and I cannot tell you how deeply we are indebted to him. So, Monsieur, please welcome M. Deheaume, the bearer of this letter, who is a worker full of good will. You already noted this when you were on the road with him, as you informed me. He is anxious to help you labor in the vineyard of Our Lord, in whose love I am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,  
i.s.C.M.

I had a fever for three or four days, but have been completely free of it for two days now. I recommend myself with all my heart to your prayers, and, on my part, I ask Our Lord to bless your work in that country.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Turin

1956. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

November 12, 1655

I thank God for the special devotions you are planning in order to ask God, through the intercession of blessed Saint Joseph, for the spread of the Company. I ask His Divine Goodness to accept them. For more than twenty years I have not dared to ask this of God, thinking that, since the Congregation is His work, its preservation and growth should be left to His Providence alone. Reflect-


Collet (op. cit., vol. II, pp. 143-44) states that Saint Vincent had written previously to M. Blatiron (August 14, 1654) to "congratulate the Superior in Genoa for seeking the mediation of that glorious Patriarch in finding workers capable of cultivating the Lord's vineyard. He advised him to say Mass, or have Mass said, every six months in the chapel dedicated to him [Saint Joseph]." Saint Vincent wanted Blatiron to lead people in his apostolic journeys "to have devotion to and confidence in" this faithful guardian of the "Immaculate Mother" of Jesus. The words in quotes are all we have of Saint Vincent's letter, which has since disappeared. (Cf. Mission et Charité, no. 80, p. 100.)
ing, however, on the recommendation given us in the Gospel to ask Him to send laborers into His harvest, I have become convinced of the importance and usefulness of this devotion.

1957. - TO MARK COGLEY, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

November 13, 1655

I am not at all in favor of your refraining from looking after business matters and the family on Fridays in order to devote yourself to your own interior life. On those days, however, you can be more recollected when taking care of business and more united to God in your ordinary actions. It would be difficult for Superiors in charge of souls to make those frequent retreats you suggest.

As for your feelings of inadequacy regarding the duty you are carrying out, remember, Monsieur, that Our Lord has sufficient competence for you and for all humble persons, and ask Him to have sufficient mercy on me.

1958. - TO JACQUES CHIROYE, SUPERIOR, IN LUÇON

November 14, 1655

Your letter leads me to think that it is inadvisable for you to hand over the parish to M. Rasine, because of the two conclusions I draw from your reasoning. The first is that the Bishop would not consent to it if he knew that this priest was not a member of the

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\(^{2}\text{Cf. Lk 10:2. (NAB)}\)


\(^{1}\text{Pierre Nivelle (1637-61).}\)
Company, and we must be most careful not to do anything that might annoy him or be contrary to his wishes because we would be acting contrary to the Will of God.

The second is the deception—unworthy of a Christian—you would be using by passing off M. Rasine as a Missionary, as a means of making him acceptable to His Excellency. That would be a great sin against the simplicity we profess. It would also be a dissimulation far removed from the practice of the early Christians who, as Pliny the Younger states, were in the habit of doing nothing on the sly or of using ambiguous language. So then, do not think that I would consent to this pretense.

Accordingly, Monsieur, I go back to my original advice, namely, that you should hand this parish back purely and simply to His Excellency. It is he who gave it to you; resign it to him. That is the surest way of not being in any way responsible before God if the person who succeeds you does not do his duty.

1959. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

November 14 [1655]

Most Honored Father,

Allow me to tell you that it is absolutely essential that your leg not dangle for a quarter of an hour nor be exposed in any way to the heat of the fire. If it gets cold, warm it by placing a hot cloth over your pant leg. Also, if you think fit, Most Honored Father, try rubbing in lightly a little of this soothing ointment and covering it with a folded cloth soaked in warm water. I hope this will do you some good. When the cloth gets cold, soak it again, but the water must not be too hot, nor should it be cold. The bloodlettings have weakened your body, as has the disease, and when you


1Year added on the back of the original by Brother Ducournau.
place your foot on the ground, the heat and fluids rush there as to the weakest spot in your body.

I really wish you would not drink so many glasses of water and would let your insides settle and calm down to prevent heat from rushing so violently to your poor sore leg. With your doctor's consent, perhaps mineral crystals, the weight of half an écu, dissolved in the first glass of water you take, would help whatever remains to pass more easily.

Am I not very forward to be talking to you like this? But I know to whom I am speaking, and you know that in asking most humbly for your blessing, Most Honored Father, I am your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Every day I drink a cup of tea, which does me a lot of good; it makes me stronger and improves my appetite.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1960. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[November 1655]

Before replying to your letter, I will tell you that Monsieur Le Gros is now before God; he died in Montech, near Montauban, on the seventh of this month. As he had lived like a true Missionary, he died like a saint. Monsieur [Lièbe], who is in charge of the seminary and who gave us the news of this loss, has greatly consoled us in this sorrow by telling us how patient he was in the midst of his sufferings and how resigned he was to suffer even more. He also mentioned his other pious sentiments during his illness and the joy with which he left this world to go to Heaven; so much so, Monsieur, that we have reason to hope that his soul is

Letter 1960. - Lyons manuscript.

1The month and year of the death of Jean-Baptiste Le Gros.
2François-Ignace Lièbe, born in Arras (Artois) on April 26, 1623, entered the Congregation
now there in all its glory. But, since God's judgments are more rigorous than people think, and since even the righteousness of the just—as well as the iniquity of the wicked—is subject to scrutiny, our dear departed may also need the prayers of the Church. Please have your house offer for him the Masses and prayers which the Company is accustomed to offer to God for our deceased confreres.

1961. - EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR IN ROME, TO SAINT VINCENT

[1655]

Since God in His goodness has chosen to bring this business to a close, which I think was the main reason why I was sent to this city, I feel obliged, Monsieur and Most Honored Father, to resign—as I now do most humbly—the office of Superior of this house, to which you assigned me in order to facilitate the expediency of our affair. God has been pleased to conclude it, perhaps so as not to leave me too long in a position where I am most unworthy and also because you entrusted it to me, Monsieur, only until M. Berthe, its legitimate possessor, could resume it, or until you could send someone capable of exercising it. M. Berthe is highly praised here and, lo and behold, Divine Providence has caused him to return to Paris at a time when it will probably be easier to obtain permission for him to return than it has been in the past.


1No. 1975, dated December 17, 1655, seems to be a reply to this letter.

2To secure the approval of the Holy See for the vows to be taken in the Congregation of the Mission. Approval was given by the Brief, Ex commissa nobis, of September 22, 1655. (Cf. no. 1954.)
There is no one on earth, no matter how holy, without some inclination to evil. This is the trial of good souls and a subject of merit. Saint Paul was perhaps never so much inclined to sin as when God struck him down for his own conversion, nor more pleasing in the eyes of the Lord as at the height of the temptations he subsequently endured. In which case, Monsieur, you should not be surprised that you have similar inclinations; they serve to humble you and to inspire you with fear. You must act in such a way, however, that you are also prompted to trust even more in God, for His grace is sufficient to help you overcome the assaults of rebellious nature. I ask Him to strengthen you in this and in all your labors, in which I fear your doing too much.

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know to whom to turn, other than to you, to get fifty livres delivered to the Annonciades nuns in Stenay, who are very poor. Someone donated them as an alms for them. Please get the money from some merchant and draw a bill of exchange on me, stating in it that it is for these nuns; then see that they get this little help as soon as possible by some safe means.

1Cf. Acts 9:3-6. (NAB)
2Cf. 2 Cor 12:7. (NAB)

1A house of the Annonciades nuns of Boulogne, near Montmédy (Meuse).
Yesterday I accepted your bill of exchange for eight hundred livres, and we will try to pay it by Christmas. I cannot find any letters from you that I have not answered. I forwarded a letter from Rome, with a Brief, to M. Cabel last Wednesday, but was unable to send one of my own with it.

I am better, thank God, although I am still in bed and taking remedies for erysipelas, which affected my leg after the fever left me.

Tomorrow or the day after, we will have here four of our priests from Poland, who were obliged to leave because the enemies of our holy religion invaded that kingdom. M. Ozenne has remained in Silesia with the Queen, and M. Desdames in Warsaw with M. Duperroy and a Polish priest who has joined the Company. M. Desdames has informed me that they are living in peace, although the city is in the power of the Swedes. Because the latter met with no resistance, they have not mistreated the inhabitants, except that they have obliged Pastors and Communities to buy back their churches, and our men have been taxed fourteen hundred livres for theirs. Please pray for them.

We are sending twelve or thirteen Missionaries to work in Burgundy this winter; some have already gone.

I embrace you and your family in spirit; may God be pleased to shower you with His blessings. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,

i.a.C.M.

M. Berthe has left to continue the visitations begun by the late M. Le Gros, and is now in Richelieu.

*At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Coglee*

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2Antoine Durand, Jacques Éveillard, Nicolas Guillot, and René Simon.
3In Glogau.
4As of September 8, 1655.
Monsieur,

I would need an angel by your side to thank you constantly for the extreme kindness which you, Monsieur, and the Abbot of Saint-Jean \(^1\) show me. I ask Our Lord to be your reward for it.

I am getting better and better, thank God, although my leg continues to bother me, so I am still in bed, using remedies.

I am very annoyed, Monsieur—extremely so, in fact—because of the trouble you are taking for the sums of money drawn on Rome, even sending to Lyons to have them forwarded here. In truth, there is no excuse for you; I told you that the Grand Saint-Lazare \(^2\) had paid everything. Furthermore, you should await your own convenience and not worry about this, as you are now doing.

I am sending back to you the promissory note you gave M. Blampignon for the two thousand livres, with his declaration on the back that he has not given this sum. Please accept it without ceremony, Monsieur, and do not be in any hurry to replace the loans. Consider that you yourself are the one who made them, since this house is yours, and you have sovereign power over all that it has and over its members.

This evening we are expecting four of our priests who are returning from Poland, where things are still going badly. Because of the variations in what people are saying, I am not giving you any details about this.

Nine priests have left here to give a mission in Joigny with two seminarians and as many coadjutor Brothers. They will be in Burgundy for the whole winter. I recommend the work and the workers to your prayers.

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\(^{1}\) Claude de Chandenier, Abbot of Moutiers-Saint-Jean.

\(^{2}\) To distinguish it from the Petit Saint-Lazare, the name given to Saint-Charles Seminary. Today that difference is indicated by the terms "major" and "minor" seminary.
M. Berthe has gone to continue the visitations begun by the late M. Le Gros. M. Martin, who went to open the house in Turin, has arrived there safely with his companions; they were welcomed most graciously by the Archbishop and the Marchese di Pianezza, who wants to make this foundation. He is most zealous for the glory of God, is honored and esteemed by all for the good he does, and is President of the Council of His Royal Highness.

Our poor priests in Rome are divided into two or three groups working in different dioceses. M. Jolly is making a fuss about the need for workers because he cannot provide them to the Cardinals who are asking for them. The Cardinal of Genoa made his retreat with his Missionaries at their house, with the same exactness and simplicity as they. Afterward, he sent them off to give a big mission.

M. Jolly said nothing to me about sending [the Bulls] we are expecting. That is because there was no consistory—and the affair cannot be concluded without one—other than the one for the preconization of the Abbey, which is not supposed to take place for two weeks.

I send greetings, with all possible respect, to your brother, the Abbot, and am, unreservedly, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, the most humble servant of both of you.

VINCENT DEPAUL,

t.s.C.M.

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3Giulio Cesare Bergera (1643-60).
4Stefano Cardinal Durazzo.
5The solemn declaration by the Pope, in consistory, of the appointment of a high ecclesiastic, such as a Bishop or, in this case, an Abbot.
Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I received your first letter from Turin, and I also received great consolation from God for having guided you safely there. I was likewise consoled by the kind reception you received, through the kindness of your benefactor, the Archbishop, and the Nuncio. I thank God for this with all my heart. He has willed to give you these graces in advance in order to prepare you for still greater ones, and this gracious welcome on the part of men is an indication of what they expect of the Company. I trust it will give itself to God in such a way as to correspond to His designs.

I see clearly that you need another priest who speaks Italian, in the place of M. Jean-Baptiste who, for some very important reasons, will not be coming to work with you. This has obliged us to send you M. Deheaume, who left Lyons for Turin on the eighteenth of this month. I am at a loss to tell you what you should do except, perhaps, that you might begin by giving a modest mission not requiring extensive preparations; but for that, Monsieur, you must love your own abjection. You could do the morning exercises, and let M. Ennery take the catechism. It will seem difficult for you to begin in such a small way; for, if you are to win people's esteem, it would seem as if you should put yourself forward a little by giving a splendid, full mission, which from the outset would make the fruits of the spirit of the Company plain for all to see. May God preserve us from having such a desire! What befits both our poverty and the spirit of Christianity is to shun such ostentation in order to keep ourselves in the background and to seek contempt

Letter 1965. - Archives of the Mission, Turin, original signed letter.

1Giovanni Battista Teone.

2John McEnery.
and humiliation as Jesus Christ did. So then, if you resemble Him, He will work with you.

The late Bishop of Geneva 3 understood this well. The first time he preached in Paris, on the last journey he made here, people flocked to his sermon from all parts of the city; the Court was there and everything had been done that could make the audience worthy of such a celebrated preacher. Everyone was expecting a sermon corresponding to the vitality of his genius, with which he was accustomed to delight everybody. But what did that great man of God do? He simply recounted the life of Saint Martin, with the intention of humbling himself before all those illustrious persons, which might have swelled the pride of someone else. 4 By this heroic act of humility, he himself was the first to profit by his preaching.

He told this to Madame Chantal 5 and me shortly afterward and said to us: “Oh! how deeply I humiliated our Sisters, 6 who were

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3Saint Francis de Sales.
4The sermon was preached on the feast of Saint Martin of Tours, November 11, 1618, in the Church of the Oratory, in the presence of the King, Louis XIII, two Queens—Marie de Médici, his mother, and Anne of Austria, his wife—some Bishops, and the most elite society of Paris. The crowd was so dense that Saint Francis had to use a ladder to climb in the window. His introduction was magnificent; it was after the Hail Mary that the idea occurred to the Saint to humble himself (cf. Henri de Maupas du Tour, La Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu, François de Sales, évêque et prince de Genève, [Paris: S. Huré, 1657] p. 370).
5Jane Frances Fremiot was born in Dijon on January 23, 1572. Her marriage to Baron de Chantal produced four children. Widowed at a very young age, she placed herself under the guidance of Saint Francis de Sales, and with him established the Order of the Visitation. The foundation of the First Monastery in Paris drew her to that city, where she remained from 1619 to 1622. There she became acquainted with Vincent de Paul, whom she requested of Jean-François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, as Superior of her daughters. Until her death in Moulins on December 13, 1641, as she was returning from a trip to Paris, she kept in close contact with Monsieur Vincent, whom she consulted for spiritual direction and the business affairs of her Community. (Cf. Henri de Maupas du Tour, La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Fremiot, fondatrice, première Mère et Religieuse de l’Ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie [new ed., Paris: Simon Piget, 1653].)
6Saint Vincent’s memory may have failed him here because the First Monastery of the Visitation was not established until five or six months after that. Perhaps he was thinking of the Sisters in the monasteries in the Provinces, who must have been humiliated to learn that their Founder had disappointed his audience.
hoping I would say something wonderful in such fine company! While I was preaching, a certain person who was present (he was speaking of a would-be fine lady who later became a nun) said: 'Look at this country bumpkin, this mountaineer; how vilely he preaches! What good was it for him to come from such a distance to tell us what he said and to try the patience of so many people?'"'

That, Monsieur, is how the Saints have checked nature, which loves glamour and renown, and that is how we should act, preferring lowly employments to showy ones, and humiliation to honor. I certainly hope that you will lay the foundation of this holy exercise along with the foundation of the establishment being made, so that the edifice will be built on rock and not on shifting sands. The Marquis will understand this quite well.

We have no news here, except the arrival of Messieurs Guillot, Durand, Eveillard, and Simon, who have returned from Poland. They left M. Ozanne with the Queen in Silesia, and Messieurs Desdames and Duperroy in Warsaw, where they have held their own, even though it is now in the hands of the Swedes.

Please write and tell me about everything there that concerns you, and take care of your health. My own is beginning to improve, and I am now getting up a little.

I embrace your dear little family with all the tenderness of my heart and am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Turin

7First redaction: "in such fine company. 'See how this mountaineer preaches,' one woman said; another thought something else, and all were really astonished at the simplicity of the preaching."
I will begin this letter with the most humble request that your last letters inspire me to make, namely, to entreat you most humbly, Monsieur, with all possible respect, not to attribute to me any of the good progress of the affairs of the Company because, if I had the time to tell you all the mistakes I have made in pursuing them, you would easily see that I deserve no words of praise. It is easy to see that God Himself has done whatever good has been accomplished in our principal affair, and the Company is and will be eternally grateful in a very special way to His Holiness, as well as to the Cardinals, Prelates, and Doctors assigned to examine our petition.

But how can we thank God, how can we thank the Blessed Virgin, whose assistance in this we felt so tangibly! You have seen, Monsieur, how God Himself willed to make our business His own, despite the powerful opposition against it, and how Divine Providence made use of the latter, as well as of my enormous faults, to settle the matter to greater advantage and in less time. Those acquainted with this affair have acknowledged and still acknowledge this with praise and admiration for the Providence of God, who showed in this way that the consolidation of the Company came from Him and not from any human competence. Oh! how happy we will be if we remain always fully persuaded of this truth, and the same for all the other Rules and customs of the Company! May it please the Divine Mercy that the special knowledge I have acquired in handling this affair may not be for my condemnation, when my poor soul faces judgment!

Vincent de Paul states that, if he has a carriage, it has only been since


1This letter is a reply to no. 1948 of October 22, 1655.

2This passage, "entreat you most humbly . . . words of praise," is found verbatim in a letter of July 24, 1651 (vol. IV, no. 1385).

Letter 1967. - This letter is mentioned in the Brother Robineau manuscript, p. 18 (cf. also Dodin, op. cit., p. 42, n. 49).
his infirmities have prevented him from riding a horse any longer, and in obedience to the orders of his civil and ecclesiastical Superiors.

1968. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN TURIN

Paris, December 3, 1655

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

A week ago I wrote a rather detailed reply to your first letter from Turin. I await others to find out what has happened regarding your health and your establishment since then, and whether M. Deheauzne has arrived as safely among you as M. Musy,1 M. Planchamp's cousin, has arrived among us; he is now making his seminary entrance retreat. I ask God to animate all of you with His Spirit and to bless your leadership.

Let the Marquis know how extremely grateful we are for the good things he does for us and for the protection he extends to you, and that we ask God constantly to give him His glory for all the services he renders Him and procures for Him.

We have no news other than the illness of M. Guillot, who has returned from Poland and is in a little danger from an attack of pleurisy. As for myself, my leg is not yet quite healed, although it is better, thank God.

Prostrate in spirit at your feet, I embrace you and your little family with all my heart. I am, Monsieur, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,

i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Turin

Letter 1968. - Archives of the Mission, Turin, original signed letter.

