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Spiritual Writings

Correspondence, Meditations, Advice

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**Letters: 1644**

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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.

L.31 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Thursday, January 14 (1644)

Monsieur,

So our good God wills you to be ill. May He be forever blessed! However, He also wills that for His love, you manifest the same charity toward your body as you would toward the body of a poor person. If I dared, my Most Honored Father, I would go so far as to tell you that He absolutely wills you to do so. Profit then from this opportunity, I beg of you, and pardon the excessive liberty I take in speaking to you as one who is deeply concerned for the glory of God.

Madame Traversay, Madame Romilly, Madame Fortia and Mademoiselle Viole<sup>1</sup> are very disturbed about the affair involving Mademoiselle Serquemann. They came here to tell you, Monsieur, that Monsieur Lavocat<sup>2</sup> had summoned them to court, where he had this woman appear, because he was offended that his wishes had not been followed. He was convinced that this good young woman had reason to complain, and he wanted her to tell these Ladies all that she had told him in private.

First, she stated that a meeting was held in a carriage of a council of three persons: you, Madame de Traversay and Madame Romilly, at which it was decided that the children should be taken to the country and that Monsieur Pelletier<sup>3</sup> should be prevented from continuing his alms. This the Lady did, and Monsieur Pelletier wrote it down in the presence of this young woman. He then awaited a response, which was also written, which said that this Lady had asked her brother to wait a week before sending money. This is not with the document.

When Mademoiselle Serquemann was asked who had revealed this secret to her, she said that since there were only the three of you, it must have been an angel.

Monsieur Lavocat also told these Ladies that, after he had spoken with you, Monsieur, he saw the Chief Justice, who said that he did not believe what you had told him and that this good young woman had stated that you were well aware of the plans of the Ladies, although you claimed not to be. This infuriated Monsieur Lavocat who said that the idea of moving the children to the country must be dropped and that Mademoiselle Serquemann must not be prevented from receiving the alms she had for their care.

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1. Ladies of Charity who took care of the work with the foundlings.
  2. François Lavocat, the King's chaplain, deceased in 1646.
  3. Monsieur Le Pelletier, nephew of Madame Goussault, financial administrator.

She made quite a scene with Monsieur Pelletier, threatening to leave the children on his doorstep. She let it be understood that she had been promised a foundation, that the Chief Justice had guaranteed a hospital and that the Ladies were interfering with this good work. She complained loudly that you had refused to speak to her, although she had gone to see you on the Feast of the Epiphany in great distress because she had been rejected completely by Monsieur Pelletier, who had sent her word that he had ordered a payment of 100 pounds to cover a month's expenses for the children whom he supported, but that he did not intend to continue. She went about complaining that she was seriously in debt.

The Chief Justice told her to present her petition and that he would stand behind it. He also said that the children would not be removed from her care and that no less than 3000 pounds would be needed as a guarantee. These good Ladies believe that the reputation of the Company is lost. They are upset that you are implicated and ask for some remedy for this evil.

I forgot to tell you, Monsieur, that yesterday when she was pressed to give some satisfaction to Monsieur Lavocat, so as to appease somewhat Mademoiselle Serquemann, Madame Traversay sent word to Madame de Romilly to tell her nephew whatever her good angel inspired her to say. This morning when he was at table with her she said, "I am here to tell you to do whatever God inspires you to do for this business of the Hôtel-Dieu."

They also asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that they believe that Monsieur Lavocat, along with some of the Ladies of the Company, ought to see Monsieur Pelletier in the presence of Mademoiselle Serquemann so that he can discover for himself the desires of this benefactor, who will verify for him that he never intended to create a foundation nor even to continue supporting the children indefinitely. This will prove to Monsieur Lavocat that the other statements made by this good young woman are more the product of her wishful thinking than of any solid hope for a foundation. It is incredible how much faith the Chief Justice places in this good woman. It is to such a point that Monsieur Lavocat and the Ladies of the hospital are constrained to say that they need her.

The purpose of these Ladies in holding this meeting is to enable Monsieur Lavocat to assure this good judge of the sale of this enterprise. They very humbly beg you, Monsieur, if you can, to give them some advice tomorrow. Were Monsieur Pelletier not ill, they would have suggested that he go himself to see the Chief Justice.

I hope that our good God will be able to derive glory from this unfortunate incident. I beg this of Him with all my heart as I beg Him also to restore your health.

I hope from your goodness to be helped by a participation in your suffering and in your holy Masses because you know our needs and that

I am, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant,  
Mademoiselle Le Gras.

**L.32 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

(1644)

Monsieur,

I very humbly beg you, if you approve of Monsieur Lavocat's going to see Monsieur Pelletier,<sup>1</sup> as I asked, to let me know which Ladies of the Company should accompany him. Madame Traversay and Madame Romilly are the most implicated. Would it not be well for a few others also to be there with them?

I believe that you would recover more quickly from your cold if you went to bed earlier. Overwork and standing heat the blood. I beg God to reveal His will to you in this matter, and it is in His will that I remain, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

P.S. My blood-letting of yesterday has practically completely cured me. Thank God.

