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**Letters: 1655**

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1655

January 18: *Approbation of the Company of the Daughters of Charity by Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris. The Superior General of the Priests of the Mission is recognized as the Superior of the Daughters of Charity.*

August 8: *Act of Establishment of the Company, signed by the 40 sisters present. First election of Officers.*

*Beginning of the Conferences on the Explanation of the Common Rules.*

September: *Visit of Monsieur Portail to Brienne, Sedan, Montmirail and Nanteuil.*

November: *Visit of Monsieur Berthe to Angers and Nantes.*

**L.422 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT<sup>1</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Roche-Guyon*

January 7, 1655

My very dear Sister,

It is very possible that the long letter I wrote to you more than a month ago and that I sent to the home of Madame de Liancourt has been lost. In it I asked you among other things to send Sister Claude here because you do not consider her suitable for that place. Please do so as soon as possible, but do not overburden yourself with work. I know that Madame de Liancourt<sup>2</sup> is so good that she will be quite willing for you to hire a woman to help you with the cooking and washing.

The good woman who came here from La Roche-Guyon brought me a good deal of consolation because she told me of the graces that God has bestowed on you. May He be forever blessed! I beg you, in the name of God, Sister, not to overdo but to be satisfied to do what is necessary. I believe that you are still suffering, but the use you make of your trials, by the grace of God and your hope for His recompense, greatly consoles me and should be a continual source of encouragement for you.

I do not remember whether or not I told you that Sister Marguerite who was at Saint-Gervais has died, and that Sister Claude Chantereau<sup>3</sup>

1. Anne Hardemont had returned from Sedan and was then at La Roche-Guyon. Her somewhat trying personality, no doubt, necessitated her numerous transfers.
2. Madame de Liancourt had her mansion in La Roche-Guyon.
3. Claude Chantereau left for Sainte-Marie-du-Mont with Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

and a companion have gone to lower Normandy to the estates of Madame, the Duchess de Ventadour.<sup>1</sup> I recommend them to your prayers and I ask you to believe me to be in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

**L.421 - TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

(January 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I think I received two of your letters. From the one that you are sending to Madame Le Comte, I gather that God has bestowed many blessings on the foundation of the Confraternity of Charity. May He be forever blessed! Please let me know the state of your health and that of our sister.<sup>2</sup> Also tell me if you have many pupils and sick to serve and if the older girls give you much help with catechism on feast days.

I would be very disappointed if your linen has been lost because we have had no sign of it. You lead us to lose hope of seeing your beautiful thread again because these days, which are so short for going about your work, do not allow you time just for spinning.

I certainly would have been very happy if Sister Claude Chantereau<sup>3</sup> and Sister Elisabeth<sup>4</sup> from Angers could have visited you on their way but that was impossible. They are 15 or 16 leagues from Caen on the estates of Madame de Ventadour.<sup>5</sup> The Duchess did me the honor of informing me that they had arrived safe and sound. Thanks be to God! I believe I told you, my dear Sister, about the death of Sister Marguerite. She was at Saint-Gervais where she had been ill for a long time.

Enclosed are your New Year's gifts, blessed by our Most Honored Father on the Feast of Saint Geneviève, when he gave us a conference<sup>6</sup> on the necessity of mortifying our senses and passions. All our sisters send their greetings and their wishes for a happy new year. Special

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1. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

3. Claude Chantereau arrived in Angers at the end of the year 1648. She left there in 1652. In December 1654, she was sent to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont for the new establishment. She died at the end of the year 1656, after a long illness.

4. Elisabeth Jousteau, a native of Angers, was in Saint-Jacques-du-Haul-Pas in 1652. She arrived in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont with Claude Chantereau in December 1654.

5. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

6. Conference of January 3, 1655 (Coste X, 54).

greetings from Sister Marie Joly<sup>1</sup> from Sedan who has been here for two months, also from the big Sister Claudine from Châlons, as well as the few older sisters here at the Motherhouse. Evening reading is beginning. I beg Our Lord to bless you and I am in His Most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I have not as yet received an answer for Sister Laurence.

L.425 - TO SISTER LAURENCE<sup>2</sup>

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

February 19 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

Thank you for sending me news of yourself. Let me know if you wrote the letter yourself. If not, do not ask anyone to write for you except Sister Barbe<sup>3</sup> who will do so willingly. However, if I am not mistaken you are learning to write. However limited your ability to write may be, if you have a private matter to share with me, write the letter yourself. Although you are under no obligation to show your letter to Sister Barbe, nevertheless courtesy requires you to tell her that you are going to write to us. Fear not; she will not ask what you want to tell us nor will she look at it since she knows that would offend God.

I have the impression that the two of you are living together in great peace and with the desire of animating one another to strive for union and cordiality. This creates a climate in which you communicate with one another, telling one another what you did while you were apart and letting one another know where you are going when you leave the house. In this instance one of you acts from an obligation of submission while the other has the duty of support and courtesy. The same applies to your community exercises. If one of you is sad, let her overcome herself so as to recreate with her sister. At the same time, let the one who is cheerful moderate her exuberance so as to accommodate herself to the mood of her sister and, little by little, draw her out of her melancholy. All this should be done for the love of God and to avoid listening to the temptation that might cause you to want to go elsewhere to unburden your soul and to seek satisfaction. This would bring about the total ruin of the holy friendship that should exist between two sisters. I beg Our

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1. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

3. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

Lord to preserve you from this by His holy love in which I am, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

**L.404 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JULIENNE (LORET)**

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

(c. 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I think that you should not raise any difficulty about letting this good woman leave although I am sorry to lose this opportunity for our sisters to practice such charity. However, I believe, my dear Sister, that you must refund the rest of the money if a quarter of the payment was advanced.

I will send you a sister as soon as possible. In the meantime I beg you, my dear Sister, not to be upset. Our sisters come out of retreat tomorrow. God willing, this will enable us to send you some assistance. I am in the love of God, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, please allow me to tell you that your letter does not emit the odor of a servant of the poor but rather an odor not permitted to the Daughters of Charity.

**L.427 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

March [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to inquire about the true state of your health and to ask you to be so good as to let me know what I should say in response to those two gentlemen from Nantes whose letters concerning Sister Henriette! I sent to Monsieur Portail yesterday so that he could communicate them to you.

I do not know if your indisposition prevented you from seeing Monsieur de la Hode's<sup>2</sup> letter concerning the state of the house and the Officers at Chantilly. Should Monsieur de la Hode's request be carried out (to reveal this state of affairs to the Queen in case what should have

1. Henriette Gesseume, see Letter 76.
2. Monsieur de la Hode, Chaplain of the Château of Chantilly.

been done has been completed and signed)? Should his letter which is addressed to Her Majesty be sent to her?

It seems that all this is somewhat urgent, but in any event, do not go to too much trouble. However, for the love of God, please bless your poor daughter and unworthy servant.

P.S. Madame the Countess de Brienne<sup>1</sup> came to ask me to inform you that Monsieur de Francière<sup>2</sup> is gravely ill with fluid in the lung. He is anxious to know what is to be done so that the administration of the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Denis will be placed in good hands. It is to be feared that it could become a benefice. The patient told her that it should be confided to the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine.<sup>3</sup> It occurred to me that someday it might come under the direction of a nun of their order (I mean the service of the sick poor). Would you not consider it appropriate, my Most Honored Father, for me to go to see this good gentleman? I think that he would be pleased.

