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accept what I am telling you graciously and with forbearance, I would be very careful not to speak to you in this way.

I urge you to send me news of yourself as soon as possible. Believe that I am in the love of Our Lord, your very humble and very loving servant.

1660

February 14: *death of Monsieur Portail.*

March 15: *death of Louise de Marillac.*

L.648 - TO SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor (at Châteaudun)

January 3, 1660

My very dear Sister,

It seems to me that too much time has passed since we have shared news with one another. I think that the same reason has prevented both of us from doing so. It is also true that I have been busier since Easter. I have also missed having Sister Marthurine² help me with my correspondence but she was ill at the time. Then it was decided to send her to La Fère to replace Sister Marie-Marthe³ who went to join our two other sisters in Cahors. So you can see quite clearly, my dear Sister, that neither my heart nor my will has been wanting nor, with the help of God, will there ever be a lack of affection or any kind of forgetfulness between us since we are so closely united in the love of our dear Jesus.

I believe that I told you that the Priests of the Mission⁴ had sent you word that your debtors have no intention of paying and that the matter should be pursued through the judicial system. However, your consent is necessary. Please let me know what to tell them.

Enclosed are your holy pictures and maxims for the new year. They are for all of you and have been blessed by our Most Honored Father. We are distressed because we no longer see him. Because of his bad leg, he can stand only with great difficulty. We must redouble our prayers for his health. Monsieur Portail is in much better health than he was last

1. Jeanne Delacroix, see Letter 297.

2. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.

3. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.

4. The Priests of the Mission of Le Mans, the native region of Jeanne Delacroix.

year. All our sisters send their greetings to the three¹ of you. I do also since I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. Send me detailed news about your work at the Hôtel-Dieu and about our sisters.

L.649 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 4, 1660

My Most Honored Father,

Permit me to greet your Charity very humbly at the beginning of this new year, and at the same time, to ask for your blessing to help me to be faithful to God for as long as it pleases His goodness to leave me on earth. I also beg you very humbly, my Most Honored Father, to take the trouble to let me know the name of the person whom you have selected as executor of the will that the woman I mentioned wishes to draw up. I am afraid that she will come and that I will be unable to comply with her wishes.

I very humbly beg your pardon, my Most Honored Father, for taking the liberty to send you this Jesus surrounded by thorns. I believe that the only thought that seeing your dear person in such generalized pain inspired in me was that nothing could relieve you but His example. I am also sending a medal that the good young woman who was here during her illness sent me, along with the chaplets, after she returned to Notre-Dame de Liesse.

For the love of God, allow me to ask for news of your health. Is the swelling in your legs increasing? Are you in less pain? Do you have any trace of fever? With the openness of a daughter toward her Most Honored Father, I cannot refrain from saying that I believe that it is absolutely essential for you to be purged thoroughly but gently to make up for the inadequacy of nature, which interferes with sweating, because it is also very dangerous to induce a sweat by artificial means.

As a sick person, you must take some nourishment in the evening, but not bread or wine. Herbs have an unpleasant taste, but they build good blood. Cornachin powder — 18 or 21 grains only — is very good occasionally for children and old people. It does not upset the system and it draws off fluids without leaving the body dehydrated. Because I am well

1. Jeanne Delacroix, Sulpice Dubois and Anne Bocheron.

acquainted with this remedy, I dare to suggest it. I know that you will not use it without consultation.

I would truly like to know how you really are. It seems to me that Our Lord has placed me in the disposition to bear everything with relative peace; and I must do so since I have the honor to be, my Most Honored Father, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.650 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MATHURINE GUÉRIN¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at La Fère

(January 1660)

My very dear Sister,

I entreat Jesus, born into this world and the sole object of our love, to be your strength and consolation at the beginning of this new year. You were correct in assuming that I was awaiting the advice of our Most Honored Father before giving a complete answer to your last dear letter. It is still in his room but I kept a copy of it for fear that it might be lost. Thus, I can speak to him about it again. There were a few points that I did not want to decide for you because they appeared to me to be important. I am not going to say anything about these matters in this letter because I am sure that you are as well-informed about them as I am either through Monsieur Vincent or through Monsieur Portail. However, I am afraid that Sister Julienne's² method of catechizing was not clearly understood.