**L.94 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX**

*at Angers*

February 3, 1644

Monsieur,

I am distressed that Monsieur Lambert has not yet come to see you. The need that our sisters have of this, according to the information that your Charity did me the honor of sending, causes me to fear that you are also disturbed. He told me that because of a slight illness, he will not be able to go there before the beginning of Lent. I hope that he will not fail to do so. So it is, Monsieur, that God permits everything that is done in this little Company to be plagued by difficulties. I believe that my weaknesses are the cause.

I do not know if my letters are actually reaching you. I very humbly beg you, Monsieur, to give me some reassurances about this. I wrote to

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1. See preceding letter.

you at the beginning of the year and told you the opinion of Monsieur Vincent of the request you had made to me concerning the spiritual service of the hospital. I very humbly ask your pardon for all the trouble we give you. Were I not aware of your great charity, I would fear wearying you, but by the grace of God, I am far from this thought. Rather, I am led to look upon you as our good and honored father when I see your cordial support for the very weak children who are under your holy direction. I beg God with all my heart to be your eternal recompense. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and very humble servant.

**L.95 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX**

*at Angers*

February 23, 1644

Monsieur,

I sent the last letter which I had the honor of receiving from you<sup>1</sup> to Monsieur Vincent. He does not understand, nor do I, what benefice you have resigned, one here in Paris or one in Angers. However, he asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he is convinced that good will come from whatever you undertake, and to thank you very humbly for the two letters you sent to him. He begs you also to excuse him for not answering them. He praises God, Monsieur, for the detachment from flesh and blood of which you spoke to him since it is a powerful means for following the maxims of the spirit of Jesus Christ. I am sure that you realize that his pressing responsibilities alone prevent him from writing to you. To this I must also add the continual ailments from which he has been suffering for the past month without any reduction in his work load.

You honored me by confiding this matter to me, but it would cause me to be somewhat fearful that you would deprive your neighbor of the good God has given him in you, were it not for the assurance to the contrary which I believe Monsieur Vincent has given you. I think that Monsieur Lambert is with you in Angers. I beg you very humbly to be so kind as to inform him in detail about the state of our sisters and also about all the complaints against them. Please do me the charity, for the love of God, Monsieur, of asking His goodness to bestow not only on

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1. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux wrote to Louise de Marillac on February 8 saying that he wished to divest himself of his benefice of the archdeaconry of Brie in the diocese of Paris.

me but on all those whom His Divine Providence will call to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, the spirit which you desire for us, which, in my opinion, is conformable to the plan of God for our continued existence. I praise Him with all my heart for having revealed this to you as clearly as He has and for preserving or saving you from danger since He wants to make use of you. How powerful these special graces must be in a loving heart!

I still have another charity to ask of you. A great need of a person<sup>1</sup> who is very close to me prompts me to beg you to remember him at the holy altar. My duty and my desire oblige me to beseech you to believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.98 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX  
*at Angers*

March 21, 1644

Monsieur,

I am most indebted to you for your kindness in sending me news of Monsieur Lambert's trip. I knew that he had returned, but knew nothing at all about what he had done in Angers. Blessed be God, Monsieur, for the good you expect from it. As for me, speaking as a person of little faith, I am afraid that it will not be so because of your inevitable absences. I beg of you most humbly, Monsieur, to find a way to make the sisters understand the trust and submission they owe the person whom your Charity shall judge suitable to direct them. If it is necessary to appoint someone, please be good enough to send us his name before you leave and before you speak to the sisters so that Monsieur Vincent can tell them that they must be submissive to him. I am certain that he is quite willing to write to them to tell them that they are to carry out whatever recommendations you have taken the trouble to give them. Since this work was blessed in the beginning by being established through your instrumentality, I also believe, Monsieur, that our good God wants it to continue under your guidance.

I told Monsieur Vincent about the matter you did me the honor of communicating to me concerning the two clerics who wish to give themselves to God for the Mission. He asked me to tell you, Monsieur, that he will approve whatever you do and that anyone whom you send

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1. It was a question of her son, Michel.

to him will be welcome. He recommends nothing other than what God will inspire you to do in directing them. You teach me a great lesson, Monsieur, by desiring God to change things from which you could derive satisfaction into crosses. It seems to me, Monsieur, that this is a powerful means for us to purify our intentions in the unknown circumstances that await us. Do me the charity, I very humbly beg of you, of asking our good God for this grace for me for His holy love in which I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble servant.

**L.39 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

(c. March 1644)

Monsieur,

It is over a month since Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux informed us that he had to come to Paris at the beginning of May and that it was necessary to appoint a director for our sisters before his departure (which he did only after I had submitted all his suggestions to you) and to change some of them.

My lack of experience and of ability prevents me from communicating to your Charity information that would enable you to gauge the danger which I see of the entire Company perishing little by little rather than becoming more firmly established. This often reminds me of Hagar who feared the death of her son and did not want to see him perish. But in my case, these thoughts are more appropriate because my sins are the cause of all these disorders. I most humbly beg your pardon for burdening you with such problems. If I did not think that it was the will of God that I do so, I would try to look peacefully at all these dangers. I beg His goodness to remedy them and your Charity to believe that I am, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful servant.

