seriously ill and Monsieur Vincent sent two Daughters of Charity to care for him.
5. Jeanne Lepintre, who replaced Louise de Marillac as Superioress in Paris.

our house to ask me to pass by Le Mans. I will not do this unless it is just a stopover, or unless your Charity orders me to do so and advises me on what I should do there.

I am truly angry that my son did not accept the honor you extended to him in admitting him to your residence. My God! I do not think I will be granted my request for his total conversion. It seems that the illness he had is more dangerous than he realizes. However, I truly fear that he is turning a deaf ear and that he does not want the fear of God to enter his mind, lest it set him on a happy return. I know nothing of your health, and that causes me to worry. For the love of God, Monsieur, I beg you to allay my fears.

I think that the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu will truly be pleased with me when they see that I did not fail to write to them. I am astonished at so much difficulty, when I truly know it is undeserved. God knows this. How can He allow it? He does so to humble me. I attribute some of the honors which we receive here to your charity. In God's name, do not mislead anyone with regard to me. They think me a great lady. I think nearly all the socially prominent women came to see us, and some even came from the country just for that. Oh, how I will burn one day (for that)! How greatly embarrassed I shall be! The will of God be done; in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and unworthy daughter.

L.154 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER HELLOT

Servant of the Sick Poor

August 25 (1646)

My very dear Sister,

Do not worry about your letters. I seem to have received them all, and I am most comforted that you have started to receive ours. I had told you that I would leave next Monday or Tuesday, but we are a bit behind in our business so we will not be able to leave for a week. If you find out, I beg you to let me know how the dear child of this very holy family[1] was killed. Our sisters at Saint-Sulpice might be able to learn something if they visit Madame de Lignère[2] on my behalf, provided she is still in Paris. The fine care given by you and by our dear sisters has, by the grace of God, restored my son to health. I believe that these illnesses are likely to recur if one is not cautious. I thank you most humbly and wholeheart-

1. The son of the Duke and Duchess de Liancourt, friends of Louise de Marillac.

2. Madame de Lignère, Lady of Charity, living in Paris.

edly for the advice you gave him to purge himself. I believe he truly needed to do that. I beg you to let me know if you received a package that I addressed to Monsieur Lambert[1] or to Monsieur du Chesne[2] in which there were letters for Monsieur Holden[3] and Mademoiselle de Lamoignon.[4] Please give me news of them.

I wrote quite a bit to you in the last mail, and it is enough to assure you that my heart is still everything you wish it to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very loving sister and servant.

L.155 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Nantes) August 28 (1646)

Monsieur,

We had next to nothing to do but, nonetheless, I was unable to get these gentlemen to hurry. They have kept us here again for this week.

We have a great difficulty here, which is the custom of the city to have a supplier who gratuitously advances his money for the hospital's expenses. His wife has been accustomed to coming and serving the meals of the sick, and still comes when she wishes, although this is contrary to our practice.

I brought this problem up to the administrators who have been granting me everything I have asked of them. I truly fear that this will hold us up a bit longer than I had expected because I foresee great inconveniences for the tranquillity and union of our sisters. This woman is not happy with their way of doing things and attempts to side first with one, then with another. I do not think we should leave them before they are freed of this obstacle. If that can be accomplished this week, we hope to leave on Monday. However, because that is not assured, I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to let me know what I should do because this woman and her husband will have served out their term in three or four months, and the administrators are suggesting doing away with this position because of several other inconveniences. I need to know if, with this hope, I should leave them, although I fear disturbances, complaints

1. Monsieur Lambert is the Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants.
2. Monsieur Pierre du Chesne, Priest of the Mission since 1638. He was also at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, and at the end of the year he left for Scotland and Ireland. He returned to Saint-Lazare in 1649. In 1652, Monsieur Vincent sent him to visit the houses in the West of France. He died in Agde on November 3, 1654.
3. Monsieur Holden, see Letter 152.
4. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.

and lack of proper service to the poor in the interim, which will give people the impression that all these failings come from our sisters. If you do me the honor of writing to me, Monsieur, I beg your Charity most humbly to address the letter to Sainte-Marie lest it fall into the wrong hands in the event that all these difficulties are well and permanently worked out and I leave the day that I indicated to you.

It is true that Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux informed me of the illness and relapse of our good Sister Marie-Marthe[1] in Angers. Since last week I have received no news. Even if God has taken her to Himself, Monsieur, I do not think it will be necessary to send another sister at this time because our sisters have told me of their need for four sisters, whom they requested some time ago. Seeing me ready to leave Angers without having spoken to them about it, the Fathers of the Poor asked me for these sisters on their own, promising me anything I felt necessary to accommodate them. I promised them that I would speak to you about it upon my return and as I assured them that they would be sent as soon as possible, I did likewise for the request for two sisters for the hospital here in Nantes. So, Monsieur, there will be seven for whom we must ask Divine Providence. May God be eternally glorified for the blessings He gives our little Company! I always hope for them to increase since your Charity works so earnestly for its perfection. I cannot express the consolation that my heart feels because of it. God is showing me that I am unnecessary and of very little use.

I shared deeply in the sorrow of Monsieur and Madame de Liancourt. However, I truly fear that the way in which their son died will be a great affliction for this fine mother for a long time.

I was hoping that the illness of Monsieur Vacherot's boarder[2] would have taught him a lesson, but they tell me he goes out and even sleeps away from the house. He wrote to me and indicated a new resentment at having been laid up, and in my humble opinion, he has placed and is placing a wall around his heart so as to block out an awareness of the state of his soul. I see all this evil but remain relatively tranquil. I seem no longer to have any involvement with him. Nevertheless, I truly desire his salvation. I most humbly beg your Charity to ask this of our good God through the merits of His Son. I believe it is a matter for the Almighty. My health is a bit better than when I last had the honor of writing to you. You know all my needs but not my infidelities which are keeping me from almost any exercises of devotion. I am always busy with people or looking after my health—poor me—although I truly am, and God willing, it will not lead to my great shame, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

2. Her son, Michel Le Gras.

L.156 - FOR SISTER HELLOT

(at Paris)

August 28, (1646)

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished that you have received only one of my letters. This one is the fifth I have written. I think I addressed two to Monsieur du Chesne[1] at the Bons-Enfants, one to Monsieur Lambert,[2] and one or two to Monsieur Vincent himself so that they would get there more safely. You can find out about them; however, they all were in packages with other letters. You did very well, my dear Sister, in not giving in to the thought which would have hindered your writing to me. You did write to me, as was proved by your last letter, and I thank you with all my heart for I had asked you to let me know the identity of this Count[3] with whom my son was supposed to travel. I am most indebted to you for the discreet care your charity has taken in this matter. There appears to me to be no fault in the advice you gave on Sister Marie,[4] nor was there any in having spoken about it to Sister Geneviève,[5] for I believe you did so with the necessary discretion. As for what happened afterward—such things must be loved and made use of so that we may die entirely to ourselves. I think I have all of your letters. I am keeping some of them so that we can talk about them. I doubt that your answer to this letter will find me in Nantes. I truly hope not, but I cannot get our business in order. In any case, I ask you to address them to the Visitation Nuns; they will be able to send them on to Angers. You produce a great deluge of paper, and I expect that you will give me a good and faithful account of it if God gives me the grace to return. But where did you learn of Monsieur Escalopier's being shipwrecked? Nothing was said of it here. You can truly expect a scolding if I do not find you a real saint. Pray that God will have mercy on me, and believe me to be with my heart completely filled with affection in the love of the heart of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I expect you have written down the dear conference[6] of our Most Honored Father, as well as your own little conferences.

1. Monsieur du Chesne, see Letter 154.
2. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.
3. The Count de Mauny, see Letter 152.
4. Probably Marie Thilhouse, see Letter 161.
5. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
6. The conference given on August 19, 1646 (Coste IX, 260).

L.158 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

(at Paris)

Nantes, September 1 (1646)

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you received a good number of our letters. It truly surprises me that you did not receive them earlier. I fear they were held up somewhere awaiting payment, perhaps at the Bons-Enfants where I addressed two packages to Monsieur du Chesne, one or two to Monsieur Vincent, and one to Monsieur Lambert, not counting those I addressed to you.[1] You give me a singular pleasure by continuing to send us news of yourselves even though you have not been receiving any from us. I would ask you to tell all our sisters that I have received their greetings, those of each one in particular, and that I seem to see their hearts, which I greet with all of mine.

The brother porters of Saint-Lazare and Saint-Victor will have to take the trouble to search their little cells or else send a request to the post office to search for any other letters which might still be there. All our sisters recommend themselves to your prayers and to those of the entire Company. I assure you that they are in great need of them. There still is not a place in which it is so difficult to serve as here. Good evening, my dear Sister. I am with all my heart in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I recommend to you the health of our sisters, and particularly of those in the greatest need, like Sister Hellot.

L.157 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

(at Paris)

(Beginning of September 1646)

My very dear Sister,

You truly astonish me by saying that there are so many (letters) that have not been delivered to you. I fear them lost because I think I wrote at least five or six to you and to Sister Hellot.[2] I am a bit worried about her because I did not receive any of her letters in the last mail. If you write to me, I would ask you to address your letters to the Visitation convent in Angers. Write a line of address to the Mother Superior and

1. See preceding letter, Letter 156.

2. Élisabeth Hellot, one of the assistants, see Letter 152.

nothing on the package, addressing it to me. Put the same postage on the inside package as on the outside one. We hope, with God's help, to leave here Monday[1] without fail, unless God wills otherwise. That is why, my dear Sister, I will say no more about it except that I praise God with all my heart for the graces that He has bestowed on our little Company, and for the blessings that His goodness gives to your guidance. Oh, how I love our dear sisters for giving so many proofs of faithfulness to their vocation!

I ask you to greet them all, my dear Sister, and to tell my dear Sister Hellot, if she is ill, that I urge her to get well soon so that I will find her in the state in which I left her. Recommend all of us to our good God. I assure you that our sisters serving the hospitals are in great need of prayers in order to be helped to act and to suffer, especially the sisters at Nantes, until the hospital is organized. I beg you, my dear Sister, to take good care of our dear sisters working with the children so that they may receive the assistance that they so greatly need. If you see Monsieur Holden[2] and my son, I ask you to tell them that I am so well that this journey makes me want to do nothing else but run about the country, provided there is some good to be done there. Here we see the dead or dying almost every day, which teaches us, much better than we realized, that this life is but a journey which leads us to eternity. May God, in His mercy, make it a happy voyage. I addressed my last letters to Sister Geneviève Poisson.[3] I hope that these will be given to you promptly, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please greet Sister Henriette[4] and Sister Anne,[5] whose illness worries me.

L.159 - (ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEY TO NANTES)

1646

On Thursday, July 26, God gave us the grace to leave Paris to take our dear Sisters Élizabeth,[6] Claude,[7] Marguerite Noret, Catherine Bagard,

1. Monday, September 10, 1646.
2. Monsieur Holden, see Letter 152.
3. Geneviève Poisson, who was at the Hôtel-Dieu, see Letter 28.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
6. Élisabeth Martin, the Sister Servant, see Letter 22.
7. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.

Perette from Sedan and Antoinette[1] from Montreuil to serve the sick poor in the hospital of Nantes in Brittany. Sister Turgis was taken along to be left in Richelieu. This was a result of the Reverend Administrators and some of the leaders in Nantes having requested our sisters from Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, since they were aware of the service our sisters were giving in the hospital in Angers. They wished to be given a copy of the agreed-upon articles and the act of establishment of our sisters, and indicated that they wanted to grant the same things.

Nine of us boarded the coach for Orléans: the six sisters going to Nantes, the one for Richelieu, and Sister Françoise Noret and I to accompany them.

The preceding Monday our Most Honored Father did us the charity of giving us a conference on this subject, and at the end of it he named the aforementioned sisters. The following Wednesday, I went to get his orders for the journey, and I had the happiness of receiving his holy blessing. I told him my justifiable fear of committing many faults during the trip, and his Charity commanded me to keep a written record of our conduct and encounters during the journey.

Remembering his holy instructions and practices, I formed as my sole intention the accomplishment of the most holy will of God and the practice of our Rule. We all boarded the coach for Orléans and travelled most gaily without, by the grace of God, failing in our observances except during the hours of prayer and silence when we were overwhelmed by sleepiness. This we occasionally blamed on the heat.

As we approached cities and villages, we would be reminded to greet their guardian angels with the hope that they would redouble their care of the souls there so that they would be assisted in glorifying God for all eternity. As we passed before the churches we made acts of adoration to the Most Holy Sacrament and greeted the patron saints as well.

When we reached places where we would eat and spend the night, some of the sisters would go to the church to thank God for His help, asking Him for a continuation of it and for His holy blessing in order to carry out His most holy will. If there was a hospital, these same sisters would go visit it. If not, they would visit some other sick person in the town. This they would do in the name of the entire Company as a continuation of the offering of our services and the accomplishment of our duty to God in the person of the poor. We would say a few words, from time to time, on the principal points of faith necessary for one's salvation, or we would give some brief, gentle admonitions on morals. When we could, we would go to church in the morning before leaving in order to make the same acts.

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1. Antoinette Larcher, see Letter 183.

After leaving Orléans, we spent the night in Meung (sur Loire). Because the river was so low, we were on the roads from Meung for nearly five days. We lodged at La Cour-sur-Loire, and the next day at Montlouis. We stopped at the port of Ablevoie where our dear sister stayed in order to go on to Richelieu.

Although we all really wanted to stay in Tours in order to see the places of devotion and to visit the friends and families of our sisters from there, God gave us the grace of spending only six or seven hours there. May He be forever blessed for it and for all the graces that His goodness has given us on our voyage so far.

We continued our journey in the same fashion as far as Saumur, where we arrived around three or four o'clock in the afternoon and found the procession of the parishes and Madame . . . to whom we spoke after having worshipped God and greeted the Blessed Virgin. The same evening we received 257 pounds from the aforementioned woman for the execution of the will of our deceased Sister Anne from Moisson. After having made our devotions at the church of Notre-Dame,[1] we continued our voyage most happily, thanks be to God, and had the honor, in Pont-de-Cé, of being put out of the inn where we arrived quite late. That happened because we did not want any chickens killed, putting us in danger of eating meat on Friday. We also had great need of rest. However, upon leaving this dear house, we found the wife of a quite well-off surgeon who received us kindly.

We continued our journey by water as far as Angers because of our luggage.

We arrived in Angers on Friday, at the inn closest to the hospital. After having dinner there, we sent for permission from the gentlemen of the administration to stay at the hospital. One of them took the trouble to find us and accompany us there where, after having adored the Most Holy Sacrament, we went to greet our dear masters and then all our sisters, who were greatly consoled in seeing our entire Company. We stayed there until Monday, and when we were ready to leave, the administrators who were still waiting for me to speak to them about the four sisters they had requested—I believe in order to save the travel costs—spoke to us on the subject. They told us that it was our sisters who were making the request and that it made no difference to them. I appeared as indifferent as they and told them, in part, that if they wished these sisters we would do all we could to send some to them.

We again took a boat to go to Nantes, and we made no stops except at Ingrandes, where Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux had asked me to see a few of the Ladies of Charity. This we did, and we found great zeal for the service of the poor which was augmented by the fervor of the good

1. Notre-Dame des Ardilliers in Saumur, a much frequented place of pilgrimage.

Mademoiselle Marie Gonain,[1] who is greatly loved and esteemed throughout the area. Her affection for all of us led these fine Ladies to have dinner prepared for us. They really pressed us to eat, but God did us the grace of not allowing us to eat anything there. Most of these Ladies and young women came to take us to the boat, among others the good Sister Gonain who, fearing that we had had nothing for dinner since we arrived too late at the inn, or perhaps by the guidance of Divine Providence, had brought the food which had been prepared for us. She agreed to accept payment rather than leave us with nothing, so we paid for what she brought us, and it lasted us the entire day.

We had two more stopovers before reaching Nantes because the water was very low. We arrived in Nantes on Thursday at two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

All the families of Nantes were impatiently awaiting our sisters, and a day or two before, some clergymen and Ladies had come to the road expecting their arrival. They assigned a man to look for us when we were still rather far off. The Wednesday we arrived, we had some trouble getting away from him so that we could go to the church of the Ursulines, which was the nearest, in order to adore God and give ourselves again to Him for the accomplishment of His holy will. Immediately several of these Ladies came to find us and take us to Belestre, which is a house belonging to Mademoiselle des Rochers[2] where most of the religious now established in Nantes first stayed. Some of our dear sisters stayed on the boat because of our luggage, waiting to hear what was to be done with us.

I wrote from there to one of the administrators sending him the letter that Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, had given me to forward. He immediately took the trouble to come, along with several of the affluent ladies of the city.

They took us to the hospital, and they sent a carriage for our sisters who could not make it through the crowd. It appeared that everyone approved because both great and small alike wanted to be a part of what was happening.

They readied a private room for me near the room for our sisters, which I refused, and I asked that I be permitted to have no other retreat than that of our sisters, which their goodness allowed me.

Right from the day we arrived, all the administrators gave us total control in the hospital. We were given full charge both of the care of the sick and of the supervision of the servants. Our sisters were told that servants performing unacceptably or refusing to obey them could be relieved of their duties. The maidservants were removed immediately, and all responsibility was turned over to our sisters.

There was a fine clergyman who was chaplain of the house, and

1. Marie Gonain, see Letter 325.

2. Mademoiselle des Rochers, Lady from Nantes.

without whose consent nothing was done, whom the administrators had decided to remove as soon as our sisters were well established. Taking his place would be the confessor of the nuns of Saint-Marie.

It so happens, either because of the custom of the area to let blood and purge patients only on rare occasions, or because the officers receive very little money—for drugs as well as for their efforts—that the sick are not well tended. Having recognized this, we asked the administrators to allow our sisters to compensate for this with little remedies in times of great need. The administrators then decided that, in time, our sisters would prepare all remedies. In light of that, they determined to have a pharmacy with a dispensary built at the end of the ward, where there had not previously been one.

God gave us the grace that, no matter what power we were given by these gentlemen, we undertook nothing without informing them and obtaining their consent. All of the numerous, affluent ladies of the city took the trouble to come to visit us, and even those from the countryside around Nantes came for this purpose, so much did they wish to see this establishment.

A number of superiors of reformed religious came as well, and several from religious convents who could not come asked the ladies to take me to see them. They did so, bringing our sisters in turn with us because the religious wanted to see them and their habit.

The very next day all our sisters began working most zealously and lovingly at cleaning and straightening out the women's ward, which was in the worst state. In a few days there was such a change that people enjoyed coming there whereas few had come previously.

At the meals of the sick, there were so many people that the tables and beds of the sick were nearly unapproachable.

We were given the liberty to ask for all that we wanted for the well-being of the sick, which we did without being excessive or fanciful. We thought that, as poor persons, the essentials and cleanliness were enough, and that self-satisfaction and praise from excessive furnishing should not be sought. We also knew that the administrators of the hospitals like good household management although, thank God, they did not complain about necessities.

For several months a number of ladies from the city made a habit of visiting the sick because of their great need for food. Between supper in the evening and dinner the next day there was no food in the hospital, nor was there anything between dinner and supper. Such was the situation that these ladies brought bouillons, eggs and other things. They stopped this upon our arrival. Knowing of the practice, we suggested that they continue it, but in a different manner. We showed them that they did not have to come in the morning, which could be a bad time for them because of their family obligations. Likewise, we let them know that they did not

need to bring fresh bouillon since there now would always be some available in the hospital, along with eggs, for the most sick individuals. We suggested, however, that they would perform a great act of charity by coming at two o'clock, after dinner, with preserves or other things, as do the Ladies at the large hospital in Paris. This does much good for the sick, as well as being pleasing to God, and they can draw much merit from it. It would also console our sisters who would be motivated by their example and would receive with respect the advice that they would do them the honor and charity of giving them.

These ladies resolved to continue their visits in this way, and several took the trouble to come to find out what they should bring.

There is not a single orderly in the hospital except two or three hired hands who help in serving the men, bringing water, and other services of . . . (word omitted) such is the situation that our sisters must be cooks and dispensers for the distribution of bread and wine for the sick. As for provisions, the administrators take care of that themselves. There is a married man living in the city whose responsibility it was to procure all the supplies, even the herbs for the soup. His wife came to meals twice a day to distribute meat, which would have caused several little disputes if it had continued. Besides, this was completely contrary to our articles, which led us to ask the administrators to place our sisters alone in charge of the service of the poor. This they promised us once this couple's time was up, on the condition that our sisters would be in charge of providing these little provisions. We agreed to this since they were easily obtainable in the area. I feared that this woman's term of service would be prolonged indefinitely, and I was apprehensive about the wish that she and some others expressed that this changeover not occur, since they felt this right to be an honor and a privilege for the inhabitants of Nantes. Therefore, I thought it essential to stop all this before I left. It seemed to me a matter of great importance for our sisters, whose actions would have been watched around the clock and reported, perhaps entirely erroneously. It led me to ask the administrators that there be a mention of this changeover in our act of establishment, and I said that I wanted to see this done before my return home, if it displeased no one. This they granted me.

I forgot to say that, a few days after our arrival, Monsieur des Jonchères[1] counselled me to write to the Vicar General of the Bishop of Nantes. Both were absent. I did so because the Bishop had signed, with the administrators of the city, the approbation of our establishment in the manner in which our articles and Rule were proposed to them. I wrote to the Vicar General in the same terms, which oblige us to be dependent on no one. However, when he returned, the Vicar acted as if he knew nothing of what had happened. We would have been truly in a difficult

1. Monsieur des Jonchères, who would become the sisters' confessor.

situation if Divine Providence had not sent us Monsieur des Jonchères. When he let the Vicar know that we had been approved by the Bishop, he then expressed his willingness to serve us in our need.

The difficulty with the wife of the administrator, of which I spoke before, delayed somewhat the drawing up of the text of our act of establishment because I thought it necessary that mention of this be made in the act; the consent of the mayor was needed for this. He gave it very easily, and I was thus obliged to allow myself the honor of going to see him before leaving in order to thank him for all the goodness he had shown us and for all the help he had given us.

Before leaving, we saw the Vicar General in order to express the same sentiments and to ask his intercession for the protection of our sisters by His Excellency, the Bishop of Nantes, assuring him of our respect and submission.

Reflecting on the guidance of this establishment, I have great reason to say, in truth, that it has been Divine Providence alone at work. Going there, I had no knowledge of what there was to do. I can say that I saw what was being done only when it was completed. In encounters where I could have met with obstacles, the same Divine Providence provided, totally unexpectedly, persons who could help me. I believe it was the result of the need brought about by my incompetence because it seems to me that I never act in this confident manner. It also seemed to me that I was doing what I was meant to do without knowing how. May God be forever blessed for it! I believe that without this grace I would have truly committed more faults than I did, although I realized I committed many.

Three or four days after our act was signed, the day of . . . , we readied ourselves for our departure. All our sisters assured us that they would remain there with the great desire to do everything well. Before our departure, they renewed their resolution in a way which left me greatly consoled. We left for Angers on our return trip. The three administrators did not leave us from seven in the morning until ten, when we boarded the boat. Likewise, there were three or four ladies with us who were the most zealous in the service of the poor; among them were Mademoiselle de La Carisière and Mademoiselle de La Pinsonnière. I forgot to mention that Monsieur des Jonchères had the goodness to come at six in the morning to say Holy Mass at the hospital. May God be blessed for all the graces He has bestowed on us in His guidance of this journey. The glory is all His. If any evil whatsoever occurred, I swear before God that I was the cause of it because of my infidelities to His love and service, and because of my great sins, for which I ask His goodness for forgiveness.

We were on the water for four days between Nantes and Angers, and although we truly wanted to observe our horarium as exactly as we did on the way to Nantes, we did not do so—in part because of our laziness

and in part because we were distracted by those aboard with us — we only had two seats[1] available to us on the boat.

We specially had great need for God's help to allay our fear of shipwreck. There were many people on board with us who were quite fearful of the water, and the wind and the water were against us. We were greatly frightened by this three or four times, but through God's goodness we were protected. This influenced our decision to take a carriage at Angers, although we were greatly displeased because of the expense.

We arrived in Angers on Friday morning[2] and went straight to the hospital. The administrators there spoke to us again about our sisters. We decided to send them the four sisters they requested on condition that they have a washtub built and put a well in the laundry room in order to have a sufficient water supply. Insofar as the administrators feared that these sisters would shrink from doing the washing, and that this expenditure would be useless, they wanted me to promise them that any return of our sisters would be at our expense. I found this rather reasonable and granted it to them: we would pay the expenses in the event that it was necessary to recall one of the four sisters sent. However, if it so happened that the fault came from their side, then they would bear the expense. They most readily agreed to this. The next day we left in the morning for Paris, during which time God gave us the same blessing that His goodness had throughout the entire trip. May He be forever glorified for it! Amen.

L.224 - MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity at Nantes

(End of September 1646)

My very dear Sisters,

Send us a bit more news of yourselves. What was the matter with Monsieur du Portail that he recently died? How is the chaplain? What news is there from Mademoiselle de La Carisière? I have heard nothing either from her or from Monsieur des Jonchères, although I believe I have written more than once to both of them. How are you getting along with her and with the rest of them there? I am awaiting your answer in your first letter to us. There are two of our poor sisters about whom we

1. Louise de Marillac returned to Paris with Françoise Noret, her travelling companion.
2. Friday, September 14, 1646.

have no news; we do not know if they are living or deceased? Sister Barbe Angiboust, who is in Fontainebleau,[1] and Sister Andrée from Nanteuil. We have been informed that both are near death. I recommend them to your prayers. If the chaplain is still alive, as I hope he is, tell him that I am greatly concerned about his health. I greet you all and am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your humble sister and servant.

L.222 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday (End of September 1646)

Monsieur,

Several days ago a person from Fontainebleau sent us word that our Sister Barbe Angiboust has had a fever since the September feast of Our Lady. Yesterday we heard from Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois that her confessor had informed a lady parishioner that she was dying and that she had received Extreme Unction.

Do you think it wise, Monsieur, in light of this news, that we send a sister[2] there today? We did write, and one of our sisters left for there a week ago to be her companion, but we have heard nothing from her.

I ask your Charity to give us a prompt response. For the love of God, I also ask you for your blessing. I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Please remember the response for the Bishop of Beauvais.

L.223 - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[3]

at Fontainebleau

(October 1646)

My very dear Sister,

You have caused great consternation because you have failed either

1. Barbe Angiboust had been in Fontainebleau since the month of August 1646 (Coste III, 17).
2. Monsieur Vincent granted his permission on the same letter (Coste III, 386). Anne Hardemont was going to leave for Fontainebleau.
3. Anne Hardemont was at the Motherhouse. Louise de Marillac sent her to see Barbe

to return or to send us news of yourself. You are well aware that we only sent you there to determine Sister Barbe's condition and to come back and relate it to us as soon as possible. As soon as you receive this letter, look for an opportunity to return with this news. If you can bring Sister Barbe along with you, I think she would be fine here. I also believe that it would be quite easy to bring her by boat, and to take her to the port in a very comfortable, covered carriage. Once she is here, we will send another sister in her place. If she cannot come, do not hesitate to return by the first coach or boat leaving after you have received this letter. Whether Sister Barbe comes or not, Sister Marguerite[1] will do as much as she can for both the sick and the children until we have sent another sister. What she cannot do will wait for a while.

Extend our warm greetings to Sister Barbe and to Sister Marguerite. Monsieur Vincent is delighted by her improved health and said a Mass to thank God for it. I am in His holy love, my very dear Sister . . .

L.163 - TO SISTER TURGIS, DAUGHTER OF CHARITY

Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

October 29 (1646)

My very dear Sister,

I received two of your dear letters. In response, I praise God, as you do, for the consolation His goodness afforded you after your arrival in Richelieu of having had Monsieur Portail[2] there for so long. O my dear Sister, what abundant provisions you have amassed. May they last you a long time! Moreover, my good Sister, the help you receive from our good Priests of the Mission will bring about, I am sure, the same consolation that you desire only as an aid enabling you to be faithful to God in all He asks of you. My dear Sister, I beg you not to think of the distance between us. Rather, think of us as strongly united, incapable of ever being separated, because separation is impossible in the close union created by holy charity. I hope that your stay in that area will do much good. I beg you, Sister, to be most careful in the instruction of the young and to maintain good order in your school. I believe that Monsieur Portail left the Rule for you about this. I also urge you to read from the Catechism to the older girls on Sunday and feast day afternoons, and to

Angiboust, who was ill. This letter was written by Élisabeth Hellot.

1. Marguerite would leave the Company of the Daughters of Charity in July 1647 (Coste III, 212).

2. Monsieur Portail was going to continue his visitations, see Letter 107c.

talk to them about devotion. I believe you are continuing the conferences that Monsieur Lambert[1] started. If not, see your priests about it.

Please send me news of your community, of Sister Anne and yourself. Let me know the number of sick you have and if they are well cared for. I recommend myself with all my heart to Sister Anne.[2] Express my apologies for not writing to her. I am to her and to you in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.160 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

Daughter of Charity. Servant of the Poor of the Hospital at Nantes

(October 1646)

(The first page of this letter is missing.)

. . . that we must hold in great esteem the charity and trouble that these fine priests go through for us. My dear Sisters, what do you think our good God is asking of you in return for the many graces He bestows on you? It is fidelity to His service in every point of your Rule; especially, my dear Sisters, cordial support of one another, graciousness and submission, and perfect harmony. Do you read your Rule and the obligations of your duties? Do you say your evening and morning prayers for the sick as well as the Benedicite and Grace at meals? Do you provide towels at the beds of the sick? Do you maintain their cleanliness? Especially, my dear Sisters, do you have a great love for their salvation? It is this in particular that our good God expects of you. Reflect that you will have to answer for the sick not only for the time you have them in the hospital, but you will answer as well for faults committed in their confessions if you fail to do your utmost in advising them about making a good confession. Likewise, you will answer if, before they leave the hospital, you fail to exhort them to a good Christian life. My Sisters, it is not that I want to make you too fearful. It is that I would like to help you to have so much love for our good God that you will often think of ways in which to help souls glorify Him.

Here are our two sisters[3] whom we send to you. They are totally animated by the desire to follow the good example that you will give them in working virtuously in the service of the poor, for the love of God. Since our return, we have already written to Sister Élisabeth[4] and

1. Monsieur Lambert was in Richelieu from 1638 to 1642 and in 1645.
2. Anne (her surname unknown) was in Richelieu until 1648.
3. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76 and Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
4. Élisabeth Martin, Sister Servant, see Letter 22.

to Sister Catherine[1] Bagard. I have since sent the letter of the good Brother Melais, who is ill. Recommend us to his prayers and to those of all your other priests. I urge you, for the love of God, to render them the service you are obliged to give them with great gentleness and respect.

Good evening, my dear Sisters. Pray for us. I am in God's holy love, my dear Sisters, your most obedient sister and servant.

L.161 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

Daughter of Charity at Nantes

(November 1646)

My very dear Sister,

Here is our dear Sister Henriette[2] who is going to help you. I beg you, Sister, although she is elderly, not to let the respect and deference you have for her deter your contribution to her desire to use well the short time that Monsieur Vincent is giving her to work toward her perfection. Thus you will look upon her as one of our other sisters, and although she will be in charge of the pharmacy, where she will instruct Sister Claude,[3] she will do everything the others do. Sister Marie Thilouse[4] will do likewise. I beg you, my dear Sister, to be very careful to keep her busy. She promised me that she would do everything you tell her. I also feel that she needs great gentleness and very charitable warnings about her faults. Express my apologies to all our sisters for not writing to them individually. I embrace all of them with all my heart, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your most obedient servant.

1. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
3. There were two sisters named Claude in Nantes: Claude Carré and Claude Brigide. It seems that it was the former, for Louise de Marillac often referred to the other as "Brigide."
4. Marie Thilouse of Tours, a sister who posed a problem, see Letters 132 and 161. She had been placed numerous times before being sent to Nantes. She left the Company at the end of the year 1649.

L.165 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 1646

Monsieur,

We have great need of the instruction of your Charity on the matter of a rather notable fault of one of our sisters. Her name is Marthe,[1] and she is the daughter of a gardener who lives on the road from the village of Issy. She served for quite a while in the parish of Saint-Leu and seemed a rather simple and good girl. However, I rather fear her to be a bit sly and standoffish. After having worked a short while in the parishes, curiosity led her to desire extensive knowledge. On her own she progressed to surgery. Her mother, the poor woman, told us of having given her a large case of instruments. After we placed her at Saint-Paul, she still had a lancet and said again that her mother had given it to her. Without her Sister Servant's knowledge she used it, although no one had ever shown her how, unless it was one of the surgeons in the parishes. When her Sister Servant asked for the lancet, she refused, saying that she would give it to me. She told me that she had thrown it away, never again wishing to see the object which had caused her to offend God. I kept her here, Monsieur, in order to find out from you what should be done about such faults. These examples seem to me to be truly necessary for the future well-being of the Company, and we should be prepared to proceed in such matters with justice and charity.

Do me the charity of asking our good God that, through His mercy, my son may participate one day in the merits of the life and death of Jesus Crucified, the living source of all holiness. Miserable and unfaithful to God as I am, I remain, although most unworthy, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and obedient servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you that I prevented this sister from confessing and communicating today, and that I await the order from your Charity before allowing her to do so.

1. Marthe Dauteuil, born in Clamart in 1626, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on January 1, 1642. She served the poor in the parish of Saint-Leu, then at Saint-Paul in Paris. In 1650, she was sent to Nantes. In August 1653, she left for Hennebont. The conference on her virtues, given after her death, took place on November 10, 1675 and explained the reasons for her departure. Monsieur Vincent had requested the Sister Servant of Nantes to send one of her companions to Hennebont, but the administrators were formally opposed to this idea. Marthe decided to leave for Hennebont, without saying anything, so that the order of her Superiors would be carried out. The hospital administrators of Nantes and Hennebont fought to have her. Finally, Marthe stayed in Hennebont and lived there for more than 12 years.

L.162 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital of Saint-René at Nantes

November 18, 1646

My very dear Sister,

We are very worried because we have not received any news from you since the departure of Sister Henriette[1] and Sister Marie.[2] Our sisters in Angers informed us that they came by there and left a long time ago, so we should have had news of their arrival in Nantes.

I urge you to give us this news as soon as possible, and to let us know the state of all our sisters' health. Also does the administrator's wife[3] still buy your provisions? Were any of the administrators changed at the feast of All Saints? If so, who has taken their place? Send us news of all the gentlemen and ladies in Nantes, and tell us whether anyone is dissatisfied with you. We still have not received any news of Melais' letter, but we sent it. Let us know the condition of your sick, and recommend us to all of them. Our poor Sister Mathurine, who was sick for so long, died Tuesday at the hospital of Saint-Denis, where everyone mourns her. Do not forget the holy custom of receiving Communion for the repose of her soul. Let us know if you had water in your kitchen. Sister Jeanne Lepintre is ill with a serious inflammation of her eyes, and Sister Françoise[4] died today from vomiting. All our sisters recommend themselves to your prayers. I do likewise, my dear Sisters, and I greet and embrace each of you individually, and wish for you, with all my heart, the holy peace of Jesus Christ, in the love of whom I am with all my affection, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.164 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBE DE VAUX

November 27 (1646)

Monsieur,

I believe Monsieur Vincent will not fail to serve these good administrators in any way he can. You know his charity. For myself in particular, I would be quite at a loss, Monsieur, if I had to act in this

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
2. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
3. See Letters 155 and 159.
4. Probably Françoise Noret, weary from the long trip to Nantes.

matter which I find very important.[1] All I could say to those who have power in the matter would be that it must be carried out with mature deliberation. It is true that this fine gentleman, one of the administrators who is here, did me the honor of speaking to me about it. To tell you the truth, Monsieur, it seems to me that he is doing the right thing, having indicated to me that he wants only to consider the will of God in the matter. In order to recognize God's will they have begun by praying and having others pray about it. That is all that he said to me about the matter. I said nothing else because I must not get involved in this affair in any way. I do not see you implicated in the matter, Monsieur, and if I thought you were, I hope in God's goodness that I would say nothing else.

I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for the continuation of your goodness for us. I look upon it as being the effect of Divine Providence on us. Then I have total reassurance.

They informed me from Nantes that the good Monsieur don Morisse is severely tried because of his decision to stay at the hospital. I am very much afraid that human respect will hinder his perseverance. Our poor sisters will be greatly troubled by this, a few of them have let me know that they were very satisfied with him.

Sister Madeleine[2] also informed me of some other difficulties with one of our sisters, which could be a bad example to our other sisters and could possibly spread. Besides that, this sister has indicated a desire to return to her region, which is not too far. I told Sister Madeleine to speak to you about it, Monsieur, and to relay to you Monsieur Vincent's feeling on the matter, which is to allow her to return home on the condition that I inform the sister to communicate with you. Perhaps this will be an example to others.

Of all our sisters coming from Angers, only Sister Perrine has left. She had the honor of speaking to you on your last journey. Now she is doing all she can to re-enter and is prepared to throw herself at the feet of the Queen. Of the last three arrivals, one named Jeanne left. She wanted to withdraw because of her infirmities, and I did not know how to prevent her from doing so. She had already been in service in two or three places, and our sisters are caring for her. One[3] who came back with this first group died a short while ago at Saint-Denis. The others are quite well, except the last one, who is paying for her welcome to the air of the sick and the climate of Paris with a fever which I hope will lead to nothing.

I would be very comforted if Mademoiselle Gonain[4] would be satisfied

1. The administrators asked Louise de Marillac for four additional sisters at the time of her visit to Angers.

2. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

3. Mathurine, see preceding letter, Letter 162.

4. Her readmission was decided at the Council of October 1646 (Coste XIII, 618). Marie

with what you will be kind enough to tell her; I hope with all my heart that God will bless the advice that your Charity will offer to the girls who desire to give themselves to His service as one of us. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.130D - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(November 1646)

Monsieur,

I did not think to ask you if I could communicate this[1] to our sisters, and so I did not do so. Permit me to say to your Charity that the explanation contained in our Rule of the Daughters of Charity leads me to wish the continuation of this title which is omitted, perhaps inadvertently, from the text of the terms of the Establishment.[2]

Could not this unqualified term of "dependence on the archbishop"[3] be harmful for the future, since it allows us to be withdrawn from the direction of the Superior General of the Mission? Is it not necessary, Monsieur, that through this Act of Establishment your Charity be given to us as perpetual director? And these regulations which must be given to us—is it the intention of the Archbishop that it be those listed after the request? Is a separate act required for that, or does he perhaps want to draw up others since he mentions them separately? In the name of God, Monsieur, do not permit anything to take place which even slightly draws the Company away from the direction which God has given to it. You can be sure that immediately it would no longer be what it is. The sick poor would no longer be helped, and thus I believe that the will of God would no longer be accomplished among us. Through His will I have the good fortune to be, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

Gonain stayed in her region to serve the sick poor.

1. The Act of November 20, 1646, by which Jean François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, established the Confraternity of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
2. The Coadjutor, who signed the Act of Establishment in the name of his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, gave the sisters the name "Servants of the Poor of the Charity.
3. It was further clarified that the Company "would live on in perpetuity under the authority of and in subordination" to the Archbishop of Paris. The guidance and direction of the Company were entrusted to Monsieur Vincent "so long as God wished to preserve his life" (Coste XIII, 557).

L.206 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1646)

Monsieur,

The Marquise de Mortemart[1] just left. While here she asked me to beg you most humbly in her name to remember a tutor for her son.[2] She still has a fine priest from Le Roule who began teaching him the fundamentals. However, she does not think him capable and has indicated to him that his employ is only temporary. His name is Monsieur Lafon. She begs you most humbly, if you can, to look into it so that if you find him as capable as someone else might be, he can be placed under consideration with the others. I most humbly thank your Charity for having done me so much good. It seems to me that when I allow myself to become so absorbed by my apprehensions, which put me in the same state as actual afflictions, I need to be guided with some severity. You will see from the letter I am sending you from my son my weakness on the one hand, and on the other, my constant reason for suffering, which puts me in such need of your charitable assistance and of always being, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant.

L.205 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday (c. 1646)

Monsieur,

Since she was unable to locate you, Madame de Mortemart[3] asked me to tell you that her son's temporary tutor would be coming to see you in order for you to determine whether or not he is capable of this duty. However, she fears that he will only want to find out from you the manner in which he must conduct himself, and this is not her intention.

Our poor Sister Geneviève[4] is still very ill. As for me, I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Madame la Marquise de Mortemart, born Diane de Grandseigne, married Gabriel de Rochechouart, Marquis de Mortemart, who was the Count de Maure's brother. The latter was Louise de Marillac's cousin. He married Anne d'Attichy.
2. Their son, Louis, born on August 25, 1636.
3. See Letter 206.
4. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

L.435 - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT FONTAINEBLEAU)

(c.1646)

My dear Sister,

Well, here you are once again serving the Court, employed by order of our very good and very devout Queen. May her holy example make you most humble, and may Divine Providence's choice of you fill you with confusion. However be on guard, my dear Sisters, so that the enemy does not sow weeds among this good seed. You will know that this is happening if, during your stay in the Court, your contact with these ladies alters your devotion even the slightest bit. You will know it also if you are less careful in the observance of your Rule, and less gentle and humble. However, with regard to humility, are you on your guard so that the deference the world shows you does not make you too bold when speaking to the ladies, both those of the Court and of their entourage? Likewise in speaking to the doctor? Be vigilant so that your experience in treating the sick and your knowledge gained from the doctors do not make you too bold and cause you to jump to conclusions, which prevent you from listening to their prescriptions and obeying any order they might give you. When someone does you the honor of asking your advice, answer with great humility, saying quite simply that you have been taught thus. Truthfully, my dear Sisters, if we acted otherwise, we would be most ungrateful for the grace of God. What do we have except what has been given to us? What do we know except what has been taught us?

1647

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Montreuil-sur-Mer, Chantilly, Chars and Fréneville.

June: *Visits to Angers and Nantes by Jeanne Lepintre and Monsieur Lambert.*

July: *Transfer of the foundlings to Bicêtre.*

September: *Monsieur Vincent's Conference on Perseverance in our Vocation.*

L.168 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

January 4, 1647

My very dear Sister,

You must be wondering what is wrong with me since it is well past the period of a month during which I promised to write to you. However, my dear Sister, you must excuse me for I have not forgotten you or lost affection for you; I have only lacked time. I was ill for quite a long time,[1] and from what they were saying, even in danger of dying. I have recovered, through the mercy of God. Please pray to His divine goodness that this be for His glory, and that I may be able to serve Him with more fidelity than I ever have. I praise God, my very dear Sisters, for all that He does through you and for the graces He grants you. You must be most thankful for and faithful to them. At the start of this new year, rededicate yourselves to His service with the fervor that you had at the beginning when you first knew what He desired of you. Sister Anne, truly look at the particular virtues that He asks of you. Here are the holy cards which Holy Providence has selected for you. Gather much fruit from the instructions they give you.

I am informing Monsieur Gauthier[2] that it is common for our sisters to take remedies given the patients. However, if something prevents this, the regional customs must be followed. That is why you shall do as Monsieur Gauthier instructs you, in keeping with what Monsieur Portail[3] has already told you.

Did you know that our poor Sister Mathurine[4] from Angers died? Through the mercy of God we have had a great number of sick sisters, but they have almost all recovered. There are still two sisters in danger of death, both named Mathurine, both having come from Angers at the same time. One has an ailment of the lung; while the other, an ailment of the spleen. Pray, Sisters, that in living or dying His holy name may be glorified in us. It is in His holy love that I am with all my heart, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Louise de Marillac was ill when she returned from Nantes. The letter was written by Élisabeth Hellot.
2. Monsieur Denis Gauthier from Langres entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1639. From 1642 onwards, he was in Richelieu. He was successively Seminary Director, then Superior of the House.
3. Monsieur Portail stayed in Richelieu in August 1646.
4. Mathurine was in Saint-Denis.

L.207 - TO MY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Fontainebleau

March 3 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

You are worrying me by seeming to be without consolation and by not letting me know of your affliction. Do you have a slight aliment? If that is it, my dear Sister, love God's most holy will, and await better health peacefully. It is a good sign that your legs are swelling.

If you grieve at seeing God offended by those who should be singing His praises and edifying the people, let it be your hope that, when the hour of the fullness of their vocation arrives, God will be able to make them great saints. For your part, do all you can to be faithful to God in your vocation and in the accomplishment of your Rule. If your infirmity prevents you from rising or from fasting and other acts of self-denial, keep in mind that it cannot prevent you from having true humility, from being most cordial and from exhibiting forbearance and gentleness toward your neighbor, even those who oppose you the most. I do not know if you were mistaken in the number of schoolgirls you reported to me. Seventy is a lot. When you have a little more strength, I think that it would be well for you to go to visit the sick once in a while, while leaving the teaching for Sister Marguerite.[1] I am truly astonished that she despises me so that she does not write to me. Tell her that it is wrong to trifle with her Master; I mean that it is wrong to anger God. I fear from this that all is not going well between her and Him. Perhaps, Sister, you are not warning her at the appropriate times that we witness great examples of misfortune among those who, little by little, grow lax. If I told you the state of all those we know, you would be moved to pity and greatly astonished. Pray for all of them, I beg you, and let us ask God for holy perseverance for one another. When you have regained your health, let us know the number of your pupils. However let us console ourselves with the thought that God knows it, and let us avoid, as much as we can, the desire to make known what God is doing through us. I most certainly sent your letters to Monsieur Vincent. I do not know if you received the letters we wrote to you two weeks ago, I believe. There was one for Sister Marguerite that I had wanted to write as if to a daughter, if I had one.

I think you know it was not Sister Françoise who died, but a Sister Mathurine[2] and Sister Perrine,[3] both from Angers. Sister Madeleine[4] is

1. Marguerite, see Letter 223.
2. Mathurine, native of Angers, deceased in Saint-Denis.
3. Perrine Fleury entered in 1646.
4. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

quite ill in Angers, as is Sister Élisabeth[1] in Nantes. Pray for both of them and for all our numerous infirm. Our entire community greets both of you. I do so as well, and am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving servant.

L.172 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

March 10 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

May God be blessed for all the graces His goodness bestows on your little company. However, my dear Sister, be on guard that the sweetness of the people's approval and the consolation of your frequent conferences and communications do not take root in your mind so that you construe the change as the purity of intention needed for the service of God. That could be detrimental to you in the event that Divine Providence changes you from this place to one where these satisfactions are not found. My dear Sister, do not think that I am giving this advice to you alone. I say the same thing to my dear Sister Anne,[3] and as I would to all our other sisters.

My dear Sister, the little trials you mention in your last letter indicate that you are experiencing a weakness of spirit. Do not be troubled. It is nothing since you hold on to God so tightly by your will.

My dear Sister, I remember that you spoke to me about drugs for medications. If there is not a small well-stocked shop for the poor, and if it becomes necessary to buy drugs in small amounts, then I advise you not to do so because I do not believe that the Confraternity of Charity has much money. Even when you obtain them from other places, it should only be for the needs of the sick. Since Monsieur Portail did not advise you on this, I think you should take my advice. Once again, I must give you news about your widowed sister. She was remarried during carnival season to a young man of about 25 who is a shoemaker's apprentice. However, she said she did so to help him with his schooling. Your other sister is well, thank God. We recommend ourselves to your holy prayers, and I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you. We have many who are ill. Remember

1. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Anne from Richelieu, see Letter 163.

us to Sister Anne, and my most humble greetings to Monsieur Gauthier,[1] of whom I am a most humble servant.

L.170 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 10 [1647]

Monsieur,

I hesitate to send you Monsieur des Jonchères'[2] letter because you are burdened by the presence of your important guests. I also have a few other letters on which I need advice to communicate to your Charity.

I do not think that what my son said was bad because, in my opinion, it did not deviate from the respect he owes. However, I find it absolutely impossible for this matter to be carried out without the consent of your Charity, and I foresee that the delay will be very prejudicial for my son, for several reasons that I cannot write. I must resign myself to all these terrible happenings which I dread. I related to you what had been told me in order to prevent the continuation of the abuse and slander against the morals of those whose doctrine is suspect. Someone remarked that those involved had protested from the pulpit that they had entered into it only in a spirit of union and charity, and that they were speaking only in these terms.

The Countess de Maure[3] told me to take care to send back to her a book which she sent you, *The Apology of Jansenius.*[4] She is also sending you this one for your perusal, as she promised. If I thought I could speak to you sometime tomorrow, I would beg you most humbly to allow me to do so. Besides the rather important matter of Nantes, I must speak to you on a need of our Company. Our Sister Madeleine[5] is much better, thank God, and all is going quite well in Angers. I cause so much disorder everywhere. I fear that your Charity forgets my needs, which causes me to wish more than ever for your Charity to believe that I am by the will of God, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful servant.

1. Monsieur Gauthier, Superior of Richelieu, see Letter 168.
2. Monsieur des Jonchères, the sisters' confessor at Nantes.
3. The Countess de Maure, Louise de Marillac's cousin.
4. Book written in 1644 by Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694), the leader of the Jansenist Party in France. His sister, Mère Angélique, was Abbess of Port Royal.
5. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

L.173 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Easter Sunday [April 21, 1647]

Monsieur,

I thought it necessary for your Charity to take the trouble to see this letter from Monsieur d'Annemont[1] before our sisters leave for Nantes. There are also two things that it seems we need to know from you: should we communicate to Messieurs des Jonchères[2] and d'Annemont,[3] and even to Mademoiselle de la Carisière, our thought of changing Sister Catherine?[4] On the other hand, if things remain this calm, would it not be appropriate to inform Sister Elisabeth,[5] who is still ill as you will see? Perhaps the negotiations for this change should be left to Sister Jeanne,[6] according to the order to be given her on it by your Charity. Another thing I find most necessary, and of great use, is that your Charity, if you think it appropriate, take the trouble to write a letter[7] to all our sisters, which shows a bit of dissatisfaction with them, and which encourages them. Just as true, my Most Honored Father, is the fact that this poor little Company is truly suffering under my wretched guidance! I also think that God will soon deliver it from this captivity, which is such a great obstacle to the perfection of His work. I myself have great reason to fear dying in my hardheartedness if your Charity does not help me. Could we hope for the kindness of a conference during this holy season, which would complete your conference[8] on the duties of the Sister Servants towards their companions and those of the sister companions towards the Sister Servants; and of the guidance and forbearance to be exercised by the Sister Servant in her relations with her companions? It seems to me that if this were well understood and practiced, it would prevent all the little disorders which exist in the Company as would having

1. Before Monsieur d'Annemont's letter, Louise de Marillac had received letters from Monsieur des Jonchères, Monsieur Fuset, a priest of the hospital, and from three sisters: Claude Brigide, Marguerite Noret and Élisabeth Martin. All of these letters pointed out community difficulties and the formation of factions, one of them being supported by the hospital chaplain.
2. Monsieur des Jonchères, the sisters' confessor.
3. Monsieur d'Annemont, priest from Nantes who had advised the hospital administrators to send for the Daughters of Charity.
4. Catherine Bagard, a very close friend of the hospital chaplain.
5. Élisabeth Martin, who was very upset, had asked Claude Brigide to write to Mademoiselle to explain the situation to her. A few days latter, she, in turn, wrote.
6. Jeanne Lepintre was going to make a visitation at Nantes.
7. Monsieur Vincent wrote a seven-page letter (Coste IX, 229).
8. Conference given on February 2, 1647 (Coste IX, 229). The next one would not take place until May 30.

some of our little Rules read from time to time in the Company.

A lady asked me to find out if there were 50 acres of land for sale near the house where the foundlings of La Chapelle are located. I suggested to them your house near the Récollets, hoping the land and the house she was looking for were around there. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to send Brother Ducourneau[1] to let me know if you think this is feasible, because this lady must send a man to visit the location after this holy season. I ask your Charity to please remember the Countess de Maure[2] concerning my son because the other matter is so out in the open it seems to me that it is the only thing of which you hear spoken. My God, how my pride is making me suffer in this, and what a great relief it would have been to be spared it. The most holy will of God did not permit this. May He be forever blessed for it! Through His will, I have the honor to be, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.166 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

(c. April 1647)

My very dear Sisters,

It has been a long time since I have had the consolation of receiving letters from you, and just as long since I have written to you. My heart has truly scolded me for it many times. However, I had not yet recovered from my illness of this past winter when I suffered a relapse which was more dangerous still, and I am just beginning to recover from it. My dear Sisters, will you not excuse me in light of this? Oh, how I truly look forward to this from the goodness of your hearts. But why does Sister Anne[4] not write to me? I would be so glad if she did! No matter how bad her handwriting may be, I beg you, Sister Turgis, to have her write to me. Here is a letter from Sister Louise Proust[5] that you will deliver to Parthenay. I believe you knew of our poor Sister Michelle's[6] death. If you see any of her relatives, you can assure them that her end would have been a great consolation to them. If I can, I will write to her father. We

1. Brother Ducourneau, Monsieur Vincent's secretary.
2. The Countess de Maure, Louise de Marillac's cousin. See preceding letter, Letter 170.
3. Letter written by Élisabeth Hellot.
4. Anne from Richelieu, see Letter 163.
5. Louise Proust, from Parthenay, had a brother in the Congregation of the Mission.
6. Michelle, a native of Richelieu, sent by Monsieur Portail in 1646.

grieved greatly at losing her because she truly was a fine girl. Our Sister Jeanne Roux[1] is doing very well. Are there not any fine girls asking to join our numbers? We greatly need them, but they must truly be good. Pray that God sends some. We had so many ill for six months that our infirmary was always full.

And my dear Sisters, there is a portion of the news I had to tell you while awaiting yours. I greet both of you and remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. A few days before her death, our Sister Michelle expressed the wish to have tangible signs that she was dying as a true Daughter of Charity. Monsieur Vincent granted this and it gave her inexpressible consolation. Her illness lasted two weeks and during this little martyrdom she practiced admirable patience.

L.174 - (TO OUR DEAR SISTERS, THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Serving the Poor of the Hospital of Nantes)

May 8 (1647)

My very dear Sisters,

Sister Jeanne Lepintre[2] is coming to visit you on behalf of Monsieur Vincent. I believe his Charity would have sent me if I had recovered sufficiently from my serious illness. Do you know why, my dear Sisters? In order to learn from your very mouths your frame of mind, the source of the little troubles showing up in your Company, and how weeds[3] were sown which seem ready to choke out the good seed. O my dear sisters, what great reason I have to fear that it was my bad example which placed unfortunate impressions in your minds. If that is the case, do me the charity of asking God's forgiveness for me; and I ask you to forgive me as well by doing better than you have seen me do. Act thus so that God will no longer be saddened by your giving to His enemy that part of you which belongs to Him. Do this also in order not to lose the rewards that His goodness promises to those who carry out works of mercy while in His grace. He refuses the greatest gifts to those He sees filled with their own will.

Thus you may speak with great trust to our sister who, on her return, will faithfully report what you have communicated to her. After all, my

1. Jeanne Roux, a young sister, also a native of Richelieu.
2. Jeanne Lapintre sent to make a visitation of the house in Nantes.
3. The letters received from Nantes explained the dissension in the community, see Letter 173.

dear Sisters, we must be entirely God's; and in order to be truly His, we must rid ourselves of self-seeking. Let us try to discover our faults without deluding ourselves, and believe me, we will find that it is only this self-love which is our greatest enemy, and which causes us to find fault with others and to desire to be so satisfied in everything.

Here is a letter[1] from Monsieur Vincent which you should truly take to heart since God gave him the needed time to write it although he is busy with so many serious and important matters.

My dear Sisters, I must relate to you most simply the thoughts given me by this dear letter as I read it. O my dear Sisters, the gentleness of the style, the remarks about God's graces to you and to us, and the instructions his Charity gave you so delicately filled me with such dismay that I do not know what to say. I remember how many times God has warned us of our obligations through him; how many times he knew and wished to forget our faults and shortcomings while never tiring of moving and encouraging us or of having a father's care for us. He goes to all this trouble for us as if we were worthy of merit. And what have we given him, barren earth that we are? Nothing but discontent, barren earth that we are, through our infidelities to God, for whom he wishes to win us. At one time, some member of the Company leaves or commits great faults against her vocation; at another, the entire body has degenerated. How stupid we all are!

It seems that all the warnings God has had given to us have had no other effect than beating the air. What is worse, I am afraid, is that because they[2] were spoken before God and the angels, they will lead to great embarrassment at our judgment.

My Sisters, is it not with reason that my heart was touched with fear and just apprehensions? Do not think that I am telling you this to intimidate you, nor that I am speaking to you alone. It is to myself that I say it, as to all others who, like me, have made poor use of our holy vocation. I beg all of them, for the love of the death of our dear Master, to renew themselves in His Resurrection, receiving the peace that He gave us so many times in the person of His Apostles. However, let us be on guard. He did not grant this peace to them in idleness, but in work and in the remembrance of the wounds He suffered for us. We are taught through this that we can have no peace with God, with our neighbor or with ourselves unless Jesus Christ gives it to us, and that He will only give it to us through the merits of His wounds and sufferings, which will only be applied to us through our mortification of self, which we acquire by imitating Him in accomplishing the most holy will of God.

How happy you are when compared to so many others of your station,

1. Monnsieur Vincent sent a seven-page letter (Coste III, 174).

2. Louise de Marillac had written: "All these dear admonitions"-words that she crossed out.

not just poor girls, but even people of rank who seek to be employed in the service of God and of the poor, and who greatly desire to do the will of God. They want so much to be helped to do this, but they remain unable to experience this consolation. As for you, you lack nothing yet you seem discontent. Instead of using the means given you by God to perfect yourselves, you scorn them.

Forgive me, my dear Sisters, if my affection for you leads me to speak to you like this. Oh, how often I have committed the same faults of which I suspect you! However, I honestly want to be faithful to God, and for that I often ask Him for His grace. Act thus: esteem and read with affection your Rule and instructions with the desire to put them into practice and to work at them conscientiously for the love of God. Especially make use of the advice God gives you, perhaps as a last recourse, in anything He asks of you.

My dear Sisters, it is not that I wanted to threaten you with God's punishment. However, let us fear, you and I, His indignation if we neglect the accomplishment of His holy will, in which and through which I am entirely yours, my dear Sisters, and where I hope from His goodness to be eternally. Ask Him to show mercy to me since I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble and most wretched sister and servant.

L.312 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity Serving the Sick Poor at the Hospital at Nantes

(June 1647)

My very dear Sisters,

I am not able to write to each of you individually, as I had promised myself I would. I decided that that was not necessary, and with everything our sister[1] is going to say to you it would, in so many words, make for quite a long letter. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to receive our good sister as God ordains, that is, to receive her as you would our Most Honored Father, since it is he who is sending her. A few days later Monsieur Lambert[2] will be there. Speak to him about everything of which you have informed me, and he will give you complete satisfaction.

Sister Claude,[3] the Lord of your mother's village sent someone to visit her in Saint-Germain, and had her taken back to her village so that she

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64. was sent to Nantes.
2. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, would be there in July.
3. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.

might be helped. She was better when she left, thank God, and I hope her native climate will restore her health. All the other relatives of our sisters, at least the ones I know, are well, thank God.

In the name of God, my very dear Sisters, be most submissive in everything Monsieur Lambert demands of you, assuring yourselves that it is the will of God and of Monsieur Vincent. I hope from God's goodness that all the little differences which have surfaced will help us to perfect ourselves and will show the Daughters of Charity how humble, submissive and attached to the exact practice of their Rule they must be. Without these virtues we are like an unstrung rosary. Take heart, my very dear Sisters. If your enemy had the upper hand for a while, let us do violence to ourselves in order to crush him.

Time does not permit me to speak to you any longer. Good evening, my very dear Sisters. I beg you to pray for us. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.101 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(June 1647)

Monsieur,

The house near Saint-Laurent would serve the little children well if your Charity considers it appropriate to suggest to its owner that he live in the apartment he gave to the beer brewer, provided the Ladies are willing to compensate him.

I cannot help but tell you that I was greatly troubled today by a fear of predestination. Several thoughts on it came to me during meditation, and it weighed on my mind so that it led me to make an act of acquiescence to God's plans for me and for my son, that we may be forever objects of His justice.

I forgot to ask your permission to receive Communion throughout the novena of Masses to the Holy Spirit. It started Friday, and using the permission your Charity gave me to communicate when my health permitted, I have been receiving Communion since then. I do not dare continue without your very special permission, for which I ask for the love of God whose help we need. I am, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant.

L.83 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MADELEINE, DAUGHTER OF CHARITY

Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-Jean at Angers

June 5 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

Monsieur Vincent ordered me to find out from you if it was the Fathers of the Poor who had you write to him about some of our sisters, and to inquire by whose order you are sending them back. I urge you to let me know as soon as possible because this is important. Taking into consideration the trials you may experience because of your small number, his Charity cannot wait this time to be assured of this action, and so he wants two other sisters to leave for Angers next Friday.[1] I am apprehensive about suspicions and rash judgments. They often cause little troubles. In the name of God, my dear Sister, I beg you to show support and cordiality among you, and to practice holy cheerfulness. We most cordially greet our other dear sisters, whom we beg to give themselves once again to God for the accomplishment of His most holy will, with no exception of person or place. It is in this most holy will that I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.178B - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

June 12 (1647)

Monsieur,

I believe Divine Providence permitted our two sisters[2] to arrive just in time to show those who were vacillating that Monsieur Vincent was sending them. I beg His goodness to guide the rest of this matter successfully. I would be greatly distressed, Monsieur, by the trouble our poor sisters give you, and by the slight satisfaction that you receive from all the goodness you have continuously practiced for their advancement in virtue, if it did not seem so evident to me that it is God who gave you this work, for which I do not dare to apologize. What would we do if God's Providence had not caused you to arrive at such an opportune time? May His holy name be forever blessed for it, and for having given

1. See the following letter.

2. Probably the arrival of Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278, and of Nicole.

you His Spirit in the decision to delay the departure and dismissal of our two sisters,[1] who, I hope, will arrive soon. I hope that God's goodness will make known to all the others the fault they committed in their resistance to your orders, for which I ask your forgiveness. They have great need of being truly humbled. Is it not to be feared, Monsieur, that greater evil would be caused if they were easily offended or defiant, and tactless in revealing these feelings to those who are suspicious of them? I do not want to believe Sister Perrette[2] exempt from the faults of which she is accused; nonetheless, I would have great difficulty in persuading myself that she wanted to mar her reputation even a little. It is truly unfortunate that there are persons to be feared in the house.

I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for the information your Charity gave us on the delay of the departure of our sisters. This had greatly distressed me because Sister Madeleine had informed us that they had left. I suspected that her severity contributed to this hasty return. It is a great relief and consolation for me to hope that God will settle everything through the mediation of your Charity. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.308 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

June 15 (1647)

Monsieur,

Wednesday I had the honor of responding to the letter which you took the trouble of sending me advising us about the dismissal of our two sisters.[3] They have not yet arrived, and I am a bit distressed. I believe, Monsieur, that the ones[4] we sent will serve to encourage the little community through their spirit of submission and gentleness, which they truly lack there.

I spoke to those responsible for the clerical fund charity, thinking it a better way to serve the relative of Mademoiselle Gonain in his plan to finish his studies in Paris. Enclosed, Monsieur, is what was related to me by Madame Traversay,[5] who has great influence in this group. I beg you

1. Departure of Perrette of Sedan and Marie-Marthe Trumeau.
2. Perrette of Sedan arrived in Angers in July 1646. She returned to Paris in June 1647. She left the Company in July (Coste III, 212).
3. Perrette of Sedan, see Letter 178b, and Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
4. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278, and Nicole.
5. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.

most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to let his sister know. If you think he should come, a letter from you to this lady would be most useful to him.

I hope that Monsieur Lambert[1] will be in Angers in a short while. I begged him to find out before he left what Monsieur Vincent had decided concerning Mademoiselle Gonain.[2] With God's help I will speak to him again about it at the first opportunity. He praised God for the decision your Charity made to serve the public in a manner which, he believes, will be most useful. In praising God for all that His goodness will do through you, I would hope to be able to participate in it. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.179 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

at Rome

June 21, 1647

Monsieur,

For a long time I have desired the honor of writing to you, but I dared not importune you. However, the present state of your health causes me to overcome this fear so that I may present to you the need which your poor Daughters of Charity have of your return and so that, in your illness, you do not mistake *Paradise* for *Paris*. What would we do, Monsieur, since it seems that the perfection that God asks of the entire Company depends on your charitable advice and guidance? It is true that your very lengthy absence has been painful for us. However, personally, I have felt consolation in knowing that you are at the source of the holy Church and near its Head, the Holy Father of all Christians. I have so often wished to be there in order to receive, as a child—though an unworthy one—his holy blessing. However, as my age and my infirmities, which increase every day, begin to make me lose hope of this benefit I have so desired, and in the knowledge of the great happiness I have had, through God's grace, to live and to desire to die in the faith of Jesus Christ, the thought came to me, Monsieur, to beg you most humbly, for the love of God, to obtain for me this grace, which would be conferred upon me at the moment of my death.

However, Monsieur, I wish to go even further and to ask you, if it is possible, to obtain this same happiness for all those to whom God will

1. Monsieur Lambert is going to make a visitation at Nantes.

2. Marie Gonain, see Letter 325. Her readmission into the Company is being considered.

give the grace to die in the Company of the Daughters of Charity, since it seems that it is the spirit of Jesus Christ that inspired those whom He chose to honor His human life on earth to desire this manner of life.

Monsieur, does this not indicate strongly to us that we have the double happiness of being Daughters of the holy Church and, being admitted in this manner, will this not be a new obligation for us to live and to act as children of such a Mother, something which requires great perfection? Return quickly, Monsieur, to help us acquire this perfection, and in the meantime, continue your charitable care for us at the altar, in your prayers and, right now, in your suffering. Permit me, Monsieur, to greet most humbly Monsieur Dehorgny[1] and Monsieur Alméras,[2] of whom I ask the same charity as I do of you.

Our Sister Carcireux[3] is well, thank God! Our Sisters Florence, Françoise from Montargis, Mathurine from Angers, and Perrine Fleury, one of the three your Charity sent us from Angers, are dead. Several others you do not know have died as well. The tall Sister Michelle whom you sent from Richelieu is dead, and several others have left. So we are in dire need of girls because of the numerous requests we are receiving for them from all over. See for yourself, Monsieur, if we do not need great help from God.

Please remember all of us to your entire holy family, and me even more than the others because I fear for and must question my salvation, although I hope for God's mercy through the merits of His Son in whose love I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.181 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Superior General of the Priests of the Mission

June 24 [1647]

My Most Honored Father,

I was truly surprised that you left before giving us the orders necessary for the departure of our sisters for Montreuil.[4] Were it not for the fact

1. Monsieur Dehorgny, see Letter 5.
2. Monsieur René Alméras (1613-1672) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1637. From 1641 to 1646, he was Director of the Seminary of Paris and Assistant of Saint-Lazare. He was sent to Rome in 1646. He returned in 1651 to assume the direction of the Collège des Bons-Enfants. After making visitations in the houses of the West of France (1653) and of the devastated regions of Picardy and Champagne (1654), he returned to Saint-Lazare as Assistant. He was named Superior General after the death of Monsieur Vincent.
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
4. The sending of Anne Hardemont and Marie Lullen to Montreuil-sur-Mer: decision made

that the seats on the coach have already been reserved, we would postpone it. However, they should leave Wednesday. What will they do without the blessing and instruction of your Charity which they so greatly need? If our good God does not inspire you to send us their instructions, we will be most upset. I assure you, Monsieur, that my mind is so overwhelmed that I admit to being the cause of this distress which our poor sisters are suffering. As for the departure of our sisters for Nantes,[1] we cannot send them since we still await the advice of your Charity on the word we received advising us not to change Sister Cath . . . Ba . . . ,[2] who began the trouble in the hospital. It is considered absolutely necessary to recall Sister Élisabeth[3] and send a Sister Servant.[4]

I believe you know of the arrival of the sisters returning from Angers.[5] The accused seems the most innocent in the world. I did not dare write to her father without finding out from your Charity what we should do about her. I believe he will come before long. I pray to God that your Charity will be back, in good health, before that time.

My Father, please give your holy blessing to us and to our sisters. Sister Marguerite Tourneton[6] left Sunday without saying a word, and the Mother Prioress wrote to me that she had gone to the Hôtel-Dieu this morning and that she had received her. She is asking for another habit so that she can return ours. I have not answered her and will do nothing about it until your return. God alone knows the state of my poor mind in all these disorders. It seems that our good God wants to destroy us completely. I deserve it, and I am surprised that He has delayed so long in carrying out His justice. Provided His mercy saves my soul, I am satisfied. Obtain this grace for me through your charity since I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

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at the Council of June 19, 1647 (Coste XII, 631), also see A.85.

1. The sending of two sisters to Nantes (Jeanne de Saint-Albin and Jacquette) and a sister to Angers (Madeleine Bécu) was decided at the Council of June 20 (Coste XIII, 645).
2. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
3. Élisabeth Martin, the Sister Servant, see Letter 22.
4. Jeanne Lepintre, who made the visitation and stayed there as Sister Servant.
5. Perrette from Sedan, see Letter 178b, and Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
6. Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149.

L.213 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Superior General of the Priests of the Mission

June 26 (1647)

Monsieur,

Our poor sisters[1] left this morning greatly distressed that they did not receive your blessing. Nonetheless, they departed with submission to the guidance of Divine Providence. Through His goodness may our good God permit you to return soon and in good health. Our entire poor Company is in a state of great sorrow, astonishment and fear at the loss of our sister.[2] Each one is murmuring secretly for no one dares speak about it. I await the return of your Charity so that you will let them know how they should regard this change.

It seems to me, Monsieur, that I am beginning to get a bit stronger, barring anything unexpected. However, I am taking excessive care of myself, and my most serious occupation is my personal welfare. It is not the same case for the interests of my soul although, by the grace of God, I am a bit calmer than when I had the honor of writing to you to reveal to your Charity the state of the one whose only consolation is the happiness of being, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I think there is something to be said again about the freedom of our sisters in Serqueux.[3]

L.182 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

June 27 (1647)

My very dear (Sister),

Although I believe Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux has given you, or sent you, a letter I had written to you a while ago, I had to give myself the consolation of writing to you as soon as our good God gave me the means to do so. I did so in order to rejoice with you on account of the graces that His goodness has bestowed on both of you. You have no idea of the

1. Anne Hardemont and Marie Lullen left for Montreuil-sur-Mer.
2. Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149, who had just left the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
3. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Serqueux took place in 1645.

consolation that Monsieur Vincent and I had in reading your letter. I hope that you are experiencing the same thing in your hearts, my very dear Sisters.

However, how is it that you do not write to me, Sister Anne? Oh, I beg you to write to me yourself and to tell me all your secrets. You know that Sister Turgis will send your letters to me safely, without reading them, if you do not want her to do so. However, I believe you to be of but one heart, since Daughters of Charity must become so on account of the union which exists among them. How fortunate you are, my very dear Sisters, to have the guidance[1] you do! Store up a provision for when Divine Providence calls you elsewhere. Do not think about when this will happen, but live in detachment. Remember, my Sisters, to pray for our entire Company, for each sister in particular and for the tasks God asks of us. We need prayers often.

Sister Anne Hardemont[2] and Sister Marie Lullen[3] from Le Mans left yesterday for Montreuil, the place for which the Count de Lannoy[4] has been requesting us for so long. I assure you, Sisters, that if we were not powerfully helped by our good God, and if good people did not do their best for us, we would have great reason to be concerned about our infidelities. All our sisters are in fairly good health, thank God, and they greet you cordially as I do, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your most humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you to greet Monsieur Gauthier[5] most humbly, and to recommend us to the prayers of their entire community.

L.182B - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

Feast of St. Peter (1647)

Monsieur,

I really did not think that Sister Perrette[6] was as they wanted to make

1. The spiritual direction given by the Priests of the Mission of Richelieu.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. Marie Lullen, from a well-off Le Mans family, was in Nanterre before being sent to Montreuil in June 1647. After her death occurred in 1649 or 1650, a conference on her virtues was held (Cost IX, 537).
4. The Count de Lannoy had been asking for the Daughters of Charity since 1642, see Letter 128.
5. Monsieur Gauthier, Superior of the Priests of the Mission at Richelieu.
6. Perrette from Sedan, see Letter 178b.

it appear. She is an extremely free spirit, and she does not seem very upset by the accusation against her because she does not feel she willingly committed any evil. Oh my God, Monsieur! How this matter has distressed me! How could it be that the service we wish to render God in the hospital is so displeasing to Him that He has abandoned His care for the daughters in this place only, permitting them to commit such grave faults? Certainly, Monsieur, it is a case of a misunderstanding, and some of these scandalmongers are taking it upon themselves to put us in a bad light before the Fathers[1] and the city itself.

It would be one thing if our service were no longer satisfactory and we were warned of it early on, but to suffer these suspicions and calumnies, and to hear them from these same mouths who wanted also to assure the administrators that they had seen three of our sisters preparing packages and throwing them out the window during the night, I beg you, Monsieur, to consider whether that is bearable. They say they do not want to believe this, but they believe worse things which possibly are told to them by the same people. I know it is easy to let oneself be taken up with suspicion of evil and to give credence to it, but this matter seems to me to be of too great importance.

You will see, Monsieur, that I am being carried away by this point of honor. I beg you, for the love of God, to remedy in some way the beginning of this great evil. The experience of the poor Huitmill[2] girl had to show that, although she only wished to leave because of weakness and little affection for her vocation, the same thing could easily happen to another sister. She would probably not have had the desire to leave the Company if our sisters had supported her a bit more, and warned her about vicious persons who think only of destroying the reputations of those of whom they cannot really say anything bad. Monsieur, I do not mean to say that our sister is without fault, nor that she herself was not the cause of the start of the slander simply because of her inexplicable charm and free and easy spirit. However, I believe her to be far removed from the evil attributed to her. Her lack of fear at going to her father and asking to return home is an indication of this. And thus, we lose her.

Monsieur, I would truly like people to know that our sisters are not as some believe: a collection of unknowns. I can assure you that we receive none until we have been well and properly informed about them. I address myself to you, Monsieur, as to the true Father God has given us. I am so pressed for time that I cannot afford myself the honor of writing to Monsieur Ratier, who has gone to so much trouble to extricate us from this unpleasant matter. I am truly ashamed when I think of what a burden

1. The Fathers of the Poor, the hospital Administrators.

2. In June 1646, Catherine Huitmill had left the Company of Charity. Her quick departure had upset the sisters and their entourage (letter from Monsieur Ratier to Louise de Marillac).

we are to you and to him, and how you receive no consolation for all your trouble, unless God lets you know that He wishes it thus. I beg Him earnestly to do so, and I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.183 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE-ÉLISABETH (HARDEMONT)[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor of the City of Montreuil-sur-Mer in the Hospital of Montreuil

(July 1647)

My very dear Sisters,

I praise God for your safe arrival at Montreuil.[2] I think Sister Marie's[3] discomfort came from the motion of the coach, and that by now she has recovered her health for the service of the poor. We eagerly await the full report you promise us, begging God that it may be in total conformity with His most holy will.

I beg you, Sister Anne, not to be lazy in writing to and answering Sister Guillemine.[4] Also, let us know any news about the relatives of Sister Antoinette,[5] who is at Nantes, so that we can relay it to her. She is well, thank God. If you do not know who her relatives are, you can ask the Count.[6]

Remember always, my dear Sisters, that it is the most holy will of God which put you where you are, and that it is for the accomplishment of His will that you must work there as would an ambassador for a King, that is to say, you must work most faithfully, observe your Rule and follow the advice of your Superiors. All must be done with gentleness of heart and humility, as we consider the interests of those with whom we are working rather than our own or even those of the Company. We were taught thus by our Most Honored Father after he learned it from the Son of God, Jesus Crucified, in whose love I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. The sisters left Paris on June 26.
3. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.
4. Guillemine Chesneau was at the parish of Saint-Paul with Anne Hardemont.
5. Antoinette Larcher, a native of Montreuil-sur-Mer, left for Nantes with Louise de Marillac in July 1646. She returned to Paris in 1647 and left the Company to return to her region.
6. The Count de Lannoy, see Letter 128.

L.188 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[July 1647]

Monsieur,

Experience finally will show us that I was correct in my apprehensions about the facilities at Bicêtre.[1] These Ladies want to get the impossible from our sisters. For lodging they are choosing small rooms, where the air will most certainly be foul, and they are leaving the large. However, our poor sisters do not dare to say a thing. The Ladies do not want Mass said there but want our sisters to go to Gentilly for Mass. And what will the children do in the meantime? Who will do the work? I am sending Sister Geneviève.[2] I beg you to take the trouble to speak to her. She will let you know how distressed the sisters are, and how pretentious the Ladies are. I truly fear that we will have to end our service to these poor little children. May the will of God be done. In His will I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I ask your Charity to remember the two Ladies who will be ready to make their confessions tomorrow morning, if that is possible.

L.200B - (TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

at Montreuil-sur-Mer)[3]

(1647)

For the love of God, my dear Sister, practice great gentleness toward the poor and toward everyone. Try to satisfy as much by words as by actions. That will be very easy for you if you maintain great esteem for your neighbor: the rich because they are above you, the poor because they are your masters.

As for the livestock you have, if it is true that they take up the time you should be using in working with the sick and the schoolgirls, you must get rid of them. Do not enlist anyone to help you with your work. Let me tell you that you must put your hand to everything without thinking that you are there only temporarily. Even if we were to be in a place for only a week, we should work there as if it were to be for our entire lives. There must be such harmony between you that what one does

1. Bicêtre, see Letter 86. The transfer of the foundlings to Bicêtre had just taken place.
2. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
3. Letter recopied into Marguerite Chétif's notebook.

will be pleasing to the other. Do not say, "I am supposed to do this or that." Both of you must be willing to put your hand to everything.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to be most exact in giving instructions in catechism and morality and in offering other advice. Do not say that you are going to "teach catechism." Do not say, "come to catechism." It is not for us to speak or teach like that. Rather say, "Let us read." From the text, with the book in hand, you can give simple explanations; however, never anything pretentious. You well know that one can be mistaken, and that would be most serious if you had a great number of pupils and patients, and if you had a lot of help from the older girls with feast-day readings.

L.184 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN[1]

Daughter of Charity at Angers

July 10 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

I was truly astonished to learn that you were in Angers. It must be something extremely urgent for you to go ahead of obedience. Outside of that, I could not imagine Sister Élisabeth exhibiting such infidelity. For that reason, my dear Sister, Monsieur Vincent has given me the responsibility of asking you to inform us fully of the reason for this journey and of giving you the order not to leave Angers until you have sent us some news and received an answer from us. Do not fail in this, my dear Sister, and do not forget to greet humbly Monsieur l'abbé[2] and Messieurs Ratier[3] and Fellet,[4] if you see them.

Remember me to all our sisters, and tell them to send us news of themselves as soon as possible. I greet them all in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Élisabeth Martin, Sister Servant at Nantes, left for Angers. What provoked this departure? The great weariness that had overcome her? The arrival of Jeanne Lepintre?
2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
4. Monsieur Fellet, priest of Angers.

L.186 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

Paris, July 10 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

I have written to you twice recently, and I urge you to let me know if you have received the letter I gave to Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux for you. Also send us news of your little family.

This letter is to inform you that Monsieur Vincent told me to ask you to go to Nantes if you are told to do so by Monsieur Lambert[1] or by Sister Jeanne Lepintre,[2] and to do this as soon as you are so ordered. Ask Monsieur Gauthier[3] to lend you money for the trip, and we will repay it here when you tell us to do so. When in Nantes, Sister, please do as obedience would have you do. Remember us always in your prayers, especially the four sisters who just arrived from Saintonge. Also remember several very young sisters who will eventually be taking over the House, since there are few older sisters left there. Provided God is Master of all, we will be only too happy. It is in His most holy love that I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving servant.

P.S. Please tell Sister Anne[4] that we will not be good friends unless she writes to me. My greetings to her.[5]

L.185 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

(July 10 1647)

My very dear Sister,

Yesterday we received word that Sister Élisabeth[6] went to Angers, and Monsieur Vincent ordered me to tell her to stay there until she hears from us. That is why, Sister, you will have to finish up the other matter[7]

1. Monsieur Lambert visited Nantes.
2. Jeanne Lepintre was also in Nantes; see the following letter.
3. Monsieur Gauthier, Superior of the Priests of the Mission at Richelieu.
4. Anne from Richelieu, see Letter 163.
5. This letter, written by Élisabeth Hellot, was not signed.
6. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
7. It was a question of Catherine Bagard's departure; she was one of those responsible for the formation of cliques in the community.

promptly when Monsieur Lambert arrives in Nantes. You can suggest to him that Sister Henriette[1] or Sister Claude[2] accompany the other one,[3] and if he thinks neither one appropriate, please suggest to him that it would be expedient to send Sister Turgis to Nantes for this purpose. Ask him to send her promptly, telling him that this was Monsieur Vincent's suggestion. However, ask him please not to speak about Nantes until this girl[4] has preceded him out of town by at least two days, and not to allow her to pass through Angers.

My God, my dear Sister, how in need you are of grace in order to carry out the task God has entrusted to you. However, do nothing without the advice of Monsieur Lambert and Monsieur des Jonchères.[5] Outside of that, express your opinions to no one, except perhaps to Mademoiselle de la Carisière[6] in order to make her understand that you and Monsieur Lambert will do nothing without an order from Monsieur Vincent, which you would not dare go against in any way. Assure her that if she helps secure the administrators' approval for the change you must make, you hope that God will once again bless this holy work and her undertakings.

Enclosed are some pills I am sending her, along with instructions for making them. You can keep some for yourself in case you think you need any. However, you know that remedies are most effective when used infrequently. Tell this fine young lady the good they do, and how they relieve the more debilitating effects to which she is daily reduced by her great infirmities.

Please assure all our sisters, in general and individually, of my affection, and tell them that all these little troubles and murmurs cause me to hope for great good from God once it is pleasing to His goodness to end them. It is the practice of the devil always to set himself against our best actions. I recommend the service of the sick to the sisters and I beg them to care for them. I was told that a girl died a short while ago without help,[7] and that this occurred because several of the sisters were in town. I am extremely surprised if that is true because they should not go out. My God, Sisters, what reason have we not to humble ourselves when we see that we have become the subject of gossip and scorn for all the people of Nantes, who had summoned us to prevent petty disorders in the house of God. Now we profane it to such an extent in popular opinion by attachment to our self-love and personal satisfaction. I would like to be able to do penance, and I assure you that every time I hear of

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
2. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
3. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
4. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
5. Monsieur des Jonchères, the sisters' advisor, see Letter 147.
6. A Lady of Nantes.
7. Marguerite Noret wrote about it to Louise de Marillac on March 18.

the good done by our Company I blush with embarrassment thinking of the disorder in Nantes. I beg the goodness of God to provide the remedy which His goodness knows is needed there, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble servant and very loving sister.

P.S. Do not mention that I told Sister Élisabeth not to return immediately. Tell our sisters that the people of Nantes are clamoring against them more than they know, and in important matters. However, it is the evil one playing these games that he will not win provided they gather together and unite near the Cross, like chicks under their mother's wing when the owl lies in wait.

Greet Monsieur Lambert for us.

L.187 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

July 22 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

You have caused us much worry by not sending us any news of yourself. May God be blessed for your safe arrival. I still have your letters for Monsieur Vincent, which should relieve your anxiety for not having written to him. You know how busy he constantly is, although that should not prevent you from adding to his workload if you are in need. You know his charity.

My dear Sister, I truly suspected that you would encounter many problems. However, I am only half sorry for you since you have Monsieur Lambert, who should take care of everything. You have but to notify him about what you noticed. It seems to me that Sister Henriette[1] was only mentioned in order to accompany the other one,[2] who perhaps would not come otherwise. Everything you are telling me about our sisters' actions is contrary to the contract which we agreed upon with the administrators. Going outside to the market, for example, should only be done to obtain fish and poultry, and that should be accomplished within an hour.

As for herbs, fruit, eggs, etc., they should be brought to the house by women vendors. The administrators promised to have butter provided for the house, as they did all wood, wine, vinegar, oil and other necessities. Point that out to Monsieur Lambert.

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

2. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 185.

Your letters all arrived together, making it hard for us to know the actual state of affairs of the sister about whom you say you asked. As for Sister Élisabeth's[1] trips outside and the communications she makes to find comfort, speak to Monsieur Lambert about them. I hope that he will also put a stop to our sisters going out to gather herbs in the countryside; such high-quality herbs are not needed in the pharmacy. It is enough to have the common and the most needed ones. Otherwise, we would be spending a lot of money needlessly.

In the matter of this good servant, I do not believe it appropriate for you to speak to him. However, be sure to let Monsieur Lambert know everything you have learned about the situation. He will be able to have the matter settled by the administrators who, I know, are greatly inclined to do anything necessary for the peace of our sisters and the good of the hospital. As for getting assistance from this servant, I believe I told him that our sisters would direct him charitably and gently as to what he would have to do, and that it was necessary to live in great peace and forbearance with the faults of one another. My dear Sister, how could I have said anything else to a person I did not know? I told him only that he must take care to furnish the hospital with water and to carry out the most lowly duties.

We must not think of eliminating all slander and calumny, but must endure them since our Master lived and died in such great peace among His calumniators.

Send us word in the next mail about your threatened inflammation. My dear Sister, I beg you to greet most humbly Monsieur Lambert and all the other administrators. I am too busy to write to them or to Mademoiselle de la Carisière, to whom I will send the recipe she requested and instructions on its use by the next mail.

All our sisters greet you most cordially. I send greetings to all there. I wish for each of them a love and a desire for the accomplishment of God's most holy will, in which I am, my dear sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. If Monsieur Lambert judges it appropriate he may grant what Sister Brigide[2] has desired for so long.

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1. Élisabeth Martin, the Sister Servant.

2. Claude Brigide asked to make vows. Monsieur Lambert granted her his permission (see his letter to Monsieur Vincent and Louise de Marillac of July 26, 1647).

L.189 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE

Daughter of charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

July 30 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that it is taking Monsieur Lambert a long time to get to Nantes.[1] I pray to our good God that he is now there and that his charity will take care of our business promptly but not too hastily. I urge you to read your recommendations often and especially to be careful not to allow your mind to be prejudiced about things reported to you, or to form judgments about what you think you see and hear. If you act thus, I hope from God's goodness that all will go well. I beg you to express my apologies to all our sisters for not writing to them, especially to Sister Catherine[2] who wrote to me. Please assure her that I am still the same friend to her as before, and that the friendship given me by God for her has not diminished.

Our sisters in Montreuil[3] are doing marvelously well, by the grace of God. The Count[4] is most pleased with them. They informed me that Sister Antoinette's[5] mother is well and that she never had greater consolation than in knowing that her daughter was a member of our Company. Perhaps if I told her everything that our sister asked me to tell her, she would think I was making it up. From what I see, she is not very exact in the practice of her Rule since she wrote letters without my knowledge and did not send them through us. Please tell her, Sister, that I cannot help but fear for her.

Greet all our other dear sisters and tell them that I hope that God will give me the strength to write to them once I learn that they are all in the state that His goodness wishes of them. Greet all your administrators as well, and apologize to them for the matter which I fear is an importunity to them, but I have learned nothing new.

It is true that I took the liberty of having a few meals at the convent of the Daughters of Sainte-Marie when I passed by there. However, my dear Sister, this must not turn into a custom. My weakness and difficulties in walking lead me to commit faults which, please, my dear Sister, neither you nor our dear sisters should commit. Also, it would be good if, during your recreation and conversations, you would advise all our sisters on this matter. I was advised on it by Monsieur Vincent when his Charity

1. Monsieur Lambert had been in Nantes for several days.
2. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
3. Anne Hardemont and Marie Lullen left for Montreuil on June 26.
4. The Count de Lannoy of Montreuil, see Letter 128.
5. Antoinette Larcher, see Letter 183.

was sending a sister to Fontainebleau,[1] and I told him of the liberty our other sisters had taken in passing by Melun where a similar thing occurred.

My dear Sister, how are you? What is the state of the inflammation? We are very worried about it. I urge you to send us word on it. I believe you received one of my letters in which I inquired about it.

Greet Mademoiselle de la Carisière and Mademoiselle de Belestre,[2] and assure them of my affection and service. I spoke of the state of Mademoiselle de Belestre's affairs to Monsieur Vincent. However, you will have to tell her how overburdened his Charity is and that he has decided not to become involved in matters outside of the Church. Also, present our most humble greetings to Monsieur Lambert and to the chaplains. You can tell the little patient that I sent his letter but that I have not received a response. If he wants to write again, perhaps we will finally get one. Recommend me to the prayers of all our good women of the hospital and greet them for me. It would be a great consolation for me if I could have the pleasure of seeing them once again. Now then, my dear Sister, I only have enough time to assure you that all is well, thank God, and that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your most obedient sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I do not have time to complete the recipe for Mademoiselle de La Carisière. It will be in the next mail.

L.192 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[August 22, 1647]

Monsieur,

Provided your Charity considers it good, unless something pressing calls me to the House, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to return right now and leave one schoolmistress alone to teach sewing and reading to the children.[3] In light of this, Monsieur, I have a most humble request to make of your Charity. For the love of God, please be so good as to visit our five sisters whom I left in retreat without having helped them much. I had led them to believe that I would return either this evening or tomorrow morning. There is a sister from Saint-Germain-en-Laye, one from Nanteuil, one from the village of Issy, and one whom I

1. Barbe Angiboust, sent to Fontainebleau in August 1646.
2. Ladies of Nantes who took care of the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in this city.
3. Louise de Marillac went to Bicêtre where she supervised the transfer of the foundlings.

believe we must send back to Saint-Denis because I do not think she is right for us. The others are very anxious to return home, and they should do so, at the latest, by next Saturday. The fifth sister is the one I am planning on as one of the teachers for our children.

I thought it essential, Monsieur, that your Charity send us a priest promptly for two reasons. Firstly, so that he can instruct the boys. Secondly, it seems to me that the first one we have as chaplain is the one who will stay.

A child died here this morning, and I took the liberty of asking the good priest who is to bury him that, if he cannot come by to do so this evening, he be so charitable as to come tomorrow and to say holy Mass for us at the same time.

If you feel it necessary for our sisters to come to your house to speak with you, rather than telling them that you cannot speak to them at all, I beg you most humbly to let them know this; nonetheless, it would be a great consolation for the entire family if you saw them at the House.

If your Charity is of the opinion that our sisters should go to speak to the Procurator General in order to remind him of the necessities they pointed out to him, I believe it should be Sister Geneviève[1] who does so. The others are not as well-suited. He must be informed that he must provide the entire supply of wood.

Our Ladies have not thought about arranging for a location for the school. We saw one place which would be good for the boys, who must be separated from the girls; it is downstairs and it only appears to need a door hung and the windows closed up. The girls' classroom would be upstairs. I would really like to have those alphabet cards which we would put upon the walls. The Ursulines use this method in some places. I am not saying that these be used in teaching writing, because I do not think it advisable for the girls to learn to write.

It is true, my Most Honored Father, that there is reason to hope for great good from this work, if it pleases our good God to continue His holy blessings upon it. For His holy love I earnestly ask for your blessing, that His holy will in this matter may be accomplished through me. And I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I forgot to ask your permission to fast and abstain tomorrow, Friday. I think I can do so and will if your Charity does not forbid it.

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1. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.

L.193 - (TO SISTER HELLOT[1])

at Paris

(August 1647)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God for the graces He bestows on our little family and I beg His goodness to give it His peace and blessing. Please see to it that our letters are taken to Liancourt.[2]

I am asking Monsieur Vincent to speak to our sisters. Please be sure that they are ready to go home on Saturday, except Sister Carcireux[3] who will remain at the House for a while.

Please buy 100 needles, 25 or 30 thimbles, and 100 little books like the Du Pons one. The needles must all be the same kind. Also send some sheets, about a half-dozen suitable for making diapers. Would Sister Julienne[4] send some thread if she has any? It is used in teaching the little children to sew.

Please find out from Monsieur Vincent if there are any printed alphabet charts which can be sent to us. If our sisters from Nantes[5] arrive before I return, I would ask that none of them come here without first informing us. However, remember us affectionately to them.

I would ask you to be certain that Monsieur Vacherot is told of the delivery of the wood, and that we do not fail to get some.

You must find out from the wife of either the woodcutter or the firewoodcutter whether there is a wood-measurer in our area. Have him look at what remains for the children so that from it we can gauge how much we will have to obtain elsewhere. Also, do not forget the firewood, but you should not take any that is not good. I would ask, my dear Sister, that someone be at the wood-measuring at Saint-Denis directing it. You must verify the arrival time of Sister Marguerite from Vienne, and find out if the bill found by Sister Françoise[6] has been paid.

All my dear Sisters, I greet you affectionately and beg you, for the love of our dear Master, Jesus Crucified, to work well toward your perfection through the observance of your Rules, through the cordiality and respect you owe one another, and through the edification you must give one another in all your words and actions. Finally, my dear Sisters,

1. Élisabeth Hellot, Louise de Marillac's secretary.
2. The Daughters of Charity had been established in Liancourt since 1649, see Letter 64b.
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
4. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220. The transfer of the foundlings to Bicêtre was in the process of being carried out.
5. Catherine Bagard and Antoinette Larcher; both were going to leave the community.
6. Françoise Le Roseau, see Letter 258.

if you place yourselves often in the presence of God, His goodness will not fail to advise you on all that He asks of you, whether it be the mortification of your senses and passions or the practice of the virtues which He desires so that you may be pleasing to Him. I truly fear that I will not keep my word regarding my return. However, I thought it would be better to remain here a bit longer and not return so soon. You know, my dear Sisters, that you are continually in my heart, and that I am with my deepest affection, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I urge you, my dear Sister, to see to it that tomorrow the little children begin to spend enough time at the fair. How is Sister Louise?[1] Please answer Sister Jeanne.[2] I do not know what she is asking of me. In the meantime, she should neither be worried by the young woman nor speak to the gentleman.

L.194 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Nantes)

(August 1647)

My very dear Sister,

You have done well in this work. May God be blessed for it, eternally blessed. May He also be blessed for the guidance His goodness has given to Monsieur Lambert in the entire matter. I would be very happy if you would send us all the particulars. I will wait for that before thanking the fine gentlemen who have helped you so much, and I will beg them to continue to assist you.

However, in the name of God, my dear Sister, be sure that none of our sisters have reason to believe that you suspect them of attachment or some other fault. You should be able to warn them skillfully as a group of the evil you fear in them individually. Then, the example of the others will help you greatly, as will the remedy which God has brought about.

Now then, my dear Sister, Divine Providence has attached you to Nantes for some time. I hope that His goodness will draw glory from it. I believe the good Sister Catherine[4] was truly surprised. Although she appeared to be glad to come back here, she really could not be persuaded that people who had shown her such good will could consent to her

1. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
2. Jeanne Lepintre in Nantes.
3. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, stayed in Nantes as Sister Servant.
4. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.

dismissal. We truly are greatly obliged to them. I will write to all our sisters individually, at different times, once I have again received news from you. I beg you, my dear Sister, to let us know if it is true that certain people are offended that there are so many sisters[1] serving the sick, saying that three or four servants were enough before we were there. If you feel, in conscience, that there could be fewer, please let us know.

Since you tell me nothing about your inflammation, I am led to believe that it will amount to nothing more than a bother. Be mindful of your health in the midst of your work so that the desire to consume yourself entirely for God, and the example which you must feel obliged to give our sisters, does not prevent the reasonable care which you should have for yourself. Do this for the same love of God in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. My most humble greetings to all your administrators and Ladies. I have written to you twice in the last week or ten days. I most cordially embrace you in spirit, having more tenderness for our sisters than ever, in light of the difficulty I know they have had. Tell them, my dear Sister, I beg you, that provided they are faithful to God in the practice of their Rule, I hope that His goodness will give them more consolation than the pain they have had. However, their desire to do good must prompt them often to ask God for the grace they need to accomplish this.

L.191 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[August 1647]

Monsieur,

Yesterday I declined giving you a message on Monsieur Leroy's[2] behalf. Nonetheless, I think I should tell you all that he told me and how I answered him, which would be quite hard for me to relate to you. However, the main point is that he is setting himself up as director and administrator of the Foundling Hospital. As such, he maintains that he can go there and teach whenever he wants to, place a priest there, and have complete spiritual care for the establishment. He wishes us to find and introduce to him a priest whom he will teach. He is more desirous of this than of a bishopric or cardinalate. He asserts that he will file complaints with the Procurator General and will resign the administrative post he has been given if he is denied in this matter.

1. After these changes, eight sisters stayed at the hospital in Nantes.

2. Monsieur Leroy, administrator of the work with the foundlings.

I showed my astonishment that he had not spoken of this earlier. I told him that, until now, these Ladies had always provided equal care in spiritual and temporal need as can be seen by the baptisms, Easter confessions and instruction for First Communion. They also have holy Mass said for the wet-nurses as well as for the children. I told him that I thought that the Priests of the Chapter had turned over full responsibility for this work to these Ladies with the exception of the 1000 pounds for which they remained accountable to the Priests and that for the more than 50 years that the Priests of the Chapter had been charged with this work, there appeared to be no other administrative task than the one involving this sum. I told him that, nevertheless, I was speaking without having heard anything about it from the Ladies, whom I see infrequently, and that what I was saying to him on the matter was common sense. He complained of not having been informed about Bicêtre.[1] I pointed out to him that I was sure that telling him of it had not been the Ladies' only thought, and that the matter had been carried out quite hastily. He told me many other things—and I him—which I cannot relate. He did not fail to bring up Sister Geneviève's[2] response to these gentlemen about their request and I gave him to understand that she had said just that.

If some good person could obtain from the Queen authorization for the establishment of the Mission in this place, much contradiction would be prevented and great good would be done. I forgot to tell you that upon my refusal to speak to you, Monsieur Leroy decided to go to these Ladies and speak strongly to them. I would ask your Charity to take the trouble to read Madame de Romilly's[3] letter; I will send it if you think I should.

Please bless us and believe me, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and most grateful daughter.

P.S. When I thought about the urgent needs, I told him that I believed that the Ladies would soon be constrained to turn the work over to someone capable of managing it. We still remained good friends because I always spoke to him as a neutral party.

I think we will have to consider the wine as soon as possible.

1. Of the foundlings' transfer to Bicêtre.
2. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
3. Madame de Romilly, born Louise Goulas, Lady of Charity who, in particular, took care of the work of the foundlings.

L.186B - (TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT, *at Montreuil-sur-Mer)*[1]

(1647)

My very dear Sister,

I am a bit fearful about the acclaim you are receiving from all sides. Perhaps God is permitting it as means to fortify your weakness and to encourage you. Or it may be the devil leading you to assume personal credit for what God wishes to accomplish in you. If it is the latter, at the least fault the world sees or the discontent it experiences, it will blame you as much or more than it now encourages you. If you believe that this is coming from God, how obliged you are, my Sisters, to humble yourselves! If it is from the devil, how fearful you must be! Ask God for the grace to make good use of it either way. Remember, my dear Sister, the advice that Monsieur Vincent gave you: proceed only very slowly. Remember, my dear Sisters, to be always the least and the last in the hospital. Endure as much as you can before notifying the Count.[2] I am very glad that the administrators decided to elect a Superioress of the hospital. Obey her faithfully in all you can, and do not think that she scorns you in order to humiliate you.

I reduced somewhat the quantity of the drugs you asked for because we must never be excessive. Remember, my dear Sisters, that it is the poor that you serve, that it is their money you are using, and that you must save every sou as a matter of conscience. Such a great quantity of drugs can spoil. Moreover, only common remedies must be used. I do not even advise you to prepare your catholicon all at once, because it is more effective when freshly made.

L.60 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1647)

Monsieur,

Madame de Verthamont[3] did not fail to come to see the Ladies. After she had again revealed even more clearly the gentlemen's plan to set

1. Letter recopied into Marguerite Chétif's notebook.
2. The Count de Lannoy, see Letter 128.
3. Madame de Verthamont, born Marie Boucher d'Orsay, Lady of Charity whose husband was a judicial civil servant.

themselves up as absolute masters of the entire work,[1] she said that she believed that they would be pleased to be given the opportunity to announce this plan. Nevertheless, she accompanied these Ladies in the manner decided upon, and the aforementioned gentlemen did not hesitate to make their intentions known. The Ladies were told that they would be granted everything they wished, even that they would have but to present an unsigned receipt for the money they set aside and the merchants' bills would be settled. It seems that the wet-nurses' bills were included in this.

The Ladies replied that they could not undertake or continue this work unless the original conditions were met. This entire negotiation was held with the Chancellor,[2] who, in the end, said that he would have the High Justices' intentions drawn up in written form and given to the Ladies. When the Ladies saw the good Monsieur Leroy[3] and told him of these proposals, he said that he would withdraw from the matter entirely if it stopped there. If there is anything else, these Ladies will speak to you about it tomorrow at the time your Charity indicated, three o'clock in the afternoon. I am, Monsieur, your daughter and servant.

P.S. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to let me know if you think it advisable to inform Madame de Verthamont that you and the Ladies will be here tomorrow. I am afraid she will be angry because she asked the Ladies when they would be here.

L.190 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[August 1647]

Monsieur,

A fine lady, moved by Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[4] and the guidance of Divine Providence, sent us 100 écus for these poor little children. Please thank her for us, Monsieur, and permit me to remind your Charity of our Sister Jeanne Lepintre.[5]

If you think it appropriate, I beg you to leave us the three reports that we sent to you for the Assembly of the Ladies so that they will not be tampered with in your absence.

My poor health continues. It occurred to me that our good God wishes

1. The work with the foundlings.
2. Pierre Séguier (1588-1672) was named Chancellor in 1635.
3. Monsieur Leroy, see Letter 193.
4. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.
5. Jeanne Lepintre, who was in Nantes, see Letter 64.

me to make use of these ups and downs in order to tell your Charity of the inconstancy of my passions. I am so dependent on them that no matter what resolutions I make, I am not given the freedom to subject them to reason. Some days I am a little better, and then almost immediately I have a relapse.

If you have any pictures resembling the one of the Lord of Charity[1] in any of your books, I would beg you most humbly to do me the kindness of giving me one. I ask your forgiveness for taking this liberty. It is only that I am unable to recover as I would like, and I hope that this picture, along with your Charity's prayers, will help me greatly. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very obedient servant and most unworthy daughter.

P.S. Please do me the charity of giving me our good God's and your own blessing at holy Mass.

L.217B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS ANNE AND MARIE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor

August 30 (1647)

My very dear Sisters,

May God be blessed for the health that His goodness gives you, which I cannot believe until I see the handwriting of Sister Marie Lullen. I do not understand why she does not write to me after I told her that I will be able to read her handwriting easily. I cannot tell you anything more about the older girls of the hospital except what you have already told the Count,[3] namely, that we can allow no singularity among us; and I believe I let him know this when he first did me the charity of speaking to me about his holy plans.

My God, my dear Sister, there must have been great need for you to be away all night. In the name of God, be on guard against this, and let me know something of what happened so that I can pass it on to Monsieur Vincent to find out if it is allowable. I believe we are receiving your letters, but I fear you are not receiving ours because we had told you of Sister Antoinette's[4] return from Nantes so that you might inform the Count. I believe she is in Montreuil now. I beg you, my dear Sister Anne, to point

1. The paintings of the Lord of Charity, painted by an unknown artist, were widely used by Louise de Marillac and Monsieur Vincent (Coste II, 10).
2. Anne Hardemont and Marie Lullen at Montreuil-sur-Mer.
3. The Count de Lannoy of Montreuil-sur-Mer.
4. Antoinette Larcher, see Letter 183.

out to the Count with utter respect and gentleness that girls leaving our Company are not to be on visiting terms with us, so that his Charity may find it appropriate to deny her access to the hospital. I truly fear this would only prevent his plans for this house from being carried out as he wishes.

I believe Sister Hellot told you that all the pottery you wanted has been bought. However, no one wants to charge less than 100 sous for its delivery. Please do not send us any more butter. We obtain good quality here for six sous.

I beg the divine goodness to continue His graces to you, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble servant and very loving sister.

L.201 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity at Nantes

(August-September 1647)

My very dear Sister,

Two days ago we received the letters that you addressed to Monsieur Vacherot. I think it would be wise for you to have someone in authority speak severely to the postman about the mail carrier. I hope that the patience you practice in bearing with all these little repugnances will draw down from our good God the blessing you need to be at peace. However, you must await it tranquilly.

Last week I wrote to Monsieur des Jonchères,[1] Mademoiselle de La Carisière, Sister Claude[2] and you. I would ask you to let me know if you received all these letters. Several times I saw that Monsieur Vincent wanted to write to you. If he has not already, I hope that he will do so next week. I cannot remember having anything new to tell you since my last letter. Please greet all our sisters for me. I urge them to arise each morning with new courage to serve God and the poor well.

To Sister Marguerite Noret:[3] everyone is well; her sister Françoise[4] received her letter. To Sister Jeanne:[5] her brother is well also, thank God.

1. Monsieur des Jonchères, see Letter 147.
2. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
3. Marguerite Noret arrived in Nantes in July 1646. In 1648, Monsieur Lambert requested her departure.
4. Françoise Noret, see Letter 64b, the sister of Marguerite.
5. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, a widow, arrived in Nantes in June 1647. She returned to Paris at the end of the year 1650. She was tempted to leave the Company of the Daughters

I know of no relatives of our sisters who are ill.

You will have no reason to worry when Catherine Bagard[1] returns to Nantes. I do not think she has enough self-assurance to go to the hospital. It would have been impossible for me to prevent her from doing so since she is no longer with us. I did what I could for her, finding a fine mistress for her once she was absolutely determined to leave us.

Let us always adore and love the guidance of Divine Providence, the true and only security of the Daughters of Charity. Pray for us. All our sisters greet you, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.197 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE ÉTIENNE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly[2]

October 7 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

I was waiting until we had a sister to send to you before writing to you. Until now, Divine Providence had not allowed us to find a suitable one. I hope she will depart before the week is over. Please let us know if you are aware of the availability of a horse or cart for tomorrow or the day after. It is troublesome to travel by coach, and they do not go as far as Chantilly.

May God be blessed for the continuation of His graces! Hope always that His goodness will not abandon you and that your desire for perseverance will be fulfilled. Let me know if Madame de Saint-Simon[3] is in Chantilly, and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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of Charity in 1655, but she remained.

1. Catherine Bagard, see Letter 112.
2. The Daughters of Charity were established in Chantilly in 1647. Financial difficulties, see A.79, brought about their brief recall in 1654. The work seems to have been re-established in 1655.
3. Madame de Saint-Simon, born Louise de Crussol. Her husband was the overseer of the Château of Chantilly.

L.195B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

Daughter of Charity at Montreuil

October 11 (1647)

My very dear Sister,

I am really astonished to hear that you are not receiving our letters. I had the honor of writing to the Count de Lannoy[1] following the news he was good enough to send me about your reception, and I also wrote a very long letter to you on the subject. These letters were delivered to the Count's house in the city. In the hope that you have received them, I will not repeat what I wrote to you.

We received the paper about which you are worried. Sister Marie[2] never tells us anything; what is her main duty? When you can, let us know how you are employed.

I would ask you to greet, on my behalf, all the fine girls,[3] your predecessors, and to continue to deal with them with constant respect, forbearance and gracious condescension.

One of our sisters in Saintonge died. All the rest of the Company is well, thanks be to God. Pray for us, and believe me in the love of His Son, Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters, and I as well, greet our dear Sister Marie. Our sisters in Le Mans are well, thank God, except Sister Jeanne Pangoy.[4]

L.126 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS[5]

Daughter of Charity, Serving the Poor at Chars

(October 18, 1647)

My very dear Sister,

I believe we received all the letters you wrote to us, as well as news

1. The Count de Lannoy who requested the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Montreuil-sur-Mer.
2. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.
3. The girls who were in charge of the hospital before the arrival of the Daughters of Charity.
4. Jeanne Pangoy, native of Le Mans, who entered in approximately 1646, would be at Liancourt in 1650.
5. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 89, was sent to Chars from Richelieu. Next to the address of this letter, written by Élisabeth Hellot, was marked: "The messenger from Forges

from you, by way of a lengthy letter from you which Mademoiselle Viole[1] showed us. I praise God for the work His goodness gives you. Writing to you on the feast of St.Luke, I ask you to meditate once again on the subject of this feast. It seems to me, my dear Sisters, that we will find there all the advice we need.

If your only patients are in town, they should not be very far away. All our other sisters in the country often have to travel to a good number of places a league or more away.

Enclosed is a petticoat we are sending along that you will start to wear when you go out. I think that the best yeast here could very well cost 12 francs. However, when we cook, we do not use the best unless it is going to be mixed half with rye. Eggs are expensive everywhere this time of year. Although we have a great number of chickens, they are giving us practically none. However, you have other comforts in the country which will get you by during this period of high prices.

I believe you received a long letter that I wrote to you a week ago. Once we are certain of your address, you will not fail to receive our replies to all your letters. I beg Our Lord to give you His Spirit, and I am in His holy love, my very dear Sisters, your humble sister and loving servant.

P.S. At the end of your letters, you need only put "Sister of Charity and Servant of the Poor." "Of the Hospital of Chars"[2] is unnecessary.

L.196 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Superior General of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission

(October 19, 1647)

Monsieur,

I was quite upset that someone had gone to see you, without my knowledge, to inform you that through God's grace my health was no worse than when your Charity left me. It continues still to improve, and for that reason I went to Mass on the feast of Saint Luke.

Without my knowing they had planned it, nor the reason for it, until

lodges on rue Montorgueil at the inn Saint-Claude."

1. Mademoiselle Viole, Lady of Charity who worked with the foundlings. Élisabeth Turgis was in the service of the children from 1634 to 1644.

2. Chars: The Daughters of Charity were established there about September 1647, at Madame de Herse's request. The Pastor, Monsieur Garson, was replaced in 1648 by Monsieur Pouvet, who had Jansenist leanings. In view of Monsieur Pouvot's excessive demands, the Founders judged it necessary to withdraw the Daughters of Charity from Chars.

about an hour beforehand, Mesdames de Herse,[1] de Traversay,[2] de Saint-Mandé[3] and Viole[4] held a meeting here again yesterday. I believe they wished to rejoice that Providence had revealed the care It wished to take of the poor little children. Several small donations came in, and the best aid is the 5000 pounds they are supposed to receive today. I believe it is part of the 8000 pounds because it is the Treasurer of the Hôtel-Dieu who must receive the receipt.

These women anxiously await the Conference that your Charity decided upon before your departure.

Their hearts are completely renewed in light of this aid, and they are resolved to continue their work at Bicêtre.[5] In order to do so, Madame Traversay and Mademoiselle Viole must go there Monday and spend the day. They charged me with petitioning Monsieur Drouart[6] for 500 pounds from one source, and 200 from another—all on the order of the Duchess d'Aiguillon.[7]

I hope your return will bring about an end to the great needs of this work of Our Lord, in whose love I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.171 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST[8]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Fontainebleau)

(November 1647)

My very dear Sister,

Many thanks for all of your kindness. As you wished, we made sure to send your present to Monsieur Lambert. However, I cannot tell you at this time how he received it since I have not yet seen him. You are not boasting of all the good his charity has done for you, are you?

With all my heart I ask forgiveness from Sister Anne[9] for not being able to write to her once again at this time. I believe you have done me

1. Madame de Herse, born Charlotte de Ligny, widowed in 1634. A Lady of Charity who took an active part in the work of the foundlings and was in favor of the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Chars. She died in 1662.
2. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.
3. Madame de Saint-Mandé, born Marie de Fortia, Lady of Charity of the Confraternity of the Foundlings.
4. Mademoiselle Viole, see Letter 91.
5. Bicêtre, see Letter 86.
6. Monsieur Drouart was the Duchess d'Aiguillon's steward.
7. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.
8. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
9. Anne Scoliège, see Letter 175.

the charity of assuring her of my good will. However, because I wish to open my heart to her, I am waiting until I truly have enough time, and also until she tells me all about herself, especially her method of instructing the little girls.

I urge you, Sister, to accept the poor whenever possible. Some time ago Monsieur Vincent spoke to me about our sisters involved in teaching, and he expressed the desire for them to employ a common method. As soon as I am completely familiar with it, I will be sure to inform you of it. He let me know that he was sorry that he had not seen you before your return,[1] but I believe he wanted to spare you the sorrow you would have felt. I believe Monsieur Lambert has told him all about you.

I would ask you not to forget your good pens at your first opportunity.

I am very glad that you received news from your relatives before your departure. Sister Cécile,[2] too, is well, thank God. Pray for us, I beg of you. We still have a sister at Saint-Méen[3] who is near to death. We all really need to think of our conversion. We will be helped greatly in this if we ask our good God for holy simplicity.

Greet our dear Sister Anne, and accept the most affectionate greetings of all our sisters, and mine in particular. I am in the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.200 - TO SISTER TURGIS

Daughter of Charity, Serving the Sick Poor at Chars

Paris, November 28, 1647

My very dear Sister,

May God be blessed for the true harmony and holy peace which exist among you. This is necessary in order to live as Christians. As Daughters of Charity we have an even stronger reason to live in this way.

You do not tell us the number of your schoolgirls. You also do not tell us whether you assist the sick outside the hospital. How many of them are there? It is all right to inform Madame d'O,[4] but I think I advised

1. Barbe Angiboust came to the Motherhouse either for retreat or upon returning from a visit to the foundlings placed with wet-nurses.
2. Cécile Angiboust, her sister, see Letter 108.
3. Jeanne, a native of Saint-Méen.
4. Madame la Marquise d'O (1626-1650), born Louise-Marie Séguier, the Chancellor's daughter and Lady of Charity in Chars.

you, as we do all the others, that all the letters written by the sisters are to be addressed to us.

How splendid you are, my dear Sisters, to have wooden shoes. Who will take the best care of them, and whose will last the longest? Let us know. Enclosed is material cut for pants. Please do the sewing because we are so busy here that there is no one available to do so.

Our little Sister Jeanne from Saint-Méen died. Since then, my poor Sister Salomée[1] has also died, and she is quite a loss. We still have our Sister Michelle who is extremely ill, as well as many others at the House and in the city. Such is the situation that we now need more than ever for our good God to send us girls. See if you can encourage any in your village to join us. Sister Jeanne[2] from Richelieu is among the sick, although she is not seriously ill, thank God. Pray that His goodness will provide for our needs, and believe me in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

L.227 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor

Feast of Saint Andrew (1647)

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that it has been some time since I have received news from you. I am anxious to know whether you received letters for Sister Henriette,[4] Sister Claude[5] and, I believe, for you. I urge you to send me word on this as soon as you can. I addressed my letters to Monsieur de Beaulieu.

I will end here; this note is only to inform you of the above. I would ask you to recommend me to the prayers of our sisters, and to greet most cordially all the good Ladies and administrators. Greet also Monsieur de Grenville and Monsieur de la Pinsonnière,[6] of whom I am the humble servant. Good evening, my dear Sisters. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. After writing this letter, I received your last dear letter and was greatly consoled by it. Greet and embrace all our dear sisters most lovingly

1. Salomée, see Letter 141.
2. Jeanne Roux, see Letter 166.
3. Jeanne Lepintre in Nantes, see Letter 64.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
6. Monsieur de Beaulieu, Monsieur de Grenville, Monsieur de la Pinsonnière, hospital administrators in Nantes.

for me. I recommend to your prayers our deceased Sister Salomée and Sister Jeanne from Saint-Méen. I also recommend to you Sister Michelle from Saint-Méen who received Extreme Unction this morning.

L.204 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

(c. November 1647)

My very dear Sister,

It is true that you have very good reason to complain about me, and I most humbly beg your pardon for not having written more often. I think, my dear Sister, that if you had been in another location I would have been more careful to write. However, I must admit that I am very much at peace when I know that our sisters have the happiness of the direction of our most honored Fathers.[2] I beg you, Sister, to revere their guidance, and not to let their goodness diminish the respect and submission you owe them.

I imagine that you have found great peace of mind in being away from the great difficulties and troubles you left behind. It is not a matter of my believing you have nothing to do; I cannot imagine your being content in that. However, it is a good thing to know that while practicing charity you take time to think of your perfection. This you can do by observing your little Rule. Interior acts can also accomplish this to the same or to a greater extent than exterior ones. Among such interior acts are forbearance, cordiality, gentleness and the mortification of our passions, one of the most dangerous of which is melancholy. In light of this, we must truly conform ourselves to the will of God, accepting from His Providence anything that happens to us that is contrary to our desires. If we walk in the presence of God in this way, we will be rid of the trials we bring upon ourselves when we seek and inordinately love our self-satisfaction. I would like to believe that you practice this since I know that you truly want to love God and to serve Him your entire life, and I ask His goodness to give you this grace.

Please excuse my poor memory if I have failed to respond to some point in your letters. However, I believe I have covered everything in the few I have previously written to you.

I would ask you to greet Monsieur Gauthier[3] most humbly, and to recommend me to his holy prayers.

1. Élisabeth Martin returned to Richelieu about August, after a stay full of difficulties in Nantes.
2. The Priests of the Mission in Richelieu.
3. Monsieur Gauthier, the Superior.

Be assured, my dear Sister, that I am as much as ever in the love of our dear Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I do not know if we informed you of the death of our dear Sister Salomée,[1] and of that of Marguerite de Tourneton.[2] Several others have also died, among them a few from Angers. All our sisters greet you cordially and often ask for news of you.

L.196B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1647)

Remember to advise the Ladies to be careful, while giving instructions, not to talk a lot to the seriously ill, even if they have not made a general confession. They should advise the patients to confess only sins they may have previously forgotten or held back, if they remember any. They should do this with the will to confess all sins they have committed against God and their neighbor. If the Ladies can, they should have them recite the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity necessary for salvation. The Ladies should spend a lot of time in preparing those who are recovering to make resolutions to live as good Christians and should teach them how to go about living such a life.

Enclosed, Monsieur, is the notice from the so-called Mother of the Sacraments[3] that was given to Mademoiselle de Villenant. However, I just received this letter from Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[4] which says that Mademoiselle de Saint-Mandé proposes to say nothing about it at the General Assembly.

Monsieur, I would ask your Charity to remember to make known to the Ladies the good to be found in assisting in the continuation of a good work not only during one's life, but after one's death as well when such a work is undertaken for the love of God, as is the case of the foundlings. If persons make bequests in a spirit of perfect love, through their will and testament, do they not have the same merit as those who have

1. Salomée, see Letter 141.
2. Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149.
3. The Agustinian religious of the Hôtel-Dieu, responsible for letting the chaplain know when an ill person requested the sacraments (Coste III, 261).
4. Madame de Lamoignon, President of the Confraternity of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, see Letter 77.

supported the work during their lifetime, provided they truly would have done so had they been able? I think that that will serve to point out the danger for all who delay.

Also, if it pleases your Charity, let me know the address of the President, Madame du Sault,[1] so I can send her a note to inform her of tomorrow's Assembly. Please do not forget it yourself.

The Ladies are quite slack in being at the collation, although some of them deserve praise for being there faithfully.

Pardon, Monsieur, your most insignificant daughter and servant.

L.199 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1647]

Monsieur,

It seems that God gave my soul great peace and simplicity during my imperfect meditation on the need for the Company of the Daughters of Charity to remain continuously under the guidance given it by Divine Providence *in spiritual as well as temporal matters*. At that time, I believe that I came to understand that it would be more advantageous for His glory for the Company to fail completely than to be under another's guidance, since that would seem to be contrary to the will of God. The indications of this are that there is reason to believe that when God inspires and makes known His will for the perfection of the works His goodness wishes to accomplish, He makes His plans known at the beginning. You know, Monsieur, that at the beginning of this work it was proposed that the temporal goods of the said Company would return to the Mission if it came to fail through malfeasance. These goods would then be used in instructing the country people.

If your Charity heard Our Lord say what He seems to me to have said to you, in the person of Saint Peter, I hope it was that He wanted to build this Company on your Charity, so that it would persevere in the service asked of it for the instruction of children and the relief of the sick.

As for the parlor,[2] I have not made up my mind. However, with regard to the election of the Ladies, oh, how essential I continue to find the choice about which I spoke to your Charity, of whom I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

1. Madame du Sault, Lady of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu.

2. See Letter 214b.

P.S. I beg your Charity most humbly to give us a conference tomorrow, if it is at all possible, and to let us know about it beforehand.

1648

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Valpuiseaux.
June-July*: Visit of Monsieur Lambert to Angers and Nantes.*
August 27-28*: Insurrection in Paris of the people against the Queen.*
October*: Death of Élisabeth Turgis.*

L.202 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE MISSION

Wednesday morning [January 17, 1648]

Monsieur,

We arrived at Bicêtre[1] in good health, thank God. However, we are not going to stay here long. I beg your Charity most humbly to send us tomorrow the brother baker, to whom I have already spoken, so that he can advise us, help us to have a good oven built, and find someone for us who is suitable for the job.

I also find it essential to start selling the wine. There is a large market here for it in casks and large bottles because of the soldiers billeted in the area. I fear if we wait much longer our sales will not be as good. Sister Geneviève[2] says she believes that the Ladies want to wait until cheaper wine is available so that it can be mixed in with it. I do not think that would be a saving because we would need a boy to do the mixing, and he quite possibly could make off with all the profits. Besides that, it would be a great burden for our sisters who would have to watch so that nearly unavoidable mistakes would not be made.

I beg your Charity most humbly to remember that you promised us a conference for a week from today. Yesterday I saw Monsieur Vacherot's[3] sister. She is quite ill and asked me to recommend her to your holy prayers. If she dared do so, she would beg you to show her the charity of coming to see her. If she gets worse, I will certainly beg you do so; I am asking Sister Julienne[4] to keep you informed, if you do not mind.

1. Bicêtre, residence of the foundlings, see Letter 86.
2. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
3. Monsieur Vacherot, the community's doctor.
4. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.

I think much good would be done for our sisters if you took the trouble to visit them at the House. Sister Hellot[1] could be told of the benefits to the Company when the sisters become accustomed to being submissive to one another, and it could be made known that those who seem to have some authority should serve as an example.

The work of our poor sisters here is almost unbelievable; not so much because of the great effort involved as on account of the natural repugnance one has for this type of work. For that reason it is most fitting to help them, to encourage them, and to make known what they are accomplishing and its value in the sight of God. It is also fitting to help them by our prayers. I am more in need of prayers than anyone else since I am the weakest in body and spirit, although I have the happiness of being, Monsieur, your very humble servant and most grateful daughter.

L.195 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS JULIENNE LORET AND ÉLISABETH HELLOT

(at Paris)

Wednesday (January 17, 1648)[2]

My very dear Sisters,

I nearly missed seeing our little patient before I left. I urge you to send me news of her, and to tell Sister Françoise[3] that I would ask her to take special care of her. Also send me any news you may have of Mademoiselle Marie,[4] and let me know if Monsieur Vincent thinks our sisters should go to attend to her during the night.

Please urge them at Saint-Lazare to have the baker come tomorrow without fail. If I do not start early, I fear I will not be able to return at the time I said I would.

In the evening,[5] I would ask you to go to do your work in the tapestried rooms, or else to have a candle burning in them that can be seen from the street. However, be very certain that the locks are secured on the stairway and in the little room, and that the windows are locked.

If you have any news of my son, I would ask you to pass it on to me.

When one of our sisters comes by early, please have her bring me my

1. Élisabeth Hellot, see Letter 152.
2. Louise de Marillac wrote from Bicêtre, see Letter 202.
3. Françoise Le Roseau, cook at the Motherhouse.
4. Monsieur Vacherot's sister.
5. In this time of war, the soldiers were all about Paris.

watch, which is attached to the headboard of my bed. However, it should be carried somewhere where it cannot be seen. Please send us some ink. If you have a small loaf of bread from the baker near Saint-Nicolas, send it, along with some herbs and chicory.

I greet all our sisters and earnestly recommend that they work toward their perfection. Oh, how I would love to have them all willingly here with me because of the feelings that God has given me for this great work. I am most edified to see the union of charity with which our good sisters carry out what God asks of them in this holy work.[1]

Good day, my very dear Sisters. Believe me to be entirely yours and in the love of Jesus and His Holy Mother, your most obedient sister and humble servant.

P.S. I would ask you to ask Madame de Saint-Mandé[2] to be so good as to have someone persuade Madame de Romilly[3] to accept the wheat. Almost all the others have accepted it. Ask that she take the trouble to have some rye purchased to mix with it. Express my apologies to her for not having been able to have her picked up. The carriage did not arrive until quite late. I believe that some men will come by tomorrow for the oven. I would be very pleased if she were here.

I would ask you to find out if the sacks were returned.

L.203 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 23 [1648]

Monsieur,

Enclosed is the letter from Mademoiselle de Pollalion[4] which testifies to the loyalty of this man applying to work at Bicêtre. Besides that, he says he knows well how to make bread, garden, plow and drive a cart. All of that is work to be done there, and it is all quite expensive when we have to have someone work on a per diem basis. If your Charity finds it appropriate, she will speak to you on the impossibility of providing an entranceway at the place the President, Madame de Herse[5] indicated for

1. The work with the foundlings.
2. Madame de Saint-Mandé, see Letter 196.
3. Madame de Romilly, see Letter 91.
4. Mademoiselle de Pollalion (1599-1657), born Marie de Lumagne, married at 18 and widowed a short time thereafter. A Lady of Charity, she also founded the Daughters of Providence. Louise de Marillac, who was still at Bicêtre, wrote on the back of Mademoiselle de Pollalion's recommendation. The man who applied for Bicêtre had served Madame de Lumagne.
5. Madame de Herse, see Letter 196.

selling wine because of the need for steps at least four yards wide, or thereabouts.

Fifty-two children have died at Bicêtre[1] since we have been there, and another 15 or 16 are not far from death. I hope they will not go so quickly once everything is truly according to these good Ladies' wishes.

Perhaps they have told you that I have spoken on how essential the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is there, not only because of necessity, but so that Our Lord may take possession of the house in the eyes of those in any way associated with this work. This leads me to take the liberty of telling you that it occurred to me that not only should the Ladies be informed of the day for this ceremony, but that it should be effectively presented in sermons in the parishes so that everyone might feel obliged to become a benefactor of this work. As it stands, people look upon this magnificent place believing that it belongs to little children, and since those in charge appear to be people of means, most think it well off. Meanwhile, we have to borrow in order to buy provisions as well as all the other necessities of which you are aware.

Would your Charity please remember to ask for girls for us. We have a most pressing need for this because the work at the House, and elsewhere, is increasing daily.

Do me the honor still of believing me, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and most grateful daughter.

L.169 - (TO SISTER TURGIS)[2]

at Chars

January 31 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for your improved health and for the true harmony between you; knowing your good Sister Marthe to be most agreeable, I never doubted this. Now then, since you have nothing to do, or at least very little, you truly have reason to humble yourself. Make up for it by frequent acts of virtue, and especially by the exact observance of your Rule. You know, my dear Sister, that God will ask for an account of the time He has given you for this. If you heed what I am saying, you will ignore all the little inconveniences which can stand in your way. Your

1. Bicêtre, see Letter 86.

2. Unaddressed letter. Élisabeth Turgis was in Chars from September 1647 to April-May 1648.

time for working will soon be past because of your age, and you will regret it. Moreover, since you are with a young sister, you are obliged to be an example to her. I greet this dear sister cordially, and I beg her to look upon your infirmities as signs of encouragement, so that she may work toward her perfection while she is young.

When I told Monsieur Vincent about the letter you wrote to Madame la Marquise,[1] he strongly charged me with warning you, as well as all our sisters, not to write to anyone without sending us the open letters. To demonstrate to you, my dear Sister, that this writing custom is already employed by us, I am enclosing a letter from Sister Barbe, who is following this advice. Our sisters in Nantes and Angers have done likewise although they are far away. I attribute this error of yours to my not having advised you on it since you have been in Chars.

You have not let me know if you take in work from the town. Remember well this practice of ours of earning our living through work.

Lately we have sisters around Melun. Oh, how they spare nothing of themselves! God did not relieve us of the need to earn our bread simply to give us a life of ease. He did so in order that we might work even harder in imitation of His Son.

I believe our sisters are sending you what you requested, except the lining because it is so hard to find here. You can buy something suitable to use instead.

I beg the goodness of God to give you the graces you need for the practice of the virtues you desire, and I am in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your most obedient and very loving sister and servant.

L.208 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH TURGIS

Sister of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars, near Pontoise

Friday, March 6 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

The only truly extensive catechism I know of is Cardinal Bellarmine's.[2] However, it seems to me that Monsieur Lambert did not think it advisable to use it in teaching the children or even the older girls. He told me it was only appropriate for parish priests. To tell you the truth, my dear Sister, it would be most dangerous for our Company to aspire to such learned teaching, not only because our self-interest is so inclined toward

1. La Marquise d'O, see Letter 200.

2. Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621), a Jesuit, was Archbishop of Capua.

vanity, but because we must fear speaking erroneously. The opinion of Monsieur Vincent is that we must go about doing things quite simply, and you know that we must defer to him and to his orders. Nevertheless, I will speak to him about it[1] and will send your letter to Madame la Marquise d'O after dinner.

I hear that Sister Marthe is so fat that she is unrecognizable. My God, how I fear places where we are more comfortable than our condition indicates! I would ask you to be sure, my Sister, that she makes herself useful by doing the most strenuous work she can. Are there no sick in any of the small neighboring villages?

As for the girls of whom you are speaking, you know if they are appropriate for us. If you think they are fit, it would be wise for them to journey here to present themselves before they come for good.

Good day, my dear Sister. Pray for me that God will pardon all my cowardice and softness which prevent me from abandoning myself to His plans. I greet our dear sister and am to both of you, my dear Sister, your most obedient and humble servant.

L.209 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Montreuil

March 31 (1648)

My dear Sister,

A short time ago, I wrote to you and told you to come here for a visit with the good girls who wish to join us. If the Count[3] wishes it, the little one may come as well. Find out his will concerning the sister requested, and if he thinks it fitting, she will return to you. Remember us to Sister Marie[4] and to all the other good sisters.[5] I beg you to be a good example

1. At the assembly of the following March, 22, Mademoiselle did indeed ask for Monsieur Vincent's opinion; he answered: "There is no other catechism, Mademoiselle, than that of Bellarmine, and when all of our sisters know it and teach it, they only teach what they should teach, because they are there to instruct and will know what the parish priests must know . . . It would be nice to read it to our sisters and for you, Mademoiselle, to explain it so that all may learn it . . . because if it is necessary for them to demonstrate it, they must know it; and they could only learn better and more soundly in this book. I am delighted that we have spoken about this, for this reading will prove to be very useful."
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. The Count de Lannoy, see Letter 128.
4. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.
5. The girls who served at the hospital before the arrival of the sisters.

for them always, not only by your forbearance, but also by gentleness, modesty and strict observance of the Rule. I beg God to give you the grace to do so, and I am in the love of His Son, Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister . . .

L.207B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Monica [1648]

Monsieur,

I believe that Mademoiselle Viole[1] is proposing a baker[2] for Bicêtre. If your Charity agrees, please tell her that there is already one there who bakes quite well and who is most appreciated. I am very much afraid that another will be brought in who would not provide such a fine service for the children or for the sisters.

The Pastor of Saint-Laurent still complains about not getting his fair share of baptisms. The Ladies want him to bring suit against the Pastor of Saint-Christophe. However, because there is not a single copy of the contract of foundation, he cannot do so. Besides that, the Pastor from Saint-Christophe complains that he cannot draw anything from it. I believe, Monsieur, that these Ladies need to determine the reason for this. I also believe that it would be quite easy to have the necessary papers given to the Pastor of Saint-Laurent.

So as not to distress too greatly the Pastor in Chars, it occurred to me yesterday to suggest to your Charity, that if it is agreeable, we send Sister Jeanne-Christine[3] in place of Sister Turgis, and that we keep Sister Jacquette for Chantilly. I suggest this because I foresee that we will still have to remove the remaining sister from Chars so as not to ignore the advice of the unknown person. However, both asked a long time ago to make their vows, and I believe they would grieve too much if we delayed. There is abundant evidence that this would be advantageous since both of them are mature in mind and both are already of advanced age. Please take the time to answer me in this matter as soon as possible, because time is running out for Chars. Allow me to call myself, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and unworthy daughter.

1. Mademoiselle Viole, see Letter 91.
2. See the letters at the beginning of the year 1648.
3. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344.

L.211 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

May 13, 1648

Monsieur,

We are rushed to send one of our sisters to Crespières, and another one to Maule, and they are among those who asked your Charity quite some time ago if they could give themselves to God by the vows. They have been in the Company for a good six or seven years and have never demonstrated any disgust. On the contrary, they have always provided very fine example. If it pleases your Charity, permit them to hear Mass and accomplish this holy action tomorrow before leaving; they are not leaving until about noon. Please be so kind as to let us know if you approve, and if we will have the benefit of having you celebrate holy Mass for the occasion. I truly need God to give me the grace of speaking to you, and your Charity to believe me always, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

P.S. One is Sister Andrée[1] from near Tours, and the other is Sister Catherine de Gesse,[2] who was serving the poor in Saint-Gervais.

L.303C - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital at Nantes

May 17 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

This note is only to assure you that we received your letters and those of Monsieur de Beaulieu,[4] which we answered last Wednesday. I beg you to forgive me if I do not always respond to every point in your letters. Since they are often on the same matters, it seems to me that I have responded to them quite amply, except perhaps concerning the changing of sisters, which you bring up several times. I assure you, my dear Sister, that I wish it were possible to secure your satisfaction or, rather, the good which your charity hopes to gain from it. However, the difficulties in

1. Andrée Guilmine, a native of Saché, near Tours, who entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately 1641-1642, left for Crespières. She died, no doubt, before 1655.
2. Catherine de Gesse, see Letter 120.
3. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
4. Monsieur de Beaulieu, a hospital administrator in Nantes, see Letter 210.

doing so are immense in faraway places. Moreover, it is not advisable for it leads too frequently to disedification. However, I hope that when he comes to see you, Monsieur Lambert[1] will be of great assistance in helping all our sisters to find their peace and satisfaction in the accomplishment of God's will through the mortification of their own will.

I know the difficulties that you are all experiencing, but I also know, my dear Sisters, that it is the yoke of the Lord, and that He Himself has the goodness to render it gentle and sweet for those who bear it for His love. I wish for this perfection for you with all my heart, and I am in this same love, my dear Sister, your most obedient and loving sister and servant.

L.33B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. 1648)

Monsieur,

I believe it essential to remove this poor young woman[2] early today. Provided she is not abandoned, it seems that our good God wills to save her by extricating her from the most pitiful danger. However, she will be completely lost if we leave her at liberty, for several reasons which I will explain to your Charity when God gives me the grace to be able to speak to you . . . [3]

L.178 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

May 29 (1648)

Monsieur,

I earnestly beg God to guide your business according to His good pleasure, and I hope that He will be glorified by it. Enclosed is a letter from Sister Cécile which seems to oblige us to await news from the

1. Monsieur Lambert would be in Nantes in July.
2. Monsieur Vincent proposed sending the young lady to the Hospital of La Pitié (Coste VIII, 527).
3. Only the first page of the letter was kept; of the second only the first, or sometimes the first two, words of each line remain.

administrators.[1] I beg you, Monsieur, to be so charitable as to take into consideration the warning contained in the short note enclosed in this letter. We sent back a girl recently for this same reason. A slight indisposition urges me to close and to assure you that I am truly in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.175 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontainebleau

(c. May-June 1648)

My very dear Sister,

Oh, how very wrong you are to believe me angry with you! I beg you never to let this terrible thought enter your mind, and I believe that it will dissipate when I explain why I have not written to you for a long time. I truly wished to do so, but business and my indispositions took the time from me. Anyway, my dear Sister, on several occasions you have had something worth much more than my letters. During Lent Monsieur Thibault was with you, and before that you had written to Monsieur Vincent. Since then, you have written to Monsieur Lambert. Now then, my good Sister, all these responses and consolations are worth more to you than 12 letters from me.

We will continue to await word from you before answering your question on habits. It seems to me, that if Sister Anne needs to be clothed, she should come into the city. I do not think that you are without work at the moment, and right now, you should be thinking only about securing a good harvest during this precious time of the mission.

I beg you to greet Monsieur Thibault[2] most humbly for me and for all his good daughters, who continue to do well, thanks be to God. Remember me to Sister Anne Scoliège,[3] and tell her that I expect her to renew in their entirety the resolutions that she mentioned to me in Nantes, and without which I would never have had her come. She will do this through an exact observance of all the Rules and through continual

1. See Letter 320. The administrators wanted some sisters to entrust them with some new work.
2. Monsieur Thibault (1618-1655) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1637 and became a priest in 1642. Assigned to Saintes at first, he then returned to the Ile-de-France region where he gave missions between 1646 and 1648. He was then in Saint-Méen until his death.
3. Anne Scoliège, a young sister and native of Nantes, entered the Company at the end of 1646.

mortification of her judgment and self-will. I am sure, my dear Sister, that you share these sentiments; I sincerely hope so. I also hope that it pleases the goodness of God to bestow this grace on me as well, since I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.432 - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT FONTAINEBLEAU)

(c. 1648)

I believe, my dear Sister, that you have the happiness of having our good Queen in Fontainebleau. If Her Majesty wishes to speak to you, offer no objections, although the respect you owe her person makes you fearful of approaching her. Her virtue and charity give the lowliest the confidence to declare their needs to her. Be sure, especially, to present the needs of the poor to her as they truly exist.

My dear Sisters, I do not have to remind you of the modesty and reserve needed in dealing with high society. I know that you hold these virtues in the greatest regard. However, do as much good for the poor as you can, and I would ask this especially with regard to the spiritual service you owe them.

L.249 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Nantes

June 6 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart that His Providence has given you, at the appropriate time, a chaplain who is exactly the type needed for His glory and the good of the poor and for your good. However, in the name of God, my dear Sisters, look upon him in this light, showing him great respect and honor along with submission to his guidance. Monsieur Vincent says that you may go to confess to him. However, remember that no matter how good he may be, even if he were a saint brought back to life by God, you must be on guard not to become familiar with him. O my Sisters, you know the danger in that, and the tremendous trouble it

can bring to communities! You also know how difficult it is to repair the evil once it is allowed in this way.

In the name of God, do not be worried and distressed over your letters. They are faithfully delivered to us, and you see that ours are delivered to you as well. Instead of worrying when they are delayed a bit, remember that they are sometimes forgotten or carried on further by the couriers. Do not be upset. Rest assured always that we never waiver in our interest in and affection for you. However, sometimes one day seems like another. In addition, our business increases constantly. Leave it all up to our good God.

We have received more than 15 sisters since Easter. Greet Sister Henriette[1] for me. I would ask Sister Claude[2] not to kill herself working in her pharmacy. A good person wrote to me about all of you individually; she is very fond of you. In light of that, I must tell you not to be surprised by the slight changes you notice in the attitudes of persons with whom you interact. I beg Sister Marguerite[3] to remember that if she is not faithful to God, she will have a great deal to account for to Him at her death. Oh, how dangerous it is to listen to flesh and blood! May Sister Marie[4] remember the last words I spoke to her before she left us.

I will write to all another time. I beg the goodness of God to give you His dearest blessings, and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your most obedient sister and very humble servant.

L.323B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(June 1648)

Monsieur,

Monsieur Lambert[5] will tell you of the grave condition of our dear Sister Louise from Saint-Jacques. I beg your Charity most humbly to explain to him the blessing that our Holy Father accorded us and the manner in which it is applied, so that our poor sister may share in this great benefit. I beg you most humbly to permit me to go see her tomorrow, if I can find transportation. I would also like to see Madame de Marillac,[6] and at the same time make the three holy stations along the Rue

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
2. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
3. Marguerite Noret had some difficulties in her relationship with her Sister Servant.
4. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
5. Monsieur Lambert was then Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants in Paris.
6. Madame de Marillac, the younger, born Jeanne Potier, wife of Michel de Marillac, the grandson of the Keeper of the Seals.

Saint-Denis; all three are near each other. I would also be very happy if your Charity would be so kind as to speak to me Saturday so that I may go to Holy Communion Sunday with the intention of gaining the Jubilee.

In light of what Sister Barbe[1] told me, I beg you most humbly to take the trouble of letting me know whether it is necessary to write to her regarding the little girl she is sending to us. Also, what should I tell her concerning this woman and the two girls she mentions in the letter I received yesterday and am sending on to you? If Monsieur Lambert does me the charity of reporting to you all the complaints made to him about me, you will truly see how necessary it is for you to grant the request I am making to see you Saturday.

Mademoiselle's[2] Chaplain came to me himself to ask if he should go to the trouble of coming to this quarter in order to show Sister Barbe's letter both to you and to me. I said nothing to him on your behalf.