L.346 - (TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT

*at La Roche-Guyon*)<sup>4</sup>

(1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am certain that you did not read my letter twice. It was written by Sister Mathurine<sup>5</sup> because a slight infirmity prevented me from writing to you myself. I am sure that there was nothing in it that you would have found upsetting. I am equally sure that you would clearly understand that the suggestion I made in behalf of Monsieur Vincent for you to return here or to remain where you are was in no way intended to insinuate that you had any distaste for obedience, but rather that it was simply to let you know that you could freely and confidently remain where you are if your ailments do not require you to return here, and likewise you could just as freely return if your health necessitates it.<sup>6</sup>

I am repeating the same thing, my dear Sister, it being understood that if you are well enough to remain you will not overwork, and you will allow the sisters to help you. We must, my dear Sister, willingly accept

1. Madame de Brienne, see Letter 86.
2. Monsieur de Francière, administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu in Saint-Denis.
3. The Reformed Augustinian Fathers had already taken over the Angers hospital, see Letter 51.
4. Letter recopied into Marguerite Chétif's notebook, the Anne Hardemont Series.
5. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.
6. Anne Hardemont was wounded in Châlons.

being incapacitated when God wills it for us. We must make use of such occasions to rise above earthly things. These circumstances must also lead us to reflect that Our Lord wills that, after we have worked for our neighbor, we must turn our attention to preparing ourselves for heaven which is our blessed home. I believe that such thoughts must often occur to you, my dear Sister.

Please greet the Reverend Martial very humbly for me. I beg you and the other dear sisters to be assured of my affection and service.

We sent you six pounds of peach blossom syrup. I believe that you no longer have the good girl from Buret with you; however, if you were not able to get rid of her, I suggest that you write to Madame the Duchess de Liancourt.<sup>1</sup>

All our sisters greet you affectionately, and with all my heart I assure you that I am still, and perhaps more than ever, in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister.

#### L.430 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday, April 4, 1655<sup>2</sup>

I forgot to tell you yesterday, my Most Honored Father, that Madame des Essarts<sup>3</sup> has recommended to your prayers and to those of the members of your Company her seventy-nine-year-old father who is ill. She is very apprehensive because she loves him dearly. She also told me that if his illness is not prolonged, she will be able to leave for Bourbon in about two weeks. She also said that she has received orders to provide all that is needed for the journey,<sup>4</sup> but she did not reveal what that would be. I do not know if she wants to be told which sisters are supposed to go before saying anything. She also said that, even if she had left, Monsieur Levêque, who has been employed for that purpose, would provide all that is necessary. It seems to me, my Most Honored Father that it is essential for her to specify what he is to procure. If you or someone representing you were to speak with her, perhaps she would be more specific. She expressed a desire to come to see those of our sisters who are going when she hears that they are here. I do not know if it would be appropriate to inform her of their arrival rather than send them to see her.

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1. Madame de Liancourt, see Letter 4.

2. In 1655, the Feast of the Annunciation was transferred to the Monday after Low Sunday.

3. Madame des Essarts, see Letter 584.

4. The departure to Poland of three Daughters of Charity (Coste V, 407).

Tomorrow is our great feast on which we must be grateful for the grace which God granted on that day to the first five<sup>1</sup> sisters whom His goodness willed to be entirely dedicated to Him for the works of the little Company. One of them<sup>2</sup> is already in heaven if Our Lord had mercy on her.

We have three sisters, Marguerite Chétif,<sup>3</sup> Madeleine Raportbled,<sup>4</sup> and Sister Philippe,<sup>5</sup> who desire and have asked to make the same offering for the second or third renewal at the end of the year. The first two sisters named ask to make it for their entire life. I believe that Monsieur Portail has proposed this to you. However, since I am afraid that I contributed to this desire, I thought, my Most Honored Father, that I should inform your Charity so as to learn your intentions and thereby be able to help them to conform to them. I also plan to join with them and a few other sisters who have this happiness.

If you have already said Mass downstairs since your illness and if you are going to do so again, you must surely know, my Most Honored Father, that we would hope that our offering would be more agreeable to God were it offered to Him by your paternal heart which would supply for the frailties of your poor daughters and humble servants, Louise de Marillac and the other sisters who, for the love of God, ask for your blessing.

P.S. Madame de Traversay<sup>6</sup> is supposed to come to see you about three or four o'clock to talk to you, I think, about what she has decided to do about our sister. The last time she did not seem to be too attached to her, but I think that this may be because she did not find in her as much potential as she had expected.

**L.424 - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT BERNAY)**

(c. May 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I wanted to speak to Madame<sup>7</sup> about what you had told me, but she

1. See note for 1642.
2. Élisabeth Turgis, see Letter 38.
3. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
4. Madeleine Raportbled was at the parish of Saint-Sulpice in 1652. She was chosen for Poland but could not go because of the war. She was then sent to Saint-Denis. The Council of February 1656 assigned her to Nantes (Coste XIII, 798).
5. Philippe Bailly, see Letter 336.
6. Madame de Traversay, see Letter 48.
7. Madame le Comte, Lady of Charity in Bernay.

cut me off to tell me of the letters of complaint she had received. I listened to her courteously while reflecting that they had probably come from envious people or, perhaps even more likely, from self-interested persons who think that everyone is like them. Nevertheless, my dear Sister, we are obliged to satisfy everyone and to carry on patiently the work of God, doing everything without haste. Our vocation of servants of the poor calls us to practice the gentleness, humility and forbearance that we owe to others. We must respect and honor everyone: the poor because they are the members of Jesus Christ and our masters; the rich so that they will provide us with the means to do good for the poor. Monsieur Vincent is especially pleased when he hears news of you. He thinks that you should give up your boarders. He says that it is not for Daughters of Charity to keep them. As a matter of fact, it was decided at a Council meeting which was held to discuss several matters that, for good reasons, they should not accept them.

**L.476 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS BARBE<sup>1</sup> AND LAURENCE<sup>2</sup>**

*Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

May 9 (1655)

My very dear Sisters,

It is true that it has been a long time since I have allowed myself the pleasure of writing to you. Since then I have received two letters from you. In answer to the first, let me say that I received the little package you were worried about a couple of weeks ago. Mademoiselle de Croissy<sup>3</sup> took the trouble to bring it to us herself. Accept our loving gratitude for it. Your good heart always finds ways of expressing your affection. Although your heart must follow where you go, it tries to show that it remains with us. I beg you to be assured that our hearts are filled with the same affections although the effects may not be apparent to you as often as they ought.

Sister Barbe, you did not share with us the recent visit you received. Please write to Sister Cécile<sup>4</sup> concerning it. She is in good health, thank God, as are all our sisters both here and in other places. I know of no one who is ill, by the grace of God.

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1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

3. Mademoiselle de Croissy, relative by marriage of the Hennequin family; one of its members, René, married Louise de Marillac's aunt.

4. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

I will not fail to give news of you to Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Portail who always welcome it with joy and gratitude. I do not know if Madame le Comte sent you any syrup because she was in the country when I sent it.

I do not understand exactly what you are telling me about the people of Bernay and the Confraternity of Charity. Is it possible that they do not like this establishment? O my dear Sisters, how I want you to be loved there. This is absolutely necessary if you are to accomplish any good in the places where Divine Providence has called you. Oh, how difficult it is when we have to disagree with someone! In the name of God do not add to the dispute. You must give evidence of nothing other than the service of the poor and the school children. I am certain that your charity is always directed toward assisting the people and that you do not relate their complaints and their whining to Monsieur de Bernay. That would serve only to make matters worse, as you know. Moreover, you will accomplish more by a gentle word than all the Lords and Officers will by their threats. Not that I think that they act in this way.

We had news of Sister Laurence's relatives. I must complain about her for not writing to me. I need only three or four lines to make me happy and that is enough to get into the habit of writing. So please do not be lazy and believe me in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sisters, your very humble and affectionate sister and servant.

#### L.437 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[1655]

The girl from La Roche-Guyon whom Sister Anne Hardemont<sup>1</sup> brought with her is insisting on leaving, claiming that she could never become accustomed to our way of life. I beg you, my Most Honored Father, to take the trouble to let us know if we should let her go. I have reason to fear that I am partly responsible because she said recently that I had not been nice to her. It is true that I told Sister Anne that it would have been more appropriate for her to have waited until she had spoken to your Charity. Does not all that oblige me to have her wait a while? I await your directive, my Most Honored Father, so that I may obey it although I am unfaithful in the practice of obedience which is why I commit so many faults. I very humbly beg your pardon, and if your Charity is willing, I ask your blessing so that I may have renewed strength.

