
Spiritual Writings

Correspondence, Meditations, Advice

1991

Letters: 1654

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L.386 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL

Feast of Saint Stephen [1653]

Monsieur,

You are aware of the necessity of sending sisters to Nantes and to the four places where there is only one sister. Every Monday there is a coach for Varize. This led me to ask Monsieur Vincent if, during his absence, we would have a conference just for the sisters of Paris. I would hesitate to request it, but I ask you to look into what should be done. His Charity left it entirely up to you.

Enclosed is an even more urgent letter for Monsieur Alméras.¹ I would be distressed to see our sisters leave without an instruction and a blessing from our Most Honored Father. I am incapable of giving instructions all the time and especially when I have allowed myself to become irresolute.

Please give us a prompt reply and be so charitable as to pray for me who am in the love of Jesus Crucified, Monsieur, your most obedient . . .

1654

Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Châteaudun, Bernay and La Roche-Guyon.

Aid to areas devastated by the war: Sedan

L.391 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor (at Angers)

Epiphany (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you must have been ill since the departure of Sister Jeanne Lepintre² because we had no news of you from that time until the end of last week when Monsieur Moreau³ took the trouble to bring me one of your letters. I would have been delighted to render him some

1. Monsieur Alméras, see Letter 179.
2. Jeanne Lepintre returned to Paris in November 1653.
3. Monsieur Moreau, hospital administrator.

service, but he did not indicate to me that he had any need. He did, however, say that he would return for a longer visit because it was getting late. I assure you, my dear Sister, that I am always pleased to see one of these good gentlemen because of their concern for the well-being of the poor and because of the charity they show our sisters.

My God, Sister, please let me know whether or not you explained everything to Mademoiselle Chevalier.¹ Did you lead her to believe that she would be exempt from many things and that we would keep her despite her infirmities? Did you speak with her mother and tell her the same thing? Until now this young woman gives no sign of being suited for us either physically or mentally. It is not that I do not believe that this poor girl is good, but she would be much better off in her home surroundings than in this city where she is always ill.

Please inform her parents of her illness, if you can. I rather suspect that they are aware of it because they know her. I think that her lung is involved. I suspect this because she had a dry cough when she arrived. Did you not tell her that she was supposed to have enough money for a return trip home as well as for her first habit? Any candidate must be told this. She has only eight pounds remaining from her journey here. Of course you realize, my dear Sister, that is not the reason why I consider her, perhaps, inappropriate. Would to God she did have the necessary qualities.

Please tell Sister Barbe² that I saw her father after she left and that he is well, thank God, as are all her relatives. He was not at all upset about her trip. He told us that she was accomplishing the holy will of God. Please greet all the sisters for us and tell them that, united with them, we have asked pardon of Our Lord for all our infidelities during the past year. We continue to hope that His grace will enable us to make better use of the present one. He will not fail us, my dear Sisters; let us be careful not to fail Him by not corresponding fully to His holy will.

Enclosed are the pictures of the Holy Protectors that we drew on New Year's Day. We had a conference;³ it was on the importance of conducting ourselves in distant houses in the same manner and with the same submission as the sisters in this house. This applies to our manner of acting toward the persons who employ us for the service of the poor, superiors, the Sister Servant and among ourselves. Have a little conference among yourselves on this topic. If we were not too busy, we would send you a short excerpt from ours.

Pray for the entire Company and ask Our Lord to send laborers for His work if He wants it to continue. Requests come from so many places that it is impossible to satisfy all of them.

1. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.

2. Barbe arrived in Angers at the end of the year 1652.

3. Conference of January 1, 1654 (Coste IX, 662).

Good evening, my dear Sister. Believe me in the love of Jesus Christ in His Crib, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Our sisters in Poland are well, thank God. They need prayers. You know the trials connected with new foundations.

L.397 - TO SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Sister of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontenay

February 13 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

We are sending you a half-bushel of excellent peas. We bought all the best ones because the beans are too expensive. We will get some, however, and will send you a supply. These peas do not need to be strained. With the help of God, we will also buy you some bouquets of herbs when we go to the fair at Saint-Germain. We will also send you a codfish. Clean it well and scale it; then dry it and cut it into pieces. As you use it, soak it; the water you use for this is also excellent for the wash.

I beg Our Lord to give us a desire for true penance, but in our hearts not just in words which are so much in vogue. May God have mercy on us! I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.398 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Brienne

February 16, 1654

My very dear Sister,

My heart aches with yours because of all the suffering that has befallen you from all sides. God be praised for the strength He has given you to work where you now are and to have completed the work at Châlons! How blessed you are to be employed as you are in such holy actions! I am sure that you will not fail to thank Our Lord for this so that the greatness of this grace will not be an occasion of reproach for you.