We are as distressed this year as we were last at not seeing our dear Father because of his bad leg. May it please God to grant him some relief! As for Monsieur Portail, one would need the influence of a great lord to get to see him! There is a small hermitage at the end of the enclosure and he never leaves it except to come here on rare occasions to hear confessions.

I shall not fail, my dear Sister, to forward your letters and little gifts. I shall perhaps add a few of my own. I am somewhat concerned because you say that you are not feeling well. Please let me know how you really are and also tell me what you do in the service of the hospital and of the sick poor of the city.

You could not have given another interpretation to what was said to you about what the Queen owes. It is also true that since these people

1. Mathurine Guérin, see Letter 280.

2. Julienne Allot, see Letter 561 and A.100.

are not well-acquainted with the exactitude with which our dear Sister Marthe¹ acted, they cannot see this matter clearly. We must leave everything to the guidance of Divine Providence.

On the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, we had the honor of a visit from the Duchess de Ventadour.² On that occasion, the eve of the Feast of the Three Kings, when she did not find you here, she told me how she regretted that you had not been given to her to be sent to Sainte-Marie³ in place of the two who went there and who have since returned at her request.

I just now received your dear letter and I am going to repeat what I have already told you concerning the teaching of catechism. If the time has come for the work that, for a long time, the Daughters of Charity have been doing quietly, to blossom into the open, may the holy name of God be blessed! According to what he has told me, I think that Monsieur Portail has probably written to you about this.

I thank you with all my heart for the presents you so generously sent us, although I am anticipating our pleasure, since we have not yet received them. We will use them in the manner you specify.

With regard to the convalescent soldiers, I think, my dear Sister, that you would be wise to put them in a corner of one of your wards or in some other place where there is an accessible exit. You know how important this is and you are aware of the prohibition in the Rules against remaining in the company of men.

We have great reason to praise God for the graces He has bestowed upon the Company. Last summer two or three heretics living in Saint-Denis were converted. God knows that is a sizable number for that district. Our Lord always forbade His Apostles to speak about what He was doing. What can we do to express our gratitude to your dear sisters but assure you of the affection of all our sisters here?

We are sending you the holy pictures and maxims that Divine Providence faithfully allowed to be selected for you. Please accept them, my dear Sister, and take care to read our dear letters in order to receive in this way the spirit of Jesus Christ, without which all our words and actions would be but clanging cymbals.

You make me very happy by sharing news of yourself⁴ with me because I receive your letters which Sister Mathurine forwards to me, except those which the Rules permit you to write to the Superior or Superioress directly and which must be sent to them without first being shown to the Sister Servant.

I have taken some medication and I am in a bit of a hurry so I am

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1. Marie-Marthe Trumeau, see Letter 102.
 2. Madame de Ventadour, see Letter 268.
 3. Sainte-Marie-du-Mont in Normandy.
 4. This paragraph was intended for Julienne Allot.

closing sooner than I would like. I assure you that I am with all my heart—and Our Lord knows how filled with affection it is—and in His most holy love, my very dear Sisters, your very humble and very loving sister and servant.

P.S. You know that I cannot reread my letters, so please excuse the mistakes.

L.651 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER MARGUERITE CHÉTIF

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Arras

January 10, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I believe that you have probably just received the letter I wrote at the end of December in which I blamed myself for letting so much time go by without allowing myself the consolation of writing to you. I gather from your dear letter that you hold my illness to blame rather than me. I must tell you that, although I have been confined to bed for only a short time, nevertheless my little ailments often make me lazy and prevent me from performing my duties. Moreover, my dear Sisters, the business of the Company increases daily. This past summer, as I told you, three or four more works were established. Blessed be God for everything! May He grant the Company the strength and generosity to maintain within itself the primitive spirit that Jesus instilled in it through His Spirit and by His holy maxims. Let us often give ourselves to God so as to obtain from His goodness the generosity needed to advance His glory by fulfilling His designs on the Company.

