215. - INFORMING SUPERIORS
OF THE SERIOUS FAULTS
AND TEMPTATIONS OF THE NEIGHBOR
(Common Rules, Chap. II, Art. 16 and 17)

[October 24, 1659]

"My dear confreres, this evening’s talk will be on part of the
Rule that was explained last Friday, October [17], but which was
done too superficially or was omitted, and on the article that
follows. So, here’s the article: The evil spirit often disguises himself
as an angel of light, and now and then tricks us by his illusions. All
of us must be ever alert for these tricks and should pay particular
attention to learning how to recognize and overcome them. That
was explained when speaking to you about illusions. The article
continues: Experience has shown that the most effective and surest
remedy in such cases is to discuss them as soon as possible with
those appointed by God for this. So, if anyone feels himself troubled
by ideas which seem to be in some way misleading, or upset by
acute anxiety or temptation, he should tell his Superior, or a Direc-
tor appointed for this, as soon as possible, so that the matter can be
competently dealt with. And he should accept with approval, as
coming from God’s hand, whatever solution is suggested, and put it
into practice with confidence and respect. Above all, he should take
care not to discuss it in any way with anyone else, whether a mem­
er of the Congregation or not. Experience has shown that this
worsens the problem, causes similar trouble for others, and can, in
the long run, even do serious damage in the whole Congregation.

"O mon Sauveur, how true that is! Here’s the following article,
which we should take with the one before it because of the
connection between them. It’s Art. 17: God has told everyone to

Conference 215. - Manuscript of Conferences. This conference is undated, but the content
establishes the date positively for us, despite a slight difficulty explained in note 1.

1The manuscript has October 24. This is an error, for the conference on illusions was given on
Friday, October 17. The date of the conference given here, about informing Superiors, should be
October 24, the following Friday. On the Friday after that, October 31, the conference was on
holiness, as indicated in the list of conferences given by M. Vincent at Saint-Lazare (cf.
Appendix 2).
help others as members of the same mystical body. We, then, in the Congregation should help one another. So, if anyone is aware of someone else being greatly troubled by temptation, or of having been guilty of a serious fault, it will be his responsibility, promptly and in the best way possible, to see that effective remedies be suitably applied at the right time by the Superior. He must, of course, act from love and in the most practical way. Each one should accept it gratefully, as a means of spiritual progress, if his defects are pointed out to the Superior in a spirit of love by someone who has noticed them outside of confession.

"As you see, this article is closely connected with the preceding one, which we recently explained in part; for I neglected to speak to you at that time about the openness of heart we should have in order to disclose properly to the Superior our illusions, faults, and interior sufferings; in a word, to make our Communication to him. That's what we have to say now, along with the other matter, which is to inform the Superior when we see someone undergo some temptation, or fall into some serious fault, and to accept that others inform the Superior of our own faults.

"So, the first of these Rules speaks about the Communication; the other recommends informing the Superior of the faults we've noted in our confrere. One of these articles mentions communicating our difficulties and telling our faults to the Superior; the other says that, in case (it's true that the expression in case isn't there, but it's just as if it were), in case someone might not make known his faults to the Superior, one of his confreres, animated with zeal and charity for the good of the Company and of the individual, should inform the Superior of it, so that he might remedy it, as a good father and not as a judge. Oh, may God preserve us from that!

"So then, both articles are aimed at informing the Superior of the state of the members of the Company and give the same reasons obliging us to give ourselves to God to carry out what is recommended to us by the first of these articles, namely, to mention our difficulties, temptations, and faults to the Superior. They also oblige us to give ourselves to God to do what is recommended by the second article, that is, to inform the Superior of the difficulties,
temptations, and serious faults of our neighbor. Here are the reasons—not all of them (for how can we mention all of them?)—but a few of them.

"The first reason or motive obliging us to make ourselves clearly known and to disclose our faults is that this is the intention of the Church, which practiced it for four or five hundred years. The Christians, who were striving for holiness, feeling that it wasn’t enough to tell their faults privately to the Bishop, declared them publicly before everyone, and this continued until about the year 500. At that time, it happened that a woman who had committed a fault accused herself publicly of it, and a deacon took the opportunity to try to do something harmful, so this practice was discontinued. But, whatever the case, we see and read that this was the practice of the saints; for who doesn’t know what the Magdalen did, when she came to cast herself at the feet of Our Lord like a wretched sinner? What did Saint Paul not say of himself! And what did Saint Augustine not write in his Confessions! And so many others! In line with that, many religious Communities have retained that praiseworthy practice of accusing oneself publicly and asking to be reminded of one’s faults. By the mercy of God, that’s what’s done here in this house at Chapter, if not by everyone, at least by most of us; perhaps one or two men don’t do it, at least not so often. Several also really open their heart during the Communication, as I’ve been told, and so much progress has been made in this that all of you know that many men, before making their Communication, ask the Company to pray for them, that God may be pleased to grant them the grace of seeing their faults clearly, of making them known, and of really putting into practice the advice or admonition given them to correct themselves. What a great reason to praise and thank God for this grace He has given to the Company! From it stems the other grace of being admonished by someone in a spirit of charity. May Our Lord be pleased to continue it and to increase it more and more!

"The second reason or motive is that the practice and custom of religious Communities and Anchorites was that, as soon as someone became aware of a temptation, no matter what it was, he went and told the Superior. Saint Dorotheus did this often, and even
though, while he was on his way, he had thoughts about not doing it, he overcame those thoughts and went and told the Superior everything. The companions of Saint Francis also did this, and many other persons as well. It's even a custom of the Company, by the grace of God, if not for everyone, at least for the majority. God grant that those who practice it may continue, and that those who don't yet do so may be given this grace!

"Another reason obliging us to do this is that anyone who doesn't do it and doesn't make known his faults, or is unwilling to accept that someone tell the Superior about them, receives no help; if the poor Superior isn't aware of them, how can he remedy them? If he doesn't, the guilty party remains always in his sad state and goes from bad to worse; he's like a sick person who might be unwilling to make known his ailment; as a result, he grows worse, and, in the end, he dies. So, if the person in question doesn't make known his faults, or if someone doesn't mention them to the Superior, who is the spiritual physician for this, he remains in that state; for, these faults lead to others, and, consequently, he commits many of them; and God grant that he doesn't end up dying in this wretched, pitiful state!

"Yet another reason is that this is the only way the Superior can govern a Company well and remedy the faults and failings an individual commits. The man who doesn't make known his faults or is unwilling to have them made known, will grow hardened and, as it were, paralyzed, by trying to guide himself in his own way. Oh, what a bad thing that is! O my Savior, You know this! So, each man ought to give himself to God to continue this holy practice of making himself known, if he's already doing it, or to start right now, if he hasn't yet done so; for, if the Superior isn't informed, what will the Company become? Whom will he send to give missions? If the faults committed in it aren't made known, whom will he send to Italy, to Poland, to Barbary, or even to the Indies? If he's not informed of the faults committed in it, how will he be able to rectify them? Otherwise, mon Sauveur, what disorder will exist! But if, in a spirit of humility and charity, we're faithful in informing him of them, he'll strive to correct them, to the consolation of everyone,
the good of the individual, and the edification of all those with whom he lives.

“A further reason is that the illusions, temptations, and sad state of a soul can’t be kept to oneself too long. If, when a person is tempted against faith, purity, etc., he doesn’t speak to someone about it or make it known, he creates within himself a mass, a corruption, like someone who has an abscess and pus in his body. This grows and goes to his brain. That’s why physicians or surgeons who visit a patient see if there’s any pus in the wound. If there is, they plunge a lancet into it up to the handle to draw the pus out—if we can speak in this way, for a lancet has no handle.

“Speaking of this, I must tell you what a surgeon told me. He was a fine man, learned, skillful, and upright. I’m talking about M. Juif. He and some physicians were called to the bedside of a sick doctor, and he was asked to give his opinion. They were wondering if the patient had an abscess somewhere in his body. Some of them said yes; the others, no. M. Juif assured them that there was an abscess in the mesentery, and that it had to be lanced. So, they had a large, long lancet brought in; he himself lanced the abscess, for he was very skilled, and the pus flowed out of it; they asked for some bowls; the patient felt better immediately and shortly after was completely cured.

“Now, let’s go back to where we were and say that illusions are certain corruptions of the spirit, a kind of pus, such as a weakness for women or an inclination to some other failing; if it’s not made known, sooner or later the person will die. In this regard, I recall that one day someone came to see me (it was in this very courtyard) and said to me, ‘O Monsieur! I’m so happy to see you because I have something to tell you! I think that if I hadn’t run into you, I would have died of grief because my desire to see you and to tell you something was so great.’ Now, let’s make the application of this and say that anyone who doesn’t tell the Superior his faults, emotional distress, or temptations suffers a great deal; and if he doesn’t tell the Superior, he has to tell someone else; but who would

2François Juif, a noted surgeon, died in Paris on July 23, 1643, at the age of sixty-six.
that be? Some malcontent, for he can always find one, or, if it’s to someone else, he’ll share his troubles with him and contaminate him. It takes only one scabby sheep to infect another, who, in his turn, infects a third, and in this way the entire flock is tainted.

"‘Oh, but what will the Superior say if I talk to him about some trouble, temptation, or fault?’ Saint Dorotheus sometimes had that thought, saying to himself, ‘Where are you going? To find a Superior. What will you say to him? This and that. But what will he say? No matter, we still have to go.’

"‘Oh, but the Superior won’t have any better thoughts to tell me than such and such, which I know as well as he does and which I’ll accept.’ I reply that your thoughts are human thoughts, but the thoughts and advice of the Superior are thoughts and advice from God. Hasn’t God said, Qui vos audit me audit? 3 ‘But he doesn’t know any more about that than I do!’ Didn’t God make the animals talk?

"‘But he’s a sinner like me and maybe even a worse one!’ A hundred times worse, if you wish; but he holds the place of Our Lord God, who said formerly of the priests of the Old Law, ‘Do what they tell you, even though you must not do what they do.’ 4 No, no, the Superior isn’t sinless. O wretched man that I am; I commit only too many faults! So, we have to be faithful in telling our faults clearly and in making the Communication well, for, otherwise, the evil will remain and even grow worse, as each one of you knows so well.

"I, personally, have remarked that those who don’t live an orderly life never admonish anyone and are very little concerned about their own growth in holiness and that of their confreres. But I also noted that those who live an orderly life work seriously at growing in holiness and reflect on the necessity and need of letting the Superior know of the failings of their confreres so that they may be admonished: they’re also exact about informing the Superior of them; and that’s the way to see that the Company gets on well. So then, if, until the present, anyone hasn’t done this, let him do it now.

3Qui vos audit me audit. Cf. Lk 10:16. (NAB)
4Mt 23:3. (NAB)
O Savior of my soul, how much more perfect the Company would become, if we mentioned our faults, troubles, and temptations to the Superior and not to other persons!

"One of the keenest sufferings I've had lately has been to learn that someone in the Company has gone to open his heart to a third and a fourth party. O Dieu! What a wrong! May God forgive him!

"Certain objections may be made to me concerning that: 'Quoi! You're saying, Monsieur, that we should inform the Superior of any serious faults committed by an individual; isn't that contrary to the Gospel teaching Our Lord gave us that fraternal correction should be made inter te et ipsum solum?' My answer is no. That was the objection made by a Paris Theologian, who had become a Franciscan in Rome, against the Jesuits, who had put this article in their Rules. He criticized it and held that it wasn't right and was contrary to what Our Lord had taught us: Si peccaverit frater tuus, corripi inter te et ipsum solum. After the Jesuits had summoned their chief Theologians and most competent men, they maintained that it was. They did so in the presence of Gregory XIII, who also decided in their favor.

"But it's very hard to go to a Superior and tell him someone else's faults; I'll offend that person; the Superior will treat him badly and look askance at him.' My reply is that this information is given to the Superior, not as to a judge, but as to a good father, who will know the most suitable time, place, and occasion to do this with charity and cordiality.

"But the Superior or Director will tell this to others.' O Dieu! O Savior of my soul! O, God forbid! Isn't he obliged to secrecy? What punishment would he not deserve? A curse, if he does!

"Let's speak now of how to act in all this. Careful consideration must be given to the man who gives the admonition, the person he admonishes, and about what and how the admonition should be given.

5 Between you and him alone. Cf. Mt 18:15. (NAB)
6 If your brother sins, tell him his fault between you and him alone. Cf. Mt 18:15. (NAB)
7 Supreme Pontiff (1572-85).
“The first mentioned should place himself before God and ask Him to give him the grace to know clearly:

“(1) If there is a fault and what it is, before deciding to inform the Superior. We have to be very sure not to do it through natural inclination or aversion. O Dieu! What a wrong that would be!

“(2) If the matter is really true and if there are any witnesses; for, if there’s any doubt, no admonition should be given.

“(3) If it’s of any consequence; for, if it’s only a trifle, the Superior shouldn’t be informed; it has to be something of importance, and the Company or the guilty party should be able to benefit from the word of advice.

“(4) If the guilty man has fallen once, twice, three times, or more often.

“(5) If he feels any aversion for the one he’s thinking of having admonished; for, despite that, if it’s an important matter, he has to give the warning, but he should add, ‘Please get information from someone else about this because I feel some aversion for that person.’

“If we act in this way, can it be hurtful? I make you yourselves the judges of that.

“As for the person who is admonished, he should receive the advice in a spirit of humility and charity.

“‘Oh, but what if there’s some detail that’s not true?’ It suffices that the substance of the matter be true. The one who’s admonished should rejoice to see himself accused, if he’s innocent; if he’s completely innocent, O Dieu, what a consolation! I’ve had experience of that.

“With regard to the Superior, he should act, not as a judge but as a good father, with gentleness and cordiality, in spiritu lenitatis.\textsuperscript{8}

“‘But the guilty man did this or that, and even such and such.’ Oh! The Superior should think, ‘I’ve done many other things.’ ‘But it’s a serious fault.’ ‘If I had been tempted as strongly, I would certainly have given in to it and done worse than he did.’

“O my Savior, You who will accuse me of all my harshness, and who know there’s almost no temptation to which I haven’t yielded,
forgive me, grant me and the other Superiors the grace of listening carefully to admonitions and to give them in Your spirit. What good reason I have to humble myself for having failed so much in this, and to ask pardon of You and of the whole Company for it! I'd like to be able to get down on my knees to do this, but my infirmity prevents me. So, bear with me, my dear confreres, since I am an abomination, and pray to God for me."

216. - THE VOWS
(Common Rules, Chap. II, Art. 18)

[November 7, 1659]

"My dear confreres, the eighteenth article of the second chapter of our Rules, on the last of the Gospel teachings, reads as follows:

Our Lord came into the world to reestablish the reign of His Father in all persons. He won them back from the devil who had led them astray by the cunning deceit of a greedy desire for wealth, honor, and pleasure. Our loving Savior thought it right to fight His enemy with the opposite weapons: poverty, chastity, and obedience, which He continued to do right up to His death. The little Congregation of the Mission came into existence in the Church to work for the salvation of people, especially the rural poor. This is why it has judged that no weapons would be more powerful or more suitable than those which Eternal Wisdom so tellingly and effectively used. Every confrere, therefore, should keep to such poverty, chastity, and obedience faithfully and persistently, as understood in our Congregation. And in order that each one might persevere until death in
observing these virtues more certainly, easily, and meritoriously, he should try to the best of his ability to carry out what is prescribed about them in the following chapters.

"That, Messieurs, is the subject of this evening’s conference. I think everyone readily understands what the Rule is stating: that when Our Lord, who was sent here below by His Father to carry out a mission and to convert souls, saw that honor, pleasure, and possessions had done such great damage in the world and that the evil spirit had made use of the drive for possessions, avarice, and the immoderate desire for wealth in order to ruin souls and attract them to himself, He willed to make use of contrary weapons to snatch them from his hands and to draw them to God His Father, namely through poverty, chastity, and obedience. So, the [Congregation of the] Mission, seeing that the world is being lost through the drive for pleasures, wealth, and honors, and drawn toward the mission of Our Lord, to which He has done us the honor of calling us to continue what He did, has realized that we can do nothing better than to adopt the means Our Blessed Savior used; and that’s what the Company has done.

"It would take too long to tell you today why the Company has to struggle against these three enemies; furthermore, this topic is often the subject of our meditations. Our duty right now is to tell you the reasons the Company has for thanking God for the grace He has granted it of having called it to this state of continuing the mission His Son had begun, and of using the same weapons, namely, poverty, chastity, and obedience, to destroy in ourselves, first of all, these three enemies: the love of possessions, pleasures, and honors. We’ll then be in a better state to be able to contend against them in others during the missions, by means of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to devote ourselves for the rest of our life to the salvation of the poor country people.

"No mention is made in our Rules of these three vows because no Company has ever taken them into account in its Common Rules in the way ours does. It remains, then, to see the reasons we have to praise and thank God for the grace He has given us of being in this state; it will be like a preamble for speaking about what follows:
poverty, chastity, and obedience. So then, the first point will be the reasons we have to thank God for being in the state to which He sent His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ; and the second, what this state is.

"The first reason we have for thanking God for the state in which He has placed us, by His mercy, is that it’s the state in which He placed His own Son, who himself has said, Pauperibus evangelizare misit me. What cause for great consolation to be in that state! See what good reason we have to thank God for it! To evangelize poor persons as Our Lord did, and in the way Our Lord did it, using the same weapons, contending with the passions and desires of having possessions, pleasures, and honors! It’s true that Our Lord didn’t have these faults or passions, but He practiced admirably and to a high degree the virtues contrary to these faults, desires, and passions, namely, poverty, chastity, and obedience. O Dieu! To what heights did He raise the practice of this virtue. To be born poor, to have lived poor, and to have died poor! As for purity and chastity, they were admirable in Him. As for obedience, He died for that: Factus obediens usque ad mortem. O Dieu! Don’t we have good grounds for thanking God for our being in this state! Perhaps I’ve never done this myself, wretched man that I am! Perhaps none of us has. So you see that we have good grounds for doing so, at least from now on.

"I’m not going to ask myself here if Our Lord made those vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Saint Thomas says that He didn’t; for, to make vows is to make a promise to someone greater than ourselves. Now, Our Lord is equal to God His Father, so He couldn’t make vows to Him. However, I heard an important person, who was virtuous and learned (it was the late Father General of the Oratory), say that Our Lord had made vows, not as God, but as man. He based this on the words of the Psalmist, Vota quae distinxerunt labia mea adimplebo, for the psalm in which these

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1He sent me to preach the Good News to the poor. Cf. Lk 4:18. (NAB)
2Becoming obedient to death. Cf. Phil 2:8. (NAB)
3Charles de Condren (cf. XI. 119, n. 5)
words are found speaks entirely of Our Lord, and therefore of the fulfillment of those vows He had made of offering and presenting himself to God His Father to do His Holy Will in all things, to redeem human beings, to become incarnate, to work at their salvation, and, finally, to die for them. He accomplished and fulfilled all these promises; so what objection is there to say and to feel certain that Our Lord made vows and fulfilled them perfectly?

"As for the Apostles, no one says that they didn’t make them either, but they certainly lived them. Ecce nos reliquimus omnia.⁵ We can say that for poverty. What greater poverty is there than to have left everything and to have kept nothing for themselves! As for purity and chastity, didn’t Saint Peter leave his wife? And for obedience, didn’t all of them live in submission? O mon Sauveur, what a consolation for us to be, like them, in that state!

