
Spiritual Writings

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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 Marillac¹ 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.

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

L.55 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

January 3, 1642

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

I do not know what to tell you about the sister who wants to wear the belt. Would you not agree, Monsieur, if you feel that she needs it, that she should limit it to two or three hours a day? I do not know if she is still using the discipline. You know that our Blessed Father² recommended it.

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

1. Monsieur Pichery, Confessor of the sisters.

2. Monseigneur Francis de Sales.

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

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

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

L.114 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

(February 1642)

Monsieur,

I believe that Monsieur Vincent plans to have the sisters assemble tomorrow. It would be a consolation for me to have your Charity meet the whole group. However, my concern at the possibility of not having an opportunity of speaking with you leads me to tell you this beforehand so that, if you judge it appropriate, you can take the trouble of coming to speak with him yourself about the wishes of the administrators, or you can put off this personal inconvenience. The sister¹ who will go to Angers will be named tomorrow. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for your charity which I hope will enable me to spend a good Lent, as well as for the letters which you were kind enough to send me. Your charity cannot be exhausted by my constant demands. I hope to have the honor of seeing Madame de Marillac before the time you indicated to me. May God accomplish His holy will in your affair. It is in this holy will that I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient daughter and servant.

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

L.58 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

March 7, 1642

Monsieur,

I am very sorry that for the time being we cannot send more than one sister¹ to Angers. I hope that she will leave next Monday with one of my friends² who is going there on business. I would have sent her to you, had you been there, so that she could humbly ask you for a letter of introduction to the Carmelines,³ whom she wishes to join. She is a widow whom I have known from birth. She can be accepted with no hesitation either about the dowry that she has promised or other obstacles which may stand in the way of someone who is unknown to them. Were she not too young to remain in the world and were I not convinced that her great attraction for Carmel was a true vocation, I would do everything in my power to keep her here with us. She has a sister in this order who has offered to receive her, but because her six years as Prioress are up, she prefers to wait until after the election of a new Prioress before accepting her. This would necessitate her remaining in the world for a longer period than she is willing, either because she is mistrustful of her own strength or because she is afraid that her mother and father will retract the permission which they have given her. She wishes to enter as soon as possible and is profiting from this trip to do so. This is why, Monsieur, I beg you most humbly to be kind enough to write a recommendation for her to the Prioress. Also, if you think it is appropriate for our sister to present herself to the administrators⁴ with a letter of recommendation from you, I will send her to receive your blessing, if you will let me know at what time you will be available. I ask your blessing also for the love of God in which I remain, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

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

L.61 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 1, 1642

Monsieur,

I beg God with all my heart that your charity for our good widow¹ may be rewarded by the glory which He will receive if she makes good use of the grace which your kindness has obtained for her. She should make a large donation to the Church, but it seems that this is no longer being discussed. I must also importune you again and ask you to be so good as to allow me to speak with you about this before you leave. Please forgive me for taking this liberty and for all the other problems I cause you. I am good for nothing else although I truly am, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.62 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 22, 1642

Monsieur,

I thought our widow² was more generous than she appears to have been. My hearts aches for her. I am certain, if you have taken the trouble to speak with her, that you must have realized that she needs to be away from the world at least for a few years. Although I have already imposed upon you in this matter, I must once again humbly plead for your charity, Monsieur, and ask you to see if it would be appropriate for her to become a boarder in a religious house, if possible in Angers. She would be as well off there as any place else. This thought occurred to me while I was writing this letter, so please, Monsieur, accept it only if you are in agreement.

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

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

2. Madame Raffy, see Letter 61.

3. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.

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

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

L.63 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

at Angers

May 9, 1642

Monsieur,

Your charity in all things is inexhaustible. I am distressed at always being an extra heavy burden to you, and I ask your pardon for this. However, I must blame Divine Providence for once again placing our poor widow² in your hands. You really know her very well, so blessed be God! I imagine that you are also well aware, Monsieur, that she greatly needs to be enlightened about her self-deception. I believe that she will profit from the good advice that you give her, since she has had sufficient proof of the uselessness of the counsel she received from persons who did not know her. If you do not judge it appropriate for her to remain in a convent, it would be a great honor for her to accompany your sister³ on her return trip. I must avow, Monsieur, that I am a bit worried about what will become of her. If you are in agreement, it would perhaps be a great advantage for her if she could make up her mind to live as a true widow and let this be seen in society. I humbly beg you to be good enough to speak to her about this.