**L.97 - TO OUR VERY DEAR SICK SISTER**

*(Sister Jeanne Dalmagne<sup>1</sup> at Nanteuil)*

(March 1644)

My beloved Sister,

I adore with all my heart the manner in which Divine Providence seems

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1. Jeanne Dalmagne, see Letter 69.

to be arranging your life. If it is the most holy will of God to call your soul to Him, may His holy name be blessed! He knows how much I regret not being able to assist you in this final act of love which I am confident you will make by willingly offering your soul to the Eternal Father, desiring thereby to imitate the moment of death of His Son.

Our good Sister Elisabeth<sup>1</sup> will assure you of the affection of all our sisters and of their desire for you to remember them in heaven when God will have shown you His mercy. This is particularly true of Sister Anne-Marie who says that she deeply regrets not being able to render you these last services. Remember then, my very dear Sister, the needs of the poor Company to which God has called you. Become an advocate for it before the Divine Goodness so that He may accomplish His plans for it. If His goodness permits it, beg our good angels to assist us. Good night, my very dear Sister. With all my heart I beg Jesus Crucified to grant you all the virtues which He practiced on the Cross, and I remain in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

### L.99 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

*at Angers*

April 19, 1644

Monsieur,

I communicated the letter which I had the honor of receiving from your Charity to Monsieur Vincent who continues to approve the directives which you are leaving for our sisters of the hospital. He also approves your selection of Monsieur Ratier<sup>2</sup> as confessor. He can name other confessors for the extraordinary confessions of the sisters at the times you judge appropriate. I hope, Monsieur, that your charitable care for them during your prolonged stay in Angers has served to move them to desire to acquire the virtues which they lack and that your good prayers will obtain them for them.

Our good Sister Élisabeth<sup>3</sup> is still sick. This is why, Monsieur, we were unable to send her. However, we will send Sister Turgis<sup>4</sup> in her place for

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

2. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71, was going to assume the role of Director of the Daughters of Charity during Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux's long absence.

3. Élisabeth Martin, see Letter 22.

4. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

three months. I believe that will suffice. We will also recall Sisters Barbe, Geneviève, Clémence and Madeleine<sup>1</sup> to stay here with us while Sister Turgis is in Angers. I hope that the sisters<sup>2</sup> whom we are sending to replace those whom we are recalling will leave no later than the beginning of next week and that your Charity will continue to look after us by being so kind as to persuade the administrators to accept this type of change by assuring them that they will be better satisfied and that the poor will be better served in keeping with their desires.

I assure you in this matter, Monsieur, that it is with the greatest reluctance that we are withdrawing Sister Turgis from the foundlings, where she is very much needed because of the great intelligence necessary for such a work.

May our good God renew the blessings which for His glory He bestowed at the beginning of this work. May we not one day suffer the reproach that your work has been in arid soil.

I am sorry for our sisters that you are leaving Angers but consoled that God is calling you to this city in the hope that it will be for the accomplishment of some good. I admit that some of my own self-interest is mixed in with this but I believe that God wills it since it is in the love of Jesus Crucified that I am, Monsieur, your most obedient and very humble daughter and servant.

#### L.100 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

April 28, 1644

Monsieur,

I hope that Divine Providence has kept you in Angers so that the needs of our sisters may be taken care of as advantageously as their establishment was made through the blessing of your charitable direction. I take the liberty of speaking to you as their father and asking you to undertake the responsibility of giving them the order they must have to enter the hospital. I am certain, Monsieur, that in your kindness you have convinced these gentlemen that these new sisters whom we are sending are only going there for their greater consolation to renew the fervor of the first sisters so that they may better serve the poor together.

Sister Turgis will show you her directives for her entrance into the

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1. Barbe Toussaint, Geneviève Caillou, Clémence Ferré and Madeleine Mongert.  
2. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b, and Catherine Huitmill, see Letter 70b.

hospital and for the necessary changes she is to make if you consider them appropriate. If you think that she should be otherwise employed, she has been told to obey you in everything.

The sisters whom Monsieur Lambert<sup>1</sup> told us had to be withdrawn are Sisters Barbe, Geneviève and Clémence.<sup>2</sup> We are sending only two. The third will wait here until Sister Turgis returns. Then she will accompany Sister Madeleine,<sup>3</sup> who will be returning, or another sister whom you will find acceptable to replace Sister Turgis.<sup>4</sup> Please let her know, Monsieur, all that she has to do and also dispose the administrators to accept her return. Please send the two sisters whose recall is most urgent. I beg our good God that all the charity you show them in this matter may draw down upon them the blessings they need to attain the perfection required of them. May the prayers which they and we are obliged to offer for you, so as to express our gratitude in some way, be pleasing to Him.

I do not know, Monsieur, if the two letters which I had the honor of writing to you have reached you. In them I urged you on behalf of Monsieur Vincent to arrange for a director<sup>5</sup> before your departure. Once again, Monsieur, I beg you to do so and to believe that I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, your most obedient daughter and very humble servant.