"We make a distinction of states. It’s said that Bishops and religious are in a state of perfection. The former are in a state of acquired holiness, or which should have been acquired, for Our Lord, who chose them in order to help others to become holy, wants them to be holy and to acquire holiness. Saint Cyprian says of them, Qui episcopatum desiderat martyrium desiderat;⁶ which shows that they must be holy and be in a state of acquired holiness. Religious are not in a state of acquired holiness, but in one to be acquired. How is that? It’s because religious are in a state in which everything, such as their Holy Rules, Constitutions, vows, the Sacraments, readings, etc., inclines them to holiness. Now, don’t we have all that? The laity and people living in the world don’t have it; on the contrary, they have to be involved in many affairs, such as caring for their family, etc., but we’re in a state of holiness, not yet acquired, but to be acquired, if we make use of the means we have for that. O Dieu! Let’s be very careful not to neglect any of these means; we’d do ourselves great harm and would fall from this state. This state of perfection is entered by poverty, chastity, and obedience, for Our Lord said, Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende omnia

⁵Behold, we have given up everything. Cf. Mt 19:27. (NAB)
⁶Who desires the episcopate, desires martyrdom.
We renounce possessions, pleasures, and honors.

"God has granted us the grace of being in this state. Oh, what good reason we have to thank His Divine Majesty for this! Let's reflect on ourselves, however, and see if we renounce pleasures, our little satisfactions, and the honor of being successful in our preaching, wanting people to speak well of us, to hold us in consideration, to esteem us as fine preachers, to say that we're intelligent and have beautiful thoughts. Let's examine our conscience; we have a witness there which, without saying a word, will make us well aware of who we are in this respect and in other similar ones. If, then, we haven't really renounced all those things as we should, let's do it now, let's renew that firm resolution of giving ourselves to God; let's renounce possessions, pleasures, and honors for love of Him.

"Besides the consolation we have of being in the state in which Our Lord and the Apostles were, of having renounced everything in order to carry out the mission and to work for the conversion of souls, we distance ourselves from things that usually incline people to what is harmful, such as wealth, the desire to accumulate possessions, etc. What are these possessions? In Madagascar, they're stones; in Canada, they're pigs, animals. Now, it's these vows that distance us from all those things, and from those possessions which cause the loss of so many souls.

"One of the advantages of this state is the peace of mind we enjoy in having, by the vows, renounced everything. The dominant passion in the world is the desire to have possessions, to accumulate things, to enjoy our pleasures, and to be held in esteem so that we can say, 'I'm the one who has this and that, who enjoys such and such a pleasure, who holds such and such an office.' And we think we'll find our peace of mind in that. We're mistaken; there isn't any there, but true peace of mind is in total renunciation. What wears lay people out—and, even more, sometimes priests—is the desire to accumulate possessions; they have no peace; but those who have renounced this by the vows enjoy great peace of mind. Those of you  

\[1\] If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor. Cf. Mt 19:21. (NAB)
who have renounced this as you should, experience this; you see it in others who live their vows perfectly, just as, on the contrary, you see the difficulty of those who don’t live them perfectly.

“In addition, these vows are a new Baptism; they bring about in us what Baptism did; for, by Baptism, we were withdrawn from the slavery of Satan, we’re made children of God, we have the right to paradise and a share in it. That’s what the vows do. Thus, a person who wants to be perfect is not satisfied with having been baptized and, at his Baptism, to have renounced the devil, his works, and his pomps; but, in addition, he sells his possessions, and renounces pleasures and honors. Now, we are in that state, by the mercy of God. Oh, what good reason, then, for thanking Him for this! ‘But,’ says a holy Father, ‘it doesn’t suffice to be in a state of perfection and not to tend toward it or work at it.’ Some say that to have made vows and lived them is a continual martyrdom. Saint Bernard says that ‘this state of vows isn’t as awful as seeing a pistol ready to be fired, a naked sword ready to strike, lighted fires ready to burn, enraged executioners in a frenzy to mistreat us. They last longer; they’re continual. The executioners’ torments last a short time in comparison to the entire life of a man who has taken these vows, for which he constantly mortifies himself and destroys self and his own will.’

“Speaking of destruction, however, what does a person do who has pronounced vows? He offers God a holocaust of himself. There was this difference with the ancient sacrifices, namely, that a holocaust was a sacrifice made to God, but where the entire victim was consumed by fire and of which nothing was reserved either for the one for whom the sacrifice was being offered or for the one who offered it. Now, the person who takes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience gives everything to God, renouncing possessions, pleasures, and honors; this is a perfect holocaust. Messieurs, because the person’s understanding is sacrificed to God, as is his judgment and will.

“What can we add to what we’ve said about our reasons for thanking God for the grace He has given us of having placed us in this state of being consecrated to Him in this way, in order to continue the mission of His Son and of the Apostles? We can add that we’ll be seated one day with Him and His Apostles to judge the whole world:
Sedebitis super sedes duodecim, judicantes duodecim tribus Israel.⁸

We should live in this hope that, going to heaven after our death, we won’t be as guilty men at the judgment, but as judges of everyone; we’ll even judge the angels, as Saint Paul says, *Nescitis quoniam angelos judicabimus,*⁹ if we live properly in this state.

“But let’s move on and see what this state is to which God has called us. Is it a religious Order? No, it’s that of secular priests, who enter the state Our Lord chose for himself, of renouncing possessions, honors, and pleasures. ‘You’re saying, Monsieur, that it’s not a religious Order; yet we live in it as in a religious Order and do the same things—or similar ones—that religious do, and even take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as is done in religious Orders.’ I’m telling you that it’s not a religious Order and that we’re not religious, for, strictly speaking, only solemn vows constitute a religious Order, and we don’t make solemn vows. There are three essential elements necessary to constitute these solemn vows: (1) The Superior must accept them. Now, that’s not done here in this house; even though the Superior or someone else in his place is present and hears the words pronounced by the man who takes the vows, he doesn’t say a word and makes no response. In short, he doesn’t accept them, as is done in a religious Order. (2) Solemn vows were forbidden by Innocent III¹⁰ about 400 years ago, except in an approved religious Order, like that of the four mendicant Orders of Saint Dominic, Saint Francis, and the Carthusians, or others that follow their Rules. Now, our Rules are not taken from those of Saint Francis or from any other Order in the Church, but they’re special Rules judged proper for the good government of the Congregation. (3) Nor would it suffice to observe some Rule like that of Saint Dominic, even if this observance had been vowed before a Superior, for this requires the permission of the Pope. So, we do not make solemn vows, and, consequently, we’re not religious.¹¹

⁸*You will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Cf. Mt 19:28. (NAB)

⁹*Do you not know that we will judge angels?* Cf. 1 Cor 6:3. (NAB)

¹⁰Supreme Pontiff (1198-1216).

¹¹Saint Vincent states elsewhere that it is not necessary to take solemn vows to be a religious. Does that expression go beyond what is said here, or could the copyist have reproduced his words poorly? Be that as it may, it is better to keep to the documents signed by the saint in which the
"So then, what do you mean by a simple vow?" It's any vow that isn't included in ordination or an approved religious Order. As for us, even though we're not religious, we still belong to religious life, not of Saint Francis or of Saint Dominic, but of Saint Peter, and, for greater stability, we've added the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Do you think, Messieurs (I'm speaking mainly of priests), that there's a great difference between us and religious? Like them, we're bound to live chastity and obedience, and we vowed that at ordination; so that leaves poverty, which vow was added because of the passion and desire for possessions, much greater in the clergy than in lay persons, even though the former have fewer responsibilities than the latter, and no families to look after, or children to provide for. It's even noted that they're harder on the poor and have less compassion in seeing to what they need. Experience shows that the heirs of priests and the clergy who have amassed many possessions don't benefit very long from them: they're the goods of malediction which usually bring a curse on those who inherit them. A good, virtuous Dean, who had eighty parishes to visit, used to say to me, 'You see, M. Vincent, one of the things I've noticed in my visitations is that the heirs of Pastors who have accumulated a great deal of wealth are not comfortable for very long, and they even visibly lose their vitality.'

'Fifteen conferences were held here to find the cause of the wretched state of the Church and the clergy, so attached to possessions and the desire to accumulate wealth; we noted that this started with the division of church property, which gave each man his share and portion: for, in the beginning, everything was in common, and each was given only what he needed. Oh, how the Church was flourishing at that time and how virtuous and holy the clergy were! Eh bien! Aren't we all, priests and Brothers as well, in that state? Our needs are met, without our having to be concerned with amassing wealth. Oh, blessed and most rich poverty, which Our Lord practiced so excellently and admirably! Qui, cum esset dives, propter nos

question is treated specifically, as in the case of the letter of February 19, 1655, to Étienne Blatiron. Cf. V, 318-19; and VII, 120.
egenus factus est. He didn’t have even a stone on which to lay His head; He was poor, not only in His life, but also in His death, dying naked on a cross, with nothing on His body, except perhaps some wretched rag, propter verenda; that’s taking poverty to the highest point it can attain. And could we see Jesus attached to the Cross in this way and not be devoted to the practice of this virtue?

“‘O Monsieur,’ you’ll say to me, ‘will we who have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and who, you say, are not religious, have the reward of our vows as religious do?’ Who can doubt that? I’m not going to give you the reasons for this, but I’ll simply use a comparison to help you see the truth of it and to assure you of it. You know that children are baptized solemnly, and sometimes also without the solemnity. What do children who are baptized solemnly receive? Doubtless they receive the grace of God, who, from the slaves of Satan that they were, makes them children of God and heirs of heaven. What do children receive who are baptized without solemnity? The same as the others. The ceremony added to solemn Baptism adds nothing to the graces received by a child baptized solemnly; and one who is baptized without solemnity shares in all the same graces as the other. Thus, even though we may not take solemn vows, we receive the same graces that professed religious receive, or similar ones.

“Here’s a comparison: when a priest says Mass, we’re bound to believe and know that it’s Jesus Christ Our Lord himself, the principal and sovereign Priest, who is offering the sacrifice; the priest is only the minister of Our Lord, who makes use of him to perform this action externally. Now, doesn’t the assistant who serves the priest, and those who hear Mass, participate, like the priest, in the sacrifice he offers, and which they offer with him, as he himself says in his Oorate, fratres, ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat apud Deum Patrem omnipotentem? No doubt they do participate in it, and more than him, if they have greater charity than the priest. Actiones sunt suppositorum; actions are per-

12 For your sake He became poor although He was rich. Cf. 2 Cor 8:9. (NAB)
13 Because of the nakedness.
14 Pray, brothers, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father.
sonal. It's not the title of priest or religious that makes the actions more pleasing to God and more meritorious, but charity, if they have greater charity than we do. Oh, what a great reason for consolation to be in the Order of Saint Peter! We have the same advantages and graces as religious, granted by our Holy Father, for the Pope was pleased to have the vows made in the Company examined at a meeting of Cardinals for the explanation of the Council of Trent, because of a certain difficulty some persons see in them. He confirmed them, and the Congregation as well. Note that this is the Pope, and he's a holy man.

"A good Theologian, the late M. Duval, often used to tell me that he recognized the infallibility of the Pope in nothing so much as in the confirmation of the Orders in the Church of God and in the canonization of saints.

"I ask the Company to thank God for the institution of the Company, for the vocation of each individual in it, and for our being in this state of religious life of Saint Peter—or rather of Jesus Christ. O my Savior, You waited sixteen hundred years to raise up for yourself a Company that professes expressly that it will continue the mission Your Father sent You to carry out on earth, and which uses the same means You did, making profession of observing poverty, chastity, and obedience. O my Savior, I have never thanked You for this; I do so now for all those present and absent. In Your eternal plans You destined us for this ministry; grant that we may carry it out by Your holy grace! But, O Savior of our souls, look at those whom You are using for the conversion of people and to continue your mission—poor people like us! What a subject of embarrassment for us! O Lord, grant us the grace to make ourselves worthy of this ministry and of our vocation, by struggling generously against this vice of the passion for, and desire of, possessions, pleasures, and honors, by the practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to have always in hand the razor of mortification, so as to succeed better in it and to leave the example of it to posterity! This is the grace we ask of You, Lord."

15André Duval.
"My very dear confreres, what has been explained about the Rules until now is contained in two chapters; this is the third one, and it concerns poverty. Christ Himself, the Lord of all, lived in poverty to such an extent that He had nowhere to lay His head. He formed His Apostles and disciples, His co-workers in His mission, to live in the same sort of way, so that individually they did not own anything. In that way they were freer to combat greed for wealth in a better and more practical way, a greed which is ruining almost the whole world. That is why each confrere must try, weak as he is, to imitate Christ in developing this virtue of poverty. We must all realize that it is the unbreachable rampart by which the Congregation, with the help of God's grace, will be defended.

2. Our ministry on missions could hardly be carried out if we lived in total poverty, since missions are to be given without charge. Nevertheless, we should try to maintain poverty as an ideal and, as far as we can, in practice as well, especially as regards what is set out here.

3. Members of the Congregation, individually and collectively, should understand that, following the example of the first Christians, all our belongings are common property and are given out by the Superior to individual members, such as food, clothes, books, furniture, and so on, according to the needs of each. We have all accepted poverty, and so, to avoid any deviation from it, no one may, without the Superior's permission, dispose of any of this sort of property belonging to the Congregation, or pass it on to others.

"So, my dear confreres, these are the first articles of this third chapter, which concerns poverty. We're going to reflect a little on the reasons we have to praise and thank God for having granted us the grace of being in the state in which Our Lord was, He who had such great esteem for poverty and practiced it so well during His en-
tire life. Then we'll mention in what it consists, how the vow we take of it is understood, the difficulties and objections to be found in it, and the particular acts of it we should practice.

"The first reflection we have to make on it—this is in the Rule—is that when Our Lord, the sovereign Lord, the Creator and lawful owner of all things, saw the great disorder caused by the desire and possession of wealth on earth. He willed to correct this by practicing the contrary. He who was so poor that He had nowhere to lay His head, willed that His Apostles and the disciples He had admitted into His company should adopt this practice of poverty, and even the first Christians, of whom it's said that they had nothing of their own, but that all their property was in common. So then, when Our Lord saw the great damage the evil spirit had caused in the world by the possession of riches, which brought about the loss of many, He willed to combat this by applying a remedy that was just the opposite, namely, the practice of poverty.

"In line with that, the Rule tells us to practice poverty, we whom Our Lord has called to do what He came into this world to do, to continue His mission and to work for the conversion of souls. Since its origin, the Company has felt that we had to reach that point, namely, to practice poverty. This poor Company, that was nothing in its beginning, considered that, from then on, or two or three years after that, the better thing was to imitate Our Lord in that respect, in this practice of poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability, and that each man could take private vows, after having prayed fervently for this and having sought advice. Finally, by the mercy of Our Lord, we're observing that practice now, first, of contending against the desire for possessions in ourselves, by the grace of God, and, by that grace, of obtaining the contrary virtue, which is holy poverty. Since, then, being called to do what Our Lord did on earth, I ask you, will we use means other than the ones He used to combat the enemies of His Father's glory: worldly people and those who allow themselves to get carried away by the desires and passion for wealth? By the practice of poverty, it has pleased Our Lord to place us in this state despite our unworthiness. O mon Sauveur, what a good reason to thank Him for it!
"That suffices for the reasons; each of you knows them better than I. We're trying to revive in the Company the spirit of the first Christians, who had nothing of their own.

"Let's say one other thing. Weren't we right to embrace the state of poverty and to adopt that holy practice like Our Lord did, seeing that, in order to make us happy, He asks only that? *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum;*\(^1\) blessed are the poor in spirit who have left . . . I don't know what, but they do it willingly! To them belong the riches of heaven; the kingdom of heaven: *Ipsorum est regnum caelorum.* Once again: *Ipsorum est;* the kingdom of heaven belongs to them; to those who really—and more than just in spirit and affection—have left everything, Our Lord declares that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Furthermore, in what does the good pleasure of God consist? He wants all who love Him to love Him without reserve, which happens when they have left everything, just as He loves us without reserve. So then, those who have taken the vow of poverty, who have left everything, who no longer hold on to anything and are attached to nothing, are then obliged to direct their affection and love toward God, for we can't live without loving. Now, by the vow of poverty, having no more affection and love for created, earthly goods, we'll have them for the uncreated Good and for heavenly things. The person who takes this vow of poverty no longer clings to anything, neither to possessions, nor honors, nor pleasures; and does that mean that the heart will exist without loving? No, it doesn't; it then has to direct its affection and love to God. So, the vow of poverty is nothing other than a sovereign, perfect means to really love God. Let's always place this at the top of the list and make it a priority: that we abandon earthly wealth only to have the riches of heaven, and that we abandon trifles, crumbling, perishable riches, only to have eternal, lasting ones. *O mon Sauveur,* what a happiness!

"But in what does this poverty consist? There are two sorts of poverty; one of which concerns possessions, houses, estates, clothing, etc. Now, of this sort of poverty Our Lord has said. *Qui non*

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\(^1\)Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mt 5:3. (NAB)
renuntiat omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus;\(^2\) and in another place: *Non est me dignus.*\(^3\) Anyone who does not leave possessions—yes, possessions and clothing—cannot be my disciple in a special and more perfect way. *Eh,* my dear confreres, will we have the title of disciples of Our Lord if we don’t abandon and renounce everything, yes, *omnibus?*

“The other sort of poverty—which is much more important—is to renounce not only everything but even ourselves. Did Our Lord do that? Did He renounce His own judgment, His understanding, His Will, His desires, His inclinations, and His passions? Yes, He renounced His understanding and judgment; that’s obvious in these words: _Mea doctrina non est mea, sed ejus qui misit me._\(^4\) I get it from my Father; I get my understanding and judgment from my Father. He renounces the dignity and title He had of being the God-man, together with His Will and judgment; He renounces all this, saying, *Non mea, sed tua voluntas fiat.*\(^5\) What poverty to renounce His own judgment, His Will, His passions, desires, and human inclinations, saying, _Ut jumentum factus sum apud te._\(^6\) A beast of burden has nothing of its own and belongs entirely to its master; it has no judgment or will of its own. It’s as if Our Lord were saying, ‘I make use neither of my understanding, nor of my judgment, nor of my own Will, nor of the passions common to human beings; it’s as if I didn’t have any of them.’ If, like Our Lord, we’re true children of God, we have to reach that point of renouncing *omnibus,* and have these two sorts of poverty: first of all, renounce what we possess; second, renounce ourselves, our judgment, our will, our inclinations, our desires, and our passions. *Durus est hic sermo._\(^7\) Yes it is, for nature and for those who live according to their sensuality, but not for those who practice virtue, who strive for holiness.

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\(^2\) *Everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions, cannot be my disciple.* Cf. Lk 14:33. (NAB)

\(^3\) *He is not worthy of me.* Cf. Mt 10:38. (NAB)

\(^4\) *My teaching is not my own, but is from the one who sent me.* Cf. Jn 7:16. (NAB)

\(^5\) *Not my will, but yours be done.* Cf. Lk 22:42. (NAB)

\(^6\) *It was like a brute beast in your presence.* Cf. Ps 73:22. (NAB)

\(^7\) *This saying is hard.* Cf. Jn 6:60. (NAB)
and who want to become spiritual persons; on the contrary, this passage from Scripture is very pleasing to them.