1. Anne Hardemont had just returned from La Roche-Guyon.

**L.434 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

May 21 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I do not know whether or not I told you that a long time afterward, Mademoiselle de Croissy<sup>1</sup> brought us personally the little package that you said you had sent us.

I learned from our Most Honored Father that you take great pains with the good girls who present themselves for the Company to learn if they desire to come solely to serve God and not just to see Paris, if they intend to live and to die in the Company, and if they have resolved to return home if they are not suited for the Company since you know, my dear Sister, how dangerous it is for girls who remain in Paris. If you have tested them and you consider them suitable, they will be welcome.

I answered your last letter fully. I urge Sister Laurence<sup>2</sup> to send me news of herself. I had news of her relatives who are in good health, thank God. Please continue to pray for the selection of sisters to be sent to Poland.

All our sisters greet you very affectionately and I remain for the both of you, my very dear Sisters, with all my heart, your very humble sister and servant.

**L.436 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

May 30 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

This is the third or fourth time that I have written to you since Lent. I answered your letters, and I inquired if you had gotten the syrup that you had asked for from Madame Le Comte because she was not in Paris when I sent her your letter.

I also scolded you a bit for not telling me about the visits you had from your nephew. Moreover, I told you that Monsieur Vincent thought that you would look carefully into the character and background of any

1. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

girls desiring to enter our Company; that you would test their vocations; that, if you find them suitable and you recommend that they come here, you would inform them that, if they do not adapt, they must return home, there being no hope of remaining in Paris and finally that they must have enough money for the journey here and the return trip because you are well aware, my dear Sister, how dangerous Paris is for these girls.

I also complained about Sister Laurence<sup>1</sup> because she has not written to me.

Monsieur Portail will write to you and give you all the answers you requested. I beg Our Lord to bless your work and I remain in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I forgot to tell you that well after Easter Mademoiselle de Croissy<sup>2</sup> brought the little package. We are very grateful to you for it. Sister Cécile<sup>3</sup> is fine, thank God, but we heard that Sister Marguerite,<sup>4</sup> in Poland, is seriously ill. I recommend her to your prayers.

Sister Anne Hardemont<sup>5</sup> asks you not to forget to send her the paper you have belonging to her. She wants to know if the title has increased in value. Sister Marie Joly<sup>6</sup> is here. She is in critical condition. Please keep her in your prayers.

**L.520B - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST AT BERNAY)<sup>7</sup>**

(c. 1655)

I am sure, my dear Sister, that you have made it clear to these two good girls what they will have to do and what they will have to endure in the Company and the purity of intention they must have to enter and to persevere in it. I am also certain that you have ascertained that they have no bodily infirmities and no hereditary problems and that neither their mother nor their father needs them. If you have done all this, you may send them but put the third one off for a while.

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

2. Mademoiselle de Croissy, see Letter 476.

3. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

4. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.

5. Anne Hardemont had just returned from La Roche-Guyon, see Letter 110.

6. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b.

7. The copy of this letter is in Marguerite Chétif's notebook, series Barbe Angiboust.

**L.440 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

June 23 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I was under the impression that you were not getting my letters and that is why I told you twice what I thought about your nephew. He had come here to find out where you were and he told me that he was going to see you.

Please tell Sister Laurence<sup>1</sup> that I am worried about her health and that I urge her to write to me personally with news of herself; otherwise, I am going to think that she is seriously ill.

I believe that you have received Monsieur Portail's letters and any news that I might have given to you, not that anything extraordinary has happened, thank God. Madame Le Comte sent me word that she was unable to send any water-lily syrup. She said that Madame de Brou<sup>2</sup> does not want to give the whole amount. She can only obtain half of what you asked with the amount of money you sent her, if you want her to get it.

As I am writing, the good girl<sup>3</sup> you sent us has arrived safe and sound with no mishap on the way. I praise God for this and ask Him to grant her the grace to dry her tears and persevere.

We thank you with all our hearts for the beautiful fine thread you sent us. You are well aware that we have little. I praise God that our sister's health is improving. This good girl told us that you needed honey. However, since you did not ask for any and because you ask Madame Le Comte for all that you need, I would not dare send you any.

Please greet Sister Laurence very affectionately for us. I also beg you to find out where our sisters, whom Madame the Duchess<sup>4</sup> is employing for the Confraternity of the Charity, are located. It is a town called Sainte-Marie-du-Mont,<sup>5</sup> near Carentan. I would like you to be able to correspond with them or to have news of them from someone. You would make me very happy if you sent me some because I believe that they are not getting my letters and I receive very few from them.

Sister Élisabeth<sup>6</sup> is still ill. The departure of our sisters for Poland has

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

2. Madame de Brou, Lady of Charity of Paris.

3. Marie Papillon, postulant from Bernay. Toward the end of the year 1656, she was sent to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. In January 1658, she was ill and returned to Paris. In August of the same year, she was sent to Metz.

4. The Duchess de Ventadour, see Letter 268.

5. The first two Daughters of Charity arrived at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont at the end of 1654.

6. Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

been delayed because of the war; however, I believe that we will soon have sisters at the Petites Maisons<sup>1</sup> to care for the insane and the poor sick women in whatever way they can.

I beg you, my dear Sisters, to pray to Our Lord for the entire Company so that each sister may carry out her duty well by dying to herself and living in the purity of the love of Jesus in which I am, my dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. Tomorrow's feast<sup>2</sup> reminds me of the gentleness which the Son of God so often urged us to practice when He was on earth. I believe that He did so to teach us that it is the means for winning over the whole world and that the contrary fault can cause us to lose everything even what we have already gained. I beg you, my dear Sisters, to ask Our Lord to grant me this great virtue. I began this letter the day our sister arrived which was Monday evening.

#### L.442 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

July 17, 1655

Monsieur,

Sister Élisabeth<sup>3</sup> wrote to me again on the matter I discussed with you; so did Sister Cécile.<sup>4</sup> I told them that your Charity would tell them what to do in keeping with the directives you received from Monsieur Vincent. I thought that this would suffice to meet their needs, Monsieur.

I am very disturbed about the reason causing the delay in having Sister Élisabeth return here. Monsieur Mercier<sup>5</sup> took the trouble to come to see me recently; he told me about the rumors. Nevertheless, I am fearful of weak spirits. In the name of God, Monsieur, if your Charity discovers the truth, I beg you to do me the honor of informing me about it. Believe me in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

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1. The Daughters of Charity are going to take charge of the hospice for the insane of Paris, called Petites Maisons because it was made up of several houses.
  2. Feast of Saint John the Baptist.
  3. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237, experienced difficulties in her duty as Assistant.
  4. Cécile Angiboust, the Sister Servant.
  5. Monsieur Mercier, the sisters' confessor at the hospital of Angers.

**L.394 - (TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST)**

*at Angers*

July 17, 1655

My very dear Sister,

Your Director's return will have to suffice for news of us. I urge all of you, my dear Sisters, to place great trust in his advice and counsels and to obey him exactly and simply for the love of God because Providence has mercifully given him to you as a guide. However, my dear Sisters, do not imagine that, to be guided by his charity, you must speak with him often or that all of you must do so except for extraordinary needs when he has a little time to give you. It is customary in Companies for the Sister Servant to receive all the necessary advice and then by her guidance to convey it to her sisters. In this way a spirit of unity is nourished in communities, and trust is firmly established in them for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. If we do not act thus, my dear Sisters, the kingdom of Jesus Christ cannot be established among us. On the other hand, if we act in this way, His peace and love will take full possession of us. If you find it difficult to accept this manner of acting, mistrust yourselves and believe that the unredeemed self is not yet dead in you. O my dear Sisters, you know better than I how great is our need to overcome ourselves. I beg Our Lord to inspire you often with this thought.

