2.219 APSL (formerly ASJPH) 1-3-3-2:13 (original in French)
Soeur Marie Bizeray*, Soeur Marguerite Woirin*, et Soeur Augustine Chauvin, Bordeaux, to “our dear sisters aspiring to the Company of the daughters of Charity at St. Mary's Mountain,” [Emmitsburg], July 12, 1810

On Bishop Flaget’s return from France in 1810, he brought a copy of the rule of the Daughters of Charity. He also hoped to bring several Daughters to assist Mother Seton’s new community. In this letter Sister Bizeray speaks in the name of the three Daughters chosen to make the trip to the United States. She rejoices in their call to serve those who are suffering. [However, these Daughters never came to the United States.]

* According to the editor’s note in Seton (2009), p. 218, fn. w, the Sisters’ full religious names were Marie-Anne Bizeray, Marguerite Woirin (also given as Voisin) and Augustine Chauvin.

2.221 APSL (formerly ASJPH) 1-3-3-1:44
Rev. John Carroll, Baltimore, to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, July 18, 1810

Carroll has not heard from the Sulpicians of any proposed change in the Sisters’ government. He does not think it would be beneficial to remove Seton as Mother of the community.

2.235 APSL (formerly ASJPH) 1-3-3-2:19
Margaret C. George, Baltimore to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, December 25, 1810

Margaret George writes as a friend of Mother Seton who eventually hopes to join her in Emmitsburg. She shares rumors of changes in the government of the community which she has heard from the Sulpicians. She mentions Fr. David’s thoughts on sending Sisters to Kentucky and beginning a sisterhood in Baltimore. A paragraph in French, probably written by Fr. Babade, is inserted.

2.261 AMSV 100, 115, 1, 4
Rev. John Carroll, Baltimore to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, Sept. 11, 1811

Carroll sends his approval of the Sisters’ Constitutions for the Sisters. He agrees that there should be no formal connection between the Sulpicians and the Sisters, except for their immediate Superior. He recognizes Elizabeth Seton’s unique situation as mother of five children.

2.297 AMSMU
Rev. John Dubois, Mount St. Mary’s, to Rev. Simon Bruté, May 7, 1812

Dubois advises Bruté on the spiritual direction of Elizabeth Seton, who continues to mourn the death of her eldest daughter Anna Maria.
My good and dear Sisters,

Since it is impossible for me to go to you, I write to you to prove that I think of you and I hope that I will have the satisfaction of seeing you in a few months, for the God who calls you to your holy state and who inspired me and my companions with the desire to be of help to you, will favor our departure.

This dear God who chose a poor, sinful man, weak and ignorant, on which to build the foundation of his Church wants, again today, to use what is most feeble (in order to better show his glory) to build an establishment that will be agreeable to Him since its end is the service of its suffering members. Oh! How beautiful the call which places us on the footsteps of our Divine Savior, to practice the virtues which he practiced, to offer ourselves in sacrifice as he offered himself for us. What gratitude, what love, we owe to this tender father, to have chosen us for a state so sublime. Let us thank him, my dear Sisters and let us pray for one another who are granted the grace to respond faithfully to this unappreciable privilege.

Let us also address ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, to S. Vincent de Paul, our father and to Mlle le Gras our blessed mother, so that they will obtain happiness for their dear daughters. Let us not doubt that we are dear to them since we love them and that we want to be submissive to them.

Monsignor Flaget should have brought to your attention the dispositions which inspired us by his zeal and the holy interest he has for you. Therefore, I will not repeat what he has already told you. I will limit myself to assure you of the entire and sincere devotion and the respect with which I am, my good sisters and soon to be companions.

Your very humble Sister Marie Bizeray
Daughter of Charity, Servant of the poor.