"So then, the poverty we profess is to give up everything; the saints think that the person elevated to that grace of renouncing everything doesn't have the right to desire property, honor, and the pleasure of this world; for God is his property, his honor, his pleasure. I'm going to digress here to explain to you the renunciation of property we make in the Company, for we have thought appropriate, since the Company remains always in the ranks of the clergy, to explain our manner of making this vow of poverty, because of certain difficulties that have arisen and because some have said that we could get permission from the Pope, or from the Superior General, to have this vow of poverty annulled. Finally, after having given much thought to this, praying for this intention, consulting many persons, and holding several conferences on it, we sent someone to Rome to ask the Holy Father to approve and confirm the explanation we decided to give to this vow of poverty. Here's the Brief he sent us on this subject. I asked M. Portail to have it copied, but it was a little too late, through my own fault, since I wasn't informed about it sooner. It has just been brought to me. So then, here's the Brief. You see how we strive to weigh everything according to the scales of the sanctuary. And since nothing should be neglected in a matter of such importance, we'll begin by reading it in Latin. Who knows how to read the Latin of Rome well? Let's ask the one who made the copy. Read Alexander, Papa, septimus, ad futuram rei memoriam. ... * Read it in French for our Brothers; it's not expressed well enough yet, and it isn't complete.

"Alexander, Pope, seventh of the name. . . .

"So, my dear confreres, that's how the vow of poverty is to be understood. As for possessions, those who have money, property, houses, annuities, and simple benefices (for we're not allowed to have parishes), may retain control of those goods, and the members of the Company may dispose of them in favor of their relatives, but they do not have the use of them; they renounce it by this vow; and

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*For this Brief, issued by Pope Alexander VII (1655-67) on September 22, 1655, see XIIIa. 417-19.
they give themselves to God, along with their possessions, to be used in good works, as the Brief demands. They will be considerate regarding their relatives in order to assist them according to their needs.

"See how lenient that is. Is there anything to be desired in it? Isn’t it manageable? The capital remains for the relatives. The individual doesn’t have the use of these goods; he doesn’t need them: the Company takes care of what he needs. He uses the revenue from the goods in good works, pro arbitratu superioris, says the Pope, or to assist his relatives if they are in need. How does that sound to you, Messieurs? Isn’t it reasonable? We’ve given ourselves to God. we’ve deprived ourselves voluntarily of these goods and have given them up; I leave it to anyone whomsoever to judge whether there’s anything to find fault with in that. Is there anything to be desired, since the question has been so thoroughly examined and sent to the Pope in Rome, who referred it to the Cardinals appointed to deal with important matters? We have the results and the confirmation that has been sent to us.

"If, unfortunately, someone were to leave the Company, by permission of the Pope or the Superior General, he could reclaim possession of his property and his benefices. That’s how this vow and the renunciation of goods are to be understood. Since God has called us to this state of poverty non nomine tenus, let’s ask Him for the grace to have its spirit and to keep our vow well.

"O Sauveur! How can I speak about that, I who am such a wretched man, who used to have a horse and carriage, who has a room, a fire, a well-curtained bed, and a Brother to look after me. I repeat, I who am so well cared for that I lack nothing! Oh, what scandal I give to the Company by my abuse of the vow of poverty in all those things and other similar ones! I ask pardon of God and of the Company for this, and I also ask it to bear with me in my old age. God grant me the grace to correct myself, now that I have reached this age, and to retrench all those things as far as I can. Get up, brothers (for the whole Company had knelt down while he was making this act of humility).

9At the discretion of the Superior.
10Not in name.
"I told you, my dear confreres, that we'd speak about some of the acts and signs of poverty, but it's too late now; we can save this topic for next Friday; let's just mention a few objections or difficulties to be encountered in observing this vow. We'll give only the first one, namely, that, when we're giving missions in the country and working to continue what Our Lord did here on earth, the Company seems to be doing something contrary to the practice of poverty by eating its own food and not living like those who have made, and do make, profession of real poverty, and who receive from others their food and other necessities. It's true that we shouldn't be receiving anything, not even an apple or a grape, but you know the reason, you see it: *Quod gratis accepistis, gratis date.* We've received the grace of God for the instruction and conversion of the people; that has cost us nothing, let's also be careful not to take anything. It's our custom to give an alms every day, to take nothing for the Masses people ask us to say, and to contribute a little to the collection for the Confraternity of Charity. That seems contrary to the vow of poverty. Now, during the mission, we have to keep at least the spirit of poverty; we make profession of it and we have to make this obvious in the sobriety and frugality of our food and clothing and have *praeparationem animi* to really leave everything, if this were appropriate. So that's the first difficulty.

"It's nine o'clock; we have to finish and go to bed. I ask the Company to praise God and to thank Him for having placed it in the state of His Son, of the Apostles, and of the first Christians, who practiced poverty so well and who had nothing of their own, but *omnia erant illis communia.* So, let's thank Our Lord God for having placed us in this state of the practice of poverty. But how can we do this in a worthy manner? Our Lord himself would have to be His own thanks and enkindle in us a greater love of this state. *O Sauveur,* a thought almost slipped my mind! I ask the priests to say Mass tomorrow and our Brothers to receive Communion on Sunday in thanksgiving that God has placed us in this state of the

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11Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Cf. Mt 10:8. (NAB)
12Preparedness of spirit.
vow of poverty, and to ask Him over and over to grant us the grace
de of practicing it well, in the hope that one day we'll receive an abun-
dant reward for this in heaven.”

218. - POVERTY
(Common Rules, Chap. III, Art. 3-10)

[November 21, 1659]

“My dear confreres, this evening we’re going to continue the third
chapter, on poverty. The first time, we spoke about articles 1 and 2:
first, of poverty in general, and second, about the fact that we didn’t
seem to be living in the state of poverty during our missions, for we
don’t accept anything, whereas poor persons receive their food and
other necessities from others. We give to poor persons and to the
Charity, and poor persons give nothing. We do not take Mass stip-
pends, and poor priests do. So then, all that seems contrary to the state
of poverty. However, that isn’t so, for, if we take nothing for our mis-
sions, it’s because the Company has given itself to God from the be-

beginning to perform all the functions of the mission gratis, based on
what Our Lord said. Quod gratis accepistis, gratis date,1 and we saw
that this was a great means of gathering fruits from a mission among
the people, who say, ‘These priests are men of God because they take
nothing and are so unselfish.’ In this way, we easily win them over to
God. Because of this state of poverty that we’ve assumed for love of
God, we should be glad during the missions to be sometimes poorly
fed and housed. Oh, how happy we’d then be to resemble more
closely Our Lord, who was poor and who practiced such great acts of
poverty! It’s at the time when we don’t have what we might need that
we should cherish our state of poverty. So much for the first two arti-
cles of this chapter.

Conference 218. - Manuscript of Conferences. The manuscript gives no date for this
conference; see the citation of Conference 216 for the choice of date assigned here.

1Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Cf. Mt 10:8. (NAB)
"Now, here’s the third: Members of the Congregation, individually and collectively, should understand that, following the example of the first Christians, all our belongings are common property and are given out by the Superior to individual members, such as food, clothes, books, furniture, and so on, according to the needs of each. We have all accepted poverty, and so, to avoid any deviation from it, no one may, without the Superior’s permission, dispose of any of this sort of property belonging to the Congregation or pass it on to others.

"My dear confreres, I’m going to divide what I have to say on the above into three points: in the first, we’ll give the reasons we have to thank God constantly for having called us to this state of poverty; in the second, we’ll speak about some kinds of poverty and the faults that are contrary to them. O Sauveur, there are only too many of them! In the third point, we’ll give the means to take upon ourselves the practice of poverty; for we shouldn’t be satisfied with just having it in name; we have to do its works and produce acts of it when the opportunity and the occasions arise.

"So then, let’s give—or rather, let’s repeat—some of the reasons obliging us to thank God for the grace that He, in His infinite goodness, has given us of placing us in this state of poverty. I’m going to proceed as the Bishop of Alet used to do. He would repeat one day, two days, three days, four days, even all during Advent, the things he had said and preached to the people, when he deemed them important for their salvation, in order to fix them firmly in their minds. So then, let’s be enlightened with the inspiration by which our obligations to God were made clear to us a week ago and how we should be constantly thanking him for having placed us in the state of poverty assumed by His own Son for our salvation.

"The first thing Our Lord practiced on coming into the world is poverty; and the first thing He taught us is likewise, Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum;² for Our Lord began to do and then to teach.³ The first thing that comes out of one’s mouth is the one the person has most at heart. Since, then, Our Lord

²Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mt 5:3. (NAB)
³Cf. Acts 1:1. (NAB)
began His sermons with those words, *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*, it’s a sign that He had great love for poverty and esteemed it highly. Brothers, if we take pains to ponder these words, *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*, we’ll have a high regard for this holy virtue, and those whom God has called to this state would have good reason to say to God, if He were to speak to them of hell and of purgatory, ‘O my God, what are you saying to me, who have striven to assume the state of poverty? Didn’t You say *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*?’ There’s almost certainly something great in the practice of this virtue, since the first words in the sermons of Our Lord were *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*.

‘Have we reflected on the saying, *Nemo potest esse meus discipulus, nisi renuntiaverit omnibus quae possidet*?⁴ We all want to be disciples of Our Lord. Now, have you, since the time you were called to serve Him, experienced this love and attachment to holy poverty? That’s why we’ve given ourselves to God to be His disciples, and we can’t be His disciples without it, without assuming poverty: if we haven’t done it, we can’t be disciples of Our Lord unless we do. Moreover, if we haven’t done it purely and perfectly enough, let’s do it now and give ourselves to God to embrace this state of poverty as perfectly as we can. When we think that, when Our Lord came into the world and willed to make a new world of people who were to serve Him. He began by saying to them, *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*, we really have to admit that there’s something great in poverty. Note particularly these three words: *nemo, nisi, omnibus*. No one (nemo) in the world can be a disciple of Our Lord and serve Him, no matter who that person is, unless (nisi) he gives up—gives up what—everything (omnibus). It’s true that this isn’t a Commandment but a counsel for one’s state of perfection, such as the Apostles assumed it. The first Christians understood this blessed state; it delighted them; they em-

⁴Everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple. Cf. Lk 14:33. (NAB)
braced it immediately; thus, they all became saints, and why? Because they were poor. *Omnia illis erant communia.*

"Or sus, let's bless God, who has called us and placed us in this blessed state! The reason Our Lord wants us to renounce everything is that, in so doing, we must necessarily love God. The heart tends toward love, just as a stone tends to fall and fire tends to rise as to their center. Saint Augustine says that it's a misfortune not to have a loving heart. After having loved creatures too much, he loved God, and he praised Him for having detached him from the love of creatures. So then, if God has deprived us of all possessions, it's so that we might love Him with our whole heart and with all our strength; for He is a jealous God: *Deus zelotes.* There are so many reasons in Him to love Him: His great love and His kindness! Doesn’t He complain that we have abandoned Him, He who is the fountain of living water, to go to those cracked cisterns that can’t hold water and are all muddy? If God were pleased that we should have this spirit of poverty—yes, this spirit of poverty—how perfectly we’d love God! Let’s add to that God’s goodness, which wants to reward, even in this life, the practice of this virtue. Three Evangelists speak of this: Saint Matthew 19; Saint Mark 10; and Saint Luke 18. The first-mentioned says that anyone who leaves father, mother, etc., will have a hundredfold in this world,* yes, in this world. In the early days of the Church, these words gave rise to a heresy called Millenarianism. Certain people believed that Our Lord would come into this world after the Judgment and, with Him, those who had left all for His love, and that they would remain in it for a thousand years in the enjoyment of every pleasure. Those poor people! If they had studied things properly, they would have been well aware that those words are not to be understood in that way, as you, who give sermons on this, know better than I.

"But let's go back to where we were and say that Our Lord doesn't fail to reward ceaselessly those here on earth who have left all

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5 They had everything in common. Cf. Acts 4:32. (NAB)
6 Cf. Mt 19:29. (NAB)
7 This teaching (Millenarianism) is based on a strictly literal interpretation of Rv 20:1-15. (NAB)
for love of Him. Don’t you see how many foundations we’ve already made, how God has provided for all our needs, and how many houses He gives us for the one or two houses that two or three of our men have left! Wretched man that I am, I’m not talking about myself, who am only a poor pig keeper and a peasant, but of other men of whom several may have been Pastors in the villages! Serving as curates! Poor people! The Vicar-General of Amiens has written me that several curates and Pastors have lost everything, that the armies passing through have destroyed everything, and he asks us to take pity on them. We’ve provided for them. We, I repeat, could be like that, but God has provided by calling us to the Congregation, where we have what we need—and not only here, but also in the other houses, some more, some less—with the result that, if any of us go to Brittany, Poitou, Gascony, or Languedoc, we always find the table laid, even in Italy and as far as Rome. These are our houses; we have a right to them; God proves only too abundantly the truth of these words: *Qui reliquerit patrem etc. centuplum accipiet in hac vita.*

Isn’t it true that we receive a hundredfold more goods than those we’ve left? Alas! What have we left behind? A trifle, or very little. As for pleasures, let’s save that for another time.


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8And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. Mt 19:29. (NAB)

9Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and
reliquenter domum aut parentes aut frates aut uxorem aut filios propter regnum Dei, et non recipiat multo plura in hoc tempore, et in saeculo venturo vitam aeternam.\textsuperscript{10}

“You see how Our Lord speaks through these three Evangelists: every person, \textit{omnis} or \textit{nemo est}, without excluding anyone; there’s no one alive who, having left home, parents, etc., will not receive the hundredfold, says Saint Matthew; and Saint Mark adds, in this world, \textit{in tempore hoc}, and even, \textit{cum persecutionibus}, not withstanding the persecutions experienced by the first Christians in the early Church, when everything was taken from them. Saint Luke adds, \textit{multo plura}, many more things than what they left, they’ll receive more than that: for one father they have left, for one mother, a hundred times as many. Isn’t the Company as much as a father and a mother to us? What can a father and a mother do for their child that the Company doesn’t do for each one of us? It feeds us, clothes us, provides for all our needs. Aren’t we like so many brothers to one another, who have as much, even much more affection and charity than our blood brothers, who usually seek only their own interests?

“Let’s examine our conscience and see in it whether God isn’t doing for us, who have left all for love of Him, what He has promised. Aren’t we sufficiently rewarded? God grant that this may not be our reward, but that it be God himself and the enjoyment of His essence! So then, don’t we have good reason to ask God for this spirit of poverty, which is so much to our advantage? If someone were so wretched as not to feel in his heart this love of holy poverty, he should really be pitied! But let’s move on; the half-hour is already striking. Oh, how shameful of me to have tarried so long! I’ll just read the articles.

“Article 3: \textit{Everyone...should understand that...all our belongings are common property}. So then, we are a community of goods like the Apostles and the first Christians, \textit{omnia illis erant}

\footnote{\textit{Mk} 10:29-30. (NAB)}

\footnote{\textit{Amen. I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive (back) an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come. Cf. \textit{Lk} 18:29-30. (NAB)}}
communia; but, since there might have been great confusion if each person had been able to take these goods at will, the Apostles themselves remedied that at the very beginning by distributing them to each individual according to need; and this was done afterward by the deacons. Thus, a well-regulated Community should have people designated to give each man what he needs. So, here in this house there’s one person for each category—senior priests, students, seminarians, even Brothers—who is appointed to look after poverty and is responsible for asking each individual weekly what he needs. Just imagine whether, in the house of great lords, it’s customary to ask what each man needs! O mon Sauveur! I earnestly recommend that those whose task it is to find out what each man needs carry out their duty meticulously.

“If anyone needs something during the week, as when he’s going to the country and can’t wait another week, he may and should go to the man responsible for asking about each one’s needs, and not to someone else. Therefore, no one is to go to the sewing room or the shoe-repairer’s shop. Above all, I recommend that you not go to ask the tailor for a certain cloak or robe, or a cassock made of a particular fabric. Oh, may God preserve us from that, for how far removed that is from the spirit of poverty! If something is really a problem, such as the cold weather for those who are sensitive to it, and the man can’t wait another week, he can and should go only to the person designated for that. With regard to books, it’s up to the Superior to distribute them or to have them distributed. O mon Dieu! What a fault is committed by someone who takes the books he likes, without permission! He’s appropriating for himself what is common property. If you need them, ask for them; and give them back when you’ve finished; someone else may need them as much as you do. Another man is going on a journey, to give a mission: he’s paid his expenses and there’s some money left over; he gives no account of it and doesn’t return it but holds on to it to buy a book: that’s acting contrary to poverty. In the name of God, my dear confreres, let him who goes to the country write down what he has spent and, on his return, give an account of it and hand in the rest of the money. Be faithful to that!
"Article 4: No one either should have anything which the Superior does not know about, or does not authorize, or which he is not prepared to give up at once if the Superior says so, or even hints at it. So then, no one shall have anything, here or elsewhere, without the knowledge of the Superior. Anyone who might keep some money or books would be doing wrong; he'd be sinning against poverty, unless the Superior gives his permission for that—and he should be very careful about allowing it! Three things are recommended in this article: (1) to have nothing without the knowledge of the Superior; (2) to have nothing unless he permits it; (3) to be ready to give it up at the slightest indication.

"Article 5: No one should use anything as though it were his own personal property. No one should give away or accept anything, or exchange or lend anything, or go looking elsewhere for something, without the Superior's permission. To give something away is to act as a proprietor; you've renounced that; to accept something for yourself is also against poverty; it's not for poor persons to lend or borrow, for people don't lend them anything willingly.

"Article 6: No one should take for himself what has been allotted to others or set aside for community use or abandoned. This goes for books as well. It has happened only too often that, as soon as a person goes to the country and leaves his books or something else in his room, people go in and take what they like. We should deplore the state of those who do such things, which are wrong and contrary to poverty. I hope that won't happen again; otherwise, we'd have to find out who those persons were and make them do penance. Mon Dieu! What great reason I have to fear that God may punish me for not having been careful to prevent such faults. Let me say here, even though it's not the place for it, that it's forbidden to write in books and to mark them up; that's an action that denotes proprietorship. We'd have to be their owners to do that, and we're not. No one should pass on to someone else what has been assigned for his own use, without the Superior's permission. Nor should he allow such things to deteriorate or get damaged through his own negligence. Oh, what harm we do in such matters! Mon Sauveur!
“Article 7: No one should go in for useless or exotic things. O cursed curiosity, how much harm you do! Each one, too, should keep his needs within moderate limits, and curb his hankering after such things, so that his life style as regards food, room, and bedding is that of a poor person. And in this connection, and with regard to everything else for that matter, he should be prepared to put up with even the worst facilities in the house, willing to feel the bite of poverty in his life. Oh, what a beautiful practice! O my Savior, You who, in this state of poverty, suffered nakedness, grant us the grace of practicing this virtue to that point.

“Article 8: And so that nothing which smacks of ownership to even the slightest degree may be seen among us, our rooms are not to be locked in such a way that they cannot be opened from the outside. And we should not have a safe in our rooms, or anything else locked with a private key, without the Superior’s express permission. My dear confreres, the Jesuits have only a latch on the door to their bedroom; there are only three rooms in their house that may be locked: the Superior’s, the Minister’s, and the Procurator’s, and that’s because of the important things that are kept in them. So, no chests, suitcases, or strongboxes here, except in those rooms in which important Community items are kept.