1A very gifted priest for whom Saint Vincent had high hopes. Sent to Turin in 1656, Musy
The letters from Tunis distress me because there seems to be no hope of ransoming the poor slaves, for I do not know if the hope being given for the exchange they are proposing in four months time will be successful.

But the letter M. Le Vacher has written you from Algiers saddens me greatly when I see the extreme misery in which they are and, to make matters worse, the horrible calumny that apostate has invented and is spreading about him. Allow me to suggest that perhaps you should send someone to testify to the Nuncio here in favor of the virtue and uprightness of M. Le Vacher, explaining the reason why that wicked apostate monk invented this calumny. Then he [the Nuncio] can inform the Nuncio in Spain about it, because that deceiver has written to the latter, as M. Le Vacher told you.

It would also be a good idea if M. Jolly in Rome were informed of this so he could give proof of M. Le Vacher’s innocence and why he is being calumniated. As a member of the Company and in the position he holds, his innocence must be made clear. The counsels of God are worthy of adoration. This virtuous Missionary, who has consumed himself for the relief of those poor slaves, is receiving this calumny as his reward; what should sinners like me not suffer?

Would you not think it advisable also to send them some money? If this cannot be done via Marseilles, perhaps it could go through Spain, since he wrote to you through that channel. Those poor people are so mistreated that I would like to console them in every possible way. They have so much to bear among those barbarians that the thought of their being also in extreme need arouses my compassion. Please forgive me and pray for me.

Addressed: For Monsieur Vincent

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allowed boredom to get the better of him and left the Company the following year. His name does not appear in the personnel catalogue.


1This latter was written after Edme Jolly was appointed Superior of the Rome house (1655) and apparently before Philippe Le Vacher’s first return to France (1657). Le Vacher did not go back to Algiers until September 1659.

2Philippe Le Vacher.
December 1655

... because our maxim and custom is to yield the pulpit to whoever comes to a place where we are working. This is based on what Our Lord teaches implicitly: "If any one asks for your cloak, give him your coat as well," and He practiced this whenever anyone in a province to which He was going approached Him, asking Him not to enter their province.

Yes, you will say to me, but if we yield, the same trick will be played on us wherever we go to give Lenten and Advent sermons, and then we will be held in contempt. No matter; we are not true Christians if we do not embrace and cherish tenderly the ridicule that will be heaped upon us.

Most Honored Father,

The state of suffering and submission to which Our Lord has chosen to subject you increases the liberty I always take in expressing my insignificant thoughts to you. The latest one that occurred to me for your relief is to suggest that both legs—but not the body—should be made to perspire.

Letter 1970. - Brother Robineau manuscript, p. 21 (cf. also Dodin op. cit., p. 44, no. 56).

1Tholard was supposed to give a mission in Maule, where a Franciscan had come to preach the Advent sermons. The Saint advised him to yield the pulpit to this friar "because our maxim, etc."

2Cf. Mt 5:40. (NAB)

3Cf. Lk 9:51-53. (NAB)


1Date added on the back of the original by Brother Ducournau.
using Monsieur l'Obligeois' little steam bath, but only after consulting two doctors. Tea may be taken between some early morning broth and dinner. Experience has shown me that this should not be a substitute for food but is an excellent way to prepare the stomach to take nourishment.

The Comtesse de Brienne told me she had talked to Monsieur de Franchère, who again spoke very highly of the Company and assured her he would protect it. He told her he recognized the tactics of a certain person who was trying to work his way into the administration of the hospital, and he was very glad we had not granted what the good priest was proposing, and several other things. This caused him to tell Sister Julienne that everything was going well and that, even if she had seen the Queen, she should take the trouble of going to see you. Will your charity please let me know if there is anything I should do in this matter other than to admire the workings of Providence, to try to make known its goodness and consequences, and to believe that it is a good thing to suffer and to await patiently the hour of God in the most difficult circumstances? All this is so contrary to my very impulsive nature.

Allow me, Most Honored Father, to entreat you to commend my state of mind to our good God. I have been a little upset for some time now by matters about which your charity knows I am very sensitive. I think you will have no doubt that I am interested in all this because of my desire to see you restored to perfect health. I ask this of Our Lord for the glory of His holy love, which has made me your most humble and very grateful daughter.

L. de M.

Allow me to ask your charity for news of our Sisters in Poland.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

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2Administrator of the Saint-Denis hospital, near Paris.
3Julienne Loret.
Monsieur,

I received your letter of November 27, informing me of M. Deheauame's arrival, for which I praise God. I would like to think that the rest has helped him recover from his fatigue.

I praise God that you have already set to work making your house suitable for your functions, and that, when you spoke to President Belloia about your foundation, you left it up to the Marchese di Pianezza. When the opportunity arises, however, you can explain to them that, in France, a thousand livres a year are needed to maintain two priests and a coadjutor Brother who go on the missions, and not much less is required for those who remain at home. I do not know if food is cheaper there than it is here.

I do not think M. Blatiron can lend you the worker you requested of him; in which case, you will not be able to give an impressive mission. It is more fitting, therefore, for you to undertake this work in a humble way. Begin with something small and have great love for your own abjection. That is the spirit of Our Lord; that is how He acted, and that is also the means of attracting His graces.

Speaking of that, I regret that you had someone ask the Cardinal of Genoa for a letter of recommendation. Please allow me to tell you that Missionaries should strive to remain lowly and unknown, and not to make a display and cause others to esteem them. Having a good reputation can be harmful to them not only because it is liable to disappear, but also because, if it puts the success of their work at six degrees, people will expect them to reach twelve and, seeing that the results do not correspond to the expectation, will no longer have a high opinion of them. God allows this to happen,

especially when this reputation is sought after; for whoever exalts himself shall be humbled.\(^1\)

_Mon Dieu!_ Monsieur, how I hope for the contrary, and pray heartily to God to give us all the grace of loving humiliation and shame, with Our Lord and our own wretchedness in mind! That is all we deserve; for, if any good is accomplished during the missions, it is He who does it, and He has no need of our reputation to touch and convert hearts.

I send most cordial greetings to your little family and am, Monsieur, with all the tenderness of my soul, in Our Lord, your most humble servant.

**VINCENT DEPAUL,**
_1.s.C.M._

*Addressed:* Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, at the home of the Marquis de Planezze, in Turin

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1973. - **TO NICOLAS FOUQUET, ATTORNEY GENERAL**

December 15, 1655

My Lord,

Madame Fouquet, your mother, did me the honor of informing me of the favor that you in your kindness desire to do for us, in protecting the interest we have in common with the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris in regard to the _aides_\(^1\) of Angers and Melun. So then, it is

\(^1\)Cf. Mt 23:12. (NAB)


\(^1\)Taxes levied on commodities and merchandise. The rights to this income had been granted to Saint-Lazare and the Hôtel-Dieu by Commander de Sillery, for Melun on June 3, 1639, and for Angers on August 20, 1640. One result of the Fronde was the attempt by the government to usurp some or all of this income.
most just, My Lord, for me to thank you for this, which I now do with all possible humility and gratitude. I ask God to sanctify your soul and to bless your family, as He sanctified that of the Patriarch Joseph, that great Intendant of the finances of Egypt, and his whole family.²

I would have gone personally to pay you my respects except that a slight illness is preventing me from going out. Meanwhile, I am, My Lord, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
L.S.C.M.

1974. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, December 1655

When Cardinal Brancaccio did us the honor of calling us to Viterbo, where he is Bishop, he sent us to Vetralla, a large town in his diocese, about two days journey from Rome. On our arrival there, although several difficulties thwarted our modest work, we still heard the general confessions of seventeen hundred persons, who indicated to us that they were deeply moved and truly penitent.

What I believe contributed most to touching these people are things that apparently should have had less of an effect, namely: (1) the explanation of the duties of a Christian, which we gave every morning at the end of the first Mass; (2) the simple instruction that followed on the principal mysteries of Faith and how to make a good confession; (3) the general examination of conscience that we made aloud with the usual evening prayers, immediately after our sermon.

I think that what made the deepest impression on them, however, was a sound reprimand our preacher gave them at the end of his exhortation for the preparation for Holy Communion. He told them, on the part of God, that no one should be so bold as to approach the Holy Table without first

²Cf. Gn 47:11-12. (NAB)

being reconciled with his enemies. I think that this public warning, animated as it was by the Spirit of Our Lord, was more effective than everything else. This was especially so with regard to the reconciliations of those who had a mortal hatred of one another, and the remarkable restitutions that were made: after that sermon, we could see or hear almost nothing but agreements being made and tearful pardons being asked of one another. These took place not only in the homes, but even in the streets, and especially in church, before everyone. It was the same for restitution of ill-gotten goods and the payment of old, neglected debts, which was done publicly and courageously with no concern for their own reputations.

If I listed here all the cases of this we have seen and heard, there would be too much for me to tell. I will simply mention three or four of the outstanding ones.

The first occurred during the procession, when one of our priests was lining up the men two by two so they would process in an orderly fashion. Providence arranged things in such a way that two men of the area, who had a deep-rooted hatred for one another, going back some years, happened to land together, and they even walked some distance side by side without either noticing this. When they finally recognized each other, however, God touched their hearts so forcefully that, in an instant, their deep hatred was changed into sincere friendship. Their hearts were so well disposed that, breaking into tears, they embraced each other and reciprocally asked forgiveness before the whole gathering. They did this so cordially that everyone, delighted and consoled, was in admiration.

The second case involved a certain inhabitant of that same place, who for a very long time owed four hundred écus to another man. He was never willing to pay the debt, although he had often been under pressure by the courts and even threatened with excommunication. So, his creditor had given up on him. The man changed so suddenly, however, that he paid off the four hundred écus within the hour, and they have been good friends ever since.

The third event concerned a rich miser, who had owed one hundred écus to a poor man for a very long time. In the end, the latter had lost all hope of ever being paid. Nevertheless, the former was touched by God and, without being asked to do so by anyone, he acted almost like Zacchaeus because he gave the poor man three or four times what he owed him, including a house and part of a vineyard, which made the situation much easier for his little family.

\[1\text{Cf. Lk 19:1-10. (NAB)}\]
Lastly, the fourth case concerned a father who, for about three years, had harbored in his heart a mortal hatred against a certain man who had tried to kill his son and had, in fact, wounded him in the arm, leaving him disabled. Besides that, he [the father] had to spend a considerable sum of money to have someone nurse him. Despite his resentment he did two things worthy of a true Christian: first, he willingly forgave this enemy who had tried to murder his son; second, he exonerated him of all the expenses to which he [the father] could have laid claim. Before this mission, however, attempts had often been made to reconcile them, which were unsuccessful.

So, these are some of the results of this mission, which can truly be said to be the product of the all-powerful hand of God because the workers involved were incapable of doing such marvels with the feeble means mentioned above. This prompts me to state, like those who witnessed the wonders worked by Moses in the presence of Pharaoh: “Digitus Dei est hic;” it is the finger of God which does such admirable things and not the eloquence, knowledge, wisdom, or power of men. Perhaps this is why Divine Providence did not will that our great Prelate and Most Eminent Cardinal be present for our mission, as he had led us to hope. When he started out to come to it, one of his carriage wheels broke. If He had given us this honor, people might perhaps have attributed to his presence and authority the glory of those marvels, which God wished to reserve to Himself alone.

1975. - TO EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

December 17, 1655

I did not wait until now to reflect on your qualities and was not satisfied with considering them in my own heart but, before putting you in charge of the government of the house, I proposed you to the senior members of the Company. They know you well and felt that you had sufficient gifts for this office—or rather, they hoped that Our Lord, who possesses all virtues in abundance, would

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2This is the finger of God. Cf. Ex 8:15. (NAB)

supply for those you lack. In fact, He does not possess them for Himself alone, but for those of whom He makes use in carrying out His plans and who place all their confidence in His help. Since you are entrusting yourself entirely to His goodness, you must allow Him to continue to work through you. When a person is determined to give himself to God without reserve, temporal interests must accommodate themselves to this plan.

I will propose at our first meeting the question of whether it is advisable to accept or to refuse the viaticum of Bishops who will have us work in their dioceses, when they wish to give it. I am of the opinion, however, that we should be very hesitant about taking anything from them unless they absolutely desire it, as did the Cardinal Datary.

It is another matter for retreatants and ordinands. You may follow what you have found in writing about this and, accordingly, accept what they offer as an alms they are giving us, even though I think that, for us to make this a total act of charity to them, it would be better not to take anything, if our financial straits allowed it.

We drew up and signed the Act of Acceptance of the Brief, all together, with the exception of the seminary. When the Act had been drawn up and signed in this way, we brought in the notary, before whom we acknowledged it officially. He then wrote a declaration to that effect at the end of it, which all of us also signed. I am telling you this to allay your doubt as to whether the notary was present for this acceptance.

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1 Allowance for traveling expenses.
2 Giacomo Cardinal Corradi, a very important member of the Curia and one of the Pope’s closest collaborators. The Apostolic Datary, formed in the fourteenth century, was the tribunal in the Roman Curia that examined candidates for papal benefices and handled the claims of those with rights to pensions.
3 The first excerpt ends here.
4 Cf. vol. XIII, no. 114, for the Act of October 22, 1655, wherein fifteen priests and thirteen Brothers of the Saint-Lazare house endorsed the Papal Brief, Ex commissa nobis, by which the Holy See approved the vows to be taken in the Congregation of the Mission.
Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I received two of your letters at the same time. In them you explain to me with your usual discretion the state of affairs. As you can imagine, I am still distressed but also hopeful that things will change for the better. We are praying, and having prayers offered everywhere to God, for that intention.

I have received no letters from M. Desdames since the one I mentioned to you. I am worried about this but am very consoled by your idea of returning to Warsaw, if it is safe. For my part, I have nothing to say to you about it except that the disposition of your person is up to God and the Queen. In the meantime, give all the consolation you can to the nuns of Sainte-Marie and the Daughters of Charity. Recommend me to their prayers and assure them of mine. Tell Sister Marguerite that I thank her for her letter and will answer it at some other time.

Recently I wrote to M. des Noyers asking him to provide you with money, if you need it, which we will repay here.

You should not be surprised at the complaints or the bad turns of M. Zel[azewski]; it is the usual thing for those who leave to try our patience. May God be pleased to strengthen you in your trials!

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1The Visitation nuns.

2Sister Marguerite Moreau.
M. Guillot has been very ill, but he is better. We have no news. Everything is going fairly well here, and I am all yours.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Ozenne, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Poland, with the Most Serene Queen

1977. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

Paris, December 17, 1655

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I have nothing new to tell you because I have had no letters from you since I last wrote to you. M. Guillot, who has been seriously ill, is better, thank God. I am still in bed or in a chair—or rather, on two of them because the pains in my legs oblige me to keep them propped up all day long, almost as high as my head. Apart from that, I am well.

M. Rome has not yet sent you the package of books we forwarded to him for you. He is waiting for the opportunity to put them into a friend's parcel so that the transport will cost you less. M. Alméras says that the Rules of the Daughters of Charity are contained in it, and I want to assure you that our sacristan has arranged to have said daily the two hundred Masses you wished us to add to the thousand already celebrated.
I did not approve of M. Martin's asking you for a letter of recommendation from the Cardinal to the Archbishop of Turin, and I told him what I thought about that, namely, that the gate by which he should begin the work of this new foundation is humility, and not the gate of a much sought after reputation. The latter is often harmful, especially when the success of the work does not correspond to the esteem that rumor first led people to have of it. It is with this same thought in mind that I have asked him to give a small mission—just he and M. Ennery 1—to prevent him from giving one that may make a good impression, for which he asked you for M. Richard. 2 I know you cannot spare either the latter or any other of your workers. That establishment will make progress like the others, if it is based on the love of its own abjection. May God be pleased to grant us this and to bless you more and more in your person and in your leadership!

I send greetings to the little family and am, Monsieur, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,

i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Blatiron, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Genoa, in Genoa

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1John McEnery.
2François Richard, born in Metz on February 3, 1622, entered the Congregation of the Mission on September 24, 1641, took his vows in 1643, and was ordained a priest in Rome on March 31, 1646 (cf. Notices, vol. 1, p. 464).
Monsieur,

I thank God that M. Langlois 1 has taken charge of the seminary. I hope that this good work, instead of declining, will rally once again. You must not neglect it to make the missions your chief affair alone; both are equally important, and you are under the same obligation to each of them—I mean the whole family, which was founded for both purposes. Please take them equally to heart, Monsieur, and cooperate with the Director in the progress of the seminary, as well as in continuing the missions with the little help you have.

Could you not find a few good pastors or other priests to help you? Try to attract some, but even if you fail to do so, God will not fail you; He will be your first and second [Assistant] and will bless your work. Do not be in any hurry and, instead of a month, allow six weeks for large missions like the one you are now giving. With practice, M. [Daveroult] 2 will become capable of helping you. We have the experience in the Company that, in different places and at different times, two priests have undertaken and successfully completed missions as large or larger than that one.

I embrace in spirit the whole family, and am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .
1979. - TO A PRIEST OF THE BARBARY MISSION

[Between 1645 and 1660]

I have seen the account of your modest expenditures. O Dieu! what consolation did I not receive from reading it! I assure you that it was as great as any I have had for a long time because of your good management, which is evident in it, and especially for the charity you extend to so many poor slaves of every nation and of every age, who are afflicted with every kind of misery. Undoubtedly, even if your work were to give you no opportunity of doing good other than this, that would be enough to consider it of infinite value and to bring down immense blessings on you! May God in His goodness be pleased to give you the means of continuing!

1979a. - TO ADRIEN GAMBART

[Between 1650 and 1660]

If M. Gambart comes to the meeting today, I will have a word

1Beginning of the Barbary Mission.

Letter 1979a. - Archives of the Visitation Convent, Mons (Belgium), original autograph note. It was published in Annales C. M. (1929), p. 728, and reprinted in Mission et Charité, 19-20, no. 83, p. 104. This edition uses the latter text.
1Adrien Gambart, born in Croye, Noyon diocese, on September 27, 1600, was ordained a priest in 1633. Soon after ordination he made a retreat at Saint-Lazare and took Saint Vincent as his guide. He became a member of the Tuesday Conferences and participated from time to time in the Saint’s missionary activities. Aware that Gambart was a prudent man, Saint Vincent persuaded him to accept the position of confessor for the Visitation nuns of the Second Monastery of Paris. He was also Director of the Daughters of Providence of Saint-Joseph and often taught catechism in the hospitals. Le missionaire paroissial, published in 1668 and dedicated to Saint Vincent, is the best known of his writings. After an illness of one week, he died a holy death on December 18, 1668. His manuscripts and part of his library were willed to Saint-Lazare. In 1670, his biography, Abrégé de la vie d’Adrien Gambart, prêtre missionnaire, was published in Paris. It was thought erroneously that Gambart was a member of the Congregation of the Mission.
2It is impossible to be more specific.
3Probably one of the Tuesday Conferences at Saint-Lazare.
with him during my retreat and give him an account of what took place with the Prior. I told the latter, briefly, that if he does not go to the Council meetings of those good Sisters, or have you go, those Council meetings will be useless and will serve only to give weight to Mad. de L.’s inclination. He had nothing to say to me about this except that he would see.