Please let me know, my dear Sister, if you received a book, written by our Pastor, entitled *The Charitable Lady of the Parish*, along with the quarter pound of gamboge that you requested. I am also conveying to you our Most Honored Father's acknowledgement of something you asked me to tell him. I urge you, my dear Sisters, to redouble your prayers asking God to preserve his health. He has been confined to his room for a month because of his bad leg so we never see him anymore. He has so many visitors and his business responsibilities have greatly increased so it is quite difficult to obtain a response when we write to him. So you can see the state in which it has pleased Divine Providence to place us. May His holy will be done now and forever!

Please send me news of yourself and let me know about your Confraternity of Charity. Do the Ladies run it there as they do in Paris? Are there Officers? Do they replace one another in office on a regular basis? This is essential, otherwise it will be very difficult for the Company of the Ladies of Charity and their work to continue. Also, please let me

know if they prepare the soup, if they collect alms and if they fulfill the requirements of the Ladies of Charity of that region. In the book I sent you, you will find the Rule for the Confraternity of Charity of Saint-Laurent.

I urge you, my dear Sister, to let me know when you need money. I do not intend you to be deprived of the food and clothing you would receive here at the House.

So you have not found any girls who want to give themselves to the service of Our Lord in the poor as members of the Company? You surely know that some of our sisters have come from farther away than Arras. However, this requires strong characters who desire to reach the holiness of true Christians and who want to die to themselves by mortification and a veritable act of renunciation, which they already made at the time of their holy Baptism, so that the Spirit of Jesus Christ may abide in them and grant them the strength to persevere in this way of life which is totally spiritual, although they will be employed in exterior works which appear lowly and despicable in the eyes of the world but which are glorious in the sight of God and His angels.

My dear Sisters, please greet Mademoiselle des Lions for me and assure her of our most respectful affection and readiness to be of service. We took the liberty of selecting one of our holy pictures and maxims for her. Please give it to her with our apologies that it is not as beautiful as we would wish. I also ask you, my dear Sisters, to accept the ones that Divine Providence allowed to be selected for you. Believe that my heart is filled with renewed affection for you and that I am in the love of the Infant Jesus who began to shed His precious blood in the Crib, my very dear Sisters, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. All our sisters send greetings in the love of the Infant Jesus. Our Most Honored Father and Monsieur Portail are both well, thank God. They often remember you with affectionate esteem.

L.652 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER LAURENCE DUBOIS¹

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Bernay

January 12, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I implore Our Lord to be your strength and consolation if He has separated you from our dear sister.² If His holy will has permitted her to

1. Laurence Dubois, see Letter 419.

2. Anne Levies, see Letter 536.

remain with you for now, please greet her for all of us and assure her that the entire community is praying for her so that, if God calls her, she may be prepared for the Last Judgment and ready to participate, for all eternity, in the merits of the death of Jesus who was crucified for her salvation and for that of the entire human race. Also, assure her that her sister¹ is persevering and doing well, thank God.

I will be unable to send you anything until I have found a safe route. I am distressed that my incompetence prevented you from receiving the letter in which I asked you to come here for a short visit. This would have prevented you from taking a risky route to send your package which we have not received. Your two letters arrived in the same mail. The people who brought them said that they are never held responsible for anything. Find out what you can about the person to whom you entrusted the package. Send us his name, employment and, if possible, his place of residence both in Paris and in your area.

Enclosed are your holy pictures and maxims. They were blessed by our Most Honored Father who is suffering greatly because of his legs. I recommend him to your prayers. Monsieur Portail is fairly well, thank God. Three of our sisters are ill: Sister Antoinette² from Saint-Étienne; Sister Marie from the Hôtel-Dieu; and a new sister who received the sacrament of Extreme Unction this evening. I recommend all our sisters to your prayers and I am in the love of Our Lord, my dear Sister, your very humble and very loving...

P.S. As soon as you can, please send us news of our dear sister.

L.653 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

January 13, 1660

Monsieur,

The good which Monsieur Ratier led me to expect from the new girls you sent us was a great consolation for me. It encouraged me to take the liberty of writing to you in the belief that your Charity will not be offended. If the letters I had the honor of sending you with these girls have not been found, then I must assure you that I did not fail in this duty. In my last letter, I asked Monsieur Ratier to let me know if I should once again take the liberty of writing to the Bishop of Angers in case my

1. Marie Levies, see Letter 551.

2. Antoinette Labille, see Letter 52.

previous letter is really lost. I also sent a letter to the administrators of the hospital along with the Rules and Customs of our sisters. It is a real pity that not a single sister there has facility in writing.