I praise God for the good dispositions which fill your dear soul and the souls of all our sisters. I expect you to profit greatly from these dispositions to advance in holiness provided you are faithful in giving Our Lord what He asks of you. I am confident that you will not fail to do so since I know that all your resolutions come from Him who reveals to you what His love desires of you.

**L.428 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

Wednesday (1655)

My Most Honored Father,

I was not aware that we have any sick sisters at Saint-Germain except the sister who has been ill for a very long time and who, I believe, has not yet fully recovered. I think that a change of air will do her a great deal of good and that the air here would be best for her.

Permit me to tell you, my Most Honored Father, that my heart is frequently and deeply concerned by the thought that the Company is very near the point of decline, and that I anticipate many problems if your Charity allows this trip because the same permission has been refused to other sisters for a number of reasons.

Sister Julienne<sup>1</sup> very humbly asks you to give her an answer about the proposal she made your Charity concerning a ring which a very rich woman, on her own and without her husband's knowledge, gave to the church. She urgently needs an answer.

Monsieur l'Obligéois went this morning to reserve for himself the vacant place at the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.<sup>2</sup> I did not find Sister Anne Hardemont<sup>3</sup> in a frame of mind that was unfavorable to accepting the proposal for the Petites Maisons; however, I think that it is essential for your Charity to speak to us so that we may understand the good that is to be accomplished there and the way we should act if sent.

We have reason to fear that the Pastor of Saint-Roch<sup>4</sup> is going to dismiss the sisters once again. May the most holy will of God be done! By His Providence, may I always be able to call myself, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I very humbly ask pardon of your Charity for the liberty I have taken of speaking to you so freely. I noticed it as I reread my letter.

#### L.444 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday [August 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Sister Anne<sup>5</sup> informed me that it was too late to go to Bourbon and that she was told that the doctors had closed the baths. They perhaps intend to have them reopened next month because it would seem that summer will not come to an end without some heat. There are many other indications that there is still plenty of time because, as far as I know, there are three coaches ready to go there.

I wonder, my Most Honored Father, if it would not be advisable for your Charity to write to her to assure her that it would be a good thing

1. Julienne Loret, see Letter 396, is at Fontenay-aux-Roses.
2. The Hospice of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.
3. Anne Hardemont is chosen for the hospice for the insane, the Petites Maisons.
4. The Pastor of the parish of Saint-Roch had already dismissed the Daughters of Charity in 1650 (Coste IV, 5).
5. Anne Hardemont was suffering from the effects of a wound she had received in Châlons.

for her to go, so as to put her on the defensive when she blames us because she did not get there; unless I am very much mistaken, she is up to something.

This is urgent because a place has not been reserved. Sister Marguerite<sup>1</sup> awaits your orders and I, your blessing. I am for the love of God, my Most Honored Father, your very poor daughter and servant.

**L.445 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

Saturday [August 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to entreat your Charity not to consider me in the election of Officers.<sup>2</sup> The term First Assistant is adequate to show that I am what I have always been and will not prevent me from being replaced when God shows you that it is necessary. My reasons are as follows. It seems to me that I must be entirely dependent upon the Providence of God; and that, if I were named by the Company, there could be consequences for those coming after me. Moreover, I feel a certain repugnance at the idea of being elected.

It is with the simplicity that your Charity has recommended to me that I am taking the liberty of making this very humble request of you and, at the same time, of expressing the aversion that most of the sisters will have for the word Confraternity when used alone. Since it is to be hoped that the Company will never change its original structure so that the poor will always be served in this way, the example of those who began with the Confraternity would not suffice because it took the form of a consecrated life. Forgive me, my Most Honored Father, your humble daughter and obedient servant.

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1. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302, was getting ready to leave for Poland.

2. The Assembly to elect officers would take place on August 8, 1655 (Coste XIII, 693).

**L.443 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE<sup>1</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity, Hôtel-Dieu of Angers*

(c. August 1655)

My very dear Sister,

Monsieur Vincent considers it appropriate to allow you to return this time because he believes it is necessary. I am informing Sister Cécile of this; therefore, I urge you not to delay your trip once she has told you of his decision. I will speak further about this with you when you return here. I beg Our Lord to guide you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble . . .

P.S. For Sister Élisabeth.<sup>2</sup>

**L.447 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTERS MARGUERITE, MADELEINE  
AND FRANÇOISE**

*Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor at Warsaw<sup>3</sup>*

August 19, 1655

My very dear Sisters,

At last the time chosen by Divine Providence for the departure of our dear sisters<sup>4</sup> has arrived. It is with sadness that we let them go because we will be separated from them; but it is also with joy because we are certain that they are going to carry out the will of God and are going to be united with you so as to fulfill His plans for the kingdom of Poland. O my dear Sisters, these designs are of great importance. I beg the goodness of God to make you understand this. I am sure that this knowledge will fill you with great humility and confusion at seeing yourselves chosen for such a work and will strengthen your will never to allow yourselves to be unworthy of it.

What shall you and I do, my dear Sisters, to bring this about? Firstly,

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
2. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237, left Angers on August 20, 1655.
3. Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon, and Françoise Douelle arrived in Poland in 1652.
4. Marguerite Chétif, Madeleine Raportebled, and Jeanne Lemeret left for Poland with three Priests of the Mission, Jean Lasnier, Aubin Gontier, and Thomas Berthe. Their trip was interrupted at Rouen because of the political events connected with the war in Poland.

we must completely subdue our passions and inclinations by mortification of our senses; secondly, let our hearts ardently desire this so that, by the grace of God, they may be filled with love and He may thereby accept the sacrifice of yourselves which you often make to His majesty and the service you render to the poor in keeping with the orders you receive from the good Mademoiselle de Villers<sup>1</sup> or someone else. If you have made certain that what you were told came from Her Majesty, Sister Marguerite<sup>2</sup> will inform you of the orders our Most Honored Father gave her on this matter.

My dear Sisters, you have always assured me that although you are three persons, you are but one in heart; in the name of the most Holy Trinity that you have so honored and must continue to honor, I beg you to open wide this heart to allow our three sisters to enter into this cordial union so that the last three arrivals will be indistinguishable from those who arrived first. I assure you that they are coming with these dispositions and with the sole desire of pleasing God. They are all without any attachment to their own satisfaction, just as you are, my dear Sisters. This does not mean that nature does not at times provide even the most perfect with occasions for struggle, but you realize that this is to test the fidelity of souls desirous of belonging completely to God. Do not be surprised then, my dear Sisters, when such a thing happens; rather this is a time when our souls must be moved, despite the weakness of our nature, to practice heroic virtue by spontaneous acts of humility and gentleness of heart and to prove that we desire to be truly Christian. Thus we will honor Jesus Christ by practicing the virtues which He, Himself, in His holy humanity, taught us.

May I ask something of you, my dear Sisters, which seems very necessary to me? It is that you never speak Polish among yourselves without letting our sisters know what you are saying. This will help them to learn the language more quickly and will prevent other problems which could arise if you acted otherwise.

Are you aware, my dear Sisters, of the spirit which animates our dear sisters as they come to join you? With regard to God, they desire to accomplish His holy will by serving the poor in a spirit of submission and charity; with regard to the Queen, they wish to honor the truly supernatural graces which God grants Her Majesty and to obey her in all matters, being certain that she will never order them to do anything that would separate them from God or be contrary to their obligations; with regard to you, my dear Sisters, they esteem you because of the choice it pleased God to make of you as the foundation stones of this establishment, and they consider all the merit due to you whom Divine

1. Mademoiselle de Villers, see Letter 416.

2. Marguerite Chétif who arrived with the recommendations of Monsieur Vincent and of Louise de Marillac.

Providence has sheltered with Its wings to lead you, with no other guide and no clear direction, to a place you did not know. Nevertheless, they are not jealous of you because of this. On the contrary, they find consolation in walking in your footsteps and hope to discover in you examples in carrying out what God asks of you and of them. I hope, my dear Sister Marguerite,<sup>1</sup> that you will not refuse them the little advices they will need, just as you have not denied them to our other sisters because you are well aware that none of them will have the slightest idea of how the poor are served where you are.