1. Barbe Angiboust returned to Brienne from Châlons. Louise de Marillac then destined her for the new establishment of Bernay.

Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, told me to tell you to come as soon as you receive this letter (I mean by the first available means of transportation) bringing Sister Marie Poulet¹ with you. I cannot tell you, my dear Sister, with what joy we will welcome you! I know that your poor body sorely needs this rest so that you may employ it elsewhere for the glory of God. I am sure that you will do everything in your power to discharge all your obligations toward others before leaving. I know your heart, so I am convinced that it will not recoil before the humiliation of such encounters.

I beg Our Lord to bless all that you will say and do in this matter, and I am in His holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Since Sister will not be going so far as you, I think that it would be all right for her to leave either before or with you.

March 15

Leave an inventory of all that you have belonging to the poor. Sign it and bring a copy to be signed by the person in whose hands you will be leaving everything. Accept the humble greetings of all your sisters.

As you can see, this letter was written a month ago. I am still asking the same thing except, my dear Sister, that instead of turning everything over to others, you place all into the hands of our dear sisters. I urge you not to tell them all the difficulties you have had especially with our dear Sister Jeanne² whom I have asked to go to Montmirail. Part company, I beg of you, gently and cordially. We joyously await your arrival.

L.362 - TO MY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT³

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châlons, in Champagne

March 18 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am astonished that the city officials are still keeping you there since we were told long ago that they had given all of you money to return here. Nevertheless, Monsieur Vincent is of the opinion that you should wait for their consent. You have no doubt, of course, that I am most eager to see you; and it seems to me that since you were wounded you have in a sense become even closer to us. I praise God with all my heart for the courage He has given you and for having preserved you. This

1. Marie Poulet, see Letter 385.

2. Jeanne Hénault, see Letter 353.

3. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

leads me to believe that His goodness still wants to make use of you. I am sure that you do not fail to offer yourself to Him often to accomplish His most holy will.

With regard to the two girls you mentioned, if you have looked carefully into their background and way of life and have told them exactly what will be expected of them, explaining the Rule of the House both for the physical and the spiritual, and if you consider them suitable for us, you can send them or bring them with you, if you are coming soon. But you must impress upon them that they are coming so as to try out our way of life and they in turn will be tested. Please see to it that they have enough money for the first habit and to cover the cost of the trip here and, if necessary, the return journey home. I say this, my dear Sister, because it is very important for girls to come in this frame of mind even if they are well suited for us.

I have not received an answer to Mademoiselle Parisolle's letter, but I am enclosing one from her niece. Because of the medicine I took today, I cannot write to you personally¹ but nothing can prevent me from declaring myself to be in the love of our crucified Lord, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.396 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Daughter of Charity at Fontenay-aux-Roses

Thursday (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am sending you our sister who has not quite finished her retreat; have her make her last three or four meditations; this will not prevent her from working in the house. This is being done so that Sister Jeanne Luce² can go immediately to Saint-Jacques³ and, if possible, sleep there tomorrow night. I have not as yet been able to send anyone there. She will remain as long as her strength permits.

Excuse me for ending this letter so abruptly and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister.

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1. The letter was written by Mathurine Guérin.
 2. Jeanne Luce was with the galley slaves along with Barbe Angiboust in approximately 1642-1646. On August 8, 1655, she signed an "x" on the Act of Establishment of the Company (Coste XIII, 575).
 3. Parish of Paris.

L.431 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity at Fontenany-aux-Roses

The 29th (c.1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am very distressed for having left you alone and without a letter for so long, but I think you are aware that I am ill. I was bled from the foot again the day before yesterday. I am sending you this very hasty note, but I cannot respond to your recent letters. I hope to have the consolation of seeing you soon.

I beg you, Sister, to look upon our sister as one who has just entered the community because, although she is a good girl, she greatly needs instruction and training. I confide her wholeheartedly to you and I am with equal affection, in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sister, you very humble sister and servant.

L.407 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

June 7 (1654)

Monsieur,

Although I am well aware that your holy employments permit you no rest, I am writing because I am so anxious to have the honor of hearing news of you from your own pen. I desire also to reiterate my very humble respect for and submission to you for all we continue to owe you, Monsieur, because of your charity which, I believe, has extended even to Nantes where I know you were recently. If such indeed is the case, I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to be so good as to let me know how you found this community which had at one time been so desolate. I am also distressed about the sisters of Angers because of Sister Cécile's¹ illness.