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

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

2. Madame Raffy, see Letter 61.

3. Madame de la Brunetière du Plessis-Gesté, see Letter 107.

4. The Introduction to the Devout Life of Monseigneur Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva.

is from Gerson¹ or another similar text which inspires the soul with the love of God. They make repetition of meditation at least once a day. They are advised to remain recollected by reflecting during the day on their previous meditations; to make not only general but practical resolutions in keeping with their own needs and especially concerning the practices necessary in their way of life in imitation of the actions of the Son of God and of His Holy Mother who are their patrons and whom they should often keep before them during prayer. They say vocal prayers, as usual, and work or sometimes go for a walk. Briefly put, Monsieur, this is an outline of their horarium. Please completely disregard it and organize their retreat in whatever way it pleases God to inspire you. I beg your pardon for this lengthy disorganized little discourse. It is because I am in a great rush.

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

Our good Sister Anne² from Angers has been very seriously ill. I hope that God will give her back to us. She has been in bed for nearly two months. I cannot write to our sisters by this mail. I have time only to beg you to present my great needs to God and to honor me by believing that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

L.68 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(c. May 1642)

Monsieur,

Councillor Belot anticipates trouble in the affair of Sister Anne. He is afraid that there will be a lawsuit because it seems that Monsieur du Ruisseau and the leading citizens³ want to keep her there. She is convinced that her brother, who is executor of the will of the foundress of the house, and her heirs will be opposed and that this point of honor will lead to conflict between them. Would it not be possible to contact the Pastor, whom she told that I was opposed to his visiting her, and to have her speak with him and with Monsieur du Ruisseau? I do not believe that

1. Spiritual author.

2. Anne Vallin, one of numerous postulants in Angers. Little is known of her life; she was at Saint-Denis with Barbe Angiboust (Coste X, 640). She was in Paris in 1659.

3. The inhabitants of Fontenay-aux-Roses.

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

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

Madame d'Humières¹ is determined to wait until you are able to hear her confession. I told her that you were not well, but she continues to hope that you will be able to come someday next week. She would appreciate hearing tomorrow.

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

L.128 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday Evening (c. June 1642)

Monsieur,

1. Should Sister Henriette² go to Sedan before your return? Should we recall Sister Gillette?³ In that case, should we send two sisters?

*I think so.*⁴

2. Should Sister Barbe⁵ remain with the galley slaves? I have had to send a third sister there because Sister Barbe is weak and infirm.

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

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

Yes.

4. Is there no way to see to it that our sisters at Saint-Sulpice⁶ are not

1. Louise de Marillac received some Ladies of Charity who came for their spiritual retreat.

2. Henriette Gesseume, see Letter 76.

3. Gillette Joly was in Sedan with her sister, Mary Joly.

4. Monsieur Vincent answered in the blank space left by Louise de Marillac.

5. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

6. Parish of Paris.

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

I will make this clear to the Duchess¹ when I get back, unless you prefer to speak to her about it.

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

You will find a way.

6. When the Chancellor's wife goes to Fontenay, should she not be brought up-to-date on matters? Since I am to speak to Sister Anne² at a time when I am to go to the foundlings, would it not be better to take her with me than to leave her here where she may cause trouble?

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

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

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

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

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

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

That is a good idea.

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

Whatever they wish.

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

Please try it.

1. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.

2. See the preceding letter, see letter 68.

3. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

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

Whenever you think it appropriate.

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

Talk to the Duchess.

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

I think that they should pay for it.

15. Is some repair needed on the fireplace that Monsieur Portail¹ has already looked at? Should we get it done?

Yes, please. We will take care of it.

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

Monsieur Portail. I will tell him.

17. The Count de Lannoy² wants to know if we will give him the assistance that he has requested.

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

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

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

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

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

Vincent DEPAUL

1. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.

