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Correspondence, Meditations, Advice

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**Letters: 1641**

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**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,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

I had not heard that your sister<sup>3</sup> 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 ecclesiastic<sup>1</sup> 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 Leroy<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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?<sup>4</sup>

I told the good sister from Saint-Germain<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> 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 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,<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> 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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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.*

**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<sup>1</sup> has explained to me the faults of which the sisters

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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,<sup>1</sup> who she tells me, is quite ill after her fall at the fountain, or about the grumbling heard from Sister Cécile<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>1</sup>**

*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<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> 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

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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,<sup>1</sup> He wills to take

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1. Cécile Angiboust or Madeleine Mongert. It is the latter who was chosen to replace Elisabeth 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.<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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.

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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<sup>1</sup>

*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,<sup>2</sup> 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)<sup>3</sup>

(1641)

My very dear Sisters,

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

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> whom you are so good as to send us. Please God she will not have as much difficulty adjusting as Sister Renée.<sup>3</sup> 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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> visit our good sisters. He told me that he would write to him about it. You can decide together if Sister Élisabeth<sup>5</sup> 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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> 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.

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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 Gesseume, 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<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> the relative of the Pastor of La Gève, Claude Laurraine who works with the children and the one from Angers.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> 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

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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.<sup>1</sup> I am very surprised that in all this time I have received no word either from the administrators or from Sister Madeleine.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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

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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,<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur,

I forgot to tell you that Madame Traversay<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Yesterday I had the happiness of seeing Madame de Chantal.<sup>3</sup> 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)<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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.