Mademoiselle Chevalier² has decided to leave, thank God. Fortunately she has found a place with Mademoiselle de Lestang.³ God grant that she may adapt to life there and be found satisfactory. I hope that you will continue to honor me by remembering our needs before Our Lord. Believe

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

2. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.

3. Mademoiselle de Lestang, see Letter 52.

me in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.411 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

August [1654]

My Most Honored Father,

I beg your Charity to be so kind as to look at these letters. There is a boy waiting to return to Videlles.¹ He did not come just for the mail. If the answer is not favorable, I will ask the sisters to express my apology for not responding by this mail.

I no longer find our good woman from Arras with us. She asked Sister Mathurine² if she could go to buy some white linen, and she never returned. It was perhaps my fault for not being considerate enough to visit her during her retreat and to let her eat with the sisters except on a few occasions. Our good God knows what He wants to do and what He will do for the Company. I have great confidence in His goodness to accomplish all this if the guidance of your Charity will rid me of the obstacles which my failings place in His way. This leads me to beg you, for the love of Our Lord, to take the time to become fully cognizant of them. I will hold back nothing which could prevent this since God has always given me the grace to want you to see all my thoughts, actions and intentions as clearly as His goodness sees them. For His glory I want to renounce the satisfaction I may receive from them and to accept the humiliations which I shall perhaps endure because of them, I who am a wretched sinner and unworthy to call myself what nevertheless I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient servant.

Today is Wednesday³ and it is my birthday. If God wills it also to be the day of my death, I hope that I shall prepare well for it.

1. Videlles, near Étampes.
2. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
3. Wednesday, August 12.

L.413 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Fontenay-aux-Roses

(August 1654)

My very dear Sister,

You are imitating Our Lord who took upon Himself the debts of others and paid them. Thank you very much especially for the beautiful and delicious figs which arrived just at the right time for everyone here.

I think that it would be advisable to take that little boarder provided you are paid adequate board. I cannot tell you how much that should be; much would depend on how meals are to be provided. Also, you should take her only on a trial basis just in case she does not get along with your good woman.

Yesterday I had planned to send Sister Jeanne¹ back to you, but neither she nor I thought of it. Monsieur Portail² is better, thank God, but Brother Ducourneau³ is dangerously ill. Keep him in your prayers. He will be a great loss for the house.

When the opportunity arises, try to settle matters with the surgeon. As far as possible, try to avoid going to places to which he may be called.

A slight ailment keeps me from writing in my own hand⁴ but not from being with all my heart, my very dear Sister, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble . . .

L.412 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE⁵

(at Angers)

(August 15, 1654)

My very dear Sister,

Both your letters and ours must certainly have been lost because I do not believe that I wrote to you only a month ago, and besides, I have had only one letter from you in a very long time. I also had the honor of writing to Monsieur l'abbé⁶ to tell him that Mademoiselle Chevalier⁷

1. Jeanne Luce, see Letter 396.
2. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.
3. Brother Ducourneau, see Letter 147.
4. Letter written by Mathurine Guérin.
5. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
6. Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, see Letter 12.
7. Mademoiselle Chevalier, see Letter 382.

was with Mademoiselle de Lestang.¹ I think that I also told you this. It is true, my dear Sisters, that I do not write to you as often as I would wish nor as often as I should, but as we grow older we have greater responsibilities.

I praise God that our sisters have recovered. It has been a long time since your companions have written to me personally to tell me how they are. Please have them write to me in turn with news of themselves. I beg Our Lord that you all may be as His heart wills you to be and that today you have entered into the death of the Blessed Virgin by the voluntary sacrifice you make to Him of dying to yourselves so that you may live in God and fulfill His most holy will for the rest of your days. Ask Our Lord to grant us all this grace and that of dying in His holy love in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Sister Anne Hardemont and three others² went to Sedan to serve the wounded soldiers. They are edified to see them die like good Christians. Pray very hard for the King's army and for the conversion of the enemy. All our sisters greet you and embrace you affectionately. I am sure that you do not forget to pray each day for our Most Honored Father, that God may preserve him for us.

P.P.S. Sister Barbe³ sends her love. She is still here and is well, thank God.

L.584 - (TO MADAME DES ESSARTS)⁴

August 30 (1654)

Madame,

Quite some time ago Monsieur Ozenne⁵ and our sisters in Poland wrote several times to say that the Queen was again requesting two sisters and that Her Majesty was astonished that they were so long in coming. As a result Monsieur Vincent has told us to send them as soon as possible and to ask you, Madame, to give us some instructions for their journey such

1. Mademoiselle de Lestang, see Letter 52.

2. Anne Hardemont, Françoise Cabry, Jeanne Marie and Anne Thibault were sent to Sedan on July 23, 1654 (Coste X, 1).

3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, returned from Brienne.

