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Spiritual Writings

Correspondence, Meditations, Advice

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

Pray to God for us. Please remember me to Sister Catherine<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> You can see what she has done about the copy of the receipt that she was asked to produce. I think it would be well, Monsieur, to settle this matter as soon as possible. The Pastor of Baron<sup>3</sup> 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.

L.76 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 25, 1643]

Monsieur,

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

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

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

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.

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

L.77 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

February 9, 1643

Monsieur,

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

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

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

L.78 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Angers)

February 10, 1643

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

#### L.80 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

March 10, 1643

Monsieur,

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

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1. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

2. Barbe Toussaint of Suresnes arrived in Angers in January 1640. She returned to Paris at the end of the year 1644. She was sent to the parish of Saint-Sulpice in August 1645.

3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

4. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

the thoughts which your humility evoked in him.

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

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

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

#### L.172B - TO SISTER CLAUDE BRIGIDE

*Sister of Charity (at Angers)*

March 29 (1643)

My very dear Sister,

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

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1. Monsieur Gabriel Constantin, one of the hospital administrators.

2. Claude Brigide and Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.

3. Madeleine Mongert, see Letter 57.

4. Monsieur Lambert, then Assistant General of the Congregation of the Mission, see Letter 18.

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

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

### L.84 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

*at Angers*

June 6, 1643

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

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

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1. Company of the Oratory, founded by Cardinal Pierre de Berulle.

2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

3. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

4. Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.

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

**L.85 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

June 8 [1643]

Monsieur,

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

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

L.86 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

June 12 (1643)

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### L.104 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

June 29 (1643)

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

#### L.96 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Tuesday (1643)

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

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

**L.74 - TO BE DELIVERED TO MONSIEUR VINCENT PERSONALLY**

(1643)

Monsieur,

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

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

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

### L.125 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August 19 (1643)

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

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

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1. Bicêtre, see Letter 86.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### L.91 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 16 [1643]

Monsieur,

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

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1. Mademoiselle Viole: Treasurer of the Confraternity of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu and of the foundlings.

2. This letter followed Letter 86. It was a question of the purchase of the Château of Bicêtre for the foundlings.

3. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.

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

### L.130 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

November 17, 1643

Monsieur,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### L.92 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

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

Monsieur,

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

Enclosed is a letter which Monsieur Compaing<sup>2</sup> gave me to show you. He told me that you were well informed about this affair.

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

1644

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

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

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

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1. Mademoiselle Viole, see Letter 91.

2. Monsieur Compaing, see Letter 127.