L.181B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Serving the Sick Poor at Fontainebleau

June 24 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

You have every reason to complain of me; it is true that I have gone too long without writing to you, and I cannot tell you what prevented me from doing so. Perhaps it was the business which often crops up: the death of my poor dear Sister Louise of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, the illness of several others and the departure of a few. Add to all this the expectation I had of being able to send you a sister at some time or other and the fact that I was not able to find anyone suitable. Although there are quite a few sisters here, when it comes to sending someone somewhere, we are not sure whom to choose because those who are apt for one thing are not so for another. My dear Sister, what especially led me not to take quick action in this was my belief that you did not need consolation so long as you had the happiness of having the mission.[3]

At long last we are sending Sister Jeanne-Christine,[4] whom Monsieur Vincent found suitable to work with you because he believes that in a short while you will be asked to visit the children, and it will be necessary

1. Barbe Angiboust, who was in Fontainebleau, see Letter 43.
2. Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans (1627-1693), Duchess de Montpensier, called "The Great Mademoiselle," was the cousin of Louis XIII.
3. Mission given by Monsieur Thibault, see Letter 175.
4. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344.

to leave someone satisfactory in your place. You will fill her in on all aspects of your work there.

My dear Sister, we are also sending your good little girl who, for the present, is not suitable for us. I believe it would be well for you to find a situation for her, provided it is in the home of good people. Perhaps she could work in the home of a laborer where, at first, she would only tend the cows. Then as she grew, she could do more. After a service of three or four years, if God gives her the will to serve Him among us, we will be able to take her. It will be better for her to make the decision when she reaches a mature age, rather than to come now when she still does not know what she wants. I hope that God will bless the charity that your heart has for her, and that you will find the opportunity to place her somewhere. I beg this of Him and am in His holy love, your very humble sister and loving servant.

P.S. I do not know how, but Mademoiselle's[1] Chaplain received your letter and showed it to Monsieur Vincent, who judges it most inappropriate for you to speak or write any more on this subject.

I truly recommend Sister Jeanne to you. It has not been very long since she was seriously ill. Take care of her needs, I beg of you. You know her . . . she is a daughter of peace.

L.320 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu at Angers

(July 1648)

My very dear Sister,

It is true that it has been two or three weeks since I have had the consolation of writing to you. It is not that I did not truly wish to do so; I was prevented from doing it by a slight indisposition, by a great number of sick sisters and by the matters which take up more of our time than we can spare. I beg you, my dear Sister, not to overburden yourself with work. I believe, as you do, that even if there were 12[3] of them, that all our dear sisters would have some work to do or some way in which to use their time wisely. You would not be wasting time when doing the

1. "The Great Mademoiselle," see Letter 323b.

2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108, who had just been named Sister Servant of the Angers community (Monsieur Lambert's letter of July 17, 1648).

3. The four sisters, requested for a long time by the hospital administrators, see Letter 159, were sent "in the year 1648 to supervise the women and help with the laundry" (Mathurine Guérin's notation of July 1675).

wash. If you did not undertake to do the entire wash, at least those among you who were washing would reduce the number of women you must employ. However, if there were more of you, it would be too great a burden for you if you were obliged to take on all the washing.

I found out from Sister Marie-Marthe[1] what the duties of the plaster-maker are, and she told me that a sister engaged in this would be most useful. Provided the sister stays in the wards and prepares her plasters in your department, I see no other inconvenience. It would not be a good thing if she had to prepare them elsewhere, or if she often had to consult with the surgeon. You can speak confidently about this to the good gentleman who suggested it to you.

As for changing the place to which you have been sent,[2] I beg God's goodness to keep you and all our dear sisters from forming any desire for this. If the devil suggests thoughts of this to them, I would warn them not to listen to them, but to reject them as evil temptations. I could not begin to tell you how well he has succeeded with those sisters to whom such thoughts have occurred. My very dear Sisters, we must belong to God in a totally different way. And who are we to want to choose our paths ourselves? Let us leave that to God.

I am sure that you have openly revealed your inner feelings to Monsieur Lambert, and that he has not failed to speak about them to Monsieur Vincent. Remain at peace until Divine Providence lets you know what It is asking of you. I beg Our Lord to give you this grace, and I am in His holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and loving sister and servant.

L.82 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

(c. 1648)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the good health He gives you and, in particular, Sister Anne.[4] I beg her to make good use of this health and of all His other graces so that she will not be reproached with them at her judgment. O my Sisters, how we must fear that! I believe we do not

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, who left for Angers in June 1647, was then at the parish of Saint-Paul, see Letter 102.
2. Monsieur Lambert would propose Françoise Claire's departure and that of Andrée.
3. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
4. Anne from Richelieu, see Letter 163.

think about this enough, and that we often freely accept the graces of God and unwittingly raise ourselves up because of them instead of humbling ourselves. As if these graces belonged to us and were of our own making, we often reserve them for our own use under the guise of charity. May God keep us from this misery; and in order to do all that we can to guarantee this, let us humble ourselves by submission to creatures, by mortification of our senses and passions and by acquiescence to the good pleasure of God in all that He has in mind for us. I beg you truly to rejoice, my dear Sisters.

I am very concerned about Sister Élisabeth's indisposition, and I urge her to let me know all about it. I believe she must purge herself quite often, although gently. Every morning, while fasting, she should take a large glass of well-boiled barley water. However, it should be well-strained and a bit of good honey or sugar should be added. She should do the same in the evening, well after mealtime.

Sister Anne, it seems that you told me something about using wine. In the name of God, do not get into the habit of doing so. Insofar as I know you, I believe it would be quite harmful to you.

I am in a hurry; good evening, my dear Sisters. Pray for me and for the entire Company, and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble and loving servant.

L.239 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST[1]

Friday (1648)

My very dear Sister,

I would ask you to have little François dressed cleanly from his undershirt to the tip of his cap. Have him eat breakfast in the morning, and if his father sends someone for him, ask the persons who come if someone should not accompany him. I find this necessary, so please, even without asking, go along with him wherever he goes, and do not let him out of your sight unless Monsieur de Charny himself sends you back. In that event, come to see me here.

I received news from Monsieur Vincent, and he desires far more perfection from us than we possess. I will tell you the rest when he returns.

I greet you all, Sisters, in the love of the heart of Jesus Crucified, and I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister, please tell Sister Geneviève[2] that I recommend the little

1. Barbe Angiboust, who had returned from Fontainbleau, left to visit the foundlings. She was at Bicêtre.

2. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.

children to her. Tomorrow, after the children have gone to bed, please send me Sister Jeanne-Baptiste.[1]

L.88 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH MARTIN[2]

Servant of the Poor at Richelieu

August 3 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

Our good God is truly making you a participant in His sufferings by permitting you to be seriously ill. Monsieur Gauthier[3] took the trouble to inform me about your condition. I beg His goodness to give you the consolations that He usually gives to souls He wishes to sanctify in this way. Two things can greatly assist us in this: the first is the love with which we must honor the suffering of the Son of God and the second is the thought we must frequently have that this life is short, and that well-accepted suffering leads us happily to eternity. Let us love suffering then, my dear Sister, and let us make strong resolutions to desire as much of it as the will of God wants us to experience. Rest assured that it is a sign of God's love for you since it is through this that He makes you somewhat like His Son. Suffer then, in His same spirit, through submission to all that God wills of you, and use every means given to you to recover your health.

I urge Sister Anne[4] to take excellent care of you—something I am sure she is already doing. However, I hope she is doing so in a spirit of perfect charity and with a sense of duty. I know, my dear Sister, that she loves and honors you. Because of that, I am very confident that she will fail in nothing you wish of her. However, I also urge you to ask her with great confidence for all the help you need. If you feel afflicted by all the submission to which your illness reduces you, you must in that as well, my dear Sister, discover and love the will of God. I beg Him with all my heart to give you the perfection of His holy love in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble servant and very loving sister, unworthy Sister of Charity.

P.S. I greet Sister Anne most cordially and ask you to do the same to Madame de Bachets. If she is in Richelieu, tell her, please, that the

1. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, see Letter 64.
2. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.
3. Monsieur Gauthier, Superior of the Priests of the Mission in Richelieu, see Letter 168.
4. Anne from Richelieu, see Letter 163.

Marquise de Mortemart[1] is quite anxious about what she did with her daughter's relics. Please ask her to inform us about this as soon as possible.

L.319 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-René at Nantes

(August 1648)

My very dear Sister,

I rejoice and praise God for the consolation His goodness has given you in Monsieur Lambert's[2] visit. I pray that this consolation might not touch only your senses, but that it might be seed sown in the good earth of your hearts, and that it might bear abundant fruit for your future needs because you must be strong women. In fact, since you are Daughters of Charity in name, and since you know that true charity loves and endures everything, even the worst contradictions and repugnances, I hope that all of you practice this. However, you will never truly experience it unless, beforehand, you have been most exact in the practice of all the recommendations included in your little Rule. Is it not reasonable, my dear Sisters, that since God has honored us by calling us to His service, we should serve Him in a manner pleasing to Him?

Greet for me all our dear sisters, whom I embrace very cordially. I am confident that they all want to renew their desire to do all things well and to be faithful to God. O my dear Sisters, how sweet this thought is, and how consoled I am by it!

Monsieur Lambert informed me that it would be appropriate for us to withdraw Sister Marguerite Noret.[3] Therefore, upon receiving this letter, I would ask you to send her to Angers by a safe route as soon as possible. We are sending another one[4] of our sisters this week to take her place, and she will meet her in Angers. Then Sister Marguerite will return here with the sisters[5] who are returning from Angers. Speak to Monsieur des Jonchères[6] about this beforehand, however, and beg him to advise you as to whether you should speak about it to one of the Fathers of the

1. Madame de Mortemart, see Letter 206.
2. Monsieur Lambert requested Marguerite Noret's recall in his letter of July 18, 1648.
3. Marguerite Noret, see Letter 201.
4. Marie Arnou, see Letter 275.
5. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b, and Andrée, see Letter 132c.
6. Monsieur des Jonchères, see Letter 147.

Poor. Ask him which one, or perhaps he will speak to him himself. I will allow myself the honor of writing to him on this matter.

I ask you, Sister, to tell Sister . . . [1] that her brother came by here recently. He is quite well and asked for news of her. He said that he had written to her, or that he would write to her. However, this was not done through us because I did not see any of his letters. Sister Henriette's[2] brother and nephew, both at Saint-Lazare, are well, thank God. Her sister, along with her other daughter, is at the home of Mademoiselle Pollalion[3] and is doing well. Sister Perrette,[4] who is still near Forges, is also doing well. My dear Sister, your aunt and uncle near Notre-Dame are well, thank God, and they wish to be remembered to you. Your other aunt also wishes to be remembered to you. She is suffering a bit from your uncle's death a good three months ago. She continues in her faith, and her children, likewise, are striving to grow in it. You are most fortunate that Our Lord has severed you from all attachments so that you might be more perfectly His. I beg His goodness to continue His holy blessings on you, and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and loving servant, most unworthy Sister of Charity, servant of the poor.

L.323 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[5]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Angers

(August 1648)

My very dear Sister,

May Our Lord constantly bestow his holy blessings upon you and upon all our dear sisters whom I greet in His most holy love. I wish I had the time to write to you at my leisure, but I do not. Concerning the girls received by Monsieur Lambert,[6] I will tell you only that if you consider them suitable, you can send them, provided that, since your return, you have not discovered anything in them contrary to our vocation. However, we do not need any do-nothings, chatterboxes, or girls who think they can come to Paris under the pretext of being a

1. Louise de Marillac left a blank space; she was speaking of Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
3. Mademoiselle de Pollalion, see Letter 203.
4. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526, Henriette Gesseaume's niece, was in Serqueux.
5. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
6. Monsieur Lambert made the visitation in June-July 1648.

Daughter of Charity when they have no intention whatsoever of serving God or of perfecting themselves. It is precisely what leads us to send them back, or leads them to leave your establishment.

Let me know, I beg of you, if Marie Dillé[1] has returned. This poor girl has caused herself a lot of trouble, and it is too bad. Please also send me any news of Monsieur Ratier[2] and especially of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux.[3] Greet them for me with all humility and respect. I will permit myself the honor of writing to Monsieur l'abbé as soon as I can. Sister Barbe[4] is now with us. She greets you and all our dear sisters. We have at least ten at the House who are ill.

Good evening, my very dear Sisters. Pray for Monsieur Vincent. He was quite ill but, by the grace of God, he is better. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.254 - TO MY DEAR SISTERS CHARLOTTE ROYER[5] AND FRANÇOISE CARCIREUX[6]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor at Richelieu

(August 1648)

My very dear Sisters,

I imagine that you have had a good cry since leaving Paris, and that if you could speak to this nasty Sister Louise[7] who sent you there you would really give her a piece of your mind! Since you cannot speak to me, tell me everything in writing. You can be sure that I will read the letter carefully.

Sister Julienne[8] wrote to your father, as you asked her. Both he and

1. Marie Dillé, a sister, native of Angers.
2. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
3. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
4. Barbe Angiboust was at the Motherhouse.
5. Charlotte Royer, a native of Liancourt. After having served the poor in the Parish of Saint-Jean, she was sent to Richelieu in 1648. She was still there in 1660, at the moment of Louise de Marillac's death (Coste VIII, 270).
6. Françoise Carcireux, a native of Beauvais, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately 1640-1641. First placed at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, then at the service of the foundlings in Bicêtre, she was sent to Richelieu in 1648. She was called back to leave for Narbonne in September 1659. From 1672 to 1675, she would be Assistant of the Company. Two of her sisters were Daughters of Charity, one of her brothers was a Priest of the Mission.
7. It is thus that Louise de Marillac designated herself.
8. Julienne Loret, who was at the Motherhouse, see Letter 220.

your mother are well, thank God, and they both wish to be remembered to you. I hope to leave tomorrow for Liancourt. I will be sure to give them ample news of you and ask them if they want to write to you and send you a basket of grapes. I imagine you are saying, "Mademoiselle is making fun of me." Oh, I suppose that by now you are behaving yourself and that you have stopped crying! So be quite content that our good God is accomplishing His most holy will in you. I say this also to my dear Sister Carcireux. I also have news of her father and he is well, thank God. He did not write to her at this time. In the name of God, my dear Sisters, be most courageous in working towards your perfection. Forget your home and your relatives so that you may live in peace in the place God was pleased to reveal to you through holy obedience.

Greet Monsieur Gauthier[1] and his community most humbly for me, and ask them to pray for us. I beg God to make you all that His heart wants you to be, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your most obedient sister and servant.

L.173B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH HELLOT

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor across from Saint-Lazare

(From Liancourt, August 1648)

My very dear Sister,

I urge you to let me know what happened at the conference.[2] Was Monsieur Vincent there? Were sisters who needed to speak to him able to do so? I believe that you are well aware that we must find out from him whether Sister Carcireux[3] should become involved in the matter concerning her father. My dear Sister, if there is some way, I would ask that someone take care of him. He moves me to pity. The person providing this care must bring him an answer. Also send me word about your sister's condition, and tell me whether God is giving you the strength to overcome the tender, useless feelings which arise from our nature. O my dear Sister, since God truly wishes it of us, how it pleases me that we do our utmost for our own.

If Champagne brings you the articles he should, hold on to them, if possible, and tell him that I will return soon, with God's help. Possibly he will want some money; there is no danger in giving him some, but he

1. Monsieur Gauthier, see Letter 168.
2. Conference of August 25, 1648 (Coste IX, 438).
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

must be made to understand that there will still be signs to be made.

Because I do not have the time to write to him, my dear Sister, I would ask you to write a note to Monsieur Holden[1] and ask him to send me several indulgence-bearing articles. The only things I have here are some medals without indulgences.

Tell Brother Alexandre[2] that I feel he should not hesitate to purge Monsieur Vincent; in my opinion he is in need of it. I think a mixture of chicory syrup and peach blossom syrup would be very good for him. You will know how to handle this message. Please ask Sister Julienne[3] to have someone visit Sister Vincente[4] for me and to send me word about her.

Our journey went very well, thanks be to God, and we arrived in Liancourt today, Tuesday, at noon. I would ask you, Sister, to remember to send someone to urge the President, Madame de Nesmond,[5] to send to Chantilly what they requested there. Tell Sister Louise[6] to send a petticoat to Sister Turgis.[7] I found both of them in good health, thank God, as I did our sisters here.[8] Take care of your health, I beg of you, and be sure to take a purgative if you need one.

I think it would be good for Sister Jeanne from Sedan to exercise her leg a little. Let me know a bit about how you dealt with Sister Jeanne Fouré.[9] If any of our sisters see Monsieur Vincent, I beg you to have them greet him most humbly on my behalf.

Good evening to all our dear sisters; I hope to see you soon. Please send word of my son, and give him news of us. I beg the goodness of God to give you the perfection of His holy love in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I beg you to assure all our sisters of my affection. I beg them to look upon it as going out to each one of them individually.

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1. Monsieur Holden, friend of the de Marillac family, see Letter 152.
2. Brother Alexandre Vérone (1611-1686), coadjutor brother and infirmarian at Saint-Lazare, accepted into the Congregation of the Mission in 1636.
3. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
4. Vincente Auchy, see Letter 36.
5. Madame de Nesmond, see Letter 77.
6. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
7. Élisabeth Turgis had just arrived in Chantilly.
8. The sisters of Liancourt.
9. Jeanne Fouré, a native of Loudun, a children's nurse in 1646, was in Valpuiseaux in 1649. In 1651, she returned home.

L.220 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor across from Saint-Lazare, in the Saint-Denis District

(August 27, 1648)

My very dear Sister,

You have given me great pleasure by writing to me, and I thank you very sincerely for having done so. I praise God for the consolation all our sisters received at the conference,[2] and I beg His goodness to give them the grace to profit from it.

I am very troubled by a rumor which went around the countryside that there was unrest and murder in the streets of Paris.[3] In the name of God, my dear Sister, send me news as soon as you can about Monsieur Vincent, my son and our sisters. Also, let me know what you have learned about this rumor. Please tell Sister Hellot[4] to send me the Rule for Chantilly[5] and the lists of expenses from the hospital and from Madame de Liancourt.[6] I would also be very grateful to hear word of Sister Vincente.[7] If she still has tertian fever and the shivers, it would be good, as her shivering ceases, to give her half a glass of blessed thistle-water. You have but to inform the doctor, and if he finds it wise, she will be able to obtain some easily from the Ladies.

Regarding little Anne's[8] mother, I am very upset that she came. However, since God permitted it, I believe Monsieur Vincent would agree that our sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu should place her as soon as possible. You did well not to take her in at our House. I would ask, my dear Sister, that Sister Hellot have all the mail ready for the portress so that it can

1. Julienne Loret, born in Paris on October 7, 1622 in the parish of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on June 9, 1644. Louise de Marillac had great confidence in her. In October 1647, she was named Directress of the Seminary and replaced Louise de Marillac during her absences. In 1651, she was sent to Chars where the Jansenist Pastor created a difficult situation. In 1653, she was named Sister Servant in Fontenay-aux-Roses. In August 1655, she returned to the Motherhouse and was named Assistant, a duty she kept after the death of the Foundress. She died on August 9, 1699.
2. Conference of August 25, 1648 (Coste IX, 438).
3. On August 26, 1648, Queen Anne of Austria had Monsieur Pierre Broussel, a Parliament deputy, opposed to Mazarin but very popular, arrested. Some barricades were put up in the streets and the people revolted. To restore order, the Queen was obliged to set Broussel free.
4. Élisabeth Hellot, see Letter 152.
5. On the way to Liancourt, Louise de Marillac stopped in Chantilly.
6. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.
7. Vincente Auchy, see Letter 36.
8. Anne Varon, see Letter 260.

go out when someone comes by for it. Please be extremely careful to close the House up well and to leave enough people there to watch it.

I beg God's goodness to keep you all well and to lessen His anger against His people. I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Please send someone to tell my son to write to me about his business.[1] I do not have enough time to write to him. Recommend to our sisters that they pray for everyone.

L.221 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER HELLOT

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor
across from Saint-Lazare, in the Saint-Denis District

(August 28, 1648)[2]

My very dear Sister,

In the name of God, send me news of Monsieur Vincent, Monsieur Holden,[3] Monsieur de Marillac[4] and my son, and I urge you to keep nothing from me. I am so greatly distressed that I would return today if I had a way.

Yesterday I wrote to Sister Julienne; please answer everything.

Put the little we have in a safe place. The best thing you can do is to have recourse to God. For the time being, I ask that there always be one or two of our sisters in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Along with so many other good souls, they will thereby try to help to appease God's anger against us.

If Monsieur Vincent is of the opinion that my son should move to Saint-Lazare, I would beg him most humbly to allow him this grace. I do not have any time to write to him about this myself. I beg you to speak to him about it and to believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and loving servant.

P.S. Remember me to all our dear sisters. Have no fear, but manifest great submission to God's justice and holy will.

1. See letter to Michel Le Gras, Letter 216.
2. See preceding letter.
3. Monsieur Holden, see Letter 152.
4. Michel de Marillac, the younger, a Parliament deputy like Broussel, who had just been arrested (see preceding letter).

L.215 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER HELLOT

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor in the Saint-Denis District across from Saint-Lazare (at Paris)

(From Liancourt) August 29 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

Do not believe me anxious about your ability to understand. I greet our dear Sister Barbe,[1] and praise God for all the calm which you lead me to expect. It is a great trial to be far from one's friends when one believes them in danger.[2] I think you would do well to send this good woman to your sister. I hope from God's goodness that she will finally recover from her illness. However, there are many of us ill, and I recommend them to your prayers with all my heart.

I beg you to write to me in as much detail as possible. Circumstances of time and place oblige me to use your envelope in writing to you. You did not answer everything I asked you.

Good evening, my dear Sister. I am entirely yours. Remember me to Sister Julienne[3] and to all our sisters. You know that I am, my dear Sister, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and very loving servant.

L.216 - TO HER SON, MONSIEUR LE GRAS[4]

(From Liancourt) August 29 (1648)

My very dear Son,

Is it because you met Madame Musnier at the residence of the ecclesiastical judge that she made you such beautiful offers? I was never so astonished as when she asked whether your business was completed. I did not know if she was referring to the work you still have to do, and I never would have thought that she would have such knowledge of it. She seems to be a good friend, and you should not be afraid of making use of her assistance, which will oblige her to secrecy.

I am very glad that you paid your respects to Monsieur de Marillac,[5]

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. See the two preceding letters, Letters 220 and 221.
3. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
4. This letter was written on the back of the preceding letter.
5. Michel de Marillac, Michel Le Gras' cousin.

and I praise God's goodness for the consolation He gave them after their affliction. I must confess to you that I was very distressed and very unhappy about not being in Paris. We must praise and bless God for everything and adore the guidance of His Divine Providence. I will return as soon as I can, I assure you. If it is necessary to write to the judge, please let me know. I beg God to keep you, and I remain, my dear Son, your most loving mother and best friend.

L.217 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

Daughter of Charity,
Servant of the Sick Poor at Montreuil

August 29 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

You have every reason to complain about the long time I have taken in writing to you. You know the ordinary hindrances; however, they seem always to increase rather than diminish. I am most distressed that you have to wait such a long time for a good priest. Please believe that we are doing our utmost for you. I am very upset by the defect you found in your stove, and I am sorry that you did not understand me well. I did not mean to complain to you about the sisters you sent us because, by God's grace, they are all of good will, and their slight faults are only a result of lack of experience, and that is nothing. However, I only wanted to remind you of their little needs. I also wanted to suggest that it is good for them to have their clothes and linen for the first year since it takes so long to train them.

Little Anne[2] is quite pretty; however, we told you that her mother should not be sent. I truly fear that that will be harmful to her in the future. Furthermore, I do not even know what she would be able to do. I was already in Liancourt when she arrived. Our sisters had made arrangements for lodging her, and they will do their utmost to place her in an acceptable position.

I beg you, my dear Sister, frequently to send us news of yourself and of our dear sisters. I hope that they are filled with holiness so that they may work usefully at God's work. It is not enough to visit the poor and to provide for their needs; one's heart must be totally purged of all self-interest, and one must continually work at the general mortification

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

2. Anne Varon, see Letter 260.

of all the senses and passions. In order to do this, my dear Sisters, we must continually have before our eyes our model, the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. We are called to imitate this life, not only as Christians, but as persons chosen by God to serve Him in the person of His poor. Without that, my dear Sisters, the Daughters of Charity are the most pitiful creatures in the world; and if they render themselves ungrateful and unfaithful to the graces of God, I do not believe God's justice could punish them severely enough in eternity.

Let us pray to the divine goodness for one another that His mercy may pour out on us His blessings of grace and light so that we may glorify Him eternally. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very obedient and very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you to greet most humbly Mademoiselle Mounille,[1] our good Mother, and all the dear sisters. I cannot urge you too strongly to honor and cherish them; to do otherwise would constitute a serious fault. This will not hinder you from being most exact in doing nothing contrary to your Rule or in acting in accord with it. It is to all three[2] of you that I speak, my dear Sisters, and I cordially and affectionately embrace you.

L.260 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

(at Paris)

(September 1648)

My very dear Sister,

Enclosed is a letter from Le Mans. Show it to Monsieur Vincent or to Monsieur Lambert if you can, and greet them most humbly for me. Express my apologies to Sister Barbe[3] for not writing to her at this time. Please remember us to our sick sisters and to our sisters at Bicêtre, of whom you have not sent me word. Find out from Monsieur Vincent whether you might give the habit to our sisters in Angers. I do not want to upset them. Let me know the names and the places where the children of this district[4] are so that I can look into the situation. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please let me know if little Sister Anne[5] is doing all right.

1. Mademoiselle Mounille, Lady of Charity in Montreuil-sur-Mer.
2. The two other sisters were Marie Lullen and Marie Gallois; the latter returned to Paris in July 1649.
3. Barbe Angiboust, who was at the Motherhouse, see Letter 43.
4. Louise de Marillac was in Liancourt.
5. Anne Varon, a young girl who came from Montreuil-sur-Mer, see Letter 217. She would

L.219 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor

September 5 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

I was greatly consoled by receiving news of your dear self. I was doubly comforted by your first letter because your entire family seemed to be in good health. However, our good God is finally touching you heavily in the person of your little ones. How fortunate you are, my dear Sisters, that so many souls leave your arms to appear before God and praise Him eternally!

You are worrying me a bit if it is Sister Jeanne-Baptiste[1] who is ill. If I did not hope to return soon, I would ask you to send me word concerning her. However, I plan to leave here[2] shortly. I beg you, my dear Sister, to give her our most loving greetings. Do likewise to all our very dear sisters, to whose prayers I recommend myself most earnestly as I do to yours, my dear Sister, and I am your very humble servant.

L.381 - (TO THE SISTERS OF THE HOSPITAL OF ANGERS)

(September 1648)

My very dear Sisters,

Do not worry about us because of all the rumors[3] you might be hearing from Paris. By the grace of God everything is rather peaceful; anyway, provided God's servants are faithful to Him, they should fear nothing. We have no greater enemy than ourselves. If our great God is ready to drop punishments down upon our heads, we should each look into ourselves and we will see that we merit them. Consequently, we must submit ourselves to Him and do all we can to lessen His anger through a true conversion. God expects this of us; and that is why, my dear Sisters, I ask you, for His love, seriously to enter into yourselves to see whether you really belong to God. You will know that you do if you delight in renouncing your self-will, watching over yourselves in all circumstances,

become a Daughter of Charity.

1. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, died in December 1648.
2. Louise de Marillac was in Liancourt.
3. Rumors of a riot in Paris, see Letter 220.

being very submissive to your Superiors, breaking any attachments you might have and excluding from your minds any desire other than to please God in your every action.

L.229 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Chantilly

(Beginning of October 1648)

My very dear Sister,

I did not think that Sister Turgis[2] was yet in any condition to go to Mass. However, since the illness was not what the doctor thought it was, and the rest of you have permission to go to Mass, I rejoiced with you in the hope you gave me.

Do not be surprised by our dear sick sister's difficulties. All or nearly all of this year's illnesses are ending this way. It is a result of a build-up of fluids, and it is much better that they empty themselves externally rather than internally. I think, my dear Sister, that she will have to be purged well and then given gentle laxatives nearly every other day. I hope that she will be able to regain her strength as a result of this draining of fluid.

Thank you for your advice, my dear Sister. Please greet our very dear sick sister and Sister Marie[3] for me. I beg God to pour forth His holy blessings on all of you and, if He allows you to be confined to the house, to let you know that He will not abandon you.

All our sisters greet you and sympathize with you in your distress; I, more so than the others. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very loving sister and humble servant.

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Marie Prévost, born on January 29, 1622, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on November 21, 1646. She left Chantilly in 1649 to serve the foundlings.

L.226 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL[1]

October 8 (1648)

Monsieur,

Although I often wished to permit myself the honor or writing to you, the hope I still had from time to time that you would return kept me from doing so. However, since I have begun to lose this hope in the last few months, I took the resolution to write. Only the fear of distracting you or, rather, that I should not distract you, made me postpone it until Divine Providence allowed your Charity to anticipate me; and for this I thank you.

I cannot tell you how joyful all our sisters are after the grief some of them had experienced because of a rumor that you were dead. May God be blessed, Monsieur, that His goodness kept you safe in the midst of so many dangers! May His same goodness lead you here soon. By His grace you will still find many of your Daughters here, and there are a number of new ones whom I hope your Charity will assist.

We presently have some older sisters who are quite ill. Sister Turgis[2] is one, although she is a bit better since she has received Extreme Unction. Sister Élisabeth Martin,[3] who was in Nantes when you left, is now languishing with a lung ailment. As for me, I am still languishing in my laziness. However, I finally have reason to believe that God will soon cease to exercise His mercy on my long years so as to bring them to an end by His justice. This thought increases my desire for your return, and causes me to urge you, Monsieur, since your work is cut out for you, to hurry and baste it so that another may sew it. If God gives me the grace of seeing your longed-for return, remember that I will not consider you are returning only from Marseilles. You will be returning from Rome, about which I will ask a great deal, and from Our Lady of Loretto, if you went there. Begin refreshing your memory, I beg you.

Our sisters will receive the consolation of something tangible when they hear read the dear letter your Charity took the time to write to them. I will ask Monsieur Vincent's permission to read it at the next conference and will wait to read it to them until then.

I no longer dare lead them to hope for your return. May God allow us the happiness of having you return earlier than we expect. I hope that your Charity will not abandon us and that you will do me the honor of

1. Monsieur Portail was in Rome. He wrote to Louise de Marillac on September 17, 1648, speaking of his return but without being able to specify the date. He had to pass through Marseilles.
2. Élisabeth Turgis died a few days later.
3. Élisabeth Martin died at the end of the year 1648.

believing me ever in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.230 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS MARIE AND BRIGIDE[1]

Daughters of Charity at Chantilly

(October 1648)

My very dear Sisters,

You can imagine our sorrow and surprise at the news of our very dear sister's[2] death, which we did not expect at all. I have no doubt that your charity took great care to provide her with every kind of assistance and consolation. I am also sure that you feel the grief of her loss as keenly as we do. However, my dear Sisters, we have great reason to complain about you for not having sent us word that her condition had worsened. If you had, we would have been sure to send someone to visit her. When we received word that she was better, Monsieur Vincent was on the verge of sending someone, and only the suggestion that she return here stopped the person from going. We awaited her return from day to day and believed it only a matter of waiting for her to regain her strength. So my poor Sisters, you can imagine our surprise when we learned of her death. Now we must praise and bless God for everything and pray to Him for her. I would also ask that the example of her virtues, particularly her submission and her love of the service of the poor, be an incentive for you to render to God the fidelity you owe Him.

I urge you to be most thankful for the care given to you and to her, and to try to repay it by the service you render to the poor. Please greet all the Ladies of Charity on my behalf, and let them know how mindful we are of their kindness toward you. All our sisters greet you and share your affliction. However, I do so more than any other, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

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1. Marie Prévost, see Letter 229 and Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, whose burial took place on October 18.

L.225 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday [October 1648]

Monsieur,

I cannot quite recall the matter about which the Pastor of Serqueux wrote to you; however, it seems to me that it concerned some nuns near Forges who were accused of some serious fault. Because of this, I believe they wanted to remove the Abbess, who, the Pastor maintained, was completely innocent of the charges against her.

Licorice is used in making infusions, and I sent you some small bits of it so that you can use it more easily. However, it must be used fresh; only cut what you are going to use because it blackens quickly. I would not dare boast that it grows in our garden because so far we have only seen leaves and flowers.

I had forgotten to inform you that the Prioress of Montmartre, Mademoiselle Channelain's sister, who is very close to death from lung disease, recommends herself to your holy prayers. She also begs you to do her the charity of recommending her to the prayers of the priests of your Company so that God may be pleased to show her His mercy.

I am sending this letter to you for fear that you might believe that it had been delivered to the addressee.

I beg God that your journey may be short and that your return may find you in perfect health.

Our sisters are asking us for some syrup which we do not have in stock. I will send someone to find out if Brother Alexandre[1] can give us some.

Since your Charity is allowing me to do so, I plan to go to Saint-Denis[2] and, possibly, Bicêtre.[3] I have nothing more to do in Liancourt, and I also believe that Monsieur and Madame[4] are going to La Roche-Guyon for a month.

If you leave[5] tomorrow, I will not have the honor of seeing you beforehand. What will then become of my poor conscience in the meantime? To what state will my cowardice, laziness and infidelity have reduced my soul? If Saint Catherine were alive, she would fear for me because of this, for my soul would appear to her to be without this love that I should certainly possess and which, by His grace, has made me, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and very humble daughter.

1. Brother Alexandre Véronne, the infirmarian from Saint-Lazare, see Letter 173b.
2. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Saint-Denis goes back to 1645, see Letter 143.
3. Bicêtre, see Letter 86.
4. Monsieur and Madame de Liancourt had their mansion in La Roche-Guyon.
5. Monsieur Vincent went to St.Germain-en-Laye, then to Fréneville (Coste III, 376).

L.265 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

November 18 (1648)

Monsieur,

In the belief that you have returned from your trip, I am allowing myself the honor of writing to you to inform you that the holy relic of Saint Maurice[1] is ready to be brought to you by whomever you have chosen to do so. All the formalities that you requested have been observed. Such an authenticated relic will inspire devotion in the people who see it.

Monsieur Ratier's goodness continues to exercise its charity for our sisters, and Sister Cécile's[2] direction truly is evidence of this. After God, Monsieur, it is to you that we owe thanks for all the good God will accomplish through her. She informed me of our Sister Madeleine's[3] illness and of the recovery of two other sisters. However, I am more concerned about the spiritual weakness of another sister. Since her retreat, this has caused her trouble in going to confession. I fear, Monsieur, that the sisters are becoming overly sensitive to their interior feelings and that they are too used to introspection. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to look into this and into the ways in which it can be avoided. This fault is more dangerous in our Company than it would be in religious communities.

Excuse my liberties; perhaps my judgment is not sound. I am often mistaken; and in light of that, I ask of you, for the love of God, the assistance of your holy prayers. Believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

1. Saint Maurice is the patron saint of the Cathedral of Angers.
2. Cécile Angiboust, Sister Servant, see Letter 108.
3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

L.231 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Angers

(November 1648)

My very dear Sister,

I am greatly pleased by the frequent news we receive from you. I am very concerned about Sister Madeleine's[1] illness, although I have no doubt that you are doing your utmost for her. She exhibits a disposition which appears a bit brusque, and this is possibly a result of her having served the galley slaves for a while shortly after she arrived here. These are people with whom one must be harsher at times than one would like. Sister Barbe[2] was very ill from several things at once that quickly undermined her health. However, by the grace of God, she is out of danger. She has already been purged twice, and she is eating meat. I do not know if we told you of the death of poor Sister Turgis,[3] whom our good God finally called after testing her by long, drawn-out suffering. I beg you to send us news of yourself and of all our sisters. Please greet them most cordially for us, and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Françoise Claire[4] asks you to greet Monsieur l'abbé, Monsieur Ratier and all our sisters most humbly for her.[5]

L.271 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital (at Nantes)

November 14 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

Some time ago I wrote to Sister Marie,[6] and I would truly like to know what effect my letter had. We cannot send a sister to you because we do not have anyone to send with her as a travelling companion. This really

1. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.
2. Barbe Angiboust, Cécile's sister, see Letter 43.
3. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
4. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b, who returned from Angers after Monsieur Lambert's visitation, had good memories of her companions.
5. This letter was written by Élisabeth Hellot.
6. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.

causes me to worry about the rest of you for I know you have enough work for more people. I praised God with all my heart for the calm which seems, from your letter, to prevail in your little Company. I hope that God will continue to bestow this same grace upon you as long as you do not become upset by anything which might be said to you.

When God's spirit resides in souls, it removes the weakness which causes them to ask, "What will they say?" or "Why are they saying this or that?" Moreover, my dear Sister, you know that nothing can make us more like Jesus Christ than persecutions suffered peacefully.

We sent you a letter from your cousin who has returned from Italy. I think you received it along with Sister Marie's[1] letter. We did not have the time then to write to you. Please greet all our dear sisters and tell Sister Henriette[2] that I am really angry with her for not writing to me. However, as soon as I receive her first letter, peace will be restored. Her niece, Sister Perrette,[3] came to make her retreat. She is doing wonderful things in Serqueux along with Sister Jeanne Delacroix.[4] She saw her brother there; he is also doing very well. Sister Henriette's brother is at their house, near our sisters in Nanteuil, with Monsieur Gallais,[5] who also is doing quite well. Assure Sister Jeanne[6] that her brother is well. He had told us that he was leaving his pastorate, but he stayed.

Be on guard, my Sister, against a fault that you commit and, I fear, permit others to commit because it seems something beneficial. I am talking about allowing our sisters to talk excessively with externs, even religious. I know it appears harmless, and that we are seeking comfort by discussing our difficulties. However, it cannot go on like this! I assure you that instead of getting rid of our problems, we take on more of them. Sometimes the means used by these good people to provide comfort and their offers of help trouble the sisters more . . . to the point where their vocation is truly shaken. The return of our last two sisters[7] most particularly indicated to me that I should warn you of this danger. It is much better to love one's distress, when one experiences it, and carry it to the foot of the Cross, or to let the Sister Servant know of it than to look for a way to be rid of it that could cost so dearly. I beg Our Lord to teach you this truth, and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, to all of you, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
3. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526, had a brother in the Congregation of the Mission.
4. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
5. Monsieur Gallais, Priest of the Mission, see Letter 107c.
6. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
7. Claude Brigide and Marguerite Noret returned in July 1648.

L.232 - TO MADEMOISELLE DE LAMOIGNON[1]

December 15 [1648]

My very dear Mademoiselle,

I ask your forgiveness for not having written to Madame Seguin as you instructed. It seems to me that I have made known only too clearly the tremendous needs of the poor infants and of the wet-nurses. I felt that I had already importuned several people, saddening tender and charitable hearts through excessive pleading. The only thing left for me to tell you might be that it seems that the Ladies of the Company should be more mothers to these little ones than their real mothers were. They should share the true sorrows of the mothers of the Holy Innocents when the massacre began, and they were powerless to do anything to stop it. Nevertheless, we must await help from the goodness of Divine Providence such as It gave the poor little foundlings at the beginning. May God be eternally blessed for that help!

I think, Mademoiselle, that you will be holding a General Assembly soon. Would it not be good once again to think about the advice already given to take up a collection in the churches of each district of the city the first Sunday of each month, on every important feast day and on every Saturday dedicated to our Lady? Perhaps all the Ladies together might offer to be in charge of this. Each one could be in charge of her own district, or could give the responsibility to someone she knows if she is unable to do so herself. Those in charge could get their neighbors or friends to help them. Thus the collection would not be too hard to carry out. However, permission for it must be obtained. Such a permission would not be refused in light of the evident need. Some might contend that little will be collected in each district. That is true, but the total will be considerable. The gentlemen of the public office must find some advantage in this since they constantly do the same thing.

I also hope, Mademoiselle, that you will bring up the great need we have of help in order to continue the collation at the Hôtel-Dieu. This is just as important as ever. These poor people sometimes say that this is their only food for the entire day. Most assuredly this is the only kindness extended to them.

Do you not remember, Mademoiselle, that at the beginning of this work the Ladies charged with instruction compiled a report on all the spiritual and temporal good done through these visits made to distribute the collation? That report let the Ladies know the fruits of their visits and alms. Perhaps that still continues; however, my fear that this work

1. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, Lady of Charity of the Confraternity of the Hôtel-Dieu and the foundlings, see Letter 143.

might cease leads me to take this liberty. Please excuse this in one who is with all her heart in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.228 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor
of the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jean at Angers

December 16 (1648)

My very dear Sister,

My belief that Monsieur l'abbé is not in Angers is keeping me from writing to him. His absence and that of Monsieur Ratier lead me to ask you, my dear Sisters, to be most careful to remember the holy practices their charity taught you. Above all, you should be very grateful for the graces God had given you by placing you in a position to render Him such great services. Remember also that the way to make yourselves pleasing in His eyes is to strive to grow in virtue for love of Him.

Monsieur Bécu[2] wishes to be remembered to Sister Madeleine,[3] and asks if she is well; something I, too, would be pleased to know. We still have not received any news concerning the money about which she spoke to us before leaving. It is such a small matter that she should neither dwell on it nor on anything else. She should think instead about her blessings and strive to work in such a way that she will be more faithful to God than a number of girls from her region have been.

As for you, my dear Sister Cécile, do not be so confident in your strength that you believe that you have too many sisters there. Our good God truly knows how to bring down our pride. It is true that I had forgotten that there were nine of you.[4] We will recall a sister most willingly when Monsieur l'abbé and your administrators are of the opinion that we should.

I cordially greet all our sisters, and I beg them also to love Our Lord Jesus and to witness to Him by imitating His virtues. If Monsieur Fellet[5]

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Monsieur Bécu: Jean and Benoît were Priests of the Mission; Hubert was a coadjutor brother.
3. Madeleine Bécu, their sister, a native of Braches in the Somme, arrived in Angers in June 1647. One of her sisters had entered the Company before her: she died suddenly (Coste III, 428).
4. Madeleine Mongert died.
5. Monsieur Fellet, priest from Angers.

has been left to direct you, greet him, or whoever else it is, most humbly for me. I am with all my heart in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your most obedient sister and servant.

L.232B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1648]

Monsieur,

We are truly having difficulty finding someone to send to the Assembly at the home of the Duchess d'Aiguillon. We can only instruct someone to deliver our papers directly to her. Since I believe everyone else's interest is similar to ours, I thought that perhaps my son could attend and do as the others. However, Monsieur, your Charity might prefer us to give our papers to the one who will be representing you at the Assembly. We will await the order that it will please you to give us, and we will beg God to give you perfect health for His glory. I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

1649

Intensification of the Fronde, the civil war pitting the supporters of Mazarin (the foreigner) and the Queen against a portion of the people and the French aristocracy.

January 14: *Monsieur Vincent's unsuccessful attempt to see Mazarin. Departure of Monsieur Vincent for the West of France; visits to the houses at Fréneville, Angers, Nantes and Richelieu.*

June 13: *Return of Monsieur Vincent to Paris.*

L.235 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SISTERS BRIGIDE AND MARIE[1]

Daughters of Charity at Chantilly

New Years Day, 1649

My very dear Sister,

Everything that you requested has been packed for some time, with

1. Claude Brigide and Marie Prévost.

the exception of the soup pot since we did not know the size you would need. We will purchase it as soon as possible and will send everything at the first opportunity.

I am quite surprised by the number of your patients. I ask that you carry the cooked dinner only in the area of your residence and for the rest, follow the orders given.

You delay too long sending us news. I am well aware that you are only there on loan, so make sure that you do not take on any new work and that you leave behind a great example of virtue. I ask the same of Sister Marie and beg both of you, in the name of God, to think of the fidelity you owe to Him and to the Company to which, in His goodness, He has called you.

My dear Sisters, death comes so quickly that it seems to me that we should always be mindful of the time when it will be our turn to die. In this way we will make good use of our remaining days by living according to the holy will of God. Two weeks ago He called Sister Renée of Angers[1] and the older Sister Jeanne-Baptiste.[2] Now Sister Antoinette[3] is quite ill; so too is the younger Sister Jeanne-Baptiste,[4] although thanks be to God, she is better. Sister Jeanne Fouré[5] in Valpuiseaux is also ill.

So, my dear Sisters, we must continually pray for our entire Company so that each of us will die well. I also ask this of you personally since I am in great need of your prayers, and I am in the love of Jesus, born and crucified for us, your very humble sister and servant.

L.233 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SISTERS BRIGIDE AND MARIE[6]

Daughters of Charity at Chantilly

(January 1649)

My very dear Sisters,

Here is a part of what you requested because we do not know what you need in the way of a soup pot. We do not know the size or whether

1. Renée returned from Angers with Élisabeth Turgis in 1640.
2. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, see Letter 64.
3. Antoinette Labille, see Letter 52.
4. Jeanne-Baptiste, the younger, had, no doubt, just arrived. After the parish of Saint-Jean-de-la-Grève, she went to Montmirail. In 1658, while at the Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, she suddenly left the Company.
5. Jeanne Fouré, see Letter 173b.
6. Claude Brigide and Marie Prévost. This letter was written by Élisabeth Hellot.

it should be made of iron or copper. When you let us know, we will buy one with a ladle to go with it.

There is no rhubarb in Paris, but here are some potent pills for diarrhea with instructions for their use. We are also sending some violart oil, some oil of roses and some excellent oil that you can use instead of Saint-John's wort. Along with these are a basin, a cushion and a dinner tray with two pairs of gloves for carrying the soup pot. I am sure that you are aware, my dear Sisters, that these gloves are not to be worn to church or in the village unless you are distributing the soup. Remember also that all these items are the property of the house, and if either one of you is called back before they are worn out, they must be left there for your replacements.

We told our sisters at Liancourt to find out whether you might have some of our deceased Sister Turgis'[1] clothing that they can use. For that reason, when they come, do not hesitate to give them what they need. However, please do not disturb Sister's little box. I believe you were careful to lock up her rosaries, book of hours, papers and other belongings which you know are kept when a sister dies so that they can be sent with her box to the Motherhouse as soon as possible.

All our sisters are reasonably well, thank God, and send you their greetings. I ask our good God to give you the perfection of His holy love in which I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

L.237 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

February 5, 1649

Monsieur,

I have refrained from allowing myself the honor of writing to you for a while because I was not certain that you were at Angers. Then I was held up by the business of which you are aware. I hope that you will receive this letter as a testimony of the gratitude I owe you.

You have been notified that Monsieur Vincent[2] is supposed to be in Angers. The Visitation nuns can confirm this for you. I beg you, Monsieur, to take the trouble to find out about this so that our sisters will not be deprived of the happiness of seeing him, although I believe

1. Élisabeth Turgis died in October.

2. Monsieur Vincent was on a visit to the West of France.

that in his great charity he would not fail to go to see them unless he was in a great hurry.

It seems to me that, in the last letter that I had the honor of receiving from you, your Charity notified me that our sisters there no longer needed the ninth sister we sent them. It has been so long that I no longer remember. If that is indeed the case, Monsieur, I beg you to take the trouble to write to Monsieur des Jonchères and find out if we could send her to the Hôtel-Dieu of Nantes where they need another sister. They have only seven there, and it has been quite a while since they have asked for another. However, because of the difficulty of sending a sister alone, we have always put this off. If Monsieur Vincent is in Angers, please make it a point to speak to him about it. Whichever sister is to be sent, she must be capable of giving good service. We thought of suggesting Sister Nicole[1] or Sister Élisabeth[2] because you know the kind of people we have to satisfy in Nantes.

We are still in possession of the holy relic[3] we acquired with all the formalities you required. I sincerely hope that the goodness of God gives us the means to send it to you so that it may be placed where God wishes it to be honored.

You know the need we have of your prayers. I request them for the love of God in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble servant.

L.238 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

March 16 (1649)

Monsieur,

I was anxiously waiting for the post roads to open so that I might have the honor of thanking you most humbly for the trouble that your Charity continues to take for our poor sisters. I am truly astonished that they are so prone to worry. Possibly, Monsieur, they are not capable of too much mental exercise, or of discussing their problems among themselves without becoming upset even though they are only trifling

1. Nicole, perhaps Nicole Georget, arrived in Angers in June 1647 and was in Nanteuil in 1659.
2. Élisabeth Brocard, arrived in Angers at the end of 1648 with Claude Chantereau, Perrette and Barbe, a native of Troyes. In 1654, she became Cécile Angiboust's assistant. Difficulties came to light quickly between them. Élisabeth, called back to Paris in August 1655, was sent to La Fère in 1656.
3. The relic of Saint Maurice, see Letter 265.

matters. I humbly beg you, Monsieur, to make a point of discussing this with Monsieur Vincent, who, I do not believe, will fail to go to Angers, if he is not already there, because he was in Le Mans not long ago.

Here, we are most anxious that his return not be delayed too long. We hope for this by the grace of God in whose love I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble daughter.

L.240 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

March 31 (1649)

Monsieur,

I owe you a great deal for the trouble that your Charity took to send us the news that we were so anxious to receive; but we will continue to worry until we hear from the person himself that the accident,[1] which God permitted, has not caused him any great harm. This leads me to beg you very humbly to show us this same kindness again for the love of God.

Here we hope for peace, although there are people with such badly conceived notions that they seem to reject it openly. Everything must be left up to God. For myself, Monsieur, I wish for peace with all my heart for ourselves and for everyone, and I pray that the teachings of Jesus Christ may reign supreme.

It is in His most holy love that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble daughter and servant.

P.S. I am not writing to our sisters at this time for I believe that they are receiving sufficient consolation. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for all the trouble your Charity has the kindness to go to for them.

1. Monsieur Vincent had an accident going to Angers from Le Mans. Near Durtal, his horse fell into a small river. Monsieur Vincent would have drowned without the swift rescue by the priest who accompanied him. He dried off in a poor farmer's cottage.

L.234 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[1] AND THE OTHER DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Serving the Poor Children at the Château of Bicêtre

Friday (c. March-April 1649)

My very dear Sisters,

Let us give God the glory which we owe Him in the state in which He has placed us. I beg Him with all my heart to let you know how good it is to trust in Him. Therefore, my dear Sisters, look to Him often as children do to their father and mother for their needs. I am sure that He gives all of you the courage to die rather than to offend Him and that your modesty will clearly show that you belong to the King of Kings to whom all powers are subject.

You would do well to keep our sisters together and to take great care to watch over the older girls or to keep them in the school[2] even when they are not helping you. Courage, my dear Sisters! Who should have more of it than you who are suffering in the exercise of charity?

Oh! that Our Lord may take great pleasure in seeing the sentiments of love in your hearts and your submission to His holy will which accepts all that He desires in you and of you. I have no doubt that each of you has thought about making a good confession with all the necessary resolutions, but especially of being faithful servants in the future and of practicing self-denial more than ever.

I beg the Blessed Virgin to be your protectress and to obtain for you from her Son the generosity you need. I also beg your guardian angels to be in accord with the angels of the gentlemen sent to you by God so that they may be helped to live in a manner which will glorify God eternally, and you, my dear Sisters, will continue all your holy efforts for His holy love in which I am, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister.

P.S. Although I speak to you of going to confession, I do not want to cause you to be afraid of death. Certainly not! I do this because it helps you to remain in the grace of God, so that He may always watch over you.

I truly would like to be with you. We are going to do all we can to be at peace.

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1. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
2. During the troubles of La Fronde, the army camped around Bicêtre.

L.241 - FOR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

(April 1649)

My very dear Sister,

Grégoire left to complete his trip. Find out what you can from his mother. You can approach her at home or in the places she frequents. She must at least name her midwife or her confessor as assurance that she will not expose her child again.

I beg Sister Françoise[1] to show great charity to our poor sick sister[2] with whom I suffer. Spare nothing to alleviate her suffering.

I praise God that we have disposed of the house.

If Monsieur Saint-Médard's daughter comes by to find out the date she will enter our Company, ask her to wait until I return.

Please send us four holy cards for our sisters at Maule and Crespières and give all our sisters Monsieur Vincent's greetings. He is well, thank God. We must constantly pray for his preservation so that God will be pleased to send him back to us soon. His letters are dated Easter Monday.[3] Please send this letter and those of Monsieur Vincent to Madame de Bouillon[4] as soon as you receive them.

I think it would be well for you to send Sister Perrette[5] to Issy for another visit and, as soon as I return, both will go to live there. Send her to Madame de Montdésir[6] to find out how she is and whether some money is due. If she has not requested any, tell her to do so. Do not let her know that you keep a portion of the money for their food until we have discussed it together as we should.

Remember me to all our sisters. I did not think that I would be here for so long. However, they may be certain that a part of me is always with them, as with you, of whom I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Françoise Le Roseau, the cook, see Letter 258.
2. Laurence Dubois, a young sister, see Letter 419.
3. Monday, April 4, 1649.
4. Madame de Bouillon, see Letter 67.
5. Perrette, the elder, see Letter 214.
6. Madame de Montdésir, Lady of Charity of Issy. The withdrawal of the Daughters of Charity from this village would take place in the year 1649.

L.242 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT, GENERAL OF THE PRIESTS OF THE MISSION

April 6, 1649

My Most Honored Father,

We are most anxious to know how and where you are. I beg God, in His goodness, that your health and Community business will allow you to come soon. The charitable undertakings here in Paris need you badly. Madame de Lamoignon,[1] the President, in particular implores you to return soon. I will let others tell you the news of peace. I only know that it inspires us to praise God with the people.

Good Monsieur Alain[2] passed away. Our sisters are getting ready to return to Bicêtre[3] one of these days to occupy the place permanently and sow the fields. God willing, they can live there as long as Divine Providence ordains.

Madame du Sault,[4] the President, sends her very humble greetings. She really hopes that you will be here before she leaves to return home.

I most humbly beg you, my Most Honored Father, not to forget our poor sisters if you are near Nantes. I also ask you if there is a way they can avoid changing sisters. As I told you in two preceding letters, if your Charity feels it necessary at least that Sister Marie[5] of Tours be changed, have her sent back to Tours rather than to Paris. We have tried her in several locations, and when she was sent to Nantes, I told her it would be our last attempt to place her. Please do as your Charity sees fit, according to the wishes of Our Lord who inspires you.

In the name of God, my dear Father, pray for us. I have written to you and made known our needs and mine in particular. However, I truly fear that you did not receive our letters. We only hope that God will show us His mercy and restore to us what was taken away by His justice. I am in His most holy love, Most Honored Father, your most obedient and grateful daughter and servant.

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1. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
2. Monsieur Jean Alain, Priest of the Mission, 31 years of age.
3. During the siege of Paris by the troops of Condé, the foundlings and the sisters returned to the center of the city (Coste III, 428).
4. Lady of Charity.
5. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161. Monsieur Vincent would be in Nantes at the end of the month of April.

L.243 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

April 6, 1649

Monsieur,

I have the honor of writing to you to ask you to give us any news of Monsieur Vincent that you might know. We are extremely worried because we have not heard anything since March 14 when he was in Le Mans. I know that he was also in Angers, but since then we have heard nothing of any sort. The last news we did receive came neither from him nor from anyone close to him. Please, Monsieur, make an effort to let us know what you know about this. I am waiting for news from our sisters before I write to them.

I beg God to preserve you, and I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble daughter and servant.

L.244 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

April 6 (1649)

My very dear Sisters,

May God be blessed and eternally glorified for all the graces He bestows on His creatures, especially the graces bestowed on our little Company in general and on each of its members in particular during these times of affliction. Share with us, my dear Sister, our joy in knowing that our sisters are safe and that they never stopped serving the sick poor. In Paris you would not believe the amount of alms given to the poor who had no bread. I believe that this has drawn down God's mercy upon us so that we might have peace.

Thank God for us, my dear Sisters, as we do for the strength and courage He gave you to bear with everything about which you told me. I rejoiced at the joy you expressed upon receiving news of us and at the good use you made of everything God let you know about us.

We knew that Monsieur Vincent was in Angers. God willing, he is with you now and you have time to speak to him. Let Divine Providence lead you in this and in all matters.

I am in such a hurry that I only have time to finish and to assure you

that I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please extend our greetings to Monsieur des Jonchères and to all our friends.

L.245 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE[1]

(April 1649)

My dear Sister,

What Divine Providence has ordained for Sister Jacqueline is very good. However, there is no hurry in carrying out the resolution that was made. Nevertheless, we must be firm and not limit our consideration only to the oral declarations of the girls wishing to remain in the Company. Their physical health and contrary actions, shown on numerous occasions in a variety of circumstances, must also be considered. We must believe that God gives His Spirit to superiors so that they may lead their families. However, when I return at the beginning of next week, we must examine the situation.

May God be praised that Sister Marie is in a better frame of mind. You did not let me know if you had the belongings of our sisters from Issy[2] sent to Saint-Lazare. Nor did you inform me of our sisters working with the foundlings, although Monsieur Berthe[3] did tell us about them. An inflamed chin has restricted me somewhat to my room. I hope it will soon be better.

I beg you to recommend Monsieur Vincent to the prayers of your sisters. He asks for prayers in each of the letters his Charity does me the honor of writing to me, and he assures us that we are remembered at the holy altar. I fear that he was not well in Saint-Méen[4] and that this is delaying his trip. This would be a great affliction for us.

I beg you, my Sister, to begin a novena to Our Lord who was a traveler on earth and to the Blessed Virgin, our true and only mother. I am in their love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Julienne Loret at the Motherhouse. Louise de Marillac was in Paris.
2. The sisters left Issy.
3. Monsieur Berthe (1622-1697) from Donchéry in the Ardennes entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1640. In 1646, he was in Sedan. In 1649, he was named Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants. He left for Rome in 1651 and stayed there until 1655. In 1661, he was named Assistant General.
4. Monsieur Vincent was in Saint-Méen on April 5, 1649.

L.261 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS JULIENNE AND HELLOT[1]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor (at Paris)

(April 1649)

My very dear Sisters,

I find both of you a bit lazy for sending me messages without writing to me and for not giving me news of the House. Perhaps you are unaware that it pleases me for you to think that writing to me is necessary; besides, you would make me most happy. My dear Sisters, it is not that I do not find great consolation in the blessing which God gives to your actions and that I do not thank Him for it with all my heart, but it is good for us to exhibit the virtues of submission and dependence.

I truly believe that the Company[2] is quite regular and that each sister is fulfilling her duties and allowing the others to fulfill theirs according to the usual customs and the necessities of the moment, the duration of which we have no idea. Nor do we know if this will last longer than we expect—something I pray God will not permit because the poor people need all of this to end.

As for myself, I am well, thank God, but I have not felt the war so much as I have since I have been in town. I was thinking of returning today, but yesterday I was waiting for the good dinner I missed because Sister Hellot has extolled the benefits of fasting at Madame de Mortemart's[3] home. As a result Sister Barbe[4] nearly challenged to a duel[5] those who were offended by the idea! I do not know how I merited it, but the same thing happened today at Madame de Marillac's home! However, neither one of them prevented me from eating heartily.

I beg you to find out tomorrow about Monsieur Lambert[6] and to let me know; he was bled twice. I praise God that Sister Laurence[7] is better. I beg you to let her know that I am often with her in spirit and that with her I offer her sufferings to Our Lord for the needs of our country.

My dear Sister, please notify Monsieur Lambert or Monsieur du Chesne[8] when our sisters from the city, even if there is only one, wish to

1. Julienne Loret and Élisabeth Hellot. Louise de Marillac visited the houses of the Daughters of Charity in Paris.
2. The Company of the Daughters of Charity.
3. Madame de Mortemart, see Letter 206, a relative of Louise de Marillac.
4. Barbe Bailly, who accompanied Louise de Marillac.
5. "Appeler sur le pré": phrase used to challenge someone to a duel. Louise de Marillac cheerfully joked about no one offering them dinner.
6. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.
7. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
8. Monsieur du Chesne, see Letter 154.

go to confession. I truly believe that in their charity they will take the trouble to come to the House.

I thought Sister Françoise[1] was supposed to come. I ask that she come tomorrow morning because I am afraid a meeting will come up which will necessitate my going out. Everyone is so busy that of all those I was supposed to see, I have only met with Madame de Lamoignon, the President.

I consider you very fortunate to be away from the great disturbance we had here yesterday. I was never so dependent nor detached from my will as I am now. I praise God for this with all my heart and find consolation in the thought of being reunited with my sisters. I greet them all warmly, and earnestly desire their perfection and holiness; and I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you not to let the pigs out together so much. Especially do not let them go into the garden so that we may see it growing. I hope you are making sure that the cow and the other animals are not overfed. This is harmful to them rather than . . .

(The end of the sentence is not finished.)

L.259 - (TO SISTER JULIENNE LORET)[2]

(April 1649)

My very dear Sister,

You have reason to complain that I have not written to you. I meant to do so but have not had the time. Then I thought that any day I would be returning to all our dear sisters, where I often wish to be. However, I must wait for God to will it.

I think it would be better, my dear Sister, to wait for our return since Sister Louise[3] has not returned to her duties. Please take care of her because I hear that she is not well.

If some wheat or flour comes your way at a good price, you may buy some. However, if it is expensive, it would be better to wait.

I do not know if Sister Françoise[4] remembered to tell you to send the cow, even if it is expensive, because I am afraid that she will dry up.

1. Françoise Le Roseau, see Letter 258.
2. An unaddressed letter, Louise de Marillac wrote from Paris to Julienne Loret at the Motherhouse, see preceding letters.
3. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
4. Françoise Fanchon, see Letter 595.

I hope that our sister gardeners are hard at work while God is giving us beautiful weather. I would ask them to take special care of the chicory. I am sending you a few nice beans so that, as they are gathered in, you might remember the war. I beg you to tell Sister Françoise that I believe the essence of cinnamon must be placed in the sun like the other distilled waters.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to continue praying to God for peace, and ask our sisters to thank Him for keeping Monsieur Vincent well. Good evening, my dear Sisters. I am entirely yours in the love of Jesus Crucified.

L.258 - TO OUR DEAR SISTERS AT SAINT-GERMAIN-L'AUXERROIS[1]

To be given to Sister Julienne, Daughter of Charity across from Saint-Lazare

(April 1649)

My very dear Sister,

I beg you to give me news of yourself tomorrow; I will return only at the end of the week. We are well, thanks be to God. Send me news of Monsieur Norais and of all our family. I am so rushed that I only have time to assure you that I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I ask with all my heart to be remembered to Sister Hellot, Sister Françoise Lerose[2] and all our sisters, but especially to Sisters Barbe[3] and Geneviève.[4]

1. Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, one of the parishes of Paris. Louise visited there during her stay in Paris.
2. Louise de Marillac wrote "Lerose" but it was a question of Françoise Le Roseau, the cook. She did not know how to read or write and signed an "x" on the Act of Establishment of the Company in August 1655.
3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
4. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

L.132 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Liancourt

Tuesday (c. May 1649)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for your safe trip.[1] You have reason to thank Our Lord for His guidance. I beg you to console Sister Marguerite of Fisme[2] in her afflictions and in her complaints against Sisters Louise[3] and Clémence.[4] I would ask her especially to consider that we are not perfect, and that God sometimes permits us to commit many faults in order to humble us. Otherwise, we would be damned by the mortal sin of pride.

God willing, we will send the carriage Thursday at the latest. Please make the trip back in two days so that it will not be too much for our dear, weak sister whom I greet very lovingly. I hope that her return will be good for her health. Greet for me as well my dear Sister Madeleine and our other sisters. Please tell Sister Clémence that we are greatly consoled to hear news of her, and that I urge her to be patient for a little while as she waits to come here. She will lose nothing, because she will have the opportunity to practice great charity, gentleness and condescension toward our poor, dear sick sister whom we shall send for, with God's help, as soon as Our Lord sees fit. Although travel expenses are not paid by the hospital, it is just that they should defray those of persons not in your party. I am sure that you will do all that is necessary to comfort the patient. Bid your final farewell to the Pastor in the same manner in which you greeted him when you arrived, and assure all our sisters of our affection. Please believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Louise de Marillac sent Barbe Angiboust to visit Marguerite, who was ill.
2. Marguerite, a native of Fisme, died in August 1649.
3. Louise Proust, see Letter 130c.
4. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.

L.246 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-René, Nantes

May 5 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I knew that you had had the blessing of seeing Monsieur Vincent,[1] and I praise God for it with all my heart. At the same time I hope that all our sisters are making good use of this grace.

I believe, Sister, that some changes among our sisters are necessary, and I would ask you to let me know as soon as possible if you could train a sister who already knows how to prepare medicines and other remedies[2] to mix compounds. It would be difficult for us to send you someone already skilled in this on short notice. Please do not mention this suggestion to anyone.

Please let me know if there are only seven sisters there, and in the name of God, do your best to take care of the goods of the poor. Also, see to it that our sisters are doing this lovingly. I believe that you are as exact as possible in keeping track of your receipts and expenditures.

Please greet warmly for me all our good gentlemen and Ladies and our sisters whom I embrace warmly and lovingly in the love of our crucified and risen Master. Your very humble sister and loving servant.

L.247 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

at Marseilles

Paris, May 16, 1649

Monsieur,

I know that your heart filled with charity will accept the humble thanks of both our sisters and me for the holy admonitions and testimonies of good will which you gave us in a general letter to the sisters and in a personal letter to me. They were a great joy and consolation to us. Your letter was read while we were waiting for the conference, and God knows,

1. Monsieur Vincent passed through Nantes at the end of April.

2. Louise de Marillac contemplated the departure of Henriette Gesseaume, who had been in charge of the pharmacy since 1646. Monsieur Vincent realized that she was the cause of most of the difficulties in the community as well as at the hospital in Nantes (Coste III, 432).

Monsieur, that tears were shed. It was the hope of seeing you soon which comforted us, although we have awaited this happiness for a long time! I beg you in the name of God, Monsieur, not to contribute to this delay so that when it pleases Divine Providence to show us mercy, we will have this happiness.

I am sure that in your charity you have suffered with us during this period of turmoil in Paris.[1] We beg you to help us to thank God for the graces He has given to the entire Company. He preserved us from hunger and all other dangers, both in the cities and in the villages. We have such a debt of gratitude that we can never repay it unless our good God adds to all His other graces that of being more faithful than we have been. This leads me to implore the aid of your charity because we hope for powerful assistance from you if Divine Providence leads you back to this area. You will find great changes here.

I do not know if you knew of the deaths of our dear Sisters Turgis,[2] the older Jeanne-Baptiste,[3] Salomée,[4] Renée from Angers,[5] Marie Despinal,[6] Élisabeth Martin,[7] who was at Nantes, and of our good Sister Madeleine[8] who had been Sister Servant for so long, as well as of several others who entered our Company during your absence. I recommend all of them to your charity, but especially those still with us—several of whom are wavering in their vocation. Please pray also for all of us in general because we are not zealous or fervent enough and are much too affected by self-love. This makes me fear that we will soon become lax.

What do you think, Monsieur, of the fact that I am not afraid to trouble you with this sad news? It is the trust I have in the charity that God has given you for our well-being that prompts me, and the perfection that His goodness wishes in us, for which I beg you to pray. I beg you to do me the honor always of believing me in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble servant.

1. During the siege of Paris by the armies of Condé.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, deceased in October 1648.
3. Jeanne-Baptiste, the elder, deceased in December 1648.
4. Salomée, deceased in November 1647.
5. Renée from Angers, deceased in December 1648.
6. Marie Despinal, deceased in May 1646.
7. Élisabeth Martin, deceased at the end of the year 1648.
8. Madeleine Mongert, also deceased at the end of the year 1648.

L.433 - (TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE)[1]

at Nantes

May 22 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

Yesterday we sent you three of our sisters.[2] Please do not wait to send Sister Henriette[3] and Sister Marie Thilouse[4] to Richelieu, as Monsieur Vincent ordered.[5] There, they shall await their new assignment from him. I beg you not to let them know of this until the night before they are to leave. Please ask Monsieur des Jonchères and Mademoiselle de La Carisière to persaude your administrators to accept this change, and follow their orders in this matter. We did not give our sisters any money for the trip, believing that the administrators would defray the cost. I assure you that the journey to Nantes is quite an expense for us. Nevertheless, if they do not wish to defray the cost, borrow some money from them and promise them that it will be repaid by us here. The journey is not long, so give them only what is necessary. If the gentlemen wish to contribute money for the expenses of the sisters sent there, accept it from them and send it with the sisters. We sent you a girl who is to be sent back to Saint-Méen. Ask Mademoiselle de La Carisière to help you to find a good chaperon for her. Our sisters have some money for her trip.

I expect much from the establishment at Nantes since persecutions are one of the signs of the value of a work. All three of the sisters we have sent to you have excellent dispositions, and they are deeply attached to their vocation. I hope that they will be a great help to you in carrying out the most holy will of God.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to tell Sister Jeanne[6] and the others not to speak of the past. This only discourages some of the sisters. We should reflect upon all that has happened only to praise God for having saved from shipwreck those who remained steadfast, and to recognize the occasions that He has given us to suffer for His love. I beg Him with all my heart to take complete possession of all that we are on this holy feast day.[7] Pray to God for the entire Company, which His goodness allows

1. An unaddressed letter. The content permits one to ascertain that it was a question of Jeanne Lepintre, Sister Servant in Nantes.
2. Marie Noret, Renée Delacroix and Catherine Baucher.
3. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
4. Marie Thilouse, see Letter 161.
5. In his letter of April 28, 1649 to Louise de Marillac, Monsieur Vincent deemed the departure of Marie and Henriette necessary (Coste III, 432).
6. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
7. Louise de Marillac wrote on Pentecost Sunday, May 22, 1649.

to be tried from time to time by various forces, that we may profit from such trials. I beg you to make a novena in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament for our needs, and pray for a number of persons who have requested our prayers and to whom we are most indebted.

I embrace all our sisters most affectionately and am to them and to you in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.248 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Nantes

June 1 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I saw your letter and noticed the advice you requested of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux regarding your incertitude. Remember that you can never be wrong in following the orders of our Most Honored Father. Be firm and constant in this, and never be persuaded to the contrary by the lure of self-satisfaction. You did not let me know to whom you had given your Rules, and this prevented them from being shown to the Bishop of Nantes, who had already once before been to see our sisters' quarters and found fault with them. However, it was not because of their way of life or the manner in which our establishment was run. This he knew of because his Vicar General had been fully informed.

I am truly upset for not having written to the administrators before the arrival of our sisters.[1] I felt better that they had a short stopover at Ponts-de-Cé. I believe the girl from Saint-Méen[2] has already been sent back. If not, I ask that she be a burden to no one. If she does not have enough money, borrow some and we will pay it back here or elsewhere.

Remember me to all our sisters and tell them always to remember the advice of Monsieur Vincent especially forbearance and cordiality so as to honor the unity and the diversity of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. I am in Their love, my dear Sister, your very humble and obedient servant.

1. Arrival of Marie Noret, Renée Delacroix and Catherine Baucher.
2. See Letter 433.

L.250 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Sister Servant of the Daughters of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-René at Nantes

June 15 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I deeply sympathize with your troubles, but because Monsieur Vincent[1] has just arrived and is weighed down by more business and difficulty than you can imagine, he has not yet been able to turn his attention to this matter. As soon as time and business allow him, he will give you instructions. Of this you can rest assured; and I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble and loving sister and servant.

P.S. I did not think I would be able to write this note. In the name of God, my very dear Sisters, work at being at peace in the midst of your troubles and concerns. Await with total submission the order and guidance of Divine Providence. One day we will both praise God for this persecution. True, you may be sent back, but please believe that nothing happens except for our good. Do you not know that God draws His glory from acts of contempt?

Please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur de la Thomassière.[2] I had the honor of writing to him last week. In speaking to him of your troubles, I mentioned something which I did not explain well enough.

When I let him know that we would approve your dismissal, I told him that you would be justified in leaving and that you had but to shake the dust from your shoes. What I meant was that, since you were taking nothing from the hospital, your leaving would only be a proof to those who had accused you of wrongdoing that they were certainly mistaken. I beg God with all my heart to forgive them and to bestow His holy blessings upon them. Please be sure to deliver this message to this good gentleman. Good day, Sisters. Please greet Monsieur d'Annemont[3] since he is in Nantes.

1. Monsieur Vincent returned to Paris on June 13, 1649.
2. Monsieur de la Thomassière, a hospital administrator.
3. Monsieur d'Annemont, a priest, see Letter 173.

L.251 - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST)[1]

at Saint-Denis

June 18 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart at seeing you restored to health, and I beg Him to increase it for His glory.

For reasons which I will explain to you, I would ask you to refrain from speaking of the faults of those over whom you exercise authority. Also be sure that our sisters are very exact when they spend money and that they keep record of it. When soup is made, three-quarters of a pound of meat, at most, may be added for each patient and sister as well. However, the sisters' soup is usually made separately since it is not reasonable for them to eat that of the patients, unless they are sick themselves. I would ask you to be sure to wash the feet of the sick as they enter, to wash their linens and to treat them with gentleness and charity. Your obligations are to provide the sick their medications and food at the correct times and to see to it that our sisters are exact in following their Rule.

Monsieur Vincent told me wonderful things about Sister Cécile,[2] and he spoke of the exactitude of our sisters. I hope our good God will bestow the same grace upon you once you are fully restored to health. I am in the love of His Son, my dear Sister, your most obedient sister and servant.

L.176 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(June 1649)

Monsieur,

We owe you so much that I do not know how to express my gratitude for it all. I praise God for the consolation which in His goodness He allowed you to give to our sisters in Nantes.[3] I am too rushed at the moment to speak to you of them. I only have time to tell you that I passed on to Monsieur Vincent the next-to-last letter I received from you. He asked me to tell you that he was most ashamed for not having written

1. Barbe Angiboust was at the Saint-Denis Hospital from 1649 to 1651.
2. Cécile Angiboust, whom Monsieur Vincent saw on his way to Angers in April.
3. The welcoming of three sisters who went to Nantes.

to you. Because he was afraid that business would not allow him the time to write, he asked me to tell you that, in view of the graces and blessings which God bestows on your holy undertakings, he finds it most appropriate that you apply for the Archdiaconate,[1] remembering that God will know where to find you when He needs you elsewhere. Monsieur, you know quite well his thoughts on this.

As for your nephew's slight disappointment, Monsieur Vincent feels that, with the goodness you always display, you should allow him more time to see whether the holder of the benefice might deal with him, informing your relatives of your procedure. After this time it seems that you will be able to act quite freely.

Monsieur Vincent also told me, Monsieur, that he gives you this advice reluctantly because he wants you to know that he finds consolation in having you in this area.

As for sending back[2] the sisters from Angers, we await your advice in the matter. I had asked you for this some time ago. I am greatly ashamed once again for not being able to write to Monsieur Ratier[3] at this time. I hope that his goodness will excuse me, and that you will believe me always in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble servant.

L.481 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

June 29 (1649)

Monsieur,

I praise God with all my heart that your fever is a simple one, and I hope that you are now over it. I also hope that the country air will help you to recover your usual good health. I have to tell you, Monsieur, that your illness had me a bit worried.

I had the honor of writing to the administrators to thank them for their kindness in receiving our sisters,[4] and for helping them with their needs. It never occurred to me that they would pass through Angers; otherwise, I certainly would have written to them. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to place our sisters as you judge best. However, I thought that

1. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux wished to obtain an archdeaconry for his nephew, the future Bishop of Saintes.
2. See Letter 481.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
4. The three sisters going to Nantes, see Letter 248.

our Sister Madeleine[1] was one of the best, and that if some change had to be made that you would choose Sister Jeanne from Loudun[2] or another, whose name I have forgotten, whom Monsieur Ratier seems to have proposed for a change. If you feel Sister Claude[3] is doing well, please place her in whatever duty you consider appropriate. As for Richelieu, it will be easy for us to send and recall those whom we judge suitable for the work there in the event that there is need to train other sisters. I do not know where to look for someone to assist Sister Cécile,[4] who is already quite ill.

I humbly thank you, Monsieur, for the advice[5] your Charity gave us for our sister of Nantes. I believe that it will be in keeping with the recommendation of Monsieur Vincent. I had already written to Monsieur de la Thomassière[6] that it would be a great benefit for us if it were followed.

I greatly fear that our good Sister Jeanne[7] spoke of the vows in a way which does not make it clear that they are something other that what is professed by the devout laity. Again let me say that they are not the same, for the laity usually pronounce them before their confessor. We must honor the plans of God and bless Him constantly. I believe that Monsieur Vincent will write to Nantes next week. He told me that he would decide tomorrow what will be done.

Please, Monsieur, let me know if in this first article of the Rule of our sisters there is anything which indicates a regular community and is different from the Rule of Angers. This was never my intention; on the contrary, I met with the Vicar General two or three times to explain to him that we were just a secular family and that because we were bound together by the Confraternity of Charity, we had Monsieur Vincent, as General of these Confraternities, for our Director. Once he understood our practices he then explained our type of establishment to the Bishop of Nantes who approved it so wholeheartedly that he signed his name along with the administrators of the city.

I believe, Monsieur, that the return of Sister Renée Priot will have greatly dampened the enthusiasm of any candidates wishing to join us. Great courage and steadfastness are essential in order to persevere here because we are bound only by obedience and are often exposed to the danger of discouragement in various circumstances. It is more than a little disheartening for us to spend so much time and so many years in

1. Madeleine Bécu, see Letter 228.
2. Monsieur Vincent proposed sending her to Richelieu (Coste III, 425).
3. Claude Chantereau, see Letter 421.
4. Cécile Angiboust would have Élisabeth Brocard as assistant.
5. See Letter 248.
6. Monsieur de la Thomassière, hospital administrator in Nantes.
7. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 248.

testing and forming our sisters only to have them taken from us by weakness. So long as God is glorified by it, nothing else matters. It is this which leads me humbly to beg you, for the love of God, to help us, by your holy sacrifices and prayers, to be faithful to His holy will in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and humble daughter and servant.

P.S. We forwarded the letter of the penitent woman and will try to get a response to send to her. The complete conversion of sinners is most difficult, and the almighty power of God must intervene.

L.252 - TO MY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Montreuil

July 23 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I was overjoyed by the return of Marie Gallois[2] who brought us news of you and of Sister Marie.[3] I praise God that it is good news, and I beg His goodness to preserve the health He has given you so that you may serve Him in the person of the poor. I am dismayed that I cannot send you one of our sisters at this time. I showed your letter to Monsieur Vincent who is of the opinion that you should get someone there, as you suggest, if you need help immediately. If you are able to come here, we could then decide together the best thing to do.

The Princess[4] did us a considerable honor by remembering us. When you see her, Sister, assure her of my most humble respect and service. I beg God with all my heart to grant her a safe delivery. I would also ask you to greet Mademoiselle de Mounille[5] for me. I am deeply touched by the kindness she extends to you.

It is true, my dear Sister, that the absence of Monsieur Vincent[6] was extremely painful for us because we feared the dangers he might encounter. However, such was the holy will of God. May His holy name be eternally blessed for it and for all the graces which He has bestowed upon our entire company in His goodness, during these times of trouble. We could not thank Him enough for this if we did so for the rest of our lives. I beg you and Sister Marie to help us to fulfill these obligations.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. Marie Gallois, see Letter 217.
3. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.
4. The Princess d'Harcourt lived in Montreuil-sur-Mer.
5. Lady of Charity of Montreuil-sur-Mer.
6. Monsieur Vincent was absent from Paris from January 14 to July 13, 1649.

I just received your letter brought by the son of your shoemaker, whom we shall serve in any way we can. I am glad, my dear Sister, that you let me know that you had given the two books to Marie Gallois. As soon as she arrived, we gave Sister Hellot the one that you had sent her. Poor Marie arrived safely, by the grace of God. I am rather upset that you were not able to keep her son at the hospital since the Count[1] had placed him there. If you only knew how incredibly difficult it is to place someone now in Paris. It seems as though the war has been here a long time and that everyone has grown poor from it. I assure you, Sister, that at the beginning of the wars it seemed that the parishes would be obliged to send all our sisters back. Nonetheless, Divine Providence saw to it that alms were given for the sick and bashful poor in amounts for which no one had dared hope. It seemed that the Lady Officers and others were more concerned about finding wheat for their poor than for themselves. May God be praised for this!

I spoke to Monsieur Vincent about the matter you mentioned concerning the Prince and Princess d'Harcourt. Assure them that he is still willing to carry out for them the wish of the deceased Count de Lannoy[2] and that he will rethink the matter anew. As for me, my dear Sister, I beg you to believe that I will urge him on in this matter, hoping that God will be glorified by it.

In the love of God and of His Son Jesus Crucified I am, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you very cordially. Our dear sister went to God, and another of our sisters is very ill; you do not know her.

L.252B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday [August 1649]

Monsieur,

The proposal made by the Duchess[3] to have the children fed with goat's milk makes me think of another means which, if it works, would allow them to be fed for an écu. However, we would have to try out the idea before presenting it to them, when it pleases your Charity. I will tell you my idea later; it would be rather long to write out.

I beg you most humbly, my Most Honored Father, to remember the request I made to you yesterday and to be so kind as to let me know if

1. The Count de Lannoy, see Letter 128.
2. The Count de Lannoy, see Letter 128.
3. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.

you will grant Sister Françoise,[1] the gardener, what she asked of you yesterday. Also please offer to God at the holy altar the renewal of several other sisters and give us your holy blessing. I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and grateful daughter and servant.

L.253 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital at Nantes

August 18 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for having restored your health. I must tell you that I was so sorry for you, dear Sister, suffering as you were from such a long illness in addition to your other troubles. The numerous reasons we have to hope that God will draw His glory from these difficulties should greatly console you. Monsieur Vincent praises God for this with all his heart and reminds you that one must always await the direction of Divine Providence to reconcile the differences that have arisen. If you are sent back,[2] my dear Sisters, it is only just that you be given the funds for your trip. If we are compelled to withdraw you, Monsieur Vincent has asked Monsieur des Jonchères to give you what you need. However, my dear Sister, it is still necessary for you to send us word before your departure because we are being asked for sisters for that area.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to assure all our sisters that Monsieur Vincent truly praises their generosity and fidelity to God in their vocation. How just it is, my dear Sisters, not to allow yourselves to be carried off in all directions!

I saw Monsieur de . . . , one of the Fathers of the Poor of last year and he was very well disposed toward you. If God permits you to remain there, we shall carry out the recommendations he judges necessary. He spoke to me about the seasoning of your soup. I believe you should not hesitate to add some cloves to it since it is the custom of the region. Likewise, Sister, since the Fathers of the Poor would like it done, please prepare consommés for the gravely ill who need them. You should also go to the trouble of preparing tasty stews and seasonings for the convalescing patients. This costs no more and they regain their strength

1. Françoise Fanchon, see Letter 595.
2. The difficulties resumed in Nantes. The administrators spoke of dismissing the sisters, see Letter 250.

much more quickly. Sometimes it only takes a little to satisfy the most difficult.

Please greet good Monsieur Don Jean[1] for me. All our sisters also send their greetings to you. Our little Sister Marguerite[2] from Liancourt was buried on the feast of Saint Roch; I would ask all our sisters to receive Holy Communion for her. Our good King arrives in Paris today and there is joy in the hearts of all. Pray God for the Church and for all of France, and believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your most obedient and humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you to extend our most humble and respectful greetings to Monsieur des Jonchères,[3] Monsieur d'Annemont,[4] Monsieur de la Truchandière, and to all our good friends, including the Ladies.

L.255 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 30 [1649]

Monsieur and Most Honored Father,

I suspected that I would have to come here,[5] but I will only be able to give you an account when I have the honor of seeing you. Monsieur de la Hode, chaplain at Chantilly, came to see me to give me some advice. It seems that the entire family is being attacked from all sides; I do not know what God is telling us by this. I most humbly beg your Charity to be so good as to let me know if I should go to Chantilly to deal with the situation; I believe it might be necessary.

I understand that Madame de Romilly[6] has learned that the family of Monsieur Portier, who lives across from Saint-Paul's, is everything we could desire. She should be speaking to you for them. However, I most humbly beg you, my dear Father, not to speak to her about it, unless she brings it up to you, because the people who spoke to my son about this[7] told him that the parents were happy with the property. It is also wiser on such occasions not to declare too openly what one has because it can be prejudicial should matters not materialize.

The hopes for the future, whether in property or employments, are considerable. It is not that I have the intention or the will to deceive

1. Don Jean Morisse, see Letter 164.
2. Marguerite from Fismes, who was in Liancourt.
3. Monsieur des Jonchères, see Letter 147.
4. Monsieur d'Annemont, see Letter 173.
5. Louise de Marillac arrived at Liancourt on Saturday, August 28.
6. Madame de Romilly, see Letter 191.
7. It was a question of marriage plans for Michel Le Gras.

anyone, God forbid, but it seems to me that the expenditures in the past which served to make a man employable were considerable. Then there is his inclination not to squander what he has but to work to acquire more, which I hope he will succeed in doing once he is settled. I beg your Charity most humbly to present this matter as well as the needs of our Company to our good God so as to draw upon them His graces and blessings. Please give me your blessing for His love in which I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient servant and most grateful daughter.

L.256 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

To be given to Sister Julienne Loret

[August 1649]

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you must have received my letters today. I also wrote to Monsieur Vincent, but I had not yet received your deplorable letter. We cannot be put off guard in this matter. It is much too important. Ask Monsieur Vincent for an appointment to see him but let him know that it is an urgent matter. Then tell him everything. Even speak to him about the conduct of Monsieur Provost. It can only be that the devil has great plans for the loss of these souls. Be especially careful that Sister Anne-Marie does not go out. Express to Monsieur Vincent the regrets of her aunt, and tell him that I most humbly beg him to see the benefit in confining this girl. We could do this if we had a secure room. However, I do not see anything else we can do except to place her at Sainte-Marie as if she were in retreat. Since she is the niece of one of their religious, they will not refuse her this charity. I foresee great difficulties if she goes out. If we resort to some stringent means to prevent her, it could possibly serve to retard the development of this custom so that weak spirits within our Company will not continue it. I foresee our total ruin if an end is not put to it. We certainly deserve it, and I, most of all, because of my failings and infidelities. Explain everything to Monsieur Vincent, telling him of the danger that exists if people see young girls leave the house with such freedom. This will be a source of scandal for everyone and even those who are well-balanced will be offended. Do all that you can promptly, and pray to God for me. I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your most obedient sister and servant.

P.S. I am astonished at the freedom this sister had to take all the trips about which you have spoken. In the name of God, dear Sister, be vigilant

concerning all that happens. I do not know if you took away her keys; it is necessary, but do so without appearing not to trust her.

L.256B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[August 1649]

Monsieur,

Since writing this letter,[1] I thought that it would be better to address it to you because of the prompt assistance required in this matter. For that reason I am sending you the letter for Sister Julienne who will explain everything to you. Monsieur Lambert knows about it, and it was only through an attachment to confessors that all the evil arose. It is truly necessary to think of what might be done in order to avoid these unfortunate incidents. It displeases me greatly to cause you so much worry by my poor leadership. If you recall, I already spoke to your Charity of this poor young sister,[2] and you suggested that she be sent back. However, she is determined not to return, and she was advised by Renée to allow herself to be put into the coach and then to get off shortly after having been left alone. These are daring spirits, capable of much evil. That is why they are to be pitied. My thought is that this misfortune befalls them because of their boldness in receiving the sacraments with these bad dispositions. God have mercy on us, and bestow on me the grace to be faithful.

L.218 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Montreuil

Friday, September 3 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I arrived Saturday[3] in Liancourt where I found your dear news. I praise God with all my heart for the health He has given to the Princess d'Harcourt,[4] and I beg Him that this may be for His glory and the

1. Letter written on the back of the preceding.
2. Anne-Marie, see Letter 256.
3. Saturday, August 28.
4. The Princess d'Harcout had just given birth, see Letter 252.

sanctification of this beautiful soul, so that she may truly be the heiress of her virtuous father and mother.

I would have been just as embarrassed as you were, my dear Sister, had I been in your place, and I believe that the absolute order issued to us takes away any fault there might have been. I will speak to Monsieur Vincent about it on my return, if God gives me the grace, so that the judgment he passes on it may benefit us in the future.

I desire as much as ever to contribute to the good work begun in the hospital. However, we must wait and see what God wishes of us in this matter through the direction of superiors, and we must remain at peace while we wait.

Little Anne Varon[1] gives us little hope that she will be suited to the Company. In the event she has to be dismissed, see if you might send her back home rather than have her serve in Paris, where there are more girls lost than ever. We will continue to do all we can for her.

Please extend my greetings to the good Mother,[2] to Sister Marie[3] and to the entire community. In the name of God, my dear Sisters, amidst the applause you receive because of your good work there, I beg you not to forget the fidelity you owe to God and the care you must take in working toward your perfection, acting only with purity of intention and with the desire to follow the example of Jesus Crucified. In His love I am, my dear Sisters, your most obedient and humble servant.

P.S. Please convey my greetings to Mademoiselle de Mounille,[4] and assure her of my most humble service.

L.264 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

November 3, 1649

Monsieur,

I refrained from writing to you for quite a while because I believed you to be out in the country. Knowing your holy duties, I feared being a bother to you. I most humbly beg your forgiveness for this.

The Bishop of Angers has not said anything about the holy relic of Saint Maurice,[5] which is still in the state in which you ordered it to be put.

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1. Anne Varon, see Letter 260.
2. Mademoiselle de Mounille, a Lady of Charity.
3. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.
4. Mademoiselle de Mounille, a Lady of Charity.
5. See Letter 265.

Our sisters have informed me that the administrators wish to have more of our sisters sent. However, they themselves have let us know nothing of this. This leads me to ask you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so good as to find out for yourself the origin of this proposal. I would also ask you, if you think it appropriate, to inform these gentlemen that they should write to Monsieur Vincent about the matter.

I beg God to keep you in perfect health for His glory and for the good of souls. I am with the respect and submission which I owe you in His holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.263 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1649]

My Most Honored Father,

I am too insistent, but we are truly at the point where we need help without delay, or else we must drop everything. Yesterday it was necessary to spend all the money we had for current expenses, about 15 or 20 pounds, to have wheat for the children at Bicêtre. Then we had to borrow to get four bushels. We have no source of income for the coming month.

There are 12 or 13 children here, and there are not enough diapers to change them. Please, it is essential for the assembly of Ladies to do something about this matter tomorrow such as pass a resolution to collect alms in the parishes every Sunday, place small collection boxes in some prominent place in the churches, ask the Parish Priests and preachers to recommend this act of charity, and take up a collection at Court, as had been suggested. I believe that if someone went to speak to the Princess[1] about these extreme needs that she would give something. It is pitiful that the Ladies go to so little trouble. Either they must believe that we have enough to support the children, or they want to force us to abandon everything. For these reasons I think that they have resolved to do nothing at all. Please let us know if we should send notices for the assembly, and if you think it is wise for us to inform Madame de Shomberg[2] and Madame de Verthamont[3] of it.

1. Charlotte de Montmorency, the Princess de Condé, of the royal family.
2. Madame de Shomberg (1616-1691), born Marie de Hautefort, Madame de Liancourt's sister-in-law. Her husband, the Field Marshal of France, took part in La Fronde.
3. Madame de Verthamont, see Letter 60.

As for the rest of what I had to tell you, it would be too long. It would be better to tell you about it tomorrow if I have the honor of seeing you. I am truly in need of personal assistance from God, for I see only misery and affliction in all that touches me. God be blessed for it! I am content to let you know my needs, for there is no other hope of assistance and consolation than you, my Most Honored Father, of whom Divine Providence wished that I be your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. Please let us know if the conference[1] will indeed treat of the subject you gave me—that of my complaint about the sisters who ask to be changed.

I fear you are going to the country.

L.266 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1649]

My Most Honored Father,

I am very distressed at being so insistent, but the impossibility of being able to continue receiving little children is too pressing. Our two wet-nurses now have seven infants who will not drink from a bottle, and we have no money to place them with someone else; nor do we have a supply of sheets or linens nor the hope of being able to borrow any more. Show us your charity, my Most Honored Father, and let us know whether we can, in conscience, see them placed in a situation where they may die. The Ladies have made no effort to help us, and I am sure that they believe that we are profiting from their expenditures. This is actually contrary to the truth, because we only retained 100 pounds from the money they allocated to us for the maintenance of the wet-nurses. I know of only one way to assist all those who suffer in this work, and that is for us, in the name of our Company, to present a request to the Chief Justice to relieve us of our responsibility of receiving the children and to have them received by whomever he deems fit. However, the Ladies would have to support this plan so that no one would be shocked by it. Otherwise, it seems to me that we are in continual mortal sin.

Four children were brought in yesterday. Besides the seven who are nursing, there are three who have been weaned. All of the new ones are foundlings, and one of them is from the prison. If it is possible, they should be nursed again. If we could deal with this difficulty without

1. The conference of November 28 would be on the love of work.

making you part of it, I would most gladly do so. However, our helplessness does not permit it. These good Ladies are not doing what they can. Not one of them has sent anything, nor has anything been received from those of the Company because the majority have paid their dues in advance.

I beg God to show us mercy. I am beginning to fear that all this misery is due to the fact that I am what I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and most grateful daughter.

P.S. I think that it is necessary to hold a General Assembly. The collation for the patients at the Hôtel-Dieu is also to cease.

L.352 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE[1]

at Chantilly

(End of 1649)

My very dear Sister,

I am deeply distressed at having left you alone for so long;[2] I ask your pardon. You lost nothing by waiting, because I am sending Sister Geneviève[3] who has served the sick poor of Saint-Leu for a long time. I hope that God will give her the graces she will need to accomplish what He will ask of her there. I especially beg you, for the love of God, my very dear Sisters, to show great gentleness to the poor, and to work with great care for their salvation, informing them of the necessity of following God's commandments and His holy will and then showing them how to do so. I would ask both of you to exhibit great reserve and modesty. Each of you should remember to practice your Rule, especially mutual support. Instruct your little schoolgirls with great gentleness; however, do not allow them to make mistakes without correcting them.

I beg you, Sister, to teach our sister how to let blood. Especially teach her well the dangers involved with the arteries, nerves and other areas. Remember, if you think you have opened an artery, to draw a great quantity of blood and to put a coin in the compress in order to make the ligature. Once our sister has been well instructed, you will be able to come here to visit. Send that good girl back to Liancourt by some safe means.

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
2. Marie Prévost was called back to Paris around September 1649.
3. Geneviève Doinel was in the Company in 1646. She served the poor in the parish of Saint-Leu then came to Chantilly in 1649. In 1650, she was sent to Hennebont, where she lived until 1653. She did not know how to write and put an "x" on the Act of Establishment of the Company on August 8, 1655. She returned to Chantilly in 1656.

Our sister will tell you all the news of the Company, which I recommend to you before God. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.293 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu at Nantes

November 21 (1649)

My very dear Sister,

I was truly happy to have news of your dear selves and especially that Sister Jeanne de Saint-Albin[2] went to the trouble of writing to me. I thank her with all my heart. If I were not so busy, I would have allowed myself the pleasure of writing to her by return mail. I beg all our infirm sisters to encourage one another in their weakness and to view themselves as being in the state which God wishes of them. Since they are doing God's will, they are honoring Him in the highest manner possible. Tell Sister Henriette[3] that her brother and her nephew, the youngest one, are doing splendidly, especially in their practice of total detachment. Sister Perrette[4] is deeply edified by them, and they both recommend themselves to her prayers.

We would really like you to send us a good supply of codfish, one which can be transported and kept easily. However, this should be done through Mademoiselle de La Carisière.[5] Tell her that I humbly request this, and ask her to give us the address where we can send the payment for the codfish and its shipment. Express my regrets for not writing to her. Do likewise to all those to whom I should write. Give our regards to Don Jean,[6] to the others and especially to our dear sisters. I am to them and to you in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
3. Henriette Gesseaume did not leave Nantes as was anticipated, see Letter 433.
4. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526.
5. Mademoiselle de la Carsière, a lady of Nantes, see Letter 147.
6. Don Jean Morisse, see Letter 164.

L.268 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1649]

My Most Honored Father,

I humbly beg you to give me 15 minutes sometime tomorrow so that I can regain what I apparently lost yesterday through the intervention of Divine Providence. I do not know whether it is fear or my pride which is at fault for always making me reluctant to speak of myself.

Enclosed is the response of Madame de Romilly.[1]

I beg you to take the trouble to let me know whether I should send your letter to the President, Madame de Lamoignon,[2] even though the Princess[3] is not coming. Also, would it be appropriate to ask Madame de Brienne,[4] who has returned to the city?

Here is a short memorandum I drew up so that you could undertake to speak of these matters at the assembly, if you think it appropriate. Please let us know where the assembly will be held so that we can tell Mademoiselle de Lamoignon.

Please let us know also if we should tell our sisters at Serqueux to send us the girl they mentioned to us. Enclosed also is a letter from the administrators of Gien.[5] What should we tell them? Is the Duchess de Ventadour[6] no longer urging the matter?

Another of our sisters left yesterday, with her habit, without saying a word. She is one from Saint-Cloud. What does it mean? Are not stern measures necessary for some of them so that this practice will cease? Once before, this sister asked to leave, and we granted her permission, and she stayed on of her free will. It seems to me that God wishes either to strengthen or destroy us through these episodes. Please think this matter over and let me know in all honesty if I am the Jonah who must be removed. I am God's, to be used as He desires, and I am, Monsieur, your most obedient sister and most grateful daughter.

1. Regarding marriage plans for Michel Le Gras, see Letter 255.
2. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
3. The Princess de Condé, see Letter 263.
4. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86.
5. Gien, a small town on the banks of the Loire.
6. Madame, the Duchess de Ventadour, born Marie de la Guiche, married in 1645, widowed in 1649, a very devout Lady of Charity. She requested Daughters of Charity for Sainte-Marie-du-Mont in Normandy. In 1658, she requested some for Ussel, which belonged to the Ventadour dukedom. As Louise de Marillac's friend, she was present at the time of her death. Madame de Ventadour died in her Sainte-Marie-du-Mont château in 1701.

L.268B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday (November 1649)

Monsieur,

I sent your note which was given to Madame de Lamoignon[1] since Mademoiselle was not there. Madame told me that the date of the assembly depended on you, and that Mademoiselle Viole[2] had earnestly desired it to be on Friday. I am, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

L.212 - TO HIS LORDSHIP, CHANCELLOR SÉGUIER[3]

(c. 1649)

My Lord,

The respect I owe your Lordship led me to seek out occasions to collect, through persons of rank, the charity you promised the poor foundlings while you were at Saint-Germain. However, my Lord, seeing everything lacking, I am taking the liberty of writing to you since I will not have the honor of coming to speak to you myself of the plight of 100 of these poor little children. Among all their needs, it is the lack of bread for this festive season which pulls at my heart so strongly that I would consider myself remiss if any consideration prevented me from having recourse to your Lordship, who has on so many other occasions truly appeared a champion of the poor. Thus, permit me the great boldness of saying that I am, with all submission and respect, in the love of God for whom you act, my Lord, your most obedient and humble servant.

1. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
2. Mademoiselle Viole, see Letter 91.
3. Chancellor Séguier, see Letter 60.

L.273 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1649]

Monsieur,

I believe that your Charity will remember that I spoke to you about that good girl from Saint-Cloud. Enclosed is a letter for her which I would ask you please to read. Divine Providence has not allowed her to sell her inheritance, but she is renting it to her sister who is well-off and who is paying her 30 écus a year. Our sisters are fond of her and find no inconvenience in taking her in, provided that your Charity approves.

We would really like to know if the poor wet-nurses will be paid something at this holiday time. Also, will the children who are still nursing and who are being brought back for lack of payment, be sent back to the nurses with the money given for the care of the new foundlings? If we get some money, we will do all we can to have them taken back by the nurses. However, some of them have already been left with us.

We truly need God's guidance in the matter involving my son[1] who, I believe, will allow himself the honor of speaking to you about it, since he has taken the liberty of staying with you tonight so as to avoid the unfortunate encounter. He will tell you of the trying incidents involved in this matter which, it seems to me, he has always submitted to the will of God, in which I have the honor of being, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.272B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1649]

Monsieur,

Here is a letter from Mademoiselle de Villenant in which you will see what I learned about the matter. What bothers me is the difficulty experienced by widows in being relieved of their duties after the death of their husbands. We are having trouble finding the money we need so as to be accepted and to pay the fees to the necessary parties. Moreover, we have not been able to obtain the gift I was told would be given to me. Besides that, the good woman who is handling the matter told me today that we had to resolve the status of the person involved in

1. See the following letters.

negotiations before us who had returned to this village. She said that they will be glad if he returns here to find matters in the hands of another. It makes me a bit fearful that they plan to break off negotiations with us. I will no longer know what to say if that occurs.

All the difficulties mentioned above have arisen only because of my son's lack of experience. However, he needs to be spurred on in order to work deliberately at setting himself up on his own. He is a bit lazy, as I am, and we need to be pushed before we act either by necessity or by bursts of enthusiasms which lead us to undertake even some rather difficult things.

After examining the articles, Monsieur de Marillac[1] saw that they were wanting in some respects; nevertheless, he did not counsel me to break with it because, though what he counselled me to ask for was not granted, he found great advantages for us in this matter.

If your Charity will be in the area Saturday morning, I urge you, most humbly to let me know. That should be the day the uncle and daughter[2] are coming, and I think that we must settle everything. Your dear and good advice will help me greatly to make up my mind. I most humbly beg you to give me your advice in the name of Our Lord, through whom I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.274 - TO THE COUNT DE MAURE[3]

(December 1649)

Monsieur,

I was still hoping that I would find some way of having the honor of seeing you. Since I cannot, I am taking the liberty of writing to you to let you know how things are going in the matter[4] concerning my son. I would like to say that the whole thing is a great affliction for me, but as a Christian I must embrace the scorn which normally accompanies poverty which is the only reason why our cause is not being advanced. To tell you the truth, Monsieur, I am beginning to share the feelings which human prudence is giving this fine girl.[5] Knowing my son, and knowing the little I can give him, she feels that he could never hope for any acquisitions since, between them, they have only enough to maintain

1. Michel de Marillac, a deputy of Parliament and Michel Le Gras' cousin.
2. Gabrielle Le Clerc, Lord de Chennevières' daughter, Michel Le Gras' future spouse.
3. The Count de Maure, husband of Anne d'Attichy, Louise de Marillac's cousin.
4. See Letter 279.
5. Gabrielle Le Clerc, Michel Le Gras' future spouse.

a small family. She is afraid to risk this danger since she is aware that expenses usually come to those least able to support them, and in the event of death, poor orphans would be left. And even though people connected with the matter have given them reason to hope when hope seems lost, it seems, Monsieur, that they only believe what they see. If God had not filled your heart with charity, you would have reason to complain about my importunity. However, to whom could I pour out these troubles, which my exaggerated courage has made me keep hidden for so long, except to you, Monsieur, who are before God what you are, and who hold in my regard the place of those[1] whose conduct[2] has led me to embrace the life which has placed me in the situation in which I now find myself. Do not think that I am complaining by all this, God forbid! I would have been very happy had Divine Providence willed the success of their hopes and plans, and the prolongation of their lives. However, it did not turn out that way. May God be forever glorified for this and for the fact that since my widowhood, or at least for the past ten or twelve years, I have sought aid. Monsieur and Madame de Marillac[3] and Monsieur's mother[4] will attest to this. Please forgive me, Monsieur, for this bothersome letter which lets you know the trust I have in your great discretion. I am truly in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.267 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1649]

I most humbly beg your Charity to place our concerns before God. I found Monsieur and Madame de Marillac[5] very willing to advance our plans. However the nun[6] feels I should see Mademoiselle d'Atry[7] in order to remind her of the services which the late Monsieur Le Gras[8] rendered

1. "Ceux": it is clear that Mademoiselle was speaking of Monsieur and Madame d'Attichy. Monsieur Le Gras had been in charge of their financial interests and perhaps even the guardianship of their children, to his personal detriment.
2. Her marriage with Monsieur Le Gras, Queen Marie de Médicis' secretary, while at the time Monsieur d'Attichy was this same Queen's Minister of Finance.
3. Michel de Marillac and his wife, Jeanne Potier, see Letter 133 and 50.
4. Madame de Marillac, born Marie de Creil, wife of René, entered Carmel at the end of 1632 or at the beginning of the year 1633.
5. Michel Le Gras' cousins, see Letters 133 and 50.
6. Madame de Marillac, see above.
7. Marie-Angélique d'Atry, daughter of Geneviève d'Attichy, a nun at Port-Royal.
8. Antoine Le Gras, Louise de Marillac's husband.

to her late mother,[1] and to try to have her arrange something for my son as the Count de Maure[2] is doing. In view of this, I ask you to permit me to go to Port Royal with her daughter, who wishes to take me there either tomorrow or the day after.

I am really afraid that Madame de Herse[3] has discouraged the Ladies from coming to the assembly by her suggestion that they bring money with them. I think, Monsieur, that she should make it clear that she is not speaking of money from their own purses, and that she wishes to obligate no one. The more I think about what we owe, the more I fear that the matter will be left in our hands alone. The nurses are starting to threaten us and are bringing the infants back, and the debts are accumulating so quickly that we have no hope of paying them. If that happens, it would be more detrimental to the Company throughout the countryside than if we had passed counterfeit money.

I am thinking about that good poor woman, the stout one. I believe she could be received now. If you wish me to speak about it with the Reverend Mother Prioress and Madame Le Vacher for you, I would be most willing to do so.

I did not have the time to see Monsieur des Bordes[4] as I had planned. Monsieur de Marillac[5] gave me some clarification on our most pressing business. If we were not being led in this matter by Divine Providence, I would be most apprehensive.

You know how greatly I need to obtain from God the means for drawing His grace upon me so that I may accomplish His will. It seems to me that accordingly I must place my will and powerlessness in your hands in order to offer all to Him. This I do, most particularly in the matter at hand, and also for the carrying out of all His holy plans for her who remains, by His grace, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and most grateful daughter.

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1. Valence de Marillac, who married Octavien d'Attichy, died in 1617.
2. The Count de Maure, see Letter 274.
3. Madame de Herse, see Letter 126.
4. Monsieur des Bordes, see Letter 272.
5. Michel Le Gras' cousin, see Letter 133.

L.272 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

General of the Venerable Priests of the Mission

December 20 [1649]

Monsieur,

I am assured that the position belongs to those presently filling it and that it is impossible to replace them before their resignation.[1] Our business continues. I found the person of whom I spoke to you yesterday to be quite calm, and this morning he did what he should. I most humbly beg your Charity to continue to pray for him.

Mademoiselle de Villenant humbly requests the opportunity to speak with you before Thursday. Please let her know where she might have the honor of meeting you. If there is a way, please be good enough to let me know through our sister who is bringing this letter. It is an urgent matter of importance for the glory of God. I was truly upset at not having gotten to see Monsieur des Bordes;[2] the coachman was mistaken and did not know the road.[3]

Enclosed is the clarification of the doubt we had. In your goodness, I ask your Charity not to lose it and to honor me by believing me to be, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.365 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Nantes

(December 1649)

My very dear Sister,

I received two of your letters which were nearly identical, both on the same day. I assure you that it troubles me greatly that you are suffering; but why? I should be envious since you are suffering in the service of God.

I sincerely hope that all of you are without fault and that each of you is taking up the practice of true and solid humility, submission and gentleness. It seems that your duties are being encroached upon in violation of our contract. It would be wise to let Monsieur des Jonchères

1. Louise de Marillac was trying to find an honorable position for her son.
2. Monsieur des Bordes, deputy of one of the 13 Administrations of Finance, a friend of the de Marillac family.
3. Louise de Marillac returned from Port Royal, see Letter 267.

and others who appreciate your work with the poor know about this. However, to look for an all-out battle, to complain about it openly, to murmur about it among yourselves must be avoided because, except for your sister assistants, the other sisters must hear nothing which will disturb them. I would have already received orders from Monsieur Vincent concerning all your troubles, but he has been confined to his room for a week. I will not fail to do so as soon as I am able.

Poor Madame Marchais[1] asks for your prayers in her affliction. She was taken from her country-house and brought to Châteaudun by a man who had a relative at the Longue-Ville town hall and who married her there. However, she says that it was by force, and now there is a major lawsuit over the matter.

Your parents are well, thank God. Extend my greetings to your administrators, Mademoiselle de La Carisière and the other good Ladies we know. Believe me to be in the love of Our Lord Incarnate, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

1650

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Hennebont and Montmirail.

January 18: *Marriage of Michel Le Gras.*

October: *Birth of his daughter, Louise-Renée.*

L.275 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hospital at Nantes

January 13, 1650

My very dear Sister,

I truly share the pain that you and we are feeling at the loss of our good Sister Marie Arnou.[2] God, in His goodness, found her worthy and so He called her to be with Him in paradise. I assure you, my dear Sister, that this news surprised us greatly. I would truly like to know how Sister Marie Noret[3] is coming along in her illness. We will do all we can to send

1. See Letter 275.
2. Marie Arnou, a native of Ennery, arrived in Nantes in November 1648 and died in the beginning of January 1650.
3. Marie Noret, arrived at the Hospital of Nantes in June 1649 and died towards the month

you help; we have lost so many sisters that the number of them suitable to send has dropped quite a bit. Then we are being asked to send sisters to so many locations that we have no idea of how we will furnish them.

The guidance of God concerning good Madame Jeanne Marchais[1] was admirable. All her business has been cleared up to her advantage and with her honor undamaged. She then was set to marry someone else, but that was not the plan of God. All her relatives have matters to straighten out because she did not have the time to clarify what was going on. During her illness, she was almost always delirious or asleep. Nonetheless, she was very happy to receive the holy sacraments of the Church while she was staying with Madame Boulonnois.

I beg you to let me know all that happened to our poor dear deceased Sister.[2] Last week I wrote a long letter to Monsieur d'Annemont[3] about the difficulties that you mentioned to me.

I am troubled that you are not sending me any news about Sister Renée.[4] I would ask you to tell her that Sister Jeanne Delacroix[5] sends her greetings. Please remember me to all the sisters, particularly Sister Henriette,[6] whom I strongly urge to persevere and to embrace the virtue of stability. How blessed I consider her because God has given her the grace to be so useful in the service of the poor! It is quite necessary for her to humble herself and to do her utmost to be faithful to this grace and grateful to the goodness of God. Her sister, her nephew and her nieces are all doing well.

I beg all our sisters to use profitably the grace which God has given you by providing you, in your need, with the help of Monsieur d'Annemont. I am sure that He does this in order to help calm you after the storms of the past and to renew you in the spirit of unity and cordiality that the Daughters of Charity must possess through the practice of this same charity which is accompanied by all the Christian virtues, particularly mutual support which is our dearest virtue. I recommend this to you, as much as I can, as something which is absolutely necessary since it leads us never to see the faults of another with bitterness but rather always to excuse them while humbling ourselves. I beg you, my dear Sister, to ask for this spirit, which is the spirit of Our Lord, for our entire Company, and to believe me in His holy love, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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of April 1650.

1. Madame Marchais, see Letter 365.
2. Marie Arnou.
3. Monsieur d'Annemont, the sisters' director, see Letter 173.
4. Renée Delacroix, a native of Le Mans, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1646. She arrived in Nantes in June 1649 and lived there until 1655. She then went to the parish of Saint Barthélemy in Paris.
5. Jeanne Delacroix, her older sister, see Letter 297.
6. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

P.S. I beg you and all our sisters to receive Holy Communion for the intention of my son, who, I believe, will receive the sacrament of matrimony soon. God has chosen for him someone who seems to be a most virtuous young woman[1] who is not from Paris.

L.276 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CLAUDE BRIGIDE[2] AND GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[3]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

(January 1650)

My very dear Sisters,

I praise God with all my heart for the grace His goodness has granted you to be a source of edification where He has seen fit to place you. However, be sure to thank Him for it through the practice of the virtues He asks of you, especially great cordiality and mutual understanding among you.

Am I not wrong in recommending this virtue to you, my dear Sisters, because without it you would be unable to be not only good Daughters of Charity, but even good Christians? I also believe that you are as exact as possible in the observance of your little Rules without detriment to the poor since their service must always come first. However, it must be carried out properly and not according to your own will.

We sent you your New Year's holy cards which are like all of ours. This is the saint who must show us our work since she was fortunate enough to serve the poor in the person of Our Lord, just as we serve Our Lord in the person of the poor.

Sister Geneviève, do not be troubled by the news of your sister. She is doing quite well, thank God, and is in very good health. If you have an opportunity to write to her, send your letter to the sisters at Saint-Germain; she is in the parish there. Please pray for our deceased Sister Marie Arnou from Ennery[4] and for me. I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You can keep the woman whom the Bishop of Senlis requested be confided to your care. Be very humble. Do not send us any more girls unless you are certain that their coming has been approved.

1. Gabrielle Le Clerc from Champlan. The marriage was celebrated on January 18, 1650.
2. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
3. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
4. Marie Arnou, see Letter 275.

L.278 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX[1]

Vicar General of the Bishop of Angers, at Angers

January 29 (1650)

Monsieur,

I am very concerned about our sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu because I have not had news of them for a long time. What worries me most is that Monsieur Vincent told me that you have been busy with important matters. In the name of God, Monsieur, remember that Divine Providence made use of you in the establishment of this work and has confided its direction to you. If the sisters have abused the graces that God has given them and the efforts which you have made for them, I beg your Charity to pardon them and to continue to direct them, either personally or through Monsieur Ratier.[2] Also, please see to it that they have no regular confessor, unless you have appointed him. They need this assistance so much that I fear that, without it, it would be impossible for them to go on. This is what leads me to be so insistent and to beg you most humbly to take the trouble to have news sent to me of Sister Marguerite Moreau,[3] and to let us know what you judge we should do for the well-being of this little Company so that God's plan for it may be carried out.

Permit me, Monsieur, to beg your Charity to remember my needs at the holy altar and to continue to honor me by believing that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.279 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[February 1650]

My Most Honored Father,

I believe that the bailiff[4] informed you yesterday of the state of the

1. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
2. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
3. Marguerite Moreau had arrived in Angers in June 1647. Because of her assertive personality, she had a few difficulties in her relationship with Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant in Angers. However, she was chosen for Poland and left with Madeleine Drugeon and Françoise Douelle in September 1652. In Warsaw, she refused to stay near the Queen while her two companions went to serve the poor in Cracow. She died in Poland in 1660.
4. Michel Le Gras.

unpleasant business,[1] which seems to depend entirely on the way in which Monsieur Lesguier informs Monsieur d'Émery[2] of the Queen's will in the matter, in keeping with the new orders that he has received from Her Majesty. I beg your Charity very humbly to be so good as to let me know if someone should be sent to speak to him and if so, who. However, this matter must be taken care of today. What obliges me to neglect nothing is that it will be a matter of at least 12 to 15 pounds plus, I am told, a 2,000-pound tax for the cost of his reception.[3]

In the name of God, my Most Reverend Father, consider whether we should persuade these Ladies not to accept new foundlings so that we can pay our debts and bring back the weaned children from the country. I assure you that, in conscience, we can no longer stifle the pity aroused in us by these poor people who beg us for what we justly owe them. Not only do we owe them for their services but we also owe them for the personal money that they have spent. Because of this, they are afraid of dying of hunger and are forced to come from quite a distance, three of four times, without receiving any money. We are in debt for quite an amount: for food, for the nurses, and often for seven or eight weaned infants, as well as for the money we have borrowed. However, it is not self-interest that causes us to speak in this way, although, if matters continue as they are, we will be obliged to liquidate whatever we have because we cannot refuse to pay them from the little we do have.

Please excuse my constant insistence and honor me always with the belief that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.390 - (TO THE SISTERS OF THE HOSPITAL OF ANGERS)[4]

(c. 1650)

My very dear Sisters,

The virtues that Sister[5] . . . told you that she had remarked in our sisters[6] must have consoled you and encouraged you to desire to acquire

1. See Letters 267 and 272.
2. Monsieur d'Émery, General Auditor of Finances.
3. Monsieur de la Rochemaillet, uncle of Michel Le Gras' wife, left him the office of deputy in the currency court. The act was signed on June 13, 1650.
4. This letter was part of a series of letters from Angers recopied by Marguerite Chétif.
5. Marguerite, see Letter 290b, who arrived in Paris.
6. Allusion to the conference on the virtues of the deceased sisters (Coste IX, 535).

them. Above all, my dear Sisters, reflect that as servants of the poor you owe those whom you serve great gentleness, support and cordiality. I beg you to be careful to be very accommodating in your words and to be respectful toward those who visit the poor because it is you who must attract benefactors by your graciousness. I am not saying that any sister who may be present should stop and converse with these people; however, if these persons come up to you in passing, stop and listen to what they have to say. If they say something to which you should not respond, refer them to the Sister Servant, who will give them a satisfactory response.

L.283 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

General of the Venerable Priests of the Mission

Friday [April 1650]

My Most Honored Father,

Yesterday I had the honor of seeing Madame de Lamoignon;[1] her daughter asked me what the Ladies had done at Bicêtre.[2] She is aware of their resolution to move the boys to an annex in an effort to effect the necessary separation, but she tells me that this is not the solution that your Charity had ordered. She clearly sees the problems for the boys, as well as for the nurses, of leaving the girls there. Although we try to employ good women, the majority of them are forced to leave because of bad conduct rather than on account of the necessities of the times. Moreover, these women, who have been gathered from all over and who are of all types, use coarse language and exhibit licentious conduct. This good young lady told me that you must stand firm so that the proposal that your Charity so strongly supported will be carried out. She also asked that it be put into effect for this Jubilee year and not be put off until a later date. I added that these delays give rise to second thoughts, and Mademoiselle de Lamoignon said that there will be no way to come back to the matter if you miss your opportunity now.

However, I also believe, my Most Honored Father, that you should be firm about taking one or two of your houses, at most, in order to save rent; otherwise, if they make the choice that I think they will, the direction of them will be entirely and permanently given to others, and in this event their plans will come entirely to light. It occurred to me that they believe that we cannot abandon the service of the children, and that we are

1. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.

2. Bicêtre, where the foundlings were.

committed to it because of the 1000 pounds we were given. You know how we have been wronged. Originally, it was the intention of the benefactors that half the donation come to us purely and simply for the support of the Company and that it not oblige us to the service of the children anymore than we are now committed to the service of the poor and of the galley slaves. If they have any intention of disputing it with us one day, it would be better now than later.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to see the Procurator General. He did me the honor of receiving me most courteously. He immediately asked me if I was there concerning some business he had at hand. I told him that I had come to refresh his memory on the matter. He asked me if we considered ourselves regular or secular. I told him that we aspired only to the latter. He told me that such a thing was without precedent. I cited for him Madame de Villeneuve's[1] Daughters and pointed out to him that they go everywhere. He said many good things about the Company and added that he did not disapprove of our plan. However, he said that something of such importance merited much thought. I expressed my joy that he felt as he did about the matter, and I begged him, if he thought that the Company was unworthy to be, or for some reason should not be continued, to destroy it entirely. But if he considered it good, I said that we begged him to establish it on a solid foundation. I explained that it was this thought that had motivated us to give it a trial for at least 12 or 15 years, and that during this period, by the grace of God, no insurmountable obstacles have appeared. He replied, "Let me reflect on this, I do not say for months, but at least for a few weeks." He took the trouble to escort us to our carriage and showed us great cordiality in the courtyard. He asked us to extend his very humble greetings to you. He added that he would consider himself a usurer if he accepted the very humble gratitude that we offered him for the honor he shows to all our sisters when they dare to approach him with their needs for the poor galley slaves or for the little children.

The Marquise de Maignelay[2] gave me only a verbal response yesterday. She sent our sister to see the Pastor of Saint-Roch. He and the said Lady assured her that there was no fault to be found in the sisters he had sent away. It was simply a question of the fact that one of the girls who was serving the poor there did not seem suited for the Company, and so he sent the other along to look after her. She is now married and those who have replaced her continue to follow her example.

The said Madame la Marquise is asking for two sisters for tomorrow. There are two obstacles standing in the way of this. Firstly, we must

1. Madame de Villeneuve, foundress of the Daughters of the Cross, see Letter 33.

2. The Marquise de Maignelay was Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi's sister, see Letter 85. Married in 1588, she was widowed in 1591. A very devout Lady of Charity, she participated in Monsieur Vincent's different works of charity.

propose to you the names of the sisters to be sent, allow you to become acquainted with them, and give them the opportunity to make a retreat before leaving. Secondly, the girl who remained and is now married is living in the house where our sisters are supposed to live. Moreover, this is a dangerous neighborhood for us.

I beg you very humbly to take the trouble to let me know how I should act in this matter so as not to displease Madame la Marquise or prejudice our interests. Please give me your blessing for all of our needs and do me the honor of believing me . . .

L.284 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-René at Nantes

Paris, May 4, 1650

My very dear Sister,

I am more astonished than anyone that you are still complaining about not receiving news of us for as long as you say. I believe that Sister Hellot[1] and I have written to you more than six times. It is true that a few weeks passed in which I did not write and did not have someone write to you, but it was at a time when I knew that Monsieur Vincent was writing to you. It is also true, my dear Sister, that I did not respond to all the points in your letters, especially in one I received recently in which you suggest that some of our sisters would like to begin a perpetual rosary. Let me tell you, my dear Sister, that this proposal was sent to Monsieur Vincent a long time ago, and we are still unable to obtain a response. However, since I know that like the Superiors of the other Companies, he does not allow us to enroll in a lot of confraternities, I am led to believe that in this matter we will have to be satisfied with simply saying the rosary.

We received some letters from Monsieur Truchart[2] which differ quite a bit. The first urges us to send you some help; the other asks us to put off doing so. In this matter, as in all things, my dear Sister, we must adore the guidance of Divine Providence. I wrote to you quite fully on this subject last week. I hope that you received the letters. I sent them to Monsieur d'Annemont.[3]

I beg you to greet all our sisters for me. I pray with all my heart that God will grant them the great courage they need to be faithful to Him,

1. Élisabeth Hellot, Louise de Marillac's secretary; it was she who wrote the letter.
2. Monsieur Truchart, the sisters' confessor in Nantes.
3. Monsieur d'Annemont, see Letter 173.

as He asks them to be, in this situation that is so painful to nature. Moreover, I hope that aided by His grace, it will prove advantageous for us. I desire this for the glory of God and the edification of our neighbor. My dear Sister, your great trials and mental turmoil, in all this confusion, do not arise so much from the uncertainty of events, opposition and conflicting reports, as from the fact that you have no one reliable to comfort you and give you advice. But, please believe me, my dear Sister, if I were in your place, I would ask God to grant me a great spirit of indifference and the realization that it is not up to us to act in this situation; rather I would ask Him to put us in the disposition to listen and to endure all that is said for or against us so that none of it troubles us. O my dear Sister, if we acted in this way, how consoled we would be to see ourselves, like the Son of God, subject to the accusations and judgments of men and entirely deprived of the comfort of creatures. Henceforth, this is the state in which I will see you before God, whom I beg to be your strength. I would ask you, Sister, if anyone pushes you to speak about all these changes and disagreements, to respond very simply, "We have nothing to say about that. We are awaiting the orders of our superiors so that we may know and carry out the will of God." Tell our sisters to do the same. If you can all act accordingly, you will be the bravest women in the world and I truly believe that you will be doing what God is asking of you. Believe me more than ever in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.284B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Angers

May 4, 1650

My very dear Sister,

If Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux[2] had not recently given me news of your dear self, I would be very worried because you have not written to us for some time. I hope that our good God will keep you healthy amidst the illnesses that have threatened you lately. I was quite consoled to learn of the return of Monsieur Ratier.[3] In the name of God, my dear Sisters, be faithful in following his advice; and above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care. Also, remember always to show great respect to the Fathers of the Poor.[1] Greet them very humbly for me. Continue to welcome warmly the ladies and gentlemen who visit the hospital. We are indebted to all of them. We must also be on our guard against two extremes: one is affectation in speaking with outsiders; this is often harmful to those who serve the poor and who thus must act only as poor persons; the second is that the idea we may have of not seeking to please anyone may lead us to make no effort to be pleasant with outsiders. Now, this is not how we should act, my dear Sister, because we must welcome cordially those who come to visit the poor, without seeking our own interests. We must greet them simply because that is the way we must act and because it can be beneficial for the poor.

I send heartfelt and affectionate greetings to all our sisters, and I am in the love of our dear Master, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our dear Sister Marie Noret[2] passed away in Nantes. I recommend to you all our dear sisters from there. They have much to endure. It seems that God has chosen them to gain merit for the entire Company.

L.270 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS TOUSSAINTE[3] AND JEANNE[4]

Daughters of Charity at Valpuiseaux

(c. 1650)

My very dear Sisters,

I praise God with all my heart for restoring Sister Toussainte to health. I hope that He has given her new strength and new courage so that she may devote herself to the service of the poor for His holy love. For this reason, Monsieur Vincent has ordered you to remain there while Sister Barbe makes a trip here.

O my dear Sisters, it seems to me that you will be living in great union and cordiality because the guidance of Divine Providence has placed you together. If your natural temperaments are not alike, in the name of God, my dear Sisters, let His holy love appear in your hearts. Remember, Sister

1. The Fathers of the Poor, the hospital administrators.
2. Marie Noret, see Letter 275.
3. Toussainte David was at Saint-Séverin in 1644, then in Valpuiseaux in 1650. In 1655, she was in Paris. She signed an "x" on the Act of Establishment of the Company. She was afterwards sent to Sedan.
4. Jeanne Fouré, see Letter 173b.

Jeanne, to preserve in your heart the holy affections which produced such generous resolutions during your retreat. Remember also the fidelity you owe to God as a result of His grace, without which we must greatly fear His judgments. Sister Toussainte, Monsieur Vincent asks that you provide Sister Barbe with a few good peasant men to take her to Étampes. Tell her to leave all her bleeding knives behind. Keep them for a while.

Remember, my dear Sisters, that if there is a place where the Daughters of Charity are obliged to give good example by their gentleness and charity, it is where you are because, after God, we are indebted to Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, who would most certainly be displeased if you acted otherwise.

I was truly astonished that you sent a messenger just for this, as you did another time recently. I beg you, Sisters, not to do this again unless there is an urgent need. I pray that God will watch over you, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and loving servant.

L.286 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

at Nantes

May 25, 1650

My very dear Sister,

Only yesterday, I received three letters from you at the same time. One was dated May 3, another May 10, and the third was undated. You must have written them some time ago because in them you told me that Monsieur Truchart[2] was to come. I cannot tell you how consoled I am to learn from you of the disposition in which you and all our sisters are. This, my dear Sister, is how we must be with God.

I will not fail to pass on to Monsieur Vincent your two letters concerning the proposal that was made to provide you with a cook and a steward. As for the steward, I have already let Monsieur Truchart know that we would benefit and would like to have one on the condition, nonetheless, that his wife not interfere in the service of the poor. However, I see many problems where the cook is concerned. Nevertheless, all this must be left to the gentlemen of the administration whom I would ask you to greet most humbly for me. I am surprised that Monsieur Truchart is not satisfied because I thought that I had told him all that I could. We

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

2. Monsieur Truchart, see Letter 289.

are greatly indebted to him for the charity he shows us.

As for your return, my dear Sisters, it will not be so precipitous that you cannot let us know in advance, so that you may have Monsieur Vincent's directives on what you should do, in addition to what I have already told you. I beg all our sisters to remain firmly attached to the guidance of Divine Providence, to love it and to abandon themselves to it anew, being certain that if we are faithful to God to this degree, His goodness will not abandon us, and all that now causes us suffering will be transformed into great consolation, and God willing, contribute to His glory. I am in His holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.277 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CHARLOTTE[1] AND FRANÇOISE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

(June 1650)

My very dear Sisters,

I am completely flabbergasted that I have gone so long without writing to you. I would never have thought it possible, if someone had not assured me that I had not thanked you for your beautiful lace. Our altar thanks you for it but our debts demand acknowledgement. It seems to me, Sisters, that you are worried about your families. I would say, Sister Carcireux, that we received news of your father some time ago. He really wanted to go to see you but we dissuaded him from doing so. He was in Beauvais with his relatives. One of them, who is a judge, has employed him and has assured us that he would willingly keep him on and give him all the help he can. As for Sister Charlotte's mother and father and her entire family, I believe that they are still in good health. We had news from Liancourt just a short while ago.

All that remains for you to do, my dear Sisters, is to thank God for the graces He has bestowed upon you and to work toward your own perfection. You must do this by observing your Rules as faithfully as possible because you owe this to God as well as to the poor whom you serve and to the schoolchildren. One of the very important things that I recommend to you, Sister Charlotte, is not to weep or at least not so often, because it is much better to rejoice. Moreover, what can we desire, wherever we are, since we have God with us? I am in His love and in the

1. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.

2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

love of His Son, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you to greet the Superior[1] very humbly for me and to ask him to assure Messieurs Manceau[2] that their sister[3] is well. Tell them that we were sending them a letter from her just as theirs arrived. She is at the hospital in Chars. Since I started this letter, Sister Florence has become ill and is dying. We have held no hope for her for a few days now. I believe that you have heard that Sister Marie Arnou[4] and Sister Marie Noret[5] died in Nantes. Please pray for all.

L.280 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE PANGOY[6]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of the Holy Spirit at Liancourt

(c. June 1650)

My very dear Sister,

I am distressed about Sister Mathurine,[7] who, you tell me, is ill with a severe attack of tertian fever. In the name of God, take very good care of her, and send me news of her as often as possible. Please assure the building superintendent that we will withhold the money due him from the pay of the nurse. Send us news of the child, please.

I am certain, my dear Sister, that the news of so many deaths is a powerful means to help you to renew your resolutions to be good to all, because life is so short and we die but once, yet the judgment passed

1. Bernard Codoing entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1636. He had been Superior in Richelieu since 1649.
2. Nicolas and Simon Manceau, Priests of the Mission.
3. Françoise Manceau, a native of Laumesfeld (Moselle) entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately 1643. She was in Chars. In June 1658, she was sent to Calais where she died, a victim of her devotion, in September.
4. Marie Arnou, see Letter 275.
5. Marie Noret, see Letter 275.
6. Jeanne Pangoy, see Letter 195b.
7. Mathurine Guérin, born on April 16, 1631 in Montcontour in Brittany, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on September 12, 1648. After a period of formation she went to the parish of Saint-Jean-de-Grèves and then to Liancourt. Called back to the Motherhouse in March 1652, she became Louise de Marillac's secretary and the Directress of the Seminary. In 1655, she was named Treasurer. In October 1659, she was sent to La Fère. In the month of May 1660, Monsieur Vincent called her back to the Belle Isle Hospital. She was named Superioress General in 1667. At the end of her first six years, she went to Angers. She was once again Superioress General from 1676 to 1682, from 1685 to 1691 and from 1694 to 1697. She died at the Motherhouse on October 18, 1704. A long biographical note on her life and virtues was compiled.

upon us at the hour of death lasts for all eternity. Saturday, we put to rest one of our sisters. Her name was Florence. She had been in the Company only two years. She was a very good girl, and we must be truly grateful to our good God that all those He is taking from us seem to be in a good state. Let us strive to live in such a way that the same will be true of us.

Please remember me to your dear sick sister and to Sister Geneviève.[1] All our sisters ask to be remembered to all of you. As for me, I am, with all my heart, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.288 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

July 1, 1650

Monsieur,

Please excuse the liberty I am taking in sending you this little package for our sisters. I will be sure to remind Monsieur Vincent about Monsieur Ratier's business although I do not think that he could have forgotten about it, since he spoke to me of the matter a while ago.

I have learned, Monsieur, that the administrators of the Hôtel-Dieu have obtained a second house to lodge the sick and that our sisters are expected to care for them. I beg you most humbly to take the trouble to look into the matter. It is greatly to be feared that, if the sisters are overburdened, they will fail in the order and cleanliness so necessary in hospitals and that people, not realizing how few of them there are, will consider them blameworthy. Most importantly, however, the sick will run the risk of suffering the consequences. I very humbly beg your Charity to take all this into consideration and to give an order concerning this situation. I also very humbly beseech you to continue to honor me by remembering, at the holy altar, the needs of our poor Company and of my soul so that the divine goodness may have mercy upon it at the hour of separation from this life, at which time I will truly be in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient . . .

1. Perhaps Geneviève Caillou, see Letter 19.

L.287 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hôtel-Dieu at Angers

July 1 (1650)

My very dear Sister,

I realize that it is truly very difficult for you to have to serve the poor in two houses. With the small number of sisters there, I see it as completely impossible. Speak to Monsieur l'abbé about it. He is still as willing to assist you as when God first inspired him with charity toward you.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to console our dear Sister Perrette[2] in her illness and to lead her to understand that bodily ailments are advantageous for us when we bear them for the love of God and try to love His most holy will. If we act in this way, then the noblest part of our being, our soul, is perfectly healthy.

Enclosed are two crosses like the ones we are now using for our sisters. They may be used as reliquaries as well since relics can be placed in them. We are not having any more of them made because they break and damage quickly. The medals certainly came from Rome. Monsieur Portail[3] brought them back with him. Distribute them as you see fit. Let me know if there are not enough for all those who requested them, and I will try to obtain more. Monsieur Portail sends greetings to all of you and urges you to be faithful and exact in the observance of your Rules, especially those concerning cordiality and union among ourselves. Our sisters join me in begging you to ask our good God for these virtues for us. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I wrote to Monsieur Ratier last week. Greet him as well as the good administrators very humbly for me.

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1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Perrette had arrived in Angers at the end of 1648. Monsieur Lambert called her "Perrine" in his report of the visitation in 1651. She left for Richelieu in 1658.
3. Monsieur Portail returned from Rome in September 1649.

L.289 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-René at Nantes

July 13, 1650

My very dear Sister,

I think that you and Sister Henriette[2] must have received responses to the letters that you wrote to Monsieur Vincent. It worried me that we had not received news of you, and I continued to hope that God would give you a little rest. It is true, my dear Sister, that you would hardly be able to get much since there are only six of you. It grieves me to see you so few in number for all the work you have because of the kitchen and the pharmacy.

It was a great joy for me to hear that Monsieur de Grenville[3] has been elected Father of the Poor. Please let me know, Sister, if he is the same one who was there at the time of our establishment. Let us hope that since he knows everything, even the length of time it took to request our sisters, he will make it clear that self-interest did not bring us there and that, with the help of God, it will never keep us there.

I sincerely hope, my dear Sisters, that together you have renewed your resolutions to be perfectly united among yourselves, so that you may faithfully practice your Rule not so much in external matters as interiorly by accepting every event and contradiction as coming from the hand of Divine Providence and by showing great support and complete understanding for one another. In this way, my dear Sisters, you will give good example to those who come to the hospital.

Since it has pleased God to give you a steward who, I believe, is one we would want, I urge you, Sisters, not to go out any longer. Even Sister Henriette should have her medical herbs brought to her. For a long time I have wished that your poor could be treated with remedies like those used in the parishes of Paris. If this were so, the sisters employed in the pharmacy[4] would have more time and energy to serve the poor.

Please assure Sister Jeanne de Saint-Albin[5] that her return trip has been delayed because we are uncertain as to whether or not all of you

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
3. Jeanne Lepintre answered Louise de Marillac in her letter of August 5 concerning Monsieur de Grenville: "It is the same, and he has as much or more kindness and affection for us than he had at that time."
4. Henriette Gesseaume and Claude Carré.
5. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201. Louise de Marillac must not have counted her when she reported that there were six sisters in Nantes.

might be returning and because we are expecting the gentlemen of the administration to request other sisters. Moreover, such long journeys are not easily undertaken alone. However, we intend to recall her at the first opportunity.

You did not tell me whether or not you had received my letters of the first of the month. I am worried about them. As for what I said about your not going out, that is to be understood as meaning without necessity. Although I am certain that you do not make social visits or visits simply for your personal satisfaction, I can assure you that it is this custom that has preserved the sisters of Angers. I sent you news of them in my last letter and explained how edified the entire Company is by their manner of acting, as it is by the patience which God has given you in all your tribulations. I beg the divine goodness to be your eternal reward and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. We have many sick sisters in various places. Two are in danger of death. Please remember me to all the sisters and express my humble greetings to the administrators, to Mademoiselle de La Carisière and to all our friends. I ask you, Sister, to offer my apologies to Monsieur Truchart[1] for not writing to him in this mail. I have taken some medication. Please extend my very humble greetings to him.

L.130C - TO SISTER JEANNE-CHRISTINE[2]

at Liancourt

(c. 1650)

My very dear Sister,

I shared your letter with Monsieur Vincent who agrees with you that you should be relieved of the responsibility of managing the money and that you should entrust this duty to Sister Mathurine.[3] She should accept it willingly since Divine Providence is ordering her to do so. Sister Jeanne Pangoy[4] will continue to nurse the sick poor along with you, Sister Jeanne, in the manner in which you saw her care for Sister Élisabeth. And you, Sister Jeanne-Christine, holy obedience makes you the Sister Servant. Thus, may the three of you be of one heart and one will.

Since we have had sisters at Liancourt, I have never, by the grace of

1. Monsieur Truchart, the sisters' confessor.
2. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344.
3. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
4. Jeanne Pangoy, see Letter 195b.

God, seen discord among them. I hope that His infinite goodness will continue to grant us this grace. When I say that Sister Jeanne Pangoy will take care of the sick of the villages, I mean she will do so with you, Sister Jeanne. However, she will show you how they must be served. Sister Mathurine will be careful to inscribe each day whatever there may be by way of receipts and expenditures. Thus everything will be very easy.

O my dear Sisters, how the desire to love God and the practice of that love make all things marvelously sweet! Oh, what a great consolation it is for good souls to have the opportunity to prove the love they bear Him, as you do, by the service that you render to the poor.

Remember the interior trials you endured, Sister Jeanne-Christine, when you lived in places where you had little work. I beg Our Lord, with all my heart, to bless your work and to make you realize how favored you must consider yourself because of the grace which He has given you. Oh, those who have lost this grace because they did not appreciate it are already filled with regret! We must be very humble and mistrust ourselves because we have no greater enemy than self-love. Let us ask Our Lord for this grace. Believe me in His love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know if I told you about the death of our good Sister Louise Proust.[1] She was sick for only six days. Pray to God for her.[2]

L.290B - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)[3]

at Angers

September 20, 1650

My very dear Sister,

I am sure that you are doing all you can to assist our Sister . . .[4] and that you look upon her as a young plant from which you may hope to gather good fruit to be presented, one day, at the eternal table of our good God. How happy you will be, my very dear Sister, if by your gentleness and cordiality in the way that you lovingly correct her, you

1. Louise Proust, a native of Parthenay, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately 1646-1647. After a short stay in Liancourt in 1649, she returned to Paris and died in 1650.
2. The copy of this letter is contained in the collection of documents relating to the Daughters of Charity.
3. This letter was part of the series of letters of Angers recopied by Marguerite Chétif.
4. Marguerite, called "Little Marguerite" by Monsieur Lambert in his report of the visitation of 1651.

are able to cooperate with grace in her efforts to sanctify herself. With all my heart, I beg you to do so.

I do not know if you regularly wash the hands of the poor. If you do not, I would ask you to begin this practice. I also urge you to correct the sisters in private; to be a good example of gentleness and submission for them; and to be a consolation for them in their little trials by your cordiality and support. Be very patient in giving them their little remedies, the greatest of which is to comfort them in their suffering and to show them the importance of never deviating from the accomplishment of the will of God who never changes His plans. Sometimes you must also take care to change a sister's duty when you see that she has become weary of it, without waiting for her to ask.

Finally, you must condescend in many things, such as foreseeing their needs without appearing to notice them. You must realize that authority is not to be wielded absolutely but charitably and that we are Sister Servants which means that we must bear the greatest burdens of body and mind. In so far as we are able, we must console our dear sisters who will always have sufficient difficulty in putting up with us, sometimes because of our moods and at other times because nature or the evil spirit makes us repugnant to them. I beg Our Lord to be your strength and consolation and I remain in His most holy love . . .

L.130B - (TO THE SISTERS OF LIANCOURT)[1]

(c. 1650)

My dear Sisters,

I am troubled about the difficulties you tell me you are encountering in accomplishing such a holy work. This house was opened, I believe, about ten years ago, by a few of our sisters who were much less gifted intellectually than you are. Moreover, when they blazed the trail for you, matters were very much more difficult than they are now. I must believe that God is sending me this little trial in punishment for my sins which would merit far worse if He willed to exercise His justice strictly.

I exhort you, as strongly as I possibly can, to reflect upon the obligations you have to God because of the gift of your vocation and because of the many graces that you have received from His generous hand. I also urge you to have great affection for the employments which He has confided to you.