Allow me, Monsieur, to ask you to pray for Monsieur Vincent's health. He has been confined to his room for a month because his legs are so weak and so painful. Nevertheless, he is working as much, or even more, for the good of his neighbor. Permit me to call myself in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.654 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

January 16, 1660

My Most Honored Father,

Madame de Glou,¹ on her own initiative, or rather by the inspiration of God, asked your Charity to name someone as executor of her will. She also sent word to you that she believes that the mission that Monsieur de Blampignon² is supposed to preach at Easter in the diocese of Chartres is to be at Marchefroy,³ provided he does not forget it.

Sister Nicole Haran,⁴ who seemed very discouraged, told me that the sisters could no longer continue without help. She wanted to write to your Charity to beg you, my Most Honored Father, to assist them by asking the administrators to allow you to recall them for this reason, since she believes that they will never agree to it. What does your Charity want me to tell her if you are unable to take the trouble to write to her?

I imagine that this prolonged cold increases your suffering which honors that of Our Lord in whose love I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and most obedient and grateful daughter and servant.

1. Madame de Glou, Lady of Charity, see Letter 622.

2. Monsieur de Blampignon (1611-1669), member of the Tuesday Conferences and of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament.

3. Saint-Ouen-Marchefroy, near Dreux.

4. Nicole Haran, see Letter 495, was the Sister Servant at Nantes.

L.655 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

[January 1660]

My Most Honored Father,

From time to time, I feel strongly the pain of the state to which your charity has reduced you as well as the suffering of being deprived of the honor of speaking to you. Since I am still the same, I am afraid that my cowardice, self-love and the other threats to my salvation may profit from this situation. As I reflect upon the present condition of the Company, I also worry about no longer being able to discuss matters with you. I am afraid that reading my letters imposes a burden upon you; nevertheless it seems to me, my Most Honored Father, that I must speak to you about the Company and tell you that I think that there is reason to fear that it may fail in several ways. Firstly, I have noticed that in several parishes the Ladies are beginning to distrust them,¹ although I believe that I can assure you that I know of no sister who gives them any real reason to do so unless it may perhaps be those who, in their zeal to relieve the poor, accept alms from the Ladies but who do not submit to the requirement of rendering an account of them to the Officers. The latter are offended by this.

In addition, it appears that our sisters are no longer as esteemed or loved. They are treated more rudely and there are places where they are much more carefully watched because they are mistrusted. There are a few places where orders were given at a public assembly to give them nothing. Even the butcher who furnishes the meat for the poor was forbidden to do so. It is not as if they had a considerable amount of anything, but however little there was helped them.

All this, my Most Honored Father, leads me to realize how necessary it is for the Rules to continue to oblige the sisters to live poorly, simply and humbly because I fear that if they settle into a way of life that requires great expenditures, is ostentatious and partially enclosed, they would thereby be obliged to find ways to maintain it, and so they would become a very withdrawn and inactive group, living apart from passers-by and poorly-clothed people, leading some to say that this wearer-of-a-rough-headdress, this sister in name only, has no authority, rather she elicits contempt. I know that not only the sisters but others, who are obliged to honor the designs of God for the spiritual and corporal service of the sick poor, will have a strong inclination toward this way of life which is so dangerous for the continuation of the work of God which, my Most

1. "Them" means the Daughters of Charity.

Honored Father, your Charity has so firmly sustained against all opposition.

I am truly distressed to cause you this trouble. If your Charity sees that God wills something other than what has been done until now, then in the name of Our Lord, be the one to declare and order it. I will always remain the same, offering no argument once I have taken the liberty, as I do now, of representing the reasons that occur to me. Because of my infidelities, I dare not say that they are the thoughts given me by God. If I am not expressing myself clearly and your Charity is willing to have my views put forth by Monsieur Alméras or someone else whom you consider more appropriate, that will perhaps make me better understood.