2. The Count de Lannoy, governor of Montreuil-sur-Mer. The sisters were not sent there until 1647.

3. Madame de Herse, see Letter 196.

L.102 - TO SISTER CLAUDE (BRIGIDE), THE FIRST¹

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

(c. June 1642)

My very dear Sister,

I share in the suffering that I know you are enduring because of your attacks of sadness and depression. I hope that interiorly you are making good use of them. This is the grace I ask of God for you with all my heart. I wish you could share them with me, my very dear Sister, along with the thoughts they have evoked in you. I will try to be of some help to you in this matter having, perhaps, experienced the same difficulties myself. Try, I beg of you, to get your mind off them. Do not dwell on them. Our mortal enemy, the devil, often uses these occasions to fill us with troublesome thoughts. His principal aim is to discourage us imperceptibly, without our being aware of it, in our service of God. He most particularly wants to prevent us from persevering in our good resolutions and sometimes, in his wickedness, he even tries to cause us to lose our vocation, which is the thing we must fear the most and which is the most detrimental to our salvation. This is why, my dear Sister, I advise you to do your best to overcome this dangerous temptation by asking the Holy Spirit for joy, which is one of His seven gifts. Stay as busy as possible. Observe your Rules faithfully. Above all, have sincere and cordial confidence in the advice you receive from our good Monsieur l'abbé² and in our good Sister Madeleine.³ I am not writing to her at this time, but I greet her and all our sisters most affectionately.

I beg you to love one another dearly and to take good care of the sick of the hospital and especially of your sick sisters. I feel deeply for our good Sister Marie-Marthe⁴ who, I am certain, is burning with the love of

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

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

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

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

L.441 - (TO SISTER MADELEINE MONGERT³)

(at Angers)

(June 1642)

My very dear Sister,

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

1. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.

2. A beam broke. Louise de Marillac was extremely affected by this accident, see Letter 102 and Coste IX, 75.

3. Copy made by Sister Marguerite Chétif (Angers series). The names are omitted to respect anonymity.

4. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux.

5. Claude Brigide, see Letter 102.

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

L.277B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday, July 4, 1642²

Monsieur,

Madame de Traversay³ forgot to ask you if we should seek another decree since that one deals only with the foundlings and not with the proposal of the Duchess.⁴ Although I told her that you had examined it, she wants me to ask you and to let her know tomorrow morning. I beg you most humbly to allow me to speak to you a while before you leave, otherwise I will be very handicapped. We have a sister here who has nearly made up her mind to leave. She has been with us for more than a year. I met her this evening when she got back from the Foundling Hospital, and I advised her to go to confession tomorrow. If possible, could Monsieur Guérin⁵ hear her confession since Monsieur Portail is still ill? Also, could it be in the morning since I have no one but her to send to help the sisters at Saint-Sulpice where, from what I have heard, a sister is critically ill. I am a bit overwhelmed by all the spiritual and emotional problems faced by the greater number of our sisters. I assure you, Monsieur, that my inability to help these good girls reach perfection is a subject of humiliation for me before God and the world. I beg the goodness of God to reveal this to you along with the means to remedy it. I remain, Monsieur, your humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

2. The date was on the back of the letter with Monsieur Vincent's reply (Coste VIII, 523).

3. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.

4. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, see Letter 89.

5. Monsieur Jean Guérin, the younger, entered the Congregation of the Mission in February 1639 (Coste II, 22).

L.64 - TO MY DEAR SISTER JEANNE LEPINTRE¹

Daughter of Charity, Schoolmistress at Saint-Germain-en-Laye²

July 5, 1642

My very dear Sister,

I was very happy to receive your two recent letters, as was Monsieur Vincent to whom I showed one of them. Continue your good works, my dear Sisters, and strive to overcome the failings which you know are displeasing to God. I feel that you did not receive the consolation that you had hoped for on the Feast of Saint Peter. Remain at peace as you await it. When I return from the little trip that I plan to make next week, I will let you know when you can come. As I see it, it will not be before August. Sister Anne of Fontenay³ has given us every possible proof of her sorrow for her slowness in obeying. She has made her retreat and more than ever, she is determined to live and die as a Daughter of Charity. She left with Sister Jeanne Dalmagne⁴ to teach school in Nanteuil.⁵

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

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

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

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

P.S. I do not know if your uncle has written to you. He told me that your father and stepmother are well but that their affairs are going badly. I believe that their mill has been destroyed once again. I asked Sister Turgis¹ to go herself to see them so as to get first-hand news and to find out if they are in need. Do not worry about them. Entrust them to God. I will let you know what I learn, and we will take care of it. May you find peace in the desire to accomplish the most holy will of God and to work for your own perfection. I would have already sent this letter but I was waiting for the enclosed news. Take care of your health. I believe that you have been bled for the swelling. I know of no other remedy. Take purgatives frequently. Farewell for now to you, my dear Sister, and you also my good Sister Jeanne-Baptiste. Take care of one another, watching over the health of your bodies and the sanctification of your souls.