O Monsieur, how the religious spirit is on its guard! It will be well for you to see him afterward and tell him what I am telling you.

_Addressed: Monsieur Gambart_

1980. - _EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR IN ROME, TO SAINT VINCENT_

(Between 1655 and 1660) ¹

_We are coming to the end of our retreat. By the grace of God, it has gone very smoothly, with regard to the persons with whom I had the advantage of making it. For myself, it will be very hard for me to change because of my longstanding habit of pride, my wish to be esteemed, and other vices. Nevertheless, God has been pleased to give me the desire to amend my ways._

_I recommend myself to your Holy Sacrifices and prayers so that I may not receive His grace in vain._

_Since you think, Monsieur, that I should remain here, I will do so most willingly. I only wish you could see my faults, my clumsiness, and all my other vices, and know how proud and unmortified I am._

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⁴Perhaps Claude de Blampignon (1611-69), Prior of Bussière-Badil, Limoges diocese, who was also a member of the Tuesday Conferences.
⁵Saint Vincent may have been asking Blampignon to become confessor of the First Monastery of the Visitation in Paris.
⁶Possibly Madeleine de Lamoignon, who had close contacts with the Visitation Monastery.

¹The period during which Jolly was Superior of the house in Rome.
1981. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

December 24, 1655

I thank Our Lord for the conquest you have made for your seminary. May His Divine Goodness be pleased to give this young plant deep roots so that it will bring forth fruit in due season! A priest also presented himself for admission to Monsieur Duport while you were away. I do not think his lack of education will prevent you from accepting him, for he will know enough if he considers that he knows nothing but Jesus Crucified, and will do a great deal if he practices virtue. By this means he will preach effectively to his neighbor because example produces greater results than instruction alone.

1982. - TO LOUIS DE CHANDENIER 1

Paris, December 28, 1655

Monsieur,

I would not trouble you with this letter if the one I have received from Rome did not oblige me to do so, to tell you that M. Jolly has sent you the Bulls by the way you indicated to him. I think you have now received them, Monsieur, for which I thank God. But what consoles me more is that Our Holy Father the Pope is not obliging the Abbot of Moutiers-Saint-Jean to become a priest. The

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1 Probably a new recruit for the Internal Seminary that had opened in Genoa.

2Cf. Ps 1:3 (NAB)

3Cf. 1 Cor 2:2. (NAB)


1 The name of the recipient can be deduced from the content of the letter.

2 The Bulls conferring Moutiers-Saint-Jean Abbey on his brother, Claude de Chandenier.
hand of God is surely in this, Monsieur; He alone gives to affairs the outcomes He deems suitable. May He be forever glorified for it! I cannot adequately express my joy to you about this.

Since the last letter I had the honor of writing you, I have not heard a word about the difficulty that arose regarding the Priory of Chandenier, except that on Friday evening your sister sent some mail here for you, Monsieur. It was to be put in with mine or, in the event that my letter had already been sent on, to be brought on its own to the post by the same servant. The latter is what happened, because I had taken care of that business on the previous Tuesday and learned about the other only just now when someone came to tell me. Had I been informed about it at the time, I would not have failed to accept the packet and would have sent one of my own letters along with it.

I have nothing new to tell you, Monsieur, that can add anything to the consolation God has been pleased to give you. I ask His Divine Goodness to continue to fill your soul with it, and that of your brother, the Abbot, as well. I am, for him and for you in particular, in life and in death, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1983. - TO EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

December 31, 1655

I would have a very hard time believing that M. [Pesnelle]

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3Marie de Chandenier.


1The copyist of Reg. 2 omitted the name, but there can be little question that it is Jacques Pesnelle. No. 2006, dated February 4, 1656, written to him by Saint Vincent after the death of Pesnelle's father, expresses the same sentiments as no. 1983.
would take it into his head to travel to his home—not only because you need him where you are and because of the services he is rendering to God, but also because he would find no satisfaction in visiting his relatives. I know the reason for this, but he does not, and it is in no way advisable to tell him. I will tell you frankly, Monsieur, provided you keep it confidential, that his father has lost his mind and is no longer in any condition to allocate any annuity to him. You can imagine how distressed he would be to see him in this weakened condition. Furthermore, he need not fear being excluded from the succession, for I can fully assure him that neither the Parlement nor his vocation will prevent him from getting his share, along with his brothers. Since he is not a monk, he has the right to do so—like the Oratorian Fathers, who may inherit the property of their relatives as secular priests do. Accordingly, I beg you, Monsieur, to do your utmost to dissuade him from making this journey.

1984. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

The last day of the year 1655

I constantly fear that your heavy labors, by gradually exhausting your strength, will so overwhelm you in the end that you will no longer be able to recover from them. So, Monsieur, please see that this disaster does not occur. I am well aware that you will be content in whatever state you may be because you want only God’s Will and know how happy are those who, sooner or later, wear themselves out in the service of such a good Master. That is fine, as far as you personally are concerned, but it does not fit in with the needs of your neighbor. The harvest is great but the laborers are few.¹

¹Cf. Mt 9:37. (NAB)
You know also how very hard it is to form good workers and that, of those who present themselves, few are suitable and disposed ever to become so.

1985. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN TURIN

Paris, the last day of the year 1655

Monsieur,

I ask Our Lord that the year we are about to begin may serve you as a stepping stone to advance toward a blessed eternity.

I have just now received two of your dear letters, dated the ninth and the seventeenth of this month. I thank God for all you tell me and ask Him to bless your leadership more and more. I thank Him also for the grace He has given you of setting to work. I am truly consoled by the fact that this first mission did not arouse great admiration, because you have more merit from this, and I hope God has received more honor from it.

Continue willingly to proceed in the same way, as long as you cannot do otherwise. M. Blatiron has told me that it is difficult for him to lend you any men. Nevertheless, because he wants to help you out, he will speak about it to the Cardinal \(^1\) to try to get his consent to send you one or two. And, because His Eminence is kind, he may agree to this, and your zeal may be satisfied.

Now, after the recommendation I have given you, Monsieur, to go about this work in a simple way, I am adding this one, namely, to take care of your health and that of your men. The Marquis \(^2\) loves justice so much that he will not take this amiss. Speaking of that good nobleman, what you tell me of his exactitude in making an annual retreat and the manner in which he makes it is a source

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\(^1\) Stefano Cardinal Durazzo, Archbishop of Genoa.

\(^2\) Filippo di Simiane, Marchese di Pianezza.
of both great edification and embarrassment to me. I ask God to preserve such an example of virtue for the great ones of this world and to give him the fullness of His Spirit for the success of all his undertakings.

I am distressed about your difficulty with Brother [Aubin] because we did not foresee his limited skill in cooking in the style of the country where you now are and in serving in a new foundation. We have no one here who speaks Italian and might be suitable for you, except Brother Balthazar, and I am not quite sure he would be to your liking. I will discuss this with M. Alméras, and we shall see; for, as far as it is in my power, I want to give you every satisfaction so that you may have the means of giving it to your benefactors.

A few days after you left, we received the Brief by which the Holy See confirmed and established our Little Company. Immediately, we assembled the Community here, except for the seminary, and drew up an official Act of Acceptance of that Brief, which each one signed. Then, in the presence of a notary, each made a declaration of having signed it, so that posterity may see that it was done juridically and in the most proper form. I wish I could describe the sentiments of joy and gratitude with which this was done, but it would take me too long.

The men at the Collège and at Saint-Charles Seminary did the same, and we have sent M. Berthe to the other houses so that they may do likewise and take vows in accordance with the Brief, after accepting it, as we have done here. He has already been to Le

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3On the original, the place for the name of the Brother is left blank. It is quite probable that it was Aubin Gautier, since he was the only Brother in the Turin house at the time. He was still there in July 1659, when Saint Vincent wrote to him (cf. vol. VIII, no. 2912).
4Balthazar Pasquier, born in Morlincourt, Beauvais diocese (Oise), entered the Congregation of the Mission on November 25, 1643, at twenty-eight years of age.
5The Collège des Bons-Enfants.
6On October 26.
7The priests, seminarians, and coadjutor Brothers of Saint-Lazare renewed their vows together on January 25, 1656. The register they signed is still in use and is kept at the Provincial
Mans, Richelieu, and Saint-Méen, and everywhere they have conformed themselves to us in this action. I will send you a copy of those Acts so that you can proceed in line with them when you make them. M. Berthe is not going expressly for this purpose; his principal business is to continue the visitations begun by the late M. Le Gros. I think I told you that, while this dear deceased was making the visitation of the Montauban Seminary, he himself was visited by an illness which led him to heaven.

We have no news here. Everything is going along fairly well, thank God, as in the rest of the Company, from which I have had good reports. We continue to ask God to bless your work.

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

I have put in a good word with M. Blatiron for the help you are requesting, telling him how consoled I will be if he helps you out on this occasion, while Messieurs Planchamp and Deheaume are learning the language. I told him, nevertheless, to be satisfied with making the proposal to His Eminence and not to pressure him. In this case, the Will of God will be clear to you to work with what He has given you.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Turin
Monsieur,

I am sending the bearer of this letter for news of the state of your health, which I ask Our Lord to restore perfectly. I am also sending him, Monsieur, to bring you this letter telling you what I myself would have said to you yesterday, had I the honor of seeing you. Having reflected on our affair of the parisis 2 that the King has placed on the aides, I think it is better for us, Monsieur, not to purchase this privilege and to let it be sold to others, for the following reasons: first, we have reason to hope that what we feared—that the person acquiring this parisis would cause us trouble—will not come to pass because, when the late M. d’Emery 3 imposed a tax of five deniers a livre on imports of wine and cloven-footed animals eight or ten years ago, it caused us no inconvenience, thank God, since M. de Marillac, 4 the proprietor of this privilege, farmed it out to M. d’Avrit, your tax farmer. The prospective purchaser of the parisis in question has done the same, as you can see from his letter, which I am sending you.

The other reason is that, if the King revokes this parisis privilege, as he has often done with other similar ones, in that case there will be a loss of both the tax and the aides of Melun, of which the capital is considerable, as you know. It is difficult to say whether the surplus value of the cash capital of Melun will be transferred and joined to that of the aides of Angers and that this will consolidate the said aides. Even if this were to be done through a resale of

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Letter 1986. - Reg. 1, fol. 70v, copy made from the original autograph letter.

1Jean-Baptiste Forne, Administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu.

2A twenty-five percent increase in the fees posted on price lists and notices.


4Michel de Marillac, Counselor in the Parlement of Paris and a relative of Saint Louise.
those aides, a director of finances, who will come later and who will know, as everything is known, that the King is held responsible for this ready money that the proprietor of our Melun aides will enjoy, he [the director] will rescind all that, and it would be in very bad taste for us to complain of it.

For all these reasons, Monsieur, we have thought that, as far as we are concerned, it seems better to allow this parisis to be sold and to be satisfied with what we have, with the promise given by the Attorney General to relieve us of the obligation of the edict binding proprietors to purchase it. I felt, Monsieur, that you would not be displeased at my suggesting this to you, and I entreat you most humbly to give us your opinion on the matter. I would like to hope that in your charity, Monsieur, you will grant us this favor, for the love of O[ur] L[ord], in whom I am . . .

1987. - TO THE MARQUIS DE CHANDENIER ¹

January 4, 1656

Monsieur,

I received the letter you did me the honor of writing me concerning Chandenier Priory, your reception of the proposal Made­moiselle de Chandenier ² and M. de Lamoignon ³ made you of

Letter 1987. - Reg. 1, fol. 33v, copy made from the autograph rough draft.
¹François de Chandenier, brother of Claude and Louis.
²His sister, Marie.
³Guillaume de Lamoignon, Marquis de Béville and Counselor in the Parlement of Paris, was a very devout man of outstanding character. In 1644 he became Master of Requests and, in 1658, Chief Judge of the Parlement of Paris. When announcing his appointment as Chief Judge, Louis XIV said to him: “Had I known a better man, a worthier subject, I would have chosen him.” Lamoignon was a friend and patron of literary men, especially of Boileau, who addressed to him his sixth epistle and wrote the Latrin at his request; he was also a close friend of Saint Vincent and gave hospitality to the Missionaries who fell ill in Étampes while caring for the poor. His mother and sister were very active in the Saint’s works. Lamoignon died on December 10, 1677. (Cf. Vie de M. le premier président de Lamoignon [Paris, 1781].)
M. Aubry, your opinion of the person you are proposing, and your deference to M. de Lamoignon in this matter. Now then, Monsieur, I want to tell you that I sent your letter to your brothers and have written to them, saying nothing to influence them in favor of either side. I feel that it is not for a poor priest such as myself to pass judgment on an affair involving so many important details, and that it was enough for me to state the matter and leave it at that, which, Monsieur, is what I have done.

Now, Monsieur, from the letter they wrote to Mademoiselle de Chandenier, you will see the decision they have taken to give the position to the person whom they judge before God to be the most competent. I am sure that the impartial manner with which you are handling this affair with M. de Lamoignon has led them to believe that you, Monsieur, will not disapprove of their line of action. Mine, Monsieur, will be always to obey you in whatever it pleases you to do me the honor of commanding me, and to that end I renew the offers of my perpetual obedience. I entreat you, Monsieur, to accept them and to allow me always to be your...

1988. - TO EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

January 7, 1656

I praise God for the zeal with which your workers are laboring and for the other graces He bestows on them and, through them, on the people. I ask His Infinite Goodness to grant them the strength of body and mind needed for such an important and arduous ministry as the missions. You are their Moses, raising your hands to Heaven while they combat God's enemies, and even their

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4 Future Prior of Chandenier Priory.

Joshua, since you fight with them by means of the weapons, assistance, encouragement, and talks you give them. Yet, you say you are doing nothing—as if what the members do should not be attributed to the head, and as if you did not have a house to govern and a hundred things to do both at home and abroad, which keep you more than busy. I ask you once again to work a little less and take care of yourself.

1989. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

January 7, 1656

There is great reason to praise God for the readiness with which all our houses have accepted the Brief dealing with the approbation of our vows. Everyone has manifested great joy and immense gratitude for this Brief and an equal desire to submit to it, renewing their vows and taking them in accordance with this Brief. This convinces us more and more that it is the work of God.

1990. - TO FIRMIN GET, SUPERIOR, IN MARSEILLES

January 7, 1656

M. Le Vacher of Tunis keeps on asking for the cloth which he had led the Dey to expect in consideration of his return.¹

¹Cf. Ex 17:11-13. (NAB)


¹Eight houses had officially accepted the Brief, Ex commissa nobis, before January 7; the others were waiting for Thomas Berthe's visitation to make the Act of Acceptance.


¹See no. 1943, n. 1.
Monsieur and Most Honored Father,

Your blessing, please!

I must tell you that there is a conflict in my mind and sorrow in my soul for the distress this letter will cause you. Like Reuben, I would gladly conceal the fatal accident that has befallen my father's house. But God, who takes pleasure in making you suffer for so many years, will continue to strengthen your heart on this occasion, as He has done until now, and for which I pray with all my heart.

So, I will tell you, Monsieur and Most Honored Father, that the ship, L'Ours, by which we wrote you about our arrival in this country and what we had begun to do here, had departed, to the great satisfaction of all the French, who considered it their only hope. After the usual salute, they accompanied it with joyful shouts beyond all the dangers of the coastline, as long as it was still in sight. Then we began to prepare to welcome M. Pronis, our Governor. The fort was being decorated, the banquet prepared, and everyone was rejoicing and getting ready. The cannon was fired, and the fusiliers and the musketeers gave their salute. Then, unfortunately, a wad from a gun fell on one of the tents, whose roof was more combustible than thatch. We rushed to the fire, but too late, because the rampart, filled with wood, was in flames, together with a large storehouse loaded with barrels needed for the ship. Everyone tried to save them: some smashed the roof; others doused things with water. M. Mousnier and I went to save the furnishings of the church because it is right across from those buildings. Then, the wind that was fanning the flames really made us fear that everything was going to burn. But God granted us the mercy of His being satisfied with those two buildings, which were repaired in a short time.

Three days later the soldiers were notified about the journey to the Imaphalles, which had been planned for such a long time. M. Mousnier, my dear Superior, made every attempt to go, as he had done before; he put in his request, but was refused. I did my best to dissuade him from this, given the danger of undertaking too much work before one is acclimatized.
He knew that men had died without the Sacraments during previous journeys and that some leaving on this one had not been to confession for six years nor had bothered to do so in the six or seven months since we had arrived. He kept on asking and finally got permission to leave. I volunteered to go, but they would not let me because of an ailment I had. We tried once again to make him change his mind, but to no avail. I told him that on this journey they sometimes went two or three days without water, that the road was rough, that they always had to go barefoot, that good food was hard to find, and that it was a twenty-five-day journey to get there and as many days to return. All that made no impression because he was so consumed by zeal to be the first to go and talk about God in places where His Holy Name was unknown. So he found all these things easy and tacitly reproached himself with the fact that, if so many young men were so courageous in going, spurred on perhaps by the sole motive of gain or honor, he had all the more reason for being obliged to go for such a holy purpose.

On the first Sunday of Lent we packed his bags. We gave him three good natives to carry his vestments and to help him in his needs. The next day forty Frenchmen and a good two hundred natives set out, all firmly determined and very orderly. Two days later, we received news that M. Mousnier had officiated at the marriage of a beautiful native woman and a Frenchman to stop a quarrel that had arisen over her between two Frenchmen. This, and another promise of marriage, made us very happy. I, for my part, was preparing to make the voyage to the Red Sea, as I had promised His Lordship and M. de la Forest. The latter had honored me with a visit to our house on the second Saturday of Lent, at about nine o'clock, and was rejoicing with me about his voyage, suggesting also that I learn the language of Madagascar. Then, someone came to tell us that the fort was on fire again, but that it was nothing serious. We rushed out and had no sooner arrived when we saw a hut and the front of the church in flames. I ran to the windows, climbed in, and threw out cases, vestments, books, candlesticks, and everything else. Finally, seeing this torrent engulfing the whole building, I picked up the sacred tabernacle and handed it to a Frenchman, but respect was making him afraid to touch that precious object, so I encouraged him and he carried it away with trembling hands. Beside myself, I looked around to see if I could save anything else. I spotted two or three beautiful pictures that were gracing our altar, but

2M. de Pronis, the Governor.
3Admiral de la Forest des Royers.
the intensity of the heat obliged me to make my escape. So I grabbed the frontal and the altar cloth in one hand, pulling it off by force, and jumped out of a window, but got hung up on a nail. In my struggle, I tore my cassock and clothes to shreds.

At the same time, the fire spread to two storehouses and the Governor's home. Everyone carried away whatever they could, but at the sight of that raging fire, their only thought was to save themselves, and they tried to throw everything out of his house. Mais quoi! it was too late; the roofs were all aflame. The man in charge of the warehouse, which was full of rice and in which the gunpowder was stored, cried out for help, but no one heard him above the noise of the fire and the confused screams. By chance, someone caught sight of him and called me, and I came running. We were retrieving a barrel of powder when the fire, which was enveloping all those still in the warehouse, made a thunderous noise, swept away the roof, and spread everywhere. Then, all was fire and flames.