I cannot rejoice enough, it seems, my dear Sisters, at the thought of the union in words and actions that I am confident will exist among you in the house and which will appear and edify the whole family as well as those outside of it. Thus there will be no secrets among the six of you and everything that happens in the house, among the six of you, will be a secret kept from those outside your little community. O my dear Sisters, what good can be hoped for if you act in this way!

I beg Our Lord, in His goodness, to grant you all the blessings you need to carry out what He asks of you, and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. I am sure that it is unnecessary to ask you to pray that God will preserve our Most Honored Father. I am sending you three medals like the ones I gave to our sisters. Monsieur Berthe<sup>2</sup> will explain the indulgences attached to them.

### L.446 - TO MONSIEUR OZENNE<sup>3</sup>

*Superior of the Priests of the Mission at Warsaw*

August 19 (1655)

Monsieur,

Although I am certain that Monsieur Berthe<sup>4</sup> will give you complete news of us, nevertheless I feel obliged to send this brief note along with our sisters<sup>5</sup> because I wish to express my sincere gratitude and my indebtedness to you for the care and concern you show in sending us news of our dear sisters. Nothing could give me greater consolation than to hear of the good they are doing. Your Charity always tells us about

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1. Marguerite Moreau who was already in Poland.
  2. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245, who was also going to Poland.
  3. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.
  4. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245.
  5. The three sisters who were leaving for Poland, see Letter 447.

this although you have, perhaps, at times withheld matters that could be a source of humiliation for me. If such be the case, please do not do so any longer, Monsieur, because, although I am deeply disturbed when our sisters fail in their duties, I, nevertheless, prefer to know the good and the bad.

You have asked for such gifted sisters that you are going to think that those who are coming are perfection itself. In the name of God, Monsieur, do not allow yourself to believe such a thing, rather simply accept my assurance that they are quite good subjects and that there is in them nothing that is contrary to the virtues required to become good Daughters of Charity.

It is a great pity that the Sister Servant's<sup>1</sup> exterior manner is not more attractive. Were that so, I think that she would lack very little else. My only fear is that she is not accustomed to the atmosphere of the Court and has very little experience with worldly behavior. She is very straightforward, but she lacks neither intelligence nor sound judgment. She possesses all the prudence required by her position and knows how to put it into practice so that she appears to be acting only with the utmost simplicity. You can see, Monsieur, that she is therefore open to direction. This prompts me to beg you to give her all the advice you consider necessary before she has the honor of meeting with the Queen.

I am so rushed that I must conclude this note by begging you, Monsieur, to continue your holy prayers for the conversion of my life. Believe me in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

#### L.448 - TO A SISTER LEAVING FOR POLAND<sup>2</sup>

August 20 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

With all my heart I wish you the joy and interior consolation of a soul that is lovingly submissive to the most holy will of God, as I believe you are in the depth of your being. I admire the guidance of Divine Providence in your life, my dear Sister, and because of it, I believe that God, in His divine love, desires you to love Him uniquely, entirely and unselfishly and to have no other concern or even satisfaction except those which pertain to Him and to your neighbor.

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1. Marguerite Chétif, see Letter 302.
  2. Letter probably destined for Marguerite Chétif.

Oh, what an excellent way of life, hard on nature but sweet and easy for souls enlightened by eternal truths and by the awareness of the joy to be found in pleasing God and in allowing Him full mastery over their wills! This, it seems to me, my dear Sister, is the road that God wills you to travel to reach Him, however difficult it may appear. Enter upon it, then, wholeheartedly as you would a vessel<sup>1</sup> that will carry you where you must go. I am certain that Our Lord will always be with you as He was with His Apostles, during His lifetime, granting them graces and preserving them. This is what I beg of Him, unworthy though I am.

Farewell, my dear Sisters. I beg God in His goodness to continue to bestow His holy blessings upon you.

**L.449 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE<sup>2</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

Last Day of August (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am answering Sister Barbe about the chemisettes you requested; as soon as we receive your measurements we will have them made as quickly as possible.

I praise God with all my heart for the good desires which, in His goodness, He continues to stir up in you. When your heart urges you to do more than you are accustomed to doing, teach it humility by saying to it, "Let us accomplish well what we are permitted to do; let us be faithful to our Rules both interiorly and exteriorly and let us rest assured that Our Lord will be pleased with us."

We sometimes feel that we would like to perform great penances and extraordinary devotions, and we fail to realize that our enemy takes great pleasure in seeing us waste our time on vain desires while neglecting the occasions to practice ordinary virtues which are always occurring. Thus we lose the graces attached to these virtues by yearning for greater ones which God has no intention of granting us.

I am the one, my dear Sister, to whom this lesson must be taught, and I beg you to ask Our Lord to enable me to learn it well. Believe me in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. Louise de Marillac uses the image of a ship on the water as a symbol of a soul abandoned to Divine Providence.
2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

**L.450 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

(September 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I do not know if Madame Le Comte has answered your letter; I forwarded it to her shortly after receiving it. I think I have already told you this as well as the fact that Sister Marie Papillon<sup>1</sup> arrived safe and sound. She received the simple habit with great joy on the Feast of the Assumption. I told her about her sister's good will but she said that she was still quite young. Perhaps it would be better to let her test her vocation a little longer.

Were you able to find material like ours to make an apron for Sister Laurence?<sup>2</sup> Be particular, I beg you, my dear Sister, because variations are very dangerous. Send us her measurements for the chemisettes, and we will make them because ordinarily there are so many different ways of making them from one sister to another that they would seem to come from two different countries. Let me know how you want us to send them.

The hope you gave me of our being able to get letters to our sisters<sup>3</sup> at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont made me very happy because I believe that all those I have been writing to them have been lost. I am delighted that you can take a little trip there. I had already spoken to our Most Honored Father about this but I will mention it again, God willing.

I recommend the kingdom of Poland and the well-being of the King and Queen to your prayers. News of the war is very bad. I beg Our Lord to give their Majesties the help they need. You can imagine the state of our sisters and of all the Catholics there because all their persecutors are heretics of various sects. Please God the evil is not so great as it is reported to be.

The result of all this is that our three sisters<sup>4</sup> who were in Rouen to embark on their journey to Poland are on their way back here. This is a great proof of the protection of Divine Providence over the Company. We are very grateful to God for this and more than ever we must strive to be faithful to Him. I am sure that you are trying to be, my dear Sister. I beg you to continue and to pray for our entire Company which sends greetings as I do. I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau.

4. See Letter 447.

**L.496 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT**

September 25 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

We are rushed to send a sister to Chantilly. Monsieur de la Hode<sup>1</sup> advised us not to send back the sister who just left there. This appears necessary as much for her sake as for the sake of the one who is still there. She needs very good example. If your Charity considers it appropriate, we will send another sister.

We have a sister who is very reserved<sup>2</sup> and whom it would be wise to remove from Paris because her parents give her no peace. I have no fear that she will lose her vocation; she has been in the Company for a long time. However, this move would help her to grow in holiness. If you agree, we will send her. I think that she will be quite suitable.

Your last conference was August 8. Could we hope to have one tomorrow, my Most Honored Father, without unduly inconveniencing you? I would ask your Charity to please let us know. If it is to be on the explanation of the Rules dealing with the order of the day, please tell us if we should prepare for the whole day or for just part of it.<sup>3</sup>

Please send your blessings and your answer, my Most Honored Father, to your very humble daughter and most grateful servant.