“Article 9: No one moving from one house to another is to take anything with him, without the Superior’s permission. So then, to take away bags or suitcases full of books is to act contrary to this Rule and is against poverty. ‘But I bought those books,’ someone will say. My reply is that either it was done with Community money, and those books still belong to the Community, or, if it was with your own money, you gave that up; and it’s the same for money from your relatives. We cannot and must not say, ‘That breviary is mine,’ for you have only the use of it. Our Lord went from village to village without a purse or a sack, and, in the beginning. He even forbade having two tunics, so great was His love of poverty. So, my dear confreres, I recommend that we strive to imitate Him in that poverty. When you go to another house, you take your notes. Fine, that’s allowed in every well-regulated Community, but not books; you’ll find enough of them everywhere: thanks
be to God, you won’t be going into any of our houses where you won’t find enough of them to write your sermons according to our method. As for books that men in other well-regulated communities have in their rooms, and which they need to write their sermons, if they go to the country, this is what they do: they give them to the Superior or the Assistant to keep, who takes them, or he leaves them in the room, which he locks. I ask all of you to act in this way.

“Article 10: The virtue of poverty can be infringed by even the undisciplined craving for personal belongings. For this reason each one should take particular care that this failing does not get a grip on him; and this includes wanting benefices, as being of spiritual value. No one, therefore, should covet any benefice or honor in the Church, under any pretext whatsoever.

“We have to be satisfied with that for now. I’ve made a few notes; please bear with me while I see if I’ve said everything.”

He read his notes in a low tone of voice, after which he said, “That’s it. God be blessed! It’s striking nine o’clock; time to go to bed; we’re not going to have time to talk to you about the means of practicing this holy poverty and of avoiding the faults I’ve just mentioned.

“The first means, my dear confreres, is to give ourselves to God, to give Him the entire Company, that He may be pleased to grant us the grace of having this holy poverty. We have to have it (1) because we’ve promised it; (2) because of what is divine in this virtue; (3) because the good order of the Company depends on it. If we strive to practice this virtue well, those who come after us will feel the effects of it, will bless God for it, and will practice it as well. If we don’t practice it, our successors won’t do it either, with the result that we—I mean all of us—will be responsible for it at the judgment seat of God if we don’t do all in our power, by word and example, to see that this virtue of poverty is operative among us.

“O my dear confreres, what a consolation it will be when we go before God, wearing this beautiful robe of poverty! Because of us, posterity will be established in it as in its strong point, yes, its strong point, for it’s the practice of poverty that preserves and strengthens houses and Companies, just as, on the contrary, it’s proprietorship
that ruins them; experience of this is only too apparent and cata-
strophic!

"O my Savior, may Your Infinite Goodness be pleased to pre-
serve us and help us to grow in the practice of this virtue! All of us
are the fathers of those who will come after us; let us beget them in
these practices. Oh, how happy we'll be to have contributed to
that! Brothers, I implore you to do your part in this by your word
and example. We priests have a greater obligation to do it than
others do. When the Church practiced this in the beginning, the
faithful were all saints; but, as soon as people began to have
property of their own and priests had personal benefices, which
happened under Pope Saint Telesphorus,11 everything began to
decline. Priests today are only the shadow of the priests of that
happy time and golden age. May God be pleased to grant us the
grace of inciting all of us to practice that holy virtue of poverty,
which, besides the temporal reward promised to it, will merit for
us the eternal one!"

219. - THE DESIRE FOR BENEFICES
(Common Rules, Chap. III, Art. 10)

[November 28, 1659]

The virtue of poverty can be infringed by even the undisciplined
craving for personal belongings. For this reason each one should
take particular care that this failing does not get a grip on him; and
this includes wanting benefices, as being of spiritual value. No one,
therefore, should covet any benefice or honor in the Church, under
any pretext whatsoever.

11Seventh successor to Saint Peter. He had been Pope for eleven years (ca. 125-36) when he
suffered martyrdom.

Conference 219. Manuscript of Conferences. Judging from the many blank spaces left in the
manuscript by the copyist, this conference is very incomplete. Although the conference is
undated, its subject matter seems to indicate that it followed immediately after that of November
21, hence the date we have given here.
"The first reason is that the strengthening of the Company or its total ruin depends on the observance or lack of observance of this Rule. Anyone can see that, if the Company were once to allow itself to aspire to benefices, in a very short time it would be deserted, with nothing but a perpetual ebb and flow of persons entering and leaving. This Company could then be compared to an inn, where someone might stay one or two times, namely, for two or three years, and then, after that, might go somewhere else; and what’s more damnable, is that ambition might profit more by it than in the world, and a man might play his role better in it; for, under cover of piety or of some acquired reputation, he might have greater success in his enterprises.

"In a word, this Company would no longer be a firm, permanent Company as, by the grace of God, it is now, but a movable camp. It wouldn’t be a Company of God, but a refuge for ambitious men who would have one foot in the Company and the other in the world. What good results could it then have? How could people trust such persons, who might turn their backs on the slightest mortification they encountered, who are here today and might be gone tomorrow, as experience has shown in Companies where the door isn’t closed to benefices, whereas, in those where it is closed, the Companies are flourishing. Saint Ignatius was well aware of this truth...

"The second reason is that we aspire to benefices either to produce greater fruit in souls or to live more comfortably and sensually. If it’s to live more sensually, who doesn’t see immediately that it’s a temptation and totally bad? If it’s to produce greater fruit in souls and to win them over to God, the deception is no less great than the first: it’s even all the more to be feared because it appears, at first sight, to be reasonable. For, please consider, you want to have a benefice; perhaps you want to be a Pastor to attend to your neighbor more. Let’s take a closer look at that. What do Pastors do that we don’t do? Pastors hear the confessions of their parishioners, and so do we, etc. And not only do we have that in common with them, but we have it to an even greater extent, since we’re not simply Pastors of one parish, but God has placed in our hands the care of all souls. In addition, what will a Bishop do that we don’t do?"
He'll open ecclesiastical seminaries, and we have them in the Company; he has ordinands, so do we, etc. And we have the advantage in that because they use us to do all these things; that's why we have an even greater share in the good done there, since we're the most proximate causes of them. From that we can judge the deceit of the devil, who very often causes us to lose our vocation under such specious pretexts... 

"The third reason is that very often those benefices we think about having are not so easily found in this day and age. Experience has shown many men how hard this is; they've been frustrated in their hopes and are now the laughing stock of people; they are considered persons who allowed themselves to be deceived, like children who have run after butterflies, or like those who try, while running, to catch their shadows, which are a true image of honors, etc. The devil makes us see marvels; very often we imagine that everything will come to us while we're sleeping, but we find ourselves deceived; everything seems to be gold and silver to us, but, in reality, it's nothing but lead....

"The fourth reason is that to desire a benefice (even when that could be done without losing our vocation first, presupposing that we were seculars in the world) is to run the risk of great danger; it's putting a heavy burden on our shoulders, that of being responsible for souls, and, furthermore, to seek honors, which we allow ourselves to do; but, in the Company we have the difficulty and not the prestige attached to those responsibilities; and in this our vocation is more certain....

"The fifth reason is the example of the saints and of important persons like Saint Ambrose, Saint Martin, and Saint Athanasius, who avoided the offices people wanted to give them with as much zeal as worldly people go after dignities and honors. And what is remarkable is that this calling wasn't as dangerous then as it is now because the honors involved weren't so great, but were rather the crosses and martyrdom that had to be endured. Why, then, will we not do what we're obliged by our Rules to do, seeing that those saints did it well, even though they were in no way obligated to do so and had the virtues and rank appropriate to such positions! Take
the example of M. Pille, who, at the hour of death, regretted having been a Pastor. . . .

"The sixth and strongest reason is that, having taken a vow to live and die in the Company, and not being able to live in it while in possession of a benefice, since that’s incompatible, it must, of necessity, be renounced, if we don’t want to give up our vocation. Moreover, that’s contrary to the vow of poverty. . . .

Means to remedy this unfortunate situation:

"First, forget your relatives, get rid of that destructive attachment that makes us wish for benefices so that we can better their situation, once we have them; that, ordinarily, is the cause of such intrigues. . . .

"Second, go to see them only as little as possible, and talk to them also as infrequently as possible; for, such propositions regarding benefices usually come from relatives who, through a foolish kind of love, very often ruin us. . . .

"Third, have a very high regard for our vocation, considering that the most beautiful benefice we could have is to be a Missioner, saying, like David, Elegi abjectus esse in domo Domini mei, etc. . . .

"Fourth, never write or receive any letter without showing it to the Superior; go to see Prelates as little as possible, unless we’re sent by Superiors; make as few visits as possible to persons outside the Community, especially those in high places. . . .

"Make known our temptation as early as possible to the Director, even telling him the means we thought about ahead of time to succeed in our undertaking. . . .

"Lastly, give ourselves to God in the Company, not looking back, not thinking about either our relatives or our friends, but saying, Pater meus et mater mea dereliquerunt me. Dominus autem assumpsit me. Deus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei, etc."

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1 I have chosen to be object in the house of my God. Cf. Ps 83:11. (D-RB)
2 My father and mother have forsaken me, however, the Lord will take me in. Cf. Ps 27:10. (NAB)
3 God, my allotted portion and my cup. Cf. Ps 16:5. (NAB)
“My dear confreres, here’s the fourth chapter, which is on chastity:

1. Our Savior showed clearly how highly He rated chastity, and how anxious He was to get people to accept it, by the fact that He wanted to be born of an Immaculate Virgin through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, outside the normal course of nature. Christ allowed himself to be falsely accused of the most appalling charges, following His wish to be overwhelmed with disgrace. Yet He loathed unchastity so much that we never read of His having been in even the slightest way suspected of it, much less accused of it, even by His most determined opponents. For this reason it is very important for the Congregation to be strongly determined to possess this virtue. And we must always and everywhere uphold it in a clear and decisive way. This should be more obviously our practice since mission ministry almost all the time brings us into contact with laymen and women. Everyone, therefore, should be careful to take advantage to the best of his ability of every safeguard and precaution for keeping this chastity of body and mind intact.

2. In order to succeed in this, with the help of God, we should be very careful to control internal and external senses. We are never to speak to women in a one-to-one situation in unbecoming circumstances of either time or place. When speaking or writing to them we should completely avoid using any words, even spiritual terminology, which smack of affectionate feelings toward them. When
hearing their confessions, or when speaking to them outside of confes-
sion, we should not go too close to them nor take our chastity for
granted.

3. And since intemperance is, so to speak, the nursing mother of
unchastity, each one should be moderate with regard to eating. We
should, as far as possible, use ordinary food, and wine diluted with
plenty of water.

4. Moreover, each of us needs to convince himself that it is not
enough for Missioners to have reached an above-average level in
this virtue. We must also try with every means available to prevent
anyone from having even the slightest suspicion of the opposite vice
in any member of our Community. The mere suspicion of this, even
though completely unfounded, would do more damage to the Con-
gregation and its good work than the false accusation of any other
wrongdoing, especially since it would result in our missions doing
little or no good. Because of this we should use not merely every
available ordinary means but even exceptional ones where neces-
sary to prevent or remove this evil. For example, we should at times
withdraw from some works, which in other respects are permissible
and even good and holy, when in the judgment of the Superior or
Director they seem to give reason for fearing such suspicion.

5. And since a lazy life is the enemy of virtues, especially of chas-
tity, each of us is to avoid being idle and should always make good
use of his time.

"Before beginning our conference today, my dear confreres, I
think I should tell the Company something I forgot to mention the
other day concerning poverty. Maybe I didn’t explain myself
clearly enough because of my limited intelligence. I was saying,
then, that the vow of poverty we take doesn’t prevent us from re-
serving the right to and ownership of our goods, even though we
don’t retain the use of them, and I added that we willed or returned
those goods to our relatives. I should have said, however, that we
may will them to our relatives or to those among them who might
need them the most and for whom we might have greater affection,
or use the money in good works. For, when the Pope gave his expla-
nation of our vow of poverty, he didn’t go into detail and, by
leaving us in the state and Order of the clergy, intended that we have the same power and use as the members of the clergy regarding the disposal of the capital of our goods, with the permission and consent of the Superior. Each of us, therefore, is free to make a will and to dispose of his property, even in good works.

"We saw this recently in the case of M. Etienne, before he left for Madagascar. Since, from his youth, he had been thinking about a similar plan, he disposed of his property in two ways: he left part of it to his brothers, namely, his elder brother and his brother-in-law, each in due proportion, in accordance with the custom of the region, reserving for himself a very considerable annuity. In addition, he created a foundation, not in favor of the Company, since this foundation is for the public good and for a good work, although the Company administers it and is obliged to provide a sum of money annually for the support of those who will be ministering in Madagascar, as long as the Mission continues there; otherwise, somewhere else for the conversion of unbelievers. He did that, I repeat, with the consent of his relatives and after presenting the matter to four of the most famous lawyers in Paris, who had been asked to meet here so we could find out from them whether, given his vow of poverty and the Pope's Brief explaining the vow as it is made in the Company, he could dispose of his personal possessions in that way. They replied unanimously that he could.

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2The personnel catalogue states: "Nicolas Étienne, born on September 17, 1634, was 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, provided that he go to Madagascar." (Cf. Notices, vol. I, p. 480.) Étienne had already volunteered to go there as a catechist; it was Saint Vincent who sought the dispensation for his ordination (VIII, 20). He set off the first time in 1660 but was unable to land and had to return to France. In May 1663, he left again, arriving in Madagascar in September. His apostolate was short-lived: Dian Mananghe, a Malagasy chief, who had promised to receive Baptism, invited him to dinner, had him imprisoned, and murdered him, along with Brother Philippe Patte and some indigenous Christians.

Cosie 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 p. 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 along with M. Étienne on March 4. In both instances, Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission. Madagascar, vol. IX, is cited; Coste specifies pp. 374-494.
"That, then, is the freedom each of us has, either to leave our property to our relatives to divide up among themselves, or to dispose of it by will, in favor of those among them who might have the greatest need of it, or to others for whom we might have greater affection, or to use it in good works.

"Another point concerns going into others' bedrooms to nose about in them, looking through books and papers and taking what we please, under pretext that anything there is common property. I didn't explain myself clearly on that point and didn't describe this fault as it deserves. The Rule forbids us to keep our rooms locked and to have anything locked up in them. Although, as we said the other day, the Superior may keep his room locked because of the important papers and letters that are in it, God gave me the grace in the beginning of never locking mine and of having no chest or strongbox that locks; only in the past two or three years has there been under our table a drawer that locks, but which is almost always left open. It's also true that the little room where I go down to spend the day is locked when we go to meals and at night when we go to bed; but that's because there are important papers in it.

"The Mission acts this way to honor that state so highly esteemed by Our Lord of putting everything in common, and that no one have anything of his own. But the Rule of not locking anything is applicable only if no one is going into the rooms or private places to rummage around and take for himself what's in them. To practice this poverty better, Our Lord himself had nothing of His own, not even a stone on which to lay His head; and so that we may imitate Him more closely and more perfectly in that, didn't He say, 'No one can be my disciple, if he does not renounce all that he possesses'? That's to be understood, in the way the Doctors of the Church explain it, for the perfect.

"According to the Rule, our rooms must not be locked, nor should anything in them; that means that what's in them isn't ours, that we're not attached to it, that things can be taken from us or we can be deprived of them in order to honor, by this state and disposition, the holy virtue of the poverty of Our Lord. But take a man who,

\[3\text{Cf. Lk 14:33. (NAB)}\]
with no consideration for God, whom he is offending, or for his conscience, which is a constant reproach to him, or for his neighbor, whom he sees and scandalizes, enters the room of a priest in his absence, when the latter has just gone to the country, and rummages everywhere in it, looking at his books, papers, and writings, and taking what he pleases; is this man to be tolerated? Should we let that go unpunished? First of all, he’s breaking a Rule; second, he’s scandalizing those who see him; third, he’s destroying, as far as in him lies, that state of poverty which Our Lord esteems so highly; fourth, he’s drawing complaints from those from whom he’s taken something, if they’re not very virtuous and if God hasn’t given them the strength to put up with such a loss, and he gives them good reason for saying that we should have keys to lock our rooms, which hasn’t been done up to the present. So we see the Company on that occasion, suffer a loss and risk being turned completely upside down, if nothing is done to remedy this great evil and if that fault goes unpunished.

“I sent someone to the Jesuits to ask one of the senior priests, Fr. Haineuve, what they do in a similar case. ‘What would you do,’ our man said to him, ‘to one of your men who might go into someone else’s room like that?’ ‘That’s unheard of among us,’ he replied, ‘that a man should go into someone else’s room is unheard of; it’s contrary to good manners, against the Rule, and against conscience.’ Their rooms are closed only with a latch, and nothing inside is locked. ‘But, Father,’ our man continued, ‘what would you do in your house with a person who had gone into one of the bedrooms? What punishment would he receive?’ ‘He’d be made to strip in the middle of the refectory and to take the discipline in front of the Company.’

“In certain towns in Italy, the ruler forbids anyone to be armed during the night, and that order is obeyed, except by those who, having enemies, get permission to remain armed for that reason. But do you know what those people may say to their ruler? ‘You forbid us to be armed during the night; so then, you have to do what’s necessary to keep us safe.’ That’s only just. So, that ruler does all he can so that people can go everywhere at night in safety. You might say the same to us here: ‘You forbid us by Rule to keep
our rooms locked and to have anything in them locked; fine! We’re willing to practice poverty and detachment from everything for love of Our Lord; but you have to see that no one enters without permission, that people don’t rummage around in them and take what they like. That’s fair and reasonable, and not only must it be very expressly forbidden, but also serious punishments must be imposed on the offenders. The Jesuits certainly do it; they have the penance I just mentioned to you. I’m thinking about what we’ll have to do and, with the help of God, I intend to correct that judiciously. I’ve considered several means, which I’m not going to mention right now; I’ll reflect some more on them before God; I’ll seek advice; but, in the name of God, brothers, let’s give ourselves to His Divine Majesty to practice this Rule faithfully; I ask the Company to do so, and I ask God to grant us the grace of having the zeal and strength to prevent its being broken, and of finding the means and punishments we have to use against offenders; for it’s not suitable to keep them here, since this house is the first in the Company and should serve as a model for all the others. To put up with a man who goes into someone else’s room like that, who sees and takes whatever he likes, should we tolerate that? I let you be the judges. I ask God to grant us the grace of putting this to rights and to give Superiors the zeal and strength to enforce it, since it’s a matter of very great importance for the good order and peace of mind of the Company.

“The third thing I didn’t explain sufficiently has to do with the things we have personally, that we’ve brought to this house, bought with our own money, or received from our relatives, such as a small box, books, or pictures. Remember that what we have doesn’t belong to us individually; we have only the use of it and must each be ready to give it up and to deprive ourselves of it, according to the will of the Superior. I know a Community in which every year the individuals make a list in writing of the things they have in their rooms, to be presented to the Superior for him to judge what’s to be left or taken away.