Bordeaux, 12 July, 1810

On the Back: For our dear sisters aspiring to the Company of the daughters of Charity
At St. Mary’s Mountain
Dear and hon[ore]d. Madam

Your esteemed favour [favor] of the 7th still found me here, and still uncertain, when to leave it. Appoint a Sacristan of your choice, whenever a vacancy happens, or sickness prevents the regular attendance of the Lady, who was constituted. I remember the custom of the monasteries, within <which> my observations. There were two Sacristans appointed and when both did not attend together, one always performed the necessary work. The abbess, Sr. [unclear] or Mother (whatever be her title) should <receive> always enjoy power to make this appointment; and it is now bestowed on you. Since my last to you, not a syllable has been said by Mr. David, or any member of Mr. Nagots council called Directeurs, concerning a change in your house: if any be intended, I must hear of it very soon. The proposal, if renewed, will not create any uneasiness on your account. You have gone thro many trials in overcoming the obstructions, interior and exterior, which were interposed to your change of religion. To these other difficulties equally or more painful succeeded; but it has still pleased God to reserve another, which must naturally disappoint your expectations, more than any <other> preceding one, that is you are destined to be tried by disapprobation and humiliation, where you expected to meet confidence and tranquility. This was wanting perhaps to perfect your other sacrifices, and to operate in your heart an entire disengagement from human things and expectations; even the consolations of religious retirement. Mr. Dubois has without doubt earlier information than me of the views of Messrs. Dubourg or David, but still their good sense must and will cause hesitation, before they resolve finally to assign to Sr. Rose the government of the monastery, and limit you to the school. I once thought, that this might be attended with some relief of your present disquietude, and should still think so, if merely your individual self were interested; but, be it said, without giving food to natural self-love, it would be in my opinion a fatal change to the prosperity of the Sisterhood, and prove ultimately detrimental to any project of your removal to Baltimore. If this event were to take place after your relinquishment of your present station it would by many be attributed to your disgust, and consequently of prejudice to the Institution. Therefore if it should be again proposed to me, it is my determination to resist the proposal, till Mr. David has finished his visitation, & made his report <of>.

Rest assured of my sollicitude [solicitude] for your happiness and that of your natural & spiritual children. Assure the former of my tenderest love & the latter of my paternal care & anxiety, & that I am D[ea]r. & h[onore]d. Madam, Ever Y[ou]rs. in Christ

B[altimo]re July 19

+ J. B. of B.

[Address]
Mrs. M.E.A. Seton
St. Joseph’s near Emmitsburg
My ever dear Mother

Having just returned from St. Mary’s where I heard 6 Masses at which I did not forget the dear Mother and inhabitants of St. Joseph I am housekeeper today My Mother having gone to the A[rch]Bishop’s church, I think I will spend part of it in writing to my Mountain mother as you style her. Bishop Flaget gave us high Mass & sermon this morning at 4 o clock The church was so crowded that a great many were outside the doors—

I have neglected writing to you before, not knowing of an opportunity until it would be too late. My dear Father on the day he sailed, when I went to see him for the last time, charged me to write you his farewell & blessing, to say everything an affectionate father could say to a dear child & to recommend himself to your prayers. He mentioned several times to me your long silence and could not account for it except sickness — might have prevented you from writing. He left Baltimore 28 Novr and was detained in Hampton roads until the 8 Dec[embe]r. – by contrary winds. Every evening since he went away I say 1 pair beads for him & I want you as ye say 3 pair every day to offer one for that dear father in union with mine that what my unworthiness cant obtain may be granted to your united endeavours. Do not refuse me.

Your letter gave me pain, I can perceive by it that your health is declining and I am afraid you are too indifferent about it - pardon my freedom it springs from true friendship. Consider your precious children, Alas no one could or would supply your loss - do then be more solicitous about your health even if it were for their sake’s alone.

I purpose this evening paying a little visit to P.B. [Pere Babade] in his own room – I have looked every day this week for him to call but I know not how it is he has never called once, it is strange as he frequently calls on his way to the poor house. You must know My Mother here is his child – when I return I will finish my letter.

I have returned without seeing him. These holidays have rendered him invisible except at the Altar where I see him every day.

