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Letters: 1640

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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 VAUX¹

(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 act³ signed, but I do not think that the one that I am supposed to have will

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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 Louise 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 benefits² 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

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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 Turgis¹ 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 sisters¹ 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.

1. Geneviève Callou, 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 Solimon¹ 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 administrators² 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.

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 Lambert¹ 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 Marie² greatly consoled me. I was afraid that she was upset. I beg you, Monsieur, to let me know if our poor Sister Marguerite³ 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 Clémence⁴ 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 Geneviève¹ 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 Gardeau² 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, 1640²

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.

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.

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

L.21 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

Paris, May 26, 1640¹

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 Anne¹ of Saint Paul who, I believe, must be handled gently and Sister Geneviève² of the Hôtel-Dieu who is

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 Élisabeth¹ and the other sisters got used to water and drank

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 Lambert¹ 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 Tonnelier³ 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 person² 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 Richelieu¹ 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 years¹ 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 articles² 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 Plessis² 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.

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 sister³ 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

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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 ecclesiastic¹ 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 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 Leroy² 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 Turgis³ 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-Germain⁵ 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 Villeneuve⁶ who told me that she had been shown a house at La Chapelle. I do not know which it could be if not ours.

1. "Beneficiary": owner of an ecclesiastical benefice.

2. Monsieur Leroy, one of the administrators 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 Élisabeth³ 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 sister⁴ 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 Liancourt¹ 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, five² 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's³ apparent naïveté. I hope that God will enable you to discover her true dispositions. I am also concerned about Madame Terrier's retreat

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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.