“The fourth remark, which doesn’t deal with possessions but with the use of certain things we might have, concerns only the Officers and Superiors. They must never allow any individual to
have something exceptional in his room, such as tapestries, paintings, etc., or to have special food, like capon or partridge, etc. at his meals, even though that's done in certain Communities in the sight, and with the knowledge, of the Superior and others. But, for the Company—the poor Company—nothing special should be permitted either in food or clothing! I make exception, as always, for the sick. Oh, the poor patients! For them, even the chalices of the Church should be sold. God has given me tender feelings in that regard, and I ask Him to give this spirit to the Company. So then, let no one have anything exceptional.

"'But,' you will say, 'we've seen just the contrary with M. Étienne, who had his own books.' I reply, first of all, that the vow hadn't yet been explained by the Pope; we received the Brief only a short time ago. How long ago? Two or three months. I can testify that, whenever he received any money, he always asked permission to buy books and never gave any of them to others until after he had asked the permission.

"So then, never allow anything special; that might make the other men unhappy, give rise to jealousy and envy, and cause charity to be lost, for it's equality that preserves the charity and friendship we should have for one another.

"'But, if a person of rank should come to this house to join the Company, shouldn't he be allowed to have a tapestry and some paintings in his room, and always something special in the refectory?' No, God preserve us from that! Don't we say to them when they arrive, 'Don't think about having a tapestry, etc.? Test yourself to see if you can be content with ordinary food and with following the Community in everything.' If we did otherwise, we'd not only cause a breach in the Community but would be ruining it entirely. I thank God that we've acted in this way with regard to men like that who have presented themselves to the Company, and for the grace He has given them of being so disposed.

"It's almost nine o'clock, too late to get into our topic; it's better to stop here.

"O Savior of the world, when the Company was in its infancy, composed at the time of only three or four men, You inspired it with
the thought of going to Montmartre⁴ (this wretched man who’s speaking to you wasn’t well at the time) to commend itself to God, through the intercession of the holy martyrs, to take on this practice of poverty, observed so well at that time and since then by a large part of the Community. O Savior of my soul, grant us the grace of wanting and possessing only You. Doesn’t the entire clergy say, Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei,⁵ and aren’t we members of the clergy? As Christians by Baptism, haven’t we renounced the pomp and vanities of the world, which, in the words of the holy Doctors, are nothing other than earthly possessions?

"Not long ago, the Coadjutor Bishop of Cahors⁶ did me the honor of telling me how consoled he was when he was at a ceremony at which the priests of Saint-Sulpice, the seminary, and the priests of the parish were present.⁷ After a Solemn High Mass sung in their private chapel, and after they had listened to a sermon, they came, one after another, dressed in surplices, and said devoutly those words, Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei. He was so deeply touched by it that he was speechless. In the early days, when people came into the Church, they left all their possessions, keeping nothing for themselves, and they said, Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei. May His Divine Majesty grant us the grace of cherishing this state of poverty, of observing exactly the Rule that speaks of it to us, and of doing all we can to be an example to posterity in regard to the principle of this holy virtue, so dear to Our Lord, and which He will reward so abundantly!"

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⁴At the time of Saint Vincent there was an abbey of Benedictine nuns near the site of the third-century martyrdom of Saint Denis, first Bishop of Paris.

⁵The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. Cf. Ps 16:5. (NAB)

⁶Nicolas Sevin, Bishop of Sarlat, appointed by Alain de Solminihac as his Coadjutor and successor in the See of Cahors.

⁷November 21, feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
"My dear confreres, last Friday all I did was to finish what I had omitted in the preceding conference on poverty, and although we read the entire fourth chapter, which is on chastity, we didn’t speak about it, for lack of time. It’s appropriate to do it this evening; and to make the points more present to our minds, we should read them again:

1. Our Savior showed clearly how highly He rated chastity, and how anxious He was to get people to accept it, by the fact that He wanted to be born of an Immaculate Virgin through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, outside the normal course of nature. Christ allowed himself to be falsely accused of the most appalling charges, following His wish to be overwhelmed with disgrace. Yet He loathed unchastity so much that we never read of His having been in even the slightest way suspected of it, much less accused of it, even by His most determined opponents. For this reason it is very important for the Congregation to be strongly determined to possess this virtue. And we must always and everywhere uphold it in a clear and decisive way. This should be more obviously our practice since mission ministry almost all the time brings us into contact with lay men and women. Everyone, therefore, should be careful to take advantage to the best of his ability of every safeguard and precaution for keeping this chastity of body and mind intact.

2. In order to succeed in this, with the help of God, we should be very careful to control internal and external senses. We are never to speak to women in a one-to-one situation in unbecoming circumstances of either time or place. When speaking or writing to them we should completely avoid using any words, even spiritual terminology, which smack of affectionate feelings toward them. When
hearing their confessions, or when speaking to them outside of confession, we should not go too close to them nor take our chastity for granted.

3. And since intemperance is, so to speak, the nursing mother of unchastity, each one should be moderate with regard to eating. We should, as far as possible, use ordinary food, and wine diluted with plenty of water.

4. Moreover, each of us needs to convince himself that it is not enough for Missioners to have reached an above-average level in this virtue. We must also try with every means available to prevent anyone from having even the slightest suspicion of the opposite vice in any member of our Community. The mere suspicion of this, even though completely unfounded, would do more damage to the Congregation and its good work than the false accusation of any other wrongdoing, especially since it would result in our missions doing little or no good. Because of this we should use not merely every available ordinary means but even exceptional ones where necessary to prevent or remove this evil. For example, we should at times withdraw from some works, which in other respects are permissible and even good and holy, when in the judgment of the Superior or Director they seem to give reason for fearing such suspicion.

5. And since a lazy life is the enemy of virtues, especially of chastity, each of us is to avoid being idle and should always make good use of his time.

"Or sus, let’s put on our birettas. We have to speak to you about the virtue of chastity. We’re going to divide our talk into three parts, as usual: first, we’ll give, with a few additions, the motives laid down in the Rules, which oblige us to have a great appreciation for the practice of the virtue of chastity; in the second point, we’ll say what the virtue of chastity is, and the principal ways we have to practice it; in the third point, we’ll give the means.

“As to the motives, O Sauveur! Who doesn’t know them? Is there any child who doesn’t learn from his father and mother that it’s a sin, and a serious sin, to commit any impure actions? O Savior, You who know the motives obliging us to practice this virtue, not
only with regard to exterior actions, but also with regard to interior purity, impress them deeply on our minds so that we may practice this virtue exactly! The practice of chastity, as you know, is commanded by God, just as the vice contrary to this virtue is forbidden: ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ It’s not necessary to dwell on something that speaks for itself.

“Our Rule gives as the first motive the great disaffection Our Lord had for anything contrary to chastity, so much so that, before becoming man, He didn’t want this to happen in the ordinary manner, but in an extraordinary way, by means of the Holy Spirit. His mother remained a virgin and was always chaste, and the Holy Spirit worked this great wonder.

“O Seigneur! It truly must be said that there’s something great in this virtue, since the Saint of Saints breached the order of nature to be conceived and born in a way that showed the great importance He was giving to chastity!

“A second reason, no less important, and likewise mentioned in the Rule, is that, during the thirty years Our Lord lived with His father and mother in a family, working in their shop (which caused people to say, Nonne hic est faber et fabrifilius?) and after leaving them to preach His Gospel, with such success that everyone, men and women, followed Him, and even though He conversed with some of them, and His greatest enemies calumniated Him and made a thousand reproaches and accusations against Him, calling Him a seducer, a drunkard, a man possessed by the devil, He never allowed them to reproach Him with anything contrary to chastity.

“What an important motive! O Savior, it’s to You we turn to obtain such a rare virtue as this. Nature doesn’t go that far; on the contrary, it’s nature that stirs up in us a thousand and one temptations, images, and imaginations contrary to this virtue. O Lord, please grant us the grace, then, that neither the Company in general nor any of its members in particular, near or far, may ever fall into the contrary vice.

1Is not this the carpenter and the carpenter’s son? Cf. Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3. (NAB)
“Our Lord goes beyond that, saying that anyone who doesn’t leave his wife isn’t worthy of Him, so greatly was He attached to this virtue. Therefore, the Apostles and disciples who had wives left them to follow Him, and the women left their husbands. Several of the first Christian men did the same and no longer had any marital relations with their wives; but, not long after that, the devil, the enemy of this virtue, saw to it that the men didn’t keep this resolution very long, for intimacy with others and the great weakness of human nature caused some to revert to actions contrary to this virtue. Several withdrew to the deserts of Lybia and Egypt, driven by the fear of not being able to live such perfect chastity in the world. In this way, the deserts were filled with people who practiced this virtue exactly. Since that time, monasteries have been established to allow people to tear themselves away from the sins and pleasures of the world and to live in chastity. O Messieurs, let’s all lift our hearts to God, beginning right now, to ask Him and to obtain from Him that this poor Little Company may not be contaminated in its body and in its members. What do I mean by that? I mean for the Company in general and for each individual. We go everywhere, preaching chastity and inculcating this in the people. How important it is, then, for us to be very chaste ourselves!

“But, in what does this virtue consist? Little children are taught by their parents how despicable is the sin contrary to this virtue. How beautiful, then, is the virtue! There are two or three kinds of chastity: conjugal chastity, which moderates the affections of sexual pleasure, and the chastity that eliminates all affections from our hearts. The latter is a very lofty virtue; it leads those who practice it to live very purely. Conjugal chastity doesn’t pertain to us, since it consists in moderating sexual pleasure, and we shouldn’t take any pleasure in that. So then, it’s the other kind of which we have to speak. It requires us to tear from our hearts any inclination to acts of impurity, evil attachments, and so forth; I won’t say any more, or go into detail, about particular acts. Oh, how rare this virtue is, and how the devil strives to make us lose it! God is sometimes pleased to try holy souls by allowing the devil to tempt them with bad thoughts and imaginations, and nasty representations, even in
holy things. I knew a religious soul who had temptations to im­
urity and temptations of the flesh only at the time of Holy Commu­
nion; never, outside of that, was she tempted, and never did she go
to Communion without them. See that malice of the devil in using
the holiest things to tempt us to impurity. So, this virtue consists in
eliminating inclinations to impurity from our hearts—not only from
fantasy and imagination, but from our hearts. O Lord, help us to
wrench from our hearts these cursed attachments to impurity, and
from our memory the remembrance of persons we’ve known too
familiarily, and with whom we’ve perhaps committed some bad
action in the past! O God, tear this remembrance from our hearts!

"There’s purity of body and purity of mind. The person who has
purity of body doesn’t necessarily have chastity; it’s purity of mind
that animates this virtue and gives it its perfection, even its essence,
and banishes all bad thoughts from our mind, our memory, and our
imagination. Our entire practice consists in that: to banish from our
hearts, etc., if we want to have the chastity the Rule asks of us, re­
calling that, in coming into the world, Our Lord attached so much
importance to it that he wanted to change the nature of things and to
be born of a virgin. It’s because of this virtue that it’s said that
virgins will accompany the Lamb everywhere and will sing new
canticles. Oh, how the Company in general and each of its members
in particular must have great respect for this virtue and do every­
thing possible to possess it and to have it more and more perfectly!

"But what will help us to do that? Control over our senses; that’s
stated in the Rule. Control over our sight. O dangerous sight! How
wrong it is to allow our eyes to wander here and there over all sorts
of things! Because David, that holy man, looked at a woman, he fell
into the sin contrary to chastity and did something even worse, for
to that one sin he added another, namely, murder; you know that
story.

"Hearing, control over our hearing. You, who have heard con­
fessions in the country and even in the city, know that many persons
learn what impurity is by seeing and hearing those itinerant enter­
tainers, those clowns who depict disgraceful actions and hold
wicked conversations. Oh, how dangerous that is!
“So then, control over the senses: of sight; I repeat, of sight, yes, of sight, of hearing, and so on for the other exterior senses, including that of touch; master our senses as much as we can. Sight, hearing, touch.

“Another means is never to be alone with a person of the opposite sex in unsuitable times and places (this is stated in the Rule) because it’s in such times and places that the devil arouses sexual desire. We’re men like others, so, be careful! I can’t help mentioning here the serious fault those commit who speak with a woman or an unmarried girl alone in our little parlor. Oh, how it grieved me to learn that someone was there, choosing its darkest part, with the person sitting across from him in more light, and staying there for two or three hours! These are the beginnings of something very dangerous!

“So then, I ask the Company to be careful about that. When you have to speak to a woman in that little parlor, if you don’t know her and don’t have much to say to her, you should ask her to come out, remain standing while you talk out in the open, and cut the conversation short. Because of their position, several men are obliged to converse with women, but I ask them to do so in that way, without sitting close to them—unless they’re persons of rank and you have to spend a long time with them because of necessary business. Alas! How I have failed in this, and still fail in it only too often! God knows, however, the pain I experience when I’m obliged to speak with women in this way. Be that as it may, the Rule tells us never to speak one-on-one with a woman. Consequently, I exhort the person in the Company (for there is one, and I know of only one who’s subject to this failing) to work on that and to make it his practice; or, if he wishes, to abstain, as a form of penance, from such conversations with women. God has sometimes granted me the grace of asking them to come out of that little parlor or office and, once they’re outside, I speak with them and keep the conversation short.

“Another great danger to chastity is overeating, eating fine foods and finding a way to get them. Oh, how harmful that is, but especially drinking too much wine, without adding any water. Oh, why shouldn’t I make a fuss over that because of the problems that have
arisen in the Company through the fault of those who have gone to excess in it! They’re no longer with us, thank God, but we really have to give ourselves to His Divine Majesty not to drink wine any more, or at least to water it well.

"Would you like me to tell you what the Bishop of Cahors,² that holy man, that great servant of God, did so as not to drink wine any longer—for all he drinks now is water? He doesn’t have dinner, but in the evening, after his visits, sermons, and other ministries in his pastoral and episcopal responsibility, he eats a little bread, some vegetables, and some fruit, and drinks a glass of water, and that’s all. He’s been doing this for about thirty years, and is now around seventy years of age. Here’s what he did, according to what he did me the honor of telling me. Even though he drank wine in the beginning like everyone else, he began to add half a glass of water to it, then two-thirds, then he put just a little wine in a lot of water. Little by little he lessened the amount of wine in that way, so that his drink was nothing but reddened water; by having become indifferent to the taste of wine and by drinking so little that it wasn’t worth mentioning, he decided not to drink any wine at all and has been very exact to that.

"Another means for preserving chastity is to avoid laziness, which is, in itself, a great evil. Oh! How carefully we should avoid that, especially persons who, by their behavior, have become useless for ministry, and also those who are in ministry; for, take my word, when the devil finds a lazy person, it’s very easy for him to torment him and to tempt him strongly to the vice contrary to chastity! So, my dear confreres, see that you’re always busy, and then, if the devil tempts you, at least the work will greatly lessen the strength of his temptation.

"Yet another means—but this pertains to confessors—is not to get too close to female penitents, for, as you see and know better than I, each thing gives off its own emanations. Just as that lighted lamp sends out its rays and light, so do the head, the face, and the clothing of those penitents give off certain emanations, which, mixing with

²Alain de Solminihac.
those coming from the confessors, spark the temptation and, if we’re not very careful, wreak distressing havoc. So then, I exhort the Company not to get too close to female penitents, but rather to keep them at a distance. If some men acted otherwise because they’re hard of hearing, O Sauveur, let them realize that this wasn’t the thing to do. I ask the confessors to be very attentive to that and to set things straight.

“What may also be very harmful to us is to ask too many questions when we’re explaining the sixth Commandment, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ We should ask the penitent only what’s necessary. Confessors must know what’s necessary to ask penitents about this Commandment; we don’t have time to mention it here; it would be a good thing for the confessors to meet here one of these days to discuss that. Meanwhile, let’s give ourselves to God not to ask any question in confession about this Commandment except what’s necessary; for, if we ignore this, the devil won’t fail to subject us to serious temptations against this virtue, and the image of what was asked or replied will often come back to mind, arouse sexual desire and wreak terrible havoc.

“Another means for preserving chastity is to avoid conversation with nuns, even the most reformed of them. Before the foundation of the Company, the Bishop of Geneva,3 whom we had the honor of knowing and with whom we had the honor of conversing. obliged us to take on responsibility for the Visitation Nuns, so we’re bound to do this; it’s a sacred pledge, what can we do about that? But, Messieurs, you must be aware that those conversations are a diabolical love potion, for we are men, and men like others. We get involved in this under the pretext of devotion; we always begin that way, and God knows how it often ends! It’s contrary to the purpose of our Institute, which is to serve the poor people of the rural areas. Now, we can’t serve two masters. So then, I recommend that the Company never accept any ministry that might oblige it to direct, guide, and converse with nuns. Speaking of this, I can tell you that, at the beginning of the Company, we gave a mission in a village or

3Saint Francis de Sales.
hamlet where there were some nuns. They asked us to give them a few sermons and hear their general confession, since we were hearing the confessions of the good people, which we did. Good M. de la Salle was there. After his return here, those good nuns wrote to him several times. As soon as he noticed that there was some attachment in that, M. de la Salle, who was a man with common sense, replied to them that they should be satisfied with what he had written to them and even said to them when he was in that place, and that he had nothing more to say or to write to them. So, we have to avoid all that as a snare of Satan.

"Yet another means is not to write sentimental thoughts; this adds fuel to the fire, commits us to affections (and God knows what kinds of affections), requires that the other give replies also filled with sentimental thoughts—even more so, for we don't want to be outdone. For the love of God, Messieurs, I recommend that we refrain from all contacts with women, both personally and in writing. I think there are still one or two of those letters here in this house, but what letters they are! Shall I read them? Better that I keep silent! No harm came to the man in this house to whom they were addressed. Oh, but how close he came!

"Yet another means is to have no devotees. 'But Our Lord certainly had them; he conversed and visited with them; the Apostles had some, too, and so many holy persons as well.' Nevertheless, how risky that is! In places where there are any of those followers who praise, for his fine guidance, the confessor to whom they open their heart and conscience, we really have to tear for the Company. Oh, what an attachment! Woe to the Company if it allows such persons in those places! What great danger they're in! I know a place where women are so affectionate toward their confessor that I'll say nothing more.

"What should be done about that? (1) Have a firm command of our senses; (2) speak to these devout women only in confession, not even standing in church and never—I mean never—in their homes or in our house. Recommend that they tell you in confession whatever they have to say to you, or will have to say to you, and never anything apart from that. Oh, would that God might be pleased to grant us the grace of holding fast, and of never speaking to them standing
in the church, at the door, or in their homes! Those are the means of preserving chastity in the Company. What should we not hope from the Company, here and elsewhere, in France and in foreign countries, if it uses such precautions! Otherwise, God might turn His indulgent countenance on other persons who would render Him much greater service and glory in the missions.

"Or sus, Messieurs, what shall we do to keep this Rule? The means that have just been proposed will be of little use if they're not animated by the Spirit of God. We must, then, ask Our Lord very earnestly for it in our prayers, and have a special intention to give ourselves earnestly to His Divine Majesty that we may be preserved and grow more holy in this virtue and keep ourselves very far removed from the contrary vices. If we do that and work here to acquire in this way the preservation and development of this virtue, that will be extended everywhere. Thus, the Company will become ever more pleasing to God, who will have only eyes of indulgence for it and new and abundant graces to share with it. May His Divine Majesty grant that it may be so!"