I would ask your Charity to please remember Fontenay.<sup>4</sup>

**L.453 - TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL<sup>5</sup>**

September 26, 1655

Monsieur,

We know so little about the state of your health that I am both troubled and hesitant as to what we should ask of God: perfect health or slow recovery. Good health would prolong your absence from here, but our sisters at Sedan, Brienne, Montmirail and Nanteuil would profit from it. However, all the sisters of Paris would feel the loss keenly. So, Monsieur,

1. Monsieur de la Hode of Chantilly.

2. Jeanne Bonvilliers, see Letter 358.

3. The conference will take place September 29 on the theme chosen (Coste X, 105).

4. Julienne Loret who was Sister Servant there had just been named Assistant of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

5. Monsieur Portail, see Letter 107c.

provided you return to us completely cured, whichever way you look at it, our interests seem to be the same although the needs of our sisters in distant places are twice as great. All this causes us to ask God, for both you and us, for whatever will conform more closely to His holy and perfect will. We beg you also, for the love of Him, to take care of yourself in carrying out your responsibilities so that you may accomplish this holy and adorable will for a long time here on earth.

If Providence wills all our sisters to have the blessing of a visit with you during this trip, I beg you, Monsieur, to recall Sister Jeanne-Christine's<sup>1</sup> letter which I showed you before you left. Sister sounded somewhat dissatisfied in it. I suspect that she is troubled because she is not experiencing, where she now is, the acclaim that has always been hers everywhere else. She has also replaced a sister<sup>2</sup> who is sorely missed. We have also gone to some expense to provide the medicine and other things that she requested. She ought to reimburse us, as is just. However, she has never paid any attention to such things. I believe this is because she practices the virtue of detachment with regard to everything except her own convenience. You are aware of the high regard we have always had for her.

As for Brienne, since both these sisters can be called brand new<sup>3</sup> and unaware of what responsibility for the goods of the Company means, I am afraid that out of respect and because of their simplicity and lack of experience, they have failed to obtain from Madame de Brienne what she had promised for them. Moreover, they did not make her understand that we must supply their habits from what remains from their food allowance. This Lady, I believe, has, for her part, not failed to require of them an accounting of their little expenses. We also have the two sisters<sup>4</sup> who came here from Brienne without bringing any money for their clothing or for the return trip, if they do not remain with us. I have no concern for the first one but I am a bit hesitant about the second one.

As for Montmirail, our sisters are not expecting you. You are already aware of their needs. However, I do not know if Sister Louise<sup>5</sup> treats Sister Catherine with all the gentleness she needs; or if Sister Catherine<sup>6</sup> has moderated any of her fondness for the company of externs or for singing with worldly people. This is very dangerous.

I believe, Monsieur, that you will have to speak to Sister Pétronille<sup>7</sup> about the respect and esteem she must have for Sister Jeanne, and to

1. Jeanne-Christine Prévost, see Letter 344, is in Sedan.
2. Marie Joly, see Letter 36b, remained in Sedan for 13 years.
3. Probably Catherine Baucher and Marie Donion.
4. The postulants who came from Brienne.
5. Louise-Christine Rideau, see Letter 149.
6. Catherine de Gesse, see Letter 120.
7. Pétronille Gillot, see Letter 626, is in Nanteuil.

Sister Jeanne about moderating her devotions and communicating with Sister Pétronille concerning the work. As for Sister Pétronille, it would be a good thing to advise her that she should not be anymore familiar with an ecclesiastic than with anyone else. This fault has been very harmful to many others.

I beg Our Lord to grant us all the dispositions we need to profit from all the trouble your Charity goes to for the general good of the Company and for each of its members. God alone can be your recompense. I am in His holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. All our sisters greet you with respect and submission. I join with them in asking you to remember us in your holy Masses; we also hope to share in your blessings and prayers. Our debt of gratitude to you should be sufficient to assure you of our prayers, weak and unworthy though they be, which we shall offer to God for you.

**L.432B - (TO SISTER BARBE ANGIBOUST)**

(c. September 1655)

I recommend to your prayers the poor country of Poland and especially the well-being of the King and Queen who do so much good for the poor. Pray hard for that, but above all, pray for the preservation of the faith in this poor kingdom which is in peril of losing it. This would be the ultimate affliction. Also remember our poor sisters who are there. The last sisters who had left here to begin their journey to Poland have returned from Rouen.<sup>1</sup> We must admire in this the great care Divine Providence takes of our little Company. Let us never allow ourselves to be ungrateful for this. On the contrary, may it help us to be faithful to Our Lord and to the practice of our Rules.

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1. See Letter 447.

L.454 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE<sup>1</sup>

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

October 2 (1655)

My very dear Sister,

I am distressed because it has been so long since I have received any news of you; it makes me fear that you are ill. I beg you to let me know how you and Sister Laurence<sup>2</sup> are as soon as possible. I also urge you to tell me if you have received the letters I sent you to be forwarded to the sisters<sup>3</sup> at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. I did this because you assured me that you had a way of getting them to them. We receive letters from them only very rarely. Sister Marie<sup>4</sup> appears to be very happy. I hope that, when she has had a bit of training, she will do well. She is easily hurt; nevertheless, she seems to be very calm and accommodating.

I am sure that you are aware of the deplorable state of poor Poland and how war is raging there. The admirable Providence of God delayed the departure of our three sisters<sup>5</sup> who were supposed to go there. They had just reached Rouen when they were told to return here because of the news concerning the war. See, my dear Sisters, what good reasons we have to love and to place our trust in Divine Providence. May this Providence be forever blessed and may the entire Company be completely submissive to It! Is this not reasonable?

My dear Sister, please tell me about yourself and everything connected with your work. Believe me more than ever in the love of Our Lord . . .

Our sisters who had left to go to Poland have returned from Rouen because of the news about the war. Pray for this poor country and for me, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. All our sisters send their greetings.

I do not know if I told you that Sister Anne Hardemont has begun the establishment for the service of the sick poor and the insane at the Petites Maisons. Our Most Honored Father is having trouble with his legs and Monsieur Portail<sup>6</sup> is away on a short journey. I am sure that you will remember to pray that God will take care of them.

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1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Jousteau, see Letter 421.

4. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

5. See Letter 447.

6. Monsieur Portail visited the houses of Sedan, Brienne and Montmirail.

L.455 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

October 3 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

For the past six years Sister Françoise<sup>1</sup>, our gardener, has always renewed her vows on the Feast of Saint Francis which is tomorrow. She begs your Charity to allow her to do so once again on tomorrow's feast. We therefore ask you to be so kind as to let us know at what time you will say Mass. Although it probably will not be in the church, she will be united to it by going to Mass at the same time.

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to inquire about your health and to ask for your blessing for our sisters, especially for Sister Françoise who, to ensure her salvation, asks to give herself to God and for myself. I beg you, for His holy love, to give me the assistance which, your Charity knows, in the sight of God, I need. I remain, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.456 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Eve of the Feast of Saint Denis [October 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

I most humbly beg your Charity to allow me to recommend my son to your prayers which he needs to obtain from Our Lord, by the merits of the injuries and insults He suffered during His human life, the cure of his deafness, if this is not contrary to the perfect will of God. I desire this only if it is accompanied by the grace which would enable him to make the firm resolution not to allow God to be offended in his little family.

Good Brother Fiacre promised him that he would begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin for him tomorrow on the Feast of Saint Denis. It occurred to me, my Most Honored Father, to ask your permission to receive Holy Communion daily and to perform some other good action during this time, provided my hardness of heart does not prevent me from doing so. Please let me know your will with regard to this.

Our Sister Officers<sup>2</sup> seem to be carrying out their duties well, thank

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1. Françoise Fauchon, see Letter 595.

2. During the Assembly of August 8, 1655, the following were named: Julienne Loret,

God. We began our little Council<sup>1</sup> Tuesday on the subject of the return of our sisters from Nantes<sup>2</sup> and how they should be received. We proposed names of sisters we thought should be sent to Châteaudun. However, uncertainty about the need to recall the Sister Procuratrix<sup>3</sup> because of the short time that she has been in the Company stopped us because we did not want to give cause for complaints.

We stand in great need of your directives and your holy guidance in everything, for the perfection of this work which appears to be beginning to take form. I hope that the goodness of God will inspire you to do this and that He will grant us the dispositions necessary to obey you since it is by His will that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient. . .