Permit me, my Most Honored Father, to inquire about your ailments which I believe could be relieved if you would allow yourself to be treated as your Charity would command someone else to be treated.

I think that I have already spoken to you about the contents of this letter except for a few details. I very humbly ask your pardon for any repetitions there may be. I hope to obtain forgiveness from your goodness because I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble, most obedient and most grateful daughter and servant.

L.656 - TO MY VERY DEAR SISTER JEANNE DELACROIX

Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Sick Poor at Châteaudun

February 2, 1660

My very dear Sister,

I am sure that you are very busy and also that you take great care to help our sisters to strive for holiness, nevertheless, I beg you to send me news of yourselves. Above all, let me know if, while they are occupied with exterior service, the sisters' minds are directed toward vigilance over themselves so that, for the love of Our Lord, they can overcome and control their passions by refusing their senses anything that might cause them to offend God. You realize that, without this, external actions, although they are for the service of the poor, cannot be very pleasing to God, nor can they merit a recompense for us because they are not united to those of Jesus Christ who always worked in the sight of God, His Father. You are well-rooted in this practice, my dear Sister, and thus you experience the peace of a soul that is dependent upon her Beloved.

Please tell me what you know about our sisters in Varize. I am waiting for the return trip of their Pastor so that I can write to them. Please inform Sister Toussainte that I expect her to write to me more often than she does.

I have heard nothing about the lady from your city. That is why I do not think that she is returning here. If you still want to write to Le Mans,¹ you may do so. If I can learn something from the Priests of the Mission at Le Mans before I mail this letter, I will add it. I recommend myself to the prayers of our dear sisters and I am in the love of Jesus Crucified, my dear Sister, your very humble sister and very loving servant.

P.S. Redouble your prayers for our Most Honored Father. His legs are so painful that he cannot walk. Because they are so weak, he cannot even say holy Mass except on rare occasions. Thank Our Lord that, in His goodness, He was pleased to preserve Monsieur Étienne from shipwreck. We were concerned about this for two weeks because he was sailing for Madagascar. All the priests are now on their way. May God in His mercy protect them.

UNDATED LETTERS

L.40 - (TO MADAME...)²

Madame,

Enclosed are the spiritual exercises that I mentioned. According to the insights which, in your goodness, you gave me into your dear soul, they seem to me to be exceptionally well-suited to you. Put them into practice, my dear Lady, living entirely for God by this loving and serene union of your will with His in everything. In my opinion, this practice, in its holy simplicity, contains the means for acquiring the solid perfection God asks of you. Always have great esteem, my dear Lady, for humility and gentle cordiality. While reflecting on the divine gentleness during your periods of meditation, speak to Our Lord with great simplicity and innocent familiarity. Do not be concerned whether or not you experience any consolation; God wants only our hearts. He placed within our power only the capacity to make a simple act of the will. He considers this alone and the deeds resulting from it. Make as few reflections as possible and live in holy joy in the service of our Sovereign Lord and Master.

In all simplicity, I present these suggestions to you, Madame, as Our Lord has given them to me since, in your humility, you requested them from my poverty. I beg Him, in His infinite goodness, to raise your dear soul to the heights of holiness that, in His love, He desires you to attain.

1. Jeanne Delacroix was from Le Mans, see Letter 297.

2. Letter with no address and no date.

Commend me to His divine mercy I implore you, Madame, and be assured that I have already done what you asked of me and that I shall never forget you in my poor prayers nor will I fail to remember your husband and all those dear people who are so precious to you. May God be blessed!

L.167 - (TO THE SISTER SERVANT OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU)¹

December 14

My very dear Sister,

I think that you must have received the letters that I sent with that good ecclesiastic, an administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu, when he left here about two weeks ago. They were lengthy so in this one I need only repeat my assurances of the great joy that I continue to experience as a result of the detailed news you sent me about your dear self and about our two dear sisters. I am also writing so as to send something along with this package and this letter which Divine Providence placed in my hands to be sent on to you.

I am not sending any recommendations, my dear Sister, since I am confident that your good heart will not fail to discern what God is asking of you in such circumstances. I beg Our Lord to fill it with fidelity to His love and with the assurance that I am with all my heart in this holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble and most obedient sister and servant.