4. Madame des Essarts took care of the Queen of Poland's affairs in France from 1652 onwards.

5. Monsieur Ozenne, a Priest of the Mission, born on April 15, 1613. He arrived in Poland in August 1653. His death occurred on August 14, 1658.

as the best time to leave and some addresses along the way. Also, Madame, it would be a great consolation for us if they could join other persons who are making this trip. If not, we shall have to entrust them to Divine Providence as we did for the first group which arrived safely.¹

We shall await word from you before having the sisters leave, so that they may have the honor of acting in keeping with your directives and thus secure a blessing on their journey.

I beg Our Lord to grant you perfect health and I am in His most holy love, Madame, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.414 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

September 4 (1654)

Monsieur,

I see clearly that the needs of our sisters are multiplying. One of the good priests of the hospital, who was one of their confessors, has written to me about it. I hope that Monsieur Vincent will be able to do them the charity that you judge necessary. Monsieur Vincent is also giving very high priority to sending sisters, as soon as possible, to serve the poor in your hospital for shut-ins. He wants us to prefer this to any other proposal we might receive once we have discharged our two commitments in a couple of important places. He recommends this because of the respect and esteem he has for the Bishop of Angers and for the reasons I believe your Charity presented to him.

I received a letter from a Sister Élisabeth² which had no signature and no address indicating where it was written. However, I am reasonably certain that it is the one for whom I am taking the liberty of sending you a response. She is the one, if she is the Assistant or has some similar responsibility, because she complained that this duty was the cause of the trial she was undergoing.

The good priest I mentioned told me that he withdrew as confessor for the sisters so as to preserve peace and harmony. You can see from this what he meant, Monsieur, and if there is some emergency, I hope that, as usual, your Charity will resolve the problem. You know the sisters' needs better than anyone else.

If the sisters learn that we have been requested to send sisters for the hospital, it might lead them to want to be placed there; this might well

1. The first three sisters arrived in 1652.

2. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

upset them. The custom of changing the sisters, which is so necessary for the Company in some places, causes all the sisters to think about the possibility. I believe, Monsieur, that this is partially responsible for creating a certain flightiness among them. However, I think that it is an evil that is almost essential for the government of the Company.

Please show us your charity by helping us, by your intercession before Our Lord, to obtain the spirit we need to further His glory, and honor me by believing that I am always in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.415 - (TO SISTER ÉLISABETH BROCARD)

at Angers

(September 4, 1654)

I must tell you, my dear Sister, that I am edified by your love for obedience and your desire for salvation. However, at the same time, I must say that I am somewhat astonished that you doubt that you have the means to practice these beautiful virtues where you now are and where you have received so many graces since God has called you there. You tell me, my dear Sister, that you think that the duty given you may be the cause. Perhaps this is so but for another reason than the one you believe.

Permit me to tell you, my dear Sister, that if great care is not taken when one is first placed in a position of authority and if one is not filled with a great desire for solid virtue, then one finds oneself in peril. Such, for example, would be your appointment to the office of Assistant.

O my dear Sister, you must ask God for the grace to stay well within the limits of your authority so that you do not go beyond it and undertake more than you should. Reflect that you are not more exempt from humiliations and obedience than before you had this duty; on the contrary, you are much more obliged to give good example to the other sisters. It is also more essential to show cordiality, submission and sincere openness with the Sister Servant. You must never suggest or ask anything unless you are certain that it is in accord with her intentions. This is especially true in Angers where the direction of the Sister Servant has always been considered excellent. If some little cause for suffering arises, humble yourself and accept it as a cross to be cherished because Our Lord has permitted you to bear it. This does not mean, my dear Sister, that if your sufferings continue, you should not make them known to us or that we will not make every effort to meet your needs. Meanwhile, I

beg Our Lord to send you His Spirit so that, united to Him, you may act in this matter and in all others purely for love of Him.

L.402 - (TO THE SISTERS OF ANGERS)

(September 1654)

My very dear Sisters,

I was consoled to have your confessors bring me news of your dear selves and of your return to good health. Since these gifts come to you from God, I beg of you, my dear Sisters, to use them willingly and joyously for His love in the service of the poor. Encourage one another, and may your mutual good example speak louder than any words could. Profit from all the instructions you will receive from the charity of the good Abbé de Vaux. Above all, practice holy cordiality and mutual respect toward one another.