L.180 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

(at Paris)

(c. May 1644)

Monsieur,

Please God, the sister who is bringing this letter will find you still there so that I may have news of you before your departure; may it be that you are in perfect health. I am also sending some preserves which I think will be much better for you than the pills I mentioned.

I believe that you have had no word from the administrators in Angers. Providence has permitted this because we would have great difficulty at the present time<sup>6</sup> in sending them any sisters. I beg God to grant you a

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1. After the visitation of the house that he made in February of that same year.
  2. Barbe Toussaint, Geneviève Caillou, Clémence Ferré.
  3. Madeleine Mongert, who went to Paris for a few months, see preceding letter.
  4. Élisabeth Turgis came for three months during Madeleine Mongert's absence.
  5. It was Monsieur Ratier who was chosen.
  6. Since 1642, the administrators of the Hospital of Angers had been asking for four additional sisters. This request was not filled until the end of the year 1648.

pleasant trip, and I remain in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

P.S. I told Monsieur Vincent that you had taken the trouble of going to Saint-Lazare to speak to him about your business. I shared with him the latest state of affairs, which I had the honor of hearing from you. He told me that he was distressed not to have spoken with you. I cannot tell you whether he is displeased that you are resigning the archdeaconate or whether it is the manner in which it is being done.

### L.142 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS BARBE AND MARIE<sup>1</sup>

Feast of Saint John (June 24, 1644)

My very dear Sisters,

Blessed be God for the strength and courage He gives you in all your works. You are accomplishing wonders. You did not let us know if you have given orders to bring back the girl whose food was paid for by Madame Sangé. It seems to me that you have not followed the path that was proposed to you. As soon as I have the decision of the Ladies, I will give it to that good notary who has been so charitable. Do not fail, I beg of you, to send us all the children who are able to walk well on their own and to wean those over 18 months.

Monsieur Vincent has seen your letters. He does not approve of the title "Reverend Mother." Oh my dear Sisters, we are not the ones who should be using such terms! This is why I urge you to speak more simply.

The Ladies agree that the impounded goods should be sold, but they want them kept impounded until we discover what has become of the two children. I will inform the proper persons. I beg you to act as gently as possible with all the poor people you will meet in these circumstances.

Send me news of yourselves as often as you can. Believe me to be in the love of our Crucified Lord, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. You need not go to Nanteuil if this is out of the way for you because Sister Andrée has come and she brought us news from there.

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1. Barbe Angiboust and Marie Daras, who visited the children placed with wet-nurses. The address and a part of the letter were written by Jeanne Lepintre.

**L.286B - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

Thursday, June 30 (1644)

Monsieur,

I very humbly beg your pardon for being so persistent, but the fear of offending God by going any longer without receiving Holy Communion causes me to take this liberty in contacting you since I cannot do so until I have had the honor of speaking with you. I entreat you, for the love of God, to believe that I did all that I could to overcome the fear which prevented me from receiving Holy Communion yesterday. You know that this is unusual for me and that I am, Monsieur, your most grateful and most unworthy daughter and servant.

**L.355 - (TO A SISTER SERVANT)<sup>1</sup>**

(1644)

My dear Sister,

You have sent me a very distressing letter; nevertheless I was happy to hear from you. I realize full well that you are disturbed at the sight of spirits that are so lacking in submission. Evidently, I was not fully aware of the situation from the beginning. I know that we all have faults and I more than anyone. However, the support we owe to one another should prevent us from noticing the weaknesses of our sisters, except if we are able to help them.

I consider you very fortunate to be assisted by the holy advice of your directors. The submission and obedience which our sisters practiced toward them brought the blessings of God on the early years of this work. I hope, my dear Sister, that your patient gentleness will correct everything and that the example you give will reanimate the spirit of the Company which is that of Our (Lord).

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1. Unfinished letter, without address or signature. Perhaps it was the beginning or a rough copy of the following letter.

**L.104B - TO THE SISTERS**

*(at Angers)*

July 26 (1644)

My very dear Sisters,

I can no longer hide the sorrow of my heart at hearing that much is to be desired in you. What, my poor Sisters! Is our enemy to prevail over you? Where is the spirit of fervor which animated you when you were first established in Angers and which led you to esteem your directors so highly? You looked upon their advice as orders which you never failed to carry out with the respect and esteem you owed them. Is it not completely unreasonable now to oppose their counsels and directives? I am referring both to your spiritual and to your temporal superiors. Where are the gentleness and charity that you must preserve so carefully when dealing with our dear masters, the sick poor? If we deviate in the slightest from the conviction that they are the members of Jesus Christ, it will infallibly lead to the weakening of these beautiful virtues in us.

Could it be possible that some attachment to creatures is putting you in danger of losing the beautiful treasure of your vocation? Be on your guard, my dear Sisters. This danger is invisible. Likewise, if we are not careful, we fail to see the vanity which may exist under these poor habits and ugly headdresses. Under the guise of cleanliness and neatness many serious faults are committed in this regard.