L.366 - TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE VAUX

Monsieur,

Madame de Saint-Gervais has asked me to submit her very humble request to you. You will find it in the answer she sent me. I had asked her for the name of her brother whom she urged me to recommend to you. I do so now with all the respect I owe you.

You are aware, Monsieur, of the consequences when young people choose a way of life without knowing what they are doing. Because of that, I led her to hope that you would help him to understand the

1. A signed letter bearing no address. It was probably destined for the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint-Denis.

dispositions with which he must approach the life he wishes to enter. I am taking the liberty of enclosing her letter so that I need not explain to you all the circumstances she describes. I cannot recall if her letter mentions the name of the religious house where this young man is residing, but if there is one called Saint-Aubin, I seem to think that this might be the house. If it is not possible for you to visit him yourself, Monsieur, I beg you to honor him by having some other virtuous person perform this act of charity. He comes from a very good family and is related to someone whom I esteem and love deeply. However, charity alone prompted me to suggest that you add this kindness to those that you practice daily, thereby increasing their number and adding to the merit of all your holy actions. I ask to share in them so as to obtain mercy from God in whose love I am, Monsieur, your very humble daughter and most obedient servant.

L.384 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT¹

My Most Honored Father,

For the love of God, I beg you to pause and to give me an appointment during which I can speak to you so that as a result I may take the time necessary to attend to the matter that I discussed with you after dinner. I am afraid that your Charity may be leaving tomorrow. If you find it impossible to afford me this time before your departure, then let me go in the coach or borrow a carriage so that I can go as far as the inn and talk to you there. I beg you to grant these requests because I must speak with you for the glory of God for which He has granted me the mercy to be, my Most Honored Father, your very grateful although unworthy...

L.395 - (TO A SISTER SERVANT)²

My dear Sister,

I think that you are well aware that our Most Honored Father has told all our sisters that when they write to Superiors they are not obliged to show the letter to the Sister Servant. However, they must not write to other persons without her permission and they must forward their letters

1. The date on the back of this letter is 1644. However, the expression "My Most Honored Father" calls it into question (Coste IV, 110).
2. Letter recopied in Marguerite Chétif's notebook.

to the Directress in Paris. It is also essential, my dear Sister, in order to live in great union and cordiality, that, when the Sister Servants write to us or receive letters from us, they inform their Sister Assistant and even read the contents to her, with the exception of confidential matters. This is so because there should be such perfect equality that, when things are well-regulated in the Company, it might be possible for the sisters to replace one another as Sister Servant on an annual basis.

In the name of God, my dear Sister, treat our sister¹ with the gentleness and tenderness that you think she needs. Although, generally speaking, all our sisters consider themselves fortunate to be servants of the poor, nevertheless very few can endure the slightest word addressed to them in a manner that is too authoritative or abrupt. That is why we must learn to ask not to command and to teach by example rather than precept. I know that you do all that you can in this regard.

L.556 - (TO THE SISTER SERVANT AT SAINT-DENIS)²

My very dear Sister,

Well now, here you are failing seriously once again! And you interpret our sister's fault other than it really is. This sister became impatient at seeing the two of you surrounded by so many cats during times of meditation. You even admit that another sister dislikes them. My God, Sister, how amiable the truth is! I have told you over and over to get rid of these animals and you pay no attention to me and then you complain that a sister does not obey you promptly!

You still owe us 20 sols. We will send you the peas. We are sending ten pounds of prunes at six francs per hundred-weight.

My dear Sister, please do not be discouraged at the sight of your faults. Unless we are aware of them, we can neither acknowledge nor correct them.

I think that you would be wise to use salted butter. The best quality costs eight sols here. Let us know if you think that it is more expensive at Saint-Denis and if you want us to send you some from here. You only need fresh butter on certain occasions and these are rare.

Be consoled by the hope that the retreat will do you good. I am astonished that you still have our two sisters without our authorization. Beg God to grant me humility and believe that I am in His most holy love, my very dear Sister, your very humble sister and servant.