I urge you not to let any opportunity go by without sending us news of all that is happening to you. Waiting to hear from you, I embrace you all and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

L.451 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST

(at Angers)

September 9 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

I have time only to thank you for the information you gave me about the matter which is as I suspected. However, you forgot the main point which is to let me know whether the young lady's mother is willing, should her daughter marry in Paris, to come to live with her for a few years. If you can answer this, please do so.

I had news of Sister Barbe¹ who is in excellent health. Of course, she is in the best country for her, a region of Normandy. She is always eager for news of you and wants to tell you that some of your relatives have

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43, had just arrived in Bernay.

assured her that the other members of the family are fine. She listed names but I do not have her letter with me.

Please greet all our dear sisters for me and urge them to strengthen one another in fidelity to their vocation. I am sure that you never fail to pray for the well-being of our Most Honored Father and for the sanctification of the entire Company.

Our sisters in Poland ask you to pray that the divine goodness will bring peace to that kingdom and will safeguard the King and Queen. Our obligations toward our dear France are such that there is no need to ask you to pray for her needs. I beg Our Lord to hear your prayers for peace for our Holy Mother Church and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I believe that Monsieur Moreau will bring you these letters. He is a very good and virtuous man who has worked tirelessly for the hospital. If the charity of all your administrators is not equal to that found among those in Paris, the goodness of this man alone would be sufficient to give all the others a good reputation.

Please remember me to Mademoiselle de la Franchandière.¹

L.81 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(1654)

My Most Honored Father,

I urgently need our good God to give you a little time so that, in your charity, you can respond to my needs. I thank you very humbly for the note that you took the trouble to send me this morning and for all your goodness in my regard. I imagine that the good Brother Pascal has told you that I see no way of giving an answer to Monsieur de la Hode² between now and Tuesday and that I suggested sending his letter to the President, Madame de Nesmond.³ Since then it has occurred to me that it might be better to let him take full charge of the arrangements for the return of our sisters⁴ since I am certain that he will not fail to send them back as early as Tuesday as he had proposed. Nevertheless, we must anticipate that he will do so without notifying us and even that our sisters will be unwilling to depart without a directive from us. I await the instructions that your Charity will give me, and I shall follow them since

1. Mademoiselle de la Franchandière, Lady of Charity of Angers.

2. Monsieur de la Hode, the Chaplain of the Château of Chantilly.

3. Madame de Nesmond, see Letter 77.

4. Financial difficulties, see A.79, necessitated the momentary dismissal of the Daughters of Charity.

I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient daughter and servant.

L.93 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER GILLETTE JOLY¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Sedan

(c. October 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I was very consoled by the news Sister Anne² gave me of you. I beg Our Lord to bestow His holy graces upon you. Your longing to come here is equalled only by my own to have you, but it is only fair that Sister Marie³ should precede you; then your turn will come. I am not writing to her because I expect to see her soon. If she has not already left, tell her that I send my greetings and that her friends of the Saint-Germain district wish she were here to take care of your mutual business, because I know that she has so much affection for you that she takes care of her temporal affairs only for your sake. Your business, I am certain, my dear Sister, is only the concern you have to render yourself agreeable to God. How fortunate you are since, if such be the case, you can rest assured that Our Lord will always take good care of you. I ask you to remember me in your prayers and to believe me to be in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

L.438 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ÉLISABETH⁴

at Angers

(c. October 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I am somewhat surprised to receive a third letter from you on the same subject because I have already responded twice on the matter. I doubt that you have received my letters because it seems to me that you would

1. Gillette Joly was sent to join her sister, Marie, in Sedan as early as 1642.
2. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110, arrived in Sedan in September.
3. Marie Joly was going to return to Paris. She had been in Sedan for 13 years.
4. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

have found reason to remain at peace while putting into practice for a time the advice I gave you. Remember, my dear Sister, that we must not pay attention to our first thoughts or give ear to our trials and difficulties which are often only minor temptations or tests of our fidelity. We need great courage to overcome ourselves, although often the things we call trials are more imaginary than real. If we wish to please God, an excellent means is to bear patiently our trials and difficulties.

This does not mean, my very dear Sister, that we are unwilling to assist you. You should place full trust in Monsieur Ratier¹ when you cannot speak with Monsieur l'abbé² and be satisfied with the advice he gives you. All the rest is superfluous and often encumbers the mind because if we are not seeking advice in keeping with the order established by God, His goodness bestows no blessings upon it.