L.64B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday evening, July 6 (1642)²

Monsieur,

Sister Françoise³ seems to be very open to going to Liancourt⁴ or to remaining here. She forgot to tell you that everything has been settled for her to inherit the property of her deceased mother. She rented out a part of the house three or four years ago but has received nothing for it. She would like to sell what property she has in her village. She thinks that she could put her little affairs in order if she accompanied me. I very humbly ask you to let me know what I should do. Although she seems to be very attached to her vocation,⁵ is there perhaps some risk in leaving

1. Élisabeth Turgis was at the Motherhouse, see Letter 38.

2. Monsieur Vincent answered on the same sheet (Coste II, 267).

3. Françoise Noret spent a large part of her life at the Motherhouse. In 1642, she was suggested for Liancourt. In 1645, she was sent to Saint-Denis. She accompanied Louise de Marillac during her trip to Nantes in July and August 1646. She signed the Act of Establishment of the Company on August 8, 1655.

4. Called by the Seigneur de Liancourt, Duke of La Roche-Guyon, the Daughters of Charity arrived in Liancourt in approximately 1642. The contract of establishment was not signed until 1645.

5. Words written and crossed out by Louise de Marillac: "Could you not bring her with

her there after the suggestion made to her by the good priest? I am still somewhat troubled that our sisters believed that I did not want them to talk about their difficulties. After reflecting on my conduct, I can think of only two instances which might create such an impression. The first concerns Monsieur Thibault,¹ who came here to see three or four sisters whom he knows. Among them was Sister Claude² who, at that time, could not stop talking about her sorrow for a sin that she had already confessed. I advised her not to speak to him about it. Another occasion concerns Sister Louise.³ She delights in frequently talking⁴ about her acts of mortification, so I told her that she should stop this, that she should continue with the practices which have been permitted and, should she discontinue them, that she could begin them again without discussing them. Other than these two instances, Monsieur, I do not know of anything else which might have given any sister reason to say that I did not approve of their speaking of their difficulties. If they have complained of other things, your Charity ought to look into the matter so as to understand better the attitude of the sisters.

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

I think, Monsieur, that in order to remedy promptly the disorder among our sisters at Saint-Sulpice it might be better to send Sister Henriette⁵ there immediately. We could recall Sister Catherine to make her retreat and then keep her here afterwards. We could put off Sister Henriette's retreat because I am afraid that their little disorders will continue. I ask your Charity to let me know, to excuse my possibly inappropriate requests, and to give me your holy blessing since I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

you and not keep her there."

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

L.65 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(August 1642)

Monsieur,

Had I not thought that you were in the country, I would not have delayed so long in expressing my very humble gratitude for all the goodness that your Charity showed the good Madame Raffy;¹ but I do so now. She has gone to live with her mother and father as you advised her. I sincerely hope that she will be as faithful to the other advice you have been kind enough to give her. I received your dear letter. Answering it reminds me that Sister Madeleine² told me that some girls have presented themselves for the service of the poor. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to look carefully into their vocation and their emotional stability. Then, if you find them suitable, they will be most welcome. They must be strong and healthy.

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

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

L.547 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE¹

(at Angers)

(c. August 1642)

My very dear Sister,

You made me very happy by speaking to me of your difficulties. Talk of them very openly with Monsieur l'abbé² or, in his absence, with Monsieur Ratier.³ Trust that they will pass but, my dear Sister, so long as they remain, look upon them as occasions permitted by God to enable you to make progress in virtue. May they keep you humble so that you may love and esteem our good sisters and show them, in matters concerning the service of the poor, the submission you owe them because of their long experience in the house. O my dear Sister, cherish your state in life that many ladies envy! When I reflect on the happiness that you all enjoy, I praise Divine Providence for having chosen you. Make good use of this gift, and please God by serving your masters and His dear members with devotion, gentleness and humility. Do not be upset if your senses rebel, but reflect that our good God is satisfied by a heart filled with good will. I beg His goodness to fill yours with His holy love in which I remain, my dear Sister, your sister and servant.