I do not want to believe that any of you, my very dear Sisters, would entertain any thought contrary to your holy vocation or that, in this matter, you would think of wanting to speak with persons who could prejudice the purity of the love that you should have for God, who is jealous of souls that He has called to His holy service! If any of you have been in the slightest marked by this passion, O my dear Sisters, do not allow this viper to hide in your breast! Reveal the thoughts of your heart to the person whom God has sent you as your director, namely, the one appointed by Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux. God will not fail to grant you the comfort and assistance that you need in these circumstances.

Renew then, my very dear Sisters, your first fervor. Begin by a true desire to please God, recalling that His Providence has brought you to the place where you are established and has united you so that you can help one another to grow in perfection. But in order to fulfill His holy plan, on which your salvation depends, there must be great union among you which will lead you to show great forbearance for one another; that is to say, you will not object when you are warned of your faults or told how you must act. You will also excuse any fault you perceive in any of your sisters. My God, how reasonable that is, my dear sisters, since we

commit similar faults and need to be forgiven. If our sister is depressed or forlorn, if she is too quick or too slow, what in the world do you expect her to do about it? This is part of her character. Although she often tries to overcome herself, nevertheless, she cannot prevent these inclinations from frequently appearing. And should her sister, who is supposed to love her as herself, become annoyed with her, be rude to her or frown upon her?

O my dear Sisters, be on your guard against acting like this. Instead, pretend that you do not notice it and do not criticize her, bearing in mind that it will soon be your turn and you will want her to act this way toward you. This, my dear Sisters, is what it means to be true Daughters of Charity, for the mark of charity in a soul is, among all other virtues, this ability to put up with everything. Also, show great esteem for what God says to you through the person who holds the place of your Sister Superior, whoever she may be at one time or another. When obedience replaces her by another, you must no longer consider the manner in which her predecessor governed you but follow in everything the directives of the one you now have, unless, of course, she would want you to do something contrary to your Rule or to the way of life which has been prescribed for you, which, I hope, will never happen if we are faithful to God.

I never weary of praying to our good God for you, so great is my desire to see you become agreeable to His goodness. It is getting late. I beg you to pray for the whole family here. It is now more than 35.

Our two sisters, Barbe and Marie Daras,<sup>1</sup> have returned in good health, thank God, from their six-week visit to all the foundlings, placed with wet-nurses. Thank God for the grace which God has granted us in them. I do not know where Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux is. Sister Turgis,<sup>2</sup> I urge you to give me news of him and to send him my very humble greetings if he is in Angers. Tell him that I had thought for a long time that he was in Paris, but I still do not know. I would be distressed if he left here without our having the honor of seeing him. Please remember us very humbly to Monsieur Ratier<sup>3</sup> and all the others whom we should greet as well as to the Ladies. I ask all of you, my dear Sisters, to believe that I am, with all my heart, in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. See preceding letter.

2. Élisabeth Turgis, in Angers for three months.

3. Monsieur Ratier, who replaced Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux during his absence.

**L.105 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER TURGIS,**

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

August 24 (1644)

My very dear Sister,

I am very anxious to know if you have received the letter which I wrote to all of you in general and sent in care of Mademoiselle la Franchandière. Please let me know. Its main purpose was to let you know how displeased I am to see the bad dispositions of our sisters and the disunion which seems to exist among you.

I am also astonished to hear that there are those who, at the slightest contradiction, yield to the desire to return to Paris without having been summoned there by obedience. Oh my dear Sisters, there is every reason to say that they do not know what they are asking! So you are offended when the Fathers of the Poor<sup>1</sup> humiliate you in front of your masters, the poor. Do not give them cause to do so. Do everything so well that they will find nothing to criticize. If on such an occasion you feel that you have not failed in anything, or that some of these gentlemen have reprimanded you too rudely for your taste, and you think that this will serve to discredit you with the sick, humble yourselves and endure it patiently at the time. Afterwards, explain your reasons to them in private and ask them to warn you of your faults. If you act in this way, I assure you, my Sisters, there is not one of your sisters who would not consider herself fortunate to be in your place.

I beg you, therefore, my dear Sister, to give the first example of virtue that I hope to see in all our sisters. I noticed the slight aversion you mentioned on the part of one of the sisters. O my God, what great compassion and forbearance must characterize your charity for her. Are you not well aware that ordinarily such reactions are natural and that we are not masters of them? It is up to those who have charge of the sisters to try to do so and to help them to overcome this trial without their realizing it. We must not be so sensitive that we are hurt if someone does not speak to us or does not smile at us. We should rather try to win their hearts by support and cordiality.

Finally, my dear Sister, those who have the care of others must not think of their personal satisfaction but disregard their own sensibilities. Blessed be God for relieving the suffering of our Sister Brigide.<sup>2</sup> If she knows that you are aware of it, warn her to avoid carefully all those

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1. Fathers of the Poor, the hospital administrators.

2. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.

dangers that might cause her to fall into similar difficulties such as overfamiliarity and excessive curiosity.