Everyone left the fort, escaping as best they could. I ran to our hut because it was nearest to the fort. The heat was so intense that we could hardly breathe. We stationed men with water beside the houses because of the sparks of fire the wind was carrying far and wide. All possessions were thrown into the courtyard. How amazing that, in less than half an hour, the whole fort, with forty or fifty buildings, was reduced to ashes! What a sight, Monseur, to see the sacred tabernacle on the ground in the middle of a courtyard! Mais quoi! Our Lord is always adorable, wherever He may be. We worked until midnight in great fear for the village. But then the wind shifted, and we began to breathe more easily. The fire smoldered for four days, with enormous blazing masses.

I dare not pass over in silence the pious zeal of one of the sailors, who entered the burning church to save the painting of the Blessed Virgin, which he carried out all afire and half burnt.

When that was over, construction was begun at once on another fortress, and we worked on a church in which to put the Blessed Sacrament as soon as possible. For this, I took a fine hut I had bought as a place for the natives to pray. I added a veranda on one side and in front so that those outside could easily hear Mass. But bad weather greatly inconvenienced those who were outside, and I could not speak outdoors. We lengthened the hut, leaving a veranda all around, except for the sanctuary and a porch in front, so that passers-by—the church was on a busy road—could at least see the ceremonies, in the event that they were shy about entering. This turned out to be very useful because there was always a crowd of people who, seeing the others pray, were gradually won over and discovered that
it was not impossible to learn to pray, as the Roandries\footnote{Petty chiefs who were like vassals to the king of a particular section of the island.} gave them to understand.

And because we should try to make use of everything, I decorated the church as prettily as I could with green leaves and with pictures that had survived the fire. Realizing that the people were very curious to see my clock, I put it in a prominent place in our chapel. That always gives me a chance to talk to them about our religion. They are amazed to see that the clock is alive and talks, so they say. Sometimes they call it Amboa volamena, which means “golden dog,” its usual name; sometimes they call it malanga, meaning “an angel.” But I told them that angels are more beautiful than the sun and everything they see because they serve God and do whatever He wills, and that, were they to be baptized and keep His Commandments, they would be as beautiful as the sun, and their soul, which is dead, would be alive. They listened to me willingly and admitted that there is nothing better than to be baptized.

The house of a native woman was in front of the church, and this prevented passers-by from seeing people at prayer. I told her that her house should not be in front of the house of God. She said: “You are right; Zanahary is a great Master,” and she immediately began to tear it down. This obliged me to give her fair compensation.

Then it was the end of April and time for our Frenchmen to arrive. We were all waiting—M. de la Forest for his men, the others for their companions, and I for my Superior. On May 23, around three in the afternoon, a Frenchman appeared on a hill in the distance. Everyone, natives as well as French, ran to assemble, delighted to hear some news. In a weary voice he said that it had been a wretched journey, and they had brought back just a small number of cattle, because all those people had rebelled and would not sell the cattle from the settlement. They had killed some of our best natives and showed the gold and silver they had been paid by the Roandries to kill the French. Lastly, he said that everyone had been seriously ill.

God knows there was no reason to rejoice. You should have seen the sad expression on every face. The Governor asked if there had been any deaths. He answered that there had been only one but they had to leave twelve very sick men at a place about six days distance. I begged him to tell me how M. Mousnier was doing; he replied that he was very ill and had been borne on a tacon for six days. (That is a stretcher carried on the shoulders of four natives.) Mon Dieu! what a shock! My heart froze. I
immediately implored M. de la Forest to allow me to leave. He refused, saying that I would fall ill. I went and threw myself at the feet of our Lord; having given vent to my sorrow, I got up feeling that I had to go in order to console him and to bring him some medicine. I went back and made my request once again to M. de Pronis, our Governor, and he granted it.

I left with our man and two native guides. It was already four o'clock in the afternoon. We walked far into the night but, being unable to see ahead and having come upon a village, our guides refused to go any farther because of frequent bodies of water and streams. I stayed in the tompon's house. I asked him where the French were, and he told me that a native had just arrived, that they were about half a day's journey from there, and that lompy sakabira, meaning 'the priest,' had stayed there because he was very ill.

Mon Dieu! how long that night seemed to me! There was no moon, but we still left before dawn and walked rapidly. Finally, we came upon the French, who were so weak that they could not carry their guns nor drag one foot in front of the other. Their first greeting was to tell me to hurry if I still wanted to see M. Mousnier alive. Oh! what a blow! So I dropped everything and went on ahead, filled with sadness. We got to the village around nine o'clock in the morning. Someone took me to the hut, but from afar I could hear the death rattle and realized that he had entered into his agony, that this was the end, and that God had kept him alive so he could receive the Last Sacraments, for they told me that he had been unconscious like that for thirty-six hours. I gave him Extreme Unction immediately, in the presence of six or seven Roandries and a few Frenchmen, who were exhausted.

They were all sad to see him in that state, so I talked to them about the uncertainty of life and told them that the person they saw so near death had come to teach them to believe in God and to serve Him so that they could live forever after in Heaven, where there would be no more sickness nor sorrow, and where the lowliest slave would be a very great king, if he had been baptized and served God well. I said also that, although the body of my brother was going to die, his soul, however, could not die and was going to heaven, especially since he had been baptized and had served God well. They listened to that willingly and said to me: "That is good, that is good."

Then I contemplated that poor sick man; I took his pulse and saw that he had a high fever. I had them give me the details of his illness. They told me he had been in the grips of it for two weeks but had always tried to travel on foot, except for the last six days, when he had been carried on a
tacon. This was a source of great torment for him because of the branches and thorns that brushed up against him as they were passing through the woods, and his face was all bruised. He had also suffered a great deal because he had had no water for three days and, lastly, he had not eaten for five days.

Using a feather, we moistened his tongue and mouth with some Spanish wine. Noticing that this relaxed his esophagus a little and unstuck his poor tongue, I took heart. I had his stomach, feet, and hands rubbed with warm wine. Seeing that this gave him a little strength, I had someone continue to moisten his mouth from time to time, until around one o'clock in the afternoon, when I discovered that his pulse was getting much weaker. I realized then that nothing else could be done and that I might have to remain alone in such a faraway land. I began to think of the trials and prodigious work this man, who had been so robust, had endured for six years so as to come to these parts. "O my God!" I said, "how inscrutable are Your judgments and how far removed are Your ways from those of men! You want the conversion of so many thousands of souls in such distant countries, yet You immediately take away the persons who are so courageous in going there!"

Then, it seemed to me that the death of such fine workers was to be the seed of Christians in these new lands, just as that of the martyrs had been in Europe. Next, I adored His divine ways and abandoned myself into His arms. Finally, after all of us had spent an hour and a half or two hours in prayer, recommending his soul to God, he passed from this life to the next as gently as a child, with no facial contortions at all, and his countenance became very beautiful.

Alas! There was no one—adults or children—who did not express their sorrow. He died on the Eve of the Ascension, at three o'clock in the afternoon. The late M. Nacquart had died the day after this same feast, at the time when Our Lord made His glorious entry into Heaven, accompanied by all those great patriarchs who had worked so hard for His glory.

So you can imagine, dearest and Most Honored Father, my distress and the sorrow of my poor heart. That, I repeat, is the cause of affliction that I have found so difficult to express to you. Mais quoi! God has willed it; let us adore His Divine Providence.

Finally, after pondering what I should do with the body because of the heat and the distance to be traveled, I decided to have it transported at all costs, not only to place it with our priests, but also to have near me after death the one who had been my companion during his life.
Therefore, after walking almost all night, we reached Tholanghare at nine o'clock the next morning. Everyone came running to our house both to mourn the deceased priest and to console me as well. But, alas! if Tobit was inconsolable because he had lost his sight, how could I be otherwise after losing my spiritual and temporal guide?

On Ascension Day I offered the High Mass of the Dead for the repose of his soul, and we buried him with all possible honor. Every single native was present and expressed his sorrow. After that, I went apart to think about myself, seeing the uncertainty of life. I took an inventory of everything; then I reflected on the life of our deceased and tried to do alone what our priests do in our houses. Oh! what a sweet occupation it was for me to recall the zeal and ardor with which he would speak to me about virtue when we were together in the seminary!

His love for the Blessed Virgin and his mortification were so great that he could not conceal them. He talked constantly about the glorious Virgin and had so much love for the feasts the Church celebrates in her honor that he spent those days in a state of extraordinary devotion. He had even prepared sermons for all of them and on all the virtues of that Mother of purity. He had made a vow to her to say her rosary every day, that she might obtain for him the grace of going to foreign lands.

As for mortification and bodily austerities, he never abandoned the discipline and vigils, and I often saw him spend fast days taking only a little boiled rice and some cheese. He suffered intensely on days of abstinence because he was unwilling to eat fat, used in place of butter, which cannot be found here. His desire for suffering was certainly evident in the two whole years he spent distributing alms in Picardy and Champagne during the wars and famine. He had to go on foot to four or five parishes to officiate there and to oversee the distribution of food and the feeding of the sick. What insults, what affronts of all kinds he had to endure! How many dangers he risked!

Mais quoi! shall I not also mention his ardent yearning to give his life to God in distant countries, and the heavy labors and fatigue he endured to prepare everything for this journey? It would certainly take me too long to do so. I leave you to imagine them, since you witnessed them, as I did. Nor will I describe to you the extraordinary trials he underwent during the entire journey from France because the person who was supposed to be helping him gave him the most trouble. I will say nothing either about the

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5Today, Tolagnaro.
sufferings I caused him; God has left me in this world to acknowledge them and to do penance for them. I will content myself only with telling you about the fatigues he underwent during the recent journey to the Imaphalles. That pleased him the most because it caused him to suffer even to his death.

He had to walk barefoot almost two hundred leagues, along narrow, rough, mountainous roads, eating just a little burnt meat and drinking foul-smelling, stagnant water for a month. He ate very small quantities of some miserable beans cooked in water, with no salt or sauce. He often walked for three days without finding a drop of water to drink, and with all that he had a fever every day. When the French were telling me all the things he had suffered, they said that for six days he was carried like a dead man in a piece of cloth slung from two poles borne by two men, and all along the way he brushed up against rocks and trees. Once, when it was very cold, they passed him across the river, and he almost went under. His body was livid and he looked like a skeleton.

I know that is a great deal. But, Mon Dieu! how his spirit must have suffered, and what must have been his sorrow at seeing so many offenses against God without being able to remedy them! How many calumnies he had to endure! By what moral tortures his delicate conscience must have been tormented! He was asked if he had anything to tell me; he replied that he really wanted to see me so he could go to confession. When the French told him that they were about twenty leagues from the settlement, he replied that it was necessary to suffer and return quickly so that he could go to the Red Sea with M. de la Forest, as he had promised him. Would so much work have been useless? Certainly not, because God, who saw his heart, gave a special blessing to his journey. On it he baptized three of those loose women whom he married to Frenchmen; they are now living upright lives and are an example to the Malagasy women. He prevented many disorders, warmed the hearts of those idolaters toward the Christian faith, and got the French and the natives to pray morning and evening.

During that journey he offered Holy Mass on all Sundays and feast days, had many of the French make their Easter duties, and was very zealous in assisting the sick. Several persons told me that he always fasted and said his Breviary throughout the journey, which is incredibly fatiguing.

That, Most Honored Father, is the little I was able to discover with regard to his virtues during the time I had the happiness of living with him. I know he kept himself as hidden as possible and that many of his virtues will be revealed to us only in the next life.

After I had eased my sorrow somewhat and put everything in order as best I could, M. de la Forest set sail, to the great regret of everyone. Still,
we were consoled by the thought of his return before long, when he would put everything in order.

M. de Pronis continued to have the fort repaired, and I continued to instruct these poor neophytes and to teach them how to pray. Every day a few of them asked to be baptized. At times two, three, four, eight, ten new persons could be seen coming to learn how to pray and to listen to the prayers. Sometimes they would stand in the doorway, craning their necks, and were very reticent. They respect the church so much that, when they are sick or have an ailment that might be repulsive to other people, they dare not enter.

Three or four times I came upon a man who had smallpox, listening from a distance. I asked him what he was doing there; "I am just listening," he said, "I have smallpox and am ashamed to enter Zanahary's house." I told him that God considered only the soul and was not like men, who considered the beauty of the body. He interrupted me, saying: "Then teach me to pray." I did so, and he was filled with joy.

The same thing happened to a poor man with two broken legs, who walks on his hands. He said to me: "I am poor and my legs are broken; I cannot enter God's house." I told him that the poor would be the greatest, if they were baptized and served God well, and that when they got to heaven they would no longer have broken legs, but their bodies would be whole and as radiant as the sun. All he could answer was: "To, to," meaning "that is good, that is good." For a month he has continued to pray very earnestly and knows all his prayers.

After one man saw me celebrate Mass and lead the prayers, he came into the room to pray in private. When he had finished, I exhorted him to desire to be baptized, to become the servant of Zanahary, and to forget those ollis made only of sand and wood. I added that their Ombiasses were deceiving them. He said that this was true and that the priests of Zanahary were ompit sakabira toko, meaning "truly priests." "Baptize me," he said, "when some of your brothers arrive."

Their fervor increases daily; although M. de Pronis, who is a heretic, harasses us a little, God still receives His glory from this because, when he had me tell the Frenchmen to come to morning and evening prayers and that he would also say his in his room at the same time, I realized this was really to attract some natives there because all those in his service went to prayers only in his home, and I was even informed that the wives of two Frenchmen were ready to go there. I dissuaded them as best I could, without, however, explaining the difference of religion, which I have always kept quiet, saying that they were baptized and were praying to God as we do. And when his little girl came to see the prayers being said, I had
her recite the Our Father in French in front of everyone. This was a great help in reassuring those poor people, who make a real effort to come to morning and evening prayers, after the example of the good Frenchmen.

From that time on, seeing that I was overwhelmed with people coming at all hours to pray, I had to make them all pray aloud in church. Children as well as adults adapted most promptly to this. Would to God, Monsieur, that you and all our confreres could hear the new harmony arising from the discordant voices of young and old, men and women, rich and poor, all united in faith in the same God!

A few days ago I baptized a mute girl about eighteen years of age. She was always coming to see us; I would show her pictures and try to give her an idea of our religion. Through these pictures she knew that there was a great Robbery; when I showed her hell and its demons, she made signs indicating that thieves, murderers, and evil people go there. We also made her understand that girls should not keep company with men and that she would be as beautiful as the angels whose picture she saw. She certainly edifies everyone, never failing to come to morning and evening prayers with the others, taking holy water, making the Sign of the Cross, and kneeling so modestly that she never raises her eyes. I believe she is a soul who is very pleasing to God.

I have baptized four native families; that is, the husband, wife, and children. The first person was a good old man, at least ninety years old. He was dying from intestinal inflammation, caused by a lack of natural heat and food. Informed of this, I went to see him. I entered a hut so small that a man would have a hard time lying down in it, and his head would touch the roof when he knelt down. His wife, the same age as he, was there. She kept a fire going day and night to warm his poor body. I spoke to her and asked about his illness. I gave her a little treacle and some good food, and he was promptly healed. The next day I met him carrying some firewood, and he said to me: "You are a god; I am cured; I am your slave forever." I replied that it was God who did it all and it was He who had made the medicine effective. I told him that he and his wife should come and learn how to pray, which they have done every day with all their children. The Governor had them given the ordinary daily ration. They are in good health and work as hard as young persons. Many people come for a week or so to learn, but when they have to keep this up, they grow tired. I have them come for two or three months, except for the elderly, who cannot remember things. I made one girl wait a whole year because she seemed bold to me, but she never stopped coming to pray, and in the end her perseverance won me over; I baptized her and she is doing very well.
With regard to marriages, I can tell you that, in addition to the three that the late M. Mousnier performed, and one from M. Nacquart's time, I have done eight between Frenchmen and loose women. The latter were the first to come and pray, the first baptized, and the first to show zeal for the honor of God. Now, as I mentioned to you, they are giving the example to the other women, who tell me they want to be like the Frenchmen's wives, that is, married once and for all. When a Frenchman asked one if she were willing to offend God, she became angry and replied that she was a married woman and that it was wrong for him to talk to her like that. That, I think, is a good sign.

We had all sorts of trouble getting rid of the prostitutes. I was obliged to go into the huts with a piece of cord and chase them out, after resorting to prayers and supplications and after the Governor had told me to do so.

Four Frenchmen, who have not yet been to confession, have caused me a lot of trouble because of women. One of them still has a mistress in the country. He keeps saying he wants to marry her but has not done so and has mistreated three women in this way since we have been here. That is making a bad impression. May Our Lord be pleased to remedy the situation!

People here never yield to angry words but reason gently with one another. That is why insults and anger surprise them and cut them to the heart. We try to get them used to suffering in silence. In the beginning they complained aloud about their husbands but no longer do so. Four natives, married during M. Nacquart's time, were separated from their wives by the wars. They were reunited with great difficulty; we had to resort to threats. They are doing very well now, except for one of the husbands, who does not come to church.

Let me tell you in passing that a man who is found... with a woman other than his wife is sentenced to kill two, three, four head of cattle, according to his means, to have the loose woman's wounds dressed... I say "to have her wounds dressed" because his wife and her relatives will hit that bad woman over the head with a stick, and quite often with a bill hook. All the friends and relatives eat the above-mentioned animal, except the husband himself.

The women are very jealous of their husbands, and husbands of their wives, so much so that very often they spy on one another. When they suspect something, they swear they will stay away from the house from two weeks to a month, and they do just that.

One horrible, detestable thing is that fathers, mothers, relatives, and others have little children commit sin from the time they are very young, giving them this fatal inclination and habit. Little girls—four, five, six years
old—sin . . . , and this is the age at which they are the boldest and are most familiar with evil . . . I do not believe there is one child over the age of three who has not been corrupted, which proves how much hard work is needed to heal this wound. A few persons, however, are beginning to open their eyes and to realize the enormity of this evil, and parents who used to prostitute their children are ashamed of this disgrace.

I beg O[ur] L[ord], who is the wine that makes virgins, to give these poor people purity and to destroy this monster, which is the greatest evil in the country.

The daughter of a very good native, who himself wants to be baptized, came to our house and said to me: “My heart is troubled, you have not baptized me; you see that I know how to pray.” I said that I would like to do so but was afraid she might act like those women married by M. Nacquart, and that afterward she might not think of God any longer or become a loose woman. Immediately she replied: “Do not say that, for I do not want to get married nor go off with men.” I had her kneel down before her companions and promise she would believe only in God, pray to Him, and never wear oills, which she promised willingly. Since the godfather she wanted was away in the country, we deferred her baptism.

Godfathers are hard to find. This being the case, I told them they could become godfathers and godmothers if they were baptized and that this is a great honor, but they had to be very good, instruct their charges, and prevent them from offending God. This made them go in search of little children to be baptized. The following day, one of my natives brought me a little boy so that he could be his godfather. After questioning him and making him promise to do good, I put him in charge of that child. He has given him all his trinkets, has him pray, and shares his food with him.