St. John’s day [Dec. 27]. At last I have seen him and was almost tempted to scold. He read me a charming panegyric on St. John the beloved disciple of our adored. I was tempted to wish for you, but apropos that is a pleasure I soon expect, he has just informed me that it is our dear Bishop’s intention to send for you on the arrival of Mrs. Barry in Baltimore, who at present is in N. York. Then Oh then I shall see my dearest Mother O that I could return with <you> her and remain with her forever –

[Next paragraph is written in Latin and French, in different handwriting, probably Fr. Babade’s.]
L.J.C. venite adoremus. Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus. Le pere se porte comme le Pont Neuf – tous les jours il recoit quelques nouveaux venus. Ce sont des gens comme les pauvres Patres de Bethléem. Il attend les Mages. Theodore lui ecrit en des termes qu’il n’on repeter – elle est insatiable de la morale, elle la jette à ses pieds, il espere que celui qui resiste aux Superbes et donne sa grace aux humbles, aura pitié d’elle. Il a quelque envie d’invoglier pour elle la vertu guérissante qui lui en a deja amené un si grand nombre. Quand le moment sera venu il avertira afin que toutes les prieres se reunissens (?) pour obtenir une victoire et une guérison de cette importance. Le jour de l’anniversaire de la delivrance de sa chere Maddalena is (??) a cru avoir une nouvelle assurance du bonheur de cette chere fille pour qui il demandoit seulement une augmentation de bonheur et de gloire. Toute la famille lui est si semblablement presente dans toutes ses adorations et ses prieres qu’il a souvent honte des effets trop exterieurs que produis ce sentiment; souvent la voix lui manqué meme à l’autre. Il desire quelques fois aller de [unclear] rejoindre Cecile et Magdaleine; mais il repri de toutes les forces un sentiment qu’il entre un peu trop d’égoisme. Il dit bien vite et pour lui et pour Y. U. [unclear] Souffrir, etre humiliée, ignore de méprisé, et vous faire connaitre, adorer, et server jusqu’à la fin du monde. ….

O éternité tu nous suffiras pour jouer. O temps que tu es court pour servir un tel maître! Il souhaite à ses enfants une année pleine, à Wm. une entier deliverance, à S. U. et à tous, les jour Stes. de la creche, à S. U. le couteau de la circoncision, à les enfants le sort (??) des SS. Innocens. Quelle joie pour lui quand il dit ou chante le credo de penser que Cecil et Magdelen voient maintenant ce qu’il ne nous est encore donné que de [unclear], cependant si l’hommage de notre foi est plus agreeable que les effusions de la joissance, croyons tant qu’il lui plaira??, l’éternité suffira pour voir

[Margaret George’s handwriting resumes]

as to the idea of sending sisters to Kentucky I know not where it could originate, your superior dined with us at Madame Maureau’s academy last week, being invited there to attend the public examination of the scholars. After dinner he came & sat by me, the conversation turned on Emmitsburg, I asked him if it was his intention, he answered no, that at the present it was unpracticable, perhaps hereafter when he becomes acquainted with that country & that such a thing might be effected he would then endeavour to have a sisterhood there but I believe by what he said that day he would endeavour to establish one here first & you know <of> who would be superior, not me at all events nor you - if such a thing does take place it will be merely for the sick alone (no school) – —

he did not speak of establishing one here as being decided it is as yet undetermined I did not give him to understand that I had heard anything of <Kentucky> sending sisters to Kentucky -

Kiss my sweet Rebbecca & Josephine for me. My love to Anna her father often speaks of her & never loses sight of her - no letter from — such was the case of dear Harriet before her
deliverance - such a disappointment contributed not a little to hasten & accomplish her true &
eternal gratification.

Do not you think it is time to finish scribbling I wish I could be near you even for 2 days.

my letter resembles a journal more than a letter, no matter what form, it will be equally
acceptable to you. "Pere" assures me he never enjoyed better health these 25 years past as he
does at present. He may feel better but he still looks the same thin emaciated figure as ever but
he insists upon it that he never was better. The report of a sisterhood being established in
Baltimore gains ground. Mr Fenwyck [Fenwick] has arrived here to take charge of St. Peter's
church & flock - Mr. O'Brien goes in a few days to N. York but returns here I believe in a few
months. Our dear Arch Bishop has received accounts which can be relied on, that our head
pastor Pope Pius was in perfect health about the middle of Sept. last yet in confinement, this
day commences another year & completes my 23 year.