I do not think that Monsieur Vincent will recall one of our sisters when you return. They should fear rather than desire this. Let them think only of growing in perfection in their present occupation, which is so noble and so pleasing to God and which constantly provides them with opportunities for serving Him. I beg you, Sister, to be certain that great respect is shown to the confessors and that the sisters never speak of them among themselves except in that way. They must never threaten one another in this matter and, my good Sister, I do not think that it is appropriate for you to speak to the confessors about the sisters. Leave it to Divine Providence to enable them to know the sisters, except in extraordinary circumstances. If you think that the sisters are not practicing the same charity toward you and that perhaps they are complaining about you, leave your justification to God.

When a sister shows repugnance about speaking to the director,<sup>1</sup> ignore it without letting the other sisters know that you have noticed it, and excuse her to them. Prevent them from discussing it among themselves by adroitly changing the subject rather than by interrupting it in a rude and authoritative manner which should be avoided on any occasion. Later, speak to her (the sister) in private. I know, my dear Sister, that it is very difficult for us to carry out our responsibilities well, but God who has given them to us will not deny us His grace. Let us humble ourselves profoundly so as to obtain it. This we can do by manifesting holy distrust of ourselves and great confidence in His goodness, which will lead us to ask Him quite simply what He wants us to do to benefit our dear sisters, whom we must look upon as His beloved creatures and servants.

I do not know what to tell you about the persons you mentioned who have expressed a desire to enter our Company except that I have considerable misgivings about the intentions of candidates coming from that area. We must consider only those who are very suitable for the Company both with regard to their physical health and their mental stability. Make further inquiries about them and then write to us about what you have learned. Likewise, if at all possible, they should not be over 30 and be recommended by persons, who, if they can be found, have known them since birth.

We have reason for thanking our good God for the grace He has granted us by restoring our Most Honored Father, Monsieur Vincent, to us. He has been very seriously and even dangerously ill. Please have our sisters offer some special prayers for this.

Please remember me to Monsieur Ratier and all the others and to our dear sisters whom I embrace with all my heart, wishing for them the

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1. Monsieur Ratier, Spiritual Director, see Letter 71.

perfection of Saint Joan and of Saint Catherine of Siena, as I do also for you, my dear Sister, as I remain in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

**L.107C - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL<sup>1</sup>**

September 9 (1644)

Monsieur,

I sincerely hope that Monsieur Vincent does not think that I am the one who sent this good Monsieur Boëtte to him. I beg you to assure him that he is an outstanding gentleman and that it would be a great charity to obtain what he desires for him. He is quite wealthy but has been very ill for a number of years.

I forgot to tell you that I hope for great things from the girls from Sedan, which is why, Monsieur, if you think it is acceptable, we can have Monsieur Gallais<sup>2</sup> send us the young woman he is recommending. The two from Argenteuil have left us.

The trip is arranged to bring Sister Turgis<sup>3</sup> back from Angers, so I beg you, Monsieur, not to let me lose the opportunity of speaking with Monsieur Vincent about this and about two or three other matters that have been suggested to me. Please have the charity to pray for us and believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient servant.

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1. Monsieur Antoine Portail, born on November 22, 1590 in Beaucaire, near Arles in Provence. Being the first fellow worker of Monsieur Vincent, his name appeared on the contract of foundation of the Congregation of the Mission passed on April 17, 1625. Monsieur Vincent held him in great esteem and trusted him on several occasions with many important missions. In 1642, he was named Director of the Daughters of Charity. In 1646, he visited the houses in the West of France: Le Mans, Angers, Nantes, then he left for Rome. Upon his return in May 1649, he stopped in Marseilles and returned to Paris in September. In 1655, he visited the houses in the North and East of France: Sedan, Brienne, Montmirail. He died on February 14, 1660.

2. Monsieur Gallais, born in 1615, entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1632. He was in Sedan from 1643 onwards. After a stay in Crecy (1644-1645), he was sent to Le Mans. He left the Congregation of the Mission in 1653 and took charge of the presbytery of Touquin in Brie.

3. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.

**L.125B - TO THE SISTERS**

*at Angers*

September 9, 1644<sup>1</sup>

My very dear Sisters,

Divine Providence has at last led us to recall our dear sister<sup>2</sup> for a time. Do not be upset by this, I beg of you, since it is the most holy will of God. I hope, my Sister, that you have willingly taken up the yoke which she left you because it is Monsieur Vincent who has ordered us to leave you there. Take it up anew then with great humility and distrust of yourself, recalling the instruction which the Son of God gave us when He told us to learn of Him to be gentle and humble of heart. Enter upon this charge in the spirit of Him who said that He had come not to be served but to serve. Listen to Him willingly when He tells us that those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and that the one who would be the greatest must begin by becoming the least so as to be great in the sight of God. Finally, my dear Sister, look upon yourself as the beast of burden of the house, the one who must carry the entire load. This you will be when you treat all our sisters with great forbearance and gentleness, often overlooking their faults so as to keep your own before your eyes, warning them charitably of their failings when it will be most beneficial for them. Never manifest a particular affection for any of them but treat all of them in such a way that they will believe that you love and support each of them.