222. - OBEDIENCE
(Common Rules, Chap. V, Art. 1-3)

[December 19, 1659]

"My dear confreres, we're at the fifth chapter of our Rules, which is on holy obedience.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us obedience by word and example. He wished to be submissive to the Most Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, and other people in positions of authority, whether good or disagreeable. For this reason we should be completely obedient to every one of our Superiors, seeing the Lord in them and them in the Lord. In the first place we should faithfully and sincerely reverence and obey our Holy Father the Pope. We should
also humbly and consistently obey the most reverend Bishops of the dioceses where the Congregation has houses. Furthermore we should not take on anything in parish churches without the approval of the parish priests.

2. Every one of the confreres should also obey the Superior General promptly, without complaining, and unwaveringly in all matters not obviously sinful. This obedience is, to some extent, blind. It implies giving up our own opinion and wishes, not only with regard to what he specifically tells us but even with regard to his intention, since we believe that what he asks us to do is always for the best. We should always leave ourselves open to what he wants, like a file in the hands of a carpenter.

3. We are also to obey, in the same way, other Superiors, whether local or provincial, as well as lesser office-holders. Each one should also try to answer the call of the bell as Christ’s voice, going so far as even to leave a letter unfinished as soon as the bell starts ringing.

“I think that’s enough reading for this evening; if we have time, we’ll proceed further. This evening’s conference, my dear confreres, is on obedience. We’re going to divide what we have to say into two or three points. In the first, we’ll state our reasons for giving ourselves to God that He may be pleased to fill us with this virtue of obedience; in the second, we’ll explain what this virtue of obedience is and in what it consists; in the third, we’ll mention the kinds of this virtue, if we have time.

“Regarding the first reason we have for giving ourselves to God that He may give us this virtue of obedience, that’s stated in the Rule, namely, the example the Son of God gave us and continued to give during His entire life, which was simply a sequence of obedience. It must be said that there’s something great and divine in this virtue, since Our Lord loved it so much from His birth to His death and performed all the actions of His life through obedience. He obeyed God His Father, who willed that He become man; He obeyed His mother and His putative father Saint Joseph, et erat subditus illis,¹ and all those who were in authority, both good and

¹And he was obedient to them. Cf. Lk 2:51. (NAB)
bad, so that all the actions of His life were nothing but a sequence of obedience. He began His life in that way, *factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis,* obedient unto death, and even to death on the Cross, and because of that—*propter quod*—His Father esteemed Him highly, exalted Him, and lifted Him up.

"O Savior, what, then, is this virtue of obedience? How excellent it is, since You have found it worthy of a God! Is there anything greater than to obey even to the ignoble death of the Cross? What's left after that? What a picture we have in that, Messieurs, in that example of obedience, which Our Lord has given and shown us! What reasons can you expect after that—obedience unto death of God made man!

"If there were anything additional, it's that Our Lord has said that 'anyone who does not renounce himself is unworthy of Him and of being His disciple.' What will we be if we're not disciples of Our Lord? And yet, we can't be so if we don't renounce ourselves. And, as we can't part with ourselves, or our soul, or our body (they're held fast by a bond that's too tight for us to be able to part with them), in the thinking of the Fathers, to renounce ourselves is to give up our own judgment and will. O my Savior, those, and only those, who renounce themselves, are the ones You take and accept to follow You in this life in order to glorify them in heaven above. So then, I can't be a disciple of Jesus Christ unless I renounce myself, my judgment, and my own will. I have to do this; I have to ask it of God, for I need His grace, without which I couldn't do it; it's repugnant to nature; I can't do it on my own, even though I have to do my part in it. For this, we have to mortify ourselves, otherwise, we can't be disciples of Jesus Christ. Let's do what Saint John Chrysostom did, who used to give a sparkle to things when he was repeating something important. We have to go through this, namely, that, to be truly a disciple of Our Lord, we must renounce ourselves, practice obedience, and live in the submission of a priest, or of a Brother of the Mission. Is that really true, Lord? Do we think about that? To obey, we need the grace of God; God has to be in-

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2*becoming obedient even to death, even death on a cross.* Cf. Phil 2.8. (NAB)

3*Cf. Lk 14:33.* (NAB)
volved in it. O Lord, we can’t go on, nor do we want to follow our own will; we’ve renounced that by our vows, and the Fathers say that even Christians have renounced it by Baptism. So then, we have to renounce our own judgment. O Lord, please grant us that grace.

“Another motive that can be added to that, even though the first is more than sufficient, is that we can’t disobey without committing a more or less grave sin, depending on how serious the disobedience is, especially with regard to things that are in the Rule, given that it’s based on Holy Scripture and the Commandments of God. And if the disobedience has any repercussions, and certain persons consequently disobey, there is sin, and mortal sin, when this leads to scandal and, above all, if we disobey in a certain spirit of contempt. O Sauveur! This is usually the case when we do it with some determination and boldness, likewise when the Superior recommends the observance of a practice that’s obligatory, or uses the words, ‘I order you to do that,’ and also, ‘in virtue of obedience.’ I witnessed this especially in something that was recommended here a few days ago; you know what I’m talking about, namely, the obligation the Company has to pray the Divine Office in common. There are some who still aren’t doing it. That gives us cause to tremble. The Rule states that; we’ve recommended it; it’s the practice of the Company in the other houses; it’s the way good priests pray it, and they do so in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. When you see those priests who come here on Tuesdays for the conference saying it devoutly in church, two by two, it’s very edifying. I recall that, when the Prince de Conti came here some time ago, he said to

4The preceding September 26.

5Armand de Bourbon. Prince de Conti, brother of the Grand Condé, was born in Paris on October 11, 1629, and became the head of the Conti house, a cadet branch of the house of Bourbon-Condé. His father, who had earmarked him for the priesthood, had conferred on him a large number of abbeys, including Saint-Denis, Cluny, Lérins, and Molesme, but the military attracted him more than the Church. His passion for the Duchesse de Longueville drew him into the intrigues of the Fronde. After having him locked up in the prison of Vincennes, Cardinal Mazarin gave him his niece, Anna Maria Martinozzi, in marriage. The Prince became Governor of Guyenne (1654) and General of the armies in Catalonia, where he captured several cities. He was also Grand Master of the King’s household and Governor of Languedoc (1660). Before his death on February 21, 1666, his virtuous wife was able to bring him back to God. Two hours of his day were devoted to prayer. A friend of Saint Vincent, he offered his services to him more than once and was present at his funeral.
the people with him, 'I have to say some prayers, which I do, as far as I can, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; so I'm going to the church.' Let's leave things at that.

"If the spirit of obedience is not present in the Company, what will it become? Won't it be a Tower of Babel, in constant disorder? Look at those Communities where there's no obedience; everything is in disorder. I admire the obedience of several in the Company; it's marvelous both here in this house and elsewhere; several men write to me for the slightest thing they have to do, 'What shall I do in this and in that? How shall I act in such or such a circumstance in which passion has a grip on me?' O Savior, forgive us if, up to now, we have committed many faults against obedience! Grant us, Lord, the grace to correct ourselves.

"In what does this virtue consist? Theologians say that it's in a disposition of doing what those to whom we are subject wish. You see, Messieurs, God is the God of virtues: Deus virtutum; virtue must have its principle and root in the interior; for, just as what appears in the person is not the person, what obedience appears to be is not always the virtue of obedience; for, it consists in a continual disposition to obey and to renounce our own judgment. In line with this disposition, we go straight to where God wishes, and that's where we should aim in order to be perfectly obedient. Let's ask God to give us this spirit of obedience. A Superior who gives orders for something may be wrong. Alas! He's neither infallible nor sinless; but the person who obeys, provided that it not be in a thing that's obviously a sin, as it would be to do something dishonest and wicked—no, never that; rather to die—that person is assured of doing God's Will, and won't be mistaken; for God can't deceive us. And how could Our Lord have commanded the people to obey the Scribes and Pharisees and the priests of the Old Law, corrupt men for the most part, to whom Our Lord gives great and continued reproaches! Yet he said to the people, 'Obey them, do whatever they tell you, but don't do what they do.' And how could He himself have obeyed them if He would have been doing something wrong, or rather, if He hadn't known that obeying corrupt and evil persons was to practice great acts of virtue! They, however, had authority
and were in office; He had to obey them because of this rule: *Qui vos audit me audit, qui vos spernit me spernit.* They had the direction of souls. Our Lord, then, was in the right, Messieurs, when He said, *Qui vos audit me audit, qui vos spernit me spernit.* Can we call this into question? Shall we not ground ourselves, more than ever, in the practice of this virtue? We have taken the vow to live always in submission and dependence by practicing holy obedience. Think about what that means.

"But to whom do we owe obedience? The Rule begins with Our Holy Father the Pope; he is the common father of all Christians, the visible head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the successor of Saint Peter; we owe him obedience, we who are in the world to instruct the people in the obedience they, as well as we, should have for this universal shepherd of our souls. It’s up to us to show them the example of this. Therefore, let’s give ourselves to God to obey Him faithfully, and receive gladly what will come from Him. It’s to him, in the person of the saint to whom Our Lord said, ‘Peter, feed my lambs, feed my sheep,’ that this same Savior has given the keys of His Church. He is, as it were, another species of man, so far is he above others. Consequently, we must consider him in Our Lord, and Our Lord in him.

"We owe obedience to the Bishops. According to certain persons, the authority of the Pope is shared with them, and according to others, they have the authority from Jesus Christ himself. Let’s leave that. When we received priesthood, we priests promised obedience to them, not only to them and to their successors but also to the Prelates in the dioceses in which we’ll have to live and work, so that we have always felt, and still do, that we should consider ourselves like those servants of the Gospel to whom the father of the family says, ‘Come,’ and they come; ‘Go,’ and they go. I’ve always been committed to obeying their orders. In fact, we’re subject to them and dependent on them with regard to preaching, catechizing, hearing confessions, and administering the Sacraments during missions, although they most willingly have left to

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6*He who hears you, hears me; he who despises you, despises me.* Cf. Lk 10:16. (NAB)
7Cf. Jn 21:15-17. (NAB)
the Company the regulations and orders for the internal discipline of Rule. Our Holy Father expressed this in his Brief, without our getting involved in it, saying that our men who are sent to give missions or to direct seminaries will be subject to the Ordinaries, that is, to the Bishops. He issued this Brief after consulting the Cardinals of the Congregation for the explanation of the Council of Trent. We owe them obedience as we owe it to God. I ask those who will be sent to their dioceses to act in this way and to be exact in obeying them.

"That’s how it is with regard to obedience to Bishops. Isn’t it just as reasonable with regard to Pastors? Quoi! Would it be right for an outsider to do anything in their parish without their consent? That would be a great disorder. From the very beginning and to this day, the Company has received from God the grace of paying them great deference and of doing nothing in their domain without their consent.

"That leaves obedience to the Superior. O wretched man that I am! To obey me who am disobedient to God, to the holy Church, to my father and mother from my childhood! And nearly my whole life has been nothing but disobedience! Alas, Messieurs! To whom are you rendering obedience? To the person who, like those Scribes and Pharisees about whom I was speaking to you a short time ago, is filled with vices and sins. But that’s what will make your obedience more meritorious. I was just thinking about that again, and I remember that when I was a little boy, as my father used to take me with him into town, I was ashamed to go with him and to acknowledge him as my father because he was shabbily dressed and a little lame. O wretched man that I am! How disobedient I have been! I ask pardon of God; I also ask your pardon, and that of the whole Company, for all the scandal I have given you, and I beg you to pray for me, that God will pardon me and will always give me heartfelt regret for this.

"Or sus, let’s stand up; it’s almost nine o’clock; let’s not start another topic. Now, Our Lord has shown such a beautiful example of obedience that He himself says, Quae placita sunt ei facio semper,\(^8\) yes, facio semper. And that obedience he rendered to God His

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\(^8\)I always do what is pleasing to him. Cf. Jn 8:29. (NAB)
Father not only lasted while He was on earth; He has continued it in His glory in heaven, obedient to priests, even sinful ones, who raise Him and lower Him in the Eucharist, as they please. Oh, what obedience, which persists even until after death! O Lord, You who have taken from all eternity the resolution to obey, grant us the grace of taking it now! Grant us the grace of obeying the Rules and the orders of our Superiors, their will signified in word or even by signs, as the Fathers demand, who go so far as to say that we should obey their intentions. But, above all, Lord, please grant us the grace of being exact in carrying out the obedience we have vowed, of really going forward in being devoted to this virtue! That, Messieurs, is what we’ll earnestly ask of God, and we’ll give ourselves to His Divine Majesty to obtain this grace. O Seigneur! What will the Company of the Mission be like, if it is truly obedient to the Pope, to the Bishops, to Pastors, and to its Superiors! How many blessings should it not expect from His Divine Majesty! May God grant us this grace!”

223. - REPETITION OF PRAYER

(Now Vol. XI, 82a.)

224. - RETREAT MINISTRY

(Now Vol. XI, 107a.)
SUPPLEMENT

1. - SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL 1 TO SAINT VINCENT 2

[Orleans, End of May 1628]

My Reverend and very dear Father,

May the most Holy Spirit of our good God fill you with His sacred gifts!

I want to tell you how sorry I was to leave without saying a last good-bye to you. But, my very dear Father, the most pure and holy union God has made of our spirits, although I am unworthy of this, makes up for these small exterior failings. I also think it gives us a certain sweetness and consolation in the belief that this separation is simply one of physical presence and that, by the Divine Mercy, we shall see each other eternally in that blessed company of saints to which you aspire as directly as possible, and I with desires only, since I do not yet have the authentic virtues which, by the grace of God, elevate us to this happiness. Pray, my dear Father, that His Goodness will give them to me, and I assure you that I will never forget you before Him— I mean in a special place.

I cannot tell you how happy I am to know that my very dear Sister 3 is satisfied with my dear older daughter, as you also are, my


1 Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal (cf. XI, 103, n. 3).
2 Saint Vincent was the Superior of the two Visitation monasteries of Paris.
3 Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier, Superior of the First Monastery of Paris; Mother Favre was designated for the monastery in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques.

Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier, born in 1592, daughter of François, Seigneur d’Interville and Anne Brachet, Dame de Frouville. Married in 1608 to Thomas Gobelin, Seigneur du Val, Master Ordinary of the Chambre des Comptes, she was received into the Visitation convent in Paris on July 2, 1620, after her marriage was annulled, and on the advice of Saint Francis de Sales. Professed on February 12, 1622, she was elected Superior several times. Saint Vincent used to say that she was one of the holiest souls he had ever known. (Cf. Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal. Sa vie et ses oeuvres [8 vols., Paris: Plon, 1874-1880], Vol. V, p. 65, note.)
very dear Father, and I am confident that the better she is known, the more she will be loved, and that you will find in her what I told you about her and much more.

It is my total desire that, in serving God, we might give satisfaction to everyone, especially to those to whom we are most indebted, as we are to that dear, virtuous foundress, who has such affection and kindness for us. After God, you are the primary cause of all this, my very dear Father. Our good Sister the Superioress gives me evidence of all that in her letters and attests to the special affection and satisfaction of both you and her. May God be glorified for everything and may He pour out His blessings ever more generously on your dear soul, my very dear Father.

He put her in contact with Commander de Sillery in the hope that she would finish the work of bringing him back to God. Mother Lhuillier died on March 25, 1655, in the Chaillot monastery, where she was the first Superior. Her name is often mentioned in the biography of her sister: R. P. Salinis, Madame de Villeneuve (Paris: Beauchesne, 1918). (Cf. manuscript life of Mother Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier in the Archives of the Daughters of the Cross of Tréguièr.)

Marie-Jacqueline Favre was "the first religious, the second professed, and the second Mother" of the Visitation (cf. Année Sainte, Vol. VI, p. 346). Her biography was written by Mother Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, Vies des premières Religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie (2 vols., Paris: Julien Lanier et Cie, 1852), Vol. I, pp. 3-120. She was born in Chambéry in April 1592, the daughter of Benoîte Favre and Antoine Favre, President of the Council of the Genevans, then Chief Justice in the Senate of Savoy. One of the two companions of the Baronne de Chantal at the time of the foundation of the Visitation on June 6, 1610, she was successively elected Superior of the First Monastery of Lyons (1615), of Montferrand (1620), of Dijon (1622 and 1625), of the Second Monastery of Paris (1628), and of Chambéry (1635). She founded the Visitation of Bourg-en-Bresse in 1627 and died in Chambéry, June 14, 1637, at the age of forty-five.

4Mme de Dampierre.
2. - VISITS TO THE CONFRATERNITIES ¹ OF SANNOIS, FRANCONVILLE, HERBLAY, AND CONFLANS

Saturday at noon [May 1630]

There has been no Procurator at the Charity of Sannois for a year. However, a good man has always written down the receipts and expenditures and is now willing to accept this responsibility by election.

The sisters² of the Charity have somewhat lost enthusiasm for their work. They have often given up visiting the sick on their day because the treasurer is so willing that she has the cooking done for those whose turn it is. Furthermore, she and the superior ³ have sometimes been satisfied with giving the sick some money. They have also given some to a few needy people and have often been careless about getting meat, and have made the sick do without eggs or something else that was to their liking.

The above-mentioned sisters, at least most of them, neglect Holy Communion for months. They need to be stirred up by some kind of exhortation when the Procurator is going to be elected.

The superior is satisfied with keeping the money box at her house and has given both keys to the (Treasurer). They are troubled about receiving the sick, and say that they do not need a Charity in Sannois which admits only those who have nothing at all, because there are very few or none at all of that sort, but many whose few possessions are so tied up that they would die of hunger before they could sell them and help themselves.

Supplement 2. - The first part of this report of Saint Louise to Saint Vincent, the section on Sannois, was published as no. 47a (I, 78), but Coste, in n. 1, identifies the place as Villepreux. The copyist states that Saint Louise wrote the report in her own hand. Spiritual Writings, pp. 705-06, contains the full text, continuing with the section dated “Thursday evening.” For the sake of clarity, the entire report is given here. As stated above, it belongs in Vol. I, as a continuation of no. 47a.

¹The Confraternities of Charity (XI, 94, n. 1)
²The Ladies of the Confraternities were often referred to as “sisters.”
³The Lady in charge of the Confraternity.
Thursday evening

In Franconville, the Procurator of the Charity has lent money to twenty-five day laborers and seemed disposed to continue this practice as the occasion might arise. The officers do not dare oppose him in this because he is very autocratic. The officers were dismissed a long time ago and another election took place; they continued, nevertheless, to function; it is to be feared that, by leaving them in any longer, it may be difficult to get rid of them and to put others in charge. They also sometimes give money to the patients, when their relatives want to take care of them, and they make them go without meat whenever it is a little hard to get it. Many sisters give free rein to spending money on their day, with no concern for the regulations.

Friday morning

In Herblay, the sisters of the Charity are still in their first fervor, yet have found it difficult to ask for alms, and are complaining that the curate had promised to have the charity to celebrate Holy Mass without a stipend. The Treasurer does not keep records. They have decided to carry a candle in the procession and at the burial of the sisters, to receive Holy Communion on the appointed days, and to observe faithfully the rest of the Rule.