These poor Indians come to me when they are sick, and I thank O[ur] L[ord] for this because, as soon as someone is wounded or ill, they come to me asking for some slight relief or refreshment. This is very useful, for it is the time when they listen to me most willingly. It also gave me the opportunity to baptize four little children, who died immediately afterward and consequently went straight to heaven. We buried them with the usual ceremonies, getting children their own age to carry the candles. The bodies were covered with a white cloth and bouquets of flowers. This surprised them the first time but, once I had explained the ceremonies to them, they were all very much at ease, since I assured them that these children who had died with baptism were like angels in Heaven. A very outspoken old man interrupted me, saying that they should be mourned in the customary way. Now, this mourning consists in killing cattle, singing, leaping around the bodies, and bringing them food and drink. I told them they were well
aware that the body decomposes and could not eat, that the soul, which
would neither die nor eat any longer, was living another life in Heaven
and praying for them, and that I was not preventing the father from
entertaining his friends. They concluded that I had spoken well, and that
this old man was not wise. Then the mothers and fathers cut their hair and
took off their trinkets.

They have the custom, every week or once a month, of sending some
rice and small containers of wine to the tombs of their dead. The slaves
eat this rice and drink the wine; then they come and say that the deceased
person is well because he has eaten and drunk well. Please observe the
illusion of these poor people. I tell them that their ancestors did this to let
them know that the soul is immortal and that, consequently, they must serve
God, if they want to live happily ever after in heaven.

When their relatives are ill, they also have the custom of having several
dances performed and obis made. When they see them getting better, they
make honey wine, and everyone takes a mouthful, which they spit in the
face of the convalescent. They say that this is done to banish the illness
and strengthen the patients. Sometimes they also throw blood on them,
especially when they have a high fever or are delirious; that is when they
write letters on their forehead with a stick of tamotamo, or palma Christi.

The circumcision of men is absurd, both how it is done and the
ceremonies observed. I will not describe it, especially since I think it has
already been explained to you. As for the women, it is said that giving birth
is their circumcision. I was told that before a woman gives birth she must
confess any evil she has done and name all the persons with whom she
sinned. All the packages and baskets found in the house must be opened
because it is believed that if she had not confessed everything she could
not give birth. To get them to say this in the confessional is always a step
forward.

But let us put this discourse aside because news has just reached us that
a young Frenchman, who had remained behind ill from the journey to the
Imaphalles, has been murdered by the Ombilambo, wood thieves who hide
in the bushes. There are some in the ravaged areas, and they give you
almost no quarter, if they can take you by surprise. We have also been
warned that the people in power are going to war again, despite their
sworn promise and the agreement made with M. de la Forest. Dian
Panola, the most important man in the region of Anossi, is secretly
crossing the mountains with all his followers. This is a serious problem
for the French because of the few men they have left, some of whom they
have to send to a place more than a hundred leagues away to get cattle,
and obliges the French to capture Dian Machicore, who is the adviser of
all the others. We have assured him that we wish him no harm, but simply regretted that those men were trying to ravage the whole area, as they had done once before, and that, if he wanted to leave, he would have to give his son and one from each powerful person as hostages. He did so in good time by a special Providence of God, as you will see later.

Since Machicore was detained in this way, his wife and children came to stay with him. They came to see me several times, but I did not get anywhere with them. Finally, one day I showed them the church vestments and the sacred vessels; they were enchanted and wanted to touch them. I told them that only the priests could touch them, but to prove to them that it was not just because of the gold—which they respect like a god and which their slaves do not dare to touch—I let them touch a silver cup plated with gold. The King’s wife took it and placed it on her head, then kissed it saying: “lay la, lay la” (“that is great, that is great”). The others then did the same. Then I took that cup, threw it on the ground, spat on it, and told them it was only yellow earth, which had no spirit, since it could not talk, nor pick itself up from the ground, and that, as far as I was concerned, I did not care about gold or silver but only about God, the Great Master who makes all the gold and silver. Then I explained the difference between that and the sacred vessels. This time Machicore’s wife was touched and she began to pray, promising she would come back. She did so for a week, bringing with her all her husband’s children; namely, two young men and two young women of marriageable age; little Jerome, who is baptized; and all her slaves. Every day I had them say prayers, and they even came to church. In the end, Machicore also came to pray, but when I realized that it would be hard to allow slaves to be seated in the room where they were—because slaves are always seated on the ground in front of them—I forestalled them. I told them I was well aware of their status and that once they were baptized and came to church regularly, I would assign them a place worthy of their dignity, but that in my house I could not have slaves seated on the ground because there were too many people coming constantly to pray. That satisfied them and, when I noticed that Dian Machicore was suffering from a bad leg, I went to their hut every evening and had them pray there. I tell you quite frankly, Monsieur, that my heart rejoiced at seeing that King on his knees, praying so devoutly with his whole family. I spoke to him about being baptized. He replied that he himself was too old but was willing to have me baptize his wife and children. I was unable to do this because they left immediately afterward, when the little children arrived.

M. de Pronis, our Governor, fell ill and died suddenly, although he had not made much headway in assuring the safety of the French. He had
always been very friendly toward me, and I tried to respond to this by rendering him whatever services I could. His illness was a violent renal colic that lasted three weeks. He sent for me at midnight the day before he died and, in the presence of all the Frenchmen, asked me to listen to his last wishes, especially since he knew he was going to die. I wrote down what he dictated to me in a confused manner. Then, after I had asked his advice on each matter, particularly on how we should conduct affairs of government with the leaders of this country, he entrusted his child to me, begging me to take care of her. Seeing how difficult it was for him to speak, we asked him to rest a little. I said a few words to him about his conversion to the faith, as I had done on other occasions, but he made no reply. I thought it was because of the presence of some heretics. For the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass I was soon to celebrate, I made the intention that God might enlighten him and dispose all things according to His good pleasure. At daybreak I left him, saying that I was going to pray for him. He thanked me for that and begged all the Frenchmen to do likewise.

So, I celebrated Holy Mass and recommended his soul to the prayers of everyone. Then he sent for me again and placed his little girl in my hands, after bidding her farewell. Seeing that I was alone with him, and burning with desire for his salvation, I said: “Monseur, you know my affection for you; I am prepared to pledge not only my life, but my eternal salvation, for the truths of the Roman Church; I seek no benefit from you by speaking in this manner but am interested only in your good.”

After reflecting a while, he said that he was well aware of what he had to do, and asked me to let him die in peace. I said to him, “It is to put you at peace, Monseur, that I venture to speak of this matter on which depends an eternity of happiness or misery for you.” He replied: “Monseur, let us leave all that alone; it is too late.” Then he immediately lost the power of speech and died around eleven o’clock in the evening, showing no sign of conversion.

Mon Dieu! how my soul was grieved! True, he had promised the late M. Nacquart he would abjure; but, as you can imagine, the short time he had stayed with his relatives had really corrupted him. He had always worked on Sundays and feast days and often made the natives work, even on Corpus Christi and the feast of Saint John. Three times I told him what I thought about this: that it was not right and that God would not bless his work. This turned out to be true because he never lived in the house he took so much trouble to build and was not successful in anything. God is just. His little girl, who wanted to come to church and pray like the others, has never failed to come four times a day. Two days after her father’s death, she knew by heart the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the
Confiteor, and grace before and after meals, which astonished me. She is very intelligent and so serious that you would think she was a grown woman. I have been looking for a good woman to take care of her and watch over her properly but have been unable to find one.

We had such a violent storm that it carried off the roofs of most of the houses and even entire houses themselves. A tremendous amount of hail fell, the icy stones as big as bullets, a sight unseen in these parts. It did not do much damage, thank God. We are really anxious about the rice crop because there is already famine in the country.

I wish you could see the destitution of these poor Indians. They are even eating raw grass, like cattle. Little children are often seen eating sand when they are hungry. This is a natural instinct, for fear that their bowels may shrink. I do not know to what I should attribute this misery, occurring two or three months every year—whether it is the greed of the powerful, who take whatever these poor people may have, preventing them from ever being able to store up anything and causing them to live without any concern for keeping anything for the morrow, whether it is a punishment from God because they do not honor Him as they should, or whether it is, rather, an effect of His mercy that, by keeping them lowly and humble, makes it easier for us to convert them. Many would like nothing better than to be baptized, but I want them to learn how to pray first, during which time I test them and observe their behavior.

Some have a slight knowledge of spiritual things. I said to one who understands French quite well that I would really like him to be my interpreter and would give him something for it. He replied generously: "You are joking; a person should take nothing for serving God." "Then," I replied, "I will give it to you because I love you." He immediately retorted: "Do not say another word because my heart would not accept anything for that." He knows his prayers very well and is looking for a wife, so that they can be baptized and married at the same time.

A few days ago, an ampanefy volamena, meaning "a goldsmith," came to work where I was. I was surprised to see how few tools these people use for their work. His forge was a little earthenware plate, his bellows a pipe, and his anvil the head of a nail. And they work quite happily with that, producing such delicate, well-made objects that people would never believe they could make those things unless they saw them do it. I spoke to him about different tools, furnaces, and large iron forges. "I find that amazing," he said, "we here are not ingenious; the Vazaha, (meaning 'the French,') are too powerful." I told him it was true that they were not ingenious, especially since they did not know God, who granted wisdom to persons who were baptized. "We are well aware of this," he replied,
"and we would be baptized if there were one or two hundred Frenchmen here." I know for sure from several persons that one of the things that has kept the people here from being baptized and is still holding them back, is the fear that the French are not going to stay long on the island or, if they are few in number, the white men 6 will have them massacred. These goldsmiths are highly respected by all, and from time immemorial it has been forbidden to harm them in any way.

The famine was so severe during the month of July that many natives were starving to death. I set up a soup kettle here for all the children, baptized and unbaptized, who are delighted to receive a ladleful of soup every day. They come in large numbers. I teach them catechism myself every day at noon. They are very attentive and well behaved. Even some of the mothers come, carrying their little children. This really pleases me because they suck in this spiritual milk with great avidity. Seeing the results of this, I have decided to keep it up and to animate them more. Even some of the French children would not miss coming. Every Sunday I give a prize to the girl or boy who has recited the best. The prize is a medal or a brass cross.

Speaking of crosses, I ask you most humbly, Monsieur, to send us one or two thousand of them, about half a finger in length or a little longer, please. They need to be solid and made of brass only because if they are tin, they cut them up and put them on their bracelets. The cross is one way to recognize them; they wear it around their neck, as well as the rosaries I give them. Wooden ones are no good because they break immediately and lose their color. They should be made of bone or white horn or dyed red; they do not like black ones.

Do not send any Agnus Dei because they wear olis around their neck, which resemble them; olis are made of wax with sand inside.

The better to help our little children remember the main points of our religion, I asked the interpreter to translate our little catechism into the native dialect, word for word, which we have done. This is very helpful to me because, for several reasons, I have been obliged to do without an interpreter.

But, every Sunday, after I offer Holy Mass, I have them recite their prayers aloud; then I talk to them for about a quarter of an hour. If, however, I cannot make myself clearly understood, one of the men or women leaders explains to the others what I have said. They are becoming

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6There were two different races of natives, black and white, on the island. The latter were mainly of Arabic origin.
more and more enthusiastic about our holy Faith, and, in fact, I see new persons arriving every day to pray. All the women of Tholanghare want to be baptized and married in church, as do many of the men. Were there two or three priests here, I would hope that, in a year's time, almost everyone in Anossi would be baptized, although it is quite large. Two or three village chiefs have told me they would gladly be baptized, but there is no one to teach them how to pray. I try to encourage them to desire baptism and have them make acts of it so that, in case of necessity, this baptism in voto will suffice.

I teach them how to make their confession. Twelve adults and two children have fulfilled this duty. I hope that all will have gone to confession before Easter, please God. They are very diligent about coming to prayers morning and evening and even at noon. The bashful and the elderly come to our house, and I have them pray privately.

We have started to make blessed bread every Sunday; this encourages them a great deal because they see that they are treated like the French. Last week, I noticed that some of them did not come until the French had finished praying. I immediately guessed that they thought our prayers were special and for us alone. So I had to tell them that nobody says the Our Father without praying for all Catholics, that people in France were praying for them and they for the people in France, and so we formed only one body. Then, too, they can see that the same bread is distributed to everyone. This has pleased them very much and they have not failed to come early, thank God. The women, on their own, have separated themselves from the men in church; they sit in the back or near the railing, when there are too many men.

Allow me to tell you in passing, Monsieur, that while I am writing this, all the women of the village have been dancing from morning to evening and even all night long, with such powerful body movements that you wonder how they can stand it. They are doing this for their husbands, who are at war. But the strange thing is that as soon as the bell is rung for prayer, they stop dancing and come to church. The first time they came, they were barebreasted. I told them I did not disapprove of their dancing to while away the time in their husbands' absence, but it would be better for them to cover their bosoms—French women would be ashamed to see them that way. They answered all together: "To, to," meaning "You are right," and from then on covered their bosoms. In these dances they carry three sticks of three different kinds of wood that they say are to make their husbands happy. They are masked as men and pretend they are fighting 7
with one another, shouting at the top of their lungs and chanting in cadence, and they stamp so energetically that the ground shakes. They keep their arms outstretched, jump up and down, and make weird faces. I told them that, if they want their husbands to be well and to win the battle, they should ask this of God, who will not fail to give them victory.

Recently, three fine young men abjured heresy, showing marvelous strength and courage in so doing. Another died with the intention and desire to do so, for he lost the power of speech just as we were about to begin. This is a very good example for the natives. There are still two more to whom I hope God will grant the grace to see the truth. I beg you, Monsieur, to recommend this matter to Our Lord.

I almost forgot to tell you that, while the ship was away, I wanted to learn to read the way they do here, both to understand better their deceitful ways and to find some way of bringing them to a knowledge of the truth. So I sent for one of the most powerful, learned Ombiasses of the region, a man named Rabobe, who has boasted that through the power of his olis he caused the death of M. Nacquart. He was delighted to come to our house, and I was pleased to be able to learn how to read and write. He suggested first of all that I buy one of their books, so I could read what was in it. That was what I wanted most. He brought me two of them, which I bought. I made arrangements with him to teach me, and we got right down to work. In a short time I learned how to write and then to spell.

Since I was glad to profit by the opportunity and because I wanted to learn the principles of their law so as to explain our mysteries better, I asked our interpreter one day to come and help me. He came, and the Governor was there also. So I asked him [Rabobe] what he thought of creation. He told us some ridiculous stories, namely, that God had thrown man out like a lump of flesh who, when he had grown, made such a huge fire that he thought he would burn heaven, which made God very angry. He also told a thousand other fables that would be boring to write to you. I asked him about Abraham, too. He said that, being angry with his son and wanting to sacrifice him to God, he was changed into a bull. It took him an hour to tell us this fable. Then I asked him what he thought of Solomon, whom they call Mose. He said that when he was small, he yelled so loud near his house that God heard him in heaven and sent an angel to find out what he wanted. He refused to tell the angel and yelled so much louder that he was deafening God, who came to talk to him. To quiet him He gave him a cow from which he could nurse, and he went on and on with this nonsensical tale.

Please observe how ignorant and blind these poor people are, Monsieur, and whether it is not true that God has allowed that seeing, they do
not see and hearing they do not hear. I asked him whether he knew that Solomon had built a temple and what he named it. He said he had no idea. I asked what he called an altar on which sacrifices were offered; he said it was called lafi, which means "a carpet placed on the ground," on which they make the sacrifice. Finally, seeing that he did not know anything, I asked him why he was so unenlightened. He answered that it was because a big book that used to be in the King's house had been burned. But that is a lie because the book was burned just recently, and I knew that it was sheer ignorance because when I asked him to explain what he was showing me to read, he said he did not understand it, which surprised me. I asked the interpreter to explain it, thinking that he was reluctant to say it for some reason. He assured me, however, that neither he nor they could give an explanation, but that they read and wrote those things like a peasant would read a prayer in Latin. This discouraged me from wasting any more time learning how to read, seeing how little use it would be to me, and that God would grant me the grace to do so when an Arabic dictionary arrived. So I took a large illustrated Bible and showed him how creation took place, and some of the other mysteries. But he was not interested in that because he was intoxicated with his own reveries. I spoke to him about baptism and of giving him a head start, in case he wanted to teach our mysteries to the people. He said he was willing, but I think that was only lip service.

Ombiasses such as those do the most harm, for they intimidate the people so much that they think they can make them ill or die whenever they wish and do them all kinds of damage. True, they sometimes make evil use of harmful roots which, although non-poisonous, can make people sick. This man made me a present of a jar of honey, which was full of scraps of these roots and of mossy, little pieces of wood in the shape of charms. All that, however, is ineffective.

I am sending you one of their books, Monsieur, in which you can see all their oils, which are like prayers written on bark and worn around the neck. They have them for all sorts of illnesses and for all sorts of wealth. Sometimes, for influential persons, the Ombiasses use a hot iron to stamp letters on them, which are indications of greatness. They also wear a belt filled with written pages, which they call sorcery. These same Ombiasses have blue figures and letters tattooed on their skin.

But, to get back to those four little Roandries, the sons of the most powerful men of the land, being held as hostages for the safety of the settlement, they came to pray for a long time. They know their prayers very well. Among them is Machicore's son who has been baptized privately. When I noticed that they were wearing oils around their necks, I told them
that their gods could not speak and had no ears, and that they were only sand and should be thrown away. They asked for a knife, cut them off, and threw them away; then they asked for a little cross to wear around their neck. I gave them each a brass cross and told them that the King of France also wears a cross. They were very proud of this, and they always wear it. I am waiting for the men on the ship to be their godfathers so I can baptize them. They want this very much.

Our men, who had gone to the country after M. de Pronis died, returned in good health, thank God. But the white men 8 bribed all the black men to rebel against them, and they almost lost their lives. Dian Panola, who is the chief of all the others, is angry at having missed this opportunity and is plotting betrayals more than ever, to the point that to restore order, he had to be taken into custody until M. de la Forest's return.

But here is the latest and worst of all the misfortunes that have befallen us and with which I will conclude. We saw the ship approaching, and everyone was so delighted that they began to jump up and down and dance for joy. It came closer but gave no salute. Everyone was seized with fear, whispering to one another, trying to find out what might be happening. Finally, some of the men were put ashore and had no sooner landed than they said that M. de la Forest was dead and the ship was lost. Most of the people were crying. You would have said that each one had lost his father. We asked how it had happened. They said that the cause of all the troubles was that those in power had sent gold and silver overland to the leaders in the places where M. de la Forest was to go, in order to have him assassinated. Moreover, they were told that he was a worthless man, not like M. de Pronis. So, one day, when M. de la Forest was taking a walk, a big native came and challenged him to a fight, hitting him on the head with a volo. M. de la Forest pretended to take aim at him but was unwilling to kill him for fear of losing trade, so he fled. But they took advantage of that and, a week or so later, brought some merchandise and urged him to come and see it. He let himself be taken in by that and was going down a hillock on his way there, when he was murdered. He put up a long struggle but had lost so much blood from a head wound that his strength failed him. This occurred on July 4, and three other men were murdered along with him, without even having had time to fire a shot. One of them was the brother of M. Gaudin, a Doctor of the Sorbonne and a native of Tours. The powerful men did this out of envy because, when they saw this handsome, gracious man, honored and loved not only by the French, but

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8See n. 6.
by the natives as well, putting everything in such good order, they seriously thought that he was going to fortify the settlement.