1. This letter is a copy contained in the collection of documents relating to the Daughters of Charity, which is kept in the Motherhouse archives.

I do not know, Sister . . . [1], if I clearly understood the suggestion that you were making to me in your letter, namely that you come to Paris so as to escape from your difficulties and receive some relief. For the love of God, be a daughter filled with trust and fidelity to God as you have always been. Practice a little patience so that the holy will of God may be known in this matter.

I promise you that I will speak to Monsieur Vincent about it. I would have already done so had I not been sick in bed. I will not let this week go by without sending you some news.

As for you, my dear Sister Mathurine,[2] fear nothing. Our Lord will suffice for you because, although you do not know how to add or subtract, no harm will be caused by that, and you will soon learn. As you have seen, the custodian of the church is kind enough to do what is necessary when you are unable to, even to inscribing the accounts in the book. Please remember me to him, to Madame de la Chambre, if she is still there, and also to Madame Thibousche. I received a letter from Monsieur Thibault[3] who sends you his greetings. I hope that he will soon write to you and to Sister Anne de la Thalonnière.[4] By way of news, let me tell you that poor Sister Marie, whom we had sent to Saint-Méen, is on her way back here without our having sent for her.

All our Sisters greet you cordially and I beg God to grant you His peace and His love in which I am your humble sister and servant.

L.291 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS

(at Angers)

(October 1650)

My very dear Sister,

Five of our sisters left today for Nantes[5] and for another place even farther away.[6] They will be stopping in Angers. I am sending along with them some blessed medals which Monsieur Portail is sending to those sisters who do not have them. They have special indulgences. The sisters

1. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344.
2. Mathurine Guérin, a native of Montcontour in Brittany, see Letter 280.
3. Monsieur Thibault, see Letter 175, was in Saint-Méen (Brittany).
4. Anne de la Thalonnière, a native of Saintonge, died in November 1650.
5. Arrival of Louise Michel, Marthe Dauteuil and Françoise Ménage in Nantes (Coste IX, 531).
6. The two sisters who left for Hennebont were Anne Hardemont and Geneviève Doinel (Coste IX, 531).

are also bringing you three crosses. I wrote you a long letter which I sent with them but I forgot to give this package to Sister Anne Hardemont. Please give it to her as soon as she arrives.

Please find out from the Fathers of the Poor[1] if they are willing to allow the sisters to stay at the hospital and at the same time greet them very humbly for me. If it is not appropriate for them to stay with you, I would prefer that they be lodged with some good woman rather than at an inn.

Remember me to all our dear sisters and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. I beg all our sisters of Angers strongly to encourage our sisters going to Nantes.

L.295 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

Feast of Saint Andrew (1650)

My very dear Sister,

This is just a note to let you know that our dear sister[2] arrived in good health, thanks be to God. O my very dear Sister, how welcome she was, coming as she did in the name of obedience. Certainly the entire company loves her dearly.

I only had time to glance at your letter since we were absorbed with grief over the impending death of your good Sister Anne de la Thalonnière who came from Saintonge. She died the day after the arrival of our sister — Tuesday, after dinner — and she was buried today, the feast of Saint Andrew. That is why, my dear Sister, I do not have time to answer your dear letter which makes me love your good heart more than ever. I can only tell you that I think that some letters have been lost because, in addition to the letters that I sent you by our sisters of Hennebont,[3] I also wrote to you by the first mail after their departure to inform you that we were sending them to you. Moreover, it seems to me that Monsieur Vincent told me that he had also written to you since that time. I can assure you, my dear Sister, that his charity for your soul never diminishes and that mine is as great or greater than ever. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble servant and very loving sister.

1. The Fathers of the Poor, the hospital administrators.
2. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
3. See the preceding letter, Letter 291.

P.S. Please greet the administrators for me and all our sisters whom I embrace most affectionately.

L.296 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hôtel-Dieu at Nantes in Brittany

December 10 (1650)

My very dear Sister,

I wrote to you in the last mail to assure you of the arrival, in good health, of our dear Sister Jeanne de Saint-Albin.[2] By the grace of God, she continues that way. I showed your letter to Monsieur Vincent and I believe that he has since written to you. We have great reason to praise God, my dear Sister, that he devotes himself continuously for the good of the Company so that it might be able to accomplish the most holy will of God. One of his particular concerns is to contribute all that he can to the welfare of the hospital of Nantes. Because of this, you may be certain, my dear Sister, that when you wait a long time for an answer to letters that you have written to him asking for his advice concerning your difficulties, it is either because the letters have been lost or because it has been impossible for him to write to you. Be assured of this because I know the heart of this father for his daughter.

Moreover, my dear Sister, I can assure you that I have often refrained from offering advice because I know that he is giving you all the necessary answers. Several times I have also respected the wish expressed in your letters knowing, thereby, that you wanted this charity from him and were awaiting his answer. Of course you realize that one word of advice from him is worth a hundred from anyone else. Besides, there is reason to fear that diversity of advice might cause confusion or, at the very least, a waste of precious time. This does not mean, my dear Sister, that by the grace of God, I have ever failed to answer you when you have asked something of me.

I wish that you could see my heart and know that the distance which separates us has strengthened rather than weakened the close bond by which it pleased the goodness of God to unite our souls long ago. As proof of this, my dear Sister, let me tell you that when there are differences with the good sister[3] who is a little difficult, these must never appear in

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.
3. Henriette Gesseaume. After the visitation in April 1649, Monsieur Vincent had written

public, not even to the Fathers of the Poor or to the administrator with whom you must discuss whatever concerns the poor and the welfare of the hospital. The details of the little disagreements which occur within your community are for you alone. You may be certain that God will bless your trust and your dependence on His guidance. In order to do this, you must practice great cordiality, mutual support and cheerfulness.

Please send me news of yourself and of all our sisters as soon as possible. I greet all of you affectionately and I remain in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and most obedient sister and servant.

P.S. I am in a very great hurry. I believe that Monsieur Vincent answered your question about confession.

BEFORE 1650

Letters for which no precise date can be determined.

L.10 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Between 1639 and 1647)

Monsieur,

I do not know what to tell you about my health, but I assure you that, before thinking about anything else, I urgently need to speak to you about serious matters concerning several of our sisters. Sister Charlotte is here and has been seriously ill for some time. She is the sister of Sister Geneviève[1] of the Hôtel-Dieu who also served food to the sick there. I am afraid that she may be like our deceased Sister Bécu[2] for whom several blood-lettings in the foot had been ordered, but no one was able to draw blood. If your Charity would be so kind as to send good Brother Alexander,[3] perhaps he could get some. Usually her temperature is higher in the evening than in the morning.

Our sisters in retreat are ready to go to confession at your convenience. Neither of them will make a general confession. The woman from

about her: "she is not very respectful, not very or not at all submissive to the Sister Servant" (Coste III, 432).

1. Geneviève Poisson left the Hôtel-Dieu in 1647, see Letter 28.
2. Marie Bécu, see Letter 228, was still living in 1639.
3. Brother Alexander Véronne, see Letter 173b.

Lorraine who spoke to you Saturday at the Hôtel-Dieu has not yet found work. That is why she has been at the Hôtel-Dieu for a good two weeks now. What are we going to do with her? Please do not give her any money. I have told Sister Geneviève to supply her needs. She would like nothing better than to live there with nothing to do and money to spend.

I see such disorder everywhere that I seem to be overwhelmed by it. Nevertheless I continue to hope and, with Saints Martha and Mary, I strive to place my trust in Divine Providence. It is in the love of our good Jesus that I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and grateful servant.

L.3 - (TO A SISTER)

(Between 1640 and 1646)

My very dear Sister,

I would like to go myself to see you in your new home. If you have not yet gone to ask for the Pastor's blessing, it would be well to ask Madame de Romilly[1] to take both of you to see him. As for a confessor, if he mentions it to you, tell him to wait until you have had a little more time to get acquainted. In the meantime, go to the first one available.

I am enclosing pictures for you. One is a Lord of Charity[2] to put in the room where you receive the poor. The other is for your room.

I beg you, Sister, in the little disturbances that you will encounter, to practice the peace that Our Lord gave to His Apostles. Reflect more than you speak. Tell no one what you hear from the Ladies of the good girl who was there before you. You must respect the zeal she always demonstrated for the service of the poor. I say the same thing to Sister Jacqueline[3] and ask you to watch over her actions.

With all my heart, my dear Sister, I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very loving servant.

P.S. After I had written this letter, Monsieur Vincent told me that you should take Monsieur du Mesnil as your confessor.

1. Madame de Romilly (born Louise Goulas), a very active Lady of Charity. She particularly took care of the work of the foundlings.
2. Monsieur Vincent sent the first picture of the Lord of Charity to Louise de Marillac in January 1640 (Coste II, 10).
3. Jacqueline, one of the very first Daughters of Charity. She served the poor at the Hôtel-Dieu and at the parish of Saint-Leu. Her very bad temper and inconsiderate words forced Monsieur Vincent to think about her dismissal (Coste XIII, 592).

L.417 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday (Between 1642 and 1649)[1]

Monsieur,

I humbly ask you to be kind enough to let me know if tomorrow, Wednesday, is the day set for the convening of our sisters so that I may notify them as well as the sisters of Issy and Fontenay.

Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[2] asked me yesterday to find out from you when she may come to open her heart entirely to you. However, she does not want her family to know about it. I will let her know if you will do me the honor of informing me of your decision. She would like it to be as soon as possible.[3] Please give me your blessing, Monsieur, since I am your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.129B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Between 1645 and 1649)[4]

Monsieur,

The fear that no one remembered to tell you that I am assembling the sisters tomorrow, Monday, for the conference that your Charity did us the honor of promising us, prompts me to importune you with these few lines lest some other appointment deprive us of this happiness.

Providence has brought our sisters from Maule, Saint-Denis and Issy here to share this joy along with all the others. Please God, it will not one day be a cause of humiliation for us because, in his goodness, He has bestowed so many graces upon us and upon me in particular by permitting me to be, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant.

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1. Period during which the Daughters of Charity were at Issy.
2. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
3. See Monsieur Vincent's reply in Coste III, 169.
4. 1645: date of the establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Saint-Denis; 1649: date of their withdrawal from Issy.

L.24 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday (Before 1650)[1]

Monsieur,

I most humbly beseech you, for the love of God, to accord me the honor of speaking with you this morning about the answer that I must give my son who is to come to see me today. I did not want to give him a reply yesterday.

If your responsibilities oblige you to go out before I am able to get there, I would ask your Charity to be good enough to stop here. I take the liberty of making this very humble plea because I greatly need this favor and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.42 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Vincent (Before 1650)

Monsieur,

I most humbly beseech you, for the love of God, to accord me the honor of speaking with you today for as brief a time as you may wish. If you have not yet taken the trouble to sign our accounts, please put it off until I have added the expenses of the sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu which I forgot to do yesterday. I make many mistakes because of my excessive haste without speaking of those committed through ill-will. I beg your Charity to obtain forgiveness for me.

All your poor daughters greet you very humbly, and I ask you to remember them and me, the least of all, who am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Before 1650, Louise de Marillac began her letters to Monsieur Vincent by "Monsieur." After 1650, she wrote: "My Most Honored Father."

L.54 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Before 1650)

Monsieur,

My poor memory caused me to forget to tell you yesterday that the little du Pont girl wanted to go to confession to you during her little retreat. I think that she also wanted to talk to you about the wishes of her parents. This led me to believe, Monsieur, that if your Charity could speak with her, she might express her thoughts more freely, and you would have greater influence over her than her brother, as I had suggested to you. He lives four or five leagues from here.

I very humbly beg your Charity to offer to God the novena which we are beginning today. Our good God knows that, by His mercy, I desire nothing but His holy will and that I implore His omnipotence to remove all obstacles to the perfect accomplishment of this most holy will by which I am, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and humble daughter.

P.S. Please be good enough to let me know what time the little du Pont girl can go to see you.

L.79 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Before 1650)

Monsieur,

I think that some problem must have arisen because Madame de Lamoignon did not send me her carriage. Therefore, I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, not to mention my doubts concerning how much money I gave the sisters when they left because I still believe that I gave them only 50 écus and all I can think of is their feeling of insecurity because of this. I most humbly urge you to consider only this amount. I had intended to tell you this in the presence of the Ladies, as I am obliged, and to acknowledge, Monsieur, that I am your very humble and most unworthy daughter and servant.

L.90 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(Before 1650)

Monsieur,

Our good God has willed to add to the consolation that His goodness has brought to me by your Charity by showing me on another occasion that His Providence does not despise sinners. He sent Madame de Marillac[1] to me to tell me that she thought that I was in financial straits. She urged me to speak freely to her so that she could give me the support that her mother had offered to me in the form of an annuity. I explained my difficulty to her quite simply and told her that I would need nothing if my son were employed.

She wanted to see you about this matter but you had gone out. She wanted to find out from you, Monsieur, how the Bishop of Beauvais,[2] had received her proposal and what his feelings on the matter were. Because she is uncertain how she should present it to him and also because he is to leave either tomorrow or the next day, both she and I beg you very humbly to take the trouble to send her a note on this subject. I will inform Madame de Marillac, if you consider it appropriate. She wanted this because she was afraid that you would have to tell me something that would sadden me. I do not know whether or not it is my pride which causes me to suffer because of the trials with which I burden others. I should certainly be better than I am since I have the honor to be, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.118B - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)[3]

(Before 1650)

Monsieur,

It is true that I have a special affection for the feast of Pentecost and this time of preparation for it is very dear to me. I recall that some time ago I was greatly consoled to hear a preacher say that is was on Pentecost that God gave His written law to Moses and that, under the law of grace, it was on the same day that He gave to His church His law of love which

1. Madame de Marillac, the younger, wife of Michel, a deputy of Parliament.
2. Augustin Potier, Bishop of Beauvais, died on June 20, 1650.
3. Unaddressed, unsigned letter.

contains within it the power to effect this love. Since on this same day, God in His goodness placed in my heart a law which has never left it, despite my wickedness, I would sincerely hope that, if possible, on this day His goodness would reveal to me the means for observing that law according to His holy will.

Perhaps that is why I thought of asking your permission to prepare ourselves for this feast by depriving ourselves of Holy Communion during the preceding 11 days, the time which the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and the holy women were separated from their dear Master. We could also profit from this occasion to reflect upon the poor use we have made of our communions during the year so as to stir up within us a renewed desire to communicate more fervently and more profitably for the glory of God. In this way we might also participate with the Apostles in the baptism of love and zeal for the service of others which they received.

I beg you very humbly, Monsieur, not to let the delicate sensibilities which I have revealed to you lead your Charity, in a spirit of condescension, to think that I want you to defer to my ideas. That is very far from my desire. I am never happier than when I am reasonably contradicted. God almost always gives me the grace to acknowledge and appreciate the opinions of others even when they are completely contrary to my own. This applies particularly to the advice of your Charity in which I am certain to see the truth clearly even in matters which are hidden from me for a while.

L.134B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT[1]

Monsieur,

I have been asked to urge you very humbly, for the love of God (as I am now doing), to show your charity to a poor woman, who greatly needs to be committed, by asking Monsieur Gillot, a merchant from the Place aux Chats,[2] to help her to obtain a place at the Pitié.[3] The need that has been represented to me is most worthy of compassion and assistance to provide for the salvation of her soul and for her personal well-being. That is why, Monsieur, I resolved to importune you and to assure you by this note that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

1. Letter published in the Annals of the Congregation of the Mission, 1961.
2. Square in Paris, situated near the Cimetière des Innocents.
3. Hospital of Paris, constructed not far from the Jardin des Plantes.

L.136B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT[1]

Monsieur,

I forgot to ask you yesterday if Sister Renée should remain at this time to make her retreat. It is about the time that your Charity had indicated for her. If she stays, do you think it would be well if our Sister Claude from Chinon went during this period to take her place? She has taught school here fairly frequently and does well.

I beg you very humbly to remember the need we have of a conference. If it could be this week so as to place us in a better disposition for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, please be so kind as to let us know the day. All our sisters greatly desire one. Our sisters, who hope that they will no longer be delayed in giving themselves entirely to God, beg you to approve their desire as do I who call myself, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.369 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 24 (Before 1650)

Monsieur,

My heart is still overflowing with joy on account of the understanding which, I believe, our good God has given me of the words, "God is my God," and the awareness I had of the glory which the blessed render to Him as a consequence of this truth. Therefore, I cannot help communicating with you this evening to ask you to assist me to profit from this excess of joy and to suggest some practice for me tomorrow which is the feast of the saint whose name I have the honor to bear. It is also the day for the renovation of my vows. I hope, because of this double anniversary, to assist at your holy Mass. I beg your Charity most humbly to please let me know the time. I hope, my Most Honored Father, that you realize that all that I am is in your hands to be offered to this good God whose love has made me, by His great mercy, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

Evening, Feast of Saint Bartholomew

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1. Letter published in the Annals of the Congregation of the Mission, 1931.

RESPONSE OF SAINT VINCENT

Written in the margin of the above letter

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, for the tenderness with which His Divine Majesty honors you! You must receive it respectfully and devoutly and in view of some cross which He is preparing for you. His goodness generally prepares those He loves in this way when He wishes to crucify them. Oh, what a happiness to have such a paternal Providence watching over you! How that should increase your faith and your confidence in God and lead you to love Him more than ever!

So carry out, Mademoiselle, the action you are to perform. Today will tell you a great deal about it. I will share in your consolation as I intend to share in your cross by the Holy Sacrifice I hope to offer to Him today between eight and nine o'clock. Good day, Mademoiselle, I am your servant.

L.257 - FOR SISTER HELLOT[1]

My very dear Sister,

I am sending the transcript back to you. Please send the child back to the same commissioner and be careful that he is not given the transcript before he has taken the child so that we can use this to show his guilt. Please look over the unsigned letter, correct the mistakes, and seal it because I am sending it to him without reading it.

Go to see Madame Lendormy, as a good friend of the girl, in order to let her know adroitly the fault she has committed, how her salvation is in jeopardy regardless of what has been said to her, and that she can expect nothing from us until she speaks with me. Tell her that if we acted according to the norms of justice, we could have had her arrested and accused of presumed larceny or another serious crime because she left without giving notice, like a wicked servant.

Enclosed is a letter to be sent immediately to Madame de Borne. Please return this evening. Believe me always in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very loving sister and servant.

1. Élisabeth Hellot died at the end of the year 1650.

1651

July: *Visit of Monsieur Lambert to Nantes and Angers.*
At the end of the year: *Death of Élisabeth Hellot.*

L.297 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SISTERS CHARLOTTE ROYER[1] AND FRANÇOISE CARCIREUX[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

January 7, 1651

My very dear Sisters,

You have a right to complain about me because I have gone so long without thanking you for your beautiful altar cloth which has already adorned our chapel. I thank you for it with all my heart.

I believe that Monsieur Vincent has already sent you an answer in the matter you addressed to him. I am pleased that you saw Monsieur Lambert for that reason but you are keeping him a little too long. Extend my very humble greetings to him as well as my regrets. Tell him to please let me know if he delivered our letters to Sister Anne's[3] aunt and if he remembers Sister Vincente's[4] business.

Sister Charlotte, your father came to see us. He brought me your baptismal certificate which I am enclosing in this letter. I am certain that you will be pleased to have it. He is in good health as are your mother, your brothers, your sister-in-law and your niece, thank God. They do not have time to write. Your father told me that he will write to you. He sends greetings to both of you.

Enclosed is a letter for you, Sister Françoise, from Monsieur Carcireux. But do not worry. We have learned that he is not nearly so bad off as he would appear. Let us know if you had as many difficulties because of the floods as we did.

Perhaps I am wrong, my dear Sisters, but I believe that you are faithful in the observance of the Rule. This is my advice to you. All our sisters greet you very humbly. Sister Jeanne Delacroix[5] broke her leg but it is

1. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.
2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
3. Probably Anne de Gennes, a native of Richelieu, who would die in 1650. "Being of noble descent, she left all to offer herself to God in the Company of the Daughters of Charity" (Coste IX, 535).
4. Vincente Auchy, a native of Richelieu, see Letter 36.
5. Jeanne Delacroix, a native of Le Mans, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately 1645. She was at first in Paris and then in Serqueux in 1648. In April

healing well and she is already beginning to get around, thank the good Lord.

Enclosed are the pictures of your saint-protectors and the virtue that Divine Providence has permitted to be selected for you. I urge you, my dear Sisters, to practice it well. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble servant.

L.298 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[February 1651]

My Most Honored Father,

A judicial decision was handed down based on the proof of the abandonment of the child set forth in the transcript. I sent it to your Charity yesterday so that you could show it to the Ladies.

Now we need advice about how to carry out the decision because we are dealing with a powerful party. The easiest thing to do would be to have the horses seized on their way to the drinking-trough. I had thought, my Most Honored Father, if you did not find this acceptable, that we (I mean one of our sisters) should go to seek the advice of the Procurator General; or since similar situations may arise in the future, perhaps it would be better if Godefroy, one of the bailiffs of your jurisdiction, went and explained the entire matter.

We are in somewhat of a hurry to resolve this because the child's mother is with Sister Geneviève,[1] and we are afraid that she will slip away from us. Moreover, the father of the child might find in this a pretext to extricate himself from the situation which would put the poor creature in a deplorable state.

We also want the matter settled quickly because we are constantly worried about this poor girl. If you have no objections, I urge you most humbly to be good enough to speak to Monsieur Portail about this so as to have an accurate idea of her behavior.

We are sending for Sister Marie and the sister from Saint-Nicolas with whom she is now leaving. They will come to see you, accompanied by Sister Julienne,[2] on the day and at the time you indicate so that you may

1651, she was named Assistant. At the end of the year 1653, she returned to Serqueux. Once again Assistant in 1657, she was sent to Châteaudun in 1659 to replace Barbe Angiboust who had just died. Louise de Marillac said of her: "She is a daughter of virtue and great example" (Coste XIII, 672).

1. Geneviève Poisson, see Letter 28.
2. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.

handle this matter for us more surely and charitably.

Please give me your blessing since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.299 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity at Saint-Denis

February 17 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

Please take the belongings of Gilles du Pont which his master's son is to bring you and give him 18 pounds and 15 sols for the last quarter of his room and board. I shall surely repay you the first time you come here. Please get a receipt. I beg God to keep you, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.282 - FOR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST[1]

(at Saint-Denis)

(c. February 1651)[2]

My very dear Sister,

Yesterday I forgot to give you the 18 pounds and 15 sols. Please do not put off paying it. If you could send me a bushel of small, good, unbruised pears, I would be pleased.

As soon as Sister Jeanne arrives, please send Sister Nicolle here. I am planing to send you the money for the school teacher for the boys as well as for the pears. If possible, send about 50.

I beg Our Lord to let us enter the desert of penance with Him. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble . . .

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. See Letter 299.

L.300 - TO SISTER CHARLOTTE[1] AND SISTER FRANÇOISE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

March 17, 1651

My very dear Sisters,

May Our Lord continue to grant you His holy graces and increase them constantly so that you may persevere in His love and service. Our good Sister Etiennette[3] arrived safely, thank God, and appears to be animated by good will. Thank you for the beautiful thread you sent to me by her. She took good care of the supply of apples you gave her and they arrived here in perfect condition.

I beg you, my dear Sisters, to help poor Jeanne Fouré[4] to rid herself of the desire to return among us. Were she to persist in this idea for ten years, neither I nor my successors could take her back.

You are fortunate to have Monsieur Lambert.[5] Manage your household well so that you will not have to borrow. I think that the severity of the weather is the cause of the problems.

As for the desire[6] you have expressed, I consider it praiseworthy. It is not enough to begin well, one must persevere as, I believe, you intend. Nevertheless, in such matters, we must be submissive to the guidance of our Superiors who, for very important reasons, have determined that it is sufficient to make this offering for one year and to renew it annually. Do you not think, my dear Sisters, that this will be very pleasing to Our Lord since, having your freedom again at the end of the year, you can sacrifice it to Him anew? This is why, my dear Sisters, I advise you, if you are still in these good dispositions, not to put it off any longer so as not to lose any merit.

I am sure that you are still as modest and reserved as you were in Paris. Although you are living in a place where people are hospitable, cordial and love to be visited, I am certain that you do not act contrary to our holy customs. Also be very respectful toward ecclesiastics and modestly reserved with all men regardless of their station.

Monsieur Carcireux came here to see us yesterday. I tried to dissuade him from going to see you but I do not know if I convinced him. He

1. Charlotte Royer, of Liancourt, see Letter 254.
2. Françoise Carcireux, of Beauvais, see Letter 254.
3. Étiennette, perhaps Étiennette Massé, a native of Richelieu, had just entered the Company of Daughters of Charity.
4. Jeanne Fouré, see Letter 173b, regretted having left the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
5. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.
6. The two sisters wished to make perpetual vows.

brought your sister who married and put her in service here in the city along with the child she had. We all have our share of difficulties!

As for Sister Charlotte's father, I haven't seen him since he brought her baptismal certificate and said that he would write to her when he got to Liancourt. I sent the baptismal certificate but I have not seen the letter.

We are all fairly well, thank God, except our good Sister Perrette[1] who was at Issy. She is with us now and always sickly as is our poor blind sister.[2] They ask your prayers as do all our sisters who send you cordial greetings. So do I who am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.301 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 18 [1651]

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to tell you that I believe that, in order to get some relief from the pain caused by your wound, you must have blood let from your arm on the same side. It need only be a small amount, a container[3] full, just enough to alleviate the inflamation that can result from the disturbance of fluids caused by purgations. However, it seems absolutely essential to me that you use no saline purgatives for several weeks.

I am sending you an ointment that I have found very effective in reducing inflammation and easing pain. I would like you to try it, Father. Rub it over the entire area of the wound. Cover it with a sort of compress—a piece of linen that has been folded three or four times, then dampened with water after it has been warmed on a few embers to prevent it from being too cold.

It must be changed at least twice a day. If the inflammation is bad enough to dry out the linen more quickly, then it should be dampened more frequently. Be careful not to let it stick to the wound and do not pull it off without first dampening it so as not to tear off the skin.

But, in the name of God, my Most Honored Father, do not wait until it has become dangerously infected to send for Monsieur Pimpernelle who cured my leg with an ointment that first produced a large scab and then healed it perfectly. Perhaps if you have a blood letting and use this little remedy for three or four days, you will not need anything else. I earnestly desire this.

1. Perrette, see Letter 214.
2. Nicole, who was blind, died in April 1652.
3. "La palette" is a type of dish which was used to collect the blood during bleeding.

With all my heart, I beseech your Charity to implore the mercy of God for my soul so that I may awaken from my torpor and serve God more faithfully and thus be able truly to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.521 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

April 19 (1651)

Monsieur,

I consider the good you do our sisters despite your many cares and preoccupations to be a great benefit, and I praise God with all my heart for the blessings He bestows on the guidance of Monsieur Le Mercier[1] to whom I have not as yet expressed my gratitude except in my poor prayers.

I fear greatly, Monsieur, that our sisters may be questioned for all the reasons that your Charity was good enough to explain to me. However, if you and the most Reverend Bishop of Angers[2] consider it necessary and wish to do so, they are under his jurisdiction. I am certain, Monsieur, that either you will be charitable enough to instruct them yourself or you will have someone else do so, so that they may answer appropriately because I believe that they will be very intimidated.

Monsieur Vincent's heavy schedule and my own illness have prevented me from informing you of his views on the matter of Monsieur Ratier. I am sure that he will appreciate the efforts you are making to initiate the conferences.

I hope that in your charity you will remember our needs in your holy Masses and in your prayers. I beg you to do this for the love of God and in the belief that I am, Monsieur, in this same love, your most obedient and very humble servant.

1. Monsieur Le Mercier, new confessor of the sisters of the hospital of Angers.
2. In 1649, a new Bishop was named for Angers. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld was the brother of the famous Antoine Arnauld, the head of the French Jansenist party. Monseigneur Arnauld had a very great love for the poor and would often go visit them at the hospital. After the death of Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, he would be subjected to the influence of his Jansenist family.

L.302 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

April 24 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for your safe arrival and beseech Him to grant you the graces you need to profit from the guidance of Divine Providence in your life. I also ask His grace to enable you to reassure our good Sister Marguerite[2] that neither she nor the other sisters will have any difficulty in satisfying the Pastor. He took the trouble to come to see us this morning and I find him quite reasonable. He is a bit brusque. The only way to deal with him is by gentleness, by not arguing and by doing what he asks when you can. When you cannot carry out his request, you must explain your reasons to him gently and humbly. I am convinced that you will thus find him very easy to satisfy.

I think that you can easily go to confession to him or to one of his priests. However be prudent, my dear Sisters, because it is better not to go to them at all than to have to stop later.

I took some medicine yesterday so I will close now with the assurance that I am, most cordially, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. At the council of April 15, 1651 (Coste XIII, 678) it was decided to send Julienne Loret to Chars. Julienne, because of her prudence and intelligence would be able to act with proper judgment with the new Pastor, Monsieur Pouvot, who was a Jansenist.

2. Marguerite Chétif, born in Paris, in the parish of Saint-Sulpice on December 8, 1621, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on May 1, 1649. She was sent to Chars, returned from there in May 1651 and left for Serqueux. Being in Paris on April 4, 1655, she made perpetual vows. She was present at the official establishment of the Company and signed the Act (August 8, 1655). In 1656, she was sent to Arras. She was there at the time of Louise de Marillac's death, and it was there that she heard of her appointment as Superioress General (Coste X, 740). In 1667, she was Directress of the Seminary, then in 1670, Sister Servant in Angers. In 1674, she was named Treasurer during the generalate of Nicole Haran. After her three-year term, she went to the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus Hospice as Sister Servant. She died at the Motherhouse at the stroke of midnight on January 9.

L.303 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

May 2 [1651]

My Most Honored Father,

I continue to do everything so badly that I have come to the conclusion that I do not take sufficient time to seek from you the advice which we so greatly need. This causes me to ask you most humbly to have the charity to send for me or to come here at your earliest convenience.

Madame de Saint-Mandé[1] told some of our sisters that there would be a meeting today to settle some business concerning the foundlings. I most humbly beg you to see to it that the Ladies do not decide to send them all back to Bicêtre.[2] It seems to me that abundant experience from the past should prevent us, with your approval, from undertaking that course of action and I would prefer not having to refuse. The work appears to be going so well that I cannot help telling you, my Most Honored Father, that I am afraid that, if these Ladies start over again to take control of everything, they will hinder the guidance which God has given it since they have almost completely given up meddling with it.

On Friday, I sent a list of our needs to Madame de Mandé to pressure her for money. I did so reluctantly because of the fear that I just mentioned. I beg your Charity to consider before God how to prevent this from spoiling the work and to remember that I am, by order of His Providence, my Most Honored Father, your most grateful daughter and most obedient servant.

L.345 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

May 19 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

One of our sisters[3] left last Tuesday for Hennebont. She will stop in Nantes and give you a letter which I wrote in a great hurry. She forgot to ask for her set of Hours. May I ask you to be good enough to give her this set? Please accept the three enclosed pictures which belonged to our dear deceased Sister Hellot.[4] One is for you, one for Sister Henriette[5] and one for Sister Marthe.[6]

1. Madame de Saint-Mandé, see Letter 196.
2. The foundlings had been brought back to the Saint-Denis suburb (Coste IV, 170).
3. Monsieur Vincent had informed Anne Hardemont of the arrival of a sister (Barbe . . .) at the hospital of Hennebont (Coste IV, 172).
4. Élisabeth Hellot died at the end of the year 1650.
5. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
6. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.

I am worried because I have not had news of you for such a long time. Monsieur de Beaulieu[1] will give you news of us. He went to the trouble of visiting us a second time. I am afraid that you are ill because you gave him no answer on a rather important matter. If Monsieur d'Annemont[2] is in Nantes, I beg you, my dear Sister, to extend my most humble greetings and respect to him as well as to all your Ladies and to the administrators. I assume that if you thought it necessary for me to write to any one of them, you would let me know.

Please send me news of yourself more often, my dear Sister. I am afraid that you are not receiving all my letters because I write to you quite frequently.

Pray for us, my dear Sisters, that Our Lord Jesus Christ may bestow His Spirit upon us on this holy feast[3] so that we may be so filled with His Spirit that we may do nothing or say nothing except for His glory and His holy love in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.304 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

May 22 [1651]

My Most Honored Father,

I am troubled by my inability to express myself clearly when I spoke to you about our good Sister Julienne.[4] This was caused by the confusion of thoughts which my mind produces whenever I am obliged to tell you things that I believe you should know. I beg your Charity not to write to her in such a way that she would think that she must remain in a place where she has been for some time now since, in fact, you would perhaps not consider this appropriate.

I feel that I must tell your Charity that I was and still am sorry at having to abandon those little prayers because I believe that the Blessed Virgin wanted me to render her this small tribute of gratitude. But with her, I console myself by offering my renunciation to her and by resolving

1. Monsieur de Beaulieu, see Letter 210.
2. Monsieur d'Annemont, see Letter 173.
3. The Feast of Pentecost.
4. Julienne Loret was in Chars, see Letter 302.

to please her in some other way and to serve her with greater fervor. But how weakly are my resolutions carried out and how often they are neglected!

Help me by your charity, by giving me your blessing often and by offering me to God, unworthy though I am, as a good father does for his prodigal children because you know that I am one of them as well as, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient servant.

L.305 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[May 1651][1]

Please let me know, my Most Honored Father, if I may postpone my confession until tomorrow evening or, if it would perhaps even be better for your convenience, to wait until Thursday. Should I review the time prior to my last confession which was about three months ago?

So as to give you an account of how I spent today, let me tell you, my Most Honored Father, that, since I have been reading the *Memorial* of Grenada instead of *The Guide for Sinners*[2], my mind has been oppressed by the punishment it depicts without, however, being apprehensive because I am too little permeated by the fear of God. Nevertheless, I seem to be immersed in some sort of generalized terror. This feeling abated somewhat when I meditated on sin after having read the first chapter of the *Guide*. I realized that I had misunderstood and the words "God is He Who is" filled me with peace even though I discovered within myself sins against His goodness. Should I continue this reading? Shall I wait for your directive about my confession, that is, about the preparation and the time for making it? I greatly need your charitable assistance for this as I do to be relieved of the products of my imagination which I believe are a frequent source of sin for me. I am ashamed to admit that I am so far from being, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and grateful servant.

P.S. I am afraid that I am being too insistent, but I am convinced that your charity will cause you to look upon me as a poor person.

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1. Louise de Marillac made her annual retreat from Ascension to Pentecost.
2. Books written in Spanish by Louis de Granada and translated into French by N. Collin during the XVI century.

L.429 - TO MY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

(at Hennebont)[2]

(May 1651)

My very dear Sister,

In the name of God, I beg you, in your first conference, to reflect on the fact that there are three of you together and that you must honor the Blessed Trinity by this number. But how exactly? It is by the great union which must exist among you, by deferring to one another so as to avoid contention and by acquiescing, as far as possible, to one another's opinions. If occasionally they differ, remember, my dear Sisters, that Our Lord always deferred to the will of His Father. In that way, you will, as it were, honor this deference when, for love of Him, you sacrifice your opinion to follow that of the Sister Servant. She can act in like manner in matters in which neither God nor the neighbor will be offended.

I beg the goodness of Our Lord to dispose our souls for the reception of the Holy Spirit so that, burning with the fire of His holy love, you may be consumed in the perfection of this love which will enable you to love the most holy will of God in which I remain your . . .

L.119 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE[3]

Wednesday (May 1651)

My very dear Sister,

I beg you, without any delay, to have Sister Marguerite[4] leave Friday to come here. We have so few sisters and so many sick people that we need her. I am sending Sister Michelle[5] until we can send someone else to replace her. You realize that I do not have time to tell you more because I am making my little retreat. I ask for your prayers and I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. Anne Hardemont and Geneviève Doinel were going to welcome Barbe, a third Sister.
3. Julienne Loret in Chars, see Letters 220 and 302.
4. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
5. Michelle, probably a young sister, entrusted to Julienne Loret, the former Directress of the Seminary.

L.304B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

May 26 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

Please let me know what has happened to the three syringes[1] from Liancourt. If we sent you any, please tell me what we sent, the price and by whom we sent them.

Also let me know if you have heard anything since the departure of Sister Marguerite.[2] She has not yet arrived. It is not yet noon.

Please keep me in your prayers for the remainder of my little retreat during which I shall not forget you because you know that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.347 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GUILLEMINE CHESNEAU[3]

Daughter of Charity at Saint-Étienne[4]

June 1 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I am very surprised that you did not receive your share of the drugs we sent. To make up for this, I am sending you a loaf of sugar to make rose and cherry syrups. All our sisters ask to be remembered to you, and they praise God for the courage His goodness gives you to serve these poor afflicted people. Oh what a grace, my dear Sister, to have been chosen for this holy employment! It is true that it is extremely difficult, but it is because of this that the grace of God acting in you is more evident. You have every reason to trust in God and to abandon yourself to His Divine Providence. God will never fail to let you know how agreable this manner of acting is to Him.

You did not mention Sister Jeanne.[5] This worries me. I urge you to let me know if you see one another[6] and whom you have to help you.

1. See Letters 526 and 306.
2. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
3. Guillemine Chesneau, see Letter 214b.
4. Saint-Étienne in Arnes, in the Ardennes. Four sisters were sent there in 1650.
5. Jeanne Françoise, see Letter 371.
6. The sisters served the poor in different villages (Coste XIII, 675).

You gave me great pleasure by writing to me. I am enclosing a letter dated, as you will see, quite long ago because I could not find a safe way to send it. I would like to receive news of you more often, my dear Sister, but since it is the service of God which prevents us from being in touch more frequently, blessed be His holy name! We must try to meet often in the presence of Our Lord, contemplating His practice of charity toward the neighbor.

Believe me cordially and affectionately in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.526 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS PERRETTE[1] AND MARGUERITE CHÉTIF[2]

Daughters of Charity and Servants of the Sick Poor at Serqueux

June 2 (1651)

My very dear Sisters,

I am very concerned about the third syringe;[3] Marie-Marthe[4] can remember only the first two. Please try to recall what you gave the messenger shortly after Sister Jeanne Pangoy[5] returned. I do not know whether or not you were billed for the 25 sols for the spindles. I have not had time to have someone purchase the drugs you requested in your last letter. With the help of God, they will be in the first mail. Your scalpel has not yet been repaired so I am enclosing another one. I am not sending your habits because I do not know how long you will be there. I beg of you, watch over what Sister Michelle is doing so that she does not form any bad habits.

The first books we sent you cost 32 sols. Sister Marguerite[6] paid 20 sols for the last two we sent you. The two scalpels I mentioned must belong to the poor. The handles are with them. Here is a pound of salt for Sister Marie of Saint-Denis. If there is any left over, it is for the poor.

Please tell your parish priest that we are sorry that we cannot accept

1. Perrette Chefdeville, a native of Villers-sous-Leu, had a brother in the Priests of the Mission. She was Henriette Gesseaume's niece. Her admission into the Company of the Daughters of Charity dates back to 1640-1641. During the first years, she served the poor in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Fontenay, then she was sent to Serqueux. In 1653, she left for Châlons to aid the war victims.
2. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
3. See Letters 304b and 306 to Julienne Loret.
4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau was in Paris, see Letter 102.
5. Jeanne Pangoy, of Liancourt, came to Paris, no doubt for the retreat.
6. Marguerite from Vienne, see Letter 144.

that good girl. I am enclosing enough money to pay the wet-nurse until the end of the month. We have taken out the cost of the spindles and the books.

Good-bye for now, Sister. All the sisters send their greetings, as do I, to you and to our good Sister Michelle. I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your . . .

L.306 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Chars

June 9 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I never received an answer to my last letter in which I asked you to let me know if you remembered what we sent to Liancourt[1] by the messenger from Clermont when you went looking for him, met him in the street, and gave him what you were carrying. Try to remember and let me know as soon as possible because I am upset about these syringes. I cannot locate the third one. Enclosed are the two books that we kept forgetting to send you.

Please pray for all of us. We felt the effects of your prayers in the preparation of our repository. It was very beautiful and we had begun only on Tuesday. God granted your prayers for this. I am in the love of Our Lord Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.306B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CHARLOTTE[2] AND FRANÇOISE[3]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor at Richelieu

June 9 (1651)

My very dear Sisters,

I am very happy to have had news of you because, although Sister

1. See Letters 347 and 526.
2. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

Charlotte is still bothered by her ailments, which she endures with her usual tranquillity, she must be in fairly good health since she keeps on working for the glory of God in the service of her neighbor. Continue to be faithful to God, my dear Sisters, and consider yourselves blessed to be far away from your birthplace. God wants you where you now are, my dear Sisters, so that you may work more generously to acquire the holiness He expects of you.

I believe that, before his departure, Monsieur Lambert[1] granted you the consolation you desired,[2] not for your entire life, but for one year only. This is because Monsieur Vincent grants permission only for this length of time to everyone, without exception. Moreover, this is more pleasing to God than would otherwise be the case because at the end of the year you will be free and can offer your will to Him anew.

I do not remember, my dear Sisters, if you asked my permission to write to your family. You may do so. If you mentioned anything else, write to me again because I no longer have your letter.

I am afraid that Monsieur Lambert left Richelieu without notifying you. If so, use this occasion to learn that we must be detached from everything.

Sister Françoise, your sister is in a pitiful state of poverty, but by the grace of God, she bears it peacefully. Pray for her and her three children. Your younger brother came to Paris to try to be admitted at the Incurables. If we can, we will help him to do so. Your father has returned to Beauvais. Beg our good God to grant him the graces he needs to make good use of all his trials. His family does all that it can for him. Everyone in Sister Charlotte's family is fine, thank God. I beg Him, with all my heart, to keep both of you steadfast in your desire to love Him faithfully and I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Please extend my very humble greetings to the Priests of the Mission and ask them to remember us in their Masses and prayers.

L.307 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday Evening [June 1651]

I very humbly ask your Charity to be good enough to see if this letter can be sent to Montmirail.[3] Monsieur Georget and Mademoiselle

1. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, visited the houses in Angers and Nantes before leaving for Poland.

2. To make or renew their vows.

3. The establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Montmirail took place in 1647.

Amaury[1] came here with a request to keep Sister Jeanne-Baptiste[2] for another four months. They seemed very dissatisfied with Sister Nicole[3] but they could not say why. Madame Fouquet[4] was present and I am sure she detected some rather strong feelings in the matter. I tried to speak to them with the respect I owe them, letting them know that the matter did not depend on me. I tried to explain to them what your Charity had instructed me to do about the parishes of Saint-Étienne and Saint-Roch.[5]

They seemed to think that you would not grant their request. I told them I did not know what your decision would be once they had explained in greater detail the urgent needs they thought they had because of the serious faults they believe they find in Sister Nicole. They said quite openly that she wants to leave the Company and that they were acting to keep her for us. They added several other things that have no foundation in reality.

Madame Fouquet must speak with you and give you the opinion of the Pastor who, as far as I can see, knows nothing except what these two persons have convinced him is necessary for their charity.

If you judge it appropriate to accord me the honor of seeing you so that I may explain the matter to you more fully, please be so good as to let me know. I am always, my Most Honored Father, your very humble...

1. Monsieur Georget and Mademoiselle Amaury were from the parish of Saint-Jean-en-Grèves in Paris.
2. Jeanne-Baptiste, the younger, see Letter 235, was at the parish of Saint-Jean before being sent to Montmirail. Monsieur Vincent, in his reply to Louise de Marillac (Coste IV, 213), was troubled about knowing who had really requested Jeanne-Baptiste: the people of Saint-Jean or a young man who wished to marry her? Jeanne-Baptiste, faithful to God's calling, stayed in Montmirail.
3. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495, arrived in Montmirail in October 1650 (Coste IX, 531).
4. Madame Fouquet, born Marie de Maupéou, was the mother of eight children. One of her sons would become the Minister of Finance, another the Bishop of Narbonne. One of her daughters would be Superioress of the Visitation in Toulouse. Madame Fouquet, a woman of great charity and eminent devotion, died at 91 years of age.
5. Parishes of Paris.

L.309 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GUILLEMINE CHESNEAU[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor
(at Saint-Étienne in Arnes)

(June 1651)

My very dear Sister,

I see that you are still enduring many trials and I praise God for granting you the grace to bear them well. However, I beg you not to be disturbed by the person who wants to make you believe that you are acting as if you did not belong to the Company. It is true that the duty God, in His goodness, has entrusted to you is extremely trying and apparently devoid of consolation. Therefore, you must find comfort in the certainty that you are fulfilling the most holy will of God, and you will always do so as long as you remain in a spirit of submission. You have acted properly by waiting peacefully for God to deliver you from fear and danger. If He has not yet done so, bear this trial in a spirit of love and trust.

I cannot recall the money we gave you when you were leaving. Just count what remained after your trip and use it for the poor.

I am sure, my dear Sister, that your kind heart suffers from this lack of communication with the other sisters.[2] However, I am also certain that you are bearing this privation peacefully since Divine Providence has willed that you live like this for a while. Undoubtedly Saint John the Baptist, whose feast is celebrated Saturday, would very much have liked to follow Our Lord and to have the joy of always being with Him, but he preferred to renounce this consolation and to carry out the task assigned to him for the glory of God and the service of the neighbor. This example is a great comfort for isolated souls. Reflect upon it from time to time, my dear Sister, I beg of you. Rereading your dear letter, I realize that God has granted you many graces. Be very grateful for them and continue to turn to Him in all your needs.

Please continue to pray for Monsieur Vincent. He seems to be as well as usual. Monsieur Portail is also fine. I will be certain to deliver your message when I have the honor of seeing them. If you see or write to our sisters in your area, please remember us to them. Two of our new sisters are sick: Sister Françoise Paule[3] and Sister Phénix[4] who is seriously ill. Please pray for them and for me who am in greater need of prayers to

1. Guillemine Chesneau, see Letter 214b.
2. See Letter 347.
3. Françoise Paule was going to recover. She was at the Motherhouse in 1657.
4. Phénix, who had entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in approximately May of 1650, died at the end of June 1651.

obtain the mercy of God in whose love I remain, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know whether or not you received the sugar loaf we sent you from the Ladies to make up for the loss of the preserves we had sent.

P.P.S. Since I wrote this letter, I have learned that you did receive the sugar loaf. Please remember me most affectionately to my very dear Sister Marie-Joseph.[1]

L.311 - TO SISTER JULIENNE LORET[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

June 30 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I thank you with all my heart for your loving concern. The remedies I took were only precautionary, thanks be to God. However, in His goodness, He has visited us again. He took from us our dear Sister Phénix[3] who died of a raging fever on the ninth. This gives us great reason to humble ourselves and to renew the confidence we must have in Divine Providence. We still have Sister Madeleine[4] from Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet who is near death.

I praise God for the better health He has given to Sister Michelle,[5] and I beg her to use it well in the service of her neighbor and to strive to form herself according to the maxims of a true Daughter of Charity. Please have her give an account of her meditations and of the manner in which she puts her resolutions into practice as well as the faults she commits against them. Show her great cordiality when she admits these. See to it, I beg of you, that she does not develop the habit, when she is out, of committing faults against the modesty and reserve she should manifest. Above all, tell her to let you know privately if you give her cause to be displeased with you and impress on her the importance of not discussing with outsiders what goes on between you. You may read this letter to her, if you think she needs to hear it.

I am sorry you have to put up with this annoyance, but I urge you to ask the Pastor to be good enough to put a private lock on your door.

1. Marie-Joseph would be in Étampes in 1653. In June 1658, Monsieur Vincent spoke of her death with admiration (Coste X, 510).
2. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
3. Phénix, see Letter 309.
4. Madeleine Espérance, see Letter 317.
5. Michelle, see Letter 119.

Assure him that it is not because you distrust the assistant but because propriety requires it. Greet him most humbly for me. All our sisters ask to be remembered most affectionately to you.

Good-bye for now, my very dear Sisters. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Enclosed is the statement you requested.

L.313 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor
at the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jean at Angers

July 1 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the consolation you received from Monsieur Lambert's[2] visit. He was so edified by all our dear sisters that I almost wish I were in Angers. This gives me great joy, my dear Sister, and reason to glorify God. Continue, I beg of you, my very dear Sisters.

Monsieur Lambert does not remember having said that three of you were to be recalled. On the contrary, he is convinced that you are all firmly established. However, he is worried that our sisters are overworked and in delicate health. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to get some relief from the women and girls who have been cured because I think that your administrators would want this.

Please remember me most humbly to them and to the Ladies I know. When you see Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux and Monsieur Ratier, assure them of my very humble gratitude and services. We are all deeply obligated to them. I do not write to them as often as I would wish since I know that this could be bothersome for them because they are both so very busy for the glory of God. Monsieur Lambert spoke so highly of the Bishop of Angers[3] that I feel that you are blessed to be under his jurisdiction. I urge you to be very grateful for this.

I recommend the soul of our dear Sister Phénix[4] to your prayers. She was buried last Tuesday. She was someone for whom we had high hopes. Other sisters are ill, particularly our good Sister Anne Hardemont[5] and

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Monsieur Lambert indicated to Louise de Marillac, in his letter of May 23, 1651, that all of the sisters, except Nicole, were sick.
3. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, see Letter 521.
4. Phénix, see Letter 309.
5. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

one of her companions in Lower Brittany.[1] Pray for all of them, my dear Sisters. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and very loving servant.

P.S. Greet your confessor very humbly for me. I will have the honor of writing to thank him for his charity in your regard.

My heart was deeply touched by your submission when I reread your letter.

Please tell all our sisters that I beg God to forgive them for wanting to be recalled. However, I am convinced that they would not want to consider such a thing except in response to the call of obedience.

L.314 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor
at the Hôtel-Dieu of Nantes in Brittany

July 1 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

Your last letter was a great consolation for me because I had long hoped to have news of you. I had written at least three times without receiving any response. I was afraid you were ill. I praise God with all my heart that such was not the case.

What can I say, my very dear Sister, to convince you that it was not because of a lack of desire that I did not give you the satisfaction you said you expected of me. I must confess that I forgot because that is the only reason for my failure. Even now I cannot recall anything I was supposed to tell you because I believe that Monsieur Vincent always answers your questions. Moreover, as soon as I see in your letters that you want some advice from him, I make it a point to remind him through the brother who serves as his secretary. I am sure you explained the whole matter fully to Monsieur Lambert[3] who represents Monsieur Vincent to you. He will not fail to do whatever is necessary about the needs he discovered.

Remain at peace, my dear Sister, and work as you always have to settle things. The trouble you have gone to until now will not be wasted. You know that sunshine follows the rain.

I have already told you, my dear Sister, that, thinking I had a safe way to write to you, I gave the messages to your uncle, Monsieur Le Duc.

1. Barbe arrived in Hennebont in May 1651.
2. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
3. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, had just made the visitation.

Also, your cousin sent me a little package to keep for you: five or six chaplets of Our Lord and a rosary. Let me know if you want me to send it by the messenger.

Tell all our dear Sisters that I greet them with all my heart and that I beg God to grant them the grace of becoming what His heart wants them to be. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.315 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 5, 1651

My Most Honored Father,

The manner in which Divine Providence has always willed that I speak to you causes me to turn to you very simply in this matter concerning the accomplishment of the holy will of God and the obstacles which experience has shown might hinder the firm establishment of the Daughters of Charity. This supposes that God does not reveal that He wishes to destroy the Company entirely because of the general and individual faults which appear more pronounced in it in recent years. Before God, I believe that if I am not the sole cause of this I am at least the principal one, miserable creature that I am, because of my bad example, negligence and lack of zeal in the performance of my duty. Therefore, one of the Company's most urgent needs is to look to the future and provide someone now who can give better example.

A second need is that their way of life be put down in writing and distributed wherever there are sisters who can read. They should keep it reverently, without showing it to lay people or giving them copies. To be sure that every member of the Company is well acquainted with it, it could be read in Paris once a month by the Sister Servant. The sisters of the parishes would assemble there for that purpose every two weeks, part of them at one time and part two weeks later.

As for the sisters living in the country in places where it is not considered appropriate to send copies, either because they cannot read well enough or because we are not too sure of them, they could listen to the reading of it during the visitation or when they come to this House.

Since there will always be persons with minimal instruction in the Company and because practice leads to a way of acting, each article must be followed by an explanation of the intention with which it is to be carried out.

It would seem that weak and flighty personalities need to see a solid

foundation in order to find in it help to overcome temptations against their vocation.

The basis for this establishment, without which it would appear impossible for the said Company to subsist or for God to derive from it the glory which He seems to want it to render to Him, is that it must be erected either with the title of Company or of Confraternity and must be entirely under the jurisdiction of and dependent upon the venerable guidance of the Most Honored Superior General of the Venerable Priests of the Missions, with the consent of their Company, so that, in association with them, it might share in the good they accomplish so that the divine goodness, through the merits of Jesus Christ and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, might grant our Company the grace to live in the same spirit with which His goodness animates their honorable Company.

These are the thoughts, my Most Honored Father, that I dared not conceal from you. I leave them entirely to the decision which God wills your Charity to make concerning them. God, in His goodness, has granted me the grace to act in this way for 26 years since that day on which, in His mercy, He placed me under your holy guidance to accomplish His most holy will. Thus He made me what He knows I must be all of my life, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.316 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

July 15 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished not to have received a letter from you. Because of this, I am worried that you may be sick or upset about some contradiction. I would be distressed if I thought that I were in any way the cause of such a state of affairs. If I have failed to answer you or to give you some satisfaction you expected from me, please lay the blame on my memory which is failing quite a bit and not on my affection or on my willingness to grant you every satisfaction I can. My dear Sister, if you only knew the difficulties we are experiencing: the number of sick sisters and the many little matters for which we cannot get any help, you would feel sorry for us. You would pity us even more if you realized that my sins are the cause of all these trials. In the name of God, my dear Sister, pray the divine goodness to have mercy on me.

1. Jeanne Lepintre in Nantes, see Letter 64.

Let me know if you received a letter in which I told you that I had a letter and a few little chaplets that your cousin Le Duc is sending you. I am waiting for a safe way to send them. I have been assured that there will be one.

I was very happy to learn through Sister Louise's[1] letter that calm has followed the storm. It is not that I am not well aware that you still have sufficient occasions to practice virtue, but Our Lord is your strength and your consolation and His example is a source of encouragement for you. I beg this of Him with all my heart and I beg you to believe me in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. Please have Sister Louise take some sugar water until Monsieur Vincent decides what is to be done.

L.317 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

July 21 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

We are in such a hurry that I only have time to thank you cordially for the dear proofs of affection you gave us. I do not think that I have anything to say to you except that, since you have not spoken to the Pastor about the key, it is just as well to leave things as they are.

As for what is said to you about those who preceded you, I do not believe that you should be upset about it, my dear Sister. Answer as well as you can without laying any blame on them. Let us try to bear the contradictions and repugnances that we meet in carrying out our duty because this will make our actions more pleasing to God. I am sure our sisters procured help because Sister Marie was very ill for a long time. Besides they had farm animals which gave them extra work. I am not saying that she was not seriously at fault on account of the freedom the deceased Pastor allowed all our sisters because he esteemed them so highly, but we all commit faults.

Our good God is still visiting the dear Company with afflictions in the form of sickness and death. Our dear Sister Espérance[2] was buried Wednesday evening at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. At present Sister Jeanne Delacroix,[3] Sister Marguerite[4] from Vienne and Sister Jeanne from

1. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
2. Madeleine Espérance, of the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, died in July 1651.
3. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
4. Marguerite of Vienne, see Letter 144.

Sedan are ill here. Pray for all of us and beg God to have mercy on us. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters send their regards to you. Together with them please remember me to Sister Michelle.[1]

L.318 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

July 26 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

This is the third or fourth letter I have written to you without receiving any response. This causes me to worry about you. I beg you, my good Sister, to reassure me about your health and that I have not given you any reason to be upset with me because, if this is the case, I can assure you, my dear Sister, that I certainly did not intend to do so.

I received a letter from Sister Louise[2] telling me about her ailments. We so seldom have the honor of speaking with Monsieur Vincent that I have not as yet found out what we will do about this matter. But please assure her, my dear Sister, that we will do all in our power to relieve her.

I am astonished that we have not received any letters from the other sisters. If possible, I would like to hear from Sister Henriette[3] how things are in her duty.

Sister Louise wrote that you are enjoying peace and quiet and I was deeply consoled. Not that I do not realize, my dear Sister, that the pathways of God are strewn with roses and thorns. However, it seems to me that you have suffered so much that I am comforted to know that you have a breathing space to enjoy the sweetness and consolation which come from serving the poor without having to be concerned about other things. It would appear that this peace is leading to great unity and cordiality among you. I sincerely hope for this from the goodness of God. I beg you with all the affection of my heart to believe me to be, more than ever, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please pray for our deceased Sisters Phénix[4] and Espérance[5] who died recently.

1. Michelle, see Letter 119.
2. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
3. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
4. Phénix, see Letter 309.
5. Madeleine Espérance, see Letter 317.

L.469 - (TO SISTER JULIENNE LORET AT CHARS)[1]

(c. 1651)

My dear Sister,

It is not appropriate for you to have started ringing your bell. I did not know that you were the one who was supposed to ring the bell for Mass. Monsieur Vincent says that the person who rings the bell must be authorized to do so by the Church. Try to discontinue this little by little. I beg you, Sister, to keep in mind that we must not undertake anything without first proposing it to our superiors. This happens imperceptibly yet it has very serious consequences.

L.326 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

(c. August 1651)

My very dear Sister,

Your last two letters received my very close attention. I thought that Monsieur Lambert[2] could shed some light on the matter about which you say you are unable to speak to me. However, he has no recollection of it. This causes me to beg you, my dear Sister, to write to me more openly. I always receive your letters, and if you have Monsieur d'Annemont with you,[3] it will be even easier for you to send them.

I beg God to grant some relief to our Sisters Marthe[4] and Louise.[5] I think that it would be wise, my dear Sister, for them to abandon the idea of making a pilgrimage.

I am distressed, my dear Sister, that you have not made a retreat since you have been in Nantes. Monsieur Vincent, to whom I showed your

1. Letter from the Julienne Loret series, recopied by Marguerite Chétif.
2. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18, made the visitation in June.
3. Monsieur d'Annemont, see Letter 173.
4. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.
5. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.

letter, says that you must take the time to do so. I will tell you what I did, shortly before Pentecost, with the advice of our Most Honored Father. He had me take five or six days for retreat after I had made arrangements to have important matters taken care of during this period and had turned the day to day running of things over to Sister Assistant. This does not mean that when a need arose I did not take time to discuss what was going on. I assure you, my dear Sister, that God made up for what was lacking in me. He does the same for everyone. He even does more for others than for me because I am always too little disposed to receive His graces.

All that remains is for you to resolve to take the time. You may be certain that no one will find fault with your decision. You can place Sister Henriette[1] in charge of the other sisters unless Monsieur Vincent has told either of you something that would be an obstacle to this. Perhaps the trust you will place in her will help to calm her down. If you do not think this would be appropriate, select someone else.

Please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur d'Annemont and greet all our very dear sisters cordially for me. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please pray and have all our dear sisters pray for our Most Honored Father's well-being.

L.321 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

August 14 (1651)

Monsieur,

It would have pleased me very much to be of service to the good young lady whom your Charity sent to me, but she was already in the very able hands of Mother Marie Constance whom I had the honor of meeting. She directed her to the Pastor of Saint-Sulpice who took complete charge of everything, which leads me to believe that she will soon be placed.

Monsieur Lambert made me ashamed that I had taken the liberty of expressing my displeasure to you. I assure you that I felt so sorry for that poor girl that if I could have proven her innocent of the evil of which she was accused, I would have done so at any cost. Finally, Monsieur, because her father, according to her, was too long in coming she left us and found work as a domestic in Paris. Believe me, Monsieur, among the sorrows that God has permitted us to suffer, none has been more painful

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

for me, other than that which touches the glory of God, than that of knowing the trouble you have gone to and the acts of charity you have performed for us in vain because of our faults and miseries. Since, in His holy love, our good God has revealed the needs of this little Company to you, I hope that by this same love He will cause you to continue to respond to them.

I most humbly beg this of you, Monsieur, and I beseech you to be so charitable as to ask our good God to grant me new graces to accomplish His most holy will, in which I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.324 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

September 1 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I thought that I had told you very clearly that Monsieur Vincent had said that you were to discontinue the practice of ringing the bell for your exercises, for many reasons which are too lengthy to spell out here. Moreover, this is not necessary, especially for you, because you know what obedience is. His Charity told me that you could give some pretext or other to excuse yourself from doing this other than the fact that it is not the custom anywhere that our sisters are established (you know how important it is not to introduce innovations into a community). But you have a very real reason for stopping this practice, and this is the thought of Monsieur Vincent namely, that if you are not the one to do so, since you may not be there for a long time, it will of necessity be other sisters who will discontinue it because there is a hospital for the sick nearby. Moreover, in the villages it is impossible for two sisters to be together for their exercises, and it is also very difficult for even one always to be there at the appointed time. Since this is the case, please reflect on the fact that the sister ringing the bell is summoning no one. Would this not be proclaiming your action to the world when Our Lord teaches us to pray in secret when only our personal interests are involved?

Thank you, my very dear Sister, for the good fruit. However, since you have promised to send us more, I would ask you to put straw around the basket and even between the pieces of fruit because your first supply arrived bruised. You did not say if it was you who had made the cake. If so, you are an excellent cook. Our sick sisters would thank you for it and for the fruit if they could write.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to join us in thanking God for the grace He granted us is restoring Monsieur Vincent to health. He has been very ill with a constant fever. Please continue to pray for his complete cure because this year people seem to relapse into this fever several times.

I beg God in His goodness to increase His graces to you, and to give Sister Geneviève a great desire to attain perfection. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.322 - TO SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

(September 1651)

My very dear Sister,

I had thought of sending one of our sisters to you today to help you, but because almost all of them are ill I was afraid that you would have a sick sister with you. Besides, what you told me about the woman staying with you leads me to believe that you do not need immediate assistance. But, if you remain hard pressed we will, with the help of God, see to it that you get relief. I beg Him to keep you and to continue to grant you His holy graces. In the love of Jesus Crucified I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.327 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

September 19, 1651

My very dear Sister,

I beg you, in the name of God, not to be afflicted by the trials which His goodness sends you. This is an occasion for you to prove more clearly than ever your fidelity to Him. I am well aware that it is very difficult for you not to be able to serve the poor in the way you would desire. You must abandon yourself to the care of Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Father of the Poor.

I am sending you one of our sisters who will be a great help and consolation to you. If she does not know how to let blood, you can teach her very quickly.

The Pastor asked for some emetic wine, which we are sending. The usual dose is three ounces, but if our dear sister is very weak, I think that two would suffice.

Please remember, my dear Sister, that the more we are deprived of human assistance and consolation, the more our souls are filled with divine consolation if we trust in God and abandon ourselves to Him, as I am sure you have and continue to do each day. I praise God for this with all my heart, and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.328 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[1]

September 22 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I am most anxious to have detailed, frank news of you. I thought that Monsieur Lambert could enlighten me about what you said he might know, but he told me that he remembers nothing. It must therefore be, my dear Sister, that God wants this entire episode of the past to be forgotten. All that remains for us is to make good use of the present, but, in order to do so, we must ask this grace of God.

Please let me know if you have news of our sisters of Hennebont. We are worried for we have heard nothing from them since we learned that Sister Anne[2] was not feeling well. We have not yet been able to give the order to change our dear Sister Louise[3] because we have only sick and infirm sisters here at the House. There are so many sick in Paris that it seems as if we are all going to die. This scourge comes from our good God who touches us in order to warn us that we must be converted. Pray to Him that in His goodness He may have mercy on me. Please pray for my son who has been very ill for more than a week.

Your relatives are well, thank God. Your cousin, who had thought of entering the Company, has gotten married. Sister Louise's mother, sister and nephew are fine, and so are all Sister Henriette's[4] relatives. Sister Perrette[5] is also well. She is a very good sister. I have never seen such obedience, or at least none greater than hers.

I think I mentioned Monsieur Vincent's illness. However, considering

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526.

his age and multiplicity of responsibilities, he is, by the grace of God, fairly well now. Please recommend him often to the prayers of our very dear sisters who, I hope, are strong in their love of God and in the practice of interior mortification. It is only reasonable that those whom God has called to follow His Son should strive to become holy as He is holy and to make their lives a continuation of His. What a blessing that will be for all Eternity! The merits of Jesus Crucified have earned this grace for us. I remain in His love, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. My apologies for not having written to our sisters, particularly to Sisters Henriette and Marthe,[1] whom I cordially embrace as I do all the others. Please extend my very humble greetings to all the good women and young ladies whom I continue to esteem most highly.

L.285 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

(1651)

Monsieur,

I have deprived myself for sometime of the honor of writing to you for fear that I might appear importunate and distract you from your holy occupations. But necessity pushes me to do so. First of all, I wish to express my gratitude for the constant charity you show our dear sisters. We are extremely grateful to you for this. Secondly, I beg you most humbly to be good enough to let me know if you believe that it is essential to recall Sister Marguerite Moreau.[2] I ask this because it seems to me, Monsieur, that to leave her as Sister Servant in her present dispositions, in which she is unable either to overcome herself or to obey, would be a bad way to begin the direction of the house, and this would cause me to worry about the outcome. Please let me know also if your Charity judges it necessary to recall any of the other sisters. Please do not base this on any desire they might have expressed, because the frailty of these sisters would cause all of them to say that they had to be recalled, but rather, on the conclusion reached by you and Monsieur Ratier. Perhaps this will give the administrators[3] the idea of asking for more sisters. This question

1. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.
2. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278. Monsieur Lambert indicated, in his account given of the visit, "There would be some reason to find fault with the relationship between Sisters Marguerite and Cécile (Angiboust)."
3. The Fathers of the Poor, the administrators.

has been discussed for a long time, but I do not believe that the idea is coming from our sisters.

I am astonished by all that our sisters tell me about the Reverend Bishop of Angers[1] because, although I have long been aware of his virtue, I did not realize the extent to which he practiced it in the service of the poor. May God be forever blessed for the graces He grants to those who fear and love Him, and may He make me worthy truly to say that I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most obedient servant and very humble daughter.

L.329 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

September 27 (1651)

Monsieur,

I was extremely surprised when Sister Jeanne Lepintre[2] informed me that she was in Angers. This causes me to fear that she went through a severe spiritual crisis in Nantes. I am all the more convinced of this because she wrote to me two or three times in such veiled terms that I suspected something. If she has returned to Nantes, she has found a letter from me in which I assured her that I was suffering because of the trial I felt she was undergoing. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, in your charity, to let us know if we can do something to relieve her, as well as what you have learned about the entire situation in Nantes relative to our sisters.

The administrators of our hospital have finally decided to ask for three more sisters. However, they did not mention how they proposed to defray the cost of the journey. This is not the only reason, Monsieur, that we cannot send them at this time. There is also the fact that there are so many sick persons everywhere who have required the services of all those sisters whom we had available to send promptly to Angers. I cannot tell you how distressed I am because of this, and also because I cannot promise you any sisters soon for Château-Gontier. I shall not fail, Monsieur, to discuss this whole matter with Monsieur Vincent as soon as God grants me the grace of seeing him.

As for the suggestion of giving a Daughter for the convent which wants a sister, we cannot do that. I would ask you most humbly, Monsieur, to

1. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, see Letter 521.

2. Jeanne Lepintre, Sister Servant of the Hospital of Nantes.

explain this to those good religious. Allow me, Monsieur, to ask you to remember my son, who is very ill, in your holy Masses and prayers. I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you, Monsieur, that I suggested the change[1] you agreed upon to Monsieur Vincent. He thinks that we must decide to put it into effect.

L.334 - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[2]

at Nantes

(c. October 1651)

My very dear Sister,

Is it possible that you did not receive the long letter I wrote to you shortly after your arrival in Nantes in which I explained to you the way I thought you should act with our sisters since you had never before been in such a situation?[3] It is true, my dear Sister, that I realize that I have not written to you since. I apologize because I have received two letters from you. I assure you that I do not have time to do all that I should because of my ailments and lethargy. I beg you to ask pardon of God for me, and do not think that I am upset with you.

You must have had a great deal of trouble to have reached this point. I hope that you will profit from the experience. I am sure, my very dear Sister, that you agree with me when I say how blessed you are to have only to obey. You have many opportunities to practice gentleness, submission and renunciation of your own will, if you are still attached to it. Look upon this as a precious time, I beg of you, because I am sure that you will find great consolation in it when it has passed.

Remember me to Sister Henriette,[4] and tell her jokingly that I believe that only the trip to Madagascar could upset her. Oh, what a blessed journey, my dear Sister! I think it must be 1,000 to 1,200 leagues from here.

All our sisters send their cordial greetings, especially those to whom you have written or sent regards. Time is so precious to them, and they are so little educated that they cannot answer you, at least not immedi-

1. The replacement of Marguerite Moreau, see preceding letter, Letter 285.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110, of Hennebont returned to Nantes.
3. Anne Hardemont was still Sister Servant.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76. Monsieur Vincent asked her to go to Hennebont as Sister Servant (Coste IV, 240).

ately. You must accept their good will for now. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My regards to all our sisters. I beg God to grant all of you the grace of remaining faithful to the grace He gave you during the Jubilee.

L.354 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

October 6 (1651)

My dear Sister,

I thank God for all the help His goodness gave our deceased sister. I believe that, in a short time, she worked diligently to acquire the degree of holiness to which God had called her. You are blessed to have been able to assist her. May Our Lord be your eternal recompense!

Now I beg you to slow down a bit and to look after your health. For this, I think that you need exercise. If we are to believe Sister Philippe,[2] she would willingly undertake anything without taking time out to be sick. This is why I beg you, my dear Sister, to take turns teaching school, looking after the house and nursing the sick in the villages. Our sisters do this everywhere else. One of my worries about Chars is that our sisters are not in the habit of looking for opportunities to serve the sick poor of the surrounding villages. This causes me to fear that our stay there will lead to our humiliation.

I thank you with all my heart for the beautiful, delicious apples you sent us. It seems to me that you once mentioned that you were going to make honey. Please find out if that white honey is natural, or if it can be made some way because sugar is becoming very expensive, and it could be used to make syrups and even preserves.

We are sending you a half-pound of catholicon, a pound of senna, a pound of cassia and two and a quarter pounds of licorice. If you need anything else, let me know. Sister Marguerite[3] will draw up an account of what you are to pay the nurses. Please let us know how the child is doing. Be sure that he is brought back to us at the time indicated. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
2. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 339.
3. Marguerite of Vienne at the Motherhouse, see Letter 144.

P.S. Thank you for your kindness toward my son. He is better, thank God. Help me to thank Him for this.

L.330 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

October 24 (1651)

Monsieur,

I think that Sister Jeanne Lepintre[1] must have found the renewed strength she needed during her little trip. I thank you most humbly Monsieur, for your charity to both of us. I would be most grateful to you if you would be so kind as to let us know Sister Jeanne's attitude concerning the possibility of a longer stay in Nantes, or if you believe she needs a change and should come to Paris for a while. Some time ago she expressed the wish to come here, but lately I fear that she does not speak to me with the same openness. I am afraid that she is offended by something, but I know no reason for it.

I spoke to Monsieur Vincent about Sister Marguerite Moreau.[2] He agrees that we should have her come here because she has spent very little time in this House, as well as for several other reasons. Dare I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, for the love of God, to help her to accept this decision.

I will give some money to the three sisters[3] who will leave soon for Angers. The administrators came to tell us how they proposed to handle the expenses of their trip.

It is certainly true, Monsieur, that Sister Henriette[4] is in the frame of mind you thought she was. Please God it will last for a long time. I have always perceived strength in the midst of her weakness.

I am delighted that the good Mademoiselle Marie Gonain[5] is practicing charity in the manner she so loves, and that the hospital of Château-Gontier is being staffed by those good young women who acquit themselves so well in the service of the sick. The fear of losing poor Sister Jeanne[6]

1. Jeanne Lepintre, Sister Servant at Nantes, came to Angers to spend a few days with Henriette Gesseaume.
2. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.
3. Marie Donion, Michelle and Jeanne-Marie Ceintereau.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Marie Gonain, see Letter 325.
6. Jeanne had problems adapting to community life. The Council of June 1647 spoke of her dismissal (Coste XIII, 644). In 1649, it was still in question, see Letter 481. Louise de Marillac must have made a mistake on her place of origin. Jeanne was from Loudun, not from Chinon, see Letter 145.

causes us to hesitate about placing her as Monsieur Le Mercier[1] suggests. Perhaps the example of the sisters we will be sending will benefit those who need encouragement.

I thank you very humbly, Monsieur, for persuading our sisters not to go to Sainte-Marie. You know why we are opposed to it. You also know, Monsieur, that the only reasons are those which have to do with our sisters, whom I always take the liberty of confiding to your direction because we need your continued charity toward them.

I am very much afraid that Sister Cécile[2] takes too many liberties in her dealings with the Reverend Bishop of Angers. In the name of God, Monsieur, be so good as to advise her how to conduct herself in these matters. It is so easy to raise oneself above one's rightful place without even noticing it, that I consider it a great charity to point this out to her. I trust in your goodness to do this and to honor me by believing that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.331 - FOR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

at Chars

(October 1651)

My very dear Sister,

The goodness of your heart is too great for its effects to be bad. I heartily thank you for the news you send us regularly. Monsieur Portail met your good curate here and immediately promised him a place for the retreat although the number of participants is already quite large.

I praise God with all my heart for your good health. I am delighted with the beautiful, delicious fruit, but be sure, my dear Sister, that you are not depriving your poor of anything. Always look at their needs so that you can give them the best you have, because it belongs to them. I am convinced, my dear Sister, that you do not fail in this.

I do not know whether I told you that my son seems to have completely recovered. However, he has not gone out as yet, and he does not eat meat at supper. I beg you and Sister Philippe,[3] whom I encourage to remain cheerful and modest, to thank God for me. I ask both of you, my dear

1. Monsieur Le Mercier, priest and the sisters' confessor.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108. On September 19, 1651, the administrators wrote Louise de Marillac in order to request Cécile's departure because she listened to the Bishop more than to them.
3. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 339.

Sisters, to consider me in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Greetings from all our sisters, as well as from our Reverend Fathers, who are very happy to have news of you.

L.332 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

November (1651)

My very dear Sister,

So, your trip[1] was beneficial! I praise God with all my heart for this. It seems to me that Sister Henriette returned home delighted with everything. You did not mention it.

I did not fail to show your letter to Monsieur Vincent, as you requested. He still has it, so, perhaps, I will not respond to everything you asked me, my very dear Sister, because I cannot remember the entire contents of your letter just now. However, do not hesitate, my dear Sister, to ask me again about anything that requires an answer.

I would ask you, my dear Sister, to take note of the dispositions and capabilities of all the sisters in your little family, and to tell me which of them you think would most suitably replace Sister Anne[2] at Hennebont. At first, I thought that she could return, but now I realize that she must not. Are you satisfied with her? Please let me know what duty you have given her, and your opinion of her. I would also like very much to know, my dear Sister, if your return from Angers makes you look a bit more favorably upon your stay in Nantes, where God has bestowed so many blessings upon all of you albeit amidst thorns and crosses.

Please send me the names and birthplaces of all our sisters. Are there not ten of you now, with Sister Anne there? Have the administrators raised any objections?

Please extend my greetings to Sister Henriette[3] and tell her that I was very pleased with her letter. I hope that she will continue to send us news of herself from time to time. I cannot write to her this time. It seems to me that it has been a long time since we have heard from Sister Marthe.[4] I am anxious to have news of her and to know if she is still very strong

1. Jeanne Lepintre and Henriette Gesseaume went to spend a few days in Angers.
2. Anne Hardemont, who was then in Nantes.
3. Henriette Gesseaume, to whom Monsieur Vincent wrote to tell her to go to Hennebont as Sister Servant (Coste IV, 240).
4. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.

and courageous. I would especially like to know if all our sisters are very faithful to their vocation. I desire this with all my heart. I hope that you will remember us in your prayers because of the close bond of His love by which Our Lord unites us for all eternity and in which I am, your very humble and most obedient sister and servant.

L.405 - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)

at Angers[1]

(c. 1651)

My very dear Sister,

Truly I found the time exceedingly long before receiving news of your dear selves. I praise God with all my heart that only your holy duty kept you from writing. May God's most holy love always make it meritorious for you, and may He continue to bestow His graces on all our sisters so as to keep them in the state you described to me. I embrace all of them tenderly, and urge them to think often of eternity so that the thought of the roses to come may console them amidst the thorns. We must strive to acquire spiritual balance and inner peace in all the circumstances that may arise.

This seems very difficult, but we can make use of two or three means that will be of great help. Firstly, my dear Sisters, we must develop the habit of accepting all our little contradictions as coming from the hand of God, who is our Father and who knows well what is good for us. Another means is to reflect that the sadness we are experiencing will not last forever, and that after a few hours, we will be in a different frame of mind from the one in which we now find ourselves. A third means to preserve peace in the midst of our little trials is to recall that God knows our present state, and that if we love Him for Himself and strive to do His holy will, the very things that now sadden us will in truth be a source of great consolation for us one day. Let us therefore concentrate all our efforts on doing good so as to please God. The lack of exterior help from creatures will enable us to advance in the perfection of holy love.

Do you know, my very dear Sisters, what Our Lord does for a soul deprived of all consolation and help from creatures but courageous and blessed enough to use this trial in the way I have described? He delights in becoming the cherished guide of such souls. Even if they do not feel this help, they can rest assured that God will not permit them to do

1. Letter recopied by Marguerite Chétif, Angers Series. The administrators requested Cécile Angiboust's departure by the letter dated September 19, 1651.

anything displeasing to Him. This should be the goal of all our desires.

Please pray for all our sisters and for me who am in Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble (sister and servant).

L.494 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

The 12th (November 1651)

Monsieur,

I cannot describe how consoled I was to receive your dear letter. I had thought that I no longer deserved such an honor and that your important work absorbed all your time. I beg God, Monsieur, to keep you well in the midst of your trials, and I hope that we may be blessed with another visit from you.

I suspected that our sisters were becoming the object of a vicious attack. Monsieur Leheurt[1] went to the trouble of coming to see us. He was highly critical of the sisters, particularly of Sister Cécile.[2] He said that they were involved in complaints lodged against the administration; that they cross-examined penitents leaving the confessional and many other things of this nature.

I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, if you do not know the basis of these complaints, to be good enough to find out so that we may know the truth in the matter. I would also ask you, Monsieur, in your charity, to determine which of our sisters[3] seems most gifted with aptitude for direction so that we can name her assistant to the Sister Servant, if God is pleased to restore her to health. She may even be asked to replace her for a time should Monsieur Vincent see fit to remove her from office for a while, in order to relieve her, and also to test her virtue a bit.

I look forward to your arrival to learn your opinion in this matter, which I beg you to commend to Our Lord, in whose love I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I most humbly beg you to pray for the very important matter of the withdrawal of our sisters from Nantes. Monsieur Vincent has just about decided to do this soon. If I have the honor of seeing you, I will give you the reasons for this decision. Permit me, Monsieur, to ask to be remembered in your prayers and holy Masses.

1. Monsieur Leheurt, hospital administrator.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. It was Élisabeth Brocard who was named Assistant, see Letter 237.

L.333 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Catherine [1651]

My Most Honored Father,

I have found no document pertaining to the foundation.[1] However, I recall that one day[2] you read to us the petition you had presented to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris. You followed this with a reading of our Rule. Thinking that the text should remain with us, I asked you for it. I believe that the reason we never received it was because there were still modifications to be made in it.[3]

My misery and my awareness of the obstacles I place in the path of grace for this Company have often led me to think that, in order to establish it on a firm foundation, it would be desirable for someone to replace me. My successor, by the example of her virtue and of her fidelity to the Rules, would be able to assist all the Daughters of Charity to form good habits. Because this is lacking at the present time, it has often seemed to me that Providence has been deferring its establishment.

There are other good reasons that have frequently caused me to doubt that God wanted its establishment, or to believe that He was only permitting it to continue until such time as it would destroy itself by particular disorders. The reasons are first, the premature deaths of so many good subjects who would have been well able to sustain it; second, the fear that the Daughters of Charity, seeing themselves securely established, might rise above their appropriate position and become smug in the fulfillment of their duties. A third or fourth reason is the experience of already having three or four sisters leave to get married. Obviously they had been harboring these thoughts while in the Company, thoughts which are strong temptations to impurity. If allowed to persist, this crime would completely destroy the Company, which must be established with the aim of honoring Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, who are the very personification of purity. And finally, there are the individual faults of our sisters, their little growth in holiness, and above all, their lack of mortification of the senses and passions.

But there are facts that lead me to believe that God wills its establishment. These are the intrinsic goodness of the work itself; the blessings which He in His mercy has bestowed upon it until now; the

1. Founding of the Company.

2. May 30, 1647 (Coste IX, 324).

3. The Act of Establishment, approved in 1646 (see notes of 1646) mentioned that the Daughters of Charity were under the jurisdiction of the Bishops. Louise de Marillac insisted that the Company depend on the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, see Letters 130d and 199.

guidance of Divine Providence in the entire formulation; the freedom Superiors have to rid the Company of subjects who might spoil it, and likewise, the freedom granted each individual to withdraw.

Another reason to believe that God wills the establishment of the Company is that, since the basic ownership of its temporal goods concerns another work, in the future it might be desired or reasons might be found to propose its general suppression, and, thus, the glory God perhaps wished to draw from it would end sooner than He intended if the Company had been faithful to Him.

The strongest reason for believing that the establishment is essential is that, if it is not effected by the Founder God made use of to begin the work, it cannot be assumed that his successors would ever dare to undertake it. I beg God in His goodness to continue to guide and to shed His light upon His work, to eliminate any obstacles remaining in it, and to manifest His will concerning the thoughts of those who wish to be associated with it.

I very humbly beg your pardon for having gone on too long. Enclosed is the first Rule which is, I believe, the one presented to the Most Reverend Archbishop. If it is not the one, it is, at least, a copy. It is my great shame that I do not practice it or deserve to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I believe that Brother Ducourneau will be able to find a copy, or the original of the petition that was presented, as well as the Act of Establishment which, it seems to me, was never in our possession.

L.269 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

December 2 (1651)

Monsieur,

If I did not know that the world usually persecutes those who do not follow its maxims, I would be astounded to see how it dares to fabricate such black malice as that which leads it to calumniate persons interested only in furthering the glory of God in all things. God, in His mercy, gives you the grace, Monsieur, to make good use of the calumnies of the period. I can assure you that I had not heard this mentioned. On the contrary, I was told that everything possible had been done to have a bishop[1] according to the will of God; and this was said openly and in the presence

1. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, see Letter 521. His frequent visits to the hospital were criticized.

of Monsieur Vincent, that when evil is spoken against someone and no proof or source can be cited, then it is pure calumny. It seems to me, Monsieur, that all this is very different from what is circulating in Angers.

Truly, I think that the great troubles and labor that our sisters have because of their weakness could, to some degree, prevent their having a well-regulated interior life. But, I believe, Monsieur, that if they acquire the habit of performing all their actions for God, they could be distracted from too much introspection which is, in my opinion, the cause of their misunderstanding and restlessness.

We are always most grateful to you, Monsieur, for the care your Charity takes of them. This obliges us to implore Divine Love to be your eternal recompense. I am in this same love, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.335 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Thomas [1651]

My Most Honored Father,

I could not let this day go without reminding your Charity that 26 years ago today Providence placed me in the state of earthly widowhood and gave me the grace of desiring to be united to God for time and for eternity. Please give me your blessing on this anniversary, and in your charity, offer me once again to His goodness. If I were not so unfaithful to my guardian angel, he would surely have inspired you to do so this morning.

I am returning to you the letter from the chaplain in Nantes. I do not think that I am wrong in surmising that some people there believe that it would be well for us to recall Sister Jeanne.[1] Would you consider, my Most Honored Father, sending her to Saint-Malo? Please excuse me for expressing my thoughts so readily. I am enclosing the letter of our dear Sister Jeanne and the one from Sister Henriette[2] who, as you will see, is quite willing to go to Hennebont.

I do not know if your Charity had the opportunity to see the letter from the Pastor of Nanteuil. I am enclosing it also. I believe he is angry because Madame de Schomberg,[3] the wife of the Field-Marshall, is listening to our sisters. At present, I believe they are opposed to his idea

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76. Monsieur Vincent wrote to her in August 1651 (Coste IV, 240).
3. Madame de Schomberg, see Letter 263.

of placing a beggar as watchman at the Hôtel-Dieu because they are afraid that the disorders that have been going on for a long time will continue. I am enclosing the letter from the sisters on this matter. I will forward it to Madame de Schomberg, the wife of the Field-Marshall, if your Charity judges this appropriate.

For the love of God, my Most Honored Father, allow me to make my little review to you before Christmas—either Friday, Saturday or Sunday (which is Christmas eve), at a time convenient for you.

We have Mademoiselle Guérin here with us. She used to be your neighbor at the Bons-Enfants. Within the past month she has lost two of her own children. They were of great promise and virtue. One young man was a professed religious at Saint-Geneviève; the other was a member of Parliament. She would like very much to have the honor of seeing you. You know that she is a person who will take no more of your time than your Charity is able to give her. Although unworthy, I remain, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. The young man who came from Nantes asked me to remember him to your Charity. I forgot to extend to you the very humble greetings of Monsieur and Madame de Liancourt[1] when they arrived from La Roche-Guyon.

L.336 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

(December 1651)

My very dear Sister,

I am greatly surprised to hear that you have not received any news from us. I am, however, the one who should complain. I have already written twice asking you to find out from Sister Philippe[3] what she bought from the grocer when she was at Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, and how much she owes him because he is pressing us for payment.

I am very much mistaken if we have not sent you drugs to make ointment, but I am sending more. I beg you, my dear Sister, to let me

1. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.
2. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
3. Philippe Bailly of Vitry-le-François. In 1647, she was in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, then at the parish of Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs. She was sent to Chars for approximately two years in 1651. She was then at the Motherhouse and signed the Act of Establishment of the Company in 1655. She was named Bursar in 1660.

know as soon as possible what you have learned from Sister Philippe. I reproached her in my last letter for not writing to me. Please tell her that I only want to hear how she is. I hope for more news from both of you, in keeping with what you have led me to expect.

I beg Our Lord to be your strength and consolation and to be good to you at the Crib. I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.337 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste at Angers

December 30 (1651)

My very dear Sister,

I am sorry for not informing you sooner of Sister Marguerite's[2] safe arrival. The Christmas season was partly the cause, as were my slight ailments. She was careful to tell me all that you wanted her to say. May the remembrance you have of her help you to bear with one another for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us to practice this virtue as a sign that we belong to Him.

I beg you, therefore, not to form hasty opinions about our newly arrived sisters.[3] You are well aware that changes are always difficult, and that it takes time to learn new ways of serving the poor skillfully and well. All that I can say to you about them is that they are all filled with good will, and that they were quite successful on their former missions.

However, you must not conclude, my dear Sister, that, because you have repeated something a dozen times, it is enough. You know that our memories are not always adequate. So, be patient, my dear Sister, not only with these sisters but with everyone in general. Practice great gentleness, condescension and discretion. Above all, show great reserve in expressing your feelings, and do not reveal what you know about one sister to another. Sister Servants must die to themselves, if they are to fulfill their duties well.

If we realized our obligations, oh, how we would dread the weight of the responsibilities placed upon us. The fear we ought to have of being unable to accomplish anything of ourselves should cause us to work for

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.
3. The three sisters who arrived at the beginning of November: Marie Donion, Michelle and Jeanne-Marie.

others, so that the patience they must practice toward us because of our weakness, might be useful for their salvation and God's glory. We will be eternally humbled, as we deserve, if we have not made use of our position according to the designs of God.

I am not speaking in this way, my dear Sister, because of any knowledge I have of you in particular. Rather, I am referring to all those who hold positions of authority, and to myself more than to anyone else because I have great reason to be afraid. Let us greatly humble ourselves and place ourselves well below everyone else so as to try to be safe. Above all, let us willingly give ourselves to God to accept all the humiliations our pride must endure, if we are to avoid being lost.

Please tell the older sisters of your house that I urge them to renew their courage and to be careful to put into practice one of the principal points of our Rule, which is to avoid confiding their trials to one another or conversing idly about the dispositions of other sisters. As for the confessor, in the name of God, my very dear Sisters, be open to whatever Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux advises.

Always be respectful toward the Bishop of Angers.[1] Do not abuse the honor he pays you by becoming too familiar in your dealings with him. Admire his humility and marvel that God has chosen you to make you what you are and to prepare you to pay the price for the honor you do not deserve and which you receive, through the humiliations you will encounter in the duty in which you will be placed when God, in His mercy, removes you from the one in which you now are.

Forgive me, my dear Sister, if I communicate to you the fraternal corrections which God prompts me to give. My cordial affection for you causes me to speak this way.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of the good Madame de Lamoignon[2] whom God called from this world last night, that she may enjoy the glory which the Son of God merited as a reward for her three outstanding virtues of holy simplicity, profound humility and unbounded charity and generosity. After having prayed for her, as the Church asks us to do, let us pray for ourselves that she may obtain for us, from the divine goodness, these three virtues, for the glory of God. Please inform Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux and Monsieur Ratier of her death. Greet them for me and express my apologies for not taking this opportunity to write to them.

Good day, my dear Sisters. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, see Letter 521.
2. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.

L.281 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT SAINT-DENIS

Thursday evening (c. 1651)

My very dear Sister,

As soon as you receive this letter, please have Sister Jeanne leave to come here. This is an order from Monsieur Vincent, so that is why I urge you to do so without delay. God willing, I will send you another sister. I beg Him to keep you in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.287B - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)

at Angers[1]

(c. 1651)

My very dear Sister,

For your retreat, reflect that God permits that in order to make you more open. Do we want to be mercenaries and wait until circumstances force us to be faithful to God? Do we not know what God asks of us?

In reality, do we not know that He wants us to distrust and humble ourselves, to be very supportive of one another, to do and say whatever we believe will please others, to be careful not to anger any of our sisters, and to overcome ourselves so as not to reveal our feelings when they are contrary to those of others.

Since we know that all these practices are pleasing to our good God, let us undertake them for His holy love.

L.357 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT[2]

(c. 1651)

When mention is made of permissions obtained from the Sister Assistant, would it not be necessary to add, "always in the absence of

1. Letter recopied by Marguerite Chétif, Angers Series.
2. Louise de Marillac expressed her reflections on the Rule which was in the process of being drawn up.

the Directress?" [1] Is the word "Directress" appropriate? Would it not be better to have the required readings once a week instead of once a month?

It would seem essential that the sisters in the parishes not visit one another except in the case of illness. Should an article be drawn up to this effect?

These are the things I have noticed, my Most Honored Father. However, in the name of God, pay no attention to either my notes or my remarks. Instead, tell us to do what you believe God is asking of us. Please add the maxims and instructions which will encourage us and keep us faithful and exact in the observance of all the points of our Rule because, it seems to me, that, as we are, we do not pay sufficient attention to our obligations because we do not look upon them as such.

Please give your blessing to all your poor daughters and ask God, for their servant, the mercy she needs to be truly, my Most Honored Father, your poor daughter and most grateful servant.

1652

Renewed outbreak of the troubles of the Fronde, defeat of Condé at the gates of Paris.
Serious illness of Louise de Marillac.
Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Brienne and Varize.
Sending of the first Daughters of Charity to Warsaw (Poland).

L.339 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

January 7, 1652

My very dear Sister,

Heartfelt thanks for your dear New Year's gifts which I did not distribute to the sisters, thinking they were your pictures from past years because they bore the same writing. This would have been out of place. As for your delicious cakes, the community will think of you while enjoying them. The "Little Sister"[2] does not yet have enough teeth to eat any.

1. Name given to the Superioress General in official documents.
2. Louise-Renée, Louise de Marillac's granddaughter, was not yet three months old.

I am enclosing the New Year's gift that Divine Providence has chosen for both of you, as well as a little Saint Julienne that I did not want to entrust to just anyone for fear you would not get it. I think they are hard to find.

I beg you, my dear Sisters, to avoid upsetting the collector's wife and to let the Pastor decide how you should account for what you receive and for what you spend. However, be very careful not to profit from anything belonging to the poor. If you feed any animals for your own use, be exact in paying for all of the feed. If you give away a part of the milk or the eggs you get from the chickens, it would be better to sell it than to incur any expense for that. Also, be careful not to spend the money of the poor to meet expenses for caring for them or for anything else that you have done for your own benefit.

You have already spoken to me about the young lacemaker. I am afraid that she is not suitable for us. You know that much can be said about the fact that we do not live everywhere in the way we have lived until now.

Do not worry about being asked to give an account of the wheat because, if you bake for the sick poor, there are usually so few of them that they cannot eat very much. However, I think that it would be better to buy bread, if there are bakers nearby, instead of baking it yourselves. Besides, this would also relieve you of some work.

I praise God, my dear Sister, that you have lodged the Infant Jesus so well. I am certain that you both have likewise welcomed His new presence into your hearts. I pray with all my heart that He may take delight in dwelling there.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of our dear Sister Marie Le Maire who died about three o'clock this afternoon. She was with the foundlings and had a slight limp. We lose a great deal in losing her. Her life was one long act of virtue. However, we must adore the holy will of God in all His designs. There is a new sister here at the House, whom you do not yet know, who is seriously ill. Please keep her in your prayers.

Forgive me for not writing more frequently. Accept the cordial greetings of all our dear sisters. Be assured of their affection, and mine, for you and Sister Philippe.[1] I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear sisters, your very humble and very loving servant.

P.S. Sister Ménard[2] was the queen. However, you have done what you have not seen done here. I beg you to be on your guard against novelties. They are very dangerous in communities. It is true that we are fearful; our sins are the cause. Let us try to amend our lives and let us pray much to God that it will please the divine mercy to appease His justice which

1. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.

2. Marguerite Ménard, who entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity at the end of the year 1650.

has been deservedly provoked. I thank Sister Philippe for having written to me. With the help of God, I will answer her. The good Madame de Lamoignon,[1] the President, was buried Tuesday. The poor would not allow her to be buried anywhere except at Saint-Leu.

L.340 - TO SISTER JULIENNE LORET[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

February 12, 1652

My very dear Sister,

Yes, I have been very ill with a double tertian fever that began three weeks ago, but I am better now, thank God. I am very worried about the way you fell ill and the length of time you have been in bed. I beg Sister Philippe[3] to let me know all the details. I had already told you that, to avoid that illness, you had to dose yourself thoroughly. If you were able to travel, we would have already sent someone to bring you here.

When I first fell ill, I received a letter from you requesting ten pounds of prunes and two pounds of rice. They were sent to you, but you did not mention that you had received them. I am worried about it so, please, let me know as soon as possible. We are not going to send you any more until you tell us the safest way to ship them.

Please pray for me. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, Your very humble sister and servant.

L.341 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hôtel-Dieu at Angers

February 17 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

Your account of all the afflictions and losses that have occurred at Angers is a source of great sorrow to me because the poor will suffer as a result. I beg the divine goodness to comfort and assist them in their needs.

1. Madame de Lamoignon, see Letter 77.
2. This letter was written by a secretary and signed by Louise de Marillac.
3. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.

My very dear Sisters, you have indeed suffered great trials. However, have you stopped to consider that it is only right that the servants of the poor should suffer with their masters? Each of us individually deserves to bear her share of the scourges God inflicts on humanity in general. Oh, how obliged we are often to reflect upon this, my dear Sisters! Who are we, after having received from God one of the greatest gifts that He could confer on any creature regardless of condition, namely, that of calling us to His service, to presume to be exempt from difficulties? O my dear Sisters, let us be on our guard against such an evil thought. Rather, let us continually marvel that God has withdrawn us from places where we would have suffered so much, along with everyone else, and has provided us so readily with bread and has kept us safe. You must realize my dear Sisters, that such gifts oblige us to practice virtue, if we do not wish to pay for them in the next world. Let us not wait for this alternative but, rather, let us make every effort to acquire the virtues that God expects of us in thanksgiving for the graces His goodness lavishes upon us every day. I do not know if you received a letter which I sent you during the past month in which I exhorted you to the same purpose. In the name of God, Sisters, I beg you to strive to cultivate solid virtue, especially humility and gentleness. If I often speak to you on this subject, it is because I have heard for some time now that you need these virtues, and that the Ladies who visit the wards would like very much to receive a welcome. You know, Sister, how our sisters who prepare the collation do their best to please all of them.

I am aware that your other duties in the service of the sick take up all your time but, when the Ladies come, you could appoint one sister, a different one each time, to satisfy them the best she can without going against the orders of the Fathers of the Poor.[1] A good understanding among all of you would solve the entire problem.

In the name of God, Sister Cécile, overcome, to some degree, your little repugnances. Desire opportunities to practice obedience; however, desire these not in an upsetting way, but in a gentle and quiet way. Then do to others as you would have them do to you. Above all, be very supportive of them, and welcome kindly those who might find it difficult to approach you, if there are any.

Remember me to all our sisters, whom I cordially embrace. I am for them as for you, my very dear Sister, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur Ratier, to the administrators, and to your Ladies if any of them do me the honor of remembering me. Sister Barbe[2] sends you her love. She is well, thank god, as are the friends and relatives of our other sisters.

1. The administrators.

2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

L.342 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

March 11, 1652

My very dear Sister,

I praise God that you are better. You are acting properly in trying to eat. You must be sure to do your utmost—anything less that that and you will not know what strength you have. As for me, I almost always have a fever,[1] but it does not prevent me from eating a little bit. Even the doctor thinks it good that I take a bit of purée.

I sympathize greatly with your constant apprehension of the soldiers. We are not sending you any prunes because there are none available. I would like the beehive you speak of to be brought here. However, I do not know the precautions involved.

I have not yet seen the curate's letter, nor that of Sister Vincente.[2] Once I have seen it, a response, if one is required, will be sent by the earliest mail. I thank her for having written to me. All the sisters greet you and thank you for remembering them. We hope that you will continue to do us the charity of praying for us. Please believe that we are doing the same, since you know that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

L.210 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[3]

Daughter of Charity

March 27 (1652)

My very dear and beloved Sister,

I was very consoled to have news from you. I praise God with all my heart for the state in which His goodness has placed you. I believe that Monsieur Vincent has answered you; he assured me that he truly desired

1. This letter was handwritten by Mathurine Guérin.
2. Vincente Auchy, see Letter 36.
3. Jeanne Lepintre, Sister Servant of the community of the hospital at Nantes.

to do so. It seems to me, my dear Sister, that it was not so long ago that you indicated to me that I had not written to you. I truly fear that our letters have been lost.

I was very glad that Providence did not permit you to send our sister to Richelieu since it is something which surely requires the approval and order of Monsieur Vincent so as to serve as an example. However, I believe, my dear Sister, that if the doctor feels that she needs a change of air, it would be appropriate for you to suggest to the administrators that they ask a lady in Nantes, with a house two or three leagues away, to allow her to go there for a couple of weeks with one of our sisters. Perhaps it would be appropriate for the sister to remain there as well.

I have just at this very moment received your letter of the twenty-first of this month in which you suggest that we send our sisters to Angers. I assure you, my dear Sister, that the air there is not as suitable for them as the air in Nantes. Moreover, the administrators would not find these visits good, particularly at this time, for reasons I cannot relate to you. As for you, my dear Sister, I think that you had forgotten all about the idea before I received your letter. I believe our good God is giving you courage enough to make good use of all the slander. Provided He is not offended, of what importance is it to us?

I have great compassion for our dear Sister Louise.[1] Please tell her that her mother and sisters are well. Try to determine whether her illness may be caused by some displeasure in being separated from them. I have not yet had the honor of seeing Monsieur de Beaulieu.[2] I assure you, my dear Sister, that it will be a great consolation for me to converse with him. I beg you to let all our sisters know that they are always most dear to us and that I see them very often in spirit, although I do not write to them individually. When you write to me, please ask each of them whether they have anything to tell me, and let them know that they would please me greatly by writing to me.

All our sisters greet you cordially. If Sister Jeanne Lepintre could stay in Nantes and come to Paris, I would surely wish her to do so. Let us always truly love the will of God, in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I did not remember that you had asked me for books. In any event, if they are just ones containing our prayers, I think you will find some.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to send this letter promptly. Also, let me know if that man went to Nantes to rejoin his wife.

1. Louise Michel, a native of Esteville in Normandy, had a brother in the Congregation of the Mission. She arrived in Nantes in October 1650 and lived there until 1653. She returned to Paris by passing through Richelieu.

2. Monsieur de Beaulieu was a judge in Nantes. He was related to the de Marillac family.

L.343 - TO SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

(at Chars)

(March 31, 1652)

My dear Sister,

This is just to reassure you that my health is improving, thank God. Join with me in thanking His goodness for His grace which allowed me to fulfill my Easter duties at Saint-Laurent today. Thank Him as well for the improved dispositions He has given both of you.

Thank you for your advice on your fine honeybees. I believe I told you not long ago that we received the swarm that the gentleman brought to us along with the hive. Forgive me if I do not send you the sugar you request. Pour your hot drink into a pitcher with a small opening, then pour about a finger of olive oil on top. That will preserve it for as long as any remains. Tip the courier generously.

I beg God to preserve you in His holy love, your sister and servant.

L.344B - TO SISTER JULIENNE[1]

April 20 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

The good you relate to us of this fine girl you are sending here is making us keep her on for a trial period only. God willing she will be suitable to serve Him in the person of the poor!

I am sending you your pound of sugar, four pounds of brown sugar and four chemises. I truly hope, my dear Sister, that your request will be granted. However, we must await the order of our Most Honored Father. Please extend my apologies to the curate for not having written to him, and thank him most humbly for me for the trouble he took to write to me. Assure him that we will do all that we can to see to it that the girl he sent us stays.

I forgot to tell you that sugar costs 22 sols, and brown sugar 20.5. I am not sending you any fine linen because I know our other sisters have made some. I hope that the further we get into spring the more your strength will return. Praise God that you have only one patient in your hospital. That will give you more opportunities to help the sick of the

1. Julienne Loret, at Chars, see Letter 220.

area, because I do not believe you go to the surrounding villages. Please let me know if you have a good number of schoolgirls, and have those who have learned lacemaking continue with it. I believe you should have those not skilled in it learn it as well, for it is essential not to have any idle girls.

I recommend to your prayers the repose of the soul of our deceased blind Sister Nicole. Also, ask God for all that our Sister Andrée[1] from Crespière and Sister Marie Raine need; both are very seriously ill. I am struggling to regain my strength, and I am always having little relapses. I am in great need of the help of your prayers in order to become more faithful to God, in whose love I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.210B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

May 6 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

I shared the consolation you received from Monsieur Vincent's last letter. Our good God operates like that; sometimes He permits us to be troubled, and then He gives tranquility. It is good to recognize, as you do, that all the changes we experience within ourselves are from God, when they are good. However, we truly need to get used to letting all vicissitudes pass us by, whether they are caused by persons from outside or by our interior dispositions. We must also always be submissive to the guidance of Divine Providence.

I am very glad, my dear Sister, that there was no need to go to Angers, and that Sister Louise[3] is demonstrating love for her vocation. I believe that she would tell you of any trials she had. It is not that she is unable to experience any, but, insofar as she does not complain of them, it does not appear that her trials are of the will. Rather they are at the level of feeling which she is truly trying to mortify. You do not mention our Sister Marthe.[4] I wrote to her. Please let me know if she received my letter. The relatives of our sisters are well, thank God.

Monsieur de Beaulieu[5] took the trouble to come to see us. However,

1. Andrée Guilmine, see Letter 211.
2. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
3. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
4. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.
5. Monsieur de Beaulieu, see Letter 210.

I had taken some medicine so I spoke only briefly to him. He promised me that he would return another time. I truly hope he does. I beg the goodness of God to dispose your souls to receive the graces of the Holy Spirit profitably, after you have made the necessary preparations. These preparations consist in willingly ridding yourselves of all earthly satisfactions in order to follow in spirit Our Lord in His Ascension.

My dear Sisters, with all my heart I beg all of you to whom I am speaking to believe me to be in His most holy love, your very humble sister and servant.

L.353 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

(June 11, 1652)

My very dear Sisters,

I truly ask your forgiveness for going so long without writing to you, although I sent you a letter since you asked us for sugar and a few other drugs. Madame de Brienne[2] took the trouble to inform me that she was sending them to you. I shall not fail, with God's help, to tell her what you tell me. I do not think that it is safe to send you money along with the tamarinds. I will send two gold coins to the Countess and ask her to send them to you.

In the name of God, my very dear Sisters, do not be impatient with your trials, and at seeing yourselves as receiving no other consolation but God's. Oh, if we only knew God's secrets when He places us in this state, we would see that this must be the time of our greatest consolation. In fact, you will see a great amount of misery that you cannot relieve. God sees it as well and does not want to give those who suffer greater abundance. Share their trials with them; do all you can to provide them with a little assistance and remain at peace. Perhaps you share in this need; in that is your consolation because, if you had plenty, your hearts would be troubled to use it while seeing our lords and masters suffering so. Since God chastises His people for our sins, is it not reasonable for us to suffer with the others? Who are we to think that we should be exempt from public evils? If the goodness of God does not expose us to the worst miseries, let us be truly thankful to Him for this, and let us believe that it is due solely to His mercy and is in no way merited.

1. Barbe Angiboust was sent to Brienne to aid war victims. She was 45 at the time.

2. Madame, the Countess de Brienne, see Letter 86.

Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, and Monsieur Portail are well, thank God. All our dear sisters are well, too. Most of them, in the area of Paris, have been forced to take shelter; however, thanks to Our Lord, they have until now experienced no evil or distress.

The messenger will tell you about the beautiful ceremony which was held today for the procession of the reliquary of Saint Geneviève.[1] Oh, how good it is to be faithful to God, who bestows so much honor upon His good servants as a sign of His eternal love. What He asks of you at the moment, my dear Sisters, is great union and great support for one another. He also asks that you labor together at God's work with great gentleness and humility, and that what goes on between you remain there so that everyone may be edified. Since you are already old and exhausted, I beg you, Sister Barbe, to get help for Sister Jeanne[2] when you see her with too much work and you cannot relieve her; we cannot send any help. We are constrained to do the same in this city. There are parishes here in which there are 5,000 poor to whom we give soup. In our parish 2,000 are given soup—not counting the sick. We are sending you a twenty-three-pound, four-sol louis coin. It is not much, but the fear of its being lost, leads us to risk no more. If you are aware of a very safe route, let us know about it.

Pray for us, my dear Sisters, and believe me to be in His holy love, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. The tamarind is unnecessary; we are not sending you any. It is not a purgative. Please read this letter to Sister Jeanne.

L.214 - TO MY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[3]

July 1 (1652)

My very dear Sisters,

I received your letter and was greatly consoled to learn the news about you and all our dear sisters. I am asking Sister Anne[4] to inform me about each one's health—I believe you will appreciate this bit of relief. I believe that our Most Honored Father has given you a full response. If you knew the great amount of work he has as a result of the charitable activities

1. The reliquary of Saint-Geneviève was ceremonially carried to Notre-Dame in the midst of an immense crowd which begged for an end to public suffering (Coste IV, 401).
2. Jeanne Henault would rejoin Barbe Angiboust in Châlons; she would then go to Montmirail in 1654.
3. Jeanne Lepintre in Nantes, see Letter 64.
4. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

being carried out in behalf of the poor refugees, you would pity him. However, his Charity does not complain and never wearies. It is essential, my dear Sister, to pray and to have others pray for the preservation of his health.

Let us know the dispositions of this fine girl of whom Monsieur Chesneau and you have written. However, you must be careful to point out to her that there is a great difference between the life and work of our sisters in the houses in the parishes of Paris and the countryside and the life of those sisters working in the hospitals. I believe, my dear Sister, that you will see to it that no one tells her tales if she is frequently going to be spending entire days at your house. To that end, in your little conferences, urge the sisters to think of the example they are obliged to give her. Test her well so that we are not constrained to send her back.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to greet your good and virtuous Ladies for me. All our sisters greet you affectionately and cordially. Our good Sister Perrette,[1] the elder, has been reduced to staying in bed as the result of her infirmities. I recommend her to your prayers. It is really sad that we have gone so long without news of each other. Only the submission we owe to Divine Providence serves to console us, as well as the holy obedience for which the Son of God died. It is in His most holy love that I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You will find that this letter was written some time ago. The relatives of our sisters are well, in particular Sister Françoise Ménage's[2] father and mother. Please have her write to them.

L.348 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(July 1652)

My Most Honored Father,

This alarm[3] truly frightened all of us. Several of our sisters would very much like to make their confession today, and I fear a priest from Saint-Laurent will not be available to us. If that be the case, I beg you to do us the charity of sending us one this afternoon.

I do not think that we can go to buy any wheat since there is none in the surrounding villages, and there is the danger of losing the money if

1. Perrette was a widow when she entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity. In 1642, she was in Saint-Germain and in 1649, Issy. She died in July 1652.
2. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
3. The enemy troops, who were being followed by the King's army, passed near to Saint-Lazare on July 1, 1652.

we go further. I informed Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[1] of this, and she told me, regarding the matter, the same thing she told your Charity. I told her that your feeling yesterday was that we should obtain it at La Grève.[2] I also informed her that the city administrators judge it safe to have it delivered by several archers whom we would pay for their trouble. I do not think there is any other way to prevent these poor little children from dying of hunger.

The majority of the people are moving out of this quarter. Shall we not follow their example? However, it would be a great undertaking for us. If there were fears for our young sisters, we could send them here and there to various parishes. If we could, we would send them food. As for me, it seems I am awaiting death and cannot keep my heart from being upset every time there is a call to arms. It seems that Paris is abandoning this district. However, I hope that God will not abandon it and that His goodness will have mercy on us. We hope that your Charity will request this for us, and with all our hearts, we ask for your blessing. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I fear that the man from Bicêtre was not able to get across. What will we do with Sister Geneviève,[3] who is truly needed there to reassure our poor sisters? I ask your Charity, please to let us know.

L.408 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 11 (1652)

Monsieur, my Most Honored Father,

Madame de Varize came here yesterday to have the honor of seeing you, and to propose to you the desire of those in charge of the hospital in Châteaudun[4] to have two of our sisters. She indicated to me that she could give up the two we gave her for Varize, and that she thinks it most useful to send them there. I am well aware, Monsieur, that it was quite a long time ago that they asked us for sisters for this place. However, until now there has always been some problem.

Madame, accompanied by another Lady, came also to ask your Charity for two of our sisters to serve the poor of Saint-André. I pointed out to them the necessity of sending sisters to Étampes and to the parishes of

1. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.
2. At City Hall, located on the Place de Grève.
3. Geneviève Poisson, who was at Bicêtre.
4. The sisters were not sent to Châteaudun until July 1654.

Paris, in which most of our sisters are ill. Yesterday evening we buried our good Sister Perrette,[1] mother of a Carthusian; and they tell me that one[2] of our best daughters, who is serving the sick poor at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, had to have Extreme Unction administered last evening. Another is dangerously ill at Saint-Sulpice. Finally, Monsieur, it must be believed that my sins are making a desert of the Company of the Daughters of Charity. When I perceive the faults I have committed through the idleness of my spirit, I am greatly ashamed. If I am to have some response to give Madame de Varize in these two matters, I beg your Charity most humbly to inform me, to give me your blessing and to do me the honor always of believing me to be in the love of Our Lord, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. Our sister serving the galley slaves came to me in tears yesterday because she cannot get any more bread for her poor men, since she owes so much to the baker and bread is so expensive. She borrows and begs for them everywhere with great difficulty. To add to her sorrow, the Duchess d'Aiguillon[3] wants her to make a list of those she thinks are to be put out. I raise three serious objections to this. First, she can only guess from the way they treat her whether they insult her or praise her; this being so, she could commit an injustice. Second, some bribe the captain and the building superintendent, who are already quarrelling about her and accusing her of being the source of the disorder. Third, those who remain chained will blame her for it. And you know, my Most Honored Father, what these men can say and do. I told Sister to delay drawing up the list until I could find out from your Charity what she is to do.

L.135 - TO SISTER CLAUDE[4]

at the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Denis

(July 1652)

My very dear Sister,

I am very grieved by Sister Geneviève's[5] relapse. I beg you to do the

1. Perrette, see Letter 214.
2. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
3. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.
4. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
5. Geneviève Vigneron had two sisters who were Daughters of Charity: Avoie and Marie. Geneviève was sent to Brienne from Saint-Denis in 1659.

best you can for her. Cordial waters are most suitable for her. Add half a piece of hyacinth compound to an eighth of a liter of water and, from time to time, give her a spoonful or two of it outside of mealtime.

I am truly distressed not to be able to send you one of our sisters; however, it is absolutely impossible. We have so few of them that there is never anyone at work in the Motherhouse, and several are so infirm that, if they were elsewhere, they would soon fall ill. You have not let me know how many sick you have, nor have you given me any other information. I beg the goodness of God to keep you, and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My most affectionate regards to our dear sisters and to our sick one, whom I beg, for the love of God, truly to love the state in which Divine Providence has placed her.

L.349 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chars

July 14, 1652

My very dear Sister,

I was sure that the goodness of your heart would cause you and, I believe, all our dear sisters who are far away to be disturbed because you are afraid that we are suffering greatly.[1] Let us praise God, my dear Sisters, that to this point we have only been frightened, and through His mercy have not been harmed. It is true that I was so cowardly that I allowed myself to persuade our sisters to come to the city to stay in a room we had rented. However, most of our sisters stayed where they were, as did all the sisters and nurses of the small children. Our Most Honored Father, who is still slightly incapacitated, did not move; neither did Monsieur Portail nor the rest of the household.

I am greatly distressed by our dear Sister Philippe's[2] illness, both for your sake and hers. I am likewise dismayed at not being able to send anyone to relieve you because, apart from the difficulty of the roads, we have never had so few sisters and been so pressed to send them to various areas. We just cannot furnish sisters because of the soup we are distributing everywhere. Here, nearly 2,000 bowls are served to the bashful poor. The same is being done in all parts of the city.

Three or four of our sisters are very ill: Sister Madeleine Raportebled[3]

1. See Letter 348.
2. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.
3. Madeleine Raportebled, see Letter 430.

and another you do not know, at Saint-Sulpice; Sister Élisabeth[1] from Angers at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas; and at Saint-Denis, Sister Geneviève,[2] Sister Avoie's sister. I recommend all of them to your prayers. I also ask you to pray for the repose of the soul of our dear deceased Sister Perrette,[3] the elder, who died in the care of our sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu, a week after she was taken there because of her apprehension at staying here. God bestowed many graces upon her at her death, after she had been suffering greatly for several years. I beg you, my dear Sister, to tell Sister Philippe to do her utmost to get well. We will try out Sister Charlotte[4] again for a while. She is a poor girl for this work, but rather pious. Several years will be necessary to train her to serve the poor.

All our sisters greet you and your dear patient, whom I pray will raise her mind to God from time to time and offer her sufferings to Him for the public afflictions, in honor of those experienced by Jesus Crucified. I am in His holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant, etc.

P.S. We received the 26 pounds.

L.350 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

July 19, 1652

Monsieur, my Most Honored Father,

The President, Madame de Herse,[5] came here to request some of our sisters for Saint-André. I was greatly distressed that I could not send any strong sisters to help our sisters working in the parishes. I was also greatly disturbed that I could not send any to this good woman. Nonetheless, Monsieur, if it is not necessary to send anyone to Étampes or Poland, as Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[6] believes, an effort must be made to satisfy her, provided your Charity judges it appropriate, and there is nothing to criticize in the conduct of the parish priests.

I beg your Charity most humbly to remember that I await your order for my return. I have not made any visits because of some slight ailment

1. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
2. Geneviève Vigneron, see Letter 135.
3. Perrette, the elder, see Letter 214.
4. Charlotte Moreau. After her seminary, she was sent to Châteaudun. She did not persevere in the service of the poor and left the Company of the Daughters of Charity in October 1657.
5. Madame de Herse, see Letter 196.
6. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.

which has kept me in bed. However, thank God, I do not believe that I will remain as ill as I feared.

I had asked a sister to find out from your Charity whether I should send for Madame de Bouillon's[1] carriage in order to visit her according to the desire she has expressed to you. She made a mistake in the message she gave you. It seems to me that it is necessary to be more ceremonious with this Lady than with others.

Honor me always with the belief that I am through the will of God, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter.

P.S. At present the priests of Saint-Sulpice are sending for four girls from the refugee center[2] to help our sisters. Should they be allowed to do so, or would it be more fitting for the convalescent patients to come for their own meals? There are six of our sisters, although two are ill. I fear that this mixture will create confusion and much harm, and that it will come from our sisters themselves.

L.351 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

at Nantes

August 24 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

I am truly astonished that you have gone so long without receiving our letters. It must be the war which prevented them from reaching you because I have been faithful in writing to you very often. May God be blessed! His goodness leads us to hope for calm, in the belief that He will soon give us peace. I shared your dear letter with our Most Honored Father, according to your wishes. He is of the opinion, my very dear Sister, that you should send the girl without any further testing if you judge her sufficiently strong in mind and body. She must be ready to return at her own expense in case she is not suitable; this would be even more unfortunate if she had been tested at your house by the order and with the consent of the persons you mentioned. As for Sister Renée[3], I was very surprised by what you told me of her. I have never heard any complaints from her except about her bad leg. The cause must be what you touched on without really letting me know about it. Perhaps that would not have been appropriate. Our Most Honored Father finds no other remedy for this situation than to send her to Hennebont. I hope

1. Madame de Bouillon, see Letter 67.
2. Some girls driven away by the war and taken in at Paris.
3. Renée Delacroix, see Letter 275.

you will give us news on this subject before this order can be sent to her.

I beg you to greet all our dear sisters most affectionately. I praise God for the better health He is restoring to Sister Anne.[1] I will write to her when she is better. I would ask you to let Sister Marthe[2] know that I took great joy in the news you gave me of her. Please tell Sister Louise[3] that I urge her to be at ease concerning her relatives; her mother, sister and other relatives are well, thank God, as is the good lady for whom she worked, who sent the rest of her belongings to her mother. I beg her to give herself wholeheartedly to her work and especially to the observance of her Rule.

I am sure, my dear Sister, that you remind the most recent arrivals of the cordial respect they owe the older sisters. This is something so necessary that there would be great disorders in the Community if we did not pay attention to it. Young minds must be formed in submission and interior mortification. Otherwise, there would be only confusion, and the older sisters would have reason for discontent if they were misunderstood. I do not know why I am telling you this, my dear Sister, because I have never had a single complaint about this. It must be the problem we have noticed here.

I was thinking of giving myself the consolation of writing to Sisters Henriette[4] and Françoise,[5] but a visit prevented me from doing so. I beg them to excuse me, and I ask all of you to pray for us, my dear Sisters. We have great need of prayers for the many sick in all the parishes and among our sisters. I beg Our Lord to be your strength and consolation, and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.262 - TO SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE[6]

October 22 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

I greatly wish to see you, but I do not dare tell you to come to see us, although they tell us there is no danger on the roads. I urge you to send me news of yourself.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165.
3. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
6. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114, was in Saint-Denis.

Enclosed is a receipt so that you may receive from Monsieur de Francière,[1] 70 pounds for a year's support for our three sisters.

I beg God to keep you, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I ask to be remembered to our dear sisters and inquire about their health.

L.354B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

October 26 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

It bothers me that I cannot find an opportunity to write to you. I am sending this at the risk of its being lost. If it reaches you, I urge you to send us news of yourself as soon as possible. We have so many ill everywhere that it causes me to be concerned about your health.

You told me, my dear Sisters, that butter is inexpensive and that you could have some melted for us. I urge you to find out how much it would cost to have it delivered here. If you think it will cost only six sols a pound, you would be doing us a favor by sending us as much as you can, 100 pounds or more.

I do not believe I told you that Divine Providence has finally called three of our sisters[2] to Poland for the service of the poor. We still do not have news of their arrival, but we heard from them half-way there. You know that it is always perilous on the sea, and that leads me to recommend them to your prayers. I ask you to pray for me as well. I am in the love of Jesus . . .

My very cordial and very affectionate greetings to Sister Jeanne.

1. Monsieur de Francière, administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu in Saint-Denis.
2. Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon and Françoise Douelle left for Poland in September 1652.

L.377 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS[1]

Daughters of Charity at Richelieu

(c.October 1652)

My very dear Sisters,

I beg God, in His goodness, to continue to bestow His holy graces upon you, especially love for your vocation, which you will know that you possess if you are faithful to the observance of your Rules, insofar as the service of the poor permits. Above all, my dear Sisters, be exact in retiring at nine o'clock so that you will be able to rise at four. Thus, you will have time to accomplish everything. If you have developed the habit of allowing outsiders, even the sick, to come when they please, rid yourselves of it little by little and have the poor come for what they need at the appointed hours, because I believe that only this can interfere with your obligations.

As for visits, I do not think that you permit any that could turn you away from your duty. Above all, I am certain that you do not receive men, of any social class, unless it is for a very serious matter, which must then be handled in a few words. Our Most Honored Father recommended this to us in recent conferences. He went so far as to say that we should not receive even him in any of the parishes or at this House where he comes only in case of illness, for serious matters, or to give a conference. I beg you to consider what must be done in other cases.

I also urge you, my dear Sisters, to remember very well that you are to make no visits except to the poor or the sick; that you are never to eat anywhere other than in your own house; and that you are not to relate what happens in the house to anyone except the director, and then only what he needs to know. If your infirmities sometimes require you to take a little wine, oh, let it be done rarely, in small amounts and for a clearly recognized need.

Gentleness, cordiality and forbearance must be the practices of the Daughters of Charity just as humility, simplicity and the love of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, who is perfect charity, is their spirit. That, my dear Sisters, is a summary of what I think I should tell you about our Rules until such time as Divine Providence permits you to have the entire text.

How happy I am when you send me detailed news of yourselves. Once and for all, I would like to know all about your manner of acting in the areas I have asked you about. Do you love your way of life? Do you esteem it as more excellent for you than all the hermitages and religious

1. Charlotte Royer and Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

convents because God has called you to it? Do you believe that you have been assembled together for your sanctification by a secret action of Divine Providence? Does the stronger support the weaker lovingly and cordially as the need arises? Do you often recall the counsel our Most Honored Father gave us in a conference when he said that we, as well as religious, have a cloister, and that it is as difficult for faithful souls to leave it as it is for religious to leave theirs, although it is not a cloister made of stones but rather one constituted by holy obedience which must govern all our actions and desires? I beg Our Lord, whose example has enclosed us in this holy cloister, to grant us the grace never to violate it.

Our newest arrivals got here safely and are in very good health, thank God. It was a bit tiring for Sister Françoise but she is over that now. I beg you to give news of them to their relatives and to send us news of their families. Also please send the 40 pounds I already mentioned to you. Sister Jeanne, to whom the money belongs, met, here in Paris, the man who had donated this sum and he assured her that it had been received. Please have this man speak to Monsieur du Chesne if he is still in Richelieu. Greet Monsieur du Chesne[1] for me with all the respect I owe him and assure him that I have written to him two or three times. I also send my very humble greetings to Monsieur Cuissot[2] and the other priests. All our sisters greet you in the love of Jesus Crucified, in which I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister.

P.S. I sent your letters to be held in Beauvais. Sister Charlotte's parents are well, thank God, and ask for her prayers, particularly her mother.

L.356B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE[3]

(at Brienne)

December 14 (1652)

My very dear Sister,

I do not remember there being anything of importance in your letter, so you may give it to anyone you please to read. I thank you with all my heart for your flax. If it was a bit expensive for you to buy there, it reaps a real profit here. Your grapes are perfectly beautiful. You know that I do not have any teeth to eat the small ones; thank you for them. I beg

1. Monsieur du Chesne, see Letter 154, was going to leave to visit the houses in Brittany.
2. Monsieur Cuissot, entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1637 at 30 years of age. The Superior of Cahors since 1647, he came to Paris in July 1651 for the General Assembly. He returned to Cahors in January 1653.
3. Barbe Angiboust in Brienne, see Letter 43.

you to recommend us and the entire Company to our good God.

Monsieur Portail received your letter, and I think he answered you. Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, is apparently still in good health. We have great reason to ask God to keep him for many years, and I am sure you will do so. All our sisters are well, thank God. I do not know if we informed you of the death of our dear Sister Marie-Marguerite, who was at the Hôtel-Dieu. Her patience in her illness and her submission to the will of God were a great example to us.

I rejoice that Providence has chosen you to serve so many souls and so many sick poor. I beg God to watch over you so that you may continue this holy employment for a long time. I beg you, my dear Sister, to have this letter given to the parents of Sister Barbe,[1] and to remember us to Sister Jeanne.[2] Her great work, I am sure, increases her zeal for her vocation. Send some news of her, I beg of you, and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our dear Sister Cécile[3] wrote to us a short while ago. She asks for your prayers and rejoices that God has given you the grace of using you so profitably in His holy service. A short while ago, one of your relatives, or a man from your region, came into this city to learn news of you and to assure you that all your relatives are well.

1653

January 31: *Death of Monsieur Lambert in Warsaw.*
February: *Monsieur du Chesne's visit to Angers.*
September-October: *Monsieur Alméras' visits to Angers and Nantes. Aid to the regions devastated by the war: Châlons, Sainte-Menehould. Foundation of the Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.*

1. Barbe Bailly, born on June 1, 1628 in Vitry-le-François, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on October 8, 1645. After having served the foundlings, she went to the Motherhouse as infirmarian and as Louise de Marillac's secretary. After Louise's death, Barbe was sent to Poland (1660-1668). Upon returning to France, she was named Superior at the Invalides. She then went to Alençon where she died on August 21, 1699.
2. Jeanne Hénault, see Letter 353.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

L.358 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)[1]

Daughter of Charity at Chars

January 4, 1653

My very dear Sister,

I certainly fulfilled your wish for Christmas day when I had the happiness of assisting at Monsieur Vincent's Mass, after having told him of your intention.

Enclosed are the pictures of your Holy Protectors, along with 25 yards of burial cloth which costs seven sols a yard. Please let the Pastor's father know that you received it, along with the two pounds of pathol, with the pots. Everything together comes to six pounds, nine sols, six deniers. I beg you to return, Sister, at the first opportunity. While waiting, please teach Sister Jeanne Bonvilliers[2] what you can about bloodletting and remember us sincerely to her. I am pressed to finish and to say that I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and affectionate servant.

L.389 - COPY OF THE TEXT GIVEN TO MONSIEUR BERTHE[3]

Who was leaving for Rome

(January 1653)

Louise de Marillac, a widow for 27 years,[4] servant of Jesus Christ and His members, the poor, more by will than effect, very attached by obedience to the Holy Father by her quality, although unworthy, of being a Roman Catholic, and through her longtime desire to receive once in her life, the holy, apostolic blessing, does humbly beg Monsieur Berthe, Priest of the Mission, to place her in spirit at the feet of the Most Holy Father, presently reigning, true Vicar of Jesus Christ through the zeal that his Holiness has for His Church, so that she may receive from our good God by this means the grace to do His most holy will for the

1. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
2. Jeanne Bonvilliers, born in Clermont in 1630, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in January 1652. She was sent to Chantilly after Chars and a brief stay in Paris. She died at the parish of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in 1691.
3. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, was in Rome in April 1653.
4. Antoine Le Gras died in December 1625.

remainder of her days. She will be obliged to pray for him in gratitude for this charity.[1]

L.236 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE[2]

Daughter of Charity at Nantes, Brittany

(January 1653)

My very dear Sister,

A good two weeks ago I allowed myself the consolation of writing to you and of sending you the pictures of the Holy Protectors of the year for all our dear sisters. I pray to God that they have reached you. What makes me doubt that they did is that I have not received any news from you since. I do not know, my dear Sister, if you will receive any letters from our Most Honored Father by this mail. However, I can assure you that I saw him this morning, and that he was greatly troubled by the state he knows you are in. He is absolutely resolved to rectify the situation as soon as possible. In the name of God, my dear Sister, put your mind at rest with the assurance I am giving you on the matter. If your trials were not excessive, I would tell you that you should experience joy in this painful situation, with the conviction that you should have that God will certainly draw His glory from it. Moreover, my dear Sister, the consolation you will derive from it will not be inconsiderable. The absence of our poor sister[3] should not sadden you. We have seen similar things and we thus have reason to believe that Divine Providence is at work.

Three women of rank are taking the pen from me. It only remains for me to assure you that I am in the love of our good, dear, little Jesus, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you and recommend themselves to your prayers.

1. The grace requested was granted by Pope Innocent X in 1655.
2. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
3. A sister left the community (Coste V, 3).

L.359 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity at Chars

January 31 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I no longer remember what kind of blankets you are asking for, nor the number. Tell us when you return. We await your arrival in order to receive the money for the last things we sent you. It seems to me that you could accustom yourself to travelling on a horse or donkey because it is impossible to undertake a long trip on foot. Also, it would be a while, if you were to await dry roads. When you have a mount, you ride for a while and then you get off and walk from time to time. Perhaps you had not thought of this. Nonetheless, see what will be appropriate for you. You cannot delay the person who will be leaving at the same time as you. However, it does not matter provided you are accompanied by someone else.

Bring along your recipe for preparing lozenges, and let the Pastor know if the drugs are the same as theirs, as I believe they are, because I know some of them are truly expensive.

I will have someone look for the linen, as the Pastor wishes; it is very difficult to find any that is wider. However, when you wrap the body in cloth, place it crosswise and have any excess at the feet and the head so that it is straight at the stomach.

You do not say whether Sister Jeanne[1] is learning bloodletting or if she already knows quite well how to do it. We are sending back your basket, along with another big "thank you" for your fine apples, and the assurance of our affection which makes me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.360B - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)

at Angers[2]

February 8, 1653

My very dear Sister,

I sympathize with your sorrow in having had so little time to speak

1. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.

2. In the copies of letters, Marguerite Chétif omitted all that could damage anonymity: the names of people and here, the announcement of the death of Monsieur Angiboust, see

with M . . .[1] It is necessary to be submissive to the guidance of Divine Providence, and to attach oneself firmly to God in order to suffer the privation of the consolation of creatures. Our good God knows your needs, and He could have stopped this good M . . . if it had been necessary for His glory and your good. Remain, then, at peace, in the trust you must have in Our Lord's love. We have so many reasons to do so, my Sisters, because of the assurances He gave His disciples while He was on earth, when He wanted to draw their love to Himself, urging them not to be preoccupied with themselves or their needs. Go then courageously, advancing moment by moment on the path on which God has placed you in order to reach Him.

In the name of God, my dear Sisters, do your utmost to help the souls of your sick poor to make the acts of faith, hope and charity necessary for salvation. Make them hate sin and love virtue so that they may resolve to live well, if they recover, or to prepare well for death. In order to assist them well in this, lead them to desire to make a good confession in order to appease God's anger with them because of their sins. Then be at peace and help them with your prayers. I am well aware that you cannot spend a great deal of time at this task. However, in coming and going, you can make many interior acts which can help them. Urge your sisters to do the same.

I am sending you your Holy Protectors of the year, begging Our Lord to give you the blessings that Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, wished the entire Company to receive with the distribution of these pictures. He also bestowed upon them a most devout blessing in order to implore the help of these good saints for you, and to sanctify all of you.

I beg our sisters who suggested their return, in the name of Our Lord, not to be disturbed, and to believe that the goodness of God will never fail to provide for their need. Oh, how dangerous it is, my dear Sisters, to desire something before God wills it! I truly believe that it is always with submission of mind that your desires appear, and for that I do not blame you. However, believe me when I say that a change in placement is always to be feared, at least when it is by your own choice. Some have requested a change, and it has cost them their vocation. What are we looking for, my dear Sisters? Is it not to please our Sovereign Lord? Let us wait in peace for His wishes to be shown us by our superiors. It is our practice, my very dear Sisters, to remain submissive to Divine Providence. In the name of God, love It with all your heart, and believe me in His holy love . . .

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the following letter.

1. Monsieur du Chesne who was making visitations in the West of France.

L.360 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne.

February 8, 1653

My very dear Sister,

I believe you received my last letter in which I told you I was sending you three gold coins and the pictures of your Holy Protectors of the year. However, the Countess[1] did not want us to send money, and she assured our sisters that she will have you provided with some promptly. I believe she has carried through on this.

I heard news of you and our sister from the Dean. He is filled with benevolence toward you, and we are most grateful to him for it. From what I learned, our poor sister's vision is quite bad, and she is in danger of losing the other eye. I beg you, my dear Sister, to do all you think necessary to take care of her. Our mildly fortified water—but not too much—is excellent for her. However, I believe the fire from the oven is very dangerous for her; that is why I urge you to have the firing and baking done by another woman. Purge her often with a hot drink containing a laxative, although the best remedy is a cauterization at the back of the head. I beg you to compel her to do what is necessary for her well-being.

Your good cousin came here to learn news of you, and told me that your dear father had passed away. I do not know if you already know of it. Your brother died also. The rest of the family is quite well, thank God. My dear Sister, we must be submissive to all that God wishes of us and our loved ones. For that reason give yourself once again to Him in order to be entirely, along with all that belongs to you, under the guidance of Divine Providence. I believe, my dear Sister, that you have followed this practice for a long time.

I recommend to your prayers our sisters in Poland, who are working in the service of the poor of a city where there is much pestilence. I beg you also to remember in your prayers our sisters in Nantes, who are still being persecuted. Such is not the case with our sisters in Angers, who are protected by the Bishop and dearly loved by the Fathers of the Poor. Sister Cécile[2] is doing better than she has in a long time. Pray fervently for the entire Company in order to obtain for it the spirit and fidelity it is obliged to manifest toward God. That was the subject of our last conference, which you will see someday. Monsieur Vincent continues his

1. Madame, the Countess de Brienne, see Letter 86.

2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

usual charity, as does Monsieur Portail, as much toward those absent as toward those present.

I would ask you, Sister, to let me know when is a good time to renew our supply of flax. It can be spun or raw, but preferably spun. Four or five hundred pounds would be needed if it could be bought and transported inexpensively. We also need good quality stuffing, which is all sold by the pound with no bargaining.

Good evening, my dear Sisters. I am pressed to finish and to declare myself in the love of Our Lord Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I had just finished my letter when I received your package. I thank you and Sister for it. The messenger is in a hurry. I will let you know at another time if you can keep this little boy. Good day, my dear Sisters. I would like it if you could let me know how many times you have received money from the Queen for Fontainebleau.[1] We have been unable to receive anything for more than two years.

All our sisters greet you affectionately. The house is starting to fill up a bit with new sisters. However, sisters are being requested in so many places that we do not have any older ones to send.

L.76B - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

[March 1, 1653]

The little family[2] did not fail to assemble, except for one from each side who still had not come. However, I believe, Monsieur, that it is necessary for your Charity to take the trouble to bring them together tomorrow morning to have them make some devotion, like the adoration of the Holy Cross, and then to give them an exhortation on the Passion. I am very bold to suggest that.

Would your Charity please give an order as well, either this evening or early tomorrow morning, on whether they should be given the clothing prepared for them.

Your blessing, please, on the entire Company.

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1. Barbe Angiboust was in Fountainebleu from 1646 to 1648.
2. The little family of the Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. This work, due to a bourgeois from Paris who wished to remain anonymous, brought together 40 poor artisans: 20 men and 20 women.

L.516 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

General of the Venerable Priests of the Mission

March 20 [1653]

My Most Honored Father,

It truly seems that Our Lord is the sole proprietor general of the Congregation of the Mission, since He disposes of the good subjects He has given it in this way.[1] He had to do this in light of the excellent mission of the one He took from us. What can we say? Nothing, unless it is that I believe that this new arrival in heaven will draw great graces from God upon the rest of the Company, and that this universal sorrow will produce effects of great holiness in many souls. Am I not truly bold, my Most Honored Father, to dare to mix my tears with your usual submission to the guidance of Divine Providence, my weaknesses with the strength God has given you in order to bear the great share in His sufferings that Our Lord so often gives you? For love of Him, give nature what it needs for its relief, and what you need for your health.

My Most Honored Father, I do not know how to hide the depth of my sorrow, but your Charity taught me to love the will of God who is so just and so merciful and whose goodness makes me, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.363 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

March 26, 1653

My very dear Sister,

I was filled with profound joy by your last dear letter. It is true that you always seemed to me to be in a state of interior and exterior pain and affliction; however, it also appeared that you were making excellent use of this trial.

I cannot help but believe that all your afflictions are a marvelous advantage to you. It is true, my dear Sister, that it is very difficult to keep one's mind from forming rebellious thoughts. Nevertheless, it is wise not to heed them. However, this is just what you do when you assume that certain encounters are possibly the reason you are not receiving the

1. It was a question of Monsieur Lambert's death, which had occurred on January 31, 1653 in Poland; the news did not reach Monsieur Vincent until March 20, see Letter 363.

advice you would like, as often as you would like. My dear Sister, this is not something that concerns you personally, but rather the entire body of the Company; and it is perhaps for that reason, my dear Sister, that Our Lord inspires you to remain at peace at the foot of His cross, completely submissive to the guidance of His Divine Providence. It seems to me, my very dear Sister, that you have found the philosopher's stone of devotion when the firm resolution to do His will calms your anxieties.

It is in the love of this most holy will of God that we must be submissive to His orders concerning the fate which His goodness decreed for the good Monsieur Lambert, whom He took from this world at the beginning of this year. You know that he was in Poland, where he was loved by the King, the Queen and everyone so much that he is missed as a saint. Was not his life also a saintly one? The Queen herself wrote to (Monsieur Vincent) to express to him her grief, and the loss she feels she has (experienced) in his passing. I am certain that you are praying a great deal for the repose of his soul, in the event he should need prayers. Please tell our sisters that I would ask them to receive Holy Communion for his intention, as well as that of another,[1] the Superior of Annecy, who has also since died. He was similarly esteemed in his region. The loss of both is beyond words.

I ask you also to pray for the soul of our deceased Sister Perrine, who was from the region of Le Maine. I assure you, my dear Sisters, that the recitation of her virtues and the affection that all our sisters had for her made the entire Company weep. Our poor sisters in Poland also have great need of prayers. Their affliction is great, as you can imagine. Although the Queen showed them great kindness, and His Majesty himself took them under his care and employed them in works of charity, their grief must be profound after the loss of such a priest! The Queen sent word to Monsieur Vincent that she had sent one of the three sisters to a city about 80 leagues from her, and that this sister is teaching several girls, some of whom already desire to be Daughters of Charity.[2] Such is their desire that I believe that with God's blessing a large establishment will develop there. We must humble ourselves greatly and pray much. Please relay this news to our very dear sisters, whom I greet with all my affection. Please tell Sister Françoise[3] that her father, mother and sisters are well, thank God. Sister Louise's[4] mother, sister and former employer are well also.

1. Monsieur Jean Guérin (1594-1653) died on March 6. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1639 and was in Annecy from 1642 onward.
2. A seminary was opened in Poland in 1659.
3. Françoise Ménage arrived in Nantes in September 1650. Two of her sisters, Marguerite and Madeleine, were already Daughters of Charity. In 1658, Catherine also came to join them in the community.
4. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.

Enclosed is a letter for the Fathers of the Poor. Our Most Honored Father told me to send it. Finally, my dear Sister, I can assure you that he resolved to do his utmost to put you at ease. I truly recommend him to your prayers; you know he is quite old,[1] and that his heavy workload does not keep him from rising at four o'clock and fasting every day. I believe you will truly excuse him if he does not write to you as often as you would like, and as he would like to be able to. All our sisters greet you and are reasonably well. Sister Jeanne Delacroix begs her dear sister[2] to pray for her and to be most faithful in the observance of her Rules. I beg you all also, my dear Sisters, to ask Our Lord for mercy for me at the hour of my death, through the merits of His most precious death. In His love I am, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.364 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

April 3, 1653

My Most Honored Father,

I forgot to tell you that the deceased Monsieur Lambert[3] did me the honor of informing me, two days before his illness, that our Sister Françoise,[4] who is in Poland, was acting as the bond between the other two who were not getting along well.

I also want to remind your Charity to think of the Pastor of Saint-Laurent when you obtain permission to have holy Mass celebrated at the house of the Poor Workers,[5] so that there will be no reason for complaints.

Yesterday I took the liberty of telling Monsieur Le Gros[6] that I did not think he should have a door from the outside into the chapel so soon. Do me the honor of letting me know when you would like to speak to outsiders about the house. Also, should not more women than men be admitted in order to increase the number?

I beg God to accomplish His holy will through it and I am, my Most Honored Father, your poor daughter and very humble servant.

1. Monsieur Vincent was 72 years old.
2. Renée Delacroix, see Letter 275.
3. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.
4. Françoise Douelle arrived in Poland in 1652.
5. Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, see Letter 76b.
6. Monsieur Le Gros, Superior of the Petit Saint-Lazare since 1652.