Tuesday after Vespers

In Conflans, no Procurator was ever elected for the Charity, and, because of illness, the service of the sick stopped a long time ago. A clergyman takes the trouble to record expenses, but doesn’t enter the revenues because, he said, there are too few of them. There is no more linen. There are about fifty livres in the treasury. On the advice of the Pastor, money has been given to the sick. The sisters often make the patients go without meat, but most of them are very faithful; all have promised to observe the regulations, and some of them have promised to provide linen.
3. - JEAN-JACQUES OLLIER \textsuperscript{1} TO SAINT VINCENT
AND THE MEMBERS OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE \textsuperscript{2}

You are firmly fixed by Our Lord in the city of Paris like lights placed on a large candelabrum to enlighten all the clergy of France, so you must be particularly encouraged by the excellent results and spiritual profit that the group of priests who have shared successfully in your spirit is bringing about in the town of Puy. They give examples of virtue that delight the entire province: they catechize in several places in the town; they visit prisons and hospitals there frequently; and they are now ready to go to give missions in all the places that depend on the Chapter. I am embarrassed to see how zealous they are for me, as incapable as I am, to go to open their mission.


\textsuperscript{1}Jean-Jacques Olier (cf. XI, 350, n. 1).

\textsuperscript{2}The members of the Tuesday Conferences.
4. - TO SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC

[Undated]

The two letters I am returning to you, Mademoiselle, seem fine to me. I think you would do well to have Sister Barbe make her retreat. I will hear her confession, God willing, and will speak to her by the same means next Saturday. I am unable to do so any sooner because of my business affairs. I am, in the love Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL


1Saint Louise de Marillac, Foundress, with Saint Vincent, of the Daughters of Charity, was born in Paris on August 12, 1591. Her father was Louis de Marillac, brother of the devout Michel de Marillac, Keeper of the Seals (1616-30), and half-brother of another Louis, Marechal de France, renowned for his misfortunes and tragic death. Louise married Antoine Le Gras, secretary of Queen Marie de Médicis, on February 5, 1613, and they had one son, Michel. Antoine Le Gras died on December 21, 1625. The devout widow had implicit confidence in her spiritual director, Vincent de Paul, who employed her in his charitable works, eventually making her his collaborator in the creation and organization of the Confraternities of Charity. The life of Saint Louise, whom the Church beatified on May 9, 1920, was written by Gobillon (1676), the Comtesse de Richemont (1883), Comte de Lambel (n. d.), Monsignor Baumard (1898), and Emmanuel de Broglie (1911). Her letters and other writings were copied and published in part in the work entitled: Louise de Marillac, veuve de M. Le Gras. Sa vie, ses vertus, son esprit (4 vols., Bruges, 1886). More complete editions are Sainte Louise de Marillac, Écrits spirituels (Tours: Mame, 1983), ed. Sister Elisabeth Charpy, D.C., trans. by Sister Louise Sullivan, D.C., Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac, Correspondence and Thoughts (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), and Sister Elisabeth Charpy, D.C., ed., La Compagnie des Filles de la Charité aux Origines. Documents (Tours: Mame, 1989). Saint Louise was canonized on March 11, 1934, and on February 10, 1960, was named patroness of all who devote themselves to Christian social work. To the above bibliography should be added some of her more recent biographers: Alice, Lady Lovat, Life of the Venerable Louise de Marillac (Mademoiselle Le Gras) (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917); Monsignor Jean Calvet, Louise de Marillac, a Portrait, translated by G. F. Pullen (1959); and Joseph I. Dirvin, Louise de Marillac (1970).
My very dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday I was at Sainte-Marie when they opened your packet of letters; I thank God for the good health He is giving you and pray that He may continue to do so for many years to come. Oh, how good it is to put oneself at risk for the service of a Master who knows how to recognize in this way the services rendered to Him!

You will see from the enclosed letters what M. Destampes has written me; I replied to him that I felt he should not go to Rouen or that they should not begin to appeal to temporal powers until the spiritual ones of your meditations and your practices of virtue, and especially your acts of patience, have not merited and obtained from God the grace you need to do His work. And I praise God, my dear Sister, that your letter helps us to catch a glimpse of the dawn of that pleasant anticipation. Oh, what an example that will be to posterity and will honor God marvelously, if you can introduce the Spirit of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ in that place, and how pleased with you our blessed Father and our worthy Mother will be for this! Then, too, you do not see either the devil's tricks or the venom he conceals under recourse to human means and worldly powers, unless the relatives of those good young women first begin to have recourse to them. In nomine Domini, at that time the Will of God will be made known to you as to how to make use of the same means. You know, my dear Sister, how many times we discussed together how irrelevant these means are to divine things, and the

Supplement 5. - Archives of the Visitation, 68, avenue Denfert-Rochereau, Paris, handwritten copy, of which there is a photocopy in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. The original has been lost. This letter probably belongs in Vol. II, after no. 679.

1 First Monastery of Paris.
2 Francis de Sales.
3 Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal.
resolutions we have often taken to hold to those that Our Lord teaches us. Let us give ourselves again to God in a very particular way for this, my dear Sister; I am going to do it right away at Holy Mass, at which I will not fail to offer you to God, as, by His grace, I never fail to do, who am in His love, my dear Sister, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

6. - CHARLES FAURE \(^1\) TO SAINT VINCENT

\(J[esus] \ h[o}mim} \ S[alvator] \(^2\)

*Monsieur and very Reverend Father,*

*May J[esus] the S[avior] of m[en] be your life!*

*I am witness to the extraordinary zeal and care you have used to bring about the success of the Sainte-Genevieve Abbey affair, and, nevertheless, your same zeal, which you exhibit in all that regards*

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\(^1\)Charles Faure, born in Louveciennes (Yvelines) on November 29, 1594, took the habit of the Canons Regular in the Abbey of Saint-Vincent de Senlis and was professed on March 1, 1615. The examples of laxity he saw did not lessen his progress in virtue. His reputation for holiness reached the King, who entrusted him with the delicate mission of establishing the reform of the Sainte-Geneviève Monastery in Paris. He was so successful that, to extend the reform, Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld gathered into one Congregation, under the name of Congregation of France, several houses of the Canons Regular spread throughout the Provinces of the kingdom, placed them under Sainte-Geneviève Abbey, and appointed Fr. Faure Vicar-General of the new Institute. Fr. Faure visited the establishments, laid down Rules for them, and founded some seminaries. The Congregation of France was canonically erected by a Bull of February 3, 1634. On October 17, the General Chapter elected Fr. Faure Superior General for a term of three years. He was reelected in 1637. Since the Constitutions did not allow a third term, he yielded his position in 1640 to Fr. Boulart, but retained such extensive powers for himself that his successor could do nothing without his advice. When Fr. Boulart's three-year term ended, Fr. Faure was once again placed at the head of the Congregation of France, but fell ill that same year and died on November 4, 1644. He left several works on asceticism. His attitude toward Saint Vincent was rather cold and reserved. Cf. Lallemand et Chartonnet, *La vie du Révérend Père Charles Faure, abbé de Sainte-Geneviève de Paris* [Paris: J. Anisson, 1698].

\(^2\)Jesus Savior of men.
God's honor, gives me good reason to ask you, for Our Lord's sake, to be [our] protector with Her Majesty and to make known to her how dangerous this charge imposed on you would be for our Congregation and the setbacks and difficulties it might cause. I am asking you this because I believe that, notwithstanding your humility, God has advanced you to the influence you have with Her Majesty to assist with your support the requests that, for God's sake, we make to her. We have known only too well the perseverance of your zeal, which makes me hope that, if [the] Queen's goodness were informed of the justness of what our Congregation desires, after the transfer of Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, 3 Her Majesty would grant it, unless you know some secret reason that would make any plea and solicitation useless. Excuse my importunity; it seeks your help in an affair that God obliges us to pursue, and will give me and all our Congregation, of which I am only a weak instrument, another obligation to ask God to bless all your holy plans. I am, in His holy love, Monsieur and most Reverend Father, your very humble and obedient servant.

Ch. Faure

Nanterre, June 21, 1644


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3Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld resigned his title and the possession of Sainte-Geneviève Abbey.

François de la Rochefoucauld was born in Paris on December 8, 1558. He became Bishop of Clermont on October 6, 1585. Cardinal in 1607, Bishop of Senlis in 1611, and Commendatory Abbot of Sainte-Geneviève Abbey in 1613. In 1622 he resigned his bishopric in order to dedicate himself entirely to the reform of the abbeys dependent on the Orders of Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine, and Saint Bernard. With that end in view, on April 8 he obtained from Pope Gregory XV special powers and the title of Apostolic Commissary. Supported by such men as Saint Vincent, Fr. Tarisse, and Fr. Charles Faure, he caused order and discipline to flourish once again in the monasteries. The Cardinal died on February 14, 1645, with Saint Vincent at his side to prepare him to appear before God. He was buried at Sainte-Geneviève, but his heart was given to the Jesuit Fathers. (Cf. M. M. La Morinière, *Les vertus du vrai prélat représentées en la vie de l'Eminentissime cardinal de La Rochefoucauld* [Paris: Cramoisy, 1646], and Lallemand and Chartonnet, op. cit.)
7. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[1646]

To help us to understand the state of Daughters of Charity and what disposition the Sisters need to enter the Company. To do this, they must have great respect for their state and for persons who are poor, since they are paid and maintained from their alms.

What they can do to prevent receiving in this life the reward for the service they render to poor persons for the little work they do compared to the work they left behind, and the honor they may receive.

Whether the Sisters may not be wrong in their urgent desire to serve poor persons, both in the parishes and in the Hôtel-Dieu, which sometimes makes them less willing to remain in the House.2

Whether the Sisters who remain in the House do not have the same merit as those who are serving poor persons directly.

The care and affection the Sisters should have for the Regulations of the House and for practicing them.

How the Sisters must respect and love one another, and how they should be willing to have their faults reported to the one who holds the place of Superioress for them. Whether each of them in turn should charitably inform the same Superioress of the faults they see her commit.

How each Sister should inform her Sister at once of her faults, and how the other should accept this.

The danger there is in Sisters telling each other of their dissatisfactions with one another, particularly by grumbling, even venting themselves on others for the reprimands given them.


1It was in 1646, beginning on February 13, that Saint Vincent treated in the conferences the subjects proposed here by Saint Louise.

2The Motherhouse.
My dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am more consoled than I can say to hear of the good services you and our dear Sisters are rendering to God in the person of His poor. Oh, how happy you will be, when our works will be considered on that great day, to be able to reply, “Yes, Lord, we have done the things you ask of us.”

I hope to send you a good confessor soon. In our collège there is a wise, pious priest who has given us hope of accepting this ministry and of going to live in your hospital. We are urging him to go, and if he should change his mind, we will try to send someone else, such as the Fathers are requesting.

Meanwhile, I ask our dear Sisters, and you as well, to bear with one another. You are going as companions into eternity, and you are all spouses of our Savior Jesus Christ. So then, be more and
more united with one another. No Sister should be upset if another Sister is at variance with her, or if people talk or murmur against her. There is no one in the world who does not have to put up with the neighbor. Our Lord himself found some of these among His disciples. We have to go through that or live apart in a desert; but what great sadness for the person who is alone. So then, let us go along together gently and cheerfully; we belong to God and are bound to accept what He orders and permits.

People rebuff us, find fault with what we do, treat us worse than servants, report us, listen to others, do the worse things possible against us. O Lord my God, what beautiful opportunities for acquiring holy humility, for practicing gentleness and patience, for becoming pleasing in God's sight, for making ourselves loved by the glorious Virgin and the whole celestial court; and, lastly, for winning the hearts of those very persons who make us suffer, and who, sooner or later, recognize their fault, provided we do our humble duty. And that is what we have to do with care and diligence. So, my dear Sisters, let's do it. I say "my dear Sisters" for I'm speaking to all of you. Let's do it in the sight of God, with peace of mind, courtesy, and gracious condescension toward one other. With that, your actions will all be golden and your reward will be great.

But what should be done to make good use of the contradictions and troubles God sends us? We have to love them, but how can we love what displeases us? First of all, we have to consider that this was the constant practice of Our Lord while He was in the world, and of all the saints without exception. Second, that we go to heaven only through tribulation and penance. Third, that it's necessary to suffer in this world, either willingly or unwillingly, and that only those who love to suffer don't suffer at all. Fourth, if the Sisters of Charity are unwilling to do anything to honor the Passion of Our Lord, who chose them from among a thousand others to raise them to His love, who, then, is going to do it? You are Daughters of Charity. Mortification is also a daughter of charity and must, consequently, be your sister. So then, cherish it, consider it often at meditation, and remember it when opportunities present themselves. Ask God to give you an affinity for it so that by this means...
you may one day reign above it with Our Lord, in whose love I am, for all in general and for you in particular, my dear Sister, your most humble and affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Jeanne Lepeintre, Daughter of Charity at the Nantes Hospital, in Nantes.

9. - TO THE MOTHER SUPERIOR OF THE FIRST MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION, IN PARIS

Saint-Lazare, December 14, 1648

My very dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for your frequent remembrance of me before God, which has been very helpful to me. Thanks to His mercy, I am better and was purged today as a final remedy. I hope to be able to go out tomorrow or the next day.

According to the letter that came from Saint-Denis, it seems that Sister Directress is bearing her cross peacefully and does not feel that the relief you offer her is necessary, so I think we should let her be.

Time will gradually reveal to us the errors of Port-Royal. I had already heard something similar to the letter you sent me, from someone who had come expressly from Brittany to enter there, but left it seven or eight months later because of several things to be desired. I will tell you more about this when I have the consolation of seeing you. You say nothing to me about your health; please take care of yourself.

Supplement 9. - The location of the original is unknown. A photocopy of a handwritten copy is in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. This letter belongs in Vol. III, after no. 1081.
I give you permission, my dear [Mother], to allow the candidate for Compiègne to enter, and your grandniece for one day. May Our Lord be the life of our hearts. I am, with all my heart, in His love, my very dear Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
I.S.C.M.

10. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Before 1650] ¹

Monsieur,

I have been asked to appeal to you very humbly, for the love of God, as I am now doing, to show your charity to a poor woman who greatly needs to be committed, by asking M. Gillot, a merchant in the Place aux Chats,² to help her obtain a place at the Pitié.³ The need that has been presented to me is most worthy of compassion, both for the salvation of her soul and for her personal safety. That is why, Monsieur, I resolved to bother you and to assure you, by this note, that I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and very obedient servant.

L. DE MARILLAC


¹Date assigned by Sister Elisabeth Charpy in Écrits spirituels.
²Square in Paris, situated near the Cimetière des Innocents.
³Hospital of Paris, constructed not far from the Jardin des Plantes.
11. - MADELEINE DE LAMOIGNON 1 TO SAINT VINCENT

[October 1650] 2

Monsieur,

I want to tell you about the blessing God is giving our poor Picards, because today M. Marbe preached at Saint-Jacques and recommended those poor people so strongly that I was told that those listening dissolved into tears. I hope, then, that the collection will begin tomorrow, since we see people prepared; we think it will be very successful. The Pastor of Saint-Eustache recommended them so well that I have already experienced the results of this: money has been brought to me from all sides. Lastly, Monsieur, because holy and adorable Providence gives us what is needed to help those poor people, let us not set any limits; we decided to ask you to please tell M. Berthe 3 to borrow some money, and we will repay it in Paris, and to assist all the sick until they are completely healed and strengthened, and the same for all the listless and convalescent. In short, that there not be a single place where anyone might die for lack of assistance. I put the responsibility on your conscience to please tell him that, and I unburden mine on yours.


1Madeleine de Lamoignon was born in Paris on September 14, 1608, of Chrétien Lamoignon, a Presiding Judge of the Parlement of Paris, and of Marie des Landes, who initiated her from childhood into the traditions of the Confraternity of Charity. Both mother and daughter were very zealous in their dedication to poor persons. They often went to visit them in their homes, dressed their wounds, cleaned their rooms, made their beds, and provided them with clothing, linen, food, and money. Mlle de Lamoignon supported and took an active part in all the works Saint Vincent founded. He used to say that she forged ahead so fast with her charitable activities that no one could keep up with her. She died on April 14, 1687, at seventy-nine years of age; her life has been written by Fr. d’Orléans (Vie de Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, Bibl. Nat., Ms. fr. 23895) and by Mlle Louise Masson (Madeleine de Lamoignon [Lyons, 1846]). Abbé Guy-Toussaint-Julien Carron gave her a place in Vies des Dames françaises qui ont été les plus célèbres dans le XVIIe siècle par leur piété et leur dévouement pour les pauvres (2nd. ed., Louvain: Varlinthout et Vandenzande, 1826).

2Date written on the back by Saint Vincent’s secretary.

3Thomas Berthe (cf. XI, 165, n. 2).
Mme de Herse⁴ would like to know if seven hundred livres a week would be enough for M. Berthe, but do not limit it to that, for fear that he might need more. It was also decided this week to send one hundred écus to M. Le Soudier⁵ in Saint-Quentin, and to continue this. Please let me know if you can hold the meeting Sunday.⁶

Addressed: To Monsieur Vincent, at Saint-Lazare

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⁴Mme de Herse, née Charlotte de Ligny, was the daughter of Jean de Ligny, Seigneur de Ranticey, Master of Requests. She was also the widow of Michel Vialart, Seigneur de la Forest de Herse, Counselor to the King in his Parlement Court, President of Requests of the palace, then Ambassador to Switzerland, who died in Solothurn (Switzerland) on October 26, 1634. Mme de Herse was the mother of Félix Vialart, Bishop of Châlons, as well as a relative of Jean-Jacques Olier; Francis de Sales, a good friend of hers, was her son’s godfather. A Lady of Charity, she was one of Saint Vincent’s chief auxiliaries and a great benefactress of the poor people of Paris, Picardy, and Champagne. Works for the ordinands and for abandoned children received her support, and she established the Daughters of Charity in Chars (Val-d’Oise). During the wars that ravaged the capital, the Queen Mother entrusted to her and to some other Ladies the distribution of her personal alms. Mme de Herse died in 1662.

⁵Jacques Le Soudier, born in Vire (Calvados) on October 28, 1619, entered the Congregation of the Mission on May 16, 1638, was ordained a priest in 1642, and took his vows in Richelieu on June 14, 1642. In 1646, Saint Vincent considered him for the foundation of the mission in Salé (Morocco). The project was abandoned, however, when the saint discovered that the Order of Recollects (Franciscans) had already made a commitment to that mission. In 1651 Le Soudier was in Saint-Quentin, where he remained for two years. He became Superior in Crécy (1652-54) and in Montmirail (1655-56). A long illness interrupted his work, and he died in Montauban on May 17, 1663. His brother Samson was also a member of the Congregation of the Mission.

⁶The meeting of the Ladies of Charity.
12. - TO CARDINAL ANTONIO BARBERINI,¹
PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

March 1652

[Most] Em[inent] and [Most] Rev[erend] L[ord],

We have heard that certain French priests are seeking to obtain, through the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, authorization to form a new body of missionaries in this kingdom. We are wondering if this may not be prejudicial to the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, already instituted apostolically in this same kingdom under the direction of Vincent de Paul, its Superior General, and spread over and ministering for many years not only in France and in other provinces of Christianity, to the benefit of the people and at the service of the clergy under the authority of the most illustrious Ordinaries, but also in partibus infidelium,² in obedience to the said Sacred Congregation. The said Vincent, Superior General, who has recourse very humbly to Your Eminence, has many reasons to fear that, if the aforesaid authorization is granted, the multiplicity of Congregations of secular priests having the same name and with identical ministries [might create]³ great confusion. For this reason, he most humbly begs Your Eminence to be pleased to have every consideration for us and to see that nothing is innovated on this point without having heard the

Supplement 12. - The location of the original, written in Italian, is unknown. A handwritten copy is in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. This letter probably belongs in Vol. IV, after no. 1479.