L.70 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 17, 1642

Monsieur,

Although I do not know if as yet you have returned from your visits, I can no longer put off writing to you to greet you most humbly and then to beg you to be good enough to send me news of your dear self and of the state of our sisters. I have not been able to write to any sister except, I believe, Sister Madeleine,⁴ since your Charity went to the trouble of telling me that I should do so. I most humbly beg your pardon for this, Monsieur, as well as for the fact that Monsieur de Marillac⁵ did not

1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

2. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.

3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

4. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

5. Michel de Marillac, Deputy of Parliament, grandson of the Keeper of the Seal.

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

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

L.127 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity Serving the Poor Galley Slaves

(c. 1642)

My very dear Sister,

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

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

Please see to it that there are six half-pound candles and six two-ounce tapers. I think that you can get the candles from the church; if so, you will not have to buy them. Also you will need 40 two-penny candles for the sisters. She should be buried near our deceased Sister Michelle. You will need a casket and a spray of white flowers. Have our sisters from Saint-Nicolas notify the sisters from Saint-Benoit, Saint-Étienne¹ and the Foundling Hospital. We will take care of informing the rest.

1. Parishes of Paris.

Remember me to Monsieur Compaing.¹ Keep Sister Françoise² until this evening, but do not let her carry the soup pot because she is not feeling well. I do not know if I have forgotten anything, but you will take care of whatever I have omitted.

Good-bye for now, my dear Sister. There is a candle shop on the Place Maubert. Contact Madame Metay³ and ask her to help you with all this. I remain your loving and affectionate sister and servant.

L.69 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(1642)

Monsieur,

Sister Jeanne Dalmagne⁴ has arrived from Nanteuil.⁵ The coach which brought her leaves tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. I do not know if she will return also or if you think it would be well for her to stay here for a few days. Because she went to the funeral of our sister, I do not know what she has to tell us. Perhaps you will find out in this letter which she brought you. I very humbly ask you, Monsieur, to let me know about her stay and to remember me before God tomorrow at the holy altar as your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.71 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

October 14, 1642

Monsieur,

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

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

about all this business to be transacted by the farmers¹ concerning the tax on the sale of the wine. I am afraid that the priests from Saint-Lazare cannot satisfy the administrators of the hospital for the reasons which I explained to them. I imagine that Monsieur Vincent has contacted you about this matter.

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

Monsieur de Marillac⁵ is distressed at not having had the honor of meeting you during his trip to Angers. I believe that he had already left when the letter that I wrote to him about you arrived there. Should he return to Angers, he will make up for the fault I committed by not letting him know far enough in advance. Could I reveal all my failings to you, I would rely on your goodness to ask God's mercy on my soul. I humbly beg this of you now, Monsieur, for the love of God in which I remain your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

1. See Letter 70.

2. Monsieur Ratier, priest of Angers, entrusted by Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux with the spiritual service of the Daughters of Charity at the hospital.

3. Clémence Ferré, see Letter 34.

4. A letter from the administrators dated February 15, asking for four sisters to do laundry and one to replace Élisabeth Martin.

5. Michel de Marillac, see Letter 70.

L.72 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 9, 1642

Monsieur,

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

L.112 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE²

Daughter of Charity with the Galley Slaves

(c. 1642)

My very dear Sister,

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

I think that it would have been better had you consulted Monsieur Accar³ or Madame Traversay⁴ before cutting down on the portions for

1. New liturgical year.

2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

3. Monsieur Accar, administrator of the house of the galley slaves.

4. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.

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

Pray to God for us. Please remember me to Sister Catherine¹ and believe that with all the love of my heart I am, my very dear Sister, for both of you, your very humble and very loving servant.

1643

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

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

Condemnation of The Augustinus by the Pope.

L.75 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(January 17, 1643)

Monsieur,

Enclosed is a letter from Sister Jeanne at Issy.² You can see what she has done about the copy of the receipt that she was asked to produce. I think it would be well, Monsieur, to settle this matter as soon as possible. The Pastor of Baron³ expects to get a sister after Candlemas Day. We are waiting for Divine Providence to inspire your Charity to give us a conference. Our sisters, as well as I, believe that we have been deprived of this benefit for such a long time as a punishment for the poor use we have made of it in the past. We regret this and recognize the fact that we will not be able to do better in the future without a great deal of help from your Charity, whose poor little daughter and most grateful servant I remain, Monsieur.

Feast of Saint Anthony

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