What I have said is based on the fear that you may have received some harmful advice, not from any belief that your will has changed in any way whatsoever because I can assure you, my dear Sister, that I, above all, would have been mistaken about you since I have always had the greatest confidence in you which I could never relinquish any more than I could the desire for you to consider me in the love of Our Lord . . .

L.416 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[November 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

Since reading the letter which the Queen³ sent to your Charity, I was convinced that it had been decided to provide a directress for our dear sisters. In my mind I even went beyond that and thought that it would be wise, so as to avoid a gap in leadership after the death of this good Lady,⁴ to convince Her Majesty that it is necessary to appoint three or four such directresses. They would thus be in line with the Confraternity of Charity. They would serve as the chief officers and our sisters would act under their direction.

If our two sisters have not modified their dispositions, I am afraid

1. Monsieur Ratier, see Letter 71.

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

3. The Queen of Poland, Louise-Marie de Gonzague.

4. Mademoiselle de Villers, Lady of Honor whom the Queen of Poland put in charge of distributing alms to the poor. Louise de Marillac feared that the Queen would appoint her directress, that is, Superioress of the Daughters of Charity in Poland.

that Sister Françoise¹ is less open than Sister Madeleine² and that she does not possess her strength. As for those whom we are to send to Poland, I see none more suitable than Sister Cécile³ except for the fact that she was with Sister Marguerite⁴ in Angers, and I doubt that they will see eye to eye in all matters. If it were not for the fact that Sister Julienne⁵ gets so dizzy and sick to her stomach whenever she rides in a coach, I think that she would be quite suitable. I leave it to your Charity to make a decision concerning Sister Jeanne Lepintre⁶ who would be in complete agreement with the views of Mademoiselle de Villers.

I think that our sisters will have no difficulty in following the advice of Monsieur Ozenne⁷ which is not to become involved in anything other than their duty. But the difficulty will come from the goodness of the Queen and the close relationship the sisters have with her. Because of this, she may ask them to do things which Mademoiselle de Villers, either to maintain her authority or for some other good reason, may tell them to put off or which she may even refuse to allow them to do. This might give rise to competition and jealousy. If Sister Marguerite has reported the matter accurately, the episode of the habits and the beds shows that we are involved in a major undertaking.

If the Ladies are to meet tomorrow, I very humbly ask your Charity to let me know if, in a brief memorandum that we are to prepare, we should speak to them of the faults of the older foundling girls who were on probation.

If it is agreeable with you, I really must speak to you along with two or three of the other sisters about some problems that were postponed at the last meeting. I also need to talk to you especially about myself who, for the love of God, ask your Charity for his holy blessing since I remain, my Most Honored Father, your most unworthy daughter and most grateful servant.

1. Françoise Douelle, see Letter 364.

2. Madeleine Drugeon, daughter of a rich merchant from Paris, arrived in Poland in 1652.

3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

4. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.

5. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.

6. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64.

7. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.

L.294 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARIE GAUDOIN¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Les Alluets

November 8 (1654)

My very dear Sister,

Here is your sister; I am sending her back to you because I believe that she will be better in the country than in the city. I am distressed that I could not help her in this matter. I sent her to this house because I had brought her back, but she was not found suitable and it certainly does not look like she ever will be. I think that in Paris she would become a permanent resident of the Hôtel-Dieu because of all her ailments.

I am not sending you a letter with Sister because I hope that she will share all the news she has of us with you. I am certain, my dear Sisters, that you will preserve in your hearts for a long time the good thoughts you had during the mission.² This is essential especially when one is outside of her house and in the midst of turmoil. It is so easy to become dissipated if we are not constantly on our guard. I imagine that when one of our sisters returns, those who welcome her do not fail to ask her many questions so that they can be renewed in the exact observance of their Rules. I beg Our Lord to grant you this grace and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving servant.

L.418 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Monday [November 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

Our good Sister Marie³ from Sedan left us after dinner without saying good-bye. She took her belongings with her. I am afraid that she will leave tomorrow for Sedan. She could perhaps be found at the coach if

1. Marie Gaudoin, after having served at Les Alluets, was sent to Angers in 1656, where she was named Assistant of the small community in 1657. She did not stay there for very long. She went to Nantes in November 1658 and to Hennebont at the end of 1659.
2. Monsieur Tholard preached Missions from village to village in the region (Coste XI, 163).
3. Marie Joly, in Sedan since 1641. Louise de Marillac had asked her to return to Paris but she refused. She boasted of obeying only if Monsieur Vincent himself would write to her. The latter sent an order to return in a letter which was delivered to her by Monsieur Jean Martin, Superior of the Priests of the Mission in Sedan (Coste V, 207).

your Charity considered it advisable to send someone to bring her back. I fear that if our sisters went, they would not be strong enough to detain her. At the very least, my Most Honored Father, I think that a letter should be sent as soon as possible to Sedan to tell the sisters what should be done if she returns to her house,¹ because I am afraid that she is going to have a tidy income and sell all that she can to earn a profit.