L.365B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hôtel-Dieu of Angers

May 23 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

You gave me great pleasure by sending news of yourself. I was anxious for it because Monsieur du Chesne[1] had informed me that you were ill. I praise God that you, and Sister Michelle[2] as well, are better. I greet her along with all our other sisters. Concerning the girls you say presented themselves to Monsieur du Chesne, if he finds them suitable, you have but to send them. However, be aware, I beg of you, that there is one who has a bad arm which should prevent her from coming. This would be a good occasion to send the sister that you suggested be sent to Richelieu.

Concerning Sister Barbe,[3] I think she must be joking to dream of returning before obedience calls her. Tell her, my dear Sister, that I have trouble believing what you wrote, and that souls that seek only God will never be better off than in the house in Angers. If they knew what it was like to be elsewhere, oh, how they would fear being withdrawn from there!

I informed Monsieur Vincent of all our sisters' desire for their Jubilee confessor. He told me they were free to do as they wanted. Let me know if I have to write to Monsieur du Chesne concerning that. I beg the goodness of God to give all of you the dispositions needed so that His mercy may spill over abundantly upon your souls for the expiation of the guilt and pain of sin. I also beg Him to grant you the grace of strength to persevere in His holy love, in such a way that all your thoughts, words and actions may be pleasing to Our Lord.

I owe much to Monsieur l'abbé[4] and to Monsieur Ratier[5] who honored me by thinking of me. I thank them most humbly for this and for the charity they continue to show you. Be most grateful to them for it, my dear Sisters, and make good use of their advice.

I am very worried about our two sisters[6] in Richelieu who are said to be dangerously ill. Please pray for them and for our sisters in Poland who are, as you know, suffering because of the death of Monsieur Lambert.[7] I am quite upset that my letters were lost. If you have not

1. Monsieur du Chesne, see Letter 154.
2. Michelle arrived in Angers in October 1651.
3. Barbe, a native of Troyes, arrived at the end of the year 1648.
4. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
5. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
6. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254, and Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.
7. Monsieur Lambert, see Letter 18.

received any since the time you indicate to me, then there were at least two rather long ones which never reached you. I deeply regret this. Sister Barbe Angiboust often asks about you. She is still in Brienne and doing well, thank God. Please tell Sister Élisabeth[1] that her cousin Brocard passed away in a most Christian manner. Monsieur Vincent saw him two or three times during his illness because we had placed him in a hospital for workers[2] which opened in this quarter. Please pray to our good God for this fine work so that His most holy will may be accomplished there.

I believe you have remembered to pray for the preservation of our Most Honored Father. He is working as much as ever, and presently he is giving a mission although he is still somewhat ill. His fine example is a living Rule in the House. You know that we are obliged to pray for the perfection of the Company in general and for that of each member, especially for all those whom we know to be involved in difficult and dangerous work so that it may please our good God to draw His glory from everything. Likewise, please do the same for the Company of the Daughters of Charity so that Our Lord may grant the sisters the grace of perseverance. Please believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you and your Company. We ask all to pray for us for the love of God.

L.310 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor of the Hospital at Angers

June 18 (1653)

My very dear Sisters,

You were truly saddened by the illness of our dear Sister Cécile,[3] whom I beg our good God to keep for you. I ask the same for our dear Sisters Claude[4] and Marie[5] who are also ill. I believe, my dear Sisters, that you accepted this affliction from the hand of our shared Father who knows what we need, and who afflicts and consoles us when He pleases. What am I saying, Sisters? If we truly loved His holy will, nothing would afflict us since we know that He loves us and desires our good in all things. You have already experienced some painful mortification when you lost

1. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.
2. The Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, see Letter 76b.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
4. Claude Chantereau, see Letter 421.
5. Marie Donion, see Letter 382.

hope of having Monsieur du Chesne[1] for your Jubilee. O my Sisters, do as good housekeepers do, and profit from everything. Remember that we must not look for the consolation and satisfaction of creatures and of ourselves. We must seek God alone and must go to Him by way of His Son, whose example teaches us interior and exterior mortification. I have reason (to believe) that those who are in charge have given you practice in this. If that is the case, Sisters, then beg Our Lord for the spirit of lowliness and of submission to His guidance. Be on your guard to offend no one, and especially, be very straightforward and disinterested. Oh, how good it is, my dear Sisters, to suffer for the sake of justice! However, let us be very careful not willingly to be the cause of any accusations against us. That is, let us not give reason for them by our misconduct, and especially by our curiosity and gossip in matters in which we should not be involved. I have no doubt, my dear Sisters, that you take excellent care of our good sick sisters, whom I greet with all my heart. Undoubtedly you realize, Sisters, that it was holy love that placed them in their present state because they have been faithful in their vocation. That being so, we must not judge but accept all the trials and demands that their illnesses can cause. We must show them that we are serving them willingly and with the desire to bring them relief. I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace of His Spirit so that you may support and assist them in a spirit of charity and gentleness, for His holy love, in which I am, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.367 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Étampes

June 19 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

You truly have great reason to be upset, since you have been alone for so long and have not received news from us as often as I should have sent it. I ask your forgiveness for this. I am still expecting you to return soon, but I hope to send you one of our dear sisters if you do not do so promptly. While you are waiting, my good Sister, I am sure that you will pray earnestly to your guardian angel to accompany you most particularly and that, as far as you are able, you will be careful to practice your little

1. Monsieur du Chesne passed through quickly at the beginning of February, see Letter 360b.

2. Jeanne-Françoise, see Letter 371. An orphanage was opened in Étampes after the troubles of the Fronde.

Rules, especially those which enjoin us to serve the poor with cordiality and gentleness. I am also certain that you will find great pleasure in teaching, as best you can, these little creatures, redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, so that they may praise and glorify Him forever.

I will not recommend modesty and reserve to you, nor mention that you should not associate with persons of the world more than you have to, because I am sure that you practice this most important advice. Always rest assured of our very special affection, and know that our sisters and I speak often of you, with joy for the service you render Our Lord, and with sorrow in the thought that you are all alone. I beg His goodness to be your strength and consolation, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.361 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE-FRANÇOISE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor and Orphans at Étampes

(June 1653)

My very dear Sister,

It is true that I have received several of your letters, but I have likewise answered some of them because I can assure you that it is a great consolation for me to reflect upon the graces our good God has bestowed upon you. I hope that He continues to be your strength and consolation, and that your guardian angel will be your companion although you remain alone. May your angel often point out to you that a good Daughter of Charity must be faithful to her vocation and must practice her Rules insofar as she is able, especially in her modesty and reserve. She must act in the same way whether she is alone or in the presence of her superiors and not become familiar with the world. O my dear Sister, how joyful I am in believing you to be in this state which gladdens God and the angels, and which makes me hope that we will see each other in Eternity! Please continue to serve our dear masters with great gentleness, respect and cordiality, always seeing God in them.

I thank you for the information you gave me concerning our dear Sisters. I have not since received any news from them. All our sisters greet you and have compassion for you in your solitary state. I hope that Our Lord will finally give you some consolation since you love His most holy will. In this will I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Jeanne-Françoise, see Letter 371.

L.368 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS ANDRÉE[1] AND FRANÇOISE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Varize[3]

June 23 (1653)

My very dear Sisters,

I praise God with all my heart for the blessings His goodness bestows upon your holy works. I beg you to be most thankful to Him for them because you must not believe that these graces are merited. How many persons like you are there who remained in the world and who suffer greatly, or who work only for their bodily existence? But since all your actions are performed for the love of God, you are completely oriented toward eternal life. That is why, my dear Sisters, you must see to it that the enemy of our salvation does not sow the weeds of materialism which might hinder you from pleasing God. Also, beware of allowing these weeds to choke the merit Our Lord would like to give to your holy works.

Let me know all about yourselves. Do you not still love your little Rules? When you are interrupted in practicing them by the service of your neighbor, do you not once again set about following them better? I am sure that both of you practice mutual charity, and that your dearest conversation, after that which you owe the poor, is between you, whether you speak of God, of the practices of the Company into which He has called you, or whether you recall the virtues recognized in our sisters.

I also believe, my dear Sisters, that you are very conscientious in helping your sick poor to make good confessions before they die, and in advising those who recover to live a better life than they ever have in the past. Likewise, I believe that you are teaching the little girls well, not only about matters of faith, but also about how to live as good Christians. That is what God asks of you, and for that reason He granted you the grace to withdraw from the world. Be most faithful to Him then.

All our sisters are well, thank God, and recommend themselves to your prayers, as I do also, assuring you that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Andrée Maréchal, returned to Paris at the end of the year. On August 8, 1655, she signed the Act of Establishment of the Company. In 1656, she was sent to Nantes. She went to Liancourt upon her return in 1658.
2. No doubt, Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b.
3. The letter was sent to Madame de Varize. On the back of the address, Louise de Marillac wrote: "Would you be so kind, Madame, as to send this letter to our sisters who are very worried about us."

L.338 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor of the Hotel-Dieu at Nantes in Brittany

(August 1653)

My very dear Sister,

I was very consoled to receive your letter which I showed to Monsieur Vincent. I left it so that his Charity might have the opportunity to read it all. He finds your suggestion quite reasonable. Be patient for a little longer, please, so that everything can be done properly.

It is true, my dear Sister, that one of the Fathers of the Poor[1] wrote to me. I believe he did so with the consent of the others, at least that is how it seems to me.

However, before I answer or put into effect the proposals that I made, I believe that it is necessary for me to find out from you if what they told us is true. They claim that the hospital is overburdened with sisters because there are so many of you.[2] This would certainly be contrary to our wishes since I can assure you that we are unable to supply sisters for the places requesting them. They complain also that, despite your large number, you do not hesitate to employ women from outside to do your work such as carrying, changing and washing linen and, I believe, even for cleaning the bowls. Needless to say, I was humiliated to hear these reproaches.

In the name of God, my dear Sister, let me know if this is true. If it is, we must acknowledge our fault. I would very much like to know if we can write with confidence to Monsieur de la Pinsonnière or to one of the other administrators who was there when I accompanied our sisters to Nantes.

I received news from our sisters at Hennebont who told me that Sister Marthe[3] was there and had been there since leaving Nantes. It would be wise to make this known so as to allay suspicions.

Please extend my greetings to all our sisters. Assure them of our sincere affection and that our sisters think of them often.

Sister Louise's[4] mother and sister are well but Sister Françoise's[5] grandmother and mother died six or eight weeks apart. Her father is very well, thank God, He, too, had been quite ill. Her two sisters in the Company are also in excellent health. They bore their affliction with great

1. The Fathers of the Poor, the hospital administrators.
2. Nine sisters were at the Nantes hospital.
3. Marthe Dauteuil, see Letter 165, left for Hennebont on August 12.
4. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
5. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.

virtue and in a Christian manner. I beg her most earnestly to do the same; to give herself to God for the accomplishment of His most holy will, and to see her suffering in light of this admirable will and the guidance of Divine Providence. What more could she desire for the well-being of her relatives than to see them die as good Christians while she practices the same abandonment that these mothers showed? The virtue and submission manifested by their good father during this trial is incredible. I urge you to help our sister to carry this cross.

I am not answering your letter in detail because, as I mentioned above, I do not have it. I long for the consolation of seeing you. Confide this matter to God. I imagine that you will find many things changed. I hope for the better. Believe me always in the love of our dear and divine Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.372 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

(September 1653)

My very dear Sister,

At last it has pleased our good God to make use of Monsieur Alméras[1] to bring you some relief from the trials you have all endured for so long and especially you, my dear Sister, whom Our Lord has chosen to bear this heavy yoke. However, since it was His yoke, I am sure that His goodness has greatly assisted you. May His holy name be forever blessed! I also hope that His grace will continue to give you strength and courage so that His goodness may bring this work to perfection.

I had promised myself the joy of seeing you here soon; however, since this is not the will of God and since you are still needed where you are for a while longer, you know that our happiness consists entirely in giving ourselves up to His guidance.

I am writing to Sister Anne,[2] at Monsieur Vincent's direction, to tell her to go to Richelieu without delay by the first available means.

I cannot write to Sister Louise.[3] Just tell her what day she is to leave to accompany Sister Anne to Richelieu. Add that the directive is from our Most Honored Father. The two of them will not be together there very long. However, they will remain until they are told what they are to do.

1. Monsieur Alméras, see Letter 179.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.

Please tell Sister Henriette[1] that I am sorry for not writing to her. Tell all the sisters that I was greatly consoled by Monsieur Alméras' visit and that I hope that, by means of it, Our Lord has bestowed many blessings on the entire family in general and on each individual. I desire this with all my heart and beg you not to worry if you do not immediately find complete rest and consolation in firmly established tranquillity. You are aware that good is accomplished little by little. I am expecting news from you since I have not had any for a long time. I hope to write you a longer letter.

I think that Sister Anne has some money but if she does not have enough to pay both fares, I beg you, my dear Sister, to give them some and to let me know how much you have borrowed in that city. I will refund it if those persons have an address there.

Sister Toussainte has received Extreme Unction. Pray for her and the entire community which sends greetings to your family. I greet you also and I am, with all my heart, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you, my dear Sister, that, God willing, we are sending you two sisters[2] at the beginning of the week. If the administrators have to be informed of the departure of our sisters, it must be taken care of by someone from the city who can do so gently, not by one of you.

L.378 - (TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT AT NANTES)[3]

(September 1653)

My dear Sister,

Our good God has permitted you to endure both great and small trials and sufferings. May His holy name be blessed for the grace He granted you of remaining attached to the desire of accomplishing His most holy will. This is a powerful means for obtaining His grace even if, on other occasions, we are subject to many faults and infidelities because of our weakness and infirmities. Thus it is for the accomplishment of the most holy will of God that I ask you, my very dear Sister, in the name of Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, to leave for Richelieu, taking Sister (Louise)[4] with you, just as soon as you receive this letter. Wait there for further directives.

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
2. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495, and Geneviève.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110. This letter was in the notebook of Marguerite Chétif's copies, the Anne Hardemont Series.
4. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.

You have had the happiness in Nantes of being called upon only to obey. You have had many opportunities to practice great gentleness, docility and submission of your own will. If any opportunities still remain to practice these virtues, look upon these occasions as precious, I beg of you, because they will be a source of great consolation for you once they are over.

L.373 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(September 1653)

I was mistaken when I said that one of the Fathers of the Poor had offered to accompany Monsieur Alméras[1] on his visit to the Bishop of Nantes. The administrator had only advised him to go to see the Bishop.

However, toward the end of this last letter, Monsieur Alméras said that he had just conferred with Monsieur de Beaupréau,[2] and they had decided to proceed without consulting the Bishop for reasons which he went on to explain. He is aware that the Bishop will probably be somewhat upset about this when he gets back. He said that Monsieur de Beaupréau knows that he will bear the brunt for this displeasure but that he is firmly resolved to act and knows what he must reply. These are his own words.

As for the article concerning the assignment of duties, Monsieur Alméras believes that this remains the responsibility of the Sister Servant. I consider this absolutely essential in order to maintain peace and to place the Sister Servant in a position which makes it clear that she, effectively, is the one who directs the others albeit in the spiritual more than in the temporal domain of obedience. Until now, the administrators had no interest in interfering except in the matter of the wine or when some disagreement arose. If this right were accorded them, little by little they would gain control of everything. A Sister Servant will be well able to justify what she is doing to any administrator[3] who is inclined to criticize her direction by acting prudently and respectfully in all other areas of her office.

Will Monsieur Alméras not be there for the departure of our sisters?[4] It would be essential.

Is nothing to be said about Hennebont?[5]

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1. Monsieur Alméras, see Letter 179, made the visitation at Nantes.
2. Monsieur de Beaupréau, administrator of the Nantes hospital.
3. The Fathers of the Poor, the administrators.
4. Anne Hardemont and Louise Michel left Nantes and returned to Paris.
5. Marthe Dauteuil left for Hennebont. The administrators of the Nantes and Hennebont hospitals quarrelled over her.

L.370 - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE [1]

September 16 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I hope that the visit of Monsieur Alméras[2] has clarified the matters which have been troubling you and that the simplicity of his sincere words has enabled you to realize that the behavior of those involved is of no consequence.

How fortunate you are, my dear Sister, to know yourself so well and to be so deeply devoted to the most holy will of God which is our sole good if it is accomplished in us. With all my heart, I pray that it will be revealed to your heart and teach you how you must bear with yourself especially in two areas. One concerns things about which you feel you do not have enough information. The second is the suffering you experience because of your reluctance to open your heart and because of your belief that no one is suited to direct you.

Recall, my dear Sister, the great Saint Teresa who was much busier than we and charged with affairs of much greater importance and who often needed advice. Although the advisors she wanted were absent, she was so simple and humble that she freely sought advice from those whom Providence sent her as directors. She listened to them as if God were speaking to her. She was satisfied with the essential and calmly abandoned the rest to the guidance of God. I am sure that you know from experience, my dear Sister, that when human beings fail us, God reveals Himself more abundantly to us. This is for our greater good, if we offer to Him all the satisfaction we would have received had we revealed our tiniest thoughts which is a gigantic mental game of no benefit whatsoever for us.

I believe you have received the letters we sent the first of last week in which Monsieur Vincent told you to arrange for the departure of Sister Anne[3] and Sister Louise.[4] I am sure that you have not failed to do so. We are sending you two of our best sisters.[5] I hope, Sister, that you are very careful not to show more affection for some than for others. If some are more faithful to you than others, do not give them any reason to believe that you want them to report the faults of their sisters to you. Just listen without reacting and without commenting on the failings of the others.

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
2. Monsieur Alméras, see Letter 179.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
4. Louise Michel, see Letter 210.
5. Geneviève and Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.

Finally, my dear Sister, I am certain that Our Lord will grant you all the graces you need in order to restore union in your community so that God may be glorified there. I remain in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant, burdened with many affairs.

P.S. Extend my greetings to all our dear sisters.

L.371 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Étampes

September 23 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

You have every right to complain about me. For a long time I have been satisfied to receive news from you without sending any of us. True, I was always convinced that you would be returning here because you have been away from this house for so long. This has not harmed you, my dear Sister, because I know that God has given you the grace to love His service and that of the poor. May this redound to His eternal glory!

You will find many new faces among our sisters here. Our Lord has taken a good number to Himself. This causes me to urge you not to delay your departure[2] once you have received word from Monsieur Vincent. You will not fail to do so since it is obedience that adds merit to all our actions and makes them agreeable to Our Lord in whose love I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Jeanne-Françoise: in 1651, she was at Saint-Étienne in Arnes in Picardy. She was then sent to Étampes to serve the orphan children after the war.
2. Jeanne-Françoise was going to entrust the children to Mademoiselle Ricard (Coste V, 15 and 18). After her retreat she returned to Étampes. She was still serving the children in June 1654.

L.379 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday [October 1653]

My Most Honored Father,

Our good Lady has asked me to go to see her tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon. She perhaps wants to know how to go about drawing up a contract. If she wishes to do so without being named, I beg your Charity to be so kind as to suggest some alternative that I can propose to her if we cannot ask someone to serve as a proxy for her.

I received another letter from the Pastor at Nanteuil. He tells me that Sister Judith is now in the parish of Monsieur Gallais[1] in Toquain-en-Brie. She already regrets the step and says that she is ready to return to Nanteuil if the Pastor can assure her that she will be there for life. What shall I tell this good priest?[2]

I do not know if Brother Ducourneau has spoken to you about a proposal to reach a settlement with the workers without prejudice to the house. The suggestion is, my Most Honored Father, to ask the person responsible for making the fabric to let you know how much the workers in his district are paid for shaping a bolt of serge; what yardage it contains; how much is paid for carding and combing the wool per hundred fleeces; and what it costs to spin it on the large as well as the small wheel. This would simplify reimbursement for the workmen because the price in Paris is too high, and rightly so, because everything is much more expensive here.[3]

Forgive my insistence and do me the honor of always believing me to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and servant.

L.374 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[4]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu at Angers

October 18 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God for the graces His goodness bestowed upon our sisters

1. Monsieur Gallais, see Letter 107c, had just left the Congregation of the Mission.
2. Monsieur Vincent proposed Judith's dismissal in his reply (Coste V, 35).
3. It was a question of the work done at the Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.
4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

during their retreat, and I beg Him with all my heart to grant them those they need in order to remain faithful to Him. As for the advice you asked of me concerning a public fault, I cannot possibly offer you any unless you tell me what it is without naming the sister or stating what penance you imposed on her.

Last week I wrote to your administrators. I rather suspect that some of our sisters[1] returning from Nantes are traveling by way of Angers. We never told them to take this detour but they were perhaps motivated by the desire to see you. If such is the case, my dear Sister, please do not offer them hospitality without first asking permission of your administrators. This is a matter of justice and you must not fail on this point.

Please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur l'abbé, to Monsieur Ratier and to anyone else you know I should remember. Do not forget our dear sisters whom I greet very lovingly. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.380 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday, Eve of All Saints [1653]

My Most Honored Father,

The memorandum[2] I sent your Charity, of which I did not keep a copy, is only a proposal made by that good lady who is asking for your advice and who wishes to remain anonymous. She is pressing me to tell her the best way to carry out this business properly. All of this leads me, my Most Honored Father, to beg you most humbly to be so kind as to write the response by each article adding whether or not it should be in a contract and, if so, what form the contract should take. I ask this because I am convinced that she accepts advice from no one else.

Because of my customary negligence, vacillation and indecision, I have not yet sent a sister to Varize. Should we completely exclude Sister Andrée[3] who returned from there three months ago? We have no one suitable who knows how to read and write. The sister who remained in Varize knows only how to let blood. If your Charity judges it appropriate, we will attend to the latter need only, and someone can leave as early as Monday. When the sisters from Nantes[4] are rested, we can send one of them there to teach the youth.

1. Jeanne Lepintre, Catherine Baucher and Jacquette, in turn, left Nantes. (Coste XIII, 680).
2. See Letter 379.
3. Andrée Maréchal, see Letter 368.
4. Jeanne Lepintre, Catherine Baucher and Jacquette.

At your convenience we will have three sisters[1] leave for Nantes, but it is essential for us to discuss it beforehand. It is even necessary for your Charity to instruct them on how they should act there.

My Most Honored Father, what answer shall I give the Pastor of Nanteuil who wants to complain to the Bishop of Nantes about the wrong he has suffered at the hands of Monsieur Gallais? I think that another sister is soon going to follow the same path as Sister Judith.[2] I am convinced that my sins and my lack of leadership are the cause of all these disorders.

Reflect on this before God, my Most Honored Father, and for His holy love apply to the situation whatever remedy His holy will inspires. Please give me your holy blessing, as to your poorest daughter who, in the love of Jesus Crucified, declares herself as she is, my Most Honored Father, your very humble . . .

P.S. I believe that your Charity must have been informed of the death of Sister Madeleine which occurred at nine or nine-thirty this morning.

L.292 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Serqueux

November 5 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

Oh, what consolation I experienced in the desolation expressed in your letter! Oh, how true it is that souls who seek God will find Him everywhere but especially in the poor! How I cherish your thoughts on this subject! They gave me great cause to praise God.

How is being deprived of the sacraments affecting our sister? You say that this is because of the curate. Is there no new Pastor? If his deafness prevents you from going to confession, you can, by being strict in your behavior and by relying on God's grace, go less often. If you can go to Forges,[4] either to the parish church or to the Capuchin monastery, feel free to do so. If this is not possible because of the good example you owe the parishioners on Sundays and feast days, you should nonetheless

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, Anne de Vaux and Madeleine Miquel were leaving on November 12, 1653 (Coste IX, 658).
2. See Letter 379.
3. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
4. Forges-les-Eaux, named for its curative waters; it is four kilometers from Serqueux.

receive Holy Communion on these days. I believe, my dear Sister, that a coach for Forges goes through Serqueux. Please look into it.

Pray to Our Lord for us and believe me in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Four of our sisters left last week to go to serve the poor wounded and sick at Châlons.[1] The sisters send greetings to you and to Sister Renée.[2] I also greet you most affectionately.

L.400 -(TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[3]

at Châlons-sur-Marne)

(c. 1653)

My very dear Sister,

I am greatly consoled by all we have been told about you and for the graces that God has bestowed upon you in the duty of directing this work which His goodness has confided to you. May He be forever blessed! I beg the divine mercy to grant you the grace of being thankful to Him for all that He has done.

I am certain, my dear Sister, that our three sisters[4] profit greatly from the good example and the advice which, in your charity, you give them. However, since you cannot always be with them, I beg the sisters, for the love of our Lord, not to allow themselves to be too distracted by the things they hear around them. They are dealing with all kinds of people. While it is true that some of them lead us to recollection and the awareness of human frailty, others can give rise to quite different thoughts because of the habits they have contracted by living as they do. The sisters must often renew their purity of intention which causes them to perform all their actions for the love of God. This will enable them to preserve the spirit which true Daughters of Charity must possess. Finally, I beg all of you not to allow the distance which separates you from us to cause you to forget the care with which you must observe your Rules and the virtues which the Daughters of Charity must possess.

I wish Sister[5] would let me know if she is truly practicing the humble

1. Barbe Angiboust, Anne Hardemont, Perrette Chefdeville and Marie Poulet left at the end of October (Coste V, 56) to aid the wounded in Châlons. Two other sisters would go to join them.
2. Renée Delacroix in Nantes, see Letter 275.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
4. Barbe Angiboust, Perrette Chefdeville and Marie Poulet.
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

submission, forbearance and reserve that a Sister Servant relieved of her duties should demonstrate, because it is a maxim that those who no longer have authority over others should be the most humble and obedient in the house. Always bear in mind the advice given you by Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, regarding the older sisters whom you should love and honor as your mothers.

Here at the Motherhouse we are continuing to recite the prayers for peace that we started during the war. They are the antiphon and prayer to Saint Michael, said in the morning after the *Sacro-sanctae*, and the same to Saint Geneviève after the *Angelus*. For nearly three months now, we have had two sisters at prayer continuously, day and night, to try to avert the wrath of God from us. We know that we have justly drawn it down upon ourselves by our sins and that we truly deserve to feel its weight. If we have been preserved, it is because God in His mercy has had pity on us and has not punished us as we deserve; but I am very much afraid that we have been ungrateful. Ask the divine goodness to preserve us and believe me in His holy love . . .

L.382 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 12 (1653)

Monsieur,

Good Mademoiselle Chevalier[1] has arrived with our sister.[2] Their journey was uneventful, thank God. I thank you very humbly, Monsieur, for the advice which your Charity gave us concerning her. This will help us to further test her vocation. She seems very willing to work with humility and submission. She is still divided between her fear and her hope of being received into the Company. Despite the uncertainty of her situation, she is bearing up very well during her retreat which she entered with a great desire to make it well. It is true, Monsieur, that she has already entered two religious orders. She was in one of them for more than six months; however, she received the habit in neither of them. She claims to have left only because she had no dowry. Her father had refused to give her anything, even enough to become a lay sister. I recommend her to your good prayers.

1. Mademoiselle Chevalier, a postulant from Angers, would have trouble adapting. She did not stay very long in the Company of the Daughters of Charity. She joined Mademoiselle de Lestang, see Letter 52.

2. Marie Donion arrived in Angers in November 1651. She returned to Paris in 1653. She was then sent to Brienne.

The Fathers,[1] while thanking us for leaving Sister Cécile[2] for a longer time, asked that we place her there permanently. This is something that we cannot and must not promise. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, when the opportunity arises, to be so charitable as to let them know that this is something they must not request; otherwise, I am afraid that they will begin to expect it.

I sent a note to Sister Cécile about Sister Marie's departure from Angers, but this is only for herself because whatever you decide concerning our sisters there will always be acceptable.

I thank you very humbly, Monsieur, for continuing your charitable direction of our sisters. You see how much they need it.

I beg you most humbly to be kind enough to inquire about Monsieur Maillard. I am afraid that he is a little too hasty in determining the need for sisters to leave the Company for their salvation. I do not, Monsieur, entirely trust this judgment which is based solely on conclusions drawn from Sister Marie's words. However, since this is an important matter, as you know, I felt that I should give you my opinion. I humbly ask your pardon for taking this liberty and I remain, with all the respect I owe you, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.383 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor

November 13 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the guidance of His Providence in all things, especially in the duty which His goodness has confided to you. I hope that your gratitude will place you in the disposition necessary to receive the graces you need to serve your sick poor in a spirit of gentleness and great compassion, in imitation of Our Lord who acted this way with the most unfortunate. It is apparent, my dear Sister, that His goodness wants to make use of you and that He reserves to Himself the right to guide you. Turn to Him often with your spiritual and temporal needs.

With the limited time you have for reading, I urge you to read your Rules once a month and also the *Imitation of Christ* and *Philotée*. These are the books necessary for the Daughters of Charity.

In the name of God, my dear Sister, reflect often that it is not enough

1. The Fathers of the Poor, the administrators.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

to have good intentions or for our wills to be inclined to do good solely for the love of God because, when we received the commandment to love God with all our heart, we also received a second commandment which is to love our neighbor. In order to do this we must give good example as you do by the grace of God.

I showed your letter to Monsieur Vincent. He urges you to submit entirely to the Bishop of Châlons to whom we are very indebted. With the Bishop's consent Monsieur Vincent wants you to go to Sainte-Menehould; Sister Barbe[1] is to remain at Châlons with Sister Perrette[2] if she is still there. As for the rest, the number and choice of the other sisters,[3] that is for you, Sister Barbe and Sister Perrette to decide together.

I greet all our dear sisters very affectionately and beg Our Lord to give them His spirit so that they may serve Him for the glory of His Father and the sanctification of their neighbor. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.399 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(December 1653)

Monsieur,

I received your letter only a long time after the date it bore. I am speaking of the one in which you honored me by writing to me in the name of the Bishop of Angers. This would be a great consolation for me if we were able to respond to his wishes and to contribute at the present time to the carrying out of his plans. However, I must tell you quite plainly, since you honor me by allowing me to speak this way, Monsieur, that whenever we discuss anything, the need to change five sisters at Nantes and two at Hennebont and to provide the six sisters requested by the Queen for Sainte-Menehould[4] has placed us in a position where this would be absolutely impossible before we have sent sisters to four places where, at the present time, there is only one sister and filled the request from four other places to which we committed ourselves more than six months ago. We will settle all this as soon as possible. I will then let you know without fail, Monsieur, before we make any commitments elsewhere. In the meantime I hope that God will give us the grace to see the

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526.
3. The Queen requested six sisters, see Letter 399.
4. These sisters went to Châlons and Sainte-Menehould at the Queen's request to aid the war victims.

newly arrived sisters make progress in their new way of life.

I would be very pleased if Mademoiselle Chevalier[1] were so fortunate as to be suited for such a life but I do not think that she can adapt to the air of Paris or of the surrounding areas. I am distressed that we did not have your appraisal of her. Your Charity could have formed a judgment on her, if you had been able to speak to her longer. She will find it very difficult to accept, if as I fear, we have to send her home. I praise God, Monsieur, and thank Him for the good that is apparent in our most recent sister from Angers. I hope that the divine goodness will continue to bestow His graces on her. May He continue also to bless your charitable direction, for which I thank you most humbly, and the concern with which, in your goodness, you permitted our sisters to go to confession to the three persons you named for them. Allow me to ask you, Monsieur, if you have heard that more than one confessor comes each day and if one is the confessor of some of the sisters while the others are for the rest of them. If this is the arrangement, might it not be the cause of little partialities and jealousy? I do not mean to imply, Monsieur, that I do not believe that your Charity has foreseen all this; however, I need this as a model for another place.

Monsieur Moreau[2] took the trouble to come here but he never mentioned the Religious of Saint-Geneviève. I pray that the holy will of God may be accomplished in this matter and that He may be the eternal recompense for all your efforts on our behalf. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.385 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE (ANGIBOUST)

at Châlons

December 13 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I cannot tell you what consolation I experienced upon receiving your dear letter. I beg Our Lord always to be your strength and your wisdom. Monsieur Vincent agrees that Sister Perrette[3] should remain with you at Châlons and that you should send Sister Jeanne[4] to Brienne. He says that if she has already left for Brienne, as he had directed, you are to keep Sister Marie Poulet[5] with you. I think that this will take care of everything

1. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.
2. Monsieur Moreau, hospital administrator in Angers.
3. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526.
4. Jeanne Hénault, who came from Brienne, see Letter 353.
5. Marie Poulet left for Châlons in October 1653 and returned to Paris the following year. In 1657, she was in Chars. In 1658, she was chosen for the mission of Calais.

quite nicely. You and the other sisters can settle all this among yourselves but always with the consent and approval of the Bishop of Châlons.

I believe that there will be a Priest of the Mission at Châlons and another at Sainte-Menehould. I think that it is all right for you to have them as confessors but let us hear from you first.

I hope, my dear Sister, that you thought to give Sister Jeanne enough funds to live on as the second sister in Brienne. If not, you will have to let her know how much to keep. Did you give her an address so that we can have what you left for her held there?

Let us know a bit about how you left Brienne.[1] Did you speak with Madame de Brienne about all the things you mentioned to me? Did she say anything at all to you about the message I sent to her by our sisters?

Please tell Sister Perrette that I am sorry for not being able to answer her letter. It is almost two o'clock and I have not yet had dinner. Tell her that my heart is as she would want it to be concerning the matter she spoke of in her letter. Tell her, also, that she knows that I love her and want to see her become a great saint by the fidelity she owes to God through the practice of mortification and detachment from all things. It is thus that she will attain the pure love that He desires of her and in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Cécile[2] sends you her love. She is loved ever more and more. All our sisters wish to be remembered to your whole family.

L.375 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

(at Châlons)

December 19 (1653)

My very dear Sister,

I never averted to the fact that Sister Jeanne[3] does not know how to read. I hope that Sister Perrette[4] will be suitable. Please bring her up-to-date on everything. I am annoyed that you did not keep your savings with you. We must have great trust in our sisters; however, we have had a couple of incidents lately, which I will tell you about, that

1. Barbe Angiboust left Brienne to go to Châlons.
2. Cécile Angiboust in Angers.
3. Jeanne Hénault, see Letter 353.
4. Perrette Chefdeville, see Letter 526.

served as a warning that we must always exercise caution. What will they do with so much money?

Please let me know if Sister Jeanne still has a deep affection for her vocation and for the Company. Also please advise us if you think that, as is done in some places, one sister should be the Sister Servant and the other the bursar who would render her accounts to the Sister Servant so that all would be done cordially and with the knowledge of the other sister.

I praise God with all my heart for what the Dean is asking of you. I am keeping his letter to show it to Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, who continues to have deep affection for Sister Barbe.

I will also tell him what you have said about those good girls. His Charity wants you to be very submissive to the Bishop of Châlons and approves of your going to confession to the confessor he gave you. His directions concerning the administrators are for cases of necessity and when they are able to hear your confessions. Ordinarily in hospitals or in parishes, the priests there are not the confessors for our sisters. On the contrary it is not allowed; the exception was at Saint-Denis when Monsieur Domilly was in residence. I will propose this to our Most Honored Father for Châlons. I will not forget to extend your greetings to him and to Monsieur Portail.

I presume that Sister Anne[1] told you the family news especially about our wall that collapsed. It will be very expensive for us to build another. Later, God willing, we will make some necessary additions but, little by little, so as not to borrow too much at once. Pray to Our Lord for the entire family. Remember me to Sister Anne, Sister Perrette and all the others.

As for those two good girls, test them well considering both their physical and their mental attitudes because you know that a girl who shows delicacy in one or the other is not suitable for us. Let us know their background and look carefully, I beg of you, into the manner of life they have led. Then if they are judged suitable, we will ask you to send them.

Pray for us and believe that I am for you in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Cécile[2] knows that you are in Châlons and sends you her love. All our sisters greet you and your dear community.

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1. Anne Thibault arrived from Paris. She was sent to Sedan in 1654.

2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

L.386 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

Feast of Saint Stephen [1653]

Monsieur,

You are aware of the necessity of sending sisters to Nantes and to the four places where there is only one sister. Every Monday there is a coach for Varize. This led me to ask Monsieur Vincent if, during his absence, we would have a conference just for the sisters of Paris. I would hesitate to request it, but I ask you to look into what should be done. His Charity left it entirely up to you.

Enclosed is an even more urgent letter for Monsieur Alméras.[1] I would be distressed to see our sisters leave without an instruction and a blessing from our Most Honored Father. I am incapable of giving instructions all the time and especially when I have allowed myself to become irresolute.

Please give us a prompt reply and be so charitable as to pray for me who am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient . . .

1654

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Châteaudun, Bernay and La Roche-Guyon.

Aid to areas devastated by the war: Sedan

L.391 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Angers)

Epiphany (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you must have been ill since the departure of Sister Jeanne Lepintre[2] because we had no news of you from that time until the end of last week when Monsieur Moreau[3] took the trouble to bring me one of your letters. I would have been delighted to render him some

1. Monsieur Alméras, see Letter 179.
2. Jeanne Lepintre returned to Paris in November 1653.
3. Monsieur Moreau, hospital administrator.

service, but he did not indicate to me that he had any need. He did, however, say that he would return for a longer visit because it was getting late. I assure you, my dear Sister, that I am always pleased to see one of these good gentlemen because of their concern for the well-being of the poor and because of the charity they show our sisters.

My God, Sister, please let me know whether or not you explained everything to Mademoiselle Chevalier.[1] Did you lead her to believe that she would be exempt from many things and that we would keep her despite her infirmities? Did you speak with her mother and tell her the same thing? Until now this young woman gives no sign of being suited for us either physically or mentally. It is not that I do not believe that this poor girl is good, but she would be much better off in her home surroundings than in this city where she is always ill.

Please inform her parents of her illness, if you can. I rather suspect that they are aware of it because they know her. I think that her lung is involved. I suspect this because she had a dry cough when she arrived. Did you not tell her that she was supposed to have enough money for a return trip home as well as for her first habit? Any candidate must be told this. She has only eight pounds remaining from her journey here. Of course you realize, my dear Sister, that is not the reason why I consider her, perhaps, inappropriate. Would to God she did have the necessary qualities.

Please tell Sister Barbe[2] that I saw her father after she left and that he is well, thank God, as are all her relatives. He was not at all upset about her trip. He told us that she was accomplishing the holy will of God. Please greet all the sisters for us and tell them that, united with them, we have asked pardon of Our Lord for all our infidelities during the past year. We continue to hope that His grace will enable us to make better use of the present one. He will not fail us, my dear Sisters; let us be careful not to fail Him by not corresponding fully to His holy will.

Enclosed are the pictures of the Holy Protectors that we drew on New Year's Day. We had a conference;[3] it was on the importance of conducting ourselves in distant houses in the same manner and with the same submission as the sisters in this house. This applies to our manner of acting toward the persons who employ us for the service of the poor, superiors, the Sister Servant and among ourselves. Have a little conference among yourselves on this topic. If we were not too busy, we would send you a short excerpt from ours.

Pray for the entire Company and ask Our Lord to send laborers for His work if He wants it to continue. Requests come from so many places that it is impossible to satisfy all of them.

1. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.
2. Barbe arrived in Angers at the end of the year 1652.
3. Conference of January 1, 1654 (Coste IX, 662).

Good evening, my dear Sister. Believe me in the love of Jesus Christ in His Crib, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our sisters in Poland are well, thank God. They need prayers. You know the trials connected with new foundations.

L.397 - TO SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Sister of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontenay

February 13 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

We are sending you a half-bushel of excellent peas. We bought all the best ones because the beans are too expensive. We will get some, however, and will send you a supply. These peas do not need to be strained. With the help of God, we will also buy you some bouquets of herbs when we go to the fair at Saint-Germain. We will also send you a codfish. Clean it well and scale it; then dry it and cut it into pieces. As you use it, soak it; the water you use for this is also excellent for the wash.

I beg Our Lord to give us a desire for true penance, but in our hearts not just in words which are so much in vogue. May God have mercy on us! I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.398 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

February 16, 1654

My very dear Sister,

My heart aches with yours because of all the suffering that has befallen you from all sides. God be praised for the strength He has given you to work where you now are and to have completed the work at Châlons! How blessed you are to be employed as you are in such holy actions! I am sure that you will not fail to thank Our Lord for this so that the greatness of this grace will not be an occasion of reproach for you.

1. Barbe Angiboust returned to Brienne from Châlons. Louise de Marillac then destined her for the new establishment of Bernay.

Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, told me to tell you to come as soon as you receive this letter (I mean by the first available means of transportation) bringing Sister Marie Poulet[1] with you. I cannot tell you, my dear Sister, with what joy we will welcome you! I know that your poor body sorely needs this rest so that you may employ it elsewhere for the glory of God. I am sure that you will do everything in your power to discharge all your obligations toward others before leaving. I know your heart, so I am convinced that it will not recoil before the humiliation of such encounters.

I beg Our Lord to bless all that you will say and do in this matter, and I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Since Sister will not be going so far as you, I think that it would be all right for her to leave either before or with you.

March 15

Leave an inventory of all that you have belonging to the poor. Sign it and bring a copy to be signed by the person in whose hands you will be leaving everything. Accept the humble greetings of all your sisters.

As you can see, this letter was written a month ago. I am still asking the same thing except, my dear Sister, that instead of turning everything over to others, you place all into the hands of our dear sisters. I urge you not to tell them all the difficulties you have had especially with our dear Sister Jeanne[2] whom I have asked to go to Montmirail. Part company, I beg of you, gently and cordially. We joyously await your arrival.

L.362 - TO MY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châlons, in Champagne

March 18 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished that the city officials are still keeping you there since we were told long ago that they had given all of you money to return here. Nevertheless, Monsieur Vincent is of the opinion that you should wait for their consent. You have no doubt, of course, that I am most eager to see you; and it seems to me that since you were wounded you have in a sense become even closer to us. I praise God with all my heart for the courage He has given you and for having preserved you. This

1. Marie Poulet, see Letter 385.
2. Jeanne Hénault, see Letter 353.
3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

leads me to believe that His goodness still wants to make use of you. I am sure that you do not fail to offer yourself to Him often to accomplish His most holy will.

With regard to the two girls you mentioned, if you have looked carefully into their background and way of life and have told them exactly what will be expected of them, explaining the Rule of the House both for the physical and the spiritual, and if you consider them suitable for us, you can send them or bring them with you, if you are coming soon. But you must impress upon them that they are coming so as to try out our way of life and they in turn will be tested. Please see to it that they have enough money for the first habit and to cover the cost of the trip here and, if necessary, the return journey home. I say this, my dear Sister, because it is very important for girls to come in this frame of mind even if they are well suited for us.

I have not received an answer to Mademoiselle Parisolle's letter, but I am enclosing one from her niece. Because of the medicine I took today, I cannot write to you personally[1] but nothing can prevent me from declaring myself to be in the love of our crucified Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.396 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Daughter of Charity at Fontenay-aux-Roses

Thursday (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am sending you our sister who has not quite finished her retreat; have her make her last three or four meditations; this will not prevent her from working in the house. This is being done so that Sister Jeanne Luce[2] can go immediately to Saint-Jacques[3] and, if possible, sleep there tomorrow night. I have not as yet been able to send anyone there. She will remain as long as her strength permits.

Excuse me for ending this letter so abruptly and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister.

1. The letter was written by Mathurine Guérin.
2. Jeanne Luce was with the galley slaves along with Barbe Angiboust in approximately 1642-1646. On August 8, 1655, she signed an "x" on the Act of Establishment of the Company (Coste XIII, 575).
3. Parish of Paris.

L.431 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity at Fontenany-aux-Roses

The 29th (c.1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am very distressed for having left you alone and without a letter for so long, but I think you are aware that I am ill. I was bled from the foot again the day before yesterday. I am sending you this very hasty note, but I cannot respond to your recent letters. I hope to have the consolation of seeing you soon.

I beg you, Sister, to look upon our sister as one who has just entered the community because, although she is a good girl, she greatly needs instruction and training. I confide her wholeheartedly to you and I am with equal affection, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, you very humble sister and servant.

L.407 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

June 7 (1654)

Monsieur,

Although I am well aware that your holy employments permit you no rest, I am writing because I am so anxious to have the honor of hearing news of you from your own pen. I desire also to reiterate my very humble respect for and submission to you for all we continue to owe you, Monsieur, because of your charity which, I believe, has extended even to Nantes where I know you were recently. If such indeed is the case, I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so good as to let me know how you found this community which had at one time been so desolate. I am also distressed about the sisters of Angers because of Sister Cécile's[1] illness.

Mademoiselle Chevalier[2] has decided to leave, thank God. Fortunately she has found a place with Mademoiselle de Lestang.[3] God grant that she may adapt to life there and be found satisfactory. I hope that you will continue to honor me by remembering our needs before Our Lord. Believe

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.
3. Mademoiselle de Lestang, see Letter 52.

me in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.411 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August [1654]

My Most Honored Father,

I beg your Charity to be so kind as to look at these letters. There is a boy waiting to return to Videlles.[1] He did not come just for the mail. If the answer is not favorable, I will ask the sisters to express my apology for not responding by this mail.

I no longer find our good woman from Arras with us. She asked Sister Mathurine[2] if she could go to buy some white linen, and she never returned. It was perhaps my fault for not being considerate enough to visit her during her retreat and to let her eat with the sisters except on a few occasions. Our good God knows what He wants to do and what He will do for the Company. I have great confidence in His goodness to accomplish all this if the guidance of your Charity will rid me of the obstacles which my failings place in His way. This leads me to beg you, for the love of Our Lord, to take the time to become fully cognizant of them. I will hold back nothing which could prevent this since God has always given me the grace to want you to see all my thoughts, actions and intentions as clearly as His goodness sees them. For His glory I want to renounce the satisfaction I may receive from them and to accept the humiliations which I shall perhaps endure because of them, I who am a wretched sinner and unworthy to call myself what nevertheless I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient servant.

Today is Wednesday[3] and it is my birthday. If God wills it also to be the day of my death, I hope that I shall prepare well for it.

1. Videlles, near Étampes.
2. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
3. Wednesday, August 12.

L.413 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontenay-aux-Roses

(August 1654)

My very dear Sister,

You are imitating Our Lord who took upon Himself the debts of others and paid them. Thank you very much especially for the beautiful and delicious figs which arrived just at the right time for everyone here.

I think that it would be advisable to take that little boarder provided you are paid adequate board. I cannot tell you how much that should be; much would depend on how meals are to be provided. Also, you should take her only on a trial basis just in case she does not get along with your good woman.

Yesterday I had planned to send Sister Jeanne[1] back to you, but neither she nor I thought of it. Monsieur Portail[2] is better, thank God, but Brother Ducourneau[3] is dangerously ill. Keep him in your prayers. He will be a great loss for the house.

When the opportunity arises, try to settle matters with the surgeon. As far as possible, try to avoid going to places to which he may be called.

A slight ailment keeps me from writing in my own hand[4] but not from being with all my heart, my very dear Sister, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble . . .

L.412 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[5]

(at Angers)

(August 15, 1650)

My very dear Sister,

Both your letters and ours must certainly have been lost because I do not believe that I wrote to you only a month ago, and besides, I have had only one letter from you in a very long time. I also had the honor of writing to Monsieur l'abbé[6] to tell him that Mademoiselle Chevalier[7]

1. Jeanne Luce, see Letter 396.
2. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.
3. Brother Ducourneau, see Letter 147.
4. Letter written by Mathurine Guérin.
5. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
6. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
7. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.

was with Mademoiselle de Lestang.[1] I think that I also told you this. It is true, my dear Sisters, that I do not write to you as often as I would wish nor as often as I should, but as we grow older we have greater responsibilities.

I praise God that our sisters have recovered. It has been a long time since your companions have written to me personally to tell me how they are. Please have them write to me in turn with news of themselves. I beg Our Lord that you all may be as His heart wills you to be and that today you have entered into the death of the Blessed Virgin by the voluntary sacrifice you make to Him of dying to yourselves so that you may live in God and fulfill His most holy will for the rest of your days. Ask Our Lord to grant us all this grace and that of dying in His holy love in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Anne Hardemont and three others[2] went to Sedan to serve the wounded soldiers. They are edified to see them die like good Christians. Pray very hard for the King's army and for the conversion of the enemy. All our sisters greet you and embrace you affectionately. I am sure that you do not forget to pray each day for our Most Honored Father, that God may preserve him for us.

P.P.S. Sister Barbe[3] sends her love. She is still here and is well, thank God.

L.584 - (TO MADAME DES ESSARTS)[4]

August 30 (1654)

Madame,

Quite some time ago Monsieur Ozenne[5] and our sisters in Poland wrote several times to say that the Queen was again requesting two sisters and that Her Majesty was astonished that they were so long in coming. As a result Monsieur Vincent has told us to send them as soon as possible and to ask you, Madame, to give us some instructions for their journey such

1. Mademoiselle de Lestang, see Letter 52.
2. Anne Hardemont, Françoise Cabry, Jeanne Marie and Anne Thibault were sent to Sedan on July 23, 1654 (Coste X, 1).
3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, returned from Brienne.
4. Madame des Essarts took care of the Queen of Poland's affairs in France from 1652 onwards.
5. Monsieur Ozenne, a Priest of the Mission, born on April 15, 1613. He arrived in Poland in August 1653. His death occurred on August 14, 1658.

as the best time to leave and some addresses along the way. Also, Madame, it would be a great consolation for us if they could join other persons who are making this trip. If not, we shall have to entrust them to Divine Providence as we did for the first group which arrived safely.[1]

We shall await word from you before having the sisters leave, so that they may have the honor of acting in keeping with your directives and thus secure a blessing on their journey.

I beg Our Lord to grant you perfect health and I am in His most holy love, Madame, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.414 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 4 (1654)

Monsieur,

I see clearly that the needs of our sisters are multiplying. One of the good priests of the hospital, who was one of their confessors, has written to me about it. I hope that Monsieur Vincent will be able to do them the charity that you judge necessary. Monsieur Vincent is also giving very high priority to sending sisters, as soon as possible, to serve the poor in your hospital for shut-ins. He wants us to prefer this to any other proposal we might receive once we have discharged our two commitments in a couple of important places. He recommends this because of the respect and esteem he has for the Bishop of Angers and for the reasons I believe your Charity presented to him.

I received a letter from a Sister Élisabeth[2] which had no signature and no address indicating where it was written. However, I am reasonably certain that it is the one for whom I am taking the liberty of sending you a response. She is the one, if she is the Assistant or has some similar responsibility, because she complained that this duty was the cause of the trial she was undergoing.

The good priest I mentioned told me that he withdrew as confessor for the sisters so as to preserve peace and harmony. You can see from this what he meant, Monsieur, and if there is some emergency, I hope that, as usual, your Charity will resolve the problem. You know the sisters' needs better than anyone else.

If the sisters learn that we have been requested to send sisters for the hospital, it might lead them to want to be placed there; this might well

1. The first three sisters arrived in 1652.

2. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

upset them. The custom of changing the sisters, which is so necessary for the Company in some places, causes all the sisters to think about the possibility. I believe, Monsieur, that this is partially responsible for creating a certain flightiness among them. However, I think that it is an evil that is almost essential for the government of the Company.

Please show us your charity by helping us, by your intercession before Our Lord, to obtain the spirit we need to further His glory, and honor me by believing that I am always in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.415 - (TO SISTER ÉLISABETH BROCARD)

at Angers

(September 4, 1654)

I must tell you, my dear Sister, that I am edified by your love for obedience and your desire for salvation. However, at the same time, I must say that I am somewhat astonished that you doubt that you have the means to practice these beautiful virtues where you now are and where you have received so many graces since God has called you there. You tell me, my dear Sister, that you think that the duty given you may be the cause. Perhaps this is so but for another reason than the one you believe.

Permit me to tell you, my dear Sister, that if great care is not taken when one is first placed in a position of authority and if one is not filled with a great desire for solid virtue, then one finds oneself in peril. Such, for example, would be your appointment to the office of Assistant.

O my dear Sister, you must ask God for the grace to stay well within the limits of your authority so that you do not go beyond it and undertake more than you should. Reflect that you are not more exempt from humiliations and obedience than before you had this duty; on the contrary, you are much more obliged to give good example to the other sisters. It is also more essential to show cordiality, submission and sincere openness with the Sister Servant. You must never suggest or ask anything unless you are certain that it is in accord with her intentions. This is especially true in Angers where the direction of the Sister Servant has always been considered excellent. If some little cause for suffering arises, humble yourself and accept it as a cross to be cherished because Our Lord has permitted you to bear it. This does not mean, my dear Sister, that if your sufferings continue, you should not make them known to us or that we will not make every effort to meet your needs. Meanwhile, I

beg Our Lord to send you His Spirit so that, united to Him, you may act in this matter and in all others purely for love of Him.

L.402 - (TO THE SISTERS OF ANGERS)

(September 1654)

My very dear Sisters,

I was consoled to have your confessors bring me news of your dear selves and of your return to good health. Since these gifts come to you from God, I beg of you, my dear Sisters, to use them willingly and joyously for His love in the service of the poor. Encourage one another, and may your mutual good example speak louder than any words could. Profit from all the instructions you will receive from the charity of the good Abbé de Vaux. Above all, practice holy cordiality and mutual respect toward one another.

I urge you not to let any opportunity go by without sending us news of all that is happening to you. Waiting to hear from you, I embrace you all and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.451 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

(at Angers)

September 9 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I have time only to thank you for the information you gave me about the matter which is as I suspected. However, you forgot the main point which is to let me know whether the young lady's mother is willing, should her daughter marry in Paris, to come to live with her for a few years. If you can answer this, please do so.

I had news of Sister Barbe[1] who is in excellent health. Of course, she is in the best country for her, a region of Normandy. She is always eager for news of you and wants to tell you that some of your relatives have

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, had just arrived in Bernay.

assured her that the other members of the family are fine. She listed names but I do not have her letter with me.

Please greet all our dear sisters for me and urge them to strengthen one another in fidelity to their vocation. I am sure that you never fail to pray for the well-being of our Most Honored Father and for the sanctification of the entire Company.

Our sisters in Poland ask you to pray that the divine goodness will bring peace to that kingdom and will safeguard the King and Queen. Our obligations toward our dear France are such that there is no need to ask you to pray for her needs. I beg Our Lord to hear your prayers for peace for our Holy Mother Church and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I believe that Monsieur Moreau will bring you these letters. He is a very good and virtuous man who has worked tirelessly for the hospital. If the charity of all your administrators is not equal to that found among those in Paris, the goodness of this man alone would be sufficient to give all the others a good reputation.

Please remember me to Mademoiselle de la Franchandière.[1]

L.81 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(1654)

My Most Honored Father,

I urgently need our good God to give you a little time so that, in your charity, you can respond to my needs. I thank you very humbly for the note that you took the trouble to send me this morning and for all your goodness in my regard. I imagine that the good Brother Pascal has told you that I see no way of giving an answer to Monsieur de la Hode[2] between now and Tuesday and that I suggested sending his letter to the President, Madame de Nesmond.[3] Since then it has occurred to me that it might be better to let him take full charge of the arrangements for the return of our sisters[4] since I am certain that he will not fail to send them back as early as Tuesday as he had proposed. Nevertheless, we must anticipate that he will do so without notifying us and even that our sisters will be unwilling to depart without a directive from us. I await the instructions that your Charity will give me, and I shall follow them since

1. Mademoiselle de la Franchandière, Lady of Charity of Angers.
2. Monsieur de la Hode, the Chaplain of the Château of Chantilly.
3. Madame de Nesmond, see Letter 77.
4. Financial difficulties, see A.79, necessitated the momentary dismissal of the Daughters of Charity.

I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.93 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GILLETTE JOLY[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Sedan

(c. October 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I was very consoled by the news Sister Anne[2] gave me of you. I beg Our Lord to bestow His holy graces upon you. Your longing to come here is equalled only by my own to have you, but it is only fair that Sister Marie[3] should precede you; then your turn will come. I am not writing to her because I expect to see her soon. If she has not already left, tell her that I send my greetings and that her friends of the Saint-Germain district wish she were here to take care of your mutual business, because I know that she has so much affection for you that she takes care of her temporal affairs only for your sake. Your business, I am certain, my dear Sister, is only the concern you have to render yourself agreeable to God. How fortunate you are since, if such be the case, you can rest assured that Our Lord will always take good care of you. I ask you to remember me in your prayers and to believe me to be in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.438 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH [4]

at Angers

(c. October 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am somewhat surprised to receive a third letter from you on the same subject because I have already responded twice on the matter. I doubt that you have received my letters because it seems to me that you would

1. Gillette Joly was sent to join her sister, Marie, in Sedan as early as 1642.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110, arrived in Sedan in September.
3. Marie Joly was going to return to Paris. She had been in Sedan for 13 years.
4. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

have found reason to remain at peace while putting into practice for a time the advice I gave you. Remember, my dear Sister, that we must not pay attention to our first thoughts or give ear to our trials and difficulties which are often only minor temptations or tests of our fidelity. We need great courage to overcome ourselves, although often the things we call trials are more imaginary than real. If we wish to please God, an excellent means is to bear patiently our trials and difficulties.

This does not mean, my very dear Sister, that we are unwilling to assist you. You should place full trust in Monsieur Ratier[1] when you cannot speak with Monsieur l'abbé[2] and be satisfied with the advice he gives you. All the rest is superfluous and often encumbers the mind because if we are not seeking advice in keeping with the order established by God, His goodness bestows no blessings upon it.

What I have said is based on the fear that you may have received some harmful advice, not from any belief that your will has changed in any way whatsoever because I can assure you, my dear Sister, that I, above all, would have been mistaken about you since I have always had the greatest confidence in you which I could never relinquish any more than I could the desire for you to consider me in the love of Our Lord . . .

L.416 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

Since reading the letter which the Queen[3] sent to your Charity, I was convinced that it had been decided to provide a directress for our dear sisters. In my mind I even went beyond that and thought that it would be wise, so as to avoid a gap in leadership after the death of this good Lady,[4] to convince Her Majesty that it is necessary to appoint three or four such directresses. They would thus be in line with the Confraternity of Charity. They would serve as the chief officers and our sisters would act under their direction.

If our two sisters have not modified their dispositions, I am afraid

1. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.
2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
3. The Queen of Poland, Louise-Marie de Gonzague.
4. Mademoiselle de Villers, Lady of Honor whom the Queen of Poland put in charge of distributing alms to the poor. Louise de Marillac feared that the Queen would appoint her directress, that is, Superioress of the Daughters of Charity in Poland.

that Sister Françoise[1] is less open than Sister Madeleine[2] and that she does not possess her strength. As for those whom we are to send to Poland, I see none more suitable than Sister Cécile[3] except for the fact that she was with Sister Marguerite[4] in Angers, and I doubt that they will see eye to eye in all matters. If it were not for the fact that Sister Julienne[5] gets so dizzy and sick to her stomach whenever she rides in a coach, I think that she would be quite suitable. I leave it to your Charity to make a decision concerning Sister Jeanne Lepintre[6] who would be in complete agreement with the views of Mademoiselle de Villers.

I think that our sisters will have no difficulty in following the advice of Monsieur Ozenne[7] which is not to become involved in anything other than their duty. But the difficulty will come from the goodness of the Queen and the close relationship the sisters have with her. Because of this, she may ask them to do things which Mademoiselle de Villers, either to maintain her authority or for some other good reason, may tell them to put off or which she may even refuse to allow them to do. This might give rise to competition and jealousy. If Sister Marguerite has reported the matter accurately, the episode of the habits and the beds shows that we are involved in a major undertaking.

If the Ladies are to meet tomorrow, I very humbly ask your Charity to let me know if, in a brief memorandum that we are to prepare, we should speak to them of the faults of the older foundling girls who were on probation.

If it is agreeable with you, I really must speak to you along with two or three of the other sisters about some problems that were postponed at the last meeting. I also need to talk to you especially about myself who, for the love of God, ask your Charity for his holy blessing since I remain, my Most Honored Father, your most unworthy daughter and most grateful servant.

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1. Françoise Douelle, see Letter 364.
2. Madeleine Drugeon, daughter of a rich merchant from Paris, arrived in Poland in 1652.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
4. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.
5. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.
6. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.
7. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.

L.294 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARIE GAUDOIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Les Alluets

November 8 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

Here is your sister; I am sending her back to you because I believe that she will be better in the country than in the city. I am distressed that I could not help her in this matter. I sent her to this house because I had brought her back, but she was not found suitable and it certainly does not look like she ever will be. I think that in Paris she would become a permanent resident of the Hôtel-Dieu because of all her ailments.

I am not sending you a letter with Sister because I hope that she will share all the news she has of us with you. I am certain, my dear Sisters, that you will preserve in your hearts for a long time the good thoughts you had during the mission.[2] This is essential especially when one is outside of her house and in the midst of turmoil. It is so easy to become dissipated if we are not constantly on our guard. I imagine that when one of our sisters returns, those who welcome her do not fail to ask her many questions so that they can be renewed in the exact observance of their Rules. I beg Our Lord to grant you this grace and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving servant.

L.418 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday [November 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

Our good Sister Marie[3] from Sedan left us after dinner without saying good-bye. She took her belongings with her. I am afraid that she will leave tomorrow for Sedan. She could perhaps be found at the coach if

1. Marie Gaudoin, after having served at Les Alluets, was sent to Angers in 1656, where she was named Assistant of the small community in 1657. She did not stay there for very long. She went to Nantes in November 1658 and to Hennebont at the end of 1659.
2. Monsieur Tholard preached Missions from village to village in the region (Coste XI, 163).
3. Marie Joly, in Sedan since 1641. Louise de Marillac had asked her to return to Paris but she refused. She boasted of obeying only if Monsieur Vincent himself would write to her. The latter sent an order to return in a letter which was delivered to her by Monsieur Jean Martin, Superior of the Priests of the Mission in Sedan (Coste V, 207).

your Charity considered it advisable to send someone to bring her back. I fear that if our sisters went, they would not be strong enough to detain her. At the very least, my Most Honored Father, I think that a letter should be sent as soon as possible to Sedan to tell the sisters what should be done if she returns to her house,[1] because I am afraid that she is going to have a tidy income and sell all that she can to earn a profit.

Enclosed is a letter for Sister Jeanne-Christine[2] so that she can leave as soon as your Charity orders her to do so. It will be most unfortunate if Sister Marie returns to Sedan before she arrives.

Monsieur Ménard told me that he will not hesitate to go wherever you wish, if your Charity sends a carriage for him tomorrow around one o'clock. I think he could diagnose the patient better if he sees him in bed instead of up and around. He can do this at the Bons-Enfants provided the carriage and the distance do not fatigue him too greatly.

If I had foreseen what happened with Sister Marie, I could have prevented it by placing her in retreat. I am always the cause of some problem; I had resolved to take care of it tomorrow. It is essential for your Charity to apply some powerful remedy to draw me out of my hardness of heart and to help me to be in reality, my Most Honored Father, your very humble . . .

L.419 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

December 4, 1654

My very dear Sister,

You have every right to complain about the length of time I let pass without expressing the joy I felt when this good gentleman returned and gave us such a detailed account of the foundation of the Confraternity of Charity and the manner in which it has pleased Our Lord to direct everything there. You have endured some privations and you, perhaps, still are. My dear Sister, does not such a state of affairs bring comfort to your heart since it associates you with the life of Our Lord and of His holy mother when they were on earth? Believe me, my dear Sister, when I see splendidly appointed houses where everything goes beautifully at the beginning, I always fear for the future. In the name of God, do not rush matters; things which are built slowly are built to last. The Daughters

1. Marie Joly did not go as far as Sedan. Overcome by remorse on the way, she returned to the Motherhouse in the evening (Coste V, 223).

2. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344, who was sent to Sedan.

of Charity must recall and possess the qualities of servants of the poor in order to remain faithful to their duty.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to speak of this often with Sister Laurence;[1] this will enable us to remain faithful to our duty to honor and respect all the Ladies and women who are members of the Confraternity of Charity. We must look upon them as persons who have placed us under the weighty obligation of cooperating with them in the service of the poor.

I am certain, Sister, that when the time comes for you to have your own residence, you will be careful to choose a lodging appropriate for poor girls. I beg of you, never consider opening a hospital, lodging the sick in your house or taking in boarders without first writing to Monsieur Vincent. If you are approached about these things, do not give them your approval. Let God act. He will reveal His will through the practice of obedience.

Heartfelt greetings to dear Sister Laurence. I promise myself the pleasure of writing to her another time. I beg both of you, my dear Sisters, to be assured of my affection and to believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

L.420 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday [December 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

It seems to me that your Charity has not given me any directives as to whether, when I am sending the book and letter to Sister Jeanne Lepintre,[2] I should say a few words to her on the way we must act when writing to our acquaintances. This is why I wrote to her as I did and sent the letter to your Charity so that, if you consider it appropriate, it can go with tomorrow's, Saturday's, mail.

Madame de Chas is very insistent and is pushing for an answer. Nevertheless, Sister Marie[3] has been faithful and did not go there.

1. Laurence Dubois, born in October 14, 1623 in Silly-Sainte-Croix, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on December 6, 1648. After her seminary, where she became acquainted with sickness, she served the poor in the parishes of Paris. In 1654, she was chosen for the new establishment of Bernay. In 1657, she became Sister Servant there at Barbe Angiboust's departure. After 1660, she went to the parish of Saint-Merry, then to Réveillon, where she died on September 16, 1685. Her great gentleness towards the poor, her honesty and her simplicity were remarked by her companions (biographical note).

2. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, was in Châteaudun.

3. Marie Joly, see Letter 418.

However, she still wants to return although she sometimes tries to moderate her desire. As for me, I am trying to await peacefully the time for my little retreat. I need to talk to you before God grants me this grace which I desire with all my heart. I also long for your blessing which I ask of your Charity since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter.

L.376 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu of Angers

(December 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the graces He has bestowed on you and on all our sisters during the retreat. How fortunate you are to experience His loving guidance and to be able to take the time for these holy exercises. I assure you that we have sisters here in Paris who have gone two years and some have gone even three years without being able to make a retreat. I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace to be very grateful for His mercy. Follow exactly the recommendations of Monsieur l'abbé especially those he gives you concerning your relationship with your confessors and the selection of those who would be suitable for all of you.

Now, my dear Sister, do not flatter yourself. Those to whom God gives the charge of others must forget themselves entirely and in all things, but especially in spiritual matters and in the little satisfactions that may assist our sisters to advance toward perfection. Remember that those in authority must be the pack-mules of the Company. Please join with me in asking Our Lord for this spirit for you and for me. I cannot clearly place Sister Jeanne-Marie. Please tell me which one she is. I believe you have two sisters called Jeanne.[2]

I am really distressed that we cannot yet send two sisters to the shut-ins. However, I agree with you, my dear Sister, that to accomplish anything there three or four would not be too many and we do not have that

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

2. Jeanne from Chinon, see Letter 145, and Jeanne-Marie Ceintereau. The latter (1620-1690), a native of Morton in Vienne, had been in the Company of the Daughters of Charity since April 1645. She arrived in Angers in November 1651 and remained there until 1667.

number at this time. We have three places where there is only one sister and we cannot send them any relief.

I believe that I told you that Sister Barbe[1] is at Bernay in Normandy and that she is very well. We also have sisters about 15 leagues from there,[2] beyond Caen, who likewise are serving the bashful poor who have great spiritual and material needs.

Our sisters in Poland send their greetings. The Queen wants us to send two more in the spring; she asked for them last year. I have no idea what we will be able to do.[3] Pray to God that all this may be accomplished according to His most holy will or that the work be brought to an end. I cannot write at this time to any of the other sisters. I beg you to greet all of them for me and to assure them of my dearest and tenderest affection. I am with all my heart, in the love of the newborn Jesus, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.401 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

December 27 (1654)

Monsieur,

If your Charity does not intercede for us with the Bishop of Angers, I have every reason to fear that he will be very displeased because we have delayed so long in responding to his desire to have sisters for the poor shut-ins. Although I only agreed to send sisters for this work as soon as we could, nevertheless, I am distressed to have put it off for so long because of circumstances that we could not have foreseen. Assist me, Monsieur, by assuring him that sheer powerlessness is at the root of this delay and that I would willingly disappoint many others so as to fulfill my obligations in obedience to him.

Since the war, we have had great difficulty in finding girls who are suitable for our works. Many, after being fully trained, allow themselves to be carried away by self-interest and leave the Company so that they may enjoy greater freedom. Because of this we have been short of sisters for the past few years. This has been accompanied by an increase in requests for the services of the Company which, in turn, has caused people to whom we had promised sisters to suddenly remember this. I can assure you, Monsieur, that at the present time we have no more than two or three sisters here at the Motherhouse to help with the formation of the

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. In Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.
3. Louise de Marillac thought briefly about sending Cécile Angiboust to Poland, see Letter 416,

others. All the other sisters are new or very ill. We have buried two recently. Judge for yourself, Monsieur, what we can do. Permit me to thank your Charity very humbly for continuing to assist our sisters in their needs.

It seems to me that Sister Cécile[1] must forget her personal satisfaction so that she can give as much as possible to our sisters. As for their confessor, I believe, Monsieur, that she is completely open to the choice your Charity will make. You are good enough to listen to her reasons should she desire to express them to you. The reason I am speaking to you in this way, Monsieur, is because I believe that the little misunderstanding that occurred with our Sister Élisabeth[2] was caused by this. Nevertheless, I think that since the retreat both of them are less troubled. Monsieur Ratier had no small role to play in bringing this about. I beg Our Lord always to be your recompense and I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.423 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Fontenay-aux-Roses

(December 29 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I just received your letter yesterday, December 28, and I am distressed that I did not get it sooner because I would have sent you some money. I do not consider it appropriate for you to ask for it from Monsieur Béguin considering the short time Madame, his sister, plans to be with you. Please send Sister Marie for what she needs. She will bring the money to you.

You were right not to leave your good woman under the sole guidance of our sister. I expect that as soon as she leaves, you will come to visit us. Please believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Although the time has passed, we will not forget to bring your request before Our Lord. I praise Him for it with all my heart.

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1. Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant, see Letter 108.
2. Élisabeth Brocard, the Assistant, see Letter 237.

1655

January 18: *Approbation of the Company of the Daughters of Charity by Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris. The Superior General of the Priests of the Mission is recognized as the Superior of the Daughters of Charity.*

August 8: *Act of Establishment of the Company, signed by the 40 sisters present. First election of Officers.*

Beginning of the Conferences on the Explanation of the Common Rules.

September: *Visit of Monsieur Portail to Brienne, Sedan, Montmirail and Nanteuil.*

November: *Visit of Monsieur Berthe to Angers and Nantes.*

L.422 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Roche-Guyon

January 7, 1655

My very dear Sister,

It is very possible that the long letter I wrote to you more than a month ago and that I sent to the home of Madame de Liancourt has been lost. In it I asked you among other things to send Sister Claude here because you do not consider her suitable for that place. Please do so as soon as possible, but do not overburden yourself with work. I know that Madame de Liancourt[2] is so good that she will be quite willing for you to hire a woman to help you with the cooking and washing.

The good woman who came here from La Roche-Guyon brought me a good deal of consolation because she told me of the graces that God has bestowed on you. May He be forever blessed! I beg you, in the name of God, Sister, not to overdo but to be satisfied to do what is necessary. I believe that you are still suffering, but the use you make of your trials, by the grace of God and your hope for His recompense, greatly consoles me and should be a continual source of encouragement for you.

I do not remember whether or not I told you that Sister Marguerite who was at Saint-Gervais has died, and that Sister Claude Chantereau[3]

1. Anne Hardemont had returned from Sedan and was then at La Roche-Guyon. Her somewhat trying personality, no doubt, necessitated her numerous transfers.
2. Madame de Liancourt had her mansion in La Roche-Guyon.
3. Claude Chantereau left for Sainte-Marie-du-Mont with Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

and a companion have gone to lower Normandy to the estates of Madame, the Duchess de Ventadour.[1] I recommend them to your prayers and I ask you to believe me to be in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

L.421 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

(January 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I think I received two of your letters. From the one that you are sending to Madame Le Comte, I gather that God has bestowed many blessings on the foundation of the Confraternity of Charity. May He be forever blessed! Please let me know the state of your health and that of our sister.[2] Also tell me if you have many pupils and sick to serve and if the older girls give you much help with catechism on feast days.

I would be very disappointed if your linen has been lost because we have had no sign of it. You lead us to lose hope of seeing your beautiful thread again because these days, which are so short for going about your work, do not allow you time just for spinning.

I certainly would have been very happy if Sister Claude Chantereau[3] and Sister Élisabeth[4] from Angers could have visited you on their way but that was impossible. They are 15 or 16 leagues from Caen on the estates of Madame de Ventadour.[5] The Duchess did me the honor of informing me that they had arrived safe and sound. Thanks be to God! I believe I told you, my dear Sister, about the death of Sister Marguerite. She was at Saint-Gervais where she had been ill for a long time.

Enclosed are your New Year's gifts, blessed by our Most Honored Father on the Feast of Saint Geneviève, when he gave us a conference[6] on the necessity of mortifying our senses and passions. All our sisters send their greetings and their wishes for a happy new year. Special

1. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Claude Chantereau arrived in Angers at the end of the year 1648. She left there in 1652. In December 1654, she was sent to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont for the new establishment. She died at the end of the year 1656, after a long illness.
4. Élisabeth Jousteau, a native of Angers, was in Saint-Jacques-du-Haul-Pas in 1652. She arrived in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont with Claude Chantereau in December 1654.
5. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
6. Conference of January 3, 1655 (Coste X, 54).

greetings from Sister Marie Joly[1] from Sedan who has been here for two months, also from the big Sister Claudine from Châlons, as well as the few older sisters here at the Motherhouse. Evening reading is beginning. I beg Our Lord to bless you and I am in His Most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I have not as yet received an answer for Sister Laurence.

L.425 - TO SISTER LAURENCE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

February 19 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

Thank you for sending me news of yourself. Let me know if you wrote the letter yourself. If not, do not ask anyone to write for you except Sister Barbe[3] who will do so willingly. However, if I am not mistaken you are learning to write. However limited your ability to write may be, if you have a private matter to share with me, write the letter yourself. Although you are under no obligation to show your letter to Sister Barbe, nevertheless courtesy requires you to tell her that you are going to write to us. Fear not; she will not ask what you want to tell us nor will she look at it since she knows that would offend God.

I have the impression that the two of you are living together in great peace and with the desire of animating one another to strive for union and cordiality. This creates a climate in which you communicate with one another, telling one another what you did while you were apart and letting one another know where you are going when you leave the house. In this instance one of you acts from an obligation of submission while the other has the duty of support and courtesy. The same applies to your community exercises. If one of you is sad, let her overcome herself so as to recreate with her sister. At the same time, let the one who is cheerful moderate her exuberance so as to accommodate herself to the mood of her sister and, little by little, draw her out of her melancholy. All this should be done for the love of God and to avoid listening to the temptation that might cause you to want to go elsewhere to unburden your soul and to seek satisfaction. This would bring about the total ruin of the holy friendship that should exist between two sisters. I beg Our

1. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

Lord to preserve you from this by His holy love in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.404 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontenay-aux-Roses

(c. 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I think that you should not raise any difficulty about letting this good woman leave although I am sorry to lose this opportunity for our sisters to practice such charity. However, I believe, my dear Sister, that you must refund the rest of the money if a quarter of the payment was advanced.

I will send you a sister as soon as possible. In the meantime I beg you, my dear Sister, not to be upset. Our sisters come out of retreat tomorrow. God willing, this will enable us to send you some assistance. I am in the love of God, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, please allow me to tell you that your letter does not emit the odor of a servant of the poor but rather an odor not permitted to the Daughters of Charity.

L.427 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to inquire about the true state of your health and to ask you to be so good as to let me know what I should say in response to those two gentlemen from Nantes whose letters concerning Sister Henriette[1] I sent to Monsieur Portail yesterday so that he could communicate them to you.

I do not know if your indisposition prevented you from seeing Monsieur de la Hode's[2] letter concerning the state of the house and the Officers at Chantilly. Should Monsieur de la Hode's request be carried out (to reveal this state of affairs to the Queen in case what should have

1. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

2. Monsieur de la Hode, Chaplain of the Château of Chantilly.

been done has been completed and signed)? Should his letter which is addressed to Her Majesty be sent to her?

It seems that all this is somewhat urgent, but in any event, do not go to too much trouble. However, for the love of God, please bless your poor daughter and unworthy servant.

P.S. Madame the Countess de Brienne[1] came to ask me to inform you that Monsieur de Francière[2] is gravely ill with fluid in the lung. He is anxious to know what is to be done so that the administration of the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Denis will be placed in good hands. It is to be feared that it could become a benefice. The patient told her that it should be confided to the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine.[3] It occurred to me that someday it might come under the direction of a nun of their order (I mean the service of the sick poor). Would you not consider it appropriate, my Most Honored Father, for me to go to see this good gentleman? I think that he would be pleased.

L.346 - (TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

at La Roche-Guyon[4]

(1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am certain that you did not read my letter twice. It was written by Sister Mathurine[5] because a slight infirmity prevented me from writing to you myself. I am sure that there was nothing in it that you would have found upsetting. I am equally sure that you would clearly understand that the suggestion I made in behalf of Monsieur Vincent for you to return here or to remain where you are was in no way intended to insinuate that you had any distaste for obedience, but rather that it was simply to let you know that you could freely and confidently remain where you are if your ailments do not require you to return here, and likewise you could just as freely return if your health necessitates it.[6]

I am repeating the same thing, my dear Sister, it being understood that if you are well enough to remain you will not overwork, and you will allow the sisters to help you. We must, my dear Sister, willingly accept

1. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86.
2. Monsieur de Francière, administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu in Saint-Denis.
3. The Reformed Augustinian Fathers had already taken over the Angers hospital, see Letter 51.
4. Letter recopied into Marguerite Chétif's notebook, the Anne Hardemont Series.
5. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
6. Anne Hardemont was wounded in Châlons.

being incapacitated when God wills it for us. We must make use of such occasions to rise above earthly things. These circumstances must also lead us to reflect that Our Lord wills that, after we have worked for our neighbor, we must turn our attention to preparing ourselves for heaven which is our blessed home. I believe that such thoughts must often occur to you, my dear Sister.

Please greet the Reverend Martial very humbly for me. I beg you and the other dear sisters to be assured of my affection and service.

We sent you six pounds of peach blosson syrup. I believe that you no longer have the good girl from Buret with you; however, if you were not able to get rid of her, I suggest that you write to Madame the Duchess de Liancourt.[1]

All our sisters greet you affectionalety, and with all my heart I assure you that I am still, and perhaps more than ever, in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister.

L.430 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday, April 4, 1655[2]

I forgot to tell you yesterday, my Most Honored Father, that Madame des Essarts[3] has recommended to your prayers and to those of the members of your Company her seventy-nine-year-old father who is ill. She is very apprehensive because she loves him dearly. She also told me that if his illness is not prolonged, she will be able to leave for Bourbon in about two weeks. She also said that she has received orders to provide all that is needed for the journey,[4] but she did not reveal what that would be. I do not know if she wants to be told which sisters are supposed to go before saying anything. She also said that, even if she had left, Monsieur Levêque, who has been employed for that purpose, would provide all that is necessary. It seems to me, my Most Honored Father that it is essential for her to specify what he is to procure. If you or someone representing you were to speak with her, perhaps she would be more specific. She expressed a desire to come to see those of our sisters who are going when she hears that they are here. I do not know if it would be appropriate to inform her of their arrival rather than send them to see her.

1. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.
2. In 1655, the Feast of the Annunciation was transferred to the Monday after Low Sunday.
3. Madame des Essarts, see Letter 584.
4. The departure to Poland of three Daughters of Charity (Coste V, 407).

Tomorrow is our great feast on which we must be grateful for the grace which God granted on that day to the first five[1] sisters whom His goodness willed to be entirely dedicated to Him for the works of the little Company. One of them[2] is already in heaven if Our Lord had mercy on her.

We have three sisters, Marguerite Chétif,[3] Madeleine Raportebled,[4] and Sister Philippe,[5] who desire and have asked to make the same offering for the second or third renewal at the end of the year. The first two sisters named ask to make it for their entire life. I believe that Monsieur Portail has proposed this to you. However, since I am afraid that I contributed to this desire, I thought, my Most Honored Father, that I should inform your Charity so as to learn your intentions and thereby be able to help them to conform to them. I also plan to join with them and a few other sisters who have this happiness.

If you have already said Mass downstairs since your illness and if you are going to do so again, you must surely know, my Most Honored Father, that we would hope that our offering would be more agreeable to God were it offered to Him by your paternal heart which would supply for the frailties of your poor daughters and humble servants, Louise de Marillac and the other sisters who, for the love of God, ask for your blessing.

P.S. Madame de Traversay[6] is supposed to come to see you about three or four o'clock to talk to you, I think, about what she has decided to do about our sister. The last time she did not seem to be too attached to her, but I think that this may be because she did not find in her as much potential as she had expected.

L.424 - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT BERNAY)

(c. May 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I wanted to speak to Madame[7] about what you had told me, but she

1. See note for 1642.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
4. Madeleine Raportebled was at the parish of Saint-Sulpice in 1652. She was chosen for Poland but could not go because of the war. She was then sent to Saint-Denis. The Council of February 1656 assigned her to Nantes (Coste XIII, 798).
5. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.
6. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.
7. Madame le Comte, Lady of Charity in Bernay.

cut me off to tell me of the letters of complaint she had received. I listened to her courteously while reflecting that they had probably come from envious people or, perhaps even more likely, from self-interested persons who think that everyone is like them. Nevertheless, my dear Sister, we are obliged to satisfy everyone and to carry on patiently the work of God, doing everything without haste. Our vocation of servants of the poor calls us to practice the gentleness, humility and forbearance that we owe to others. We must respect and honor everyone: the poor because they are the members of Jesus Christ and our masters; the rich so that they will provide us with the means to do good for the poor. Monsieur Vincent is especially pleased when he hears news of you. He thinks that you should give up your boarders. He says that it is not for Daughters of Charity to keep them. As a matter of fact, it was decided at a Council meeting which was held to discuss several matters that, for good reasons, they should not accept them.

L.476 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS BARBE[1] AND LAURENCE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Bernay

May 9 (1655)

My very dear Sisters,

It is true that it has been a long time since I have allowed myself the pleasure of writing to you. Since then I have received two letters from you. In answer to the first, let me say that I received the little package you were worried about a couple of weeks ago. Mademoiselle de Croissy[3] took the trouble to bring it to us herself. Accept our loving gratitude for it. Your good heart always finds ways of expressing your affection. Although your heart must follow where you go, it tries to show that it remains with us. I beg you to be assured that our hearts are filled with the same affections although the effects may not be apparent to you as often as they ought.

Sister Barbe, you did not share with us the recent visit you received. Please write to Sister Cécile[4] concerning it. She is in good health, thank God, as are all our sisters both here and in other places. I know of no one who is ill, by the grace of God.

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Mademoiselle de Croissy, relative by marriage of the Hennequin family; one of its members, René, married Louise de Marillac's aunt.
4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

I will not fail to give news of you to Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Portail who always welcome it with joy and gratitude. I do not know if Madame le Comte sent you any syrup because she was in the country when I sent it.

I do not understand exactly what you are telling me about the people of Bernay and the Confraternity of Charity. Is it possible that they do not like this establishment? O my dear Sisters, how I want you to be loved there. This is absolutely necessary if you are to accomplish any good in the places where Divine Providence has called you. Oh, how difficult it is when we have to disagree with someone! In the name of God do not add to the dispute. You must give evidence of nothing other than the service of the poor and the school children. I am certain that your charity is always directed toward assisting the people and that you do not relate their complaints and their whining to Monsieur de Bernay. That would serve only to make matters worse, as you know. Moreover, you will accomplish more by a gentle word than all the Lords and Officers will by their threats. Not that I think that they act in this way.

We had news of Sister Laurence's relatives. I must complain about her for not writing to me. I need only three or four lines to make me happy and that is enough to get into the habit of writing. So please do not be lazy and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble and affectionate sister and servant.

L.437 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[1655]

The girl from La Roche-Guyon whom Sister Anne Hardemont[1] brought with her is insisting on leaving, claiming that she could never become accustomed to our way of life. I beg you, my Most Honored Father, to take the trouble to let us know if we should let her go. I have reason to fear that I am partly responsible because she said recently that I had not been nice to her. It is true that I told Sister Anne that it would have been more appropriate for her to have waited until she had spoken to your Charity. Does not all that oblige me to have her wait a while? I await your directive, my Most Honored Father, so that I may obey it although I am unfaithful in the practice of obedience which is why I commit so many faults. I very humbly beg your pardon, and if your Charity is willing, I ask your blessing so that I may have renewed strength.

1. Anne Hardemont had just returned from La Roche-Guyon.

L.434 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

May 21 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I do not know whether or not I told you that a long time afterward, Mademoiselle de Croissy[1] brought us personally the little package that you said you had sent us.

I learned from our Most Honored Father that you take great pains with the good girls who present themselves for the Company to learn if they desire to come solely to serve God and not just to see Paris, if they intend to live and to die in the Company, and if they have resolved to return home if they are not suited for the Company since you know, my dear Sister, how dangerous it is for girls who remain in Paris. If you have tested them and you consider them suitable, they will be welcome.

I answered your last letter fully. I urge Sister Laurence[2] to send me news of herself. I had news of her relatives who are in good health, thank God. Please continue to pray for the selection of sisters to be sent to Poland.

All our sisters greet you very affectionately and I remain for the both of you, my very dear Sisters, with all my heart, your very humble sister and servant.

L.436 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

May 30 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

This is the third or fourth time that I have written to you since Lent. I answered your letters, and I inquired if you had gotten the syrup that you had asked for from Madame Le Comte because she was not in Paris when I sent her your letter.

I also scolded you a bit for not telling me about the visits you had from your nephew. Moreover, I told you that Monsieur Vincent thought that you would look carefully into the character and background of any

1. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

girls desiring to enter our Company; that you would test their vocations; that, if you find them suitable and you recommend that they come here, you would inform them that, if they do not adapt, they must return home, there being no hope of remaining in Paris and finally that they must have enough money for the journey here and the return trip because you are well aware, my dear Sister, how dangerous Paris is for these girls.

I also complained about Sister Laurence[1] because she has not written to me.

Monsieur Portail will write to you and give you all the answers you requested. I beg Our Lord to bless your work and I remain in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you that well after Easter Mademoiselle de Croissy[2] brought the little package. We are very grateful to you for it. Sister Cécile[3] is fine, thank God, but we heard that Sister Marguerite,[4] in Poland, is seriously ill. I recommend her to your prayers.

Sister Anne Hardemont[5] asks you not to forget to send her the paper you have belonging to her. She wants to know if the title has increased in value. Sister Marie Joly[6] is here. She is in critical condition. Please keep her in your prayers.

L.520B - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT BERNAY)[7]

(c. 1655)

I am sure, my dear Sister, that you have made it clear to these two good girls what they will have to do and what they will have to endure in the Company and the purity of intention they must have to enter and to persevere in it. I am also certain that you have ascertained that they have no bodily infirmities and no hereditary problems and that neither their mother nor their father needs them. If you have done all this, you may send them but put the third one off for a while.

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
4. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.
5. Anne Hardemont had just returned from La Roche-Guyon, see Letter 110.
6. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b.
7. The copy of this letter is in Marguerite Chétif's notebook, series Barbe Angiboust.

L.440 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

June 23 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I was under the impression that you were not getting my letters and that is why I told you twice what I thought about your nephew. He had come here to find out where you were and he told me that he was going to see you.

Please tell Sister Laurence[1] that I am worried about her health and that I urge her to write to me personally with news of herself; otherwise, I am going to think that she is seriously ill.

I believe that you have received Monsieur Portail's letters and any news that I might have given to you, not that anything extraordinary has happened, thank God. Madame Le Comte sent me word that she was unable to send any water-lily syrup. She said that Madame de Brou[2] does not want to give the whole amount. She can only obtain half of what you asked with the amount of money you sent her, if you want her to get it.

As I am writing, the good girl[3] you sent us has arrived safe and sound with no mishap on the way. I praise God for this and ask Him to grant her the grace to dry her tears and persevere.

We thank you with all our hearts for the beautiful fine thread you sent us. You are well aware that we have little. I praise God that our sister's health is improving. This good girl told us that you needed honey. However, since you did not ask for any and because you ask Madame Le Comte for all that you need, I would not dare send you any.

Please greet Sister Laurence very affectionately for us. I also beg you to find out where our sisters, whom Madame the Duchess[4] is employing for the Confraternity of the Charity, are located. It is a town called Sainte-Marie-du-Mont,[5] near Carentan. I would like you to be able to correspond with them or to have news of them from someone. You would make me very happy if you sent me some because I believe that they are not getting my letters and I receive very few from them.

Sister Élisabeth[6] is still ill. The departure of our sisters for Poland has

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Madame de Brou, Lady of Charity of Paris.
3. Marie Papillon, postulant from Bernay. Toward the end of the year 1656, she was sent to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. In January 1658, she was ill and returned to Paris. In August of the same year, she was sent to Metz.
4. The Duchess de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
5. The first two Daughters of Charity arrived at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont at the end of 1654.
6. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

been delayed because of the war; however, I believe that we will soon have sisters at the Petites Maisons[1] to care for the insane and the poor sick women in whatever way they can.

I beg you, my dear Sisters, to pray to Our Lord for the entire Company so that each sister may carry out her duty well by dying to herself and living in the purity of the love of Jesus in which I am, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Tomorrow's feast[2] reminds me of the gentleness which the Son of God so often urged us to practice when He was on earth. I believe that He did so to teach us that it is the means for winning over the whole world and that the contrary fault can cause us to lose everything even what we have already gained. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to ask Our Lord to grant me this great virtue. I began this letter the day our sister arrived which was Monday evening.

L.442 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

July 17, 1655

Monsieur,

Sister Élisabeth[3] wrote to me again on the matter I discussed with you; so did Sister Cécile.[4] I told them that your Charity would tell them what to do in keeping with the directives you received from Monsieur Vincent. I thought that this would suffice to meet their needs, Monsieur.

I am very disturbed about the reason causing the delay in having Sister Élisabeth return here. Monsieur Mercier[5] took the trouble to come to see me recently; he told me about the rumors. Nevertheless, I am fearful of weak spirits. In the name of God, Monsieur, if your Charity discovers the truth, I beg you to do me the honor of informing me about it. Believe me in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

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1. The Daughters of Charity are going to take charge of the hospice for the insane of Paris, called Petites Maisons because it was made up of several houses.
2. Feast of Saint John the Baptist.
3. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237, experienced difficulties in her duty as Assistant.
4. Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant.
5. Monsieur Mercier, the sisters' confessor at the hospital of Angers.

L.394 - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)

at Angers

July 17, 1655

My very dear Sister,

Your Director's return will have to suffice for news of us. I urge all of you, my dear Sisters, to place great trust in his advice and counsels and to obey him exactly and simply for the love of God because Providence has mercifully given him to you as a guide. However, my dear Sisters, do not imagine that, to be guided by his charity, you must speak with him often or that all of you must do so except for extraordinary needs when he has a little time to give you. It is customary in Companies for the Sister Servant to receive all the necessary advice and then by her guidance to convey it to her sisters. In this way a spirit of unity is nourished in communities, and trust is firmly established in them for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. If we do not act thus, my dear Sisters, the kingdom of Jesus Christ cannot be established among us. On the other hand, if we act in this way, His peace and love will take full possession of us. If you find it difficult to accept this manner of acting, mistrust yourselves and believe that the unredeemed self is not yet dead in you. O my dear Sisters, you know better than I how great is our need to overcome ourselves. I beg Our Lord to inspire you often with this thought.

I praise God for the good dispositions which fill your dear soul and the souls of all our sisters. I expect you to profit greatly from these dispositions to advance in holiness provided you are faithful in giving Our Lord what He asks of you. I am confident that you will not fail to do so since I know that all your resolutions come from Him who reveals to you what His love desires of you.

L.428 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday (1655)

My Most Honored Father,

I was not aware that we have any sick sisters at Saint-Germain except the sister who has been ill for a very long time and who, I believe, has not yet fully recovered. I think that a change of air will do her a great deal of good and that the air here would be best for her.

Permit me to tell you, my Most Honored Father, that my heart is frequently and deeply concerned by the thought that the Company is very near the point of decline, and that I anticipate many problems if your Charity allows this trip because the same permission has been refused to other sisters for a number of reasons.

Sister Julienne[1] very humbly asks you to give her an answer about the proposal she made your Charity concerning a ring which a very rich woman, on her own and without her husband's knowledge, gave to the church. She urgently needs an answer.

Monsieur l'Obligeois went this morning to reserve for himself the vacant place at the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.[2] I did not find Sister Anne Hardemont[3] in a frame of mind that was unfavorable to accepting the proposal for the Petites Maisons; however, I think that it is essential for your Charity to speak to us so that we may understand the good that is to be accomplished there and the way we should act if sent.

We have reason to fear that the Pastor of Saint-Roch[4] is going to dismiss the sisters once again. May the most holy will of God be done! By His Providence, may I always be able to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I very humbly ask pardon of your Charity for the liberty I have taken of speaking to you so freely. I noticed it as I reread my letter.

L.444 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday [August 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Sister Anne[5] informed me that it was too late to go to Bourbon and that she was told that the doctors had closed the baths. They perhaps intend to have them reopened next month because it would seem that summer will not come to an end without some heat. There are many other indications that there is still plenty of time because, as far as I know, there are three coaches ready to go there.

I wonder, my Most Honored Father, if it would not be advisable for your Charity to write to her to assure her that it would be a good thing

1. Julienne Loret, see Letter 396, is at Fontenay-aux-Roses.
2. The Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.
3. Anne Hardemont is chosen for the hospice for the insane, the Petites Maisons.
4. The Pastor of the parish of Saint-Roch had already dismissed the Daughters of Charity in 1650 (Coste IV, 5).
5. Anne Hardemont was suffering from the effects of a wound she had received in Châlons.

for her to go, so as to put her on the defensive when she blames us because she did not get there; unless I am very much mistaken, she is up to something.

This is urgent because a place has not been reserved. Sister Marguerite[1] awaits your orders and I, your blessing. I am for the love of God, my Most Honored Father, your very poor daughter and servant.

L.445 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday [August 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to entreat your Charity not to consider me in the election of Officers.[2] The term First Assistant is adequate to show that I am what I have always been and will not prevent me from being replaced when God shows you that it is necessary. My reasons are as follows. It seems to me that I must be entirely dependent upon the Providence of God; and that, if I were named by the Company, there could be consequences for those coming after me. Moreover, I feel a certain repugnance at the idea of being elected.

It is with the simplicity that your Charity has recommended to me that I am taking the liberty of making this very humble request of you and, at the same time, of expressing the aversion that most of the sisters will have for the word Confraternity when used alone. Since it is to be hoped that the Company will never change its original structure so that the poor will always be served in this way, the example of those who began with the Confraternity would not suffice because it took the form of a consecrated life. Forgive me, my Most Honored Father, your humble daughter and obedient servant.

1. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302, was getting ready to leave for Poland.

2. The Assembly to elect officers would take place on August 8, 1655 (Coste XIII, 693).

L.443 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Hôtel-Dieu of Angers

(c. August 1655)

My very dear Sister,

Monsieur Vincent considers it appropriate to allow you to return this time because he believes it is necessary. I am informing Sister Cécile of this; therefore, I urge you not to delay your trip once she has told you of his decision. I will speak further about this with you when you return here. I beg Our Lord to guide you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble . . .

P.S. For Sister Élisabeth.[2]

L.447 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS MARGUERITE, MADELEINE AND FRANÇOISE

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Warsaw[3]

August 19, 1655

My very dear Sisters,

At last the time chosen by Divine Providence for the departure of our dear sisters[4] has arrived. It is with sadness that we let them go because we will be separated from them; but it is also with joy because we are certain that they are going to carry out the will of God and are going to be united with you so as to fulfill His plans for the kingdom of Poland. O my dear Sisters, these designs are of great importance. I beg the goodness of God to make you understand this. I am sure that this knowledge will fill you with great humility and confusion at seeing yourselves chosen for such a work and will strengthen your will never to allow yourselves to be unworthy of it.

What shall you and I do, my dear Sisters, to bring this about? Firstly,

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237, left Angers on August 20, 1655.
3. Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon, and Françoise Douelle arrived in Poland in 1652.
4. Marguérite Chétif, Madeleine Raportebled, and Jeanne Lemeret left for Poland with three Priests of the Mission, Jean Lasnier, Aubin Gontier, and Thomas Berthe. Their trip was interrupted at Rouen because of the political events connected with the war in Poland.

we must completely subdue our passions and inclinations by mortification of our senses; secondly, let our hearts ardently desire this so that, by the grace of God, they may be filled with love and He may thereby accept the sacrifice of yourselves which you often make to His majesty and the service you render to the poor in keeping with the orders you receive from the good Mademoiselle de Villers[1] or someone else. If you have made certain that what you were told came from Her Majesty, Sister Marguerite[2] will inform you of the orders our Most Honored Father gave her on this matter.

My dear Sisters, you have always assured me that although you are three persons, you are but one in heart; in the name of the most Holy Trinity that you have so honored and must continue to honor, I beg you to open wide this heart to allow our three sisters to enter into this cordial union so that the last three arrivals will be indistinguishable from those who arrived first. I assure you that they are coming with these dispositions and with the sole desire of pleasing God. They are all without any attachment to their own satisfaction, just as you are, my dear Sisters. This does not mean that nature does not at times provide even the most perfect with occasions for struggle, but you realize that this is to test the fidelity of souls desirous of belonging completely to God. Do not be surprised then, my dear Sisters, when such a thing happens; rather this is a time when our souls must be moved, despite the weakness of our nature, to practice heroic virtue by spontaneous acts of humility and gentleness of heart and to prove that we desire to be truly Christian. Thus we will honor Jesus Christ by practicing the virtues which He, Himself, in His holy humanity, taught us.

May I ask something of you, my dear Sisters, which seems very necessary to me? It is that you never speak Polish among yourselves without letting our sisters know what you are saying. This will help them to learn the language more quickly and will prevent other problems which could arise if you acted otherwise.

Are you aware, my dear Sisters, of the spirit which animates our dear sisters as they come to join you? With regard to God, they desire to accomplish His holy will by serving the poor in a spirit of submission and charity; with regard to the Queen, they wish to honor the truly supernatural graces which God grants Her Majesty and to obey her in all matters, being certain that she will never order them to do anything that would separate them from God or be contrary to their obligations; with regard to you, my dear Sisters, they esteem you because of the choice it pleased God to make of you as the foundation stones of this establishment, and they consider all the merit due to you whom Divine

1. Mademoiselle de Villers, see Letter 416.

2. Marguerite Chétif who arrived with the recommendations of Monsieur Vincent and of Louise de Marillac.

Providence has sheltered with Its wings to lead you, with no other guide and no clear direction, to a place you did not know. Nevertheless, they are not jealous of you because of this. On the contrary, they find consolation in walking in your footsteps and hope to discover in you examples in carrying out what God asks of you and of them. I hope, my dear Sister Marguerite,[1] that you will not refuse them the little advices they will need, just as you have not denied them to our other sisters because you are well aware that none of them will have the slightest idea of how the poor are served where you are.

I cannot rejoice enough, it seems, my dear Sisters, at the thought of the union in words and actions that I am confident will exist among you in the house and which will appear and edify the whole family as well as those outside of it. Thus there will be no secrets among the six of you and everything that happens in the house, among the six of you, will be a secret kept from those outside your little community. O my dear Sisters, what good can be hoped for if you act in this way!

I beg Our Lord, in His goodness, to grant you all the blessings you need to carry out what He asks of you, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I am sure that it is unnecessary to ask you to pray that God will preserve our Most Honored Father. I am sending you three medals like the ones I gave to our sisters. Monsieur Berthe[2] will explain the indulgences attached to them.

L.446 - TO MONSIEUR OZENNE[3]

Superior of the Priests of the Mission at Warsaw

August 19 (1655)

Monsieur,

Although I am certain that Monsieur Berthe[4] will give you complete news of us, nevertheless I feel obliged to send this brief note along with our sisters[5] because I wish to express my sincere gratitude and my indebtedness to you for the care and concern you show in sending us news of our dear sisters. Nothing could give me greater consolation than to hear of the good they are doing. Your Charity always tells us about

1. Marguerite Moreau who was already in Poland.
2. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, who was also going to Poland.
3. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.
4. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245.
5. The three sisters who were leaving for Poland, see Letter 447.

this although you have, perhaps, at times withheld matters that could be a source of humiliation for me. If such be the case, please do not do so any longer, Monsieur, because, although I am deeply disturbed when our sisters fail in their duties, I, nevertheless, prefer to know the good and the bad.

You have asked for such gifted sisters that you are going to think that those who are coming are perfection itself. In the name of God, Monsieur, do not allow yourself to believe such a thing, rather simply accept my assurance that they are quite good subjects and that there is in them nothing that is contrary to the virtues required to become good Daughters of Charity.

It is a great pity that the Sister Servant's[1] exterior manner is not more attractive. Were that so, I think that she would lack very little else. My only fear is that she is not accustomed to the atmosphere of the Court and has very little experience with worldly behavior. She is very straightforward, but she lacks neither intelligence nor sound judgment. She possesses all the prudence required by her position and knows how to put it into practice so that she appears to be acting only with the utmost simplicity. You can see, Monsieur, that she is therefore open to direction. This prompts me to beg you to give her all the advice you consider necessary before she has the honor of meeting with the Queen.

I am so rushed that I must conclude this note by begging you, Monsieur, to continue your holy prayers for the conversion of my life. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.448 - TO A SISTER LEAVING FOR POLAND[2]

August 20 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

With all my heart I wish you the joy and interior consolation of a soul that is lovingly submissive to the most holy will of God, as I believe you are in the depth of your being. I admire the guidance of Divine Providence in your life, my dear Sister, and because of it, I believe that God, in His divine love, desires you to love Him uniquely, entirely and unselfishly and to have no other concern or even satisfaction except those which pertain to Him and to your neighbor.

1. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.

2. Letter probably destined for Marguerite Chétif.

Oh, what an excellent way of life, hard on nature but sweet and easy for souls enlightened by eternal truths and by the awareness of the joy to be found in pleasing God and in allowing Him full mastery over their wills! This, it seems to me, my dear Sister, is the road that God wills you to travel to reach Him, however difficult it may appear. Enter upon it, then, wholeheartedly as you would a vessel[1] that will carry you where you must go. I am certain that Our Lord will always be with you as He was with His Apostles, during His lifetime, granting them graces and preserving them. This is what I beg of Him, unworthy though I am.

Farewell, my dear Sisters. I beg God in His goodness to continue to bestow His holy blessings upon you.

L.449 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

Last Day of August (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am answering Sister Barbe about the chemisettes you requested; as soon as we receive your measurements we will have them made as quickly as possible.

I praise God with all my heart for the good desires which, in His goodness, He continues to stir up in you. When your heart urges you to do more than you are accustomed to doing, teach it humility by saying to it, "Let us accomplish well what we are permitted to do; let us be faithful to our Rules both interiorly and exteriorly and let us rest assured that Our Lord will be pleased with us."

We sometimes feel that we would like to perform great penances and extraordinary devotions, and we fail to realize that our enemy takes great pleasure in seeing us waste our time on vain desires while neglecting the occasions to practice ordinary virtues which are always occurring. Thus we lose the graces attached to these virtues by yearning for greater ones which God has no intention of granting us.

I am the one, my dear Sister, to whom this lesson must be taught, and I beg you to ask Our Lord to enable me to learn it well. Believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Louise de Marillac uses the image of a ship on the water as a symbol of a soul abandoned to Divine Providence.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

L.450 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

(September 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I do not know if Madame Le Comte has answered your letter; I forwarded it to her shortly after receiving it. I think I have already told you this as well as the fact that Sister Marie Papillon[1] arrived safe and sound. She received the simple habit with great joy on the Feast of the Assumption. I told her about her sister's good will but she said that she was still quite young. Perhaps it would be better to let her test her vocation a little longer.

Were you able to find material like ours to make an apron for Sister Laurence?[2] Be particular, I beg you, my dear Sister, because variations are very dangerous. Send us her measurements for the chemisettes, and we will make them because ordinarily there are so many different ways of making them from one sister to another that they would seem to come from two different countries. Let me know how you want us to send them.

The hope you gave me of our being able to get letters to our sisters[3] at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont made me very happy because I believe that all those I have been writing to them have been lost. I am delighted that you can take a little trip there. I had already spoken to our Most Honored Father about this but I will mention it again, God willing.

I recommend the kingdom of Poland and the well-being of the King and Queen to your prayers. News of the war is very bad. I beg Our Lord to give their Majesties the help they need. You can imagine the state of our sisters and of all the Catholics there because all their persecutors are heretics of various sects. Please God the evil is not so great as it is reported to be.

The result of all this is that our three sisters[4] who were in Rouen to embark on their journey to Poland are on their way back here. This is a great proof of the protection of Divine Providence over the Company. We are very grateful to God for this and more than ever we must strive to be faithful to Him. I am sure that you are trying to be, my dear Sister. I beg you to continue and to pray for our entire Company which sends greetings as I do. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau.
4. See Letter 447.

L.496 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

September 25 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

We are rushed to send a sister to Chantilly. Monsieur de la Hode[1] advised us not to send back the sister who just left there. This appears necessary as much for her sake as for the sake of the one who is still there. She needs very good example. If your Charity considers it appropriate, we will send another sister.

We have a sister who is very reserved[2] and whom it would be wise to remove from Paris because her parents give her no peace. I have no fear that she will lose her vocation; she has been in the Company for a long time. However, this move would help her to grow in holiness. If you agree, we will send her. I think that she will be quite suitable.

Your last conference was August 8. Could we hope to have one tomorrow, my Most Honored Father, without unduly inconveniencing you? I would ask your Charity to please let us know. If it is to be on the explanation of the Rules dealing with the order of the day, please tell us if we should prepare for the whole day or for just part of it.[3]

Please send your blessings and your answer, my Most Honored Father, to your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

I would ask your Charity to please remember Fontenay.[4]

L.453 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL[5]

September 26, 1655

Monsieur,

We know so little about the state of your health that I am both troubled and hesitant as to what we should ask of God: perfect health or slow recovery. Good health would prolong your absence from here, but our sisters at Sedan, Brienne, Montmirail and Nanteuil would profit from it. However, all the sisters of Paris would feel the loss keenly. So, Monsieur,

1. Monsieur de la Hode of Chantilly.
2. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.
3. The conference will take place September 29 on the theme chosen (Coste X, 105).
4. Julienne Loret who was Sister Servant there had just been named Assistant of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
5. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.

provided you return to us completely cured, whichever way you look at it, our interests seem to be the same although the needs of our sisters in distant places are twice as great. All this causes us to ask God, for both you and us, for whatever will conform more closely to His holy and perfect will. We beg you also, for the love of Him, to take care of yourself in carrying out your responsibilities so that you may accomplish this holy and adorable will for a long time here on earth.

If Providence wills all our sisters to have the blessing of a visit with you during this trip, I beg you, Monsieur, to recall Sister Jeanne-Christine's[1] letter which I showed you before you left. Sister sounded somewhat dissatisfied in it. I suspect that she is troubled because she is not experiencing, where she now is, the acclaim that has always been hers everywhere else. She has also replaced a sister[2] who is sorely missed. We have also gone to some expense to provide the medicine and other things that she requested. She ought to reimburse us, as is just. However, she has never paid any attention to such things. I believe this is because she practices the virtue of detachment with regard to everything except her own convenience. You are aware of the high regard we have always had for her.

As for Brienne, since both these sisters can be called brand new[3] and unaware of what responsibility for the goods of the Company means, I am afraid that out of respect and because of their simplicity and lack of experience, they have failed to obtain from Madame de Brienne what she had promised for them. Moreover, they did not make her understand that we must supply their habits from what remains from their food allowance. This Lady, I believe, has, for her part, not failed to require of them an accounting of their little expenses. We also have the two sisters[4] who came here from Brienne without bringing any money for their clothing or for the return trip, if they do not remain with us. I have no concern for the first one but I am a bit hesitant about the second one.

As for Montmirail, our sisters are not expecting you. You are already aware of their needs. However, I do not know if Sister Louise[5] treats Sister Catherine with all the gentleness she needs; or if Sister Catherine[6] has moderated any of her fondness for the company of externs or for singing with worldly people. This is very dangerous.

I believe, Monsieur, that you will have to speak to Sister Pétronille[7] about the respect and esteem she must have for Sister Jeanne, and to

1. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344, is in Sedan.
2. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b, remained in Sedan for 13 years.
3. Probably Catherine Baucher and Marie Donion.
4. The postulants who came from Brienne.
5. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
6. Catherine de Gesse, see Letter 120.
7. Pétronille Gillot, see Letter 626, is in Nanteuil.

Sister Jeanne about moderating her devotions and communicating with Sister Pétronille concerning the work. As for Sister Pétronille, it would be a good thing to advise her that she should not be anymore familiar with an ecclesiastic than with anyone else. This fault has been very harmful to many others.

I beg Our Lord to grant us all the dispositions we need to profit from all the trouble your Charity goes to for the general good of the Company and for each of its members. God alone can be your recompense. I am in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you with respect and submission. I join with them in asking you to remember us in your holy Masses; we also hope to share in your blessings and prayers. Our debt of gratitude to you should be sufficient to assure you of our prayers, weak and unworthy though they be, which we shall offer to God for you.

L.432B - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST)

(c. September 1655)

I recommend to your prayers the poor country of Poland and especially the well-being of the King and Queen who do so much good for the poor. Pray hard for that, but above all, pray for the preservation of the faith in this poor kingdom which is in peril of losing it. This would be the ultimate affliction. Also remember our poor sisters who are there. The last sisters who had left here to begin their journey to Poland have returned from Rouen.[1] We must admire in this the great care Divine Providence takes of our little Company. Let us never allow ourselves to be ungrateful for this. On the contrary, may it help us to be faithful to Our Lord and to the practice of our Rules.

1. See Letter 447.

L.454 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

October 2 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am distressed because it has been so long since I have received any news of you; it makes me fear that you are ill. I beg you to let me know how you and Sister Laurence[2] are as soon as possible. I also urge you to tell me if you have received the letters I sent you to be forwarded to the sisters[3] at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. I did this because you assured me that you had a way of getting them to them. We receive letters from them only very rarely. Sister Marie[4] appears to be very happy. I hope that, when she has had a bit of training, she will do well. She is easily hurt; nevertheless, she seems to be very calm and accommodating.

I am sure that you are aware of the deplorable state of poor Poland and how war is raging there. The admirable Providence of God delayed the departure of our three sisters[5] who were supposed to go there. They had just reached Rouen when they were told to return here because of the news concerning the war. See, my dear Sisters, what good reasons we have to love and to place our trust in Divine Providence. May this Providence be forever blessed and may the entire Company be completely submissive to It! Is this not reasonable?

My dear Sister, please tell me about yourself and everything connected with your work. Believe me more than ever in the love of Our Lord . . .

Our sisters who had left to go to Poland have returned from Rouen because of the news about the war. Pray for this poor country and for me, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters send their greetings.

I do not know if I told you that Sister Anne Hardemont has begun the establishment for the service of the sick poor and the insane at the Petites Maisons. Our Most Honored Father is having trouble with his legs and Monsieur Portail[6] is away on a short journey. I am sure that you will remember to pray that God will take care of them.

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1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
4. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.
5. See Letter 447.
6. Monsieur Portail visited the houses of Sedan, Brienne and Montmirail.

L.455 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

October 3 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

For the past six years Sister Françoise[1], our gardener, has always renewed her vows on the Feast of Saint Francis which is tomorrow. She begs your Charity to allow her to do so once again on tomorrow's feast. We therefore ask you to be so kind as to let us know at what time you will say Mass. Although it probably will not be in the church, she will be united to it by going to Mass at the same time.

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to inquire about your health and to ask for your blessing for our sisters, especially for Sister Françoise who, to ensure her salvation, asks to give herself to God and for myself. I beg you, for His holy love, to give me the assistance which, your Charity knows, in the sight of God, I need. I remain, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.456 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Eve of the Feast of Saint Denis [October 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

I most humbly beg your Charity to allow me to recommend my son to your prayers which he needs to obtain from Our Lord, by the merits of the injuries and insults He suffered during His human life, the cure of his deafness, if this is not contrary to the perfect will of God. I desire this only if it is accompanied by the grace which would enable him to make the firm resolution not to allow God to be offended in his little family.

Good Brother Fiacre promised him that he would begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin for him tomorrow on the Feast of Saint Denis. It occurred to me, my Most Honored Father, to ask your permission to receive Holy Communion daily and to perform some other good action during this time, provided my hardness of heart does not prevent me from doing so. Please let me know your will with regard to this.

Our Sister Officers[2] seem to be carrying out their duties well, thank

1. Françoise Fauchon, see Letter 595.

2. During the Assembly of August 8, 1655, the following were named: Julienne Loret,

God. We began our little Council[1] Tuesday on the subject of the return of our sisters from Nantes[2] and how they should be received. We proposed names of sisters we thought should be sent to Châteaudun. However, uncertainty about the need to recall the Sister Procuratrix[3] because of the short time that she has been in the Company stopped us because we did not want to give cause for complaints.

We stand in great need of your directives and your holy guidance in everything, for the perfection of this work which appears to be beginning to take form. I hope that the goodness of God will inspire you to do this and that He will grant us the dispositions necessary to obey you since it is by His will that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient...

L.457 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

October 22 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

I beg your Charity to take the trouble to read these letters because I am afraid that they contradict those that you are writing.

Sister Jeanne de Saint-Albin[4] is very upset about the matter she presented to you. She says that she cannot bring herself to say anything about it to Monsieur Portail or even to wait for his return before giving the order for the withdrawal of an infant from a wicked mother. Perhaps she would like to take care of this matter before setting aside the habit of the Daughters of Charity so as to create the impression that she is performing an act of charity. However, I fear the consequences; so please tell us, Monsieur, what we are to do.

I think that my little fever is caused only by my diseased spleen which

Assistant; Mathurine Guérin, Treasurer; Jeanne Gressier, Procuratrix.

1. See Council Minutes, S. 4.
2. The administrators sent several letters concerning the difficulties within the community at Nantes. Only one, written by Monsieur de Branday on May 28, 1655, has been preserved. He defends Sister Henriette Gesseaume whom the administrators want to keep because of her competence in pharmacy. Monsieur de Branday attacks, somewhat vehemently, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, the Sister Servant, and asks that she be recalled.
3. Jeanne Gressier, a native of Senlis, entered the Company around 1654. Named Procuratrix very young, she remained at the Motherhouse. She assisted Louise de Marillac at the hour of her death and gave a written account of the details of her last moments. Monsieur Vincent confided the government of the Company to her while awaiting the appointment of the new Superioress in August 1660.
4. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.

is hardening and covering part of my stomach. If this is the key that will soon release me from this world, then I truly need to learn how to prepare for it. It is for this reason that I turn to your Charity so that I will not be shipwrecked as I arrive at port, because of my own navigation, but will be guided solely by your directives and the orders of Divine Providence. You know that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.459 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday evening [October 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

The two sisters are ready to make their vows for the first time tomorrow, the Feast of All Saints. They are the same two who spoke to you at one of the last two conferences and your Charity informed me of their desire. Would you be so good as to grant them this grace, for the love of God, and offer them to Him during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? One has been in the Company for seven years, the other for six. Both have given good example for several years now. Two other sisters, who made their first vows on this feast, also ask your Charity for the grace of renewal. They do not appear to have done anything contrary to them and they desire to persevere in their vocation. One is from Dammartin, the other from near Maule. Of the first two, one is from Richelieu, the other has been in Paris for a long time, if she is not from here. Their names are: Perrine, Marie, Geneviève and Avoie.[1] I beg your Charity to bless them and the entire Company.

I hope that Monsieur Bécu[2] did not forget to ask you to give us a little conference on one of these feast days, if this will not impose too much of a hardship upon you. I would not be so insistent if it were not for the length of the subject and its importance.[3] This leads me to hope to obtain the forgiveness I ask for so acting. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578.
2. Monsieur Jean Bécu, see Letter 228, who was then at Saint-Lazare.
3. Monsieur Vincent began the explanation of the Common Rules.

L.460 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Angers

November 2, 1655

My very dear Sister,

Perhaps you have received word of the death of Monsieur Le Gros.[2] I believe that his illness may have deprived you of the honor of seeing him and of receiving the consolation and assistance you desired of him. Divine Providence planned it this way, my dear Sister, and God, in His goodness, will supply for what you have lost by sending you Monsieur Berthe[3] whom you are to trust as you did all the others because he is sent to you by our Most Honored Father. Assure the sisters that they can speak to him very openly; we have had the opportunity to know him well. I can assure you of his great charity and tell you that, in his goodness, he will work for the growth in holiness of our sisters. He can be of assistance to them.

For the love of God, stop worrying about what you told me about Sister Élisabeth.[4] It is true that she owed ten francs to just one girl, but a tradeswoman called Marguerite was responsible for returning the money to her. The money for the scalpels was placed in the box as should be done. In the name of God, my dear Sister, when you have reason to be suspicious of someone, do not continue to let it be so obvious and do not say anything about it to the sisters. Such a trial is too heavy for their minds to bear. You can speak about it with Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, or if he is away for a long time, with Monsieur Ratier. However, do not reserve judgment for fear of aversion or scandal.

I will afford myself the honor of writing to the Fathers[5] when we have reached a point where we are able to send sisters. I would ask you to request only the number that are strictly necessary because we must send sisters to many other places. The needs of Angers, however, will always take priority.

Please send my greetings to all our dear sisters, especially to our sick sister. Tell them that I urge them all to write to me. Ask them to do so one after another so that I can answer them and thus impress their names and their personalities on my mind. I beg them to pray for me and I am

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Monsieur Le Gros (1614-16550) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1644. He spent his first years in Paris. He was sent to Richelieu in 1652. In 1655, Monsieur Vincent sent him to visit the houses. He fell ill at Montauban and died on November 7, 1655.
3. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245.
4. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.
5. The Fathers of the Poor, the administrators of the hospital.

for the whole dear Company, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur l'abbé and to Monsieur Ratier.

L.502 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

(November 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to give you His holy love and to grant you the grace to work in His spirit in all the duties His goodness confides to you. You certainly have your work cut out for you. In the name of God, my very dear Sister, do not undertake anything without consulting our Most Honored Father.

I have heard nothing about Monsieur l'abbé de Nesmond.[2] Perhaps he did not come to see Monsieur Vincent because our Most Honored Father has been ill since the Feast of All Saints. Praise God with us, my dear Sister, for his improved health. He is now suffering only from the last stages of erysipelas which he had on his leg and which caused a very high fever for 24 hours. For some time since then he has continued to have a low-grade fever. We have every reason to ask God for his cure, more by our actions and upright intentions than by our prayers, although we must have recourse to both.

Monsieur Portail has returned from his two-month trip in good health, thank God. Sister Henriette,[3] Sister Marie-Marthe[4] and Sister Renée[5] have returned from Nantes; only five of our sisters are left there. We could send a sister there, if God so wills it, along with two or three for Hennebont and another hospital about five or six leagues from there. We have many reasons to humble ourselves for the graces that God has bestowed upon the Company.

Some Priests of the Mission of Poland are back and have assured us that our three sisters[6] are with the Queen of Poland. If this good King

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Monsieur de Nesmond, nephew of Madame de Lamoignon; ordained a priest in 1654, he would later become the Bishop of Bayeux.
3. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau was the Sister Servant at Nantes, see Letter 456. She was replaced by Nicole Haran.
5. Renée Delacroix, see Letter 275.
6. Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon, and Françoise Douelle.

loses his entire kingdom, I think that they will return with the Religious of the Visitation; they are all together.

Sister Marie Papillon[1] is fine, thank God. Please send her greetings to her family and friends. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know how to respond when you ask me for advice concerning the linen; we use linen cloth only for our toquois and collars. It would be very useful for us provided it is very white and not too fine. The trouble is that people will not know where it comes from and judgments are quickly made, as you know. I leave the matter to your prudence. Whatever you do will be fine.

L.462 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 14 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to tell you that it is absolutely essential that your leg not be out of an elevated position for a quarter of an hour nor be exposed to the heat of the fire. If it gets cold, you must warm it with a warm cloth placed over the pant leg. If you think it appropriate, my Most Honored Father, try a little of this soothing ointment. Apply it lightly and cover it with a folded cloth soaked in warm water. I hope it will do you some good. When the cloth gets cold, it should be soaked again in water that is neither hot nor very cold. The blood-lettings have weakened your body, as has the disease; and when you place your foot on the ground, the heat and fluids rush there as the weakest spot in your body.

I wish you would not drink so many glasses of water so as to let your intestinal tract calm down and be refreshed, thus preventing the heat from rushing so violently to your poor, sick leg. With the consent of your doctor, perhaps mineral crystals, the weight of half an écu, dissolved in the first glass of water, would help to pass whatever remains more easily.

Am I not very forward to speak to you like this? But I know that I am talking to you who know that I am, as I very humbly ask for your blessing, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Every day I drink a cup of tea; it does me a lot of good by improving my appetite and making me stronger.

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1. Marie Papillon, a native of Bernay, see Letter 440.

L.461 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE[1]

Daughter of Charity at Bernay

(November 1655)

My very dear Sister,

Sister Barbe[2] will inform you about Monsieur Vincent's health. I am sure that you do not fail to pray to Our Lord to preserve him. Please continue to do so.

I am sending you a set of prayer books like those we use here. In everything we must arrange things so that they are, as far as possible, in keeping with our vocation which urges us so strongly to imitate the holy poverty of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. I praise God that in His goodness He makes use of you in this way. Oh, how blessed you are! You must show your gratitude for this by a more perfect love for Our Lord who moves us to a more fervent practice of these virtues.

A practice which our Most Honored Father taught us at one of his recent conferences[3] will prove useful to you. It is, my dear Sister, to turn to God at the beginning of each action; to make an act of humility, recognizing that we are unworthy to perform it; then to make an act of love, undertaking it for love of Him and offering it to Him in union with similar actions which His Son performed while He was on earth. His Charity assures us that, if we go to the trouble to carry out this exercise for a week, it will become habitual and we will perform it effortlessly. I have no doubt that you will grow to love this practice which we must look upon as inspired by God for us.

I am very pleased by the news you sent me of your little family. I am very happy that you act in this way. We will send you the chemisettes. Please let us know if your two are worn out.

You did the right thing in writing to your family and in showing your letters to Sister Barbe. This is how we should act. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His grace upon you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
3. Conference of October 18, 1655 (Coste X, 121).

L.463B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

December 4, 1655

My very dear Sister,

I just received your letter dated December but I am afraid you must have made a mistake because today is only the fourth. I am astonished to hear you say that it has been so long since you have received letters from me and that you have no news from Madame Le Comte to whom I sent your letter two days after receiving it. I wrote to both you and Sister Laurence[2] less than two weeks ago. I responded fully to your letter in which you told me your thoughts about the hospital and about taking on more work as well as about your leftover cloth and linen. Let me know if you ever received this letter and if you want me to write to you again about these matters.

I received an answer from the sisters[3] at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, near Carentan, and wrote them another lengthy letter. I urge you to write to them so that you may hear all about them. From their letter, it appears that their work is very difficult. Trials such as these enable us to bear witness to the fidelity we owe to God. It seems to me that they are giving ample proof of this for which I praise God with all my heart. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the divine goodness for the inner strength He gives to our sisters in faraway places. Oh, how good it is to possess God alone and to love Him with all our heart!

I believe I told you that we had news of our sisters in Poland and that they are safe with the Queen as are the Religious of Sainte-Marie and Monsieur Ozenne.[4] We have every reason to praise God for this. But this poor kingdom is in a deplorable state. We must continue to pray for its relief and especially for the Catholic religion which is in great danger of being eradicated there. I beg Our Lord to assist this land and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I sent the prayer books to Sister Laurence by Mulot. Sister Marie[5] gave them to him herself. She said that she did not dare to speak to him because she did not recognize him at first. She is fine and sends greetings to you and to all her family and friends. She is a very good girl and I

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
4. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.
5. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

hope that, once she has gotten over a certain softheartedness—not for her family—she will be capable of rendering excellent service in the Company.

We sent your letter to Madame Le Comte. Enclosed is one I would ask you to forward by the route you mentioned.

L.463 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

The state of suffering and submission to which it pleases Our Lord to subject you increases the boldness I always show in expressing my puny thoughts to you. The latest one that occurred to me to bring you some relief is to suggest that you bring both legs to a sweat (not the whole body) by using Monsieur l'Obligeois' little steam bath. But do not do this without consulting two doctors. Tea may be taken between the early-morning bouillon and dinner. Experience has shown me that it must not be taken as a substitute for other food, but that it is an excellent way to prepare the stomach to take food.

Madame the Countess de Brienne[1] told me that she had spoken to Monsieur de Francière.[2] Once again he spoke very highly of the Company and assured her that he would protect it. He told her that he had recognized the tactics of a certain person who was trying to work his way into the administration of the hospital and that he was very glad that we had not granted what the good ecclesiastic had requested. He also added several other comments which caused him to tell Sister Julienne[3] that everything was going well and that, when she had seen the Queen, she should take the trouble of going to see you. I ask your Charity to let me know if there is anything else I should do in this matter other than to admire the workings of Providence; to try to make known Its goodness and power; and to believe that it is a good thing to suffer and to await patiently the hour of God in very difficult circumstances, which is so contrary to my overly impulsive nature.

Allow me, my Most Honored Father, to beg you to commend my state of mind to our good God. I have been troubled for some time now by matters which your Charity knows touch me very deeply. I believe that you have no doubt that all this is prompted by the desire to see you

1. Madame the Countess de Brienne, see Letter 86.
2. Monsieur de Francière at Saint-Denis, see Letter 262.
3. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.

restored to perfect health which I ask of Our Lord for the glory of His holy love which has made me your daughter.

P.S. Allow me to ask your Charity for news of our sisters in Poland.

L.452 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(c. December 1655)

Monsieur,

I have put off, for a very long time, affording myself the honor of writing to you. I wanted to be able to do so personally as is my duty. However, since I am still prevented from doing so by the prolongation of my little indisposition, I am taking the liberty, Monsieur, of using another hand[1] to express my regret that, for so long, we have been unable to supply the sisters we are obliged to send to relieve our sisters and to restore the necessary order, in keeping with the needs that your Charity foresaw long ago. Permit me, Monsieur, to beg you very humbly to allow me to ask your advice on the expediency of transferring Sister Cécile[2] and of having her return here to steep herself in the maxims of the Company at its source. If this is appropriate, I think that we will have some difficulty in making the idea acceptable unless your Charity grants us the powerful assistance we have always received.

About a month ago, I had the honor of writing to Monsieur Ratier. I had not fulfilled this obligation to him since just before Sister Élisabeth[3] returned here. I am very anxious to know if he received my letter. We have good reason to praise God and to consider the return of this good sister a happy event. She is doing very well, thank God, and strongly desires to persevere. We are greatly indebted to you for this, Monsieur, because we can attribute all her good fortune to the charity you showed her as you do all the other sisters. Our Lord Himself will be your eternal recompense. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

1656

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Arras and at La Fère. Serious illness of Louise de Marillac.

1. Letter written by Mathurine Guérin.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

L.464 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER FRANÇOISE MÉNAGE[1]

Daughter of Charity at Nantes

January 19, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the grace which, in His goodness, He has bestowed upon you by fulfilling the desire you have had for such a long time. I blame you for the pain you told me you endured in this matter. In the name of God, my dear Sister, put your mind at rest and be assured that I was consoled to learn what you told me. You have reason to admire Divine Providence for sending you Monsieur Berthe[2] at just the right moment. By the grace of God I hope to send you what you want, provided you promise me that you will desire nothing other than to please Our Lord.

Both Sisters Ménage[3] are fine, thank God. Thank Him also for preserving your father's house from fire. He and the family are well. So are our sisters from there and all those of the Motherhouse. They all send you their greetings. Good day, my dear Sister. Let us love God tenderly. Believe me in this same love, your very humble sister and servant.

L.465 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CHARLOTTE ROYER[4]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

February 9, 1656

My very dear Sister,

You gave me great pleasure by sending me news of your dear self although Sister Françoise[5] has always taken care to send me word of you and to tell me of your continual illness which has often taken the place of your holy occupations for the service of the poor. Your sufferings are just as meritorious because God wills them.

As for your reading and writing, you know, my dear Sister, that I fought with you about this from the time of your arrival at Saint-Jean.

1. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
2. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, made the visitation of the house of Nantes in November 1655.
3. Marguerite and Madeleine who are at the Motherhouse.
4. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.
5. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

I am rather curious to know how you treat yourself in your ailments with regard to food and medicine and especially if you are considered as one of the sick of the parish. If you are, then the matter needs to be examined because of your continuing fragile health. I urge you, my dear Sister, to let me know what the situation is and I will offer some suggestions. I have not the slightest doubt but that you are making good use of your illness and that the more your body is struck down by sickness, the more your spirit soars by your submission to and acceptance of the good pleasure of God and by the practice of interior virtues.

I praise God for what you tell me about Sister Françoise. The graces of God are not all the same because, in His goodness, He knows our weaknesses and needs. I began a letter to her some time ago. I hope to finish it and to send it with this one. Oh, how united your hearts seem to be! This is evident from the news we receive about you. I beg Our Lord to continue to grant you His graces and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble . . .

P.S. I forgot to tell you that your mother and brother are well, thank God. Please write to them.

L.467 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday [February 1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Your Charity knows that I would rather die than disobey you. I believe you would want me to inform you that by the grace of God I am not sick. The tea I am drinking prevents the inflammation from which I am suffering from spreading to my chest. It does not interfere with my appetite for Lenten food or for meat. I had had such a strong aversion for meat that I could tolerate it only with difficulty. If you are willing to dispense me once again from eating it for a while, you will make me very happy. If I am permitted to eat eggs, I will do so and I think that will be sufficient. I promise that just as soon as I feel the need for meat, I will ask for it because your Charity allows me to do so. I have the grace to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble, obedient and grateful daughter and servant.

L.466 - TO MADAME JOSSE

February 26, 1656

Madame,

If I were well enough and strong enough, I would afford myself the honor of seeing you so as to suggest a very charitable undertaking to you. Our sister will explain the matter to you in detail if you will do her the honor of listening to her. However, I will point out to you, Madame, that the person in question is very prone to evil and very dangerous to place in anyone else's hands. The food she was given until the age of eight or nine may have contributed to the situation.

The education she has since received, however, leads me to hope that if your Charity is so kind as to have her placed at the house which Providence has confided to your special care, the example of persons who have had the happiness of living there and the guidance of the Spirit of God in the lives of persons of this kind will completely win her over and bring about her total conversion.

It was in the parish of Saint-Eustache, Madame, that she fell into sin. We can assure you that she was removed from there only so that she could be put in a safe place. For more than three months she has been a prisoner in the house she had left.

I beg Our Lord to reveal His holy will to you and I am in His most holy love, Madame, your very humble and obedient servant.

L.467B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday [March 1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Would your Charity be so kind as to remember his daughter who hoped to go to confession this morning because, by the grace of God, nothing prevented her from preparing for it. What appeared to be sickness is really nothing but a precaution against illness and too much concern for my health. It is true also that I wanted to allow myself the opportunity to take as much time as possible.

As I write, I am conscious of this poor note and of the liberty I take in writing to you. I ask your pardon for this. Please grant me your blessing, my Most Honored Father, as I await the blessing of God's mercy

through your charity. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very poor and unworthy daughter and servant.

L.504 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

(c. March 1656)

Madame de Herse, the President, asked the Pastor of Saint-Nicholas to name the churches where our sisters from Saint-Martin and, I believe, Saint-Médard could make the stations for the Jubilee. They have not as yet made it.

Would it be possible for all our sisters of the parishes and even from the Motherhouse (except those who are with the foundlings) to go to Notre-Dame, the Hôtel-Dieu and two other churches near their part of the city, even if they have not been named for the week? It would be very convenient. Could they go together at the time that is best for the poor? This would be about five o'clock in the evening. I am speaking of the sisters of the parishes.

Is there any obligation to say the prayers that are in the booklets being sold for the purpose?

Some of the sisters would like to go to confession here. Should we not inform them all that, for this one occasion, they are to chose the confessor they wish?

L.471 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

March 29 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

You have every right to complain about me although you may be certain that you and our dear Sister Laurence[1] are never out of my mind. I beg her to continue to love holy poverty, not only abstractly and in her words, but by practicing its many aspects. I am enclosing the chemisettes that I am sending you for her. I urge her to accept them graciously. I am also sending you a letter from Sister Cécile.[2] I would ask you to write to

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

her, and when you can, to our sisters[1] at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. I am very worried about them. The last news we had of them led us to believe that both of them are ill. I am distressed at having no safe way to send them a letter.

I do not know if Monsieur Portail[2] was able to write to you. He has not been well for the past eight to ten days. I am certain that you do not forget to pray for his health and for the well-being of Monsieur Vincent who has not yet fully recovered from his latest illness.

I think that some of my letters have gotten lost. I had thanked you for the cloth that you told us about. I pointed out that it was a bit too elegant and too expensive because of the narrow width. However, this in no way diminishes our debt of gratitude to you. Your heart always shows its deep affection for the Company which also loves you tenderly.

We have had sick sisters: Sister Antoinette[3] from the parish of Saint-Étienne, who is gravely ill, and Sister Jeanne Bonvilliers.[4] I do not as yet know what will happen to the two of them.

If Sister Laurence has not written to her family, please have her do so.

We had the Jubilee in Paris. You will probably have it soon. All you have to do, my dear Sisters, is to read the decree and follow the directives exactly, especially with regard to the intentions for which you are to pray. For everything else, follow the instructions of the confessor whom you will choose with the approval of your regular confessor. Our Most Honored Father extended this permission to all our sisters. They all send you their affectionate greetings.

I urge you to beg Our Lord to send laborers to do His work. You would not believe how many places are asking for our sisters and how few we have to send.

Our sister from Bernay[5] is very well. She is still at the Motherhouse. We must be careful to ascertain that those we accept have truly been called. We have reason to expect much from her, but she still needs more time for her formation. We all ask for your prayers. I am, with all my heart, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
2. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.
3. Antoinette Richevillain (1631-1684) entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1654.
4. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358, was at Chantilly.
5. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

L.472 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday [April 1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to remind your Charity of the note I gave you the last time I had the honor of speaking with you. Also permit me to ask you to remember the poor woman that Monsieur de Croissy recommended to you for a place at the Nom-de-Jésus.[1] I just heard that a woman is leaving there.

We have a sister who last year lived in the home of an employer who has gone bankrupt. A man, who is owed 13,000 pounds, wants her to make a statement before a commissioner concerning what she knows of the matter. He is to come to find out if your Charity will allow her to do so. I am supposed to give him an answer today. Since he will be bringing an authorization from an ecclesiastical judge to the rectory, would it not suffice, when he publishes it, for her to tell the Pastor what she knows about the matter?

I have been informed that the General Assembly of the Ladies is to take place today. Would you consider it appropriate, my Most Honored Father, to point out to them the spiritual good that could be accomplished if they visited the poor galley slaves at the same time as our sisters bring them their dinner. This would be at ten o'clock in the morning, which is a rather convenient time for them since it would allow them to return home early and thus cause no inconvenience for their household.

I would also ask your Charity to keep in mind our need for a little assembly. Could it be tomorrow, Palm Sunday? I will ask then, as I always do, for your blessing. I remain, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient servant and your most grateful daughter.

L.495 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

(April 1656)

My very dear Sister,

1. The Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, see Letter 76b.
2. Nicole Haran, born in 1627, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on July 28, 1649. In 1650 she was sent to Montmirail. Arriving in Nantes in September 1653, she

I am concerned about whether or not Monsieur Truchart[1] received the letter I had the honor of writing to him about two weeks ago. I also had the consolation of writing to you in the same mail. I am waiting to hear from both of you so that I can send you one of our sisters.[2] I send greetings to all the sisters and ask them not to become weary of waiting.

Please find out from Sister Madeleine[3] how much money she left when she came to Paris and with whom she left it. When she tells you how many pounds are involved, ask her if they are in French francs, that is, worth 20 francs each. Please let me know what you learn.

It will be a great consolation for me to hear from you of the union and cordiality which exist among you. If God continues to grant you this grace, as I hope His goodness causes Him to do, you have nothing to fear, neither the judgments and suspicions of the world, nor rude reproofs, calumnies and complaints. Nothing need upset you; God sees and knows the state of your conscience. Your sole preoccupation must be to please Him by your fidelity in His service manifested by the strict observance of your Rules and especially by respect for your spiritual superiors, the clergy, whatever their rank. Also obey, for the love of God, the gentlemen of the administration in everything that pertains to the service of the poor.

I am in the love of God and of all my dear sisters, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.473 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poot at Bernay

April 24, 1656

My very dear Sister,

Monsieur Portail happened to be here in the House while I had your dear letters in my hand. He read them and both of us were greatly edified by them. I praise God with all my heart for the graces He has bestowed on many sisters of the Company during this holy time of the Jubilee. I received accounts very similar to yours from sisters from several different places.

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was proposed by the administrators for the office of Sister Servant in May 1655. Her life would not be without difficulties. She was still in Nantes at the time of the death of Louise de Marillac. In 1673, she was elected Superioress General for a three-year term. Afterwards, she served the foundlings in the Saint-Antoine area of Paris. She died there on June 5, 1679.

1. Monsieur Truchart, the sisters' confessor.
2. The Council of February 27, 1656 decided to send Madeleine Raportebled but her departure was delayed. Andrée Maréchal would go instead to Nantes in June 1656.
3. Madeleine Micquel arrived in Nantes in November 1653 (Coste XIII, 680).

I urge you to be careful not to be the one who is pushing to have a house. I believe that Madame de Brou[1] is no longer in a position to handle the matter and I am afraid the whole thing would fall upon you. Let others persuade you to consent to it, or better still, do nothing at all in this matter. What God wants will be done in His good time.

By the grace of God, I will not fail to explain matters to your relatives in the way you wish. I have no doubt, my dear Sister, that the good thoughts that God has given you and dear Sister Laurence[2] have led to good strong resolutions for the future. If so, they will, with the help of God's grace, enable you to become great saints.

Monsieur Portail has been ill for the past month; this, added to all the work he has to do, has prevented him from writing to you. However, I will urge him to do so for your consolation. I will not fail to convey your very humble greetings to our Most Honored Father. He is fairly well, thank God. It is not necessary to ask you or Sister Laurence, to whom I send my loving greetings, to pray that Our Lord will leave him with us. I beg you to believe that I am in His love, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. God willing, I will speak to Monsieur Vincent about your little establishment.[3] Sister Cécile[4] sends her love; she is well.

L.392 - TO MONSIEUR (THE ARCHITECT)[5]

(c. April 1656)

Monsieur,

The implicit trust I have that you will be so good to me as to take into consideration the request I made to you concerning our modest design causes me to remind you that it is absolutely essential that the final structure appear rustic and as unostentatious as possible.[6] I know that you cannot accept these constraints without difficulty because you are accustomed to making everything a large and lofty structure. However, when you have reflected on what I explained to you and on the need the

1. Madame de Brou, Lady of Charity.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. The establishment of a hospital.
4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
5. This letter is no doubt a copy of the letter sent to the architect.
6. See the Council of April 27, 1656 (Coste XIII, 716) and the response of the architect (autograph 1038).

Company has, if it is to endure, to appear poor and humble in everything, you will see clearly, Monsieur, that it is Our Lord's work, and perhaps you will be willing to contribute the talents God has given you to its firm foundation. This is the very humble request that I once more make to you. I also wish to add that the areas we refer to as parlor and kitchen of Saint-Laurent will be adequate for us for a school and a place to treat and bleed the poor.

L.474 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu at Nantes in Brittanny

April 29, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I had the consolation of writing to you about three weeks ago, but I planned to send any future letters only by a sister. However, since I have been forced to put off sending one so as to send a companion to Angers, I am writing to beg you, for the love of God, not to be upset and to believe that I am more distressed than you are at knowing you are enduring the trials of which I am aware.

I would ask you to find out from Monsieur Truchart[2] if he received the letter I had the honor of writing to him at the same time that I wrote to you. I am concerned about his health. We have been taught a remedy that we are to try out. Once we have done so, I will recommend it to you more confidently for his treatment. Please greet him for me very humbly and with all the respect I owe him. Express my humble gratitude to Monsieur Humey for all the charity I know he exercises toward our dear sisters.

All our sisters join me in assuring you of our deepest affection. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

1. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.