Today I baptized a family of four and married the father and mother. I baptized the two eldest children of Dian Mananghe, an important Roandrie, after suggesting that he and everyone else, including his father and brother, be baptized. They are Kings like him and are not far from it, often asking me if it is true that baptized persons go to heaven and the unbaptized to hell, and they have even asked me things privately. He is leaving his youngest son with me and has given me permission to baptize him. This is a great deal as far as the powerful men are concerned. If this man were baptized, there would be many others. The grandfather, who is almost a hundred years old, but healthy and very prudent, asked me whether I baptized old men and if it would be the wrong thing to do. When I had satisfied him on these points, he said it was a good thing and he would think it over. I told him, however, that from now on he should not put any faith in oIs but only in God and should desire to be baptized, calling on God whenever he was fearful.

The eldest son of Dian Mananghe, named Dian Masse, who is baptized, is one of the most courageous young men in the region and is very intelligent. A handsome man, he prays every day in front of his people. I told him to instruct his wife and his people, which he promised to do. They leave for home tomorrow.

That is all I can tell you right now, entreating you to have people pray for the conversion of these poor people and for my own in particular. I am, Monsieur and Most Honored Father, your most humble and very obedient son and servant.

T. BOURDAISE, I.C.M.

1992. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

You know that, among the workers mentioned in the Gospel, some were called late and yet were rewarded in the evening like those who had worked since morning.¹ So you will merit just as

¹Cf. Mt 20:1-17. (NAB)
much by patiently awaiting the Master's Will as by doing it when it is made known to you, since you are ready for anything—ready to leave, ready to remain. May God be praised for this holy indifference, which makes you a most fitting instrument for the works of God!

1993. - TO FIRMIN GET, SUPERIOR, IN MARSEILLES

January 14, 1656

I do not know if I told you that our Holy Father has been pleased to ratify our Little Company and the custom of simple vows. At any rate, I ask you to help us to thank God for it. This approbation states nonetheless that we belong to the body of the secular clergy.

1994. - TO JEAN MARTIN, SUPERIOR, IN TURIN

Paris, January 21, 1656

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have not received any of your precious letters since the last one I wrote you in my own hand, so I have nothing to tell you except that the enclosed is a letter from one of your relatives concerning your brother. I do not know if there is any news of him. I pray to God that he is well, wherever he is, and that He will ease your suffering about him. I ask Him also, Monsieur, to strengthen you in your work so that you will not succumb beneath the load and

Letter 1993. - Archives of the Mission, Paris, Marseilles manuscript. The original was in the Saint's handwriting.

can continue to restore to His grace souls who have distanced themselves from Him through ignorance and sin. To do so, you must take good care of your health and join to this great confidence in His Goodness, for thus He will be favorable to you in all your needs and will take pleasure in blessing the services you will render Him. These are the wishes of my poor heart, which is full of esteem and tenderness for yours and embraces affectionately your little Company.

I am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
is.C.M.

1995. - TO FIRMIN GET, SUPERIOR, IN MARSEILLES

January 21, 1656

I received a letter from M. B. together with yours, but please tell him that I do not answer persons who do not do what I have asked them to do, and that, when he does, I will write to him.

I have written just as many or more letters to Algiers as to Tunis during the last eight or ten months; yet, in his latest letters, M. Barreau says that he has received none, while the men in Tunis say they have received six or seven. Please let me know if you are aware of the reason for this. Perhaps the boats by which you sent them were lost. The wife of a citizen of Paris had sent a bill of exchange to her son. He is a slave—or rather a renegade—planning to escape, and had asked her for four or five hundred livres for clothing and travel, to be picked up when he gets to Venice. Now, this mother is worried because she has received no reply about this, nor have I. If you have a chance to write a word about it soon to M. Barreau or M. Le Vacher, please do so.
1996. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

January 21, 1656

It will be a good idea for you, Monsieur, not to keep any money aside but to hand it over to the procurator. He must know that it is up to the Superior to dispose of whatever is in the procurator’s office, and still less should he have anything to say about how you use it. So, please do not hesitate to ask him for it, when necessary. Everyone knows you are not one to make ill use of it or incur unnecessary expenses.

You have no sooner returned from the missions than there you are, doing another work, giving retreats to parish priests, instead of taking a little rest! Oh! what a great rest God is preparing for you in heaven, since you take so little on earth, where you are consuming your life for the love of Our Lord, who gave His own for our salvation! I ask Him, however, to preserve you for a long time so that His death may be efficacious for the souls you assist.

1997. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, January 1656

During the mission we just gave in Breda, we noticed how tireless the people were in coming to our sermons and catechism lessons. They came with such a great desire to profit by them that what they heard there made a deep impression on their hearts, with the result that they could be seen instructing and encouraging one another afterward. They spent the whole morning of Communion day in reconciliations and embracing one another. The power of God’s grace was clearly seen in that, for the most
prominent men and women of the area, putting aside all human respect, had no difficulty humbling themselves before the poorest of the poor, asking their pardon for the faults they had committed against them.

But when it came to the sermon, which was given immediately before Communion, hearts were so touched that it took very little for several to fall into a faint. The preacher was obliged to interrupt his sermon twice and to stop speaking in order to halt the tears and sighs of those good people. When the sermon was over, a local priest came forward to the main altar and, prostrating himself on the ground, asked pardon aloud, first of God and then of the people, for the scandalous life he had led. The people, deeply moved by such an example, began to cry aloud: “Have mercy!”

Envious of such success, the devil tried to thwart it by disturbing the good order and good disposition of the people during the procession after Vespers. Precedence was the cause, claimed equally by a few confraternities of penitents established in the parish. God in His goodness, however, prevented disorder because, during the dispute, when someone stated that the preacher had said that the penitents clothed in white had precedence, the great respect everyone had for what he said caused them all to accept this, with no further discussion. By this means, the procession took place with great piety and edification for all.

I think I should not omit saying here that, when the people were encouraged to buy a silver cross for their church, everyone wanted to participate in this good work. The result was that, after each had made his modest effort to contribute to it, the amount collected was a hundred écus—more than was needed.

1998. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1656] 1

Will Mademoiselle Le Gras please look over this rough draft of a letter for Nantes 2 to see if it is as it should be? If not, change it,


1The note Saint Louise appended to this letter (cf. n. 9) enables us to assign the date.
2Saint Vincent’s reply to the request of Abbé de la Meilleraye, principal Administrator of the Nantes hospital.
adding and deleting whatever you judge appropriate. 3

"Monsieur, in the letter you did me the honor of writing me, you ask us, on behalf of the Fathers, 4 for another Sister who knows how to compound medicines at least as well as Sister Henriette; 5 otherwise, they do not want one. My reply to you, Monsieur, is that we have no one so proficient in that duty. We do, however, have some Sisters who know how to fulfill it adequately; they have done so, and are still doing so, effectively in the parishes of Paris, and there have never been any complaints about them. 6 We will give you one of them who will give you grounds for satisfaction. Perhaps one can be found among the five who are at the hospital; in that case, we will send a Sister to serve the sick in the place of the one who will take the pharmacy. If there is no one there adequately trained for it, we will send you someone from here.

"If you, Monsieur, 7 do not want anyone from either here or there for that duty, unless she is as experienced as the Sister you have sent back to us, please excuse our helplessness and agree to our holding to the terms of the contract, which does not oblige our Sisters to prepare remedies.

"I ask you, Monsieur, to let me know the final intention of the Fathers in this regard and whether they approve of our sending them a sixth Sister, since five are not enough to cover the other duties, plus the fact that this would 8 be overworking them." 9

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3This paragraph is in the Saint's handwriting.
4The Administrators of the Nantes hospital, often called Fathers of the Poor.
5Sister Henriette Gesseaume.
6The phrase, "and there have never been any complaints about them," is in the Saint's handwriting.
7This word was added by the Saint between the lines.
8First redaction: "unless they want to." The correction is in the Saint's handwriting.
9Saint Louise added the following at the bottom of this rough draft: "Reply to the letter from Abbé de la Meilleraye, prepared by our Most Honored Father in January 1656. We should take note of the spirit of humility, gentleness, forbearance, prudence, and firmness, and especially the Spirit of God in him, which should convince us that he always acts in consequence of what God makes known to him. May He be forever glorified for it."
Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I received two of your letters—from January 8 and 13—at the same time. In a letter the Marquis did me the honor of writing me, I had already heard of the blessing God was pleased to give to your work during the mission of Pianezza,¹ and he expressed his great satisfaction with it. God be praised! I am deeply consoled by this, but I am equally distressed by the meager help you are getting from your men and the lack of enthusiasm some show for the language of the country and the functions of the Company. I ask God to make them realize how wrong they are to act that way and the account they will have to render at the judgment seat of God, if they do not apply themselves to their duty, in view of the needs of the poor people and the example you are giving them.

You should not expect anyone from Genoa to come and help you because, when M. Blatiron spoke to the Cardinal about lending you M. Richard, H[is] E[minence] changed the subject—a sign that he did not accept this proposal. We are, in fact, sending you a priest from Savoy, who is a good preacher,² but I am not sure that he speaks Italian. Besides, he cannot go to Turin until around Lent. In the meantime, I ask Our Lord to be your first and your second [Assistant] in the other missions you are going to undertake. The extraordinary aid you received from Him in the one you have just closed should increase your confidence in His help for those that will follow. In addition, I hope you will get more help than you are already getting from your priests. We will try also to send you a Brother, other than Lasnier, whom we have put in the pharmacy to

¹A small commune in Piedmont.
²M. de Musy.
prepare to replace Alexandre, if God were to call him to Himself.

I thank God that your foundation has been made. His Lordship said a few words in general to me about it, and you have written me the details. I will have a thank-you letter written to him as soon as possible, but only God can make him realize the magnitude of our gratitude. Remember to regulate your expenses in line with your income.

You, as well as we, no longer have to worry now about your brother's absence, for I think you heard that he has gone to Rome. M. Blatiron has informed me that he is in Genoa, staying at their house, while awaiting an occasion to leave with his companions. These are some young men who took him from Paris to make this journey. That being the case, you need not be concerned about his affairs nor send the power of attorney requested of you.

We have no news here. Everyone is well, thank God. I started going out a week ago, which I had been unable to do for the past three months. M. Guillot is also cured. We are going to send the three priests, who came back with him, to Agde, Cahors, and Tréguier. M. Ozenne is still in Silesia with the Queen of Poland, and M. Desdames is staying on in Warsaw with M. Duperroy. They are all at peace, and God seems to be trying to bring about a change in the affairs of that kingdom because the Tartars and the Cossacks have joined forces with the King against the Swedes.

I send my most affectionate greetings to your family, and with all my soul I embrace your own dear one. I am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Turin, in Turin

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2Brother Alexandre Véronne, the infirmary in Saint-Lazare.
January 30, 1656

Vincent de Paul asks this Superior not to accept the invitation of a wealthy pastor who might offer to board the Missionaries, even if the pastor should be annoyed at this.

January 30, 1656

I saw what you did in Chartres; thank God that you found M. Le Feron, your uncle, disposed to consider us for his Saint-Martin Priory. I do not know what will come of it, but it seems there may be something of God in that interview. The proposed benefit seems so great to me that I find myself in the same state as I was when the late Prior of Saint-Lazare came to offer me this house. I was dumbfounded, like a man surprised by the report of cannon fired

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1The personnel catalogue states: "Nicolas Étienne, born on September 17, 1634, admitted on August 8, 1653, on condition that he remain a seminarian all his life because of the serious deformity of one of his hands. He took his vows on August 8, 1655, and with a dispensation was ordained a priest on August 31, 1659, on condition that he go to Madagascar." (Cf. Notices, vol. I, p. 480.) Étienne had already applied to go as a catechist; it was Saint Vincent who sought the dispensation for his ordination. He set off the first time in 1660 but could not land and had to return to France. In May 1663 he left again, arriving in Madagascar in September. His apostolate was short-lived: a Malagasy chief, Dian Manangue, who had promised to receive Baptism, invited him to dinner, imprisoned him, and murdered him along with Brother Philippe Patte and some indigenous Christians. Coste and Notices, vol. V (Supplement), p. 218, give February 27, 1664, as the date of the massacre. Notices, vol. III, pp. 350-68, gives a fuller biography of Étienne; on page 350, it states that he died on March 4, while on p. 367 it says "in the first week of Lent 1664." A short account of Brother Patte is given on pp. 369-71 of the latter, which states that he died with M. Étienne on March 4. In both instances, Mémoires C.M., Madagascar, vol. IX, is cited; Coste specifies pp. 374-494.

2Saint-Martin was a section of Dreux (Eure-et-Loire).
close to him when he was not thinking of it; he is dazed by such an unexpected noise. So astonished was I by the proposal that I was speechless. He himself noticed this and said to me: “Quoi! you are trembling!” Yes, dear Brother, the proposal of which you have just written me had almost the same effect on me, and I do not dare dwell on it, when I have in mind the sight of our unworthiness, except to admire the goodness of the Prior of Saint-Martin for having cast his eyes on a little, nascent, wretched Company like ours.

Something else that fills me with wonder and gratitude is the offer you make of your property to establish us in that place, in this way divesting yourself of everything for the glory of God. By this voluntary renunciation you prepare yourself to be clothed with the spirit of Jesus Christ in order to bring about your own sanctification and to procure that of others.

I thank you most affectionately, dear Brother, for your heartfelt, effective love for your poor mother; you are like a well-born child, who never ceases to love tenderly the one who gave him birth, however poor and unattractive she may be. May God be pleased to grant the Company to which you belong the grace of raising you, by its example and practices, to a great love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our father, our mother, and our all.

Let us get back to M. Le Feron’s proposal. I think we will do well to leave it at that for a while, both to blunt the point of nature, which wants advantageous matters to be executed promptly, and to practice holy indifference, giving Our Lord the opportunity of manifesting His Will to us, while we recommend the matter to Him. If He wants it done, delay will not spoil anything; and the less there is of our will in this, the more there will be of His.

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3 Saint Vincent used this same comparison in the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, ch. 12, art. 10.
4 It did not materialize.
February 1656

M. [Vageot], who went back to his native place after leaving you, was seen in Paris two days ago by one of our Brothers. I tell you this so you will not be taken by surprise because he is probably here only so he can make his way back to Saintes. I do not think you should refuse to give him his bag—if he asks for it—nor keep any of its contents, because he could make a great fuss over it. However, no matter how much he insists, you are not to give him any of the furnishings which that good monk, when he was dying, left to the Company for the use of your house. If he says that he gave them to him personally, that is unlikely, but it is possible to believe that the deceased intended to make this gift to the family and not to an individual person. And even if he had thought of presenting it to M. [Vageot] alone, the latter, who had made a vow of poverty, could accept this gift only for the Community. If this has to be debated in court, as the case merits, it will take this argument into consideration, if you are summoned there.

If the Bishop of Saintes visits your house, he should be received with the respect, love, and submission we owe him. He has a right to visit his seminary, and if he also agrees to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in your church, that will be a blessing for you.

I thought I had given you a reply regarding the proposal of that good Pastor who, owing to trouble in his parish, is asking to exchange it for your Saint-Preuil parish. You know, Monsieur, that there are long formalities, and often insurmountable difficul-

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1Reg. 2 mistakenly referred to him as the Superior. He was not appointed to that office until April 2 (cf. no. 2040).

2The copyist does not name Philippe Vageot here or further on in the letter.

3Louis de Bassompierre (1649-76).

4A locality in the district of Cognac (Charente).
ties, in effecting the union of a parish; the consent of the patron, of
the inhabitants, of the Bishop, and even of the King is required. It
demands legal contracts, inquiries into advantages and disadvan-
tages, and other long, drawn out proceedings.

We did all that for the union of Saint-Preuil. Is there any
reasonable motive now to divide that benefice, which you are
enjoying in peace, to become embroiled in a new lawsuit for
another union, with the obvious danger of failure, and to end up
with a lawsuit on your hands with the nobleman who is at odds with
this Pastor? For he would be no more favorable to you than he is
to him, if you did not grant him what he desires. For all these
reasons, I ask you to thank this good priest for his good will.

2003. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

February 1, 1656

Your letter did not surprise me, as you thought it would, because
it is said that those who want to follow Jesus Christ will suffer
temptation.¹ It has instead greatly consoled me, since it is the first
letter I have had from you, and comes from a person most dear to
me, whose goodness I have known from the time God called you
to the Company, which you have always edified. So, if you are now
being troubled so strongly by your relatives that you are on the point
of yielding to their persuasions, do not be surprised by this. It is a
trial God wishes to make of your fidelity in order to bind you all
the more to Him, once He has freed you from this danger; for then
you will see, better than you do now, that the world is a deceiver.
Instead of the satisfactions it promises, it gives nothing but troubles
of mind, as you have just experienced. By continuing to serve God,

¹Cf. 2 Tm 3:12. (NAB)
as you have done, you will enjoy the abundant, divine peace of the children of God, such as you have already tasted.

Courage, then, Monsieur, do not yield. If, for two weeks, you have resisted the proposals being made to you, it is because you have seen that they are contrary to God's Will and your vocation; and if, in the end, you consented to them somewhat, it was not without regret, knowing that you could not do so in conscience. Moreover, no harm has yet been done, if you are willing to give up the parish and remain in the state in which God has placed you. I certainly hope you will do so, Monsieur, if you reflect carefully on the following reasons:

(1) on the grace of your vocation, by which God places in your hands so many means of perfecting your soul and of saving so many others. "You have not chosen yourselves," says Our Lord, "but it is I who have chosen you." 2 Now, He would not be bound to give you those graces in another vocation to which He had not called you.

(2) on the blessings God has been pleased to bestow until now on all your works, in which you have done great good at home and abroad, and which, apart from the merit you will have for them before God, have won for you the esteem and affection of everyone.

(3) on the promise you made to God to serve Him in the little Congregation. If you break your word to God, with whom will you keep it?

(4) on these words of Our Lord: "Anyone who does not leave father and mother for love of me, is not worthy of me." 3 You have left yours, thank God, to give yourself entirely to Him; is it likely, then, that you might leave His side now in order to go back to your relatives?

(5) lastly, on the regret you will have when you are dying, and on what you will have to answer for at the judgment seat of God

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2 Cf. Jn 15:16. (NAB)
3 Cf. Mt 10:37. (NAB)
if, out of human respect, or for a temporal good, or to lead a more comfortable life, or for all these reasons together—although under other pretexts—you were to fall into the infidelity we just mentioned and lose the opportunities you have of promoting the glory of our Master, among both the clergy and the poor. God forbid, Monsieur, that this misfortune should befall you!

You will perhaps be told, as you have already been told, that you can work out your salvation anywhere, and that a parish is a continual mission. I admit that, but I reply also that it is very difficult—not to say impossible—to save ourselves in a place and in a state where God does not wish us to be, especially after abandoning, for no reason, a true vocation such as you acknowledge yours to be. This being so, you would have great reason to fear that you might not have the grace for the duties of a parish and for your own perfection because you wanted to confine your efforts to one place, when Providence meant them to be for several.