#### L.457 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

October 22 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

I beg your Charity to take the trouble to read these letters because I am afraid that they contradict those that you are writing.

Sister Jeanne de Saint-Albin<sup>4</sup> is very upset about the matter she presented to you. She says that she cannot bring herself to say anything about it to Monsieur Portail or even to wait for his return before giving the order for the withdrawal of an infant from a wicked mother. Perhaps she would like to take care of this matter before setting aside the habit of the Daughters of Charity so as to create the impression that she is performing an act of charity. However, I fear the consequences; so please tell us, Monsieur, what we are to do.

I think that my little fever is caused only by my diseased spleen which

Assistant; Mathurine Guérin, Treasurer; Jeanne Gressier, Procuratrix.

1. See Council Minutes, S. 4.
2. The administrators sent several letters concerning the difficulties within the community at Nantes. Only one, written by Monsieur de Branday on May 28, 1655, has been preserved. He defends Sister Henriette Gesseume whom the administrators want to keep because of her competence in pharmacy. Monsieur de Branday attacks, somewhat vehemently, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, the Sister Servant, and asks that she be recalled.
3. Jeanne Gressier, a native of Senlis, entered the Company around 1654. Named Procuratrix very young, she remained at the Motherhouse. She assisted Louise de Marillac at the hour of her death and gave a written account of the details of her last moments. Monsieur Vincent confided the government of the Company to her while awaiting the appointment of the new Superioress in August 1660.
4. Jeanne de Saint-Albin, see Letter 201.

is hardening and covering part of my stomach. If this is the key that will soon release me from this world, then I truly need to learn how to prepare for it. It is for this reason that I turn to your Charity so that I will not be shipwrecked as I arrive at port, because of my own navigation, but will be guided solely by your directives and the orders of Divine Providence. You know that I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

#### L.459 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Sunday evening [October 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

The two sisters are ready to make their vows for the first time tomorrow, the Feast of All Saints. They are the same two who spoke to you at one of the last two conferences and your Charity informed me of their desire. Would you be so good as to grant them this grace, for the love of God, and offer them to Him during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? One has been in the Company for seven years, the other for six. Both have given good example for several years now. Two other sisters, who made their first vows on this feast, also ask your Charity for the grace of renewal. They do not appear to have done anything contrary to them and they desire to persevere in their vocation. One is from Dammartin, the other from near Maule. Of the first two, one is from Richelieu, the other has been in Paris for a long time, if she is not from here. Their names are: Perrine, Marie, Geneviève and Avoie.<sup>1</sup> I beg your Charity to bless them and the entire Company.

I hope that Monsieur Bécu<sup>2</sup> did not forget to ask you to give us a little conference on one of these feast days, if this will not impose too much of a hardship upon you. I would not be so insistent if it were not for the length of the subject and its importance.<sup>3</sup> This leads me to hope to obtain the forgiveness I ask for so acting. I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

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1. Avoie Vignerou, see Letter 578.

2. Monsieur Jean Bécu, see Letter 228, who was then at Saint-Lazare.

3. Monsieur Vincent began the explanation of the Common Rules.

**L.460 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER CÉCILE<sup>1</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Angers*

November 2, 1655

My very dear Sister,

Perhaps you have received word of the death of Monsieur Le Gros.<sup>2</sup> I believe that his illness may have deprived you of the honor of seeing him and of receiving the consolation and assistance you desired of him. Divine Providence planned it this way, my dear Sister, and God, in His goodness, will supply for what you have lost by sending you Monsieur Berthe<sup>3</sup> whom you are to trust as you did all the others because he is sent to you by our Most Honored Father. Assure the sisters that they can speak to him very openly; we have had the opportunity to know him well. I can assure you of his great charity and tell you that, in his goodness, he will work for the growth in holiness of our sisters. He can be of assistance to them.

For the love of God, stop worrying about what you told me about Sister Élisabeth.<sup>4</sup> It is true that she owed ten francs to just one girl, but a tradeswoman called Marguerite was responsible for returning the money to her. The money for the scalpels was placed in the box as should be done. In the name of God, my dear Sister, when you have reason to be suspicious of someone, do not continue to let it be so obvious and do not say anything about it to the sisters. Such a trial is too heavy for their minds to bear. You can speak about it with Monsieur l'abbé de Vaux, or if he is away for a long time, with Monsieur Ratiér. However, do not reserve judgment for fear of aversion or scandal.

I will afford myself the honor of writing to the Fathers<sup>5</sup> when we have reached a point where we are able to send sisters. I would ask you to request only the number that are strictly necessary because we must send sisters to many other places. The needs of Angers, however, will always take priority.

Please send my greetings to all our dear sisters, especially to our sick sister. Tell them that I urge them all to write to me. Ask them to do so one after another so that I can answer them and thus impress their names and their personalities on my mind. I beg them to pray for me and I am

1. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.

2. Monsieur Le Gros (1614-1655) entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1644. He spent his first years in Paris. He was sent to Richelieu in 1652. In 1655, Monsieur Vincent sent him to visit the houses. He fell ill at Montauban and died on November 7, 1655.

3. Monsieur Berthe, see Letter 245.

4. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.

5. The Fathers of the Poor, the administrators of the hospital.

for the whole dear Company, in the love of Our Lord, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. My dear Sister, please extend my very humble greetings to Monsieur l'abbé and to Monsieur Ratier.

**L.502 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE<sup>1</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

(November 1655)

My very dear Sister,

I beg Our Lord to give you His holy love and to grant you the grace to work in His spirit in all the duties His goodness confides to you. You certainly have your work cut out for you. In the name of God, my very dear Sister, do not undertake anything without consulting our Most Honored Father.

I have heard nothing about Monsieur l'abbé de Nesmond.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps he did not come to see Monsieur Vincent because our Most Honored Father has been ill since the Feast of All Saints. Praise God with us, my dear Sister, for his improved health. He is now suffering only from the last stages of erysipelas which he had on his leg and which caused a very high fever for 24 hours. For some time since then he has continued to have a low-grade fever. We have every reason to ask God for his cure, more by our actions and upright intentions than by our prayers, although we must have recourse to both.

Monsieur Portail has returned from his two-month trip in good health, thank God. Sister Henriette,<sup>3</sup> Sister Marie-Marthe<sup>4</sup> and Sister Renée<sup>5</sup> have returned from Nantes; only five of our sisters are left there. We could send a sister there, if God so wills it, along with two or three for Hennebont and another hospital about five or six leagues from there. We have many reasons to humble ourselves for the graces that God has bestowed upon the Company.

Some Priests of the Mission of Poland are back and have assured us that our three sisters<sup>6</sup> are with the Queen of Poland. If this good King

1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.

2. Monsieur de Nesmond, nephew of Madame de Lamoignon; ordained a priest in 1654, he would later become the Bishop of Bayeux.

3. Henriette Gesseaume, see Letter 76.

4. Marie-Marthe Trumeau was the Sister Servant at Nantes, see Letter 456. She was replaced by Nicole Haran.

5. Renée Delacroix, see Letter 275.

6. Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon, and Françoise Douelle.

loses his entire kingdom, I think that they will return with the Religious of the Visitation; they are all together.

Sister Marie Papillon<sup>1</sup> is fine, thank God. Please send her greetings to her family and friends. Believe me in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I do not know how to respond when you ask me for advice concerning the linen; we use linen cloth only for our toquois and collars. It would be very useful for us provided it is very white and not too fine. The trouble is that people will not know where it comes from and judgments are quickly made, as you know. I leave the matter to your prudence. Whatever you do will be fine.

#### L.462 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

November 14 [1655]

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to tell you that it is absolutely essential that your leg not be out of an elevated position for a quarter of an hour nor be exposed to the heat of the fire. If it gets cold, you must warm it with a warm cloth placed over the pant leg. If you think it appropriate, my Most Honored Father, try a little of this soothing ointment. Apply it lightly and cover it with a folded cloth soaked in warm water. I hope it will do you some good. When the cloth gets cold, it should be soaked again in water that is neither hot nor very cold. The blood-lettings have weakened your body, as has the disease; and when you place your foot on the ground, the heat and fluids rush there as the weakest spot in your body.