2. Monsieur Truchart, the sisters' confessor.

L.475 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

April 29, 1656

Monsieur,

There are so many things to consider when selecting a Sister Servant for Angers that I am at a loss to suggest one to Monsieur Vincent. I see no one who does not appear to be essential in the place where she now is and this makes us a bit reluctant to withdraw anyone. Nevertheless, Monsieur, after pondering the advice your Charity gave us, we have found no sister more suitable than Sister Marie-Marthe.[1] You are aware that she has already been in Angers, and I believe that the administrators were pleased with her. We could not make a final decision without asking your opinion. I urge you to let us know it as soon as possible so that, once we have received it, we can send the sisters without delay. Please understand, Monsieur, that we will withdraw Sister Cécile[2] at the same time. We should have less difficulty in doing this because Sister Marie-Marthe is well trained for the service of the sick and knows how to satisfy the administrators.

If I had had the honor of meeting with your nephew, I would have urged him to assure you that our sisters will bring you the text of the customs that you requested from Monsieur Vincent. As soon as he learned that you wanted them, he had them written up immediately. You realize of course, Monsieur, that he is delighted to render you this little service and that he is most grateful for the charity you exercise toward our dear sisters. Our Lord alone can repay you. We are obliged to beg Him to continue to bestow His holy graces on your blessed works that they may promote His glory and the fulfillment of His holy plan for your dear person. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. If I had more time, I would write to Monsieur Ratier to express my very humble gratitude to him.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau who returned from Nantes in November 1655.
2. Cécile Angiboust was the Sister Servant at the time.

L.468 - (TO THE SISTERS OF ANGERS)

(c. May 1656)

My very dear Sisters,

Your recent letters, which were brought to me today by Monsieur . . .[1] gave me great joy. They arrived just in time to cure me completely of a serious illness that I have had for the past month. You must believe, my dear Sisters, that nothing gives me greater joy than to learn about each one of you, about your health and about your interior dispositions. I will write to you about this when I have regained my strength. In the meantime, I exhort you with all my heart to be faithful; you owe this to God in the practice of the virtues required by your vocation.

How fortunate you are, my dear Sisters, to have so many sick to serve! Oh, how evident it is that God loves you since He provides you with so many opportunities to serve Him! Continue to do so, I beg of you, for love of Him with all the gentleness, concern and charity required of you.

L.478 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER FRANÇOISE MÉNAGE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

Paris, June 10, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to be your eternal recompense for the charity you showed me during my illness. It did not please the divine goodness to remove me from the face of the earth, although I have deserved it for a long time. We must await submissively the order of Divine Providence. We must always be in that state, open to accept the death of a loved one, our own death or any other painful event so that God, in the exercise of His divine will, will never have reason to complain that we have not followed His orders.

I believe, my dear Sister, that you will realize that God has permitted and willed that a close member of your family[2] be called to Him. I have asked Monsieur Truchart[3] to be so good as to tell you about it himself but, in the meantime, renew the gift that you have made to God of all

1. This letter was recopied by Marguerite Chétif. The name has been omitted to preserve anonymity.
2. Her father had just died.
3. Monsieur Truchart, the sisters' confessor.

that you are. This gift obliges you to be completely detached from all earthly things. I beg Our Lord to be your strength, your courage and your consolation. I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your humble sister and servant.

L.479 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

June 14, 1656

Monsieur,

For a long time I was afraid that you had not received the letter in which I spoke to you about Sister Marie-Marthe.[1] I thank you very humbly, Monsieur, for the advice your Charity gives me in this matter. I am a bit surprised by the aversion of our sisters; this makes it impossible for us at present to send another sister who is capable of replacing Sister Cécile.[2] I find this distressing. It is delaying the departure of our sisters until the beginning of next week when, God willing, they will leave.

I am truly astonished, Monsieur, at the proposal of the hospital administrators to buy the fish market. I am equally surprised that they are considering employing our sisters in it. I can make no decision concerning such a work. Because I do not know what would be expected of the sisters, I cannot even present the matter to Monsieur Vincent. Besides, Monsieur, do you not think that we have reason to fear considerable trouble because of this additional work? The administrators began by asking the sisters to do the washing; other requests could be forthcoming. Moreover, what I personally fear is communication with the officers and the anger of those who are normally employed for this task. You know the rest so I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to take the trouble to clarify the whole matter for me.

A good ecclesiastic came here to see me. He introduced himself, I believe, as the Vicar General of the Bishop of Angers. He spoke with me in the name of the Bishop about the hospital for shut-ins. I believe he is one of the chief administrators. I am distressed, Monsieur, at not being able to give him what he wanted. I tried to convince him that only the shortage of sisters caused our refusal because I am absolutely certain that Monsieur Vincent does not want to go back on his word to the Bishop

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

of Angers and that some one will be sent just as soon as he finds sisters suitable for this work.

It is true, Monsieur, that Sister Cécile has spoken to me several times about a good servant[1] who wants to enter the Company. However, she does not know much about the girl. The girls we have accepted here make us realize the importance of knowing the background from early childhood of any girl we receive. One thing that makes me fear that this girl may be a bit flighty is the fact that she is unable to put anything aside from her wages or any other little source of income to pay for a habit. One can deduce from this either that she is a spendthrift or that she was never in a position for any length of time. In either case, she would be far from possessing the qualities necessary to persevere in the life of the Daughters of Charity. Given enough time, Sister Cécile can find out all about this.

It pleased Our Lord to bring me back from the threshold of death so as to give me a little time yet to reflect more seriously on His judgments. In the name of God, Monsieur, help me with your holy prayers, so that this experience may not be a source of humiliation for me, and honor me by believing that I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.480 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

June 19 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

I have only just now read your letter dated the third of this month in which you inform me that Providence finally supplied a hospital for the poor of your area. May Our Lord be forever blessed! In His goodness He continues to give me new strength. Help me, my dear Sister, to make better use of it for His glory and for the service He wills me to render to the Company.

I am very worried about our sisters at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. Some time ago I heard that Sister Claude[2] was seriously ill. I thought you had already told me that you had forwarded the letters that I had sent you for them. I have had no answers from them.

Be very careful, my dear Sister, that there is nothing in the hospital contrary to the humility and simplicity of the Daughters of Charity or

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.

2. Claude Chantereau, see Letter 421.

that might interfere with the strict observance of your Rules. Should anyone want to have you accept responsibilities which you recognize as out of the ordinary, such as managing the finances or purchasing provisions, please inform Monsieur Vincent.

You were right to ask advice about accepting the girl suggested to you. I can tell you, my dear Sister, that Monsieur Vincent is opposed to the sisters' employing anyone; however, in this case, we must take into consideration the fact that she is the daughter of a former hospital employee. If she is already with you, you can tell her that it is temporary until you hear his decision.

My dear Sister, I would be very pleased if you told me a bit about your spiritual welfare; if your Rules are strictly observed; if sometime during the day you make repetition of prayer together; if you hold the Friday conference; and if you take time for your other little exercises. For the rest, I have no doubt but that your dear hearts beat in close union and that you share with one another what you are doing. If this were not so, my dear Sister, you would not experience the consolation that Our Lord promises to those who come together in His name, and in whose midst He is present. I believe, my dear Sister, that your mutual support causes you to feel the effects of divine consolation. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His holy graces upon you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.439 - TO SISTER LAURENCE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Bernay)

June 20 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

I have received at least two letters from you and I thank you for them with all my heart. I can recall at this moment only what you told me in the most recent one. It was a great source of consolation for me because I saw how steadfast you are to observe your Rules faithfully. I believe that Sister Barbe shares this desire with you and that is why I beg you, my dear Sister, if you are not always punctual for all your exercises or even if you have to leave one of them in case of necessity, to believe that, if Sister Barbe[2] tells you to do so, she is more disturbed by it than you are, although she is well aware that we are leaving God for God if we

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

leave one of our spiritual exercises for the service of the poor.

I beg her, my dear Sister, to let me know that among all your spiritual exercises repetition of prayer and the little Friday conference are not omitted. I assure you, my dear Sister, that I know of no exercises that are more efficacious in keeping us faithful to God and cordially united in His holy love.

I must tell you about another practice which our Most Honored Father strongly recommended to us at the last conference his Charity gave us. He told us that, as soon as we see that we have offended one or several of our sisters, we should immediately kneel and ask pardon of them. Oh, what a beautiful practice! I strongly recommend it to you for the love of Our Lord in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.482 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Eve of the Feast of Saint Peter [1656]

My Most Honored Father,

If the direct intervention of Divine Providence had not stopped me by arousing in me some minor doubts, Sister Claude would have returned more than a month ago. Moreover, what happened today makes it evident that the Company is guided more by this same Divine Providence than by any other means. However, if we must still take some action concerning her, I think that there must be a clearer understanding with . . . because the good girl expected his Charity to have explained her trial to me.

I believe, my Most Honored Father, that Madame Guergret has not told your Charity that she intends to remain in retreat only until Saturday since she must be at Saint-Sauveur for Vespers because of their Company of Charity. She would like to go to confession either this evening or tomorrow. These few days would be a very short time for a retreat for her were it not for the fact that you consider the good life she has led since her youth a substitute for a longer retreat.

L.483 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

July 8 (1656)

Monsieur,

I could not allow myself the honor of writing to you before I had shown Monsieur Vincent the letter you were good enough to send me. He greets you very humbly, and he told me to beg you to take the trouble to test that good girl's[1] vocation very thoroughly. He is certain that your choice and discernment in the matter will be excellent.

As for the confessors, it is to be hoped, Monsieur, that there will be just one to serve as the regular confessor for the little community. Experience has shown that having several can be a source of division among the sisters. As for the need of Sister Cécile,[2] the first Priest of the Mission[3] who goes to Angers will be instructed to go to receive orders from you, Monsieur, so as to make this change which I consider very necessary.

I am no longer surprised by the disorders in Nantes because they have had no one to guide them in the way they should act. This always serves to underscore the strict debt of gratitude we owe you and which God alone can discharge. With all my heart I beg Him to be your recompense, and with the same fervor I ask for the assistance of your holy prayers so that I may experience the mercy of God and have the honor of having you believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.485 - (TO THE SISTERS OF ANGERS)[4]

July 10, 1656

My very dear Sisters,

In the hope that this letter will reach you, I am speaking to you from the depths of my heart to assure you of my enduring affection. My love for you causes me to share in the happiness of your perseverance in the

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, will go there in May 1657.
4. Letter recopied by Marguerite Chétif, Angers series.

service of God in your holy vocation despite the trials which the enemy of our salvation may place on our path. Do you know why he behaves in this way, my dear Sisters? He does so to prevent us, if he can, from persevering because he derives a great deal of perverse glory in causing us to abandon a good work which we began long ago. Were he able to do so, he would have no qualms about leading us to set aside our good resolutions the day before we die. Let us be on our guard, my dear Sisters, never to give him the upper hand.

In order to do this we must be faithful in the smallest details and have a great desire to please God in all things by walking in His holy presence. Believe me, our chief preoccupation is also to practice great mortification, not by exterior penance but by submission based on true and solid humility: being content to be despised; waging war against our senses and passions; being strictly attached to obedience and to all the virtues; practicing cordiality among ourselves, without showing any preferences, for in this way grumbling, favoritism, and exclusive friendships are avoided. Above all, always have affection and esteem for your dear Sister Servant and any other whom God may give you when it pleases Him to take pity on Sister . . . ,[1] because I can assure you, my dear Sisters, that the direction of others is a heavy burden. Believe me always in His holy love . . .

L.486 - (TO MADAME, THE GREAT PRINCESS)[2]

July 17, 1656

Madame,

I praise God with all my heart for your continued zeal. It is true, Madame, that we are unable to supply sisters for the places that have requested them for some time to come. As for the proposal your goodness leads you to make to us of receiving some of them, I would say, Madame, that you would be doing a great act of charity by furnishing the means for some good girls who wish to serve[3] to withdraw from the world. But permit me, Madame, to point out two reasons that would prevent you from having your desire fulfilled soon. Firstly, it takes a long time to form the girls and to furnish them with what they need personally as well as with all they must know in order to serve the poor. Secondly, Madame, we do not accept anyone who does not intend to live and die in the

1. Cécile Angiboust whose departure is planned.

2. Claire Clémence de Maillé-Brézé, wife of Louis de Bourbon, called the Great Condé.

3. To serve the poor.

Company. Moreover, even if they enter by the charitable support of persons who have assisted them, nevertheless we do not send them to their native place.

This is all I can tell you on this subject. I assure you of my very humble respect and that I am in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your very humble and most obedient servant.

To Monsieur Vincent

My Most Honored Father, I ask your Charity to correct this letter[1] and to have it rewritten, if necessary. It is for Madame, the Great Princess.

L.531B - TO SISTER CARCIREUX[2]

July 18 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

It is true that I am greatly at fault for not having written to you for so long. Believe me, my dear Sister, it is not because I did not want to, since I take singular pleasure in thinking of both of you and of the union, harmony, and cordiality that exist between you. I believe that you work with one another to grow in perfection in keeping with the divine plan. All the actions of your lives can serve this purpose even those which might appear destined to withdraw you from that intimate union with God which you so ardently desire. Very often this union is established in us through no action of our own, in a manner known only to God and not as we would wish to imagine it.

In my opinion this is what we can do to help to bring this about: we must not allow our will to oppose the will of God in any way; we must give ourselves to Him to put into effect all the practices that have been suggested to us, so that we may be detached from our own judgment and strive to mortify our inclinations even in matters which appear to be good. For example, how many times can we desire things for a goal which, if we follow our own will, would actually lead us away from it.

You are very indebted to your Reverend Director[3] for having spoken to you in this way. I am sure, my dear Sister, that you felt that you were listening to the voice of God and that you truly believe that He was speaking to you in the words of this good gentleman. Nothing is more

1. Monsieur Vincent read the letter and found it satisfactory.

2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

3. Monsieur Pierre de Beaumont, born in 1617, entered the Congregation of the Mission in February 1641. After a stay at Saint-Méen, he went to Richelieu as Director of the Seminary. He was named Superior in 1656.

blind than the eye for seeing itself, although it can see everything else.

Do not be surprised by these little recurring thoughts and complaints. I believe, my dear Sister, that our principal preoccupation, yours and mine, is to humble ourselves greatly, to a depth equal to the height to which our minds want to raise us under the specious pretext of uniting us to God by our own efforts. We certainly must simplify our intentions by abandoning ourselves to the guidance of His Divine Providence and to the direction of our superiors. Your letter seems to express your desire to act in this way.

I am writing a note to the Pastor at Troyes to whom we are greatly indebted. However, my dear Sister, you ought not to have allowed these good girls to travel here at the expense of the Priests of the Mission. I am sure that they could have obtained assistance from some other charitable source. You must see to this especially when you meet with the Duchess.[1]

I will not fail, my dear Sisters, to ask Monsieur Vincent to send you a brief reply. He is so overburdened with business that I never interrupt him without experiencing a twinge of remorse. When you allow yourself the honor of writing to him, be as concise as possible and make your letter as easy as possible to read; not that he has ever said anything at all to me about this.

Accept my very humble thanks, my dear Sisters, for your charity to us. I am also most grateful to whoever told you both that I needed a habit. I do not badly need one unless, of course, you listen to our sisters.

I am grateful to Sister Charlotte[2] for having succeeded in making you speak as she does. Oh, what joy you give me by overcoming yourself so well! You probably practiced one of the greatest acts of virtue on that day. Keep it up, my dear Sisters. As long as we are a part of the Church Militant, we must continue to fight. If God, in His goodness, shows us His mercy and admits us into the Church Triumphant, we shall then enjoy that intimate union with Him which we can never completely attain here on earth. Let us then, my dear Sisters, apply ourselves diligently to the corporal and spiritual service of the sick poor for the love of Jesus Crucified in whom I am, your very humble and devoted servant.

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1. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, Richelieu's niece.
2. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.

L.477 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

(July 1656)

Monsieur,

I thank you most humbly for the trouble your Charity has taken to gather information about the good sister[1] you consider suitable for us. She will be very welcome.

We did our best to choose two sisters[2] we thought suitable for Angers. I beg you very humbly, Monsieur, to be so kind as to inform Sister Cécile so that she may welcome them properly, and to warn the other sisters to refrain from speaking to the newcomers of the little difficulties they experience among themselves, lest they create an unfavorable impression.

We must soon send three more sisters to Britanny. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so charitable as to send us your opinion of Sister Marie[3] and to let us know if you judge it necessary for us to recall Sister Cécile[4] for the reason which your Charity has already advanced.

Pardon me, Monsieur, for the liberty I take in giving you so much trouble and continue to honor me by the belief that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.

P.S. Monsieur Vincent is sending what you requested of him.

L.489B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

at Bernay

July 31 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace to make good use of all the blessings He has showered on your work. If you believe me, and I have no doubt that you do, you will be careful not to make things too magnificent, because you still do not know how many patients you will have. To have too many things and too much furniture would show a lack of confidence for which you might be criticized. As you know, the

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.
2. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294 and Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
3. Marie Gaudoin: Louise de Marillac thought that she could replace the Sister Servant.
4. Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant at the time.

Son of God wanted no ostentation in the establishment of His Church. If we are imbued with His spirit, we will want to imitate Him. Things are accumulated easily and laudably, but when they have to be taken away, those who amassed them are blameworthy.

To fulfill her obligations as a good Daughter of Charity, a sister must do all in her power to persuade the Ladies of Charity to undertake the task of visiting the sick. That is why Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, seldom recommends the opening of a hospital in areas where a Confraternity of Charity has been established except in the larger towns.

You are right, my dear Sister, to let me know what you are doing with your beautiful thread. Use it as you see fit; it will always be fine.

Sister Marthe from Nantes[1] and Sister Élisabeth[2] left Sunday to go to serve the soldiers.[3] Pray to God for the entire Company. Remember me to Sister Laurence[4] and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.489 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LOUISE-CHRISTINE[5]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Montmirail

The last day of July (1656)

My very dear Sister,

I wish I had more time to speak to you heart to heart on this happy occasion, but it is already after 10 p.m. I praise God with all my heart for the sincere affection His goodness has given you for one another. This is what maintains the union and support which the Daughters of Charity must have among themselves. This also prevents you from speaking ill of one another when you give an account of each other's conduct because, if some little difference occurs, the whole thing should be forgotten once forgiveness has been asked. This should be the case unless they are matters which are important for the glory of God.

I do not remember, my dear Sister, if I answered a question you asked me some time ago about whether or not you should count any small profit you make. I would say, my dear Sister, that whatever you receive from the house of the good gentlemen of the administration must be rigorously accounted for and you must take from it only what is

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau returned from Nantes in November 1655, see Letter 102.
2. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.
3. They left for La Fère on July 29, 1656 (Coste X, 197).
4. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
5. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.

necessary. However, whatever does not come from them, but belongs to your little household, you may use as do the sisters of the parishes. If you have some savings, use them for your current needs because I know that, by the grace of God, you are not trying to accumulate funds. You have too great a love of holy poverty and too much confidence in God to do that. These are the two pillars of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

All our sisters send their greetings. Had we known sooner that a messenger would be leaving, some of them would have written to you. I thank you with all my heart for the affection you show my son's little family.[1] A good part of his hearing has returned, thank God. His wife is well. So is his little daughter. She was very seriously ill but God, in His goodness, has given her back to us. They are in the country,[2] at the present time. I beg you to pray for all their needs, especially for their salvation. Do not forget to include our Most Honored Father, Monsieur Portail, and the whole Company in your prayers.

Good night, my dear Sisters. Believe me always in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

L.490 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 8 [1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Monsieur de Marillac[3] is quite ill with a cold, and his mother[4] would like me to come to see about it. Since her daughter-in-law[5] is not in Paris, she is somewhat worried. If your Charity would allow me to go to visit them, she will send a carriage for me. I do not know exactly when.

Madame de Herse[6] expects you to take the trouble to visit Saint-Martin.[7] She asked me to go there a few days later. I think that she wants to break up Sister Jeanne's household. That is fine with me since I have wanted to do this for a long time. This ought to convince me of the advantages of awaiting the action of Divine Providence.

1. Michel Le Gras, who married in 1650, had a daughter, Louise-Renée, who was almost six years old.
2. At Champlan, at the home of the parents of Gabrielle, the wife of Michel Le Gras.
3. Monsieur Michel de Marillac, the Councilor of Parliament, see Letter 272b.
4. Marie de Marillac, Carmelite, wife of René, see Letter 77.
5. Jeanne, wife of Michel, is on their estates in Ollainville.
6. Madame de Herse, see Letter 196.
7. Parish of Paris.

We have no news of the good girl from Arras.[1] I am afraid that the sluggishness of my unenlightened mind has caused me to do little to provide for that place as well as for Chars.

May God be praised, my Most Honored Father, for the safe trip of our sisters to La Fère.[2] Since Monsieur de Saint-Jean is pleased about their arrival, there is reason to believe that his charity will take care of them.

I do not know if I am mistaken, but I believe that Our Lord always desires more confidence than prudence in order to maintain the Company, and that this very confidence will imperceptibly give rise to prudence when the need arises. It seems to me that experience has often shown this in the many occasions on which the laziness of my mind made it necessary. If I am mistaken, I hope that your Charity will enlighten me, since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very poor daughter and most obedient servant.

L.492 - TO BE GIVEN TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

before he says Mass

Eve of the Assumption [1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Your holy blessing, please, for all your poor Daughters of Charity, three of whom beg your Charity to offer the renewal of their vows to Our Lord tomorrow, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. There is a fourth sister making this request. She was crippled in the service of the poor soldiers. Only a life of great pain remains for her but she is bearing her affliction well, thank God. I believe that Monsieur Portail has spoken to you about them since they are presenting themselves with his approval.

I long for an hour of your Charity's time for all my needs because I am too negligent to know them well. I hope to obtain from your assistance what our good God wants to grant me because it is through His goodness that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very poor and most obedient daughter.

1. The sisters will leave for Arras on August 30.

2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau and Élisabeth Brocard left on July 29.

L.484 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARIE GAUDOIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Angers

(August 1656)

My very dear Sister,

I thank Our Lord for your safe trip. I was certain that you would be well received both by the administrators and by our sisters. Please send me news of yourself often. Sister Cécile[2] will not be annoyed.

Please let me know what sister was with you when Madame de Bouillon[3] told you to accept 400 pounds from one of the farm women. I believe that it happened in 1654. Also let me know if you had had her request this sum.

Also tell me especially about your health. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.557B - TO SISTER CARCIREUX[4]

(c. 1656)

I received one of your letters, dated some time back. Since I am inclined to believe that you are no longer suffering from the little trials you mentioned to me, I am not going to respond concerning them. I believe that they are the same ones I spoke about previously. Only allow me, my very dear Sister, to say that I praised God many times for the graces He has granted you. I begged Him to help you to forget yourself and to mortify your desire for self-satisfaction which, in you, hides under the beautiful appearance of striving for great perfection. We are greatly deceiving ourselves if we think that we are capable of it, and even more so if we believe that we can attain this perfection by our own efforts and by constantly and closely watching over all the movements and dispositions of our souls. It is a good thing, once a year, to apply ourselves seriously to this kind of examination while being duly distrustful of ourselves and recognizing our weaknesses. But to put ourselves through a continual purgatory to analyze our souls and to give an account of all

1. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294, had just arrived in Angers with Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. In 1654, Marie Gaudoin was in Les Alluets, on the estates of Madame de Bouillon.
4. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

our thoughts is useless, even dangerous. I am repeating to you what I was told long ago.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to help me by your prayers, as I will help you by mine, so that we may obtain from God the grace to walk simply and confidently along the path of His holy love, without too much introspection, lest we resemble those persons who, instead of growing rich, become bankrupt while striving to find the philosopher's stone.

Believe your Revered Director,[1] although you speak with him only once a month, and very briefly even then. Rest assured that that is sufficient for you. Succinct confessions are always the best. What are we looking for in this sacrament? Grace alone, and we can be certain that the divine goodness will not withhold it from us if we approach the sacrament with the necessary dispositions of simplicity, heartfelt sorrow and submission. I beg Our Lord to grant us these dispositions and I am in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.493 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

Paris, August 22, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I received your letter in which, as always, you express your most dear and tender affection for us. I thank you with all my heart, assuring you of the same from us, although we can reveal it to you only before God.

I am still quite worried about our sisters of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont because of Sister Claude's[2] persistent illness. If you have learned anything about them, I beg you, my dear Sister, to let me know. Also give me news of Sister Laurence[3] whom I cordially greet. I can assure you of the good health of Sister Cécile[4] who wrote to me not long ago. We have given some thought to having her come here. If that happens, you can be certain, my dear Sister, that we will see you shortly thereafter.

You say that you are sending us some thread but you did not tell us how much or where it was to arrive. Perhaps it has not come yet.

All our sisters wish to be remembered to you and to Sister Laurence. So do I with all my heart. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Pierre de Beaumont, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, see Letter 531b.
2. Claude Chantereau, see Letter 421.
3. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
4. Cécile Angiboust at Angers, see Letter 108.

L.491 - TO MONSIEUR BÉGUIN

An Administrator of the Petites Maisons and other places

(c. 1656)

Monsieur,

Monsieur Vincent has directed me to write to you. He has learned that Sister Anne,[1] who is at the Hospital of the Petites Maisons, has had a disagreement with the Pastor concerning the patients and wishes to be allowed to change confessor lest the same thing happen again and they be hindered, even in the slightest way, from fulfilling their duty. Our Most Honored Superior, having duly reflected on the matter and on the importance of such encounters, has granted her this permission, after having her humbly apologize and trying to prevent this change. His Charity went to the trouble of placing the matter before the said Revered Pastor who very graciously agreed. However, Monsieur, since that time, during the meeting where our sister was to offer her apology, do you know what has happened? Some of your administrators have also been told of this by someone other than us and it is now said that there will be a display of resentment toward him when these gentlemen hold their next administrative meeting. In the name of God, Monsieur, I beg you very humbly to prevent that because of the respect we owe his priestly character and his virtue which was often a good example for our sister, as she has frequently told us.

I most humbly ask your pardon, Monsieur, for taking this liberty. While writing, I realize that you know him better than I and that all the administrators recognize the need to maintain his authority for the glory of God and the welfare of souls entrusted to his care. Moreover, if the slightest affront were offered to this person whom we are bound to honor, we would be forced to withdraw our sisters for many reasons. However, I hope that, by the goodness of God, the spirit of Charity which He has given to your Company will restore calm by supporting the weak, among whom our sisters are to be found.

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1. Anne Hardemont was at the Petites Maisons from October 1655 until November 1657.

L.290 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 9, 1656

Monsieur,

I believe that you are caught between hope and fear as you await news of the good girl[1] whom your Charity has sent us. I would say, Monsieur, that I was waiting to get to know her better so that I might better reassure you about her. All that we have observed until now gives us good reason to hope for the best. That is why I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to allow me to let Sister Cécile[2] present to you the girls to whom God may give the desire to serve Him in our Company.

I am very anxious to know if His Excellency[3] received a letter which I had the honor of writing to him at the time of the departure of our sisters[4] for Angers. The fear of importuning him prevented me from answering the last letter he did me the honor of sending me.

Be so good, Monsieur, as to point out my duty to me and believe me always in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and grateful servant.

P.S. I had hoped to respond to Monsieur Ratier's very kind letter. Allow me, Monsieur, to ask his pardon for not doing so. I am too pressed for time just now.

L.497 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

October 13, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I saw your last dear letter only today because of the infirmities caused by a fall which I had almost five weeks ago. I had not yet learned of the situation at the house of the poor. But my God, my dear Sister, who is going to live there and what will happen to the work of the Ladies of Charity, if their patients are obliged to go to the hospital? You will see that the bashful poor will be deprived of the help they receive from cooked

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, Bishop of Angers, see Letter 521.
4. Marie Gaudoin and Claude Carré.

food and medicines. The small sum of money they will be given will not be used for their needs. We must do all in our power to prevent this from happening by very humble and charitable remonstrances.

What shall I say to you about the beautiful house in which you live? Does not your profession of lowliness and poverty at times give you a twinge of fear? If so, I hope that you make heroic acts of virtue, both interiorly and exteriorly, so that you are ashamed to attract attention because you look upon yourself as the last and the least in that place, since you have only the food and clothing that God allows to be provided for you gratuitously.

I am very edified to see the lights that Our Lord gives Sisters Cécile[1] concerning these truths. As always, she sends her love and recommends herself to your prayers as do all our other sisters. Sister Marguerite Chétif[2] and Sister Radegonde[3] arrived at Arras to establish the Charity. I hope that God will bestow His blessing upon it.

Redouble your prayers, I beg of you, for poor Poland, and consequently, for the Catholic religion. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our Most Honored Father still seems to be in his usual health; nevertheless, his age and little infirmities should keep us always close to God so that we may ask Him to preserve him for us, because we need him more than ever. I am sure that you do pray for him and also for Monsieur Portail. He is also well, thank God, and continues to work for the Company. You are not feasting us with your good cider and fine fruit, but I am willing to believe that the abundant share you give to the poor prevents you from considering them yours.

L.498 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

The last day of October [Tuesday, October 31, 1656]

My Most Honored Father,

Three of our sisters very humbly beg your Charity to allow them to renew their vows tomorrow, namely: Sister Jeanne Henault,[4] for the third

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
3. Radegonde Lenfantin, sent to Arras on April 30, 1656. In September 1660, after the departure of Marguerite Chétif, who had been named Superioress General, she went through a period of depression and left Arras. However, she returned and died as a Daughter of Charity (Coste VIII, 446).
4. Jeanne Henault, see Letter 353.

time; Sister Mathurine from Richelieu, for the second time; and Sister Avoie,[1] for the third or fourth time. Monsieur Portail has given his approval. They are good girls.

I am retiring this evening uncertain of what would be pleasing to God. I went to Mass Sunday. I will try to go to Holy Communion, provided I am helped before God by your Charity. I ask for your holy blessing since I am, my Most Honored Father, you very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Without inconveniencing you, can we not look forward to your conference on one of these feast days?

L.499 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

November 17, 1656

My very dear Sister,

Your dear and lengthy letter about yourself and your holy works gave me great pleasure. I beg Our Lord to shower His blessings upon them. So you are now regular hospital sisters. Provided this does not interfere with the work of the Confraternity of Charity, I hope that everything will turn out well. If such is not the case, it is to be feared that, as in other places, neither work will prosper. I am sure that you will see to it that this does not occur.

The good Pastor took the trouble to come to see us. I was very pleased with his visit. I advised him to go to see Monsieur Vincent but I do not know if they met. With the help of God, when he is returning, I will not fail to send Sister Laurence[2] the cross she asked for and to include also the one you requested.

I wrote to you after the linen arrived but, since I was not certain that it was from you, I did not thank you for taking the trouble to buy it for us. I do so now with all my heart. I beg you, if you need any of our goods or money, do not hesitate to use them because you know that all our possessions are in common, and that I am entirely at your disposition and Sister Laurence's, being in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

L.547B - TO SISTER CARCIREUX[1]

(c. 1656)

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His holy graces and blessings upon you. I thank both of you with all my heart for the care which your charity has caused you to take to preserve the life of this wretched body which offends God so much here on earth. It seems that, in His mercy, He wants to prolong its life for a short while, but it cannot be for much longer. That is why I beg you, my dear Sisters, to show your affection for me by begging Our Lord to grant me salvation, which I can hope for, if I fulfill His holy will for the rest of my days. Ask God for this grace for me. I promise to do the same for you in the hope that your fidelity in observing your Rules—which we hope to send you very soon—will draw down upon you the fruit of our poor prayers. I could not otherwise hope for this because of my wretchedness.

Your confidence in speaking so affectionately to us brought me more consolation than I can ever express. Those whom Our Lord has united by His holy love should act in this way, my dear Sister. I beg you to believe that I return your affection.

I see, from your dear letter, that our good Sister Charlotte[2] is still suffering from her ailments. I have no doubt, my dear Sister, that you are giving her a great deal of help to bear them in a Christian manner so that, by the good use she will make of them, Our Lord may use them to sanctify her by the merits of His holy life and His precious death for us upon the Cross. Since her illness did not start in Richelieu, there is no reason to believe that she should be moved. Is it not true, my dear Sister, that it is sometimes a joy for you to serve her needs, and that you look upon her as the first among your patients and as the dear companion God has given you to help you to grow in holiness? Do not scruple to omit one or other of your exercises either to assist your sister or for the service of the poor. You do this for the love of God and this is what He asks of you. Remember that the thing that we must have most at heart, and the greatest honor that we can receive, is to satisfy the wishes of our Divine Master.

I am distressed that you found reason to consider us ungrateful. You had not yet received our letters in which we expressed our gratitude for what you sent us. It is in our interest to receive your acts of kindness but I have even greater satisfaction in seeing the advantage they are to you.

1. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

2. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.

In this one action, my very dear Sister, I find several acts of virtue deserving great merit, such as your charity in forming several girls and rendering them capable of serving God and His poor. Moreover, in this you evince great detachment and abandonment to Divine Providence. You have reason, my dear Sister, to beg Our Lord to purify all your intentions. I am certain that, for your part, you will cooperate with His grace in this matter.

In my previous letters, I had given both you and your companion reason to believe that we would have each of you in turn come here; however, we will have to await God's good time. As for your Rules, we will try to send them to you when the first safe means presents itself. In good faith, continue to practice what you know of them and believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my two dear and good Sisters . . .

P.S. Our sisters send their cordial greetings and our two co-officers are doing their best to send you news of us. If our good God continues to bestow His blessings on the Company, we will never have enough good sisters to send to all the places requesting our services from our Most Honored Father. The Queen sent two sisters to La Fère[1] and Her Majesty wants them to remain there. Two others have left for Arras.[2] Moreover, my dear Sisters, we are forced to refuse some establishments, for which we must truly humble ourselves. Implore this grace from Our Lord for me and for the entire Company.

L.500 - TO SISTER CHARLOTTE ROYER

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

November 20 (1656)

My very dear Sister,

I learned from our dear Sister Françoise[3] that Our Lord still continues to bestow His graces upon you by permitting your infirmities to persist; and that sometimes you suffer more than at other times, as I believe to be the case just now. You are well aware, my dear Sister, that the path by which God wants you to go to Him is the royal road of the Cross. I have no doubt that willingly and cheerfully you allow yourself to be led along this way so as to accomplish His holy will, as I hope you did when his Divine Providence charged you with the care of your little family. Perhaps, my dear Sister, your mind was a bit troubled by this, as was the

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau and Élisabeth Brocard left for La Fère on July 29, 1656.
2. Marguerite Chétif and Radegonde Lenfantin left for Arras on August 30, 1656.
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

case with one of our sisters who recently shed bitter tears for the same reason. That seems virtuous, but we must admit that we are deceiving ourselves, and acknowledge that it is our ignorance which makes us consider this duty an honor and a pleasure. If only we understood the duty of the Sister Servant! Oh, how we would humble ourselves when this responsibility was given us, considering ourselves to be the burden of the house, the one whom everyone must support; we would also realize that we are obliged, by our solicitude, to serve in all the duties of the house, and to give good example in all things. Moreover, if we carried out our responsibilities well, we would have a right only to the refuse of others and we would hold each of our sisters in our heart.

Let us try, my dear Sister, to observe these holy practices. Let us prefer the will of our sisters to our own, when their desires are not contrary to the holy will of God in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you, my dear Sister, to extend my very humble apology to Sister Françoise for not writing to her. I have misplaced her letter and I am too pressed for time. I greet her most cordially.

L.501 - TO SISTER GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

November 22, 1656

My very dear Sister,

The Reverend Chaplain[2] and Almoner of the château honored us with a visit during which his charity greatly edified me. I praise God that I was not mistaken in the trust I always placed in him. We are greatly indebted to him. I trust, Sister, that you do not fail to show your deep gratitude to him by being submissive to his orders for your work.

If you see Madame, the Marquise de Saint-Simon,[3] assure her of my very humble respect and obedience. Greet Sister Jeanne[4] for me. I urge both of you to learn to write and to write to me yourselves and tell me about yourselves, as I have already explained to each of you, because I am not comfortable unless I have news from you personally. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Monsieur de la Hode.
3. Madame de Saint-Simon, whose husband was the overseer of the Château of Chantilly.
4. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.

P.S. The chaplain told me that you were to change residence but not neighborhood. The assurance he gave me that he would not advise you to do anything contrary to the wishes of the Queen leads me to tell you not to raise any difficulty in the matter and to be careful to be very accommodating, both for the sick and for the schoolgirls, whom you are obliged to assist and to teach.

L.638 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

in his solitude[1]

November 29 (1656)

Monsieur,

You continue your goodness and I continue to take the liberty of increasing your difficulties by asking you to be so kind as to re-read the ninth article[2] to see if you find this addition acceptable: "The sisters in the parishes, either in villages or in towns, may not buy any material, either serge or linen, for their clothing; the Superioress of their house provides it. For this end, it is customary that any surplus left over from the money given them by the Ladies of their food and clothing be brought to the said Superioress for this purpose; when she considers it appropriate, she permits them to purchase little necessities themselves when these are presented to her."

My thoughts are so scattered that I cannot explain clearly the meaning of what I want to tell you without using my poor wording, which your Charity will change as you wish.

Article number 15,[3] whether it be changed or expanded, is essential, if you judge it appropriate: "The Sister Servants must notify the Superioress of the needs arising from the illness of their sisters before subjecting them to remedies." Some act in this way, but others provide remedies as the end of the article foresees.

I failed to mention, Monsieur, that Article 13 stands more in need of reins than of spurs[4] because, as soon as a sister becomes ill, she must be

1. During their retreats, the priests of Saint-Lazare withdrew to a small house at the far end of the garden.
2. In 1656, the text of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity was being drafted (Coste VI, 66). Monsieur Vincent would explain this Article 9 during the Conference of August 5, 1657 (Coste X, 287).
3. Articles 13 and 15 would be explained during the Conference of November 11, 1657 (Coste X, 338 and 343).
4. The bridle holds back a horse; the spurs push it forward.

served chicken and veal and be settled in bed like a lady. When the sisters have superfluities such as these or when they have them to arrange their rooms, they claim that the Ladies want them. Assuredly, the Ladies would be satisfied with neatness and cleanliness.[1]

You will perhaps be as astonished as I was to learn that one of our sisters made a bathrobe, or had it made, and that her sick companion was wearing it yesterday when she got up. This happened at Saint-Merry. That is a simple thing, it is true, but many a young noblewoman or woman of the merchant class in Paris does not possess one. Moreover, Monsieur, such a thing has far-reaching consequences. Please reflect on whether or not everything I told you concerning this article is to be taken into consideration and do me the honor of believing that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. Since you will take the trouble to have this book (of Rules) re-copied, you would do us a great service, Monsieur, if you had it folded again, so that it will be thicker and stronger when covered with parchment and will also be more durable in the house.

L.503 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

December 15, 1656

My very dear Sister,

I am a bit worried about you because I have not had news of you for so long. I have not had a letter since the linen arrived and I have already thanked you for it twice. I have been waiting to hear of the departure of the Pastor of Sainte-Croix[2] because I wanted to send you and Sister Laurence[3] the crosses you requested. However, I am afraid that he may well have left without letting us know. If such be the case, when you have found another safe way to send them, please let us know. I hope that it will be in time to let us send you your New Year's gifts.

Please send me all the news about yourself, assure Sister Laurence of my affection, and believe that I am for both of you, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

1. During the Conference of December 14, Monsieur Vincent comments on this subject.
2. One of the parishes of Bernay.
3. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

1657

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Saint-Fargeau, at Cahors, and at la Salpétrière in Paris.

May: *Second visit of Monsieur Berthe to Angers.*

November: *Letters Patent from the King approving the Company of the Daughters of Charity.*

L.505 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE AGNÈS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Jean at Angers

January 8, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I imagine that it must have grieved you to go so long without receiving a letter from us. I have so little time because of my ailments and the sister who assists me has also been unwell. This has caused part of the delay. However, I was also waiting for the first conference of the year, so I could participate in the drawing for the holy pictures, in your place, after our Most Honored Father had blessed them. Enclosed are the ones that Providence has chosen for you. We wanted to allow each of you the consolation of drawing her own when they are distributed.

The subject of the Conference[2] was the obligation we have of striving after our own perfection this year, even more intensely than we have in the past. The first point gave the reasons why we must strive to reach perfection; the second, the means at our disposition to attain it; the third, the obstacles that we might encounter as we seek perfection.

If Monsieur l'abbé[3] could spare you a little time, and if all our sisters were animated by a sincere desire to reach personal perfection, I think that you would profit considerably by a little conference on this subject. Believe me, Sister, it is more harmful to our sanctification than good to seek our own satisfaction by speaking privately first to one person then to another. However, the advice given to all, assembled in the name of Our Lord, which each one receives as coming from the hand of God and intended for her personally, is much more profitable.

But allow me to tell you what often prevents us from being better and more faithful despite all the instructions which are so charitably given us. It occurs when we do not reflect that it is God who is speaking to us, or when we say that such and such a thing is said for us personally because

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Conference of January 6, 1657 (Coste X, 242).
3. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.

we are held in low repute. It also happens when, instead of being convinced that we need all that is being taught us, we are bold enough to say that it is being addressed to this sister or that one, or that another sister has indeed been told off.

Am I not mean to think this way? But do not believe, my dear Sisters, that I think such things of you. I point them out because I have observed such conduct in some sisters here, and each of us is capable of committing all the faults that others commit. I, therefore, allow myself to bring these obstacles to your attention while begging God to preserve you from them and urging you, during this new year, to renew your first fervor for the service of God, so as to obtain from His goodness the grace of fidelity and perseverance in fulfilling His holy will. If you realized how fortunate you are to be in a place where everything contributes to your sanctification, you would praise God continually for having chosen you for this work.

Sister Gaudoin,[1] I will not fail to write to Beauvais as you requested. I send my cordial greetings to all our sisters and to each one in particular. It is a great consolation for me to know that Sister Claude[2] is in the disposition you mentioned, as are all our dear sisters. If humility, simplicity and charity, which produce support, are well established among you, your little Company will be made up of as many saints as there are persons. We must not wait, however, for someone else to begin. If it can be said that these holy practices are not universally in use, let each of us be the very first to start. Moreover, it is not enough to begin because she who starts out generously should say, " I will never tire of practicing these virtues even though I may not reach the level of holiness of others." This latter would not happen.

It has pleased Our Lord to call to Himself Sister Claude Chantereau,[3] who was serving the poor in Lower Normandy, on the estates of the Duchess de Ventadour.[4] O my dear Sisters, what a sweet fragrance her virtues have left! Our sister,[5] who was fortunate enough to live with her, related all the consolations she enjoyed while they were together. These poor daughters witness well to their fidelity to Our Lord. They live 15 leagues from Caen, in an area through which no courier service passes, so they sometimes go three months without receiving any news of us and our letters are frequently lost. Despite all this, they live as if they were here with us. I beg you to thank God for this and for the strength His

1. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294.
2. Claude Carré, from Neuville, near Pontoise, arrived at the hospital of Nantes in August 1646. She was the Assistant of the house. She returned to Paris around 1652-1653. She arrived in Angers in approximately the month of August 1656. She would be named Sister Servant after the departure of Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 198.
3. Claude Chantereau was at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, see Letter 421.
4. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
5. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

goodness gives Monsieur Vincent whom I am sure you do not forget in your prayers.

All our sisters send greetings and join me in asking to be remembered in your prayers. I beg the Blessed Virgin, if such be the will of God, to assist, with her all-powerful intercession, our very dear sister who trusts in her. I am, with all my heart, in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.506 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CATHERINE[1] AND MARIE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Brienne

January 10, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

I am writing this very hasty note to assure you that I am not ill and that our Most Honored Father is well, thank God. I am sure that you will still continue to pray for his well-being.

I praise God, Sister Marie, that you are completely restored to health. It is true that I failed to write to you last month, but you know the reason why. Had I not feared to sadden and upset you, I would have put it off again for the same reason.

We are enclosing the pictures and maxims that were drawn for you after they had been blessed by Monsieur Vincent. I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace to make good use of them.

Sister Jeanne Blot is very worried about her little brother. I beg you to find out what he is doing; if he and his sisters are living in the fear of God; and if this child is learning anything.

All our sisters send their greetings. The sisters from Brienne[3] are in good health and are progressing well, if a bit slowly. Please explain clearly to their relatives that they are not sufficiently well-instructed to write to them often, and that all our sisters have so much to do that they cannot take the time necessary to write.

As for your brothers, they are doing very well at the Mission, and, as I already told you, are still in the same dispositions. As for your cousin, I think I told you that he had left. O my dear Sisters, what a good thing it is to confide all our affections and all our cares to Divine Providence!

1. Catherine Baucher, a native of Épône, in the department of Seine-et-Oise. She was placed at Nantes from 1649-1653. She was in Brienne in 1654-1655. She was sent to Poland in 1668 and remained there until 1679.
2. Marie Donion, see Letter 382
3. The sisters who were natives of Brienne.

It is a means to obtain peace of heart which I beg Our Lord to bestow on you. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please pray to God for the repose of the soul of Sister Claude Chantereau.[1] Toward the end of last year, Sister Elisabeth[2] praised her highly to us for the way she had seen her practice virtue.

Sister Elisabeth Brocard[3] is in good health. She is at La Fère with Sister Marie-Marthe[4] nursing the poor soldiers, wounded during the last battle in Picardy. God willing, they will be back soon, I think.

L.507 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

January 10, 1657

Monsieur,

I hope that your goodness will pardon me for the long time I have allowed to pass without affording myself the honor of thanking you most humbly, as I do now, for your continuous charity toward our sisters, and for the news you went to the trouble of sending us about them. It is true, Monsieur, that our Sister Marie[5] does not yet seem to have sufficient knowledge to replace our Sister Cécile.[6] So long as her dispositions are not negative, and she possesses discretion, sound judgment and some foundation in virtue, perhaps the experience and practical ability of our sister, which she will constantly observe, will suffice to form her mind for authority. I think that we will need time to determine that.

I praise God, Monsieur, for your perfect cure. His Providence knows the need the Church has for your good health and all that He wills to accomplish through you in the proposed work. I hope for many blessings for it if you resolve to overcome all difficulties with your usual confidence.

I was a little too forward when, speaking to our sisters of a conference which Monsieur Vincent had given us on the Feast of the Epiphany, it occurred to me that a similar one would be very profitable for them.[7] I feel certain, Monsieur, that they will importune you for one, and if I were

1. Claude Chantereau died at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, see Letter 421.
2. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
3. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237, was in Angers with Marie Donion.
4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau was at Nantes with Catherine Baucher.
5. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294.
6. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
7. See Letter 505.

not too considerate, because of the great tasks with which I know that your Charity is burdened, I would join my supplications to theirs.

I beg your pardon for taking this liberty. Believe that I am, with the respect I owe you, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.

L.393 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CATHERINE[1] AND MARIE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Brienne

January 12, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

I do not know if Brother Mathieu's[3] brothers gave you a little note in which I told Sister Catherine to come here by the first safe route, and if necessary, to come by way of Troyes, so as to be in good company. However, since I am fairly certain that you have not left Brienne, I beg you to wait for another order because I have not yet spoken to Madame, the Countess de Brienne,[4] and Monsieur Vincent wants us to obtain her consent. I hope that Our Lord will grant the prayers of his Charity and of Monsieur Portail, to whom I conveyed your very humble greetings yesterday, and that by means of them, your sufferings will be changed into consolation because of the crosses you are privileged to bear. Yes, my dear Sisters, the greatest honor you can receive is to follow Jesus Christ carrying His cross.

Our Most Honored Father sends word to Sister Catherine that her brothers, Marin and Éloi, are both fine. The former is at Saintes while the latter is at Orsigny which is four leagues from Paris. Both are doing very well, thank God, as is Brother Aubin,[5] whom I thought had left, but who is at Turin in Piedmont.

See, my dear Sister, how many graces Our Lord bestows upon you. I also believe that, for your part, you do not fail to be faithful to Him. Nor does Sister Marie[6] who has given us so many excellent proofs of this.

1. Catherine Baucher, see Letter 506.
2. Marie Donion, see Letter 382.
3. Brother Mathieu Regnard was a native of Brienne. Born in 1592, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1631. He distributed alms to the devastated regions of Lorraine with great courage and daring. His very lively accounts of his work and of the misery he encountered more than once moved the Ladies of Charity.
4. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86.
5. Brother Aubin Gontier, the cousin of Catherine Baucher, was the cook in Turin.
6. Marie Donion, see Letter 382.

I beg Our Saviour to grant you perseverance and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. We are sending you your New Year's pictures. They were blessed by our Most Honored Father. Pay the postage on your letters so that they will be delivered promptly.

L.508 - (TO SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS AT BERNAY)[1]

January 13, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I communicated your difficulties concerning a confessor to (Monsieur Vincent) who told me to ask you to go to the same one as Sister . . . [2] for very important reasons. I was certain, my dear Sister, that the advice you sought in the matter reveals your submission. The act of obedience which you will perform will make it easier for you to overcome the difficulty you experienced because of the blessing Our Lord will bestow upon it. We must act in this way so as not to stray from the path of God's will.

I shall not fail to write to the Pastor of Nanteuil, as you requested, to obtain news of your brothers. As soon as I have heard anything, I will let you know.

I praise God for the blessings He is showering upon your work. I am sure that you recall clearly that, in order for the service we render Him to be pleasing to Him, it must proceed from a good heart, that is to say, one that is accustomed to mortifying its own judgment and will and to denying satisfaction to its senses and passions. Without this, my dear Sisters, our actions are empty noise. In them there is only self-love; and such self-love banishes the pure love of God which is the philosopher's stone that changes everything into gold and makes all our actions meritorious.

I have no doubt, my dear Sister, that your desire to please God and to work out your salvation will cause you to be vigilant with regard to yourself, so that you may know if you are doing what God desires of you and see if you are committing any faults.

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1. Copy from Marguerite Chétif's notebook, series Laurence Dubois.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

L.509 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

January 25, 1657

My very dear Sister,

Today I received three of your letters, all dated this month, in which you mention several different things which make me question the solidity of your establishment. You tell me that Monsieur l'abbé does not think that you are adequately housed. I urge you to let me know how things really are. We will not fail to send you whatever you request when we send a sister there.

I am disturbed at having delayed so long in sending assistance and consolation to our poor afflicted sister.[1] But, you would not believe, my dear Sister, how difficult it is for us to find sisters suited for such out-of-the-way places because of the number of requests we receive from different areas. We must look to the aid of Divine Providence, so I beg you to pray to Our Lord for this intention.

You are certainly right not to worry about the gossip of the world. Provided we do not give rise to such talk, let us remain at peace. Should it happen that we give occasion for it, let us humble ourselves very much and try to correct our faults. This does not mean, my dear Sister, that I suspect that you have displeased anyone, but you know that often the world gives rise to its own discontent.

Please let me know if the Pastor from Bernay has returned. Recommend me to Sister Laurence's[2] prayers and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. When you write, my dear Sister, address your letters to the Cloister of Saint-Germain-de-l'Auxerrois, for our sisters, because the messenger keeps them too long.

Please tell Sister Laurence that I wrote to the Pastor of Nanteuil to have detailed news of her relatives and that I beg her, in the meantime, to remember that her good angel is giving God news of how she uses the graces He has granted her.

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1. Élisabeth Jousteau who had been alone in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont since the death of Claude Chantereau, see Letter 506.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

L.510 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

January 10, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

I was very consoled, as I have already told you, to know that the poor are so well served. May God be forever praised for this! Since you acquit yourselves of this duty, I have no doubt that you are also very exact in the observance of your Rules, particularly those dealing with restraint in frequenting persons of the world without great necessity. Believe me, Sisters, sometimes people of the world reproach us a bit because we fail in certain social graces that it would be inappropriate to manifest toward them. However, later on, when they realize that we act out of virtuous principles, they are edified. They see quite clearly those who allow themselves to be won over, to some degree, by their applause. I am sure that you will not be surprised by the little advice I am offering you. It is always beneficial for those who receive it as coming from God, even if they have no need of it in a given matter.

Sister Jeanne Bonvilliers[1] must take a little trip here. I urge you, Sister Geneviève,[2] to send her as soon as possible because, although I place my full confidence in you, as I would in any one of our sisters, nevertheless, it is not proper for you to remain alone during the celebration of Carnival.

Please send me news of your health and everything else about you, when Sister comes. I ask both of you to believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

L.511 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 1657]

My Most Honored Father,

Upon my arrival, I noticed Sister Louise Ganset[3] whom you know through Monsieur du Fresne.[4] She knows how to bleed and is an excellent schoolteacher. I immediately thought of suggesting her to your Charity

1. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.
2. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
3. Louise Ganset, see Letter 11.
4. Monsieur du Fresne was the steward and secretary of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi. He lived in Villepreux. He was a friend of Monsieur Vincent.

for Maule. She could leave as early as tomorrow, Thursday, eve of the Feast of the Blessed Virgin.[1] We had thought of not sending her outside of this house both because of her age and for other little reasons that are not significant for Maule. However, I spoke with her this evening and realized that she can still easily undertake to live outside the city. If we have to withdraw her at the end of the summer because of her health, our good God will indicate someone else to us for this work.

I must confess, my Most Honored Father, that I am deeply affected when I see our sisters straying from the path of fidelity. However, if I have failed by my powerlessness or for some other reason, I hope that our Sister Louise will expiate my fault for which I very humbly ask pardon of your Charity. I hope for your forgiveness because I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I ask your Charity to please respond so that our sister may leave by the Saint-Germain coach.

L.480B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

February 6 (1657)

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished that you have not sent Sister Jeanne[3] to us. I am afraid that your lack of firmness allows her too much freedom to practice her own devotions. I realize that you have a lot to do. When a sister is so near to Paris, she should take a little trip here from time to time; a stay of two or three days would be sufficient. You are aware, my dear Sister, how much good this can do.

Sister Françoise Paule[4] asks that you let her know if you received a pound of catholicon and if so, how long ago, if you can remember. I urge you to have our sister come as soon as possible. I must close because the courier is in a hurry.

I beg Our Lord to fill your hearts with His holy love and I am, for both of you, in this same love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

1. The Feast of the Purification, February 2.
2. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
3. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.
4. Françoise Paule was at the Motherhouse. She had entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity about 1650-51. She was made an Officer in June 1658.

L.512 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Feast of Saint Apolline [February 1657]

My Most Honored Father,

I do not recall ever having seen anyone more worthy of compassion than a young woman who went to see you on two successive days last week. She is the daughter of a certain Madame du Lorier and was bringing your Charity a letter from her husband asking you to employ him or to find some employment for him. This good young woman is in such dire need that she questions if she cannot, in conscience, take advantage of an opportunity that is presenting itself. This offer comes, surprisingly enough, from a person you know who promises to put her in comfortable circumstances, telling her that it is only her need that attracts him to her. It seemed to me, my Most Honored Father, that to prevent such a criminal offense against God, it would be a good thing to inform the Ladies of Charity of this opportunity to practice corporal and spiritual charity. The young woman said that she sometimes has gone three or four days without bread. She assured me that she was still innocent because she has been in this extremity only four or five months during which she has been trying to straighten out her affairs with her creditors, after having been forced to give up a large hardware store at the base of the Pont-Neuf. She has been very well-brought-up and has entreated me to investigate the truth of all she has told me.

If the Ladies are willing to assist her, I will see to it that they are not deceived. Although I do not know her, I recommend her to you with all my heart for the love of God, thanks to which I have the honor to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. I very humbly beg you to do me the charity of allowing me to talk to you before Lent.

L.513 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Nantes in Britanny

February 10, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

For a long time now, I have put off sharing with you the great sorrow

I experienced at knowing that you are so overworked because there are so few of you and there are once again so many sick persons. My greatest sorrow is not knowing how to relieve you. Is there no one, who esteems you work and desires to see it continue, to explain the impossibility of your going on without an increase in your number? But, my dear Sisters, this must not come from you, because although we would have great difficulty in sending sisters immediately, it could be thought that we have more than enough. I am not speaking of persons in authority but of those who do not always accept what others find good.

What can you do in this situation my dear Sisters? Nothing but practice patience and imitate, as far as you are able, the example of Our Lord who consumed His strength and His life in the service of His neighbor. By so doing you will find strength not only for your bodies but even for your minds which will receive very extraordinary consolations. This will lead to the sanctification of your souls by an interior grace that will produce unfailing union and cordiality among you. The mutual support generated will make easy all that nature finds difficult. It will also enable you to find consolation even in face of your repugnances and in the denial of your personal satisfaction by showing you that any comfort we seek, except from persons to whom God has bound us by His love and for similar functions in His service, can only be very harmful to us.

I believe that you have no need of this advice. Experience has taught this truth: we are well advised when the example of others helps us to avoid the difficulties that are so prejudicial to the body of Companies and to each of their members, and which are noticed only after a great deal of damage has been done. I beg Our Lord to preserve you from these evils. Do not be surprised, my dear Sisters, that I speak to you of these things, although your little community gives me no reason to do so. You are aware that even those farthest advanced in the way of perfection must mistrust themselves, and that we are told that if we are standing, we must be careful not to fall.

What reassures me about you is the fact that you have good confessors. Even if the only assistance you receive from them is the knowledge that their advice will do you no harm, that is already a great deal. What I find essential, and recommend with all my heart, is that the entire community go always to the same confessor. This is not to say that I want you to go always to one confessor. It is possible that the one Monsieur Vincent gave you as your principal confessor cannot always be available. However, if there is another who serves as ordinary confessor, let everyone go to him. I do not say this to you without reason. I do so because I am aware of the disorder that appeared in a community in which, little by little, the practice was introduced of giving the members the liberty of going some to one confessor, some to another. Discord and trouble arose from the insinuation of this evil into a company that was

previously well-regulated and closely united and in which God was greatly honored. I beg Our Lord to preserve you from this disorder, as I am confident He will, if you continue to love one another and to strive to overcome your passions and any little inclinations which sometimes take us by surprise.

I believe I told you of the death of Sister Claude Chantereau. Another time, God willing, I will share with you what we learned during the conference on her virtues. Courage, my dear Sisters! This life is so short for so many! And as you know, the recompense for our interior and exterior sufferings is eternal. But it will be given only to those who have fought valiantly. I wish victory to all of you, my dear Sisters, and I am in the love of Jesus Christ, by which we overcome all our difficulties, if we trust in Him rather than in creatures, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.514 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

February 16 [1657]

My Most Honored Father,

Enclosed is the document that has caused me such worry. It was lent to me again for a week. I am sending it to your Charity sealed, so that it will be seen only by those whom you judge appropriate.

I beg you, for the love of God, to allow me to continue the diet of eggs and barley broth which I began this Lent. I have reason to believe that it abates the heat of my blood by some relief that I feel in the beating of the arteries. I am asking this grace of you in a spirit of simplicity. I see so clearly the additional need that I feel obliged to do so although, because I am so wretched, I fear that it is more from attachment to my health than from concern about observing the precept. Nevertheless, I believe myself to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.515 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

March 10, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I was not able to send you a letter with Sister Marie Navain[2] who left today to join you. I did not like delaying so long in sending her to you, but it so happened that she had not made a retreat for nearly two years. My confidence in you led us to give her the time to make one so that we would not be obliged to send for her at another time just for that.

If Monsieur Vincent has not answered your letter, my dear Sister, I believe that it is because he wants you to come here for two or three days so that you can see him to discuss the matter fully. I also think that this is essential. However, if there is nothing urgent, I believe that this meeting cannot take place before the feast days. I will let you be judge of that, according to the needs you see in your work.

I thank you very humbly, my dear Sister, in the name of the entire community, for the excellent fish. If I could have sent it back to you promptly, I would have asked you to prepare a treat with it for your poor patients, because you are well aware that our Company does not indulge in such delicacies. However, since this could not be done, your charity provided for several of our sick sisters, of which I was one.

You also sent us an écu. We had forgotten what it was for, so we gave it to Sister Marie for her trip. She will give you a full account of it. I am not going to tell you anything about her. You are well aware of her virtue which will continue to grow because of the good example of yours, which I beg Our Lord to increase more and more in you. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Greetings to the Reverend Chaplain.[3] Please assure him, as well as the Officers of the Confraternity of Charity, of my very humble respect.

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1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Marie Navain, born on August 8, 1619 at Asnières-sur-Oise, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on June 10, 1648. The letters of Louise de Marillac allow us to follow her to Chantilly from 1657-1658 and then to Paris. She died in April 1686 at the Motherhouse. Despite her frail health, she was very devoted to the poor.
3. Monsieur de la Hode.

L.517 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity at Bernay

March 20, 1657

My very dear Sister,

Finally, I have given up hope that one of our sisters would have to pass by Bernay. The Providence of our good God has arranged it otherwise. She left Sunday for Caen,[1] which is the most direct route. I am almost sorry it turned out this way because of the pleasant time you could have enjoyed coming and going together. I beg you, when you have the opportunity, to show them the charity of writing to them. They will be greatly consoled if you send them news of yourself and of us in this way.

I do not know if you received the two letters I sent you. They were written fairly closely together. You can be certain that I was delighted to receive the last two you sent me. Your forbearance will help the Ladies to understand that you undertook nothing on your own, and that you have no intention of challenging their authority. I am convinced that you acted in this with great humility and with great gratitude for the goodness of God. I beg you to help Sister Laurence[2] to manifest similar sentiments.

I am sending herewith the eight yards of material you requested. I urge you to save any old worn-out habit you might have for us. We can use it to make linings.

With all my heart, my dear Sister, I wish that you could take a trip here. However, the time has not yet come for that because of the matters which God has entrusted to you in Bernay. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His blessings upon them. Help us also, my dear Sister, to thank the divine goodness for the extraordinary strength that He has given to our Most Honored Father. Despite his many ailments, he is working harder than ever. By the grace of God, Monsieur Portail is also fairly well, although he has had a very bad cold. We must ask God to watch over the health of both of them for His glory. I am in His love, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Marie Papillon went to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont to assist Élisabeth Jousteau who had been alone there since Claude Chantereau's death.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

L.403 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday Evening [March 1657]

For the love of Our Lord, my Most Honored Father, I ask your permission to fast these last two days of Lent. I have spent the season so badly. For this same love, I also ask for your blessing and urge you to reflect before God on the answer we are to give Mademoiselle,[1] who is requesting two sisters for her hospital at Saint-Fargeau.[2] She first made this request a long time ago. It is said that this area is in dire need of spiritual and corporal assistance, and the disposition of the person for the glory of God is equally great. Madame de Brienne[3] is waiting for the answer. I had thought I would be able to send it to her at Saint-Denis. She is supposed to be returning from there on Sunday. However, I believe that it will suffice to give it to her on one of the coming feast days.

Allow me, my Most Honored Father, to beg your Charity to pray to Our Lord for all our needs including those of your very humble daughter and obedient servant.

P.S. I forgot to ask your Charity if I should allow the Duchess de Ventadour[4] to have a roast served to our sisters on Easter Sunday.

L.532 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

April 2, 1657

My Most Honored Father,

Although I doubt that the proposal that I am about to detail for your Charity is feasible, I would not dare to omit telling you that it would seem to me to be very advantageous for the Company for it to be stated, in the authorized copies of the seal or in the approval of Parliament,[5] that, in view of the public usefulness of the Company, the fragility of their sex and their employment in different places, the King or Parliament should guaranty special protection for the Company as a whole as well

1. The "Great Mademoiselle," Duchess de Montpensier, the first cousin of Louis XIV.
2. Two Daughters of Charity were sent to Saint-Fargeau.
3. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86, was from Saint-Denis.
4. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268, was in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.
5. After having been approved by the Archbishop of Paris in 1655, the Company would receive official recognition from the King. The file was being studied at this time in Parliament.

as for each of its members in particular; that all should be strictly forbidden to leave the said Company without the consent of the superior; even that they many not leave wearing the simple habit in use. It should grant power, even now, should this occur, to proceed juridically against such persons for revolting against the ordinances of the King or of Parliament.

If such an idea[1] is completely ridiculous, I am certain that your goodness will pardon this fault along with all my usual ones because I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

P.S. My Most Honored Father, would your Charity please point out any errors you may find in this letter to the Chancellor's wife. If it is acceptable, should I not re-copy it because of the deletions? If I had dared to mention your approval, it seems to me it would have carried more weight.

L.518 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

April 3 [1657]

My Most Honored Father,

The work which the Bishop of Cahors[2] wishes to confide to our sisters leads me to withdraw the suggestion for the second sister that I made to your Charity. I think that she will have to know how to read, write and do a bit of sewing. To find one, we will have to take a sister from the children. The choice of these two sisters[3] will be the equivalent for us of selecting more than four, but we must make the effort for several reasons, the principal one being your holy intentions.

My Most Honored Father, given my knowledge of the poverty of the Company and the fact that it is not the intention of His Excellency that we should bear the burden of the expense of the journey, which we could not do, allow me to tell your Charity quite simply that it would be convenient for us and would facilitate the prompt departure of our sisters, if the Bishop would have the necessary sum distributed to us in Paris,

1. Louise de Marillac's request has not been preserved.
2. Alain de Solminihac (1593-1659) born at Belet, in Périgord, was consecrated Bishop of Cahors on June 17, 1636. He zealously devoted himself to the people of his diocese and made numerous pastoral visits. He requested the Priests of the Mission for his seminary, and in 1657, he asked for the Daughters of Charity. Monseigneur de Solminihac was a close friend of Saint Vincent. The many letters they exchanged show their mutual concern for the reform of the clergy.
3. Louise Boucher and Adrienne Plouvier.

because, apart from the fact that we must furnish them with everything new, we must also meet the cost of the carriage and of food for the journey. Perhaps this is what the good Bishop intends to do but my desire to obey him promptly causes me to anticipate him. If this was unnecessary, I very humbly ask your pardon. In the same spirit, I ask for your blessing in the belief that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I do not know if I am acting contrary to simplicity by practicing what I believe is prudence in sending you this letter, my Most Honored Father, in case your Charity considers it appropriate to forward it. I thought that I had decided to do this because of some need and to prevent your Charity from making a suggestion to us that I will discuss with you, if Our Lord permits.

L.520 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

April 10, 1657

My very dear Sister,

Today I sent the package of clothing that you had requested as well as the crosses, and I included a letter with them. However, I thought I would send you this note in response to your last letter and so that you would have news of us sooner. I also wanted to urge you not to be frightened by the outbreak of serious illnesses because they are appearing everywhere, not just in your region. It is true that a great many people have died suddenly in Paris and they are still dying. These deaths are warnings for us to be ready when it pleases God to call us and to take precautions before visiting the sick. It is a great consolation for me to know that you do not want to abandon them and that the administrators and Ladies are of the same mind. I hope that no harm will befall you.

One day soon we will send you a small box of orvietan. Take a pea-size dose every morning. I am certain that you will not fail, Sister, to have devotion to Saint Roch, asking him to obtain for you from God the strength necessary to bear up under the fear of this evil and of everything that might happen with submission to His good pleasure. By so doing, we will have nothing to fear.

We have had news of the arrival of Sister Marie[1] at Sainte-Marie. Sister Elisabeth[2] tells us that she has some thread and something else that she would like to send us but she does not know what route to use. If there are tradesmen in your area who go there on a regular basis, you could send a letter to our sisters there, in whatever way you judge best, to advise them about the route. Please accept very affectionate greetings from all our sisters. I join mine to them with all my heart both for you and for Sister Laurence.[3] We sent letters from her relatives with the package. I hope everything gets to you safely. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I sent your letter to our Most Honored Father. I am sure that you often pray for his well-being. We are obliged to pray for him, for Monsieur Portail and for their entire holy Company.

L.522 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

May 3 [1657]

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to remind your Charity that tomorrow is the Feast of Saint Monica, and that this day is a solemn feast for me because of the grace[4] which you know God bestowed upon me then, and of which I have not made good use. For this reason, I need mercy and I am begging your Charity to ask it of Our Lord for me and to give me to Him without reserve at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I also beg for a share of your blessing, for the love of God, since I am by this same love, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most unworthy daughter.

1. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440, arrived in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.
2. Élisabeth Jousteau, see letter 421.
3. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
4. See the account of the grace received by Louise de Marillac, A2.

L.523 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Angers

May 12, 1657

My very dear Sister,

It has been a very long time since I have allowed myself the consolation of writing to you. Nevertheless, I assume that you have had news of us from the letter I wrote to Sister Marie from Beauvais.[2] I took the liberty of sending it to Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux and in it I told him that Monsieur Vincent had decided to send one of his priests[3] to your region shortly. I desire this with all my heart because I must avow to you and to all our dear sisters that I am distressed to learn of the little progress your community is making in the way of perfection. When I experience some slight dissatisfaction with one or other of our sisters and I examine the matter to discover the cause, I must acknowledge quite simply that I often realize that the fault lies with me, either because I have failed in cordiality or because I have not given them the example I owe them.

We must realize, my dear Sister, that the title which Divine Providence has conferred upon us of Servants of our Sisters obliges us to be the first in the practice of the true and solid virtues of humility, forbearance, hard work and the faithful observance of our Rules and of the practices of the Company. We must be convinced that we are accountable to all of them and are obliged to serve them in order to assist them spiritually and materially. We must also acknowledge that prudence requires us to trust them for their needs, without showing partiality toward any of them. I beg Our Lord to grant you this ability for His glory and for the well-being of our sisters. I remain in His holy love and in the love of all our sisters, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.522B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday Evening [May 1657]

I believe, my Most Honored Father, that the situation between Sister Jeanne Lepintre[4] and the administrators at Châteaudun is such that your

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294.
3. Monsieur Berthe, Priest of the Mission, see Letter 245, would arrive at the end of the month.
4. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, had been in Châteaudun since 1654.

Charity must personally go to the trouble of recalling our said Sister Jeanne for the second time so as not to bring about a refusal in obedience or a violation of our contract with these gentlemen. The latter want to prolong matters so that they can do exactly as they see fit. This is why, my Most Honored Father, I have not written. I am sure that they would have other arguments to put forth.

I am forwarding their letters so that your Charity can learn from them that the blame placed on Sister Charlotte[1] was not so extensive as thought. Thus, you could order her to remain, and in that event, Sister Jeanne could return here with the aspirant. Three of our habit sisters[2] could remain which would satisfy the administrators. The messenger leaves tomorrow, Sunday. There is not another for three days.

I beg your Charity, for the love of God, to grant me your blessing and to allow me to speak with you because I believe that it is necessary. Let it be at your convenience, however, during the first few days of the month. I beseech your Charity to consider me before God as being by His most holy will, your very poor daughter.

L.524 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

June 1, 1657

My very dear Sister,

We are very worried about your present condition, because we have not had news of you since we sent the little box of orvietan to help to protect you from the polluted air during the epidemic of malignant fevers. We have heard that the epidemic is over, for which we praise God. However, I would be very relieved to receive news from you personally. I beg you to let us know how you are as soon as possible. Also tell me, please, if you received the letter from her family which we sent to Sister Laurence.[3] I do not fail to relate news of you to our Most Honored Father and to Monsieur Portail. I often send them the letters that you write to me. We have good reason to thank Our Lord for the good health that He, in His goodness, gives them, because we need them so much.

Offer to our good God the resolution we have taken to continue to enlarge the House.[4] Work begins today. You can understand, my dear

1. Charlotte Moreau, see Letter 349.
2. Sisters who just received the habit.
3. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
4. See Coste X, 428.

Sister, that more than ever we need the guidance of His Providence for this project and for all the other business of the Company.

Sister Cécile[1] sends her love. The shortage of sisters prevents us from recalling her immediately. I do not know if I told you about the death of one of our sisters who had been in the Company only 18 months. All our sisters send greetings to both of you. Please remember me to Sister Laurence. I am, for both of you, my very dear Sisters, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please let me know how far it is from Bernay to our sisters in Sainte-Marie.

L.525 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

June 12, 1657

My very dear Sister,

It is not yet two weeks since I allowed myself the consolation of writing to you, but since that time I have received three letters from you which all arrived nearly at once. There was also a letter from Sister Laurence[2] for her brother. I will not fail to forward it to him when the first safe route presents itself. For fear that my last letter has been lost, let me repeat my request that you let me know how far it is from Bernay to our sisters in Sainte-Marie,[3] and if you could go there before your little trip here. With the help of God, I will ask Monsieur Vincent's permission for this as soon as I see him. Please let me know precisely when you can make this trip without inconveniencing the sick or the schoolchildren. The sooner the better, so that Sister Laurence can come here in turn.

I beg Our Lord to watch over you and I am in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

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1. Cécile Angiboust would soon return to Paris.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. The distance between Bernay and Sainte-Marie-du-Mont was about 150 kilometers.

L.530 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

June 22, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I praise God for having restored health to your town. I was very worried, especially since I had not had any news of you for such a long time. I urge you, my dear Sister, if you think you are strong enough to make the trip to Sainte-Marie,[1] to leave as soon as possible. If you need money, as I am sure you do, I would ask you to borrow it and we will reimburse you. However, I would prefer that, upon your return, if God permits, you come here in person to request it.

Please extend my apologies to Sister Laurence[2] for not writing to her. I am going to have a blood-letting because of an inflammation in my shoulder. I hope, if it pleases God, that it will be minor.

I beg you, my dear Sister, if you make the trip, to learn whatever you can about everything so that you can share the news with us upon your return. If it is more direct to come here, instead of returning to Bernay, please do so. Do your best to encourage our dear sisters,[3] because I believe they have a great deal of work and little consolation. However, they have a great deal of merit. They can say to Our Lord with Saint Peter, "We have left everything to follow you," and they can be certain that, if they are faithful, their recompense will be great.

Our Most Honored Father considers it appropriate for you to send the girls whom you judge suitable for the Company.

Assure Sister Laurence that your trip will not be long. Try to make it as brief as possible without, however, rushing matters. Please reflect on whom it would be appropriate to have stay with her during your absence.

I beseech Our Lord to be present to each of you so that you may work in His spirit. May He be your guide, your strength and your consolation in all your needs. Believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Sainte-Marie-du-Mont was 150 kilometers away.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
3. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421 and Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

L.528 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[June 1657]

The good sisters from Saint-Flour[1] have not been able to resolve the matter of their confessions. They have no objection to deferring them, my Most Honored Father, in a spirit of submission to the order of Divine Providence. If they cannot make their confessions to your Charity, they are willing to make them to whomever it will please you to name.[2]

The oldest sister wishes to make a communication to you. If she cannot speak with you, she asks our Charity for permission to do so in writing. Her submission to all that the will of God orders is admirable. She told me that she has never felt so at ease nor has she experienced such openness of heart concerning her confession. Nevertheless, she remains at peace. I discern great holiness in this soul and admirable dispositions toward the works which God will entrust to her. How much good she would have done and would do, were she to occupy my place! How much benefit will she have brought me, if I profit from the humiliations I experience because of her example on account of my misery and my opposition to the grace of God!

I beg your Charity to obtain mercy for me and to forgive me for having wasted your efforts on my behalf.

Truly the needs of the Company are pressing us somewhat to meet and to speak to you. It seems to me that my mind is completely preoccupied; it is so weak. Its only strength and peace, after that which comes from God, is to be by His love, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.527 - (TO THE PASTOR OF CHARS)[3]

(July 1657)

Monsieur,

Permit me to tell you that, since I did not tell Sister Marie[4] to put Monsieur Pouvot[5] to the trouble of finding her a way to return here, I

1. Sisters who were natives of Saint-Flour.
2. In his response (Coste VI, 318), Monsieur Vincent suggests Monsieur Alméras.
3. This letter was probably addressed to the titular Pastor of Chars, see Letter 529b.
4. Maire Poulet, see Letter 385.
5. Monsieur Pouvot, the Pastor in residence of Chars, who was a Jansenist.

was not surprised that she did not choose the difficult road used by the dairymen, but rather one that was safer. It is true, Monsieur, that I was annoyed that she brought along the girl for the reasons your Charity explained to me, but I am astonished that any remark was made because she spoke to Monsieur Garson[1] considering the fact that you had told me that you were aware of his goodness; that you approved his behavior in your parish over these many years; that you knew of the services he had rendered you; and that our sisters made their confessions to him only with your approval.[2]

I am distressed, Monsieur, at not being able to send you the sister that I had too easily led you to expect but I am afraid that things will start up again because of some complaints and warnings that have been directed to me. This is why, Monsieur, I beg you, in the name of God, to try out the persons proposed to you and to allow Sister Clémence[3] to return without delay.

L.529 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS MARIE[4] AND CLÉMENCE[5]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chars

July 5, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

I assure you, especially you, Sister Marie, that I feel deeply all the trials I know you have had. This is a sign of Our Lord's love for you, my dear Sister, because He has chosen you to honor Him in His sufferings. The only thing that concerns me is that because of your inexperience concerning how you are to act in such circumstances, you have failed in the respect you owe to the Pastor and that the people are following your example, as you told me in your letter. This would be an unfortunate situation. It is one which must be corrected by telling all those who speak of it to you that the Pastor is the absolute master of the behavior of the priests and people of his parish and that the Lord of the region, the Duke de Luynes,[6] has confided this parish to Monsieur Garson[7] and he must remain in it. This is why, Sister, if I had any power, I would consider

1. Monsieur Garson, the former vicar of Chars, who was not a Jansenist.
2. This paragraph was crossed out on the autographed copy.
3. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
4. Marie Poulet, see Letter 385.
5. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
6. The Duke de Luynes was a Jansenist.
7. Monsieur Garson had been sent to another parish.

myself as offending God, if I used it to have him return to Chars. Surely, you know that you are forbidden to be attached to anyone at all or to be on familiar terms with any man. Since this is so, you must be at peace that things have turned out as they have, because this good gentleman was accustomed to the hospital.

From what you tell me, I think that it is appropriate for Sister Clémence to go to request money from the Pastor. If she asks about your little provisions, consult together before making the purchase, and then get whatever you have agreed upon. You both know, my dear Sisters, that no matter where you are, you must always practice moderation in both the quality and the quantity of your food, as is the practice here at the Motherhouse.

For several reasons, Sister Marie, you are to be the one to teach school. Sister Clémence, you will care for the sick poor both in the hospital and in the countryside, where they are never numerous. This will furnish you with the means to care for them well, with your usual charity and gentleness. This does not mean that Sister Marie may not also visit them to satisfy her desire to practice charity and to serve them, as best she can, without detriment to her schoolgirls, whom she must continue to instruct well on the fear and love of God rather than to teach them how to talk at length about Him.

I am not recommending union and respect for one another since I am sure that you practice these virtues. Total silence, I beg of you, concerning all that has happened. Sister Marie, if you think that the Pastor is angry with you, very humbly ask his pardon. When there are rumors about those who support Jens. S,[1] never speak about it; never. You know only that this person has no authority to counsel anything contrary to your religion. If something is said to you which you do not understand, ask us, and I will not fail to get directions from our Superiors to tell you how you should act, or they will take the trouble to communicate with you directly.

Blessed be God, my dear Sister, for the grace His goodness has bestowed upon you not to follow your own ideas about the trip that you can take when the time comes. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to follow the directives Monsieur Portail gave you concerning your confessions. Fear nothing regardless of whatever advice others may give you. Give the same advice to those who are so strongly urging the return of Monsieur Garson. I believe that you are not rendering him a service.

Remember us to all those who seem to be of good will. Serve them by your good example and by your responses.

Good day, my dear Sisters. Believe me always in the love of Our Lord, your sister and servant.

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1. Title given by Louise de Marillac to the Jansenists.

L.531 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

July 10, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I am very anxious to know if Sister Barbe[1] has left for her short trip as well as how you are getting along by yourself, and if you have more work than you can manage. I am sure that Sister Barbe must have asked someone to help you, if need be, during her absence. Please let me know if this is so and also if there is some good girl staying with you at night.

I am also certain, my dear Sister, that you are being very careful about your spiritual and temporal obligations, because it is at times such as these, that our enemies most frequently prowl around us to see if they can catch us off guard. This leads me to believe that you are redoubling your prayers and your efforts to practice virtue. Above all, I am sure that you are keeping your doors tightly locked against persons who should not enter but wide open when circumstances require a man to come in who should not be stopped from doing so.

I urge you, my dear Sister, to be careful not to displease any of your Ladies and to change nothing in your usual practices. Neither increase nor decrease anything during Sister's absence. If you must refuse something, always do so gently and humbly. We have no right to act differently because we have been called by God, in our holy vocation, only to assist the Ladies in the service of the poor. Therefore, we are but the servants of both.

I am eagerly awaiting detailed news from you. Please send it as soon as possible and believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters send their regards and recommend themselves to your prayers.

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1. Barbe Angiboust left for Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.

L.533 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

July 24, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

I am concerned because we have received a request for some medications for which we have received an invoice, but we cannot find it and we do not know what is required. I would ask you please to send us another one and we will immediately take care of the matter.

I am really distressed not to have had the honor of seeing Monsieur Pesset who, I was told, went to the trouble to come here, but I was not at home. I beg you to greet him very humbly for me. I also urge you to let me know if you received a letter from me about two or three weeks ago in which I stressed the great benefit and necessity of always going to the same confessor. I also related Monsieur Vincent's advice on this subject.

I beg you, Sister Marie,[1] to take a short trip here as soon as possible, unless something major prevents you from doing so. I promise you, Sister Geneviève,[2] that Sister's stay will be brief so that you may have the same opportunity before winter arrives.

Sister Suzanne and Sister Gabrielle[3] were gravely ill and in danger of death but, by the grace of God, they are both beginning to get better. All our sisters send their greetings and ask to be remembered in your prayers, as I do also. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble . . .

L.534 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday Evening [July 1657]

I very humbly beg you, my Most Honored Father, if your Charity considers it appropriate, to authorize the Superior of Sedan to receive

1. Marie Navain, see Letter 515.
2. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
3. Gabrielle Cabaret, the daughter of the Lord of Gionge. Born in 1634, she entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on October 7, 1651. Monsieur Vincent showed some reluctance about accepting her (Coste IV, 312). After a difficult period of adaptation, Gabrielle was sent successively to the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, the hospital of Saint-Denis and to Arras. She was named an Officer in 1667. She died at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on February 5, 1669.

and to offer to God the renewal of Sister Jeanne-Christine's[1] vows and the first vows her companion[2] wishes to pronounce, if this is their intention and they mention it to him.

This morning I forgot to suggest to your Charity that it would perhaps be beneficial for me to accompany Sister Jeanne[3] and Sister Madeleine. In addition to any other consideration, I think that Sister Jeanne would be pleased and it would be a consolation for me. As always, it is in a spirit of submission that I make this proposal, my Most Honored Father, as I must, since I am, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.535 - TO MADAME DE HERSE, PRESIDENT

[July 1657]

Madame,

I feel obliged to inform you that, for the past year, the Daughters of Charity at Chars have been sorely tried for two different reasons, both stemming from the Pastor's zeal. One I cannot put into writing for you. The other pertains to the stability he wants to establish in this place and which would result in our not being free to change our sisters, as we do everywhere else, in keeping with the conditions we have contracted with you, Madame. The respect we owe to the guidance of Divine Providence with regard to the Company and to the persons who have been inspired by God to make use of it for the service of the poor has prevented us from withdrawing them. For this reason, I am taking the liberty, Madame, of sending you a letter of notification[4] that was given to me and of begging you very humbly to send us yours, which we will willingly follow. We hope that your renewed protection will serve to calm these petty persecutions which have increased since Lent. A good Priest of the Oratory[5] from the Saint-Jacques district arrived at that time and has been there since.

If God grants me the grace to see you, I will explain the details of the

1. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344.
2. Undoubtedly, Renée Pescheloche who was in Paris on August 8, 1655. She then went to Sedan.
3. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, and Madeleine went to La Salpétière, a hospital founded several years earlier, to house all the beggars of Paris.
4. The decision to withdraw the Daughters of Charity from Chars was made at the Council of July 21, 1657 (Coste XIII, 733).
5. A priest with Jansenist leanings (Coste XIII, 736).

matter in greater depth. Assuring you of my very humble respect, I am in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your very humble and obedient servant.

L.529B - TO THE PASTOR OF CHARS[1]

July (1657)

Monsieur,

I thought perhaps you did not know that it was as a result of an accidental and unexpected meeting that our sister accompanied that good girl. Moreover, she did so with the consent of her aunt with whom the girl had made the journey from Saint-Prix. This indicates that she was not overburdened with work. Because you think it strange that she did not take the route suggested by Monsieur Pouvot,[2] let me say that, except in cases of extreme necessity, it is not the practice of our sisters to ask advice in these matters after we have told them what to do. We never reach any agreement concerning them except on these conditions.

As for Monsieur Garson,[3] please remember, Monsieur, that you have always held him in high esteem because of his good life. Moreover, your Charity acknowledged this the last time I had the honor of seeing you. You even complained about Sister Marie[4] who thought that her Superiors had named him as their confessor on your advice, since you kept him in your parish where he had served you so well, Monsieur, for the consolation of your people who have been so afflicted by the trouble caused by the maxims that you know some clergymen are introducing there.

All these considerations are added to the fact, Monsieur, that several people have assured me that you intend to have people around you whom you control completely and, as you yourself have told me, that you do not want our sisters to be changed. On top of this, there is also the behavior of some of your ecclesiastics toward Sister Marie who was once refused Holy Communion at the altar rail, in full view of the congregation. On another occasion, the host intended for her, which was about to be offered, was removed from the altar. Out on the street, she was declared to be in need of public penance. The insults and offensive words pushed her to her limits. Her simplicity was so taken by surprise that she

1. This letter was undoubtedly addressed to the titular Pastor, the Superior of the Oratorians of the Saint-Jacques area.
2. Monsieur Pouvot, the Pastor in residence in Chars.
3. Monsieur Garson, the former vicar of Chars.
4. Marie Poulet, see Letter 385.

was incapable of the necessary prudence and she allowed herself to speak in a way that was less respectful than it should have been. I have already asked your pardon for this and do so humbly once again.

All these considerations, I repeat, Monsieur, have forced me very humbly to ask Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, to recall Sister Clémence.[1] His Charity judged it appropriate to do so. I, therefore, ask you, Monsieur, to approve her return with the sister who is going there expressly to bring her back. Before her departure, she will return all the furniture belonging to the Hôtel-Dieu and will give an account of the sick to whomever you select. This will be in accord with the order that you say that you have received from the Duke de Luynes[2] to place the sisters' house and everything else into your hands.

I beg Our Lord to give you His spirit and I am in His most holy love . . .

L.527B - TO MADAME DE HERSE[3]

(1657)

Madame,

Since we are accountable only to you concerning the employment that your Confraternity of Charity has entrusted to the Daughters of Charity who serve the sick poor in Chars, we are obliged to inform you, Madame, that we have done all in our power to be usefully employed there for the glory of God and the satisfaction of the Pastor. For several years, he seemed satisfied but lately, certain difficulties have arisen in his parish. As a result, he has had a very good ecclesiastic dismissed—one whom he had previously considered suitable as a confessor for our sisters.

Subsequently, he introduced practices not generally in use into the church such as, publicly refusing people Holy Communion when they are already at the altar rail; having bread that is ready to be offered on the altar, removed; and teaching that the faithful can communicate once a week although they have not been to confession for several months.

He threatened to require the sisters to do public penance at the church door to try to force them to act contrary to the obedience they owe to their legitimate Superiors. Among other things, he told them that, in his parish, they were not to regard them as their Superiors and that they were not obliged to observe their Rules faithfully. He told them also that they

1. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.
2. The Duke de Luynes was a Jansenisnt.
3. Madame de Herse had established the Daughters of Charity in Chars.

were subject to punishment because they had refused his order to whip a 12 or 13 year-old girl in his presence. He wants them to accept, without complaint, any man or woman he sends to their house for food, drink, or lodging. He also demands several other things of equal importance.

He got rid of one of our sisters in such a hurry that he pushed the other one to the limit of her strength. The one who remained and who had been pushed to this extreme was a simple soul with little experience in the practice of prudence. As a consequence, she said something less than respectful, not to the Pastor but to the one accompanying him. She should not have done so. It was occasioned by the discontent of the people who had been angry for several years because of the rumors accusing them of Jansenism.

All of this, Madame, has led Monsieur Vincent, upon whom we have the honor of depending, to permit us to withdraw after we have received your recommendation and have informed you that we have learned, from reliable sources, that these gentlemen want people who are entirely dependent upon them and have said that they have a letter from the Duke de Luynes making them the absolute masters of the Hôtel-Dieu and everything that depends upon it. This is a consolation for us since it is a sign that it is not by our own choice that we are leaving a work which Divine Providence has confided to us only for a short time. I hope you will not object since our decision is so just.

L.536 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

August 7, 1657

My very dear Sister,

What are you going to say about me for having delayed so long before informing you that Sister Barbe[2] had to come directly here without first returning to Bernay? I would have written sooner to ask you, in the name of God, not to be upset but I was hoping to be able to send a sister to help you. I now hope that the sister[3] whom Divine Providence has destined for you will leave on Friday. I praise God with all my heart for the blessings His goodness has bestowed upon your action and your work. I was very consoled by what you told me about it. I forwarded your letter

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
3. Anne Levies entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1655. She remained at Bernay until her death in 1660.

to our Most Honored Father who was very pleased with it.

Now, my dear Sister, you are really entering into the life of a true Daughter of Charity because you find yourself temporarily deprived of direction and consolation. You must, therefore, renew your confidence in God and abandon yourself to His guidance. If you continue, as you are now doing, to observe your Rules, you may be certain that He will assist you in all your needs.

Sister Barbe and I urge you to send her all her belongings especially all her letters. She mentioned some fine linen and some other things that I have forgotten. In any event, my dear Sister, sending her belongings will give you the opportunity to send whatever needs to be sent because I do not think that you will be able to come here this summer.

Sister Barbe sends you her love and begs you to remember her to all her friends. She will not fail to allow herself the consolation of writing to you. I did not think of that before she left for Châteaudun. The poor thing did not have a moment's rest while she was here. She very humbly asks the Reverend Dean[1] to remember her in his holy Masses and in his prayers and she greets him with respect and submission. All our sisters send their greetings and recommend themselves to your prayers. I do so also in a special way since I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.537 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Salpétrière

August 8, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I have just received an order from Monsieur Vincent telling you to come here today or tomorrow, without fail, for some very urgent business. All you need do is inform Monsieur Drouart.[2] Also, be sure to bring Sister Madeleine.

Please remember me to the young English lady and tell her that I hope that she will be very faithful to God because she realizes full well that only perseverance, coupled with the grace of God, brings about salvation. Also tell her, please, that her good father will soon be going to see her.

Good evening, my dear Sisters. I am entirely yours in the love of Our Lord being your very humble sister and servant.

1. The Pastor of the Parish of Sainte-Croix.

2. Monsieur Drouart, the steward of the Duchess d'Aiguillon who had participated in the foundation of the hospital of La Salpétrière.

L.538 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[August 14, 1657]

My Most Honored Father,

After very humbly asking pardon of your Charity, I beg for your blessing for the love of God, so that the Holy Communion I plan to receive tomorrow, if you allow me to do so, will not turn to my confusion because I am deeply troubled in spirit.

The following three sisters very humbly beg your Charity to bless them and to offer to God their annual renewal; namely: Madeleine Ménage,[1] for the sixth time; Renée from Saint-Barthélemy,[2] for the fifth time; and Marie from Fimes, for the third or fourth time. All three are very good daughters. As for me, I am very wicked but, nevertheless, I am consoled because I think that I have the right to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.539 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

August 22, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I did not afford myself the consolation of writing to you when the coach was leaving for two reasons. First, I was still waiting to learn what I was to tell you. Second, I had been quite ill. I am certain that there is much to be done in that place; nevertheless, we must hope that God, in His goodness, will bless your efforts and bestow upon you all the graces you need to accomplish His most holy will because you were chosen for this work by the guidance of Divine Providence. I assume you have received a response from Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father. I hope that, with the help of God, all will go well since the good gentlemen of the administration[3] have already begun to act as you describe.

1. Madeleine Ménage entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity around 1646. She had been at the Motherhouse at least since 1653. In 1657, she was named Bursar. She had three sisters who were Daughters of Charity: Marguerite, Françoise who was in Nantes, and the youngest, Catherine.
2. Renée Delacroix, see Letter 275.
3. Serious difficulties existed with the administration of the hospital of Châteaudun. It is for this reason that Barbe Angiboust was sent there.

I am truly distressed about our dear sister.[1] I beg Our Lord to grant her the grace she needs to trust in His goodness and to rely on us to the extent that she should. My regards to all our sisters to whom I hope, with the help of God, to have the consolation of writing individually by the next mail. I am in Our Lord, with all my heart, my very dear Sister, your very humble . . .

P.S. All our sisters send their regards especially Sister Françoise[2] who is very sorry not to have said good-bye before you left.

L.540 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

August 26, 1657

My very dear Sister,

Truly you have had good reason to be upset at being left alone for such a long time. I beg your pardon for this. I hope that the satisfaction you will experience from Sister Anne[3] will make up for everything. Although she has not been in the Company quite three years, her virtue will compensate for a longer period of time in another sister and will allow you to live together in great union and cordiality, while you give good example by serving the poor with your usual care.

You did not specify what you sent in the package.[4] We are worried because we have not received it. This leads me to believe that there is a habit remaining which one or other of you could use. However, if you need anything, I beg you, Sister, to let us know. Our sister will tell you all the news. I am in hurry to conclude and to say that I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Charlotte Moreau, see Letter 349.
2. Françoise Fanchon, see Letter 595.
3. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
4. This package contained Barbe Angiboust's clothing and letters, see Letter 536.

L.541 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

Paris, September 1, 1657

Monsieur,

I am entrusting to you two letters from Monsieur Vincent, one is for the Bishop of Angers[1]; the other is for Sister Cécile[2] whom we have judged it advisable to send to Richelieu for a while, for a rest. Monsieur Berthe[3] has undoubtedly mentioned the matter to you, Monsieur, so I need add nothing further. It is also quite late and a slight indisposition obliges me to send just a brief note, written by a hand other than my own. Nevertheless I am, with very special respect, and in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.542 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

September 2, 1657

My very dear Sister,

The state in which you found everything makes me anxious to have news of you a little more often. You are not sending us any. We have as yet received only one letter from you since your departure. This leads me to urge you to find a safe route to send your letters with some degree of security. Do not send them to anyone in the city, or who is staying in Paris, but rather to Sister Henriette[4] who is now in the parish of Saint-Séverin.

I have been waiting a long while to learn what has happened to that poor sister.[5] My heart is so deeply touched by her suffering, that I cannot express it. Please greet all our sisters for me and recommend me to their prayers. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, your . . .

P.S. Sister Cécile[6] is well and sends her love. We sent Sister Anne Levies[7] to join Sister Laurence.[8] Sister Laurence sent me all of your

1. Monseigneur Henri Arnauld, see Letter 521.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, made the visitation of the house in May 1657.
4. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.
5. Charlotte Moreau, see Letter 349.
6. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
7. Anne Levies, see Letter 536, left for Bernay.
8. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

belongings as well as everything else you told me she was to send. Let me know what you want us to send on to you. If you see Mademoiselle Libereau, please extend my very humble greetings to her and assure her of my very affectionate service.

If you have any news of the sisters at Varize,[1] please share it with me. It is a great consolation for me to know that you have as director, the Reverend Superior or someone he will appoint for you. I sincerely hope that all our sisters will be exact in observing uniformity in this matter and that they will go to no one but him, because I know how necessary this is. God will bless them abundantly for acting in this way.

You did not tell me what you did with the strung chaplets belonging to the girls. Also, please let us know how much money Sister Mathurine[2] gave you both for your travel and for your food because she has forgotten and cannot enter it in the debit column.

L.543 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 12, 1657

Monsieur,

I am truly ashamed when I reflect on how long it has been since I afforded myself the honor of writing to you. Moreover, I have put off expressing my very humble gratitude for the charity you showed Sister Jacquine[3] by taking the trouble to reassure her concerning her father's condition. It has been a great help to her and I can assure you, Monsieur, that she has enjoyed peace of mind ever since.

I am astonished that Sister Cécile[4] is haggling over her little trip to Richelieu after she told me, so many times, that she wanted to go or even to come here to Paris. You realize, Monsieur, how important it is to carry out the orders of Superiors promptly.

I am certain that Monsieur Berthe[5] did nothing without consulting you

1. Varize is 15 kilometers from Châteaudun.
2. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
3. Jacquine, a postulant from Angers, arrived in Paris in June 1656. After her seminary, she remained in Paris.
4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
5. Monsieur Berthe came to Angers in May.

about the dispositions of all our sisters. Before his departure, I showed him what you, Monsieur, and Monsieur Ratier did me the honor of sharing with me on the subject.

I beg you very humbly to be so good as to let me know if, after our sister has been away for a few days, your Charity sees that, without spoiling anything, she can come to Paris. We would have to try to send another sister, because we also intend to recall a sister from Richelieu.

Monsieur Berthe told us, Monsieur, that he had sent you a good girl who desires to enter our Company. I assure you that, as always, any young women who have your approval will be welcome, because I am certain that your Charity takes the trouble to investigate their background and to explain clearly to them the dispositions of body and mind that are required. I deserve to be accused of boldness, Monsieur, because I dare to continue to impose upon you, after having failed so often in my duty by not expressing my gratitude to you. Once again, I very humbly ask your pardon for this, although I have often refrained from doing so for fear of distracting you from your holy occupations.

I am anxious to know, Monsieur, if a letter that Monsieur Vincent had the honor to write to the Bishop of Angers has reached you. I believe it concerned Monsieur Berthe's visit. I took the liberty of sending it in care of you last week. Be so good, Monsieur, as to allow me to ask you to take the trouble to let me know if it has arrived. Permit me also to ask you very humbly to overlook the lack of understanding on the part of our sisters and the little fidelity they have shown in putting your holy advice into practice so that your Charity may, for the love of God, assist them in this new need, occasioned by the absence of Sister Cécile. I hope that, by the goodness of Our Lord, this change will prove to be beneficial, if my sins do not become an obstacle to the grace He wishes to bestow on your holy guidance. I desire this for our sisters. I also hope to be aided by your prayers and Masses to obtain this mercy for myself. Allow me also to say most respectfully that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. I am ashamed of this awful handwriting. Please excuse me, Monsieur.

L.544 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

September 15, 1657

My very dear Sister,

Your letter brought me great pleasure because I was so worried, having heard from you only once since your departure. Of whom were you afraid? I am not clear about who this person is. Just put the name in the corner of the next letter you send me, without any other explanation. I would also be more at ease if I knew that all that Monsieur Berthe[1] requested has been carried out. I think that I made it clear enough that I was recalling Sister Renée. I have sent someone to meet her at the coach.

You have not yet sent me Sister Laurence's[2] letter. Until you indicate the best route, I will not send you your letters nor anything else that arrived from Bernay. I forgot to tell you that Sister Laurence wishes to be remembered to you and sends you greetings from several people from Bernay, including your confessor who was ill the last time she wrote to me.

I would be very grateful if you would make a little visit to Varize[3] and give some of your good advice to Sister Claude,[4] about her health and the dispositions of her mind, in your usual gentle and charitable manner. It would ease my mind to know how she and the Reverend Prior are getting along.

I will not fail to deliver your message to Monsieur Portail when I see him. I heard that he was ill, but that it was only a slight indisposition. I need only mention this to know that your good heart will make you redouble your prayers for his recovery and for the preservation of our Most Honored Father's health.

Sister Jeanne Gressier[5] sends her regards to Sister Anne[6] and asks you to tell her that she received her beautiful present of a little case containing 25 pins. Please thank Sister Anne for her. Sister Jeanne is so busy that she does not have time to write to her herself. Please greet Sister Marthe[7] for me, as well as all the other sisters, and tell her that "He who begins,

1. Monsieur Berthe was to stop in Châteaudun in July 1657 (Coste VI, 360).
2. Laurence Dubois at Bernay, see Letter 419.
3. Varize was 15 kilometers from Châteaudun.
4. Claude was at Varize from 1657 to 1659.
5. Jeanne Gressier, see Letter 456, was Procuratrix at the Motherhouse.
6. Anne Bocheron entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity before 1655. She went to Paris from Châteaudun in November 1659 to speak about the virtues of Barbe Angiboust (Coste X, 676).
7. Marthe will go from Châteaudun to Varize in November 1658.

has not yet reached the goal." All our sisters send their greetings and ask to be remembered in your prayers just as I do since I am, with all my heart, in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. If God permits, we will send your letters by the earliest departing coach.

L.545 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

September 15, 1657

My very dear Sisters,

You made me very happy by sending me news of your dear selves. I thank you with all my heart. I praise God that, in His goodness, He has restored Sister Geneviève[1] to health. However, I am amazed that I was not told that her illness was so prolonged. I beg you to let me know exactly what was wrong.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to these good priests but you must not abuse this privilege by imposing on them too often. You are aware that here we do not call on our Superiors except for the sacraments or for some other urgent need.

Before winter sets in, Sister Geneviève, you must take your turn to come here for a visit. I beg you to remember, Sister Marie,[2] that you need exercise for the good of your health. To accomplish God's will in this matter, you will be careful not to waste time. But, what am I saying, my dear Sisters? I am sure that both of you are very exact about this and that Divine Providence does not fail to provide you with enough work wherever you have to go. Your fervor would not allow you to fail to assist your neighbor any more than your charity would permit you to neglect to pray for our needs. I beg you to do so and to accept the affectionate greetings of all our sisters. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Please extend my very respectful greetings to the Pastor of Saint-Firmin and to Monsieur Pesset.

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

2. Marie Navain, see Letter 515.

L.545B - FOR SISTER MARGUERITE CHÉTIF[1]

(at Arras)

September 22, 1657

My very dear Sister,

It has not been more than a week since I allowed myself the consolation of writing to you, although it was at least the second time I had written without having received any news from you. This has worried me.

However, since I last wrote, I have seen the letter you sent to Sister Julienne.[2] In reading it, I realized your goodness toward me, which I do not deserve. However, is it not true that friendship can be recognized and reciprocated only by someone who is in tune with oneself? Accept my very humble thanks then, my dear Sister, for the proof you give me of your very dear friendship.

In my last letter, I told you that Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[3] had sent some money to the Superioress of the Confraternity of Charity to provide bread for your sick poor. I think that she will explain this more fully in her letter to Monsieur Delville.[4] She also told me that she would take care of your needs, which leads me to tell you, my dear Sister, not to deprive yourself of essentials. Ask me for what you need or borrow it until you receive the money.

I trust, my dear Sister, that Our Lord has let you taste the sweetness reserved for souls filled with His love amidst the sufferings and anguish of this life. If such is not the case and you are still standing on Calvary, rest assured that Jesus Crucified is pleased to see you retire there and to know that you have enough courage to want to remain there as He did for love of you. You may be certain that you will emerge from there gloriously.

Is Sister Radegonde[5] very courageous? Does she understand the Christian virtues with which her Spouse wishes to see her adorned? I beg her to be faithful to Him. I ask each of you to believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302, was sent to Arras on August 30, 1656.
2. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220, was at the Motherhouse.
3. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.
4. Monsieur Guillaume Delville (1608-1658) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1641. After having worked in Crécy and Montmirail, he returned to his native region of Arras where he was the confessor for the sisters.
5. Radegonde Lenfantin, see Letter 497.

L.545C - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER FRANÇOISE CARCIREUX

at Richelieu

September 26, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I clearly see your sorrow in the words of your letter and I share your suffering, because I know that your grief comes from the affection Our Lord has given you for our dear sister.[1] I embrace her with all my heart and beg her to love the path on which Our Lord has placed her. This path is His own because He always suffered during His earthly life. If it is His holy will to call her to Himself this time, then she will fully realize in heaven the value of her sufferings.

I wrote you a long letter two weeks ago. Please tell the Superior of the Mission that Monsieur Vincent gives the confessor permission to impart the Apostolic Blessing and to apply the indulgence attached to it. Please God our sister will be here to receive it. If her death comes beforehand, I still hope that she will derive merit from it. I pray with all my heart that God will leave her with us a little longer so that she may add to her heavenly crown by the services she will render Him.

I am closing because I am in a bit of a hurry. Please believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.545D - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT[2]

September 28, 1657

My Most Honored Father,

I very humbly entreat your Charity to will that your daughters always be in a state of obedience like little children who never oppose the orders of their Most Honored Father and never believe that they are, at any time, dispensed from them. In keeping with this desire, we will welcome the good persons your Charity mentioned. However, I am taking the liberty, my Most Honored Father, of asking the following questions:

Could we have them take their meals in their rooms because my ailments prevent me from following a fixed schedule and the Community

1. Charlotte was no doubt sent to Richelieu to rest. She died in October 1657.

2. Monsieur Vincent answered on the same sheet of paper (sentences in italics).

would notice the religious habit? Nevertheless, if you believe they should be there, we could set a little table for them.

Let them eat in their rooms.

Do they plan to make the exercises of a retreat?

No.

Will they go to Mass? Where?

Here, or wherever they wish.

Must we visit with them often?

For a short time in the morning and the same after dinner.

Will they come and work with our sisters?

If they want to.

If they ask for a sister to accompany them into the city, should we provide one?

Send a sister.

If their acquaintances come to visit, may we allow them to speak with them?

You must allow them to speak to visitors.

If they want to go to prayer in the chapel with our sisters, may they?

It would be a good idea.

Once all these points are clarified, we will do the best we can.

They will be here only three or four days.

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to make a very humble request of you, and please grant it. Please take tea, at least during your retreat. I am sure you can do so without any inconvenience. For a short time now, we have had some here which is very good and quite inexpensive. If you do not make this little effort, for the sake of your health, I am going to complain to our good God about it. You can take it after dinner, about four o'clock; I think it will do you a great deal of good.

I do not know if it would be appropriate to send Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux[1] Sister Cécile's[2] letter in which she reveals how eager she is to come to Paris. If, as early as tomorrow, your Charity could take the trouble to write about this matter to the Reverend Bishop of Angers, we could move things along. I am afraid that a delay will cause the gentlemen of the administration in Angers to have our sister leave too hastily.[3]

I will do so.

My Most Honored Father, I am taking the liberty of asking your Charity to remember my needs before God, both with regard to my salvation and to the service I owe my neighbor. Also, please be good enough to let me know if I can give another chance to the sister who brought the note to the assembly yesterday, and send her to Saint-Jac-

1. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux was in Angers.

2. Cécile Angiboust; her departure from Angers required considerable negotiation.

3. Monsieur Vincent had already written to him about the departure of Cécile Angiboust.

ques-du-Haut-Pas. She was there once before. The late Mademoiselle de Montigny had insisted upon having her.

For the love of God, my Most Honored Father, often bless all your poor daughters as well as your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.548 - TO SISTER FRANÇOISE MÉNAGE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

The 12th of (October 1657)

My very dear Sister,

Truly, I am greatly at fault for not having written to you after I had the consolation of receiving your dear letters which revealed your excellent dispositions and your love for your vocation. I beg Our Lord to continue to grant you the grace to remain faithful to Him.

By the grace of God, our two Sisters Madeleine and Marguerite[2] are also doing very well. They continue to ask you to remember them in your prayers, as do all our dear sisters. Please extend my greetings to all the sisters of your community, and tell them that, with the help of God, I will write to each of them.

I imagine that you are vying with one another both in your efforts to work for your interior perfection and in your service of the sick poor, whom I believe you deeply love. Remember, however, my dear Sister, that you must take great care to help them to know and love Our Lord in whose love I am, my very dear Sister, your humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Mathurine[3] sends her love.

L.549 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

at Châteaudun

October 13, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I showed your letter to Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father,

1. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
2. Madeleine and Marguerite Ménage, her sisters.
3. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280, Louise de Marillac's secretary.

so that his Charity may write, as you suggested, if he judges it appropriate. I was certain that all of you would have much to endure, but, by the mercy of God, you are generous enough to bear this burden and to help our sisters to look upon it as the yoke of Our Lord. You also possess sufficient gentleness and forbearance to treat those with whom you deal without passion. This is one of the best ways to win them over.

It seems to me that, for the time being, the assistance you are receiving from that baker is very advantageous for you. However, since he is quite old, it is to be feared that, should anything go wrong, you would be obliged to hire a younger man. In any event, you can continue as you are until you receive word to the contrary.

I sent a note to Monsieur le Maistre from whom I have not had any news for quite a while. It seems to me that I enclosed a note for him in a letter to you.

I think that we will soon have Sister Cécile[1] with us. She would probably be here already had she not gone to Richelieu, where Sister Charlotte[2] died a week ago. Nevertheless, I think that she is on her way. Perhaps, she could stop to see you en route, if it is not too far out of the way. I continue to hope that you will see one another because she will be here for a long time.

We have great reason to praise God for the harmony that exists among you and for your fidelity in observing your Rules, insofar as the service of the poor permits. Nevertheless, I am a bit annoyed with Sister Anne[3] and Sister Marthe[4] for not taking turns in writing to me from time to time. I am certain that you would encourage them to do so.

We are sending you your cross and your letters and we assure you of the affection of all our sisters who wish to be remembered to you and to all our other dear sisters as well as to the sisters at Varize. I am astonished that I have had no news of them for so long.

Believe me always in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108, left Angers.
2. Charlotte, see Letter 545c.
3. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.
4. Marthe, see Letter 544.

L.546 - (TO SISTER MARGUERITE CHÉTIF AT ARRAS)

October 15, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I am not surprised that Our Lord has given you a share in His interior sufferings. Did you think that you could be so honored before God and His angels without its costing you anything? I am certain that His grace is sustaining you very powerfully during this period when you feel abandoned and lacking in sensibility toward God. Moreover, do you not realize, my dear Sister, that the Holy Spouse of our souls takes His delight in these trials, when we bear them with loving patience and peaceful acceptance, without being troubled by what we are enduring when we find ourselves in such a state?

I am certain that you are careful not to lose these opportunities to bear witness to your fidelity. I am likewise sure that your heart is not open to listening to the arguments of nature which incline us to judge events without the guidance of Divine Providence and the accomplishment of the most holy will of God. I know that you turn a deaf ear to any longing for the garlic and onions of Egypt that would lead us to desire to be, once again, back in our native town, among people we know. Sometimes these persons compliment us. This seems to comfort us a great deal because our senses are involved. For a time, our minds derive pleasure from reflecting on these words, but after a while, we find that we have not become more virtuous because of them.

If we are assailed by temptations and trials, we become completely dejected, imagining ourselves to be in a deplorable state. And truly, this would be our condition if we did not cling to God by the tip of our souls, saying to Him, from the depths of our hearts, "My God, do whatever you will; I belong entirely to you!" Despite these temptations, we must perform all our actions purely and simply for the love of God.

You must be convinced that it is His holy will that you find yourself in the state in which He has placed you, either by the direct operation of His Providence or by permitting His creatures to put you in such a state.

Have you considered, my dear Sister, what we have learned from the example of Saint John the Baptist who knew Our Lord so well that he bore witness to Him, as you know, and loved Him more than anyone else in this world? Nevertheless, he drew away from Him, or rather God separated him from Jesus by his vocation to penance, although he was born without the stain of sin. Could it not be, my dear Sister, that God wanted to give this example to souls that He wishes to separate from all earthly affection, so that He may fill their hearts with His holy love? How consoling for a soul to find itself completely dependent on His

special guidance! This thought is sufficient to make me rejoice with you. Do not believe that things will always be as they now are.

Please extend my very cordial greetings to our dear Sister. I am, for both of you, in the love of Jesus Crucified . . .

L.550 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity at Châteaudun

November 2, 1657

My very dear Sister,

It seems that it has been a long time since I have spoken to your good heart. I do not even know if I sent you news of Sister Cécile's[1] arrival. She returned here in good health and filled with good will. She received your letter and was filled with great tenderness because of the good advice you gave her. I can assure you that she had already begun putting it into practice. Our good God has destined her to work, so He did not will to leave her with us for long to practice patience during a period of unemployment. God called her to replace Sister Anne Hardemont[2] at the Petites Maisons while Sister Anne comes here to make her Holy Exercises.[3]

I have heard that Charlotte[4] has returned to Chars. If you know anything about it, please let me know. Also, please send me detailed news of yourself.

I was convinced that your gentleness, submission and cordiality would succeed in dissipating the little dissatisfaction caused by this change. I was also certain that you would not spare yourself in your efforts to appease by words those whom you could not satisfy in deed.

I beg Sister Anne Bocheron[5] to excuse me for not writing to her by this mail. Please assure her that I was very consoled to received her letter and to have news of Sister Marthe.[6] My greetings to both of them. I am with all my heart, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. The annual retreat.
4. Charlotte Moreau, see Letter 349, who left the Company of the Daughters of Charity.
5. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.
6. Marthe, see Letter 544.

L.551 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

November 16, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I do not know if you are receiving our letters. We have written to you since Sister Anne[2] left but we have had no news from you. This is worrisome for me, so I urge you to write as soon as you possibly can. Please tell me about your work and if charity is still practiced there.

Before Sister Anne left, she mentioned a new habit but I thought, at the time, that she did not need one. However, my dear Sister, if you see that she really does, let me know. I am afraid she would not ask for it out of courtesy and to avoid superfluity.

I rejoice in the hope that you are living together in great union, that your mutual support unites you in one heart and one mind in Jesus Christ, and that you are, therefore, a source of great edification to everyone.

Sister Anne's sister[3] is still at Saint-Nicolas and is still in need of prayers. All our sisters send their greetings. Some of them had been ill, but they are better now, thank God, except Sister Jeanne-Marie,[4] who is completely bedridden because of her usual infirmities. Please ask God to grant her the grace to profit from them.

I am sure that you do not neglect to entreat Our Lord to keep our Most Honored Father in good health. Please remember also to pray for Monsieur Portail. He had been seriously ill and is still weak, but he is much better, thank God.

Sister Barbe[5] still shares the same affection you experienced when you were together. Enclosed are tangible proofs of it.

Believe me always in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
3. Marie Levies entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity after August 1655. She seems to have remained in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet until 1660.
4. Jeanne-Marie went to Sedan in 1654. After her return to the Motherhouse, she was frequently ill. She died in April 1658.
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, lived in Bernay with Laurence Dubois for three years.

L.552 - TO MADAME DANSE[1]

November 20, 1657

Madame,

If I were in better health, I would not fail to afford myself the honor of visiting you to pay my respects. I would also assure you that, according to what she herself told me, Madame de Saint-Martin is facing total ruin because of the losses she has suffered. She is also threatened with the prospect of having the house, which the Queen was good enough to have purchased for the Daughters of Charity at Fontainebleau, put up for public auction. She sees no solution other than from the payment of the back rent owed for the said house, which she could have paid had she received the funds allocated by Her Most Just and Charitable Majesty. She still hopes to receive this assistance and trusts, Madame, that your goodness in her regard will obtain it for her by your kind ministrations, which you undertake for the love of God and out of concern for a poor, afflicted widow. I do not dare to add to this my own very humble plea, but I do assure you of my respect and obedience in the love of Our Lord in whom I remain, your very humble and most grateful servant.

L.554 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS CLAUDE[2] AND MARIE[3]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Angers

November 28 (1657)

My very dear Sisters Claude and Marie,

Thank you for the news you sent me about our sisters. I praise God with all my heart that they are faithful in continuing to serve the poor as they did at the time that Sister Cécile[4] was there. I cannot hide the fact, my dear Sisters, that I was very consoled to learn of the fruit of her direction from Monsieur l'abbé and from Monsieur Ratier. This leads me to say that the Daughters of Charity of Angers have been singularly blessed by God for the service of the sick poor of the hospitals. May He be forever blessed!

1. Madame Danse, Lady of Charity, was a Lady-in-Waiting for the Queen. Monsieur Vincent and Louise de Marillac often sought her intervention with the Queen.
2. Claude Carré, see Letter 505, the new Sister Servant of the hospital of Angers.
3. Marie Gaudoin, the Assistant, see Letter 294.
4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

One of the practices of all our sisters strikes me as excellent and I beg them and you also, my dear Sisters, to continue it. It consists of informing the Sister Servant of everything that occurs in the hospital. She is to be the only one to render any account to any of the numerous people involved, after she has learned from you the state of affairs in the matters for which you are responsible. If you always respect this custom, you may be certain that all will go well. You will be respected by those outside the Company, and the union and cordiality prevalent among you will be so strong that it will form an impregnable rampart against the devil.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Monsieur Ratier for the trouble he takes to give you so many conferences. The angels will preserve the recollection of them to present to God the profit you have derived from them, while the demons will remember them to reproach you for failing to put them into practice.

At the present time, we cannot send you copies of any of the conferences given here. As for yours, you cannot transcribe them unless you have a sister write down all that she can remember of what is said, then copy it over neatly and give it to other sisters to verify from their recollections. However, to transcribe entire conferences you would need a sister who did nothing else. It suffices to write down the principal recommendations his Charity gives you and then to share on them among yourselves from time to time.

I am amazed, Sister Claude, that you have not written to me. I believe that Monsieur Berthe[1] named you to replace Sister Cécile until she returns. If you cannot write, you can have someone else do it, but in your name. You can also act independently, overcoming your timidity or rather, a bit of mental laziness.

I embrace our dear sisters very affectionately and urge them, insofar as they are able, to keep before their eyes, in all that happens, the desire to accomplish the will of God. I ask them and you also to believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know if you have received the letter that I wrote to the entire community.

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1. Monsieur Berthe passed through Angers in May 1657.

L.555 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

December 4, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the great peace that exists between you and the Ladies of Charity. There is nothing more powerful to preserve this peace than the respect and humility you must manifest toward them. If there is someone who looks after your needs, you must not become proud or overbearing because of this but say quite simply, "Monsieur . . . wants things this way."

I believe that the Confraternity of Charity functions differently at Bernay from other places. This is why I am asking you to send me a copy of your Rules and an outline of what is asked of you. I will then show the materials to our Most Honored Father. After he has examined them, we will send you the clarifications his Charity judges advisable and tell you how they are to be carried out.

I did not think that Sister Anne[2] would need habits so soon, but since you consider it necessary, we are sending you a skirt. I greet her most cordially and urge her to work at her perfection. I can assure you of Sister Barbe's[3] continued affection. She never writes to me, as far as I can remember, without speaking of you. She greets you warmly and asks to be remembered in your prayers, All our sisters and I do the same. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.557 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

December 18, 1657

My very dear Sister,

I am taking advantage of the visit of the Prior of Varize to ask you if you received two letters that I sent to you by messenger about two weeks ago. I want also to ask if you have any recent news of our sisters

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

at Varize.[1] Let me know also if people in general are growing satisfied with your changes, and if your cordiality and gentleness are attracting persons of rank to the hospital where they can do some good.

Perhaps I am mistaken in believing that it was you who told me that you were teaching little girls, and that the administrators were very pleased about it.

Greet Monsieur le Maistre and Mademoiselle Libereau very humbly for me. Sister Cécile[2] continues to be well, thank God, although she has a great deal to endure. She sends her love. She longs to see you but she is at peace. All our sisters join me in sending greetings. We ask the three[3] of you to remember us in your prayers. I assure you that I am, with all my heart, in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1658

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Ussel, Metz and Calais. December 27: *death of Sister Barbe Angiboust.*

L.559 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

January 6, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I was worried because I had not received any news of your dear self. I was very much afraid that our letters had been lost. Indeed, I believe they have been, because I think that your answer is to the letter that the Prior of Varize brought you.

I have learned from a very reliable source that Charlotte[4] has returned to her home town, which is Chars, and that she is not married. I imagine that her Pastor is relieved about this because, as you know, we no longer have any sisters there.[5]

Sister Élisabeth[6] from Sainte-Marie is better, thank God, but Sister Marie[7] has exchanged places with her and is quite ill.

1. Sulpice Dubois and Claude.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Barbe Angiboust, Anne Bocheron, and Marthe, see Letter 544.
4. Charlotte Moreau, see Letter 349.
5. The Daughters of Charity left Chars around August-September 1657.
6. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.
7. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

I praise God with all my heart for the serenity you are enjoying and for the blessings He is bestowing upon your work. Please let me know if you really have schoolgirls. I beg you to slow down a bit. Take some lukewarm, sweetened barley water at bedtime. It will help your cold.

I believe that our sisters will not be able to move into the new building much before Easter. The remodeling that had to be done on the nearby one delayed things considerably.

Today we had the happiness of having a conference.[1] Our New Year's pictures were blessed at the same time. We are enclosing yours.

Continue, I beg of you, my dear Sister, to beseech God to preserve the health of our dear Most Honored Father. Pray also that He may spare Monsieur Portail who has been very ill. He is still not well but he is a little better, thank God.

Today we are honored to have Sister Cécile[2] with us. She could not return because she is having problems with her thigh. She sends her love and asks you to pray for her, that God may grant her the grace to be very grateful for the blessings His goodness has showered upon her. All our sisters send love as I do also. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I am enclosing the pictures for our sisters at Varize.[3] Please get them to them at your convenience. Please tell them that I am sorry for not writing to them but it is too late. For the past two months, our conferences have been an explanation of the Rule.

L.560 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

January 13, 1658

Monsieur,

After having praised God with you, unworthy though I am, for the grace He bestowed upon us by preserving our Most Honored Father from very imminent danger,[4] I am taking the liberty of urging you to look into the defects which I think are to be found in his carriage. It seems to me

1. Conference of January 6, 1658 (Coste X, 442).
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Claude and Sulpice Dubois are 15 kilometers from Châteaudun.
4. Monsieur Vincent fell getting out of his carriage, which he referred to as his "carriage of ignominy."

that the doorsills are too low and that the entire body of the carriage is too elevated on the springs. Although that makes the ride smoother, it causes the carriage to sway to such an extent that sometimes, when riding in it, I am afraid that the jolting will cause me to be thrown out the door. I also believe that there should be a handrail on either side of the doors, although this is no longer the style.

I believe that Sister Rose[1] is still waiting to speak with you. If your Charity can see her tomorrow, I will send her over at the time you indicate. If you are in agreement, I think that, after you have seen her, giving her an absolute prohibition to return without having been to Holy Communion might restore her peace.

Allow me to ask to be remembered in your Masses and prayers and to say that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble sister and most obedient servant.

L.561 - (TO BROTHER DUCOURNEAU)

[January 1658]

The girls from Saint-Fargeau,[2] who are asking to enter the Company of the Daughters of Charity, must be informed that it is not a religious house; nor is it a hospital from which they will never be moved. Rather they must continuously go to seek out the sick poor, in various places, in any kind of weather and at predetermined times. They will be very poorly clothed and nourished and will never wear anything on their heads except a linen cornette in cases of great necessity.

They must have no other intention, when entering the Company, than the pure desire to serve God and their neighbor. They must be willing to live in the Company in a constant state of interior and exterior mortification and be determined to observe all their Rules faithfully, especially those requiring absolute obedience.

They must realize that, although they go about the city of Paris, they may never visit friends or acquaintances without permission. They must bring enough money with them to cover the cost of their travel and of their first habit. Experience has shown that girls who are associated with our sisters in distant places, before being received and clothed at the Motherhouse, do not persevere because they are under the illusion that they have only to continue what they have begun.

Madame, the Duchess de Ventadour,[3] asked for two sisters, claiming

1. Anne Rose, see Letter 144.
2. The postulants who came from Saint-Fargeau.
3. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

that four would not be too many to serve her poor. When I assured her that four would indeed be too many if God gave good health to the two sisters who are now there, she responded that, if Monsieur Vincent were in agreement, two sisters could be sent to Saint-Pierre.[1] She added that since the two establishments would be close together, the sisters could have a change of air from time to time, which would be beneficial for both their bodily and their mental health.

Nevertheless, we did not follow this suggestion. Instead, we considered sending only one sister to meet the urgent needs of our two sisters who are both ill.[2] One has a continuous fever. The other has quartan fever.

I very humbly beg Brother Ducourneau[3] to show this letter to our Most Honored Father; to give us some news of him; and, if his Charity approves, that a sister be sent to La Fère as soon as possible. We recommend Sister Julienne Allot.[4] Most of our sisters do not want to see the ship leave for Madagascar[5] without them.

L.562 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 1 [1658]

My Most Honored Father,

I very humbly beg your Charity to allow me to ask you for news of the true state of your health. For the love of God, do not be in a hurry to go out!

Sister Renée, one of the best girls to come from Angers, made her first vows last year with your Charity's permission. Since she has been named for Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and, although she does not know it, may leave soon, she asks to renew them tomorrow. She went to confession with this intention and spoke about it to her confessor—we do not know his name—and he agreed. I very humbly beg you, my Most Honored Father, to let us know if you approve; and to tell us how she should go about it, since she cannot be present for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when you celebrate it upstairs.

1. Saint-Pierre-du-Mont, which was about 50 kilometers from Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.
2. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421, and Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.
3. Brother Ducourneau, see Letter 147.
4. Julienne Allot was already in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in August 1655 (Coste XIII, 567). She went to La Fère and was still there in 1660.
5. Three Priests of the Mission were preparing to leave for Madagascar. They would sail from Nantes (Coste VII, 52-60).

Although I am most unworthy, we all ask your Charity to offer us once again to Our Lord and to beg Him to grant us the graces we need so as not to be unfaithful to Him. Asking also for your holy blessing for this intention, my Most Honored Father, I am your most obedient and most grateful daughter.

L.563 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 4 [1658]

My Most Honored Father,

To spare your Charity the trouble, I had asked Brother Ducourneau to explain to you the interior dispositions of the good girl who had been with the late Mademoiselle Noret. She has been deeply depressed for the past year ever since her parents made her leave Mademoiselle Noret's home. As a result of this, her poor mind has developed a distaste for everything. She was deeply moved during her retreat, but not strengthened. She wants to speak to her confessor from Saint-Eustache who, she says, could make her better known to us.

I also believe, my Most Honored Father, that it would be appropriate for him to speak with you before we allow him to make any decisions. If your Charity agrees, we will ask him to take the trouble to come here. He will have more information to give you in the matter.

Enclosed is the little booklet you requested. Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to ask that the author's name remain unknown. Not that I fear that it contains anything contrary to faith, but it might seem a weakness to have spent time this way or to appear to be carrying on a colloquy with a woman.

Please be so charitable as to grant me your holy blessing, to offer to God the desire of our sisters to go to Madagascar,[1] and to honor me by believing that I am always, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

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1. Madagascar, see Letter 561.

L.564 - (TO SISTER CLAUDE CARRÉ AT ANGERS)[1]

February 13, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I am sure that you frequently rekindle your charity to watch over our sisters so as to warn them cordially and privately of the little faults you may have noticed in them, and to point out to them the holy practices that might help them to make all their actions pleasing to Our Lord. This will come about if they are accomplished for love of Him and in imitation of those which He performed on earth. Moreover, they will all be perfect, provided our sisters continue to strive to renounce their personal satisfactions and to overcome their natural habits and inclinations, in order to please God by serving Him in the poor.

Give the sisters the opportunity to speak to you privately once a month even if it is only for a quarter of an hour. Be supportive of them as they reveal their faults to you. Share in the sufferings they recount to you. Nothing in your manner should ever reflect to any sister what they may have said to you.

I send greetings to the entire little community, begging Our Lord to fill it with His grace and to bestow upon it His richest blessings, as a sign of His pure love in which I am with all my heart . . .

L.565 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

February 16, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I am not surprised at all the difficulties you are experiencing in dealing with the Ladies of Charity. This generally happens wherever a hospital and a Parish Confraternity of Charity are together. There are disagreements everywhere, without either side being at fault, because each group feels obliged to gain the advantage for those for whom it is caring.[2] The desired solution would be for the two works to be separate, each having clear rules delineating its responsibilities. However, these would have to be drawn up and that depends entirely on the Pastor of Bernay, because, as of now, I know of none that I could send you.

1. Letter recopied by Marguerite Chétif. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.

2. See Letter 499.

Your obligation, in the midst of all these disagreements, is to be very humble and to be very careful that no one can accuse you of arrogance or independence. You must always keep in mind that you are subject to everyone, the last of all. You must believe that you have no authority and act accordingly, doing nothing without the permission of those to whom Monsieur l'abbé has entrusted the direction of the works. As for the accounts you must give, always do so as accurately and as humbly as possible.

In dealing with the Ladies of Charity, you must never take their rank into consideration in showing them respect. It suffices for you to know that they have been received into the Company to honor them as Mothers of your Masters the Poor. This is so, even if they contribute nothing from their own property. If you realized, my dear Sisters, the degree of humility, gentleness and submission Our Lord desired of the Daughters of Charity, you would be dismayed not to practice these virtues.

My God, Sister Anne,[1] what are you doing? If you are discouraged, I will tell you what I have already told you several times, namely that you must work. Laziness brings sin to the soul and illness to the body.

Although I am sure, Sisters, that you are not being familiar or communicating with people of the world, nevertheless, I cannot fail to tell you that our Most Honored Father, in the explanation of our Rules which his Charity is giving us on how we must live, points out the great dangers to be found in these practices, which are expressly forbidden by our Rules. All our exchanges and all our consolations, if we *can* have any, other than with Our Lord, must be found among ourselves. I beg Him for this grace with all my heart so that His holy love may be the strong bond uniting us. I am in Him, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I will forward your letter to Monsieur Vincent. I beg you to thank God with us for the grace His goodness bestowed upon us by preserving our Most Honored Father after he fell from his carriage. Ask God to continue to protect him on all occasions.

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1. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.

L.566 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Nantes

February 16, 1658

My very dear Sisters,

I imagine you must have received the letter I sent you some time ago telling you of the trip some of the priests were making. They will be kind enough to bring you this letter along with one which I allowed myself the honor of writing to the Reverend Vicar of Sainte-Croix because you have often told me that he had expressed the desire to hear from me. I am certain that our Most Honored Father has given some of these good priests full authority to listen to what you say, so I urge you to tell them everything with complete confidence. Sister Françoise Ménage,[1] do not forget anything, I beg of you. Also, remember to send us news of yourself from time to time. Do the same, Sister Andrée,[2] but, for the love of God, learn how to spell so that I can read your letters easily and answer you as you would wish. I had intended to write to several of you individually, but I do not have the time and I do not want to cause you to lose any time either.

Be very simple, all of you, and speak in the presence of God, giving an unbiased account to those with whom you speak, with no other interest than to make known your faults so that you may be assisted in your efforts to overcome them.

I beg Our Lord to grant you this grace and I recommend myself to your prayers. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our sisters in Poland ask to be remembered in your prayers. All our dear sisters of Paris send cordial greetings.

L.567 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 2 [1658]

My Most Honored Father,

If the poor woman, on whose behalf you were asked to write, is in a condition to be a wet-nurse, I can think of no safer place for her than

1. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
2. Andrée Maréchal, see Letter 368.

to have her come to nurse the foundlings. If the fear is that she would want to return, and if she has been banished as a punishment for her fault, this would be a means to keep her here. If she has enough milk, she could nurse for two or three years. Otherwise, my Most Honored Father, I see nothing in this area to prevent her from falling into the same, or a more serious fault, depending on where she is. If she has been banished, she could be secretly placed as a servant some place about five or six leagues from here, especially if her sentence has not been widely publicized, lest shame drive her to sin again because her honor has been completely destroyed.

I have probably said too much, so I very humbly ask your pardon. I am also taking advantage of this opportunity to ask for your holy blessing and for the assistance of your prayers that I may obtain mercy. I fear that my past, perhaps present and even future obstinacy—miserable creature that I am—may cause me to be lost eternally, like those poor people who perished only bodily during the floods. To move your Charity to do this, I beg you to believe that I am by the will of God, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L.569B - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(c. March 1658)

Monsieur,

Some time ago, after your Charity had informed us that there were two good girls who wanted to enter our Company, and we had learned that you had gone to the trouble of testing their vocation and had been good enough to recommend them, Monsieur Vincent told me to ask you to send them here, if you consider them suitable.

As for the other four, it appears that they do not yet have your approval. Should there be someone among them whom you would also recommend, I would say to send her with the two mentioned above.

Permit me to say, Monsieur, that the last girl your Charity sent us, a girl named Jacquine,[1] who seemed to be the pearl of the girls coming from Angers, is still subject to little weaknesses of character which lead to inconstancy. Nevertheless, she finds comfort in her tears and she tells me that she is worried because she has not had any news of her father. It is not necessary, Monsieur, to send someone there solely for that purpose, but if our sisters could find someone from her neighborhood

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.

who, from time to time, could send us news of her family, she would be very happy.

I must avow, Monsieur, that I am somewhat disturbed about our dear Sister Claude[1] and about the trouble our sisters, or at least some of them, are causing Monsieur Ratier. I assume, Monsieur, that he has told you what we did about changing Sister Perrine.[2] Perhaps this will be a lesson for the other sisters, and Monsieur Ratier[3] will see more clearly the service he is rendering to our good God by his patience. I beg Our Lord to recompense him for it by His choicest graces.

For His holy love, I ask you for a share in your holy prayers. I also ask you to believe that I am with respect and in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful servant.

L.470 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 26 [1658]

Monsieur,

Three months ago, I was bled. I needed a second bleeding but had to defer it, because the last time I was ill, the doctors told me that, because of my age, I should only have it done in case of urgent need. I have put it off for this reason but my knowledge of my physical condition warns me that it must be done. I would do so today if your Charity would take the trouble to let me know that it is all right for me to have it done without another opinion. I am not ill, thank God, only indisposed by chest trouble and other symptoms that warn me of this need. I have reason to fear that I am trying too hard to end my days comfortably, being more sensitive than ever to pain. Nevertheless, my Most Honored Father, I continue to be your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

1. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.
2. Perrine, see Letter 287.
3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

L.569 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

April 10, 1658

Monsieur,

I cannot express the sorrow that touched my heart when I read the opening lines of the letter you so kindly wrote to me. For a long time, Monsieur, I have truly admired your patience and I have always realized that God has blessed it and wills it to continue. We had good reason to believe that this change would further undermine weak spirits. Allow me, Monsieur, to beg you very humbly to let me know if Sister Claude[1] is entering into her new office of responsibility properly, and if she is doing all in her power to win over those who have an aversion for her. Also, Monsieur, please indicate those sisters whom your Charity believes should be recalled immediately.

As for the two girls who have expressed a desire to enter our Company, they will be most welcome, Monsieur, if you consider them suitable and if they seem to possess emotional stability. I know that you do not recommend them without first testing them thoroughly. Sister Jacquine[2] is doing fairly well and does not seem to be worrying about her father any longer.

I am truly ashamed not to be able to write to Monsieur Ratier by this mail but the little affairs of the community are increasing and my ailments absorb most of my time. I know that I should give him preference over many others, because of the debt of gratitude we owe him. I keep it very specially in my heart to present to Our Lord in whose love I feel very strongly obliged to say that I am with respect, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.570 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay in Normandy

April 17, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished to hear that Sister Marie[4] is ill. Were I not certain

1. Claude Carré, the Sister Servant, see Letter 505.
2. Jacquine, see Letter 543.
3. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
4. Marie came to help the two sisters at Bernay.

that you had shown her all the charity you should, I would suggest that you give her the remedies of the new season. However, since you do not expect her to recover, please send her back here by the best means of transportation you can find, provided she can make the trip without endangering her life. I am amazed that your administrators consider her a burden, because she is the first sister to fall seriously ill since the foundation of the work. I would think that they have enough charity to realize that your bodies are not exempt from illnesses that can befall others. This illness will prevent us from seeing you as soon as I had hoped, because another sister will have to be well trained before you can make a little trip here.

All our sisters are fairly well, thanks be to God, but we must join together in praying that God will preserve our Most Honored Father. He is suffering greatly from a bad leg. Monsieur Portail is in fairly good health. He continues to show us his usual charity. This obliges us to pray fervently for him.

I told you that you could write to your brother and that I would be certain that he received the letter. Send us all the news about everything there. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your . . .

P.S. My love to Sister Marie. We will wait for her return to determine who best to send. Since I wrote this letter, your uncle came looking for news of you. He said that your brother and sisters had divided up your parents' furniture, without including you. However, they have drawn up an inventory. You must ask for a copy when you write to your brother. Then we will let you know if you should send someone with power of attorney to settle your share of the inheritance. Good-day, my dear Sisters.

L.572 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER FRANÇOISE MÉNAGE

Daughter of Charity at Nantes

April 24 (1658)

My very dear Sister,

I love your good heart for sending us news of yourself, but I beg you not to be upset if I do not write to you as often as you would wish. The same is true of our Sisters Ménage;[1] they are all steeped in work and do not have a minute to spare. Sister Madeleine is much better since she has been here with us at the House. It must be our good air. Sister Marguerite

1. The three sisters of Françoise Ménage: Marguerite, Madeleine and Catherine.

was not feeling well but she is better now, thank God. As for Sister Catherine, although she was the last to come, she is making every effort to surpass the others in virtue. I assure you that I am extremely edified. We must pray that she perseveres.

If you need to write to our Most Honored Father, you may do so, but keep it concise and send it to me either sealed or open. I can assure you that neither I nor anyone else will read it. Please ask Sister Haran[1] to pray for me. I beg her to remember me also to her entire little community, whom I cordially embrace. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, please remember that you must always respect our older sisters and you must pay strict attention when they speak of the holy practices recommended to us long ago by our Most Honored Father. In my opinion, you misunderstand our sisters when you tell me that they object to your writing to us. I think that they mean that you should not write often or without necessity.

Because many of our letters are being lost, I will send you a crown of Our Lord when I find a safe route.

L.571 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARGUERITE CHÉTIF[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Arras

April 30, 1658

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that I ought to complain that you are complaining about me, because I wrote to you several times after receiving your letter concerning the vows. However, since it came very close to the feast of the Renovation, and since my letter would not have reached you in time, we were content simply to accompany you before Our Lord in spirit, with joy and consolation. We rejoiced not only in this act but because of the generosity which His goodness has granted you in the difficult situation in which He has allowed you to find yourself, so that you may serve Him in a spirit of pure detachment and persevere faithfully.

I am a bit surprised, my dear Sister, by the thoughts that enter your mind, calling into question my awareness of your affection for me as well as the consciousness you should have of my affection for you. Moreover, I can assure you that you have never seemed to me to be closer

1. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.

2. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.

to God or to love your vocation more than at present. What more could I ask of you, knowing as I do the manner in which you serve our Masters? May God be forever blessed for this! I urge Sister Radegonde[1] to act in the same way and to show great cordiality toward them.

I am sending you the bill of exchange that we drew up when we sent the hundred pounds. There are no more fruit capsules to be found, but I am sending two pounds of inexpensive senna, which the doctors approve, as well as a half-pound of better quality. We cannot yet send you directions for making spirit of vitriol because we do not know how to make it ourselves. In keeping with what the merchant advised us, these are the ingredients we bought to make it. Sister Philippe[2] said that she cannot remember any other remedy for dropsy except to purge the patient often and sometimes to use gamboge. If I can learn anything more, I will let you know.

I rejoiced to hear that our Most Honored Father had written to you because I am aware of the consolation his letter must have brought you. In the name of God, my dear Sister, let no fear enter your mind that I am displeased with you because I am thoroughly convinced that you are not in the least inclined to give us any reason to be so. On the contrary, it seems that God is increasing His graces to you and is pleased with your fidelity in suffering and your trust in His guidance. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His graces upon you and to grant Sister Radegonde the grace to be faithful to the practice of her Rules and to everything pertaining to the perfection of her vocation.

Monsieur Vincent is not feeling well. Beg God to leave him with us for His glory. Sister Jeanne-Marie[3] left us on the eve of the Feast of Saint Mark, after much suffering. One has only to realize the guidance of Our Lord in her illness, His care for her, and the provisions He made for the assistance given her until her death, to have great love for the Company. She was the first to live in the new building. I am certain that you will show her the charity of praying to God for the repose of her soul. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You acted properly, my very dear Sister, in writing to your relatives when you had the opportunity.

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1. Radegonde Lenfantin, see Letter 497.
2. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.
3. Jeanne-Marie, see Letter 551.

L.573 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

[May 1658]

I did not know, my Most Dear and Honored Father, that you were ill. For the love of God, take care of yourself! What I am anxious to know from your Charity is whether we should send the little sister destined for Cahors as a companion to Sister Anne[1] on the trip she will be making with the Duchess de Ventadour.[2] We have been assured of this sister's stability in the service of God and of her exactitude in the observance of the Rules. She knows how to write, which is essential so that we can be accurately informed of what is going on. The aforementioned Lady wants our sisters to be ready to leave on May 8.

I think that we must urge Mademoiselle de Lamoignon[3] to decide once and for all what is to be done about Mademoiselle de Chisé. If she asks us to keep her, should we grant her request? If we are to keep her in sickness and health and to provide her with remedies, would 400 pounds, in addition to her clothing, be adequate to request?

One of our new sisters, who has been doing very well for more than two months, has asked to be clothed in the habit of the Daughters of Charity. If you are willing to grant her request, I hope that she will capably replace Monsieur Haslé's[4] sister, who left yesterday after having spoken to Monsieur Portail.

I will tell the rest to the good Brother,[5] if your Charity will be so good as to send him here.