If you say you are not strong enough for the works of the Company, you know, Monsieur, that, by God’s grace, we have various functions, that the duties of each individual are gauged on his health and talents, and that those who work hardest have, however, less difficulty than a country parish priest who does his duty well.

If the objection is put to you that you have greater obligations toward the souls of those nearest to you than toward strangers, say courageously that the mission you will procure for their parish will do them more good in a month or three weeks than you could do them if you lived among them all your life. The reason is that familiarity lessens esteem and often destroys it entirely, and a person is then incapable of effecting anything. That is why a man is rarely a prophet in his own country. In fact, Our Lord returned to Nazareth only once, and on that occasion the inhabitants wanted to throw Him down from the summit of a rock. Perhaps He allowed

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4 Cf. Lk 4:24. (NAB)
5 Cf. Lk 4:28-29. (NAB)
this to teach evangelical workers that, by returning to their own country, they are in danger of losing the high opinion to which their labors had raised them and of falling into some shameful vice. That is why again he would not let two of His disciples return home, when they asked permission, one to bury his dead father, and the other to sell his property in order to distribute it among the poor.

If you say you are bound to assist your mother, that is true in only one case, namely, if she lacked the basic necessities of life and, without your help, was in danger of starving to death. But she is well provided with the goods of this world, thank God, and can manage without you in the future, as she has done in the past.

You will tell me, however, that you will prevent lawsuits and divisions in the family. That you would do so is questionable, Monsieur; you should fear, rather, that your mother, brothers, or sisters might win you over to their own interests and entangle you along with themselves in temporal affairs. This happens only too often to priests who try to meddle in them.

Finally, you could add that you are already committed to this benefice and that M. . . ., who conferred it on you, would be displeased if, after having accepted it, you were to give it back to him. Surely, Monsieur, it is better to fail a man than fail God, since you cannot satisfy both in this instance, having already renounced all sorts of benefices for the love of this same Lord. But this good gentleman, far from being annoyed, will be most edified when, to carry out your original resolution, you send him back his letters of appointment.

For all these reasons, Monsieur, I would like to hope that you will give yourself anew to God to serve Him in the Company according to His eternal designs, and think no more of the parish or your relatives, except to distance yourself from them both in deed and in affection, and to recommend them to God. In this way,

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\[^6\text{Cf. Mt} 8:21-22. \text{(NAB)}\]

\[^7\text{Cf. Mt} 19:21. \text{(NAB)}\]
He in His Divine Goodness will continue to grant His blessings
and, because of you, to pour them forth on souls who are close to
you. I ask Him this with all my heart.

2004. - TO A PRIEST

This priest, formerly a member of the Congregation of the Mission, had
saved Saint Vincent's life. Many times he had asked to be readmitted, but
always in vain. The idea occurred to him to remind the Saint of the service
he had once rendered him. On recalling it, Saint Vincent yielded and sent
him a letter of which Collet has preserved only the following words:
"Come, Monsieur, and you will be received with open arms." 1

2005. - TO JEAN MARTIN, SUPERIOR, IN TURIN

Paris, February 4, 1656

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

God be praised, Monsieur, that you, in Turin, heard sooner than
we, in Paris, of your brother's journey to Rome, and this even
before you knew how worried we were by his absence, which
would have upset you more! True, he would have done better not
to leave his class before the end of the year and to have prepared
people and his affairs better, as he had intended to do, and not taken
them by surprise, as he did; but I hope God will receive some glory
from it, and he, some strengthening. I ask His Divine Goodness for

1Collet states that, in late March or early April 1649, this priest had rescued the Saint when
his fractious horse threw him into the river at Durval.

this, and I cannot thank Him enough for the graces He has bestowed on your second mission. Nevertheless, I thank Him as best I can, with a deep sentiment of gratitude, especially since it is obvious that Our Lord is working with you. Since you are not being helped by men, you could not do what you are doing without the hand of God, who not only strengthens you in this heavy work, but also touches the hearts of those who come to you. May His Mercy be pleased to convert them entirely to Himself!

You should not be surprised, Monsieur, to note some sadness in those priests who are with you; still less should you attribute the cause of it to your leadership. It proceeds from the fact that they are unable to work at such a beautiful harvest. It stirs up in them a desire to do so, but ignorance of the language prevents this. That is why this sadness will change to joy in proportion as they see themselves in a position to help you and to share with you the work and merit.

Meanwhile, Monsieur, it is fitting for you to support them and, by supporting them, you will encourage them gently in their study and progress in the language. By always speaking Italian with them and obliging them to speak it, you will even help them advance in it, so that, by combining practice with study, they will profit more from this. I am sure that the acts of patience and forbearance you practice in their regard will bring down a blessing on them, and on yourself as well, and that this blessing will soon bring them to the point which God in His Providence demands of them to be of service to Him. Your leadership, which is already very good, thank God, will become gentler and stronger and, in the end, the work of the Lord will be, as always, better accomplished by gentleness than otherwise. Please, Monsieur, ask Our Lord for this for me. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Turin
Paris, February 4, 1656

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

You will have learned from the letters I sent you that God has been pleased to take your father to Himself. There was no need to console you in this sorrow because the same God whom you are serving will, I hope, have done so at the same time that you have striven to merit the grace of this by conforming your will to His. That is the prayer I offered Him. I have also prayed, and have had prayers offered, for the repose of the soul of the dear departed. Our Company has suffered a great loss in him, for he was a good friend of ours.

The letter I just received from you states two reasons for which you suggest making a journey to France. One is to see and to console this good father. This reason no longer holds now, since he is with God. That leaves the second, which pertains to your share of the property he has left you. On this point let me tell you, Monsieur, that your share cannot be contested and, if it ever is, you will have the right to ask for it because the vow of poverty which we make does not exclude you from your inheritance, but leaves you the power to dispose of your property. As this is so, I do not think you should come here now for this temporal interest, since it cannot be lost and you do not need it; for, apart from the good you would leave undone where you now are, you would be coming here to engage in a lawsuit, which would cause you mental strain and might be harmful to your vocation.

I am sure that if you had lived in the time of the Apostles, Our Lord would not have permitted you to return home, for He refused

permission to two of His disciples, although the reasons they had for going home were plausible: one wanted to bury his dead father,¹ and the other to sell his goods and distribute them among the poor.² This Divine Savior knew the inconveniences which arise from such returns, and He Himself had experience of it when He went back to Nazareth. That is why, Monsieur, I ask you to defer your journey and be content with writing to your brothers. Do so in order to express your grief and mingle your tears with theirs for the common loss you have just suffered. Do so also to tell them you envy them the happiness they had of assisting this dear father in his illness and death; to wish them the grace of fearing and loving God as he did; and to tell them that you were about to go and see them but, as you are now in a position to serve effectively God and your neighbor, to whom you have given yourself, you are willing to prefer the salvation of souls to your own satisfaction. Tell them you do so in the hope that, as your father is the first cause, after God, of the good you are doing, Our Lord will apply its merit to him; that you hope also that, when the inheritance is divided, they will preserve your share; that you are not a monk—and can never be one—but a secular priest belonging to the body of the clergy; consequently, you have a right to inherit along with them. That, more or less, Monsieur, is what you might say to them.

In addition, I cannot express to you the consolation I had to learn of the blessings God is giving to your work and that of M. Legendre, whom I embrace tenderly in spirit. I ask His Divine Goodness to continue to grant them and to give you the strength needed to sustain so many missions. The commotion that arose in the last one did not lessen my joy, for that is a sign that the evil spirit saw he was being forced to leave the place, since he had made use of his time there to incite his henchmen openly against the servants of the Gospel, who are trying to make Jesus Christ reign in the souls

¹Cf. Mt 8:21-22. (NAB)
²Cf. Mt 19:21. (NAB)
which this tyrant had ravished from Him. Yes, Monsieur, it is a
good sign when you suffer for justice' sake,3 and I hope the patience
and humility you have practiced in this little tribulation have drawn
down fresh graces on you to triumph more gloriously in a greater
one, if it occurs, and to labor with greater success. The sufferings
of Our Lord caused His words to bear fruit, and your crosses will
likewise cause the seed you sow to bear fruit in hearts. Please take
care of yourself.

I am, in the love of that same Lord, Monsieur, your most humble
servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
I.S.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Pesnelle, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

2007. - TO FIRMIN GET, SUPERIOR, IN MARSEILLES

February 4, 1656

Our vow of poverty leaves us the freedom only to dispose of the
capital of our property, if we have any, but deprives us of the use
of its profits, which is reserved to the Company. Consequently,
those who have made this vow cannot, as individuals, receive,
keep, or use any money or anything else, except with the Superior’s
permission. Therefore, Monsieur, please see that this is observed
by your men, especially after the visitation, during which M. Ber-
the will explain to them the obligation of this vow.

3Cf. Mt 5:10. (NAB)

Most Holy Father,

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, humbly represents to Your Holiness that God has been pleased to bestow abundant fruits on the missions given by priests of the said Congregation. These include the conversion of many sinners, the settlement of disputes, the appeasement of mortal hatreds and deadly enmities, and by this means of the missions, the cessation of many public scandals. To encourage more people to receive these graces and to remove the obstacles standing in the way of the conversion of many because those priests do not have faculties to absolve from cases reserved to Your Holiness, it would be most helpful if Your Beatitude would deign to grant a plenary indulgence and the Apostolic Blessing to all those who go to confession and receive Holy Communion during those missions, and to authorize these same Priests of the Mission to absolve from cases reserved to Your Holiness, even from the censure against duelists, and the one in the Bull, *In coena Domini*, against those who steal or keep the property of shipwrecked persons. Therefore, the said petitioner humbly entreats Your Beatitude to grant these favors, which Popes Urban VIII and Innocent X, of happy memory, granted to the Priests of the Mission of the house in Rome for the entire district of Rome. And the whole Congregation, as well as the

Letter 2008. - Archives of Propaganda Fide, III Gallia, no. 200, fol. 177, original unsigned petition, written in Italian.

1In March 1656 the Saint was notified that the concession he requested had been granted for a period of seven years (cf. no. 2029).

2In Church law, there are sins or crimes considered so serious that their forgiveness is reserved to the Bishop or even to the Pope alone. In certain circumstances the faculty to absolve from these reserved sins can be delegated to specified persons for specific cases.

3See no. 1876, n. 9. The Saint refers here to paragraph 4 of the papal letter.
peoples who will be served by it, will feel bound to pray unceasingly for Your Holiness and for your happy reign.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: His Holiness of Our Lord, for Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

2009. - TO CLAUDE DE CHANDENIER

Paris, February 8, 1656

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know how I let these last two mails go by without writing to you. I most humbly ask your pardon for this and intend, with God's help, to acquit myself better of this duty another time.

With your last letter I received the power of attorney concerning the Priory of Chandenier. I have handed it over to M. Aubrey, in accordance with your instructions and the wish of Mademoiselle de Chandenier,¹ and have burned the other documents, since your sister thought it advisable to do so.

Enclosed are the two models for the annuities on Saint-Pourçain and Coudres.² I send them to you with as lively a gratitude as I have ever felt and am capable of feeling. O Monsieur, who will give me words to enable me to let you see it! Surely only Our Lord can do so, and He will do it by saying it into the ear of your heart. I ask

Letter 2009. - The original autograph letter was formerly the property of the Daughters of Charity in Commentry (Allier). Its present location is unknown.

¹Marie de Chandenier.
²Saint-Martin de Coudres Priory, Évreux diocese (Eure), was dependent on the Benedictine monastery of Bourgueil. The Bulls of union with the Congregation of the Mission were not obtained until much later (March 24, 1663). They were published in Acta apostolica in gratiam Congregationis Missionis, pp. 29-32.
Him this with all the tenderness of my own wretched heart, so unworthy of such an incomparable favor as you have done us. O Monsieur, how fervently I ask God to be Himself your reward! We will act in such a way that you will be completely satisfied.

M. Jolly has written to me twice to say he is worried at not receiving any news from us about your Bulls, which he sent by way of Lyons to Tournus, and that he fears your Bulls may have gone astray. I let him know, Monsieur, that you have received them.

I have not yet written to the Marquis 3 in reply to his last letter. I will do so in the spirit I think you would wish, and will explain to him that your Bulls do not oblige you to change your state in life.

I think your sister is still filled with gratitude, and it seems to me that M. Aubry’s gratitude is incomparable. O Monsieur, what a good servant of God he is!

I venture here to renew my offers of perpetual obedience to you and your brother.4 God knows how heartily I do so and that I am, Monsieur, in His love, the most humble and most obedient servant of both of you.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: The Abbot of Moutiers-Saint-Jean

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3François, Marquis de Chandenier, brother of Claude de Chandenier.
4Louis de Chandenier, Abbot of Tournus.
Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

By a decree of February 10, 1653, this Sacred Congregation appointed as Missionary Apostolic to Saint-Laurent Island, also known as Madagascar, François Mousnier, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, and empowered Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the said Congregation, to send with him two other priests, with the participation and approval of the Nuncio to France. In virtue of this decree, Toussaint Bourdaise was approved by His Most Illustrious Lordship and sent with the aforementioned François Mousnier, as indicated in the Nuncio’s letter. Therefore, Vincent de Paul, the most humble petitioner of Your Eminences, humbly petitions that Toussaint Bourdaise be declared Missionary Apostolic on that island and be granted the usual faculties. And because Charles Nacquart, Priest of the same Congregation of the Mission and Prefect of the Mission of the island of Madagascar, has passed to a better life, Vincent de Paul also humbly entreats them to name as Prefect, in place of the above-mentioned deceased, François Mousnier, who was already appointed Missionary Apostolic some years ago, and of whom the Nuncio gives favorable


1In no. 2085, dated June 23, 1656, Saint Vincent writes of a ship, recently arrived in Nantes from Madagascar, carrying letters from M. Bourdaise. Among them was probably no. 1991, written on January 10, 1656, in which the Saint learned of the death of M. Mousnier. Since he was unaware of it when he wrote this petition, it is safe to assume that it was written before June 23, 1656. The year, 1656, was added at the head of the petition in another handwriting.

2From letters arriving on L'Ours, a ship which landed at Saint-Nazaire shortly before June 23, 1655, Saint Vincent learned that Nacquart had died on May 29, 1650. Costa mistakenly gave the date of Nacquart’s death as May 21, 1651. Notices, gives May 29, 1650.
testimony in his letter. And he will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

2011. - TO MARK COGLEY, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

February 16, 1656

The Superior of the Capuchin Fathers of Sedan has written me a letter complaining that your house, which used to give them a weekly alms until the time of M. Martin, no longer wishes to continue this help. Please let me know, Monsieur, how much they were previously being given weekly or monthly, whether they are still being given anything now and how much, the reasons for reducing or cutting off this alms, and if it is because they can manage better without it than we can do. Lastly, tell me what the family thinks about the request of those Fathers to have this charity reestablished.

When you have informed me about all that, we shall see what it is advisable to do. In the meantime, please do not say I have written to you about it.
2012. - TO LOUIS DUPONT, SUPERIOR, IN TRÉGUIER

February 16, 1656

I ask you, in the name of Our Lord, to apply yourself principally to seeing that the Rule is observed. If you do, God will be at your side and will bless this way of acting, as He always blesses ways that are firm with regard to their end and gentle with regard to the means. Even those persons who might find this observance difficult will recognize subsequently that you do well to act in this way. They will have greater respect for you and, in short, greater submission to your orders.

2013. - NICOLAS DEMONCHY, SUPERIOR IN TOUL, TO SAINT VINCENT

1656

I cannot tell you how good Our Lord has been to us. We have heard about five hundred general confessions, without a single day of respite for a month. The bad winter weather, with snow two feet deep on the roads, has not been able to stop the poor people, rich in faith and hungry for the word of God, from coming, despite the extraordinary vexations they suffer from the soldiers. This is a sure proof that the kingdom of God is for them. All the good that could be desired was done there, and we have reason to say that Jesus Christ was pleased to spread, in an extraordinary manner, the fragrance of His Gospel in those places.


1Louis Dupont, born in Nemours (Seine-et-Marne), entered the Congregation of the Mission on October 23, 1641, at twenty-two years of age, and took his vows in November 1644. He was Superior in Toul (1652-53), Tréguier (1654-61), Annecy (1662-53), and at Saint-Charles (1664-71).

...*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur, how blessed are those who give themselves to God in this way to do what Jesus Christ did, and to practice, after His example, the virtues He practiced: poverty, obedience, humility, patience, zeal, and the other virtues! For in this way they are the true disciples of such a Master. They live solely of His Spirit and spread, together with the fragrance of His life, the merit of His actions, for the sanctification of souls for whom He died and rose again.

**2014. - TO FIRMIN GET, SUPERIOR, IN MARSEILLES**

Paris, February 25, 1656

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think the letter or packet which I should have received from you by the last ordinary mail was taken too late to the post office. At any rate, I received nothing from Marseilles, but I did hear from Toulon. I have written to M. Huguier there to say that the visitation...
of your house would be made by M. Berthe, who is nearby, and that, if he can leave Toulon in a day or two to be there for it, you will let him know the precise time he should go. Otherwise, M. Berthe will try to go and see him in Toulon. I am writing the same things to him once again in Marseilles and Agde at the same time. He sent me word from Agde that he would wait there for M. Durand and M. Lebas, in order to settle them in their duties, and I am asking him to remain there two or three days longer to get them started. Accordingly, I do not think he will reach your house until around March 5 or 6.

I am in a hurry to finish but cannot do so without recommending myself to your prayers and without repeating mine to God, as I am doing, for your preservation and the sanctification of your family. I send them affectionate greetings and am, Monsieur, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], your most humble servant.

**VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.**

*Addressed: Monsieur Get, Superior of the Mission, in Marseilles*

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**2015. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT**

*Saturday [February 26, 1656]*

*Most Honored Father,*

*Your charity knows that I would rather die than disobey you. I believe you will be pleased at my telling you that, by the grace of God, I am not*
sick. The tea I am drinking prevents the cold I have from spreading to my chest and does not interfere with my appetite for Lenten fare or for meat. Before, I had such repugnance for it that I could hardly eat it. You will make me very happy if you dispense me from it once again for a while. If you permit me to eat eggs, I will do so, and I think that will be enough for me. I promise that I will ask for some meat as soon as I feel the need for it, since your charity allows me to do so. I have the grace to be, Most Honored Father, your most humble, most obedient, and most grateful daughter and servant.

L. de M.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

2016. - TO GEORGES DES JARDINS,1 IN TOUL

March 1, 1656

It is true that your ailment requires some relief, but the remedy for it is not a change of residence. I have never seen anyone cured of those headaches by moving from one house to another. If God is pleased to free you from yours, He will do so just as well in Toul as elsewhere.