And to all of you, my dear Sisters, we are sending reinforcements.<sup>3</sup> I beg you to act in such a way that those sisters who have been the longest in the house will be distinguishable only by the good example they give, especially by their reserve in speech. Never comment on one another's moods. Always see Our Lord in Sister (Madeleine)<sup>4</sup> and look upon her directives as the will of God and believe me in His love . . .

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1. This letter, recopied by Marguerite Chétif, bears the date September 9, 1645. It seems that the copyist made a mistake. This letter seemed to be from September 1644, when, after the departure of Élisabeth Turgis, Madeleine Mongert once again took over as Sister Servant.

2. Élisabeth Turgis, who stayed in Angers from May until September.

3. Three new sisters arrived: Marie Despinal, Marguerite Tourneton and Jeanne de Chinon, see Letter 113b.

4. Madeleine Mongert, Sister Servant, see Letter 57.

L.70B - TO SISTER MADELEINE<sup>1</sup>

*at Angers*

(September 1644)

My dear Sister,

Are you being very courageous? Are you imitating the Good Shepherd who risks His life for the welfare and safety of the flock under His care? I think so. Although we do not often meet with occasions when we are called upon to risk our lives, we do not lack those in which we must sacrifice our wills so as to yield to the desires of others, or so as to overcome our habits and inclinations in order to give good example to our sisters, or so as to conquer our passions in order to avoid arousing those of others. This, my dear Sister, is how we must act if we are to maintain cordiality, to practice forbearance and to live in that close union which marks the charity of Jesus Crucified and which I beg God to grant us. Tell Sister Marie-Marthe<sup>2</sup> that I hope she will be Marie and Marthe not only in name but in reality. Bearing the name Marie she must live with great purity, gentleness and modesty and be ready to please everyone. Her name Marthe obliges her to be very exact in the observance of all the requirements of the Rule. As for Sister Cécile,<sup>3</sup> oh how peaceful and gentle she must be so as to imitate her patroness who sweetly sings the praises of God.

Our dear Sister Brigide<sup>4</sup> must embrace constant suffering with perseverance and in conformity with the designs of God for her. I hope that God will bestow His grace on Sister Françoise<sup>5</sup> so that the strength of her spirit may make up for the weakness of her body. Tell her, my dear Sister, that she needs great courage to respond to this grace. With all my heart I hope that no trace of her illness remains and that she is very cheerful. What is our good Sister Catherine<sup>6</sup> doing? Do the wheels and

1. Letter sent to Madeleine Mongert, who resumed the office of Sister Servant after the few months spent in Paris. Louise de Marillac took advantage of this to give a personal message to each one of the sisters of the community.
2. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
4. Claude Brigide, see Letter 114.
5. Françoise Claire arrived with Élisabeth Turgis in May-June. Because of her violent character, Monsieur Lambert asked to have her recalled to Paris after the visitation in 1648.
6. Catherine Huitmill, native of Arras, also arrived in May-June 1644. In May 1646, she left the Company (letter from Monsieur Ratier to Louise de Marillac).

fire of hard work torment her? Does she have that same love for God that her patroness did to overcome everything? Tell her that it is entirely up to her. Her dear Spouse will grant her the same graces and love that He bestowed on the great Saint Catherine provided she is as faithful to Him. I say the same thing to Sister Barbe.<sup>1</sup> I wish her and all of you, my dear Sisters, holy perseverance and continued growth toward perfection. Always remember the needs of the Company, which needs the help of your prayers and especially the merit God gives to your actions performed for the service of the poor.

### L.110 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

*Superior General of the Priests of the Mission*

(c. October 1644)

Monsieur,

The confidence which God has instilled in my heart with regard to your Charity overcomes the fear which I should rightly experience at the thought of bothering you by begging you very humbly to recall that the time is approaching when we must carry out an article contained in the little outline that I sent you before your departure.<sup>2</sup> I also wish to remind you, Monsieur, of the desire expressed by Monsieur Guillon concerning the hospital where his sister now is. I am afraid that he will be offended if we do not give him a response before the date by which he hoped to have sisters, which is the Feast of All Saints. Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to ask when we can hope to see you return. Oh, how relieved I would be if I could make known my fears! They all end in the dread of being abandoned by God, which I have often merited. I beg you most humbly to allow me to make a pilgrimage to Chartres during your absence so that I may entrust all our needs and the suggestions I have made to you to the care of the Blessed Virgin. The time has surely come for me to reflect on myself in the sight of God. I must tell you that I am convinced that the good of our little Company requires it.

Last week the widow of a gentleman named Monsieur Sigongne came here to see if she might serve God with us. She is still grieving for her

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1. Barbe Toussaint, see Letter 78.