L.574 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

May 11, 1658

Monsieur,

I am very much afraid that I am rushing you by telling you that our sisters are to leave[6] Monday morning with the Duchess de Ventadour[7]

1. Anne Hardemont who was leaving for Ussel.
2. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
3. Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, see Letter 143.
4. Monsieur Haslé was Pastor of Saint-Nicolas until 1650. His sister, Marie Haslé, was in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in August 1655 (Coste XIII, 576).
5. Brother Ducourneau, see Letter 147.
6. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110 and Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578, left for Ussel.
7. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

and that I believe that it is essential for them to take with them a copy of the principal articles of the establishments, particularly those pertaining to total dependence in spiritual matters, the continuation of the style and color of the habit, and the fact that no one should be associated with them, either over them or under them, for the service of the poor. Moreover, since this is not an established hospital, there must be an article, if Monsieur Vincent considers it appropriate, which states that their expenses will be separate from those of the poor.

By pointing these things out to you, Monsieur, I do not mean to exclude anything that you see fit to include. Our dear sisters are looking forward to having the honor of seeing you before their departure. I recommend myself to your holy prayers and I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.

P.S. I do not know if it is necessary to add an article stating that our sisters must be established with the consent of the Bishop.

L.576 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday [June 1658]

My Most Honored Father,

The uncertainty as to whether or not the Queen will request Sister Marthe[1] from La Fère is very troubling to me, since I am not certain about seeing Sister Manceau[2] as Sister Servant, although she has been in the Company for 15 years. This leads me to suggest, my Most Honored Father, that we send a sister to La Fère. Perhaps the coach could take her when it passes that way, or we could ask her to go to wait for it in some nearby town. Then there would be five sisters there. Sister Clémence[3] is here. She would be quite suitable as Sister Servant—or there is that sister from Lorraine who volunteered to return for the mission in Metz.

I am wondering if the news I just heard, if true, should prevent their journey. I am awaiting authorization to go to see you and to send to the parishes for the sisters I proposed to you. I am with all my heart, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
2. Françoise Manceau, see Letter 277.
3. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.

L.577 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

This Holy Feast of Pentecost [June 1658]

My Most Honored Father,

I would ask your Charity to recall that the election of officers takes place during Pentecost week.[1] Could it be today, lest you be unable to come another day?

The Act of Establishment requires that the Superioress be elected every three years. Nevertheless, until now, she seems to be in office for life. If your Charity considers it appropriate to begin to make it an elective office, I think that this would be most fitting, so long as it does not play on the weaknesses and ambitions to which persons of lowly condition are inclined.

The aforementioned Rule does not provide for the prolongation of the term of office of the three officers, nevertheless, my Most Honored Father, this would seem to me to be essential because nearly three to four months go by before they assume their responsibilities. If your Charity is in agreement, you could begin it this year because it is impossible to find other sisters since we must provide so many elsewhere.

For many years to come, may Our Lord in His goodness continue to carry out His designs for the Company under your holy guidance. May He also grant me the grace to be all my life, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and most grateful servant.

L.577B - TO SISTER CARCIREUX[2]

June 25, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I have just received your letter of June 18 in which you reproach me severely, and rightly so, for not having written to you for so long. I beg your pardon for this with all my heart and I ask you to welcome the little advice I have to give you that will help me not to fall into the same fault again. I would urge you, my dear Sister, to make your letters easier for me to read, and to place all your requests right at the beginning, listing

1. The following were elected on June 9, 1658: Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280; Françoise Paule, see Letter 309; Jeanne Gressier, see Letter 456.

2. Françoise Carcireux is at Richelieu, see Letter 254.

them separately, one after the other. It is not that I do not find great consolation when you honor me by sending me detailed news of yourself, but I am now so weak that I have difficulty in doing much reading. I am really distressed that I cannot remember everything you requested in your previous letters.

Since Monsieur de Beaumont[1] went to the trouble of writing to our Most Honored Father about those two girls, I am certain that his Charity will not fail to answer him. Let me add, however, that it is extremely important that they have true vocations, because experience has taught us that some girls profit from the occasion to come to Paris in the hope that, if they do not adapt to this house, they will find a good place to enter domestic service.

To respond to your letter, let me say that as yet I have heard nothing about the rent for your house nor have I received a letter in which it was mentioned. So I have nothing to tell you except that, if you owe something and have the where-with-all to pay, it is quite reasonable for you to do so. However, since in all places where our sisters are established, the Ladies of Charity always assume the responsibility for housing them, perhaps the Duchess de Richelieu[2] will do the same for you.

I think that the fact that two sisters are ill is delaying our sister[3] from Angers. I praise God for the holy indifference you manifest by your submission to His divine guidance. I beg Him to preserve you always in the union and cordiality of His holy love.

L.579 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

July 4, 1658

Monsieur,

I must confess to you that I can experience a no-more-humiliating mortification than the one caused me by our sisters when they make such bad use of the advice your Charity continues to give them. I hope, Monsieur, that, by the grace of God, some change will occur, or that His goodness will furnish us with the means to make an efficacious one, so as to prevent this evil from increasing.

I thank you very humbly, Monsieur, for the authorization you gave Sister Claude[4] to examine the so-called packages so as to remove from

1. Monsieur de Beaumont, see Letter 531b.
2. Anne Poussard, wife of Armand Jean du Plessis, the grand-nephew of Richelieu.
3. Perrine, see Letter 287.
4. Claude Carré, see Letter 505.

them what does not belong to the person believed to have made them up. It is true that when our sisters leave here they cannot always carry all their belongings with them. If it were only a matter of equality, she would not be guilty. Whatever the case, I am glad that our sisters witnessed this example so that nothing inappropriate will creep in.

I cannot bring myself to tell Sister Jacquine[1] that her brother has deserted her father. The news would cause her so much grief. Since right now he is not in want, we will wait until winter is on the way to send him the needed clothing.

I would consider it no small matter, Monsieur, if we had two girls of the calibre your Charity describes. I have just now received the notice your Charity took the trouble to send me about the journey of the two good girls from Angers, whom you know so well, Monsieur.

I will not fail, Monsieur, to carry out your orders concerning Monsieur Vincent. He has assured me that he shares our debt of gratitude to you for your goodness to us which increases day by day. I must confess, Monsieur, that I find great consolation in the assurance I have that you will not abandon us, as we deserve. (I am sure of this because I have the honor of knowing you).

The information your Charity gave me concerning the father and mother of the good girl who just left her home will certainly help us to see to it that she does not succumb to the temptations she might experience in their regard. I will make good use of it, with the help of God, as well as all the other advice you are good enough to give me. I thank you very humbly for all, Monsieur.

We have no news about the departure of our sister[2] for Richelieu. This worries me somewhat.

Monsieur Vincent very humbly requests, Monsieur, that if you see that Sister Claude is in the proper dispositions to renew her vows, that you grant her this grace, for one year only, as is the custom in the Company. It is absolutely essential that she be fully aware of the obligations inherent in this holy action and that she realize the esteem she must have for it, although we make only simple vows. Lack of knowledge in this matter, or rather the failure to recognize the extent of their obligations, has been harmful to others. I have every reason to say that I am guilty of all the faults that our dear sisters commit. For that reason, I implore the assistance of your holy prayers that I may obtain mercy. I beg you very humbly to honor me by continuing to believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

1. Jacquine, see Letter 543.
2. Perrine, see Letter 287.

L.580 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

July 5, 1658

My very dear Sisters,

You doubtless realize that I was very distressed when Sister Henriette[1] returned and I learned from her that it would appear that your conduct, on both sides, reveals considerable lack of awareness of your obligations. The desire for your perfection that God has instilled in me gives me more cause for suffering than I could ever express. For the love of God, reflect a little on the fragility of this life and on the misery of souls when they appear before God laden with sins and infidelities. I am sharing this lesson with you so that I may be aware of the necessity of overcoming myself and of detaching myself from any satisfactions that are against God. I must also learn to renounce the abuse of my senses and passions, because no one will rise with Jesus Christ who has not first of all died in this way.

I am quite ill and for that reason I must deprive myself of the honor of writing to Monsieur Pesset. Please extend my very humble apologies to him for this. Please pray for me and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.581 - TO THE SISTERS OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU OF NANTES

July 13, 1658

My very dear Sisters,

I received two packets of letters that you addressed to Sister Henriette.[2] I realize that you are trying to spare me a bit of trouble by not giving me so much news. Allow me to imitate you by writing only one letter to the entire community. I beg all of you to renew your courage so that you may serve God and the poor with more fervor, humility and charity than ever. Strive to acquire interior recollection in the midst of your occupations. Be particularly submissive to the good pleasure of God and abandon yourselves to His Providence. However, avoid mournful probing to discover everything that is going on within you. This often leads in

1. Henriette Gesseaume went to make the visitation of the community of Chantilly.

2. Henriette Gesseaume spent ten years in Nantes.

the end to imaginary virtues, puts you in a bad mood, and wears you out, finally producing a distaste for solid virtue. I tell you this, my dear Sisters, to encourage those of you who are not inclined to this practice and to reassure those who are troubled when their exterior occupations distract them from this manner of acting. Perfection is not to be found here but in the practice of true charity.

Truly, my dear Sisters, your heavy work load moves me to compassion. However, rejoice in Our Lord because I have solid reason to hope that you will soon have some relief. Continue, I beg you, to be an edification to your neighbor, a consolation to the afflicted and a comfort to the sick.

Sister Andrée,[1] you have every reason to praise God for the graces He has bestowed upon your mother and the entire family. I think that this takes care of news for you because God usually watches over the dear ones of those who are faithful to Him.

As for Sister Ménage,[2] please let her remember that we have often sent her news of her sisters and of her entire family since the death of her good father. At the present time, all is still going well with them, thank God. There were armed soldiers at Serqueux but God delivered her family safely from them. We must thank God for this and for all the graces His goodness bestows upon us.

I am sure that you do not forget to pray constantly for our Most Honored Father's health and that you are praying also for a safe trip for the Priests of the Mission who have left for Madagascar. We think they are safe.

Four of our sisters,[3] who are in Calais to assist the poor wounded, are no less in need of prayers. Nor are all our other sisters who send their greetings along with mine. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You brought me great joy by sending me a little account of your prayer. This assures me that, when it pleases God to give you more time, you will be as faithful to the greater part of your obligations as you now are to the lesser.

As for Sister Anne's[4] ailment, put a drop of oil of rue in her ear and cover it with a wad of cotton before she goes to bed. There is no better remedy.

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1. Andrée Maréchal, see Letter 368.
2. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
3. Françoise Manceau, Marguerite Ménage, Marie Poulet and Claude Muset left for Calais in June 1658. Françoise and Marguerite died at the end of July (letter from Marie and Claude dated August 3).
4. Anne de Vaux, born in 1629 in Ardivilliers, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in December 1651.

L.488 - TO SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

July 26, 1658

I received your letter asking for the Rule for the hospitals. I think I have already told you that there is none suitable for that place because of the small number of patients. Nevertheless, I am procuring a few little books to help you to instruct your patients. However, I hope that, if you are very submissive to the Ladies in matters concerning the sick of the town, your example, more than anything else, will arouse their fervor. When Mademoiselle de Croissy[1] has returned and we have met with her, we will be better able to determine what to send. I beg you to greet her very humbly for me and to thank her. Assure her that I am looking forward to her arrival in Paris and that I am eager to have the honor of seeing her as are all these good girls to whom I beg Our Lord to communicate His spirit so that they may accomplish His holy will.

I am sending a pair of stockings that are not yet made up. Although we sent you a similar pair just before Mademoiselle de Croissy went to Bernay, you never acknowledged receiving them nor did you mention that you would need more when you asked for the first pair.

Please extend my greetings to Sister Anne.[2] I am, for both of you, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble and affectionate sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, I beg you to remember that one of the principal obligations of your Rules is to perform your actions in a spirit of humility, obedience and charity.

L.582 - TO SISTER GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

July 27, 1658

My very dear Sister,

We are returning your licorice to you because it would not be appropriate for us to take it back. When it was sent, it was as fresh as

1. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.
2. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
3. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

could be found in Chars. It would be even more dried out if we sent it back and forth.

I was very happy to hear that you are both in better health. I praise God for this with all my heart. A short time ago, I wrote you a letter in which I asked you to offer my apologies to Monsieur Pesset because I could not afford myself the honor of writing to him to thank him for the solicitude his goodness leads him to show you. I beg you to express your sincere gratitude to him by your respect and your obedience. Please greet him very humbly for me.

You said you had enclosed something else with the licorice, but we did not find anything. Please be so good as to send us some juniper berries. I recommend myself to your prayers and I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Marie,[1] I have learned that you were more seriously ill than I had realized. I beg you to remember that submission of the mind to the good pleasure of God is one of the best ways to preserve bodily health.

L.583 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN[2]

at Nantes

August 8 (1658)

My very dear Sister,

It is true that the Vicar of Sainte-Croix did me the honor of writing to me, but it is also true that I afforded myself the honor of answering his letter. I profited from the same occasion to write to Sister Françoise Ménage[3] to give her detailed news of her family. I urge you to find out whether or not these letters reached their destination. If they have been lost, I am very much afraid that many others have also gone astray, because I am certain that it has not been as long as you claim since I have written to you.

If I had known that Monsieur Pocquelin was leaving, I would certainly have given him some letters. When I have the honor of seeing him, I will not fail to thank him for the visits he has paid you and I will ask him very specially for detailed news of you because it seems to me that what you tell us of yourself is very succinct. I think that I wrote to Sister Andrée[4] and I will be very upset if her letter has also been lost. Next

1. Marie Navain, see Letter 515.
2. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.
3. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
4. Andrée Maréchal, see Letter 368.

week, with the help of God, I will straighten everything out because this week there are several little matters that prevent me from doing so.

Our Most Honored Father is as well as usual, thank God; so is Monsieur Portail. I am sure that you do not forget to pray that God will preserve their health so that He may be glorified on earth through them for a long time to come. Please greet the Vicar of Sainte-Croix very respectfully for me. All our sisters send love to all of you and ask you to pray for them. I know of no sisters who are ill, thank God, either here or in distant houses. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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L.578 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

(Anne Hardemont and Avoie Vigneron at Ussel)[1]

(1658)

My very dear Sisters,

I am worried about the state you may be in because it has been so long since you have sent us any news of yourselves. I am also anxious to know, my dear Sister Anne,[2] if you have received a letter I sent you. It was a good six weeks ago, I think. In it, among other things, I promised Sister Avoie[3] that I would write to her by the next mail but I was not able to do so because I have been almost constantly ill ever since. I also mentioned that the Duchess de Ventadour[4] had not responded to the proposal we made to her to change from the house to the hospital. I would like to believe that she is waiting until she has taken all the necessary measures, so that she can make the foundation at the same time. This is painful for persons who would like to see the designs of God succeed immediately and who desire to work incessently for Him to whom they have wholeheartedly dedicated themselves. My dear Sisters, if we want to please our good God, we must not look so much to what we want to do but to what He wants us to do. From the moment His love called you to His service, He foresaw that you would be sent to Ussel, and He knew what you would have to do to begin the work. He

1. Letter without an address or a signature. The second part of the autograph seems to be missing.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
3. Avoie Vigneron entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity about 1646-1647. She was sent to Ussel in 1658. She encountered many difficulties there. She speaks of her sufferings with great feeling to Mademoiselle (Coste VII, 429) and to Monsieur Vincent (Coste VIII, 410).
4. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

accepted your submission to His good pleasure which was that you accomplish only what His Providence placed before you. He also willed that you faithfully observe your Rules and that you serve the small number of poor entrusted to your care with great exactitude, gentleness and charity. Our Lord knows very well where to find you when He has more for you to do.

L.585 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[September 1658]

I must find consolation in your charity, my Most Honored Father, for the loss of our poor Sister Jeanne-Baptiste[1] through my fault. I did not have the courage to speak to her frankly about the bad behavior that went on at the Nom-de-Jésus,[2] from which she suffered intensely because of her timidity. She left at 7 o'clock in the morning and I did not know it until 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

What are we to do, my Most Honored Father? My heart aches for her because I believe that she was innocent of these recent suspicions. Shall I send someone to look for her at the house of the Madeleines, where she has a sister, or at her parents' home? We know them. Shall I send to the Nom-de-Jésus for the woman who always accompanied her when she went out so that I can find out, without telling her that she has left us, how she behaved when she was out? Shall we find out whatever we can from the daughters at the Nom-de-Jésus so as to try to learn what has become of her?

Oh, how this incident makes me realize how much the Daughters of Charity must depend on those who hold the office of Superioress! Lately she had shown a marked spirit of independence. I think that fear, that was more vain than reasonable, has put her in the state in which she now finds herself. Your Charity will undoubtedly pray for her and pardon the faults I have committed in this matter. Nevertheless, I ask that you warn me of these faults as well as of my others, so that I may be assisted in overcoming them. I very humbly beg you to do this for the love of God in whom I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

1. Jeanne-Baptiste, see Letter 64.

2. The Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.

L.586 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

September 11, 1658

My very dear Sister,

You did not tell me what kind of clothing you need because I do not think Sister Anne[1] needs a chemisette and I believe that we sent you one. We may have sent one to each of you. Let us know, if you need something immediately.

We heartily welcomed that good girl. If she can detach herself from her family and her home, I hope that she will do well. The only thing that worries me a bit is that she is very young.

You are quite right, my dear Sister, not to want to entrust money to the courier. I am unwilling to believe that you are troubled if there is a delay in sending the remainder. Your desire for perfection and Sister Barbe's[2] example would rule this out. I am eager to have more detailed news of you from Mademoiselle de Croissy[3] when she returns. I am already beginning to rejoice in the consolation I will experience because of the wonderful things she will tell me about you and dear Sister Anne. I greet her with all my heart as do all our sisters. I remain in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.588 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[4]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

September 12, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I can only tell you how it grieves me to know that you no longer have a sister with you who can read my letters because it is essential and a strict obligation imposed by our Rules that we not communicate them to outsiders. This is one of the most serious obstacles I know of to the union and cordiality that must exist between two Daughters of Charity living together. I will do all in my power to see to it that the sister I am sending

1. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
3. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.
4. Geveviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

to you can supply for the need, because I am well aware of how distressed you are, after your stay here,[1] when, of necessity, you have opened your heart too widely to creatures.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your lovely present. I would be delighted if you sent me some juniper berries when they are ripe.

Please extend my most respectful greetings to Monsieur Pesset and to the Reverend Pastor of Saint-Firmin. I very humbly ask their pardon for the trouble you and our sister[2] have caused them. I hope that in the future you will act more simply, in keeping with the spirit of Our Lord, in whose love I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.589 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

September 16, 1658

My very dear Sister,

The opportunity to profit from the trip of the Prior of Varize was too advantageous for me to let it slip by without affording myself the consolation of writing to you. I want to remind you that I was not urging you to send one of the sisters but only complying with what you suggested to me. If it becomes necessary, let me know. When our sisters arrive from Calais,[3] we will not fail to send you a sister to replace the one you are sending us.

I was distressed to hear about that bad business concerning your house.[4] Please let me know if things have quieted down and tell me what you have done concerning the privacy of the house. I do hope that you handled everything as gently as possible.

Our sisters in Varize are asking for clothing, but their writing is so illegible and I have so little time to decipher it that I really do not know what they are requesting. They tell me that you were good enough to visit them. I would be very grateful if you would tell me what they need because I seem to recall that you told me that they had bought some clothes. I would appreciate knowing exactly what.

1. A stay at the Motherhouse.
2. Marie Navain had to be recalled to Paris at the end of July or at the beginning of August after the visitation by Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 580.
3. The sisters returned from Calais only in October 1658.
4. Many men and women entered the sisters' rooms. Barbe Angiboust would gently put an end to this abuse (Coste X, 675).

I received your letter so late that I was not able to write and tell you that it was not appropriate for Sister Anne[1] to go to the fair. I do not imagine that she went unless some dire necessity obliged you to send her.

You must have received Sister Cécile's[2] letter. She continues to be well, thank God, and is peacefully waiting for Providence to offer her an occasion of seeing you. She is following your example, my dear Sister.

I do not know if you heard of the deaths of Sister Françoise Manceau[3] and Sister Marguerite Ménage.[4] They died arms in hand, because God called them while they were serving the poor sick and wounded at Calais. The other sisters there beg the three of you for the charity of your prayers, as I do, for the needs of the Company, which are more pressing than ever, and for my needs since I am in need of mercy. For this intention, you must believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.590 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[5]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

September 17, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I believe that I am more distressed than you by the fact that I cannot send you a sister as soon as we both had hoped. We are committed to send more than ten to different places, including yours, and we find it very difficult to find suitable sisters. However, our sisters from Calais[6] have informed us that they should be returning. This will provide us with a few sisters for these places. Not that we are obliged to await their return before sending you someone, my dear Sister. I hope to be able to do that by the end of next week.

I am very much afraid that you go to a great deal of trouble to see to

1. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.
2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
3. Françoise Manceau, see Letter 277.
4. Marguerite Ménage was already in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1653. She did not know how to write. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company with an X in August 1655. After a long stay at the Motherhouse, she was sent to Calais in June 1658. She died at the end of July 1658, a victim of her devotion to the contagion-ridden soldiers.
5. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
6. Marie Poulet and Claude Muset along with Henriette Gesseaume and Jeanne would not return until the end of October. Marie Cuny, who was ill, returned with Françoise at the end of the month of September.

it that we receive those little presents you send us, and that they are a burden for those who have to deliver them. Be careful, I beg you, because this is not the usual custom among our sisters and I fear that those living with you will consider it a necessity.

You brought me great pleasure by sending me the juniper berries. Thank you very much. Greet Monsieur Pesset very humbly for me and remind him about the 200 pounds he owes us. His Charity had led us to believe that we would be receiving the money.

When I send a sister, I will do my best to send you a copy of the Rules. They will help you to attain the holiness you seek and for which you have been striving so long. I beg Our Lord to guide you to this end by His spirit. I am in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. We are returning your basket and linen.

L.591 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

September 19 (1658)

My Most Honored Father,

I was not aware that my son had spoken to you about Champlan;[1] however, his brother-in-law told me that he would be talking to you about it. He indicated to me that it is a rather important family matter caused by a slight change in the friendship existing between my daughter-in-law and her cousins de la Proutière and Lestang. It would be distressing if the disagreement were to continue. I will explain the matter to you, God willing.

A sister came from Saint-Roch[2] to tell me that she could not adapt to living with our sister, or to the parish, and that she did not want to return there. There is much to find fault with in her. I sent her back and promised I would speak to your Charity about the matter. However, I believe that you should be aware of the whole affair so that you can make a correct decision.

I think, my Most Honored Father, that for persons our age the best time for blood-letting is during the full moon; for purgatives, the waning moon is best, so that the evacuation will not be too violent.

This morning, I forgot to get from your Charity orders about the retreat for that good religious about whom the Chaplain of Chantilly[3]

1. Champlan, region where the estates of the parents of Gabrielle Le Clerc, wife of Michel Le Gras, were to be found.
2. Saint-Roch, a parish of Paris.
3. Monsieur de la Hode.

spoke to you. He is here today about the matter. The poor woman seems to be in a rather bad state but perhaps her soul needs assistance. Could she speak to one of your priests, or should our sisters and I do what we can to help her? Would your Charity please let me know?[1]

If possible, I will take this little trip. In keeping with my needs, be so charitable as to grant me the powerful assistance of your holy advice and prayers to raise me from my misery and to rid me of my illusions, if need be. Continue to honor me by believing that I am by the will of Our Lord, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful servant.

L.592 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Ussel

September 20, 1658

My very dear Sisters,

We have every reason to praise God for the patience He has given you and for the blessings His goodness then bestowed on the plans of our very good and most honored Duchess.[2] I am certain that you have striven to render to Our Lord all the fidelity you owe Him even if you have failed in some way. The more difficult a place is for service,[3] either because of poverty or for other reasons, the more we must rely on assistance from heaven when we are striving to labor for the pure love of God, which I sincerely hope is your intention.

I am eager for the return of the Duchess so that I can learn how she left everything. You must not think, my dear Sisters, that these good persons in any way prevented the foundation. Believe rather that prudence led them to deliberate about this matter, as must be done in affairs of such importance. It seems to me that I share in your peace. I know that you are combining all your efforts so that you may be of but one heart and one will and may thereby act only with the desire of accomplishing the will of God.

I am not quite sure, my dear (Sister) Avoie, what you are telling me about your sister. Be careful that she does not plan to visit you for your convenience.

1. Monsieur Vincent answered on Louise de Marillac's letter (Coste VII, 264).
2. The Duchess de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
3. Anne Hardemont and Avoie Vigneron were discouraged by the difficulties they encountered in Ussel. Monsieur Vincent also wrote to them to strengthen them in their vocation (Coste VII, 232).

I would ask each of you, one after the other, to let me know a little bit about how you practice charity. Do you have a little time to observe your Rules? You were so exact about them, by the mercy of God, when you were at the House. I am sure that you remember the promise, in this regard, that our Most Honored Father made in one of the conferences. He told us that, if we keep our Rules, they will keep us. This is a wonderful promise because we need to be kept in many ways. See what power we have in our hands! I beg Our Lord to grant us the grace to make good use of it. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.587 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Châteaudun

(September 1658)

My very dear Sister,

In your last letter, you told me that our sister[1] was going to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Holy Tear.[2] I did not respond because I thought the pilgrimage would have already taken place. I have no idea how far away it is. I suppose you put her in good company.

I have not sent you a sister for the very reasons you gave me. Thank God you are not in urgent need of one. As for our sisters in Varize, I think that it is essential for Sister Claude[3] to make a short trip here so that we can provide her with clothing and also for other reasons of which you are aware. If you could send a sister to replace Sister Sulpice,[4] it would be a very good thing. Then she could go to your house and would not have to stay alone. Let me know about this and also if you have any advice to give me for when our sister will be here. Be sure that she understands that it is customary to come here from time to time, otherwise I am afraid she will think there is some other reason and become apprehensive.

Remember, my dear Sister, that no matter what you tell me, you will

1. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.
2. Famous pilgrimage to Vendôme where the pilgrims venerated a tear of Our Lord. Vendôme was 40 kilometers from Châteaudun.
3. Claude, see Letter 544.
4. Sulpice Dubois entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity before August 1655. She came to Paris in November 1659 to bear witness to the virtues of Barbe Angiboust (Coste X, 657).

never hurt my feelings. My heart is not constituted in that way and I am never more pleased than when our sisters speak frankly to me.

Our Lord continues to bless us by granting strength and health to our Most Honored Father. Monsieur Portail is ill from time to time. Sister Cécile[1] is well, thank God. She recognizes the need she had to return to the source and is making excellent use of God's guidance in her life. She sends her greetings, as do all our sisters, along with me. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.593 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[September 1658]

What I pointed out as necessary for your Charity to know concerns the behavior of the sister who does not want to be a slave at Saint-Roch[2] or to be with a particular person. She has returned there so there is no hurry. It can await my return if I am able to go.

I am somewhat afraid that Madame de Marillac[3] and her entire family will be offended if I am so near them and do not pay them a visit, just as they were in previous years when I refused them. If your Charity has no objections, I would like to stay two days. I would return the horses on Sunday morning. This would all occur if I am strong enough.

The other thing I had to tell you, my Most Honored Father, concerned the differences that have arisen among the people I am supposed to visit and the service I may render them in the future by giving them advice. However, this is less urgent than Ollainville.[4] I would ask your Charity to send me a response. I shall await it with entire submission, as God has always granted me the grace to do, since I am your poor daughter and servant.

P.S. I have just been assured of a coach for tomorrow morning. I will be assisted by your horses and by the coachman your Charity is good enough to lend us.

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1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. See Letter 591.
3. Madame Jeanne de Marillac, the wife of Michel, the Deputy to Parliament, was at her estates in Ollainville.
4. Ollainville was 13 kilometers south of Champlan.

L.594 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity at Châteaudun

September 29, 1658

My very dear Sister,

A little trip[1] I took prevented me from seeing your letter as soon as it arrived. You made me very happy by letting me know that the health of our sisters in Varize had improved. I do not know whether or not you received the letters that I sent over to the Prior of Varize before he left on his return trip. In these letters, I asked you to let me know if you thought our sisters needed habits.

Since you felt that Sister Anne[2] should make the trip to Vendôme, I beg Our Lord to bestow His blessing upon it, so that she may be comforted and may be able to serve Him more easily. I shall not fail to try to dissuade her brother from visiting her, since she wants me to do so.

I do not know if our sisters in Varize are aware that the usual custom among our sisters is that the stipend they receive must cover not only their food but the cost of material for their habits, although we furnish it, because you are aware, my dear Sister, that we could never assume those expenses.

All our sisters and I send love to you and the other dear sisters. I will not fail to transmit your very humble greetings to Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Portail, whom I have not seen since my return. I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.595 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[October 1658]

My Most Honored Father,

Sister Françoise Fanchon[3] consulted Monsieur Portail today concern-

1. Louise de Marillac went to visit her family in Champlan and Ollainville, see Letter 593.
2. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 587.
3. Françoise Fanchon, born June 25, 1625 at Conche-les-Pots in Picardy, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on August 9, 1644. She remained at the Motherhouse where she was gardener and later cook. She made her first vows in 1649. She did not know how to write and put a simple X on the Act of Establishment of the

ing her desire to make the annual renewal of her vows tomorrow on the Feast of Saint Francis. He had no objections. If you are in accord, she begs your Charity to offer her renovation to God, as it is to be offered, and I, steeped in my miseries, implore your blessing and your prayers.

It distresses me somewhat that I have been deprived of speaking with you for so long. God wills it, since He permits it to be so.

Madame de Marillac, the Carmelite,[1] is anxious for me to visit her to give her news of Ollainville.[2] Madame, the daughter, told me that she would return there Saturday. If your Charity allows me to go, I will take advantage of your carriage tomorrow, so as not to disappoint the mother.

I am distressed because I have had no news of our sisters in Calais[3] or in Metz[4] since their departure although I have written to them. Permit me to ask if you have any. Allow me to believe that I truly continue to be, my Most Honored Father, your least and most unworthy daughter and servant.

L.519 - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[5]

(at Ussel)

(1658)

My very dear Sister,

We must love the good pleasure of God in all the events directed by His Providence. It is true that you are in great difficulties and suffering. If I were not convinced that the Spirit of God would provide you with the assistance and guidance you need, I would be very much afraid that this work would not succeed. Let us, from this very moment, my dear Sisters, be submissive to God to accept whatever it pleases His goodness to allow to happen. It is to your advantage that you are obliged to practice great mutual support and condescension, and above all, gentleness and reserve in your dealings with others.

Do not be upset if things are not as you would want them to be for a

Company in 1655. She was later Sister Servant in the parish of Saint-Médard. After her death on May 12, 1689, her companions pointed out that she showed charity and compassion toward everyone.

1. Marie de Marillac, Louise's cousin, see Letter 78.
2. See Letter 593.
3. The sisters from Calais were on their way back to Paris.
4. Madeleine Raportebled, Marguerite Ruhant, Marie Papillon and Barbe were sent to Metz on August 26, 1658.
5. Letter recopied in Marguerite Chétif's notebook, series Anne Hardemont.

long time to come. Do the little you can very peacefully and calmly so as to allow room for the guidance of God in your lives. Do not worry about the rest. You can do nothing except obey M . . .[1] I sincerely hope that all your words and actions will testify to the fact that you act only in obedience to her.

L.596 - TO SISTER HENRIETTE GESSEAUME

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor Sick and Wounded at Calais[2]

October 7, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I have been extremely worried about you and Sister Claude.[3] I beg Our Lord to preserve you in the excellent dispositions in which you seem to have been when our sisters left. They arrived safely although Sister Marie Cuny[4] is still not well and Sister Françoise[5] is suffering from a high fever, which makes us fear she may have contracted a dangerous illness. I beg you, my dear Sister, not to bring a certain mattress which has caused some talk. Give it, instead, to the person who procured the rest of the furnishings. The one that arrived was just the kind to make our poor sister so seriously ill. You must try to avoid giving rise to gossip concerning the behavior of our sisters, who must always act very prudently and manifest detachment from the things of this world.

The little supply of butter lasted our sisters for the entire journey, and the container arrived in good condition. So, my dear Sister, if there are any cups or drinking-bowls, or any other small containers of the same composition, I would be delighted if you brought me some.

My dear Sister, if Sister Claude is still suffering from intestinal inflammation, please boil some chicory roots with a little bayberry, both in generous amounts. It is a quick-acting remedy but it is very distasteful to drink if one does not try to accompany it by the remembrance of the bitter drink offered to Our Lord on the Cross. I pray with all my heart

1. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
2. Beside the address is written: to the Dominican Religious of Calais.
3. Claude Muset left for Calais in June 1658 to care for wounded soldiers. She wrote an admirable letter to Louise de Marillac on August 3 to tell her of the deaths of Marguerite Ménage and Françoise Manceau and of the illness of Marie Poulet as well as her own.
4. Marie Cuny left for Calais in August 1658 with Henriette Gesseaume. In a letter of September 10, Henriette said that Marie was ill. She was brought back to Paris on a stretcher at the end of the month.
5. Françoise also went to Calais in August 1658. She returned to Paris with Marie Cuny.

that you will soon leave that infected air because I am afraid you will become ill once again.

Please extend my very humble greetings to the good Capuchin Father who has done so much for our sisters. I recommend myself to his prayers as well as to those of all the good nuns with whom you have been staying. I beg Our Lord to be their recompense. I am in His most holy love, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.597 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

October 7, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I think that the arrival of our dear Sister Louise will give you much joy. You know her cheerful and willing disposition. I was distressed by my long delay in sending you a sister, but she will explain the reasons and tell you how much trouble we have had since Sister Marie's[2] return. I believe, my dear Sister, that together you will renew your desire to practice all our Rules. She will tell you the subject of the last conference.[3] I think that it will inspire you with renewed esteem for our vocation. I beg you to send Sister Marie's belongings by the first available route. Please greet Monsieur Pesset very humbly for me and tell him that the good religious made her retreat here and has since told me that she is returning to her convent.

Sister Louise will give you the news about all our sisters. I beg you to pray for them. Believe me in the most holy love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I am sure that you are relieved that you no longer need to have anyone except our sister read your letters. Too much communication with the outside is most troublesome and dangerous.

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1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Marie Navain, see Letter 515.
3. Conference of October 6, 1658 on Rising, Prayer and the Angelus (Coste X, 564).

L.598 - TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY[1]

Servants of the Sick Poor at the Hospital of Ussel in Limousin

October 26, 1658

My very dear Sisters,

At last, the good Duchess[2] has arrived in Paris. I only had the honor of seeing her the day before yesterday when she took the trouble to come here. She informed me that she had written five times since her departure but I had received only one of her letters. I praise God with all my heart for the good He has accomplished through her and the means she has left you to continue her work. These alms do not represent all she wants to do to relieve the poor. She has administered her goods prudently and has ordered that requests for assistance be investigated carefully. She told me that she was very consoled by the fact that you remain faithfully with the poor.

Perhaps you think that the food of that place is somewhat strange because it consists of soup made with oil. However, once you realize that this is the custom and that the person, I believe you love most in the world, always takes soup made with oil to restore his appetite when he is recovering from an illness, you will not feel so sorry for these people. Indeed, the good Duchess hopes that your charity will bear abundant fruit there. As for me, I have always believed that it would.

Knowing that opposition exists, you have acted prudently by being satisfied with what the Duchess has given you because, although I am well aware that she does not intend it to last the full year, the freedom she has given you to ask her for what you need is sufficient.

We are sending you the two syringes and the four covers for them that you requested. Because you asked for inexpensive pots, we are not sending you any. They cannot be purchased for less than 32 sous each. We can send them later on, just as well as now. The two syringes and the four covers come to eight pounds.

Sister Avoie, you never gave me any further information concerning what you told me about your sister. I will look into the matter. I beg you to send me news of yourself as often as you can. Your very humble sister and affectionate servant.

P.S. I imagine that the occasions for mental dissipation that you experienced will help you to acquire greater recollection and will prevent curiosity except about things that could lead you to perfection. I beg you, Sister Avoie, when you sing during your recreation together, be careful

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110 and Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578.

2. The Duchess de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

that people outside cannot hear you. I am sure that you teach all that you can to your poor girls and that you remember that the most essential lesson is the knowledge of God and of His love. Moreover, my dear Sister, like a true Daughter of Charity, you must accept all that is said to you by the one who, here on earth, represents your true Superior in heaven. You must do so without any second thoughts, but simply, as Our Lord asks of you.

I am sending your syringes with the Duchess and her companion who were good enough to offer to bring them.

L.599 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

November 11, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I am a bit concerned that you are still not well. This leads me to believe that the air in Chantilly is not good for you.

What you tell me about conditions there convinces me that you must take a short trip here to try, through the intervention of Madame Fouquet,[2] to find a new system to support the poor. It is not appropriate for you to borrow on your own for this purpose. It also seems strange to me that you are receiving nothing for your own maintenance nor even the amount that has been owed to us for so long. I know that they have the wherewithal to pay us.

I am not writing to Sister Marie[3] by this mail but I urge her to continue to send me news of herself and to welcome her schoolgirls cordially. She may teach them to make serge stockings, but she must concentrate mainly on the catechism and on the practice of virtue. I am sure that she will have as much work as she can manage, and I think that she is very fortunate to have time to practice the Rules.

As for the other things you mentioned, we will discuss them when you come here, which I beg you to do as soon as possible. Assure Sister that you will be here only for a week or ten days, if God so wills.

Please extend the expression of my very humble respect and obedience to Madame, the Marquise de Saint-Simon,[4] and to the Duchess, if she is there. My very humble greetings also to Monsieur Pesset. Believe that I

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Madame Fouquet, wife of the Minister of Finance.
3. Marie had just arrived in Chantilly.
4. Madame, the Marquise de Saint-Simon, see Letter 197.

am, for both of you, my very dear Sisters, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.600 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Saturday [November 1658]

I believe, my Most Honored Father, that your Charity should speak to Sister Etiennette,[1] who is to leave for Angers, and explain to her the dispositions she must bring to the duty that will be entrusted to her there. She must understand that she must make herself readily available to the sisters who wish to speak with her; that she must maintain secrecy concerning all that is told her; that she must deter among the sisters, insofar as she can, any pampering of mind or body which can only lead to the quest of self-satisfaction; that she must see to it that Rules are faithfully observed, without detriment to the service of the poor; that she must maintain a cheerful manner; and that she must respect the administrators. Please add anything else, which you know much better than I, who am incapable of doing anything worthwhile.

We hope, with your approval, my Most Honored Father, to set the departure of our sisters[2] for Monday. If your Charity could give us the conference,[3] continuing the explanation of the Rule, it would also benefit three or four sisters who are returning to the country on the same day. I beg Our Lord to give you strength for this and, for His holy love, I ask for a small share in your holy prayers. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very poor and unworthy daughter and servant.

L.198 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 17 (1658)

Monsieur,

I afforded myself the honor of writing to Monsieur Ratier by the last

1. Étiennette Dupuis had been in the Company of the Daughters of Charity for a long time. In 1655, she was in Paris. In November 1658, she went to Angers as Sister Servant. She left Angers in December 1659.
2. Étiennette Dupuis, Marie Bertrand and Catherine left for Angers.
3. The Conference took place on Sunday, November 17, 1658 (Coste X, 582).

regular mail to inform him of the departure of our sisters and to share with him my joy that God had furnished us with the means of fulfilling this duty. I can tell you, Monsieur, that I believe that we have chosen three good sisters, and that I am confident that God will grant them the grace to fulfill their obligations. Monsieur Vincent believes that Sister Etiennette,[1] who has been in the Company a long while, and I may also add, is well-schooled in the practice of virtue, will be of great assistance to our sisters, along with Sister Claude.[2] She may perhaps appear a bit timid, Monsieur, but I can assure you that she is very disposed to submission, and I am confident that she will be exact in carrying out any advice your Charity may give her. Let us hope for the same from Sister Catherine and Sister Marie Bertrand, who complete the three named for Angers. In keeping with Monsieur Ratier's advice, and if you are in agreement, Sister Michelle[3] and Sister Marie[4] will go to Nantes. Please, Monsieur, do not let them delay in Angers, because the sisters—there are only four of them there—are in great need of reinforcement.

If my sins do not pose an obstacle to the mercy of God, I hope that it will surround our sisters, enabling them to work more faithfully in His service. They will be able to do so provided they are fortunate enough to continue to be assisted by your holy direction and by the efforts of Monsieur Ratier to put it into practice. For this, we have more reason to be grateful before God. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.553 - TO SISTER BARBE[5]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

November 24 (1658)

My very dear Sister,

I was very upset not to receive any news of your dear self. Thank God, the news is good.

You did not tell me whether or not Sister Anne[6] went to Vendôme.

1. Étiennette Dupuis, see Letter 600.
2. Claude Carré, see Letter 505. Community difficulties necessitated the naming of a new Sister Servant. Claude remained in Angers and would assume responsibility for the community once again from 1659-1667.
3. Michelle arrived in Angers in November 1651.
4. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294.
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
6. Anne Bocheron made a pilgrimage to Vendôme, see Letter 587.

As for changing Sister Marthe[1] and Sister Sulpice,[2] I think it will be all right so long as you are at Châteaudun. However, it seems to me that it would be appropriate for Sister Claude[3] to take a short trip here. Meanwhile, if you can spare Sister Marthe, you could send her to Varize. Perhaps it would be all right for her to remain there alone for two or three days and she could send Sister Sulpice to you. But, do not mention it to Sister Claude. It would be better to do it during her absence.

Sister Laurence[4] cannot forget you. She says that her schoolgirls are asking you to come to celebrate the Feast of Saint Catherine with them. She also wants you to know that Monsieur Hare's good mother is very ill. She said that she was sent to visit the hospital at Erbée,[5] and that she thinks that they plan to ask for our sisters. Please let me know if you are familiar with that place.

The Prior from Varize paid us a visit. If Sister Claude comes soon, she can make her retreat and return home before he comes again. Sister Cécile[6] is working very hard to attain perfection. One of your sisters came to see her and told her that all is well in your family.

I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His holy blessings upon you and upon our sisters to whom I wish to be remembered. I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I beg you to explain to Sister Claude that it is customary to come here from time to time to make a retreat and that she should profit from the opportunity.

L.602 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday [December 1658]

My Most Honored Father,

How can I express to your Charity, in the name of the entire Company of our sisters, how fortunate we would consider ourselves if tomorrow, at the holy altar, you placed us under the protection of the Holy Virgin? I beg your Charity to obtain for us the grace to be able, henceforth, to look upon her as our only Mother since, until now, her Son has never allowed anyone to usurp this title in a public act. Please approve this

1. Marthe, who was in Châteaudun, see Letter 544.
2. Sulpice Dubois was in Varize, see Letter 587.
3. Claude was also in Varize, see Letter 544.
4. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
5. A city that is difficult to locate. Was it Ernes in Calvados or Enrée in Mayenne?
6. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

request for the love of God and implore for us the grace to do what we must and will do, if your Charity sees fit and is willing to teach us.

Two years ago, on this feast, our little Sister Barbe[1] pronounced her vows forever, after having made them for five consecutive years. My Most Honored Father, she begs your Charity to offer her renewal to God. Another sister has asked Monsieur Portail for permission to make them for the first time. However, I do not know her well enough to be able to assure you that he has granted her request. Her name is Jacquette. Allow me to beg you very humbly to offer to God the renewal of all the other sisters, even if they did not pronounce their vows on this feast. I beg you also to pardon me for all the faults I have the audacity to commit against the respect I owe you. Please honor me by believing that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble . . .

L.601 - TO MY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

December 8, 1658

My very dear Sister,

I am glad you received our letters so promptly. However, I beg you to consider, given their dispositions, whether Sister Marthe[2] and Sister Claude[3] can get along together. God willing, I will send the cloth you requested when Sister Claude returns. Let us know if, in addition, you think we should send a habit for little Sister Sulpice.[4] Please respond as soon as possible because we cannot keep Sister Claude here too long since she may be needed at Varize.

Sister Cécile,[5] who is here with me, sends her love. I cannot tell you how it consoles me to see you both so submissive to the good pleasure of God. It seems to me that in this way you are imitating the dispositions of Saint John the Baptist who deprived himself of seeing Our Lord, although he was fully aware that Jesus was the Messiah. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His graces upon you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. Much love from all our sisters to you and to Sister Anne.[6] Sister

1. Barbe Bailly, see Letter 356b.
2. Marthe, see Letter 544.
3. Claude, see Letter 544.
4. Sulpice Dubois, see Letter 587.
5. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
6. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.

Jeanne Gressier[1] wants to be especially remembered to you. She continues to do very well. She is here. My greetings also to Sister Anne and to the two sisters from Varize, if you see them.

L.603 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 21 [1658]

My Most Honored Father,

Fearing that the frost may return, I am taking the liberty of telling you that I think that the pain in your leg will subside when you have been purged. Allow me to explain a method I was taught, which is in no way upsetting. Take some senna, the weight of an écu and infuse it for about an hour in a pint of ordinary bouillon, the first from the pot, drawn when it is at a full boil. Take it at the beginning of a meal, or eat some soup after you have taken this little dose by itself. Be sure it is good and hot. If you repeat this for two or three days, it will have the same effect as a strong medicine, but without producing any weakness. If you find it does you some good, continuing it once or twice a week will bring some relief to your poor legs. I forgot to mention that this does not interfere with taking bouillon in the morning or with having dinner at the first table. I think that it was Monsieur de Lorme, or some other clever doctor, who taught me this secret that he has been using for more than 30 years. We would be delighted to prepare it, so that you can try it out. We will be even happier to continue to do so if God blesses its use. I know from experience that trying it cannot hurt you.

Forgive me for taking this liberty as your Charity pardons me so many other faults. Believe me, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.604 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 25, 1658

I very humbly ask your pardon, my Most Honored Father, because your remedy was ready at ten o'clock and I completely forgot about it

1. Jeanne Gressier, see Letter 456.

until ten thirty. I consoled myself by the fact that, if your Charity forgives me, we can start again tomorrow, if you are agreeable. If the preceding remedies helped you by drawing off the heavy fluids, then tomorrow the dose could be greater and taken in the morning so as to finish drawing off the fluids. You could take either 24 grains of cornachin powder or the weight of two écus of senna or a few crystals and some rhubarb in an infusion of our good peach blossom syrup. I think, my Most Honored Father, that this would do you good and would help us soon to have the honor of seeing you again.

I hope that you will be good enough to send me an answer about this. I hope also to be helped so that my indifference to my interior state and to everything pertaining to the service of God and my salvation will not lead to my condemnation. I flatter myself by the erroneous belief that God is willing to accept everything from me—even my careless life—in what concerns my personal conduct. This leads me to fear, my Most Honored Father, that it is only in name that I am, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

1659

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Vaux and Narbonne. Visitation by Monsieur Dehorgny at Nantes, Cahors and Ussel.

L.605 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(December 31, 1658)

My Most Honored Father,

I praise God with all my heart that your Charity foresees the expression of our needs. I thank you most humbly for this. My heart derives so much reassurance from this that, without it, I would find it difficult to endure so long a deprivation. Reflect a bit, my Most Honored Father, on the means I could employ so as not to go astray and be lost, living as I am without revealing my condition to you and without advice or communication.

Permit me to ask if your leg is any better and if we can soon hope for a cure.

The last hours of the year are at hand. I throw myself at your feet to beg your Charity to obtain mercy for me as I await only that hour when

God will call me to render an account of my life. It is for that moment alone that I implore your charity because my constant infidelities and immortifications so frequently lead me to offend Our Lord.

It seems to me that something still remains to be done for the spiritual strengthening of the Company. If your Charity would allow me to send a memorandum about this, I would do so even if I must blush for shame because of it. All our sisters are anxiously awaiting the honor of seeing you. Offer us to God in the way that He wishes and honor me by believing, my Most Honored Father, that I am your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. My ailments prevented me from finishing this letter yesterday. I am beginning the year with great weakness and suffering of mind and of body. For this and for all my needs I ask you, your Charity, for your holy blessing. I ask it as well for the entire Company.

I had asked Monsieur Portail to ask your Charity, for the love of God, to have a High Mass celebrated in your church for our deceased Sister Barbe[1] who was in the Company for a very long time and was very faithful to her vocation. All our sisters would be assembled for it. I believe that it would be a great consolation for them and would be an encouragement to do good.

Enclosed are our pictures and maxims for the year. I am sending them to your Charity so that, if you are willing, we can distribute them as usual on your behalf after you have blessed them to obtain for us the grace of using them well.

The First Day of the Year 1659

L.605B - TO SISTER (NICOLE HARAN)[2]

at Nantes

January 4, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I pray that the love of Our Lord will fill your dear heart with its holy flames so that your dear little community may experience its sparks by the cordiality and mutual support flourishing among you. I make the same wish for all our dear sisters, whom I embrace in spirit in the love of Our Lord, because these virtues are absolutely necessary for all

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, died on December 27, 1658 at Châteaudun.

2. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.

Christians and particularly for the Daughters of Charity.

I praise God with all my heart for the choice He has made of our sisters of Angers[1] for Nantes. Oh, what good I hope will come of this because of the gratitude which will animate them to remember the fidelity to which they are so obliged! I urge them to reflect and to recall that it is not necessary always to be filled with joy and consolation in order to please God. Since the Son of God accomplished the work of salvation for the entire world through sorrow and pain, it is quite logical for us, if we wish to share in His merits, to overcome ourselves and to accept suffering.

I just received your letters but I do not have time to read them. I can only tell you that God has seen fit to afflict us by calling to Himself our dear Sister Barbe Angiboust.[2] She left us an outstanding example of virtue. I believe that if our sisters were conscious of it, it would be sufficient to animate them to attain a blessed eternity.

I beg Our Lord to enlighten all of you by bestowing His holy blessing upon you at the beginning of this year during which I wish you fidelity in accomplishing His most holy will in which I am, for each of our dear sisters, my very dear Sister, your very humble and affectionate sister and servant.

L.606 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANDRÉE MARÉCHAL[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Liancourt

January 8, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I admire your patience for not complaining about me because I have not written to you until now. I am doing so in order to rejoice with you because of the grace which God has given you since your arrival. I have learned of the good you have done and are doing in the work which God has entrusted to you and which you are carrying out in the manner He desires.

I hope that God will continue to grant you the grace of perseverance which is so essential for our salvation. Enclosed is your baptismal certificate which the sisters at Nantes sent to me. If you discover that you are older than you thought, remember that death is equally surprising and is coming sooner than we expect.

1. Marie Gaudoin and Michelle, see Letter 198.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, died on December 27, 1658.
3. Andrée Maréchal, see Letter 368, returned from Nantes at the end of 1658.

Please remember me to Sister Jeanne[1]. I am sure that you both received your holy pictures for the new year which we sent you and that you earnestly desire to strive to imitate these good saints and to put into practice the accompanying maxims. Divine Providence has selected them for you. I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace you ask from Him to attain this goal. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and affectionate servant.

L.607 - TO SISTER MARIE DONION[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

January 8, 1659

My very dear Sister,

You may be certain that we often think of you and are distressed by the awareness that you are completely alone, although I have absolute confidence in the guidance of God and of your guardian angel. I am sure that your God-given spirit of obedience is a consolation for you and I beg Our Lord with all my heart to comfort you. I had been longing for the consolation of your dear letter and I thank you for it. You have had much to do since Sister[3] left. She has entered her retreat which is the reason she has not answered your letters. She will not fail to convey your message to Monsieur Portail, but do not believe what you say about him. He is far too charitable for all his daughters.

You must not worry about the sheets that were lost, since it was through no fault of yours. As for the sheep, if it belonged to you, you can say, "God has given it to me and God has taken it away. Blessed be His holy name in us and in what belongs to us!"

I did not find the note for Brother Mathieu[4] that you mentioned. Assure his brother, however, that he is fine, thank God, and that he just returned from Burgundy two or three days ago. I shall not fail to relay to him the news of his brother and the concern he has for him.

I had planned to send you one of our sisters at the same time as this letter, but Madame, the Countess de Brienne, sent word asking me to wait until she had spoken to me. This annoyed me somewhat, but we have to submit to it. As for all the girls you mentioned to Sister Catherine,[5]

1. Undoubtedly, Jeanne Pangoy, see Letter 195b.
2. Marie Donion, see Letter 382.
3. Catherine Baucher, see Letter 506.
4. Brother Mathieu Regnard, see Letter 393.
5. Catherine Baucher, see Letter 506.

she will tell me about them after her retreat. We will then let you know what you are to tell them. In the meantime, I urge you to be a consolation for them so as to help them to discern the will of God.

I am sending you, on behalf of our Most Honored Father, the holy picture chosen for you. I beg you to accept it along with his blessing and the graces he asked of God for you and for the entire Company. I am confident that you continue to offer prayers for the preservation of his health and, now that he is ill, that you will pray even more fervently, asking God for his complete recovery.

Monsieur Portail has also been ill all winter, but now, thank God, he has returned to his usual state of health. However, our sisters very rarely have the consolation of speaking with him because of his indisposition.

You know, my dear Sister, that God was pleased to call to Himself our good Sister Barbe Angiboust at 7 a.m. on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist. Her devotion throughout her illness, her conformity to the will of God, her patience and her ability to see herself as dying at the feet of Jesus Crucified reveal to us the goodness of her life and the love of God for those who are faithful in carrying out His designs. I beg Our Lord to grant us this virtue. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. Sister Catherine sends her heartfelt greetings as do all our sisters. Once again, God has willed to reveal to us that He is our King.

L.608 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

January 9, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to be your strength and consolation at the beginning of this year so that you may bear generously, for love of Him, all the crosses that it may please His goodness to send you.

Truly, the choice made of these good girls was not a success. The mistress of the last one was not able to keep her any more than we were. I believe that she has returned to her home. As for the little one, there seems to have been no valid reason to have sent her. She is even more immature in mind than in body. Please explain to her father that I apologize for not writing to him, but that I have not been feeling well, and tell him that his daughter is still in the same frame of mind as when

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

she wrote to him and that I would, therefore, ask him to come for her. Make him understand that not only has she always been quite useless to us but that she has also been a financial burden, and therefore he must pay her expenses.

I am quite apprehensive about sharing this news with you, my dear Sister, but I must tell you that it has pleased Our Lord to call our dear Sister Barbe Angiboust[1] to Himself. She died on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist, at 7 a.m., after having practiced to the end all the virtues that you recognized in her. During her illness, God honored her by the most excellent marks of a true Christian woman and servant of God by granting her the grace to conform her will to His, to raise her thoughts frequently to Jesus Crucified and to practice great patience. So it is that, even here below, God begins to recompense His faithful servants.

Sister Marie,[2] Sister Anne's[3] sister, has also been seriously ill. However, it has pleased God to restore her health and I believe that she is going to write to her.

Enclosed are your holy pictures and maxims for the new year. They are accompanied by our Most Honored Father's blessing which I asked of him for all our sisters. I beg you to redouble your prayers for the preservation of his health. He has been quite ill this winter, and still is, although, by the grace of God, he is a bit better.

Please greet Sister Anne for me. I remain, for both of you, in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.609 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 1659]

A young man came and told us quite simply of his obligation to see to it that a twenty-one-month-old baby, that had been taken away from its mother, be well brought up. Since he wants to become a monk, he set forth the terms he was willing to meet in order to be relieved of his responsibility. He would pay seven pounds a month to the hospital and he would leave an outright gift of 1,000 pounds to the child so that, when he is old enough to learn a trade, he can be placed as an apprentice.

Some delicate spirits in the Company have a repugnance for the word "Confraternity" and wish only the term "Society" or "Community."

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, lived with Laurence Dubois for three years in Bernay.
2. Marie Levies, see Letter 551.
3. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.

I took the liberty of saying that this word [Confraternity] was essential: that it could be a strong barrier against innovation; that it signified our secular status; and since Divine Providence had added to it the words "Society" and "Company," that we thereby understood that we must live regular lives by observing the Rules that we received at the foundation of our Confraternity, as they were explained to us.

Sister Louise Ganset's[1] money is cleared to be handed over. However, since it changed hands after the death of Monsieur Bézé, the person who is now overseeing it wants a memorandum from Monsieur du Fresne.[2] I beg you very humbly, my Most Honored Father, if you consider it appropriate, to take the trouble to let him know. Sister is growing weaker by the day and we are afraid that she will not live much longer and, therefore, that the legacy that she wants to leave the Company could be lost. I feel obliged to take this little precaution and to ask you very humbly to forgive me for all the trouble I have caused you recently. This is a habit of mine which, with your assistance, I want to correct along with all my other faults. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and grateful servant.

L.609B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 1, 1659

My Most Honored Father,

If God did not make me insensible to the suffering I experience at seeing myself so abandoned, I would be enduring great pain. I am touched by the fact that I am not sufficiently enlightened to make good use of it, in keeping with the plan of Divine Providence. Nor do I possess the means to make this privation, which I have perhaps merited, useful to me. This letter is a consolation for me since I can—as I am now doing—ask for your blessing for all our sisters, especially Sister Marie of the Hôtel-Dieu, Sister Anne[3] from Angers, who has been in the Company for 18 years, and Sister Geneviève[4] from near Maule. After their recent retreat, they expressed to Monsieur Portail their desire to be allowed to renew their vows tomorrow. The sister who came from Brienne with Sister Catherine[5] very humbly asks for the simple habit of the Daughters of Charity.

1. Louise Ganset, see Letter 11.
2. Monsieur du Fresne, see Letter 511.
3. Anne Vallin, see Letter 63.
4. Geneviève Caillou, see Letter 19.
5. Catherine Baucher, see Letter 506.

Several persons request your prayers for a matter of great importance for the glory of God and the salvation of souls redeemed by the blood of His Son. You are aware of how greatly I need your prayers and that is sufficient for me since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.610 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

February 23, 1659

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that it has been a very long time since you have sent me news of yourself. I am a bit disturbed by this. I am also surprised that Sister Anne[2] does not write to me. I would be relieved to know if the differences among your administrators have been settled.

Let me know also if you have had any news from Varize since Sister Marthe's[3] arrival, and tell me about Sister Sulpice.[4] I think that she is a good soul but, since she has a very joyful and simple character, she must be supervised to some degree, because of the dangers existing in that place. This was why Sister Barbe[5] had changed her. I am convinced that all her intentions are good, even during her periods of recreation, but everyone does not see things this way. I beg you, above all, if you send her to do the cooking, not to leave her alone in the bakehouse, nor any place else where there may be an entrance from outside.

I send greetings to both our dear sisters. I am also sharing with you news of our Most Honored Father's improved health. He is beginning to go out and we have already had the honor of seeing him. I am certain that you continue to pray that God will preserve him. Monsieur Portail is also better, thank God. They are both as anxious as I for your return. I pray that God will preserve your health so that you may come. I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving servant.

1. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297, was sent to Châteaudun after the death of Barbe Angiboust.
2. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544.
3. Marthe, see Letter 544.
4. Sulpice Dubois, see Letter 587.
5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

L.611 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CLAIRE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Roche-Guyon

February 27, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I am as eager as you to see you come here for the exercises[2] but there are two reasons which prevent me from having you do so. The first is that this is the season for the real harvest for the little schoolgirls during which they may be instructed and thoroughly prepared to spend devoutly this holy season of Lent. This would enable them to observe Easter in a fitting manner, especially those who are to make their First Communion.

I also urge you, if your occupations permit, to have catechism for the older girls on Sundays and feast days, and to encourage them to come to see you. They sometimes are in as great need of instruction as the little ones. However, this must be done kindly and gently, without causing them to be ashamed of their ignorance, if you notice any in them.

The second reason for not having you come at this time is that I would be glad to have Sister Françoise come here before you to make the same exercises. I, therefore, urge you to send her to us as soon as possible so that you will not be alone at the end of Lent, which is the busiest season.

I am complaining loudly to Sister Anne for not sending me a word about herself. I am disturbed that she does not know how to write. I am afraid that she does not apply herself. I urge you to encourage her strongly to learn.

I praise God with all my heart for the blessings His goodness bestows upon your little community. This is evident in the support, union and cordiality which exist among you. I hope that your fidelity will cause this same goodness to continue.

I had forgotten that you had sent us some scalpels. If they have been lost, I will send you others, as soon as possible.

I ask the three of you to pray for me and I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and affectionate servant.

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1. Claire Jaudoin, born on March 7, 1629, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in April 1653. She served the poor at La Roche-Guyon for many years. After a three year term as Bursar, she went to Châteaudun where she died in 1684.

2. The exercises of the annual retreat.

L.612 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 27, 1659

My Most Honored Father,

I thought that I was consoling Sister Jeanne Lepintre[1] by telling her that I did not think that her ailment appeared to be serious, but I did not make myself clearly understood.

I do not know where this Hospital for Shut-ins is located. However, I beg your Charity to recall that you do not consider it appropriate to send a sister alone. You are also aware that we do not have any to give. Moreover, I think that they may be asking for sisters for Saint-Eustache[2] because the servants of their poor have left them. However, there is some opposition to this.

Please give me your holy blessing, my Most Honored Father, as to your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

L.613 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARIE DONION

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

March 11, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the joy He has given you at the arrival of our sister. I fully expected you to find consolation in her.

I am truly amazed that you have received no money. Madame de Brienne is in arrears for more than a year and we have been unable to obtain payment. Do not let the first mail go by without telling me of your needs, in case you have received nothing. I beg you, for the love of God, my dear Sister, not to deprive yourself of the food you need. Sister Geneviève[3] was shocked to see how thin you are, but she had forgotten that you are naturally so. Nevertheless, be careful not to remain in that state through necessity. Borrow money freely when you need it. I am sure that you will not abuse this permission.

As for your request to be relieved of responsibility,[4] do not consider

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, suffered from psychological problems during the last years of her life.
2. Parish in Paris.
3. Geneviève Vigneron, see Letter 135.
4. Marie Donion, see Letter 382, asked to be relieved of the duty of Sister Servant.

it, I beg of you. You must not afflict our sister to this degree, but you must remain submissive to Divine Providence by rendering service to her.

God willing I will send you, by the first mail, a book of meditations along with another little book which is essential for the instruction. We were unable to obtain them for this mail.

I urge you to send us news of Sister Barbe's[1] mother. Let us know if you delivered to her the letters that Sister brought because we have received some since and they are anxious about them.

Our Most Honored Father is well, thank God. So is Monsieur Portail. In keeping with your wish, I will not fail to remember you to them. I ask for a share in your prayers. Believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.614 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE GEORGET[2]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Nanteuil)

March 18, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I truly shared in your suffering in all the matters you mentioned to me. However, we must not find it strange that lying persons utter calumnies against us because we are Christians and Daughters of Charity as well. This fact obliges us to put up with everything as we have been taught by this great lover of suffering, Jesus Christ.

I am a bit saddened because it appears that you have had a misunderstanding with your Pastor who leads a very holy life, is quite learned and toward whom we are greatly indebted because of the charity and good will he has always shown our sisters. I gave your letter to Monsieur Vincent. He is aware of the Pastor's virtue and he told me to urge you always to maintain toward him the attitude of respect we owe him. As for the other matters, you realize that his Charity does not answer immediately. I can only assure you that, by the grace of God, our sisters have always been faithful to their obligations and have certainly never taken books or anything else.

I am ashamed that you defended yourself so vociferously. But, what can we expect? Our weakness will not allow us to be overcome.

I do not think that you should teach our sister or permit her to be taught anything more. She is not capable of this and I do not want to

1. Barbe Bailly, see Letter 356b.

2. Nicole Georget, see Letter 237.

expose anyone to her initial attempts.[1] I am sending you the cross you requested; through it you will learn to accept willingly those which it pleases Our Lord to send you. I recommend myself to your prayers and to Sister Marie's. I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving servant.

L.615 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 25 [1659]

I had promised myself the honor and the blessing of receiving Holy Communion at your Mass, my Most Honored Father, but I do not deserve this. It is already a great deal that Divine Providence reminded your Charity to be so kind as to grant me about a quarter hour of your time afterwards, otherwise I would have been severely hindered. All our sisters, from far and near, who have had the happiness of pronouncing their vows, and I, unworthy though I be, beg you, my Most Honored Father, to offer us to God in this sovereign mystery so that we may properly renew our vows, particularly the 12 sisters who will have the privilege of assisting at your Mass. We hope to share in it because of the need which your Charity knows we have of this. In all humility, we ask for your paternal blessing. Allow me also to recommend my children to you and to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble servant.

L.616 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

March 30 (1659)

Madame, the Baroness de Mirepoy, told me that she would be delighted to participate in the General Assembly. Do you think it appropriate for me to inform her of the time and place, when I learn them? I refused, once again, her offering of ten écus for the retreat. However, she forced it upon one of our sisters who then returned it by putting it in the dress of her lady-in-waiting. This lady, in turn, left it on the doorstep. I was not there. My Most Honored Father, does your Charity consider it appropriate for me to return the money when I send her our Rules for her consideration and inform her about the Assembly?

1. Marie was learning to let blood.

We have not yet sent a response to Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux whose letter I sent to your Charity; nor have we answered the confessor of our sisters in Nantes concerning Sister Nicole Haran's suggestion that we increase the number of sisters and name an assistant. I am awaiting your orders in these matters. I humbly ask for your holy blessing since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.617 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

April 14, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I just saw, in your letter, the trouble you continue to have in obtaining money both for your needs and for the Confraternity of Charity. This truly disturbs me; however, we have done all that we can without making any progress.

It is true that it has been some time since I have allowed myself the consolation of writing to you, but the fact that opportunities to send you letters pass so quickly is part of the reason.

As for Sister Marie's[2] request, I am fully in agreement. Tell her, my dear Sister, that she will be welcome to make her retreat whenever she can conveniently come here.

I beg Our Lord to preserve you in His grace. I send my very humble greetings to Monsieur Pesset to whom both you and we are greatly indebted. Believe me always in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Marie went to Chantilly in November 1658 to replace Louise.

L.618 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu at Nantes

April 30, 1659

My very dear Sisters,

I very humbly ask your pardon for allowing so much time to pass without writing to you. The great amount of business and my poor health are truly the reason. However, I will add, my dear Sister Haran,[1] that the condition in which you tell me your little community finds itself so consoled me that it seemed to me that I had nothing more to say to you by way of advice for your growth in holiness. Moreover, the direction, or rather the Director, that Divine Providence has given you and that you received by the order of our Most Honored Father, is a great support for you. Listen to him, I beg of you, and obey him as you would an angel. In reality, you should consider him in this way and often reflect on this concept. Should nature or temptation give rise to other thoughts or even to feelings of repugnance when it comes to accepting and esteeming his advice, be firmly convinced that the evil spirit has a master plan for your destruction. Moreover, my dear Sisters, what is there on earth that you could desire for your salvation, that you do not possess? You are called by God to make use of all your thoughts, words and actions for His glory, and thus to do nothing contrary to His commandments but rather to grow in holiness by practicing his counsels. Therefore, you must mistrust any thought that comes to you that would turn you away from the path on which obedience has placed you. An example of such a fault would be : "Oh, if I were in this place or that one! Oh, how much good I think I would accomplish!" Be certain that this is an illusion and that you would do worse there. Spirits lacking in steadfastness never lay solid foundations of virtue because their vacillation prevents them from developing habits of obedience, humility, forbearance and fidelity to the observance of their Rules. The devil always keeps these souls in a state of inaction. I am so convinced of this, on account of the numerous examples I have seen of it in various places and even among our sisters, who have lost their vocation in this way or have remained in a state of torpidity and cowardice which has caused them to cling to their evil habits and inclinations, that even should an angel come down from heaven to tell me this, I would not be more certain. For this reason, I exhort all of you, my dear Sisters, in the name and for the love of Our Lord, to believe me. I urge each of you to say to herself, "Well now, my Savior, You truly want me to be here so that I may share in Your merit and win a

1. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.

place in Your Holy Paradise. I am going to set to work diligently, as if I had only just begun to make an earnest effort to understand fully our Rules and to strive to put them into practice by obedience to my Superiors." You will discover in your Rules many instructions both for the service of the poor and for your spiritual exercises which cannot always be performed at the hour indicated but which must be adapted to the customs of various places. Sister Nicole will clarify this for you and you must obey her as you would Our Lord Himself.

I hope that Monsieur Vincent will send one of the Priests of the Mission to Nantes[1] and Angers this summer. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to prepare for his visit by the faithful observance of your Rules, of which you will render him an account. Do not, instead, fill your minds with things you would like to persuade him are fine, so as to satisfy your useless desires. This does not mean that you are not to unburden yourselves completely of anything that might be troubling you, but do this with an attitude of implicit trust because he cannot tell you anything that he does not believe God desires of you.

Assure your Revered Director of my very humble respect and gratitude. Tell him that we received the letters that you mentioned to me. Allow a little time for the things suggested before giving him an answer. I will seek one from Monsieur Vincent.

I had asked you for the age, mental state and health of these good postulants as well as an idea of what they know how to do, whether or not they have been in domestic service and if they have spent a long period in one household. I must know all this before I can give you an answer.

I am disturbed because I am unable to write to Sister Françoise Ménage.[2] I am waiting for a safe way to send her the chaplet of the Crown of Our Lord. It seems to me that I have sent you two of them since I sent one to Hennebont but I am afraid that they have been lost. Sister Madeleine Ménage[3] was seriously ill but, thank God, she is better and sends her greetings to her sister. With all my heart, I want Our Lord to shower His choicest blessings upon your little community, filling it with His most holy love in which I am, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

1. Monsieur Dehorgny would not arrive until December 1659 (Coste XIII, 91).
2. Françoise Ménage, see Letter 363.
3. Madeleine Ménage, see Letter 538.

L.619 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CATHERINE GESSE[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Montmirail

May 4, 1659

My very dear Sister,

We are sending little Elisabeth back, having judged that for her own good she should not be received as one of our sisters, because she is so immature in both body and mind. I make the same request to you that I made to Sister Louise[2] namely, not to show her any special consideration but to treat her like the other girls, and not to allow her to become accustomed to being among you or to reside with you.

Because I am confident that my letters will not be lost, I am taking advantage of this safe route of delivery to write to you to rejoice with you, by thanking God for the graces His goodness has bestowed upon you, enabling you to continue to love His service by observing your Rules especially by the cordiality and support you show one another. I cannot tell you what a consolation this is for me. So long as these holy practices exist among you, you can be certain that God is with you. I beg Him with all my heart to continue to grant you His graces and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.620 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARIE DONION[3]

Daughter of Charity at Brienne

May 13, 1659

My very dear Sister,

You pleased me greatly by reminding me that we have one of your scalpels. I do not know how we forgot to send it whereas we remembered your letter which we forwarded to the Countess de Brienne[4] the very next day after we had received it. She told us yesterday that she had ordered a gentleman, whom I believe to be her solicitor, to give you 200 pounds. When you have received the money, I urge you to notify us so that we

1. Catherine Gesse, see Letter 120.
2. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
3. Marie Donion, see Letter 382.
4. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86.

may give an account of it to the Countess who says nothing about the past nor about what we sent you.

I am returning your scalpel and ask you to let me know if you have received the two écus from Sister Barbe's[1] brother-in-law. As soon as we are informed, we will be certain to send them to these two hospitals. Assure this good sister that we will not fail to pray for her mother.

As for the sister whose will has turned in another direction, this is a sign that she was not really called. We will always have enough sisters because we will have only those whom God wills to give us.

I beg you not to go to visit the sick without rubbing your nose with vinegar and putting some on your temples. I continue to hope that you are in good health and I praise God for this with all my heart. I beg Him to grant you the graces you need to become great saints, believing as I do that you are unstinting in your efforts to correspond with them. I recommend myself to your prayers and to Sister Geneviève's.[2] Her sister came to see us; she is fine, thank God. I beg Him to grant you the strength you need to cope with the heavy demands of your work and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I will do what you and Sister Geneviève request. I will not fail, from time to time, to communicate to our Most Honored Father the desire of our dear sisters in distant places. I am sure that you do not fail to pray for the preservation of his health and of Monsieur Portail's; I shall be certain to remember you to him. All our sisters send their greetings.

L.621 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX[3]

Daughter of Charity at Châteaudun

May 26, 1659

My very dear Sister,

You tell me that bands of soldiers passed through your neighborhood and that the sisters have a quantity of thread to spin, but you do not mention whether or not the soldiers did any harm on their way through. Nevertheless, thank you for your care of the sisters. You also say nothing about little Sister Sulpice[4] concerning the recommendations I received

1. Barbe Bailly, see Letter 356b.
2. Geneviève Vigneron, see Letter 135.
3. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297, was at Serqueux when she was named to go to Châteaudun.
4. Sulpice Dubois, see Letter 587.

about her. This worries me because I know that you are so tolerant that you are not always aware of things that are to be feared.

As for this good girl, we must have a little more information about her. We must not be in a hurry to accept her but must test her thoroughly beforehand. Sister Claude[1] tells me that this girl does not have the means to pay for her first habit. That is an obstacle. It is unbelievable that she cannot obtain the money from her family unless there has been mismanagement in the home.

I will do everything possible to send some strong and energetic sisters, but, in the meantime, I beg you not to allow yourself to be crushed by your burden.

By all means, my dear Sister, use the little book that belonged to our deceased sister.[2] You did not tell me how many sick there are in your hospital. I praise God for the blessings He is bestowing upon the instruction of your children. Let us know something about the lady who gave you news of our dear sisters in Serqueux. Sister Marie is eagerly awaiting your arrival. I do not know what Divine Providence will decree in this matter. I would also willingly consider you for other places because, although we have almost 40 sisters here, we have considerable difficultly in finding a few for the establishments.

Pray for the Company so that, in His goodness, God may send His Holy Spirit upon all in general and upon each individual sister in order that we may all be very faithful to Him. Our Most Honored Father is still in the same condition. Pray fervently for the preservation of his health, I beg of you. Remember me to all our dear sisters and convey to them the most affectionate greetings of our community. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving servant.

P.S. When you have the opportunity, I would ask you to make your packages smaller and to put everything into one so as to save shipping charges. The last ones cost eight sols.

L.622 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

June 2, 1659

Madame de Glou[3] very humbly entreats you, my Most Honored Father,

1. Claude who is at Varize, see Letter 544.
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
3. Madame de Glou, Lady of Charity in Paris.

to grant her some time to speak with you tomorrow morning, at an hour that is convenient for you.

Allow me to ask you if it should not be every year, during this period of the Feast of Pentecost, that we hold the election of Officers, either to elect new ones or to prolong the terms of those holding office. If so, although we shall perhaps have to elect some sisters who are not in Paris, I would ask your Charity to let me know the day. I would also ask you to recall that my pride or foolishness always prevents me from presenting my needs to you. Nevertheless, I realize how important this is to me for the salvation of my soul and the accomplishment of the will of God. Therefore, have the goodness to help me to surmount my difficulties and to make better use of my remaining days so that, at the end of my life, I may not be filled with shame. I hope for this from the goodness of God and beg Him for it with all my heart as I entreat your Charity to grant me some time for this purpose, since, for many years, it has been by this means that I have been assured that I was fulfilling the will of God by doing what I was ordered to do. I desire this grace until the end, although I am unworthy of it, along with the grace of calling myself in His most holy love, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter.

L.623 - TO SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[1]

at Bernay

July 23, 1659

My very dear Sister,

Although you would excuse me for forgetfulness or excessive negligence, I do not want to excuse myself. Nevertheless, I could tell you that, since Easter, I have been continuously ill and still am, as the good Pastor may have told you. It was from him that I had news of your dear self.

Some time ago, one of your relatives stopped here. He gave us news of your family and said that everyone is fine. I have not as yet seen nor have I been able to send the letter that you wrote to your brother. I will let you know as soon as I have had an answer.

What I have learned of your employments greatly consoled me. I found particular consolation in your way of life which is permeated with cordiality and mutual support. I was greatly comforted also by the respect,

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

modesty and charity with which you act. It is in this way, my dear Sisters, that you must edify the public and not be persons who only bear the name and wear the habit of the Daughters of Charity and who do everything except their duty, yielding rather to gossip and idle thoughts, with no consideration for the observance of their Rules. May Our Lord protect us from this evil!

My greetings to Sister Anne.[1] I am, for both of you, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

L.624 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 2 [1659]

Enclosed is the letter that I received this morning from Madame de Bouillon.[2] I think that I should respond promptly. I am sending it to learn from your Charity whether or not you consider it appropriate for me to treat her in this way.

The Sister Renée she mentions is the one involved in the rumors concerning this good ecclesiastic. He told her on two different occasions to come here. She is likewise the one that the said Lady wanted left with her as long as she remained in the country. I ask your Charity please to consider all these circumstances because a request is being made for another sister, perhaps so as to keep Sister Renée there permanently, as she desires. More than a month ago, I was told that she never left the château. Madame has the habit of often delaying the sisters there to visit her and Sister Renée expects this.

We are not at all acquainted with Monsieur Piètre whose decision could either harm us or be very beneficial to us. Would we dare, my Most Honored Father, to ask your Charity to send someone to him on your behalf. We will assemble at 2 o'clock today to discuss the matter of the fountains.[3] I was told that Monsieur Piètre may live near Saint-Jean.[4] I will send for him there as well as for our sisters from the Hôtel-de-Ville area. Would your Charity please intercede with Our Lord for us, so that we may obtain what is necessary, and bless us for His holy love. Believe me, my Most Honored Father, your very humble . . .

1. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.
2. Madame de Bouillon, the younger. She was at her château in Morainvilliers.
3. The Daughters of Charity obtained authorization to bring water from the city to their house.
4. Saint-Jean-de-Grèves, a parish of Paris.

L.625 - TO MADAME DE BOUILLON[1]

August 21, 1659

Madame,

I was aware of Sister Toussainte's[2] illness and I would not have failed to send someone to help Sister Renée if we had a sister suitable for that. Since we are continuously in this state of powerlessness, and will be for some time to come, I very humbly beg you, Madame, to pardon me for not responding to your request as quickly as you would wish. Allow me also to tell you that, since Sister Toussainte is on the road to recovery, she does not need to have someone with her while Sister Renée is serving the sick. Because the other sister has a great deal of experience and is accustomed to teaching school, the children will receive adequate instruction.

This is not meant to imply, Madame, that I do not pay careful attention to whatever you do me the honor of telling me. I respect, as I must, your instruction which I will follow exactly because I am certain that you want everything to redound to the glory of God and the good of the poor who are so dear to you. In the love of Our Lord, I take the liberty to call myself, Madame, with the respect I owe you, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.626 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

August 24 [1659]

My Most Honored Father,

Our two sisters who asked your Charity for permission to make their vows are completing the fifth year since their entrance into the Company. One is called Pétronille.[3] She is not unmindful of the esteem that she must have for the vows or of their meaning. The other sister is a simpler soul with less knowledge, or even understanding, but she loves God and her vocation—as does the first sister. Both of them have always been steadfast in their vocation. They have Monsieur Portail's approval. This second sister is named Louise.

1. See Letter 624.
2. Toussainte David, see Letter 270.
3. Pétronille Gillot, who entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1654, went to Nanteuil after her seminary.

My patron saint reproaches me for my infidelity. For this reason, I beg your Charity to ask pardon of God for me and to beg new graces from Him so that I may accomplish His holy will. Tomorrow, if I am able, I will attend holy Mass with our sisters so that this small number may represent the entire Company for you and so that your Charity may obtain for it the grace of fortitude through the blessing of Our Lord for this intention.

L.627 - TO SISTER GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[1]

at Chantilly

September 3, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I have truly been distressed to have left you all alone for so long and I praise God for having furnished me with the means to be able to send you our dear Sister Françoise.[2] She has a very sweet disposition and a great desire to give herself totally to God. I beg you to be an example for her of a true Daughter of Charity who is given to God for the service of the poor and who, therefore, must be more with the poor than with the rich; who has Rules to observe and no time to waste; who, except when she is required to visit the poor, must prefer her own house and the company of her sister whom she must love and support; who, consequently, must never complain to anyone about her companion or about anything that transpires between them, not even in confession where one must be careful not to reveal the faults of others; who must never speak of her neighbor, especially of priests, other than with great respect; and who must not go to talk with the clergy, except in church. The Daughters of Charity are obliged, therefore, to strive to become more holy than religious. Our sister will tell you what she learned about this from our Most Honored Father's last conference[3] as well as about the charity he showed us today for the repose of the souls of our deceased sisters. Let us implore Our Lord for the grace to profit by the mercy He shows our poor Company. Believe me in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. I beg you, my dear Sister, to convey my respectful greetings to Monsieur Pesset. Once again, I recommend our sister to you. I beg you,

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.
2. Because of her health, Françoise remained at Chantilly for only a few months.
3. Conference of August 24, 1659 (Coste X, 657) On the Perfection Required for Sisters in Parishes, and On Attachment to Confessors.

above all, to live together in such a way that you will have no need to go to different confessors. This is extremely important.

Our sister does not seem to be in good health. If she is no better, you will have her with you only temporarily, while awaiting the arrival of another sister.

L.628 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday [September 1659]

My Most Honored Father,

I believe that we must send for Sister Marie-Marthe[1] as early as today. One of our sisters reminded me that the sisters named[2] are not industrious, except Sister Carcireux.[3] Because it is true that the others are naturally very slow-moving, I am afraid that, without much work to do, there may be cause for complaints. Also, depending on the situation in Cahors, I think that it may be necessary to send Sister Carcireux there to satisfy His Excellency.[4]

We would need one of your servants or someone else, my Most Honored Father, to go on horseback to Vaux[5] and our sister must leave tomorrow at dawn. This necessity leads me to inconvenience you in order to make up for the fault I committed when I thought only of the compatibility of personalities, which appeared to me to be the more urgent need. I will have to know your decision so that I can have the horse readied. Please excuse all my imprudence since I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and very humble servant.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102, was recalled from La Fère to be sent to Cahors.
2. Three sisters would leave for Narbonne: Françoise Carcireux, Anne Denoual and Marie Chesse.
3. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254. Louise de Marillac was hesitant about her placement. She would go to Narbonne.
4. Monseigneur Alain de Solminihac, see Letter 518.
5. Vaux-le-Vicomte, a new establishment.

L.628B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CARCIREUX

En route to Narbonne

September 15, 1659

My very dear Sisters,

When I learned that I could still communicate with you during your journey, I did not want to lose the opportunity to assure all of you that physical separation does not prevent spiritual presence among persons whom Our Lord has united by the bonds of His holy love. The stronger this love grows within us, the closer it binds us together. Since this same love gently persuaded you to heed the call to the place to which you are going, I have no difficulty in convincing myself that the entire trip will serve to prepare you to act properly in that place where God is awaiting you. There you will discern His will through the voices of those who will speak to you by order of the Bishop of Narbonne.[1]

Before you arrive, I must tell you, my dear Sisters, what a consolation it is for me to see you living in your cloister on this journey as you did in the streets of Paris. I am equally consoled to know that you do nothing other than what Sister Marie-Marthe[2] tells you to do and that she, in turn, acts only on the order of Reverend Mother Marie-Thérèse[3] in matters pertaining to the services you can render this religious. When you leave the coach, all four[4] of you are to stay together except when these good religious want you with them.

You will recall, Sister Françoise,[5] what, on your return from Richelieu, you remarked as not being good but which was not, by the grace of God, an evil. If, upon your arrival, you had Sister Marthe with you, I would not pity you. She would put you on the right path. However, if she is not there, redouble your confidence in God. After you explain that you are going to receive the Bishop's orders, remain at peace until you are told what you are to do. Above all, since those people are not familiar with your poor way of life and your humble dwelling, do not desire to be treated differently, even in small matters. Do not argue but explain your reasons humbly, firmly, briefly and gently. If you are asked for your opinion, give it only to explain how the poor are served in Paris. If it is

1. The Bishop of Agde and of Narbonne, one of the sons of Madame Fouquet, see Letter 307.
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102, went to Cahors.
3. Mother Marie-Thérèse, a Visitation nun, the Superioress of the Monastery of Sainte-Marie in Toulouse, was the sister of the Bishop of Narbonne.
4. Françoise Carcireux, Anne Denoual and Marie Chesse who went to Narbonne and Marie-Marthe who went to Cahors.
5. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

for a hospital, do not forget to represent the needs of the bashful poor who would receive no assistance because they would never go to the hospital no matter how much pressure was put on them. For this reason the establishment of the Confraternity of Charity is absolutely essential. I am not telling you this, my dear Sisters, to encourage you to be the first to speak of these things, but rather to assure you that you may do so, should the need arise. I beg Our Lord to enable you to act in all things according to His spirit and I am in His holy love . . .

L.629 - (TO MONSIEUR VINCENT)

[October 1659]

My Most Honored Father,

Sister Mathurine[1] did not depart. She will not leave until the early part of next week. She expressed the desire to make a short retreat and to go to confession. She would be very happy if your Charity heard it, provided your important business will not weigh you down if she takes your time. I would ask your Charity for an answer on this point.

I am sending you the letter I received yesterday from the Queen of Poland as well as my response. I ask your Charity to keep it, if it should not be sent; otherwise, please return it so that I can copy it over without mistakes. Enclosed also is a letter from Sister Carcireux[2] which will give you news of your priests[3] who left for Narbonne.

My Most Honored Father, I am sending you the memorandum I mentioned to your Charity. It outlines the spiritual means to bring about the solid establishment of the Company of the Daughters of Charity. I beg you to show it to no one, lest it be ridiculed. My poor heart greatly needs your Charity to be able to see its weakness because of the loss of a letter similar to this one almost immediately after it had been written. Your Charity would be well aware that, now more than ever, I need advice and correction so that I may more truly call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

P.S. Our two sisters from Hennebont have arrived, thank God.

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280, was sent to La Fère to replace Marie-Marthe Trumeau.
2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
3. Monsieur des Jardins, Monsieur Lemerer, and Monsieur Tanguy (Coste VII, 147).

L.630 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Nantes

October 15, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I was informed about what you told our Most Honored Father concerning the matter you mentioned to me. I have not yet had the honor of speaking to him and of learning his decision; however, I am sure that you are convinced that his Charity will not fail you in your hour of need.

We will do all in our power to send a sister to Hennebont and one to Nantes next week. At that time you will learn the decision concerning your request.[2] Nevertheless, I sincerely hope, my dear Sister, that your strength is greater than the obstacles and that your love and fidelity to the will of God have fortified your courage to resist all dangers. This does not mean that I do not wish to see you, my dear Sister, or that I do not believe that Divine Providence may want something of which we are unaware. I entrust you entirely to His guidance. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I greet all our dear sisters with all my heart.

L.631 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

October 18, 1659

Monsieur,

I believe that you will soon be receiving a visit from Monsieur Dehorgny,[3] if he has not already arrived in Angers. I am certain, Monsieur, that he will afford himself the honor of seeing you. I am certain, also, since your Charity still continues to assist our poor sisters, that you will be good enough to inform him of their strengths and weaknesses, and that together you will determine the means to restore the spirit of submission and cordiality in this little family.

I received a letter yesterday from Sister Etiennette[4] who tells me that

1. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495.
2. Nicole Haran begged Mademoiselle to send sisters to Nantes, see Letter 618.
3. Monsieur Dehorgny, see Letter 5.
4. Étiennette Dupuis was the Sister Servant, see Letter 600.

the administrators are requesting only two sisters. I very humbly entreat you, Monsieur, if your Charity considers it appropriate, to take the trouble to order our sisters to explain to them that, if they decrease the number of workers, one of the gentlemen of the administration must take the trouble to inform me and also to assure me about the provisions made to cover the expense of the sisters' travel. I very humbly ask your pardon, Monsieur, for taking this liberty with you. The continuation of the grace which Divine Providence bestowed upon us by granting us your assistance is so necessary that I cannot prevent myself from hoping for it for love of Him or from begging Our Lord for it. You act for love of Him and in that love I take the liberty of calling myself, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.632 - TO SISTER MATHURINE GUÉRIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu of La Fère

Feast of All Saints, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I am truly distressed for having taken so long to answer your second and most recent letter. In it I recognized your diligence in responding to the request I made to you before your departure. I thank you for this with all my heart.

The feast we celebrate today answers you by the lips of Jesus Christ when He spoke the last beatitude to His Apostles. I am sure that you consider this article which treats of calumny as the most important. It is His intention to reveal the truth Himself as his Goodness has already done in various places and in similar circumstances, as you well know.

Do not stop listening, my dear Sister, to all that is said and report it to me. However, let those who speak see that it is only the expression of truth that is causing them to become angry and most often to seek self-justification, although they are guilty. However, when what is said is false, you must be at peace, not worry about it and leave our justification to God.

Because our sisters did not communicate openly, the remaining sister[2]

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280. At the beginning of her letter, Louise de Marillac alludes to the persecution Mathurine had endured in Liancourt. Weighed down with humiliations, to the point of being deprived of the sacraments for four months, she manifested so much virtue and courage that Monsieur Vincent was struck by admiration for her.

2. Julienne Allot, see Letter 561.

may sometimes pass on to you her suspicions for facts. What leads me to say this is the sale that took place in which one thing could have been mistaken for another. I praise God with all my heart for the change you are finding there and I beg Him to continue this grace.

You did not act improperly, my dear Sister, during your first visit to the Ladies. I think that the custom of getting acquainted with one another that prevails there, as in other very small towns, should not make it necessary for you to call on the Ladies. Receive their visits as visits to the poor and in the room reserved for the poor, not in your room. Thus, you will not be acting contrary to your Rules. Do not bring them to the chapel either, because I do not know how the hospital is laid out.

We are most indebted to your Pastor. I did not fail to inform our Most Honored Father of his charity. I believe that he will not oppose our following his recommendation as set forth in the first paragraph of this letter. You know that I always act in this way in important matters.

Please let me know if, since the departure of Madame, the King's Nurse,[1] you have found her ledger recording receipts and expenditures. I believe that when she was there she, or the person to whom she entrusted the responsibility, took care of this matter. However, I shall not fail to write to Sister Marthe[2] to find out how she handled the accounts. What I told you about the linen leads me to this conclusion.

I am rather surprised that the Pastor did not present a clearer defense of our sister's innocence. I am afraid that he is perhaps dissatisfied with this establishment and that everything was not communicated to him.

You are astonished, my dear Sister, because those who appear ill-disposed support the sisters. They are forced to do so, even against their will, by the truth that God alone knows. This is the work of Divine Providence in which the Daughters of Charity must place all their trust, rather than in the powerful, or in spiritual leaders, or still less, in our own efforts.

We are most grateful to this good Monsieur Le Mairre who is good enough to take the trouble to intervene with the Queen on your behalf so that you may receive your wages. I think that it is necessary for him to know that only the wages for the past two years are still owed us and consequently that our sisters have received anything that dates farther back than that.

I am expecting great things of you, my dear Sister. I know that you have done all that you can and in the best possible way, as God and the requirements of justice demand. I am not at all worried about the success

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1. Madame Perrette du Four, First Nurse of Louis XIV. On the order of the Queen, she asked Monsieur Vincent for Daughters of Charity to assist the wounded soldiers at La Fère (Coste X, 197). She continued to take an interest in that hospital later on.
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

and future of this work. I am eager to know how the sale of the clothing and belongings of the soldiers has been organized and whether or not the profits will go to support the Hôtel-Dieu.

If you need scalpels, let me know. I do not know if Sister left us any. If so, I will send them to you; if not, you will have to buy some since she had whatever she needed purchased for her here. She did not tell me what the money she left me was for. She gave it to me as she was going out the door for her long journey.[1] She said only that there were 20 francs for the chasuble. I found that amount.

I think, my dear Sister, since benediction is offered in the church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, that it would be appropriate to continue to allow or even to have the Ladies and other women attend. Sister Marthe was not the only one to permit this. However, you acted correctly when you informed this good man that he was not to remain after the conclusion of services nor was he to hold them at times that would interfere with the observance of your Rules.

As for the boarders, reflect on the necessity and importance of having them, and then be good enough to inform me of your conclusions. I will then request a decision from our Most Honored Father and communicate his orders to you.

I am certain that you will find Sister Marthe's papers because she is very well aware of the order that must be maintained in hospitals. I would be very surprised if she had failed to record the names, places of origin and dates of admission and discharge or death of the patients or if she had not kept an exact account of receipts and expenditures.

I am sending a note to Sister Julienne.[2] If she has trouble reading it, be charitable enough to do so if she requests this favor of you. Also, please teach her to spell.

I imagine that your charity for us causes you to remember all of us in your prayers. Be assured of the prayers of all our sisters. They are the same as when you left them but those who had been ill are better, thank God.

The water tank has been installed and I think that the whole system will be ready before long. Help us to thank God for the goodness of Divine Providence in watching over the Company. Believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Trip to Cahors.

2. Julienne Allot, see Letter 561.

L.633 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 12 [1659]

My Most Honored Father,

Sister Noëlle, who has been in the Company for nine years and has done as well as her simplicity permits and who greatly fears God, very humbly begs your Charity to offer her to God and to allow her to make her vows tomorrow during holy Mass. For a long time, she has shown very special charity toward little children.

I also believe that a decision must be reached tomorrow concerning the sisters to be sent out. Please send us a message. In keeping with my usual confidence, I ask your Charity for your holy blessing and I take the liberty of calling myself, my Most Honored Father, your least and most unworthy daughter and servant.

L.634 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Ussel

November 13, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I admit that I am wrong and that it has been too long since I have allowed myself the consolation of writing to you. You give me great pleasure by not holding that against me. I hope that you realize that I do not lack the desire to afford you whatever satisfaction I can. From your letter, I gather that you are beginning to have high hopes for your new establishment. I believe that the Duchess[2] is on her way back here. With the help of God, I will not fail to speak to her about your suffering poor. She did, indeed, tell me that, upon her return from Ussel, she would go where you mentioned. I hope that she will then set about carrying out her plan for that place.

I am sending you the picture and the reading glasses that you requested a long time ago. I am not writing to Sister Avoie[3] because I have already done so. Please, my dear Sisters, accept this method of corresponding with you so that I can economize my time for my health's sake.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.
2. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
3. Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578.

Sister Mathurine[1] went to La Fère to replace Sister Marie-Marthe[2] who went to Cahors to help our sisters there. They have both[3] been ill. Sister Carcireux[4] went to Narbonne with two relatively new sisters.[5] Both of them are overwhelmed with difficulties but this is the seal God places on His works.

Let me tell you the good news, my dear Sister. Divine Providence which continues to watch over us, has moved the City Administrators to furnish us with water. The pipes have already been laid from the reservoir to the House. This leads me to hope that we will have a completely functioning water supply before Christmas. My dear Sisters, see how faithful we must be to God since He is so good to us! Let us spare no efforts to observe the commandment He gave us to love Him.

We have recalled two of our sisters[6] who were in Châteaudun at the time of the death of Sister Barbe[7] whom we must look upon as blessed. Our Most Honored Father, having learned the truth concerning her life and death, wanted them to remain here to recount these things to the assembly of our sisters held on the Feast of Saint Martin. During it, admiration was expressed for the steadfastness she manifested in carrying out the orders given her wherever she was placed and in assisting her sisters to observe their Rules faithfully. Her detachment from all things and her ability to trample upon any form of human respect or self-satisfaction were praiseworthy.

I must tell you, to my own humiliation, that, when one of the two sisters asked pardon of Sister Barbe for a serious fault she had committed against her, her response was so gentle and so humble that the recollection of it brought tears to my eyes. Sister Barbe answered, "What, Sister, you put up with so much from me, why would I not bear with you?"

Those who had seen Sister Barbe during her illness declared that they could not believe that they were looking at the same person after her death. Moreover, the ordinary people, who came for two days in such numbers to view her that the doors had to be closed, said that make-up had been used because she was so beautiful. See, my dear Sisters, what a good thing it is to persevere in the love and service of God! I am in

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
3. Adrienne Plouvier and Louise Boucher.
4. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
5. Anne Denoual, see Letter 647b, and Marie Chesse, a native of Brittany, born October 28, 1637, who entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on September 30, 1657. In September 1659, she went to Narbonne where she remained for 17 years. She was then named Sister Servant at Gex, and later at the hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in Paris. After a three-year term as Treasurer General, she returned to Gex where she died on April 19, 1699.
6. Anne Bocheron, see Letter 544 and Sulpice Dubois, see Letter 587.
7. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

Him, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

L.635 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 16, 1659

Monsieur,

Monsieur Dehorgny[1] greatly consoled me in the suffering I was experiencing because I thought that my faults were causing our sisters to receive the just punishment they had so often merited of being abandoned by your Charity. He told me that you had had the goodness to promise him that, for the love of God, you would continue your charitable ministry to them so long as your more important duties allowed. I very humbly thank you for this, Monsieur, because I cannot even express the harm I had foreseen befalling them should they be deprived of this grace. May God be forever blessed for your decision and for the glory which, in His holy designs, He is preparing for souls who work for the salvation of others who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. With the respect and submission I owe you, Monsieur, I am in Him, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.637 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1659]

I do not know the name of the young lady who wrote to me, my Most Honored Father. Enclosed is my answer in case your Charity considers it appropriate to send it to her.

Please reflect on whether it might not be necessary to send one of your priests to find the Pastor so as to discover why he refuses to hear our sisters' confessions. Their previous confessor also refused but they returned to him despite orders to the contrary which they had received. One is led to believe that one of the sisters may have told him about this prohibition.

I spoke to our sister who came from Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois and

1. Monsieur Dehorgny, see Letter 5, made the visitation at Angers.

she has sworn to abide by the prescribed orders. I hope that she does so for many reasons.

For the love of God, I ask for your blessing for my needs and for those of all our sisters and I very humbly beg your pardon for my lack of discretion in detaining you too long and for all my other faults. I remain your unworthy daughter and very humble servant.

L.636 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 23 [1659]

Monsieur Mercier, resident priest at Saint-Barthélemy[1] and confessor for our sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu, desires to be numbered among those who participate in the Tuesday Conferences.[2] To this end, he came to ask me to inform you, my Most Honored Father, that I have known him for a long while, having met him at the residence of Monsieur de Villenant whose mother esteems him.

I imagine you have seen the letter that the Lady from Saint-Cosme[3] sent me yesterday. She made one fairly reasonable request but the others were just the opposite. I think that it would be wise, my Most Honored Father, to send an answer, if you consider it appropriate, but that we should not entrust it to the sister who brought the letter, because I believe that she is partly to blame for a good portion of the disturbances although, in reality, a bit of negligence and human respect on my part are also factors. This sister is the one who wanted to leave the Company some time ago, but she humbled herself and remained. It is true that her companion, who is a very simple girl, showed some lack of prudence as I often do with regard to the virtues necessary to enable me truly to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and obedient servant.

1. Parish of Paris.
2. Conference organized by Monsieur Vincent as early as 1633 for the formation of priests. These Tuesday Conferences became famous and brought to Saint-Lazare priests noted for their doctrine and their holiness.
3. Parish of Paris.

L.639 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 7, 1659

Sister Barbe Bailly,[1] who has been in the Company of the Daughters of Charity for 14 years, made her first vows 11 years ago tomorrow. She renewed them each year until the year 1656 when she says, my Most Honored Father, that she received permission from your Charity to make permanent vows, which she did. She now very humbly begs your Charity to offer to God the renewal of these vows which she desires to make with your permission.

For the love of God and for the fulfillment of His holy will for the Company, I also beg you, my Most Honored Father, to ask Our Lord, because of His love for the choice He made of His most holy Mother, to pardon all the faults committed against interior and exterior purity and to grant us the grace of true purity which, in His mercy, He wills to find in us. Since I am the most at fault, I am also in need of more powerful intercession. Please allow me to consider myself, my Most Honored Father, as your unworthy daughter and servant.

L.640 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER NICOLE HARAN

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Nantes)

December 10, 1659

My very dear Sister,

With all my heart, I thank you for sending me news of our sisters. I was worried about them. You made me very happy by standing firm about sending Sister Marie[2] to Hennebont. Please let me know if our sisters who remained in Angers gave the other sisters part of the surplus from their trip, and if so, how much. I would also like to know if the Vicar General of Vannes sent funds to cover the cost of Sister's trip.

I beg all our sisters to have great esteem for the grace that God is bestowing on them by sending them someone to visit them on His behalf.[3] I urge them to dispose themselves to make their communications truthfully and with simplicity of heart, for the glory of God and not for their personal satisfaction or for any other reason. I hope for this

1. Barbe Bailly, see Letter 356b.
2. Marie Gaudoin, see Letter 294.
3. Monsieur Dehorgny went to visit the sisters at Nantes.

disposition in all of our sisters because what can sisters, who have given themselves to God, desire but to seek all the assistance possible to be faithful to Him. This is so important that it is all that can be wished for to provide greater assurance of our salvation since God Himself has called us to Him in this way. Let us ask His goodness for the grace of which we and all our sisters stand in need. Believe me in His holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I send my respectful greetings to your Director and I urge you, Sister, if the administrators request any sisters, to ask them, once they have received a favorable response, to remember to send us the address in Paris where we can receive the money necessary for their trip.

L.641 - FOR SISTER MATHURINE GUÉRIN[1]

(at La Fère)

December 15, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I am anxious to know if you have received a lengthy response to your first long letter as well as another written at nearly the same time. I am truly astonished by several things that you told me especially by the claim that you believe is being made on the money allocated by the Queen, if it is forthcoming. These funds rightfully belong to our sisters since it is incontestable that they never used the food for the poor for their own needs. Moreover, if you recall the disposition and comportment of Sister Marthe,[2] you will have no difficulty in believing this, but you will have a great deal of trouble in accepting what is being said in the same vein as the earlier gossip.

I am giving you no answer concerning any of the other matters that you mentioned in your last letter. I am awaiting the response of our Most Honored Father, who, as you know, does nothing in a rush so that whatever is done may correspond as closely as possible with the will of God. Moreover, since no contract of establishment has been drawn up for us with the hospital, we must await the expression of God's will in the matter.

We have received no news from your home region other than what we are sending you; nor have we seen the young man who usually stops

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.

2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

here. It seems to me that you had sent your address so that they could write to you. If not, you can still do so.

Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Portail are in the same condition as when you left us. All the sisters send their greetings especially those whom you mentioned in your letters. With all my heart, I do the same, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.575 - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

(at Ussel)[1]

(c. 1659)

My very dear Sister,

You are aware that the works of God, even the greatest and those which contribute most to His glory, are often the most painful for those who undertake them. Offer yourself frequently to Him and ask Him what He wants you to do. Do not worry about your strength. Rest assured that you will receive all that is necessary from the goodness of God for as long as He knows that you must remain in that place.

If you had not so often been employed in very arduous work, I would encourage you to be generous; but you do not need generosity, you have enough. However, I would ask God for the grace to enable you to imitate the inaction of the Son of God. During His stay upon earth, He did not always work to the full extent of His powers. His labor in the family of Saint Joseph reveals this. You perhaps frequently admired this before He placed you in a situation where you are called upon to imitate it. May His holy name be blessed!

L.634B - TO SISTER CARCIREUX[2]

(c. 1659)

My very dear Sister,

As for the disposition and behavior of the person you mentioned, be careful that you are not contributing to this situation by giving her too much authority over others or by having her take care of matters that

1. Copy Chétif, series Anne Hardemont.

2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254, was in Narbonne.

you should be looking after yourself. We must act on our own and teach by our actions, otherwise our advice has little effect. I am sure that you practice support and gentleness in dealing with all our sisters, to the extent that these virtues are necessary, so I am not recommending them to you. However, I do recommend brevity in your communications when you believe that you must ask for advice or when you feel obliged to give it. Otherwise, we become boring and contemptible. The situation deteriorates to the point where people do everything in their power to avoid speaking with us because of the loss of time and the uselessness of this activity. I beg you, my dear Sister, to accept this recommendation graciously for the love of Our Lord in whom I am your very humble sister and servant.

L.642 - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Ussel

December 20, 1659

My very dear Sister,

Madame, the Duchess de Ventadour,[2] has not yet arrived in Paris. She is spending some time at Vigny because her residence here was not habitable. With the help of God, I shall not fail to speak with her about the matters you mentioned when I have the honor of seeing her.

I praise God with all my heart for the disposition in which you tell me you now are. Nevertheless, I share the pain you are experiencing because you feel that you are doing nothing. Be thoroughly consoled, my dear Sister, by the thought that you are imitating the state in which the Son of God found Himself when, after leaving the temple where He had been working for the glory of God, He went with the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph to obey them. He thereby accomplished the will of God by toiling for many years at the humble tasks of a carpenter's shop. Yet He had come upon earth to labor for the salvation of the entire human race.

We do not know, my dear Sister, why Divine Providence has put you aside, leaving you hidden in the Son of God. Nevertheless, by working unostentatiously and quietly in the service of the poor, you are most certainly fulfilling the designs of Divine Providence. If you reflect upon this, my dear Sister, as I am sure you do, you will find profound peace and you will wait lovingly and confidently until God wants something

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

2. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

else of you. In this way, you will be practicing holy indifference. Our Most Honored Father spoke to us about this virtue last Sunday during the conference[1] his Charity gave us. He explained that it is an angelic state because the angels in heaven, who are destined to serve souls, await peacefully the command of God to know what they are to do, whether that be in heaven for the accidental glory of blessed souls, or in purgatory for the consolation of those who are suffering there, or on earth, to communicate to souls the holy inspirations necessary for their salvation.

It has perhaps been quite a while, my dear Sister, since you have written to our dear Father. He has less time than ever. Although he cannot leave Saint-Lazare, because of problems with his legs, he is nonetheless weighed down with business. I believe that he would be comforted if you wrote to him about your situation. He could then answer you because he perhaps no longer recalls what you told him. Nor do I, my dear Sister, because I think that I have always answered you promptly.

I hope that you will have the happiness of seeing Monsieur Dehorgny.[2] He told me that he would take the trouble to go to Ussel if it was not too far from those places he was to visit. I desire this with all my heart and urged him to do so in my response.

I do not know if I told you that Sister Mathurine Guérin[3] has gone to La Fère to replace Sister Marie-Marthe.[4] I will send you a few more than your usual 50 pictures. The large ones cost more than the small. This number includes those you already have. The entire thing comes to two pounds, five sols. You have only 17 pictures and not 17 double sheets. Your glasses come to 16.[5]

I will wait to write to Sister Avoie[6] until I have some news for her. I greet her with all my heart. I am, for both of you, in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and affectionate servant.

1. Conference of December 14, 1659 (Coste X, 698).
2. Monsieur Dehorgny, see Letter 5, continues his visits (Coste VII, 195).
3. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102, had left for Cahors.
5. The price of eye glasses.
6. Avoie Vigneron, see Letter 578.

L.643 - TO MY DEAR SISTER MATHURINE GUÉRIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at La Fère)

December 23 (1659)

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you must have received a letter from that good young man at the Academy to whom I forwarded your letters shortly after your departure. You will, therefore, have news of your relatives and friends. I can assure you that news of them touches me as deeply as does news of my own family. The same is true of matters concerning you, especially your health. I beg you to give me a detailed report on this point.

If you completely entrust everything to the guidance of Divine Providence and love the most holy will of God, this will contribute greatly to your peace of mind and heart. In fact, this is one of the most essential practices I know of for growth in holiness.

You have undoubtedly had the consolation of an answer from our Most Honored Father. Since I sent my letter along with Monsieur Portail's, it must have reached you before mine did.

We received the two écus that you sent. We know that you asked for two scalpels but we have not obtained them yet. As for the two books and the schedule you must follow, if you have not written to our Most Honored Father about this and received a response from him, I would say that I believe that it is his intention to postpone things a bit. I cannot recall if I mentioned this in my last letter.

I will wait until I have re-read Sister Julienne's[2] letter before writing to her because I have to ask her to explain what she told me when she wrote during Sister Marthe's[3] time there. With the help of God, I will also relay your request to Sister Marthe.

With regard to what you tell me about the boarders, let me say that I see Monsieur Vincent so seldom that I do not yet have his recommendation. His ailments, the heavy demands of his work and the rigors of the weather keep him confined to his room. We must pray earnestly for the preservation of his health. I am sure that you do not fail to do so and that you are also helping our dear sister to begin to practice true and solid virtue or to persevere in this way if God has granted her the grace to undertake it. I greet her with all my heart as do all our sisters, with a special remembrance for you for whom I am truly and in the love of Our Lord your very humble and very loving...

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
2. Julienne Allot, see Letter 561.
3. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102, was at La Fère from 1656 to 1659.

P.S. Let me know, please, if Madame de Liancourt's daughter has gotten married.

L.645 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Evening of the 23rd [December 1659]

Because I foresaw difficulties from sending the sister back to Saint-Cosme[1] before having her explain the entire situation to your Charity, I sent another sister there this morning, my Most Honored Father, with permission to say that she was coming to assist our sister with the service of the poor. She would be there until I have learned how I was to answer the letter that had been sent to me. To do this, I needed directives from you, my Most Honored Father.

Lest there be another letter, I believe that it is necessary, if your Charity considers it appropriate, to reach a decision for the present as well as for the future. If you are willing, could it be tomorrow, during a little conference, at the time your Charity tells us?

For a long time, my Most Honored Father, you have also been reflecting on the means to provide more efficacious service for the little children. I beg Our Lord to reveal His will in this as in all other matters so that it may be faithfully fulfilled in your poor daughters and very humble servants.

L.644 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 24, 1659

My Most Honored Father,

The coming of Our Lord has produced in three of our sisters the desire to empty themselves so as to give themselves entirely to Him by the vows they wish to make, if your Charity permits them to do so, tomorrow, at the hour you will indicate, either during the holy Mass that you will say or during another. The names of our dear sisters are Sister Jeanne Gressier,[2] from Senlis; Sister Gabrielle,[3] from Gionge; and Sister Marie

1. See Letter 636.
2. Jeanne Gressier, see Letter 456.
3. Gabrielle Cabaret, see Letter 533.

Petit,[1] from Paris. The latter is in her fifth year in the Company. There is also Sister Marie Prévost[2] who asks your Charity to allow her to renew her vows which she has already pronounced several times. All four have the approval of Monsieur Portail. All the older sisters also very humbly beg your Charity to offer to the Infant Jesus the renewal of the gift that they have made to Him for their entire lives. Sister Julienne wanted me to mention her by name.

My Most Honored Father, tomorrow is the twenty-fifth of the month, the day on which holy Mass is to be celebrated for the entire Company, for its needs and intentions, of which your Charity is aware. Allow me to tell you, my Most Honored Father, that my powerlessness to accomplish any good prevents me from having anything acceptable to offer to Our Lord, other than my wretched renewal, except the deprivation of the only consolation that His goodness has given me for 35 years. I accept this for love of Him and in the way that His Providence ordains because I hope to obtain from His goodness and your charity the same assistance by an interior pathway. I beg this of you for love of the union of the Son of God with human nature, without, however, losing hope of having the honor of seeing you when that can occur without endangering the little health He has given you. I implore Him to preserve it until His designs have been accomplished in your soul, for His glory and for the benefit of many others among whom I have the honor to be, since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.646 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CHARLOTTE ROYER[3]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Richelieu

December 27, 1659

My very dear Sister,

I suppose that you were surprised to see our dear Sister Etiennette[4] arrive without any letter. Do not be upset. She did not go to Richelieu without an order from Monsieur Vincent. Since that is so, you must find consolation in it because I am sure that Monsieur Dehorgny[5] led you to

1. Marie Petit entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1655. Her name is found at the end of the list of sisters in the Company on August 8, 1655 (Coste XIII, 577).
2. Marie Prévost, see Letter 229.
3. Charlotte Royer, see Letter 254.
4. Étiennette Dupuis, see Letter 600, came from Angers.
5. Monsieur Dehorgny, see Letter 5, visited the houses in the West and the Center of France.

hope for some relief in the suffering caused by your ailments. Accept Sister Etiennette among you, not to increase the number, but to await the decision of our Most Honored Father which will tell both of you what will be happening to you. I said the same thing to Sister Perrine[1] that I am saying to you. I also told Sister Etiennette this. This does not mean that she cannot assist you in your works of charity. You will find her filled with good will in this regard.

Send me details about yourself and Sister Perrine. What are your dispositions? How many sick poor do you usually serve? How do you serve them? Do the Ladies prepare the soup? Do they take up a collection? If so, who does it? Is the money given to the sick? Also let me know how many schoolgirls you teach and if the older girls sometimes come on feast days for catechism and to hear the instruction you give the little girls.

It is true, my dear Sister, that it has been far too long since I have written to you. I beg your pardon for this. However, I sent you some letters from your mother and you did not let me know that you had received them. Moreover, when your letters require no answer and I do not know what you are doing, my memory is not adequate to enable me to write something and share news. Nevertheless, I promise to correct this fault with the help of God.

I think that you know that Sister Françoise Carcireux[2] has gone to a place that I believe is more than 100 leagues from here. She asks to be remembered in your prayers. I am sure that, wherever she goes, she will be a good servant of Our Lord.

Please convey my very humble and respectful greetings to your Reverend Superior[3] as well as the very humble gratitude of our aforementioned sister for all that she owes to his charity. We must certainly honor those whom God gives us to help us to reach Him but we must especially do so by following their advice. I am sure that you do not fail in this regard. I praise the goodness of God for the graces He has bestowed upon you. I am in the love of His Son, born for us in a stable, my very dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

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1. Perrine, see Letter 287.
2. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.
3. Monsieur de Beaumont, see Letter 531b, was Superior of the Priests of the Mission at Richelieu.

L.647 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS GENEVIÈVE DOINEL[1] AND MARIE-MARTHE[2]

Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Chantilly

December 28, 1659

My very dear Sisters,

I received great consolation from your letter because I saw in it what seems to me to be a reflection of the union of your hearts and the tranquillity of your minds. This leads me to believe that our good God is pleased with you because this is the means by which you know you can restore peaceful living among you, should you ever perceive that you are not accomplishing the will of God or faithfully observing your Rules.

I praise God with all my heart for the grace His goodness has bestowed upon Monsieur Pesset by giving him so much charity for the sick poor. His labors have merited this grace for him because, in their hour of need, he spared them from destitution. Sister Geneviève, please greet him for me with the humble respect I owe him. It would have helped us with our needs had we received promptly the remainder of what was owed us. However, we must leave this to Divine Providence.

I think that, if the stocking you mentioned is not finished, it will be soon. I will be sure to look into it and send it to you.

You invite me to go to the Crib so that I can meet you there near the Infant Jesus and His Holy Mother. From the way you speak, I gather that you visit it lovingly so that you may be united to all our sisters. I, however, visit it seldom because I stop only on my way back from holy Mass. Let me tell you that, this year, the Crib is in a little grotto at the feet of Jesus Crucified. It is in a large alcove so it seems to be a better representation of Bethlehem than we have had other years. You will learn from Jesus, my dear Sisters, to practice solid virtue, as He did in His holy humanity, as soon as He came down upon earth. It is from the example of Jesus in His infancy that you will obtain all that you need to become true Christians and perfect Daughters of Charity. You will do so by entreating Him to grant you His Spirit as He did at your holy Baptism. However, this time, there is an essential difference. At your Baptism, you did not have the use of reason so as to correspond with this precious gift, but now, O my dear Sisters, if you obtain this gift from Him anew, you will have the strength to strive to acquire the holiness He asks of you. I beg Him in His holy love to grant you this grace and I am in this same

1. Geneviève Doinel, see Letter 352.

2. Marie-Marthe had recently arrived. She came to replace Françoise who was ill.

love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.647B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CARCIREUX[1]

Daughter of Charity at Narbonne

December 30, 1659

My very dear Sister,

For a long time, I have deprived myself of the consolation of writing to you because I was waiting to learn from you what had become of the three of you. I am distressed if Sister Anne Denoual[2] is still separated from you. What are the services being given in each place? How far is one house from the other? What direction are you receiving?

I am sure, my dear Sister, that you have a lot to do but, for the love of God, undertake only what you can accomplish so that you will not be obliged to hire another person to help you. You are aware that this should never be done. This does not mean that in case of great necessity, for example, when you have more than the usual number of sick or when some other need arises, you cannot employ outside workers, such as a laundress or a seamstress, but you should do so only rarely and never to spare yourselves labor because it is essential that you carefully combine work with concern for the management and frugality of the house. Experience has taught you the importance of this especially during the time you spent at Saint-Sulpice.

I should perhaps not speak to you in this way, but I must tell you that my powerlessness to act has caused me to see very clearly the difference between a Sister Servant who says, "Let's do this," and one who is content to say, "Do this," without ever putting her hand to the task. In the first case, the Sister Servant is an equal among her sisters. In the second, when she gives an order, she removes herself from the group and from the work and cloaks herself with the mantle of her authority.

Your letter dated the ninth of this month has just been handed to me. From it, I still do not know if the three of you are together. O my dear Sister, how I share in your affliction on account of the accident that has just occurred because of our mutual fear of the loss of this soul which is so dear to God! As for what concerns you—I should say you and us—we cannot call this an affliction. Some people believe the worst and

1. Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 254.

2. Anne Denoual entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity around 1656. She was sent to Narbonne in September 1659. In August 1660, she asked Monsieur Vincent for permission to make her vows (Coste VIII, 391).

gossip about it. You are publicly mocked and scorned. Oh, what a blessed beginning! You have every reason to be consoled. God looks after the interests of the afflicted. I am also certain that the majority of people will not attribute this crime to our sister. But even should God permit that the truth never be known, would we have reason to be afflicted? No, truly not, my dear Sister. However, we and especially the entire Company, must accept this trial as coming from Divine Providence as our share in the Cross of Our Lord and as an opportunity He has given you to enable all of us to follow Him.

I urge you, my dear Sister, to be a great consolation for our dear Sister Anne and to anticipate her needs by your support and cordiality. Sometimes the initiation of marks of respect or deference is very helpful in winning hearts and in entering upon the practice of solid humility. I assure you that I was deeply edified by Sister Anne's letter both because of what she told me about the past and because of the attitude she revealed concerning the future. Nevertheless, I grieve over your separation.

Your father came to visit us and he is fine, thank God. You know this since he has written to you. You realize that he continues to complain but you also know fairly well from experience that he has no need for you or your presence at home. I believe that in this matter, as in all else, you are at peace and that you entrust the outcome of everything that touches your life into the hands of Our Lord because you desire only to accomplish His most holy will. May He be forever blessed for the disposition of mind He gives the Bishop of Narbonne for the care of his flock!

I am sure, my dear Sister, that you have no time to spare for anything else or for any other purpose than the service of the poor. Therefore, you must not think that you are obliged to visit or to write to nuns or to the Ladies, unless there is great necessity. If you have time to spare, I am convinced that it would be better spent earning some money by working for your poor; or you could instruct your poor patients and say a few kind words to them that would be beneficial for their salvation. Such activities are more useful than passing hours in exchanging compliments.

Do not think, my dear Sister, that you were not correct in writing, as you told me you had, to Madame Fouquet[1] who is a very good and virtuous nun. However, because I am firmly convinced that you love your vocation and are well-rooted in it, I do not hesitate to tell you quite frankly whatever comes to my mind. That is also why I give you all the advice I believe it is my duty to give and which I hope will be beneficial for those sisters whom I foresee God wants to use to maintain the Company in the spirit of humility and simplicity of Jesus Christ.

If I did not know you well and if I were not convinced that you would

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1. Mother Marie-Thérèse Fouquet, see Letter 628b.

accept what I am telling you graciously and with forbearance, I would be very careful not to speak to you in this way.

I urge you to send me news of yourself as soon as possible. Believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, your very humble and very loving servant.

1660

February 14: *death of Monsieur Portail.*
March 15: *death of Louise de Marillac.*

L.648 - TO SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor (at Châteaudun)

January 3, 1660

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that too much time has passed since we have shared news with one another. I think that the same reason has prevented both of us from doing so. It is also true that I have been busier since Easter. I have also missed having Sister Marthurine[2] help me with my correspondence but she was ill at the time. Then it was decided to send her to La Fère to replace Sister Marie-Marthe[3] who went to join our two other sisters in Cahors. So you can see quite clearly, my dear Sister, that neither my heart nor my will has been wanting nor, with the help of God, will there ever be a lack of affection or any kind of forgetfulness between us since we are so closely united in the love of our dear Jesus.

I believe that I told you that the Priests of the Mission[4] had sent you word that your debtors have no intention of paying and that the matter should be pursued through the judicial system. However, your consent is necessary. Please let me know what to tell them.

Enclosed are your holy pictures and maxims for the new year. They are for all of you and have been blessed by our Most Honored Father. We are distressed because we no longer see him. Because of his bad leg, he can stand only with great difficulty. We must redouble our prayers for his health. Monsieur Portail is in much better health than he was last

1. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.
2. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
3. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
4. The Priests of the Mission of Le Mans, the native region of Jeanne Delacroix.

year. All our sisters send their greetings to the three[1] of you. I do also since I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Send me detailed news about your work at the Hôtel-Dieu and about our sisters.

L.649 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 4, 1660

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to greet your Charity very humbly at the beginning of this new year, and at the same time, to ask for your blessing to help me to be faithful to God for as long as it pleases His goodness to leave me on earth. I also beg you very humbly, my Most Honored Father, to take the trouble to let me know the name of the person whom you have selected as executor of the will that the woman I mentioned wishes to draw up. I am afraid that she will come and that I will be unable to comply with her wishes.

I very humbly beg your pardon, my Most Honored Father, for taking the liberty to send you this Jesus surrounded by thorns. I believe that the only thought that seeing your dear person in such generalized pain inspired in me was that nothing could relieve you but His example. I am also sending a medal that the good young woman who was here during her illness sent me, along with the chaplets, after she returned to Notre-Dame de Liesse.

For the love of God, allow me to ask for news of your health. Is the swelling in your legs increasing? Are you in less pain? Do you have any trace of fever? With the openness of a daughter toward her Most Honored Father, I cannot refrain from saying that I believe that it is absolutely essential for you to be purged thoroughly but gently to make up for the inadequacy of nature, which interferes with sweating, because it is also very dangerous to induce a sweat by artificial means.

As a sick person, you must take some nourishment in the evening, but not bread or wine. Herbs have an unpleasant taste, but they build good blood. Cornachin powder—18 or 21 grains only—is very good occasionally for children and old people. It does not upset the system and it draws off fluids without leaving the body dehydrated. Because I am well

1. Jeanne Delacroix, Sulpice Dubois and Anne Bocheron.

acquainted with this remedy, I dare to suggest it. I know that you will not use it without consultation.

I would truly like to know how you really are. It seems to me that Our Lord has placed me in the disposition to bear everything with relative peace; and I must do so since I have the honor to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.650 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MATHURINE GUÉRIN[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Fère

(January 1660)

My very dear Sister,

I entreat Jesus, born into this world and the sole object of our love, to be your strength and consolation at the beginning of this new year. You were correct in assuming that I was awaiting the advice of our Most Honored Father before giving a complete answer to your last dear letter. It is still in his room but I kept a copy of it for fear that it might be lost. Thus, I can speak to him about it again. There were a few points that I did not want to decide for you because they appeared to me to be important. I am not going to say anything about these matters in this letter because I am sure that you are as well-informed about them as I am either through Monsieur Vincent or through Monsieur Portail. However, I am afraid that Sister Julienne's[2] method of catechizing was not clearly understood.

We are as distressed this year as we were last at not seeing our dear Father because of his bad leg. May it please God to grant him some relief! As for Monsieur Portail, one would need the influence of a great lord to get to see him! There is a small hermitage at the end of the enclosure and he never leaves it except to come here on rare occasions to hear confessions.

I shall not fail, my dear Sister, to forward your letters and little gifts. I shall perhaps add a few of my own. I am somewhat concerned because you say that you are not feeling well. Please let me know how you really are and also tell me what you do in the service of the hospital and of the sick poor of the city.

You could not have given another interpretation to what was said to you about what the Queen owes. It is also true that since these people

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.

2. Julienne Allot, see Letter 561 and A.100.

are not well-acquainted with the exactitude with which our dear Sister Marthe[1] acted, they cannot see this matter clearly. We must leave everything to the guidance of Divine Providence.

On the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, we had the honor of a visit from the Duchess de Ventadour.[2] On that occasion, the eve of the Feast of the Three Kings, when she did not find you here, she told me how she regretted that you had not been given to her to be sent to Sainte-Marie[3] in place of the two who went there and who have since returned at her request.

I just now received your dear letter and I am going to repeat what I have already told you concerning the teaching of catechism. If the time has come for the work that, for a long time, the Daughters of Charity have been doing quietly, to blossom into the open, may the holy name of God be blessed! According to what he has told me, I think that Monsieur Portail has probably written to you about this.

I thank you with all my heart for the presents you so generously sent us, although I am anticipating our pleasure, since we have not yet received them. We will use them in the manner you specify.

With regard to the convalescent soldiers, I think, my dear Sister, that you would be wise to put them in a corner of one of your wards or in some other place where there is an accessible exit. You know how important this is and you are aware of the prohibition in the Rules against remaining in the company of men.

We have great reason to praise God for the graces He has bestowed upon the Company. Last summer two or three heretics living in Saint-Denis were converted. God knows that is a sizable number for that district. Our Lord always forbade His Apostles to speak about what He was doing. What can we do to express our gratitude to your dear sisters but assure you of the affection of all our sisters here?

We are sending you the holy pictures and maxims that Divine Providence faithfully allowed to be selected for you. Please accept them, my dear Sister, and take care to read our dear letters in order to receive in this way the spirit of Jesus Christ, without which all our words and actions would be but clanging cymbals.

You make me very happy by sharing news of yourself[4] with me because I receive your letters which Sister Mathurine forwards to me, except those which the Rules permit you to write to the Superior or Superioress directly and which must be sent to them without first being shown to the Sister Servant.

I have taken some medication and I am in a bit of a hurry so I am

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
2. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
3. Sainte-Marie-du-Mont in Normandy.
4. This paragraph was intended for Julienne Allot.

closing sooner than I would like. I assure you that I am with all my heart—and Our Lord knows how filled with affection it is—and in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. You know that I cannot reread my letters, so please excuse the mistakes.

L.651 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARGUERITE CHÉTIF

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Arras

January 10, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you have probably just received the letter I wrote at the end of December in which I blamed myself for letting so much time go by without allowing myself the consolation of writing to you. I gather from your dear letter that you hold my illness to blame rather than me. I must tell you that, although I have been confined to bed for only a short time, nevertheless my little ailments often make me lazy and prevent me from performing my duties. Moreover, my dear Sisters, the business of the Company increases daily. This past summer, as I told you, three or four more works were established. Blessed be God for everything! May He grant the Company the strength and generosity to maintain within itself the primitive spirit that Jesus instilled in it through His Spirit and by His holy maxims. Let us often give ourselves to God so as to obtain from His goodness the generosity needed to advance His glory by fulfilling His designs on the Company.

Please let me know, my dear Sister, if you received a book, written by our Pastor, entitled *The Charitable Lady of the Parish,* along with the quarter pound of gamboge that you requested. I am also conveying to you our Most Honored Father's acknowledgement of something you asked me to tell him. I urge you, my dear Sisters, to redouble your prayers asking God to preserve his health. He has been confined to his room for a month because of his bad leg so we never see him anymore. He has so many visitors and his business responsibilities have greatly increased so it is quite difficult to obtain a response when we write to him. So you can see the state in which it has pleased Divine Providence to place us. May His holy will be done now and forever!

Please send me news of yourself and let me know about your Confraternity of Charity. Do the Ladies run it there as they do in Paris? Are there Officers? Do they replace one another in office on a regular basis? This is essential, otherwise it will be very difficult for the Company of the Ladies of Charity and their work to continue. Also, please let me

know if they prepare the soup, if they collect alms and if they fulfill the requirements of the Ladies of Charity of that region. In the book I sent you, you will find the Rule for the Confraternity of Charity of Saint-Laurent.

I urge you, my dear Sister, to let me know when you need money. I do not intend you to be deprived of the food and clothing you would receive here at the House.

So you have not found any girls who want to give themselves to the service of Our Lord in the poor as members of the Company? You surely know that some of our sisters have come from farther away than Arras. However, this requires strong characters who desire to reach the holiness of true Christians and who want to die to themselves by mortification and a veritable act of renunciation, which they already made at the time of their holy Baptism, so that the Spirit of Jesus Christ may abide in them and grant them the strength to persevere in this way of life which is totally spiritual, although they will be employed in exterior works which appear lowly and despicable in the eyes of the world but which are glorious in the sight of God and His angels.

My dear Sisters, please greet Mademoiselle des Lions for me and assure her of our most respectful affection and readiness to be of service. We took the liberty of selecting one of our holy pictures and maxims for her. Please give it to her with our apologies that it is not as beautiful as we would wish. I also ask you, my dear Sisters, to accept the ones that Divine Providence allowed to be selected for you. Believe that my heart is filled with renewed affection for you and that I am in the love of the Infant Jesus who began to shed His precious blood in the Crib, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. All our sisters send greetings in the love of the Infant Jesus. Our Most Honored Father and Monsieur Portail are both well, thank God. They often remember you with affectionate esteem.

L.652 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS[1]

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

January 12, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I implore Our Lord to be your strength and consolation if He has separated you from our dear sister.[2] If His holy will has permitted her to

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
2. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.

remain with you for now, please greet her for all of us and assure her that the entire community is praying for her so that, if God calls her, she may be prepared for the Last Judgment and ready to participate, for all eternity, in the merits of the death of Jesus who was crucified for her salvation and for that of the entire human race. Also, assure her that her sister[1] is persevering and doing well, thank God.

I will be unable to send you anything until I have found a safe route. I am distressed that my incompetence prevented you from receiving the letter in which I asked you to come here for a short visit. This would have prevented you from taking a risky route to send your package which we have not received. Your two letters arrived in the same mail. The people who brought them said that they are never held responsible for anything. Find out what you can about the person to whom you entrusted the package. Send us his name, employment and, if possible, his place of residence both in Paris and in your area.

Enclosed are your holy pictures and maxims. They were blessed by our Most Honored Father who is suffering greatly because of his legs. I recommend him to your prayers. Monsieur Portail is fairly well, thank God. Three of our sisters are ill: Sister Antoinette[2] from Saint-Étienne; Sister Marie from the Hôtel-Dieu; and a new sister who received the sacrament of Extreme Unction this evening. I recommend all our sisters to your prayers and I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving...

P.S. As soon as you can, please send us news of our dear sister.

L.653 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

January 13, 1660

Monsieur,

The good which Monsieur Ratier led me to expect from the new girls you sent us was a great consolation for me. It encouraged me to take the liberty of writing to you in the belief that your Charity will not be offended. If the letters I had the honor of sending you with these girls have not been found, then I must assure you that I did not fail in this duty. In my last letter, I asked Monsieur Ratier to let me know if I should once again take the liberty of writing to the Bishop of Angers in case my

1. Marie Levies, see Letter 551.
2. Antoinette Labille, see Letter 52.

previous letter is really lost. I also sent a letter to the administrators of the hospital along with the Rules and Customs of our sisters. It is a real pity that not a single sister there has facility in writing.

Allow me, Monsieur, to ask you to pray for Monsieur Vincent's health. He has been confined to his room for a month because his legs are so weak and so painful. Nevertheless, he is working as much, or even more, for the good of his neighbor. Permit me to call myself in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.654 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 16, 1660

My Most Honored Father,

Madame de Glou,[1] on her own initiative, or rather by the inspiration of God, asked your Charity to name someone as executor of her will. She also sent word to you that she believes that the mission that Monsieur de Blampignon[2] is supposed to preach at Easter in the diocese of Chartres is to be at Marchefroy,[3] provided he does not forget it.

Sister Nicole Haran,[4] who seemed very discouraged, told me that the sisters could no longer continue without help. She wanted to write to your Charity to beg you, my Most Honored Father, to assist them by asking the administrators to allow you to recall them for this reason, since she believes that they will never agree to it. What does your Charity want me to tell her if you are unable to take the trouble to write to her?

I imagine that this prolonged cold increases your suffering which honors that of Our Lord in whose love I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient and grateful daughter and servant.

1. Madame de Glou, Lady of Charity, see Letter 622.
2. Monsieur de Blampignon (1611-1669), member of the Tuesday Conferences and of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament.
3. Saint-Ouen-Marchefroy, near Dreux.
4. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495, was the Sister Servant at Nantes.

L.655 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 1660]

My Most Honored Father,

From time to time, I feel strongly the pain of the state to which your charity has reduced you as well as the suffering of being deprived of the honor of speaking to you. Since I am still the same, I am afraid that my cowardice, self-love and the other threats to my salvation may profit from this situation. As I reflect upon the present condition of the Company, I also worry about no longer being able to discuss matters with you. I am afraid that reading my letters imposes a burden upon you; nevertheless it seems to me, my Most Honored Father, that I must speak to you about the Company and tell you that I think that there is reason to fear that it may fail in several ways. Firstly, I have noticed that in several parishes the Ladies are beginning to distrust them,[1] although I believe that I can assure you that I know of no sister who gives them any real reason to do so unless it may perhaps be those who, in their zeal to relieve the poor, accept alms from the Ladies but who do not submit to the requirement of rendering an account of them to the Officers. The latter are offended by this.

In addition, it appears that our sisters are no longer as esteemed or loved. They are treated more rudely and there are places where they are much more carefully watched because they are mistrusted. There are a few places where orders were given at a public assembly to give them nothing. Even the butcher who furnishes the meat for the poor was forbidden to do so. It is not as if they had a considerable amount of anything, but however little there was helped them.

All this, my Most Honored Father, leads me to realize how necessary it is for the Rules to continue to oblige the sisters to live poorly, simply and humbly because I fear that if they settle into a way of life that requires great expenditures, is ostentatious and partially enclosed, they would thereby be obliged to find ways to maintain it, and so they would become a very withdrawn and inactive group, living apart from passers-by and poorly-clothed people, leading some to say that this wearer-of-a-rough-headdress, this sister in name only, has no authority, rather she elicits contempt. I know that not only the sisters but others, who are obliged to honor the designs of God for the spiritual and corporal service of the sick poor, will have a strong inclination toward this way of life which is so dangerous for the continuation of the work of God which, my Most

1. "Them" means the Daughters of Charity.

Honored Father, your Charity has so firmly sustained against all opposition.

I am truly distressed to cause you this trouble. If your Charity sees that God wills something other than what has been done until now, then in the name of Our Lord, be the one to declare and order it. I will always remain the same, offering no argument once I have taken the liberty, as I do now, of representing the reasons that occur to me. Because of my infidelities, I dare not say that they are the thoughts given me by God. If I am not expressing myself clearly and your Charity is willing to have my views put forth by Monsieur Alméras or someone else whom you consider more appropriate, that will perhaps make me better understood.

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to inquire about your ailments which I believe could be relieved if you would allow yourself to be treated as your Charity would command someone else to be treated.

I think that I have already spoken to you about the contents of this letter except for a few details. I very humbly ask your pardon for any repetitions there may be. I hope to obtain forgiveness from your goodness because I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.656 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

February 2, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I am sure that you are very busy and also that you take great care to help our sisters to strive for holiness, nevertheless, I beg you to send me news of yourselves. Above all, let me know if, while they are occupied with exterior service, the sisters' minds are directed toward vigilance over themselves so that, for the love of Our Lord, they can overcome and control their passions by refusing their senses anything that might cause them to offend God. You realize that, without this, external actions, although they are for the service of the poor, cannot be very pleasing to God, nor can they merit a recompense for us because they are not united to those of Jesus Christ who always worked in the sight of God, His Father. You are well-rooted in this practice, my dear Sister, and thus you experience the peace of a soul that is dependent upon her Beloved.

Please tell me what you know about our sisters in Varize. I am waiting for the return trip of their Pastor so that I can write to them. Please inform Sister Toussainte that I expect her to write to me more often than she does.

I have heard nothing about the lady from your city. That is why I do not think that she is returning here. If you still want to write to Le Mans,[1] you may do so. If I can learn something from the Priests of the Mission at Le Mans before I mail this letter, I will add it. I recommend myself to the prayers of our dear sisters and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. Redouble your prayers for our Most Honored Father. His legs are so painful that he cannot walk. Because they are so weak, he cannot even say holy Mass except on rare occasions. Thank Our Lord that, in His goodness, He was pleased to preserve Monsieur Étienne from shipwreck. We were concerned about this for two weeks because he was sailing for Madagascar. All the priests are now on their way. May God in His mercy protect them.

UNDATED LETTERS

L.40 - (TO MADAME...)[2]

Madame,

Enclosed are the spiritual exercises that I mentioned. According to the insights which, in your goodness, you gave me into your dear soul, they seem to me to be exceptionally well-suited to you. Put them into practice, my dear Lady, living entirely for God by this loving and serene union of your will with His in everything. In my opinion, this practice, in its holy simplicity, contains the means for acquiring the solid perfection God asks of you. Always have great esteem, my dear Lady, for humility and gentle cordiality. While reflecting on the divine gentleness during your periods of meditation, speak to Our Lord with great simplicity and innocent familiarity. Do not be concerned whether or not you experience any consolation; God wants only our hearts. He placed within our power only the capacity to make a simple act of the will. He considers this alone and the deeds resulting from it. Make as few reflections as possible and live in holy joy in the service of our Sovereign Lord and Master.

In all simplicity, I present these suggestions to you, Madame, as Our Lord has given them to me since, in your humility, you requested them from my poverty. I beg Him, in His infinite goodness, to raise your dear soul to the heights of holiness that, in His love, He desires you to attain.

1. Jeanne Delacroix was from Le Mans, see Letter 297.

2. Letter with no address and no date.

Commend me to His divine mercy I implore you, Madame, and be assured that I have already done what you asked of me and that I shall never forget you in my poor prayers nor will I fail to remember your husband and all those dear people who are so precious to you. May God be blessed!

L.167 - (TO THE SISTER SERVANT OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU)[1]

December 14

My very dear Sister,

I think that you must have received the letters that I sent with that good ecclesiastic, an administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu, when he left here about two weeks ago. They were lengthy so in this one I need only repeat my assurances of the great joy that I continue to experience as a result of the detailed news you sent me about your dear self and about our two dear sisters. I am also writing so as to send something along with this package and this letter which Divine Providence placed in my hands to be sent on to you.

I am not sending any recommendations, my dear Sister, since I am confident that your good heart will not fail to discern what God is asking of you in such circumstances. I beg Our Lord to fill it with fidelity to His love and with the assurance that I am with all my heart in this holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble and most obedient sister and servant.

L.366 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

Monsieur,

Madame de Saint-Gervais has asked me to submit her very humble request to you. You will find it in the answer she sent me. I had asked her for the name of her brother whom she urged me to recommend to you. I do so now with all the respect I owe you.

You are aware, Monsieur, of the consequences when young people choose a way of life without knowing what they are doing. Because of that, I led her to hope that you would help him to understand the

1. A signed letter bearing no address. It was probably destined for the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Denis.

dispositions with which he must approach the life he wishes to enter. I am taking the liberty of enclosing her letter so that I need not explain to you all the circumstances she describes. I cannot recall if her letter mentions the name of the religious house where this young man is residing, but if there is one called Saint-Aubin, I seem to think that this might be the house. If it is not possible for you to visit him yourself, Monsieur, I beg you to honor him by having some other virtuous person perform this act of charity. He comes from a very good family and is related to someone whom I esteem and love deeply. However, charity alone prompted me to suggest that you add this kindness to those that you practice daily, thereby increasing their number and adding to the merit of all your holy actions. I ask to share in them so as to obtain mercy from God in whose love I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.384 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT[1]

My Most Honored Father,

For the love of God, I beg you to pause and to give me an appointment during which I can speak to you so that as a result I may take the time necessary to attend to the matter that I discussed with you after dinner. I am afraid that your Charity may be leaving tomorrow. If you find it impossible to afford me this time before your departure, then let me go in the coach or borrow a carriage so that I can go as far as the inn and talk to you there. I beg you to grant these requests because I must speak with you for the glory of God for which He has granted me the mercy to be, my Most Honored Father, your very grateful although unworthy...

L.395 - (TO A SISTER SERVANT)[2]

My dear Sister,

I think that you are well aware that our Most Honored Father has told all our sisters that when they write to Superiors they are not obliged to show the letter to the Sister Servant. However, they must not write to other persons without her permission and they must forward their letters

1. The date on the back of this letter is 1644. However, the expression "My Most Honored Father" calls it into question (Coste IV, 110).

2. Letter recopied in Marguerite Chétif's notebook.

to the Directress in Paris. It is also essential, my dear Sister, in order to live in great union and cordiality, that, when the Sister Servants write to us or receive letters from us, they inform their Sister Assistant and even read the contents to her, with the exception of confidential matters. This is so because there should be such perfect equality that, when things are well-regulated in the Company, it might be possible for the sisters to replace one another as Sister Servant on an annual basis.

In the name of God, my dear Sister, treat our sister[1] with the gentleness and tenderness that you think she needs. Although, generally speaking, all our sisters consider themselves fortunate to be servants of the poor, nevertheless very few can endure the slightest word addressed to them in a manner that is too authoritative or abrupt. That is why we must learn to ask not to command and to teach by example rather than precept. I know that you do all that you can in this regard.