1Georges des Jardins, born in Alençon (Orne) on January 6, 1625, was ordained a priest in September 1649, entered the Congregation of the Mission on August 15, 1651, and took his vows on August 17, 1653. He was Superior in Toul (1655-57) and Narbonne (1659).
Dear Mother,

In my letter to you last Sunday, I wrote you two things concerning the draft of the contract to be signed with the Attorney General. These were: that I had nothing to add, delete, or change in what had been agreed upon. In addition, I told you, dear Mother, that I have always found something added or deleted from new drafts given to me. This happened in this last one you sent me, in which I did not find the clause I added to the preceding draft I gave to our dear Sister Louise-Eugénie in the faubourg. That clause referred to the exception of placing the coat of arms of the said nobleman in the chapel intended for the Blessed; this exception was not

Letter 2017. - Reg. 1, fol. 10v, copy made from the original autograph letter.

1Madeleine-Élisabeth de Maupeou, daughter of Gilles de Maupeou, Intendant and Controller-General of Finances under Henry IV. She entered the First Monastery of the Visitation in Paris in January 1628, at thirty-two years of age. The nuns of the Caen convent elected her their Superior on May 24, 1635, and reelected her on May 20, 1638. In 1641 she went to Bayonne to found a Visitation Monastery at the request of her nephew, François Fouquet, Bishop of that town, and did not return to Paris until 1655. When this letter was written, Mother Élisabeth was Superior of the First Monastery, an office she held until 1658. She died in this monastery on July 3, 1674, at the age of seventy-eight. (Cf. Année sainte, vol. VII, pp. 249-54.)

2Nicolas Fouquet.

3Louise-Eugénie de Fontaine (Fontaines) was born in Paris of Huguenot parents on March 13, 1608, entered the Visitation Monastery (rue Saint-Antoine) in 1630, seven years after her abjuration of heresy. She soon became Mistress of Novices; after her election as Superior in 1641, she was reelected so often that the convent had her at its head for thirty-three years. In 1644 she went to La Perrine Abbey near Le Mans to establish the renewal. On her return, the Archbishop of Paris asked her to work on the Rule of the Post-Royal Abbey. Saint Vincent, who observed her behavior in certain difficult situations, stated that “an angel could not have comported herself with more virtue.” (Cf. Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, So vie et ses oeuvres. [8 vols., Paris: Plon, 1874-80], vol. VIII, p. 446, note.) She died on September 29, 1694, at the age of eighty-six, leaving the reputation of a holy religious. “God always blessed her leadership and her undertakings,” states the Book of Professions (Arch. Nat. LL 1718). Her biography has been written by Jacqueline-Marie du Plessis Bonneau, Vie de la vénérable Mère Louise-Eugénie de Fontaine, religieuse et quatrième supérieure du premier monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie de Paris (Paris: F. Muguet, 1696).

4Francis de Sales.
inserted in the last draft, which is why I put it in the margin of the said draft. Still, I add to this that the epitaph of the said nobleman could be placed in that chapel, in the style and size of the ones of the late Commander and the late M. Fouquet. Perhaps that is all he is requesting, when he says he could have his coat of arms and epitaph placed anywhere he pleases in the church without spoiling anything—meaning to have them placed in the chapel where his body will lie.

Where else could we think of putting them? I see only the main altar. You cannot place them in the other chapels because you have given them all away, with the result that you do not have a single one in which you might place arms and epitaphs, without offending the proprietors of these chapels. Assuming this to be true, no other place remains but the one I mentioned to you, except for the pillars, which actually form part of those chapels. Does it not seem to you,

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5Noël Brulart de Sillery, Commander of the Knights of Saint John of Malta in Troyes. He held the highest posts at Court, was the Queen’s First Squire, then her Knight of Honor, Extraordinary Ambassador to Italy, Spain, and later in Rome to Popes Gregory XV and Urban VIII. Renouncing public life, he left the magnificent Hôtel de Sillery, sold his possessions, and, toward the end of 1632, went to live in a modest house near the First Monastery of the Visitation. Saint Vincent, his director, had brought about this miracle. When he saw the Commander detached from the world, he helped him make good use of his immense fortune. He took him to prisons and hospitals, and initiated him in works of charity. Sillery began his priestly studies in 1632 and was ordained a priest in 1634. He celebrated his first Mass on Holy Thursday, April 13, 1634, in the Chapel of the Visitation. He gave generously to religious congregations, especially to the Visitation, the Priests of the Mission, the Monastery of the Madeleine, the Jesuits, and Carmel, and tried unsuccessfully to organize a seminary in the House of the Templars in Paris. His priestly life was short but replete with works of charity, since he died on September 26, 1640, at the age of sixty-three. Saint Vincent assisted him in his last moments and celebrated his funeral service. (Cf. Vie de l’illustre Serviteur de Dieu Noël Brulart de Sillery; Histoire chronologique [1843], vol. 1, pp. 290-307; cf. also, Marcel-Martin Pouyeux, “Contribution à l’Histoire du monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie du faubourg Saint-Antoine au XVIIe siècle,” Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de Paris et de l’Île-de-France, [1910], pp. 184-202.)

6François Fouquet, Vicomte de Vaux, born in Brittany in 1587, died in Paris on April 22, 1640. He was a ship owner when Richelieu called him to the Council of the Navy and Commerce, and later became a Counselor in the Parlement, Master of Requests, and Ambassador to Switzerland. Fouquet had twelve children by his wife, Marie de Maupeou: five daughters entered the Visitation; Nicolas, the most famous of his children, was Attorney General (1650) and Superintendent of Finances (1653); François (the younger) was successively Bishop of Bayonne, Agde, and Narbonne; Louis took his brother’s place as Bishop of Agde.
dear Mother, that it is well to be explicit on this point and to indicate the place where he wishes to place his arms? It seems to me that the arms of the Commander and those of M. Fouquet are attached to the epitaph. Since this is so, and since the said nobleman is content with having his epitaph and arms placed around it in this way, that other clause, “to place them anywhere he pleases in the church,” would be unnecessary, and if it were not inserted, it would prevent the inconveniences that might arise in the course of time.

In this way, dear Mother, I think the said nobleman will have what he desires, namely, the right for him, his children, and his descendants who bear his name and arms, and their wives, to be buried, in perpetuity, in the crypt of the second chapel on the Gospel side of the main altar, and the right to have his arms and epitaph, like those of his late father and of Commander de Sillery, placed in the said chapel, with an obligation on the part of the monastery of never transferring the said bodies from the crypt nor the epitaph from the chapel. In doing this you are making a contract according to God and to justice, in so far as you will be carrying out the intentions of the late Commander and preserving for the monastery its rights to dedicate the chapel in honor of our Blessed Father and to inter in the said crypt noteworthy benefactors of the monastery, in conformity with your book of customs and your Constitutions.

No one in the world can ever contest any of the concessions you have granted to the Attorney General and his family, whereas, if you had followed the first drafts, you would have offended justice, the recognition due to the late Commander, and the designation of the chapel for the Blessed, and deprived a Prince, your neighbor, of the result of your concession, making a powerful enemy. In addition, you would have deprived the monastery of the right granted it by the King’s late brother. I feel certain that the Attorney General would not wish to make such a contract, once he was fully informed of the state of the matter, and this, dear Mother, has obliged me to put before you the objections I have made. Perhaps, to a certain extent, your Sisters might have had some excuse before
God for acting in accordance with the first drafts; but I would not have any, if I consented to it, for I know, as I am obliged to know, that anything not in accord with justice and order should never be done.

I think you are aware, dear Mother, that no one on earth is more devoted to the service of the Attorney General and to that of your sister than I. For the last twenty-five years I have been loyal to them and their family, and I hope God will grant me the grace of dying in that state. Therefore, I beg you to believe, dear Mother, that I have nothing else in view in this matter but the interest of God, of their service, and the welfare of your family, for whose good government I am obliged to expose myself to all sorts of eventualities. I am, dear Mother, in the love of Our Lord, Your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Since Commander de Sillery-Brulart desired that, after his death, his body should be buried in the church of the said monastery, where it now lies, in the crypt of the second chapel on the Gospel side, built and constructed by order of the late Commander and at his expense, selected and chosen by the Commander as the place of his burial, and in which he is interred, as it appears on the epitaph in the said chapel, in accordance with, and at the desire of, the contract entered into by the Commander and the said nuns on March 15, 1635, in virtue of which the said nuns have had President Fouquet buried in the said crypt, it seems just to mention the late Commander de Sillery in the manner stated above because he is the principal founder of the Church of Sainte-Marie and has given

7Marie de Maupeou.
8In accord with the expressed desire of the Commander, the chapel was to be dedicated to Saint Francis de Sales. His wishes were carried out.
9The text of this epitaph has been published in several works, among others the Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France (1910), p. 201.
great possessions to the monastery. That deserves recognition; in
addition, the Sisters are making this concession in virtue of the
contract entered into with the said Commander. It is also just to
speak of the said Commander, since mention is made of the other
bodies buried there. In time, the nuns, unaware of the obligations
they are under to him, and seeing that this crypt had been alienated
with full authority, might have his body removed from the crypt
and buried elsewhere.¹⁰ What gives one reason to fear this is the
fact that they have already transferred the body of the late President
Fouquet from the chapel in which it was interred into the crypt of
the said Commander, in order to give it [the chapel] to someone
else.¹¹ In the second place, the Attorney General, fearing that the
same transfer might be made of his body and those of his succes­sors,
has stipulated that the nuns will not be able to do so. Add to
this the gift or transfer they are making to the Attorney General of
the first Chapel on the Gospel side.

Furthermore, it seems inadvisable to include in the contract the
lines which begin in the middle of the next to last line of the fourth
page with the words “If in the future,” and go as far as the middle
of the sixth line, stating that, “if in the future any persons wish to
enter into a contract for the said second chapel, they shall not be at
liberty to do so nor to pledge it to anyone whomsoever, except to
the house of the said Attorney General,” because this chapel was
set aside by the late Commander de Sillery for Blessed Francis de
Sales, their Founder. It is useless to say that the Jesuit Fathers at
Saint-Louis Church gave the late Prince¹² the chapel they dedi­
cated to their patron, Saint Ignatius, because the Jesuits are the
masters of their own church, which they themselves had built, and

¹⁰The body of Commander de Sillery remained in that chapel until 1835.
¹¹In the eighteenth century the remains of François Fouquet reposed under the steps in the
chapel on the left as one entered. The body of his son was also placed there. (Cf. Hurbant et
Magny, Description historique de la ville de Paris et ses environs [4 vols., Paris: Moutard,
1779], vol. IV, p. 839.)
¹²Henri II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé (1588-1646).
can dispose of everything in it as they please. This, however, is not the case with this chapel because the Commander was its principal founder. And if it is said that he placed it at the disposition of the nuns, it was so that it would be, and always remain, dedicated to this Blessed Father, and serve under his name, whenever His Holiness is pleased to beatify him. These are the precise terms of his intention laid down in the contract. Now, if those nuns were to alienate it to others, they could have it used for years for Requiem Masses celebrated every day for a year, and keep it draped in mourning all year long, which would be contrary to the intention of the late Commander. That is why it is inadvisable to insert this clause.

2018. - TO LOUISE-MARIE DE GONZAGUE, QUEEN OF POLAND

Paris, March 3, 1656

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I did not have the honor of writing to Y[our] M[ajesty] since God was pleased to give you a share of the heavy cross with which He burdened the King of Kings, Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, because I heard of the perfect use Y[our] M[ajesty] is making of it and because, ordinarily, the consolation of men renews the sorrow and does not lessen it. Now, however, that I have learned that God has taken up arms for Y[our] M[ajesty] against His enemies and those of the King and his realm, I could not restrain myself from expressing to Y[our] M[ajesty] the incomparable consolation this gives me. It is certainly one of the most tangible I can receive in this world, both for the interest of your kingdom and that of His
Spouse, which is suffering in the person of Y[our] M[ajesty]. Most upright persons see this and are distressed by it.¹

Our Prelates are so moved, both by that and by the institution of five hundred sermons given in this kingdom since the death of the late King, that, in their meeting being held in Paris, they have ordered everyone to do penance to ask God to remedy so many ills with which the Church is threatened.² They all fasted on the Friday and Saturday before Shrove Tuesday, and began the Forty Hours’ devotion at the Augustinians, where two of them alternated before the Blessed Sacrament during the three days and celebrated Holy Mass in the same order. In addition, three of them also each took a day preaching and gave instructions that their servants should be catechized during that time. All that was done with such devotion by the Prelates that everyone confessed that they had never seen the likes of it nor greater unpretentiousness in the procession they had.

All that, Madame, gives us reason to hope that Our Lord will reestablish His Spouse in her pristine splendor, and Your Majesties in their kingdom. I spoke to many of them about contributing their temporal assistance for this purpose, and I found most of them ready and determined to propose this at their meeting. We shall see how God chooses to take care of matters. I venture to assure Your Majesty that, despicable as I am, I will lose no opportunity to be of service to you in this, and only my sins will prevent its effects.³

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¹In 1656 Sweden, with Brandenburg as an ally, invaded Poland. As Louise-Marie related in her 1657 appeal to the Assembly of the Clergy in France (cf. vol. VI, Appendix 2), Sweden attacked holy places and religious persons; it was feared that Catholicism would be destroyed in Poland. At this time Russia, Denmark, and Austria (the Holy Roman Empire) had declared war on Sweden.

²Following the deaths of Richelieu (1642) and Louis XIII (1643), during the period of the Regency and the civil wars of the Fronde, there was a great proliferation of Huguenot churches and meeting places in France. This was a great concern for the Assembly of the Clergy and eventually of Louis XIV, who revoked the legal religious status of the Huguenots in 1688.

³The Assembly of the Clergy did not deal with the needs of Poland until 1657, upon reception of a letter from Louise-Marie, Queen of Poland (cf. vol. VI, Appendix 2). At that time it declared
I was greatly distressed by the return of Your Majesty's Missionaries, for fear lest they had given Your Majesty some reason for sending them back, and I very nearly sent one of them back myself. I most humbly thank Your Majesty for the incomparable goodness you continue to show toward those who have remained there. I ask Our Lord to be your reward and to make me worthy of the grace of meriting the one you give me of allowing me to be, Madame, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

2019. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

March 3, 1656

Your proposed manner of filling your Internal Seminary is very long and very risky, for children taken before they are old enough to make a choice of life are changeable. They will say readily that they want to be Missionaries, and for a while will even be compliant, so that they can study, but if they are competent in something, they change their tune, say that they have no vocation, and leave. How many of that kind have we seen! Not so very long ago, we had fifteen or sixteen of them who, after putting us to a great deal of expense, left us. The late Cardinal de Joyeuse established a

that circumstances did not allow it to respond to her wishes. (Cf. Collection des Procès-Verbaux des Assemblées générales du Clergé de France depuis l'année 1560 jusqu'à présent [10 vols., Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1767-80], vol. IV, p. 431.)

Antoine Durand, Jacques Eveillard, René Simon, and Nicolas Guillot returned to France in late November 1655. Charles Ozenne, Guillaume Desdames, and Nicolas Duperrey remained in Poland despite the crisis.


1François, Duc de Joyeuse, born on June 24, 1562, was successively Bishop of Narbonne (1582-84), Toulouse (1584-1605), and Rouen (1605-15). He was created Cardinal on December 12, 1583, taking possession of his titular benefice in Rome on January 7, 1590. He had negotiated the reconciliation of King Henry IV with Rome and presided over the Estates-General of 1614, the last Estates-General before the French Revolution (1789). He died in 1615.
seminary in Rouen to train young clerics for the purpose of making them good priests for the diocese. However, scarcely a single one of them seems to have succeeded; for, once they complete their studies, some go into secular professions, and the others who become priests, not willing to subject themselves to serve the diocese, go elsewhere. The houses of the Visitation nuns often have a similar experience. They take little girls as boarders and, raising them in the spirit of the religious Order, give the habit to those who ask for it, when they are sixteen years old. But, almost all of those girls who take it in this way subsequently lead a lax, lazy life because they do not have a true vocation since they were put there by their relatives and remained there out of human respect.

So, Monsieur, there is reason to fear that, even though these young boys would like to persevere in our Congregation, they would be unsuitable for our works and give us reason for dismissing them. It is another thing to find in the missions intelligent, pious children who ask to become members of our Company, for I think it would be well to give them a try, if there was a way of feeding them free of charge. Still, I see so many reasons against this that I doubt very much that it is feasible.

2020. - TO LOUIS RIVET, IN SAINTES

March 5, 1656

The less you and your men can see and associate with M. [Vageot], the better; for, to justify his leaving us, he will have nothing but complaints in his mouth, and his bad attitude toward the Company could only be contagious.
2021. - TO PIERRE DE BEAUMONT, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU

March 5, 1656

I strongly approve your entreaty to me not to impose on you the office of Superior, for this shows that it will find in you the basis needed for this duty, namely, distrust of yourself. Without it you would not be sufficiently careful to have recourse to God, but with it you will present yourself often to His Goodness as being powerless to carry this burden and yet submissive to what He wills. Have the hope that He will give you the strength required, and ask Him for it. Go cautiously in His Divine Presence, doing nothing without consulting Him, asking the advice of wise, competent persons, especially your Consultors, in important matters. In accordance with all that, I am asking you to take over at the helm of this little bark which Providence is entrusting to your leadership. However, I give you this piece of advice for now: do not change what your predecessors have done, without the consent of the Superior General. Because this has not been done, some Superiors have made serious mistakes and almost ruined their houses.

2022. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

After the genuine, extraordinary signs God has given you of your vocation for the salvation of those people,¹ I embrace you in spirit, with all the sentiments of joy and tenderness merited by a soul whom God has chosen among so many others on earth to draw a great number of people to heaven. Your soul is such a one, having left all things for this purpose. Indeed, who would not love this dear


¹The inhabitants of Madagascar.
soul, detached in this way from creatures, from its own interests, and from its own body, which it animates only to place it at the service of God's plan, its end and sole aspiration? But who would not take care to husband the strength of this body, which has most certainly enlightened the blind and given life to the dead? This, Monsieur, is what causes me to ask you to consider it an instrument of God for the salvation of many and to preserve it with this in view.

2023. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

I am sure you feel keenly the separation from that dear companion and faithful friend, but remember, Monsieur, that Our Lord separated Himself from His own mother; and His disciples, whom the Holy Spirit had so perfectly united, separated from one another for the service of their Divine Master.

2024. - TO EDME JOLLY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

March 10, 1656

You have sent me the opinions of Reverend Fathers Aversa and Hilarion on the various questions I submitted to you. I thank


1Raffaello Aversa was born in San Severino (Italy) in 1588 and died in Rome on June 10, 1657. Five times this noted theologian served as Superior General of the Congregation of Clerks Regular (Theatines), founded in 1524 in Italy by Saint Cajetan and Gian Pietro Caraffa (later Pope Paul IV).

2Abbé Hilarion was born Bartolomeo Rancati on September 2, 1594 in Milan, the son of Bartolomeo Rancati and Margherita di Bagno. He entered the Cistercians in Milan on March 10, 1608, and taught in Salamanca (1614-18), then in Milan. In May 1619 he was sent to Holy Cross Convent of Jerusalem in Rome. Among the offices he held in the Curia was that of Consultant for Propaganda Fide, in which he provided many services for religious Orders and Founders. Saint Vincent considered him a friend and protector (cf. Annales C. M., 1951, p. 374).