2. Monsieur Vincent left for Richelieu on September 21. He returned on approximately October 29.

husband, whose loss has completely detached her from everything. She does not have any children. I do not know if God has sent her. I felt very sorry for her seeing her so deeply afflicted. If she returns, do you think it would be well, Monsieur, to keep her here for a little retreat which, in the light of her needs, would serve to distract her a bit from her afflictions? I felt that I should not make a decision in this matter before communicating with you. But, alas, our good God has permitted this long trip without granting what I had asked of Him. I beg His goodness to send you back soon and in excellent health. Do me the charity of taking the time to reassure me about your condition and continue to honor me by believing that our good God wants me to be able truly to call myself, Monsieur, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Allow me, Monsieur, to send you the very humble greetings of your daughters, our very dear sisters, who were as surprised as I by your departure. Our Sister Anne<sup>1</sup> from the parish of Saint-Paul is seriously ill. We are all beginning to feel that it has been too long since we have had the happiness of coming together with your Charity for a conference.<sup>2</sup> We look forward to it with deep affection and ask for your holy blessing so that we may prepare for it in all humility.

This lady has been a widow for nine months. She is of high rank. You know full well that had you been traveling in the Beauce, I would have waited for your return to make the pilgrimage for which I requested your permission. I beg you to forgive me for bothering you so often about this matter.

#### L.111 - (ACCOUNT OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO CHARTRES)

(1644)

We arrived in Chartres on Friday, October 14. My devotion for Saturday was to render to God, in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, the

1. Anne Hardemont. The numerous letters that she saved allow one to follow her. In the parish of Saint-Paul from 1640 onwards, she was chosen for the mission of Montreuil in 1647, then in 1650 for that of Hennebont. Ill, she returned to Nantes, where she remained until 1653, when she was sent to Châlons to aid the wounded, then to Sedan in 1654. She was present in Paris on August 8, 1655, and signed the Act of Establishment of the Company. After having been sent to La Roche-Guyon, she returned to assume responsibility of the Petites Maisons. In 1658, she left for Ussel.
2. There had been no conferences since January 1, 1644. The next one was on December 11 (Coste IX, 160).

thanks I owe Him for the many graces that I have received from His goodness.

Sunday's devotions were for the needs of my son. On Monday, Feast of the Dedication of the Church of Chartres, I offered to God the designs of His Providence on the Company of the Daughters of Charity. I offered the said Company entirely to Him, asking Him to destroy it rather than let it be established contrary to His holy will. I asked for it, through the prayers of the Holy Virgin, Mother and Guardian of the said Company, the purity of which it stands in need. Looking upon the Blessed Virgin as the fulfillment of the promises of God to mankind, and seeing the fulfillment of the vow of the Blessed Virgin in the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation, I asked Him for the grace of fidelity for the Company through the merits of the Blood of the Son of God and of Mary. I prayed also that He might be the strong and loving bond that unites the hearts of all the sisters in imitation of the union of the three Divine Persons.

In my prayers for myself, I placed in the hands of the Blessed Virgin the decision to be made concerning the outlines which I have given to my Most Honored Spiritual Father, as well as my desire for practices to help me to prepare for death while awaiting the plan of God in my daily life through the practice of holy obedience.

### L.113 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

December 2 (1644)

Monsieur,

I am extremely anxious about my son, who arrived on Saturday with the Countess de Maure.<sup>1</sup> She sent me word that she had given him a note on Sunday and that he was supposed to come here to see me. She does not know where he could be. What should I do? I do not know if he went to the Bons-Enfants. Should I send someone there or would you, Monsieur, be willing to go to the trouble of doing so? I mean simply to send someone to inquire if he has been there and what he has done. I most humbly beg you to do this for me for the love of God. You are aware of how great my sorrow is and that my misgivings are considerable.

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1. The Countess de Maure, cousin of Louise de Marillac, see Letter 96.

I remain, Monsieur, your most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. I have no one in the world to help me in this matter and I scarcely ever have except your Charity.

1645

*Establishment of the Daughters of Charity in Serqueux, Saint-Denis, Maule, Crespières.*

*The foundlings are placed in 13 houses on the Champ-Saint-Laurent, near Saint-Lazare.*

**L.113B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS**

*Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor  
of the Hospital of Saint-Jean (at Angers)*

(January 1645)

My very dear Sisters,

Truly it has been too long since my heart has conversed with yours that have been so kind to me and that pardon me and excuse me because they are aware of my many responsibilities. Our good sisters<sup>1</sup> arrived in excellent health, thank God. This continues as well as their fervor and devotion. It has been quite a while since you sent us any news of yourselves. We have received nothing since the arrival of our sisters. I beg you to write, Sister. Do not wait for an answer. Three or four lines at least once a month would suffice.

How are the sisters who have just arrived<sup>2</sup> and Sister Huitmill and her companion?<sup>3</sup> I urge all of them to be very courageous especially in perfecting themselves in the practice of true humility, gentleness, obedience, cordiality and support for one another.

You should all be holy with the many opportunities that are constantly available to you to serve God and the poor. I believe that those sisters

1. At the end of the year 1644, Claude Brigide and Barbe Toussaint left for Paris.

2. The last three to arrive at the end of the year 1644: Marie Despinal, see Letter 458, Marguerite Tourneton, see Letter 149 and Jeanne de Chinon, see Letter 145.

3. Françoise Claire, see Letter 70b.