L.556 - (TO THE SISTER SERVANT AT SAINT-DENIS)[2]

My very dear Sister,

Well now, here you are failing seriously once again! And you interpret our sister's fault other than it really is. This sister became impatient at seeing the two of you surrounded by so many cats during times of meditation. You even admit that another sister dislikes them. My God, Sister, how amiable the truth is! I have told you over and over to get rid of these animals and you pay no attention to me and then you complain that a sister does not obey you promptly!

You still owe us 20 sols. We will send you the peas. We are sending ten pounds of prunes at six francs per hundred-weight.

My dear Sister, please do not be discouraged at the sight of your faults. Unless we are aware of them, we can neither acknowledge nor correct them.

I think that you would be wise to use salted butter. The best quality costs eight sols here. Let us know if you think that it is more expensive at Saint-Denis and if you want us to send you some from here. You only need fresh butter on certain occasions and these are rare.

Be consoled by the hope that the retreat will do you good. I am astonished that you still have our two sisters without our authorization. Beg God to grant me humility and believe that I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. This letter was perhaps addressed to Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 647b.

2. Letter with no address and no date.

L.568 - (TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL)

Monsieur,

I am deeply grateful to you for your willingness to show me signs of cordiality and kindness since you are aware of my sins. I beg you, Monsieur, to allow your knowledge of them to inspire your Charity to strive to obtain mercy for me.

We have indeed already seen this dear little book. I shall treasure it for the reasons you mention. I thank you very humbly.

Allow me to explain, Monsieur, the words in my letter that prompted you to reveal your intentions. I said, "There might be circumstances that would prevent me from obeying you or would make it impossible for me to do so." You see, Monsieur, sometimes when our sisters tell me that your Charity has told them to ask to make a retreat or to be moved from the place where they are (although this manner of notifying me is somewhat unusual) I find it impossible to do so because there is no qualified person to replace them; moreover, there is often absolutely no sister available.

We really should confer for a good hour so that I could cite several examples that would convince you that I would always prefer your advice to any reasons I might have if I could explain the situation to you and you had time to listen. This has not yet happened because I think that you did not consider it appropriate.

I hope that Our Lord will supply for what is wanting in me since all I truly desire is His glory and the accomplishment of His most holy will. I am not trying to justify myself to our sisters or to anyone else except you because of the respect I owe you and the great debt of gratitude the entire Company has contracted toward you. I am especially indebted to your Charity since I am from the very bottom of my heart in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I do not know if Monsieur Vincent sent you word about the little conference to be held at Saint-Lazare between Vespers and Compline so that you might take the trouble to come.

L.25 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Forgive me for my excessive dread of what I have always most feared

in the person about whom I spoke. My reflections on this subject (which increased my sorrow) were the reason that the consolation God gives me through your Charity was not apparent to you.

If you believe that Divine Providence has guided my life, then for the love of God, my very dear Father, do not abandon me in this need. If such is not the case, be so charitable as to point out the error of my ways so that I may not die unrepentant.

I forgot to ask you very humbly, for the love of God, to say holy Mass tomorrow for my son and to do whatever it pleases God to inspire you to do to help him to extricate himself from the great trouble in which I think he finds himself and for which you would have great compassion if you saw it as I do. I am doing all in my power to enter into the views you did me the honor of expressing to me.

I ate a better supper than I thought possible. I intend to strive to give God what He is asking of me in the present circumstances. I hope to learn what this should be from the advice your Charity will give me. I have great need of this so that I may remain as long as God wills it, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and humble servant.

L.356 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Poor Sister Nicole from Montmirail told our sister that Mademoiselle de Montdésir, mother of Madame Tuboeuf, had accepted her to go to serve the sick poor of the village of Issy to replace our sisters whom we had already withdrawn from there a long time ago. She said that she would never give up the habit or the headdress and that she would always be like one of our sisters.

All our sisters will be distressed about this and I fear it (insofar as my present insensibility to everything can allow me). I therefore very humbly beg your Charity to reflect on the matter before God and to let me know if it would not be better to prevent her from going there in the habit (as we could through Mademoiselle Viole's intervention) rather than have it taken from her after she has been accepted in the village, because Mademoiselle de Montdésir will not support our position.

I beg our good God to bring you back in good health and I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.410 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday, the 26th (After 1650)

I very humbly ask your Charity to permit me to beg you to give a half-hour of your time to Sister Françoise tomorrow, Saturday, as she expects. I would also ask that you delay the decision that you are to make concerning her until I have had the honor of speaking to you. This would not only be in her interest but also in the interest of the Company which greatly needs a little enlightenment so as to act with prudence and discretion. And I have a greater need than anyone else since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and obedient daughter and servant.

L.558 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday (After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to take the place of a bashful poor woman who begs you, for the love of God, to be charitable enough to give her the alms of a short visit. I urgently need this since I cannot write to you about the matter which is preventing me from doing many things. This obliges me to be importunate because I cannot act otherwise since I am by the order of God, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and poor daughter.

THOUGHTS

PERIOD PRIOR TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

A.1 - RULE OF LIFE IN THE WORLD

In the name of God and with His divine assistance, may I live thus!

May the desire for holy poverty always live in my heart in such a manner that, freed from all bonds, I may follow Jesus Christ and serve my neighbor with great humility and gentleness, living under obedience and in chastity all my life and honoring the poverty that Jesus Christ practiced so perfectly.

Upon awakening, may my first thought be of God. May I make acts of adoration, thanksgiving and abandonment of my will to His most holy will. Reflecting on my lowliness and powerlessness, I shall invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit in which I shall have great confidence for the accomplishment of His will in me, which shall be the sole desire of my heart.

As far as I am able, from Easter to the Feast of All Saints, I shall rise at five-thirty; from the Feast of All Saints until Easter, I shall rise at six o'clock.

Immediately after rising, I shall meditate for an hour or at least three quarters of an hour on a subject taken either from the Gospels or the Epistles to which I shall add a reading from the life of the saint of the day so as to be instructed by a practical example.

After meditation, I shall recite attentively Prime and Terce in honor of Our Lady while preserving the inspirations I received during prayer. Then, if there is any order to be given to the household, I shall take care of it while dressing.

At eight-thirty in the summer and at nine o'clock in the winter, I shall go to holy Mass. Sometimes my sole intention will be to pray for and with the Church. At other times I will make use of the points for reflection to be found in *Philotée* or in another book entitled *Dosithée*.

After Mass, I shall finish the recitation of the Office of the Blessed Virgin while continuing to ponder the great love which God showed to us by instituting this Holy Sacrifice.

Upon my return home, at nine-thirty in the summer and at ten o'clock in the winter, I shall work until eleven o'clock. Then, after reading a chapter from a pious book, I shall dine.

Exactly at midday, I shall meditate for a quarter of an hour in order to honor the instant when the Incarnation of the Word took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

I shall try never to be idle. Therefore, after these few minutes of

meditation, I shall work cheerfully, until four o'clock, either for the Church or for the poor or for my household. If I am obliged to pay a few visits or to receive them, I shall attend to such duties at this time.

At four o'clock, even when I am in the city, provided I am not too involved in some charitable work or some essential social obligation, I shall go to the nearest church to recite Vespers of the Blessed Virgin. During that time, I shall recollect myself so as to be able then to meditate for half an hour. I shall then return home and remain there as far as possible. If there is time, I shall work from after meditation until six o'clock.

I shall have supper at six-thirty. Before this meal, I shall spend from fifteen minutes to half an hour reading. Then, I shall reflect upon what I have read or share my thoughts with my table companions.

After supper, I shall recreate for half an hour and then work for another half hour.

At eight o'clock, I shall retire to make my examination of conscience, humbling myself profoundly for the graces which I may have received from God during the day as well as for the faults which I may have committed, trusting always in His goodness and mercy which are my only hope. Afterward, I shall recite Matins of the Blessed Virgin for the following day. Sometimes, I shall examine my conscience on the manner in which, as a woman desirous of becoming devout, I fulfill the commandments of God and my obligations as a Christian and a Catholic.

Every day I shall recite five decades of the rosary while meditating on one of the mysteries.

I shall strive to remember the presence of God at least four times each hour, exciting within me the desire for His love by means of frequent ejaculatory prayers.

Once a week, I shall read the points which I wrote down about five years ago, so as to remind myself of the obligation I contracted to serve God all my life.

Every first Saturday of the month, I shall renew my vows and my good resolutions by reading my act of consecration either before or after Holy Communion. I have selected Saturday as proof that, because of my weakness and inconstancy, I have chosen the Blessed Virgin as my protectress. Moreover, through her intercession, I hope to honor in her, for the remainder of my life, the preference which God has shown for virginity over the married life.

Therefore, I shall cultivate a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, my guardian angel and the Apostles, with the desire of imitating their lives to the best of my ability since they are imitators of Our Lord.

I shall recite the hymn "Jesus nostra Redemptor" all year long on the same day of the week as that on which Christmas falls. On the day on which Pentecost falls, I shall say the sequence, "Veni Sancte Spiritus."

I shall receive Holy Communion on Sunday and Tuesday except when special feasts oblige me to choose other days. I shall be faithful to this so as to keep before my mind the realization that I can only desire to serve God if His love draws me.

I shall strive to the best of my ability to overcome my passions, especially vanity and precipitousness. To this end and in honor of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, I shall take the discipline in a spirit of penance two or three times while reciting a Pater in honor of Jesus Christ, an Ave in praise of the Blessed Virgin and a De Profundis for the souls in purgatory. I shall wear a hair shirt on the mornings on which I receive Holy Comunion and all day Friday.

I shall fast on all Fridays of the year; during Advent and Lent; on the vigils of the feasts of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, and on all days of fast prescribed by the Church. On days on which there is no fast, I shall take only two meals unless necessity or condescension obliges me to do otherwise.

I would like to spend eight to ten days in retreat twice a year. One would be during the period between the Feast of the Ascension and Pentecost in order to honor the grace which God bestowed on His Church by giving it His Holy Spirit to guide it and by commissioning His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations. At this time, I would strive to be particularly attentive to the Word of God and to His law expressed in His commandments. The other days of retreat would be during Advent.

I adore You, O my God, and recognize that You are the author of my existence. Because of the love I owe You, I abandon myself entirely to Your holy will in my life. Although I am filled with powerlessness and reasons for humiliation on account of my sins, I trust in Your mercy. I beg You, because of the love You have for Your creatures, to send the assistance of the Holy Spirit so as to produce the full effect of the plan which Your holy will has had, from all eternity, for my soul and for all souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

A.13 - (AN INTERIOR TRIAL)

(c. 1621)

On the Feast of Saint Thomas, I fell into a state of depression which lasted all day. The sight of my own abjection led me to consider myself as a mass of pride and self-love. I experienced discouragement, annihilation of myself and desertion by God which I had merited because of my infidelities. My heart was so depressed that the force of my emotions

sometimes resulted in physical pain. When I considered the esteem which, at times, others mistakenly accord me, I felt that I was unworthy to have the holy will of God accomplished in me.

On the following Tuesday, still experiencing the same trial, I looked upon myself as the object of divine justice. Holy Communion and all the other graces which God had bestowed upon me were to be the means of revealing His goodness in carrying out His justice. Once I had accepted this reality, I felt somewhat at peace. I took as the subject of my meditation: the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.

A.15B - (ON THE DESIRE TO GIVE ONESELF TO GOD)

(c.1622)

On the Feast of Saint Sebastian, Martyr, I felt a strong desire to give myself to God to fulfill His holy will for the remainder of my life. I offered to Him the inspiration which He had given me to seal this desire by vow once I had obtained permission. For the rest of the day, I meditated on the mercy of God to His creatures as seen in all the good accomplished by His saints. Their deeds appeared even greater to me when I reflected upon my personal experience of the weakness of human nature.

The following Saturday, I begged God earnestly to make known what His goodness desired of me. On Sunday, the awareness of my infidelities to God so filled me with confusion that I was prepared not to receive Holy Communion without first going to confession. I was particularly ashamed of the fact that, on a day on which I was to receive Holy Communion, I had failed so miserably in recollection and had resisted the inspiration to mortify myself two or three times. I had stifled the very idea of mortification by blocking it completely from my mind. The only thing that prevented me from abstaining from Holy Communion was the reminder that I had been forbidden to do so. All day, I suffered from great interior trials.

On the following Tuesday, the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, I reflected on how Jesus destroyed all the obstacles to the operation of His divine will both in Saint Paul and in the entire Gentile community. This thought produced such a sudden painful sensation within me that I was almost unable to make my confession. The pain was so great that, if I had said and done what I felt impelled to do, I believe that . . .

I was ordered to receive Holy Communion every Saturday to thank Jesus Christ for His assistance and that of His Holy Mother.

On the last Sunday of January, I meditated on the greatness of God. I reflected on Jesus, in the Crib. The truth of His Being was alone sufficient for His Eternal Glory yet, in conformity to the will of His Father for our Redemption, He despised the riches and grandeur of this world so as to detach us from the things of earth.

As I meditated on the Gospel of the Sower, I realized that there was no good soil in me. Therefore I desired to sow, in the heart of Jesus, all the actions of my heart and soul in order that they may grow by sharing in His merits. Henceforth, I shall exist only through Him and in Him since He has willed to lower Himself to assume human nature.

A.31 - (ON FIDELITY IN THE SERVICE OF JESUS)

As I contemplated Christ who had brought eternal joy to the world and saw Him filled with sorrow, I realized that His sadness did not come from within but was caused by His love for me. Not only did He grieve at the thought of all the sufferings He was to endure but His love was wounded by the foreknowledge of my ingratitude and infidelities. This meditation should lead me to greater devotion in His service and enable me to honor His holy sadness by the little services I render to Him and especially by greater fidelity to my rule of life, since He is offended by disorder.

If I do not want to slumber in sloth for the rest of my life, I must lovingly express this desire to Jesus with the confidence that He will draw me out of it when I am disposed to let Him act in me. This will happen when, having no life of my own, I recognize my own powerlessness and become entirely dependent upon God who is surely calling me to a closer union with Him by abandoning anything that separates me from Him.

A.3 - ACT OF CONSECRATION

I, the undersigned, in the presence of the eternal God, having considered that, on the day of my holy Baptism, I was vowed and dedicated to my God to be His daughter and that, notwithstanding, I have repeatedly offended Him by acting contrary to His holy will; having considered, also, the great mercy, love and gentleness with which this kind God has always preserved in me the desire to serve Jesus Christ despite my almost continual culpable resistance to His graces which, throughout my negligent and ungrateful life, He has lavished upon me, unworthy and frail creature that I am . . .

Finally, entering into myself, I detest with all my heart the iniquities of my past life which render me guilty of high treason against the Divine Majesty and of the death of Jesus Christ; because of this, I am more deserving of damnation than Lucifer. However, trusting in the infinite mercy of my God, I implore, with all my heart, pardon and entire absolution both for the sins which I have confessed and for those that I cannot recall. I ask pardon particularly for the contempt I have shown for His goodness by abusing the sacraments. I sincerely repent of all these sins, once again, relying on the merit of the death of the Savior of my soul as on the only foundation of my hope. In virtue of this, I affirm and renew the sacred profession made to God for me at my Baptism. I irrevocably resolve to love and serve Him with greater fidelity and to give myself entirely to Him. To this end, I also renew my vow of widowhood and my resolution to practice the most holy virtues of humility, obedience, poverty, suffering and charity in order to honor these same virtues in Jesus Christ who, in His love, has often called me to imitate Him.

Promising never again to offend God by any part of my being and to abandon myself entirely to the designs of Divine Providence and to the accomplishment of His will in me, I sacrifice and dedicate myself to God and to the fulfillment of His holy will which I choose as my supreme consolation.

If, on account of my usual weakness, I should fail to keep these holy resolutions, which I beg God, in His goodness, not to permit, I implore the Holy Spirit, from this very moment, to grant me the grace of immediate conversion because I never wish to remain for an instant in a state which is displeasing to God. This is my irrevocable intention which I confirm in the presence of my God, of the Blessed Virgin, of my guardian angel and of all the saints, here before the Church Militant which accepts this consecration in the person of my spiritual director. Since this spiritual father takes the place of God for me on earth, I entreat him, by his charitable guidance, to help me to be faithful to my resolutions and to the accomplishment of the holy will of God by my obedience to him in this matter.

O my God, deign to confirm my consecration and my holy resolutions and to accept them as a fragrant offering! Since You inspired me to present these gifts to You, grant me the grace of perfecting them. You are my God and my All. I recognize You as such and adore You, the one true God in three Persons, now and forever.

May Your Love and that of Jesus Crucified be eternally exalted!

Louise de Marillac

A.4 - OBLATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

(c 1626)

Most Holy Virgin, deign to take my son and me into Your care. Welcome the choice I make of you as our protectress. Accept my vows and my prayers as well as my heart which I give entirely to you so as to glorify God for the choice He made of you to be the Mother of His Son. Because of this divine action, your conception was immaculate since the Father applied to you the anticipated merit of the death of Jesus Christ. May all generations to come bless your birth. May your holy and pure life, devoted to the service of the temple, be as an example to virgins who have the happiness of imitating your untarnished vow of virginity. May persons united by the will of God in holy matrimony honor your pure marriage by their submission to, their dependence upon, and their confidence in the Providence of God. May they imitate the limitless virtues which you practiced during the years of the hidden life of your Son, Jesus Christ, especially your great humility which made you ever open to the action of God in you and to your place in the divine plan. May widows learn from you what God is asking of them so that they may honor by practice and example the sweet tranquillity of your soul as you stood at the foot of the Cross, and your detachment from all earthly things during the period following the Ascension. May they, likewise, imitate your pure love of God and your zeal for the salvation of souls to which you devoted the remainder of your life in perfect fidelity to the spirit of Jesus, my Savior.

Although I am but an unworthy sinner, I beg you, Holy Virgin, to allow me to unite myself to your merits so that I may glorify God for the glory He will receive from you by the pleasure He takes in your holy soul and by the revelation of the plenitude of His divinity which operated so extraordinarily in you. Blessed was your dear heart, filled with love, which, after great interior suffering, gave death to your holy body, separating it from your soul so full of merit. May your beautiful soul be forever triumphant, elect among millions, because of your faithful accomplishment of the designs of God. May your blessed body, once again united to your soul, be in everlasting glory because of the testimonies of love it will receive from the most Holy Trinity for all eternity.

I am entirely yours, most Holy Virgin, that I may more perfectly belong to God. Teach me, therefore, to imitate your holy life by fulfilling the designs of God in my life. I very humbly beg you to assist me. You know my weakness. You see the desires of my heart. Supply for my powerlessness and negligence by your prayers. Since your dear Son, my Redeemer,

is the source of the heroic virtue of which you gave the example during your life on earth, unite the spirit of my actions to His for the glory of His holy love. May all creatures pay homage to your greatness and look upon you as the sure means for reaching God. May they love you above all other pure creatures and render you the glory you deserve as the beloved Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and worthy Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Most Holy Virgin, have pity on all souls redeemed by the Son of God, your Son, Jesus Christ. Offer to the Divine Justice your pure body which furnished the blood which He shed for our Redemption so that His merits may be applied to the souls of the dying and effect in them complete conversion. Procure for us, through your intercession, all that we need to give glory to God in the fullness of heavenly beatitude and to enjoy the blessedness which your dear presence imparts to the saints who are now with you in glory.

A.38 - (ON THE END OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION)

(Before 1628)

That the principal end of the Association[1] be knowledge of oneself and contempt for the things of the world, practiced by the resolution to serve the Parishes, in submission and obedience to the Pastors, while renouncing all benefices and honors.

In the design of serving the Church, it shall have a knowledge of God, recognizing Him as sovereignly worthy of being fittingly honored. To this end, each one in particular shall give himself entirely to work for the salvation of souls insofar as he can hope to do so by the love of God. This work will be greatly advanced by their example and their instructions on the duties of a Christian as well as by the grace of the sacraments worthily administered in the Church. This will happen and the glory of God will be greater when the only priests are good priests.

Moreover, they shall honor the Blessed Trinity by great union among themselves. This union shall be neither constrained nor forced but always maintained by gentle necessity which cordiality transforms into mutual affection. By a communication of the Holy Spirit, they shall enter into a holy relationship with the Son of God who, by personally detaching Himself, as it were, from His Father, willed to take our flesh for the salvation of the human race. Likewise, they shall be completely detached

1. After 1628, the Priests of the Mission were known as the Congregation of the Mission.

from anything that could prevent them from working toward this same end, for the glory of God.

A.39 - (MOTIVES TO PRAY FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION)

(Before 1628)

To present the end of the Association to the Blessed Virgin, pointing out that it renders the greatest possible glory to God in the person of His Son since it seeks, firstly, to work for the perfection of priests who take His place on earth and who have the honor and the power to render Him present so frequently in the Sacrament of the Altar and, secondly, to reanimate the hierarchy of the Church with its primitive fervor.

To implore Mary to offer to God the way by which He is calling them, that is: by honoring the Cross and by imitating the Son of God who, in the abjection of His Passion, united the human race to God.

Since their end is also to work for the salvation of souls and to keep themselves always in lowly positions and submissive to others, to ask Mary, by her intercession, to obtain the perfection of this spirit for them and for their successors.

To beg the Blessed Virgin to obtain for them from God the grace to eliminate any human considerations in their establishment and, should there have been any in the past, to destroy them by her prayers so that God may be pleased to guide them by His Holy Spirit and to look upon their Association as truly His work.

A.17 - (FEARS AND CONSOLATIONS EXPERIENCED CONCERNING HOLY COMMUNION)

From time to time, especially on solemn feast days, the sight of my abjection, occasioned by my faults and my infidelities to God, causes me to fear to receive Holy Communion. Sometimes, I experience an unwillingness to see such a good God come into such a miserable place. At other times, I am afraid that my audacity in approaching this most Holy Sacrament will draw down some exemplary punishment upon me from the Divine Justice. On the Feast of All Saints, I was particularly overwhelmed by the thought of my lowliness, when my soul was made to understand that my God wanted to come to me. However, He did not wish to come into some temporary dwelling but to a place that was rightly

His and which belonged entirely to Him. Therefore, I could not refuse Him entrance. As a living soil, I had to welcome Him joyfully as the true possessor of my soul and simply acquiesce to Him, giving Him my heart as the throne of His Majesty. With the disciples, I desire to hear the precepts of the Holy Gospel of the day.

A.7 - (RETREAT MEDITATIONS)

(c. 1628)[1]

First Day

Since God had no other plan in view when He created our souls, which so far surpass all other creatures, than to possess them entirely, I intend, with the help of His grace, to give myself willingly and completely to Him and to avoid all those occasions that might prevent me from doing so.

I must greatly esteem the means which I have for reaching the end for which my soul was created. Time is one such means but God has others, as yet unknown to me. I desire always to abandon myself to Him so as to allow Him to employ them. I should also have great respect for the reality that, once I have attained this end, my soul will have the honor of rendering eternal gratitude, glory and love to God.

The knowledge of the love that God has for us in creating our souls so that they could be entirely possessed by Him, rejoice in Him and glorify Him, is a greater motive for loving Him than all the benefits of creation. However, we must also venerate this grace in others. That is why I must honor and love them and strive to help them to attain their eternal salvation so that they may reach the goal for which they were created.

Second Day

Although subjection to sin is very damaging, it is, nevertheless, a sign of the excellence of the soul and will never prove detrimental so long as God does not withhold the grace necessary to preserve us from it. Therefore, with the help of His grace, I shall have great confidence in His goodness and keep before me the image of my weakness so that I will fear, not so much the punishment due to sin, which is a sign of the Divine Sovereignty, as the fact that sin separates us from God and from His love.

1. See Coste I, 51.

The greatest proof of the enormity of sin is the fact that it has brought death even to our bodies. Jesus Christ Himself was subject to it in order to satisfy for our sins. This leads me to believe that God has great esteem for pain and suffering since, by means of them, Jesus Christ expiated the sin of our first parents. Our Savior is gentle and merciful to us until the last hour when the soul enters Eternity. Then He exercises His justice toward those who have died. They remain in the state in which they were at the moment of their death. This gives me reason to fear but it also gives me the desire, without flattering myself, to carry out what God is asking of me. I shall seek help to try to discern this.

I shall willingly accept death and the reason behind this physical annihilation since, in a certain sense, the pain it entails satisfies for sin. I must have a great horror for sin although I do not feel its presence in my soul where it actually is. Because of this lack of knowledge, I shall have great confidence in God that He will deliver me from those sins into which I ordinarily fall with no thought of the offense I am committing against God.

Third Day

The soul that has loved God rejoices to see itself at the particular judgment when the hour of death has come, but it is a sorrowful occasion for one who has not loved Him. Since in the Providence of God I have not been able to make any particular resolution, I shall place my trust in His mercy, abandoning myself entirely to His goodness, knowing that He will save me without such resolutions.

My ignorance and my powerlessness to desire or to resolve to practice particular virtues cause me to attach myself strongly and perseveringly to Jesus Christ Crucified, so that the joy which I now feel in meditating on the Last Judgment, where I see my Savior reigning alone and acknowledged by all, may not, on that day, turn to shame because of my sins and ingratitude which have merited hell although I was not conscious of this.

May the glory of the true humanity of Jesus Christ appear since it is as Man, although united to the Divinity, that He will judge us at both the particular and the general judgment. Moreover, He is a Judge who can neither be corrupted nor deceived. Love alone can win Him. I must ask this of Him and recall my fear of the sins which are now hidden from me but will then be exposed for my shame if I do not now humble myself and repent.

Fourth Day

The pains of hell are caused by eternal banishment from the presence

of God. In order to avoid them, after confiding myself to the divine mercy, I shall try to have, instead of the continual hatred of God, the forgetfulness of grace and the rage against others of the damned, a deep love for God in this life which will be shown by practicing His goodness, gentleness and charity toward my neighbor.

As soon as human nature had sinned, the Creator, who wanted to repair this fault by a great act of pure love, ordered, in the Council of His Divinity, that one of the three Persons should become Man. By so doing, He gave proof of deep, true humility. This caused me to be ashamed of my pride. Part of my vanity is surely due to ignorance since, properly speaking, humility is the knowledge of truth. This is why it is possible to recognize it in God. But, my soul, what is God asking of us by the Incarnation of His dear Son other than gratitude for our Redemption? Just as He personally left heaven to be united to the earth, so He wants us willingly to abandon the earth of our sensuality so as to be united to the essence of His Divinity.

God never showed greater love for His creatures than when He resolved to become Man since all the graces that He subsequently bestowed on us depend on this initial act. This teaches me that we must have a great and special love for our enemies and do all in our power to procure their salvation.

Fifth Day

The Son of God was not satisfied with promising to redeem us or with becoming Man. But He willed to come into this world in a manner not at all consistent with His grandeur. He came as humbly as can be imagined so that we might be more free to approach Him. We must do this with a respect commensurate with His humility. This humble act shows us how great this virtue is in God since all the actions He performs outside of the Godhead are greatly beneath Him.

Our Lord showed even greater evidence of His love in the conversion of sinners than in the continuation of His graces to the just. This is seen in the case of the Samaritan Woman where everything He said and did was a manifestation of love. This should lead me to place great confidence and trust in His goodness, knowing that He will grant me His holy love at the end. However, I must work for this and listen to His Word.

Sixth Day

The infinite perfection of God contains within itself the perfection of all His creatures who, by necessity or willingly, act only through His power. I should humble myself, therefore, because in a certain sense, His permissive will causes Him to contribute to my iniquities. Consequently,

in order to be no longer the occasion of such an evil, I shall, with the help of His grace, keep myself in His presence, which I hope never to leave, although I am not always consciously aware of it.

The infinite goodness and wisdom of God leave the soul free to draw on the infinite sources of His love. He is so good that He communicates His prodigious love to all. This should keep my soul very humble and dependent on the divine goodness.

I must be mindful not to seek tenderness or spiritual consolation as a motive for serving God. Rather, I accept all the dryness and lack of consolation for which my soul is destined. I offer myself in total abandonment to God to endure all the temptations it will please Him to send, and to live and to die in this state if such be His holy will.

Seventh Day

I must practice interior humility by a desire for abjection and exterior humility by willingly accepting all the occasions which occur for humbling myself. I shall do this in order to honor the true and real humility of God Himself in whom I shall find the strength to overcome my pride, to combat my frequent outbursts of impatience and to acquire charity and gentleness toward my neighbor. Thus I shall honor the teaching of Jesus Christ who told us to learn of Him to be gentle and humble of heart.

I shall make the Way of the Cross as a penance and shall receive Holy Communion tomorrow.

A.21 - (THOUGHTS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD)

Honor the condition of Our Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection: purgatory of desire after God the Father had received His spirit; purgatory of human nature in Him.

Fidelity to Jesus Christ on the Cross, who willed to fulfill the Scriptures. When Jesus knew that He had endured all the pain which the Scriptures had foretold, He increased His own sufferings saying, "I thirst."

The demands of the Bad Thief show me that we do not know how to appreciate fully the value of suffering, while the conduct of the Good Thief teaches me the merit to be found in honoring justice, confessing the truth and praying.

I gave myself to God to accept the designs of His Providence if He willed me to continue, for the remainder of Lent, in a state of interior abandonment and even affliction so as to honor the sufferings of Jesus Christ which the Church places before our eyes.

Jesus thirsted on the Cross after He saw that all had been accomplished. His afflicted body, like a deer, sought the relief of water. He suffered a double thirst: that of His body and that of His spirit. He bears witness to this by crying out simply, "I thirst." His refusal to swallow the drink offered to Him reveals His desire to reunite His divine Person to the Father and the Holy Spirit. His third cry expresses His thirst to apply His merits to all souls created for paradise.

He willed to forgo even necessities so as to use every moment of His life to the fullest. Listen to Him, O my soul, as if He were speaking to you alone, "I thirst for your faithful love."

Death has lost its sting because it has not separated the divinity from the blessed body of Jesus Christ nor deprived it of grace.

The jeering of the crowds reveals those who do not believe in Jesus Christ and who refuse to do good without miracles. By forgiving them, Jesus shows that there is no place in Him for contempt or revenge. In asking pardon for His enemies, He excuses them.

The admirable work which took place at the moment of the Redemption of the human race is manifested in the words of Our Lord, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This cry shows us that His divine Person suffered, at that moment, from an extraordinary sense of separation which led Him to address His Father as "My God." By the infinite merit of this instant, the human race is in full possession of the power to be reunited with its God if it will but make use of the means to do so. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus no longer says "My Father." Thus He reveals the suffering of the Son of God and the sense of abandonment of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Father forsakes His Son so as to welcome back the human race.

"I thirst." Jesus addresses these words to us so that we might understand that His death is not sufficient to save us if we do not apply the merits to ourselves and this can only be done by the personal consent of each individual soul . . . He does not address His Father. He does not ask for something to drink. He simply cries out, "I thirst." . . .

A.9 - (RETREAT)

I must depend completely upon God and show no greater resistance to Him now than I did when He created me.

I must use my entire being to know God in His works and to recognize Him by love.

I desired no longer to subsist of myself. After having been continuously sustained by the grace of God, it seemed to me that all that I am is but

grace. I implored God to draw these graces to Himself and thus I would be totally His.

To love abjection since God is to be found there. Jesus teaches us this by His birth. He wanted us to know that this abjection filled heaven with astonishment and gave glory to the Father. However, I must unite my miserable, weak self-abnegation to His glorious abjection.

To give life to Jesus in my heart by love, thus rendering Him present in me. This presence will be the sole object of my attention as it was for the Blessed Virgin at the Crib.

The means to imitate Jesus at the moment of His birth is to have my soul completely united to God and my mind filled with true knowledge of my own nothingness.

To admire, on the one hand, the true humanity of Jesus and, on the other, His divine works and the word of God which He spoke. To thank Him for the grace given to obedient souls to know the truth of His words.

God demands great purity of intention from those who serve Him. Therefore, I must, in no way, seek to derive glory from any action. God must be guiding my intentions for me to have attained the degree of purity necessary to realize that there was a lack of it in my desire for the graces of God.

To imitate the simplicity of Jesus when He told the Jews that they wanted to put Him to death.

To admire the kindness of Jesus in teaching and putting up with the Jews. To listen to the word of God spoken in my heart.

To have recourse to God to eliminate sin from my life since He is willing to assist us.

To avoid anything that would breach charity to my neighbor. To struggle courageously against my evil inclinations.

To take care of the service and glory of God and He will take care of me in all things.

To remove the obstacles to the serenity He desires to see in me.

To wait for God to visit me during this time of rest and to say to me, as to the holy men of old, "Sin no more!"

To seek Jesus in the Tomb, that is to say, in affliction and abandonment. But truly to seek Him without undue concern about the cause of this feeling of separation from Him. To have great confidence so as to overcome any difficulty that might stand in the way of my finding Him. To admire the goodness of the Providence of God.

To have great distrust in myself although the reasons for such distrust are not always apparent. To recall that the weight of my ingratitude for the goodness of God had, at one time, been such a heavy burden for me that His Providence had to come to my aid and permit me, once again, to make good resolutions in His presence, which seemed to me to be a pure abuse of His mercy.

A.10 - (RESOLUTIONS FOR THE PERIOD FROM ASCENSION TO PENTECOST)

(c. 1630)

To keep my mind as fully occupied as possible in honoring the glory which the holy humanity of Our Lord receives in heaven, remembering the way in which He lived on earth, with the desire to imitate Him.

To consider the Blessed Virgin accepting to be deprived of her Son and remaining on earth for the good of Christians, with the desire to remain here myself so long as it is the good pleasure of God for me to accomplish His holy will in this life. I shall also often recall the dispositions of the holy Apostles as they prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit, especially their serenity in awaiting Him.

To mortify myself interiorly and exteriorly insofar as I am able. To offer to God, several times each day, the charity which He put into the heart of Blessed Francis de Sales and to ask, through the intercession of this saint, that the designs of the holy will of God may be fulfilled in me.

The reading of the eighth and ninth books of the *Treatise on the Love of God*[1] with gentleness, calm and attention.

To request to be warned of my faults, to confess them and to ask for a penance.

A.50 - (VISITS TO THE CONFRATERNITIES OF ASNIÈRES AND SAINT-CLOUD)

(February 1630)[2]

On Ember Wednesday preceding Christmas, I left for Asnières. I was fearful of making this trip because of my ailments, but the thought of the obedience which was sending me on this trip strengthened me considerably. At Holy Comunion, on that day, I was moved to make an act of faith, and this sentiment stayed with me for a long time. It seemed to me that God would grant me health so long as I believed that He could sustain me, despite all appearances, and that He would do so if I often reflected on the faith that enabled Saint Peter to walk on the waters.

Throughout my trip, I seemed to be acting without any contribution on my part; and I was greatly consoled by the thought that God wished

1. The Treatise on the Love of God by Francis de Sales.

2. See letter from M. Vincent to Louise de Marillac (Coste I, 75).

that, despite my unworthiness, I should help my neighbor to know Him.

I left on the Feast of Saint Agatha, February 5, to go to Saint-Cloud. At the moment of Holy Communion, it seemed to me that Our Lord inspired me to receive Him as the Spouse of my soul and that this Communion was a manner of espousal. I felt myself more closely united to Him by this consideration which was extraordinary for me. I also felt moved to leave everything to follow my Spouse; to look upon Him as such in the future; and to bear with the difficulties I might encounter as part of the community of His goods.

God permitting, I wanted to have a Mass celebrated on that day because it was the anniversary of my marriage.[1] I abstained, however, wishing to perform an act of poverty and to depend solely upon God in the action I was about to undertake. I had not expressed my wish to my confessor who celebrated the Mass at which I received Holy Communion. However, as he came out on the altar, the thought came to him to celebrate it for me as an alms and to say the nuptial Mass.

A.51 - (VISITS TO THE CONFRATERNITIES OF SANNOIS, FRANCONVILLE, HERBLAY AND CONFLANS)

Saturday Noon

For the past year there has been no Procurator for the Confraternity of Sannois. Nevertheless, a good man has continued to keep a written record of revenues and expenditures and he is now willing to accept this position, if elected to it. The Ladies of the Charity have let their zeal cool a bit. Often they do not visit the sick on the days for which they are responsible because the Treasurer is so good-hearted that she cooks the food for those who should be doing it that day. Also, she and the Superioress are sometimes satisfied with giving money to the sick. They also give money to some needy persons and often fail to buy meat. They make the sick do without eggs or something else they would have liked.

These Ladies, or at least the majority of them, go months without receiving Holy Communion. They need to have their zeal rekindled by a sermon when a priest is sent for the election of the Procurator. The Superioress was willing to have the safe in her home and she had given both keys to the Treasurer.

They are having difficulty in serving the sick. They say that there is no need for a Charity at Sannois to serve only those who have nothing since there are none, or practically none, in this condition. However, they claim that there are many who have little and the little they have is used

1. Antoine Le Gras and Louise were married on February 5, 1613.

to meet their own needs so that they would prefer to die of hunger rather than sell what they have and help one another.

Thursday evening

In Franconville, the Procurator of the Charity has lent money to twenty-five persons with no guarantee of repayment. He seemed disposed to continue this practice as the occasion might arise. The officers do not dare oppose him in this because he is very autocratic. The officers were replaced by election a long time ago but continue to fulfill their functions. It is to be feared that, if they continue to do so much longer, it will be impossible to replace them and put others into these positions. They sometimes give money to the sick when their relatives want to care for them and let them go without meat when it is difficult to obtain. Many of the Ladies spend money on their appointed day according to their own whims and pay little attention to the Rule.

Friday morning

In Herblay, the Ladies of Charity are still in their first fervor. Nevertheless, they find it difficult to seek alms and complain that the curate had promised to have the charity to say holy Mass for them without a stipend. The Treasurer does not keep records. They have resolved to carry a candle in the funeral procession of a deceased member, to receive Holy Communion on the appointed days and to observe faithfully the other points of the Rule.

Tuesday after Vespers

In Conflans, no Procurator was ever elected for the Charity. Because of illness, the service of the sick stopped a long time ago. A priest records expenses but he does not enter revenues because, he claims, there are not enough to be significant. There is no more linen. The treasury contains about fifty pounds. Upon the advice of the Pastor, money has been given to the sick. The sick often have to go without meat. However, their intentions are good. All have promised to observe the Rule. Some have agreed to provide linen.

A.46 - RULE OF THE CHARITY

The End for which the Confraternity of Charity is to be Instituted

It shall be instituted in the Parish Church, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, which is a symbol of union. Its end is to honor Our Lord Jesus Christ, as its Patron, and His Holy Mother; to assist the sick poor of the Parish where it is established: spiritually, by seeing to it that those who die leave this world in a good state and that those who recover resolve never again to offend God, and corporally, by administering the necessary food and remedies to them; finally, to fulfill the ardent desire of Our Lord that we love one another.

Patron of the Confraternity

It shall be Our Lord Jesus Christ who is Charity.

Persons to be Admitted

It shall be composed of a stated number of virtuous women and girls. Married women shall be admitted only with the consent of their husbands while young girls must have the approval of their father and mother. They shall be called Servants of the Poor.

Officers

The aforementioned Servants of the Poor shall elect three of their number to direct their Confraternity with the approval of the Pastor or of his delegate. One of those elected shall be the Directress or Superioress.The other two shall be first and second Assistant.

The Directress

The Directress shall do all in her power to see to it that the present Rule is faithfully observed; that each Servant of the Poor accomplishes her duty; and that the sick poor are well served. She shall procure

additional revenue for the Confraternity; receive the sick poor who are to be cared for by the Confraternity after they have been to confession and received Holy Communion; and she shall keep one of the keys to the safe where the funds of the Confraternity are kept.

The Assistants

They shall serve as advisers to the Directress. One shall handle current funds and keep the second key to the safe. The other shall oversee the goods of the Charity and the care of the linen.

Duties of Each Servant of the Poor

They shall look upon the sick poor as their own children, God having made them their mothers; they shall serve them in the manner set forth in this Rule on the days appointed; they shall assist at the Low Mass which the Confraternity shall have celebrated on one of the first days of each month, selecting the day of the week on which the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord falls that year. Their intention shall be to be united in the charity of Our Lord. Those who can conveniently do so shall go to confession and receive Holy Communion on these days. They shall all pray for the deceased Servants of the Poor as well as for the poor whom they have assisted. Each morning and evening, they shall say the Pater and the Ave for the preservation of the Confraternity, for its spiritual and temporal growth and for their benefactors. They shall arrange to have a sermon preached on the first feast of each month both to encourage them to persevere in their good works and to persuade others who will hear it to be generous to the Confraternity.

Manner in which the Servants of the Poor should serve the Sick

Each Servant of the Poor shall serve, on her appointed day, in the manner indicated here. When it is her turn, she shall purchase meat from the butcher, bread from the baker and wine from the inn. She shall keep a written record of her purchases. She shall prepare the meal and bring it to the sick who should eat at nine o'clock in the morning. She shall do the same for supper which should be served around five o'clock in the evening. After she has finished her service of the day, she shall contact the Lady who will follow her to serve the poor the next day. She shall

give her accounts and inform her of the number and condition of the sick.

Manner in which the Sick are to be Fed

Each sick person is to receive four or five ounces of lamb or veal with each meal, as much bread as he can reasonably eat and half a glass of wine (Paris measure). On fast days, they shall have two eggs with each meal and bouillons made with butter and egg whites.

Mutual Charity among Themselves

They shall cherish one another as Sisters who profess to honor the spirit of Our Lord by the practice of charity which is the virtue He practiced most perfectly on earth and which He most strongly recommended to His followers. To this end they shall visit one another and assist one another in sickness and in health. They shall pray for one another especially in case of sickness or death, as has been mentioned. In short, they should do all in their power to help one another to leave this world in a good state. They do all this, however, with no obligation binding by sin, either mortal or venial.

Election of Officers and Financial Reports

The election of officers shall take place every two years on the first work day of the year. They shall be elected by a majority of votes of the Servants of the Poor. There shall be a special election when an officer dies or has been absent for a long time. A financial report shall be given the same day in the presence of the Pastor or his delegate. At the same time, the Treasurer shall turn over any remaining funds to the person elected to replace her. At this time, the second Assistant shall give the goods of the Confraternity to her successor.

A.19 - ON THE LOVE WHICH GOD HAS SHOWN TO US IN THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION

The Triune God, in the unity of His essence, created me for Himself

alone. He has loved me from all eternity. Seeing that I could neither come into being nor subsist without Him, since He is my first and only origin, He wants also to be my end and, indeed, He must be. Therefore, He created all things as means to enable me to reach Him just as river banks guide waters to their source. Thus, I must honor and love all creatures because of the design of God in creating them.

The good God saw that, through too many attachments, I had often abused all these means and especially the noblest of them, my will. Thus, He asks me to give my will to Him. I shall do this by entire confidence and abandonment to His most holy will. However, I continue to abuse His means. It is then that the invention of His Divine Love teaches me and permits me to attach myself to the greatest means He has given me for reaching my end, the most holy humanity of His Son. With the help of His grace, this sacred humanity shall be the only example for my life.

I recognize my unworthiness and misery and the fact that it is by His goodness and His love alone, that He wills to be my strength in the painful circumstances which I encounter in His service. I felt great consolation at a glimpse of my poverty but I realize that in this I had neither the horror for sin that I must have nor the necessary dread of the punishment it merits and which the fallen angels and evil men of yore already suffer. Nevertheless, I must rightly fear the judgment of God which will be even more rigorous for me. Like the angels and our first parents, I must obey God because He is God. However, I have received much more than they. I have knowledge of the great love God has for us which was hidden from them. Moreover, the special proofs of His love which His mercy has accorded to me add even greater weight to my sins because of my ingratitude.

The Blessed Virgin is the one who most desired the proof of the love of God revealed in the Redemption. I shall implore her to obtain for me sincere gratitude for this great good and the fear necessary to make good use of it.

A.29 - (ON CHARITY)

The person who does not love does not know God, for God is Charity. The cause of love is esteem for the good in the thing loved. Since God is most perfect in the unity of His essence, He is love in the eternity of this essence by the knowledge He has of His own perfection. The love of creatures enters into the nature of this love. But the effects are attached to the will in the practice of charity either toward God or toward the neighbor. This practice of charity is so powerful that it gives us the knowledge of God, not as He is in Himself, but we penetrate so deeply

into the mystery of God and His greatness that we may say that the greater our charity the greater our participation in this divine light which will inflame us with the fire of Holy Love for all eternity. Therefore, I want to do everything in my power to practice this Holy Love and to rid my heart of any bitterness which might wound it.

Souls destined by God to a state of suffering should love it greatly and be persuaded that, without His special assistance, they could not be faithful to Him. It seems to me that we have proof of this in the sanctification of Saint John in the womb of his mother. This was an anticipated grace which gave him the strength to respond to the designs of God for his soul. The first sign that God gives that His goodness intends to call a soul to Himself by the path of suffering is similar to this sanctification because it is a rebirth in grace. Since we often receive this grace after the age of reason, its continuation depends entirely upon us. However, I lost it by preferring self-love to the love of God. Therefore, I now ask Him for it again with great humility and shame.

God, who has granted me so many graces, led me to understand that it was His holy will that I go to Him by way of the Cross. His goodness chose to mark me with it from my birth and He has hardly ever left me, at any age, without some occasion of suffering. Since grace had many times enabled me to esteem and desire this state, I trusted that His goodness would, again today, grant me a new grace to carry out His holy will. I begged Him, with all my heart, to place me in this state no matter how painful I found it.

After confession, reflecting on my misery, not so much on account of the faults I had confessed as on account of those which I had unwillingly failed to acknowledge or had not expressed clearly, I felt as if all my sins had remained on my soul to such an extent that I was overwhelmed by a sort of physical awareness of having sinned. My love and esteem for the Divine Presence caused me to believe that I should not or could only with great pain permit my Lord to enter a place so unworthy of His grandeur. However, since I had been ordered to do so, I received Holy Communion. Immediately after the reception of the Host, my heart was filled with sorrow for having been preoccupied with creatures and having sought their love and consolation. I was grieved by this because my conscience reproached me by reminding me of how often His goodness had moved me to desire Him alone. And, indeed, He had even revealed that such was His will. This led me to renew my resolution to make Him my All and I asked God to put me in a state where this would be possible.

A.6 - (RETREAT)

The first day to reflect on the purgative way; the next four, on the life of Jesus Christ; and the last on the coming of the Holy spirit.

The goal of creation; obstacles to the attainment of this goal; summary of my meditation.

Second day, the particular judgment; the Prodigal Son; summary of my meditation.

Third day, the design which God has had from all eternity for my soul; the obstacles to the accomplishment of this design; summary of my meditation. Then, examination of conscience particularly on the resolution I made during my last retreat and the advice I had received for putting it into practice.

Fourth day, the Council of the Holy Trinity on the Incarnation; the Nativity; summary of my meditation.

Fifth day, the Prayer in the Garden of Olives; the Crowning with Thorns; summary of my meditation.

Sixth day, the Resurrection; the coming of the Holy Spirit; summary of my meditation.

Then, the final two days, the Divine Attributes; conclude with a meditation on Paradise. Do all in a spirit of gentleness and love.

Outline written by Saint Vincent

First Meditation, The end for which we have been created and the means for attaining it, which are all created things.

Second Meditation, A summary of the preceding one.

Third Meditation, The obstacles that could prevent us from attaining the end for which we were created, which are sin and the great spiritual and corporal evils caused by sin; the first effect of sin: death; a summary of these meditations.

Fourth Meditation, The second effect of sin: the particular judgment.

Fifth Meditation, The general judgment.

Sixth Meditation, Hell.

Seventh Meditation, The Council of the Trinity on the Incarnation; The principal circumstances of the life, passion and death of Our Lord.

Eighth Meditation, Spend the last two days on the Divine Attributes.

A.15 - (CONFORMITY TO THE DIVINE WILL)

(c. 1632)[1]

Holy Communion with the Body of Jesus Christ causes us truly to participate in the joy of the Communion of Saints in Paradise. This joy was merited for us by the Incarnation and the death of the Son of God. So powerful was this merit, that the reconciliation of human nature by means of it is so great that we can never again be separated from the love of God. Just as God sees Himself united to man in heaven by the hypostatic union of the word made Flesh, so He wanted such a union on earth so that the human race would never again be separated from Him.

O Infinite Love! Why do You allow blind creatures to neglect so great a good? This good can only be lost by sin which alone prevents the union between Your goodness and humanity. But, O my God, what is the cause of sin? It is self-love which, by the chaos it entails, prevents Your holy will from being fully accomplished. I hereby renounce self-love with all my heart and choose Your holy will as the directing force in my life. I shall recognize Your will by reflecting upon the life which Your Son led upon earth, to which I shall strive to conform my own. 0 Holy Will of my God! How reasonable it is that You should be completely fulfilled! You were the meat of the Son of God upon earth. Therefore, You are the nourishment which will sustain within my soul the life received from God. But what are You in the life of grace? You are grace itself which sanctifies souls . . . Thus, no more self-will! May Your will alone be the rule of my life! Grant me this grace, 0 my Jesus, for the love which You have for me and through the intercession of Your Holy Mother who loved so perfectly all the effects of Your loving will. I beg this grace of You with all my heart and I give myself entirely to You, imploring Your goodness to overlook any contrary dispositions still to be found in me. I pray that the force of Your love, by its gentle power, may compel the acquiescence of any of my senses which may continue to oppose You.

To go to my new home with the motive of honoring Divine Providence which is leading me there. To place myself in the disposition to do all that this same Providence will permit to be accomplished there.

By this change of residence, to honor the changes made by Jesus and the Blessed Virgin when they moved from Bethlehem to Egypt and then to other places, not wanting, any more than they, to have a permanent dwelling here on earth.

May our love for God lead us to desire His glory and to sing His praise. Let us rejoice in His greatness, in all that He is in Himself, praising and

1. See Letter of Monsieur Vincent (Coste I, 156).

loving His attributes and making acts of love as frequently as possible throughout the day.

1. What is grace? It is an act of the will. It is a gift of the soul that welcomes God. What is called light is nothing new. Rather, God, by a special grace, removes any obstacle that would prevent the soul from recognizing His gift.

2. What is it for God to perform a miracle any time at all? It is nothing new.

3. The soul must be attentive to supernatural graces which should not be called supernatural if . . .

A.5 - (RETREAT)

(c. 1632)

1. On the gravity of sin because of the sufferings Our Lord endured to expiate it; pride and vain glory; summary of my meditation.

On the infinite excellence of Our Lord and on His inviting all men to follow Him.

2. On the openness necessary to hear the call of Jesus Christ and to renounce all things to follow Him; summary of my meditation.

3. On the excellent way in which Our Lord joins the contemplative to the active life; a summary of my meditation.

4. On the life of Our Lord in Nazareth and the temptations to which He was subjected in the desert; a summary of my meditation.

5. On the evangelical counsels which Our Lord set forth in the Sermon on the Mount; their excellence and the high perfection to which they call us; a summary of my meditation.

6. On the appearance of Our Lord to all His disciples on the Mount of Galilee; the commands He gave them; the promises He made to them; summary of my meditation.

7. On the recollection and prayer of the Apostles between the Ascension and Pentecost as they prepared to receive the Holy Spirit; a summary of my meditation.

8. On the wonderful works which the Holy Spirit accomplished through the Apostles on Pentecost.

Our Lord desired to unite Himself so intimately to us by His love that God, His Father, punished in Him the enormity of sin. Nothing, therefore, can separate me from Jesus except sin which must now be punished in each person. To avoid it, I must unite myself closely to Jesus by imitating His most holy life.

Pride and all its effects are great obstacles to the action and plan of God in the soul. Since I recognize this to be true in my case, I shall strive

to simplify the workings of my mind and to keep it humble not only in order to receive the grace of God, but also out of gratitude for His love because, in recommending this virtue, He did not teach us to practice it on account of our lowliness but in imitation of Him who is Himself humble of heart.

Willingly must I allow Jesus to take possession of my soul and reign there as King. Thus, I shall preserve the joy I experience in realizing that each of us individually may desire and, indeed, has the power to become His well-beloved.

Because Jesus took our misery upon Himself, it is only reasonable that we should follow Him and imitate His holy, human life. This thought absorbed my mind and moved me to resolve to follow Him wholeheartedly, without any reservation. Filled with consolation and happiness at the thought of being accepted by Him to live my entire life as His follower, I resolved that in everything, particularly in uncertain or questionable circumstances, I would consider what Jesus would have done and honor His submission to His Mother during the years when He was dependent upon her as her Son. Kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, I felt interiorly moved freely to place myself in a disposition of total availability in order to receive the call of God and to carry out His most holy will. I considered that I was unworthy that the goodness of God should have a design for my soul. But I desired that it be fully accomplished in me and I offered my entire life to Him for this end.

I shall abandon myself completely into the hands of God in gratitude for His great love which led Him to manifest Himself to the whole human race and for the knowledge He gave His creatures of the means they have to give themselves entirely to Him.

All the actions and the entire life of the Son of God are only for our example and instruction . . . since He could have performed all of His miraculous works of and by Himself. This should give me great courage and confidence to undertake all that He will ask of me because, what I am unable to do on account of my powerlessness or other obstacles in me, God will do by His kindness and omnipotence.

Jesus grew before God by repeated acts of virtue. He grew before men as they gradually became aware of His excellent virtue. I shall honor this state by longing for an increase of the divine glory within me and by submitting, as far as possible, to creatures for love of Him.

The law of my God, as such, constitutes an obligation for me and, with the help of His grace, I have resolved to practice it. But, the example of His dear Son, in the fulfillment of this law, instructs us and has moved me to resolve to assist my neighbor to understand it, insofar as I am able. Since I consider myself unworthy of such an undertaking, I can only offer myself completely to God that He might carry out this desire which does not come from me.

We have an evident proof of the love of God for us in the fact that He was pleased to teach us through the words of His Son that we must be perfect as He is perfect. This leads me to hope in His divine mercy. Since He is impeccable by nature, He will grant me the grace to reject sin. Therefore, I shall do all in my power to avoid it. Moreover, I hope that His divine goodness will allow me to share in those virtues which are essentially His. I shall implore this benefit not only for myself but also for all souls created for Him in order to honor the act by which God humbled Himself so as to raise up His creatures.

The humility of God who calls us to be perfect as He is perfect should give me great courage and lead me to great purity of intention. It should also make me confident that He will never fail to assist me when He asks something of me which is beyond my capabilities.

I must have great trust in God and believe that His grace will be sufficient to enable me to fulfill His holy will, however difficult it may appear to be, provided the Holy Spirit is truly calling me. I shall know this by listening to the advice which He will permit me to receive.

I shall honor the divine will by which the Holy Spirit led Our Lord into the desert to be tempted. I shall do this, firstly, by calmly enduring the temptations of the devil and by repressing my pride which is wounded at its failure to recognize temptation disguised under the appearance of good. I shall honor this mystery, secondly, by a lively and trusting faith that the will of God for me will be accomplished, provided I allow myself to be led by Him.

I must imitate Jesus as a spouse tries to resemble her husband. Therefore, since to give me the greatest possible proof of His love, He chose the lowliest of surroundings, I accept the choice He wills me to make of the humblest possible way of life in a place where there is no worldly satisfaction.

The surest means of receiving the grace of God is to obey His holy inspirations as the Apostles did by going, as their Master had directed them, to the mountain where He appeared to them. I am struck by the charity of the Apostles who were not content with going there alone but who, by their example and preaching, brought a large crowd with them. As far as I am able, I must imitate this example and work for the salvation of my neighbor so that God may be glorified.

I shall greatly honor and respect those persons who hold the place of the Apostles since God has granted them the power to make us His children and to dispense His grace to us by means of the sacraments.

The recollection of the Apostles shall be an example for me to keep myself interiorly recollected by great and total dependence on the Providence of God. Thus, closely united to God, I shall await the time when He shall be pleased to reveal what He is asking of me.

The principal reason for the recollection of the Apostles was their love for their Master. This same love must also be the sole reason for my dependence in which, with the help of His grace, I shall persevere all my life, ever longing for His love and hoping that, after having persistently begged for it in time, I may receive it in eternity.

I must perseveringly await the coming of the Holy Spirit although I do not know when that will be. I must accept this uncertainty as well as my inability clearly to perceive at this time the path which God wishes me to follow in His service. I must abandon myself entirely to His Providence so as to be completely His. In order to prepare my soul for this, I must willingly renounce all things to follow Him.

A.8 - RETREAT

(c. 1633)[1]

Saturday morning

The only means for me to find the mercy of God at the hour of my death is to have, at that moment, the image of Jesus Christ imprinted upon my soul. I must do this if I believe that His words are truly of God. I shall, therefore, have great confidence in Him who has assured me that, despite my misery and powerlessness, He will accomplish all that He desires in me. So as not to be taken by surprise by the uncertainty of the moment of death, I shall dispose myself to practice all that He asks of me.

One means to attain my goal is that, without there being anything in me to indicate it, others see me as having received graces from God. This humbles me but, at the same time, gives me courage.

No desires—no resolutions. The grace of my God will accomplish whatever He pleases in me.

Saturday. 10 o'clock

Since death is a necessary detachment from all things except the works which we have regularly produced, I shall strive to detach myself willingly and effectively from everything so as truly and habitually to attach myself to God. This practice alone may be called death since true physical death has been exalted by the death of Jesus Christ who transformed it for us into an entrance into life. I had the strong feeling that God was asking

1. See Letter of M. Vincent (Coste I, 181).

such a resolution of me after the example of Our Lord who, during His life on earth, said that He had come to separate fathers from their children and, in general, to break all attachment to creatures.

Saturday. 2 o'clock

If I want to avoid the harsh and severe repudiation of Jesus, my Judge, I must live in such a way that my purity of intention, in all of my actions, will hide me from the eyes of the world so that I may be seen by God alone and ignored by the world and the devil. I wish to be ignored by the world because its praise is of no use to me and by the devil, so that, having disavowed me, he cannot accuse me.

I shall also have confidence in and devotion to my guardian angel so that he will assist me in this painful undertaking.

Sunday morning

Our Lord, born in poverty and obscurity, teaches me the purity of His love which He does not manifest to His creatures. He is satisfied simply to do whatever is necessary for them. Thus, I must learn to remain hidden in God, desiring to serve Him without seeking recognition from others or satisfaction in communicating with them, content that He sees what I am striving to become. To this end, He wants me to give myself to Him so that He can form this disposition in me. I did so with the help of His grace.

Sunday. 10 o'clock

I shall honor the serenity of the Crib by a disposition to replace desire by contentment in the possession of God who never denies Himself to the soul that truly seeks Him. I shall calmly adore the divinity in the Infant Jesus and imitate, to the best of my ability, His holy humanity, especially His simplicity and charity which led Him to come to us as a child so as to be more accessible to His creatures.

Sunday. 2 o'clock

The Crib is the throne of the Kingdom of Holy Poverty in which I ardently desire to be a subject, since the King of the Poor loved this virtue above all others. He proved this by allowing only the truly poor and simple to recognize Him. To this end, He revealed His birth by heavenly voices, thus assuring the listeners that God Himself honors this lowly state. In order to participate in this grace, I must, in imitation of the shepherds, correspond to the holy inspirations of God, without delay.

Sunday. 5 o'clock

I must be greatly ashamed on account of my pride and, in imitation of the Holy Virgin, humble myself not only when there is true reason to do so but I must even give myself to God to serve my neighbor in situations where I will be subject to blame in the eyes of the world. Thus, I shall imitate Our Lord who conversed with sinners and who, throughout His life, despised His own temporal interests so as to be useful to His creatures. I desire to do likewise if such be His holy will.

Monday morning

The Life of Our Lord from the Age of Twelve until the Age of Thirty.

I must spend the rest of my days honoring the hidden life of Jesus on earth. He came among us to accomplish the will of God His Father. He did this during His entire life. Since He saw that the common life had the greatest need of examples, He devoted more time to it in the continual practice of evangelical perfection. He was rich but He chose holy poverty. He subjected Himself to the Blessed Virgin and to Saint Joseph by His obedience to them. I implore Him, with all my heart, to grant me the grace to imitate Him. Although I am unworthy, I hope that, after having filled me with this desire for so many years, He will, in His goodness, effectively bestow it upon me.

Second Meditation

I must bear in mind the fact that the humility which Our Lord practiced at His Baptism is not only a source of humiliation for me but it must also serve as an example which I must imitate, neither to a greater nor to a lesser degree, than would an apprentice imitate his master if he wanted to become perfect. I should have no other thought, leaving the care of the rest to Divine Providence.

Monday evening: the washing of the feet of the Apostles.

Nothing should keep me from humbling myself. For this, I have the example of Our Lord who had a legitimate interest in advancing His glory and in reminding His Apostles of their obligation to honor Him, yet He did not shrink from humbling Himself to the point of washing the feet of His Apostles immediately before His passion.

At holy Mass, as I was giving myself wholeheartedly to the Blessed Virgin so as to belong entirely to God according to His good pleasure, it seemed to me that Our Lord was presenting my past and future

unworthiness to His Holy Mother. Believing that they both had accepted me, I asked a proof that . . .

A.12 - (RENUNCIATION OF SELF)

(c. 1633)[1]

I must make good use of the advice which has been charitably given to me concerning the distinctions which appear among persons working together for the same goal, who have similar and nearly equal responsibilities for its outcome as well as those which exist when there is a single person responsible for the project who, through necessity, employs an assistant to direct it, who must be looked upon only as his representative. It seems to me that this is how I should consider myself in the tasks which God gives me. Therefore, I must submit, with no resistance whatever on my part, to the directives of those in power for the good of this work, although this was not apparent to me from the beginning!

On Easter Sunday, my meditation was on my desire to rise with Our Lord. Since, without death, there can be no Resurrection, I realized that it was my evil inclinations which must die and that I must die completely to myself by deadening my passions and desires. I saw clearly that of myself I could never hope to achieve this, but it seemed to me that our good God was asking it of me. Therefore, I gave Him my full consent to operate in me by His power whatever He willed to see accomplished.

A.53 - NOTES ON THE VISITS TO THE CONFRATERNITIES[2]
(Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Verneuil, Gournay Neufville and Bulles)

(1633)

I arrived in Verneuil and stayed at the home of a baker named La Caille. I saw two sick persons there, a man and a woman. The Ladies are responsible for different neighborhoods. There is only one where there are any sick; therefore the Ladies of the other neighborhoods do not visit. They have the sacraments administered only in cases of serious illness.

1. See Letter of M. Vincent (Coste I, 200).

2. These notes seemed to have been used in drawing up report no. 52, of which they faithfully give nearly all the details.

They complain that the Treasurer is a difficult character who does not easily accept the advice of others. They tend to act according to their personal whim. They bring food to the sick only at eleven o'clock. The Superioress suggested not waiting until the sick had sold everything before caring for them.

They have some financial resources. Madame wants to buy a house to shelter the poor. Others suggested buying a few pieces of land because of the mortality rate of the livestock. There seems to be cordiality among the Ladies although some of them sometimes criticize the behavior of the Officers.

Linen—Bread—The Superioress wants to terminate the care of the sick too soon, according to the complaints of the Ladies. They do not meet to discuss the needs of the poor and they do not read their Rules. The Ladies go to the funeral Mass and to the cemetery when the men who are lodged in the house belonging to the Charity die.

I arrived in Pont on Tuesday and stayed at "The Fleur de Lys." The Ladies of Charity visit the sick except during times of plague, but they bring bouillon only at noon and leave very little. They give Holy Communion to the dying, prepare their bodies for burial and attend the funeral. They do not do anything more for the Ladies who die. They have funds but are afraid to invest them profitably for fear of diminishing alms. They have a sick call set to bring to the homes of the sick when they are to receive Our Lord. They seek alms from the local residents and obtain four pounds or more each week.

I arrived in Gournay on Thursday. The Ladies are a little more coarse here than elsewhere, and there seems to be less charity among them. They have always had a few sick persons whom they often place in a private home in the care of a woman to whom they give five sous a day to look after them. However, they go to visit the sick three times a day and, since there are not many, they cook the meat in their own homes.

The litanies are said after Mass. They have no chapel, nor do they have a painting. They would like to have both. The people criticize them because they use alms to have Masses celebrated. There are some sick persons who have financial resources, but they can neither sell nor pawn anything because of the laws concerning the inheritance of widows. These persons are assisted from private alms, provided this is not a burden to the poor and there is a surplus. A painting—There are neither lambs nor sheep.

I arrived in Neufville-le-Roy on Saturday at noon. I stayed at the inn. There are six sheep and six lambs and only about thirteen to fifteen pounds in revenue. The peasants complain and the Ladies are prevented from doing what they should. When there is a sick person who has assets which he cannot sell because they are so tied up, I advised that he be told to bring in his creditors, who can authorize the sale and that, once he

has paid them, he can live on the surplus. If his lands are covered with grain, he should sell before the harvest. If he has but one house he should sell it but retain the right to live in it for the remainder of his life.

There is much dissension among the Ladies over the reception of the sick and the purchase of meat. Each one wants to bring the meat from home according to her whim, if she does not receive the customary amount. There is no High Mass on the first Sunday of the month and the litanies have only been sung once. The Ladies receive Holy Communion on almost all the appointed days.

On Monday, I arrived in Bulles where there were no sick. A Lady had died and the others had not received Holy Communion for her. Some of them do not receive Holy Communion each month. There has been some ill-feeling about collecting alms. The sick are visited three times a day and they are given the regular portion of cooked meat. However, the meat is not equally distributed to the sick because some of the Ladies want to bring home whatever they have left at the end of the day. There are fifteen or sixteen sheep and ten or twelve lambs being raised by local peasants for the benefit of the Charity. The first six they purchased died. They have pallets, bolsters, mattresses, blankets and a lot of linen as well as about forty-five pounds. They have a vigil, a High Mass and a funeral Mass offered for the Ladies who die, but the people complain about this.

A.52 - VISITS TO THE CONFRATERNITIES OF VERNEUIL, PONT-SAINTE-MAXENCE, GOURNAY, NEUFVILLE AND BULLES

(1633)[1]

There have almost always been sick persons to care for in Verneuil since the establishment of the Charity. However, because the village is very spread out, the Ladies complain that only the Ladies from one neighborhood actually visit and they asked that the custom of dividing the village into neighborhoods for service be abandoned.

The Treasurer, on account of her ill-health, does nothing more than keep the money. She is not on good terms with the other officers and she is sometimes difficult to deal with, even in receiving and discharging the sick who, because they are let go too soon after recovering their health, sometimes have a relapse.

The Superioress suggested that they not wait until the sick have sold everything before assisting them. The Ladies complained that the officer

1. M. Vincent asked her to make these visitations after the death of Marguerite Naseau (Coste I, 188).

in charge of the goods of the Charity put new shirts and sheets into daily use. They seem fairly cordial with one another and have a deep affection for the Charity.

The poor are served every day as the Rule ordains but the portion of meat is brought only at eleven o'clock. They have some financial resources. The Marquise wants the Charity to buy a house to shelter the sick while some other Ladies want to purchase a small piece of land because of the loss of livestock which sometimes occurs. The Superioress complained that many of those who had promised thread are no longer willing to give it. The sick receive the sacraments only when they are seriously ill.

Nearly all the Ladies receive Holy Communion on the appointed days but they do not meet to discuss the needs of the poor nor do they read their Rules. They attend the funeral Mass and go to the cemetery when a member dies and they do the same for others who have requested it, although they do not belong to the Confraternity, when they have left a donation to the Charity.

In Pont-Sainte-Maxence, the Ladies of Charity faithfully visit the sick except during time of plague when they assist the poor with the money of the Charity because the city abandons them. They even gave six sheets to a person who was caring for these poor victims because they discovered that she had nothing but straw.

When they visit, the Ladies bring the portions of meat already cooked, but they do so only at noon and they leave only a little bouillon. They prepare the dead for burial, attend the funeral and offer their next Holy Communion for them. They attended the funeral of the first Lady of the Confraternity and showed signs of grief. They received Holy Communion for her and accompanied the body to the cemetery.

This Charity is well supplied. They even have a sick call set which they bring to the homes of the sick who are to receive Our Lord. They show great cordiality to one another and are devoted to works of charity. Even their husbands encourage them in their endeavors. The people have noticed them, and since the establishment of the Charity, the local inhabitants are better. The Treasurer has funds which she is afraid to invest profitably for fear of diminishing revenues. Requests for donations are made in the homes of the local residents.

In Gournay, there have been sick to be cared for since the foundation of the Charity. They are visited three times a day. Each Lady cooks the allotted portions of meat in her own home.

The local inhabitants complain that charitable donations are used to have Masses said. The Ladies are prevented from doing what they ought when they find sick persons who have property which they cannot sell and are thus ineligible for assistance. The Charity has not cared for these poor sick who must be assisted by charitable individuals. The Ladies here

are somewhat lacking in refinement and are less united among themselves than elsewhere.

They have neither an altar nor a painting but they would like to have both. Mass is celebrated every month, followed by the litanies. Many receive Holy Communion at this time. The sick who are without shelter are housed with a woman who cares for them for five sous a day. This expenditure is necessary because they have neither sheep nor lambs and very little money.

In Neufville, the peasants complain because the sick are not attended to quickly enough. The officers are prevented from doing what they should for the sick who have assets which they cannot sell. There is some dissension among the Ladies because they want to know everything that is going on and give their advice on it. There are also disputes because, on their appointed days, they each want to bring what suits their fancy to the sick and take from their own homes things which have not been given to them. There are six sheep and six lambs which are undernourished. They have about fifteen or sixteen pounds in the treasury. The sick are visited three times a day. The Ladies usually receive Holy Communion on the appointed days. The Mass on the first Sunday of the month is not a High Mass, but the Pastor says that the Bishop of Beauvais does not want it to be. The litanies have only been sung once.

There was a sick woman who had property which she gave in its entirety to her relatives before or during her illness without the knowledge of the Ladies, who now wonder if they should serve such persons under these circumstances since the timing of the gift may have been deliberate.

The sick poor of Bulles are visited three times a day. They bring cooked portions of meat but not in equal amounts to all because each Lady wants to take from her home what she judges right so as to please the sick.

Many of the Ladies do not receive Holy Communion for months at a time. A member died and they did not receive Holy Communion for her. However, they did attend the funeral and had a vigil and a complete funeral service celebrated. The people complained about this.

There are often little disputes among the Ladies which interfere with their practice of charity. Some of them do not wish to be in the company of those with whom they have quarreled. The Superioress is sometimes able to remedy the situation.

There are pallets, mattresses, bolsters, blankets and an abundance of linen. There are also fifteen or sixteen sheep and ten or twelve lambs which are raised by local peasants for the benefit of the Charity. The first six that they had purchased died, so they had to buy others. There are about forty-five pounds in the treasury. The Procurator administers everything with great charity. He is well respected and loved.

The Ladies would like to have some medals since none of them have

any. The possibility of gaining indulgences would move them to receive Holy Communion more often.

A.43 - (ON THE GOOD USE OF SUFFERING)

I experienced consolation in my great sorrow without feeling that it was for the love of God. Therefore, desiring to make good use of my weakness and recognizing my powerlessness, I recalled the suffering of another person and united my intention to his and offered them to God with Our Lord on the Cross.

On the Feast of Saint Bernard, after Holy Communion, regretting my little knowledge and love of God which caused me to fill my mind with so much that was not of Him, I had the firm desire to concentrate all my thoughts on God as the only means to rid my mind of other things. I continued in this state since I wanted to be instructed on the means I should employ.

A.35 - (PRAYER TO A PATRON SAINT OF FRANCE)

Complete the work which our loving God has given you to do. You know the greatness of the mysteries which Jesus has left us in order to sanctify souls born of His blood in His Spouse, the Church. Help them, therefore, to esteem their calling and guide them by your prayers.

Blessed state of the Christian which makes the soul no less than an associate of God.

Let the souls that you possess feel your possession. But, possess them with gentle power, leading them to live as their state requires, aware that pride of the senses no longer has any place in their lives nor does resistance to the omnipotence of God who wishes to share His joy with them.

O Great Saint, your interest and the glory of God oblige you to pray for France. It is well that she still needs your powerful assistance to draw her once again from malicious idolatry rather than from ignorance. Watch over the clergy who are extending their hands to you for help as to another Elisha pleading for your twofold spirit so as better to understand hidden mysteries. You see how greatly God has been dishonored by them from whom He should receive glory because of the priestly character which has consecrated them and totally dedicated them to the service of the altar where He is to be adored.

PERIOD BETWEEN 1633 AND 1647

A.55 - ORDER OF THE DAY

(Observed by the First Daughters of Charity)

(1633)

They shall rise at five-thirty and kneel down beside their beds to adore God and to ask His blessing so that they may employ the day in keeping with His most holy will.

They shall dress, make their beds and, at six o'clock, they shall go to the oratory to make their meditation.

They shall conclude their meditation at seven o'clock after which they shall say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Respice, the Retribuere, the De Profundis and the Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

They shall then give an account of their prayer and shall carefully remember their most important resolutions so as to practice them during the day.

Those who are to serve the sick on that day shall go to the home of the Lady who is cooking the food to see that all will be ready to begin distribution at nine-thirty.

Those who are in charge of the medicines shall distribute them after prayers. Upon their return, they shall go to Mass.

After Mass, they shall learn to read or they shall do their work.

At noon, they shall make the particular examen on the way they have practiced the resolutions made during meditation. They shall say the Benedicite and then they shall dine.

After Grace, without kneeling, they shall recall their good resolutions and ask God for the strength to practice them for the remainder of the day.

Those who are in charge of the medicines shall go to the doctor for the prescriptions and attend to whatever is most pressing. Those who take food to the sick shall contact the Lady who will prepare it the next day.

When they have all returned to the house, they shall continue their work, study, and then after repeating the principal points of their faith in the form of a short catechism, they shall read a passage of the Holy Gospel so as to stimulate themselves to the practice of virtue and the service of their neighbor in imitation of the Son of God.

Those who serve the sick keep a constant watch on their needs such as wood, linen, preserves, infusions and other necessities.

At six o'clock, they shall take their reading after which they shall make the particular examen on the manner in which they have practiced their good resolutions. They shall say the Benedicite and then have supper after which they shall say Grace.

After supper, they shall have recreation; then they shall give an account of what they remember from the reading. Anyone who wishes to do this privately may do so.

They shall continue their work until nine o'clock at which time they shall make the general examen and then recite aloud the Confiteor, the Misereatur, the Indulgentiam, the Visita quaesumus, the Respice, the Angelus, the Retribuere, the De Profundis and the Litany of Jesus. They shall go to bed at ten o'clock after kneeling down beside their beds to adore God and to ask His blessing for the night.

They shall be disposed to receive Holy Communion on some feasts and Sundays. However, they shall remember not to ask this permission of their confessor without informing me. I shall use this occasion to remind them of some faults which should not be found in persons who communicate frequently.

A.54 - (DRAFT OF THE RULE)[1]

The Confraternity of widows and village girls has been instituted to honor Our Lord, its patron, and the Blessed Virgin, and to imitate, in some way, the women and young girls of the Gospel who followed and ministered to Our Lord and His Apostles. While doing this, they shall work at their own perfection, for the salvation of their families, and for the corporal and spiritual assistance of the sick poor of this city and of the country, whom they shall serve themselves in their parishes and for whom they shall procure the able assistance of the Ladies of Charity in the villages. They shall provide funds from their common purse for the village Charities which would otherwise be unable to care for the poor and they shall see to it that all involved do their best to enable the poor who recover to lead a good life for the rest of their days and those who die to leave this world in a good state.

The said Confraternity shall be directed by three of the widows or older girls, who shall be elected for three years by a majority vote of the membership. The votes shall be tabulated by the Superior of the Mission or his delegate. One of those elected shall be the Superioress, another the Treasurer and another the Procuratrix.

The Superioress shall see to it that the present Rules are observed;

1. Draft drawn up before the Rule of 1645 (Coste XIII, 551).

assume the *direction of the widows*[1] insofar as the Confraternity is concerned; *receive into the Confraternity*[2] those village girls whom she judges suitable and dismiss those who, in her opinion, do not possess the required qualities. She shall also transfer these village girls from one place to another; direct them in the ways of salvation; teach them to take good care of the sick poor, in keeping with the end of the Company, and to instruct country children. She shall also correct them.

In a word, the Superioress shall be the soul which animates the body and which enables it to carry out the plan of God for it. Nevertheless, she shall fulfill her responsibilities under the direction of the Priest of the Mission appointed by the Superior and in consultation with the two officers when they reside in the House. When they are at a distance, she shall seek their advice only in very important matters.

The Treasurer shall serve as a councillor to the Superioress. In this capacity, she shall keep a register of the receipts and expenditures. She shall retain in her possession the key to the safe in which are kept the papers and money of the Confraternity except the three hundred pounds which remain in the hands of the Procuratrix. She shall give a financial report once a year to the officers in the presence of the above-named Superior.

The Procuratrix shall also serve as a councillor to the Superioress as the need arises and, with the approval of the said Superioress, she shall see to it that provisions are not lacking and that the one who replaces her in the House when she is not in residence there carefully carries out this responsibility. She shall give a report on the same day as the Treasurer.

The above-mentioned widows shall look upon the Superioress in Our Lord and Our Lord in her. They are obliged to observe the Rules of this House and those who reside elsewhere must obey the Rule drawn up for them. They shall contribute to the support of this good work, in keeping with their means and their devotion. They shall cherish one another as sisters whom Our Lord has united by the bond of His love. They shall love the girls as the handmaids of Jesus Christ. They shall meet at least once a month to discuss the matters contained in their Rule.

Once a year, the said widows shall make a spiritual retreat. They shall go to the Motherhouse for this purpose. Insofar as they are able, they shall visit the Confraternities of Charity in the country districts when asked to do so by the Superioress and always in keeping with the directive of the Superior of the Mission or of the priests appointed by him.

The girls shall look upon the widows as their Mistresses and their Mothers. They shall honor the Blessed Virgin whom they shall see in them. They shall obey their Superioress, looking upon Our Lord in her

1. Correction by Vincent de Paul.

2. Correction by Vincent de Paul.

and her in Our Lord. They shall cheerfully go wherever they are sent, either to the city or to the country, and they shall return in the same spirit whenever they are recalled by the Superioress. They shall serve the sick poor and they shall show the Ladies of the Charity of the place where they are sent the manner in which this care is to be provided. They shall teach them how to prepare and distribute medicines and how to treat wounds and other ailments. As far possible they shall only leave their rooms, two by two, to go to church, to obtain provisions, and to visit the sick in their lodgings. They shall never stop to speak with anyone on the way. They shall teach the little girls of the villages while they are there. They shall strive to train local girls to replace them at this task during their absence. They shall do all this for the love of God and without any remuneration.

A.47 - (VISIT TO THE CONFRATERNITY OF GOURNAY)

(1636)

There should be a large register containing the establishment and Rule of the Charity, the names of the members, the election of the first and second Officers, the election of the second Procurator and, finally, the following information:

On the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, May 18, 1636, the Ladies of the Charity assembled at the Château, in the presence of Madame de Gournay, to discuss the affairs of the said Company, for the service of the poor. During the meeting, they resolved once again to practice their Rule exactly and to proceed to the election of Officers, as is prescribed, with no preferences and so as to avoid a misunderstanding of the past which had led them consistently to place officers in different responsibilities and to change them. They resolved that next year the Treasurer and the Officer responsible for the goods of the Confraternity should remain in office for the following year while the other two would be replaced so that, subsequently, each year those who had held office for two years would be changed. A majority vote of the membership shall determine which two officers are to remain.

They also resolved that they would each carry a candle in the procession which takes place every third Sunday after Vespers and that, as far as possible, they would accompany the Blessed Sacrament to and from the homes of the sick.

On this same day, Madame de Gournay asked to be received into the Company of Charity and she was accepted. The widow of the deceased

. . . also asked to be admitted. Since Madame . . . had relinquished her place because she was moving to Paris, it was decided that she would be received after she had lived in Gournay for three months and had assured the members that she was determined to remain there at least for the lifetime of her husband.

The Ladies of the Charity asked two questions. They wanted to know, first, if it were necessary to wait until the sick had entirely disposed of all their assets before they could be accepted for care by the Charity and, second, if a non-resident of the village should fall ill, should he be cared for by them.

It was decided that if the sick had extra furnishings or clothing, such as pewter dishes and the like, or wine or a little wheat or even a bread oven, all had to be sold before they could be assisted. However, should they have a piece of land from which they can derive no profit, they should be accepted for care by the Charity. Such would not be the case, if they have an acre to which they have clear title.

They also asked if they could assist those sick persons who would want to give their few assets to the Charity after their death or their cure so as to repay the expenses incurred in caring for them. They were told that they should not do so because they are obliged to serve the poor with no thought of remuneration. Moreover, by so doing, they would place themselves in danger of losing what had been given to them or of becoming involved in a lawsuit, which must be avoided at all cost. However, should it happen that a sick person whom they have assisted, desires, at the hour of death, to leave property to the Charity, they may accept it, provided the sick person has not been asked to do this by the Ladies; does not have any debts; and does not have any heirs in need.

In another part of the register, they should record the deaths of the Ladies.

In yet another section, there should be a record of the sick who have been accepted for care and the date on which they were discharged either because they were cured or had died. Finally, there should be a section for the extraordinary donations made to the Charity along with the necessary legal documents and a listing of the belongings of the sick. This book is never to be removed from the safe!

A.77 - PRACTICES WHICH OUR SISTERS SHOULD OBSERVE WHEN TRAVELING TO THEIR LITTLE FOUNDATIONS[1]

When they receive their Obedience, they shall give themselves to God

1. Louise de Marillac originally wrote "establishments," but she crossed it out and wrote "foundation."

to carry it out, asking for the grace to be faithful to Him in all things.

On the day of departure, they shall receive Holy Communion, if they can do so without too much difficulty. Then, after receiving the blessing of their Superior, they shall reflect that when they are traveling they are to honor the journeys of Our Lord and strive to maintain a disposition of humble confidence in Divine Providence.

Their veil shall be modesty in their glances, words and actions. They should be well aware that everyone in the coach will be observing their slightest movements. Therefore, they must be a source of edification rather than scandal.

They shall try to sit together in the coach so as to be able to hear one another and to discourage the other travelers from conversing with an individual sister.

When the coach leaves very early in the morning and they have not had time to make their meditation at the inn, they shall do so as soon as they are in the coach and have said the prayer for travelers. They shall continue their spiritual exercises on about the same schedule as at home.

When they pass through a village where the coach does not stop, they shall adore the Blessed Sacrament and greet the guardian angels of all the souls in this place.

They shall not eat at the guest table of the inn. As soon as they have arrived, they shall go to the nearest church to adore the Blessed Sacrament. Should there be any poor nearby, they shall visit them. Otherwise, they shall catechize those whom they meet. They shall eat together in some private place in the inn, having bought what was necessary the night before.

They shall eat at the usual time and observe the same frugality at meals as they do at home. If their zeal moves them to say a few good words to those around them, they shall be careful to do so humbly and modestly, avoiding all complacency.

In the evening, if it is not too late, they shall go to adore the Blessed Sacrament. They shall also give a few minutes instruction to the poor and distribute some holy cards. They shall do the same for the servants at the inn who often need to be instructed in things necessary for their salvation.

When they arrive, they shall ask the innkeeper's wife to provide them with a small room so that they can sleep separately from the others. They shall also eat there, practicing frugality because of the close quarters and in order to save something for the next day. Since bread is usually more expensive at an inn, they would be well advised to buy a good quantity from a baker so as to meet their needs.

They shall do their utmost to assist at Mass every day, but especially on Sundays and feast days. To this end, they shall inquire the night before the time of the first Mass the next day. If possible, on the eve of a feast,

they shall go to confession so as to be able to receive Holy Communion. However, they shall be careful not to inconvenience their fellow travelers or to miss the coach. Consequently, they shall try not to get separated from their companions.

A.21B - (MEDITATIONS)[1]

I desired to satisfy my obligations to the Eternal Father by offering Him the death of His Son, but I suddenly realized that this would be temerity and an offense against Him who, out of His goodness alone, had consented to the mystery of the Incarnation.

The Holy Communion of Eastertime is the only one commanded by the Church, which tells us thereby that its children will receive their inheritance from its Spouse today. This seemed to me to be a treasure capable of providing me with anything I might need throughout the year. This obliges us to choose the life of Jesus Crucified as the model for our lives so that His Resurrection may be a means for glory for us in Eternity. In order to live in this way, I thought that I must often reflect on His example. Therefore, I determined to make three or four acts each day, one in the morning, one at noon and one in the evening, in which I would address myself to the holy humanity of Our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin and to my guardian angel in order to abandon myself to the plan of God, to honor the life of the Word and to ask for the spirit of steadfastness and counsel.

On March 2, when I received the news concerning our Sisters at Nanteuil, I recognized the fact that I had been unfaithful to God in allowing myself to be overwhelmed by these painful circumstances and in rushing off to seek a solution from those who could provide one rather than having recourse to God as I had resolved to do.

On the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi, I adored the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of our venerable Fathers. I begged Our Lord, by the loving union of the Word with man, that both communities might be eternally united to Him; that we might remain forever united to the Roman Apostolic Hierarchy by means of the close union of each member of our communities with the poor, in conformity to the will of God. I had the thought, which I resolved to put into practice, of giving a painting of the Blessed Virgin, with the sun in the background to represent her Immaculate Conception, to the Cathedral of Chartres, to Saint-Lazare and to our Motherhouse in order to obtain the preservation of the purity of both Companies. I asked this of God by the purity of His Incarnation.

1. These thoughts, drawn up on different days, are contained in the same small notebook as A.21.

This resolution has been carried out. I sent a small picture of Our Lady to Chartres; a small painting of the Blessed Virgin holding a pearl rosary to Saint-Lazare; and a wooden statue of Mary holding a chaplet of nine beads in honor of the nine months which Our Lord spent in her womb to the Motherhouse.

M.41 - (ON THE SUFFERINGS OF PURGATORY)

I reflected on the sufferings reserved after death for the person whom we might believe had lived at least for a few years without committing mortal sin. I recall hearing that there was punishment in purgatory to erase the guilt of the sinner who had failed to love and to desire to see God. I seemed to see the powers of the soul acting on his senses and passions, causing him to suffer from the excessive desire for satisfaction: his eyes to see; his ears to hear; his taste to savor; his nose to smell; his affectivity to love God and to hate himself.

A.16 - (DESIRE FOR HOLY COMMUNION)

On the Feast of Saint Benedict, I had yet another reason for abandoning myself entirely to Divine Providence. After having failed to receive Holy Communion and grieving for my sins, I was moved by a strong desire for the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, I asked God that, if such be His holy will, He might inspire my confessor with this thought. I had said nothing to him about my desire when he sent for me to speak to me about it. I was greatly consoled by this very special grace of Divine Providence. In His goodness, God had revealed His great love for me by making me realize that, although I had forgotten some sins in confession and knew full well that sin alone could separate me from Him, His love was so great that not even sin could prevent Him from coming to me.

A.30 - (MEDITATION ON THE HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE)

"Blessed are they who..." Hunger and thirst are two urgent needs of nature, especially in strong bodies... If our souls are healthy, they should have the same urges, not as passions, but as desires for justice.

It seems to me that justice consists of the general renunciation of all

my passions which are so contrary to the commandments of God and to the perfection that He expects of me, as well as that charity which in words, actions and attitudes I am obliged to render to my neighbor.

Thirst for justice, which is a more pressing need, must lead us to desire greater things. We must long for union with God and the disposition and means to attain it. We must ardently desire that the effects of His holy will reign in us; and we must do all in our power to bring about this reign in others. It is only just that the owner should dispose as he sees fit of what is his without encountering any resistance. To attain this goal in my own life, I shall abandon myself entirely to Divine Providence and no longer seek to be the proprietor of my free will. Rather, I shall place myself in the hands of God and of my Superior. To put this resolution into effect, I shall gladly accept whatever God permits to happen to me, whether it comes directly from Him or through the instrumentality of His creatures, to whose judgment I shall acquiesce despite my repugnance to do so.

A.22 - (ON THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED TRINITY)

I desired to honor the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, as God has ordained that we should celebrate the Sabbath which is called the day of rest of the Lord, after the six days of the creation of the world. I thought that man is the chief work of God's creative power and that sin had, in a way, nullified this work by preventing the creature from rejoicing in His God. However, in His divine plan, God did not intend this separation to be permanent. Therefore, this same God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who had said, "Let us make man to our image and likeness," now resolved to create him anew by redeeming him. Since, after all the other mysteries of our Redemption, the Holy Spirit has inspired the Church to institute the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, it seems to me that God wills it to be solemnized as the day of rest.

M.35B - (DREAM, EVE OF DECEMBER 8)

On the vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, after I had heard the reading of the Epistle for this day, I saw, in a dream, a great darkness at noonday. It appeared insignificant at first but was followed by a black night which astounded and frightened everyone. I felt only submission to Divine Justice. Once the darkness had disappeared, I saw the radiance of the dawning day and, somewhere in

the high heavens, a figure resembling the one presented to us in the Gospel of the Transfiguration but it seemed to be a woman. Nevertheless, I was filled with great astonishment and gratitude to God to such a degree that my body felt pain and I awoke. I continued to suffer for a time after that. Unlike my other dreams, this one has always remained in my mind as a representation of the first grace of the Blessed Virgin who is the beginning of the light which the Son of God was to bring to the world.

In my meditation on the subject of the Epistle, I saw that Holy Church applied Being to the Blessed Virgin before the Creation of the world. I accepted this concept, reflecting that not only was she in the mind of God from all eternity by His foreknowledge of her, but that she was there also in preference to all other creatures because of the dignity for which God had destined her as the Mother of His Son. He was able to so will it before the creation of all earthly things which would witness the sin of our fathers. God chose to accomplish an act of His own will for the creation of the soul of Mary. This could also have been an effective act. However, I am entirely submissive to the Church in this matter. I make use of these ideas only to give greater honor to the Holy Virgin and to renew the total dependence of the Company upon her as her most unworthy daughters, who look on her also as our most praiseworthy and only Mother.

May Jesus and Mary be loved!

A.32B - (THOUGHT ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN)

Prostrate yourself[1] before the Holy Virgin whom God willed to redeem before He created her. Reveal your conscience to her and ask her to obtain for you conversion of life, deliverance from your most urgent needs as well as a greater love for her Son and closer union with His divine humanity.

A.45B - (ON THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY)

It is not enough to have a mind enlightened by the consciousness of our faults. Our wills must also be moved to correct them. In the first case we purify our conscience, while in the second we embellish and adorn it for the reception of our Jesus.

1. The French text uses "adorez." This shows the influence of her study of Latin. She uses it, as it is used in Sacred Scripture, to mean "prostrate yourself."

The cleansing is effected by the complete confession of all our sins; the embellishment by the practice of virtue, especially prayer, fasting and almsgiving which are, in a way, to people in the world, what the three vows of religion are to religious, i.e. almsgiving for poverty, fasting for chastity and prayer for obedience. We may also offer them at the Crib in place of the gifts of the Three Kings: almsgiving for gold, fasting for myrrh and prayer for incense. Likewise, we may present them to the Blessed Trinity: prayer to the Father, fasting to the Son and almsgiving to the Holy Spirit. Thus we are able to adore our Incarnate God with the angels by prayer, with the Kings by almsgiving and with the shepherds by fasting; and God will bless us.

A.80 - RULE FOR THE SISTERS WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

(c. 1640)[1]

In the morning, as the sisters enter the children's room, they shall kneel in order to offer to God all the services that they are going to render to the childhood of Our Lord in the person of His children. They shall say the Veni Sancte Spiritus, and then sprinkle all the children with holy water, having them raise their hearts to God.

They shall have the children make acts of adoration, love, thanksgiving and supplication so as to avoid offending God during the day and throughout their lives.

Afterward, they shall have the girls who are with them get the children up and dressed properly.

As soon as they are dressed, the sisters shall have them kneel and pray to God by reciting acts of love of God, of adoration and of thanksgiving.

Then, the children shall be given breakfast. The youngest, from three to four years old, shall receive some soup which has been simmered. The older children, the five, six, seven, and eight-year-olds, shall be given a piece of dry bread.

At ten o'clock, after having had them say the Benedicite, the sisters shall take care to have the children seated on their benches at their tables for dinner. At the end of dinner, they shall have them say Grace.

At one o'clock, the oldest children shall be assembled so that they may be taught catechism and their letters. After this, they shall be given a piece of bread with some sweets, if they are available.

At four o'clock, supper shall be prepared for the children.

At five o'clock, the sisters shall start putting the little ones to bed, and

1. See the Letter of M. Vincent (Coste II, 114).

they shall have the older boys and girls pray to God. They are all to be in bed at six o'clock since they get up at five o'clock both winter and summer.

Once the children are in bed, the sisters shall take care to have them give their hearts once more to God, and sprinkle them with holy water as they did in the morning.

A.76 - ON SEVERAL CUSTOMS OF THE MOTHERHOUSE

(To obtain a decision from Vincent de Paul)

(After 1641)[1]

The rising bell rings at four o'clock. At four-thirty a bell rings for entrance into the chapel and the beginning of meditation.

The bell rings at eleven-thirty for dinner. Three strokes of the bell mark the rising from table.

The Vespers bell of Saint-Lazare serves to announce reading and silence. Instruction follows until three o'clock.

At five-thirty, the bell rings for the evening meditation. It rings for supper at six o'clock. Around six-fifteen, it is sounded as at dinner to mark the rising from table.

At eight o'clock, the bell rings for the reading of the Martyrology. The subject of meditation is given at this time and several sisters share their reflections until the quarter hour rings for all to go to the chapel for prayer.

We would like to have the Angelus rung three times a day.

It might be appropriate to have the readings and prayers done by different sisters, most often by the three Officers and sometimes by others, as is the custom of all communities for the Office and readings.

Perhaps the text "the Sister Assistant will have the same power" includes authority over other Officers. This could be detrimental and could cause her to act imperiously. Such is already the case, although it has not been made public since there has not been a single protest. The sister in question is very careful to act in such a way that she maintains authority and credibility with the other sisters. It is for this reason, along with the others proposed, that the first two Sister Officers are each to give the instruction during their assigned week. This seems necessary for

1. After the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity was moved to the Saint-Denis district, near Saint-Lazare.

the Company. This has begun, but is not continuing with great regularity while we await orders in this matter.

Not being able to obtain the advice of the Sister Officers, particularly on the frequent changing of the sisters—quite a long period of reflection is needed on this, and on the situation. Then the necessity to change a sister quickly in order to send one who is, in reality, better suited.

A.91 - OBSERVATIONS ON THE RULES[1]

(First Notebook)

It seems that the difficulty of keeping three reliable and capable sisters at the Motherhouse—two Officers would suffice—was not in training a new sister who would be responsible only for writing down the expenditures, nor was it in giving advice and counsel. The difficulty was in knowing whether there would be something to add to the article.

The first Officer and the appointed second Officer should not be called Sister Servant for the reasons given to Father Portail.

In the matter of the Treasurer, it would be better to put three hundred pounds instead of one hundred. This should be done in order to avoid confusion during the times when it is necessary to make an extraordinarily large expenditure, which too often requires searching through the safe.

The third Officer presents her accounts to the Treasurer every week. The Treasurer reports to the Superioress once a month. This is all either of them can do because of their many responsibilities.

(Second Notebook)

The third intention of the act of adoration commemorating the moment of Our Lord's death is for the souls in purgatory so that divine merit may be applied to them.

In the article on the evening examen, which concerns the account given of the reading or meditation, add that this is done after the reading of the Martyrology, provided there is enough time before the quarter hour rings.

The Friday Conferences are held only after evening prayer.

Catechism is held after Vespers on Sundays and feast days. The instruction spoken of in this article remains at the time indicated.

The seventeenth Article of this notebook is useless, there never having been any weaned children at the Motherhouse.

1. The Rules on which Louise de Marillac makes her observations were possibly drawn up after the Conference of June 14, 1643 (Coste IX, 113).

Common Rules

To explain or do away with the title of Sister Servant in an article.

To the article which speaks of the sisters first submitting their written letters to the Superioress shall also be added, "those letters which they receive." These are of greater concern.

In the article which says that all the sisters must be warned of their faults, should it not specify that the Officers must do it with equal exactitude and necessity?

The repetition of the Employment of the Day is cumbersome. It seems that it would suffice to state it once only and then to specify all the things particular to the parishes. We shall do this if we are ordered to do so and if it is necessary.

The custom is that the sisters make their request for Holy Communion to the Superioress at the Motherhouse. In other places, the request is made to the Sister Servant. This exercise in humility seems useful, provided that it is used well by both parties. This is not spoken of in the chapter regulating the reception of Holy Communion.

For the sisters working with the foundlings

The article following the first one which deals with the spiritual service that the sisters give to the children is not to be on the subject of imitation of the Blessed Virgin. A few words of explanation seem necessary here. If the above is the case, it would be possible to add an article on the esteem that Our Lord has for the service which is rendered to children.

The Sister Servant must take care to point out to the Lady Treasurer of the Children the necessity of placing the children, particularly the boys, as soon as she sees that they are ready for domestic service or to learn a trade. She should try to recognize their inclinations and desires without their noticing it. She should especially do this for the boys so that they not be kept at the Motherhouse past the age of twelve. In this matter as in all others, she shall consult the Superioress of the Company of the Daughters of Charity before making a decision. Such collaboration will lead to great union between them. Thus, it would be necessary to amend the article which speaks of sixteen as the age at which boys must leave, unless it is the case of some crippled boy. Nevertheless, if a boy is judged to be causing harm to the other children because of some bad inclinations, the Sister Servant shall point it out so that the Ladies may have him placed in another hospital for the poor where he will cause no harm.

Should not the sister representing the Sister Servant be named her Assistant by Superiors? It will not be possible for this sister to have sole care of the weaned children; that would require another sister. This article would be more intelligible if it were written as two articles.

Should not the following article address itself to the Sister Servant in order to speak of her once again?

It seems to me that the following article, which speaks of the older children, is sufficiently covered in another article. This other article should be amended so that neither seems a repetition of the other.

In the article which speaks of neither adding nor subtracting anything, it would be necessary to specify which Superioress, since it could be understood that it is the Superioress of the Company of Ladies to whom reference is being made. On this subject, I had remarked something similar to that, which probably will not be necessary.

The next to the last article should be divided into two separate articles.

Hôtel-Dieu[1]

If the sisters notice some extraordinary spiritual or temporal need in one of the sick poor, the Sister Servant shall give instructions on the matter to one of the Ladies.

Revise the article which speaks of having the children baptized. The sisters should no longer have them baptized in the hospital unless they have an extraordinary need for it.

The sisters should not communicate with or receive anything from religious. Nor should they communicate with surgeons or apothecaries. It is to be ascertained whether or not Monsieur Vincent judges it appropriate for the sisters to ask the religious for remedies when they are ill or to give them freely to such religious. This began a few years ago without our knowledge, and the sisters even summoned surgeons to have them let their blood. I have prevented this for some time. However, I would like to propose easier access to remedies for the sisters.

Not to speak in the article concerning weaned children of following the custom of the Motherhouse, since they are not kept there.

In the last article, instead of saying, "The sister shall have the children brought", say, "She will bring it to the attention of the Sister Servant of the hospital to send someone to bring the children to the hospital."

There should be an article speaking of the works of the house, as in the case of the parishes.

The Sister Servant shall be careful to write down the names of the Ladies who bring money to her. She shall also record the date and the sum which she receives so that she may give an account to the Lady Treasurer of the Hospital.

So long as there are collection boxes at Notre-Dame for the devastated provinces, or should they be left there later on for the children, and the sisters have keys for them, they shall be careful to empty the boxes at least once a week and every evening on great feast days. They shall keep

1. A.90 comes after the passage on the Hôtel-Dieu.

a record of the funds collected in order to deposit this money with the Lady in charge of this matter.

The sisters of the parishes

To this article should be added the respect and obedience that the sisters owe the Ladies and the doctor. The doctor shall be dealt with with great reserve, as is the confessor of the poor.

The sisters must take care to encourage the sick to receive the sacraments, doing their utmost to help them prepare themselves well for this. The sisters must also procure consolation for the sick when they are in true need of it, respecting them and speaking to them gently and humbly never thinking that the poor owe them anything for these services.

The sisters should pay no more attention to the praise given by the poor than to their insults and contempt, except to try to make good use of them—refusing the praise interiorly and welcoming the insults in order to honor the contempt shown the Son of God.

An article should state that the sisters must make the beds when necessary and that the Sister Servant should know of it. Another article should state that the sisters must be diligent in all that they do, and that they must work even if there is not sufficient work to be done for the poor. If there is no work to be done, the sisters should ask for it from the Motherhouse, as has been the case for some time.

Several of these items are included in the Common Rules. However, since these things apply particularly to them, it will be more useful to treat of them all here.

For the sisters employed with galley slaves

It should be included in one of the articles that the sisters shall not argue with the galley slaves, even to help them to understand the reasons for the unpleasantness which they claim to have been caused by the sisters. Also, the sisters must never reproach them nor speak rudely to them. Moreover, the galley slaves should be treated with great compassion, as much for their spiritual state as for their most pitiful corporal state.

The sisters must never speak to any one galley slave in particular, nor give credence to them when they try to justify their crimes. Likewise, the sisters must turn a deaf ear toward their pleas for help in escaping their predicament because of the evil which it entails.

In order to make it intelligible, changes should be made in the article which instructs the sisters to seek advice on the galley slaves' temporal welfare from the Sister Servant.

When some extraordinary expenditure is to be made for the galley slaves by one of the sisters, she shall first seek the advice of the Superioress of the Motherhouse. According to the necessity or usefulness of the

expenditure, the Superioress will tell her not to carry it out without the permission of the representative of the Procurator General, who presently is Monsieur Icar.

Since this situation is the most dangerous and arduous for them, both because of the need to handle money and because of the quality of the persons involved, the sisters must see to it that, as often as possible, the Ladies of the parish come in order to be present when they serve the galley slaves. If the zeal in this charitable work cools, the Reverend Superior or even the Superioress should be informed so that help may be found from them or from their advice. Here, especially, the sisters must be more exact in the practice of their Rules, having also more time than at other places. Often, they should invoke the Holy Spirit in order to purify their thoughts, words and actions.

For the sisters employed in hospitals

At the end of their stay at the hospital, before they leave, the sick shall again make a good confession and receive Communion.

The Sister Servant shall keep an exact account of the money and the value of the clothing of the deceased.

In the article which speaks of exhorting the sick to receive Holy Communion every Sunday, this must always be done with the consent of whoever is in charge of giving the sacraments. However, the sisters may lead the sick to ask for Holy Communion themselves. The clergy in several localities find it wrong that the sisters urge the sick to receive Communion. Often it is feared that the sick receive the sacraments just to please the sisters, and that they forgo a good preparation for their reception.

The preceding article states that the sick should be given an egg or some bouillon at seven o'clock. This is too late. The sister on night duty gives food to her sickest patients at four o'clock. She must then inform the sister replacing her of this.

It seems that there is an article which prohibits or does not permit the sisters to send word of their trials and spiritual state to the Superioress of the Motherhouse. I believe this could be detrimental to some of them.

The reading of the Rules at table is not such a good thing since all the sisters are not present. It seems that it would be better to have them read after supper, when all the sisters have returned, or after dinner instead of other readings before the hour of silence.

A sister who cannot observe the Order of Day as prescribed by Rule because of her work with the sick should unite herself to it in spirit from time to time.

There must always be an Assistant when the number of sisters exceeds three. Ask the Superior General for one or notify the Superioress so that she may make an earnest request for one.

Would it not be necessary to give more of an explanation in the article which speaks of the "Blessings of the Sick" so as to indicate that the Sister Servant should request the priest who is there at the time, whether he comes from the Motherhouse or from elsewhere, to say this prayer.

A.90 - (OBSERVATIONS ON THE RULES)[1]

Sisters employed in the villages

The sisters shall be careful to purge patients and to let their blood only when necessary because of the dangers associated with these procedures. As soon as the sisters are called to see the sick, they shall greet them warmly and approach them cheerfully and with good will. The sisters shall then find out how long they have been ill and shall begin administering remedies by means of cold sponges or bloodletting when the sick are adverse to the sponges. If their fever continues, the sisters shall repeat the treatments three or four times. When the fever persists, they shall let blood from the patient's foot, then begin once again to let blood from the arm until the fever goes down. When the patients have an intermittent fever with recurring shivering they shall be purged by a laxative tea. The sisters shall be very careful not to administer any remedies while a patient is shivering or sweating. Only a glass of mildly fortified water with a very small amount of theriac may be given to them just before shivering starts.

The sisters cannot observe the order of the Schoolmistresses of Paris, except in the case of the little girls. For that reason, they must receive, at any time, any girl of any age who would like to come to learn. They must have the discretion to have those girls who are timid and bashful enter a special area, welcoming them warmly even when they come at mealtime or very late. They should urge them to develop the habit of kneeling each morning and evening for prayer.

In places where there is little work to be done, the sisters must be very exact in the observance of their Rule, and must use their time well. If they have no work with which to earn part of their living, they should at least busy themselves with spinning so that linen can be made.

The sisters of the villages are far from the Motherhouse and, consequently, are far from advice on their conduct and from the help they need in surmounting their faults and small interior trials. They may always write to their Superiors on these matters; however they shall help one another by great forbearance and cordiality which gives them the

1. A.90 carries the Roman numeral II. It comes in the middle of A.91.

freedom to communicate with one another, except in matters which would be prejudicial to another sister.

Living in the villages, it is easy to turn away from good practices and resolutions. Thus, it is necessary for the sisters to be on guard, particularly to avoid falling into the idle gossip, slander and complaints that are common with the village people. They must especially refrain from speaking of anything that goes on among them, recalling that they are in this place by the order of Divine Providence so as to provide edification for the villagers. To cause scandal or disedification would attract chastisement on themselves and on the Company.

If the sisters are obliged to be away from their house for a long time in the service of their neighbor, they shall take a few provisions with them in case they have need of food. In this way they will not have to obtain it elsewhere. If through forgetfulness or unforeseen circumstances it becomes necessary to obtain something from the poor, the sisters shall pay them so that they do not become a burden for them. In doing this, they shall be careful to demonstrate their need so as not to be accused of satisfying a fancy.

When the sisters find themselves in an area in which the churches are dirty or neglected and where the lamps are allowed to go out, they shall notify the Superioress and ask her whether or not they should assume responsibility for taking care of them.

On instruction in school

In the article which speaks of verifying once a month the names of those who miss coming to school so that they may be reprimanded, add that some sort of reward should be given to those who are diligent in attending.

The Sister Servant of the hospitals

She shall respect her Assistant and shall follow her advice as often as possible in doubtful situations, so long as it does not breach the confidence of others.

She shall not reprimand another sister while either one of them is in an emotional state. In this way the sister will profit from the admonition and will not be caused to feel shame.

She shall not look for faults in the sisters. When she is notified of some fault, she shall thank the sister who informed her and shall pardon, as much as possible, the sister at fault, not showing herself to have a bad opinion of this sister.

The sister who receives the sick

She shall give notification of all money found on new arrivals and shall record it so that she can give an account of it at the necessary time.

She shall notify the doctor of the new arrivals.

The sister who serves the infirm

She shall notify the Sister Servant of those who do not eat enough, either through aversion or for other reasons, and ask her to provide what is necessary.

The sister who prepares meals on days of abstinence

If it is a locality where porridge is not eaten, the sister shall not introduce it since it is not proper food for the sick. Instead, she shall prepare some poached eggs and good buttered toast, throwing a bit of water on top of the toast before putting it in the butter.

The sister in charge of dishes

If she finds any cracked dishes, she shall be careful to put them aside and to notify the Sister Servant of the need for new ones.

The sister on night duty

As she goes on duty she shall find out from the Sister Servant if there are any sick who are in need of receiving the sacraments. Thinking that this time of darkness is that of the Devil, they should make rounds of the rooms together so that they will not be taken unawares. Thus, the sister must be on her guard and should be wary of everything in order to have recourse to God and to her guardian angel.

Since she who replaces the sister on night duty is alone in the rooms for three hours of darkness in the winter, she too shall be wary of all things.

The sister laundress

Concerning the last article on the young sisters who must do the washing, do not exclude the other sisters when the Sister Servant orders it.

The Sister laundress must take care in her placement of the linen, setting aside that which must be mended and that which no longer can be used. Likewise, she shall separate linen used by men from linen used by women.

The sister in charge of the clothes of the deceased

To the article which states that she shall buy the small necessities should be added: "by order of the Sister Servant."

It should also be added to ask for the advice of the priests for the sale of the good clothing.

A.88 - HOSPITALS[1]

In the name of God, the Daughters of Charity shall rise precisely at four o'clock. They shall make their beds after having made their act of adoration and after having dressed. At a quarter to five, they shall begin meditation. They shall conclude it at five-thirty, and then they shall recite the Litany of Jesus and two decades of their rosary.

They all shall come to the hospital at six o'clock. They then shall empty the night vessels and basins and make the beds of the sick. Before going to the hospital, they shall each have taken a piece of bread and some wine except on days when they receive Holy Communion. On these days, they shall content themselves with the scent of vinegar, putting some vinegar on their hands. This shall only be necessary until they become accustomed to the air in the rooms of the sick.

At seven o'clock the sisters shall have the sickest patients take a bouillon or a fresh egg for breakfast. The less sick shall take some fresh butter or cooked apples.

The Daughters of Charity shall hear Mass every day. Beforehand, however, it is necessary to have the ordered medicines given to the sick. Also, there must be great care to give bouillons at the precise times.

The Daughters of Charity who have need of breakfast shall go immediately and then return to the sick in order to console those who are close to death. They shall provide for those sick in need of instruction concerning salvation, so that they can make a general confession of their entire life. This should dispose the sick to go to confession and to receive Communion every Sunday, as long as their illness persists. It should also prepare them to receive Extreme Unction at the proper time. Those sick who will recover should be moved nevermore to offend God. If they should fail in this, they should be prepared to go to confession as soon as possible.

The Daughters shall see that the sick have dinner precisely at ten o'clock. If they are in charge of the food for the sick, they shall provide

1. Because of a large tear in the manuscript of this passage, the lines are incomplete. However, they have been completed through reference to corresponding passages in the copy of the Rule of Angers, evidently written by Louise de Marillac (Note of Sister Geoffre).

at least some veal and mutton, with a bit of beef. In the evening, some roasted and boiled meat shall be provided. At least four bouillons and three fresh eggs per day shall be given to the sick who do not eat meat.

After having cleared the table of the dinner of the poor, a Daughter shall remain at the hospital. The others shall dine precisely at eleven o'clock after having made their particular examen. During dinner, each shall take her turn reading. After Grace has been said, they shall recite a decade of their rosary. Immediately afterward, two of them shall return to the hospital. Their recreation shall be in recreating with the sick. The Daughter who had remained at the hospital shall go to the second table with the reader. After having said Grace as the others did, and after having cleared the table, these two shall go to the hospital for recreation with the sick. The other two shall go to their quarters and work at whatever needs to be done, doing as much for the linens of the poor as for their little Community.

If there is no Company of Ladies which brings the afternoon collation, the Daughters shall all come to the hospital at precisely two o'clock in order to give the sick poor a few little sweets such as toast and cooked pears.

Those who have work to do shall go to their duties, or if there is nothing urgent to be done, they shall go to the bedsides of the sick and shall try to move the new arrivals to make a general confession, instructing them beforehand on the manner in which they are to confess their sins.

At four o'clock, they shall wash the sick. They shall change soiled bedsheets, empty the vessels, and put the beds of the sick back into some order without the sick getting out of bed.

At five o'clock, they shall serve supper to the sick. After supper, the same sister will remain in the hospital that did so at dinnertime. The others shall go to supper after the particular examen which should take a good quarter of an hour. This examen shall be in the form of repetition of meditation, unless they make a half hour of meditation followed by the particular examen at a later time. There shall be reading during supper.

After Grace, which shall be at about six-thirty, the sisters shall go to the hospital. The sister who had remained at the hospital shall go to supper with the reader. Those sisters who have just returned to the hospital shall make sure that the sick are all in bed at seven o'clock, and that there is water, some wine and a few little sweets for those who need them. At seven-thirty, all the Daughters shall come to the hospital to make their general examen aloud in the midst of the poor. They shall recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and shall give holy water to all the sick.

At eight o'clock, they shall go to prepare the necessities for the next day's service of the sick. They shall finish their rosary, make an act of

adoration, and then go to bed at precisely nine o'clock. One sister shall stay on night duty and shall see to it that none of the sick die without having received the Last Sacraments. Until the sick first awaken, she shall recite her rosary and shall read the subject of her meditation.

The sister on night duty shall have a book to read, so long as it does not interfere with her service of the sick. After having made her meditation at three-thirty, she shall go to awaken the other sisters at four o'clock. If she wishes, she may have breakfast and then go to bed, rising at nine o'clock in order to hear Mass. Another sister shall take her place in the hospital, and she shall make her meditation in the same manner as the others.

All the sisters shall take their turn staying awake at night to watch over the sick.

The Daughters shall not go out into the city and shall conduct themselves with great modesty in the Motherhouse. They shall often recall the presence of God and shall speak modestly and gently with externs. They shall act in the same way among themselves and with the sick.

I think that something should be said concerning the sisters' associating with the religious.

It is hoped that the sisters shall have at their disposal some preserves, some fruit, some sugar and some wine so that the sick are not left with something sour if they desire some nourishment outside of mealtime.

The sisters shall take proper care of the linen of the sick.

In the hospital, there should be several holy water fonts and at least two oratories in the form of small altars.

The sisters shall have four Crucifixes to leave with the sick who have received Extreme Unction. A plenary indulgence is applied to these Crucifixes through the ejaculatory prayer "Jesus, Mary."

They shall have four pieces of coarse cloth to put on the beds of the sick for extraordinary confessions of persons who are not from the Motherhouse.

At the hospital, there should be some small copper tubs in order to facilitate the emptying of basins. There should be two larger tubs, always filled with water, attached to the wall. These should empty into ditches or elsewhere and be used to wash the basins and vessels.

In the hospital, there should be two censers which may be lit when needed. In these should burn only sweet fragrances, such as juniper or bay seed. Sometimes old bread crusts may be burned in the furnaces. Red hot gridirons should be quenched with vinegar.

It is hoped that the girls destined to join our Company would have their beds in the hospital in order to accompany the sister on night duty.

The Daughters must care for the table napkins, spoons, cups and plates used in serving the sick their meals. The order that the sisters must retain some for their service is not noted here.

I am not speaking of the act of adoration which, it seems to me, should be made with the poor each morning. Likewise, I am not speaking of the Benedicite and the Grace of the sick, for I do not wish to know what the men religious do. And then it seems to me that there are so many things to say in order to inspire the sisters in their actions that I should speak of these topics from time to time.

If I remember other things, I shall write them, if it pleases God.

A.40 - (NOTE ON BROTHER ANTOINE)

The first thing that I learned from good Brother Antoine is that we must always be united to God and totally dependent upon Him. We must attribute the glory of all things to Him and be satisfied with whatever happens. We must will only what He wills for us and be faithful to all the occasions that arise for the practice of virtue.

When I was near death I was sorry and regretted that I would die without having served my neighbor. Henceforth, I shall dedicate the rest of my life more completely to this.

Neither the habit nor the circumstances of life make us love God. Rather it is the preparation of a heart disposed to accept His good pleasure.

I must consider my son only as a child of God and love him as such. I must bear with the privation of not seeing him for the love of God.

A.84 - MANNER IN WHICH THEY ARE TO TREAT THE SICK OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU OF SAINT-DENIS

(1645)

The sisters shall take great care that the infirm who can eat neither bread nor meat are given bouillon and eggs alternately every three hours. They should also be given some sweets according to their needs and tastes, provided it is not detrimental to their health.

The sisters shall see to it that the very sick are washed. Through fear of canker sores, the mouths of the sick should be cleansed frequently. The sisters must also watch for gangrene.

In times of great necessity, when the very sick are unable to take bouillon or eggs, they shall be given jelly and consommé. In this case, it shall be necessary to give them small amounts frequently. The sick who

do not drink wine shall have some tea or some sweetened water.

Wine is to be served to the sick only at mealtime, and the sisters shall be sure to dilute it with water.

The sick shall be given bread as long as they can eat it without harm. This bread shall be baked for two days.

For each sick person there shall be a half pound of meat put in the pot each day. From this will be made the bouillon for the day. In the evening, there shall be about a pound of roasted meat for every three sick persons. An egg shall be given with the bouillon to those who cannot eat meat.

The sick shall have breakfast at seven o'clock, dinner at ten o'clock, collation at three o'clock and supper at five-thirty.

The sick shall eat only veal and mutton, but in the same pot shall cook the beef for the attending sisters, a quarter pound for each one This will produce a better bouillon.

On days of abstinence, herbal bouillons shall be prepared in the morning. There shall be one egg added for every two bouillons. In summer, there shall be no eggs added to the dinner bouillon. However, in winter they may be added because herbs are not so easily procured at this time.

The sisters shall take care to make preserves and syrups at the proper seasons.

Draft of the order which the Daughters of Charity must follow at the hospital of the city of Saint-Denis in France

So as to establish this order effectively, the Elder of Saint-Denis shall be *asked*[1] that admissions be limited to only the very sick. Also, as a protection for the sisters,[2] it shall be determined if it is necessary for those presenting themselves for admission to have been visited by the surgeon who is paid for his work with the sick, even if he does not remain at this particular hospital.

The exercises of the sisters *shall be performed*[3] in much the same way as they are at the hospital at Angers. The needs of the sick shall always take precedence.

Each sister shall take her turn at providing for the nighttime needs of the sick. Although she does not stay awake all night, she shall rise two hours later than the others.

1. Correction by Vincent de Paul.
2. Note made by Vincent de Paul: "Either the chaplain or the Sister Servant shall keep the register of the admission and release of the sick."
3. Correction by Vincent de Paul.

The sisters shall take turns staying awake at night when the needs of the sick require it. The sister on night duty shall awaken the others at four o'clock. She shall then go to bed and rise at nine o'clock.

The Sister Servant shall welcome the sick, wash their feet, change their shirt, and comb their hair if necessary. She shall take care to lock away any clothes and money that the poor bring with them. All items shall be noted in a register so that the belongings may be returned if a person recovers or the clothes sold if a person dies. A receipt should be kept.

According to her orders, the Sister Servant shall have the care of all the necessary provisions for the house. She may have to go to procure these provisions herself, or she may send another sister, using her time well so that neither the sick nor the sisters are inconvenienced in the service of the hospital.

The Sister Servant shall welcome persons from the outside, greeting them pleasantly, permitting them to serve the poor during the day, and making sure that time is not lost in useless conversation with them.

The Sister Servant shall try herself or get others to try to move all those sick who have not made a general confession to do so as soon as possible. Those who have made one shall be urged to make a confession covering the time since they last received the Sacrament. Caution should be taken that too much pressure on the sick be avoided. The sick shall also be urged in general to make the acts of faith, hope and charity necessary for salvation. They shall be taught to have sorrow for all the sins of their life, and to ask for God's forgiveness with all their heart. They shall be advised to make a personal confession, revealing to their confessor all the sins which they can remember. Fear should be instilled in those who have need of it and confidence in those who are too fearful.

Whereas many of the sick will have received the sacraments during their stay in the hospital, the Sister Servant must see to it that they go to confession and receive Communion in the chapel once more in the event that they recover, advising them of those things they will have to do in order to live as good Christians. However, she shall have those sick who certainly will die make frequent confessions, preparing them to die well, helping them to detach themselves from the earth and from creatures, and instilling in them the desire for paradise. She shall do this while preserving in them sentiments of repentance and of hope in the death of Jesus Crucified, taking great care that they receive the Last Sacraments after having prepared them for this.

It is the responsibility of the Sister Servant to release the sick from the hospital. In this matter, as in all others, she shall act with great gentleness and charity, as well as with good judgment and justice. She must be certain that they have been well purged and have sufficiently regained their strength. If she does not take this precaution, they may suffer a relapse. This could prove detrimental to the sick and would put too much

of a burden on the house. As soon as Our Lord had cured a sick person, He would send him on his way. Likewise the Sister Servant must send those who are cured on their way, especially the idlers and the lazy. These people are often retained too long through a natural reluctance on the part of the Sister Servant to turn them out.

If there are any sick girls at the hospital the Sister Servant shall try to place them in someone's service or she shall recommend them to some of the Ladies of the city. However, the Sister Servant shall not leave the hospital in this endeavor. The only recommendation that the Sister Servant should give is for the service owed to the sick poor. Neither she nor the other sisters shall go to take messages to the city. If it is an urgent matter, then the sisters shall have the messages taken by someone else, as always, on the advice of the Sister Servant.

The Sister Servant shall seek advice from her sisters, particularly from the sister in charge of the pharmacy since she has a better knowledge of the state of the sick. It is necessary for the Sister Servant to make this act of submission with cordiality, gentleness and true humility, occasionally foregoing her personal judgment, except in matters of importance. Likewise, it is necessary that the sister do the same, always acquiescing to the opinions of the Sister Servant when she sees no notable interest in her opinions either for the glory of God or for the service of her neighbor.

All the sisters shall always strive for true union, being on guard to avoid appearances to the contrary when habits, naturally bad dispositions and bad moods contribute to opposing frames of mind. They shall always remember to honor the union of the Blessed Trinity, by which all order in the world has been made and is conserved, and to which, as they should recall, they submit themselves.

The Sister Pharmacist shall take great care to keep the drugs in a good state, making sure that nothing spoils or is lost. She shall see to it that all her utensils are kept clean, that the sick are given their medications at the necessary times, and that the doctor and surgeon are asked to come when necessary. She shall be particularly obliged to inform the Sister Servant of the state of the sick so that, by her order, the sacraments may be given to them. Likewise, she shall carry out her responsibilities only on the orders of the Sister Servant.

The Sister Pharmacist or another of the sisters shall let the blood of the sick and dress their wounds when it becomes necessary and the surgeon is not present. Also, the Sister Pharmacist shall be informed that her position shall not hinder her from performing other duties at the house. For instance, when the Sister Servant is not present, or when the Sister Servant orders it, she shall receive the sick as the Sister Servant herself would. She shall wash the dishes, do the laundry, and take her turn at night duty, except when she is kept busy by her own duties and

the Sister Servant feels it appropriate to excuse her from these duties. Then the Sister Servant herself shall carry out these duties in her turn. She must be the first one to give to the others the example of virtue and of work.

The Sister Portress shall be very exact in her duties. She shall let no one enter the house without the permission of the Sister Servant, and she shall serve the sick in her turn as do the other sisters, always carrying out her own duties, except on days when she has night duty. In this case, one of the other sisters shall carry out her duties the following morning.

The Sister Servants shall determine who must keep[1] the register of the admission and release—by death or otherwise—of the sick. There shall be three registers. In the register of admission shall be noted the year, month and day of the entrance of the sick; their name; their status; and from where they come. An identification ticket shall be put on the arms of the sick, and one shall also be put with their clothes in safekeeping. The sisters shall be most careful to save any letters or important papers that they find in the clothing. They must also be sure to notify the relatives of those who die. In case of recovery, the relatives should be notified of any necessities.

In the second register shall be noted the names of the sick who recover and the duration of their stay in the hospital.

In the third register shall be noted the names of the dead and the localities from which they came. The length of their illnesses shall also be noted, along with any business which they have entrusted to the sisters. With counsel, all such business must be carried out as soon as possible.

The Sister Servant and all the other sisters shall take great care in the management of the house so that the well-being of the poor shall be preserved there. They shall try their best to increase this well-being through the knowledge that persons on the outside have of the sisters' good order, and especially through the knowledge of the sisters' careful service of the poor and of the edification that they give. This good example must be given as much to those who visit the hospital as to the sick themselves, who will always be witnesses to the charitable conduct of the sisters.

The sisters shall allow none of their acquaintances to eat or sleep at the aforementioned hospital, even their Sisters of Charity, unless they bring the necessary provisions as they have been ordered and unless they have permission to go there.

Apart from the above, the sisters shall adapt, as far as possible, to the order of day and the practices observed at the House of the Directress who resides in Paris. In light of this, they shall have a copy of these practices which they shall read from time to time along with the above.

1. Note made by Vincent de Paul: "If it is the responsibility of the Sister Servant to keep the register."

A.91B - RULE FOR THE MOTHERHOUSE

The elected officers:
The Superioress
The First Assistant
The Treasurer
The Procuratrix
The Directress of the Seminary

The appointed officers:
The Bell Ringer
The Schoolmistress
The Portress
The Pharmacist
The Baker
The Cook
The Gardener
The Laundress

Obligations of the Superioress

After her election, having given herself totally to God for the accomplishment of His most holy will in this very important matter, she must desire to be entirely detached from any concern for herself.

1. Her principal care is to see to it that the Rule is exactly observed. She does this by *gentle persuasion* rather than through constraint. She must instill it in the minds of her sisters first by her example and then by her words.

2. She must believe herself most incapable of solid virtue since God has chosen her to serve the others. In this way, the shame of not meeting the standards which she sets for others will help her to acquire self-knowledge.

She shall consider herself the beast of burden of the Company, loaded with a precious treasure of which she must give a most exact account. When there is a general or particular question concerning the welfare of the Company, she shall not take herself into consideration. In this matter, she shall always do more to advance the spiritual welfare of the Company. Nevertheless, she must have great care for its temporal welfare, exhibiting great confidence in Divine Providence in both endeavors.

3. Since she cannot undertake such a heavy task alone, she shall rely on her Sister Officers, but without shifting responsibility for everything as if she were alone. She shall never appear to be inconvenienced when her counsel or permission is sought. She shall watch continuously over all that happens in the Company, whether it be in the House, or in the parishes and countryside. In order to sadden no one, she must keep this watch without causing uneasiness and without letting it be known how she is aware of what happens.

4. She shall watch over herself so that her heavy workload does not cause her stress. This makes it difficult for the sisters to approach her and difficult for her to speak cordially with them.

5. She shall do her utmost to prevent the sisters from knowing her weakness, not letting herself get carried away in speaking with one sister of another, and not acting on her first impulses but having enough discretion to discern the proper times to advise them of their shortcomings.

She must try to be easy to approach, so that her sisters may speak to her with confidence, but she must also be discreet so as to give them no reason to lose respect for her.

In order to attract the sisters to perfection, the Superioress should instill in them a sense of esteem for the Rule rather than fear of chastisement in the event that they are unfaithful.

She shall confer often with her Sister Officers in general, and sometimes with them individually. In this way, she gains knowledge of what is taking place in the Company, and she is able to notify her Officers of needs or make comments on things which have been brought to her attention. This she must do with great cordiality and gentleness, considering her Officers as part of herself.

She shall try not to sadden the sisters in the practice of their Rule, having as much forbearance as possible when one of her orders has not been carried out, accepting it so long as it is not something of notable detriment to the Company.

She shall instill esteem for the Sister Officers in the other sisters so that they may put the Officers' advice to good use without ever sensing her disapproval of their conduct unless there is a strong reason why they should.

She shall add nothing to nor take away anything from the practice of the Rule. However, she may dispense the sisters from some practices according to their needs, but not permanently without having received an order from the Superior, as is the case in everything of any importance.

She shall be extremely careful never to say anything nor write anything in behalf of the Superior without his knowledge and approval for fear of inappropriately involving him in some matter. Insofar as she is able, she shall carry the keys to the entrance of the House. When she is unable to do so, the first Assistant shall take on this responsibility.

The Superioress shall be exact in responding to the letters of the sisters away from the House. She shall use this opportunity to assist them in their struggle for perfection, showing her esteem for their virtue and good will, and showing knowledge of their faults only when it is of great necessity.

She must be careful not to repeat anything told to her in secret regarding another sister for fear that it will take away the sisters' confidence in her. In advising the sisters of their faults, she must use great prudence, never doing it immediately, if this can be avoided, nor

unnecessarily, but advising them, nevertheless, carefully, gently and cordially.

Office of the First Assistant

Words of excuse shall be few and words of refusal even fewer as the First Assistant and the other officers acquiesce in the election. The First Assistant must humble herself, along with the others, having fear of not being able to carry out her obligations properly, but also having confidence that God will give her the ability to do that which she could not do on her own. She shall fix in her mind the belief that she must carry out her duties with submission to her Superioress, doing nothing without first informing her and refraining from ordering anything that she would not allow. Moreover, she should hide nothing from her, however disagreeable, that has occurred in the Company. She should believe and act in such a way that the other sisters will perceive that she has no power to act or to give orders except in keeping with the directives which she herself has received or in the absence of the Superioress.

If she is unable to give advice when the sisters request it of her in matters of any importance, she shall not send them to the Superioress but shall tell them that she will speak to the Superioress on the matter.

Since she has the same obligation as the Superioress to see to the observance of the Rule, she shall watch over everything in order to advise her Sister Officers of any shortcomings in their exercises, doing so gently and charitably and likewise accepting advice given her. If obedience causes her to be absent, she shall notify the Second Assistant so that nothing is omitted which must be done. She shall try in everything she does to set a good example for the whole Community through the modesty, exactitude and charity which mark her recollection as a result of God's presence.

She shall not weary of advising her sisters of their faults or of what they should be doing, keeping in mind that repeated acts are necessary in order to destroy a habit and to establish another one in its place. She shall not act as those who would rather find fault immediately with the sisters than talk with them about the practice of virtue repeatedly over a period of time. Such persons do not consider their obligation or the good which can result from instilling the idea of virtue and work in others.

Her principal care shall be to see the sisters who are not following the Rule well. In so doing, she shall learn the details of the situation and shall advise them of their faults. All this shall be presented in her report to the Superioress. This report shall be given with simplicity, an open

heart and great charity every week, if possible, or when the Superioress orders it.

The Office of the Treasurer

Besides taking the place of the Superioress in the absence of both the Superioress and the First Assistant, the Treasurer shall see to it that the Rule is observed and that each sister has a task. She shall have a key to the safe and one to the collection box in which the daily receipts are kept. In the presence of the Superioress, she shall give one hundred francs to the Procuratrix monthly and then enter the sum in the register. As far as possible, she shall also receive the monthly report of the Procuratrix in the presence of the Superioress. If the Treasurer notices any extraordinary or excessive expenditure, she shall make the matter clear and then gently and charitably inform the Superioress, since she cannot remedy the situation on her own. If the Superioress does not notice that three hundred pounds are being kept in the collection box, then the Treasurer shall humbly advise her to put the money in the safe.

She shall do her utmost to see to it that the money is managed well so that no debts arise. She shall draw up her reports in good time so that they may be given annually, without fail, before the Superior or whomever his Charity orders.

Office of the Procuratrix

The Sister Procuratrix shall write down exactly the daily expenditures, receiving an exact account from the sisters who purchase the daily provisions, making sure that the normal expenditure is not surpassed. She shall introduce no changes in the management of the household, and she shall make sure that nothing is wasted. If a wasteful situation arises, one for which she has no solution, then she shall notify the Superioress of it as soon as possible in order to prevent it in the future.

She shall see to it that the provisions are bought at the proper time. For this reason, she shall advise the Superioress to ascertain whether or not there is money at the House. To insure good management, she shall retain the key to the pantry so as to keep an eye on the kitchen sister and to see to it that nothing spoils. This is necessary so that the little that the sisters receive may be well prepared and for the general well-being of the household.

Office of the Directress of the Seminary

The Sister Directress of the Seminary shall have particular care in considering the duties of her office and in acquiring the virtues necessary to perform them well. She shall rid herself of her passions in order to act without personal interest and, if possible, without following her own judgment. However, she should often implore the help of the Holy Spirit so that she may see her sisters and their actions only in His light. Whether these sisters are at the House or in the parishes, the Sister Directress shall give a truthful account of anything she notices in them whenever she is sent to them or they to her. That which is certain shall be reported as such and doubtful matters as doubtful. When the sisters from the parishes come to the House for confession, she shall make sure that the entrance of the confessional is guarded, for fear of noise. If the entrance is not locked, she shall station a sister there.

From time to time, she shall go through the House in order to discourage frivolity and the frequent gossiping, murmuring and news telling that occurs between the sisters coming in and the sisters at the House. Such activity is contrary to good preparation for confession.

In carrying out this duty, she must use great prudence and gentleness, advising the sisters of what they have to do and pleasantly enduring the arguments of those who are most attached to these conversations. She shall make them understand that it is her duty which requires her to take such a stand and that they will not think bad of it once they become accustomed to it.

From time to time she shall most truthfully and charitably give an account of her office to the Superioress.

The principal concern of this Sister shall be to watch over the new sisters, studying their moods and aptitudes for the first week or two.

She shall confer with the Superioress on this matter so that together they can determine the proper placement and training of the sisters.

These first two weeks—or longer—she shall instruct the new sisters to say their rosary at the time when the community begins meditation. Through prayers to the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, they shall ask God to give them the grace to make meditation whenever obedience to the Rule permits them to do so.

At six o'clock, she shall leave the chapel with the new sisters in order to instruct them in their faith, their Christian obligations, and in all that is necessary for their salvation.

When new sisters arrive who have already received sufficient instruction, the Directress shall point out to them the necessity that the Sisters of Charity have of recalling their first formation. She shall also stress that they should have no desire to change food or clothing except in order

to imitate more closely the way of life of their Masters, the poor, for whom they must always have respect.

She must advise the new sisters of their faults against modesty, teaching them the way in which they are accountable for their actions in this matter. She shall teach them the proper behavior with regard to the older sisters, advising them to ask forgiveness of these older sisters as soon as they realize that they have failed in their duty. She shall also teach them the proper behavior with regard to the other new sisters.

During the second month, she shall teach them how to make mental prayer, instructing them in the practice of one point each day. Simply and succinctly she shall explain one article of the Rule each day, advising them that failure in some of them puts them in danger of committing a mortal sin against the commandments of God.

At two o'clock, after the Community reading, the Seminary Directress shall go with the new sisters to their designated place and shall instruct them on the excellence of the Sacraments, teaching the sisters that it is through the merit of the Blood of Jesus Christ that the benefits of the sacraments are bestowed upon us. She shall inform them of the great happiness experienced by souls who receive the sacraments well, and of the unhappiness of those who do not. She shall have them give an account of their use of the morning with regard to faults against their Rule and against the sisters. She shall teach them the acts necessary to prepare for a good confession and Communion, although this would only be for a week. Esteem due the confessors must also be taught at this time.

I omitted that, at one o'clock, she shall have them say the "Our Father," or another prayer for those who do not know it. This shall continue until the two o'clock bell.

When the Superioress or another of the Sister Officers employs one of the new sisters, she shall make sure that it is not during her instruction time; and the sister who has been given a task shall notify the Seminary Directress. The Directress shall never indicate disapproval; however, if she finds the situation inconvenient, she shall go to consult with the Superioress on the matter and then shall gently inform the sister making the request.

Office of the Bell-Ringer

The sister who awakens the others must pay attention to her responsibility, which is comparable to that of our guardian angels. Each evening, she shall ask her own guardian angel for help so that she will have bell in hand precisely at four o'clock. For the sake of health and modesty, she will have decently dressed beforehand.

She shall go quietly to all parts of the dormitories, saying in a

moderately loud voice, "In the name of God arise, my Sisters."

At four-thirty she shall ring the call to chapel.

At five-fifteen, the Angelus.

At eleven-thirty, dinner.

At twelve-fifteen, the rising from table is rung and the reader says Grace. The sister who serves at table is usually one of the Sister Officers.

At six o'clock, the suppertime examen, and at eight o'clock, evening prayers.

Office of the Portress

The Sister Portress shall often think of the trust that the others have in her in giving her such an important duty. As do the other Officers, she shall ask for the grace to perform her duties well. Since she is by herself, she shall be sure to have some work which she can carry with her so that time is not wasted.

She shall not converse on curious or worldly matters with those waiting at the entrance. Often, these are poor people, and she shall do her utmost to give them some manner of advice. She shall do the same for the novices.

She shall not go far from the door, so that those who come are not kept waiting; and she shall humbly ask forgiveness of anyone who complains of having waited too long.

When someone rings to enter or exit, the sound warns her to speak and conduct herself with modesty. When a sister is asked for, and the Portress does not know whether she is present, she shall ask the person to be seated while she goes to notify the Superioress or, in her absence, the Sister Assistant. The response shall be relayed simply to the person waiting, and the sister asked for shall not be told that she has had a visitor.

Likewise, the Portress shall give no messages to the sisters or tell them that someone wished to speak with them. However, if someone begs her to do so, then she shall faithfully tell the Superioress.

She must be careful of things told her in general conversation with externs so that confusion does not arise from her lack of knowledge of news from the city.

She shall take great care always to carry with her the keys to the door, never leaving them there. She shall close the other doors of the courtyard entrance and shall let no one enter without permission.

She shall have the sick wait to be bled or bandaged in the Saint Cosmas Room. The schoolgirls shall be placed in the school and the novices in the nearby parlor. She shall ask the wealthy and moderately wealthy to sit in the Saint Peter parlor, keeping the door to the refectory closed.

Before nightfall in winter, she shall be sure to double lock the door, and she shall be sure never to go there alone. She shall not open the door without permission after seven-thirty in winter and eight o'clock in summer. At nine o'clock, after having locked all doors of access, she shall take her keys to the Superioress. If there was some trouble in locking any of the doors, she shall notify the Superioress of it.

Office of the Schoolmistress

The Schoolmistress shall have her sister students read from six o'clock until seven when they must go to Mass, except those who put the dormitories in order and the sister who is responsible for the community room and the downstairs area. They shall make their meditation by themselves in the chapel after the lessons given by the First Assistant or, in case of necessity, by another appointed for this task.

At precisely eight o'clock, she shall go to the school and kneel down to ask for help of the Holy Spirit for herself and for her pupils, that they be taught purely for the glory of God.

She shall make sure that all the pupils coming to school do the same thing.

She shall have her little girls recite their lessons attentively, not merely going through the motions. She shall often reflect that these souls must learn from her the means to attain their salvation. God asks this of her; the children's parents give her this responsibility; and the interest of these poor children urges her to it. At ten-thirty, she shall take her pupils to Mass, placing them all in front of her in order to get them used to behaving respectfully and appropriately in church. On their return, she shall have them enter the House, praising those who have done well, and gently reprimanding those who have not, emphasizing to them the importance of this matter. She shall advise them to return home with modesty, to respect and obey their parents, and to avoid offending God. She then shall get them all together as soon as possible so that they can go to the dinnertime examen.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, she shall go to the appointed place in order to instruct those sisters who have permission to learn to write. Carefully, and without noise, each one shall write only four lines. Those who finish first shall be sent back to the House. Those who have difficulty learning their prayers by heart shall be asked to recite them after the writing lessons are finished. Following the instruction, which takes place after the two o'clock reading, she shall go to the school, entering as she had in the morning. Provided that it is done slowly and attentively when there are a great many pupils, she shall have them recite their lessons,

although not so much as they had done in the morning. Especially in the winter, the Schoolmistress shall ask for help from the Superioress so that nothing is omitted.

She shall not fail to have her pupils pray to God every morning and every evening before she sends them home.

She shall place greater importance on instructing them well in the mysteries of faith, in correct morality, and on the difference between good and evil than on progress in reading or on the memorization of a lot of facts which reveal more curiosity and vanity than solid learning which consists in understanding clearly what has been taught and putting it to good use.

She shall instruct her pupils well in the sacraments and in the esteem due to them. She shall teach them all that is necessary for the proper reception of these sacraments.

In order that the souls to which she speaks may profit from her advice, she shall inflame in herself a great love for the salvation of these souls and a great esteem for her work. She shall recognize herself unworthy of this task and shall be sure never to give them bad example, correcting them impartially, and conducting herself always with modesty.

She shall never accept anything which her pupils would like to give her, not even a New Year's gift. However, if it is something quite small and sent by a child's mother, then she shall accept it with the permission of the Superioress.

Each Thursday she shall teach Catechism, explaining it so that it is understood and phrasing her questions in different ways so that her pupils grasp the meaning rather than simply memorize words.

She shall teach them the way in which they are to spend their day, making them accountable for it. She shall take special care to instruct them when it comes time to prepare them for their First Communion, indicating to them that they will possibly receive more important graces for their salvation from it, if they are open to its reception.

Office of the Pharmacist

Her primary concern is to learn properly the method of compounding remedies; and she shall be most exact to observe all that is necessary in this. She shall use only pure drugs, checking on them often. In the event that some remedy deteriorates, she shall make some up new immediately.

She shall prepare syrups in the proper seasons. In this endeavor, she shall follow the exact proportions and shall do everything promptly, neither overcooking nor undercooking the syrups.

Since her responsibilities involve the health of the Company, she shall

have greater care for the health of her soul so that all her care may be pleasing to God.