1. This letter was perhaps addressed to Françoise Carcireux, see Letter 647b.

2. Letter with no address and no date.

L.568 - (TO MONSIEUR PORTAIL)

Monsieur,

I am deeply grateful to you for your willingness to show me signs of cordiality and kindness since you are aware of my sins. I beg you, Monsieur, to allow your knowledge of them to inspire your Charity to strive to obtain mercy for me.

We have indeed already seen this dear little book. I shall treasure it for the reasons you mention. I thank you very humbly.

Allow me to explain, Monsieur, the words in my letter that prompted you to reveal your intentions. I said, "There might be circumstances that would prevent me from obeying you or would make it impossible for me to do so." You see, Monsieur, sometimes when our sisters tell me that your Charity has told them to ask to make a retreat or to be moved from the place where they are (although this manner of notifying me is somewhat unusual) I find it impossible to do so because there is no qualified person to replace them; moreover, there is often absolutely no sister available.

We really should confer for a good hour so that I could cite several examples that would convince you that I would always prefer your advice to any reasons I might have if I could explain the situation to you and you had time to listen. This has not yet happened because I think that you did not consider it appropriate.

I hope that Our Lord will supply for what is wanting in me since all I truly desire is His glory and the accomplishment of His most holy will. I am not trying to justify myself to our sisters or to anyone else except you because of the respect I owe you and the great debt of gratitude the entire Company has contracted toward you. I am especially indebted to your Charity since I am from the very bottom of my heart in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your very humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. I do not know if Monsieur Vincent sent you word about the little conference to be held at Saint-Lazare between Vespers and Compline so that you might take the trouble to come.

L.25 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Forgive me for my excessive dread of what I have always most feared

in the person about whom I spoke. My reflections on this subject (which increased my sorrow) were the reason that the consolation God gives me through your Charity was not apparent to you.

If you believe that Divine Providence has guided my life, then for the love of God, my very dear Father, do not abandon me in this need. If such is not the case, be so charitable as to point out the error of my ways so that I may not die unrepentant.

I forgot to ask you very humbly, for the love of God, to say holy Mass tomorrow for my son and to do whatever it pleases God to inspire you to do to help him to extricate himself from the great trouble in which I think he finds himself and for which you would have great compassion if you saw it as I do. I am doing all in my power to enter into the views you did me the honor of expressing to me.

I ate a better supper than I thought possible. I intend to strive to give God what He is asking of me in the present circumstances. I hope to learn what this should be from the advice your Charity will give me. I have great need of this so that I may remain as long as God wills it, Monsieur, your most grateful daughter and humble servant.

L.356 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

(After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Poor Sister Nicole from Montmirail told our sister that Mademoiselle de Montdésir, mother of Madame Tuboeuf, had accepted her to go to serve the sick poor of the village of Issy to replace our sisters whom we had already withdrawn from there a long time ago. She said that she would never give up the habit or the headdress and that she would always be like one of our sisters.

All our sisters will be distressed about this and I fear it (insofar as my present insensibility to everything can allow me). I therefore very humbly beg your Charity to reflect on the matter before God and to let me know if it would not be better to prevent her from going there in the habit (as we could through Mademoiselle Viole's intervention) rather than have it taken from her after she has been accepted in the village, because Mademoiselle de Montdésir will not support our position.

I beg our good God to bring you back in good health and I am, my Most Honored Father, your most obedient and very humble servant.

L.410 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Friday, the 26th (After 1650)

I very humbly ask your Charity to permit me to beg you to give a half-hour of your time to Sister Françoise tomorrow, Saturday, as she expects. I would also ask that you delay the decision that you are to make concerning her until I have had the honor of speaking to you. This would not only be in her interest but also in the interest of the Company which greatly needs a little enlightenment so as to act with prudence and discretion. And I have a greater need than anyone else since I am, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and obedient daughter and servant.

L.558 - TO MONSIEUR VINCENT

Wednesday (After 1650)

My Most Honored Father,

Allow me to take the place of a bashful poor woman who begs you, for the love of God, to be charitable enough to give her the alms of a short visit. I urgently need this since I cannot write to you about the matter which is preventing me from doing many things. This obliges me to be importunate because I cannot act otherwise since I am by the order of God, my Most Honored Father, your very humble and poor daughter.