Jany. 18 I have been in daily expectation of an opportunity, none has occurred till now
pray for your poor child M.C.G. I have just heard that Mrs. Barry is in town at Colonel Howards

[Address]
Mrs. Seton
St. Joseph's Valley
near Emmetsburg
Hon[ore]d and dear Madam,

Shall I confess that I am deeply humiliated at being called on to give a final sanction to a rule of conduct and plan of religious government, by which it is intended to promote and preserve, amongst many beloved spouses of Jesus Christ, a spirit of solid and sublime religious perfection? When I remember how many prayers, fastings, watchings, etc. were employed by the holy founders of religious institutions to obtain light and assistance from the Holy Ghost to render their constitutions and rules adapted to the objects of their pious zeal, I am so sensible of my unworthiness, that I would certainly decline from the task, if I did not entertain a confidence that it may please God to bestow a blessing on the ministerial acts of the ministers of religion, whom he has constituted, to which blessing they are not entitled, if only their private worth were considered. Under this impression therefore, I shall and do now give my approbation to the Constitutions exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois, after they shall receive the alterations suggested to and by him. You will know from him what these are; and it affords me great pleasure to learn that all the material points on which a difference of opinion was thought to exist, have been given up by Messrs. de S. Sulpice in their last deliberations. If they had not, I do not think that I should have approved the Constitutions, as modified in the copy thereof which has been before me. Mr. Dubois has not exhibited the rules of detail and particular duties of the Sisters but these being matters of which yourselves and your Fr. Superior will be the best judges, I commit you and them with the utmost confidence to the guidance of the Divine Spirit. I am exceedingly anxious, that every allowance shall be made not only to the Sisters generally, but to each one in particular, which can serve to give quiet to their consciences, provided that this be done without endangering the harmony of the community, and therefore it must become a matter of regulation. I am rejoiced likewise to know, that the idea of any other connexion than of charity, is abandoned, between the daughters of St. Joseph and the Society of S. Sulpice; I mean, that their interests, administration and government are not to be the same, or at least, under the same controul. This removes many inconveniences for you and for Messrs. of S. Sulpice – No one of that body but your immediate Superior, residing near you, will have any share in the government or concerns of the Sisters, except (on very rare & uncommon occasions) the Superior of the Seminary of Balt[imor]e, but not his Society. This however is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendence and controul of the Archb[isho]p over every community in his Diocese. Your own peculiar situation required special consideration on account of your dear children – it seemed to me that only general principles for your and yr family’s care should be now established, grounded on justice and gratitude; and that special considerations should be deferred to the period when the circumstances may require them – At present, too many persons would be consulted, and amongst them some, who are incompetent to judge; and even they, who are most competent, might find their most equitable provisions rendered useless by the changes produced in a few years. Mr. Dubois has been very explicit in communicating, I believe, whatever it was proper for me to know; on my side, it has been my
endeavour, when I read the Constitutions, to consult in the first place, the individual happiness of your dear Sisters and consequently your own; 2ly. to render their plan of life useful to religion and the public; 3ly. to confine the administration of your own affairs, and the internal and domestic government, as much as possible, to your own institutions once adopted, and within your own walls. Y[ou]r Superior or Confessor alone need be informed or consulted in matters where the mother and her council need his advice. I shall congratulate you and your beloved Sisters, when the constitution is adopted. It will be like freeing you from a state in which it was difficult to walk strait, as you had no certain way in which to proceed. In the meantime, assure yourself and them of my utmost sollicitude for your advancement in the service and favour of God; of my reliance on your prayers; of your prosperity in the important duty of education, which will and must long be your principal, and will always be your partial employment. A century at least will pass, before the exigencies and habits of this country will require, and hardly admit of the charitable exercises towards the sick, sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our largest cities; and therefore they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable and permanent object of their religious duty. Mention me in terms of singular affection to your dear sons and daughters. I will not make Nannina [Anna Maria] vain, by repeating all I hear of her merit. The dear Balt[imo]re girls in y[ou]r school form a special object of my affection, tho I cannot name half of them. Your account of Miss Wiseman has added much to my high estimation of her. Juliana and Maria White, Mary Anne Jenkins, Ann Cox, and Anne Nelson occur this moment to my memory; yet I omit some equally dear to me. Mr. Harper thinks of sending up his daughter – I have not seen her since her return home. Adieu – Mrs. Ja[mes] Barry still in Wash[ingto]n, as is our ever hon[ore]d friend. I am with esteem and respect, Hon[ore]d and d[ea]r Madam,