When the sisters tell her of their indispositions, she shall listen to them charitably without dispensing remedies too often. She shall then inform the Superioress of what she finds out. Without exception, she shall have equal care of all the sisters. In the case of illness, she shall carefully give whatever is needed to the sisters. She shall be discreet so that nothing she says will sadden them; she shall sympathize with those who have need of sympathy, and she shall encourage the fainthearted and apprehensive, helping them to submit themselves to the will of God.

She shall inform the Superioress of any need in the quality of their food or of any need of the sacraments. She shall also inform the Superioress when the sick have need of being visited in order to prevent great despondency.

When it becomes necessary to call a doctor, she shall make this known, and she shall be most exact to prepare the prescriptions. She shall make sure that the sister appointed as Sister Infirmarian carries out her duty well; that she gives nothing to the sick which could cause them harm; that she does not tell them anything which could sadden them, or anything which is said at the House; that she gives nothing which is served at the sisters' meals.

Insofar as she is able, she shall be the one who bandages and bleeds the poor who come to the House. She shall find out from the Superioress which sisters may learn these skills so that they can assist her. She shall be a great example to the sisters of the House and to those outside as well since the office which she occupies is one of the principal ones. She must be careful that all she says is to the point. She must also be careful of the words she chooses; nothing she utters should cause disedification.

She shall particularly refrain from being curious and from wanting to know what goes on in the houses of the sisters. Insofar as is possible, she shall make sure that no one is bled who has the means to go to a surgeon to have it done. Others in need of being bled and Ladies who do not appear to be very sick shall not be bled unless they are well-known by the Sister Pharmacist, or, at least, not without the advice of a doctor. A pregnant woman is never bled without the advice of a doctor.

As is the custom, the Sister Pharmacist shall sell good quality remedies at a better price than is found at the apothecary shops.

She shall maintain an account book in which to record money owed her, and all entries shall be crossed out promptly when she has been paid.

She shall have a strongbox in the pharmacy in which she shall place all money received, and she shall have a key to it so that she can take money from it for her advance payments. Every three months, she shall count the money along with the Superioress and the Treasurer. She shall record funds given out as the Treasurer records money taken in.

If it becomes necessary to make large advance payments for supplies, she shall borrow the money from the House and then repay it from her receipts before they are totaled.

Office of the Baker

She shall greatly esteem her duty since bread is the greatest necessity for life. She shall always try to do her best without, nonetheless, blending her flour any differently than normal.

She shall make sure that her oven is neither too hot nor too cold, and in order to regulate this better, she shall split some wood and leave it to dry at the oven after having done her baking.

She shall be most exact and faithful that no dainties such as cakes or other pastries are baked. She shall also make sure that none of the sisters come to take away bread or to break the loaves.

She shall be careful that the flours are blended again and that the bran does not go bad. She shall keep the granary in good condition.

When kneading the dough, she shall not use water which is too hot, for this produces a coarser, red bread. The baker shall spare neither herself nor her sweat for she shall knead the dough much more than is actually necessary. Once in a while she may rest before she finishes.

The Office of the Cook

This is one of the most important offices for the regulation of the House. For this reason, the Cook shall animate herself for her task as if she were continually in a hurry. Nevertheless, she shall do this without overeagerness. In the evening, she shall be careful to have some water and wood with which to start her cooking early in the morning.

At four-thirty she shall go to the chapel as the others, and shall make her meditation in peace. After the Angelus has rung, she shall leave the chapel and go immediately to start the fire and to put on the pot which she shall not leave until it is at a full boil. Her fire having been started, she shall complete, in the kitchen, the prayers which are said at this time, checking on the fire from time to time.

After her pot has come to a boil, she shall go to Mass, unless there is an infirm individual in need of soup, in which case she shall prepare some and then leave, with permission.

If one day she finds that the herbs have not been cleaned the night before, she then shall ask a sister to help her. On other days as well, she

shall ask for help rather than have dinner ready any later than exactly eleven-thirty.

When one of the Ladies or some other woman in retreat is present, she shall take extra care that their meals are ready on time.

She shall not wait until close to dinnertime and then hurry about her business. Rather, she shall work carefully all morning long, finding out well in advance what she is to prepare for the meal.

She shall keep herself clean and shall work in a clean manner so that nothing distasteful is found in the soup and portions.

She shall accept corrections and reprimands with humility and with the desire to profit from them.

She shall be sure to prepare enough so that each one receives an equal portion.

She shall see to it that the meat is neither overcooked nor undercooked. She shall season fricasseed meat well without its being too spicy, too salty, or too vinegary since all this is bad for the health. On the other hand, it should not lack seasoning to the point that the sisters cannot eat it.

She shall dish out the soup precisely at eleven-fifteen so that everyone can be served peacefully, promptly and quietly. Otherwise, service could be interrupted.

At five o'clock, she shall start to prepare supper. If there are any infirm individuals or women in retreat, then she shall start at four-thirty and well before. She shall go to the chapel at five-thirty to listen to the reading, and there she shall have a quarter hour of meditation. She shall conclude her meditation in the kitchen for she must be ready to serve the sisters when they arrive at the refectory at a little before six-fifteen . . .

L.134 - RULE FOR THE SISTERS GOING TO LE MANS

(Wednesday, May 2, 1646)

Sister Jeanne Lepintre[1] shall go to Le Mans with a heart filled with charity for the sick poor, for the sisters who are accompanying her, and for those whom she will find there.

She shall take great care to bear with and to edify the first Daughters whom she will encounter at the Hôtel-Dieu. She shall try very gently to bring them back to the practice of their Rule in keeping with the orders of Monsieur Portail.[2] She shall show them cordial respect. The sisters shall have great respect for the Administrators and obedience to the Superior of the Mission.

1. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

2. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.

As often as possible the sisters shall send us news, notifying us of what is taking place among them and informing us of other necessary matters.

Even if there is a pharmacist, they shall take on the task of washing the women and girls.

They shall recall often the advice of Monsieur Vincent, especially that which prohibits unnecessary communication with men, and even clergy, in any place outside of the church or hospital.

They shall remember to preserve great gentleness and support among themselves; and it should be with an open heart and great trust that they approach the Sister Servant for all their needs.

They shall give my regards to all the Priests of the Mission and shall show them great respect. They shall not take advantage of their gentleness and goodness and shall conduct themselves towards them as they would at the House.

While en route, they shall remember to follow their Rule as precisely as they are able. After they leave the coach, they shall go to adore the Blessed Sacrament at the church. The sister sent to the inn for necessities shall conduct herself with reserve. If they have some time, they shall go to the hospital to visit any of the sick poor who might be there, recalling that the love and service of God and neighbor is their sole reason for existence.

L.131 - NOTE ON THE SUBJECTS WHICH NEED TO BE TREATED DURING THE CONFERENCES[1]

(1646)

To help us to understand the nature of the calling of the Daughters of Charity and the dispositions that this vocation requires. To this end, to point out the esteem they must have for their state in life and for the poor since they are paid and nourished from the funds provided for them.

What the sisters are to do to avoid receiving in this world their recompense for the service they render to the poor. This could happen because of the slight effort they put into a service which they no longer perform but for which they receive great honor.

If the sisters do not sometimes deceive themselves in their overeager-

1. These topics proposed by Louise de Marillac were treated by Vincent de Paul in a series of Conferences in 1646: February 13, 1646, On the Love of our Vocation and on Helping the Poor; August 19, 1646, On Indifference; August 19, 1646, On Meekness and the Practice of Mutual Respect; October 22, 1646, On Concealing and Excusing the Faults of one's Sisters.

ness to serve the poor of the parishes or in the Hôtel-Dieu, which can cause them to be less satisfied to remain in the House.

If those sisters who remain in the House do not have the same merit as those engaged in the direct service of the poor.

What care and affection the sisters should have for the Rule of the House and how faithful they should be in observing it.

How the sisters must esteem and love one another and be willing to have their faults reported to the one who holds the place of Superioress. How each one in turn should warn the same Superioress of the faults which they have seen her commit.

How each sister should spontaneously remind her companions of their faults and how they should accept these admonitions.

On the danger to be found in complaining to one another of the faults they find in their sisters, and particularly in murmuring and in unburdening themselves to others about the admonitions they have received.

A.44 - (REMARKS ON THREE DECEASED SISTERS)

(c. 1646)

Among other reasons which we have for speaking of our deceased sisters, the little progress in virtue which is apparent among us is one of the most important.

Another is to avoid being ungrateful for the graces which we receive from the goodness of God.

The three sisters of whom we are to speak all died young. This is a third reason pushing us to have this Conference as soon as possible: so that we may all, young and old alike, place ourselves in the dispositions in which we wish to be found at the moment of death.

Our Sister Marie who died at Saint-Denis had only been in the Company for about three months. Nevertheless, she practiced almost all the virtues that could be asked of her, particularly great submission and the desire to persevere and to die in the Company. She hid her ailments and placed such little importance on her life that her physical limitations never prevented her from undertaking the most arduous chores.

Retreat note: fear of leaving the Company.

Sister Jacquette Midy had a strong desire to die in the Company. Since she was aware that she did not have sufficient physical strength to remain, she hoped to die rather than be obliged to leave. She greatly desired to do penance. She patiently accepted being admonished of her faults. Although she had considerable difficulty in overcoming her self-will, she

submitted to others very peacefully. She asked pardon for not having said from what region she came.

As for our Sister Marie Despinal,[1] from the time that she sought to enter the Company, she revealed a true call from God to perseverance. She showed no imperfections.

A.75 - (ON THE CONDUCT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE)

The day and the season when God permitted us to recognize His Divine Providence by the remarkable events surrounding the fall of our ceiling[2] reminded me once again of my profound interior conversion at that time when His goodness gave me light and understanding concerning the great anxieties and difficulties which I was then experiencing.

I then thought that our entire family should have great devotion to the Feast of Pentecost and total dependence on Divine Providence. However, this should be manifested in a very particular way.

As on other occasions when the grace of God has acted in our Most Honored Father and in the souls of some of our sisters, leading to the solid foundation of this little family, so it seemed to me that rather than looking upon this event as an accident, we should see it as a warning to his Charity to establish a close union between the way of life that God wanted this community to practice and that of his Institute, since there are common interests to be found in this place of God. Miserable as I am, I should have seen this accident as a punishment for my sins. However, I never thought of it in that light either at the time or later. In word and in my heart, I always considered that it was a grace from God, permitted for an end that we do not know and that God, by means of it, was asking something of each of us. I pray that He will reveal His will to our Most Honored Father.

It seemed to me that in order to be faithful to God we must live in great union with one another. Since the Holy Spirit is the union of the Father and the Son, the life which we have freely undertaken must be lived in this great union of hearts. This will prevent us from becoming annoyed by the actions of others and enable us to bear with one another and to live together with cordiality and gentleness. The familiar exchanges that we propose to have each Friday and the monthly Conferences, should we be permitted to have them, can help to facilitate this practice. We should also ask the extraordinary confessor for means for acquiring this virtue as well as that of total dependence on Divine Providence, since

1. Marie Despinal died in May, 1646, see Letter 458.

2. The accident occurred in June, 1642, on the vigil of the Feast of Pentecost.

this is one of the virtues which God clearly requires of us in order to insure the preservation of the Company.

We must once again be taught by this voice of God to become accustomed, out of love, to think often of Him so as to prepare ourselves to die at the time that pleases Him and even suddenly, if such be His holy will, since our lives place us in situations where this could happen. We must often reflect upon this.

As for myself, I thought that I must be more faithful to God than ever before in my spiritual life, in the service I must render to the poor, and especially in the guidance and assistance which I bring to our sisters. I must also ask for direction in the use I am to make of the many graces which I see God bestowing upon me and with which I feel interiorly filled.

Once, moved by this sentiment, I thought that I ought to refuse these graces and desire only God. However, a few days later, God led me to understand that the graces which He granted to me were not for me, but because I belonged to Him as I was. Nevertheless, I did not understand this.

With all my heart, I wanted to render glory to God and to cause others to do the same, since this seemed to correspond to the plan of God when He permitted this accident to happen to us. To this end, I thought that I must strive to keep the memory of this event alive within me for the rest of my days and thank God for the interior sentiments which He gave me at that time.

I resolved to ask permission for myself and for all of our sisters to receive Holy Communion each month on this date, so as to thank God for His protection and for the grace which He has given to us in calling us to serve Him in the person of the poor and to renew the fervor of the first days of our vocation to the Company.

Each year, from the Ascension to Pentecost, all our sisters shall practice interior recollection in honor of the plan of the Son of God when He commanded His Apostles to remain in a state of inactivity while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. They shall strive to imitate the life of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles in their deprivation of the visible presence of Jesus. Henceforth, if possible, the sisters of the Motherhouse shall make their retreat at this time. With permission, they shall be deprived of Holy Communion so as to do penance for their failings in the reception of the Blessed Sacrament during the course of the year and to obtain from God better dispositions for the future.

Let us all make a pilgrimage to invoke the intercession of the saints and to glorify God for the graces which He has bestowed on the entire Company on this occasion. On this date each month, the sisters shall say the Litany of the Saints at the conclusion of the evening meditation.

A.49B - PRAYER TO BE SAID MORNING AND EVENING BEFORE THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

I adore You, Most Holy Trinity, one God in three Persons, and I thank You for all the graces that, in Your goodness, You have bestowed upon me. I give You my heart and all that I possess so that henceforth I may accomplish Your holy will.

Grant me the grace, I beg of You, my God, to spend this day without offending You and without wronging my neighbor. Help me to recognize my sins and move me to contrition for having offended You, my God, who are so good. Have mercy on us because of the merits of the Precious Blood of my Savior. Have mercy on us and on all souls immersed in mortal sin so that, having obtained mercy, they may praise You eternally.

PERIOD BETWEEN 1647 AND 1660

A.85 - (INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SISTERS WHO WERE SENT TO MONTREUIL)

(1647)

Our Sisters Anne Hardemont[1] and Marie Lullen[2] are going to Montreuil in order to discover what Divine Providence wishes them to do there.

First and foremost, they must remember to keep in mind God and His glory. Then they must consider the welfare of the people with whom they will be associated in order to serve them better according to their aptitudes.

Thirdly, they shall remember that none of their actions among themselves or with externs should be prejudicial to the Company of the Daughters of Charity because we must honor God in the interest of the Company.

Above all, they shall beware of crediting to themselves the least portion of the works in which God does us the honor of employing us. This can come about through vain complacency, satisfaction, or self-serving plans; all things which we must renounce often.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

2. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.

En route, they shall be as exact as possible in the practice of their Rule. If they cannot make their morning meditation before leaving, they shall make it without fail while in the coach. Before leaving their bedroom, they shall make an act of adoration. In the evening they shall make their examen while kneeling.

They shall take a book along with them in order to read in the coach. They shall try to keep their exercises private and shall avoid bothering others in the coach.

They shall guard against uttering improper, careless or idle words, and against any unbecoming action. In order to prevent this, they shall watch over one another in order to give a charitable warning if a sister accidentally forgets herself. The sister given the warning shall willingly accept it even if she is not aware of her fault.

If they have the opportunity to say a few good words to some poor person or to the servants at the inns, they should do so with humility, never mocking the person's ignorance.

After leaving the coach, before thinking about eating, they shall go to the nearest church to adore God in the Blessed Sacrament.

They shall make the same act of adoration in every village through which they pass. They shall acknowledge the guardian angel of each town and the guardian angel of each soul living there in order to commend them to their protection for the glory of God.

If they are able to do so before the coach departs in the afternoon, they shall visit some of the sick or the hospital, if there is one in the village.

Arriving at Montreuil, they shall go directly to the church and then to the Château to pay their respects to the Governor [the Count de Lannoy] telling him that they are there to receive his orders.

They shall remember that true Daughters of Charity must be united in order to fulfill God's expectations. Because our corrupted nature has deprived us of this perfection, and since sin separates us from our unity which is God, following the example of the Blessed Trinity, we must have but one heart and act with one mind as do the three divine Persons. We must do this in such a way that, when the sister in charge of the sick requests the help of her sister, the sister who instructs the children shall readily comply. And, if the sister in charge of the children requests assistance from the sister in charge of the poor, she shall do likewise since both tasks are equally the business of God. Considering themselves both chosen by Divine Providence in order to act in unison, we hope never to hear the words, "That is your business, not mine."

If they are housed outside of the hospital, they shall not go to the hospital unless the Count orders them to do so.

If they are housed at the hospital and their only task seems to be the service of the poor of the city, and, nonetheless, the Count wishes them

to take charge of the school for girls and the care of the sick of the hospital as well, then they shall comply and shall not involve themselves in other things.

Should the Count request that they tell him all that happens at the hospital, then they shall do so with great prudence and charity.

Prudence consists in speaking about important matters only and not relating a lot of trifles that are not worth saying. That which you feel obliged to say should be expressed in as gentle a manner as possible, remembering that what seems evil is often so only in our feelings and opinions. In order to avoid conflict with the women and girls who have run the hospital for a long time, our sisters must have great respect for them and manifest great love and cordiality toward them. The sisters shall do nothing without their permission, not even take a pot, a frying pan, or anything else for their own needs.

In this matter, they shall remember the instruction and example of our Most Honored Father: that they shall enter this house prepared to suffer and to humble themselves beyond all their expectations. This they can do by apologizing to persons apparently angry with them even if they did not provoke this anger.

If some of these good women and girls get the idea that you are there to dismiss them and send them away, in the name of God, my Sisters, bear with such little suspicions, but prevent them as much as you can from arising by showing submission and cordiality in your words and actions. Consider that, in reality, you must respect these good persons as your mothers and as persons chosen by God to begin this work and to administer it so well during all these years.

Never respond to any complaints or reproaches that they may address to you. Although you are assured that the Count will provide for all your needs, do not take advantage of this, and bear in mind that you are there on a trial basis. If these good girls do fairly well and you, on the contrary, are at odds among yourselves and exhibit discord, you shall most certainly be sent back. This fact shall oblige you to act always with purity of intention, only looking upon God with more humility, mistrusting yourselves and trusting in God so that, if we are sent back, we shall be able to believe that it is the will of God; that it will not harm the Company or give bad example to anyone.

Consequently, you must go there with the intention of accomplishing the will of God manifested through the will of the Count; and in order to obey the Count more perfectly, you shall consider him in God and God in him. Remember that such is the teaching of our Most Honored Father and that, perhaps, he owes the great blessings he has received from God to this holy practice.

In his goodness, the Count will often speak freely with you; be careful to show respect always and to be reserved in your speech. Above all, my

dear Sisters, if God should allow some small disputes between you, never mention the matter to him or to anyone else. And, if you have grounds to complain about one another, never allow it to appear on the outside.

It is most necessary that you never say anything rude to one another, especially in front of externs. With the help of God, your charity will prevent your being unpleasant with one another.

The close union that should exist between you shall be maintained by mutual forbearance with one another's failings and by the account you give of what you have done, where you have gone, or where you are going during the day. When some difficulty arises in your exercises, for example when the sister in charge of the sick, or she who is in charge of the children experiences some doubt, you shall talk it over together. As soon as you have found a solution, both of you, if possible, shall discuss it with the Count or with the Superioress, if there is one.

You are to conduct yourselves simply, according to the practice common to Paris and other places. However, if someone wishes you to act otherwise, you shall follow their orders so long as they are not offensive to God. Recall the same practice of our Most Honored Father who believes that the advice of others is always worth more than his own.

One of the great needs of our sisters is that they satisfy the people, and in this way God will bless their work and it will result in His Glory. This need is encountered everywhere, but especially there where the people are extremely fond of the hospital. Great gentleness and cordiality are necessary in order to win over these people. That is why it would be well if every morning each sister would individually pray (so as not to multiply the prayers said under the Rule) for the blessing of our good God in order that they might act in the manner of His Son while He was on earth as they carry out the works of charity to which they have been called. Better yet, they should pray that the same Spirit that acted in Him should act through them. They should begin their day by reflecting that they are accompanied by Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and their guardian angel. It would also be well to have devotion to the guardian angels of all the souls in the city.

Our sisters shall be mindful to show great respect to priests, particularly to the chaplain of the hospital to whom they should show no familiarity. If necessity requires them to speak to him, they shall always do so together or in the company of another person. They shall take the parish priest as their confessor, believing that they will always find a blessing in remaining obedient.

As for your conduct toward the sick, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or too eager. Above all, you must have

great care for their salvation, never leaving a poor person or a patient without having uttered some good word. When you meet someone who appears quite ignorant, have them make acts of faith, contrition and love; for example, "I believe all that the Holy Church believes, and I wish to live and to die in this faith." At other times, it would be well to have such persons recite separately the principal articles of our faith.

They shall not forget to give a report of the expenditures for their trip and any money remaining to the Count. If they are housed separately, either in or outside the hospital, their expenditures are to be taken care of by the Count and kept separate from other accounts. If they are also required to spend money for the poor, one of them should handle these funds and the other, the money for the maintenance of the sisters.

If, as is the custom in the parishes of Paris, you were to receive an annual sum, it would not be necessary to give an account of your expenditures to the Count. However, since he sets no limits and money is requested as needed, you must furnish him with separate accounts of expenditures both for yourselves and for the poor.

As for your food, you may not change it even if you are offered better than that which you receive where you are housed.

Our sisters shall remember to be as recollected as possible in all places, visiting no one and allowing no one to enter their quarters, whether to visit or to engage in useless conversation.

When they are requested to do something the propriety of which they doubt, they shall defer the matter as long as they can in order to have the time to seek the advice of the Superioress.

Our dear Sisters are most humbly requested, at the beginning, to send us news every two weeks, and to pray for us and for the entire Company. On our part, we shall often implore God to grant them the blessings they need for the fulfillment of His will. May He be eternally blessed.

A.14B - (TO THE VIRGIN MARY)

Most Holy Virgin, you know the emotions of my heart today at the thought of your Divine Son in the Crib and how great this mystery seemed to me when I considered that it was the introduction of the law of grace granted to all mankind, which until then had been held captive by the guilt of original sin, that deprived all souls of the vision of God for which they had been created.

O holy time of grace! Why are our souls not in a continuous state of joy and happiness? Why does this time not suffice to fill our lives with love for so good a God?

O my God, I wish to reflect often upon this and to recognize Your

infinite mercy because You created me. After this holy time, I beg You to make me most grateful for this favor.

Most Holy Virgin, how admirable is your virtue! You are the Mother of God, yet you did not disdain to live in humility and poverty. You did so to confound our pride and to make us esteem the grace of God above all worldly splendors, which are truly worthless in comparison.

O my God, why am I unable to reveal to the world the beauty which You have shown me as well as the dignity of the Blessed Virgin? Everything is comprised in her title of Mother of the Son of God. How admirable are her deeds! With good reason the Church addresses her as the Mother of Mercy because she is also the Mother of Grace.

I gaze upon you today, most pure Virgin Mother of Grace, since it was you who not only provided the matter for the formation of the sacred body of your Son, at a time when you were not as yet actually a mother, but by bringing Him into the world, you have become both Mother of God and Mother of the Man who at His birth brought a new law to the world, the law which alone leads to eternal life. You are the Mother of the Law of Grace because you are the Mother of Grace incarnate. It seems to me that I have never looked upon you as such. If the people of Israel held Moses in such high esteem because they had received the revelation of the will of God through him, what love and service must I not render to you for having brought the God of the Law of Grace into this world. I shall manifest my gratitude to you by the praise I offer, by my zeal in helping others to recognize your greatness, and by renewed devotion and trust in your powerful intercession with God.

Help me, I implore you, most Holy Virgin, to put such appropriate resolutions into practice.

A.20 - (THOUGHTS ON THE CROSS)

Weeping, Saint Paul exclaimed that many persons living in the world are enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, we are called upon to honor this Holy Cross by all types of suffering, after the example of Our Lord, who teaches us this by His death on the Cross and by all the other pains and sufferings which He endured during His life on earth and which are recounted in several places in the Gospel. But souls chosen by God are very particularly destined to suffer, and this is such a sweet and agreeable privilege for them that they would rather die than not suffer since they consider loving and suffering as one and the same thing.

Our Lord wanted us to understand the dignity of suffering when He told Saint Paul that he would be honored by the privilege of suffering in

His name. This belief is a truth which must be deeply rooted in our hearts. Effectively, what are we accomplishing on earth when we suffer? We are applying to ourselves the merit of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

And what is God doing in heaven? He is eternally fulfilling the purpose for which His Son suffered and died, by granting eternal happiness to souls redeemed by this Divine Savior.

O Holy Cross! O suffering! How amiable you are since you are honored and will be eternally honored because of the power which you have given souls to praise and love God!

O Holy Cross! O suffering! How amiable you are since the love of God has given way to you in His Son to gain through you the power to give paradise to those who had lost it by pleasure!

A.36 - (THOUGHTS ON THE FEAST OF SAINT FIACRE)

Saint Fiacre left his country and the house of his father, the King, in order to live in the desert of Brie. This generous action could have been prompted only by a strong interior grace which, at one and the same time, enlightened his understanding and revealed to him the greatness of God and the contempt that he should have for all the splendors of the earth.

Grace thus touched his will and penetrated the depths of his heart, removing from his soul any obstacle to the dispositions which God in His goodness was giving to him. In order to make him a perfect man, God so filled him with His divine love that he left everything so as to possess the plenitude of this love.

At the sight of this divine action, I prayed that God would act in a similar manner in my soul and remove from it any obstacle to the grace which His goodness willed to bestow upon it and fill it with the necessary dispositions. I then resolved to cooperate and to strive to rid myself of the evil inclinations that often lead to sin, which is nothingness opposing itself to the omnipotence of God. I shall make every effort to avoid idleness, which is of such great importance because it imprisons the soul in a state of vicious poverty, since every instant that the soul cooperates with God it can amass immense treasures.

Not only did Saint Fiacre leave his country, but he did so in order to avoid becoming its King. When the emissaries of his father's kingdom were pursuing him, he begged God to cover him with leprosy so that they would leave him in peace in his hermitage.

As I reflected on the life and plans of Saint Fiacre, I saw that by renouncing his kingdom he took over the rule of a much more important

one because it is said that each human being is a microcosm of the universe.

Therefore, I looked upon him as the peaceful possessor of his little republic, overcoming, or rather, having overcome, his passions by the repudiation of all worldly pretentions. At the moment of death, friends and pleasures forsake those who have pursued them, but the subjects of our spiritual King will never abandon Him because they have been transformed from worldly, temporal and sensual beings into celestial and spiritual ones.

What a happiness it is to contemplate such a soul ascending to Paradise! There the King of Kings will welcome triumphantly this Prince and his court and make him one of His principal courtiers. I hope to imitate him by willingly renouncing everything and especially by placing no value on any position of authority and by trying to be relieved of office prior to my death, or, rather, during my lifetime. Neither shall I be concerned about who will replace me when business calls me away since I must believe that God is to be the absolute Master in the direction of souls.

I did not feel up to traveling. However, I asked God for good health because I had been advised to do so but, desiring to imitate the sentiments with which Saint Fiacre prayed for leprosy, I implored God not to cure me if I was not going to make a similar use of my restored health. I prayed also to be rid of all useless suspicions concerning my neighbor.

Our meditation on pilgrimages caused me to reflect that, in creating souls, God placed them here on earth as pilgrims destined to be in the company of their bodies only for a time. I considered that the greater number of our forefathers did not possess a permanent home and often undertook pilgrimages of devotion, perhaps to place before their eyes the fact that this earth was not their true home. In order to convince them of this truth, it often pleased God to have them accompanied by angels. In imitation of their example, I should willingly accept any change of place that Divine Providence may allow, being accompanied interiorly by my guardian angel.

I also thought that our first father, Adam, wanted to perpetuate his life on earth, in opposition to the plans of God, by eating the forbidden fruit and that, instead of acquiring life, he met with death. So as to remedy this evil, the Son of God came in person as a pilgrim, His life being one unending pilgrimage. This should be the example for our lives. Therefore, I have resolved to meditate profoundly on His life and to try to imitate it. I spent a great deal of time reflecting on the title of Christian which we bear, and I came to the conclusion that we must, indeed, truly conform our lives to the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to do this, I thought that I should study the manner in which I had acquired this name and the words employed by Holy Mother Church in conferring it upon us.

Finally, I must remember that I received this holy name so as to become a true Christian.

A.42 - (ON THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES IN THE DESERT)

Cum sublevasset oculos

This action of Our Lord as man must reveal the modesty of His exterior demeanor to us. It also permits us to understand that as God His divine gaze is the continual safeguard for the preservation of our natural and immortal being. Likewise, this benign gaze protects the grace which subsists in us by His love and goodness alone. Therefore, I must be eternally grateful to Him for this as well as for His mercy which He shows us in all the actions of His holy life and particularly in the care that His Providence wills to have for the flocks which follow Him. As if He were ignorant of a way to provide for their necessities, He asks where bread can be bought.

O my God, You desire to teach me the means for obtaining Your help in my needs. By the powerlessness which appears in this place, I see that I must admit my lowliness and recognize the truth of my nothingness in order to draw down upon me the greatness of Your mercy.

O Holy Providence, You are the source of all these graces! Grant, I beseech You, that I may confide my soul to You forevermore. It is by the loving gaze of Jesus upon me that I shall obtain this grace. However, this gaze comes from above. Therefore, with the help of His holy grace, I shall detach myself from the earth and attach myself closely to God. By the practice of His Holy Presence, this gentle gaze will inflame me with His holy love.

As the deer seeks water, so my soul seeks God. I shall prepare myself by a great desire to be united to Him so that, as food shares its properties with the human body which consumes it, so the union of my soul with God may render it conformable to Him, and the reception of the Precious Blood of my Savior may lead me to imitate His most holy life.

A.71 - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

(August 18, 1647)[1]

The Conference on Holy Communion treats of two points. The first point deals with the reasons why we should give ourselves to God to communicate worthily.

It appeared to me that there are two principal reasons in which all the others are comprised, one is the fear and the other the love of God.

The precept of the Church binding us to go to Communion once a year under pain of mortal sin shows that it is God's absolute will for us to communicate. It would seem from this threat that we should go to Communion frequently under pain of losing many graces which would be given to us in Holy Communion. It also behooves us to give ourselves to communicate worthily because, if we do not do so, we shall be in danger lest the threats addressed both to those who do not go to Communion at all and to those who communicate unworthily be levelled at us in punishment for our sins.

The other reason that we have for giving ourselves to God to communicate worthily is the gratitude we should have for the great love which He reveals by giving Himself to us in Holy Communion. We can only do so by testifying a reciprocal love of Our Lord, by desiring with all our heart to receive Him since He wishes with all His heart to give Himself to us. His love appeared to me to be all the greater from the fact that, His Incarnation having sufficed for our Redemption, it would seem as if He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion solely for our sanctification, not merely by the application of the merits of His Incarnation and death, but also by the communication which His goodness desires to make to us of all the actions of His life, and to establish us in the practice of His virtues, desiring to make us like unto Himself by His love.

On the second point which deals with what we should do in order to give ourselves to God to communicate worthily, it seemed to me that we should have a high esteem of Holy Communion, that such an esteem inspires a fear in us of not having the dispositions for communicating worthily and that, as one of the effects of Holy Communion, and the principal one, is union with God, we should strive, as far as it is in our power, to remove all hindrances to this union. And as the most dangerous of all is to be too self-centered and self-willed, through love of our own will, it is essential for us to give ourselves to God to have only one will with Him if we are to participate in the fruits of Holy Communion. This is what I desired after I had been taught by God, on so many occasions,

1. Thoughts drawn up by Louise de Marillac for the Conference (Coste IX, 341).

that I am incapable of any manner of good and utterly unworthy of Holy Communion.

It seemed to me that I should regard more attentively the actions of the Son of God in order that, aided by His grace, I may unite mine to His.

Because I know that God sees all things, I think I should always have a right intention when I go to Communion, without any admixture of human respect, and go solely for the love I should bear the holy and divine humanity of Jesus Christ, so that I may faithfully correspond to the love He bears me in this most Holy Sacrament. The knowledge God has imparted to me of the many occasions when, in the course of my life, I abused Holy Communion, by leading a life which rendered me unworthy of It and by the violence of my passions, inspired me with a desire to mortify them, so that I may not incur God's hatred instead of His love, if I continue to make a bad use of this divine Food.

A.63 - (REASONS FOR PERSEVERING IN ONE'S VOCATION)[1]

Three reasons why the Daughters of Charity must have the firm resolution to remain in the Company all their lives:

The first is the esteem we must have for the grace of our vocation.

The second is the danger to be found in uncertainty which causes us to think constantly of the future and which prevents us from making good use of the present.

The third is the occasions which the Daughters of Charity will constantly encounter for losing their vocation.

Means for making and keeping this resolution

The first is to ask God earnestly for the grace to do so.

The second is to reflect often on this vocation both as coming from God and as received by us, always recognizing our unworthiness.

The third is never to allow any thought which might lead us to abandon it.

1. Louise de Marillac used to prepare her thoughts in writing on the subject of the Conference being given by Vincent de Paul. At the beginning of the Company, it was she who drew up the account of the Conferences from Vincent de Paul's notes, from the sisters' letters, and from whatever the sisters remembered. In May 1646, she confided this duty to her secretary, Sister Élisabeth Hellot, who will be replaced in 1652 by Julienne Loret, and then by Mathurine Guérin. The secretaries saved many of the letters of their Foundress.

Signs by which we may know those sisters who have taken such a resolution

The first is to be exact in the observance of her Rules.

The second is to encourage the other sisters and to have a great desire for the perfection of all.

The third is to show great cordiality and to give proof of strong and respectful friendship.

A.68 - (ON OBEDIENCE)

(August 7, 1650)[1]

The first reason that occurred to me is that God, in creating the world, has subjected all creatures to obedience and in such a manner that it seems to me it was only His reasonable creatures who contravened His command and that this obliges us to love and practice obedience.

Another reason is that disobedience has always been so displeasing to God that when disobedience was introduced into the world by man, it was necessary for one of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity to become Man, not only to let us see by His acts of obedience how reasonable it is for us to obey, but also that our imperfect acts of obedience might, by being united to those of the Son of God, acquire the merit of His, and this is a very strong motive for acquiring and practicing the virtue of obedience.

A third reason is that without obedience there would be continual disorder in every family, especially in Communities, and particularly so in that of the Daughters of Charity, both on account of the freedom of going to different places afforded them by their mode of life and by the interior and exterior disorder that would be caused by disobedience.

And as obedience may be observed in different ways, it seemed to me that, if it is to be such as God demands of me, it is essential to obey with great simplicity and humility.

Secondly, we should obey those who have a right to command, without making any distinctions, and as if it were God Himself who commanded since it is for love of Him that we should obey and do His holy will.

A third condition of true and meritorious obedience is not to influence our Superiors to order us to do what we ourselves desire but to desire that we may be ordered to do what they know God demands of us.

In the fourth place, I think that obedience should be cheerful, prompt,

1. Thoughts prepared in view of the Conference (Coste IX, 528).

and uncritical, with submission of our own judgment and a faithful observance of whatever we may have been ordered to do. It will help us very much, in my opinion, if we accustom ourselves not to be self-opinionated and to yield to all sorts of persons, even in trifling matters.

I felt deeply ashamed, for I saw that I have frequently failed in all those observances through my pride and obstinacy, of which I repent and ask pardon of all my sisters who may have remarked it.

One of the means which I thought might help me to acquire this virtue of obedience, such as God demands it of me, is to esteem it highly; frequently to call to mind the obedience of the Son of God in matters that are painful and difficult for us; to reflect that it was His will that obedience should be observed even unto death and that this was to help us as an example and an encouragement.

Another means I hope to make use of is to be on the lookout for opportunities for practicing obedience. If I am not fortunate enough to have them frequently in my daily life, I thought that I should bear in mind, whenever I give orders or suggestions to those to whom I am bound to do so by my office, that it is because I have been commanded to do so by the will of God expressed to me by my Superiors.

A.44B - FORMULA OF THE VOWS[1]

I, the undersigned, in the presence of God, renew the promises of my baptism, and I vow poverty, chastity and obedience to the Venerable Superior General of the Priests of the Mission in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in order to give myself, for the whole of this year, to the corporal and spiritual service of the sick poor, our true Masters. I shall do this with the help of God which I ask of Him through His Son Jesus Crucified and the prayers of the Holy Virgin.

A.11 - (NOTES DURING A RETREAT)

I began my retreat with so many occasions to mortify my judgment that I wonder if this has not caused the interior suffering that I am now experiencing. These contradictions led to painful dryness in my customary prayers which lasted a long time, and I was very close to murmuring.

The refusal to send a sister to Madame Manceau, believing that this

1. This vow formula is signed by Jeanne Delacroix who recopied it as far as the word "chastity." The rest is written by Louise de Marillac.

was an honest decision and for her good. The decision to let another sister go to a place near her own home.

Finish the reading.

What a remedy for activity is to be found in recognizing my faults, reflecting on them, and grieving for each of them as well as for the shortcomings of the entire Company.

Am I mistaken when I think that I clearly perceive the interior motives of others, particularly my sisters in the Company?

I wonder if my idiotic behavior in revealing myself and in seeking advice is not putting me in danger of perdition. What prevents me from stopping, so it seems to me, is my inability to find the proper words to express what I really mean.

Did I fail in refusing the women of Saint-Étienne? Am I satisfying some passion on the occasions when I feel a certain repugnance in doing what I believe I must do?

Must I refrain from so much exterior dissipation in the use of elegant phraseology when speaking so as to expedite matters?

Should there be adaptations in my mental and vocal prayers and in my Rule?

Should I continue the prescribed reading in *Grenada* and in the New Testament?

Reflections on the little occasions for amusement that I find in holy cards and other devotions.

The pleasure I find in children. My conduct when there is something in the House belonging to them which is not in customary use. I pay for these things according to their market value rather than their actual worth.

In order to practice obedience, reflect on the Communion of union.

To supplicate very humbly that, for the love of God, I be warned of my faults since this could no longer hurt me. I seek also to be advised of the failings of the Company for the glory of God. I am certain that His goodness will grant me the grace to make good use of these admonitions.

M.20B - (LOVE OF GOD THE CREATOR)

The love which God has for our souls proceeds from the knowledge that He has of the excellence of the being which He has given to them and which participates in His life. This knowledge enables us to recognize their greatness since it is an act outside of God equal to the one which He produced in Himself when He begot the Second Person of the Godhead. However, since our souls are not God Himself and since His knowledge produces the love which He has for them, may He deign to

take fatherly care of the general well-being of those who are completely resigned to the designs of His holy will.

M.40B - (ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE)

I must practice great humility and mistrust of myself; abandon myself continuously to the Providence of God; imitate, insofar as I am able, the life of Our Lord who came on earth to accomplish the holy will of God His Father; assist my neighbor to the best of my ability both corporally and spiritually for the love which God has for all of us equally; carry out my spiritual exercises carefully.

A.14 - (THOUGHTS ON THE INCARNATION AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST)

The Son of God took a human body in the womb of the Blessed Virgin in a state of innocence more perfect than that of the first man. This action was sufficient to satisfy divine justice for the disobedience of our first parents and to reveal to us the truth of the plan of God expressed in the words, "My delight is to be with the children of men."

Nevertheless, this did not satisfy His great love for us. He desired an inseparable union of divine nature with human nature. He accomplished this after the Incarnation by the admirable institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar in which the fullness of the divinity dwells continually in the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity. This union is a means for uniting the Creator to His creature. However, all do not participate in this mystery because free will enables man to bring about his own damnation by following his evil inclinations and the temptations of the devil, or to earn his salvation by grace which applies to him the merits of the Son of God.

We have reason to believe that the assurance which Our Lord gave us that He would always be with us was designed to sanctify souls by means of this continual, albeit invisible, presence and by the application of the merits of His actions to those of His creatures. Our Lord does this either by asking pardon of His Father so as to wash away the sins which we have committed in opposition to the virtues which He Himself practiced, or by rendering the virtuous deeds which men accomplish by the power of His grace pleasing to God by uniting them to His meritorious actions. It seemed to me that it is in this way that the holy humanity of Our Lord is continually present to us. He is among us by the application of His

merits and by the sanctification of souls. His presence is like air without which the soul is lifeless. It is thus that I see the Redemption of men in the Incarnation and their sanctification by means of this union of man with God in the person of His Son and by this continual presence, whereby His merits are applied to each soul joined to the personal union of a God to man. All of nature is thereby honored since it causes God to see His image in all mankind, if it has not been disfigured by the refusal of the application of the merits of His Son which sin alone can effect.

This thought came to me after a long period during which I prayed for a great love for the humanity of Our Lord as a means for moving me to practice His virtues especially gentleness, humility, forbearance and love of my neighbor in order to overcome the sins which I so often commit against them.

M.33 - (DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN)

All truly Christian souls should have great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, especially in her role as Mother of God. They should honor her, also, because of the virtues with which God endowed her for accomplishment of His holy designs.

Her eminent dignity obliges us to honor her in some way each day. The best way to do this is to unite ourselves to the Church, especially at those times which it has set aside for the express purpose of paying homage to Mary. We should rejoice with her and congratulate her for the choice which God made of her by uniting His humanity and His divinity within her womb. We should also implore her to assist us to preserve in our own hearts a close union with God.

When we are filled with gratitude for the graces that God has bestowed upon us through the Incarnation and the exemplary life of Jesus Christ, let us look upon the Blessed Virgin as the channel through which all these benefits have come to us and thank her by acts of love.

Let us take Our Lady as the model for our daily lives and bear in mind that the best way to honor her is by imitating her virtues. We should particularly honor her purity since we are the spouses of Jesus Christ. We should also imitate her humility which led God to do great things in her. Following the example she gave us by living apart from her parents as a very young child, we must be detached from all things. In all of our actions, let us practice these virtues, of which Mary has given us the example, and beg her to offer them to her Son in our name.

Let us celebrate, in a special way, the Church feasts honoring Mary and meditate, during the day, on the mystery proposed. Each day, let us implore her to help us to render to God the service we have promised

Him and to be as submissive as she was in accomplishing His holy will.

We should faithfully recite, each day, those prayers which we have chosen to honor her. These should include acts of love as well as of joyful praise for the glory that is hers in heaven. Finally, let us continue to hope that we will one day be with her and will thus be able to render to her all the honor due to her in the divine plan.

A.23 - (THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM)

Since the sacrament of Baptism is a spiritual birth, it follows that He, in whose name we are baptized, is our Father and that, as His children, we must resemble Him. Consequently, we who are baptized in Jesus Christ are baptized in His death. Thus, our entire life should be a continuous death, for it would be quite prejudicial to the soul to live amidst delights. Moreover, this death in which we are baptized is the result of the love which Our Lord has had for us from all eternity. He could have found no better way to show us that love than by His anticipated death, for if human beings place such a high value on this life that they prefer it to all else, how much greater reason would our dear Master not have had to prize His since He possessed every virtue and had a body in perfect condition? Thus, as the good daughter I desire to be, I want to imitate this good Father. In order to be truly the daughter of death, I resolve, with the help of His grace, no longer to fear that death which will unite us to Jesus Christ for all eternity. It is not logical for the members to flee that which their Head so ardently desired.

Let us live, therefore, as if we were dead in Jesus Christ. Henceforth, let there be no further resistance to Jesus, no action except for Jesus, no thoughts but in Jesus!

May my life be solely for Jesus and my neighbor so that, by means of this unifying love, I may love all that Jesus loves, and through the power of this love which has as its center the eternal love of God for His creatures, I may obtain from His goodness the graces which His mercy wills to bestow upon me.

A.74 - (THOUGHTS ON THE HIGH ESTEEM WHICH WE SHOULD HAVE FOR OUR SISTERS)

(January 5, 1651)[1]

The Conference is on the high esteem which we should have for our sisters so as always to speak well of them.

1. On the first point, I thought that one of the reasons which we have for giving ourselves to God to do this is the great difficulty which our love for our own esteem always opposes to the practice of this virtue because of the blindness which it causes us in our own regard and with regard to our neighbor. This often leads us to judge the intentions and actions of our sisters other than what they really are.

2. Another reason is that, if we no longer live for ourselves and are truly given to God to acquire this virtue, His goodness will not permit us to abuse the passions which are part of our nature. Rather, God will grant us the grace to act only as belonging to Him by His spirit, and He will not allow us to dishonor this spirit by acting contrary to it since, being entirely His, we cannot go against it.

The second point deals with the faults which we can commit against this holy practice. One is not to have a high regard for it. Another is not to consider the great good that can come from it. The most serious would be to fail to realize that it is very pleasing to God and not to bother to strive to acquire it.

It follows that, if we do not speak well of our sisters when we are together, we will inevitably say something damaging to them or talk about frivolous things. This could be very prejudicial to the Company and scandalize our neighbor who might hear of it.

Another great evil which is to be feared is that we would live together in discord; that we would not love one another enough; and finally, that God would frequently be offended. If we acquire the practice of esteeming and of speaking well of our sisters, a spirit of union, gentleness and true charity will grow in the Company in keeping with the plan of God when He formed it.

One of the means to attain this virtue is to strive to have a clear understanding of ourselves by awareness of our usual faults.

Another is always to separate the little faults which may appear in our sister from the person committing them. We should always suspend our judgment and excuse her hasty reactions as we would want others to excuse ours. Thereby, we support one another for the love of God.

Another means is to help one another to acquire this habit of speaking well of our sisters. If by chance we should meet a sister who should forget

1. The date is mentioned on the copy made by Marguerite Chétif.

herself so far as to say something unkind about her sister, we should mortify ourselves and refuse to listen. Then we should gently say to her, "My dear Sister, let us remember the admonition which we have received always to speak well of one another."

But the surest means is to humble ourselves; to recognize that of ourselves we can never attain this virtue; and to implore it confidently from God for His glory and love.

A.60 - (OBLIGATIONS OF THE SERVANT OF THE POOR)

The first reason that should cause us to desire to be instructed on the manner in which the Sisters of Charity should act, in all the places where they are employed for the service of the poor, is the danger they are in of doing just the opposite if they do not know how to behave.

The second is the danger that, by acting otherwise, they will go against the will of God.

The third is the danger that God will not derive glory from our employments if we do not act as we should.

1. Great faults can be committed if they are not well informed concerning their responsibilities. It takes great temerity for a sister to act without knowing how she should conduct herself.

2. There is always the danger of offending God when one is uncertain how to behave.

3. This lack of instruction could lead to discord rather than to the union which should exist among them. This is the most damaging thing that could happen to the Company and the most opposed to what God is asking of it.

4. The fourth evil is that a sister who does not know how she should act would be in great danger of becoming a source of disedification to persons of the world. Moreover, she would not serve the poor in the spirit of Jesus Christ, and she could draw down upon herself the indignation of God by her repeated faults. Little by little, she would become lax, thereby rendering herself unworthy of the graces of God. This might even cause His goodness to withdraw from her the grace of her vocation. Such great faults might finally lead to the total destruction of the Company.

It seems to me that the first means to help us to act as true Daughters of Charity is always to be disposed to respond to holy obedience with the view of accomplishing the will of God.

To be available to go anywhere; to be disposed to be submissive to the sister who will be given to us as Sister Servant; and to do nothing without communicating with her.

Before leaving for a new mission, to take the firm resolution to do

nothing contrary to the rules and maxims of the Motherhouse or of the Company.

To be faithful neither to give nor to receive news, except when told to do so by the Sister Servant who shall not fail to send it to the Superiors in Paris.

To be very respectful to the Ladies of Charity and to others employed in the service of the poor.

Neither to meddle nor to speak with them without the advice of the Sister Servant.

To be very circumspect in speaking with externs, especially concerning private community matters.

To be supportive, cordial and submissive to one another. To preserve the spirit of gentleness and charity.

This could be done easily if the sisters are as faithful as they should be to the practice of their Rule which should be repeated frequently so that they can learn it by heart. It should be read in places where this can be done.

In order to accomplish these things, they must have great mistrust of themselves and great confidence in God.

A practice to be remembered is the thought that if Jesus Christ had not been...

A.56 - NOTES ON THE MEETINGS OF THE LADIES OF CHARITY

It is very evident, in this century, that Divine Providence willed to make use of women to show that it was His goodness alone which desired to aid afflicted peoples and to bring them powerful helps for their salvation.

No one is ignorant of the fact that, to carry this out, God used the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission through the instrumentality of Vincent de Paul. Moreover, everyone is aware that through his work this great benefit spread so far that it is apparent that it must be continued by means of the meetings of the Ladies of Charity where needs will be discussed and where, it seems, the Spirit of God presides.

The power which the Holy Father gave to the aforementioned Congregation of the Mission to establish the Confraternities of Charity is the seed of the fruit which has been produced and which is produced daily not only in France but, we might say, throughout the civilized world.

Was it not by means of this light that the Ladies of the Company of Charity recognized the needs of the provinces and that God gave them the grace to aid these peoples so charitably and so magnificently that Paris has become the admiration of and an example for the entire kingdom?

Were not these holy assemblies at which Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Mission, presided, the means which these charitable Ladies employed in order to determine priorities for the distribution of goods to the poor?

As we all know, Monsieur Vincent furnished honest and charitable criteria to enable them to discover true needs and to provide for them prudently. In all of this, they sought to meet the spiritual as well as the temporal necessities of the poor, thereby giving honor to God in heaven perhaps even now by His divine foreknowledge of the innumerable souls which will one day be with Him.

We clearly recognize these truths. Therefore, it seems to be essential for the Company of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu to continue its functions, since, from the origin of this noble group, their visits to the sick of this holy hospital have brought such apparent good to the place itself and to the souls who have found the way to salvation there.

Through their ministry, some of the sick poor died a happy death as a result of their good dispositions following a general confession. Others recovered but their confessions led to admirable conversions. The Ladies themselves entered on the pathway to sanctification which is perfect charity, such as that which they have practiced in this place where they have frequently put their lives in danger by their service to the sick. All this has been accomplished by Ladies of noble birth such as princesses and duchesses whom we have seen spending entire hours at the bedside of the sick instructing them in the things necessary for their salvation and helping them to free themselves from the dangers surrounding them.

The truth of what has been reported here would be clearly seen had a record been kept of all of the deeds of the Ladies, known as the Fourteen, who have devoted themselves to these holy exercises in keeping with their rank.

If all the good which seems to have been accomplished here is not only useful but necessary, is it not reasonable to ensure its continuation? If, in the plan of God, there were some powerful guarantee that, once peace has been restored, everyone will live a good Christian life; that God will no longer be offended; and that each individual will have a sufficiency, then the necessity for the continuation of the Company, which can only subsist through its assemblies, would no longer be so urgent to meet needs as they appeared in the past and for which there had been so many assemblies which could also cease.

However, I ask if this general refuge for all countries and nations and this discovery of future needs both in France and elsewhere which are related in these holy meetings do not merit to be continued, although they seem to accomplish so little at the present time. The cloud which somewhat overshadows this light will pass and its rediscovery will lead to the fruits which God desires of His work. To this end, it seems that the Superiors and the other officers, if they seek to continue for the glory

of God, would perform an action worthy of their greatness and agreeable to Eternal Charity by seeking the means for having ready access to the advice and guidance of that person whom God has employed for this purpose for as long a time as His goodness sees fit to leave him on earth. This appears to be a simple matter to the person who humbly asks your pardon for the temerity of this advice and for her audacity in saying that this assembly and the other establishments of the Charity can obtain strength from God to remain faithful and to persevere in the primitive spirit of the Congregation of the Mission. See if the good to be gained from this is small!

A.89B - (INSTRUCTION TO THREE SISTERS WHO WERE BEING SENT TO POLAND)

On September 5, 1652, Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, informed our three sisters who had been chosen to go to Poland that they would leave the next morning. However, Divine Providence caused their departure to be postponed until September 7.

The three sisters were: Sister Marguerite Moreau,[1] Sister Madeleine Drugeon[2] and Sister Françoise Douelle.[3] Our Most Honored Father spoke to them in approximately the following words:

"My dear Sisters, I believe that you are aware that the very virtuous princess, the Queen of Poland, has been urging me for more than two years to send her Daughters of Charity who would establish works such as those she had seen in France. Time was necessary to weigh this call to see if it came from God. There can no longer be any doubt about it since this good Lady has persevered in her desire and has put great pressure on me for the past six months to send her Daughters of Charity.

"Oh what a happiness, my dear Daughters, to be certain of this call for the entire Company! And what a happiness for you who have been chosen from among so many others in the Company who might do better than you! You should have no doubt of this.

"But, my Daughters, why is this call such a cause for happiness? Here are a few reasons.

"The first is that it is God who is calling you. Oh, what a great vocation it is to be called by God! This is apparent from the complaint which we hear from God concerning persons who want to work in His service when He has not called them. Moreover, does Our Lord not reveal the greatness

1. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.
2. Madeleine Drugeon, see Letter 416.
3. Françoise Douelle, see Letter 364.

of a vocation to follow Him when He says to His Apostles, 'You have not chosen me but I have chosen you?' Therefore, you should greatly esteem your vocation. Humble yourselves for this grace, my dear Sisters, and be grateful for it. Humble yourselves at the sight of this astonishing action of God for what would you be, my Daughters, had He not chosen to call you from your poor and lowly state to serve Him? Had you remained in the way of life for which you were destined by your birth, you would be performing the manual labor of poor people just as other village girls do. Who would have shown you any more respect than they show to others of your background? This is why you and I have great reason to humble ourselves. However, our humility should be solid and lead us always to look upon others as better than ourselves."[1]

S.1 - (VISITATION OF A HOUSE)[2]

The Conferences to our sisters are ordinarily on points of our Rules.

Advice is given on ways to observe them well; on the virtues of which the Company stands in need or in which it has failed; and also on the manner in which the sisters should deal with their confessors or other responsible persons.

The points to be treated in the Conference are given to the sisters a short time in advance so that they may make their meditation on them.

1. The Sister Servant is a compulsive worker. She even chides others if they show repugnance or unwillingness to comply with her wishes rather than admonishing them or taking the trouble to see to it that her orders are carried out when it is the responsibility of a sister to do so.

She also fails to look after the others and tends to keep to herself because of her melancholy disposition. This could be harmful to the sisters and could even stifle warmth and cordiality had she not been admonished of this fault and helped to overcome it.

2. The Sister Assistant, Sister Claude, is almost the same. She is even a little more melancholy and scrupulous. I believe that no attention should be paid to her scruples and that she should not be allowed to make a general confession. She needs to be pushed to take a little more initiative in aiding the other sisters, either by charitably advising them of their faults or of how they should act or by helping them in their difficulties. She sometimes uses her tenderness for her mother as a pretext for her behavior. However, her mother has no need of her assistance. She also likes to come to Paris.

1. Text recopied by Louise de Marillac that is not included in Coste.

2. Probably the house at Saint-Denis, where Sister Claude Brigide was assigned in 1652.

3. Sister Catherine easily listens to externs and even to the complaints of the sisters when they have little occasions for murmuring or dissatisfaction. She is naturally inclined to be a bit affected and self-indulgent and to have a good opinion of herself. You have to approach her to know her needs. Nevertheless, she is a good soul who mends her ways quickly when she is admonished. She is anything but scrupulous. Rather, she needs to be helped to be more concerned about her faults, particularly those against the Rules.

4. Sister Brigide has an open, simple disposition. She is quite willing to be admonished of her faults. She easily becomes annoyed and shows it, but she calms down quickly after her first reaction which is sometimes too violent.

5. Sister Marguerite is somewhat attached to her own opinion and to what she wants to do. She likes to converse with and listen to externs.

6. Sister Antoinette is a bit haughty and not very exact in obedience because of carelessness. By the grace of God, all her faults are natural reactions and not deliberate.

A.78 - (ON THE NAMING OF SISTER SERVANTS)

The first reason is that if we rely on ourselves the choice we make will be suspect, and we will inevitably be inclined to follow our own whims.

Another reason is that if we are truly given to God, we will seek only His interests, and thus we may hope that we will decide everything according to His good pleasure.

We must pay attention to the information we have on the subject and see to it that the sisters we would like to name have a great love for their vocation and for the practice of the Rule, and that they give evidence of wanting to acquire or of having already acquired the spirit of the Company which consists of humility, simplicity and charity.

Another sign we should look for in them is willingness to be the first to do what they are supposed to teach others, and submission to Superiors which is as great or greater than that of the other sisters.

Total openness is the means which those of us who are called upon to make these decisions should employ if we wish to do it well.

A.99 - (NOTES ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HOSPICE OF THE SAINT-NOM-DE-JÉSUS)

(c. 1653)[1]

Wishing to contemplate the work before God, the thought came to me to look at it in all its stages; namely, its beginning, its continuation and its completion. We must not think of this as the plan of men, but as a plan inspired by God to be carried out by His servants.

Looking at it in its completion, I perceived it as excellent since it concerns the glory of God in the accomplishment of His most holy will which ordered man to earn his bread by working.

Another end is that persons sheltered there will be helped to become participants in the merits of the life and death of Jesus Christ and thereby to gain eternal salvation as much by the instruction they receive as by the good use they make of their time.

Now, since this is a great undertaking, it is important to lay good foundations so as to build it as perfectly as possible and to make it last.

It seemed to me that we should hope that the first persons chosen would be of great integrity and that they should not necessarily be beggars. For this reason, it would be appropriate, after the selection has been made, to help them to understand the importance of the decision which they have made. There may be persons who are relatively well off who would wish to pass for poor people. If, as I believe Divine Providence will permit from time to time, they are skilled in a trade, they shall be allowed to stay only for six months and in order to teach their craft to others.

So as to avoid complications at the beginning, it seems necessary to accept no married men or women, even if they are childless, since this would be a most difficult situation to encounter. Nevertheless, if some such persons wish to be admitted for a period of time and if they are resolved to cut themselves off from their families, it may be possible, after careful reflection and if God so wills it, to find a few who would help to give a good foundation to this work.

The difficulty in accepting such persons arises from the possible necessity of providing them with a bit of wine or beer.

Since one of the greatest assets of this project is the work which it provides, it is necessary to assign tasks which are useful and productive. An acceptable one would be that of clothmaker. Apart from being productive—the cloth could be used in the House and in other places—it employs many persons and requires little equipment. Bootmakers and shoemakers would also be most useful. Any buttonmakers and muslin

1. See Letter 76b.

workers who are skilled in their trade can put the finishing touches on the products before they are put into use.

Other useful workers are: lacemakers, glovemakers who know how to trim, seamstresses who can take in work from the dressmakers of the city and of other places, and pinmakers.

Having quite enough workers to get the project underway and to keep it going, there is no need to consider the expense that will be incurred for tools and building supplies, nor is there need to be concerned about the difficulty of the skills involved or the problem of securing a location cheaply and easily. Divine Providence provides for all, and skills will be discovered through experience.

Rest assured that there will be very little progress during the first year.

A.79 - (MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF CHANTILLY)

(1654)

The Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor of Chantilly, were obliged to live on borrowed money throughout the year 1653 since, for that entire year they received, in grain and cash, only 77 of the 200 pounds due to them. Therefore, they must be paid the sum of 123 pounds to settle this account.

As of October 24, they have received 61 pounds, 12 sous of the approximately 171 pounds which should have been paid to them by this date for the year 1654. Therefore, 109 pounds, 8 sous are still owed to them. Since the month of October, they have received full payment both in grain and in cash.

Moreover, the rent for their housing has not been paid for four years and it falls due once again on the Feast of Saint Martin. The sum involved is 36 pounds per year. To satisfy this debt their furniture has been repossessed and is about to be sold.

A.62 - (MOTIVES WHICH THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY HAVE FOR GIVING THEMSELVES TO GOD TO OBTAIN THE PRESERVATION OF THE COMPANY)

(May 25, 1654)[1]

The first reason we have for giving ourselves to God to obtain from His goodness the preservation of the Company for many a long year and, if possible, forever, is to be persuaded, as we are bound to be, that God Himself willed its establishment and willed it in the form in which it now actually exists. And God does not wish His creatures to destroy what He has made.

Another reason is that those who would go against the designs of God by contributing to the ruin of the Company would be the cause of the loss of many souls and would prevent many poor persons from being helped. Such infidelity would put their eternal salvation in danger.

Another thing which would contribute to the ruin of the Company would be, first of all, a desire to alter its customs, because this would, in a way, be to prefer one's own judgment to the guidance of God who knows well enough its future needs.

A second thing which could lead to the ruin of the Company would be to have, on account of our cowardice, little love and esteem for the exercises prescribed in our little Rules.

Another thing which could cause the complete destruction of the Company would be for the sisters to forget what they are, and on account of their long collaboration with the Ladies, which gives them the opportunity to handle the money donated for the poor and to live comfortably without worrying about earning their livelihood, to become complacent. This could lead to vain satisfaction and the desire to accumulate goods. Forgetting the obligations of their vocation, they could want to become independent in some places. What would be even worse would be the thought of setting aside some funds so as to carry out this miserable design. Should this contagion touch several members of the Company, there would be reason to fear that the goodness of God would be offended and that the total ruin of the Company would ensue.

The means to prevent the destruction of the Company are to reflect frequently on the grace which God has given to us by calling us to it and to ask Him for the grace to persevere in it.

The final means is to strive to acquire the spirit of the Company through the love which we must have for Our Lord and by the practice of humility, simplicity and true charity.

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste IX, 693). Louise de Marillac had read only the first part when Vincent de Paul stopped her to give an explanation.

A.67 - (ON MORTIFICATION)

(January 3, 1655)[1]

I think that one of the reasons which we have for practicing mortification is the necessity of keeping our souls constantly in the state in which they were created. Since they were made in the image and likeness of God, they are disfigured, to a certain extent, when we do not mortify our passions but rather allow them to overwhelm us.

Another reason is that mortification is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body. If we do not mortify ourselves, our souls will die in the pursuit of passion and will be forever displeasing to God.

We must look to the example of Our Lord, although the passions and sins to be found in us were never in Him.

A third reason is that, if we do not practice this virtue, we will never be able to support one another as we must. Moreover, we will become a source of scandal for the world if we allow ourselves to yield to our first emotions.

On the second point, it seems to me that we must practice this virtue particularly by the frequent mortification of our own judgment and openness to the opinions of others.

We must also mortify our self-will and more willingly condescend to our sisters when there is no prejudice possible to the glory of God.

We cannot place limits on the time which must be devoted to the acquisition of perfect mortification. On the contrary, we must undertake this labor generously for our entire lives since it is a matter of mortifying rather than of killing our passions. These passions remain constantly alive within us. Therefore, we must be continuously vigilant and work to mortify them. In order to do this, it would be well for each of us to take the trouble to ask occasionally for some exterior acts of mortification. Nevertheless, this should be done after we have worked to mortify our interior and anything that we may see in ourselves that is contrary to the little Rules of the Company.

Strict mortification of our curiosity is necessary, especially when the sisters are together. Ordinarily, we are anxious to discover the failings and moods of our sisters and also to relate whatever we have heard. We are even obliged to be careful to mortify the feelings of vindictiveness which can cause trouble among the sisters of the parishes when we allow ourselves to complain of our little occasions of annoyance with one another.

If the Daughters of Charity are to persevere in their vocation and obtain from God the graces of which they stand in need, I believe also

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste X, 63).

that, in general, they must strive continuously to mortify their senses and passions by never allowing them to push them to accomplish the evils which they propose. To this end, they must strive to gain insight into this matter.

I acknowledge my guilt before God for my negligence in assisting our sisters in this task and for my failure to give them the necessary example because of my cowardice, my tenderness for myself and my sensuality.

A.65 - SECRETIVENESS

(February 2, 1655)[1]

The interpretation of the spirit of secretiveness has furnished us with more than one motive for putting us on our guard, for it has made us see that it is a demon hidden in the soul which may do us far more harm than the diabolical possession of the body, for one is concerned with eternal life and the other with temporal life only. Another reason is that if we act by this spirit of secretiveness we extinguish, in a manner, the light which Our Lord came to enkindle in our souls. Another reason is that persons who are moved by this spirit are most annoying and troublesome to those with whom they live, and they run a great danger of the spirit of pride gaining an ascendancy over their imagination so that, because from this motive they have desired to hide themselves from others, although unconsciously, they are so hidden from themselves that they cannot make themselves known; and they are thus prevented from receiving the advice and warnings of which they stand in need.

Part 2

Although there are other types of character who, by natural disposition, find it impossible either to speak out or to explain, nevertheless, I think that passions afford much food for this temptation and especially the passion of pride, which suggests to us not to mention this thing or that lest conclusions be drawn from it, or lest people believe that, because we fell into a fault once, we may be always suspected of it. This does great damage to the soul and inclines it to take the liberty to commit a great many other faults.

Persons who have this fault of not opening up their minds freely to their Superiors, when suffering from any mental troubles or when in need, or when they make their spiritual communications, are in danger of telling

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste X, 75).

lies or of practicing much dissimulation. And this habit may be so strongly formed that they may even yield to it in confession. This spirit of secretiveness, proceeding from the evil spirit, may cause such embarrassment to those who possess it as possibly to lead them to despise the warnings of their Superiors and to pay no regard to the duty of mentioning their difficulties, because they believe their Superiors are interested parties or have been influenced by others. This causes them to seek help or consolation where they should not, and to discover sources of help or consolation that are most dangerous and lead to their destruction. Those who gradually come to accept the maxim of the spirit of secretiveness, being unable to keep their own troubles or what they know of those of others to themselves, are in danger of communicating their thoughts and feelings unsuitably and to all sorts of persons, which is most prejudicial to their spiritual progress; it leads them to offend God and causes those who listen to them to commit the same faults.

Part 3

As this spirit is most dangerous and frequently unknown to us, we should often ask Our Lord for light to detect it and, if it is in us, each one of us should fear and distrust herself, lest she should have a share of it. In order to get rid of this spirit, it is necessary, as soon as one feels any difficulty and repugnance in admitting the fact, to have recourse to the Holy Spirit, to ask Him for strength, and overcoming oneself, to admit this reluctance for the love of God. Moreover, if any feel inclined to seek consolation in others, by pouring out their mind to them, they should distrust themselves and, furthermore, if they feel any repugnance at the fact that their Superiors may know what they would like to say or even think, they should fear this repugnance.

S.4 - (COUNCIL)

(October 5, 1655)

The first three Officers began their meeting by determining to treat of three subjects. The first was that they were to be informed as soon as our three sisters,[1] Henriette, Marie-Marthe and Renee, arrived on foot from Nantes. They were also to discuss the manner in which these sisters were to be received.

The second was to determine who should be sent to Châteaudun to

1. Henriette Gesseaume, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, and Renée Delacroix.

replace Sister Geneviève who would be returning soon. The third was to study together the conduct of the sisters so as to be aware of their failings and of the needs and the overall condition of the sisters of the Motherhouse.

It was resolved that we should welcome our dear sisters with cheerful countenances, manifesting our joy at seeing them without mentioning in any way what had occurred at Nantes either when they arrived or at any later date. We determined also to find out as soon as we had greeted them if they needed to eat or if they wished to retire. Had they, in fact, arrived on foot, they were to be given water, in which fine herbs had been boiled, to soak their legs.

Sister Jeanne from Senlis[1] was suggested for Châteaudun and we decided to send her.

Time ran out so we did not discuss anything more.

A.13B - (ON THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION)

As soon as our first parent had sinned, the goodness of God took pity on human nature and promised to repair the fault by the Incarnation of His Word. This promise was so powerful that, although it did not completely abolish sin because of the freedom which God has given to man, it changed its effect, making it personal.

This promise meant that the whole nature could no longer participate in the fault of an individual because the Person of God was now part of it. Moreover, its effect was immediate for us since, from the instant it was made, the divine plan was accomplished in the mind of God.

O admirable love! O hidden secret! What did You want to do, O my God, when You created man since You were not unaware of his weakness? However, the events had to be as they were, O my Master, to make us understand the effects of Your great love.

Was it not also, O my God, so that Your admirable Incarnation might be the source of the graces of which souls stand in need in order to reach their end? When You created our bodies, You gave us all that we need to feed and clothe ourselves and to experience pleasure. However, the soul, by its nature, could never of itself make use of all these means for its preservation. Neither could it become so closely united to God who is its object since He is inaccessible to all beings except through this most admirable of means which makes God man and man God who, continually present to the soul . . . has made it so like unto Himself that He acts

1. Jeanne Gressier.

it as He sees fit, conformably to its needs, in order to enable it to attain its end in keeping with His designs for each individual.

Yes, O my God, I wholeheartedly accept this thought which seems to me to be so in keeping with Your goodness and love. To fail to acknowledge the fact that You want to communicate interiorly with man would be, as it were, to diminish and to be ungrateful for the love which You bring to us.

What! You, who would will the communion of the Saints of the Church Triumphant, Suffering and Militant, and who operate all these marvels, would act like the princes of this earth who must remain withdrawn from others in order to maintain their authority! Oh, it is not so. You who are infinite goodness always want to communicate Yourself. Therefore, I shall be more attentive than ever to Your dear presence. Do not, I beg of You, O my Lord, reject the most unfaithful of Your creatures. I hope for this through Your love. I implore You to share the sentiments which You put into my heart during this little meditation with those who need them so that, by loving and honoring Your holy and amiable presence, they may apply themselves to be attentive to it. Thus, You will not refuse to grant them the graces that You infallibly give to those who hold themselves in the disposition to receive them anymore than the sun distinguishes in shedding its rays on all that is before it.

Now is the time for the fulfillment of your promise. Blessed may You be forever, O my God, for the choice which You made of the Holy Virgin! Did not the devil merit final damnation from Your divinity? It was necessary for Your omnipotence to make use of the weaker sex in human nature to crush his head as Your justice had threatened to do. In order to accomplish this, You used the blood of the Blessed Virgin to form the body of Your dear Son. O admirable goodness! What care You took in carrying out your plan! How long did You defer it?...

A.24 - (THE SOVEREIGN DOMINION OF GOD)

In the one true being of God resides the essence of all the other beings which, in His goodness, He has created. Since all time is dependent upon His eternity, it is only reasonable that we should employ it according to His holy will and for His glory. Everything has been created by Him in the most perfect order; therefore, I shall strive more than I have in the past to live as well-regulated a life as possible. I shall begin this month by honoring the sacred order of creation as it was accomplished by the true and only divinity.

A.25 - (THE PURITY OF LOVE NECESSARY TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT)

Souls that are truly poor and desirous of serving God should place their trust in the coming of the Holy Spirit within them believing that, finding no resistance in them, He will give them the disposition necessary to accomplish the holy will of God which should be their only preoccupation.

In order to be in a state of receptivity, the soul must imitate the obedience of the Apostles by freely confessing its powerlessness and by detaching itself completely from all creatures and even from God Himself, insofar as the senses are concerned, because the Son of God, who prepared His Apostles to receive the Holy Spirit, did so by depriving them of His divine presence at His Ascension. The Holy Spirit, upon entering souls that are so disposed, will certainly remove any obstacle to His divine operations by the ardor of His love. He will establish the laws of holy charity by endowing them with the strength to accomplish tasks beyond their human powers so long as they remain in a state of total detachment.

The love which we are obliged to bring to God must be so pure that, when we receive His most particular graces, we must hope for nothing other than the glory of His Son. Our Lord taught us this in the person of His Apostles to whom He had promised to send His Holy Spirit when He assured them that He would thereby be glorified.

The soul that truly loves God must seek nothing more. The greatest happiness that it can experience is to cooperate in rendering glory to Him whose ignominious death astounded all mankind. Even if, as God, He did not merit the purity of love which would make Him the unique object of all our affections, we would be obliged to render to His holy humanity a debt of gratitude for the greatness of His love.

Blessed, therefore, are they who help others to fulfill their obligations to Him. Blessed are they whose powerlessness prevents them from acting in any other way and who employ the full power of their love so as to make the love of their Master the sole proprietor of their hearts.

A.28 - (THOUGHTS ON THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOULS)

The love which God has for our souls proceeds from the knowledge that He has of the excellence of the being which He has given to them and which participates in His life. This knowledge enables us to recognize their greatness since it is an act outside of God equal in some ways to the one which He produced in Himself when He begot the Second Person of the Godhead. However, since our souls are not God Himself, and since

His knowledge produces the love which He has for them, may He deign to take fatherly care of the general well-being of those who are completely resigned to the designs of His holy will.

A.37 - (HEAVEN COMPARED TO A MUSTARD SEED)

Our Lord wanted to make the Kingdom of Heaven accessible to us by comparing it to a mustard seed and thus teaching us how easy it is to gain this kingdom which He has won for us by so much labor and suffering and by His death. We are assured that we shall attain this bliss if we desire it. It would appear that this kingdom is but a desire in this world, for what is smaller than a mustard seed, and what is more insignificant than a desire?

What! O my God, is this bliss, which is the sole satisfaction of the blessed, such a small thing? Do You thus minimize the blood and the life that purchased it? Do You esteem it so little as to compare it to a tiny mustard seed? Nevertheless, I am well aware that this seed contains great strength within itself, both in its capacity to multiply and in the quality it gives to everything that is seasoned with it.

Therefore, I shall strive for the desire for heaven and, once I possess this desire, I shall sow it in the soil of my heart. Then I shall ask my God to enrich this ground with the warmth of His love and to water it with the Precious Blood of my Savior so that this seed may grow to its full perfection.

M.69 - (ON RECREATION)

Recreation must always begin with a reminder of the presence of God and of the equality of all reasonable beings in His eyes, reflecting that the least esteemed by men are perhaps the best loved by God.

Recreation should be regarded as a time allowed by the goodness of God to unite ourselves by means of a sincere communication of thoughts, words and actions. This time should be used to honor the true union of the three distinct Persons of the Blessed Trinity and the admirable union of the blessed in heaven.

During recreation, conversation should be truly lighthearted and cordial. We should converse with those who are agreeable to us as well as with those we favor less, replying graciously without arguing and without taking offense at what is said, bearing in mind the meekness with which Jesus Christ received the blame for His holy words and actions.

Never make fun of a sister who does not speak well unless you are certain that she does not mind it and that your heart is free from uncharitable feelings. Should you be the target of others' amusement, accept the situation graciously and consider your sisters as better than yourself and, therefore, as better loved by God. Look upon yourself as blessed in the occasion offered you of serving them.

From time to time during recreation, raise your mind to God and recall that you are strengthening your mind and body in their weakness during this period of rest. Because of this, they can be better employed in the service of God, according to your obligations, and they are once again given courage for the work at hand.

During this time of recreation, reflect on the eternal joy that you will have in heaven if, on earth, you love God and your neighbor as He has commanded you. To help you practice the love you owe your neighbor, remember when you are together that the bond of union among you is the Blood shed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

Conversation during the time allowed must be in a spirit of great charity, following the example set for us by the Son of God while on earth. You must try to associate with those sisters who bring you the closest to virtue, or with those whom you can help in the same way. Keep yourself interested in others. Do not get angry over the actions of the others, especially over their intentions. Avoid exclusive friendships since you are obliged to a mutual communication with one another in order to maintain the union which must be preserved in your religious family.

Be amiable with all your sisters. Always respect your Superior whom you must look upon as Jesus Christ on earth. Never criticize her manner of governing even when her orders sometimes appear to be contrary to your views or perhaps far from reasonable. Certainly, with a little patience, you will discover that it is the spirit of God more than the spirit of the Superior that is governing.

Be zealous in defending the sisters who are absent. Let your charity be such that you do not easily give in to rash judgments. Always put yourself in the place of those who are blamed either by reflecting on your own faults or by taking into consideration the power of natural inclinations on a person's way of thinking and the near impossibility of getting rid of a habit. Finally, remind yourself and those with you of your mutual obligations to God if you are all exempt from the fault in question. However, be careful that what you say about others proceeds from a truly Christian heart and not from pretended virtue.

Your conversation should center mainly on subjects which help you to fulfill the obligations of your Rules. You should bear in mind that all other acts are more prejudicial than helpful to you.

A.92 - (ON THE DUTIES OF THE MOTHERHOUSE)

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sisters entrusted with the duties of the House shall consider themselves doubly obliged to give good example to all the Company, and they shall serve the Company in the same spirit of gentleness and charity that they would bring to the service of the poor if they were so employed, recognizing Our Lord in these persons.

The Bell-Ringer

The sister who rings the bell shall have a special devotion to her guardian angel so that he will help her to wake up a short time before four o'clock. She must consider that God will hold her responsible for those who, through her fault, would fail to rise. Likewise, however, with the thought of God's approval, she shall consider that she will share in the merits of the prayers which God will give to those who, with her help, will awaken on time.

After waking up, she shall get dressed quietly and shall make her rounds modestly. In order not to distract or amuse the sisters, she shall only say to them what is necessary to awaken them.

She shall be careful to ring the bell for all the exercises: dinner at eleven-thirty; evening meditation at five-thirty; supper at six o'clock, and prayers at eight o'clock, except on Fridays when she shall ring the bell at seven-thirty.

She must remember not to resemble the bell that she rings. A bell does not go itself to the place to which it calls others. However, since she is the first to summon the other sisters, she must also call herself not only to be the first one in the chapel but also to reflect on where she is going and why.

The Portress

As soon as she is named to her office, the Sister Portress shall give thought to its importance and to the great discretion and reserve that she must exhibit. After having asked God for this grace, she shall implore her guardian angel to assist her; and each time she goes to open the door, she shall try to lift her mind to God.

As far as is possible, she shall not let people ring twice, urging herself to diligence by an act of charity and by the thought that, if God in His

mercy should send her to purgatory and then free her for her entrance into paradise, she would be most annoyed to be kept waiting at the heavenly portals.

She shall have the key to the pantry and the responsibility to cut the breakfast bread which should weigh no more than three-quarters of a pound. She shall not give seconds or more than is necessary to anyone.

It is also necessary that she cut up the bread for the soup and that she cut the slices quite thin so that they soak up the bouillon better. In putting the bread in the soup, she shall be reasonable and shall avoid excess so that there is bouillon for those who need it. The others shall give up some of their bread if there is not enough of it.

In order that there be bread enough for the second table, she shall be careful not to slice it too thickly at the first table. She shall make sure that those in need of more bread are given a little.

She shall collect the soup bowls early, in the event that they must be washed for use at the second table.

She shall take care to remove the serving vessels neatly and shall give what is left over to the Sister Cook. She shall also be sure to prepare the soup for the second table while the other sisters go to the chapel to say the Angelus.

When the sisters have finished dinner, which occurs when the first quarter hour is about to be rung or when the majority of them have finished eating, the Sister Portress shall then be sure to go to ring the bell three times to mark the rising from table, and at the same time, she shall remember to adore the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

I neglected to say that she shall prepare the soup after eleven-fifteen has been rung, and that she shall always prepare first the soup of the poor while honoring Our Lord in each of them.

She shall also be responsible for cleaning, as early as possible, the courtyard and the entrance way, both inside and outside the House, and the stairs leading from the chapel.

The Sister Portress must recollect herself a little each time she opens or shuts the door so that she conducts herself with great modesty and reserve, while at the same time listening seriously and responding to the point.

When news of the sisters is requested, she shall answer only in regard to their health and shall not say where they are placed. If these persons seem most anxious for news, she shall ask them to wait while she goes to obtain the desired information. For this, she shall address herself to the Directress, or in her absence, to the Sister Assistant.

She must never inform a sister that she has visitors until she has obtained permission to do so. If permission is not granted, she must never inform the sister that she has had visitors. Likewise, no messages may be relayed without permission.

The Sister Portress shall not indulge in curiosity when someone comes in and waits, and she shall never ask for news. If someone wishes to give her any, she shall skillfully avoid it. However, if she cannot prevent herself from hearing it, she shall not make it a topic of conversation with the sisters unless it is a matter requiring prayer, in which case she shall notify the Directress or the Sister Assistant.

In the evening, she shall be most careful to close all the doors and windows in the rooms for which she is responsible, and to take the keys to the Sister Assistant.

She shall always take great care to carry the keys with her, never leaving them in the door nor anywhere else, keeping the door doubly locked. When she is requested to do something else, she shall not hand the keys to another sister without the permission of the Sister Assistant or the Directress.

Ordinarily, she shall serve at the first table, and she shall make sure that there is no noise in the refectory. In order to promote this, she shall keep the doors closed and shall not allow in any dogs, cats or chickens. She shall make no noise, opening and closing the doors quietly. She shall be certain that the sisters lack nothing, such as water and bread, dishing out servings reasonably and without showing favoritism. She shall do all of this mindful that she is serving the servants of Our Lord and the poor.

The Cook

The Sister Cook shall go to the kitchen at exactly six o'clock, or a little before, in order to light the fire and place the pot for the sisters' meal over it. She shall think of the joy that St. Martha and St. Joan of Cusa experienced in preparing food for Our Lord when they were so fortunate as to offer Him their hospitality. Through this thought, she shall move herself to devotion, while considering that she is serving Our Lord in serving His servants in the person of the poor.

She shall do her utmost to prepare the food tastefully so that her effort will compensate for the delicate morsels eaten in other Communities.

She shall be careful to have everything ready for dinner at eleven-thirty, and for supper at exactly six o'clock. For fear that our sisters might be interrupted in their reading—which she herself shall try to hear—the Sister Cook shall make sure that there are no loud voices in the kitchen, nor noises of any kind.

Since the head Sister Cook is also in charge of supplies, she shall be as careful to give the sisters what they need so as to avoid superfluity; charity demanding the former and the virtue of poverty the latter. When she becomes aware that any sister finds the food disagreeable or

distasteful, she shall charitably give her something better and something which she judges in keeping with her infirmities. Likewise, she shall give them a little something along with the breakfast bread, and shall provide collations for those who are truly in need of them.

This sister stands in need of great charity and prudence so that she does not give more to one than to another. She must consider solely her obligations which should incline her to love and to treat all the sisters alike when providing for their needs. If she is aware that a sister, through temperament, feels that she should receive something different from what she is getting, she shall inform the Directress in order to determine whether or not this sister should be satisfied. But whether she gives or refuses, she should always do so gently and with gracious words.

When the sisters are actually ill, it is then that she must redouble her care in making good bouillons. She must remember that it is the exactitude with which she prepares them rather than the quantity of meat used which makes the bouillons pleasing to the patients.

In preparing the soup, she shall be sure always to save some bouillon to give to the sick sisters in the evening.

Although she must do her best in preparing the sisters' food, she should not use spices except when necessary and then only sparingly. Likewise, she should not use onions since they are most unhealthy for the girls.

She shall do her utmost always to eat dinner at the second table with the sisters rather than alone so as to avoid charges of selecting the best meat for herself. Although she is most diligent in carrying out her duties, she is strongly urged not to become saddened or upset by the complaints that a few of the sisters might make about her. Whether these malcontents accuse her of having prepared too much or too little, of having prepared the food badly, or of having prepared better for herself than for the others, she shall make good use of such murmurs. She shall endure them patiently and console herself with the thought of the countless times that murmurs were issued against Our Lord as He was serving His neighbor. He rejoiced at these times and did not feel guilty.

All the sisters are warned against entering any work area or taking anything from these areas without the permission of the Sister Officers. Likewise, however, the Sister Officers must be gracious to those who approach them for permission. If they are obliged to refuse entrance to someone, for example to a sister who wishes to chat or warm herself in bad weather, they shall do so gently while pointing out to her the importance of obedience. However, whenever they are able to allow the sisters entrance, they shall do so, whether it be to take some live embers or to take some utensil—provided that it is returned, since it is inconvenient not to find the needed utensil.

The Infirmarian

As soon as one or several sick sisters are placed in the care of the Sister Infirmarian, she shall look upon it as a request from Our Lord. She shall consider herself as called anew to make the same efforts that He made on earth when He cured the sick poor, and she shall honor His efforts through the work of watching over and caring for the sick.

She shall take great care to inform the Sister Pharmacist of all that happens to the sick and of all that they need; and she shall never give them food or remedies without her advice.

She shall be exact in following the schedule for their food and medicine and she shall not give them anything that could harm them even if they request it.

Although she makes every effort to perform her duty well, nevertheless it is possible that her patients will complain about her. In such a case, she shall not appear upset, but should excuse them on account of their illness and anxiety. She shall strive to satisfy their requests if there is a way of doing so without causing a mishap. Should a sick sister, through impatience, speak rudely to her or express discontent, she shall pretend not to hear her or she shall quietly apologize, thus honoring the rebukes addressed to Our Lord by the Jews when He cured their sick on feast days.

Since the Sisters of Charity are obliged to serve the sick poor both corporally and spiritually, in imitation of Our Lord who, in curing, always gave some advice for the salvation of souls, saying to some, "Go and sin no more," giving others to understand that their faith would save them, and speaking many more words of advice, our Sister Infirmarians shall take great care that the sick have great submission to the will of God and great trust in His love. They shall see to it that the sick sisters make good use of their trials, offering them to God in union with those of His Son. They shall take care that the sisters' hope for salvation be in the life and death of Jesus Crucified, that their intention for the future be to serve God better than ever before, and that they have great compassion for the sick poor who suffer so much without either the corporal or the spiritual help which they are given. From time to time, it would be well to say to them, "My Sister, while lying in your bed, do you ever think of the sufferings of our sick poor; how they are so often all alone without any fire, lying on straw without sheets or blankets, bereft of all kindness and consolation? Do you not consider yourself most blessed with the graces that God has bestowed on you?"

The Sister Infirmarian shall be most exact to notice any change or accident which occurs in the patients so that she can notify the doctor or the Sister Pharmacist. Likewise, when she notices the sick becoming

weaker she shall give notification so that they may be provided with the sacraments.

The Office of the Sister Pharmacist

Since health is the most precious treasure of life, the sister in charge of the pharmacy must be charitable, prudent, and most careful to prepare her compounds in the proper seasons. She shall spare nothing in order to prepare them well, checking on them from time to time to see that none of them have deteriorated, and she shall keep all her pots and bottles well covered.

If God restores their health, they have truly done their best.

A.93 - (REMARKS ON THE COMMON RULES)

(c. 1656)

—Fifth Article—should something be repeated in this article with the words: "in order to merit, as He did, to enter heaven one day?"

—Eighth Article—obscure—it seems to exclude the sisters of the country parishes from sending their surplus funds to the House. This would be unfair since they are clothed at the expense of the House as are the other sisters. In this same article, so long as there shall be a sister at the House who carries the title of Superioress, it has been judged that the first Sister Assistant shall not be called Sister Servant.

—Ninth Article—The ordered sentences are from the Ninth Article, the rest are from the Eighth.

—Tenth Article—The expression "the ungrateful": is it not too harsh, and does it not seem to presume that the poor owe gratitude to Sisters of Charity? This should not be since the sisters are most obliged to serve the poor.

In following up the statement on the sacraments, it seems to me that if the sick cling to life and desire to receive Communion and have need of confession, that the sisters should provide for them and even incline them to such devotion.

—Eleventh Article—After the last words "their desires," add "inclining the Ladies or others, to the best of their ability, to do the most good that they can for the poor."

—Nineteenth Article—Following the statement on the Sister Servant, which position should not exist at the House, add "being in the parishes,"

or else an Article which makes it clear that the Sister Servant must be considered the Superioress by the sisters with her.

—Twenty-first Article—Add, as succinctly as possible, something on the good intentions which they may have.

—Twenty-ninth Article—A statement on the Sister Servant is here again, and it should not say that they shall be granted permission by the Sister Assistant—unless the Superioress is absent. For several reasons the Assistants risk the danger of being given too much authority since we are not like religious communities.

—Thirtieth Article—Does it not seem to stress unduly the possibility that the sisters may dislike one another? Often it is simply a matter of some mood, action, or word.

—Thirty-first Article—Instead of "aversion" say "discontent."

—Eleventh Article on the employment of the day. The reading of the subject for meditation follows the reading of the *Martyrology* because the sisters fall asleep if it is done after prayers. If some time remains until the quarter hour, a sister shall repeat the subject for meditation so that it is fixed in the mind for the next day.

The repetition of the meditation takes place every day after morning meditation.

To the end of this article add that it would be well to fall asleep having some good thought.

I have made these remarks because your Charity has instructed me to do so. The passage on the Sister Servant can be made more clear by adding: "being in the parishes."

I have again learned that the Confessor of Chars[1] often forbids talking to the parish priest, and in several meetings also asks what Father has said. It seems odd that they take advantage of one another.

A.81 - (REMARKS ON THE RULE FOR THE SISTERS WITH THE FOUNDLINGS)

Following the Fourth Article

Would it not be appropriate to draw up two or three meditations on the subject of the service of little children? This would point out to the sisters how pleasing this work is to God and the recompense reserved for those who serve the children well. It would also point out the danger of serving them negligently. Such subjects should be meditated on each month.

1. The difficulties are going to increase in 1657, see Letter 535.

After the Sixth Article

In order to promote modesty and purity, as well as good health, the sisters shall not permit the children to get out of bed totally naked, nor to undress totally, nor to go barefoot or bareheaded. Likewise, the sisters shall not comb the children's hair in open areas, such as in the courtyard, nor in their rooms near open windows.

In winter, the sisters shall be on guard that the children do not linger near the fire. Rather, they should be made to play some game in order to warm themselves. From time to time, when necessary, they shall be permitted to warm themselves at the fire.

Also, the sisters shall be watchful year-round that the children do not fall asleep in direct sunlight or in unhealthy places.

After the Twelfth Article

The sisters serving in the rooms of the little children shall try to discipline them with little mortifications or gentle words which encourage them to be good. However, when they remain incorrigible and the sisters feel it necessary to punish them in a different way, they shall notify the Sister Servant who shall take a stick to the children herself, or inform the sisters to do so. In order that this may be done without emotion, the sisters should wait awhile after the children's bad behavior before hitting them, and they shall be very careful to avoid hitting them on the head.

Eighth Article, on the Sister Servant

Following "or otherwise" add "unless they be suited to serve at the House."

Ninth Article

Following the words "and the silence" add "except when their duties require them to do otherwise."

To indicate the time that the litanies of the feast days should begin.

Would it not be necessary also to have particular rules for the duties of the sisters of the Motherhouse such as the Portress, the Bell-Ringer, the Cook and the Clothesroom Sister?

She shall see to it that all the thread and silk is used sparingly, that the children have chores and carry them out; and that whatever is made at the House is sold. Likewise, she shall make sure that the merchants

pay for the goods in order to keep an account of the profit for the Lady Treasurer of the Company for these children; and to cook . . .

Following the Nineteenth Article concerning the children add "that all the children who work, up to age sixteen, shall rise at five o'clock in summer and five-thirty in winter. Ordinarily, they all shall go to bed precisely at nine o'clock."

The sister in charge of the children shall be in their room as they rise from bed. She shall take them to the chapel to pray to God, and upon their return, she shall have them recite their lesson. Then they shall begin work and their breakfast shall be brought to them at eight o'clock.

This sister shall take one or two of these children to Mass every day at the time judged most appropriate by the Sister Servant so long as Mass is not said at the hospital. She shall keep the children in front of her while in the chapel and she shall make sure that they pray attentively. Upon their return, she shall reprimand them for any faults committed while in the chapel.

On the Seventh Article of the Rule

Following these words "as soon as they will be gotten up from bed," add "which shall be, at the earliest, at seven o'clock for the very small children, and at six-thirty for those from six to seven years old."

On the Eighth Article

Instead of the Benedicite being said by the sister, she shall have one of the older girls say it, each one taking a weekly turn. Those girls who do not go to Mass every day shall say their Rosary every day, at different times during the day; that is, a decade after morning prayers, two decades after Grace at dinnertime, and two decades after Grace at suppertime.

A.66 - (ON THE NECESSITY OF ACCEPTING CHANGES)[1]

The first reason that obliges the Daughters of Charity to accept changes of place, persons and duties is the respect that they owe to the example of the Son of God who acted in this way.

The second is that such changes can and must occur. If they are not

1. Thoughts prepared for a Conference, possibly that of June 6, 1656 on Indifference.

accepted, we shall never enjoy the peace of soul that is essential if we are to please God and to accomplish His holy will.

The third reason is that the sisters must take into consideration the difficulties that Superiors encounter in trying to please everyone; in finding Daughters of Charity to send to serve the poor in places where they have been requested; in trying to avoid the many inconveniences that may arise.

If the sisters are not willing to accept changes in all these circumstances, they are in danger of committing many faults. If it is a sister who has been changed so that another may be sent in her place, if she is dissatisfied with her replacement or has heard rumors about her, she will not welcome her cheerfully and cordially. No kind words will be exchanged and there would be reason to believe that once they are together they will be in continual disagreement. In such instances, it is extremely difficult not to reveal one's feelings and matters may progress to such a point that, in conversation with the Ladies, the evil spirit might suggest words that are harmful to our sister.

Another evil is the disedification that we would give to our neighbor. Moreover we would find ourselves in the impossibility of faithfully practicing our Rules and we would be in danger of losing our vocation. There are an infinite number of other evils which would befall us but which are too lengthy to mention here.

A.45. - (ADVICE REQUESTED FROM MONSIEUR VINCENT)

December 30, 1656

After I had recovered from my most recent serious illness in the month of . . . of the present year, I asked Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Superior and Founder, with what dispositions I should once again take the resolution to live.

In addition to giving me other counsels which were in conformity with the holy will of God, his Charity told me that I should do this with the determination to deny myself any satisfaction and to renounce myself by refusing all that is agreeable to my senses and passions so as to honor the practice of the Son of God in the use that He made of occasions for renunciation. During the illness which followed my fall, I wanted to discover the means that I should employ to help another person to know her faults. I told my Most Honored Father that this desire had led me to point out her failings to her and that I realized that my admonitions appeared to have profited her very little.

His Charity told me that we must put up with a great deal and rely more on God than on our own means. He said, "Pray tell, who are we to think that we can undertake such a difficult and important task?" This remark made me understand that I had been hasty in my zeal and that my own passions had sometimes come into play. It also taught me that I should serve souls in their needs by another practice, that of turning to God by an interior act of confidence and trusting Him to accomplish by His grace and goodness all that I could not do. This seemed to be a more efficacious means.

I then spoke to his Charity of the direction of our sisters with their diverse personalities and employments and the liberty they have because they are in so many different places. In his kindness, his Charity told me, among other things, that direction is a gift which must be obtained through patience. This led me to understand that we must not always let others know that we have noticed their faults. Moreover, we must overcome our repugnances in putting up with them, especially when they are minor, and be careful not to allow ourselves to yield to sudden emotion which might cause us to resolve, in our direction, to rid ourselves of the services of some sisters for whom we must always . . .

A.32 - (ON THE VIRTUES OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN)

Her conception which God made immaculate in anticipation of the merits of the life of her Son.

All the graces infused into her soul because of the choice which God made of her to be His mother.

Her birth; her most pure life dedicated to the service of the Temple; and her vow of virginity.

Her marriage; her submission and dependence; her trust in Divine Providence; her tranquility; the inexhaustible spring of all the virtues of her beautiful soul during her marriage, sustained as she was by her great humility which kept ever before her eyes the work which God was accomplishing in her.

Her complete detachment and the sweet tranquility of her soul during the passion and death of her Son.

Her renunciation of all things and her willingness to remain on earth after the Ascension of her Son because of her pure love of God and her zeal for the salvation of souls, for which she labored for the remainder of her life, thereby imitating perfectly the Spirit of her Son.

I offer You, O my God, all the glory which You will receive forevermore from the beatitude of this most holy soul which You have

rendered extraordinarily capable of experiencing the plenitude of Your divinity.

Blessed is this heart filled with love which, by the interior sufferings of her soul, brought death to her body laden with merit.

May her soul, chosen among thousands of millions, be glorified for all eternity because of her total acceptance of the plan of God.

May this precious body, united to so worthy a soul, be forever glorified because of the testimony of love which the Blessed Trinity will show to it throughout eternity.

M.70 - (ON CONFESSION)

We must open our minds to a true understanding of the sacrament of Penance and weigh very seriously our motives for approaching it. Since this sacrament can be applied only to sinful souls, we must recognize and acknowledge ourselves as such before receiving it. We must also admit that we have rejected the grace of God which is an unbearable evil for the truly Christian soul. Once we are fully aware of our state and realize that confession is the only remedy for our great affliction, we should carefully examine our conscience. We must then conceive a holy hatred for ourselves because we have been so irrational as to oppose God who has always been so good to us and who of Himself merits infinite honor. This self-hatred should lead to filial regret for having offended God and the firm resolution to overcome ourselves and to avoid the occasions which so frequently cause us to fall into sin. Above all, we must recognize that of ourselves we can do nothing to avoid sin and make an act of loving confidence which will move us to ask God for the grace to desire to please Him more earnestly in the future. To this end, we must pray for the grace to avoid even the smallest failings so that we may love God for Himself alone.

Once we have entered into these dispositions, with a heart filled with shame, we should present ourselves at the feet of the priest as before a judge. After accusing ourselves of our sins simply and humbly, we should await absolution in fear and in hope. We should receive it with admiration, reflecting that the great love of God for us has willed that the remembrance of the cruel death of His Son merit pardon for our sins.

A.26 - (REASONS FOR GIVING ONESELF TO GOD IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT)

1657

The first subject of my meditation is my powerlessness to enter into prayer because of my attachment to myself.

Considering myself as belonging to God because He is God and because He created me, which are the two foundations of His proprietorship over me, I saw that I belonged to Him also because He preserves me. This preservation is the support of my being and a sort of continuous creation. I then asked myself what I intended to do so as to give myself to Him. I saw that His power to possess me was, by the excellence of the divine plan in the creation of the human race, to be found in His close, eternal union with His creatures. He brought this about through the unique means that He possessed which was the Incarnation of His Word. As perfect man, the Son willed that human nature should participate in the Divinity through His merit and through the close union of His nature with the Father. Oh, what wonders are seen in heaven in souls that have given themselves to God in the only way possible, which is by means of the gift of their free wills which they make use of exclusively as belonging to Him!

Oh, excellence of souls that are free, that no longer belong to themselves, of souls that act in all their thoughts, desires and deeds in conformity with the justice of God, of souls that find nothing so reasonable, so beneficial or so just as to give themselves to God!

What love, what a unique gesture on the part of God, to make known His omnipotence in this unequaled way! He willed His creatures to be so closely united to their Creator that they would be one with Him in matters related to them. Confusion for failures in this regard—entire oblation—distrust of self—resolution to do better in the future.

Second meditation on the second reason for giving myself to God so as to dispose myself to participate in the reception of the Holy Spirit, which is the loss I would suffer and the harm I would incur if I did not do so.

One of the greatest losses that a soul can experience by not participating in the coming of the Holy Spirit is that the gifts infused at Baptism do not have their effect, which leads us to see the truth of the warning

of Our Lord to cowardly and lazy souls that, not only would they receive nothing, but what they have will be taken from them. This means placing ourselves by our misery in such a state of powerlessness that even grace can do nothing for us. Oh, how many times have I been in this condition, thus removing myself from the order of the designs of God, which are great for those to whom He sends the Holy Spirit. This made me realize that all the disorders of life are caused by the failure to give oneself to God so as to receive the Holy Spirit. The lack of these gifts is apparent in the strange difference in comportment between persons who are animated by them and those who are not. The actions of the latter are earthy and unreasonable as is often my case on account of my misery. I have experienced this too often in the disorder of my senses and passions.

What means are to be employed and what dispositions are necessary in order to participate in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The first one that occurred to me was that Our Lord told His Apostles that He had to leave them so as to return to the Father and to send them the Holy Spirit. This taught me that I must be completely detached from all creatures and even from the Divine Presence so that my soul may be empty of all obstacles and the Holy Spirit may fill it with His presence and gifts which will draw me out of my lassitude by the power of His love and cause me to act by His strength.

Therefore, it is not enough for You, O Lord, to have taught me the means for disposing myself for the coming of the Holy Spirit. I must also labor diligently, O my soul, to remove all obstacles and to act, or better, to let the grace, with which the Holy Spirit wills to fill all the powers of my being, act in me. This can only come about by the destruction of the evil habits which, on diverse occasions, hinder His action in me.

O Eternal Light, lift my blindness! O Perfect Unity, create in me simplicity of being! Humble my heart to receive Your graces. May the power to love which You have placed in my soul no longer stop at the disorder of my self-sufficiency which, in reality, is but powerlessness and an obstacle to the pure love which I must have as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Confusion then for myself because of my errors which have often attached me to falsehood and led me to abandon eternal truth. Consume all that, O Fire of Divine Love, although I do not merit this grace.

The subject of this meditation is a continuation of the preceding one on the means and dispositions necessary in order to participate in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The first seemed to me to be the esteem that we must have for this gift both with regard to its greatness and to the benefits and the eternal honor that we will derive from it. Is there anything more excellent in heaven or on earth than this treasure? How is it possible to live a disorderly life after having given oneself entirely to be open to this infinite good? Should I not desire, O my God, to die upon receiving it? To live for as long as it pleases You, but with Your life which is one of total love. May I not, beginning in this world, flow into the ocean of Your Divine Being? Should I be so fortunate as to receive the Holy Spirit, oh, how I must desire this with my whole heart!

No longer to walk any path but this one; no other satisfaction but that of loving and of willing Your good pleasure.

You still see weaknesses in me in my desire for the affection of creatures. Consume this, O Ardent Fire of Divine Love! By the power of Your grace, weaken my passions and the use I make of my senses so that, by my powerlessness, I may render You the honor which my will was unable to exact from their fury, and which I have always owed to You. I reject, with all my heart, my excessive abruptness which I renounce forevermore, whatever the temptation that may come to me from the world, the flesh, or the devil. At least, I shall do so if I am so fortunate that the Holy Spirit will deign, by the Divine Goodness, to come into my soul and to restore in it the graces with which Your goodness filled it at my Baptism. Eternal Father, I beg this mercy of You in the name of the design which You had from all eternity in the Incarnation of Your Son and through His merits. My Savior, grant me this grace for the love which you bear for the Holy Virgin. Holy Spirit, operate this marvel in your unworthy subject by the loving union which You have from all eternity with the Father and the Son.

Subjects of meditation for the third day: Signs of having participated in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I reflected that the Person of the Holy Spirit is in the divine essence. I saw the Spirit as the perfect bond among the three Persons in the unity of the Trinity. I recalled the glory which the Church so frequently renders to this unity at the end of the psalms. Then, I spent a long while considering this truth: that the Godhead can be truly honored only by His own eternal glory. I saw that one of the effects of the Holy Spirit in God is union. I recalled the design of God in creating man to His image

and likeness. I considered in this His three excellent faculties of which two are ordered to the third which is the will. On account of this resemblance, it seemed to me that each Person of the Blessed Trinity operated in each of these faculties, and that the Holy Spirit, by means of His unitive power, gives the will the facility to unite perfectly so that there is no disorder in the soul. This would restore it permanently to the excellence of its first state at the time of creation, making it a participant in this first glory which honors the eternal glory of God after the abundant Redemption for sin. My mind recalled the thought that I had had: that the design of the Blessed Trinity from the creation of man was that the Word should become flesh so that human nature might attain the excellence of being that God willed to give to man by the eternal union that He willed between Himself and His creature, the most admirable state of His exterior operations.

My meditation was more reflective than reasoning. I felt a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord and I desired to honor and imitate it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and of all my neighbors. I had read somewhere that He had taught us charity to make up for our powerlessness to render any service to His person. This touched my heart very particularly and very intimately.

The subject of my sixth meditation was the marks which Our Lord gives so that one may know if one has received the Holy Spirit.

The strong and tender love of Our Lord appeared clearly when He told His Apostles of the consolation that the coming of the Holy Spirit would afford them. He revealed the two forms that this consolation would take. The first was that the Holy Spirit would bear witness to Him. O my Savior, had You not given them enough by Your words and works both during Your lifetime and after Your Resurrection? What more could the Spirit of Consolation, whom the Father would send by You, do for them? O profound and inscrutable secret! O Trinity perfect in power, wisdom, and love! You bring to completion the work of founding the Holy Church. You desire her to be the Mother of all believers. To this end, You console her by instructing and strengthening her in the truths which the Incarnate Word had taught her. You infused into this Mystical Body the union of your works, giving her the power to perform miracles so as to enable her to bring to souls the true witness which You willed her to bear to Your Son. You operated in them holiness of life by the merits of the Word Incarnate. The Holy Spirit, by means of His unitive love, associates Himself to this action in order to produce the same effects by His coming. He thus renders to men the proof of the divinity and

perfect manhood of Christ which should be for all a source of joy, emulation, and true detachment from worldly affections so as to form oneself according to His holy and divine actions which should lead to the resolution to live as reasonable human beings. I believe that this is what Our Lord wished to convey to His Apostles when He told them that, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they would also bear witness to Him. This is what all Christians must do, not by bearing witness to the doctrine of Christ, which is the prerogative of apostolic men, but by the perfect actions of true Christians. Blessed are those persons who, under the guidance of Divine Providence, are called upon to continue the ordinary practices of the life of the Son of God through the exercise of charity.

O Holy Spirit, you alone can enlighten us concerning the greatness of this mystery which, if one can say such a thing, reveals the impatience of God seen in the promptness with which He carried out His design on human nature for the perfection of the union which His omnipotence wished to operate in it. O creatures blinded by trifles, and I more than any other! Let us lift our spirits, not above what we are in the plan of God, that would be impossible, but above our natural inclinations which are due to the corruption of sin, so that in all our actions we may honor Our Lord by the witness He wishes us to bear to Him by performing the actions which He accomplished on earth and to which, on account of His love for us, He will apply the merits of His own. He wills by this means that Christians experience in this life that union with God which He has merited for us.

To this end, I shall strive, with the help of His grace, to overcome my sloth and to make use of a practice which was recommended in a reading: to look upon all the occasions for doing some good for my neighbor not only in terms of the recompense which Our Lord has promised to me because He considers such acts as done to Himself, but also in light of the fact that the neighbor has been given to me in the place of Our Lord, by means of a love which His goodness knows and which He has revealed to my heart, although I am unable to put it into words.

I shall also make use of a thought which His goodness gave me at a moment when I was distracted by a vain consideration; namely, that when I am seen accomplishing some good deed, I shall develop the habit of calling to mind the belief that God and His angels are watching me.

M.72 - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

Three moments are of great importance if we wish to receive Holy Communion well. The first is the period before Communion; the second

is the moment of the reception of Communion; the third is the time which follows.

During the preliminary period, we should prayerfully reflect on what Holy Communion is and who should communicate. Let us recall that faith teaches us that it is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the unity of His essence. This realization should produce in us the respect that the creature owes the Creator, recognition of our dependence upon God and our own nothingness without Him, and a great desire to receive Him.

We must try to discover in God some motive for this admirable and, in a human sense, incomprehensible action. Since there is no apparent reason, other than His pure love, we must render honor and glory to God by acts of praise, adoration, love, and gratitude for His loving invention which unites Him to us. At times, we should ask Him if becoming man was not sufficient to win our hearts completely. At others, we should seek to discover what there is in us that He wanted to acquire at so high a price and offer it to Him.

The awareness of the dignity of this most Holy Sacrament should make us realize our powerlessness to prepare adequately to receive Him. Thus, we must turn to the Spirit of Love, the Holy Spirit, who furnished this gift, and beg Him to come into our hearts and to fill them with the dispositions necessary to honor the presence of such a Lord.

Sometimes, we should place before the Blessed Trinity all that the divine omnipotence has effected in us and ask the Triune God to take possession of all that is rightly His and to make use of us as He sees fit.

At other times, we should offer to God the good dispositions of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints with the desire of imitating them so that we may more worthily receive Our Lord. We should do this by simple acts of our understanding and will which produce interior movements of love. However, we must preserve our souls in peace and await, with joy, the coming of Our Lord whom we must desire as the beloved of our souls.

As we reflect on those who should communicate frequently, we should humble ourselves greatly since it should be persons who are completely detached from all things, who have great love for God, and who shrink from nothing on the pathway of holy love.

The second important time for us, if we wish to communicate well, is the moment of the reception of Holy Communion. After the preceding acts have placed our souls in peace and tranquility, we must receive our God, our King and our Spouse, in this most august sacrament. We must offer to Him acts of adoration, dependence, confidence, and abandonment of all that we are, begging Him to take possession of our being. We must unite ourselves to our Spouse to accomplish His will by means of numerous acts of love, being particularly attentive to those qualities

in Him which call forth our love, especially His real presence within us. We must seek to discern what He wishes to accomplish within us, although we cannot see it.

The time following the reception of Holy Communion must be marked by a continuation of similar sentiments and acts. We must remain attentive to the divine presence and express our gratitude, sometimes to the Godhead, sometimes to each Person separately, according to His attributes. We should rejoice in contemplating this admirable invention and the loving union by which God, seeing Himself in us, makes us, once again, like unto Him. This He does by communicating not only His grace but Himself. He thus effectively bestows upon us the merits of His life and death, thereby giving us the capacity to live in Him as He lives in us.

We can bring great simplicity to this time after the reception of Holy Communion. It is a time for thanking God by our desire to honor Him in all the actions of our lives. It is a time, also, for offering Him all the glory due to Him as God, all that He will eternally receive from the holy humanity of His Son, and all that will be rendered to Him by the blessed in heaven. This total offering can constitute an act of thanksgiving for all the benefits we have received from His divine liberality toward us.

A.61 - (ON THE CARE THAT THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY MUST TAKE TO PRESERVE THEIR COMPANY)

The first reason is the eternal and inevitable misfortune due those who, on account of their malice, would cause the ruin or loss of a work which God, in His Providence, had established, as He seems to have done in the case of the Company.

The second is the loss that would be suffered by the many persons who will be called to the Company if it subsists. Should it perish, this could not be accomplished.

The third reason is the spiritual and physical harm that would befall so many poor persons were the Company to cease to exist, since they would be assisted only by the members of this Company unless God were to raise up another like it.

The fourth reason is the offense that each sister would commit against God if, through her wretched pride, she were to oppose His holy will in establishing the Company of the Daughters of Charity by doing things that would lead to the complete ruin and loss of the aforementioned Company.

Part II

There are many faults which the sisters might commit that could bring about the total ruin of the Company.

One of the principal offenses is to have little esteem for the manner in which the practice of the Rule calls upon the Daughters of Charity to comport themselves in all their actions.

Another is not to make known the coldness which our self-love causes us to feel for our vocation.

Another very dangerous failing is carelessness when speaking of our sisters. This could happen when the occasion presents itself to discuss what is happening in the Company, either to individuals or to the entire group, especially in matters related to the missioning of a sister who may have experienced an aversion or some repugnance for her companion. Often, it is for one who has reproved her or who desires to be very exact in fulfilling all her obligations. This could lead to criticism and blame. Sisters being sent to live with those who have been the object of such criticism are pitied. Thus, they are led to believe that the distaste that they feel for their vocation is due to the diverse dispositions of the sisters in the house where they have been placed when, in reality, it is the result of their own immortification and affection for the world as well as of the initial temptation to withdraw which they failed to reveal and concealed from their Superiors.

Since the majority of those who enter the Company are not in the habit of conversing with persons of rank, nor are they used to handling money or to possessing little things which are now freely obtainable, there is another danger which is greatly to be feared, namely, that as they become accustomed to working with the rich and the influential they may take advantage of the situation and, by forgetting the respect that they owe them, become so impudent that they are no longer bearable. Moreover, the management of money gives them the opportunity to appropriate some of it for themselves or to use it as their impulses dictate by purchasing useless objects because they have seen others with them. They might even show preferences and give some money to their relatives or others, taken not only from their resources but from the goods of the poor. Familiarity with the Ladies might lead some sisters who are already wavering and losing the affection that they should have for their vocation to obtain funds from them to give to those whom they know are ready to leave the Company.

The means for preventing the destruction of the Company on account of these dangers is to practice our Rules faithfully by observing both their general spirit and their particular recommendations, especially:

To avoid flattery and conversation with externs.

To be careful not to linger anywhere for longer than is necessary.

To avoid completely conversations with men and flattery from them.
To try to return to the house early in the evening.

A.18 - (THE DESIRE TO IMITATE OUR LORD AT HIS DEATH)

August 16, 1658

On Monday, during the reception of Holy Communion, I suddenly felt moved by the desire that Our Lord should come to me and communicate His virtues to me. Prior to this, I seemed to experience shame for the ill-use I had made of the honor of receiving Him.

Since the subject of our morning meditation that day had been the signs which appeared at the moment of Our Savior's death, I asked Him to effect two in me. I desired firstly, that the veil of the temple, which I saw as my understanding, should be torn so that I would no longer cling to my own judgment, and secondly, that my stony heart should be rent by gentleness and support for my neighbor.

As a means for attaining this, I thought that I must turn to the example of Our Lord during the final moments of His life. Here I was instructed by His last words, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," which taught me that I should do nothing of consequence without this disposition. His final action was to incline His head, thereby showing me that I must not notice so many things and must humbly acquiesce to others.

M.73 - (ON THE INTERIOR SPIRIT NECESSARY FOR THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY)

It seems to me that our interior conversation with God should consist in the continuous remembrance of His holy presence. We must adore Him every hour and make acts of love for His goodness, recalling, as far as possible, the thoughts that we received during meditation so that we may correct our faults and advance in this same holy love.

On all those occasions which are painful to our senses, we must consider the paternal goodness of God. Like a good Father, He allows the rod of His divine justice to touch us, sometimes to correct us and at other times to show us His great love by allowing us to share in the sufferings of His Son so that we may likewise share in His merits. Let us, therefore, make acts of thanksgiving.

When pleasant things happen to us or when our undertakings succeed as we wish them to, before abandoning ourselves to the joy of the moment, let us glance interiorly toward God and thank Him for His mercy since it is His love alone which affords us this consolation. Therefore, let us accept it in this light by an act of love.

We must strive to use all the things that strike our senses as means to raise our minds to God. We should consider them as coming from His all-powerful hand or we should reflect on His design in creating them, which is almost always for the benefit of the human race so that it will be grateful to Him.

At other times, we should ponder the excellence of the being which God has given to us so that we may raise ourselves above the lowliness toward which our corrupted nature draws us through our affection for so many things which do not deserve to occupy our minds. Consequently, let us cry out that all that we desire on earth is God.

Sometimes we are under pressure, and it seems to us that we urgently need and hope for help from others. However, we are disappointed. This happens either through the conduct of Divine Providence or because of human weakness. We must then look immediately to the will of God and accept it in this situation. We should raise our minds to God and depend only on Him, remembering that, from all eternity, He has been and is sufficient to Himself; consequently, He can and should be sufficient for us. Since we are so fortunate as to be in a state of life in which He is to be our only consolation, we must lovingly accept the privation of all that we lack, although we consider certain things as essential for us. Let us remain in intimate peace with God without complaining of creatures who would not be a subject of trial to us if God did not permit it. We must strive to keep our minds closely united to God. Such acts must stem from our wills. Therefore, I think that it is an excellent means of keeping our minds directed toward God as is His good pleasure.

In all the situations that we have mentioned, we must develop the practice of making frequent acts of the desire to know God and ourselves. This will lead us to make the repeated acts of love which we owe Him and to avoid anything that is displeasing to Him. We must often abandon ourselves to Him; show Him our hearts filled with trust and gratitude; and try, from time to time, to whisper ejaculatory prayers to Him.

A.27 - ON THE PURE LOVE WE HAVE VOWED TO GOD

John 12:28-35

"Father, glorify your name!"
Then a voice came from the sky:
"I have glorified it,
and will glorify it again."
When the crowd of bystanders heard the voice, they said it was thunder. Others maintained, "An angel was speaking to him." Jesus answered, "That voice did not come for my sake, but for yours."
"Now has judgment come upon this world,
now will this world's prince be driven out,
and I—once I am lifted up from earth—
will draw all men to myself."
(This statement indicated the sort of death he had to die.) The crowd objected to his words: "We have heard it said in the law that the Messiah is to remain forever. How can you claim that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Just who is this 'Son of Man'?"

My very dear Sisters and all souls that aspire to the perfection of pure divine love, these are the words of our beloved Master and Spouse who teaches us thereby that we may hope for this and that such aspirations are in keeping with His plan as seen in the attraction that He will exert when He is raised up from the earth.

Let us admire the means that He took to make these words more efficacious and to enable us to understand that they are addressed to all chosen souls. He spoke to the entire crowd of people who were following Him and He addressed words to His Father in their presence that should delight us all. He asked that His Father's name be eternally glorified by great love.

The Father answered with a sign to show that it was, indeed, His Son who was speaking and that He had the power to fulfill His promises. The people recognized Our Lord as truly the Christ, but they asked Him who the Son of Man was since He had said that He would die and be raised up from the earth.

Was anything more needed, O my dear Spouse, so that You might be recognized? How is it that vanity prevailed and still prevails over truth? Let us be more courageous, my dear Sisters, and let us accomplish, insofar as we are able, the words God addressed to His Son when He said that His name would be glorified. May this come about through the effect of Jesus' words when He promised that He would draw all to Himself when He was lifted up. This gives dominion over all things to the Creator of all things, as is only just.

Is it not glorious for souls to cooperate with God in carrying out this

plan? Let us, therefore, submit ourselves to the will of our Well-Beloved so that His words may be fulfilled in us.

What will become of us if, seeing Him raised up and desiring to draw us to Himself, we are so attached to earth that the weight of our misguided affections prevails over the attraction of His pure love?

Draw us, therefore, O my Lord, and we shall run; and the fragrance of Your perfumes will hold us so firmly that nothing will be capable of separating us from Your charity.

You desire to draw all to Yourself. Teach us truly to understand these words. If we belong to You, we can no longer belong to ourselves. If we believe that we are Yours, would it not be stealing to use ourselves and to live ever so slightly at variance with the precepts of the pure love which You taught us on earth?

Once we have completely yielded our wills to the purity of Your holy love, our lives must be spent entirely in the observance of the rule given to us by our Beloved from the moment that He was lifted up until His death.

Let us take the first step in following Him which is to exclaim, "I desire it thus, my dear Spouse, I desire it thus. As proof thereof, I am going to follow You to the foot of Your Cross which I choose as my cloister. There, I shall leave behind all earthly affections because Your voice has called me and urged my heart to forget my people and my father's house so as to be open to Your great love. Therefore, at the foot of this holy, sacred and adored Cross, I sacrifice everything that might prevent me from loving, with all the purity that You expect of me, without ever aspiring to any joy other than submission to Your good pleasure and to the laws of Your pure love."

Do not be fearful, my very dear Sisters, even if, in using the word *All*, I am making no exceptions. The thorns on these roses should not prevent you from grasping the bouquet since it will make you most pleasing to your Spouse. The Bride of the *Canticle of Canticles*, whom we should consider as our Abbess, exclaimed, "He is white and scarlet."

Since, at the creation of the world, God taught us that our resemblance to Him was dependent on His love, let us preserve this image within us by means of two eminent perfections: purity, symbolized by the color white, and charity, symbolized by the scarlet of the rose. These colors represent for us the purity and charity of God: His intrinsic purity in the simplicity of His Being and the purity inherent in all the graces that His goodness has communicated and continues to communicate with limitless generosity; the intrinsic love of God who, in the unity of His essence, engendered His Word from all eternity by His omniscience; and the work of the Holy Spirit in producing Their reciprocal love, which love is the Holy Spirit. The love of God for mankind willed that the Son should take human flesh because His delight is to be among His creatures. By

becoming like them, He could bear witness to the fact that God has loved them from all eternity. This He did throughout His human life upon earth.

Therefore, let us love this love and we will thereby grasp its endlessness since it depends in no way on us. Let us often recall all the actions of the life of our Beloved so that we may imitate them. Not content with the love that He bears for all chosen souls, He wishes to have some very cherished ones raised up by the purity of His love.

But, before entering upon this lofty practice, let us admire the goodness of our Spouse, and with the simplicity of the dove that He asks of us, let us question Him to discover if He loves us and if He wants us to love Him.

My Lord, I received a kind of new light concerning the uncommon love that You wish to receive from those whom You choose to exercise the purity of Your love on earth. Look upon this little flock of Yours and see if we may dare to hope for such a thing. It seems that we hold this wish in our hearts. However, the awareness of our weakness, because of our past unfaithfulness, makes us fear that You might reject us. But the thought that You placed no limits on the times that we are to forgive our enemies makes us hope that You will treat us in the same way, and so we believe that You love us.

Yes! You truly love us since You are one with the Father who willed to show us His love by giving us You, His only Son. We are also certain that You want us to love You. Both Your old and Your new law command us to do so. You promise us that Your Father will love us and that You both will come and abide with us if we love You.

O power of love! O admirable treasure hidden in the depths of the soul! O excellence of the creature who knows You! All mankind would take delight in it. Love is the gauge of a glorious eternity of souls called to heaven since, if it is alive in the soul, God will come and make His abode there.

O Pure Love, how I love You! Since You are as strong as death, separate me from all that is contrary to You.

Practice of Pure Love

My Lord, we are at the foot of the Cross where we see You hanging so that we may be drawn to You as You promised. Were not Your word omnipotent, I would fear the weight of my earthly affections. However, You are well aware of this, O my dear Savior, since You requested neither our consent nor our labor. Act resolutely in me and unite my love to Your pure love which triumphs over life.

A.31B - (THOUGHTS ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY)

Would to God that I could fully express the thoughts that, in His goodness, He has granted to me on the subject of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, so that the true understanding that I possess of her merits and the desire that I have to render her fitting homage may remain always in my heart.

Thus, reflecting on this Holy Conception, I saw, at one and the same time, the design of God in the Incarnation and its application to the matter that was to form the virginal body of Mary so that, although she was a true daughter of Adam, there was to be no stain of sin in her. This was because in her was to take form the sacred body of the Son of God who could not have satisfied the divine justice by His death had He participated in original sin. The most pure body of the Blessed Virgin is a worthy dwelling place for the soul that God created for her. Both are agreeable to God because, from the moment of her pure Conception, both have been enriched by the merits of the death of her Son.

As into a very precious vessel, more and more graces have been poured into her soul and she has never failed to make good use of them. Therefore, with every good reason, she should be honored by all creatures and served in a particular way by Christians since she is the only pure creature who has always found favor in the eyes of God. This makes her the astonishment of the heavenly court and the admiration of all humanity.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin leads us to realize and to adore the omnipotence of God because grace totally vanquished nature in her. She was saved without ever having been lost, not only through mercy but also through justice, since this was essential for the Incarnation of the Son of God in the eternal plan for the Redemption of mankind. We must, therefore, honor this holy Conception that made her so precious in the eyes of God, and believe that it depends only on us to receive the assistance of the Blessed Virgin in all our needs. This is so because it seems to me that it would be impossible for God to refuse her anything. His divine and loving glance never left her since she always lived according to His will. Therefore, we must be convinced that He is always ready to grant whatever she requests because she asks for nothing that is not for His glory and our good.

We must carefully consider the advantages that the Blessed Virgin has enjoyed over all other creatures as a consequence of her Immaculate Conception. The first is that she never harbored tendencies that could push her to sin. She never knew this evil that dwells in all the children of Adam. Oh, what peace, gentleness, charity and humility there were in the soul of the Virgin since it is this instinct that causes us so much trouble

by leading us into sin.

The knowledge that God gives us of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin should cause us to glorify Him eternally for this masterpiece of His omnipotence in a nature that is purely human. We are also led to admire the beauty of the purity of Our Lady's thoughts. Her mind never indulged in useless thoughts nor was it occupied with sin.

May the frailty of human beings, conceived in sin that leads them to revolt against God, bring to light the honor that the Blessed Virgin rendered to Him by remaining immersed in justice and truth. May souls devoted to the holy and most pure Virgin attentively consider her actions which were never in the least disagreeable to God since they were always accomplished according to His will.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, therefore, completely enlightened her mind and strengthened her will so that she continually acted in such a way that she never omitted anything that God asked of her. Consequently, she was filled with virtue both in the matter and in the form of the being which God gave to her.

This is why, throughout my life, in time and in eternity, I desire to love and to honor her to the best of my ability by my gratitude to the Blessed Trinity for the choice made of the Holy Virgin to be so closely united to the Divinity. I wish to honor the three Persons separately and also together in the unity of the divine essence.

M.5B - (THE VIRGIN MARY, CO-REDEMPTRIX)

(August 1659)

On August 15, 1659,[1] during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at which I was to receive Holy Communion, I reflected on the greatness of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of the Son of God who desired to honor her to such a degree that we may say that she participated in some way in all the mysteries of His life and that she contributed to His humanity by her virginal blood and milk. Considering her in this light, I congratulated Mary on her excellent dignity which unites her to her Son in the perpetual sacrifice of the Cross, reenacted and offered on our altars.

I also remarked that, by this means, the son of God has, as it were, begotten human nature for Eternity, rendering it capable of enjoying God according to His designs. This appeared to me to be great in heaven where

1. The person copying this passage had written "1660." This date is impossible since Louise de Marillac had died March 15, 1660.

the just contemplate the divine nature and essence, angelic nature, and human nature which, in turn, is also contemplated by the angels and the divinized humanity of Our Lord.

A.100 - (PROBLEMS FOR THE COMPANY)

(1660)[1]

The method of teaching used at La Fère is to be feared not only because the sister involved may inject much of herself into it and advance maxims that she cannot explain, but also because public places, such as the rooms in hospitals where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, are used. This could lead others to accuse the Superiors of the Daughters of Charity of allowing the sisters to undertake too much.

There are also other disadvantages. God was pleased to choose village girls for the solid establishment of the Servants of the Sick Poor. Now since this method of instruction is brilliant and sophisticated, if those sisters who have great capabilities were permitted to undertake it but were not dispensed from more lowly tasks, they might, after having been well trained for it, seek dispensations from several exercises and expect better treatment than that given to those in more humble duties. If contradicted in this matter, they would soon leave the Company.

Other sisters would turn to avid reading. In the desire to appear capable, they would devote their attention to learning without taking into consideration other necessary work. Although they have recently arrived in the Company, they would not apply themselves to the practice of mortification. There are already examples of this truth in the Company.

It is said that this work will not continue for a long period of time; that there will not always be sisters capable of undertaking it; that it has the approval of the Pastor and of the Vicar General; and that most of the inhabitants of the city applaud it. This would be acceptable for individuals such as Mademoiselle Pileure or for others whom God might wish to assemble for this purpose.

However, to turn this into an essential function in the Company of the Daughters of Charity would be to enter on the pathway to its destruction. At the very least, it would divide it into two bodies. Those who would judge themselves capable of this employment would be the dominant group and, in their illusions of grandeur, they would fulfill the functions of Saint Mary Magdalen. They would compromise and they would lord it over those employed in visiting the sick. Little by little, poor

1. See Letter 650.

girls would be prevented from entering the Company and the others would soon become ladies. This is already the pretense of several sisters.

It could be objected that one of the main functions of the establishment of the Confraternity and the Company of the Daughters of Charity is the spiritual service of the sick poor. We are all convinced of the truth of this. May God be glorified for it! But does not the grace of God act in all the sisters even the most rustic and simple? In the places where they are located, how many people have been turned away from sin? How many general confessions have been made after years away from this sacrament? How many little girls have been instructed by the sisters in the school? How many persons in the families to which she brings food have also profited from her instruction? How many heretics have been converted since the Daughters of Charity have been working in the hospitals? Recall that, in 1659, a sister who had been in the hospital of Saint-Denis said that, during the year, five or six heretics were converted, including the son of a Protestant minister, without counting several previous conversions. All this was done under a veil of silence. Would to God that it had not been necessary to mention it, since this manner of acting is in keeping with the first commandments of the Founder of the Company, Jesus Christ, speaking through His servant. We are told to honor His hidden life. This is essential for the strength of this Company which, one day, may perhaps have the grace to be employed, not in the city, but in the service of the peasants according to its original end or, rather, according to God's first design for it. This could come about in the course of changes inherent in human history.

Oh, what a happiness, if, without offending God, the Company could be employed only in the service of those who are destitute in all things! To this end, this Company must never depart from nor change its poor manner of life. Thus, should Divine Providence provide them with more than is necessary, let them go to serve the corporally and spiritually poor at their own expense. If this passes unnoticed, what does it matter, so long as souls honor eternally the Redemption of Our Lord?

M.8B - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

On the Feast of Saint Geneviève, in 1660, as I was receiving Holy Communion, I felt, upon seeing the Sacred Host, an extraordinary thirst which had its origin in the belief that Jesus wanted to give Himself to me in the simplicity of His divine infancy. When I was receiving Him and for a long time afterward, my mind was filled by an interior communication which led me to understand that Jesus was bringing not only Himself to me but also all the merits of His mysteries. This

communication lasted all day. It was not a forced, interior preoccupation. It was rather a presence or a recurrent recollection, as sometimes happens when something is troubling me.

I felt that I was being warned that, since Jesus had given Himself entirely to me, laden with the merits of all these mysteries, I must make use of this occasion to participate in His submission to humiliations.

One means to attain this end is to be found in the fact that, without any cause in me, I appear to others as having received some graces from God. This both humbles me and gives me courage.

No desires, no resolutions. The grace of my God will accomplish in me whatever He wills.

A.49 - PRAYER BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

Most Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and of the Son, come to purify and to embellish my soul so that it will be agreeable to my Savior and so that I may receive Him for His greater glory and my salvation. I long for You with all my heart, O Bread of Angels. Do not consider my unworthiness which keeps me away from You, but listen only to Your love that has so often invited me to approach You. Give Yourself entirely to me, my God. May Your precious body, Your holy soul, and Your glorious divinity, which I adore in this Holy Sacrament, take complete possession of me.

Sweet Jesus! Gentle Jesus! My God and my All! Have mercy on all souls redeemed by Your precious blood. Inflame them with the arrow of Your love in order to make them grateful for the love that urged You to give Yourself to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

To this end, I offer You the glory that You enjoy within Yourself from all eternity, and all the graces that You granted the Blessed Virgin and the saints, together with the glory that they will eternally render You by this same love.

SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT

My dear Sisters, I continue to ask God for His blessings for you and pray that He will grant you the grace to persevere in your vocation in order to serve Him in the manner He asks of you.

Take good care of the service of the poor. Above all, live together in great union and cordiality, loving one another in imitation of the union and life of Our Lord.

Pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin, that she may be your only Mother.[1]

1. This spiritual testament was recorded by the sisters who attended Louise de Marillac during her final moments on earth. It was faithfully transcribed. Gobillon quotes it in his Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras, written in 1676.

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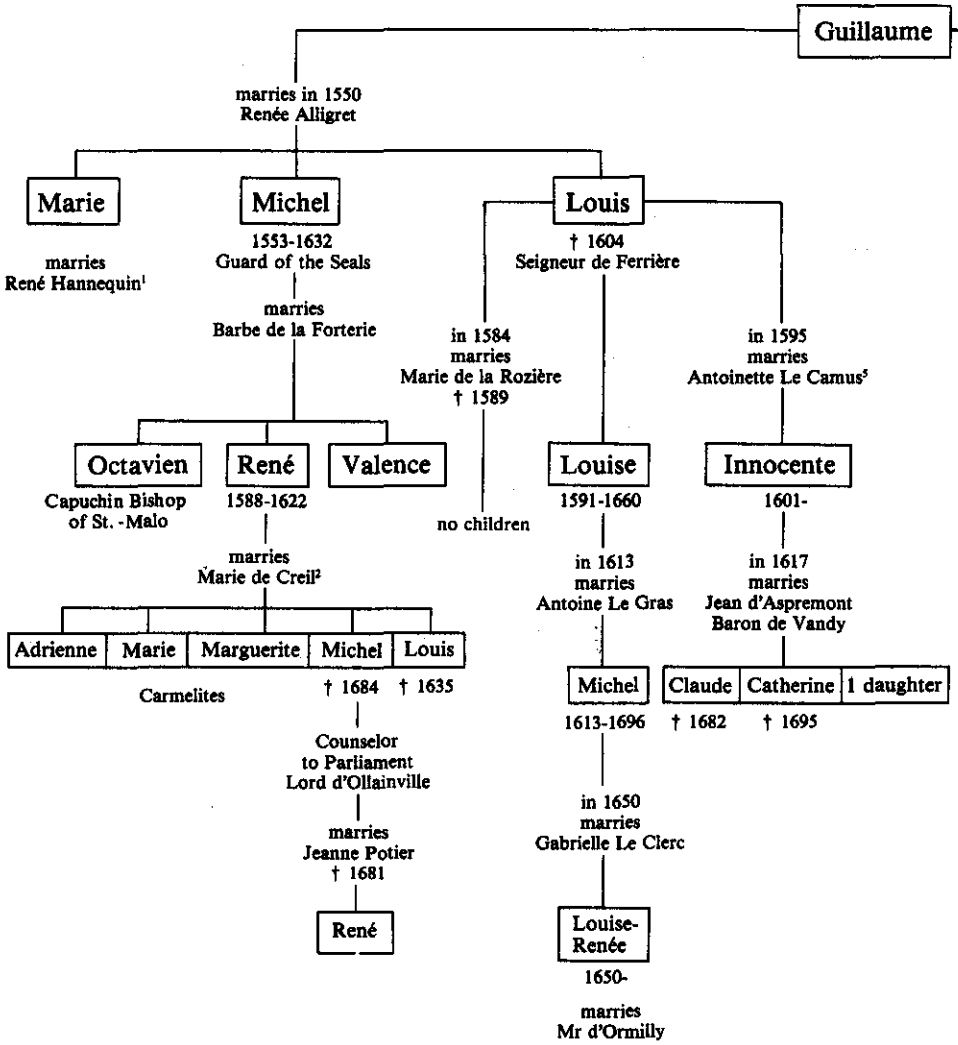
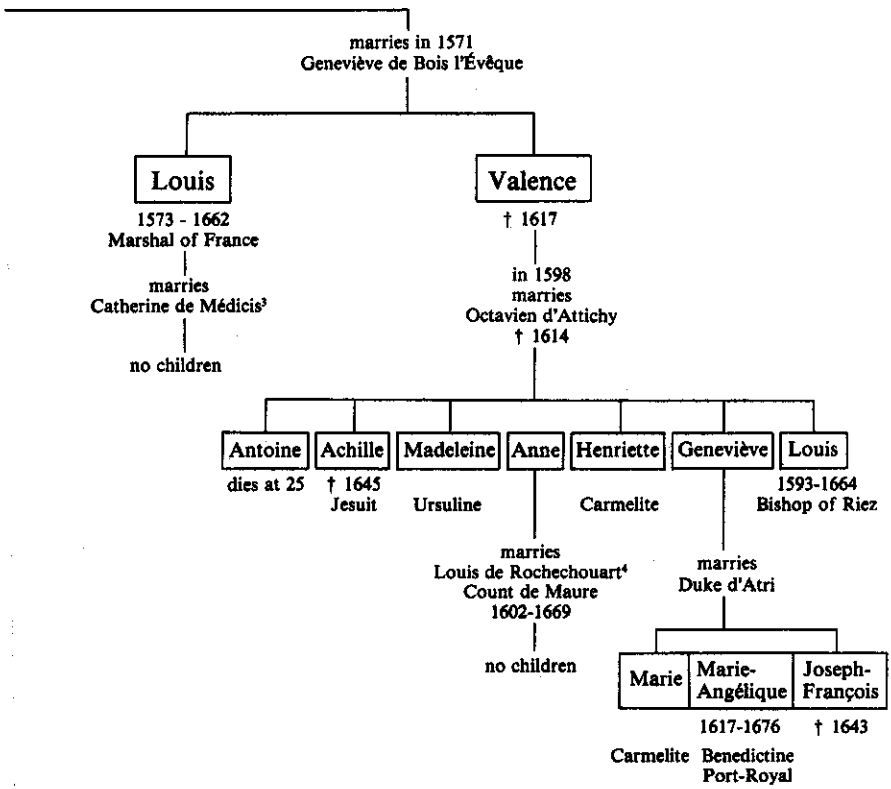
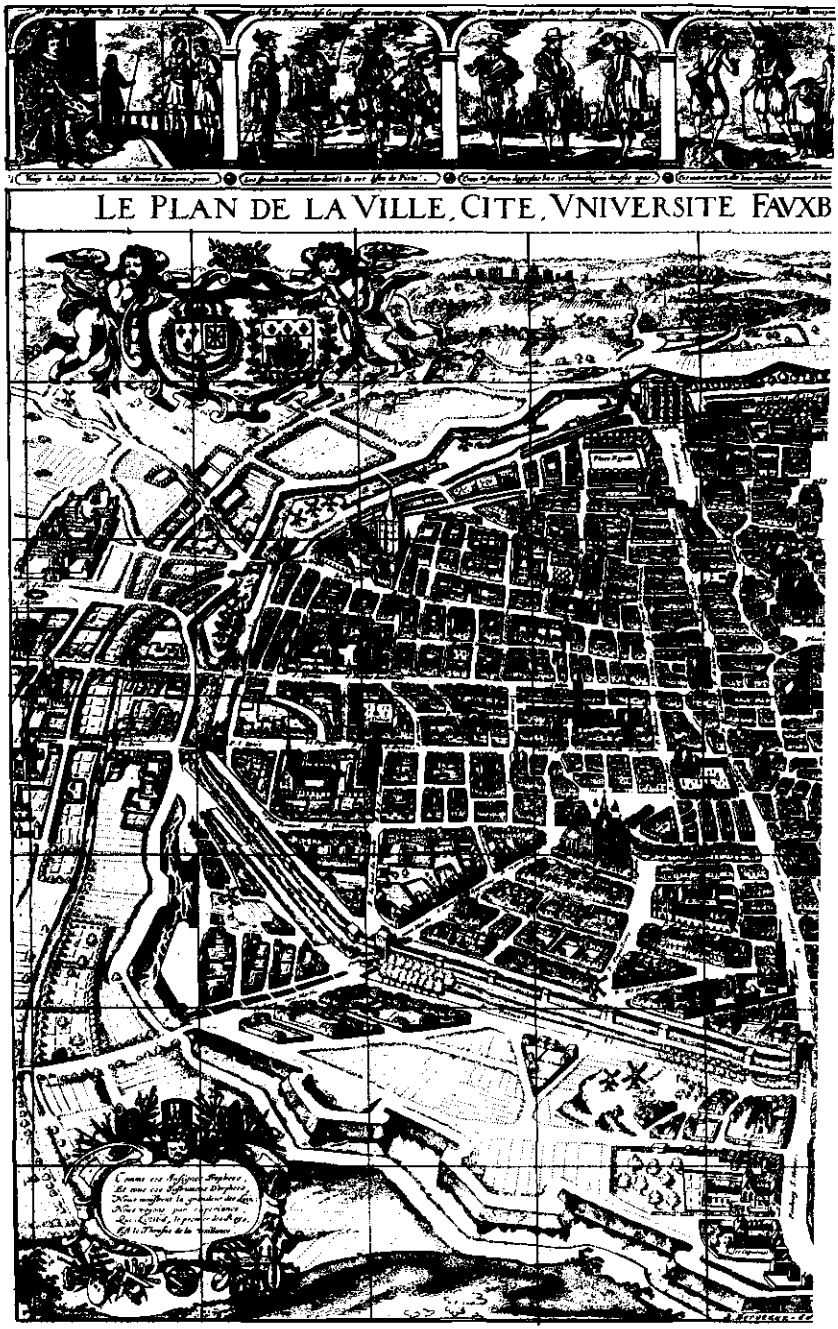


DE MARILLAC FAMILY



Notes: 1. Uncle of Mlle du Fay
2. Enters Carmel after the death of her father-in-law
3. Aunt of Queen Marie de Mèdicis
4. Brother of the Duke de Mortemart
5. Aunt of Mgr Camus, Bishop Belley


LE PLAN DE LA VILLE, CITE, VNIVERSITE FAVXB

DE PARIS AVEC LA DESCRIPTION DE SON ANTIQVITE

Amiens
Chaſteau en
Chaſtelet
Peronne
Corbie
La ferte
Catte
Bretaul
Roye
Nayon
BULLES
NEUFVILLE
GOURNAY
Roan
Arevecocur
Liancourt
BEAUVAIS
CLERMONT
LA BRUYÈRE
RANTIGNY
CAUFFRY
PONT-SAINT-MAXENCE
VERNEUIL
CHARS
VILLERS-SOUS-LEU
CHANTILLY
SENLIS
BARON
ENNERY
ASNIÈRES-SUR-OISE
PONTOISE
NANTEUIL
CONFLANS HERBLAY
SANNOIS
FRANCONVILLE
LE HAUDOUIN
ARGENTEUIL
SAINT-DENIS
DAMMARTIN
COLOMBE
AUBERVILLIERS
ST-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE
LES ALLUETS
NANTERRE
LA CHAPELLE
PARIS
SURESNES
ST-CLOUD
GENTILLY
BICETRE
VERSAILLES
ISSY
CLAMART
SUCY-EN-BRIE
FONTENAY-AUX-ROSES
Chaſtre
Gallardon
Eſtampes
CHAMPLAN
Toury
Bais
Artenay
Orle
OLLAINVILLE
REAVSSE
Sens

INDEX

Abbreviations
CM: Congregation of the Mission; DC: Daughters of Charity;
M.: Monsieur; Mme.: Madame; Mlle.: Mademoiselle;
Msgr.: Monseigneur (title of a Bishop).

A

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