¹Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII and his brother the Capuchin Cardinal Antonio Barberini, was only twenty when he entered the Sacred College of Cardinals in 1627. He was placed in charge of several legations. Since the steps he took to prevent the election of Innocent X were unsuccessful, he came to France, obtained the bishopric of Poitiers in 1652, and became Archbishop of Reims in 1657. He died in Nemi, near Rome, on August 3, 1671.

²In regions of infidelis, i.e., no longer an extant diocese, but only a titular one.

³This word is illegible.
Superior of Rome, and this will be received as a particular grace from Your Eminence. *Quam Deus.*


With the recommendation of the [Most] Exc[ellent] L[ord] Ambassador of France

VINCENT DEPAUL,
Superior General of the Congreg. of the Mission

13. - TO CHARLES OZENNE, IN DOVER, ENGLAND

Paris, September 11, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

*Mon Dieu,* Monsieur, how saddened I am for you and for the treatment you have received! I hope from the Goodness of God that you are now free and that all those heavy crosses with which Our Lord has burdened you and our dear Sisters of Sainte-Marie will be the means of drawing down on them and on you more abundant graces.

The word here is that it is doubtful that they will continue their journey. If they do not, please do all you can not to stay on. I am writing this to the Queen of Poland. You could take advantage of the ship on which you set out. I am certain that M. Datineau, who has gone to England, will give you what you need, or, if you are going to Calais, as I am told, that the Comte de Charreau will have someone give you the money by a bill of exchange, which I will pay here on demand; he is my good seigneur; show him this letter. I


1Visitation Nuns.

2Louise-Marie de Gonzague (cf. XI, 317, n. 2).
have written to him on behalf of our dear Sisters of Sainte-Marie. If, then, you are leaving, I ask Our Lord to be your guide. I am, in His love, your very humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Please greet M. de Montois\(^3\) for me and assure him of my obedience, as I am doing in the letter I am writing to our dear Mother the Superioress.

_Addressed_: Monsieur Ozenne, Priest of the Mission, presently in Dover, England.

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**14. - TO DOMINIQUE LHUILLIER,\(^1\) IN CRÉCY\(^2\)**

Paris, September 10, 1656

Monsieur,

I am writing this letter to ask you to send Br. Sené\(^3\) back to us here with the bearer of the letter, who will return with him the day after his arrival. So then, we shall expect him on Wednesday, at ten o'clock or at noon. He could come to sleep in Lagny\(^4\) Tuesday night

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\(^3\)The Director who was to accompany the Visitation Nuns to Poland. The spelling of his name is not certain. It can also be read: de Montou or Monthoux.

_Supplement 14._ This letter was published in _Carità e missione_, nos. 1-2, 2001, pp. 7-8. It is in the possession of a person in Italy who prefers to remain anonymous. The letter should be placed in Vol. VI, after no. 2136.

\(^1\)Dominique Lhuillier, born in Barizey-au-Plain (Meurthe), entered the Congregation of the Mission as a priest in Paris on July 11, 1651, at the age of thirty-two. He took his vows there on May 5, 1659, in the presence of M. Almeras. Lhuillier was a Missioner in Crécy (1654-60) and in Toulon, where he died.

\(^2\)The house of the Mission in Crécy (today Crécy-en-Brie, department of Seine-et-Marne) was founded in 1641. The Missioners were called there by Louis XIII, who had given them the house and 4,000 livres pension.

\(^3\)Nicolas Sené, born in Paris, entered the Congregation of the Mission on October 7, 1651, at twenty years of age, and took his vows in 1653.

\(^4\)A town of more than 15,000 inhabitants in the department of Seine-et-Marne.
and leave the next morning when it is still cool. I ask you to pray for me, and am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,  
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lhuillier, Priest of the Mission, in Crécy

15. - TO SISTER FRANÇOISE ANGÉLIQUE LE ROY,  
VISITATION NUN

(Paris, October 16, 1656)

We, Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and Spiritual Father of the Religious of the Visitation Sainte-Marie in Paris, to you, our dear Sister Françoise-Angélique le Roy, one of the Religious of the First Monastery of the city, greetings. The Mother Superior of your house in Le Mans has asked us for a Sister of your Community to help her bear the yoke of Our Lord in the government of her Community and to contribute to the sanctification God is asking of the souls who compose it.

Knowing that God has blessed your way of acting in all the duties you have had up to the present, we have chosen and delegated you, choosing and delegating you to go to your house in Le Mans, accompanied by our Sister Marie-Joseph Trouillet, and to remain there in the above mentioned office until holy obedience ordains otherwise. We enjoin you to lower your veils at the entrance of the cities where you will pass and to conduct yourselves everywhere in keeping with the Rules and practices of your holy Institute, in such a way that God may be honored and the neighbor edified by this,

Supplement 15. - Archives of the Mission, Paris, original signed letter. This recently discovered letter was sold on November 27, 2008, at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris; it should be placed in Vol. VI, after no. 2157.
begging His Divine Goodness to honor you with His protection and to continue to bless you.

Given at Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, October 16, 1656.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
unworthy Priest of the Mission

16. - TO THE BISHOP OF SOISSONS 1

[Around the beginning of March 1657] 2

I take the liberty of renewing to you the offer of my perpetual obedience with all possible affection and humility; I most humbly entreat you, Excellency, to accept it, as also the very humble request I make of you to give permission to M. Guillot of our Company, the bearer of this letter, who is leaving to direct the little house we have near Montmirail, and to two or three other priests, our confreres, who are to go there at the end of this week, to open the mission in Montmirail next Sunday and then to go on to the villages that are dependencies of it. This is the time when we are obliged to do it, if you, Excellency, see fit. And if you, Excellency, agree to give permission to absolve reserved cases and to commute vows, as the other Bishops do, we will have the means of serving the poor people more effectively. That, Excellency, is the very humble request I have the honor of making of you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Excellency. . . .

The bearer of this letter returned from Poland some time ago. If you, Excellency, would like to know the state of the Church in that kingdom, he is able to speak with you about it.

Supplement 16. - The location of the original is unknown. A photocopy of the unsigned autograph draft is in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. This letter probably belongs in Vol. VI, after no. 2221.

1Charles de Bourlon. After having been the Coadjutor of Simon Le Gras, he succeeded him in the See of Soissons at his death on October 28, 1656.

2In this letter, Saint Vincent announces that M. Guillot, C.M., is leaving to head the Montmirail house. It was on May 3, 1657, that he first sent a letter to M. Guillot as Superior there (cf. VI, 311-13).

3The text of the draft stops here and skips the formula: "your very humble and obedient servant," as well as the signature, but it adds a postscript.
17. - TO JEAN PARRE,¹ IN SAINT-QUENTIN

Paris, September 27, 1659

My dear Brother,

The grace of O.L. be with you forever!

I am writing to you but have nothing to tell you, since we did not have any meeting this week. I do not know if you are in Saint-Quentin yet because I did not receive any news from you by the last coach.

We have M. Le Soudier² critically ill, and M. Perraud³ as well. I recommend both of them to your prayers, and I am, in the love of O. L., my dear Brother, your very affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,
i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Bro. Jean Parre, of the Mission, at Saint-Quentin

18. - REGISTRATION BY THE PARLEMENT OF THE UNION OF SAINT-LAZARE TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

Monday, March 21, [1633]

The Court having examined the letters patent of the King given at Saint-Germain in January 1633,¹ by which the said Lord praises,

Supplement 17. - DePaul University (Chicago) Special Collections, original signed letter. A few lines of the text were published by Coste (VIII, 157) as a summary; at that time its location was unknown. In May 2007, the original was purchased from The Boys' Town Collection. This letter, then, replaces the summary given in Vol. VIII.

¹Jean Parre (XI, 306, n.3).
²Jacques Le Soudier.
³Hugues Perraud.


¹Cf. XIIIa, 293-95.
accepts, confirms, and approves the union made by the Archbishop of Paris\textsuperscript{2} of the priory, leprosarium, and administration [of] Saint-Lazare to the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, wills that the said priests and their successors in the future should enjoy it "in perpetuity, together with all fruits, rights, revenues, emoluments and any dependencies whatsoever, with the responsibilities, terms, and conditions stated in the contract for this union, decrees of the Court, declaration of the Prior,\textsuperscript{3} approval and union of the said Archbishop,\textsuperscript{4} etc. The Act of the said union was passed on the last day of this past December.\textsuperscript{5} The said contract, letters patent, decrees of the Court, declaration of the Prior and other documents, etc..." The said Court has ordered, and does order, that the said letters will be in its office to have them implemented according to their formulation and terms.

19. - REGISTRATION BY THE PARLEMENT OF LETTERS PATENT ON BEHALF OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

September 3

The Court examined the letters patent of the King given in Paris in the month of May 1642,\textsuperscript{1} obtained by the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, by which the said Lord permitted and granted that the said Priests of the Congregation of the Mission may, and are free to, have implemented the Bulls attached under the counter-seal obtained by them from the Pope, stating the approval of their Insti-

\textsuperscript{2}Jean-François de Gondi.

\textsuperscript{3}Adrien le Bon, Canon Regular of Saint Augustine and Prior of Saint-Lazare, was born in Neufchâtel (Seine-Maritime) and died at Saint-Lazare on April 9, 1651, in his seventy-fourth year. When he offered the Priory to Saint Vincent, the generous offer alarmed the saint, who refused it several times, until a trusted advisor, André Duval, convinced him of the wisdom of this agreement (cf. XIII\textit{a}, 283-86).

\textsuperscript{4}Cf. XIII\textit{a}, 275-80.

\textsuperscript{5}Cf. XIII\textit{a}, 286-93.


\textsuperscript{1}Cf. XIII\textit{a}, 321-22.
stitute, and to enjoy their contents, point for point, in accord with their formulation and terms. The said letters of permission given and granted, the Lord causes, admits of, and allows the said Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, present and to come, to enjoy them fully and peacefully, putting a stop to all disturbances and hindrances, provided that there be nothing else in them contrary to the rights of the said Lord and any concordats between the Holy See and him, and the privileges and liberties of the Gallican Church, as is stated more fully in the said letters and the said Bulls given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, in the year of Our Lord 1632, the day before the Ides of January (January 12, 1633),² attached under the counter-seal; foundation contract of the said Mission of April 17, 1625;³ approval of the said contract by the Archbishop of Paris of April 24, 1626;⁴ letters patent of the said Lord King, given in Paris in the month of May 1627;⁵ confirmation of the foundation stated in the said contract, and permission to form among the said priests the Congregation and Association mentioned therein; decree of April 4, 1631,⁶ of verification of the said letters and contract, passing over the opposition of the Pastors of the city and faubourgs of Paris to the modifications stated in the said decree;⁷ request of the said Priests of the Congregation of the Mission for the purpose of verification, etc.; the said Court has ordered and does order that the said letters and Bulls be registered in its office so that the said petitioners may enjoy their effect and contents in the offices stated in the said letters and decree of the Court of April 4, 1631.

²Cf. XIIIa, 296-304.
³Cf. XIIIa, 213-17.
⁴Cf. XIIIa, 218.
⁵Cf. XIIIa, 226-27.
⁶Cf. XIIIa, 258-59.
⁷Cf. XIIIa, 253-57.
20. - REQUEST OF WITHDRAWAL FROM A LEASE

Saturday, May 14, 1644

Before the royal notary of the Comté of Beaumont and the castellany of Creil, appears the undersigned Marthe Goupil, residing in Précy, widow of the late Ghislain Frappiet, during his life one of the four messengers between Poitiers and Paris. Presently receiving income from the land and seigniory of Précy, where she resides, she has appointed as her general and special attorney René de Matsé, esquire, Sieur de Plessis, Prosecutor in the Privy Council of the King, to whom she has given, and hereby gives, authority, for her and in her name, to draw up before all the notaries whom it may concern the waiver of the lease drawn up by her, under the name of Sieur Vezon, of the farm of the coaches and carriages of the town of Rennes and other towns of Brittany, which she had taken from the Fathers of the Mission established at Saint-Lazare in the faubourg Saint Denis in Paris. The lease had passed before Paizant, Sieur Payzant nottson [words crossed out], royal notary at the Châtelet of Paris, and Dupuy, his associate, on September 27, 1643 [the 3 is crossed out and 2 is written above it] and from him passed to the...
said party all the documents he will advise to be proper. Promising, etc. [words crossed out] Promising, etc. Obliging, etc.

Drawn up and signed at the château of Précy, May 14, 1644, in the presence of Jehan Randon, Sieur of Compen,7 and Thomas Maris, and approved by them.

MARTHE GOUPIL

RANDON [paraph] 8

R. DEMASÉ 9 [paraph]

PAISANT [paraph]

D. CREMASSON [paraph]

[Added nine days later in another hand]: Paraphed by the undersigned parties and notaries [paraph of Demasé] a certain document passed today before the said undersigned notaries this twenty-third day of May, sixteen hundred forty-four.

R. DEMASÉ [paraph]

VINCENT DE PAUL [paraph]

D. CUSSET [paraph]

C. MOUFEL 10 [paraph]

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7Probably Compons, a village in Seine-et-Marne, an arrondissement of Meaux.
8A paraph or "flourish" was required to authenticate the signature on a legal document.
9The notary wrote "De Masé," but in that period, people often joined the De to their name in their signature, just as Vincent did.
10The spelling of this name is uncertain but it is probably "Moufel." The scribes wrote what they heard and were not always consistent in their spelling. Because they had to write so quickly, their handwriting was not always legible.
21. TRANSACTIONS CONCERNING WITHDRAWAL FROM A LEASE

(May 23, 1644)

Present in person were Messire Vincent de Paul, priest, Superior General of the Priests of the Mission established at Saint-Lazare, owners of the coaches and carriages going and coming between this city of Paris into the town of Rennes and the towns of the province of Brittany, with Monsieur de Paul living at Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, on the one hand, and Monsieur René Demasé, esquire, of Plessis, advocate at the Privy Council of the King, residing in Paris on rue de l’Arbre secq in Saint-Germain de l’Auxerrois parish, in the name of, and as agent of, the honorable woman Marthe Goupil, widow of the late Gillain Frappier, during his life one of the four ordinary messengers between Poitiers and Paris, established by her as her proxy, passed before Lemasson, royal notary of the comté of Beaumont and the castellany of Creil, residing at Précy, on the fourteenth of the current month and year, her special agent in substance, to have the proxy passed before the present notaries, as it has appeared to the undersigned notaries, by the original of the texts later signed Marthe Goupil, Randon Paris, R. Demasé, and Lemasson, and joined to the present minute after being signed with parahps ne varietur by Monsieur Masé and Monsieur de Paul; and to that of the same Goupil the aforementioned Monsieur Masé promises to have ratified before the present [notaries] and for her certainty, to oblige her to provide the valid act of ratification to Monsieur de Paul [?en lestepre] in Paris, as many times and whenever it will be requested, without, however, allowing default of the ratification to be prejudicial to the parties present, since said Goupil, the interested party, by the declaration of Jean Vezon, had taken a lease on


1Between the Place Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois and rue Saint-Honoré, Paris.

2"Lest it be changed," i.e., by anyone else.
the said coaches and carriages, passed before Dupuis and Paysant, notaries, the twenty-seventh of September 1642, as recorded in the document of the declaration passed before Le Vasseur and Moufle, the undersigned notaries, on the last day of December in the year 1642. These parties, on the other hand, in order to avoid the disagreements that were at the point of arising between them, since the said Goupil held that Père\textsuperscript{3} de Paul should be obliged to compensate the lack of income borne from the said farm because of the obstacles placed to that income by the tax farmers messengers of the said province up to today, or to cause these obstacles to cease in the future.

To this charge Père de Paul maintained that he was not obliged, since, according to the lease, said Goupil was responsible for establishing the coaches and carriages at her own cost and expense, and if there were any impediment, she was supposed to act against those who had created the obstacles and to continue the lawsuits already begun, likewise to avoid all costs and expenses that might arise because of these disputes. They have concurred on the following, namely, that Pierre [sic] de Paul and Monsieur Masé, in her name, have voluntarily desisted and annulled, and do desist and annul by these documents, the lease agreement that has been broken[?], and they agree that it remains null and void for the time remaining from today onward. By so doing, said Goupil is freed both for the past and for the future from the rentals and income of the coaches [and carriages], so that, afterwards, Pierre [sic] de Paul (paraphs) may make no demand on her in any way or manner, but Pierre [sic] de Paul frees her from them purely and absolutely, with no further expense, damages, and interests on one side or the other. By means of this, Pierre [sic] de Paul consents and agrees, in addition to what is found above, that said Goupil may take up her case and continue, if she thinks it advisable, to deal with the said messengers and others who are supposed to have created the obstacles, to receive compensation because of the lack of income up to today, without, nevertheless, for that reason, being able to oblige Père de

\footnote{Several times throughout the document, this is incorrectly written as "Pierre."}
Paul to be held to any guarantee for the indemnification, nor even, should this not be forthcoming, that said Goupil may have any recourse against Pierre [sic] de Paul nor transfer to him any costs or expenses, but refrain from so doing and indemnify him against all those which might be claimed by the messengers. It has, however, been agreed between the parties that, in case a lawsuit be brought against the messengers for the said non-payments, of which Monsieur de Mouchal [?Mouf] is the rapporteur, Monsieur de Paul should take care not to find in it any charges or expenses. He will reject legal pursuits against those that might be awarded. And for the execution of these present and [pending] documents, the parties have chosen and do choose their irrevocable domicile in the said city of Paris, that is, Monsieur de Paul at Saint-Lazare, and C. De Masé, in her name, in the house stated above, where he lives, in which places we.... Promising, etc. for Monsieur de Paul at Saint-Lazare, and Monsieur de Masé, in her name, in the house of... Secretary of the king, located on rue de Montmartre, in the year 1644, the twenty-third day of May, in the afternoon.

The following have signed and attested to the present documents.

VINCENT DE PAUL [paraph]

R. DEMASÉ [paraph]

D. CUSSET [paraph]

C. MOUFEL [paraph]
22. - REGISTRATION BY THE PARLEMENT
OF THE CONFIRMATION OF THE UNION OF SAINT-LAZARE
TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

Monday, May 15, 1662

The Court having examined the letters patent of the King, given in Aix in the month of March 1660, signed Louis, and on the fold, in the name of the King, de Loménie, and sealed on silk knotted cords with the great seal in green wax, obtained by Father Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, by which, and for the terms and contents, the said Lord praised, accepted, approved, and confirmed the union of the house and priory of Saint-Lazare, situated in the faubourg of Saint-Denis-lez-Paris to the said Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, and confirmation of that union and incorporation made by our Holy Father the Pope by his Bulls of April 18, 1655, of the rights, fruits, profits, revenues, emoluments, and any dependencies whatsoever, following and in conformity with the said Bulls, as well as what is contained in the said letters “addressed to the Court; petition of Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the said Congregation at the end of their registration, conclusions of the Attorney General of the King, and all things considered; the Court has ordered, and does order, that the letters and Bulls be registered in its office so that the Priests of the Mission may enjoy their effect and contents according to their formulation and terms.”


1Cf. XIIIa, 485-88.
2Cf. XIIIa, 409-16.