Y[ou]r F[athe]r In Xt etc.,

Just a few words, my dear little brother; not for lack of good will but for lack of time and because I do not wish to miss this opportunity. I just came from Vespers. At Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament we sang the hymn of our longing for heaven; videbimus, amabimus, laudabimus.---

Do keep on writing to me; it is my only consolation. This (consolation) cannot displease our Good Master, since it draws me to Him even more than to you. ---Continue to write to St. Joseph’s. By doing so you will accomplish some good. I say this in order to reassure you, not to flatter your vanity. —(By the way) Be on your guard against introversion, especially against whatever might be too affectionate, too personal, towards those to whom you write or about whom you speak, whenever there is danger that the heart may become too attached.---

But this apart, why should we two not love one another? As for yourself, you remind me of nothing else but God, whom I love together with you and through you. As for myself, poor, miserable sinner, I have nothing but my wretchedness to draw you to me. As for Mother, do not flatter her; this is, I fear the one evil that has been done to her --- there must be none of that. I fear that the terrible trial she suffered at the death of Anina was intended to put an end to or to curb the exaggerated pleasure she took in praising her; to banish the excessive fear she felt lest her daughter say or do something too human when in the presence of others. (The) excuse (she gave for this) was her fear of scandal but I am afraid there was something else besides that. A hundred times I wanted to probe this wound; it is only lately that I dared to touch it. Besides, I must be careful lest I do harm while trying to do good. I almost fear that I used flattery in order to conquer her. God grant that [you may know how to (treat?) this soul – what a fabric! but like]* gold brocades, rich and heavy indeed, but hard to handle. For these many years she has been flattered too much. As for myself, poor wretch, what can I do? There is nothing more that I can say. The double office which I hold bids me hold my tongue.

To try to get her to open up her heart! Men speak of the things that are on the surface, of the things that glitter; they even seem to fear that one might come to know them thoroughly. As a result, one can only judge from the appearances and beat about the bush. A hundred times I was tempted to give up the job. How great a soul this work would demand! It would take a first class saint, A St. Francis of Sales, and I am so insignificant. To try to make her explain herself on such points as humility, obedience, detachment from all things even from her children in God and out of love for God; renunciation of one’s own will, the love of discipline, of uniformity, of the rule,—in a word, (to make herself clear) on the religious life. The more I reflect on it, the more I feel I should give up the office of director. What a (tremendous) task it is, Great God! But when I seek for someone on whom to lay my eyes, I do not know where to find him. I would not be given those whom I consider fit (for the work), and I believe I see clearly that those whom I could get would not be suitable. I fear to cause confusion by refusing the burden. I fear still more that my shoulders are not equal to the task.
I have not been able to speak to our visitors about the beautiful sacrifices of which you write; there were too many people around, -- and I was afraid to shock them by a proposition of this kind.

Farewell! It is late. My poor head is tired. My heart alone still has strength when it speaks to you, for it loves you. Would to God that it be just as sure to love God, for the sake of God, for the sake of God alone and forever!

J. D.

When I speak to you of the trial in connection with Anina and its probable cause, do not you touch this chord as I do now – that would drive the poor mother to despair.—I merely offer you a thread by which to find your way out of the labyrinth should you (undertake to) explore it.

* Phrase in brackets is in the original French manuscript but is missing from AMSMU transcript.