I wish you would not drink so many glasses of water so as to let your intestinal tract calm down and be refreshed, thus preventing the heat from rushing so violently to your poor, sick leg. With the consent of your doctor, perhaps mineral crystals, the weight of half an écu, dissolved in the first glass of water, would help to pass whatever remains more easily.

Am I not very forward to speak to you like this? But I know that I am talking to you who know that I am, as I very humbly ask for your blessing, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

P.S. Every day I drink a cup of tea; it does me a lot of good by improving my appetite and making me stronger.

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1. Marie Papillon, a native of Bernay, see Letter 440.

**L.461 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE<sup>1</sup>**

*Daughter of Charity at Bernay*

(November 1655)

My very dear Sister,

Sister Barbe<sup>2</sup> will inform you about Monsieur Vincent's health. I am sure that you do not fail to pray to Our Lord to preserve him. Please continue to do so.

I am sending you a set of prayer books like those we use here. In everything we must arrange things so that they are, as far as possible, in keeping with our vocation which urges us so strongly to imitate the holy poverty of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. I praise God that in His goodness He makes use of you in this way. Oh, how blessed you are! You must show your gratitude for this by a more perfect love for Our Lord who moves us to a more fervent practice of these virtues.

A practice which our Most Honored Father taught us at one of his recent conferences<sup>3</sup> will prove useful to you. It is, my dear Sister, to turn to God at the beginning of each action; to make an act of humility, recognizing that we are unworthy to perform it; then to make an act of love, undertaking it for love of Him and offering it to Him in union with similar actions which His Son performed while He was on earth. His Charity assures us that, if we go to the trouble to carry out this exercise for a week, it will become habitual and we will perform it effortlessly. I have no doubt that you will grow to love this practice which we must look upon as inspired by God for us.

I am very pleased by the news you sent me of your little family. I am very happy that you act in this way. We will send you the chemisettes. Please let us know if your two are worn out.

You did the right thing in writing to your family and in showing your letters to Sister Barbe. This is how we should act. I beg Our Lord to continue to bestow His grace upon you and I am in His most holy love, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

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1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.  
2. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.  
3. Conference of October 18, 1655 (Coste X, 121).

L.463B - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER BARBE<sup>1</sup>  
*Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay*

December 4, 1655

My very dear Sister,

I just received your letter dated December but I am afraid you must have made a mistake because today is only the fourth. I am astonished to hear you say that it has been so long since you have received letters from me and that you have no news from Madame Le Comte to whom I sent your letter two days after receiving it. I wrote to both you and Sister Laurence<sup>2</sup> less than two weeks ago. I responded fully to your letter in which you told me your thoughts about the hospital and about taking on more work as well as about your leftover cloth and linen. Let me know if you ever received this letter and if you want me to write to you again about these matters.

I received an answer from the sisters<sup>3</sup> at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, near Carentan, and wrote them another lengthy letter. I urge you to write to them so that you may hear all about them. From their letter, it appears that their work is very difficult. Trials such as these enable us to bear witness to the fidelity we owe to God. It seems to me that they are giving ample proof of this for which I praise God with all my heart. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the divine goodness for the inner strength He gives to our sisters in faraway places. Oh, how good it is to possess God alone and to love Him with all our heart!

I believe I told you that we had news of our sisters in Poland and that they are safe with the Queen as are the Religious of Sainte-Marie and Monsieur Ozenne.<sup>4</sup> We have every reason to praise God for this. But this poor kingdom is in a deplorable state. We must continue to pray for its relief and especially for the Catholic religion which is in great danger of being eradicated there. I beg Our Lord to assist this land and I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and servant.

P.S. I sent the prayer books to Sister Laurence by Mulot. Sister Marie<sup>5</sup> gave them to him herself. She said that she did not dare to speak to him because she did not recognize him at first. She is fine and sends greetings to you and to all her family and friends. She is a very good girl and I

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1. Barbe Angiboust, see Letter 43.
  2. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.
  3. Claude Chantereau and Élisabeth Joustean, see Letter 421.
  4. Monsieur Ozenne, see Letter 584.
  5. Marie Papillon, see Letter 440.

hope that, once she has gotten over a certain softheartedness—not for her family—she will be capable of rendering excellent service in the Company.

We sent your letter to Madame Le Comte. Enclosed is one I would ask you to forward by the route you mentioned.

L.463 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[December 1655]

My Most Honored Father,

The state of suffering and submission to which it pleases Our Lord to subject you increases the boldness I always show in expressing my puny thoughts to you. The latest one that occurred to me to bring you some relief is to suggest that you bring both legs to a sweat (not the whole body) by using Monsieur l'Obligéois' little steam bath. But do not do this without consulting two doctors. Tea may be taken between the early-morning bouillon and dinner. Experience has shown me that it must not be taken as a substitute for other food, but that it is an excellent way to prepare the stomach to take food.

Madame the Countess de Brienne<sup>1</sup> told me that she had spoken to Monsieur de Francière.<sup>2</sup> Once again he spoke very highly of the Company and assured her that he would protect it. He told her that he had recognized the tactics of a certain person who was trying to work his way into the administration of the hospital and that he was very glad that we had not granted what the good ecclesiastic had requested. He also added several other comments which caused him to tell Sister Julienne<sup>3</sup> that everything was going well and that, when she had seen the Queen, she should take the trouble of going to see you. I ask your Charity to let me know if there is anything else I should do in this matter other than to admire the workings of Providence; to try to make known Its goodness and power; and to believe that it is a good thing to suffer and to await patiently the hour of God in very difficult circumstances, which is so contrary to my overly impulsive nature.

Allow me, my Most Honored Father, to beg you to commend my state of mind to our good God. I have been troubled for some time now by matters which your Charity knows touch me very deeply. I believe that you have no doubt that all this is prompted by the desire to see you

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1. Madame the Countess de Brienne, see Letter 86.

2. Monsieur de Francière at Saint-Denis, see Letter 262.

3. Julienne Loret, see Letter 220.

restored to perfect health which I ask of Our Lord for the glory of His holy love which has made me your daughter.

P.S. Allow me to ask your Charity for news of our sisters in Poland.

**L.452 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX**

(c. December 1655)

Monsieur,

I have put off, for a very long time, affording myself the honor of writing to you. I wanted to be able to do so personally as is my duty. However, since I am still prevented from doing so by the prolongation of my little indisposition, I am taking the liberty, Monsieur, of using another hand<sup>1</sup> to express my regret that, for so long, we have been unable to supply the sisters we are obliged to send to relieve our sisters and to restore the necessary order, in keeping with the needs that your Charity foresaw long ago. Permit me, Monsieur, to beg you very humbly to allow me to ask your advice on the expediency of transferring Sister Cécile<sup>2</sup> and of having her return here to steep herself in the maxims of the Company at its source. If this is appropriate, I think that we will have some difficulty in making the idea acceptable unless your Charity grants us the powerful assistance we have always received.

About a month ago, I had the honor of writing to Monsieur Ratier. I had not fulfilled this obligation to him since just before Sister Élisabeth<sup>3</sup> returned here. I am very anxious to know if he received my letter. We have good reason to praise God and to consider the return of this good sister a happy event. She is doing very well, thank God, and strongly desires to persevere. We are greatly indebted to you for this, Monsieur, because we can attribute all her good fortune to the charity you showed her as you do all the other sisters. Our Lord Himself will be your eternal recompense. I am in His most holy love, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

1656

*Establishment of the Daughters of Charity at Arras and at La Fère.  
Serious illness of Louise de Marillac.*

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1. Letter written by Mathurine Guérin.
  2. Cécile Angiboust, see Letter 108.
  3. Élisabeth Brocard, see Letter 237.