Enclosed is a letter for Sister Jeanne-Christine² so that she can leave as soon as your Charity orders her to do so. It will be most unfortunate if Sister Marie returns to Sedan before she arrives.

Monsieur Ménard told me that he will not hesitate to go wherever you wish, if your Charity sends a carriage for him tomorrow around one o'clock. I think he could diagnose the patient better if he sees him in bed instead of up and around. He can do this at the Bons-Enfants provided the carriage and the distance do not fatigue him too greatly.

If I had foreseen what happened with Sister Marie, I could have prevented it by placing her in retreat. I am always the cause of some problem; I had resolved to take care of it tomorrow. It is essential for your Charity to apply some powerful remedy to draw me out of my hardness of heart and to help me to be in reality, my Most Honored Father, your very humble . . .

L.419 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

December 4, 1654

My very dear Sister,

You have every right to complain about the length of time I let pass without expressing the joy I felt when this good gentleman returned and gave us such a detailed account of the foundation of the Confraternity of Charity and the manner in which it has pleased Our Lord to direct everything there. You have endured some privations and you, perhaps, still are. My dear Sister, does not such a state of affairs bring comfort to your heart since it associates you with the life of Our Lord and of His holy mother when they were on earth? Believe me, my dear Sister, when I see splendidly appointed houses where everything goes beautifully at the beginning, I always fear for the future. In the name of God, do not rush matters; things which are built slowly are built to last. The Daughters

1. Marie Joly did not go as far as Sedan. Overcome by remorse on the way, she returned to the Motherhouse in the evening (Coste V, 223).
2. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344, who was sent to Sedan.

of Charity must recall and possess the qualities of servants of the poor in order to remain faithful to their duty.

I beg you, my dear Sister, to speak of this often with Sister Laurence;¹ this will enable us to remain faithful to our duty to honor and respect all the Ladies and women who are members of the Confraternity of Charity. We must look upon them as persons who have placed us under the weighty obligation of cooperating with them in the service of the poor.

I am certain, Sister, that when the time comes for you to have your own residence, you will be careful to choose a lodging appropriate for poor girls. I beg of you, never consider opening a hospital, lodging the sick in your house or taking in boarders without first writing to Monsieur Vincent. If you are approached about these things, do not give them your approval. Let God act. He will reveal His will through the practice of obedience.

Heartfelt greetings to dear Sister Laurence. I promise myself the pleasure of writing to her another time. I beg both of you, my dear Sisters, to be assured of my affection and to believe me to be in the love of Jesus Crucified, your very humble sister and servant.

L.420 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday [December 1654]

My Most Honored Father,

It seems to me that your Charity has not given me any directives as to whether, when I am sending the book and letter to Sister Jeanne Lepintre,² I should say a few words to her on the way we must act when writing to our acquaintances. This is why I wrote to her as I did and sent the letter to your Charity so that, if you consider it appropriate, it can go with tomorrow's, Saturday's, mail.

Madame de Chas is very insistent and is pushing for an answer. Nevertheless, Sister Marie³ has been faithful and did not go there.

1. Laurence Dubois, born in October 14, 1623 in Silly-Sainte-Croix, entered the Company of the Daughters of Charity on December 6, 1648. After her seminary, where she became acquainted with sickness, she served the poor in the parishes of Paris. In 1654, she was chosen for the new establishment of Bernay. In 1657, she became Sister Servant there at Barbe Angiboust's departure. After 1660, she went to the parish of Saint-Merry, then to Réveillon, where she died on September 16, 1685. Her great gentleness towards the poor, her honesty and her simplicity were remarked by her companions (biographical note).
2. Jeanne Lepintre, see Letter 64, was in Châteaudun.
3. Marie Joly, see Letter 418.

However, she still wants to return although she sometimes tries to moderate her desire. As for me, I am trying to await peacefully the time for my little retreat. I need to talk to you before God grants me this grace which I desire with all my heart. I also long for your blessing which I ask of your Charity since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter.

L.376 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at the Hôtel-Dieu of Angers

(December 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I praise God with all my heart for the graces He has bestowed on you and on all our sisters during the retreat. How fortunate you are to experience His loving guidance and to be able to take the time for these holy exercises. I assure you that we have sisters here in Paris who have gone two years and some have gone even three years without being able to make a retreat. I beg Our Lord to grant you the grace to be very grateful for His mercy. Follow exactly the recommendations of Monsieur l'abbé especially those he gives you concerning your relationship with your confessors and the selection of those who would be suitable for all of you.

Now, my dear Sister, do not flatter yourself. Those to whom God gives the charge of others must forget themselves entirely and in all things, but especially in spiritual matters and in the little satisfactions that may assist our sisters to advance toward perfection. Remember that those in authority must be the pack-mules of the Company. Please join with me in asking Our Lord for this spirit for you and for me. I cannot clearly place Sister Jeanne-Marie. Please tell me which one she is. I believe you have two sisters called Jeanne.²

I am really distressed that we cannot yet send two sisters to the shut-ins. However, I agree with you, my dear Sister, that to accomplish anything there three or four would not be too many and we do not have that

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

2. Jeanne from Chinon, see Letter 145, and Jeanne-Marie Ceintereau. The latter (1620-1690), a native of Morton in Vienne, had been in the Company of the Daughters of Charity since April 1645. She arrived in Angers in November 1651 and remained there until 1667.

number at this time. We have three places where there is only one sister and we cannot send them any relief.

I believe that I told you that Sister Barbe¹ is at Bernay in Normandy and that she is very well. We also have sisters about 15 leagues from there,² beyond Caen, who likewise are serving the bashful poor who have great spiritual and material needs.

Our sisters in Poland send their greetings. The Queen wants us to send two more in the spring; she asked for them last year. I have no idea what we will be able to do.³ Pray to God that all this may be accomplished according to His most holy will or that the work be brought to an end. I cannot write at this time to any of the other sisters. I beg you to greet all of them for me and to assure them of my dearest and tenderest affection. I am with all my heart, in the love of the newborn Jesus, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

L.401 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

December 27 (1654)

Monsieur,

If your Charity does not intercede for us with the Bishop of Angers, I have every reason to fear that he will be very displeased because we have delayed so long in responding to his desire to have sisters for the poor shut-ins. Although I only agreed to send sisters for this work as soon as we could, nevertheless, I am distressed to have put it off for so long because of circumstances that we could not have foreseen. Assist me, Monsieur, by assuring him that sheer powerlessness is at the root of this delay and that I would willingly disappoint many others so as to fulfill my obligations in obedience to him.

Since the war, we have had great difficulty in finding girls who are suitable for our works. Many, after being fully trained, allow themselves to be carried away by self-interest and leave the Company so that they may enjoy greater freedom. Because of this we have been short of sisters for the past few years. This has been accompanied by an increase in requests for the services of the Company which, in turn, has caused people to whom we had promised sisters to suddenly remember this. I can assure you, Monsieur, that at the present time we have no more than two or three sisters here at the Motherhouse to help with the formation of the

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

2. In Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.

3. Louise de Marillac thought briefly about sending Cécile Angiboust to Poland, see Letter 416.

others. All the other sisters are new or very ill. We have buried two recently. Judge for yourself, Monsieur, what we can do. Permit me to thank your Charity very humbly for continuing to assist our sisters in their needs.

It seems to me that Sister Cécile¹ must forget her personal satisfaction so that she can give as much as possible to our sisters. As for their confessor, I believe, Monsieur, that she is completely open to the choice your Charity will make. You are good enough to listen to her reasons should she desire to express them to you. The reason I am speaking to you in this way, Monsieur, is because I believe that the little misunderstanding that occurred with our Sister Élisabeth² was caused by this. Nevertheless, I think that since the retreat both of them are less troubled. Monsieur Ratier had no small role to play in bringing this about. I beg Our Lord always to be your recompense and I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

L.423 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE LORET

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor at Fontenay-aux-Roses

(December 29 1654)

My very dear Sister,

I just received your letter yesterday, December 28, and I am distressed that I did not get it sooner because I would have sent you some money. I do not consider it appropriate for you to ask for it from Monsieur Béguin considering the short time Madame, his sister, plans to be with you. Please send Sister Marie for what she needs. She will bring the money to you.

You were right not to leave your good woman under the sole guidance of our sister. I expect that as soon as she leaves, you will come to visit us. Please believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Although the time has passed, we will not forget to bring your request before Our Lord. I praise Him for it with all my heart.

1. Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant, see Letter 108.

2. Élisabeth Brocard, the Assistant, see Letter 237.